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Reviews

BOOKS

David Breitman, *Piano Playing Revisited: What modern players can learn from Period Instruments* (Rochester, NY, 2021), £40.00, https://boydellandbrewer.com

In addition to his concert career, David Breitman, associate professor at Oberlin Conservatory for the last thirty years, has been teaching his piano students to include consideration of historical keyboards within their studies. As Breitman himself acknowledges, there is a dilemma in confronting historical repertoire with modern instruments, so he shares how the reader might apply insights from period instruments to practical problems on the piano they are using. As a student in Boston, Breitman's lessons with Robert Hill impressed upon him a 'near-fanatical attention' to articulation; a doctorate with Malcolm Bilson and acquisition of a fortepiano completed his formal education. He has much of value to share, and as a supplement to this book, Breitman has made some very enlightening videos to bring his many musical examples to life (see https://vimeo.com/showcase/8046349), which I strongly recommend.

Whilst most subscribers to this journal will prefer Bach on the harpsichord and Mozart and Haydn on an early piano or clavichord (although which specific type of 18th-century keyboard is itself contentious), it is an inescapable fact that most piano pupils will have to play these composers on a modern grand - but it does not mean that style has to be ignored. Breitman mentions Haydn on the right piano as wearing 'clothes that fit', but he shows no prejudice in his attitude to Historically Informed Performance: HIP, the third letter of which he prefers to stand for 'Preparation'. His argument is that pianistic style is hugely enhanced by first absorbing the touch and sound of the early piano.

The inclusion of composers within the book is not designed to be comprehensive, but it reflects Breitman's own interests in clearly laid-out, canonic case-studies. In addition to Mozart and Haydn (who share the third chapter), he deals separately with Beethoven, Schubert and Chopin. 'Last but not Least...' is how he describes the significant last chapter which is devoted to the clavichord. Here, particularly, his students' remarks reflect my own and my students' experience of the impact that playing the clavichord has on specificity of touch. Having worked with it, he suggests thinking of the piano as 'a very loud clavichord'.

I would have liked differentiation of the nomenclature between the 'Viennese Fortepiano', of which Breitman has considerable experience, and the 'English Piano Forte'. The music of the latter may not be as much played at Oberlin (or, as quoted by Milchmeyer, at the court of Dresden in 1797), but in Britain, the popularity of the English square or grand piano and its relevant repertoire was evident in the explosion of publishing; it is increasingly the subject of both academic and practical study today.

Repeatedly, we can benefit from the practical experience that Breitman brings to this book; his comments of string-players who finally feel like equal partners when an early piano is used in chamber music; the enjoyment of less precise damping in passages of legato thirds; and the extraordinary contrast of 'a dark veiled sonority' of the Moderator - applied not for a graded dynamic, but as a mute.

Epistemologically, Breitman offers a sound model in his chapter on Beethoven. His own thorough understanding of the sonatas is reflected in the longest chapter of the book. He recommends study of all Beethoven's indications for the sustaining pedal; absorption of historical treatises, such as Hummel's; and experience of the effects of pedalling on different types and periods of piano. He instructs on the micro-detail of slurs and articulation, as well as viewing the whole, and he concludes that '...the better we understand Beethoven's intentions, the more sympathy we may have with his demands'. Breitman's insights on pedalling inevitably permeate other chapters, whether in explaining the moderator and the Janissary effects in Schubert, or how duettists might enjoy using four feet as well as four hands. His suggestions for solving the confusing indications for the sustaining pedal as notated by Chopin are immensely useful. He leads us, inevitably, to the importance of playing and hearing his music on Pleyel's instruments.

The epilogue is an encouragement not to lose creativity in the process of achieving an elusive authenticity, but to gain ownership of the style in order to be free with it. Graphs of the overtone structure of Steinway versus Walter are given in an Appendix, and make an interesting visual comparison to supplement what we hear.

This book is excellent value, so if you would like to benefit from some first-class teaching in classical piano-playing, for an early or modern keyboard, the use of this

book and its accompanying videos will be a fine step forwards, and a perfect addition to lessons with a teacher - preferably one who has some instruments, including a clavichord, for you to try!

Penelope Cave

Marcelo Fagerlande, Mayra Pereira and Maria Aida Barroso, *O Cravo no Rio de Janeiro do século XX* (2020), 381pp, R$120.00, https://www.riobooks.com.br

The history of the modern harpsichord revival is gradually being written, with books, biographies and music surveys such as Peter Watchorn's *Isolde Ahlgrimm, Vienna and the Early Music Revival* (2007) and Larry Palmer's *Harpsichord in America* (1989), but there is still much to do before a comprehensive picture of this important piece of history is completed. International concert travel, the growth of recordings and students gathering at critical musical centres such as Amsterdam, London and Boston means that the revival can seem as if it was a worldwide event, but of course this is not the case; different things happened at different rates in different countries.

This substantial new volume is edited by Marcelo Fagerlande, Mayra Pereira and Maria Aida Barroso, three scholar-performers educated in Stuttgart, The Hague and Rio de Janeiro; all have links with the latter place, and have chosen to focus on the history of the harpsichord revival there during the entire 20th century. Each decade is assigned a chapter, with a spotlight on the players (both visiting and domestic), ensembles, instruments and events of that period. Much of the source material comes from newspapers, magazines, concert programmes and other documentary sources.

The origins of the modern Brazilian harpsichord tradition lie in France, with composer Leopoldo Miguez acquiring a Pleyel in Paris in 1900. Elodie Lelong was one of the first to perform in Rio, in 1904, and the idea of historical-survey concerts was also imported from France. Both Landowska and Ehlers passed through the city in the late 1920s, but without apparently performing on this still almost-unheard instrument. Later, Landowska pupils (including Marlowe, Valenti, Kirkpatrick and Kipnis) did play in Rio, and instruments by Pleyel and Neupert were heard there in the 1930s. The post-war era saw more harpsichords used in concerts and broadcasts, and a series of leading European players visited, including Stanislav Heller and Karl Richter. Local maker Roberto de Regina and local recitalist Violetta Kundert worked hard to develop the instrument's profile, and from the 1980s Brazilian players began to return from European conservatoires to share their new knowledge. Christopher Hogwood, Jacques Ogg, Gustav Leonhardt, Kenneth Gilbert and Genoveva Gálvez were among many subsequent influential visiting performers, and with the appearance of the instrument in conservatoires and universities, the stage was set for the creation of baroque ensembles and all the normal operas and concerts of the early music revival.

This book is thoroughly researched and lavishly illustrated, and makes a critical contribution to our understanding of the harpsichord in Brazil. Although the volume is written in Portuguese, there is a 13-page 'compact version' English appendix, which summarizes the book's narrative, and together with the wealth of visual material, makes this a worthwhile purchase even for those who do not speak Portuguese.

Francis Knights and Pablo Padilla

MUSIC

Martin Erhardt (ed), *Das Buxheimer Tabulaturbuch*, Edition Walhall EW1110 (Magdeburg, 2020), €21.80, https://www.edition-walhall.de

The Buxheim Organ Book (c.1460/70) is a very large manuscript collection of intabulated music from various parts of Europe, mostly vocal in origin; it uses mixed notation, with the highest voice in mensural notation and the lower ones in tablature. The 25 selected works, all in two or three parts with a decorated top voice, are here grouped by: sacred; German; French/Burgundian; Italian; and dance music. The great majority are anonymous, but there are also some attributed works by Binchois, Ciconia, Dufay, Dunstable, Frye and Wolkenstein.

The edition is specified as for 'Melodieinstrumente oder Tasteninstrument', and that leads to a number of curiosities in the layout. The lower two voices appear on one stave in octave treble clef, with the Contratenor printed in red so that it can be distinguished from the Tenor. This choice seems unhelpful, as it suits neither keyboard nor melody instrument; treble and bass would have been better for the former, and score layout for the latter. The editor makes suggestions for performance (at 4', 6' and 8' pitch) by various wind, string and keyboard groupings – and curiously, these include instruments which would not be invented for some centuries.

The editor has provided simple guidance as regards aspects of performance practice, and there is a detailed Critical Commentary. Chant or other melodic models are supplied, as well as text translations and some facsimile pages from the manuscript. All this is in German only. 15th century keyboard music is all too rarely heard, but this edition is in some ways a missed opportunity; organ, harpsichord and clavichord players will probably still prefer the London Pro Musica Edition volumes of Buxheim from the 1980s, in normal clefs and with a detailed bilingual preface.

Francis Knights

Jon Baxendale and Francis Knights (eds), William Byrd, *My Ladye Nevells Booke* (Tynset, 2021), €54.99, https://lyrebirdmusic.com

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to play, read and review this edition of William Byrd's jewel in the crown of English keyboard music of the Elizabethan and early Jacobean periods, here meticulously edited for Lyrebird Music by Jon Baxendale and Francis Knights. The oblong volume is beautifully presented, replete with a wide beaked Kingfisher enhancing the front cover of this the first new edition for almost a century, following the acquisition of the manuscript by the British Library in 2002. The music text is interspersed with occasional facsimiles from the manuscript after a comprehensive, historical and interpretative preface, and concludes with comprehensive critical and bibliographical epilogues.

The 42 pieces are transcribed with the minimum of editorial intervention, apart from the use of five line staves and G and F clefs, the essence of the original notation remains in the mensurations. The note values (black and void), time and mensuration signatures and the rhythmic beamings also remain with one editorial addition: a black dot is added rather than inserting a spurious tie.

The preface comprises extensive biographical profiles of Byrd and his copyist John Baldwin of Windsor, details of contemporaneous instruments followed by discussions of significant performance issues: tuning and temperament, fingerings and articulation, rhythmic inequalities and the interpretation of time signatures, black and void note heads as well as beaming, bar lines and proportions. The vexed issue of how the double stroke and single ornament symbols might be played receives extensive attention, although it is pertinently noted that the latter do not feature in English keyboard manuscript sources until after the very end of the 16th century. None occur in MLNB which was completed in 1591. It is appropriate to note that the reference in Stationer's Hall to the elusive English *Treatise on Keyboard Playing* of 1597, coincides with the same year as the publication of Thomas Morley's *Plain and Easy Introduction to Practical Music* and also of Diruta's *Il Transilvano*.

The conclusion of each piece bears Byrd's name with varying references to his stature, notably: 'homo memorabilis', 'laus: sit deo' and to his status as a 'gentleman:of: her maiesties: chapel' - The only dated piece is the variations on 'Will yow walke the woodes so wylde' (1590). Finally, I am pleased to commend this exemplary edition unreservedly.

Christopher Kent

Colin Booth and Matthew Brown (eds), Johann Mattheson, *The Melodious Talking Fingers*, Soundboard (Wells, 2020), £25.00, https://www.colinbooth.co.uk/publications

Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) has been regarded more as a music historian – his work *Der Vollkommener Capellmeister* is a key text - than a composer until quite recently. Some of his keyboard music has now been recorded several times (including Colin Booth's own recording of the 1714 suites, which publication Bach may have known), and it is here the turn of his attractive fugue collection *Die Wohlklingende Fingersprache* (1735/37). This comprises twelve fugues plus a number of separate movements; the style tends more to the Handelian-melodic than to the contrapuntal density of a Bach, even though plenty of fugal artifice is on show.

This excellent edition by Colin Booth and Matthew Brown is complemented by the former's own recording (see review below), and it is very interesting to engage with the music through Booth's performances before turning to the score: like the best performers, he lifts the music off the page and makes it sound (dare one say) better than it actually is. This is a worthwhile addition to the early 18th-century German keyboard canon nevertheless, and like Mattheson's suites and his two works for keyboard duo deserves to have a place in the harpsichord repertoire.

Francis Knights

RECORDINGS

***Johann Sebastian Bach: Complete Organ Works*, David Goode (organ), Signum Classics SIGCD640 (2020), recorded 2015-16, 16 CDs, 1059'**

This set of 16 CDs is a highly significant and indeed inspirational achievement. Goode plays the 'complete organ works of Bach' on the 1976 Metzler organ of Trinity College, Cambridge, an instrument justly regarded as one of the finest in the country. The recordings were made between January 2015 and August 2016, and have now been released in a complete box set. Goode's playing is exemplary, and I can find virtually nothing to criticise. He plays with authority, flexibility, utter clarity, and consummate musicality; with imaginative use of the organ's resources; without rhythmic exaggeration or mannerism but with plenty of nuance; and with an infectious *joie de vivre*. He loves this music, and this joy really comes through.

The beautifully produced and comprehensive booklet contains complete listings of the 16 discs, a note by Goode about why and how the set came into being, a general essay by his former pupil George Parsons about Bach's organ works, followed by specific notes on each piece. Inevitably, Parsons relies to an extent on the writings of Peter Williams - although not entirely uncritically. His essay is well-focused, commenting knowledgeably on the current state of Bach scholarship, and usefully discussing questions of theology and aesthetics as well as purely musical considerations - a fine piece of writing. The specific notes on each piece are a model of how these things should be (and can easily be amplified with reference to Williams's writings). The booklet does not contain Goode's registrations - that would be very lengthy and tedious - and one can pretty well work these out by referring to the organ specification.

Goode wisely decides to present the music as a series of 'recitals', mixing the genres of prelude and fugue, chorale-based works, trios, concertos and so on; this is surely the best approach. The named collections are, however, played together as Bach grouped them: the unfinished *Orgelbüchlein*, *Clavierübung III*, the *Leipzig* and the *Schübler* chorales. Given that there remain questions about the authorship of certain works attributed to Bach, Goode takes a pragmatic approach as to what to include. He includes 'the' Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV565 (where Bach's authorship is widely doubted) on the grounds that he 'can't think who else could have produced something of the imagination' of the piece. Also included are the two little trio arrangements by Couperin and Fasch because he has played them since his early teens. I warm to this refreshingly personal approach.

There are so many highlights that I can mention only a few. The virtuoso preludes and fugues such as BWV532 (D major) and BWV550 (early G major) are thrillingly exciting. The more mature prelude and fugue pairs, such as BWV541, 538 and 540 (Toccata in F) and the Passacaglia are masterfully played. Perhaps fluency is the most impressive aspect of Goode's playing; there is never the slightest hint that he is not supremely in command. In these big works Goode often contrasts the Hauptwerk plenum registration with episodes on the Rückpositiv and Schwellwerk, and effectively deals with the vexed question of manual-changing in fugues. He sometimes adds the sesquialtera to the mixture chorus, adding extra piquancy and 'clang'. Also welcome is his periodic use of the pedal 8' trompete as the plenum bass, rather than always using the 16' posaune. This works particularly well in the very active pedal part of the great G minor fugue BWV542.

The chorale-based pieces are despatched with endlessly varied registrations (including many appearances of the colourful dulzian, with or without other stops) and the *Affekt* of every movement is vividly communicated. This is especially true in the 46 movements of the *Orgelbüchlein*, but also in the early and generally simple 'Neumeister' chorales which can look dull on the page. Goode projects every one with care, often using unusual registrations (such as soloing out a treble or alto chorale melody on the pedal). The six Trio Sonatas, among the trickiest of all organ music, are played as if without a care: ebullient, sparkling, even with added ornamentation, and with stylish give-and-take in the phrasing. The concerto arrangements have the same qualities.

This is a worthy addition to the huge Bach organ music discography, music which, because it is of such integrity, responds well to many and varied treatments. It is a privilege to hear it played by a technically impeccable organist who plays with energy, flexibility and profound understanding. Goode is very well served by the expert recording team, the recorded sound giving an excellent account of both the instrument and the acoustic. It is fitting to complete the set with the Fugue in E flat BWV552, arguably the pinnacle of Bach's achievement.

John Kitchen

***Johann Sebastian Bach: 6 Partitas*, Asako Ogawa (harpsichord), First Hand Records FHR92 (2020), recorded 2020, 2 CDs, 151'**

The six Partitas BWV825-830 constitute the first part of the *Clavierübung* and were published between 1726 and 1731 in Leipzig. As the title page reads, they are a collection of preludes of various kinds, allemandes, courantes, sarabandes, gigues and other pieces (*galanterien*). They constitute, together with the French and English suites, some of the best-known works for harpsichord by Bach. The name 'partita' was originally used to designate a single instrumental piece, but Johann Kuhnau applied the term for collections of works, as a word analogous to 'suite' - Christoph Graupner was a prolific composer in this genre, having authored close to 60 of them. Besides those for harpsichord, Bach also wrote three partitas for solo violin, and choral partitas for organ. This genre is often technically demanding, which is certainly true in the case of Bach's partitas.

When one considers the list of recordings of these works, including those by Landowska, Kirkpatrick, Walcha and Leonhardt, just to mention a few of the earlier ones from among no fewer than twenty (without including the piano versions), it is natural to ask to what extent something different can be added. In this respect it is remarkable that Asako Ogawa's interpretation, on a harpsichord by Alan Gotto (2009), after Jean Goermans/ Pascal Taskin (1764/83), succeeds in presenting a fresh and spontaneous performance. This is particularly true of her ornamentation on the repeats. Her choices of tempi are also very successful and overall, the conception and interpretation of the whole set, made in London last August and September, are balanced and convincing.

Pablo Padilla

***Johann Mattheson, The Melodious Talking Fingers*, Colin Booth (harpsichord), Soundboard Records SBCD220, recorded 2019, 70'**

The 1735 edition of this collection has a prominent dedication to Handel, in flowery language ending '... as a mark of particular esteem'. Mattheson and Handel met in 1703, when the 18-year-old Handel joined the orchestra of the Hamburg opera house, where Mattheson was a tenor soloist and composer. They became good friends, in spite of a squabble over which of them was to play the harpsichord in Mattheson's opera *Cleopatra*. When they both were invited to audition for the post of organist in Lübeck, they travelled together, amusing themselves by composing double fugues in the coach.

In 1735 Handel published *Six Grand Fugues* and Mattheson published *Die Wohl-klingende Finger-Sprache...*, translated in the CD booklet as 'The Melodious Language of the Fingers containing Twelve Fugues ...'. This music is indeed melodious and enjoyable; and not too difficult. It must have been popular, as it was reprinted in 1749 with the title *Les Doits Parlans* (sic). A facsimile and a good modern edition are available on imslp.org, and a new edition by Booth and Brown is reviewed above. It has been recorded on modern piano by Andrea Benecke (2016) and on harpsichord by Fernando de Luca in 2019; de Luca's recording is available online at tinyurl.com/mattfing.

Colin uses his harpsichord after Nicholas Celini, Narbonne (1661), an instrument of unusual design, described on his website www.colinbooth.co.uk. It has the clarity of a good Italian and some of the resonance of an early French harpsichord, but not enough to cloud the transparency of the sound. It is an ideal instrument for contrapuntal music, as shown in Colin's recent Bach recordings (see *Harpsichord & Fortepiano* xxv/1, Autumn 2020). He is a thoughtful player; rather than dazzling us with virtuosity, he wants us to hear the music clearly and understand it. The pulse is flexible, responding subtly to the nuances of the music and to the structure of the fugues, without distorting the rhythmic line. I particularly enjoyed Fugue 8, with its sonorous and almost hypnotic repeated chords; the Fughetta played on buffed 8' plus 4'; the beautifully played allemande named Seriosità; and Fugue 10, where Colin writes that the third subject is a joke and the fugue ends in a musical laugh; he brings off the jokes very well. On the other hand, the vivace Burla (joke) didn't work for me; and Fugue 8 is treated rather unkindly: it starts with a fast 11-bar Sinfonia ending on the dominant, leading into the first entry of the fugue. In the original print it is a single movement, but in this CD it is split into two tracks, breaking the piece apart and leaving the listener suspended in the dominant at the end of the first track.

But these are minor matters of personal taste. Overall this is a fine performance on an excellent instrument; the CD booklet is well thought-out and informative, and the music is relatively little-known but interesting and enjoyable. Strongly recommended.

David Griffel

***Sublime: Clavecin Roïal*, Pablo Gomez Ábalos (clavecin roïal), La Cupula Music B 21794-2019, recorded 2019, 70'**

Readers of Kerstin Schwarz's article 'The Clavecin Roïal and the first copy in modern times' in the Autumn 2020 issue will have been intrigued from her description of the instrument - and the issues arising in making modern copies - as to what it actually sounded like; Pablo Gomez Ábalos' important new recording will surely satisfy their curiosity. The *Clavecin roïal*, a large five-octave German square piano with various changes of timbre (using knee levels or pedals) appears to have been invented by Johann Gottlob Wagner in 1774, and was made until the end of the century. Other makers included Friederici and Horn, and C. P. E. Bach owned one of the former. His last fantasias were created on the instrument, and he was particularly keen on the undamped register of the early piano for improvisations – it is heard on the very first track, the Fantasia in Eb Wq.58/6.

The *Clavecin roïal* heard here was made by Kerstin Schwarz in 2019 after instruments from the 1780s, and is the first modern copy ever made (about 15 originals survive, few in playing order). The music selected naturally focuses on C. P. E. Bach, including six fantasias from the *Kenner und Liebhaber* collections IV-VI (1782-86), and these are supplemented by a 1783 Sonata in D by the Königsberg composer Christian Wilhelm Podbielski and an intriguing F minor Sonata WoO47 of Beethoven from the same time - the composer was then aged 13.

Those expecting a standard 'square piano' sound may well be surprised; the instrument has considerably more depth and richness, and the variety of timbres is as much a selling point now as it was then. Pablo Gomez Ábalos clearly both revels in the instrument's resources and in the quirkiness of the composers; the recording is excellent, as are the booklet notes by the performer. This is the sound C. P. E. Bach wanted for his fantasias, and we can be very grateful that instrument-maker, player and recording company have combined so effectively to make this premiere possible.

Francis Knights