

Early Music Today' (December 09/January 2010 edition):

"With a comprehensive recording of John Bull's extensive and varied keyboard pieces long overdue, this first volume of Complete Works for keyboard makes a welcome addition to the library shelves.

Often described as the 'Liszt of the virginals', Dr Bull's music, while predominantly melancholic in character, is extraordinary for its virtuosity and intellect, two qualities which harpsichordists Peter Watchorn and Mahan Esfahani bring in abundance to this recording. The two-CD set features some highlights in Bull's output, notably the *Walsingham* Variations and the celebrated pavans and galliards to Lord Lumley and Elizabeth I. Other shorter pieces include folk song settings *Why Ask You?* and the wistful *Bonny Sweet Robin*. These provide a good contrast to the autobiographical pieces such as *My Grief and My Selfe*, culminating in *Bull's Goodnight*. Performances throughout are characterised by musical clarity and a sensitivity to phrasing, punctuated by sparkling dashes of virtuosity. The varied timbres of three different harpsichords, two after Hans Moermans (1642 and 1584) and a 1646 Ruckers copy (rebuilt by Blanchet in 1756), draw the listener into the early 17th-century sound world, while providing welcome aural refreshment."