

Harpsichord & fortepiano

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
(MIRCat)

REVIEWS

Albert Rice, with photographs by Marlowe A. Sigal, *Four Centuries of Musical Instruments: The Marlowe A. Sigal Collection.* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2015).

Reviewed by Richard Troeger

This is a magnificent publication, documenting one of the most impressive private musical instrument collections in the world. Mr. Sigal and his collection are famous in the field of organology, as is Dr. Rice, a distinguished scholar, writer, and curator.

Following the Preface (by Mr. Sigal), Acknowledgments, Introduction, and coverage of terms and abbreviations, the book is divided into chapters by instrument type. Readers of this periodical will be mainly drawn to Chapter 1 on the 93 keyboard instruments in the collection; but the ensuing chapters cover also flutes, double reeds, single reeds, free reeds, cup-mouthpiece instruments, plucked and bowed strings, and percussion instruments. After a Bibliography follows an index, divided into, and limited to, a Makers' Index and an Index of City and Country.

I have played many of the keyboard instruments in the collection and the book--a large-format volume with splendid colour photographs throughout--gives the reader something of the overwhelming feeling one has encountering such a wealth of instruments (even one roomful at a time). One could wish for plan-view photographs of every keyboard instrument and for a more extensive technical description (ribbing, etc.) but not all technical details were necessarily accessible; and the accounts of over 600 instruments are consistent, well thought-out, and clearly presented.

This volume is available at a very low price and, since books like this are at times as elusive as their subject matter, I encourage readers to give in to the collecting urge at least to the extent of securing copies.

SCORES

Girolamo Frescobaldi: Organ and keyboard works II Capricci. Ed.

Christopher Stembidge with the collaboration of Kenneth Gilbert.

Bärenreiter BA8413 £37.00

Reviewed by John Collins

This volume is the fourth to appear in the complete keyboard works that Frescobaldi published during his lifetime and also a selection of instrumental Canzonas and pieces preserved with certain attribution in manuscripts.

The introduction presents full information about the appearance of the term "Capriccio" in previous music prints in Italy from 1564 onwards (Vicenzo Ruffo's *Capricci in musica a tre voci...*), the possible impact of the Neapolitans including the prints by Trabaci in 1603 and 15, and manuscript pieces by de Macque, the importance of Frescobaldi's volume is carefully assessed and the novelty of this collection and its relationship to his earlier publications is discussed, along with a detailed appraisal of each piece. In the section on interpretation there are some helpful comments on notation including the somewhat imprecise triple-time descriptions provided by the composer himself (a table gives the occurrences of triple time with the original time signatures), along with suggestions on instruments and tuning; a chromatic keyboard with the range of E to A² will suffice, but there are places where the low E would have been played on a short-

octave instrument (i.e. on the G# key), and the player must decide how best to adjust this. A translation of the composer's preface offers helpful advice and is required reading before playing the pieces.

This volume contains the 12 pieces included in the print of 1624, no. 7 *sopra l'Aria Or che noi rimena in partiture*, being omitted in the reprints of 1626, 1628 and 1642. Most are composed as a sequence of between seven to ten sections of variable length and in contrasting metres, but the player is permitted to shorten the piece at will. Frescobaldi states in his preface that he realises the comparative difficulty of this style and laments that reading from score is falling out of fashion.

The volume opens with two examples on the hexachord, no. 1 on the ascending, no. 2 on the descending, starting on la, but the final note ut is wittily altered to G#. No. 3 is based on the call of the cuckoo, the treble part throughout the piece consisting only of the falling third D-B, and may well be the earliest instrumental piece featuring what was to become such a popular motif. No. 4 is based on a Mass themes from Josquin, *La, sol, fa, re, mi*, which had been used previously by numerous composers of both keyboard and ensemble pieces. As with nos. 1 and 2, this figure appears in each voice in various rhythmic transformations here up to 25 times) in combination with a plethora of contrapuntal ideas. No. 5 and 6 are based on *La bassa Fiamenga* and *La Spagnoletta* respectively, both originally dance tunes. No. 7 *sopra l'Aria Or che noi rimena in partite* consists, uniquely in this collection of pieces, of variations, albeit with contrapuntal writing; a change of figuration and also of time signature, from the opening triple time to quadruple time occurs in the middle of each partite.

No. 8 and 9 stand apart even more and have just the one section, and dealing

with theoretical problems, no.8 is entitled *Cromatico, di Ligature al contrario*, with dissonances being resolved upwards instead of the customarily accepted downwards, and no. 9 being an example of the Durezze, or dissonance through suspension and its resolution. These two pieces contain some extreme dissonances and raise the genre well above those of contemporaries.

No. 10 presents a challenge to the performer by being an *Obligo di cantare a Quinta parte senza toccarla*. The part to be sung is shown in semibreves, and is not subject to rhythmic change, and its appearance – 15 times – is marked in the score. No. 11, *sopra un Sogetto*, is based on a more lively theme than the preceding abstract themes utilised, and no. 12 is based on *L'Aria di Ruggiero*, which would seem to be a particular favourite of the composer, given its appearance as a set of variations in the 1st book of Toccatas and also in the Aggiunta of 1637 to the second book. Each of the four phrases of the bass is used as a soggetto, and over half of the ten sections use more than one soggetto simultaneously.

An appendix includes the setting of "La, sol, fa, re, mi" by Vincenzo Ruffo and a version in score of the eighth Capriccio. The critical commentary discusses the sources, including the Turin organ tablature, and the editorial policy points out the extent of the editors' intervention as the original contained no beaming of quavers or semiquavers. The editorial conventions applied throughout the series are also in force here regarding accidentals and whether naturals may admit of inflection; more than one solution is frequently possible. There are full listings of readings and places where there have been editorial, those variants in the Turin Tablatures being particularly interesting. Appendix A gives a list of hand-written corrections in each of the 1st editions consulted, and Appendix B

suggests obvious uncorrected printing errors; these together with the facsimiles will be worth reading through.

The quality of printing is excellent, and the very careful layout ensures that pageturns are manageable by the player him or herself. These intricate pieces will require care where the parts cross, but the quality of the music makes such labours well worthwhile. It is primarily through playing and immersing oneself in this wonderful music that one becomes more adept at solving some of the problems posed in the score and these demanding but inventive pieces deserve to be far more frequently included in recitals.

Francesco Araja (8) Capricci per Cembalo
ed. Jolando Scarpa,
Edition Walhall EW968. 19.59 Euros.

Reviewed by John Collins

The little-known Neapolitan composer Francesco Araja was born in Naples in 1709 and may well have studied with Leonardo Leo. One of several Italians to work in Russia – like the later Rutini and Paisiello – he returned to Italy after 1762 and died around 1770. These Capricci survive in a manuscript now in Berlin, probably copied in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. His only other known harpsichord work is a sonata.

Each of the Capricci is relatively short, only no. 2 (172 bars of 2/4), 4 (113 bars of C) and 8 (213 bars of 2/4 all written as quaver triplets) exceeding 100 bars. No. 7 and 8 are in binary form, the others being through-composed. Apart from no. 5 marked *Larghetto* (although containing runs in hemidemisemiquavers) the prevailing tempo is *Allegro assai*, with no. 2 opening with a *Largo* which soon gives way to an *Allegro*. Although no. 7 is marked *Andante Spiritoso*, the qualifier seems to imply a tempo on the faster side, with many runs in demi-semiquavers. Textures vary but are predominantly two-voiced. Alberti and Mürky

basses occur more rarely than in many Italian sonatas of the period, but dotted rhythms appear with some frequency. Apart from the relatively undemanding no. 6, these pieces contain some extreme technical difficulties with frequent use of crossed hands, extended arpeggios and frequent leaps in each hand, sometimes of up to two octaves, at speed.

The volume is clearly printed with six systems to a page, and contains an informative introduction about the composer. The technical demands will seriously limit the potential number of purchasers and players, but those who can cope with Scarlatti and Soler's most demanding sonatas will relish the challenges posed by these Capricci. The 18th-century keyboard schools centred around Naples have received relatively little attention and are worthy of note.

Handel: Water Music.
Music for the Royal Fireworks.
Arranged and edited by Siegbert Rampe.
Bärenreiter BA9254 £29.00.

Reviewed by John Collins

This volume contains the three Suites known as the Water Musick (HWV348-50) and the Musick for the Royal Fireworks (HWV351), which have been among Handel's most popular works, with arrangements for keyboard and also for a solo instrument plus basso continuo appearing during the composer's lifetime to enable a recreation in a domestic setting without the extensive forces which performed the original versions. Arrangements of these pieces published in the eighteenth century by Walsh and later by Wright were followed by countless others up to the present day.

The pieces composed originally for performance in 1717 comprise ten pieces in F, five in D and seven in G. Almost all of these were set for harpsichord by the eminent violinist Francesco Geminiani, but whose harpsichord skills were clearly

subservient to his prowess on the violin. The volume was published by Walsh in 1743 and also included two minuets with variations (not included in the volume under review). The opening Suite in F is by far the longest with ten movements (the final movement being arranged by Siegbert Rampe from the original material because Geminiani did not arrange it.)

The opening Overture was also included in volumes of the collected Overtures published over a period by Walsh, followed by an *Adagio e Staccato* in triple time, after which an *Allegro* for Corno and Violini is followed by an *Adagio* in the relative minor and a repeat of the *Allegro*. Rampe has provided a complete arrangement of the *Adagio*, which he has retitled *Andante*. An untitled triple-time movement with an opening in binary form leading into a section in the relative minor which closes in its dominant is marked *Da Capo*. The next movement is the well-known Air in F, here followed by Handel's own arrangement for keyboard HWV464, followed by a Minuet with its trio in the tonic minor. The Suite concludes in Geminiani's arrangement with a Bourree and Hornpipe, to which Siegbert Rampe has added a 67 bar movement from the manuscripts.

The shorter suite in D opens with an *Allegro*, with a three-bar transitional *Adagio* from the manuscript sources, followed by the well-known Hornpipe, untitled in the original, with its markings for Corni and Violins inserted. A binary-form Minuet and ternary-form *Lentement* are followed by a binary-form Bourree (untitled in original) which closes the Suite.

The Suite in G opens with an untitled movement in triple time, followed by two Rigaudons, the first in the tonic major, the second in the minor, two Minuets, both in the tonic minor, the first in binary,

the second in ternary form, and closes with two Gigues, the first in the tonic minor, the second in the major, for which Siegbert Rampe has provided a complete arrangement.

The Musick for the Royal Fireworks comprising six pieces in D major and minor was first performed in 1749 and published later that year by Walsh, arranged anonymously for the German Flute, Violin or Harpsichord; the volume contained 11 transcriptions on 21 pages, of which only the first seven pages belong to this Suite, with the rest of the volume being filled with Marches from various Oratorios on p. 8-11, the Coronation Anthem ("Zadok the Priest") on p. 12-15, and two unidentified Airs filling p. 16-21. This modern edition contains only the pieces belonging to the Royal Fireworks, opening with the lengthy Overture, followed by pieces in binary form including a Bouree (sic), a *Largo alla Siciliana* known as "La Paix", an *Allegro* known as "La Rejouissance", and two Menuets, the first in the tonic minor, the second in the major.

The introduction gives comprehensive information about the original performance of both sets of pieces, with much information from contemporary sources, and is well worth reading. The printing is clear, with editorial additions and suggestions, including complete movements, being clearly distinguished through being in a smaller font. This volume offers all of the music associated with these two perennially popular sets within one cover, and should be a welcome alternative to those seeking a closer arrangement of the original than many of the greatly inflated arrangements from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The inclusion of the separate parts for the Musick for the Royal Fireworks will enable a wider range of performance options within both home and church. Several movements

are worthy of inclusion in recitals, and make excellent teaching material.

Repertoire for two harpsichords has been issued recently by two different publishing houses, namely Les Nations and a concerto by Krebs.

The publishers LMM have chosen to make available different versions of *Les Nations* to allow for varying performances.

1. Each of the four volumes in a conductor's score, numbered CAH 281-284.
2. The version for two harpsichords for volume 1 and volume 3 are available, as variants of CAH 281 and CAH 283.
3. Available separately are parts for the premier dessus, second dessus, bowed bass and figured bass, plus a part with the figured bass realised for those not yet initiated. This seems a sensible approach. The editor notes the reasons for doing this: that there are many errors in the published engravings of 1726 by Louis Hue.

François Couperin, *Les Nations, vol 1, Premier Ordre <<La Francaise>>, version pour deux clavecins. Collection Musique de Chambre. Julien Dubruque, ed.*

Editions du Centre du musique baroque de Versailles. CAH. 281-RC. [two parts]

Les Nations, vol 1, Premier Ordre, Sonade <<La Francaise>> et suite de symphonies en trio.

As the repertoire for two harpsichords is of special interest, it is good to know that for volume 1, the two harpsichord part comes in two volumes. This has the wonderful advantage over the facsmiles of giving a part to each player. The usual complaint is that the engraving has one copy so that when one buys it one does not have the tools to actually perform it (without photocopying). Having a part for both players is sensible and allows

performers to open the package and start playing instantly.

The editor acknowledges the previous work undertaken by Kenneth Gilbert and Davitt Moroney for L'oiseau-Lyre as well, mentioning that the named piece "La Francaise" is not littered with the same errors as the *suite en symphonies* which follows. A glance through shows that editorial dotted slurs are given but do not intrude, and that the editor's notes seem reasonable and transparent with regard to method. In many cases, rhythms have had to be "reconfigured" to match a similar part; in others a stem or dot may be lacking. The editor had to make more difficult choices where tempi did not match from part to part. Perhaps the one note of caution might be that the use of "homogenising" of articulations may be part of a 21st-century desire to have "the answer" and that natural variation might not be such a bad thing, especially when dealing with chamber music of four instruments only. Breath marks followed by a break in the beaming pattern of notes found in one part are added into the other parts by the editors. The change of beaming does not change the actual notes but the expression, which is so important to Couperin, may benefit from further investigation.

The editor makes an important distinction that instrumentation should not be changed from the given (two violins, a viol and a harpsichord), because in the eighteenth century this was less common, much like over-use of registration changes. The range of the music makes this clear, as does the conscious imitation of Corelli through the word "sonade" – so therefore two violins. Claims at the time that it could be played on all sorts of instruments were a marketing ploy; however, claims by Couperin that all of *Les Nations* can be performed on two

harpsichords are to be trusted; he has the *premier dessus* and bass on one; and the second *dessus* in unison with the same bass on another harpsichord. The editor assigns the Bowed Bass to the first harpsichord and the Figured Bass to the second. The editor notes the occasional difference between these two bass parts, and it seems efforts to make them similar are to help with ensemble between two keyboard instruments. It is hoped that volume 2 and 4 will be issued in due course. In fact, Couperin himself notes that it was easier to get two harpsichords together than four professional musicians!

When considering purchasing a new edition, a prospective buyer wants to know the following: Does the new edition allow the works to be more easily performed, with fewer errors? Does it show traces of editorial choice? Would a performer/scholar need both?

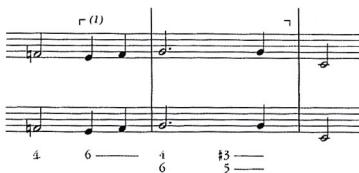


Figure 1a: LMM edition, b. 8-9
bowed bass and figured bass



Figure 1b: 1726 print, b8-9,
basse d'archet (bowed bass)



Figure 1c, 1726 print, b. 8-9
basse chiffrée (figured bass)

A comparison with the Fuzeau collection of facsimiles may be fruitful. The work "La Francaise" only exists in the 1726 print, making a comparison easy. In b. 8 of the first movement there is a choice. The *basse d'archet* (bowed bass) differs from the *basse chiffrée* (figured bass) in that the bowed version has crotchets on beats 3 and 4; the LMM edition uses this rhythm. However, in the 1726 print, the figured bass has a dotted crotchet followed by a quaver, a quintessential French pattern that in performance is often double-dotted. Performers might like to

have this rhythm and indeed, to perform it double dotted in a French overture style. If the performers only consult the LMM edition they may miss this opportunity. [They can of course consult the list of editorial changes, but sometimes seeing the original(s) may trigger a more thoughtful consideration. It may be tempting to accept on face value what one sees; if one does not see the dotted rhythm, one may not bother to investigate.] In b. 9 of the same movement, LMM gives the bass as dotted minim crotchet. This time the LMM edition matches the chordal bass, while the bowed bass has only a semi-breve. This may be logical because the more active rhythm of the chordal bass may alert the performer to play another chord, adding harmonic tension at this point. If one had to select just one option then the one with the more active rhythm is sensible. See figures 1a-c.

If one glances through the editorial changes for this movement, most of the rhythms that differ between the bass parts are regularised to follow the figured bass. Where there are changes in figures these are sensible, based on what is in the upper two parts, and courtesy accidentals are added. In one or two occasions a written out mordent is converted to a symbol so the ornaments appear as a turn followed by Nachschlag. In b. 16 of the Allemande a figure has a trill added where it is not found in the figured bass but can be found in the bowed bass.

In the Chaconne titles are regularised to show “Chaconne ou Passacaille” and the use of “fort” and “dou” are included in all parts.

In the Menuet, there is an editorial choice which does not seem sensible (although it is included in the table of editorial changes): The trill is removed in b. 17 of the Dessus 1 part to regularise it with b.9. As mentioned already, regularisation or homogenisation of this sort is not necessary to the expression of 17th-century music but perhaps more so with modern interpretations. See Figures 2ab.



Figure 2a: b. 17
LMM score, 1re dessus



Figure 2b: b. 9, and 171
726 print, 1re dessus

Notable is the adding of a slur holding over the last beat of b.22 into the beginning of b.23 with a trill. This detail is given in the LMM scores as a dotted slur in the Dessus 1 part but not listed in the editorial notes. Perhaps it is obvious enough where the slur originates.



Figure 3: b. 22-23. LMM score

The version for two harpsichords is a good investment, performable instantly. If one performs it in ensemble, it may wise to

consult the editorial notes and allow the possibility of making other editorial decisions. If one wishes to use parts in modern edition, one will see that the LMM edition is designed to update the Musica Rara editions (which are published as part for one sonata for around £23.00). If one's ensemble prefers to perform from manuscript, then one can purchase the Broude Brothers facsimile of 1726 only for the reasonable price of £33.75 (giving up any other sources).

If one however wants a complete set, one must have the Fuzeau, which covers not just the 1726 print but also the Paris MS and Lyon MS, which yield six further works: “La Pucelle”, “La Visionnaire”, “L’Astree”, “La Steinkerque”, “La Sultanee” and “La Superbe” covering all sources at about £82. All facsimiles will require some editing by an ensemble wishing to perform them but the type of player wanting a facsimile is the type willing to spend the extra time.

It is for the purchaser to do the calculation of what is needed: efficiency of performance, access to all the sources, or a connection to the past mixed with performability. Perhaps we need to wait a few more years for LMM to produce the other six works in parts? Will there be more versions for two harpsichords as well?

**Johann Ludwig Krebs,
Konzert a- Moll für zwei Cembali;
ed. Roland Bach. LMM 038, 2014.**

For those unfamiliar with this genre, this is not a concerto in the traditional sense but a duet on a grand scale. It fits into the tradition of concertos for multiple harpsichords; there are others by J.S. Bach, J.C Bach and C.P.E. Bach. The Collegium Musicum's influence can clearly be seen on Krebs. This concerto was first performed at the Dresden court in 1753. The piece is a hybrid of solo concerto and duet; of Bachian counterpoint and galant style. In the first movement, the solo versus concerto texture is clear, because the Harpsichord II acts as an orchestral accompaniment. It is not like a continuo part as it includes fully voiced chords that are not thinned on weaker beats; it requires careful shaping to give an elegant performance. Around b.93 the figuration in Harpsichord I is florid with enriched arpeggios designed both to impress and to give rich sonority. In the second movement, entitled *Affetuoso*, the two parts engage in melodic imitation as well as working in parallel thirds, in a lighter, galant style. There are plenty of ornaments that would require precision as many notes are held out before renewed figuration- this allows the melodies to overlap. The final *Allegro* is a canon with a delightful energetic feel as first Harpsichord I plays an exuberant leap, which is then echoed by Harpsichord II. Later it builds to b.144 for a solo by Harpsichord II. This is balanced nicely with the solo work heard previously by Harpsichord I and takes the listener to the relative major before a return to the original A Minor.

RECORDINGS

**Coin Booth, Harpsichord,
“Louis Couperin: Harpsichord Music”.
Soundboard Records SBCD215
Reviewed by John Collins**

The sadly short-lived Louis Couperin (1626-61), organist, harpsichordist and violist, was a nephew of the somewhat better-known François Couperin, although as the latter was not born until 1668 they would not have met. In addition to some 70 pieces destined for the organ he also left a large corpus of harpsichord music, which was copied into two manuscripts, with much overlapping of contents. The c. 150 pieces consist of Preludes, written as a stream of semibreves, with connecting slurs to assist the performer in identifying possible groupings of notes, and the traditional four dances making up the suite, i.e. Allemande, Courante, Sarabande and Gigue, with a few other dances such as Branles, Canaries, Volte, Chaconnes, Passacailles and a Pavane which in the manuscripts were grouped by key, allowing the player to select as many – or as few – as desired. For this recording Colin Booth has selected 30 pieces, eight in D Major/Minor, six in C Minor, five in A Major/Minor, nine in F Major, and two preludes in G Minor and C Major respectively.

The instrument which Colin Booth uses for this recording was signed by Nicholas Celini Narboniensis in 1661 and was restored by the player in 2013; it has two-manuals, the lower manual having two 8' stops and the upper manual having just one 4' stop, with no coupler. This late 17th-century instrument, tuned one tone lower than modern pitch, with its Italianate qualities, is the ideal vehicle to convey the French harpsichord music of the seventeenth century, far more so than the late double manual instruments of the eighteenth century.

The music performed here includes six of the tantalising unmeasured preludes, with the most complex being the prelude in A Minor written in imitation of Froberger, whom this Couperin met in Paris, its central section in strict time offering a contrast to the rhapsodic outpourings, here played with an improvisatory

feel that does not, however, ever seem to be lurching out of control. Dances performed include three Allemandes, the one in F Major being marked *Grave* is here taken at a leisurely pace which never drags; three Courantes with sufficiently varied rhythmic schemes; five Sarabandes of which the one in D Minor has perhaps the most startlingly dissonant opening of any Sarabande, still guaranteed to arrest attention today, and the one in A Major is headed "*En rondeau*"; three Gigues which contrast straight and dotted rhythms; a vigorously dotted-rhythm Canaries and a triple time Volte in D Minor; the Menuet de Poitou and its Double; a Gaillarde and Branle in A Major, both taken at a less demanding pace; three Chaconnes with their couplets, of which the D Minor example entitled "*La complaingnante*" does indeed sound querulously peevish with its rapid drive towards the dominant seventh, the one in C Minor, although entitled "*la Bergeronnette*", lacking any birdsong depictions in its writing, and the F Major one more melodically conceived than the others. Pieces with titles included here are "*La Pastourelle*", in a gentle triple time and "*La Piemontoise*" with its vigorously chordal opening and succession of broken chords in the second half. The "*Tombeau de Mr. De Blancrocher*" is here performed with just the right amount of tempo contrast as indicated in the score, and the bell-like sounds ring out from the brass strings in this far simpler tribute than Froberger's to the unfortunate lutenist who met a premature demise falling downstairs.

The accompanying booklet contains a brief biography and much interesting and useful information about the pieces, especially about the preludes – a photo of the opening of the A Minor prelude shows what confronts the player. There is also a concise description plus photos of the instrument and a short note about the performer.

There has been recent speculation about whether Louis or his brother Charles was in fact the composer of these pieces, but while this question may never be decided, the important thing is that today we can continue to enjoy music of such high quality, whether as performers or as listeners at either the rare occasions these pieces are included in recitals or to recordings such as this. Colin Booth continues to provide performances of an exceptional quality, allying an intellectual grasp of the form of the pieces with the rhythmic flexibility which was such an integral part overall of the French music of the period, and also showing us Louis Couperin's asperity and muscularity as well as his grace; Colin Booth's varied repeats show an innate ability to add ornaments (although unusually he chooses to ignore several of those actually included in the manuscripts, and sometimes loses the opportunity to add more), slightly change tempi and registration.

It is good to hear Courantes taken at a more spacious tempo than many previous performers have, allowing for a greater rhythmic sharpening. The high emotional content of the music with its sometimes jagged lines, false relations and unprepared dissonances is vividly imparted, sometimes through barely perceptible subtle adjustments to the overall rhythmic scheme, sometimes through contrasting broken chords with unbroken. My personal disappointment is that Booth did not include the wonderful Pavane in F# Minor so we could hear the effects of the meantone tuning in this "outlandish" key, but inevitably the anthologist can never please everyone; overall the selection allows us to hear differences in the compositional approach to the same dance form. For those who have yet to dip their toes into the waters of later French 17th-century keyboard music, this CD, covering almost 79 minutes, will make an excellent start.

Three Debut Discs

Reviewed by Charlene Brendler

Fernando Miguel Jalôto, Harpsichord,

“Dieupart, Six Suites de Clavecin,”

Brilliant Classics, 2015.

Joseph Gascho, Harpsichord,

“Transcriptions of music by Murcia,

Matteis, J.S. Bach, Charpentier, Handel

and Gascho”. Self-produced, 2012

Aya Hamada, Harpsichord,

“Jacques Duphly, Pièces de Clavecin”.

Nami Records Co., Ltd. Japan

WWCC7784, 2014.

In reviewing these three very different debut discs, one can appreciate the thought given to necessary choices: repertoire, appropriate instruments, and in which order to place the works. The CDs and performers below offer Baroque music by French, Italian, Spanish, and German composers on a variety of harpsichords, plus a refreshing disc of transcriptions.

American harpsichordist Joseph

Gascho delivers a beautiful and maturely played debut CD featuring his own transcriptions of several Baroque composers. This is welcome new “old” music, enriching the lives of both listeners and performers alike. Nine variations to the familiar Spanish tune *“Marizápalos”* of Santiago de Murcia open the CD and welcome the listener with playing that is sensitive in touch, timing and inflection. Gascho’s sense of phrasing, pauses, cadential breathing, and subtle rhythmic alterations are sustained in the contrasting Scarlatti-like sonata that follows. His playing never sounds automatic or uninvolving. The slower second movement of the sonata is beautifully played, as is the lyrical *Menuet amoro*so. Especially notable are the transcription decisions in regards to register choices that Gascho makes. The musical material is well served and sounds naturally placed. Virtuosic transcriptions for

the Matteis Chaccone are performed with flair, closing this part of the disc, all of which is delivered on a fine Wolf replica of a 1680 Italian harpsichord.

Transcriptions of Bach, Charpentier, and Handel fill the remainder of the disc, all being played on a French double harpsichord by Dowd. There are several transcriptions of Bach’s solo string works currently available, but Gascho has contributed an especially fine one: The movements of the G Major cello suite are idiomatic and convincingly set in appropriate registers. Gascho has created an enchantingly programmatic suite based on Charpentier’s opera *“La Descente d’Orphée aux Enfers”*. The stirring French Overture is played with panache and is followed by a refined and serene sarabande creatively adapted from the opera’s closing chorus. The combination of moods, chosen tessitura, and compositional adjustment choices in the five movements add a welcome new Charpentier suite to the French harpsichord repertoire.

“Ottoboni’s Contest” unveils another sampling of Gascho’s creativity. Juxtaposing Handel’s “Blacksmith” variations with some in the style of Scarlatti is a charming idea, with the idiomatic and smooth transitions between sections being skilfully played. Any harpsichordist will be grateful to add these musical contributions to their repertoire, if and when they are available. The transcriptions are musically inspiring, dramatically written with wit and elegance, and very importantly, the performer/arranger delivers them beautifully. This CD is highly recommended.

Portuguese harpsichordist **Fernando**

Miguel Jalôto plays Dieupart’s Six Suites, choosing music that is less familiar to the general Baroque loving audience. Overall, the playing is not especially stylish, but he does offer imaginative harmonic and melodic additions when performing repeats. The CD liner notes mention the St. Lambert treatise

suggesting such treatment, as well as the privilege to play whatever tempo pleases the player. This is taken a bit too far by Jalôto, especially in his chosen tempo for the Allemandes: The performer's stodgy pace directs the ear to too many events in a phrase, resulting in a lack of flow in the music.

A predictable nature pervades Jalôto's playing, which is not helped by the sonorously uninteresting Klinkhamer French double harpsichord. The upper manual's character provides a welcome respite from the stodgy sounding lower manual and coupled registers. The presentation order of the Suites is puzzling, placing Suite I (arguably the most interesting) last on the disc. The brooding Suite VI in F Minor opens the CD, which unfortunately does not feature his best playing.

Articulation, an important expressive tool, is needed to highlight the character of a dance movement, point out special rhythmic irregularities (such as the shifting patterns of 2 and 3 in courantes), or to emphasize a hemiola. Use of articulation seems to be minimal in this recording, and regrettably, a sense of breathing space is also lacking. Musical arrivals are a non-event, and the charming nature of some of the gavottes and minuets are veiled by non-descript interpretations. Regardless, the fine, more rhetorical playing in the Gigue of the 2nd Suite, the Sarabande in the 4th, and the French Overture in the first indicate that Jalôto might move towards a more effective musical delivery on his next disc.

Aya Hamada chose Duphly for her debut disc. The music of the late French Baroque composer Duphly is approachable to listeners as well as idiomatically friendly to pianists and emerging/aspiring harpsichordists. The music presents virtuosic opportunity,

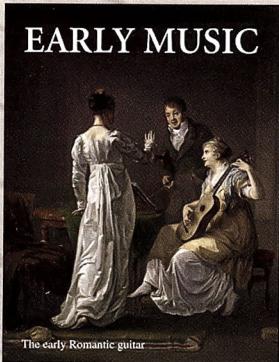
rococo sequences and passagework, but, unfortunately, also some vacuous content.

Hamada's playing juxtaposes a virtuosic finished technique with a poetic, sensitive approach. This combination should be ideal. Although Hamada's playing is intelligent and often musical, it is rarely moving. The rhapsodic and loud sweeping sound of "La Larare" opens the CD with startling immediacy, and a total of six quiet bars—in an otherwise noisy piece—are the listener's only refuge from this unleashed torrent of sound. Such placement so early in the CD often attracts impressionable listeners; perhaps this is why she opened with it.

The CD continues with selected portraits and dances from Duphly's four books for harpsichord, without any explanation regarding their placement. Repeats are taken religiously, with a few well-considered lead-ins, but the musical content often does not require hearing again, and fewer repeats would have served better. There are some welcome deft and surprising register changes that set off phrases well. Unfortunately, cadential trills often sound mannered and hemiolas get glossed over, perhaps due to Hamada's pianistic training. Interestingly enough, there is no biography for her in the booklet, but lots about the harpsichord, which many of us have played in lessons with Leonhardt in Amsterdam.

As found with Jalôto, some of Hamada's best playing seems to be placed in the second half of the CD. "La Forqueray" is sensitively and affectionately played, as is the "Rondeau in do" which concludes the CD. At the end of this recording, Hamada begins to sound more like a harpsichordist who knows "where the string is" under her fingers, and less like the award-winning facile pianist she is known to be.

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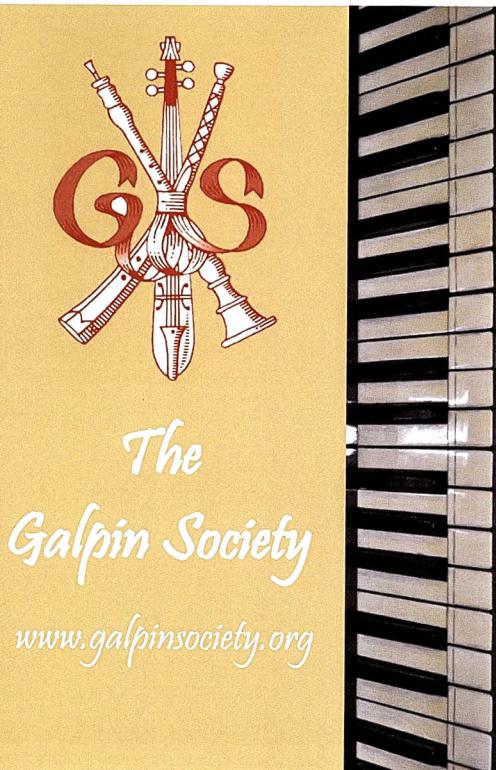
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