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ACTS OF GOD

EMT looks into
the fashion for
staging oratorios

SPILLING THE BEANS

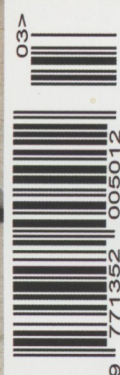
Franco Fagioli
on the music
of Nicola Porpora

WIN!

A COPY OF THE
EDITOR'S CHOICE CD
BY CAROLE CERASI
SEE PAGE 36

FABIO BONIZZONI

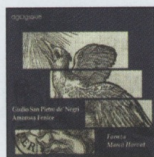
The Italian conductor
talks finance and
ethics in music



R.

PLUS even more NEWS, COMMENT, REVIEWS and the DEFINITIVE GUIDE to what's on in the early music world

Tyler Kaiser on chaconnes by Mouton and by Emmemond Gaultier. The duo play their music on two gut strung 11-course lutes by Dan Larson, and the sound is delicious. Duets impose a rhythmic discipline which I think generally benefits French baroque music. There is even accompanying sheet music and music-minus-one discs available for would-be baroque lute duettists. One of most worthwhile lute projects of recent years, and highly recommended. **CGo**



Giulio San Pietro de' Negri: Amorosa Fenice
Faenza, Marco Horvat (d)
Agogique AGO018
★★★★★

Giulio San Pietro de' Negri seems to have spent the first quarter of the 17th century travelling fairly far and wide, to judge from the title-page dedications to far-flung Italian patricians and noblemen fronting his volumes. These volumes include two books entitled *Grazie ed Affetti* (comprising monodic writing as well as strophic multi-part items) and one (incomplete) *Canti Accademici* as well as collections of *canzonette*. Beyond that, we don't know a great deal about him, and this disc is the fruit of Marco Horvat's enthusiastic labours in Negri's cause. What's here is well worth discovering.

It's hard not to think of Monteverdi while listening; Negri was evidently steeped in a musical sphere of which history has left us Monteverdi as the primary protagonist, and the few works by Negri's contemporaries are similarly reminiscent. The fast ciaccona 'O Amante, se non sai' (Ghizzolo), for instance, is eerily similar to 'Ecco pur ch'a voi ritorno' from *L'Orfeo*. That said, it also calls to mind Giovanni Stefani's *alfabeto* song 'Bella mia, questo mio core', so perhaps this is retrospective generalisation.

Either way, if you like Monteverdi, try this. The music is refreshing and delightful and the performances universally first-rate; to single out Magali Imbert's recorder playing seems to do a disservice to the plural and excellent chordophonists. **CGr**



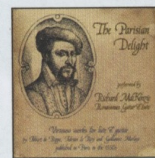
Lady Maggie's Lilt – The Lute Book of Lady Margaret Wemyss
Martin Eastwell
Music Media MMC104
★★★★★

The lute was central to the (polite) musical life of Scotland as it was to the rest of Renaissance and baroque Europe, but the surviving manuscripts testifying to this can be counted on the fingers: the Rowallan, Skene, Straloch, and Balcarres books, and the source featured here, the lute book of Lady Margaret Wemyss, who was born in 1629 and died aged just 19.

Here, lutenist Martin Eastwell has avoided an elephant trap of Scottish lute

music recordings, and not recorded only the Scottish tunes, which are sweet but often very, very short; instead he gives a balanced programme by including French baroque lute 'pops' by Dufaut, Mezangeau, and the Gaultiers which are found in the manuscript, as indeed they were found in manuscripts all over Europe.

The lute's sound is excellent, and Martin Eastwell's editing of pieces not always correctly notated by their teenage scribe is convincing. To be honest, the little preludes he has composed to introduce successive suites seem musically more articulate than some of the arrangements played by Wemyss herself; but this only adds to the prevailing touching character of the disc, which closes with a piece called 'Goodnight' and a version of the famous lament, 'The Flowers of the Forest'. **CGo**



The Parisian Delight – Virtuoso works for lute & guitar from the 1550s
Richard MacKenzie
(Renaissance guitar, lute)
www.magnatune.com
★★★★★

Richard MacKenzie was the first ever student to play the lute as his first study at Chetham's School in Manchester, and is now one of the rising stars of the British lute scene. On this, his second solo lute recording, he takes the temperature of French plucked instrument culture at that time. It is a very accomplished recording; the lutenist consistently attaining the beautiful bell-like tone, sweet and clear, that devotees of Renaissance lute (and four-course) guitar aim for, and the musicianship is confident throughout.

The music here was published partly for the bourgeois, gentry or noble amateur player no doubt, and some of the dance-form and ground-based pieces are, though enjoyable, not really virtuoso pieces, but alongside the *vin ordinaire* pieces are some really fine and singular works – many of these, it must be said, non-French players: Narvaez, Francesco (probably) and above all Albert de Rippe (alias da Ripa). These include a fantasia for guitar by de Rippe; *multum in parvo* indeed, for the tiny instrument of only four courses then all the rage in Paris. Let's hope for lots more like this. **CGo**



Hildegard von Bingen: Vox Cosmica
Hirundo Maris, Arianna Savall (voice, harps, lyra, Tibetan singing bowl et al.)
Carpe Diem CD-16304
★★★★★

This striking disc has three elements: firstly, the chants of Hildegard of Bingen treated freely, accompanied abundantly, and knitted together intricately; secondly, the long 'Planctus David' or lament for Saul and Jonathan, of Peter Abelard – a prism, according to Arianna Savall, through which Abelard's desolate love for Héloïse is viewed (Petter Udland Johansen's tenor is punctuated sparsely here only by Savall's harp in a particularly effective and beautiful track); and thirdly, airy, atmospheric, free instrumental compositions, called Meditations and with more than a touch of 'mood music' about them, by Udland Johansen.

Voices, medieval and triple harps, lyras, fiddles and hardingfele, Tibetan singing bowl, monochord, flutes, Romain bells, colascione, tromba marina, nyckelharpa, viola da gamba, santur and percussion here provide a kaleidoscope of colour as Hirundo Maris take their cue from Guibert de Gembloux, Hildegard's biographer, who vouches for her having enhanced her chanting 'with the accompaniment of the most beautiful instruments'.

Savall uses Hildegard and Abelard, herself and Udland Johansen, to represent a variety of polarities – male and female, heavenly and earthly focus and delight, fundamental joy and fundamental sadness – in what is a conceptual and creative disc. I'd highly recommend you give it a try. The liner notes are nebulous, certainly, but the performances are startlingly beautiful and free and the arrangements endlessly creative. **CGr**