



works by Haydn, Mozart or Beethoven – with various *airs variés* of his own composition. Virtuoso and canonical pieces could therefore be played one after another in *soirées* praised for their elitist and avant-garde spirit. Viotti's last quartets provide a fascinating testimony to the fact that this genre, far from being the pure abstraction often described by historiography, was porous to other instrumental and vocal genres with which it could blend even in the conditions of its practice (see November, *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets*, 19–22).

After presenting the stylistic characteristics of Viotti's last quartets – especially the originality of their harmonies – Lister offers a rigorous Critical Apparatus. His commitment to transparency is shown in the way he details the nature of his interventions and in the way they are presented in the score and notes. He discusses many aspects of the notation at length (slurs, dynamics, accents, articulations, appoggiaturas and so forth), relating them to matters of performance practice (once again, the editor draws on a large corpus of scholarly references). He considers the question of standardizing the various ways in which articulation, tempo and ties were notated (as they sometimes vary considerably between the first four editions used as the main reference points for the present enterprise). We can only praise the fact that Lister has frequently opted not to homogenize inconsistent notation, a choice more likely to spark the imagination and creativity of modern performers. Similarly, rather than systematize what might appear to be inconsistency between the parts or between parallel segments of a movement, the editor has also chosen to preserve diversity; for example, he does not indicate how trills should begin or end, to allow for more varied choices of execution. He does standardize some passages, such as those involving imitations or tutti sections, yet does not explain why he did not apply the principle of variety in those cases as well. In such instances, the standardization is not signalled in the score itself but only in the notes (xxix), and performers may wrongly believe it to be a conscious wish of the composer.

The main contribution of this edition is to disseminate knowledge about a little-known aspect of Viotti's career through making it possible to study and perform his last quartets. But most importantly, the reader will appreciate the fine editorial choices that have been made, which – far from reducing the genre to a prevailing ideal of homogeneity between the parts – emphasize the variety of relationships possible among the instruments, as well as the external references that can be heard in the pieces. This new edition will undoubtedly spark new interpretations that will shed further light on the rich and subtle writing of Viotti's quartets.

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RECORDINGS

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THOMAS ARNE (1710–1778)
 THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS

Mary Bevan, Susanna Fairbairn, Gillian Ramm, Ed Lyon, Anthony Gregory (soloists) / The Brook Street Band / John Andrews (conductor)

Dutton Vocalion CDLX7361, 2019; one disc, 68 minutes

In this world premiere recording, the conductor John Andrews leads The Brook Street Band and a cast of six singers in Thomas Arne's masque *The Judgment of Paris* (1742). Like many of his eighteenth-century English colleagues, Thomas Arne (1710–1778) has periodically suffered from the whims of fashion, and comparatively little of his music has been recorded. Aside from endless versions of 'Rule Britannia', there are just a few recordings of the overtures (The Academy of Ancient Music, Christopher Hogwood (Decca, 2007) and Collegium Musicum



90, Simon Standage (Chandos, 2006)), the organ concertos and symphonies (Cantilena, Adrian Shepherd (Chandos, 1988 and 1985)), and the solo cantatas (Capella Savaria, Mary Térey-Smith (Centaur, 2010)).

But this small corpus of orchestral and solo vocal music is outweighed by Arne's huge output of works for the stage. Arne was a dyed-in-the-wool theatre musician: he was married to a prominent soprano, Cecilia Young (1712–1789), and his sister Susannah Maria Cibber (1714–1766) was a 'celebrated stage personality, tragedienne and singer' (liner notes, 3). Her husband, Theophilus Cibber (1703–1758), was a sometime manager of Drury Lane. It was in that theatre that Arne would spend much of his career, producing dozens of masques, operas, pantomimes and sets of incidental music. Sadly, most of this music has been lost, most likely in one of the several Covent Garden fires. Of the works that survive, only *Thomas and Sally* (1760), *Love in a Village* and *Artaxerxes* (both 1762) have been recorded in their entirety. This performance of *The Judgment of Paris*, from the Ian Spink edition (Musica Britannica, volume 42 (London: Stainer and Bell, 1978)) is a very welcome addition.

Written in 1742 – just a year after *Messiah* – Arne's score shows a clear stylistic debt to Handel. Handel wrote nearly forty Italian operas for the London theatres beginning in the 1710s, and a young Thomas Arne was often in attendance. Indeed, as the liner notes report, *The Judgment of Paris* was premiered at Drury Lane as 'an afterpiece to Handel's *Alexander's Feast*' (2). The overture is perhaps the best example of Handelian influence, written in three parts: a brooding, stentorian Largo with dotted melodies gives way to the imitative polyphony of the Minuet, and the graceful lilt and scalar flourishes of the closing Giga. Much of Arne's vocal writing, especially in the upper voices, demonstrates a kind of operatic virtuosity in keeping with the coloratura in many Handel roles. But the opera is not just an English facsimile of Italian conventions and technique. Rather, it brings together a range of musical influences. If its graver and grander moments bear the mark of Handel, its more light-hearted numbers are firmly in step with ballad operas like *Love in a Village*. In the martial, homophonic choruses we hear an unmistakable echo of Purcell.

The libretto by William Congreve (1670–1729), based on the Greek myth, was written for a musical competition in 1701 (the settings by John Eccles, Gottfried Finger, Daniel Purcell and John Weldon were selected for performance – Weldon won). It concerns Paris, a lowly shepherd, who is visited by the messenger god, Mercury. Mercury gives Paris a golden apple to present to his chosen goddess, and Juno, Pallas and Venus all arrive to stake their claim to the prize. They extol their own virtues, cajole, seduce, even threaten, but at the end Paris chooses Venus. The other goddesses depart, and several cupids and the three Graces descend for the final chorus. The work is dramatically straightforward, but Congreve's text provides ample opportunity for musical variety – from gentle, lilting airs to trumpet fanfares and marches. Under John Andrews's sensitive direction the performance is subtle, satisfying and well paced.

The tenor Anthony Gregory gives a strong performance as Mercury, bringing a bright, reedy sound to the role. His air, 'Fear not, Mortal', is especially enjoyable, showcasing his vocal agility through broken thirds and seemingly endless runs. Opposite him is Ed Lyon as Paris, whose slightly broader tone balances well in their various duets. Lyon has a particular gift for dramatic declamation, especially evident in his opening recitative, 'O Hermes, I thy Godhead know'. As a pair, they seem to be both musically and dramatically in sync, adding some welcome humour to the comically excessive melismas on the word 'happy' in 'Happy I of human race'. (One imagines it would be even better in a staged performance.)

The sopranos Susanna Fairbairn (Pallas) and Gillian Ramm (Juno) are impressive, bringing warm, rounded tones and considerable agility to their lines. Sadly, Ramm gets only one short air in which to shine, a well-ornamented and graceful duet between soloist and first violin. Fairbairn's bold, martial opening to 'Hark, hark! the glorious Voice of War' is one of the highlights of the recording, sung with dramatic fire and impeccable diction. Of course, the functional protagonist of Arne's masque is Venus, and Mary Bevan brings a beautiful, clarion tone to the role. Her first aria, 'Hither turn thee, gentle Swain', a plaintive duet with the cellist Tatty Theo, seems to materialize out of nowhere, a gossamer of sound that gradually spins out as the melody descends.

Led by its regular core of Rachel Harris and Kathryn Parry (violins), Tatty Theo (cello), Carolyn Gibley (harpichord) and Lisete da Silva Bull (recorder), this augmented Brook Street Band achieves some impressive subtlety throughout the work. A few movements into the masque – Paris's opening *accompagnato*, 'O Ravishing Delight' – the violins really hit their stride, playing their descending scalar couplets with a muted,



silky tone. It is in the cadences and transitions that the band really shines, carefully placing downbeats and easing into new material. An arresting *forte-piano* at the start of Venus's *accompagnato* 'Stay, lovely Youth', for instance, demonstrates the band's polish, even in small gestures.

Because of the divisions between full strings and solo principals, we get a chance to hear Brook Street in its usual configuration and as a larger, eighteen-piece baroque orchestra. (Among the many highlights of this is some lovely woodwind playing, and the bold trumpet fanfares of William Russell and Simon Desbruslais.) It's a reasonably large ensemble for an eighteenth-century masque designed for English theatres, and much related repertory can be accomplished with even smaller forces; a fabulous 2018 run of *Macbeth* at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre used a consort of just six to play Eccles's incidental music.

And yet one comes away wanting just a bit more power, especially in the choruses, when the full complement of winds and brass somewhat overwhelms the strings. Mercury's air, 'Fear not, Mortal', gives us a taste of the bolder sound Brook Street is capable of. The violins alternate between graceful, mannered lines and a more in-the-string kind of playing. It is a chance for them to show off their baroque rhetoric, juxtaposing flourishes and glissandos with satisfyingly percussive pedal notes. Likewise, in the three-part overture, the quieter moments shine but the bold ritornellos are perhaps a little too polite, lacking some of the dramatic fire that we get at later points, such as Pallas's *accompagnato* 'Awake, awake, thy Spirits raise' and the subsequent aria. While this roster serves perfectly for most of the masque, it is in these bigger numbers that a slightly larger string section might have offered that breadth of sound.

One has the same sense about the chorus itself, made up of the title principals with the addition of the bass Andrew Mahon. In part because we have already heard these singers in solo numbers, and also because of a slightly odd spatial balance of the voices in stereo, it sounds a bit discrete, rather than as a unified chorus. But these are small reservations.

In all, Andrews brings out the full range of musical contrast in the work, from the bold and stentorian to the quiet and graceful. The Brook Street Band plays with characteristic verve and subtlety, and a well-balanced cast of singers brings Congreve's text to life. It is a very fine performance. One hopes to see it staged soon.

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CLAUDE-BÉNIGNE BALBASTRE (1724–1799), JACQUES DUPHLY (1715–1789),
 JEAN-BAPTISTE FORQUERAY (1699–1782), JOSEPH-NICOLAS ROYER (C1705–1755)
PIÈCES DE CLAVECIN
 Adam Pearl (harpsichord)
 Plectra 21803, 2018; one disc, 74 minutes

For his debut solo recording, harpsichordist Adam Pearl has issued a disc in Plectra Music's series 'Le clavecin français' (<https://www.plectra.org/blank>). This labelling may prove somewhat deceptive among devotees of the harpsichord repertory, for whom such a phrase may conjure up names like Chambonnières, D'Anglebert and, particularly, Couperin – men intimately connected to the establishment of a French harpsichord tradition in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Pearl's disc represents a different side of the *claveciniste* coin: later music of the 1740s to the 1760s, virtuosic compared to the intimacy of those predecessors, showing distinct signs of the Italianate and internationalizing influences that marked the tides of musical change during this period everywhere, including France. This disc features works by Claude Balbastre, Jacques Duphly, Jean-Baptiste-Antoine Forqueray (*le fils*, arranging his father's viol music for