



madrigalisms and instead showcase the narrative qualities of the text; the strum of Ossian's harp prevails with relatively restrained feints toward expressive keys. Zelter's setting, by contrast, returns to the expansive, through-composed style of Zumsteeg, albeit with more recurring melodic material and the unusual addition of several 'stage directions' for the performer.

Published in 1813, Zelter's 'Colma: Ein altschottisches Fragment' is the last setting included in this volume and thus crowns a series of works that, through their range of idiom, offer musical traces of just what caused so many readers to flock to Ossian's Scotland in search of emotional and expressive liberation. This edition offers persuasive evidence that Ossian should be taken seriously by anyone interested in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century music, and in addition to providing insightful commentary, notes on performance and English translations for each setting included in the edition, Clemmens Waltz's introduction also helpfully synthesizes recent work on Ossian and his popularity in Germany. For their testimony to the complex processes of literary influence, it is a pleasure to see these songs emerge from the mist.

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RECORDINGS

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JOHANN ADOLPH HASSE (1699–1783), JOHANN WILHELM HERTEL (1727–1789), CARL PHILIPP
EMANUEL BACH (1714–1788)
CELLO CONCERTOS

Musica Viva / Alexander Rudin (soloist and conductor)

Chandos o813, 2016; one disc, 70 minutes

In seventeenth-century Europe the cello was by no means the 'default' bass-line instrument that it later became in the eighteenth century. As Michael O'Loughlin explains in the liner notes to this disc, the four- to six-string violone was ubiquitous in Italy and Germany, and the basse de violon still reigned supreme in France. It was Stradivarius who standardized the violoncello, subsequently launching it on its career as the most common bowed bass in classical music. These growing pains, however, had set the solo cello behind its already established cousin the violin, which was building a repertory of virtuoso solo music almost from the moment of its sixteenth-century birth. And so it was another Italian, Vivaldi, O'Loughlin writes, who first 'emancipated' the cello from role of bass line, and began writing solo music that would surely have eluded even the finest violone players (7).

This disc is a document of that 'emancipation', specifically of the time when eighteenth-century German composers first began writing virtuoso concertos for the cello. Included are the greatest of these first-generation concertos, as well as several modern premieres prepared from autograph manuscripts. It is not surprising that this would be a task undertaken by the cellist and conductor Alexander Rudin, who has led Musica Viva (the Moscow Chamber Orchestra) for two decades. The project is ideal for Rudin, who happens to be an excellent cellist – but even more to the point, he is a music director with a passion for little-known music and a commitment to championing it. These qualities come together here to shine light on unknown cello concertos from northern Germany. It seems that soloist and orchestra are not using period instruments (and the liner notes offer no clues on the matter). None the less, they play with such vigorous style and rhetoric that the disc still stands as a more than useful document of these works.



Johann Adolph Hasse has been a favourite of mine ever since I discovered his galant-inflected Handelian operas, which rival those of *Il caro Sassone* himself for melodic invention and poignant dissonance. Many consider Hasse to be primarily an opera composer – and indeed, one of the eighteenth century's luckiest, as he married Faustina Bordoni, regarded as one of the most talented opera singers in Europe at the time – but he also found time to write hundreds of concertos. Although today Hasse is recognized more for his charming melodies and light textures than for his grinding dissonances, the Concerto in D major played on this disc (c1725) has a particular pathetic charm for me, and even includes a fugue. Surprising harmonies lurk around every corner in the third movement, bringing together a Handelian sensibility and the world of *Empfindsamkeit*.

These varied styles shine in the hands of a talented performer like Alexander Rudin, who manages to combine the rhetorical skills of Christophe Coin with the rich, nutty sound of, say, Truls Mørk. The playing is exceptionally polished, though sometimes superfluously virtuosic, but it's the way it so adroitly moves from spoken to sung idioms that makes it so appealing, and such a convincing example of eighteenth-century grace. The orchestra plays with equal sensitivity and vigour, creating an unceasingly lively texture. Special mention must be made of Vladislav Pesin, who leads an excellent violin section which is always well unified in its expression.

The concerto by Carl Philip Emanuel Bach (Wq170, in A minor) is surely the best known of the offerings on this disc, but is still much less frequently performed than later concertos by Haydn and Boccherini. Here, Rudin paints in bold strokes and speaks in long, elegant paragraphs. The bewildering passagework is continuous, and speaks to the level of skill that must have been possessed by Ignaz Mara, the cellist for Frederick the Great for whom these concertos were most likely written. The second movement, apart from simply being extremely beautiful music, possesses a certain *sprezzatura* that Rudin brings out most effectively. The cadenza, in particular, is one of the most arresting moments on the disc, and makes an eloquent case for Rudin's contrapuntal playing skills. He is well suited to this quirky music, and does a great job emphasizing what is so interesting about it. As the liner notes point out, this music exemplifies the *empfindsamer Stil* – and Rudin excels at bringing out the pathetic dissonances, the harmonic surprises and the endless melodies, which are beautifully sung. But the sudden stops and extreme changes of mood could be much more exaggerated. One gets the feeling that to take the music out of its driving, metronomic pace would be anathema to both soloist and orchestra. But a more pregnant pause here and there, to exaggerate the craziness of this music, would not be unwelcome.

The two premieres on this disc are both by Johann Wilhelm Hertel, and were recently prepared from autograph manuscripts housed at the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles. I'll admit that I am largely unfamiliar with Hertel's output, but a few things about his music instantly stand out. Rhythmic, dramatic and with an almost Mozartean glut of ideas, the music brings C. P. E. Bach to mind. In fact, Hertel was a student of Benda, and heard Bach himself perform a concerto at his teacher's house. The experience was formative for the young Hertel, who went on to compose many concertos that were greatly influenced by the slightly older Bach. It isn't surprising that the A minor concerto of 1759 immediately recalls Bach's concerto in the same key, written several years earlier.

Rudin must be commended for the tempos in these Hertel concertos: each movement is carried forward with an inner momentum that so often eludes conductors of early classical music. The first movement of the A minor concerto was particularly impressive, in its sustained level of breathlessness. The second movements of both concertos were charming, and never dragged. The last movement of the A minor concerto features some fascinating moments where two phrases of markedly different characters (contemplative and fiery, for instance) elide, the last bar of the first carrying seamlessly forward as the first bar of the next. Some virtuoso passagework here permits Rudin a nearly immodest display of talent.

If there is anything missing from this disc, perhaps it's an exploration of the quiet end of the dynamic spectrum. The loud and virtuosic come through brilliantly, but these qualities would stand out in even greater relief if contrasted with some truly soft playing. This is partly because of the way the music is mixed: the sound



of this album is very forward, very up front. While one might wish that more music from this period would be engineered this way, quiet playing would still be welcome here, and would still shine through, despite the forward engineering.

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JEAN-BENJAMIN DE LABORDE (1734–1794), FRANCESCO PETRINI (1744–1819), JEAN-PHILIPPE RAMEAU (1683–1764), JEAN-BAPTISTE FORQUERAY (1699–1782)
LABORDE – RAMEAU: SONGS AND CHAMBER MUSIC WITH HARP, VIOLIN AND HARPSICHORD
 Mailys de Villoutreys (soprano) / Trio Dauphine: Clara Izambert (harp), Maud Giguet (baroque violin), Marie van Rhijn (harpsichord)
 evidence EVCDo08, 2015; one disc, 72 minutes

This disc from the French ensemble Trio Dauphine with guest soprano Mailys de Villoutreys provides a welcome insight into the treasure trove of unexplored and unrecorded repertory that is the eighteenth-century French chanson. With its unique instrumental combination of harpsichord, violin and single-action harp, the trio also contributes to a still vastly uninvestigated area of performance practice, that of the eighteenth-century single-action harp and its diverse musical functions. In this instance the focus is pre-revolutionary Paris and salon music, for which the single-action harp was surely the ultimate instrument. The first harp to feature a pedal mechanism, which allowed for continuous scales and arpeggio figures whilst modulating to various keys, this instrument made its first appearance in Austria around 1720 and was introduced to France in the mid-eighteenth century with performances at the Concert Spirituel. It quickly became a wildly popular accomplishment for aristocratic young women, as is evidenced by the number of methods (particularly pitched at a growing market of amateurs and beginners), teachers and harp makers, and by the growing repertory. Contemporary art also testifies to the popularity of the instrument. The Parisian theatrical impresario Charles-Simon Favart summed it up in 1761 when he remarked of the instrument that ‘all the ladies are mad to play it’ (*‘la harpe est aujourd’hui l’instrument à la mode; toutes nos dames ont la fureur d’en jouer’*). Charles-Simon Favart, *Mémoires et correspondance littéraires, dramatiques et anecdotiques de C. S. Favart*, ed. Henri François Dumolard, three volumes (Paris: L. Collin, 1808), volume 1, 147).

On this disc, the single-action harp is featured in world-premiere recordings of chansons by the little-known French composer Jean-Benjamin de Laborde (1734–1794). The ensemble has undertaken research in the archives of the Bibliothèque nationale de France to bring to life extracts from three collections of chansons with harp, violin and harpsichord accompaniment by Laborde published in Paris in 1763, and the resulting disc was co-produced by this institution. The disc’s title *Laborde – Rameau* points to both the inclusion of an arrangement of Jean-Philippe Rameau’s *Deuxième Concert* and the connection between the two composers. Rameau was Laborde’s composition teacher, and the first movement of the *Deuxième Concert* is titled ‘La Laborde’, although it is not known whether this refers to the ‘Laborde’ in question. Also bearing the title of ‘La Laborde’ is an extract from the Suite No. 1 in D minor for solo harpsichord by French viol virtuoso Jean-Baptiste Forqueray (1699–1782). Further socio-musical connections with Laborde appear via a solo sonata for single-action harp by the prolific harpist-composer Francesco Petrini (1744–1819). Born in Berlin, Petrini spent most of his career in Paris, and wrote the harp accompaniments to arrangements of arias from Laborde’s various *opéras comiques*. The dedicatee of Sonata No. 3 featured here is Mlle de Laborde; the disc’s liner notes