

# Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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## Reviews

### BOOKS

**Dominique Ferran (ed), *Le clavicorde* (Paris, 2020), 128 pages, <https://www.clavecin-en-france.org>**

**Cristiano Holtz, *J. S. Bach – A sua técnica ao teclado segundo fontes históricas/J. S. Bach's Keyboard Technique According to Historical Sources* (Lisbon, 2022), 92 pages, 15 euros, <https://editions-ava.com/pt/cristiano-holtz>**

A glance at Lothar Bemmman's huge and comprehensive Clavichord Bibliography on the Deutschen Clavichord Societät website ([http://www.clavichord.info/clavkult\\_literatur.html](http://www.clavichord.info/clavkult_literatur.html)) shows that by far the largest amount of writing about the clavichord in modern times is in English, followed by German. This reflects the strong place that Britain and Germany have had in the clavichord revival, but it also means that the more modest scope of the literature (including books, articles, catalogues and facsimiles) in other European and world languages has perhaps deprived keyboard players from further afield from easily learning about the instrument and its music. Two new books help remedy that, in French and in Portuguese.

Dominique Ferran's 2020 collection of essays is published by the organization Clavecin en France, and offers a survey of the clavichord's history and music, partly through specific case studies. Two of the essays (all given here with English titles for convenience) are not new: Joris Potvlieghe's 'The clavichord in the life of Johann Sebastian Bach' first appeared in *Clavichord International* in 2016/17, while Etienne Baillot's 'The Clavichord, a small reasoned manual' was originally published in French in 1992. The very first piece in the collection is Koen Vermeij's thoroughly illustrated 'A little history of the clavichord', which sets the tone of what follows, including Emile Jobin's 'Clavichord, little stories', which combines further observations about different types of instruments, from the Medieval to the pedal clavichord. The earliest types of instruments are described in more detail in Stéphane Treilhou's 'Around the reconstruction of the clavichord of Arnault de Zwolle', which includes an intriguing photograph of a reconstruction being played upright and one-handed, against the shoulder. The remaining two brief essays look at the historical sources for one key clavichord composer (Jean-Claude Battault, 'The clavichord of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach') and make some personal comments about the instrument's technique and future repertoire

(Renée Geoffrion, 'Clavichord! The big gap between poetry and technicality'). There are numerous black and white illustrations and drawings, and many bibliographic references are given (a little more detail, accuracy and consistency of style would have been welcome here). French speakers will certainly thank Clavecin en France for having provided such a useful introductory guide.

Cristiano Holtz's new Bach guide, from AVA Musical Editions, is printed twice, first in Portuguese then in English, thus covering the actual ground each time in about 40 concise pages. His concern, as an expert Bach performer on both harpsichord and clavichord, is the historical evidence from which we can ascertain the composer's approach to keyboard technique and performance. The method is to take the written sources concerning Bach's performance and musical attitudes, by Adlung, Agricola, C. P. E. Bach, Quantz, Sorge, Marpurg, Grienkerl and Forkel (excerpts from their writings all printed in bold), glossing these with the help of explanatory comments, fingered music examples and facsimiles. Much of this will be familiar to those with the *New Bach Reader* and other collected documents on Bach, but there is still value in extracting and grouping those comments specifically relevant to keyboard performance. And of course, some Portuguese speakers may not have come across all of them before. Finally, readers will want to supplement their study of this book by listening to Holtz's own recordings, to see how he puts all these ideas into practice – something that is always a challenge to explain in words, as the original sources show.

**Francis Knights**

### MUSIC

**Claudio Merulo, ed Francesco Tasini, *Il primo libro de Ricercare da cantare a quattro voci, Ut Orpheus* HS306 (2021), [www.utorpheus.com](http://www.utorpheus.com)**

Claudio Merulo (1533-1604) was probably the pre-eminent keyboard virtuoso of 16th century Italy, with two volumes of Toccatas, three of Canzonas and one of Ricercars destined specifically for keyboard instruments being printed during his lifetime or shortly after his death. In these pieces the art of imaginative and precisely written-out ornaments – including demisemiquavers and even hemidemisemiquavers – in Venetian keyboard music is taken to its height, and his playing achieved

legendary fame in his lifetime. His style of playing and ornamenting formed the basis of instructions in Diruta's treatise *Il Transilvano* of 1593 and 1609. In addition to the keyboard set of eight Ricercars that appeared in 1567, three sets 'da cantare a quattro voci' were published, the first in 1574, the second and third sets after his death.

This volume contains the 19 Ricercars (although numbered up to 20, number four is missing from the original partbooks) published in the first book of 1574. Unlike the 1567 set for keyboard they are not described as being in a specific tone, with keys used not exceeding one flat, 11 being in minor keys (D, E, G and A) and only eight in major (C, F and G). All are in cut C time, with length varying from 67 to 193 double bars; most being well over 100 bars.

Once again, as with his workings of Alessandro Scarlatti's Fugues, editor Francesco Tasini has provided some attractive pieces in their own right that generally lie comfortably beneath the hands. Comparison of the pieces in this volume with Merulo's set of keyboard Ricercars (available in modern editions from Edition Walhall and AR Editions) is rewarding; the latter are generally much shorter (from 79-139 double bars) and contain passages of unornamented crotchets and minims, whereas Tasini's workings contain a more relentless flow of diminutions, mainly in quavers and semiquavers but with occasional demisemiquavers forming part of an ornament, rather than in scale passages. I do think that sometimes less would have been more. Comparing the short excerpt of the first nine bars from the printed version of Ricercar's serene movement in minims and crotchets with Tasini's intabulation with its sense of forward movement will also be instructive. These intabulations provide generally good models for tackling contrapuntal pieces from other part books, perhaps more relevant to those from the Venetian school than to the Roman or Neapolitans. The introduction gives valuable information about the pieces and places them in a context stretching back to the *Musica Nova* collection of 1540.

The edition is clearly printed and Tasini is to be commended for his exceptional work, but the pieces will probably appeal more to those with a special interest in Italian Renaissance keyboard music, and have the digital dexterity to match the at times considerable demands.

**John Collins**

**J. S. Bach, arr Lorenzo Ghielmi, *Organ works preserved as fragments*, 2 vols, la divina armonia (2020, 2022)**

Like all busy composers, Bach left a number of works unfinished (or apparently unfinished, such as the *Art of Fugue*): sometimes manuscript sources are incomplete, and sometimes the composer moved on to other projects or felt disinclined to continue with his initial thoughts. These two slim volumes include ten pieces for organ (or indeed other keyboards, as only four require obligato pedal), completed by performer and scholar Lorenzo Ghielmi, who describes his task as trying to be 'faithful to Bach's style, knowing that such an artist is inimitable'.

The first volume includes the Fantasia in C BWV 573 from the Anna Magdalena Bach Book, the chorale from the Wilhelm Friedemann Bach Book 'Jesu meine Freude' BWV 753, the chorale prelude from the *Orgelbüchlein* 'O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid' BWV Anh.200 (where the composer provides only the first two bars), and an arrangement of the solo violin sonata Adagio BWV 1001/i intended by Ghielmi as an alternative to the Prelude in D minor BWV 539/i which prefaces Bach's own organ arrangement of the following Fugue. The main work here is the Contrapunctus XIV from the *Art of Fugue*, where Ghielmi adds 31 bars to the original 238, using as much of the original thematic material as possible and concluding over a tonic pedal.

In the second book, the remaining two movements of BWV 1001 are arranged, to complete the sonata; oddly, only the third includes obligato pedal, presumably in order to make room in the texture for more imitative counterpoint. As well as a further incomplete early chorale prelude on 'Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern' BWV 764 there is an interesting five-part Fugue in C minor BWV 562/ii (probably one of Bach's very last organ works) and an ornate Air with two variations BWV 991, again from the Anna Magdalena Bach Book.

A preface in English, Italian and German explains the background to each work, including reference to several of Ghielmi's own Bach research articles, for those wanting to know more. Information about the extent of Bach's openings is given, but not typographically distinguished in the score, making it a fascinating exercise to judge just where Bach shades into Ghielmi. The completions, which range from a few bars to almost an entire piece, are both expertly done and convincing, and Ghielmi understands Bach's technique and Bach's style (or more properly, styles, early, middle and late) to a very high level. The two volumes thus form a desirable appendix to the composer's complete surviving keyboard and organ works.

**Francis Knights**



**Ernst Wilhelm Wolf, ed Ryan Layne Whitney,**  
*Collected Solo Keyboard Sonatas*, 3 vols (2021), Lulu.  
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This welcome new publication is the first collected edition of Wolf's solo keyboard sonatas. Paul Simmonds championed these works in his excellent selective recording and landmark survey in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup> There he discussed the quality of the music, established its credentials as clavichord music and noted the unfortunate patchiness and rarity of modern editions. Since then, curious players have relied on facsimiles and the few available editions. Ryan Layne Whitney is therefore to be congratulated on the appearance of this enterprising and long-awaited new performing edition.

Ernst Wilhelm Wolf (1735–1792) showed a talent for keyboard playing and composition from an early age. Thuringian-born, he was educated in Eisenach, Gotha and Jena and rubbed shoulders with the Leipzig composers Johann Friedrich Doles and Johann Adam Hiller in 1758. After a brief sojourn in Naumburg, he joined the court of the Duchess Anna Amalia in Weimar where he married the keyboard player and singer Maria Carolina, daughter of Franz Benda, in 1770 and worked (not always happily) alongside the young Goethe, who criticised him for writing frivolous music. Wolf passed up the invitation to succeed C. P. E. Bach at the court of Frederick the Great and remained employed in Weimar until his death. Apart from his keyboard music, six sonatas for four hands (not included in this edition) and 20 keyboard concertos, Wolf composed 20 *Singspiele*, motets, Passions, cantatas and choruses, over 50 songs, symphonies and chamber music.

The complete solo keyboard music comprises 74 works, nearly all of which are three- or two-movement sonatas published in his lifetime in sets of six with the amateur market in view. He wrote for the changing tastes of his time and was widely published. The *New Grove* entry for Wolf currently ends somewhat dismissively 'at the height of his career Wolf's rate of composition slowed and he became increasingly depressed'. Other commentators have found some of his most beautiful and reflective music in the later sets.<sup>2</sup> This may simply be a question of a sympathetic ear and finding the right instrument. For myself, I have greatly enjoyed getting to know the variety and charm of Wolf's keyboard music through this excellent first collected edition, which charts the changes of his varied compositional style over three decades.

The editorial method in these volumes is very straightforward. The music has been directly typeset from a single, printed or manuscript source. Interventions such as the extra thickening notes added editorially to left-hand octaves are distinguished by cue-size note-heads. Most of the sources are available online at IMSLP (<https://imslp.org>). The beauty of this edition is that it draws all the music together in three very usable books ideal for ready reference.

Wolf's compositions show a clear debt to the *Affekte* and *Manieren* of C. P. E. Bach and his school, albeit at a more modest and provincial level. The *sturm und drang* theatricality and *Empfindsamer stil* sensibility of the earlier sonatas (e.g., Nos.5 and 18, the latter with programme, 'The quarrelling common couple') gradually gives way to more international influences (such as Alberti-like accompaniments), though with some notable later exceptions. The music is well written, profound in places, with occasional touches of humour (e.g. the zany *Prestissimo* of No.12), and otherwise generally charming and elegant with a strong sense of melody and clear, regular phrases. Wolf likes bold contrasts and uses a wide range of tempo and character indications. We find Baroque dances (*siciliana*, *giga*, *polacca*, *minuet* etc), galant variations and varied reprises, and first movement binary forms transitioning towards Classical ternary structures. Wolf's themes are lyrical and sometimes reminiscent of Mozart and J. C. Bach. They often begin as a single melodic line which grows towards a fuller texture and clearer tonality. Sighing motifs, slurred articulations and syncopations are common. Wolf is not afraid of chromatic inflection of melody and harmony (including augmented sixths) for expressive or ornamental purposes, and his virtuosity is not too difficult (most commonly with a single line shared between both hands for ease of execution) with only very occasional hand crossing. Whitney's estimation that Wolf writes clear and attractive themes which are well worked out and 'rarely go on too long' is about right. He goes on to add that 'the concision of some of the sonatas is notable, and often the briefest movements are fully formed and expressive'.

The title pages of Wolf's collections mention *Cembalo* in two early sets, otherwise *Clavier* and *Klavier*, and later, *Fortepiano* and *le Clavichord*. From the frequent and meticulous dynamic markings (often with extreme contrasts or *crescendo/diminuendo* in words or symbols) and articulations, the clavichord is the first choice for

1 Ernst Wilhelm Wolf, *Keyboard Sonatas*, Paul Simmonds (clavichord), Ars Musici CD 1206-2 (1997), which includes ten sonatas (Nos.3, 5, 11, 13, 14, 22, 39, 64, 65 and 73), and Paul Simmonds, 'An introductory survey of the keyboard works of Ernst Wilhelm Wolf', *De Clavichordio II: Proceedings of the International Clavichord Symposium, Magnano* (1995), pp.141–154.

2 Simmonds (1995), p.152.

these pieces. This preference can be inferred from other internal evidence in the music and is corroborated by Wolf's 1785 *Anleitung* – a short but comprehensive treatise on how to play the clavichord. The *Anleitung* is printed in volume 2 of this edition in German and a new English parallel translation by John Collins with musical examples: an important addition to the literature and an indispensable tool for anyone who wishes to play Wolf's music to its full potential. The Collins translation includes helpful cross-references to Christopher Hogwood's 1988 translation and commentary of the same (in Stephen L. Clarke (ed), *C. P. E. Bach Studies* (Oxford, 1988), pp.133–157). The terms *Bebung*, *appoggiato* and *portato* are described in the *Anleitung* and occasionally specified in the music. Several movements are fingered. The 1785 sonatas which are prefaced by the *Anleitung* are graded in technical and interpretative difficulty, beginning with a two-movement sonatina and ending with a fantasia and variation. Wolf's music requires a clear understanding of cantabile playing and a precisely refined touch to bring out the nuances of articulation and dynamic at appropriate tempi. The editor's informative and thought-provoking introduction, in English and German, is printed only in volume 1. The full thematic table of sonatas is included in each volume.

The three volumes are available separately in paperback or coil-bound printings from the online self-publishing website lulu.com, where the three volumes are currently very reasonably priced at £24.75, £22.80 and £21.80 respectively. I have been working from the sturdily bound paperback volumes which open fully and easily without the spine cracking. The music engraving (Lilypond) is well laid out to avoid page turns where possible and includes extra facsimile images, and the volumes appear to have been very well proofread. The symbol used for the trill with final turn is a straight horizontal reversal of another ornament symbol resulting in a noticeable mismatch of italic style, but this is a minor quibble. The volumes are printed on white, non-shiny paper with a very legible balance of ink density to stave size making the music clear to read. Do buy them and get to know this engaging music.

Terence Charlston

## RECORDINGS

*Froberger, Suites for harpsichord, vol.2*, Gilbert Rowland (harpsichord), Athene ath23209 (2021), 2 CDs, 117'

*Gottlieb Muffat, Suites for harpsichord, vol.3*, Naoko Akutagawa (harpsichord), Naxos 8.574098 (2021), 67'

*Bach, Toccatas for harpsichord*, Pieter Dirksen (harpsichord), Etcetera KTC1722 (2021), 72'

To confess ignorance of the extent of Froberger's keyboard compositions in such illustrious pages is to invite disdain. Yet by doing so, it allows me to express unfeigned delight at what greeted me in the second volume of Gilbert Rowland's survey of Froberger's complete keyboard suites. Rowland gives a beautifully well-rounded interpretation of the Suites, sometimes called Partitas, from the collections of 1649 and 1656, and certain others which are judged to be authentic of stylistic grounds.

The tenderness and the delicacy of the music is a revelation, and its echoes of Louis Couperin – or in reality *pre-echoes*, as Couperin certainly met and may have been taught by Froberger in Paris in 1651–2 – make one realize what a rich and unified musical culture existed throughout Europe in the first half of the 17th century – despite a penchant for murderous religious wars. Johann Jakob Froberger (1616–1667) was fortunate to work for the enlightened Ferdinand III of Vienna who paid him to study in Rome for five years with Frescobaldi, whose influence on his structural and harmonic progressions is evident, as well as allowing him to travel widely in Europe – even to England, so rumour has it. This all ended abruptly with the curtailment of court music following Ferdinand's death in 1657; and the last ten years of Froberger's life were mostly spent as a pensioner at Hérécourt Palace, home of his most talented pupil, Sybilla, Duchess of Württemberg.

In contrast to the high baroque Allemande-Courante-Sarabande-Gigue suites of Gottlieb Muffat, to which we shall come, Froberger's suites are in varied order, which is refreshing to listen to today when we carry expectations of the standard order – which constitutes a reminder of his role as a pioneer. He seems to channel his most personal thoughts into the opening Allemandes, one of which is titled 'meditation on his impending death'. Their chromaticism and accented appoggiaturas are whimsically idiosyncratic, and while they aren't *preludes non mesurés*, an innocent ear could easily mistake them



for such – the connection above offering an explanation. The Gígues are ‘très gai’ (as Poulenc would have said) and their trickily ornamented siciliano rhythms are neatly executed by Rowland. Generally they *precede* the Courantes, where Froberger is at his most experimental, hopping into and out of hemiolas in a way that must have challenged performers such as Duchess Sybilla. In fast movements there is a wit and playfulness – borne out by the B<sup>b</sup> Partita being titled *Der Naseweise Orgelprobrier*, ‘the nose organ tester’ – which makes one suspect Froberger was amusing company. Often the suites end with a Sarabande, whose form had not yet reached the gravitas of Bach. Rowland performs these in the lively way their concluding position demands; but the effect of one slow plus three lively movements lacks differentiation to our ears – though it may have been exactly on the money for contemporary audiences – and makes one see how the evolutionary pathway to the high form of baroque dance suite. To expect the variety of movements found in later composers is of course to look through the wrong end of the historic telescope. A special word of praise to sound recordist John Taylor for capturing the Andrew Wooderson’s Goermans copy with such a warm and attractive harpsichord sound. Altogether a richly rewarding recording on Athene.

By contrast the suites of Gottlieb Muffat (1690-1770) are elaborate affairs of 8-10 movements, including a wide range of character dances, though not always with a Sarabande. Son of the more famous Georg, renowned for his orchestral music, Gottlieb was taught by Fux, and appointed to the music establishment of the Viennese court at a young age, teaching the future Empress Maria Theresa, who appointed him principal organist a year after her accession, in 1741.

Until then Muffat had composed a huge body of keyboard music, but thereafter he seems to have composed no more. In about 1739 he had published a set called *Componimenti musicali per il cembalo*, but these manuscript suites instead come from a collection lost to public knowledge when the Soviets confiscated the contents of the Berlin Staatsbibliothek after WWII and took them to Russia. In the post-Soviet period the Berlin Sing-Akademie library from the Staatsbibliothek was returned, and Muffat’s suites have now been edited by Glen Wilson for Breitkopf & Härtel. This CD of five suites by Naoko Akutagawa is the third and final volume of a Naxos retrospective.

Akutagawa’s virtuosity is not in doubt. Muffat’s suites contains some of the most challenging music available at that time, particularly in respect of his Beethovenian demand for trilling above sustained chords. That Muffat

*sohn* was a significant figure is attested by Handel’s extensive and naked plagiarism of his music, with at least 18 of his pieces appearing 30 times in the latter’s oeuvre, most blatantly in his St Cecilia Ode where five of Muffat’s movements are shamelessly passed off as his own. Lucky for Handel, Shazam didn’t exist then or he would have had his YouTube channel closed down!

The variety and characterization of Muffat’s suites shows how public taste had developed in the century or so since Froberger’s keyboard compositions. Nearly all of them begin with a Prélude (note the possible implications of that French ‘é’) and in some the main traditional dances are omitted altogether in favour of a Fantaisie or a Ballet or character piece like ‘La Jalousie’. There is even an intriguing movement named ‘Le Bastard’ (it doesn’t appear conspicuously difficult!). Some of the suites end with a Gigue and a Finale, and some with just one or the other. So the shift away from wholly dance-inspired movements to abstract forms was already in full swing.

To my ear the overall sound on the Ruckers-Hemsch copy by van Schevikhoven is a bit staid, but in some ways this is in keeping with the more imperial/formal *Affektenlehre* style of the music. I am not a sufficient scholar to comment in detail on the musical revolutions taking place around the time of these suites’ composition, but suffice it to say that it must have been one of the last hurrahs of the baroque dance suite, which was to be swept away by C. P. E. Bach’s *empfindsamer Stil* – aided by the arrival of the fortepiano and the compositional contrasts offered by classical sonata form. Nevertheless, it’s delightful music, and good to have available.

Finally, Pieter Dirksen’s seven Bach Toccatas for Harpsichord on Etcetera, which was recorded in 2020 on a Sebastian Núñez copy of a 1638 Ruckers. It enters a crowded market: there are 120 versions of the Toccatas available on Amazon alone, and I fear it doesn’t altogether see off the opposition. The tempi are a bit staid, and there’s not much of the rhetorical fire and steely caprice you find in (say) Trevor Pinnock’s readings. In the booklet Dirksen talks of the *stylus fantasticus*, but doesn’t quite succeed in making it ‘walk’ before our ears. He rightly draws attention to the stylistic debt Bach owed Buxtehude – unquantifiable, as the latter’s toccatas are lost — and engages in some speculation that these toccatas may relate to Ptolemaic astrology: a fanciful idea considerably at odds with what we know of Bach’s Lutheran mindset. A recording by no means to be rejected, but not as compelling as certain other interpretations.

Michael Maxwell Steer

*François Couperin, Pièces d'orgue*, Pieter Dirksen (organ), Toccata Records TRR 99025 (2021), 81'

*Echoes of Advent: Magnificat and chorale settings for organ from 17th-century and 18th-century Germany and France*, Douglas Hollick (organ), Riverrun Records RVRCD123 (2020), 78'

The first of these two CDs features François Couperin's only compositions for the organ, dating from 1690, just one year after he started receiving the same salary as organist of St Gervais as had his father, Charles (1638–79). These pieces are the *Messe pour les paroisses* and the *Messe propre pour les couvents*. Both have the traditional structure of Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei, with specific registrations provided by the composer. However, as pointed out by Pieter Dirksen in his CD booklet, the two works are stylistically well differentiated. The first one is intended for the ordinary use of parishes in solemn festivities ('à l'usage ordinaire de paroisses, pour le Festes Solemnelles'), while the second one is meant for convents ('Propre pour le Couvents de Religieux et Religieuses'), and in particular for two-manual organs. Dirksen's performance is technically impeccable, yet full of expression. The choice of the Andries Severijn organ of c.1650 in Cuijk is no coincidence, since it 'must have strongly reflected the organ in St Gervais as it was in Couperin's day', as remarked in the notes to the performance.

In contrast to the Dutch recording, the eclectic CD by Douglas Hollick offers a very broad selection of pieces, mostly for the season of Advent. As its title indicates, the works exhibit echoes, both personal and musical. The chronological spectrum ranges from Hieronymus Praetorius to Corrette, and also includes Schildt, Jacob Praetorius (son of Hieronymus), Guilain, Buxtehude, J. S. Bach and Scheidemann. The least known of them being the French organist Guilain, whose Magnificat in the form of a suite contrasts very effectively with the rest of the selection. As for the genres, there is a common denominator of Magnificats, although other pieces provide coherence to the programme: a Praeambulum by Jacob Praetorius, two by Scheidemann, and a Fantasia by Bach, among others. Hollick's playing is very imaginative and fresh, and definitely offers a very personal perspective of the music. The disc was recorded on the Metzler Organ in the Chapel of Trinity College, which was built in 1976, although pipework of previous historic instruments have been incorporated.

Pablo Padilla

*Handel's Eight Great Harpsichord Suites*. Bridget Cunningham (harpsichord), Signum Classics SIGCD 679 (2021), 154'

Sometimes one hears a recording for the first time, and immediately knows that it will be remarkable. Like the collections written by his German and French contemporaries, Handel's Suites for harpsichord stand at the high point of composition for the instrument. As such, they deserve an exceptional performance, and Bridget Cunningham brings a wide experience of the music of Handel's era to this project. She has conducted many Baroque works as Artistic Director of London Early Opera, and has several Handel recordings to her name on the Signum label. Cunningham demonstrates an extraordinary flair for bringing out the subtlety of feeling that eludes many players of the Suites, and manages to combine a commanding and apparently effortless technique with an instinctive sense of Handel's musical language.

This is a generous recording, a two-disc set that in addition to the 8 Suites also includes harpsichord settings of three pieces from Muzio Senevola, and keyboard versions of arias from *Floridante*, *Riccardo Primo*, and *Radamisto*, as well as the famous G major *Chaconne* (the latter particularly striking in the clear contrast of the crisp top lines with the rich warmth of the bass). The Suites are naturally the focus of the set, and there are too many highlights to describe in detail in a short review, so I shall mention just a few – those which were especially appreciated by this reviewer on a wet September afternoon. In the second suite, with its alternating Adagio/Allegro movements, Bridget brings out the pathos of the slow sections, but still does justice to the cheerful delicacy of the second movement, and the jaunty counterpoint of the fourth. The third Suite in D minor, with its French colouring, shows Handel's understanding of the work of his colleagues over the Channel, and includes the wonderful Air and Variations that sounds like a direct competitor to Rameau, whose *Gavotte à Six Doubles* (in A minor) would appear in the *Nouvelles Suites* only seven years after the publication of Handel's collection. The playing is beautifully idiomatic throughout, and there is no sense of exaggeration – for example in the *Harmonious Blacksmith* variations of Suite No.3, which players are often tempted to sensationalise.

Slow movements, such as the Sarabande of Suite No.7, are given space to breathe, without any fear of the brief silences that act as punctuation marks in the phrasing of the piece. In such richly textured harpsichord music as this, it makes a great difference when the player allows a chord to ring through its full duration, rather than being quickly overlaid with the next sound. Bridget always lets us



hear the instrument as well as the music, and the double-manual harpsichord built by Andrew Wooderson after Ruckers, tuned in a Neidhardt temperament, is an ideal choice. The sound is warm, clear, and sympathetically recorded, bringing the listener close to the harpsichord, yet maintaining a balanced tone. I listened to the CD version via speakers, headphones, and through the built-in speakers of a MacBook, and even the latter produced a multi-dimensional sound throughout the compass of the instrument.

The accompanying booklet provides an interesting and comprehensive account of the repertoire in the context of Handel's musical output, and reflects the interest these pieces aroused in Handel's own day. He felt obliged to publish them, partly because so many pirated editions were circulating - and because he could then benefit financially from their popularity.

There are of course quite a few other recordings of these suites, and many readers will know some of the classic versions by Kenneth Gilbert, Colin Tilney et al. Among recent issues, Bridget Cunningham's is one that stands out as a well-crafted and musically deeply committed performance. Above all, her playing conveys to the listener her love of these brilliant and astonishing pieces, and the recording does full justice to the music.

Paula Woods

***Johann Sebastian Bach: Das wohltemperierte Clavier 1*, Ulrika Davidsson (clavichord), organroxx ORG 08 (2021), 2 CDs, 130'**

***Light & Shade: Douglas Hollick plays clavichord music by C P E Bach, Jiří Benda and Haydn*, Douglas Hollick (clavichord), Riverrun RVRCD122 (2020), 67'**

***Clavichord Music from the Danish Golden Age*, Mats Damlund (clavichord), Helikon HCD 1100 (2022), 77'**

***An das Klavier*, Alissa Duryee (clavichord), with Emily Eagen (soprano), ADK 2020/1 (2020), 66'**

There are now several fine recordings of *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier* on clavichord, but any new one is of course most welcome. Ulrika Davidsson's Book 1, which will be followed by Book 2 in due course, was recorded in 2020 on a 'duo-clavichord' built by Joel Speerstra and Per-Anders Tärning in 2014, using surviving five-octave instruments by Johann Heinrich Silbermann as a model. The design involves building a pair of facing instruments in a single case (the same was done for a few harpsichords and fortepianos in the late 18th century), and this enables well-balanced duet

playing with excellent sight-lines. The temperament is Bach-Barnes. The performances are admirable, and there is just one concern about the recorded sound, a psychoacoustic feature which may not bother all listeners: either from the duo-design of the instrument, or from the space of the studio in Sweden, the notes are surrounded by a slight acoustic haze that means that one has to concentrate hard to hear the music, which becomes tiring after a while.

Douglas Hollick's survey of music by C. P. E. Bach, Jiří Benda and Haydn is on a different kind of historic instrument, a 1909 Dolmetsch-Chickering (after Hoffman, 1784) that formerly belonged to Christopher Hogwood. Hollick has fettled it since, to good effect, and it has an attractively bright tone, even if not that similar to the Hoffman original. The repertoire includes C. P. E. Bach's *Fantasia in C*, Wq.61/6, Haydn's *Sonatas* 23, 41 and 48, and Benda's *Sonata in F*. The performer's enjoyment of both the music and the instrument is well communicated, and the slightly dry acoustic provides plenty of clarity.

The next disc explores an important and neglected repertoire, that from the Northern reaches of Europe. While a large number of clavichords survive from Scandinavia, there are few recordings of the music that would have been played on them (Inger Grudin's 1998 CD *Stockholmsklaver* on the Hurv label is a noteworthy exception), so Mats Damlund's disc of 18th-century Danish music is very welcome. The repertoire includes Johann Abraham Peter Schulz's Op.1 set (six varied pieces, the first of which is very Bachian) and his Op.2 *Sonata*, together with an arrangement of Naumann's *Overture to Orpheus og Eurydike* and three works from the 1780s and 90s by Friedrich Ludwig Aemilius Kunzen. Two instruments are used, an original fretted Schmahl of c.1790 and a Joris Potvlieghé 'Saxon' design from 2011; the recorded sound provided for the latter is particularly good. Damlund makes an excellent case for this music as clavichord repertoire, and the recording will hopefully encourage further investigation of such composers.

The final disc in this group is Alissa Duryee's survey of music ranging from Buxtehude to the start of the 19th century, with several of the pieces having a strong Moravian connection; the reason for this is the historic instrument used, a clavichord by Johann Christian Meerbach of 17[9]9 now in the Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. As well as familiar fare such as Buxtehude's *Praeludium in G minor*, the second of Kuhnau's *Biblical Sonatas* and Bach's *Partita in E BWV 1006a*, the recording includes two anonymous sonatas from a 1753 Moravian source and a sonata in



A by Marianne Martinez. Duryee is joined by soprano Emily Eagen for two melancholy songs, with 'An das klavier' by Friederike Pallas specifically mentioning the consoling presence of the 'klavier'. As the performer's booklet notes mention, the instrument is both flattered and challenged by the music (the Bach in particular puts the Meerbach under some pressure, one notices); but the playing is expressive and highly controlled.

Francis Knights

**John Worgan: Complete Harpsichord Music, Julian Perkins (harpsichord), with Timothy Roberts (harpsichord), Toccata Classics TOCC 0375 (2021), 77'**

It is easy to feel a little sceptical when faced with a recording of music by a more or less forgotten composer. In the last few years, numerous minor masters have been rediscovered, and while some have proved a revelation, others have been less impressive. In the case of John Worgan (1724-90), there is no need for scepticism: while his surviving keyboard music is limited in quantity, and he has predictably been overshadowed by more famous names such as Handel, it is easy to see why he was highly regarded by his contemporaries. In these performances by Julian Perkins and Timothy Roberts, Worgan's music is consistently engaging, original and entertaining – as might be expected from a man who combined a career as a church organist with playing and composing for the Vauxhall pleasure gardens. Although his music clearly reveals the influence of his favourite composers – Scarlatti, Geminiani and even J. C. Bach – the often surprising, and sometimes quirky use he makes of their ideas produces music that is never a pastiche, or a dull echo of them.

Following his recording of Worgan's *Complete Organ Music* (Toccata TOCC 0332), Timothy Roberts joins Julian Perkins to divide the surviving harpsichord music between them for this recording. During the Covid lockdowns, Julian lifted the flagging spirits of many listeners by performing the *Six Sonatas for the Harpsichord* (1769) as a livestream, spread over several evenings. On this CD he precedes the set of six with Worgan's *Allegro non tanto* in D minor. The Sonatas often combine Scarlattian repetitions of melody with elegant structures and unexpected colourings. With decades of experience improvising both in church and at Vauxhall, Worgan knew how to create a sense of excitement in his music and hold the attention of his audience. Timothy Roberts then plays the series of thirteen *Pieces for the Harpsichord, composed purposely for forming the Hands of Young Pupils to that Instrument*. (1780). These 'lessons' progress in

difficulty, but should not be dismissed as a beginner's exercises: they are delightful miniatures in a similar style to the Sonatas, with hints of Scarlatti and J. C. Bach discernible – and no doubt intentionally so. The disc is rounded off with the three-movement *New Concerto* for the Harpsichord in G Major, published in 1785. This may well have sounded a little old fashioned by the time that it appeared, only five years before the composer's death, but is as eclectic as Worgan's other pieces, and immensely enjoyable.

The two performers have each included some illuminating and helpful notes in the booklet that accompanies the CD, and the music is played on two well chosen (and well prepared) harpsichords: a 1772 double-manual Kirckman, and another double, built by Klaus Ahrend, after Dulcken. With a choice of CD or downloadable formats, the recording is sensibly priced, and can be recommended for the quality of the recording as well as the novel, and massively entertaining music.

Paula Woods

**Kübl, nicht lau, Tami Krausz (flute) and Shuann Chai (fortepiano), with João Moreira (tenor), Matthijs van de Woerd (baritone) and Marc Pantus (bass baritone), Ramée RAM 1903 (2020), 67'**

*Kübl, nicht lau* (Cool, not lukewarm) might seem a somewhat enigmatic title for a disc, but this is the name of a small, whimsical canon that represents the connection between Friedrich Kuhlau and Ludwig van Beethoven, as presented here in works of both composers performed by Tami Krausz and Shuann Chai. Performing on period instruments, Chai plays on fortepianos by Johann Zahler (Brünn (Brno), c.1805), restored by Gijs Wilderom and by Michael Rosenberger (Vienna, c.1802), restored by Edwin Beunk; Tami Krausz plays on an eight-keyed flute made by Rudolf Tutz in 2000, after Heinrich Grenser (Dresden, c.1810).

It was in 1825 on a visit to Vienna that Kuhlau met Beethoven. In the disc's liner notes, Chai and Krausz explain that the 'inspiration to juxtapose the music of Beethoven and Kuhlau ... came from the delightful account of their first and only personal encounter'. It seems the two composers got on rather well, judging by their exchange of compositional canons as souvenirs. German-born Kuhlau had emigrated to Denmark and introduced much of Beethoven's music to audiences in that country.

The first work on the recording is Beethoven's *Serenade* in D major for piano and flute (or violin), Op.41, a piece

based on the composer's Op.25 for flute, violin and viola (c.1801, published in 1802). Due to its popular appeal, an arrangement was made a year later for flute and piano by another composer (possibly Franz Xaver Kleinheinz), corrected and approved by Beethoven himself and published as Op.41. Krausz and Chai's reading of the *Serenade* presents music of a young, carefree Beethoven (less familiar to listeners than the burdened person he was to become); here, a composer writing music possibly to entertain and delight guests attending a Viennese garden party. Light-hearted and recreational, this is nevertheless no background music in the hands of these two artists, who give rich expression to its jovial hide-and-seek banter, its naivety, its cantabile moments and almost folk-like dances as well as to the many contrasts created by textures and piano timbres. Displaying fine teamwork, Shuann and Krausz colour gestures with understated rhythmical flexing and some whimsical-but florid and imaginative ornamenting, the latter sitting well with the eight-keyed flute and on the easeful action of the *Zahler* fortepiano.

Considered the most important composer of flute music in the early 19th century, Friedrich Kuhlau has been referred to as 'Beethoven of the flute'. Of his some 300 works, more than a quarter include the flute - a favoured instrument of gentlemen amateurs of the early 19th century - thus ensuring the composer of some nice profits. The *Capriccio in D minor No.9 Op.10b* (published 1810) is one of Kuhlau's *12 Variations and Solos* for solo flute, a collection of pieces based on familiar French and German folk melodies. Krausz's performance of the *Capriccio* combines the piece's rich agenda of expressive writing with opportunities for bravura performance, as she fashions and defines each motif and phrase with involvement, appealing capriciousness, articulacy and with good articulation throughout the range of the instrument. Such writing suggests that Kuhlau must have been a virtuosic flautist. In 1814, however, the composer explained to his publisher Breitkopf & Härtel 'I play this instrument only a little, but I know it exactly'. On matters of the instrument, he is known to have consulted with the flautist of the Royal orchestra in Copenhagen.

In the late summer of 1826 Kuhlau moved to Lyngby, eight miles north of Copenhagen, where he spent his time composing and enjoying nature to the full in beautiful rural surroundings. One of the composer's most substantial works for flute and piano, the *Grande Sonate Concertante in A minor* for piano and flute Op.85 (1827), is a product of this period; it is the last of several sonatas composed for flute and piano. Krausz and Chai give vivid expression to Kuhlau's free use of musical ideas, to the work's grand gestures, charm,

changes of temperament and compelling textures, as in the opening movement (*Allegro con passione*), to the skipping, lilting, entertaining lightness of the *Scherzo*, to the tranquillity dictated by the *Adagio* and to the good-natured vivacity of the final movement (*Rondo*); in the latter, Chai makes economical but hearty use of the Rosenberger piano's drum-and-bell Janissary stop. In Krausz and Chai's hands, Kuhlau's rich harmonies, virtuosic writing and user-friendly melodiousness take on fluency, spontaneity, suave shaping and some lavish and elegant ornamentation. How alive this music emerges when performed on authentic instruments!

The title of Beethoven's *Canon à 3 Köhl, nicht lau* (Cool, not lukewarm) WoO191 is a play on Kuhlau's name. Written under the influence of a few glasses of champagne, the opening of the small canon's somewhat strange course, floating in and out of tonality, is based on the B-A-C-H cryptogram (B<sup>b</sup>, A, C, B natural). On this disc we hear pianist/mathematician Joris Weimar's reworking of the canon for three voices, with piano and flute. Referring to Weimar's arrangement of the canon, Chai and Krausz write: 'We hope that it brings modern-day listeners closer to a time when extemporization and musical riddles were a regular part of musicians' lives'. Recorded in Holland in 2019 under license to Outhere Music, the disc's lively, fresh and rich sound quality does justice to the artists' informed, profound and dedicated musicianship.

**Pamela Hickman**