

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Reviews

BOOKS

David J. Smith (ed), *Aspects of Early English Keyboard Music before c.1630* (Abingdon, 2019), 246pp

A great deal of research was done on English keyboard music in the second half of the 20th century, supported by complete recordings of the virginal and organ music by, for example, Byrd (Davitt Moroney) and Tomkins (Bernhard Klapprott). The critical editions in the Music Britannica series are now nearly complete, so there is a danger that this area is now seen as finished. However, much important work remains to be done, and this new volume of essays by eleven authors, edited by David Smith, shows some of the many insights still waiting to be explored by thoughtful scholars. Most of the material derives from three conferences held in 2004-8, and it is very welcome that these are at last seeing the light of day.

The book begins with the editor's own survey of the state of research in 16th and early 17th English keyboard music, an excellent summary of what has been done, together with a detailed bibliography. This is supplemented by an update to Richard Turbet's previously published annotated bibliographies of this repertoire, bringing to light yet more rare items from the past, as well as recent books and articles. The section on keyboard instruments will be essential reading for performers, with John Koster on the harpsichords during the period and Dominic Gwynn on Tudor organs, subjects about which we would like to have much more evidence that actually survives. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the extant sources and instruments now takes us closer than ever before to the tools used by the composers of this period.

The third group covers an area which has been seriously neglected: the use of the organ in the pre-Reformation liturgy. Here, John Harper explains the *alternatim* organ use of the organ with the choir, while Magnus Williamson uses his own experience as a performer to illuminate improvisational practice in the Tudor period. Some of these ideas are then explored compositionally by Frauke Jürgensen and Rachelle Taylor, who compare the *Clarifica me Pater* organ settings by Tallis, Byrd and Tomkins, concluding that linkages can be seen between them. Music from the end of the period is the subject of David Ledbetter's 'Stylistic change in English lute and keyboard sources in the time of Orlando Gibbons', which focuses on the increasing influence of French music in the Stuart period, as seen through three *corantos* attributed to Gibbons.

Two articles then look at the best known manuscripts of the period, with Tihomir Popović reflecting on the aristocratic cultural milieu represented by Byrd's *My Ladye Nevells Booke*, and David Smith's important new study of the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, reiterating his belief (contra Ruby Reid Thompson's thinking that this may be a court manuscript) that the traditional Tregian/Fleet Prison origin does hold water. There is much fascinating new information about the copyist's method and approach, and Smith also makes the point that this seems to be a study score rather than a performing volume.

The most substantial article, in both senses, is Pieter Dirksen's new catalogue of the very large corpus of keyboard music of John Bull. The two *Musica Britannica* volumes of this have been available for more than half a century, and are now in their third revision, reflecting the fact that there are significant attribution problems with the sources, caused by their division - British and foreign - following Bull's departure for the continent in 1613. Dirksen revisits all the sources, assigning different levels of 'trustworthy' status to them according to their copyist, date, accuracy and closeness to the composer. He concludes that the 'definite' canon is somewhat smaller than has been previously thought, but that the 'doubtful' works still have some standing, and therefore divides them into four categories: safe, insecure, with conflicting attributions, and anonymous but associable with Bull in some way. This is an important step towards a better understanding of Bull's style, and hopefully detailed music analysis can do more to investigate these latter three categories.

This Ashgate book is one of the most important on the subject for many years, and is beautifully produced. The downside is the high price, around £85 (there is also an ebook version at £35.99), so it is hoped that sales will be strong enough to justify a paperback version before too long; this really is essential reading for anyone interested in the music of the virginalists.

Francis Knights

MUSIC

Juan Baptista Cabanilles, ed Gerhard Doderer and Miguel Bernal Ripoll, *Selected Works for Organ*, vols. I and III

Bärenreiter BA 11228/30

Juan Baptista Cabanilles (1644-1712) was First Organist

of Valencia cathedral from 1666 until shortly before his death. His output for keyboard, copied by his pupils in numerous manuscripts, comprises some 169 *Tientos* of various genres, many of considerable length – and proportionate difficulty – several *Tocatas*, dances and smaller pieces, almost all of which are available in the nine volumes of the Anglés complete works, although there are inaccuracies in these. In addition there are also almost 1000 (yes, one thousand!) *Versos*, some of quite a length, for use in the liturgy, of which only a small number have been made available in a modern edition. The three volumes in this series include 35 representative pieces from this enormous output; volume II contains 12 *Tientos* for organs with divided registers, and is not covered here.

The first volume contains ten pieces, all of which are headed *Tiento Llento*, i.e. with the same registration used for each hand; on the contemporary Iberian organ this would necessitate drawing both bass and treble of each stop. This genre is therefore eminently suitable for performance on stringed keyboard instruments, the pieces being arranged by order of the Tone in which they were composed, two on the first, the second one being based on *In exitu Israel*, one on the second Tone, two on the fourth, one on the fifth, two on the sixth and one each on the seventh and eighth Tones. There are examples of contrapuntally conceived pieces such as the second, fourth, seventh and ninth, along with freer pieces closer to toccatas (although written in four voices), as seen in the first (this piece continues with imitative writing), sixth and tenth pieces. The two pieces on the sixth Tone are in triple time throughout, and only the *Tientos* on the 2nd Tone and the 8th Tone do not have a section in either triple time or 12/8, which is usually followed by a further section in C time either of a reasonable length in imitative writing or a shorter Toccata-like coda. The second *Tiento* on the 4th Tone opens with thick chordal writing in up to six parts before imitative four-part writing takes over. Length varies from a relatively modest 115 bars to 187 bars. Pedals are required at the end of No.5 for the long held bass A, but omitting this will not detract.

The thirteen pieces in volume III (numbered 23-35) include three sets of *Versos* which belong to the liturgy, but the remaining ten pieces are variations on dances, *Tocatas* and variations on the *Xacara* and *Folias*. Of the six sets of variations on dances, the *Paseos de tercer tono* unfolds over a four-bar harmonic scheme having 13 variations in C time followed by 14 in triple time. Several rhythmic complexities in the original have been transcribed exactly but with guiding brackets above

the stave to facilitate performance – perhaps it would have been more straightforward for the player to have relegated the original to the critical commentary. The first of the three *Passacalles* is the much anthologised example in five voices *de primer tono* in C time, with 26 variations over a simple bass. The second *Passacalles de primer tono* is in triple time with 18 variations and is far more modest in attainment, while the final *Passacalles de cuarto tono* is in C time and has only ten variations, building in rhythmic intensity with semiquaver runs in the bass in the final variation. These two are far more approachable and less virtuosic, and offer an insight into the composer's skill on a smaller scale. The *Passacalles* are followed by two *Gallardas*, the first *de primer tono* being in C time with twelve variations of increasing intensity and virtuosity – some repeats are written out and others have repeat dots. The *Gallardas de tercer tono* contains nine variations, each being 20 bars including repeats, with passages in sextuplet semiquavers. Both pieces contain sections with carefully notated broken chord arpeggio patterns. These two long and demanding pieces will test even experienced players.

Pieces 32 & 33 are two short *Tocatas*, the first *de mano izquierda de quinto tono* has the solo writing in the left hand beneath two-part writing against left hand semiquavers. The *Tocata de quinto tono*, again in three voices, makes much use of rapid repeated notes in each hand, the sequence commencing in the left hand with quavers before semiquavers take over. The volume continues with *Diferencias de Folias* with 13 variations. Very similar to the harmonic progression used by Corelli, the piece is far more advanced than the earlier example by Ximénez, the beginning of which is provided for comparison. After opening in minims and white quavers, from the seventh variation white semiquaver figures and scalar runs in both hands, sometimes together, requite composure and steady hands. The final piece is a set of variations covering 137 bars on the *Jácara* (or *Xacara*), a dance in triple time, the most extended set in the Iberian sources. From bar 97 onwards scalar runs and written-out ornamented figures occur in both hands in demisemiquavers, punctuated by written-out broken chord figures.

The introduction to each volume – in English, Spanish and German – gives facts, as far as these can be ascertained, about the composer's life, instruments of the time, the works and sources, with a valuable section of the genres of the pieces, the Spanish titles of which give us much information. Unlike his illustrious predecessor Francisco Correa, Cabanilles left no treatise on playing and only very rarely is a trill indicated in the MSS; although there is a far greater incidence of ornaments

being fully written out, more can – and indeed, almost certainly should – be added. A list of modern editions, including the even less well known vocal music, and an extensive bibliography of pertinent articles (although the majority are in Spanish or Catalan) will give the player interested in reading more about this enigmatic, demanding and ultimately most rewarding of composers plenty of material in which to immerse themselves. The critical commentary, in English, provides substantial information about the sources and corrections made by the editors, as well as including passages from the source where there may be other solutions available. The printing is very clear, with four or five systems to the page, and a few facsimiles in each volume show the difficulties of transcribing the pieces into modern notation from the *partitura* format of the original. Editorial suggestions for accidentals are added in a smaller font above or below the stave, and original notation and beaming have been retained, as have the original black and white notation for the triple time sections, which may take a little while to get used to, and thought will need to be expended on the sometimes complex rhythms and ambiguities in these sections. The editors deserve rich commendation for their hard work in selecting and presenting these pieces in a well produced modern edition, a cornucopia of different compositional styles within each genre, some of which are of considerable technical difficulty. This volume contains a most interesting range of pieces, many offering substantial technical challenges, but which should prove most rewarding to study and master. The editors deserve every thanks for selecting and editing the wide range of pieces in these three volumes, and the publishers for making them available and readily obtainable.

John Collins

Manuel Rodrigues Coelho, ed João Vaz, *Flores de Musica I*

Ut Orpheus ECHOM3

ECHO – European Cities of Historical Organs – was founded in 1997 by the cities of Alkmaar, Innsbruck, Lisbon, Zaragoza, Roskilde, Treviso and Toulouse. The ECHO collection of Historical Organ Music is a new initiative from the publisher Ut Orpheus of Bologna, which opened in 2018 with two volumes presenting the Brussels Ms II 3326 mus. and the Camphuysen MS. There will be ten volumes of critical editions of complete MSS or prints in the series, issued at the rate of two per year up to 2022.

This is the first of three volumes which will present

the complete contents of *Flores de Música* by Manuel Rodrigues Coelho (c.1555-1635), organist of Elvas, Badajoz and the Chapel Royal, Lisbon, newly edited by João Vaz. The original volume of 235 folios was published in Lisbon in 1620, the first volume of keyboard music in open score produced in the country. It contains 24 large scale four-voice contrapuntal *Tentos*, three on each of the eight Tones, four settings of the Chanson *Susana un jour* by Lassus, followed by a large amount of liturgical material: four settings of the Pange Lingua, four of the Ave Maris Stella followed by a further five verses on this chant, and three sets of *versos* on each Tone, amounting to some 92 individual pieces. This volume seems to have exerted a major influence on the succeeding generations of Portuguese composers for keyboard through the 17th century. This new edition presents the 12 *Tentos* on the first to the fourth Tones (as customary, only the pieces on the second Tone carry a key signature, one flat), the length ranging from around 165 (No.10) to almost 300 bars (No.7). Half of them contain a section in triple time, some quite lengthy; most of these close the *Tento* but in Nos.7 and 12 it forms a central section. The rhythmic values in these sections vary considerably, with three having quavers and two having crotchets as the smallest note value; in No.7 we find two incidences of short figures in semiquavers in thirds in the right hand. Eleven copies of the original are known to have survived, the one from the National Library, Lisbon being used as the prime source for this edition, with others for comparison.

Unlike some pieces by his Spanish contemporary Aguilera de Heredia, none of Coelho's compositions calls for divided keyboard, enabling them all to be played on one manual or on harpsichord and clavichord, making them particularly attractive to non-organists. While lacking the more dissonant boldness of the contemporary Italians, and also of the Spanish, especially Francisco Correa de Araúxo (whose *Facultad Orgánica* was published in 1626), these *Tentos* display a considerable variety of skillful writing showing a command of counterpoint as well as of toccata and variation technique. Most *Tentos* open with subjects in semibreves, followed by a faster continuation; slower passages reminiscent of Coelho's predecessors such as António Carreira, and also long passages of semiquaver figuration, showing a possible influence from northern Europe, are also to be found in most of them. In No.3 the subject consists of an ascending scale mainly in quavers, answered by its inversion, and in each *Tento* on the second Tone and in the second and third on the fourth Tone the answer appears before the subject is complete. Some *Tentos* are monothematic, others have a number of subjects, and also short motivic figures,

sometimes fragments of the previous subjects, which are treated imitatively. The undoubted artistic and aesthetic quality of these pieces provide ample reason for Coelho being mentioned very favourably by Francisco Correa.

The comprehensive introduction provides substantial information about the sources and corrections made by the editors (the original print has a page of errata), and the graphic characteristics and editorial methods offer very helpful suggestions about possible interpretations of the occasionally haphazard engraving of triplet groups; other such groups feature to an extreme point of repetition, as in No.9. There is a useful bibliography listing articles (mainly in Portuguese) and other modern editions and anthologies. The composer's own preface and advice to players is included as a facsimile and in an English translation – although, as with Correa, in places some of his comments would have benefitted from a greater clarity of expression as, for example, just how to play the ornaments which he stresses must be added with great frequency; editorial comments on this as well as on the plainchants used for the liturgical pieces will follow in the remaining volumes. The critical commentary following the music pages is exhaustive. The printing is in a good size font, with up to six systems to the page, and there are a number of facsimiles which show the difficulties encountered when transcribing the pieces into modern notation from the score format of the original. The edition contains enough detailed discussion to satisfy the scholar and enable the performer to make an informed decision in how to interpret some passages based on this, but also succeeds admirably in its prime intention of offering a score suitable for immediate practical use and not overloaded with incorporated suggestions. These *Tentos* – still very little known and scarcely played in the UK – offer an interesting range of pieces, many providing technical challenges, but should prove most rewarding to study and master. A particularly Portuguese feeling of *saudade* or melancholy pervades many of the pieces, especially those on the second Tone. Volume two, which will contain the remaining 12 *Tentos* and the *Susanas*, and volume three, which will include the liturgical pieces, are scheduled to appear next year.

John Collins

RECORDINGS

Bach and Friends: Œuvres de J.S. Bach, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, Böhm, Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas (organ/harpsichord)
Editions Ambronay AMY048 (2017), 68'

It is a treat to be reminded of the greatness of the German baroque composers aside from Bach, who at times get lost in Johann Sebastian's deserved reputation, and this recording, aptly titled 'Bach and Friends', showcases some wonderful music by his predecessors and contemporaries. Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas, acclaimed French organist, harpsichordist and musical director, is particularly adept when it comes to playing the pieces associated with the virtuosic *stylus phantasticus*. His organ playing holds much interest with creative and engaging choices when it comes to registration. Of course, variety in registration is in an organist's nature, but Bestion de Camboulas really takes you on an exciting aural journey with these.

The recording is split into five tracks each of harpsichord and organ; J. S. Bach is the only composer whose works appeal on both halves – a toccata for the harpsichord and a fantasia & fugue for the organ. He starts off the disc with the Praeludium in G minor BuxWV163 by Dietrich Buxtehude. In it, he gives us a real feeling of excitement of what is to come; there is a nice flow in the music, with a rhetorical emphasis – this is really beautiful, sensitive playing. You just want to float along with the music. Oddly enough, though, the next piece, Heinrich Scheideman's *Pavane Lachrimae*, fell flat to my ears. I guess some would say it is a nice contrast to the Buxtehude, but the playing seems stilted, comparatively speaking. It comes off as somewhat pedestrian and ordinary, but that may also have to do with the music itself.

The disc continues with pieces by Johann Caspar Ferdinand Fischer, Johann Pachelbel, and of course J. S. Bach – his Toccata in G minor BWV915. Right away is it clear how Bach's music has basically levelled up against the playing field – it is passionate and harmonically more sophisticated right off the bat. I really liked his decision to quickly alternate between lower and upper keyboards. Bestion de Camboulas is skilled at making the whole piece feel cohesive.

The organ section starts with Georg Muffat's Toccata No.9 in E minor. As a harpsichordist, it is easy to feel a bit of envy of organists who can effortlessly keep the sound going – perhaps even more than the big wide world of registration choices they have. At the end of

this toccata, the crush of sustained harmonies is simply fantastic. Three variation pieces by Georg Böhm follow, all based on *Vater unser im Himmelreich* (a Lutheran hymn by Martin Luther with text based on the Lord's Prayer). Of particular interest in the third, a flutes-heavy *Chorale Orné*. The piece sounds dramatic right off the bat, almost like the start to an opera. The execution of the ornamentation was exquisite; if the player failed at that, it would be all over for this performance.

The disc ends with one of Bach's most well-known organ pieces, the Fantasia & Fugue in G minor BWV542. Bestion de Camboulas brings on a huge sound following the gentle *Chorale Orné* – it was jarring at first but it is easy to forget that and get excited about the music within the first 30 seconds – you've really been taken to another soundworld, and Bestion de Camboulas is a superb guide. The Fantasia is an extravaganza of harmony, and the Fugue has a very familiar and uplifting subject – this is gorgeous imitative work, with the performer's excellent articulation that just keeps you moving along and enjoying life. The subject is pure joy and always gives me chills. Bestion de Camboulas keeps us engaged the whole way through. It's a fantastic way to end the CD.

The booklet has informative notes in French and English, with a nice selection of black and white photos of the artist, the harpsichord (a copy built by Philippe Humeau of a 1722 instrument by Johann Henrich Gräbner) and the organ (located at Ciboure Church, a large instrument in the Dutch style built by Dominique Thomas).

Meg Cotner

**Mozart, *Piano Duets*, vols. 1 and 2, Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate (fortepiano)
Resonus Classics RES10172 (2016), 68', RES10210 (2018), 71'**

Resonus Classics has recently released a pair of discs featuring the fortepiano duets of Mozart, J. C. Bach and Clementi. The distinguished and capable duo partners are Julian Perkins and Emma Abbate, playing on three fortepianos chosen from the late Finchcocks collection, now called the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection of Early Keyboard instruments in Watertown House, Tunbridge Wells. Live duo piano concerts are rare, and two discs of classical era repertoire on early pianos is an uncommon treat. Interestingly, each performer has established a musical career outside fortepiano performance. Perkins comes closest to the early music realm with his experience as a harpsichordist,

whereas Abbate works as a modern pianist in opera and contemporary music. Commendably, they are respectful of the light piano action, dynamics are carefully managed and pedals are sparingly used. Eight selections of varying difficulty are contrasted on these two discs. Mozart is represented by six pieces, accompanied by one work each for Clementi and J. C. Bach.

There were many keyboard instruments at Finchcocks, and careful choices must have been made according to their playing state, availability, performer's preferences etc. On these two discs, one hears Mozart performed on the lovely Johann Fritz Viennese fortepiano (c.1815), as well as on the earlier, equally lovely, Rosenberger Viennese fortepiano of 1800. Clementi is heard on one of his own square pianos of the 1820s, and the J. C. Bach is featured on a square fortepiano by Anton Walter of Vienna (c.1805). The Viennese sound-ideal is the focus, with the square piano offering a hybrid English/Viennese experience. Each inhabits its own unique soundworld, bridging the turn of the century's interesting piano evolution. The action and unique sound of each instrument inform both player and listener alike, offering insight into how the composers used the capabilities of the early piano, as well as how to technically best deliver musical ideas.

The warm sonority of the Fritz draws the listener into the first disc with Mozart's late Sonata in C Major K521. Although the Fritz looks back in terms of sound, it is less than ideal for Mozart. This rich, rounded and complex sonority (plus its four pedals) better serves the virtuosity and music of Beethoven and Clementi, and I would have happily heard more Mozart on the lighter, clearer sounding Rosenberger. Regardless, the Fritz is useful for expanding Mozart's written range, and this fun option is used several times.

The most stunning performance is that of the Mozart F Major Sonata K497, heard on the second disc. This revered work is delivered with vivacious flair, brilliantly played passagework and with cadence chords that never end harshly. The musically expressive and sympathetic exchange between the players is contrasted with an exciting, energetic, and forceful first movement. Here, the section sounds almost too driven, which is a characteristic unfortunately heard several times in the two discs. However, one also hears beautifully executed ornaments and a stellar cadenza. Alas, there are also sections played with seemingly humdrum monotony, and it is disappointing to experience this occasional unevenness in the musical interpretation. In the middle movement, one might wish for more playful

demisemiquaver flourishes to grace the intimate and expressive conversational dialogue. The third movement is a delightful romp through a stellar Rondo-Sonata form, where one hears some of the best playing of either CD. The development section is masterfully played, sympathetic to Mozart's intentions of excitement, scholarly dialogue, and clownish musical figures. Later, a wonderfully played cadenza leads to the coda.

Square pianos were modest instruments popular for domestic use at the time. Listening to two different square pianos invites comparisons. The well-played and lyrical J. C. Bach Sonata offers a welcome, gentle contrast to Mozart's challenging and virtuosic music. The Bach is played on a Walther square piano, which is a light and clear sounding instrument. The two-movement Sonata would have been appropriate after dinner entertainment in an 18th century English drawing room. The E^b sonata by Clementi is played on one of Clementi's own square fortepianos. Especially wonderful playing is heard in the development section. The instrument has a slightly muffled bass sound coupled to a bright and clear treble, and is easy to distinguish from the Walther.

The other late Mozart Sonata, K521 in C Major (mistakenly labelled as first on CD 1) opens with dignified exuberance. However, as the playful musical exchange unfolds, the accompaniment is loud in the Primo and sounds overly important. Musical dialogue in late 18th-century style is like that of a conversation, and each player must be sympathetic to lyrical exchanges. This is generally well done on both discs, but within such a narrow emotional range that one wishes for a bit of ease in the bar, or nuance in the arc of a phrase. Thankfully, the second player reliably offers more nuances on both discs. In the first movement there are some important chromatic moments that are rich with content but too casually treated. The Primo adds a few tasteful ornaments on repeats, leaving one wishing for more. Listeners always relish musical liberties played in good taste, and although performing live with flexibility (such as stretching a phrase) becomes permanent on a recording, a bit more of this freedom would have delivered a more expressive experience to the listener. The brilliantly played passagework ends with civilized cadence chords that are never harshly played. The Duo takes the third movement at a comfortable tempo, allowing both partners to create just the right sensibility, with the rampant demisemiquavers.

The musical temperament of both partners is consistent throughout. The Primo is often assertive (or even too prominent), but memorable flourishes and skilful

cadenzas are delivered which help to forgive minor offenses. The well-done booklet is lavish, with photos of the Fritz, the most highly decorated fortepiano on the disc, and good information about all the instruments and the works played, including the interesting completion by Robert Levin of the Allegro and Andante (Sonata) in G Major, heard as the last track on volume 2. All comments considered, these recordings come highly recommended.

Charlene Brendler

**Beethoven Three Piano Trios Op.1, Trio Goya: Kati Debretzeni (violin), Sebastian Combetti (violoncello) and Maggie Cole (fortepiano)
Chandos CHAN 0822(2) (2017), 95'**

Referring to his Op.1 Piano Trios, Beethoven wrote: 'When I re-read the manuscripts, I wondered at my folly in collecting into a single work material enough for twenty'. Not the first set of Ludwig van Beethoven's compositions to appear in print, publishing Op.1 was a felicitous event for 24-year-old composer, and it was no coincidence that he chose these three works with which to make his debut into the wider musical world of composition, having already established his name as a piano virtuoso in Vienna. Another consideration for choosing these three trios was that writing for violin, cello and piano would surely be remunerative, the medium appealing to both *Kenner und Liebhaber* (connoisseurs and amateurs.) The publication was a stunning success, both critically and commercially. In Beethoven's hands the trio form moves beyond the traditional three-movement design of Haydn and Mozart so suited to domestic music-making, now offering a four-movement format of more demanding and fervent expression, not to mention the technical demands made here on the players, in particular, the pianist and violinist (and in that order). Beethoven dedicated the Trios to one of Vienna's foremost patrons of the arts, Prince Karl Lichnowsky, who had secretly subsidized the publication and in whose salon the young composer was invited to perform. Playing on instruments of the period, Trio Goya makes for an enriching listening experience of these early but full-blown works.

What becomes obvious from the beginning of the disc is the clarity and inviting timbral glow of period instruments and, at A430 pitch, the uncluttered but warm timbre of the fortepiano (Paul McNulty, 1991), cardinal to the natural balance of the three. In Op.1/1, the artists take the listener back to an untroubled Beethoven sometimes forgotten today as, from the characteristically Beethovenian opening summons, they give expression to

his generosity of ideas and humour - the latter evident in the droll violin comments of the Scherzo, with a few bucolic chords there for good measure and to moments of emotional reticence in the chromatic descending diminished chords in the Finale. But it is also the performers' wholehearted use of dynamics which creates a canvas of immense richness.

Trio Goya's examination of No.2 begs to be listened to several times, as the players piece together a richly detailed picture of Beethoven's temperament, thinking processes and originality, from the curious opening of the first movement, in which the composer takes the liberty to put out feelers in small motifs, expanding the texture into a dazzling ensemble scene, interpolating sections of charming, understated Classical gestures; under the ensemble's fingers, all emerge with an air of suspense. Here is Beethoven the capricious, presented with much life and brilliance. With its delicacy, seriousness and understated Lutheran-hymn-like melody, the Largo con espressione, its theme laid out by the piano and based in the somewhat distant key of E major, speaks of tranquillity. Through the players' empathic and articulate working through of the compositional process, their slight flexing gives it palpable life; we hear dialogue between violin and cello, as well as cello melodies welling up with poignancy, at times, even vehemence. After a Scherzo in every sense of the word, with Comberti's jocular entries and its frequent accents, Cole and Debretzeni then take the listener into the Trio in a featherweight foray, tripping through D major and B minor with carefree delight. As to the presto Finale, infused with excitement and drama, the players' agility, punctuated with chords that modulate and change colour, is indeed a tour-de-force, showing Beethoven's quick-witted practice of imitation in playful hide-and seek mode.

Beethoven brings the set to its climax with Op.1/3 in C minor, the composer's earliest masterpiece in a key that would call forth some of his most impassioned music. In a work clearly influenced by the *Sturm und Drang* movement of earlier decades, the artists establish Beethoven's dark, soul-searching mood, present in the introductory pause-filled first few bars, the short themes progressing from dark introspection to empathic sunny extroversion. Furnished with moments of Beethoven-type unpredictability, their melding of moods results in playing that is both profound and experiential, supported by Maggie Cole's virtuosic treatment of the keyboard role. Transparency, good taste, natural flow and a sense of well-being are the hallmark of their reading of the Andante con brio with variations, the playing striking a delicate balance of charm and imagination. This is

followed by the refinement and invention of the Minuet and Trio, both sections graced by gossamer piano runs. Debretzeni, Comberti and Cole draw the threads of Op.1 together in their emotionally-involved rendition of the prestissimo Finale, their chosen tempo thankfully allowing for all nuances to be heard. Here, the artists present a gripping soundscape of urgency, reflection, elegance and reminiscence, the work bowing out quite surprisingly in downy, major-hued serenity.

Extraordinary for their scope and breadth of ambition, the Op.1 Trios' Haydn/Mozart legacy is a strong element in what nevertheless emerges as Beethoven's unique musical language. As Beethoven was preparing to leave Bonn, it was Count Waldstein who wrote: 'You will receive the spirit of Mozart from the hands of Haydn'. Addressing all aspects of the trios, the Trio Goya members' collaboration, profound musicianship and deep probing into the music result in consummate performances of the kind that never leaves the listener on the outside. With the stellar role written for Beethoven's own instrument, Maggie Cole's treatment of the virtuosic piano part is no less than superb, and there is much to enjoy in Chandos' rich, warm recording quality.

Pamela Hickman



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