

string or wind players adopting historical bowing or tonguing. For the harpsichord disc Woolley uses Malcolm Rose's exceptionally beautiful copy of the Theewes instrument in the Victoria and Albert Museum. However, although the original was by a Dutch maker, it dates from 1579 so is perhaps less appropriate for Sweelinck than later instruments by the Ruckers family, such as the copy by Adlam Burnett of a virginals of 1611 also used by Woolley in his recording. This is a minor quibble, though, since the playing on this disc is entirely convincing. In particular, Woolley has a way of characterizing each section of the toccatas whilst keeping some sense of overall unity. I also liked the way in which works were sometimes grouped by mode, with a toccata preceding a variation set: for example, the *Toccatà Primi Toni* precedes *Mein junges Leben hat ein Ende*, and the Toccata in G introduces the *Pavana Philippi*. Also, Woolley avoids the temptation of arriving at exactly the same tempo for each piece: each tempo is finely judged according to its mood and character.

There is some finely sensitive and eloquent keyboard playing from both Vogel and Woolley, and the recordings of Sweelinck's vocal music reviewed here certainly serve as an apt monument to him. In the essay accompanying Cappella Amsterdam's CD, Ignace Bossuyt boldly concludes by stating that 'the vocal output of Sweelinck formed a worthy conclusion—indeed, a sparkling culmination—to two centuries of renaissance polyphony', and on the strength of these recordings it is hard to disagree.

Websites

Chandos www.chandos.net

Dabringhaus und Grimm www.mdg.de

Glossa www.glossamusic.com

Harmonia Mundi www.harmoniamundi.com

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Psalms and Vespers

The seven recordings considered here come from two contrasting traditions of 16th- and 17th-century psalm settings. The first tradition is that of the ancient Office of Vespers, rooted in the Roman Catholic rite, and frequently associated with the Virgin Mary—in part owing to its use of the Magnificat as its canticle. Three of these recordings

present the music of 17th-century Italian composers, and one the music of a Silesian monk who settled in Vienna. The second set stems from a Protestant tradition which emerged further north in Europe during the Reformation: vernacular metrical psalm settings, based on melodies specifically designed to be sung by an entire congregation, but presented here as adaptations for professional voices.

Probably the most notable of the Vespers recordings is **Cozzolani: Salmi a Otto Voci Concertati (1650)** (Musica Omnia 000401, rec 2000–2, 144'), featuring works by Chiara Margarita Cozzolani (1602–c.1677). Under the aegis of The Cozzolani Project (www.cozzolani.com), this 2010 release is the first volume of a movement to promote the music of this cloistered nun with a passion—and an obvious gift—for music. The project aims to record all of Cozzolani's music and enable it to be available for download within a few years. *Salmi a otto voci concertati* (Venice, 1650) was Cozzolani's fourth publication within the space of ten years, as well as apparently being her last. The music, evidently written for use only in her Benedictine convent of Santa Radegonda, Milan, is full of stylistic variety: from lyrical solos (as in *Beatus vir*), to a minuet-like elegance (in *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*), to a faster, Iberian-style syncopation (notably on the word 'vive' at the end of *Venite sodales*). The performance by Warren Stewart's Magnificat Baroque Ensemble (which has recently promoted several woman composers besides Cozzolani) is graceful and balanced, although the singers' vibrato can occasionally feel a little overdone. Robert L. Kendrick's historical notes provide a helpful background, although on p.5 there appears to have been an editing malfunction: there are two paragraphs beginning 'The collection', but containing somewhat contradictory information. The first sentence of the second paragraph on that page should therefore be disregarded entirely.

Performed with equal energy and spirit is the more recent recording of **Alessandro Grandi: Vespro della Beata Vergine** (Carus 83.367, rec 2010, 58'). Unlike the Cozzolani recording, however, this is not based on a single publication, as Grandi did not in fact write a complete Vespers service for the Blessed Virgin Mary. This collection of pieces is instead a compilation by Rudolf Ewerhart of psalm settings and motets by the composer that could potentially have been combined to form such a service, and is the first recording of such material. Any minor grievances with the performance, for example slight tempo fluctuations in *Dixit Dominus*, are outweighed by its sheer vitality. The opening movement, *Deus in adiutorium* is particularly vivacious, immediately drawing the attention of the listener. This attention is maintained: the

theorbo's opening notes in the next track, *O quam suave*, add a beautifully rich foundation to the music; *Vulnerasti cor meum*, for solo soprano, contains some surprising chromatic shifts; the virtuoso trumpet passages in *Lauda Jerusalem* are captivating; the hymn, *Ave maris stella*, is in a ritornello style, alternating between verses of male plainchant and female solo accompanied verses; and so on. The Magnificat, for SATB soloists and chorus, is a splendid and joyous conclusion to the programme. The soloists (Deborah York, Daniel Taylor, Ed Lyon and Peter Harvey) are always sensitive and nuanced. Considering that this recording is from a live performance (by the Gächinger Kantorei Stuttgart and the Bach-Collegium Stuttgart, directed by Matthew Halls, in September 2010 during the Stuttgart Musikfest), the quality is outstanding. The CD notes are translated from German into French and English, but in an abridged form. This is a fascinating and highly recommended collaboration between some top-class English, Canadian and German musicians.

VESPERÆ: Baroque Vespers at Stift Heiligenkreuz (Oehms Classics OC826, *rec* 2010, 72') is an imaginative mixture of performances coming together to embrace what is supposed to be the same tradition. The first voices heard on the recording are those of the Cistercian Monks of Stift Heiligenkreuz, Vienna, who sing all the Gregorian chant on the CD. The solo and chorus works are sung by the group *dolce risonanza* under the direction of Florian Wieninger. It is unfortunate that the monks produce a slightly jarring, tinny sound with their singing, especially during the first few tracks, although it does sound as if they have warmed up about a third of the way through the recording. The music performed on this disc has been reconstructed from Alberich Mazak's *Cultus Harmonicus* (Vienna, 1649) to create the service of Vespers for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross on 14 September 1649. Mazak arrived in Vienna from Silesia, entering the monastery in 1629 and taking his vows in 1631. His talent for music was recognized by Emperor Ferdinand III, who commissioned him to write several pieces for the court chapel. The recording includes organ interludes composed by Wolfgang Ebner, Giovanni Battista Buonamente and Marco Antonio Ferro. In addition, there is one motet by Giovanni Felice Sances, which includes a particularly remarkable example of descending vocal glissandos on the words 'Miserere nobis'. The quality of the recording is high, and perfectly pleasant to listen to, although there are occasional balance issues (the 'Magnificat' refrains in the Magnificat, for example, sound distant compared to the accompanying continuo, and a little muffled). The words for all psalms, motets, and antiphons are given

interlineally in Latin, German and English, making for a bulky booklet.

Finally in the Vespers group we come to **Chamber Vespers: Miniature masterpieces of the Italian Baroque** (Chandos CHANO782, *rec* 2010, 62'). This is the latest recording by the Gonzaga Band, established in 1997 by Jamie Savan. It is also the most eclectic set considered here; a series of pieces by different composers put together to form a conceivable service of Vespers. Many little-known names appear among more familiar ones such as Girolamo Frescobaldi and Adriano Banchieri. All the pieces are performed with a small ensemble, something which does not detract from the fullness of the sound, but which indeed serves as a welcome contrast to the more prominent grander-scale sound of the other three recordings considered here. The booklet notes make clear that some liberties have been taken with instrumentation (including, unfortunately, in Francesco Petrobelli's *Laetatus sum* and in Banchieri's Magnificat, neither of which have been recorded before), although in other cases the composers' intentions seem to have been vague to begin with. In putting together this pseudo-service, Savan has started with the first five Psalms and interspersed them with various instrumental pieces, as seems to have been the tradition in the 17th century. The other important structural elements of Vespers are present: Orazio Tarditi provides the setting of the opening versicle and response for Vespers, Giovanni Felice Sances the Marian hymn *Ave maris stella*, and Banchieri the Magnificat. Care has apparently been taken to maintain a sense of unity by not shifting to remote keys between pieces. Although the performances are at A440, the temperament is quarter-comma meantone, something that is most audible in the instrumental solos, especially those featuring the cornett. The CD notes are plentiful, containing biographical information about each composer and performer, as well as several photos of the group during their recording sessions, which adds an air of intimacy. References to the music sources used are also provided. There is a surprisingly restrained but charming end to the CD: an energetic soprano solo (the first recording of Maurizio Cazzati's *Regina caeli*—continuing with the notional Marian theme of the disc) ends on a quietly abrupt final repetition of 'Alleluia'.

Orlando di Lasso can perhaps be described as the missing link between Catholic and Protestant music at this time. Despite his Roman Catholic faith, his psalm settings, as well as his French chansons, were of great significance to many of the other composers who feature on **Du fond de ma pensée: Vocal music of the French Reformation** (Christophorus CHR77297, *rec* 2007, 62').

This disc presents harmonizations of the Genevan Psalter, monophonic psalm settings close to the heart of Protestant reformer Jean Calvin and completed in 1562, as well as several 'spiritual chansons' by a mixture of some lesser- and some better-known composers of the period—including Benedictus Appenzeller, Hubert Waelrant and Guillaume Morlaye among the former group and Claude Goudimel, Loys Bourgeois and Claude Le Jeune among the latter. In addition, the recording features organ and lute paraphrases by Eustache de Caurroy and Adrian le Roy. Whether this is really 'Music of the French Reformation', though, is not certain, as several of the composers featured on the recording were of Flemish origin. Historical background given in the accompanying notes in three languages is minimal, and the English translation is terribly awkward, both in elements of syntax and of punctuation. It is also inaccurate in places: it is unclear, for example, what Luther's 1534 Bible had to do with the translations of the psalms which appeared in the Genevan Psalter, as the metrical translations were by Clément Marot and Théodore de Bèze. It is also claimed that Calvin's Strasbourg Psalter of 1539 contained harmonized or polyphonic versions of the psalms; it did not. This is in fact a mistranslation, as comparisons with the French and German versions reveal (the writer actually means that harmonized versions of the psalms began appearing soon *after* the publication of Calvin's 1539 Psalter, which contained the first melodies). This is the first of three (so far) CDs released by the vocal group Chant1450. All four singers received their training in Switzerland, three of them at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis. There is no biographical information, surprisingly, for the two continuo players. The performance as a whole is pleasant, although not usually effervescent. For a while, at the beginning of the recording, it sounds as though the singers are having some difficulty adjusting to the temperament. Some of the key changes between tracks are rather jarring (for example, tracks 8–9 and 19–20). There are some enjoyable touches, though, especially the word painting for 'S'évanouit tout en rien' ('dissolve into nothing') at the end of L'Estocart's song, *La glace est luisante et belle*. The song texts are provided in French, Italian, English and German, the English translations thankfully being from a contemporary publication, *All the French psalm tunes with English words* (London, 1632). It is not made clear why this particular publication was chosen, however. Frustratingly, also, no musical sources are named.

Claude Le Jeune's **Dix Pseaumes de David** (Ramée RAM1005, *rec* 2010, 75') is a recording of the 1564 Paris book of that name, published by Le Roy and Ballard. The

performance of these pieces is expressive but unpretentious, and conveys well the sense of praise that Le Jeune intended these songs to have. The singers of the group Ludus Modalis, under the direction of tenor Bruno Boterf, are accompanied very subtly either by organ or by muted harpsichord, which was also the approach taken on the previous disc. Although not strictly necessary, this adds body and texture to the sound without being obtrusive, and one feels that the psalms retain an element of their common origins, pieces to be sung by the Huguenots in their newly founded church order. It is nevertheless worth noting that multiple-part compositions such as this would not have had a place in Reformed worship during the 16th century; the reformer Jean Calvin, at least, would not have permitted either accompaniment or multiple-part singing in church services. Information provided in the booklet is thorough, authoritative and detailed: the performers for each track are identified by their initials in the track listing, and there is even an explanation of the modal systems used by Le Jeune.

Le secret des muses (Alice Musik Produktion ALCD027, *rec* 2003/4, 68') presents a slightly later development in the psalm. Set to music from the Low Countries by Nicolas Vallet and Jacob van Eyck, the Genevan psalm texts are sung (in French) as solo pieces, accompanied on the lute. These are interspersed with charming accompanied and unaccompanied paraphrases on violin (originally intended for recorder) and lute. This is a reflective, enchanting and meditative 'package' from this Swedish label: the CD is actually presented almost as an accompanying appendix to the blue hardback booklet which contains poems by Swedish poet Marie Lundquist (translated into French and English) as well as all the usual information expected of liner notes. One has to dig fairly deeply into the booklet (p.43 for the English) to establish which pieces on the recording are by which composer; even this is not made totally explicit until p.56, which lists the musical sources. The historical background is interesting, if not always accurate (on p.41 it is stated that Calvinism permitted homophonic singing, which it did not). The psalm texts are given in French, English and Dutch, with facsimiles of pages from various 16th-century psalters interspersed among the words. It is notable that Vallet published two versions of the psalms, one with a Dutch foreword and one with a French foreword. In both, however, the psalms themselves were given in French, despite the existence of Dutch and German translations. The singing and playing, by Peter Söderberg, Lena Susanne Norin and Maria Lindal, is elegant and heartfelt, and one comes away feeling quite mesmerized by the whole experience.

Websites

Alice Musik Produktion www.alice-musik.se
Carus www.carus-verlag.com
Chandos www.chandos.net
Christophorus www.christophorus-records.de
The Cozzolani Project www.cozzolani.com
Musica Omnia www.musicaomnia.org
Oehms Classics www.oehmsclassics.de
Ramée www.ramee.org

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Interesting Historical Figures

Where would the early music movement be without its constantly replenished stock of Interesting Historical Figures (to revive Tovey's belittling but at least not wholly unfriendly term)? Simultaneously 'old' and 'new', their music challenges our expectations and critical faculties. In the final analysis much, if not most, of this music deserves to remain on the shelf (as is equally true of much music of the present day following its first performance), but one would not wish it never to be trialled, just in case it reveals unsuspected beauties or—and here the musicologist rather than the musician or listener speaks—sheds extra light on some particular composer, work or repertory of greater worth. Each of the CDs reviewed in this batch foregrounds the music of one or more Interesting Historical Figures, and with hardly an exception reveals the benefit of having done so.

Top of my list comes an ingeniously conceived and expertly performed double act of sacred chamber duets and *partimenti*, performed by Echo du Danube, **Giovanni Alberto Ristori: Divoti affetti alla Passione di Nostro Signore; Esercizi per l'Accompagnamento** (Accent ACC24209, *rec* 2009, 64'). Ristori (1692–1753) was a colleague of Heinichen, Zelenka and Hasse at the Dresden court (although he also spent much time in Poland and, later, Italy); his music, mainly vocal, has been the object of considerable recent interest, although recordings are few. The duets, very similar in form and style to the chamber duets of Handel and Clari notwithstanding their Latin and sacred texts, are quite exquisite, but the real surprise comes in the *Esercizi*. These are in essence

simply figured bass lines designed as practice material for keyboard accompanists, but the strong melodic profile and logical thematic development of Ristori's basses produces a result more akin to a solo sonata movement than to a mere figured bass exercise—in fact, one three-movement sequence is actually described as a sonata. As performed on the CD, these pieces are more accurately viewed as artful elaborations than as quasi-improvised realizations, but what the arranger, Alexander Weimann, has achieved—distributing the accompaniment in myriad ingenious ways among harp, psaltery, lute, harpsichord, organ and bass viol—is little short of miraculous, in the process demonstrating a purity and elegance of part-writing that Bach would have admired. This recording is also a striking testimony to the riches of the SLUB (the former Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden), from which so much remarkable music has emerged in recent decades.

The Venetian-born Giovanni Benedetto Platti (before 1692–1763) is another Italian who made his career in Germany, working principally in Würzburg. His published keyboard music has long been known (Apel and Davidson even included a sample in their 1947 *Historical anthology of music*), but his more copious chamber music has been less fortunate. His style is very attractive: it is close to Vivaldi's but has something of the conversational manner of Telemann. The three trio sonatas performed by Epoca Barocca on **Platti: Sonatas & trios** (CPO 777 340–2, *rec* 2005, 65'), which mix treble and tenor registers (one for oboe and cello; one for violin and cello; one for oboe and bassoon), are worthy to stand alongside Vivaldi's RV83 and 86, and similar sonatas by Telemann; they even make one wish for a collected edition of Platti's ensemble music. The mellowness of tone and generally relaxed approach that Epoca Barocca employs suits this kind of music perfectly. Those preferring more *brio* have only to turn to another all-Platti recording by the Neumeyer Consort, **Platti: Ricercate & Sonate: Chamber music with violoncello** (Christophorus CHR77310, *rec* 2008, 64'). This unites two eloquent cello sonatas to a group of four *ricercate* for violin and cello without accompaniment, which are sonata-like compositions employing a contrapuntal texture not dissimilar to that of the Bach Inventions, albeit more tolerant of euphonious parallel motion. This more urgent performance is, in its own way, equally convincing. Platti is represented by a different sonata for oboe and bassoon in an attractive-looking anthology of Italian late Baroque wind sonatas by Ensemble Barocco Sans Souci, entitled **Del sonar pitoresco: Musical pleasures in the Venetian countryside in the time of Tiepolo** (Dynamic CDS637, *rec* 2008, 65'). Partnering Platti's sonata are pieces