

words 'Sancte Deus' (and no more), the second by 'Sancte fortis', and the last by 'Sancte et misericors' to the end of the antiphon.

Media vita has long presented practical problems for performers thanks to the extensive repeated material: how to sustain interest through 25 minutes of music, and how to shape a satisfying conclusion to such a huge musical edifice when the ending material itself must be repeated four times. Ostensibly, these issues are caused because of the priority placed on liturgical correctness over musical coherence in functional music of this kind. But the 'new and improved' performance sequence adds considerably to the antiphon's musical success, suggesting that its structural shortcomings are a modern problem not originally of Sheppard's making. In Alamire's recording, ten minutes are shaved off the performance time with no adverse effect on the material, the full six-part responses between each verse have more impact because they are proportionally shorter, and Sheppard's conclusion is allowed to feel truly final and not over-worked. Given the early date of recording this performance, one must ask whether it was originally intended for a different purpose and has been edited to give the present performance sequence: it would be interesting to see how choirs might reshape their future interpretations of *Media vita*, and especially of the three 'Sancte' acclamations, to fit with Smart's findings. We can hope that the reduced length might open doors for more dramatic and forceful performances, as we are used to hearing in shorter responsories such as Tallis's *Loquebantur*.

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Hamburg to Vienna: German and Austrian Baroque

The clutch of recordings reviewed here ranges across the sacred repertoires of a variety of cities and courts—both Lutheran and Catholic—in the German lands and Austria: from north to south, Hamburg, Saxony (Leipzig and Dresden) and imperial Vienna. Chronologically they take us from the late 16th century to the mid 18th, and generically they encompass Latin motets and antiphon settings; a parody Mass; two Magnificat settings (one with German Christmas interpolations); liturgical organ

music designed for alternatim performance; German motets, sacred concertos and cantatas; a Christmas *historia* in German and a Holy Week oratorio (or *sepolcro*) in Italian; and sonatas for liturgical use. Inevitably, between them the recordings raise or reflect a good number of the performance practice issues which have occupied scholars and performers engaged with such music, including the 'chorus' (concertists/ripienists) debates. And they open numerous windows on both the multifarious infusions of Italian influence into the German and Imperial territories and continuities of practices and repertoires within those areas.

The earliest music represented is by Hieronymus Praetorius, the most famous member of a family dynasty of organists in Hamburg (but unrelated to Michael Praetorius). Hieronymus, who served as organist of the Jakobikirche from the 1580s until his death in 1629, gathered his sacred vocal works (predominantly Latin-texted, and some published previously) in the five-volume *Opus musicum* issued in Hamburg and then Frankfurt between 1616 and 1625, which achieved wide dissemination and ensured the extensive and enduring repertorial presence of his music. His motets also made their way into such widely used anthologies as the *Florilegium Portense* (1618) of Erhard Bodenschatz, still used in Leipzig's churches in Bach's time. That anthology provides one of the stated themes for Siglo de Oro's recording of music by Praetorius and others—Lassus, Jacob Handl (Gallus), Hassler and Andrea Gabrieli: **Hieronymus Praetorius: Missa Tulerunt Dominum meum** (Delphian DCD34208, issued 2018, 59'). Praetorius's Eastertide *Missa Tulerunt Dominum meum* is the largest work here, a parody Mass based on his own eight-voice motet, which is one of the items included in *Florilegium Portense*, the others being two motets designated 'de Passione' in Bodenschatz's index allocating motets to feasts: Lassus's *Tristis est anima mea* and Handl's *Filiae Jerusalem*. Holy Week is accordingly the other binding thread in the repertory chosen for inclusion on the disc.

As vividly displayed both here and on Alamire's new recording (**Hieronymus Praetorius: Motets in 8, 10, 12, 16 & 20 parts** (Inventa INV001, issued 2019, 100')), Praetorius's employment of the polychoral styles derived from Italian practice was imaginative and masterful, and both ensembles respond with gripping and adroitly moulded performances. His shaping of the music on small and large scales through manipulation of texture, pace and phraseology is supported by a highly inventive harmonic language: the extraordinary treatment of the 'Et incarnatus' in the *Missa Tulerunt Dominum meum* is striking

even within the contemporary context of especially affective settings of this point in the Credo. Praetorius's exploitation of sequence includes a mesmerising example in the remarkably extended twelve-voice setting *per omnes verus* of the Nunc dimittis performed by Alamire.

One intriguing aspect of the *Missa Tulerunt* is the absence of an 'Osanna' setting at the end of the Sanctus, but the provision of a double setting at the end of the Benedictus, the first part of which is integrated into the Benedictus without musical articulation, while the second is in triple metre. Praetorius likewise postpones the 'Osanna' until after the Benedictus in three of his other Masses, but not in the *Missa Factum est silentium* or the *Missa Angelus ad pastores*, which has (conversely) an unusually extended 'Osanna' after the Sanctus. One would like to know what the liturgical explanation for the omission is: presumably it in some way reflects ritual practice at the Jacobikirche and perhaps other Hamburg churches.

Siglo de Oro's *a cappella* performances throughout its recording contrast with the approach on the Alamire recording of Praetorius, where the singers are joined by His Majesty's Sagbutts & Cornetts and organist Stephen Farr (playing the instrument at Roskilde Cathedral dating partly from the 1550s). There are no obbligato instrumental parts in the original printed editions (organ *basso seguente* being given as an option). However, Frederick Gable (whose 1966 doctoral dissertation concerned Praetorius's polychoral motets) has elsewhere signalled contemporary documentation from Hamburg indicating instrumental participation in Praetorius's motets, while in the section which he contributed to the liner notes here Gable points to Michael Praetorius's *Syntagma musicum* of 1619 as a relevant source regarding such practices. Alamire's director David Skinner chose to perform the eight-voice works as either all-vocal or all-instrumental, while for the pieces with larger-scale scoring he employs—as well as much *colla parte* doubling of voices and instruments—a contrast between singers and instrumentalists to highlight passages involving the repetition of short musical units, a device which proves highly effective in, for example, *Decantabat populus* (azo). While one wonders whether the more consistently stratospheric lines might have been intended for instruments rather than singers, as in *Angelus ad pastores* and *Exultate iusti* (both involving quite frequent use of top *a'*), the sopranos of Alamire negotiate them with assurance, and while clarity of text sometimes suffers when instruments double voices in such repertory, that is not the case here. One notes that the instrumentalists on these recordings typically ornament more than do the singers, despite the commonality

of material performed, bespeaking perhaps a continuing gap in expectations and practices between modern singers and players in such repertory. Alternatim practices, despite their ubiquity in liturgical-musical practice in the early modern period, remain underrepresented on recordings, and it is thus very good to hear an alternatim Mass and Christmas and Easter Sequence settings (alternating organ and chant) which provide welcome variety on Alamire's recording.

Knowledge of Praetorius's output in modern times was long circumscribed by the paucity of editions, although two volumes of (respectively) double- and triple-choir motets, edited by Gable, were published by A-R Editions in 1974. The new recording of Schütz's music by Yale Schola Cantorum under the direction of David Hill, **Heinrich Schütz: The Christmas Story** (Hyperion CDA68315, issued 2019, 71'), brings us to much more familiar territory. Alongside some well-known motets, the two most substantial works on the disc—the *Historia der freuden- und gnadenreichen Geburt Jesu Christi* (or 'Christmas Story'), swv435, and the Latin Magnificat, swv468—have been much recorded; indeed the Christmas Story is particularly abundantly represented on disc, Paul Hillier's recording with Ars Nova Copenhagen perhaps standing out among the recent versions: *Heinrich Schütz: Weihnachtshistorie, Auferstehungshistorie* (Dacapo 8.226058, issued 2009, 79'). However, the readings of this repertory by the Yale ensemble are of such high quality as to make this a welcome addition. There is a remarkable unity of phrasing and expressive device between singers and players (although the final chorus of the *Historia* has some less secure wind playing), text is to the fore, and the choral singing is lithe and tautly disciplined. The solos are taken by members of Yale Voxtet (who are also members of the Schola Cantorum) in accomplished fashion, although some of the deployment of vibrato sounds inappropriate to its context in degree and type.

From the Electoral court in Dresden we move westwards to Leipzig and to the music of Bach's predecessor as Thomaskantor (and therefore director of music at Leipzig's two principal churches), Johann Kuhnau. As was to be the case with Bach, several volumes of Kuhnau's keyboard music were published while his sacred vocal music was transmitted only in manuscript, and that has resulted not only in the loss of much of the latter but also significant problems in establishing authorship. This last issue is richly addressed in Michael Maul's stimulating liner notes accompanying the five discs constituting the *Complete Sacred Works* series recorded by Opella Musica and Camerata Lipsiensis under Gregor Meyer's direction,

recordings which present a fascinating wealth of unknown repertory in performances which evoke the excitement of discovery: **Johann Kuhnau: Complete sacred works I** (CPO777 868-2, issued 2014, 70'); **Complete sacred works II** (CPO555 020-2, issued 2016, 67'); **Complete sacred works III** (CPO555 021-2, issued 2017, 74'); **Complete sacred works IV** (CPO555 190-2, issued 2018, 55'); **Complete sacred works V** (CPO555 260-2, issued 2019, 68'). An associated complete edition as part of this 'Kuhnau Project', overseen by David Erler (who sings with Opella Musica), was begun by Pfefferkorn Musikverlag and is being continued by Breitkopf & Härtel, with (at the time of writing) seven cantatas in print, together with a volume of motets and the large-scale Magnificat with inserted Christmas items (comparison with the case of Bach's Magnificat is duly drawn in the liner notes) which is the largest item on the third recording of the series. One aim of the project is, as Maul puts it, to 'silence those critics who willingly decry his church music as the work of a backward-looking composer vehemently opposed to the musical innovations of the early 18th century'. Maul attributes this image's origins to the polemical aesthetic disputes between Kuhnau and younger Leipzig musicians, feuds which involved Telemann and Kuhnau's ex-pupil Heinichen, for example. In the preface to a 1709 publication setting out the texts of the pieces to be performed in church during the coming year Kuhnau criticized such musicians' understanding of the distinctions between the theatrical and ecclesiastical styles of music, and proudly declared his intention 'to escape the suspicion of theatrical music' in his works for the year by avoiding recitatives and arias with modern text, restricting himself instead entirely to the biblical texts. In fact, however, the repertory attributed to Kuhnau and recorded here ranges very widely—both musically and texturally—across diverse types of sacred concerto and cantata, and, for example, the *O heilige Zeit* included on the third recording, the text of which is by Erdmann Neumeister, incorporates distinctly operatic elements.

A second cantata setting part of this same text exemplifies the issues of attribution which constitute an intriguing aspect of the project: in this case, Maul speculates that one of the younger brigade of Leipzig composers mentioned above—perhaps Telemann or Heinichen—might be the composer. Another such case of doubtful authorship is the fine and well-known *stile antico* motet *Tristis est anima mea* included in volume one of the series, which seems to have been known to Bach but of which the source bearing attributions to Kuhnau probably dates from after that composer's death. Maul here proposes Antonio Lotti as a

candidate for the composer, while in the preface to his edition David Erler—although acknowledging the uncertainties surrounding its attribution—is inclined to retain the possibility of Kuhnau's authorship, arguing that connections with *Tristis est* settings in Bodenschatz's *Florilegium portense* (including that by Lassus recorded on the Siglo de Oro disc reviewed here) point to Leipzig origins and to Kuhnau as composer.

In general, each recording in the series presents a heterogeneous selection of works, in terms of sources (although most works in the second volume are from the Bokemeyer collections), strength of attribution to Kuhnau, likely date of composition, text types, genre (or sub-genre of sacred concerto or cantata), and stylistic pedigree and influences (whether relatively local or distant). The most unified recording thematically is the third, focused on Christmas works and centred on the Magnificat setting. This disc ends with the cantata *Frohloket, ihr Völker* which opens with a magnificent *da capo*-form chorus, and which Maul suggests may be one of Kuhnau's latest surviving works. Opella Musica perform this disparate repertory with essentially one voice per part (and five singers in all), and some of the issues rehearsed in the long 'Bach's chorus' debate conducted in the pages of *Early Music* and elsewhere are consequently relevant. The concertists-only approach on these recordings is not discussed in relation to that performance practice debate or the evidence regarding Leipzig's major churches and the associated performing forces; rather, the booklets simply note 'the ensemble's philosophy of performing magnificent baroque music with very small forces to produce translucent textures'. Issues of balance occasionally arise in fully scored passages within 'coro' movements with large instrumental scoring, including, variously, trumpets, trombones and horns. Of course, it is possible that in some or many such cases it would have been difficult or irrational to distinguish between concertists-only writing and that where ripienists might join. However, ripienists' parts survive for the exquisite sacred concerto *Gott sei mir gnädig* (on volume V of the series), and the solo/tutti contrasts within and between movements, absent in Opella Musica's approach but indicated by the Dresden source, are reflected on the excellent recording by Collegium Vocale Gent directed by Philippe Herreweghe, on *Before Bach: Deutsche Kantaten: Tunder, Kuhnau, Bruhns, Graupner* (Harmonia Mundi HMC901703, issued 2000, 75').

The two remaining recordings under review take us to the Catholic Habsburg court in Vienna under the Holy Roman Emperors Leopold I (r.1658–1705) and Charles VI (r.1711–40), and the music of Johann Heinrich Schmelzer

and Johann Joseph Fux. Schmelzer served the court both as a violinist and as *vice-Kapellmeister* (and briefly *Kapellmeister*), while Fux—best known as the author of the treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum*—was appointed court composer by Leopold I from the 1690s and became *Kapellmeister* of the Hofmusikkapelle under Charles VI in 1715. Schmelzer's *sepolcro* (a Holy Week genre of oratorio) *Le memorie dolorose*, written for performance at court in 1678, receives its first recording on **Johann Heinrich Schmelzer: Le Memorie dolorose** (Olde Focus Recordings FCR914, *issued* 2019, 74'). The libretto by the court poet Nicolo Minato was printed, but the music survives only in manuscript from Leopold's private 'bedroom' music collection, the Schlaftammerbibliothek. Digitized copies of both libretto and musical score can be viewed on the site of the [Austrian National Library](#). As noted by Robert Kendrick in his excellent liner notes, Leopold himself composed two recitative-aria sections of the work, as was his usual practice. The work consists of four scenes, in which the Virgin Mary converses with different groups of interlocutors (angels, apostles, the Marys present on Easter morning, and Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea). The libretto is set as recitative alternating with brief two-stanza arias, and there is powerful deployment of ritornello devices in the opening scene and that involving the three Marys. Striking also is the fine descending-tetrachord aria 'Morte à Christo' sung by the Blessed Virgin Mary which concludes that third scene. With regards to the performance, the playing (by the ensemble Acronym) is more arresting than some of the singing (by Tenet Vocal Artists). The continuo group energizes and colours the drama effectively, but the delivery of Mary's (i.e. the leading character's) fervently impassioned text is somewhat monochromatic and understated.

Johann Joseph Fux likewise contributed abundantly to the repertory of *sepolcri* for the imperial court, but it is another (albeit overlapping) aspect of Habsburg devotion and a key pillar of the famed *Pietas Austriaca*—devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary—that is reflected in the recording of his music by Accentus Austria, directed by violone player Thomas Wimmer, **Johann Joseph Fux: Ave Regina** (DHM88985411892, *issued* 2017, 57'). The programme alternates Marian antiphon settings (and one motet) for solo soprano—here the superb Hana Blažíková—with ensemble (mainly trio) sonatas suitable for liturgical use, for example between the lessons at Mass. The latter are wonderfully imaginative and energetic in invention, and include a splendid passacaglia which makes up the bulk of the G minor sonata, K377,

and a Christmas *Sonata pastorale* with recorders. This first-rate repertory here receives appropriately characterful performances, as do the Marian works. Amid the frequently virtuosic vocal writing in the votive antiphons, one of the four settings of the antiphon *Ave regina cælorum* included on the recording (K205) stands apart in that the soprano presents the chant as a monorhythmic *cantus firmus* throughout while a multi-movement instrumental sonata is woven around it. Fux's surviving output of sacred music is vast—there are, for example, more than 20 settings of *Ave regina cælorum* alone, and approximately 90 Masses—and represents a rich territory for performers to explore. Recordings have tended to favour his instrumental output above his sacred vocal works. This recording gives another small taste of this composer whose narrower fame as author of the *Gradus* can obscure his engagement with a catholicity of Italian styles from ancient to modern.

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Daniel Bangert

Touring the European Baroque

This batch of recordings criss-crosses Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, presenting works from all corners of the Continent. The theme of journeying or road-tripping across the European Baroque is poignant in this period when travel and live music have been severely curtailed. However, several of these discs serve as reminders of inventive programming and experimentation that we have seen continue in the form of online projects like those discussed by Chris Parsons in this journal ('Music and the internet in the age of COVID-19', *Early Music*, xlviii (2020), pp.403–05).

We begin with the DVD/CD set **House of dreams** (Tafelmusik TMK1020DVDCD, *issued* 2013, 92' + 72'); a multimedia project from Toronto-based Tafelmusik conceived by bassist Alison Mackay and first performed in 2012. *House of dreams* is designed as a virtual visit to five private homes across Europe (in London, Venice, Delft, Paris and Leipzig) and combines narration with select movements from works by Handel, Vivaldi, Sweelinck, Purcell, Marais, J. S. Bach and Telemann, and images of paintings by Vermeer, Watteau, Canaletto, Chardin and other contemporaries.

In terms of narration, the most engaging sections are those with narrator Blair Williams filmed on location at