



followed by a cadential trill. This surely represents a skeletal notation of the schema dubbed Grand Cadence by Floyd Grave (see 'Freakish Variations on a "Grand Cadence" Prototype in Haydn's String Quartets', *Journal of Musicological Research* 28/2–3 (2009), 119–145), with the approach to the high note needing to be filled in by means of a brilliant run or arpeggio, but here it is blankly played as written. A more common question one would have for the performers is why they always seem to play appoggiaturas short when long execution would often create a smoother sense of musical line. In spite of these reservations, one can only welcome the recorded debut of four more works by this still largely unknown composer.

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JOHANN CHRISTOPH PEPUSCH (1667–1752)
CONCERTOS AND OVERTURES FOR LONDON

The Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen / Robert Rawson
Ramée RAM 1109, 2012; one disc, 59 minutes

When attempting to explain why it is that much of Pepusch's music has been undeservedly overlooked, many will cite Sir John Hawkins, who found him to be 'a learned, but a dry composer, and . . . apparently deficient in the powers of invention' (*A General History of the Science and Practice of Music*, volume 5 (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776), 404). What they will not cite are Hawkins's favourable comparison of Pepusch's cantatas to the works of Scarlatti, his assertion that he was 'one of the greatest theoretic musicians of the modern times' or the fact that he was remembered on the continent primarily as a fine composer of concertos. The Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen, who as the present sleeve notes inform us intend 'to explore the neglected repertoire of public concert life in England in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries', here present six of Pepusch's concertos, which until now had remained unrecorded. Framed by Pepusch's well-known overture to *The Beggar's Opera* and his less well-known one for *Venus and Adonis*, these concertos succeed in showing why it was that Pepusch was so highly regarded as a composer in this field. Written in the opening two decades of the eighteenth century, these works demonstrate strong influences from the Italian styles of Corelli and Vivaldi in addition to more English pastoral shades. Though not hugely innovative, Pepusch's music is by no means lacklustre; still less so as a result of the invigorating treatment it receives from these tickle-fiddling players. The ensemble has excellent proportions and there is a wonderful delicacy to the recording, with one player to a part creating an intimate character that is perfectly suited to music such as this, written for such small-scale and relatively personal settings as Thomas Britton's public concerts. The continuo playing is intuitive and well balanced, though it is a pity that it was not enhanced by either a theorbo or arclute, which was common practice in this period and would have added greatly in a percussive way to the general sonority.

The earliest of the concertos here presented is that in B flat major; written most probably before 1707, it stands as a likely candidate for the earliest extant example of a concerto composed in England. It is also the only one that can be associated with Thomas Britton's concerts at 'The Small-Coal-Man's Musick Club', whose participants, fittingly, were described by Ned Ward in his *Compleat and Humorous Account of all the Remarkable Clubs and Societies in the Cities of London and Westminster* as a 'Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen' (seventh edition (London: J. Wren, 1756), 299). Though labelled as a 'Concerto Grosso', it is in truth a solo violin concerto. It is no surprise to discover from Robert Rawson's illuminating booklet notes that all but the first movement are rearrangements of an earlier violin sonata. The influence of Corelli is evident throughout. Soloist Tassilo Erhardt performs admirably, providing delicious graces in the slow movements and showing a fitting and lively manner of attack for the Vivace and Allegro. The



other two violin concertos – in A major and A minor – seem to be from a later period (Rawson speculates 1713 and 1715 respectively) and have a more virtuosic solo part. These both demonstrate a much more Vivaldian flavour. Especially notable is the solo part in the third movement of the A major, written as plain chords and treated to a rapid and exhilarating *arpeggiando* by Erhardt. Both of these concertos are of the well-known northern Italian three-movement design, with opening and closing fast movements in ritornello form (though it is rather less recognizable in the first movement of the A major, which develops its opening motto theme heavily, disguising it beneath the shifted beats of slurred stepwise motives). The treatment of ritornello form in the first movement of the A minor is strikingly Vivaldian, with ascending scalic patterns in the *tutti* of the opening bars leading to characteristic sequential passages of semiquavers on alternating strings in the episodes.

The four-movement *Concerto à 5* with solo oboe is of a different breed from the violin concertos, Rawson speculating that it could be the work that was composed at Cannons for the Dutch virtuoso Jean Christian Kytch. Though in G minor, it is a surprisingly playful work, especially with the sprightly dialogue between the soloist and the orchestra in the closing Allegro. The slow movements owe much of their attraction to Mark Baigent's tasteful performance and are evocative of the English pastoral style, both supported by pulsing accompaniment. There is a similar Handelian pastoral beauty to the slow movements of the *Concerto à 6* in D major with solo trumpet. The faster movements could in general have benefitted from a brisker tempo, though that chosen is judicious given the obstinate nature of the baroque trumpet. Crispian Steele-Perkins performs admirably throughout, though the articulation of faster semiquaver passages is audibly difficult.

The *Concerto à 6* in F major, which features prominent parts for bassoon and cello, is one that showcases Pepusch's contrapuntal skill. Following a vivacious opening allegro movement reminiscent of Telemann, we are treated to a delicate Adagio. Rather than simply doubling the bass as is typical, the bassoon, operating in the tenor range, opens with the theme, which is then picked up by the cello in the second bar, leading to a string of Corellian dissonances that later recur between first and second violins. This is the crowning jewel of the entire album; the adeptly interwoven lines reveal Pepusch to be a composer of considerable flair and technical ability. It is interesting that such a serious movement occurs in an otherwise light and carefree concerto; the Presto that follows, for example, is a cheerful echo movement, and the closing Allegro is a light-hearted *Minuetto*.

Pepusch's overture for *Venus and Adonis* – a masque that according to its Preface intended to produce an 'Entertainment [that] will want nothing of the Italian but the Language' – breaks new ground in its departure from the French type typical of the genre. Staged as an afterpiece to the Beaumont and Fletcher play *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife* at Drury Lane in March 1715, *Venus and Adonis* stands as Pepusch's first major composition for the theatre. In both style and instrumentation, the overture is remarkably similar to the *Concerto à 6* in F major that precedes it on this album. Pepusch opts for an overture in Italian tripartite form, opening with an animated Allegro, with descending scalic ritornello motives that can only have drawn inspiration from Vivaldi. The intervening sections for oboes and bassoon lend a concerto-grosso flavour to the overture, with tightly knit movement in thirds and thematic development in the upper parts carefully propelling the bassoon-led return to the ripieno sections. The Adagio that follows contains a similarly Vivaldian flavour, with a pulsing crotchet rhythm in the strings and continuo supporting emotive intertwining oboe lines. The structure and concertante-style emphasis on the two oboes in this overture is similar to that of Handel's *Acis and Galatea*. Both composers were at Cannons for a time, and these works seem indicative of the great extent of cross-influences among the works of the 'Club of Composers' at Cannons (which also included Nicola Haym and John Arbuthnot). Though tasteful overall, the performance of this overture could have benefitted from a slightly faster tempo in the opening Allegro.

It is ironic that the overture to the hugely popular *The Beggar's Opera*, merely assumed to have been by Pepusch, remains his best-known instrumental work today. It was Pepusch's last successful contribution to the London theatre scene before he withdrew to focus on musical pursuits of a more academic, pedagogical and directorial nature, surely propelled by his increased involvement in The Academy of Ancient Music from 1726. The overture is an interesting contrast to that of *Venus and Adonis*, its closing section being



written in a galant style and based on the air 'One evening having lost my way', which appears in the third act of the opera.

This recording succeeds in its intention to explore the neglected repertoire of public concert life in England and in doing so brings to our attention another side to a composer who has been both tarred with the brush of *The Beggar's Opera* and maligned by the pen of Hawkins. The accompanying booklet notes, which contain many contemporary anecdotal references as well as an in-depth and well-supported account of the composer's time in England, give a more balanced account of the reception of Pepusch's works. There are but a couple of slips, such as the assertion that Pepusch's works were 'advertised in *The London Stage* in April 1704' (presumably an anachronistic reference to *The London Stage*, edited by William Van Lennep (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1960–1970), which is actually a modern multi-volume calendar and compendium of source materials). In addition, Rawson is responsible for editing the parts used for the recording from the surviving manuscript sources, an endeavour that adds to this group's integrity. Here their enthusiasm and conscientiousness conjure an atmosphere that one can imagine is as spirited as that of the eighteenth-century concert rooms and theatres for which these works were composed. They present us not only with music that exemplifies Pepusch's mix of Continental styles and experimentation with a range of concerto subgenres, but also with intriguing possibilities regarding his music's influence on Handel. This first album has but scratched the surface of the neglected concert repertory of eighteenth-century England and leaves one itching for more. One can only hope that there will be further fiddling from these gentlemen (who do, incidentally, admit several ladies into their harmonious company).

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ANTONIO ABREU (c1750–c1820), DIONISIO AGUADO (1784–1849), SALVADOR CASTRO DE GISTAU (1770–AFTER 1831), ISIDRO DE LAPORTA (fl. c1790), FEDERICO MORETTI (c1765–1838)

SPANISH MUSIC FOR 6-COURSE GUITAR AROUND 1800

Thomas Schmitt

Centaur CRC 3277, 2012; one disc, 66 minutes

The double-strung six- and seven-course guitars used in Spain and the Spanish Americas between 1760 and the 1820s were largely ignored by late twentieth-century historical performers because of an apparent lack of repertoire. Although advertisements placed by *copisterías* in the periodical press from the 1780s until the Spanish War of Independence in 1808 identify manuscript copies of six-course guitar music for sale in Spain, most of this music remains lost. Routinely overlooked in this search, however, are the pioneering nineteenth-century Parisian editions of six-course guitar music that Salvador Castro de Gistau acquired in Madrid. Thomas Schmitt's recording of some of this repertoire is much to be welcomed. On first hearing, his guitar has a powerful and lovely range, the sonority of its doubled strings and richness of its low register helping to evoke the revelation it must have been for listeners accustomed to five-course guitars. I have two questions, though: is this the sound of a six-course guitar? And how does this music fit into late eighteenth-century Spanish instrumental style?

In his second-language-English sleeve notes, Schmitt states that 'the ideal of sound [*sic*] of the six-course guitar is similar to that of the lute or the Spanish vihuela', which suggests a quiet instrument, not the 'percussive sound as we know it in modern guitars' (1). Yet a quiet, lute-like instrument is not my expectation for a guitar of this period. Double strings do not make this guitar into a kind of vihuela. Furthermore, without a reference level to correlate real-world sound levels on this recording with those on my