

de clavecin were published in two volumes in London in 1714 and appeared shortly afterwards in Hamburg as *Matthesons Harmonisches Denckmahl* ('Harmony's Monument'); Handel is said to have rushed off and played them all through as soon as he could lay hands on a copy. The air from the Fifth Suite was orchestrated by Stokowski and also recorded on a 78 in a version for violin and piano. Bradford Tracey recorded four suites in the early 1980s, but these two new CDs provide stronger evidence of Mattheson's skill as a keyboard composer, especially in the first complete recording of all twelve suites by Colin Booth.

There is considerable variety in the make-up of these works. The opening improvisatory-style movements are given a variety of titles, from Prelude and Fantasie to Tocatine, Symphonie, Overture, Fugue and Boutade, and this range of names reflects a variety of styles: for example, the Symphonie that opens the Tenth Suite in E minor begins with short chords and rests before taking up a slightly more conventional dotted passage, while the Fugue from the Eleventh Suite in C major contains some strange twists and unexpected progressions. However, I am not convinced by Colin Booth's suggestion that this Fugue was intended to be so bizarre that the penultimate note's accidental, later corrected by Mattheson, was a deliberate comic effect rather than an unintentional error on the part of the printer. There is similar variety in Mattheson's choice of movements: every suite has an allemande and courante, sometimes with ornamental doubles, while only around half have a sarabande and several lack a gigue. The airs and minuets show Mattheson's gift for melody, which sometimes has a Handelian quality, as in the sarabande of the Eighth Suite. Two of the minuets have strange chromatic progressions and sudden shifts of harmony, while perhaps the most unusual feature comes in the final suite in which three of its movements, albeit with some alterations, are actually by Mattheson's contemporary Georg Böhm.

We are fortunate in having two strong interpreters of this music. I listened to Cristiano Holtz first; he plays on an instrument made by Bruce Kennedy after Michael Mietke (1702/4), and very good it sounds. Holtz provides persuasive performances, and he captures the moods of the different dances well with considerable sensitivity. However, in many movements Colin Booth takes us up a gear. To start with, this is a complete set of all twelve suites on two CDs, and he uses two harpsichords built in his own workshop—a brass-strung two-manual instrument modelled on an original single-manual harpsichord by Christian Vater (Hanover, 1738), and an iron-strung copy of an earlier 1681 instrument by Antoine Vaudry. This choice provides greater tonal variety, though they are

both rather closely recorded, something especially noticeable when listening on headphones. Both players make use of a buff stop, sometimes for the same piece (for example, the air from the Fifth Suite and the minuet from the Sixth, although in the latter case Booth uses an attractive combination of stops across the two keyboards). In many cases, when comparing the same pieces, I found myself favouring Booth: he manages a greater improvisatory feel in some of the opening movements, being particularly impressive in the torrents of notes that form the Prelude of the Second Suite in A major. He manages a real sense of cantabile in some of the slower movements, shaping the melodies expertly, while providing energy and verve in the quicker movements: the sarabande and the gigue (with its interesting chromatic twists) in the First Suite illustrate this well, with sensitive shaping of the former and a real edge to the latter, which ends up about ten seconds faster than Holtz's version. Booth has a fine grasp of rubato and ornamentation, especially the use of inequality in varying degrees for different contexts, and his approach always seems to grow naturally from a genuinely Matthesonian sense of rhetoric. While Holtz's recording is attractive and may appeal to those who do not want more than 75 minutes of harpsichord suites in their collection, I find it hard to imagine Booth's approach being bettered, or there being a more persuasive advocate for this underrated music. A minor gripe is that it would be nice to have timings for the individual tracks and suites, and a biographical note on Booth, but with performances like this that is a small price to pay.

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Rohan Stewart-MacDonald

Existing threads and new leads in the Romantic repertory

Reviewing this set of discs meant picking up certain threads from two previous reviews in this journal (November 2010 and February 2011), comparing different interpretations of works by Schumann and Chopin, responding to unfamiliar

repertory and returning to favourite works presented in new guises. Of these four activities, the first was straightforward, the second complex and sometimes hazardous, the third and the fourth highly rewarding.

Jan Vermeulen's **Schubert: Works for fortepiano, vol.6** (Et'cetera KTC1335, *rec* 2009–10, 122') and Hardy Rittner's **Brahms: Late piano works, vol.3** (Dabringhaus and Grimm MDG904 1680-6, *rec* 2010, 75') perpetuated my previously positive reactions to other volumes. In vols.3–5, Vermeulen, playing on an 1826 Streicher fortepiano, substituted 'the balmy, insipid legato serenity' (February 2011, p.136) of typical Schubert performance with something much more invigorating by energizing accompanimental figuration, zealously embracing histrionic gestures and deftly handling Schubert's frequent changes of tone colour. Vol.6, again mixing in sonatas with shorter compositions, boasts the same qualities. An outstanding feature of vol.1 of Rittner's Brahms series, the pianist's handling of the lower dynamic ranges, was replicated in vol.3, where he moves between pianos by Schweighofer's Söhne (1876–7) and Streicher (1870). In the Intermezzo op.118 no.2, Rittner achieves audible variety within an extremely restricted dynamic range. He also achieves satisfactory clarity in the faster figuration of op.116 no.7, and op.118 nos.3 and 6, despite the instruments' considerable resonance.

Comparing the two versions of Schumann's *Sinfonische Etüden*, op.13—Malcolm Frager on **Schumann: Works for fortepiano** (Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina NIFCCD100, *rec* 1970s, *issued* 2011, 43'), and Jan Vermeulen on **Schumann: Works for fortepiano** (Accent ACC24238, *rec* 2010, 133')—was complicated by memories from my musically formative years of Ivo Pogorelich's 1983 Deutsche Grammophon version, whose eccentricities include a polarized approach to tempo whereby the more energetic variations are helter-skelter (especially Variation v), while others are almost unduly slow. Unlike Frager (and Pogorelich), Vermeulen includes the five 'appendix' variations; Frager selects the 1852 version of the work with its differing finale. Vermeulen's resuscitation of Schumann's original tempos means that the dotted rhythms of Variation vii emerge at a similar speed to those in 'Vogel als Prophet' from the *Waldszenen*, op.82. Vermeulen's fortepiano is by Johann Nepomuk Tröndlin (1830s); Frager's instrument, by Rosenberger (1845), has a less even tone. Its weak tenor register impedes the projection of inner voices (especially in Variation iii), and sometimes melodic notes stick out, along with other rasps and jangles from the instrument's mechanism. Frager's accents verge on the unpleasant in Variation ii. His speed in Variation vii is similar to Vermuelen's, while Variation

vi is slower. Adjusting to Vermeulen's and Frager's Variation vii was difficult because Pogorelich's was exceptionally slow; but I did come to value the less magisterial approaches of the present performers. Vermeulen also maintains a moderate tempo in Variation ix, whereas Frager is slower (Pogorelich considerably so). Vermuelen's approach avoids weighing down the left hand's demisemi-quaver figuration and gives the broadly arched melody greater coherence. Vermeulen also ends the variation with a wash of pedal, catching the left hand's C^x as an unresolved dissonance: an intriguing effect.

A large slice of Chopin's solo piano output is encompassed by Howard Shelley's **Fryderyk Chopin: Sonaty** (Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina NIFCCD022, *rec* 2009, 80'), Tatiana Shebanova's **Fryderyk Chopin: Polonezy; Rondo C-dur; Mazurki** (Narodowy Instytut Fryderyka Chopina NIFCCD018, *rec* 2009–10, 77'), Daniel Grimwood's **Fryderyk Chopin: 24 Preludes** (SFZ Music SFZMO210, *rec* 2009, 58'), the first six tracks of **Fryderyk Chopin: Piano Concerto no.2 on Pleyel piano and string quintet** (Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments Collection Series 35 LMCD-1942, *rec* 2010, 74') and the first four of Viviana Sofronitzky and Sergei Istomin's **Fryderyk Chopin: Complete works for cello and piano** (Passacaille 968, *rec* 2010, 65'). Shelley's technical command of all three of Chopin's solo sonatas is characteristically impeccable. Excessive rubato does intrude into the climax of the opening movement of the Sonata in B^b minor, but the central section of the B minor sonata's slow movement is memorable. Shelley's maintenance of the pace and curtailment of pedalling avoids the cloying sentimentality of some performances.

Of the solo Chopin players the very recently deceased Tatiana Shebanova (playing polonaises, mazurkas and other compositions on an Érard fortepiano from 1849) seemed to me the most outstanding. Compared with Kikuko Ogura on the Hamamatsu discs (see below), Shebanova instils more flexibility of speed and rhythm and more subtle dynamic shading: in places like the first solo of the Concerto in F minor, Ogura's approach to tempo can verge on the strait-jacketed, and accompaniments can be overly conspicuous: a slightly plodding sensation emanates from parts of the Barcarolle in F[#] major, and the canon in the Ballade in F minor seemed prosaic rather than mysterious. For me, Shebanova also outstripped Sofronitsky's performance of the Polonaise in C[#] minor, op.26. Shebanova's performance time of 7'55" considerably exceeds Sofronitzky's 5'56": she takes the central section slower but sustains the melody better and gives the 'Polonaise' rhythms more uplift.

With Daniel Grimwood (playing here on an 1851 Érard) one never feels entirely safe: Grimwood's radicalism (evident in the well informed if slightly pugnacious liner notes) is to be commended, at least in principle. Surprises, ranging from the piquant to the inspiring, included the densely foggy reprise of the Prelude no.18 in A^b major, through which the tolling bass-note resounds, and the central section of no.15 in D^b major where Grimwood goes further even than Alain Planès (Harmonia Mundi) in restraining the *fortes* to avoid the sledge-hammer approach of some performances. Grimwood achieves a more coherent large-scale vision of the Barcarolle than Ogura, preserving the work's rapturous coda by curbing its earlier A major statement: Ogura is noisier here, and the eventual tonic transposition is inflated to the point of slight harshness. Grimwood also achieves more finesse with the ostinato accompaniment than Ogura. Grimwood's faster preludes are sometimes too headlong and indistinct, but my only unequivocally negative comment concerns the careless editing of the liner notes; the most egregious error is a sentence at the bottom of one page that peters out halfway through.

My curiosity gravitated inexorably towards the performances of Chopin's piano concertos with string quintet on **Chopin: Piano Concerto no.2 on Pleyel piano and string quintet** (Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments Collection Series 35 LMCD-1942, *rec* 2010, 74') and **Chopin: Piano Concerto no.1 as chamber music, with Pleyel piano** (Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments Collection Series 9 LMCD-1828, *rec* 2006, 69'). Both sets of liner notes recount the 19th-century tradition of performing the string and solo parts only of concertos; Chopin himself is known to have performed his concertos as chamber works as well as with full orchestra (William G. Atwood, *Fryderyk Chopin: pianist from Warsaw* (New York, 1987), pp.43, 218). When you are used to hearing concertos with full orchestra, the initial reaction is grudging acceptance; suddenly the familiar melodies of the *tuttis* are scantily clad, the five players frantically scrubbing away to replicate the power and weight of an orchestral ensemble. The first *tutti* of Chopin's Concerto no.2 in F minor, with its missing inner voices, was the musical equivalent of a holey vest. Usefully enough, though, the chamber versions indirectly challenge scholarly convention by insinuating the competence and relative sophistication of Chopin's orchestral scoring, traditionally branded as dull and inept—because one soon comes to miss the woodwind and brass solos where, as Gerald Abraham once acknowledged, the strings 'provide ... a canvas on which solo wind ... embroiders a delicate

melodic tracery' ('Chopin and the orchestra', in *The book of the First International Musicological Congress devoted to the works of Frederick Chopin* (Warsaw, 1963), pp.85–6). The adoption by the viola of the famous horn call heralding the coda of the Concerto in F minor is one excruciatingly awkward bit of rearrangement. Another drawback is that the piano's periodic provision of indispensable wind and brass parts in the opening *tutti* of the same concerto, following the directions of the edition chosen for the performance, steals the thunder from the true solo entry which, in the F minor concerto, sounded more like a cough and splutter than the imposing acrobatic manoeuvre it is conceived to be. Repeated hearings did lead to gradual acclimatization, helped along by the magnetism of Ogura's rendering of the more virtuoso sections of the Concerto no.1 in E minor where she transcended every performance I can recall in vitality, drive and technical flair. The second half of the first solo where (as in most concertos of the period) the secondary key's cadential articulation is reiterated with increasingly ornate figuration, seems exciting rather than embarrassingly prolix. After many repeated hearings it finally occurred to me that a large part of Ogura's success lies in her treatment of the second theme—which (notoriously) is introduced in the tonic major, to be transferred to the relative major in the recapitulation, reversing convention and supposedly revealing Chopin's ephemeral grasp of large-scale structure during his 'Warsaw period'. Ogura somehow makes sense of the key scheme, because she gives the E major statement a kind of luminescent intensity and allows the later G major transposition to relax.

Similarly dizzy heights were not quite reached in the Concerto in F minor, parts of which seemed weighed down. In the first solo of the opening movement more fluctuation of speed and tone was called for, especially later on when Chopin vacillates between the relative major and minor dominant as competing secondary key areas. The finale seemed on the slow side, particularly in the developmental region following the mazurka section where things could have picked up. The coda also seemed a gear too low, although my experiences were again being conditioned by ingrained memories of Pogorelich's fast speeds in his 1981 recording: he is one of the very few pianists who does not slow down for the series of chromatic, spread diminished 7ths near the end. Ogura's second movement is, however, very successful, with intense treatment of the quasi-recitative section where the reduced string group managed a more unanimous and therefore gripping *tremolando* than is achievable with a larger ensemble.

On the cusp of the genuinely unfamiliar repertory lies an assortment of early Chopin works. Shelley's disc includes the Sonata in C minor, op.4; the Piano Trio in G minor, op.8, appears on one of the Hamamatsu discs; the Variations on *Der Schweizerbub* and Rondo in C major, op.73, are included by Shebanova, with several early compositions for cello and piano opening the disc by Sofronitsky and Istomin. Juxtaposing Chopin works preceding 1830 with post-1830 ones is commendable and instructive—particularly given the saturnine tone of scholarly assessments of Chopin's 'Warsaw period' of 1817–30 (John Rink, 'Tonal architecture in the early music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge, 1992), p.80). One is certainly struck by an alien harmonic simplicity in, say, the Rondo, op.73, and the unorthodox approach to large-scale key relations in the early sonata-type movements (including the concertos) is well established. Gratifyingly, none of the performers seem to construe these works as insignificant 'stocking fillers' or peculiar asides. Whereas some pianists scud through the outer movements of the Sonata in C minor like a dose of salts, as if keen to get onto the more succulent meat of the other two sonatas, Shelley's performance is admirable shapely and nuanced; he clearly respects the sonata's rightful position alongside its two more famous companions. Ogura's fiery approach to transitional figuration in the E minor concerto also galvanizes the development of the first movement of the Piano Trio (where she is joined by Takeshi Kiriya and Kaoru Hanazaki). Of the first three cello and piano pieces included by Sofronitsky and Istomin, the *Introduction et Polonaise Brillante* in C major, op.3, is particularly impressive. Using for this track a copy of a Graf fortepiano from c.1819, Sofronitsky produces crystal clear figuration which, combined with crisp dynamic contrasts from both players, bestows an air of extroversion and panache. This disc ends with the Cello Sonata, op.65, from the opposite chronological extreme and representing the opposing face of Chopin's output, when increasingly problematic compositional gestations had caused the 'late' style to give way to Jeffrey Kallberg's (negatively charged and arguably disenfranchising) 'last style' ('Chopin's last style', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, xxxviii/2 (1985), p.133). Istomin and Sofronitsky's first movement lacks the flexibility of tempo found in the 1994 recordings by Maria Kliegel and Bernd Glemser (Naxos) and Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax (Sony); but their scherzo is taught and spicy, and the lyricism of their trio section buoyed rather than pinned down and milked (as it slightly is by Ma and Ax).

The more distant repertorial realms here include a piano trio by Sigismund Thalberg, recorded alongside Robert Schumann's well-known Piano Quartet op.47, by the Atlantis Trio & Ensemble on the disc **Robert Schumann: Piano Quartet in E-flat major, op.47; Sigismund Thalberg: Piano Trio in A major, op.69** (Musica Omnia MO0211, rec 2006–8, 58'). Although performed with conviction throughout by the ensemble, parts of Thalberg's Trio are marred by excessive rhythmic reiteration and stasis, and the first movement's development seems like an elongated *smörgåsbord* of references to the exposition, logical in principle but flaccid in effect. The lyrical second movement, permitting a looser construction, stands out more strongly, as does the unusual finale, a quasi-scherzo with two trios. The performance of Schumann's Piano Quartet is extremely fine. The ensemble's springy rhythms and clearly projected motivic exchanges exploit the thematic intricacy of this 'cyclic' composition, whose thematic processes are very well explained in John Daverio's liner notes, which include a concise schematic diagram of the slow movement's structure. Syrupy sentimentality in this movement is avoided by projection of the piano bass's dotted rhythms during the reprise, by adequate maintenance of the tempo and by clear demarcation of the quasi-canonic exchanges. Gratifyingly, the players put the explicitly 'learned', contrapuntal mentality of this movement before its sentimental qualities, sustaining what is, in Schumann's Quartet, something of a motivic/contrapuntal *tour de force*.

The high point of this reviewing experience was my initiation to Clara Wieck's Piano Concerto in A minor, op.7, and her *Konzertsatz* for Piano and Orchestra in F minor. Both appear on **Schumann's chamber music** (Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments Collection Series 16 LMCD-1868, rec 2008, 64'). The origins of the concerto stretch back to January 1833 when the composer was still only 13 years old. The first portion to be written was the third movement; the first two movements were added later and the concerto was published in its final form in 1837. The Leipzig edition from this year is used for the present recording. Writers concur about the stylistically radical qualities of Wieck's concerto: whereas the juvenilia of Mozart and Mendelssohn were derivative, the 'construction of Wieck's op.7 ... breaks the mold of conventional concerto form and places her conception of the genre among the most radical of her time' (Stephan Lindeman, *Structural novelty and tradition in the early Romantic piano concerto* (Stuyvesant, 1999), p.129). Like some concertos by Mendelssohn, Moscheles, Hummel and Cramer, Wieck's op.7 is through-composed: the first movement's structure is truncated and runs on to the slow

movement which continues without a break into the finale. The principal themes of all three movements are motivically connected, but still more radical is Wieck's chromatic large-scale key structure, with the slow movement in A^b major. In this she builds on the more common procedure of placing concerto slow movements in third-related keys (Hummel had done this in four out of his eight concertos, composed between about 1816 and 1833). Within Wieck's key scheme the slow movement's key of A^b is anticipated in the first movement and recollected in the last. The second movement also tonicizes A major towards its centre, and the modernity of Wieck's conception is reflected in the structurally complex finale. Wieck's Concerto elicits some of the best playing from the ensemble, with extremely virile string playing complemented by further samples of Ogura's energetic figuration.

Whereas Wieck's Concerto in A minor has attracted several scholarly studies, the incomplete *Konzertsatz* in F minor occupies a very shadowy realm. The present recording is based on the 1994 reconstruction and edition by Flemish musicologist Jozef de Beenhouwer (Breitkopf & Härtel), arranged for the quintet by violinist Takeshi Kiriya. Astonishingly, the liner notes have nothing whatsoever to say about either this fascinating piece, nor about Beenhouwer's reconstruction process. Yet the significance of the *Konzertsatz* as a rare specimen of a large-scale composition by Wieck during the years of her artistic maturity is ratified by its excellent performance on this disc.

Working with this consignment of discs is likely to be remembered as the experience that kindled my interest in the works of Clara Wieck. Alongside this were the first-rate renditions of Chopin's Concerto in E minor by Ogura and colleagues and a number of the tracks on the Shebanova, Grimwood, Rittner and Vermeulen discs. In a nutshell, there are several recordings here that I have not been able to stop listening to since the discs arrived.

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Francis Knights

The Deller centenary

We may well regret that many significant early music pioneers were too 'early' for their own good, at least as regards their long-term reputations: missing out on the wider audiences that easier travel and good agents could have provided; playing pre-authentic instruments (Landowska); or working with primitive recording technology (Dolmetsch). Alfred Deller, the centenary of whose birth falls on 31 May this year, was fairly fortunate in the first and the third of these, and actually in the second too, being a singer. Had he lived longer there is no doubt his impact would have continued to grow but, like Thurston Dart (1921–71), that productive overlap with the bright young things of the rising HIP generation was mostly denied him. Perhaps more significantly, his early recordings were made for a record company that is no longer with us, and most younger listeners have little idea of the scope and variety of his recordings as singer and conductor, or the extraordinary range of repertory they covered. The reissue of his complete Vanguard recordings on 35 CDs in six box sets is thus a matter of real celebration.

Between 1952 and 1967 Deller made 50 LPs for Vanguard, in partnership with producer Seymour Solomon (1922–2002), whose newly founded label encompassed classical, folk and jazz. This was an exciting time to be recording, with new editions making unknown works available and an increasingly affluent post-war public keen to invest in new technology and new sounds. Alfred Deller, the Deller Consort and a host of other musicians day by day recorded Pérotin, Tallis, Dowland, Monteverdi, Purcell, Bach, the madrigalists, the French Baroque, opera and oratorio—repertory from the 13th to the 18th centuries, including complete versions of Machaut's *Messe de Notre-Dame*, Purcell's *Hail, bright Cecilia*, *Dioclesian* and *Dido and Aeneas*, de Lalande's *De Profundis*, Couperin's *Leçons des Ténèbres* and Handel's *Alexander's Feast*. Although the vocal style does not change greatly over this critical period of the early music movement, the accompaniments certainly do; we move from guitar to lute, and from modern chamber orchestra to one-to-a-part Baroque band. The vocal items will thus seem less dated to present-day listeners.

The first set reminds us of a key Deller repertory that has become seemingly peripheral these days, **Folk songs and ballads** (Vanguard Classics MC193, issued 2008, 432'). This rather catch-all title includes a wide variety of British