

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Musical Instrument Research Catalog
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REVIEWS

RECORDINGS

Colin Booth, "The Melodious Birde: Keyboard Music by William Byrd". Soundboard Records SB CD217-FSRCD013. Reviewed by Kathryn Cok.

Not often does one come across a recording made with instruments made by the performer, and beautiful sounding ones at that. A veteran of recorded keyboard music ranging from Peter Philips to Bach, Colin Booth provides the listener with a thoughtful, well researched and tastefully packaged collection of Dances, Fantasias, Variations and Grounds by William Byrd. This esteemed English composer remained on the continent throughout his life, rapidly gaining fame as a keyboard virtuoso and composer. While Byrd's dogged devotion to the Catholic faith caused him much inconvenience, his reputation as a prominent musician in the court remained intact, and story has it that Elizabeth 1 reportedly referred to him as "a stiff papist, and a good subject".

The booklet accompanying this CD is particularly thorough and illustrative, providing detailed information on the composer and keyboard music of this genre. Mr. Booth also supplies the reader with notes on the performance, including notation, rests, tempo, ornaments and most importantly, the instruments; a picture of the two smaller instruments used can be found on page eight. In addition, elaborate descriptions of the type of keyboard instruments in use during Byrd's time is presented, accompanied by a discussion of the possibilities open to performers. Mr. Booth chooses to use three instruments on this recording: a pentagonal virginal, which is based on a smaller instrument similar to an example found in the Victoria and Albert museum and thought to have been one of Elizabeth I's own instruments; a smaller harpsichord, used for most pieces and based on an instrument

made in the early 1500s by the Roman maker Bertarino; and a large harpsichord. The variety of sound colour, resonance and attack of the instruments perfectly lends itself to the changing characters of this music. In addition, all are beautifully tuned and regulated, and the close miking allows us to enjoy the natural resonance of the instruments. Mr. Booth appropriately chose mean-tone tuning, which allows the music to sound: "more vivid and rich..." and helps illustrate when the composer ventures into more daring keys.

The warm, welcoming sound on this CD invites you to come into the room and listen. Mr. Booth has a very honest, no nonsense feel for this repertoire, and takes a very straightforward approach to the timing in the pieces, occasionally enjoying a brief rest on a blue note. There is nice over legato in the passagework, allowing the instruments to resonate. Mr. Booth chooses to arpeggiate the additional grand chords found at the end of many of the pieces (such as the Pavan and Galliard on Tracks 3 and 4)). He states that this should probably be done, as: "when played for dancing, this may have been the point at which dancers ended their efforts by a formal obeisance to their partners". This CD is recommended for aficionados of William Byrd and virginal music enthusiasts.

CD Linda Nicholson, "Discovering the Piano". Various composers on a replica 1730 Cristofori-Ferrini fortepiano by Denzil Wraight. LC 10925, 2016. Reviewed by Charlene Brendler.

Fortepiano enthusiasts usually hear replica or original instruments from historical models made by makers such as Stein, Walter, Schantz, and Fritz. These later 18th-century fortepianos best serve the Classical era music of Mozart, Haydn, Clementi, and Beethoven, encompassing music written roughly between 1770 and 1830. The music here is performed on a replica of a Cristofori of 1730, made

by Denzil Wraight, based on a fortepiano bequeathed to Farinelli by the Spanish Queen Maria Barbara. It has a GG to e³ compass and features brass strings rather than the usual iron and steel strings found in late 18th-century fortepianos. Nicholson's recording provides a useful window to the foundational time of earlier fortepiano makers Cristofori-Ferrini and their instruments.

Dynamic features were severely limited in the harpsichord, the much-loved domestic and continuo keyboard instrument played from the Renaissance to the late Baroque Era. In the early eighteenth century, some musicians and composers desired a keyboard instrument that produced dynamics and had an agreeable sound.. The fortepiano models made by Cristofori were the first to be sensitive to touch, have an efficient action, and produce a singing treble coupled with a powerful bass. This particular model has a very homogeneous sound, unlike later instruments where each register of the keyboard has a distinctively different character. The paper covered and hollow hammers are of a different shape, being more rounded than Walther or Stein hammers, but the concept is there, ready to be developed and built upon by several builders by the end of the eighteenth century.

The unfamiliar composers on this disc were chosen from the pre-classical era that paralleled the featured fortepiano. Familiar names such as Scarlatti, Soler, and Handel are sprinkled in with music of the less familiar ones like Guistini, Paradisi, Platti, and Alberti. For many listeners, this CD provides an introduction to the early Cristofori piano of 1730 and appropriate music in a succinct package.

The Guistini Sonata I in G Major of 1732 opens the disc. Interestingly, it was written for the fortepiano and one already hears how expressive the early fortepiano can be. The basic forthright sound of the instrument is magically altered in the fifth movement, a *Minuet Affettuoso*. The ethereal *una corda* effect is produced by playing on only one set

of strings and allowing the other to resonate in its off position. The listener can hear this "halo" quality four times in the recording, and each time it is a special treat. There are no other stops or knee lever pedals on the Cristofori instrument. The player, therefore, is challenged to produce legato, color changes, and sustaining notes, entirely by touch. Nicholson has expertly adapted her technique and touch to these particular demands.

Paradisi's musical style is similar to that of Scarlatti in its use of playful figuration, phrasing, and register exploration. In the D Major Sonata played here, one doesn't miss the metallic harpsichord sound, or its clarity for that matter, as the upper register of the Cristofori has a lively and sparkling quality.

The perceptively played opening Adagio from Handel's F Major Suite features subtle nuances within narrow tempo alterations. This expressiveness is a welcome musical quality to what otherwise is generally straightforward playing by Nicholson. She excels in movements featuring counterpoint and pseudo-counterpoint, demonstrated for instance in her warm and friendly approach to the final contrapuntal Allegro in Handel's F Major Suite. Her performance of counterpoint is exemplary.

Scarlatti's very expressive and imitative Sonata K.87 in B Minor is serenely played, with overlapping melodic lines weaving through the texture in a beautifully performed rendition. The three other sonatas possess the typical Scarlatti flash: excitement, biting dissonance, and contrasting registers. These are delivered with virtuosic splash. Hauntingly delicate and melodic passages contrast with virtuosic verve throughout this recording. There is a lovely Andante in the A Major Sonata by Alberti, and the C Minor Sonatas by Soler bring the CD to a fiery close. The encompassing repertoire might well encourage players to consider giving more attention to some of these little known works.

Nicholson's expressive playing also delivers clarity in musical form, marred occasionally with tempi that are too fast.

Regardless, Nicholson has created a unique CD that features the early fortepiano model perfected by Cristofori. She has chosen to play mostly unfamiliar music that is contemporary with the time and it happily marries with the piano's distinctive qualities. The music is delivered with a competent technique, her expressive resources complimenting those of the piano. The result is an excellent listening resource, not only for referencing less familiar composers, but also for presenting and hearing a replica of an important model in the history of fortepianos.

(My biggest listening problem was having difficulty in finding a suitable volume for listening to this CD. I wonder if the microphone was too close?)

Patrick Hawkins, "Giovanni Matielli, Three Sonatas". Golden Square Records 88295 54984, 2017.

Reviewed by Pamela Hickman.

Patrick Hawkins' premiere recording of three (and a bit) of Giovanni A. Matielli's Opus 1 Sonatas on the square piano is definitely an enterprising project, considering the fact that Matielli (1733-1805) is virtually unknown to today's audiences. Born in Vienna, he studied with Austrian court composer Georg Christoph Wagenseil, who was instrumental in seeing in the early Classical period. Known in Vienna as a teacher rather than a performer, it stands to reason that Matielli's works would have been played by amateurs and diligent students. Not a great deal is known about the composer's life; his reputation remains in the shadow of contemporaries of the likes of Haydn and Mozart. However, it is known that Christoph W. Gluck "was fond of Matielli's compositions and delighted in his keyboard sonatas", as we read in the disc's liner notes. Dr. Hawkins has recorded each of the complete sonatas on a different square piano, all of which were made in London at the end of the eighteenth century. Two belong to the Carolina Clavier Collection; the third - built by Christopher Ganer between 1785 and 1790 - is owned by Hawkins himself.

Patrick Hawkins invites the listener to a concert of salon music; we hear these sonatas as they must have sounded at the time. He opens with Sonata in A Major Opus 1/1 played on a Johannes Broadwood square piano of 1787. This is an exuberant work of some naïveté. Hawkins applies the instrument's somewhat fluty timbre to highlighting the sonata's brightness, its searching middle movement, then adding some fine ornamentation to the final Allegretto movement.

Sonata in G Major Opus 1/3 is performed on a Longman, Clementi and Co. square of 1799, a piano whose more developed technology and depth of sound serves this more sophisticated and varied work well, with its many contrasts and expressive moments. Take, for example, the third movement - *Affettuoso* - a mood piece, played very personally, its repeated section embellished with some pleasing spreads. We hear some contrasted and spirited playing in the work's fourth and final movement - *Allegro* - as Classical textures present themselves in quick, lively succession. Christopher Ganer's 5-octave pianos, with their square, tapering legs, simple veneers of mahogany and satinwood and bronze medallions were typical of fashionable furniture of the 1780s.



Hawkins at the Ganer Square. Photo by Ron Hagell.

The Ganer instrument (1785-90), on which Patrick Hawkins plays Sonata in A Major

Opus 1/5 has its own distinctive, more abrupt character. The sonata, opens with exuberant energy and a hint of flexing. Hawkins chooses a more detached texture for the second movement (Adagio), taking time and enlisting plenty of rubato to give it natural and thoughtful spontaneity, with the final movement exuberant, free and entertaining. Played appealingly, "La Caccia" from Sonata in E-Flat Major Opus 1/6, the final piece on the CD, represents much that is so vivid and delightful about the Classical style, and how effective and engaging it sounds on the square piano. Introducing the listener to this unknown composer, "this recording will surely appeal to those interested in the style and possibilities of the square piano, its true sound and transparency. The liner notes offer much information both on Matielli and on the instruments used for the recording.

Born in Virginia, Patrick Hawkins is a graduate of the Peabody Conservatory (Johns Hopkins University) and of East Carolina University and Arizona State University. Since making his European debut at the Cambridge Summer Recitals (UK) in 1993, he has continued to perform and teach internationally. As a choral conductor, he has conducted numerous school, church, and community choirs in Arizona, California, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. A founding member of the Vista Ensemble, a historically-informed performing organisation of musicians in Columbia, South Carolina, Patrick Hawkins has recorded for Arkay and Navona Records.

SCORES

Title: Masterworks and Miniatures. Organ and harpsichord music from Renaissance Venice. Ed. Richard Lester. Nimbus Music Publishing NMP1015. Reviewed by John Collins.

This attractively produced landscape format book contains an introduction to the keyboard music which would have been played in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth

century, with 20 pieces, most of which are by three of the leading keyboard composers of the time, covering some 82 pages of music. Richard Lester is known as a specialist in this repertoire, and his article "Fingers Crossed", which gives information on many aspects of contemporary Venetian performance practice, was published in the May 2015 edition of *Harpsichord & Fortepiano*; to get the greatest benefit from the pieces included in the volume under review this article should be read in conjunction.

The Preface gives an overview of the three main musical genres prevalent at this time – the Toccata, Ricercar and Canzona – , and gives information about earlier treatises for other instruments, which undoubtedly provide useful information applicable to all sorts of instruments. Understandably, most of the preface here is concerned with the important treatise on playing keyboard instruments, *// Transilvano* by Girolamo Diruta, published in Venice in two parts in 1593 and 1609, which covers fingering, ornamentation and registration amongst other facets of the art of playing, with 13 Toccatas, two Canzonas and 13 Ricercars by various Venetian and Roman composers. The requirements for fingering are elucidated – they are the opposite of most European schools of the time, using 2 and 4 as strong fingers – and there is a detailed discussion of the different types of ornaments mentioned and described in some detail by Diruta. It should be noted that although these are frequently written out in the score there are still many opportunities for adding further ornaments of various kinds.

Very useful indeed are the juxtaposition in the music part of this book of the *Canzona La Zambecara* in its ensemble version followed by its intabulation by Claudio Merulo. A further section gives information on registration, and a description of the typically small Italian organ of c.1600. Some of the registrations advised by both Diruta and the Brescian organ maker and composer Costanzo Antegnati are listed. A brief description of the organs in the Basilica di San Marco, Venice closes this section. A list of translations of

sources consulted and of the sources of the music (although the numbers of the pieces quoted here fall out of alignment at no. 9) should help to stimulate further research by the interested player, but a list of modern editions of the complete works by composers featured in this book would have been of inestimable value as a short cut for the player who has the inclination but who does not have the time for researching these.

The music section contains 20 pieces, primarily Toccatas and Canzonas, with only two Ricercars and one Ricercar Arioso, but including three pieces which were used as models for intabulations, one instrumental and two vocal. The first two pieces are taken from *Il Transilvano* and are Toccatas by Diruta himself, which are fully fingered; the second one is entitled *Toccata di Salto Cativo del Sesto Tuono*; an explanation of why the leaps are considered 'bad' would have helped the player to understand the structure. Both proceed in quavers with the typical scalar passagework in the first Toccata, and conjunct and disjunct motion in the second. Also taken from this publication is the intabulated version of Antonio Mortaro's *Canzona L'Albergona* (which includes the letters printed in the treatise, which indicated the type of ornament, described in this volume's introduction), the original being printed above it, and a Toccata by Gioseffo Guami.

Other Toccatas included are three by Claudio Merulo, the Toccata Prima from his 1598 print, the Toccata Undecimo ditto Quinto Tono, the first Toccata in the 1604 print, and to close the music presented here, Toccata Settima Ottava Tuono from the 1604 print. These four Toccatas contain slow openings merging into passages of semiquavers sweeping up and down the extent of the contemporary keyboard and requiring great care in the phrasing; in addition to incorporating loosely imitative sections the Merulo pieces, which contain passages in demisemiquavers, are splendid examples of precisely notated ornaments, taking the Venetian Toccata to unsurpassed

heights. By Giovanni Gabrieli there is a lively Ricercar on the VII and VIII Tones with ornamental passages including demisemiquavers, taken from one of the Lynar MSS, and by his uncle Andrea there is a Ricercar Settimo Tuono which opens with the repeated notes associated with a Canzona, and contains several written out semiquaver passages as well as more simply notated passages. His Ricercar Arioso is another lively piece, containing a triple time section.

In addition to the Canzona by Mortaro mentioned above, there are two Canzonas by Merulo, both taken from his 1592 publication of nine pieces, *La Leonora* and *La Zambecara*, both examples of precisely applied ornamentation. Two further Canzonas by Andrea Gabrieli, "Petit Jacquet" (which has added ornamentation by Richard Lester, although this is not indicated in the text so the player can readily distinguish this from the original score) and one of the two settings of "Qui la Dira", are lightly ornamented in the original; Lester has made some suggestions for embellishments. Another rather more sparingly ornamented Canzona *La Guamina* by Gioseffo Guami is also included (the list of sources in the introduction mentions the source as being *Nova musicaes organicae tabultura* 1617 but omits that this is the collection compiled by Johannes Woltz). Two intabulations of vocal pieces have been included, Andrea Gabrieli's setting of the popular *Ancor che col partire* follows the vocal original of the Cipriano de Rore's madrigal, and Richard Lester's own very successful setting (transposed down a fourth) of Andrea Gabrieli's motet for the feast of St. John the Baptist *Fuit homo missus a Deo*, the vocal original preceding the intabulation.

Richard Lester has added his own suggestions for extra ornamentation above or below the score in each piece as appropriate; these are very helpful as starting points to encourage the player to develop this art for him or herself, although the ornamented start of a Toccata being played before the opening chord is sounded – as suggested in the first piece – does not feature in any of the

examples in *Il Transilvano*. An anthologist has to be selective in what is offered, but it is a pity that no example of the dignified Ricercar in longer note values is included, as these offer greater scope for applying ornamentation. The pieces each carry a suggested registration for performance on the organ, the player should read the introduction to become aware of other possibilities, particularly in the Canzonas, and consider how to apply these to modern instruments. Personally I would not apply the term "miniatures" to any of these pieces; they are a far cry from much later and simpler pieces to which that term can be applied!

The edition is produced with ring binding, and is generally very clearly printed with most pages having four systems, although where there are only three the space between them is quite large. It is a good introduction to an exciting but difficult repertoire which is very rarely played, and deserves to be far better known. Also included are a CD (NI 5931) lasting 78 minutes with 23 well played tracks on organ (1-8 and 15-23) and harpsichord - what a shame that there is no information about the tracks, although a search of the website will provide this listing - and a DVD NI 1557 of about 50 minutes, which, in addition to a commentary on the repertoire, its development and interpretation, played on church and chamber organs and harpsichord, also includes very clear views of the hand positions and fingerings adopted as well as some views of old Italian organs, all recorded by Richard Lester. These additional media include most of the pieces in this volume as well as others by Jacques Buus, Annibale Padovano and Adriano Willaert -, and will offer great help to the player who is new to this repertoire, they are bonuses indeed. It would be a marvellous testimony to Richard Lester's work in producing this guide if even a few more players investigated this soundscape.

Claudio Merulo, Ricercari d'intavolatura d'Organo Libro Primo. Ed. Jolando Scarpa. Edition Walhall EW936.

Reviewed by John Collins

One of the leading Italian performers and composers for keyboard in the seventeenth century, Claudio Merulo (1533-1604), organist of St. Mark's, Venice and later in ducal service in Parma, saw many of his keyboard works published in his lifetime, including Toccatas and Canzonas, with more volumes issued after his death. This collection of eight Ricercars - published as entitled as being for organ, but also playable on, and very suitable for, stringed keyboard instruments as well for organ - was published in 1567 (and reprinted in 1605) in keyboard tablature, as were those Ricercars specifically for keyboard by his colleagues in Venice, which usually - but by no means always - indicated the division of notes between the hands, unlike the similarly titled pieces by his Roman and Neapolitan contemporaries and successors, which were published in partitura - a separate stave for each voice, which facilitated performance by various instruments or voices. The subjects are usually presented in semibreves and/or minims, with written out ornamentation included as the piece progresses.

They are lengthy pieces, covering from 79 to 139 double bars, the music taking up 45 pages in this edition. Each opens slowly, with multiple subjects being subjected to contrapuntal working as the piece progresses - the first and seventh treating eight different subjects, the others being limited to three or four - and six of the prime eight Tones are utilised, with the first and fourth transposed down a fifth, the fifth Tone replaced by the 11th, the sixth by the 12th (both transposed down a fifth), and the eighth and final piece is transposed downwards twice from G to F, with a key signature of two flats to indicate this.

The monothematic Ricercar popular with his Venetian colleague Andrea Gabrieli does not feature in this collection, but Merulo's pieces do share his colleague's enthusiasm

for certain stereotyped ornamental figures which, in addition to trills commencing on either the main or the upper note, cover intervals of up to a fifth ascending or descending; when used to excess, as sometimes happens in Merulo's Ricercars, they can sound unusually formulaic to our ears, but these printed ornaments may offer clues as to how similar pieces might have been embellished in performance, as do the carefully ornamented cadences. However, there is much to be commended in these pieces for careful study, and each has passages in minims or crotchets – similar to the writing in the verses of his organ masses and Credos – which can sound static without some embellishment. Headed Libro Primo, this collection was intended to be the first in a series of volumes published by the composer, but no other volumes are known to have survived from his press – if, indeed, they were ever issued.

Jolando Scarpa has produced a most serviceable edition, which is clearly printed with six systems to a page, and precautionary accidentals have been added where the editor has considered necessary. The table of contents omits the Ricercar on the 12th Tone. Although not as taxing as his Toccatas and Canzonas, these generally more restrained pieces still require care, and an accurate performance of the ornaments will be a test for players. Most of the pieces last a good eight or nine minutes and would certainly be welcome additions to recitals.

**Daniel Magnus Gronau (?1690-1747),
Concerto per il Cembalo. Ed. Jolando
Scarpa. Edition Walhall EW 1029.**

Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

Gronau's work is described in Scarpa's preface as a rare example of 18th-century organ practice. Without quite explaining why, the author mentions Gronau's four chorale variations edited by Frotscher for Bärenreiter. The list of registrations for these four variations are given in full in the preface of this concerto, perhaps to help organists to deduce what

might be suitable for this piece, although a less careful reader might assume that this concerto is based upon a chorale tune, which it is not! The organist who performs this achieve timbres through the judicious mixing of stops. There are moments where the organ's ability to hold out sound can be exploited, particularly where there are held over dissonances.

The music is quite satisfying and requires a certain modicum of skill. Having taken this to my local church, I tried and found it perfectly performable on manuals. There are no long pedal tones or awkward stretches needed. The range is modest, with the lowest note ranging down to AA. The harpsichordist or clavichordist can of course easily perform this concerto as well. The work is in three movements: Allegro moderato, Allemanda, and Vivace.

The first movement, in 2/4, should be taken at a conservative tempo, as although it contains two strong beats per bar, it contains some demi-semiquaver (32nd note) runs, as well as some chromatic passages moving in quavers which do not succeed if played too quickly.

This movement appears to have a rondo-like form. The 'A' section is to be performed until the marking "il Fine" followed by a fermata. The 'B' section, also in the same key of A Minor, ends in the dominant minor (E Minor) and has a repeat sign pointing backwards. One could interpret this as an instruction to repeat the 'B' section or to go to the start and play the 'A' section again. The 'C' section begins in E minor and has at its start a repeat sign; it ends on a C Major chord with the instruction '*Da Capo fino al segno*' and a fermata. This seems to imply going to the very beginning ('A' section) and ending at the 'Il Fine' which has the only fermata in the piece. However, one then wonders what the repeat sign's function is at the start of the 'C' section. In a work already lasting about seven minutes it does leave some doubt. With every repeat written, the work might be 12 minutes long or so. It could possibly be akin to Telemann's

two movement pieces which have explicit instruction to repeat the whole first movement once again. It would have been helpful if the editor had provided some guidance on the “roadmap” for this movement.

The second movement is an Allemanda marked “Largo”. It is written *alla breve* (cut time) with the harmonic motion moving in half bars; the left hand accompaniment features broken chords in the *style brisé*. Performers usually play an allemande in 8, with the quaver taking the beat; for this work the player might choose to perform in a slow 4. It is a highly decorated aria form, with trills applied to crotchet and quaver beats and with some demi-semiquavers as written out ornamentation, as well as some lovely chromaticism. The third movement, a Vivace in 3/4, is a simple menuet texture with almost constant quaver motion which helps to sustain the harmonies in the left hand. At times this gives way to semiquaver motion, giving interest and sophistication.

**Mathias Georg Monn (1717-1750),
Concerto per il Clavicembalo in D, for
Cembalo solo, 2 violins and bass.**

Ed. Markus Eberhardt.

Edition Walhall EW 956.

Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

Not much is known about Monn, or Mann, except that he may have taught Albrechtsberger and that he worked in the Karlskirche, Vienna. It's likely because he died young that his reputation did not spread far. This work was printed in c.1780 (so after his death). There is no evidence for a date of composition. The movements are Allegro, Andante in 2/4 and Menuetto.

The concerto for “not a full orchestra” is an interesting combination. It is intended as a sort of public music rather than chamber music, which can be played for the players' pleasure alone. It has the instrumentation of a trio sonata but with concerto organisation in the roles. In this pack there is one keyboard (score) part, two identical parts for “Violino 1m”, one for “Violino 2do” and two identical

part for “basso”. This implies that the minimum number of personnel expected for a performance is probably nine players, possibly 10 (if basso is doubled at all). The second violin parts splits its work between supporting the bass or supporting violin 1. The music has dynamic markings which show delineation; the beginning *fortes* stand as tutti/ripieno, and the *pianos* can be echoes, at least in the first part. Early in the first movement the bass takes a prominent role; it proclaims an interesting melody which is expanded upon by the cembalo “solo” in b.15 before a tutti in the dominant. Like most baroque concerti, the theme is reworked in different ways and in different keys.

The 2/4 Andante, written in the parallel minor, is probably meant to be felt as four quavers – it might have been titled “Aria”. It begins with all strings and keyboard left hand, before the keyboards solo passagework later. Figuration expands to include sextuplets in all parts.

The final Menuetto is a typical energetic finale with four bar phrases. There are a few instances of registral echoes (simply a change of register from high to low). There some tied, syncopated rhythms, which give it interest and give the performer satisfaction.

The editing is clear with “t” for trill clearly marked, and the parts appear complete and accurate. This work will make a nice addition to the repertoire.

**Fanny Hensel (nee Mendelssohn),
Klavierstücke Band 12. Ed. Raimund
Schächer, Furore Edition 10148.**

Reviewed by Micaela Schmitz

This volume has been awaiting my attention for a while. International Women's Day inspired me to have a look. The volume contains four items, a Fugue in Eb Major (WV 273, 1833-4), a piece in A Minor (WV376, 1841), a piece in E Minor (WV443, 1946) and a fragment of another piece in A Minor (WV42, 1821). The edition is based on autograph manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin.

Stylistically, the Fugue in Eb Major is linked to the baroque, however its first theme, found in the left hand, is strongly harmonic; as it partly outlining a dominant seventh chord, it seems to show that it is in a more Classical vein. In other places there are arpeggios in the figuration which contribute to the Classical nature of the piece. In many places Hensel write the theme as octaves in the bass, possible indicating that the pianos with which she works required more power in the bass. Alternatively, one might surmise that she was trying to simulate the feel of an organ and the associations of fugal organ music. In other places it seems clear that a damper pedal will be required to carry these bass fugal notes, because the other two voices are spread out registrally, requiring some nimble finger work. Works of this nature are often hard to categorise, looking both backwards to the baroque forms, yet looking forward to the textures and the harmonies expected in the Classical period and its instruments.



A sketch of Hensel By her later husband, Wilhelm Hensel (1794-1861) - Programmheft Kasseler Musiktage 1991, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=482454>

The piece in A Minor (WV376) is a substantial work which may be a centrepiece for performers today, whereas the E minor is significantly shorter (and has needed an editor to supply an ending). The two might work in programme with shorter one first, followed by the longer. The A Minor work has a constant rhythm split between left hand with the left hand giving beat 1 and 4 (or the 6/8) and the right hand providing dotted crotchet rest, then semiquaver, quaver. This gives a lilting feel to the music. When the rhythms gives way to two dotted crotchets per bar, it gives a sense of ease. Soaring over the top is a right hand melody. The registers use separate the top melody from the accompaniment and require frequent judicious pedalling. Modern pianists may need to play with caution, as the left hand accompaniment will sound too heavy on a modern piano, but just right on the instruments of Hensel's time. In terms of range the work reaches f'''.

The E Minor work is labelled Scherzo and is notated in 9/8 metre. It is characterised by long soaring melody, accompanied by two or three-note chords in the right hand and longer note values in the left hand. Harmonically it alternated between E Minor and G Major, and though it includes some chromaticism in the melody, it does not stray too far from these keys. It requires a virtuosic technique to negotiate the textures, which call for half diminished chords in various positions – not a sight reading piece.

The A Minor Fragment (WV42) seems to be more tied to Handel in style. The work strikes one as an unlabelled Allemande with its theme of two quavers followed by three beats of semi-quavers. It includes another section in 2/4 metre, and one can only wonder how Hensel might have completed it — a tantalising prospect.

Furore are to be congratulated for bringing to the performing and listening public the final of Hensel's approximately 140 piano works.

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