

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



'VINCERÒ!'
Piotr Beczala *ten*
Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana / Marco Boemi
Pentatone
► **MARK PULLINGER'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 26**

Tenor Piotr Beczala sings this delightful selection of arias with an engagingly openhearted spirit of humanity and drama, and most importantly a beautifully weighted, richly coloured voice.



ELGAR Violin Concerto
Nicola Benedetti *vn*
London Philharmonic Orchestra / Vladimir Jurowski
Decca

One of today's top ambassadors for music off the platform, Nicola Benedetti is an equally inspiring one on it, her playing embracing Elgar's emotional depths.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 33**



POULENC
Piano Concerto
Mark Bebbington *pf*
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / Jan Latham-Koenig
Resonus

What a wonderful Poulenc journey pianist Mark Bebbington takes us on, always with a sense of passion and purpose.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 37**



HELLENDAAAL
Six 'Cambridge' Sonatas
Johannes Pramsohler *vn*
Gulrim Choi *vc* Philippe Grisvard *hpd*
Audax

The Dutch-born, English-based Baroque composer Pieter Hellendaal gets championed here in superb style by Johannes Pramsohler and colleagues.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 45**



TELEMANN
'La querelleuse'
The Counterpoints
Etcetera
This is a sparkling debut album,

chamber and solo Telemann works alike – in a programme that speaks of real creative care – are all performed with life-affirming relish and flair.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**



JS BACH Guitar Works
Sean Shibe *gtr*
Delphian
The superb young guitarist – and this month's cover artist –

Sean Shibe's devotion to drawing a rich tapestry of colours from every impeccably played phrase makes this a Bach recital worthy of adding to everyone's collection.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 52**



'THE LONG 17th CENTURY'
Daniel-Ben Pienaar *pf*
Avie
Like the best of those who perform early

music on piano, Daniel-Ben Pienaar makes these pieces – and what a generous offering he gives us – live and breathe with an almost contemporary sensibility.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 58**



BEETHOVEN
An die ferne Geliebte
SCHUBERT
Schwanengesang
Roderick Williams *bar*
Iain Burnside *pf*
Chandos

The excellent Roderick Williams's ability to convey meaning with a personal touch makes for a memorable *Schwanengesang*.

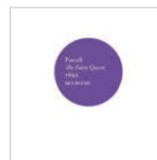
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



STRADELLA
San Giovanni Battista
Le Banquet Céleste / Damien Guillon
Alpha

The intense drama of this 17th-century Biblical oratorio is vividly conveyed by an impressive line-up of singers and players under the astute direction of Damien Guillon.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 72**



PURCELL
The Fairy Queen
Gabrieli Consort and Players / Paul McCreesh
Signum

Paul McCreesh often offers thrillingly performed projects, and doesn't disappoint here: elegantly played, characterfully sung, Purcell's Shakespeare-inspired music is a joy.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 78**



DVD/BLU-RAY
'THE ENGLISH ORGAN'
Daniel Moults *orgs*

Fugate State Films
Fugate State Films offers another absolutely fascinating, lavish and lovingly put together historical and musical feast, which traces the English organ's story across 500 years.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
'PAUL VAN KEMPEN: COMPLETE PHILIPS RECORDINGS'

Paul van Kempen
Eloquence

Another in-depth exploration from Eloquence of a great artist's legacy on record – this time conductor Paul van Kempen, and his Philips recordings.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**

strophically structured songs from seeming redundant, supported by Burnside's sense of rubato that's beautifully fashioned to the emotional temperature at hand. This disc doesn't displace classic accounts – such as Goerne's live pairing of the same repertoire with Alfred Brendel (Decca, 7/05), which John Warrack called 'one of the great Lieder partnerships of the day' – but stands beside them. Williams fires on all cylinders here, including some I didn't know he had, and his longtime admirers won't want to miss this. **David Patrick Stearns**

Stradella

San Giovanni Battista

Le Banquet Céleste / Damien Guillon *countertenor*

Alpha © ALPHA579 (81' • DDD • T/t)



San Giovanni Battista was composed in 1675

for performance in the church of San Giovanni dei Fiorentini in Rome. Although an oratorio, not an opera, it's highly dramatic. When John condemns Herod for marrying his brother's wife, it is Salome (here called Herodias the Daughter) who asks if Herod will tolerate the insult; but, as in the New Testament, it's 'Herodias the Mother' who tells her daughter to demand John's head.

The four characters, together with the Counsellor, combine to form the chorus of John's disciples or Herod's courtiers. The instrumental group is divided into a concertino and a concerto grosso, who play in various permutations; Herod's vengeance aria, 'Tuonerà tra mille turbini', is accompanied first by the latter, then by the concertino (tracks 16 and 17). The opening gives a good idea of the flexibility of both construction and instrumentation. As John bids farewell to his surroundings, *secco* recitative frames a tuneful arioso, still with continuo accompaniment, followed by a short passage for the concertino. Then, after an exchange with the disciples, a vigorous metaphor aria features both string groups together.

The part of John was first sung by the castrato known as Siface (whose departure after a brief stay in London was marked by Purcell with his harpsichord piece *Sefauchi's Farewell* and who, like Stradella himself, was later murdered). Paul-Antoine Benos-Djian has a beautiful countertenor voice, full and even at both ends of his range, which he uses to superbly expressive effect. Olivier Dejean, not entirely comfortable with Herod's low notes, is excellent at depicting the character's bluster and

uncertainty. Alicia Amo as Herodias the Daughter (Salome) is quite wonderful in her final aria, 'Sù, coronatemi', where she exults in John's death with dazzling coloratura. The last number is a duet where Salome and Herod express happiness and torment respectively but ask 'why, tell me, why?', ending – clever Stradella! – on a questioning chord on the dominant.

Of earlier recordings, Tess Knighton welcomed one by Michael Schuster and La Stagione, but with reservations (DHM, 5/91). Nicholas Anderson was enthusiastic in his review of Marc Minkowski and Les Musiciens du Louvre (Erato, 10/92). Comparison with the excellent Hyperion recording shows some interesting differences: the Academia Montis Regalis have a much larger concerto grosso, which makes it easier to distinguish between the two string groups; I slightly prefer the lightness of *Le Banquet Céleste*. Salome's aria is much faster than on Hyperion, where it's assigned to the mother; whereas John's 'Io per me non cangerei' is much slower, giving Benos-Djian the opportunity to relish the chromatic inflexions. (Incidentally, the track number is incorrectly placed in the booklet.)

Anybody who owns the Hyperion can rest content, but newcomers should try this present version under the excellent direction of Damien Guillon. The important thing is to get to know this ravishing piece. **Richard Lawrence**

Selected comparison:

Academia Montis Regalis, De Marchi
(2/08) (HYPE) CDA67617

'Les plaisirs du Louvre'

Anonymous M de Liancourt. Les Suisses. Les Suissesses. Les vallets de la faiste Boësset Aime-moi Cloris. Astres pleins de malheurs (Récit de la nuit). Bien loin profanes de ces lieux (Concert des nymphes des bois). Ce roi vainqueur de nos malheurs (Pour le Roy). Conseille-moi mon coeur (David disgrâcié). Fut-il jamais une rigueur pareille. Je perds le repos et les sens. Je suis l'adorable Équité. Me veux-tu voir mourir. Monarque triomphant (Au Roy). Ne vante point flambeau des cieus. Ô mort l'objet de mes plaisirs. Que prétendez-vous mes désirs. Reine que je sers et que je connais (Concert de Diane et ses nymphes). Segua chi vuol iniquo Amore **Chambonnières** L'entretien des Dieux **Chancy Rares fleurs vivante peinture** **L Couperin** Le Piémontoise **Guédron** Cesse mortel d'importuner (Juste mespris de sainte Agnez). Quel tourments rigoureux (Le Purgatoire) **Louis XIII** Les Gascons **Moulinié** Il sort de nos corps emplumés (Concert de différents oyseaux). Ô doux sommeil. Rompez les charmes du sommeil (Air de la ridicule)

Ensemble Correspondances / Sébastien Daucé
Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 5320 (81' • DDD • T/t)



The pleasures here are not concerned with the pictures and sculpture of the present-day

museum but with musical activity in the reign of Louis XIII, when the Louvre was the monarch's principal residence. The *air de cour*, a short setting of verses that could be performed in various configurations from voice and lute to an ensemble of voices and instruments, was popular in the salons of Paris as well as at court. There was also music for the ballets that were danced by the king and queen and the courtiers, played by professional musicians. The most important composer was Antoine Boësset: he published nine volumes of *Airs de cour à 4 & 5 parties* between 1617 and 1642 and, as Surintendant de la Musique de la Chambre du Roi, he was responsible for organising the musical entertainment both public and private.

Of the 28 tracks on this enjoyable CD, 15 are devoted to Boësset. The subjects include love – more the pains than the pleasures thereof, actually – and sycophantic addresses to the king. One song, 'Conseille-moi mon coeur', is a recasting of his 'Qui vit jamais amant' to a religious text. It was published in Boësset's lifetime, so would have had his approval: more than can be said of the adaptation of the two numbers by Pierre Guédron, his father-in-law and predecessor, which appeared posthumously.

The pieces are mainly homophonic with a touch of counterpoint here and there, as in Boësset's 'Monarque triomphant'. Many are in the minor key, and often in triple time. The predominant mood is one of delicate wistfulness: this is not a musical world of aching suspensions and chromaticism. The singers of Ensemble Correspondances, led by the sopranos Caroline Weynants, Caroline Bardot and Élodie Fonnard, are a beautifully blended team who express these refined sentiments to perfection. A good example is Boësset's 'Me veux-tu voir mourir', a restrained performance for SATB; another approach can be enjoyed on 'L'esprit galant' (Channel Classics, 5/08), where Johannette Zomer sings a solo version a semitone higher, with brighter tone and more prominent decoration.

There's excellent support from a consort of viols, a flute and a continuo group under Sébastien Daucé. Pleasures indeed!

Richard Lawrence