

Harpsichord & *fortepiano*

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Reviews

BOOKS

Derek Remeš, *The Art of Preluding. Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Preludes in J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier I & II*, Leupold Editions LE500046/47 (Colfax, NC, 2021), 2 vols, 83 and 94 pages, \$39 and \$32, <https://theleupoldfoundation.org>

The use of pattern preludes (sequences of chords using repeated figuration) was part of composition and keyboard teaching in Germany during the first half of the 18th century, and Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* provides numerous examples; it is even possible to exchange the chords and the figuration of the C major Book I and C# major Book 2 preludes at sight (an exercise I set my students), to see how the composer explores slow-moving five-part chordal structures. Writers on Bach's two books have usually focused on the fugues, but Derek Remeš - who has been producing a large amount of invaluable Baroque didactic material in the past few years - here takes all the preludes as his topic, looking at them as models of compositional elaboration of figured bass technique. In order to make comparison between the works possible, all are normalized to C major or A minor, which is necessary for this kind of analysis but can be visually disturbing to those who know the original pieces well!

The format used is pairs of staves, Bach's original below and the author's reductive annotated analysis with figured bass aligned above (sometimes a further reduction is provided, as in the C# major prelude from Book 2); this is virtuoso typesetting, all impressively done by Remeš himself. After a clear prefatory text, and the use of some of the short preludes from BWV 924-943 as an introduction, the complete *Well-Tempered Clavier* preludes appear in sequence order (major keys in vol.1, minor keys in vol.2); separate bass-clef staves provide figured-bass reductions, which can be used as the basis of improvisation practice, exactly like those provided at the back of C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch* (and some of which are included by Remeš in an Appendix here).

These volumes will become an essential analytical resource for Bach scholars and for harmony and counterpoint students for decades to come; however, the sheer density of information provided should however not put off performers who just want to understand Bach's harmonic structures, or use his material for

improvisation: a patient, systematic approach to this material will pay huge dividends. The prices for these large-format paperback volumes (rather tightly bound) are not unreasonable, but be warned that direct postage to the UK might double that cost - there does not seem to be a British distributor.

Francis Knights

MUSIC

Marco Antonio Cavazzoni, ed Liuwe Tamminga, *Recerchari Mottetti Canzoni Libro Primo* (1523), **Il Levante Libreria Editrice TA23**, €25, www.illevante-libreria.it

In addition to composers whose birth or death anniversaries can be commemorated this year (particularly William Byrd, c.1542-1623), there are a few important publications the anniversaries of which are worthy of being commemorated. This slim volume of eight pieces composed by Marco Antonio Cavazzoni (c.1485-after 1569), is amongst them, being published in Venice in 1523. The second printed volume of keyboard pieces in Italy, it is extremely important in the history of keyboard music since its two Ricercari are the first compositions destined for the organ (although also playable on stringed keyboard instruments,, as mentioned in preface) that are not related to previously existing vocal models.

The starts with two Ricercars of 127 and 150 double bars respectively, not imitative as later examples of the form, but, like early lute compositions, closer to a Toccata with homophonic writing including six-note chords, and running passages, sometimes in two voices, against held chords producing some delightful dissonances. Each is followed by a Marian *Motet Salve Virgo* and *O Stella Maris* of 73 and 120 bars respectively, *O Stella Maris* containing 18 bars in triple time towards the end. The motets generally proceed in two or three part texture with more imitative passages, and in slower note values. They are in the same key as the preceding Ricercar, raising the possibility that they were intended to be performed as a pair.

These are followed by four intabulations of songs, including *Perdone moi sie folie*, *Madame vous aves mon cuer*, *Plus ne regres* and *Lautre yor per un matin* of 82, 89, 66

and 100 double bars respectively; unfortunately no details of the originals are given in the introduction and they appear to be unknown. They contain more passages in two voices, but there are similarities between them and the Ricercars in the thick chords against running quavers. These sound very well on a 4' Principal and Flute. All of the pieces in the volume feature scale passages, and written out trills in quavers with a varied number of repercussions. The pieces are presented in the original note values, a welcome point, but notes are beamed together where appropriate rather than individually as in the original.

The edition by Liuwé Tamminga, the Dutch musicologist and specialist in the early Italian repertoire who very sadly died in 2021 at the age of 68, contains an introduction placing the work in its historical context, a detailed critical commentary and a facsimile of the original print, well worth studying to look at forms of accidentals amongst others. Unfortunately it does not contain any helpful notes on registration or on the implications of the occurrence of notes above top A up to F, lacking on Italian Renaissance organs (and harpsichords) and possible contemporary interpretation. The volume also contains the majestic toccata-like *Recercada* found in the manuscript at Castell Arquato, and a facsimile of this dramatically imposing piece. The printing of this portrait-format volume is very clear. The pieces are well worth the study required and should take their place in recitals this year.

John Collins

Louis Couperin, ed Jon Baxendale, *Pièces de clavecin*, Lyrebird Music LBMP-035 (2022), €55, <https://lyrebirdmusic.com>

Lyrebird music's release of Louis Couperin's *Pièces de clavecin* last year marks something of a milestone for this key 17th-century repertoire. This impressive publication, incorporating significant departures from earlier editions, offers something truly new to the field.

The two principal sources of Louis Couperin's harpsichord music are the so-called Bauyn and Parville manuscripts. As detailed in the Preface, it is difficult to assess which of these sources is more authoritative, given that both contain errors of repetition and omission. Bauyn has been chosen as the principal source here since, as the editor explains, watermark analysis proves it to be the earlier of the two.

In all of Lyrebird's editions, there is a mission to present as many visual aspects of the source material as possible. Players will see a significant difference in the appearance

and layout of the pieces compared with, for example, Alan Curtis' edition for *Le Pupitre*, especially in terms of original beaming and ornamentation. This style of presentation allows readers to be influenced by subtleties such as hand shapes, articulation and gesture. The issue of ornamentation is challenging in these pieces, given that the Bauyn manuscript is nearly bereft of ornaments. None are added here by the editor, but those present in the Parville manuscript have been transferred where sensible. Players using this edition will be confident to add their own, using ideas for guidance in the Preface.

Referencing the debates of the past decade, Baxendale's introduction concisely counters Glen Wilson's argument (in his *Early Keyboard Journal* article 'The Other Mr Couperin', 2013) that Charles (not Louis) Couperin might be composer of these pieces. Demurring, Baxendale refers to the 'restricted' and liturgical style of organ music of this period, believing that 'organ music was restricted in style because it had to be functional' and that the "new, modish and experimental" nature of the compositional language of the harpsichord goes some way to explain the difference in nature of Louis' organ works. Fundamentally, he disagrees with Wilson's argument that the Louis' missing forename in either principal source points to a different authorship, Louis' brother Charles (father of François *le Grand*).

The prefaces of Lyrebird's edition have earned a strong reputation for their detailed insight into performance practice. Here, Baxendale discusses rhetoric with regards to his harpsichord music in a far more detailed way than his forebears, and his comments on the rhetorical language of the preludes is a significant contribution to the pedagogical field on these works. His didactic writing here is inspired, and guides readers/players in areas from harmonic direction, use of tempo/movement, breathing/phrasing and inequality, to figures of speech and rhythmic devices, drawing on examples in a compelling way.

The notation of Couperin's preludes is notoriously difficult to interpret. Baxendale's section on these pieces features diagrams with coloured notes to indicate the main progressions. Relating this to the score, he suggests meanings for the curved and vertical lines, helping players interpret groupings appropriately. For him, it is the placing of the curved lines, not their meaning, which is sometimes ambiguous. He guides his reader into the intricacies of declamation, harmonic working, ornamental shapes and fingering.

This quality release sits well within the rapidly growing Lyrebird Music catalogue, which encompasses a range

of keyboard repertoire, ranging from 16th-century collections to César Franck. The print quality is high, with a clear typeface and thoughtful pagination. This well-priced edition reflects a huge amount of original research, care and detailed preparation, with issues of performance practice at its core. I would recommend this publication highly to keyboard players who would like to get closer to the original notation of the sources. This edition, equally suitable for the seasoned player and less experienced, will satisfy every thinking musician.

Thomas Allery

RECORDINGS

William Tisdale: Music for Virginal, Charles Metz (virginal), navona records NV6330 (recorded 2020), 79'
The Fall of the Leaf: English Keyboard Music on the Rucellai virginal, Giulia Nuti (virginal), Arcana A532 (2022), 54'

Tisdale's Virginal Book survives as part of a larger manuscript now in Cambridge University Library, once owned by John Bull in c.1600; it was edited by Alan Brown for Stainer & Bell in 1966. Charles Metz's new CD is its first complete recording, and the 20-odd pieces are here supplemented by five other Tisdall works from the contemporary Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. The composers identified (five pieces are anonymous) include Byrd, Dowland, Edward and Robert Johnson, Lassus, Marchant, Morley and Randall, with a number of pieces being arrangements of vocal or lute works.

Little documentation survives regarding the composer William Tisdale (or Tisdall): although there were two persons of that name working in London at the end of the 16th century, it is likely that (whatever the variant spelling of his surname) Tisdale/Tisdall were the same musician. The seven keyboard pieces by him represent his complete surviving keyboard works, and show him to have been a composer of considerable skill and imagination, especially in the *Pavana Chromatica Mrs. Katherin Tregian* (taken from the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, with its connections to copyist Francis Tregian).

The C/E-f virginals used by Charles Metz on this recording dates from c.1590, and although unsigned is - to judge by comparison with other extant instruments - by the prolific Florentine builder Francesco Poggi (d.1634). Remarkably, it was unknown before being found in an antique shop in Illinois in 2005. An interior note documents a previous 1891 restoration, which

seems to have included adding a lid painting and an incongruous 18th-century style decorative scheme and stand. Since thoroughly restored to working order, it is a welcome addition to the roster of original Italian Renaissance virginals.

Charles Metz has doctorates in both optometry and music, and has decades of experience as an early keyboard specialist. His performances here lack something in flair, and could have engaged with the Tisdale manuscript better: while there may not have been room on the disc to include varied repeats of all those dances that invite them, surely this would have been an ideal opportunity to play all of the ornaments written in the source, and make some distinction between the single- and double-stroke indications (the exact meaning of which is not clear), rather than providing just mordents and short trills.

Complete Tudor manuscript recordings are rare (although Lady Nevell's Book has been done twice and the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book once), so this CD not only focuses attention on the little-played Tisdale source, but provides useful performances of his music, and introduces a newly-discovered instrument.

Giulia Nuti's comparable virginal disc is also a Tudor anthology, this time selected from a wide variety of sources, including the inevitable Fitzwilliam Virginal Book. The 19 tracks cover music by Dowland (six arrangements by Anon, Byrd, Peerson, Richardson and Wilbye) and his Tudor contemporaries, including Byrd, John Tomkins, Amner, Campion, Morley and Harding. Two short Tisdall works (an Alman and Coranto) duplicate Metz's CD, while the most substantial pieces include Byrd's florid setting of *The Bells* (on a two-note ground), Amner's *O Lord in thee is all my trust* and the premiere recording of the ornate variations on *John, come kiss me now* by Thomas Tomkins' brother, John.

The anonymous virginal used here (possibly from Naples, or by Francesco Poggi - again!) of c.1590, is now in private ownership; it was discovered in the attic of the Palazzo Rucellai in Florence in the 1980s in remarkable condition. There are three partial black-and-white photos of the instrument in the booklet, and it is a pity there is no full colour picture, as the decorative detail looks most attractive. The tone is excellent, and the virginal is in fine playing condition, thanks to maintainer/tuner Thomas Steiner. 54' may seem rather short measure, but Giulia Nuti is an excellent guide to the repertoire, by turns virtuosic, charming or plaintive. The recorded sound is much more attractive than that of the Metz disc, making this a better choice all round

for anyone wishing to sample the English virginalist repertoire.

Francis Knights

Alessandro Scarlatti: L'estro intelligente, Toccatas, Marcello Di Lisa (harpsichord), CPO 555 401-2 (recorded 2019), 57'

Alessandro Scarlatti, Opera omnia per tastiera, vol. VII, Francesco Tasini (harpsichord/organ), Tactus TC 661991 (recorded 2015/2019), 114'

Alessandro Scarlatti is probably best known for his vocal music and as the father of Domenico. His instrumental music, and in particular his keyboard music, not as famous, represents nevertheless an important part of his compositional output. The latter includes mostly *toccatte* and other genres both for harpsichord and organ (not always clearly distinguished). The virtuoso character of these pieces is evident, with the *toccatte* seeming very much improvisations turned into written compositions. On this disc Marcello Di Lisa, using an instrument by Franco Barucchieri after Giovanni Battista (1693), delivers impeccable performances; the clarity of his phrasing and articulation are striking, but perhaps the most notable feature is the precise choice of tempi, combined with a subtle and tasteful rubato. Di Lisa succeeds in presenting Alessandro Scarlatti as a great master of counterpoint.

Francesco Tasini's two-CD set represents the final output of the project *Opera Omnia per tastiera* (complete works for keyboard) by Alessandro Scarlatti, carried out in collaboration with his co-editor Andrea Macinanti. It is indeed a valuable recording, containing mostly fugues on the first disc, and on the second *partite*, one Andante, a *tastatura* and several *toccatte*. The set forms a very interesting contrast with the previous recording, using as it does both harpsichord (Anon, 18th century) and organ; the latter is late in date for the music (Caarlo Serassi (1836), in the Basilica di S. Maria di Campagna, Piacenza) but sounds well enough. Registration is carefully chosen, and brings out the contrapuntal character of the works very effectively. The partimento-type fugues constitute an interesting catalogue of models for the teaching of this form, and it is appropriate that the source containing these pieces survives at the conservatory S. Pietro a Majella in Naples. This recording definitely fills a gap in the discography and provides a new perspective on the composer.

Pablo Padilla

Johann Sebastian Bach: The Well-Tempered Clavier I, Cristiano Holtz (harpsichord), Ramée RAM1912 (rec 2019), 123'

The first 24 of the 48 - there can hardly be a more

emblematic work in the keyboard literature. Even though its date and place of origin are well established - Cöthen, 1722 - there are many unknowns around it, beginning with the keyboard for which it was intended. It has been conjectured that the natural choice is the harpsichord, a statement that seems consistent with many idiomatic passages, but the presence of occasional pedal notes would imply that Bach also had in mind the organ, or an instrument with a pedalboard. It has even been suggested that the *Well-Tempered Clavier* was meant as much a thesaurus of compositional styles or as a practical composition treatise, as to be performed on any particular instrument. Whether it was primarily intended for practical or pedagogical purposes, the fact is that it has had a profound influence on many later composers, Beethoven and Chopin being two of the best known. It is still a common practice in conservatory courses to orchestrate one of the fugues as an exercise. Ironically, the unresolved meaning of the 'temperament' mentioned in the title is still the subject of endless discussions.

Leaving aside such musicological questions, it is worth recalling that the *Well-Tempered Clavier* has been recorded on many different keyboard instruments, including harpsichord, clavichord, organ and piano. In this context, one of the most remarkable features of Cristiano Holtz's performance is the subtlety of dynamic effects that he is able to obtain from the harpsichord by using a variety of arpeggiation patterns and carefully chosen registrations. The performer points out in his notes that the very few extant indications that Bach left on registration (mainly for organ) had a profound influence on his interpretation. This can genuinely be appreciated in the recording, part of Holtz's stylistically balanced performance. Both the contrast between the preludes and fugues, and the contrapuntal structure of the latter, are very effectively brought out, without any exaggerations. The natural question to ask is, what will Holtz now do with the last 24 of the 48?

Pablo Padilla

Friedrich Wilhelm Rust, Sonate per il clavicembalo, Davide Pozzi (harpsichord), MV Cremona 022-59 (2022), 64'

Ernst Wilhelm Wolf, Selected works for clavier, Flóra Fábri (tangent piano), CPO 555 409-2 (2022), 72'

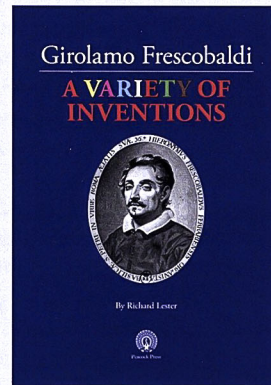
Two albums present some relative rarities of the second half of the 18th century: keyboard works by Friedrich Wilhelm Rust and Ernst Wilhelm Wolf. Both are representatives of a broader circle of musicians influenced by Bach's sons: the former was a pupil of Wilhelm Friedemann, the latter a friend of Carl Philip

Emmanuel. However, the comparison illustrates how diverse this generation of musicians was.

In the disc of keyboard sonatas by Rust, Davide Pozzi chooses the harpsichord (in this case, one by Keith Hill after Conrad Fleischer) over the clavichord. This choice proves especially felicitous for the exuberant experiments in virtuosity on display in many of the sonatas recorded on this disc. The liner note mentions Rust's travels in Italy in 1755–56 and his encounters with figures such as Tartini, Pugnani and Padre Martini. Indeed, even an innocent ear will discern in Rust's idiom a certain strikingly ornate, joyous and almost anarchical character that puts one in mind of Scarlatti and Italian masters. To see how effectively Pozzi's performances bring to life these qualities, look no further than the raucously ornamented repeats he gives in the Sonata in E^b major. There are, however, a few blemishes to deplore in the presentation. The tracks seem to have been mislabelled in the otherwise well-printed and informative booklet: the Sonatas in G minor and E^b major do not appear in the same order on the booklet as they do on the CD.

Flóra Fábri's disc, featuring compositions written by Ernst Wilhelm Wolf between 1774 and 1785, invites us to reconsider an old artistic feud. When the younger and headstrong Goethe arrived in 1775 at the court of Karl-August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Wolf was *Kapellmeister* and had held a variety of positions under the patronage of the duke's mother. The encounter between the two artists was not amicable. Goethe berated Wolf's 'stupidity' and 'reprehensible self-importance'. In this recording, we hear a compendium of sonatas and a Fantasia with Theme and Variations. Listening, it is possible to imagine how Wolf's idiom, steeped in *Sturm und Drang*, but influenced by contrapuntal craft and baroque dance forms, might have repelled an early standard-bearer of enlightenment classicism. Fábri plays a tangent piano by Christoph Friedrich Schmahl on this recording. Made in 1790, it claims the distinction of being the only 18th-century example to survive in largely original form. Perhaps one of the most distinctive and interesting features of this disc is the extraordinary range of sonorities Fábri conjures on this instrument: stormy outbursts are given a percussive incisiveness, while playing on the 'unleathered' tangents gives lyrical movements a warm intimacy.

Pierre Riley



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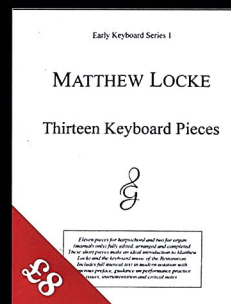
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