

Epiphany and Candlemas. Furthermore, the Second day of Christmas (26 December) was the birthday of Landgrave Ernst Ludwig (1667–1739) and the sacred cantata for that day simultaneously functioned as homage and congratulations to the ruler. Grünewald died in the same year as Ernst Ludwig and Graupner was then obliged to supply all the church music, an enormous workload that continued even when the new assistant *Kapellmeister* Samuel Endler arrived. Endler took responsibility for instrumental music, but this was mainly performed at the hunting castles in the region where the new ruler Ludwig VIII preferred to reside. The evocative Christmas music in the directly focused (rather than seductive) studio recording of **Graupner: Frohlocke, werthe Christenheit—Christmas cantatas** (CPO 777 572-2, *rec* 2010, 74') by Das Kleine Konzert under Hermann Max shows the Darmstadt court increasingly abandoning Baroque convention and the ceremonial pomp that had previously welcomed the ruler of heaven with timpani and trumpets in the manner of an absolutist monarch. Graupner prefers an elegant and noble reserve, sometimes with a melancholy tinge that is characteristic of his later music. The impressive advocacy represented by these varied Graupner discs bears witness to the current healthy state of Baroque performance practice, especially in continental Europe; there is also more than a hint that the overdue reappraisal of his work need not regard him as merely a pale shadow of his more celebrated contemporary at the Thomasschule in Leipzig.

Websites

Accent www.accent-records.com

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Carus www.carus-verlag.com

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CPO www.jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home

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A mountain of Mozart

It is well known that, between 1836 and 1843, Robert Schumann reviewed a wide range of contemporary piano concertos in the pages of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.

These reviews have recently been reconsidered by Claudia Macdonald in *Robert Schumann and the piano concerto* (New York, 2005). Macdonald demonstrates that the antagonism Schumann famously expressed towards the concertos of Parisian composers Frédéric Kalkbrenner (1785–1849) and Henri Herz (1803–88) was provoked by their 'excessive' virtuosity and the persistent subjugation of the orchestra by the soloist. Macdonald also recounts Schumann's commendation of the more equal sharing of the limelight between solo and orchestra, and also the more conspicuous motivic continuity in the slightly earlier concertos of John Field (1782–1837) and Mozart pupil Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778–1837); the approaches of Field, Hummel and also William Sterndale Bennett (1816–75), whose concertos also drew Schumann's approbation, had their roots in the 27 piano concertos of Mozart, albeit not well known to Schumann himself. Since that time the concertos of Mozart (and Beethoven) have, either directly or indirectly, provided the central criterion against which most contemporary and subsequent works in the genre have been measured. Recent analytical literature is saturated with attempts to trace, in the concertos of Mozart and others, 'dialogic' interaction between the piano and sections or solo instruments from the orchestra (particularly woodwind) as a counterbalance to unremitting virtuoso figuration and as a means for thematic processing. (See Simon P. Keefe, *Mozart's piano concertos: dramatic dialogue in the Age of Enlightenment* (Woodbridge, 2001).) Paradigmatic in this context is the second solo of Mozart's Concerto in B^b major no.27, K595. Beginning with a modulation to the remote key of B minor, this solo unfolds as a series of sequential modules that process, in dialogic fashion and in a manner involving the soloist's right hand collaborating with solo woodwind voices, motifs drawn exclusively from the first ritornello. The result is one of Mozart's most intricate developmental textures; Schumann would surely have approved.

The prestige of Mozart's piano concertos is thus predicated to a significant degree on his management of the relationship between solo and ensemble; and this is directly affected by recordings that either reduce the orchestra's size or enlarge it with reconstructed parts. In Arthur Schoonderwoerd and ensemble Cristofori's recording of **Mozart: Piano Concertos KV456 & KV459** (Accent ACC24278, *rec* 2012, 58'), the extra trumpet and timpani parts have a galvanizing effect on the ritornellos of the first and last movements of K459. Their **Mozart: Piano Concerto KV175** (Accent ACC24289, *rec* 2014, 58') includes reconstructed flute parts in the first and second movements of K175 in D major; in both, the flute

interspersions are clearly audible without being obtrusive. Reduction in the size of the string section has an impact on the perceptibility of thematic exchanges between solo and orchestra that is sometimes enhancing, sometimes deleterious. On **Mozart: Concertos pour pianoforte no.13, no.14, & no.27** (Agogique AG0004, rec 2011, 76'), soloist Daniel Isoir and La Petite Symphonie adopt string-quartet scoring for K415 in C major, on the basis that 'it was common practice in Vienna to play piano concertos with a small orchestra, generally with just one instrumentalist per part...' (Hervé Audéon, liner notes). I did miss the presence of a double bass: in the second ritornello of the first movement, where the cello line ventures quite high, the bottom seemed to fall out of the texture. The precision of the string playing partly compensates for the lack of bulk, however, and sustained the sensation of solo/orchestral interaction. Reducing the string group to a quintet, alongside the normal complement of woodwind, brass and percussion, produced more consistently successful results on the Isoir/Petite Symphonie disc. The second solo of the opening movement of K595 features unusually clear bassoon interspersions, and the oboe/bassoon dialogue occupying the (modulating) retransition was not, as in so many recordings, lost in a thicket of sustained strings and piano triplets. In Schoonderwoerd's recording of the Concertos K453 and 459 the reduction of the strings to two violins, two violas, one cello and one bass exacerbated certain problems of clarity and balance—particularly when compared with Ronald Brautigam and the Kölner Akademie's **Piano Concertos nos.18 in B flat major & 22 in E flat major** (BIS 2044, rec 2012, 60'), where the string group is larger: eight violins, two violas, two cellos and two basses. On the Schoonderwoerd disc the sustained woodwind notes and other thematically subordinate material is often too penetrating and clouded more important textural details; for example, in the recapitulation of the second theme of the first movement of K456 the sustained woodwind notes are a good deal louder than the piano right hand's thematic statement: the flutes and oboes hog the limelight after their statement of the theme. These problems do not afflict the Brautigam recording (also containing K456), where the balance both within the ensemble and between it and the solo is impeccable. Commendation is also due to Brautigam's flawless execution; this was exploited by a rather brisk tempo in the opening movement of K456 and a perhaps dangerously fast galloping in the 'hunt' finale.

These concerto discs often break new ground by including alternative versions or reconstructions of incomplete works. Schoonderwoerd and Cristofori present Mozart's

early Concerto in D major, K175, on harpsichord and also on fortepiano, interpolated by the concert aria 'Ah, lo previdi', K272, sung by Johanette Zomer. The Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's recording of **Mozart: Complete horn concertos** (Signum Classics SIGCD345, rec 2012, 70')—with its line-up of Mozart's four 'official' horn concertos alongside various fragments and reconstructions—provokes insatiable curiosity. Titled simply 'Fragment in E', K494a really *is* just a fragment: right before the cadence into the would-be second theme the orchestra drops out, leaving the soloist high and dry on an unresolved dominant. More substantial are the reconstructions, by Stephen Roberts, of the Horn Concerto in E \flat major, K370b and 371, a two-movement *Allegro* and *Rondeau*. The disc presents two versions of the finale of the Horn Concerto in D major, K412 and 514, the familiar *rondo* by Franz Xaver Süssmayer (1766–1803) preceding Roberts's own version. Süssmayer's extremely liberal treatment of the manuscript sources—he pretty well wrote his own piece using the manuscript as a point of departure—and Roberts's stronger adherence to the sources results in drastically differing versions, particularly towards the second *rondo* couplet (a harmonically more integrated *minore* in the Roberts version) and in the final third of the movement, where Roberts achieves greater harmonic and textural intricacy. The recording displays consistently fine playing from both the soloist, Roger Montgomery (who uses a natural horn with hand-stopping) and the orchestra, directed by Margaret Faultless.

The liner notes of these concerto discs are generally of a high standard. John Irving begins his preface to the Brautigam/Kölner Akademie disc with a diverting account of Franz Anton Mesmer's—temporarily successful—treatment of the blind Maria Theresia von Paradis, dedicatee of the Concerto K456: if only one had full medical details of this fascinating episode! Overall, in the notes there is rather too exclusive a concentration on performance practice and the capabilities of 18th-century pianos. Irving's writings can be faintly evangelistic in this regard, and in his notes to the Isoir/Petite Symphonie disc Hervé Audéon also misses an important opportunity to mention the unusual structure of the rondo of K415 in C major: the initial refrain is followed by a slow, digressive episode in the parallel minor that recurs in a modified form later on. Stephen Roberts, furthermore, offers a disappointingly perfunctory description of his reconstruction of the Horn Concertos K412/514, K370b and K371. Admittedly, a full account would require (and deserve) a full-length article, or even a monograph; but in mentioning that the *Rondeau* in E \flat major, K371 is 'now restored to its entirety after the

recent discovery of 60 missing bars, Roberts could at least have told us which 60 bars were missing.

The title of a set by Concentus Musicus Wien, **Mozart: The last symphonies: Mozart's instrumental oratorium** (Sony 88843026352, *rec* 2013, 104'), is initially bewildering; but the liner notes clearly articulate director Nikolaus Harnoncourt's case for interpreting Mozart's Symphonies nos.39, 40 and 41 as a continuous work conceived on a massive scale. Harnoncourt correctly states that all three symphonies were written in a spell of about two months, in the summer of 1784; but the grounds for material 'interdependence' between them are less solid. He asserts that the 'C major Symphony ("Jupiter") ends with a proper finale of a kind not found in either of the other two symphonies'. The 'Jupiter' finale certainly is unique; but in what ways are the finales of nos.39 and 40 'incomplete'? Harnoncourt suggests that the finale of no.39 ends in a 'cloud of dust' and in the performance he follows on directly to the opening of no.40 in order to achieve a 'transition'. The ending of no.39 certainly is abrupt—but it follows a full recapitulation whose structure is by no means 'incomplete'. Harnoncourt's contention that the development section of the finale of no.40 entails the 'total destruction' of the parameters of melody and harmony, as a factor making the symphony dependent on 'salvation' by the 'Jupiter' Symphony, is similarly doubtful. The jagged onset of this development certainly does grievously distort the principal theme. Nonetheless, the notion that the following sequential activity 'destroys' harmonic coherence seems contradictory. The sequences certainly traverse an exceptionally wide terrain: but by definition, the sequential continuum preserves the framework of harmonic convention; and it achieves a logical counterbalance to the section's fragmented opening.

The quality of the actual performances on the disc is consistently excellent. A notable feature is intensely polarized dynamic levels: crystal-clear brass and percussion interspersions give the *tutti* passages considerable bite and the ensemble's co-ordination is immaculate throughout. The opening movement of the 'Jupiter' Symphony feels rather too steady in speed; in the finale some of the contrapuntal entries are obscured by muffled lower strings.

Several of the discs here containing piano music belong to complete cycles, each one presenting a *smörgåsbord* of the familiar and unfamiliar. The (centrally familiar) Fantasias in C minor, K475 and D minor, K397, emerge more than once. In **Mozart: Sonatas and Fantasia, KV475** (Musica Omnia MO0409, *rec* 2010, 68'), Trudelines Leonhardt plays on a 1795 fortepiano by Anton Walther. The capacities of this instrument seem ideally suited to the demands of the Fantasia in C minor. The opening's

stentorian octave unisons are powerfully projected by a resonant bass register, and the *empfindsamer* melody of the later section in D major benefit from the instrument's considerable sustaining power. Paul Badura-Skoda's performance of this same fantasia on **Mozart: Werke für 1 and 2 Klaviere** (Gramola 98900, *rec* 2010, 65') boasts a more liberally pedalled—and thus more expressive—approach to the lyrical passages; and positively tooth-chattering right-hand semiquaver figuration erupts in the sequential passage following the 'aria' in B^b major. In **Mozart: Keyboard music vol.4** (Harmonia Mundi HMV907528, *rec* 2011, 71') Kristian Bezuidenhout flanks the centre of his programme with two versions of the (incomplete) Fantasia in D minor, K397; the second includes the coda by August Eberhard Müller (1767–1817), the first using the incomplete version as a 'prelude' to the Sonata in D major, K311. The effect of the latter is arguably unconvincing because it delivers two extroverted D major units in succession. For me, the better of the two performances of K397 was by Jörg Demus, on his collaborative disc with Badura-Skoda. The liner notes omit details of the instruments used, but Demus achieves some memorable effects with the damper pedal. His application of it to every alternate *arpeggio* in the fantasia's opening section, for instance, adds significantly to the effect of improvisatory 'preluding'. Compared with Bezuidenhout, Demus adopts a gentler approach to the coda, tempering what John Irving aptly describes as the 'rather brusque and miniature' effort by Müller (liner notes for Bezuidenhout, p.5). To the category of fantasia-type compositions one must add the Prelude and Fugue in C major, K394, included in vol.4 of the Bezuidenhout series. Dating from 1782, this composition was a product of Mozart's encounter with the works of J. S. Bach and Handel through Gottfried van Swieten (1733–1803). Irving duly catalogues the Prelude's fantasia-like characteristics, including 'rapid cascades ... strange chord successions ... fluidity of time-signature ... completely diffuse textures...' (liner notes, p.7). One is reminded of Leonard B. Ratner's compilation of 18th-century descriptions of the fantasia 'topic': in 1753 C. P. E. Bach stipulated that 'a free fantasia consists of varied harmonic progressions which move through more keys than is customary in other pieces' (*Classic music: expression, form and style* (New York, 1980), p.308).

Like the concerto discs, those containing piano music also venture into the dimly lit realms of spurious and incomplete works. Kristian Bezuidenhout's sixth volume of **Mozart: Keyboard music vols.5 & 6** (Harmonia Mundi, HMU907529.30, *rec* 2013, 142') incorporates the curious Adagio in F major, K.ANH206a and A65 (c.1772). The notes

explain that this may be an embellishment of a simpler work by one of the composers whose sonatas Mozart had previously arranged as concertos. Irving also suggests that the piece might exemplify Mozart's own approach to improvisation (liner notes, p.13). The Badura-Skoda/Demus disc offers a particularly rich source of incomplete works. One is the Fantasia in C minor, K396, that includes a development and recapitulation by Maximilian Stadler (1748–1833). After Mozart's amorphous, 'improvisatory' opening, Stadler's development compensates efficaciously for the previous syntactical fragmentation by sustaining a continuum of figuration that helps to prolong key areas like G minor and B \flat minor. The sudden turn to the major during Stadler's recapitulation is, however, rather jarring. Of even greater interest is the Larghetto and Allegro in E \flat major for Two Pianos, K v .deest. The performance incorporates Badura-Skoda's own continuation of Mozart's surviving exposition, published in 1964. Badura-Skoda's development and recapitulation seem highly successful. The development's interior is subdivided between a brief, declamatory introduction that leads to a statement of the exposition's second theme in the subdominant key; then follows a sequence, leading back to the subdominant, followed by further sequencing. This sequence processes motifs from both principal themes and leads to a cumulative retransition. The recapitulation is regular; but the brief articulation of the subdominant during the modified bridge passage takes up and 'resolves' the development's periodic emphasis on this tonal centre.

The importance of Mozart's engagement with the music of J. S. Bach in the 1780s is axiomatic, not just to an understanding of Mozart's later compositions, but also to constructions of 18th-century musical history *per se*. In 1969 Daniel Heartz famously and influentially challenged the traditionally bifurcated view of an 18th century subdivided between 'Baroque' and 'Classical' eras; he critiqued attempts to establish continuities between Bach, Handel and Haydn, Mozart on the basis that 'the well-spring for the music of Haydn and Mozart was a specific 18th-century heritage *other* than that represented by Bach and Handel'—namely Italian opera. He also emphasized that the importance of Bach and Handel for Mozart and Haydn 'came late, mainly after 1780 in fact, and in the manner of a revelation' ('Approaching a history of eighteenth-century music', *Current Musicology*, ix (1969), p.92). Amongst the Mozartian products of this 'revelation' are Mozart's arrangements for various instrumental combinations of fugues from Bach's *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*. These are compiled in the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin's **Mozart: Adagios & fugues: W. A. Mozart after J. S.**

Bach (Harmonia Mundi HMC902159, *rec* 2014, 51'). The works, which appear to have been written specifically for van Swieten's matinées, where Mozart encountered much music by Bach, are not simply 'arrangements'. The preludes from Bach's *Wohltemperierte Klavier* were inaccessible to Mozart, so he composed new ones in their place. Many of these motivically anticipate the fugal contents: the *Adagio cantabile* preceding the E \flat major fugue from Book II of the *Wohltemperierte Klavier* clearly presages the fugue's subject. In this and other respects the introductory movements represent 'updated' or 'Classitized' Baroque: the *Adagio* just mentioned ventures as distantly from the tonic as D major, and the *Adagio* and Fugue in C minor, K546, unattached to any Bach fugue, exhibits a positively 'proto-Romantic' strain of melodrama, particularly through its dotted opening. The standard of performance throughout this disc remains polished, and Andreas Friesenhagen's liner notes are concise but extremely informative.

Reviewing this varied set of discs was a wholly positive experience. It reinforced my existing awareness of the strong engagement by period-instrument performers with recent Mozart research. Musicians like Margaret Faultless are highly active in a variety of academic and performing circles; and in his liner notes Daniel Isoir recounts that a period of study at the François Lang Music Library and Royaumont Abbey preceded the recording sessions: 'we worked on an early edition of the Mozart concertos belonging to the library and were able to read the latest publications of the results of musicological research into the orchestral forces Mozart used'. Encountering more than one performance of the same work on the same disc implies an encouraging lack of interpretative foreclosure, furthermore, and it mounts an implicit challenge to the (extremely questionable) ideal of the 'definitive performance'. All in all, traversing this mountain of Mozart discs opened up new vistas onto previously hidden realms of Mozart's output; and it is always refreshing when the *terra firma* of the instrumental canon once again becomes novel and treacherous.

Websites

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