



his action ensembles and finales. In his recitatives he softened the jog-trot of unbroken iambs into something closer to Italian verse types.

The editors close their Introduction with a remark that Dittersdorf made after attending a rehearsal of Reichardt's *Claudine* in 1789: 'I wish that all the pieces I have written and probably ever shall write were as pure as this one.' (xi; originally quoted in Max Friedländer, 'Varianten zu *Claudine von Villa Bella*', *Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 8 (1921), 54). This is high praise indeed for a Viennese to bestow on a Prussian, and it illuminates at least one of the sources of the high regard in which Goethe held Reichardt's music at the time.

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RECORDINGS

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TOMASO GIOVANNI ALBINONI (1671–1751)

HOMAGE TO A SPANISH GRANDEE: SELECTIONS FROM 'CONCERTI A CINQUE', OP. 10

Collegium Musicum 90 / Simon Standage (violin and direction)

Chandos, CHAN 0769, 2010; one disc, 69 minutes

This 2010 release from Chandos Early Music presents eight concertos – Nos 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12 – selected from Tomaso Albinoni's Op. 10. Simon Standage and Collegium Musicum 90 give a refreshing new reading of the last printed collection by the Venetian *musicò di violino*, published by Michel-Charles Le Cène at Amsterdam in 1735 or 1736. Although one of three known copies of the original edition of Albinoni's Op. 10 was discovered in a Swedish private collection in 1966, this opus did not gain the favour of critics or musicians in the following decades. Even so, two complete recordings were made by I Solisti Veneti and I Musici di Roma and were released several times on record and on compact disc. Recently, Albinoni's Op. 10 seems to have enjoyed a rise in popularity, with several ensembles sampling its concertos. Collegium Musicum 90 has already recorded four CDs of better-known works by Albinoni, whose aristocratic and measured style encounters a fitting rendering in its interpretation by this ensemble.

Albinoni introduced galant features in Op. 10, sprinkling the melodic line with appoggiaturas, triplet semiquavers and syncopations, but he remained loyal to his sober musical taste in the architecture of the parts. In these late concertos, issued when Tartini was already celebrating his early triumphs, Albinoni permits the *violino principale* to play larger solo passages in only a few cases. Maybe it was for this reason that Simon Standage included concertos Nos 8 and 12 in his selection, as these can truly be called solo violin concertos, while the others are string concertos without a particular soloist. Producing a beautiful and well-rounded violin tone in the slow movements, Standage resists falling into over-indulgent expressivity, but he might even have been a bit more courageous in ornamenting more passages in the manner that he used in the Largo of the eighth concerto (in track No. 11, for example, the line of the solo violin part might have been embellished to a greater degree). The final cadenzas marked in the first movements of the two violin concertos could have been more developed.

The convincing articulation, accentuation and tempo choices of Collegium Musicum 90 clearly find their apogee at the outset of the first movement of Concerto No. 11; this work is written in 'Spanish style', and fittingly so, since the 'Homage to a Spanish Grandee' refers to Don Luca Fernando Patiño, the dedicatee of Op. 10. Collegium Musicum 90 plays with impeccable technique and without the roughness common to so many early music ensembles. One might comment, though, that sharper distinctions could have been drawn between the *piano* and *forte* passages. Although the harpsichordist employs little motivic licence in realization of the figured bass, it is very effective when this does occur. The recording engineer seems to have pared



down the reverberation in favour of capturing a closer sound. The booklet includes some nice illustrations, but regrettably lacks an eye-catching cover – the picture used to adorn the frontispiece might have been a little more handsome or creative than a cutout of an official portrait of Carlo III. The liner notes by Michael Talbot provide a very useful introduction to Albinoni's swan-song, and we would not expect otherwise from this distinguished scholar of the Venetian *settecento*. The German translation, surprisingly, contains many inaccuracies and is often simply erroneous. Aside from these small imperfections, this recording is highly recommended to lovers of the musical elegance of eighteenth-century Venice. It is a shame that Simon Standage and Collegium Musicum 90 did not produce a complete recording of the twelve concertos, but perhaps that could be a worthy project for the future.

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FRANCESCO FEO (1691–1761)

PASSIO SECUNDUM JOANNEM

La Divina Armonia / Lorenzo Ghielmi

Passacaille, 964, 2009; one disc, 61 minutes

When Charles Burney began his article on Francesco Feo in his *General History*, he proclaimed him 'one of the greatest Neapolitan masters of his time' (*A General History of Music, from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London: author, 1776–1789), volume 4, 550). Burney went on to praise the composer's music for its fire, invention, force in the melody and expression of the words. Despite Burney's accolades, however, Feo's music has been slow to enter the mainstream of recent research and performance, and it seems that the inconvenient lack of access to manuscript sources is partly to blame. Lorenzo Ghielmi's recording is therefore a welcome and important contribution to our understanding of this neglected composer who was once so revered.

There are two manuscripts, one in autograph, of Feo's *St John Passion*, held in the Biblioteca Oratoriana dei Filippini in Naples. The work is listed twice in the *Catalogo generale* as '1). Passio secundum Joannem, a più voci con quartetto, 2 copie in 2 tonalità; Partit. autogr. Parti cop.' and '2). Passio secundum Johannem, (Venerdì santo), a più voci con più stromenti; Partit. e parti in copie' (Salvatore di Giacomo, compiler, *Catalogo generale delle opere musicali: Città di Napoli. Archivio dell'Oratorio dei Filippini* (Parma: Fresching, 1918), 54). There is also a *St Matthew Passion* by Feo in the archives, and I have private hopes, now made public, that Ghielmi and his group La Divina Armonia will generously offer us a recording of this little-known work as well.

Among the several types of Passion composed in the eighteenth century, Italian Passion-oratorios were more popular than were Latin Passions. It is striking, therefore, that both Alessandro Scarlatti and Francesco Feo composed Latin Passions based on St John's Gospel. Scarlatti's *Passio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi secundum Joannem*, from c1680, written for solo alto, solo bass, four-voice choir, strings and basso continuo, was most likely the model based on which Feo imagined his own Latin Passion, from 1744, for countertenor solo (the Evangelist), two tenors (Jesus and Pilate), four-voice choir, a quartet of strings and basso continuo. Ghielmi effectively uses an Italian harpsichord, which he plays brilliantly on the recording, and an *organo di legno* (positive organ) for the continuo realization. He adds a harp to the continuo group, noting that this was a standard feature of Neapolitan baroque music. The CD booklet offers translations of the text in German, Italian, Latin, English and French (the last of which is included separately on pages 75–80) along with striking photographs of artworks chosen from the chapels of the Sacro Monte sopra Varese, northwest