

have impressed everyone else far more than his composer, who wrote it in a hurry. Here are some other variations from Moscheles along with two sonatas for flute.

These pieces are consistently varied in rhythm, harmony, and texture. The contrapuntal turns the music takes are an important component of that textural variety. Even the five divertimentos included in the program are first-rate light entertainment. None of the writing sounds like an imitation of other composers, namely Moscheles's more famous contemporaries, except the earliest selection, which has touches of Beethoven. This piece predates the famous Alexander Variations. The Variations Concertantes for flute or violin and piano were written in Vienna in 1813 or 1814 and consist of a theme and six variations plus coda with impressive technical work from both players. It was shortly after this that Beethoven would delegate to Moscheles a piano arrangement of *Fidelio*. The edition used for the Sonata in A (1819) is Billaudot, and the one I have is from Universal, called Vienna Urtext Edition. There are some minor differences between them, and in the Trio of the Scherzo the flute and right hand of the piano part are switched. This earlier sonata of the two is among the most important flute works of its time.

The flutist studied at the Paris Conservatory and the pianist attended Curtis; both of them have competed internationally. Kazunori Seo's articulation is sparkling clean in III of the Sonata in G; his tone is pure and refined. Whether he is accompanying a sonata or a divertimento, Makoto Ueno has lots to do and executes it with clarity, sensitivity, and superb balance. In case you haven't figured it out yet, this is one of the best records I've heard this year.

GORMAN

## **M**ozart: *Castrato Arias*

Valer Sabadus, ct; Graz Orchestra/ Michael Hofstetter—Oehms 1814—50 minutes

Mozart composed some arias for castrato, adapted some of his own, and some others were taken over by present day countertenors. Sabadus sings some of each. He begins with two of Ramiro's arias from *La Finta Giardiniera*, we hear the (non-sung) overture to *Lucio Silla*, then two of Cecilio's arias. Sesto's big aria, 'Deh, per questo istante solo' from *La Clemenza di Tito* is followed by Idamante's 'Non ho colpa' from *Idomeneo* and (yes!)

Cherubino's 'Voi che sapete' from *Marriage of Figaro*.

His is a superbly beautiful voice, and his silken sound makes much of the arias. Since six of the arias are fairly unfamiliar to most listeners, only Cherubino's aria falls on reluctant ears. Years of hearing a mezzo voice have hardened my ears against a countertenor Cherubino.

The orchestra and fairly slow tempos add to the musical beauty. No texts.

Look for a recording of this by male soprano Michael Maniaci. He sings the same two *Lucio Silla* arias, duplicating Sesto's 'Deh, per questo istante solo' and adding 'Parto, ma tu ben mio'. He caps off the program with a spectacular, complete *Exsultate, Jubilate*. His is a brighter, precisely edged voice, and he sings with enthusiasm and personality. His accompaniments are by the Boston Baroque. They also perform the overtures to *Idomeneo* and *La Clemenza* (Telarc 31827, March/April 2010).

PARSONS

## **M**ozart: *Clarinet Concerto*; *Bassoon Concerto*

Thorsten Johanns, cl; Ole Kristian Dahl, bn; Cologne Radio/ Karl-Heinz Steffens, Eivind Aadland—LAWO 1060—45 minutes

The WDR Symphony of Cologne presents the "Alpha and Omega" of Mozart's wind concertos, both recorded in concert in June 2011. Principal Clarinet Thorsten Johanns takes center stage with Norwegian maestro Eivind Aadland on the podium. Principal Bassoon Ole Kristian Dahl is a native of Norway as well, but this time Berlin Philharmonic clarinetist-turned-conductor Karl-Heinz Steffens takes the baton.

The production begins well, with a handsome and muscular Bassoon Concerto. Dahl offers a robust tone, excellent technical facility, a highly varied color palette, and wonderful sensitivity; and the orchestra matches him with confidence and energy.

The Clarinet Concerto, though, is a disappointment. Johanns plays with a cloudy timbre and a patchy legato; and while he has good fingers, he allows messy connections and regularly compresses 16th notes. Moreover, his rendition is bland. Although he has a wide dynamic range, he says very little; and he hurries through II as if he has a plane to catch. The crisp orchestra of the Bassoon Concerto is also gone, replaced by one that sounds tired and indifferent, following Mozart's expressive markings out of courtesy rather than belief.

The WDR Symphony is still a superb ensemble, and even the greatest orchestras in the world have a bad day. But why package it for the world to hear?

HANUDEL

## **MOZART:** *Flute Concertos*

Paul Fried; Maria Casale, hp; Virtuosi de Los Angeles/ Paul Fried

Golden Tone 9—75 minutes (800-BUY-MYCD)

*Flute & Harp Concerto*; **BACH, CPE:** *Flute Concerto in D minor*; **HENZE:** *Sentiments of CPE Bach*  
Maria Cecilia Munoz, fl; Sarah O'Brien, hp; Basel Chamber Orchestra

Ars 38158 [SACD] 64 minutes

In 1982, Hans Werner Henze transcribed a CPE Bach Fantasia in F-sharp minor from 1787 for flute, harp, string orchestra, and violin. It is a substantial, 15-minute work full of contrasting textures and harmonies that have been further explored by setting a string quartet apart from the string orchestra accompaniment. For these reasons, sometimes it sounds modern and sometimes baroque, which can probably also be said about the original!

The playing of the Basel Chamber Orchestra, apparently without conductor, is oriented more toward refinement than drama. This notably informs their approach to CPE Bach and his modern reincarnation. Their dynamic range tends toward the softer end, and in fact they are the softest accompanying group I have heard in a concerto. Lest you think it is all sedate, watch out for the storm-like introduction to the third movement of the Bach!

Maria Munoz is a very polished young player from Argentina who has won several international competitions. She is currently principal flutist of two orchestras in Switzerland and also plays in the orchestra of the Colon Theater of Buenos Aires. Her instrument is an 18k gold Muramatsu flute. Sarah O'Brien has been principal harpist of the Munich Philharmonic and Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra and taught at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Sibelius Academy in Finland, Juilliard, and universities in Zurich, Basel, and Rotterdam. She plays her Lyon and Healy harp exceedingly well, but the highest notes get lost in the Mozart. The balances among flute, harp, and the orchestra are otherwise superb, but the perfect finish to the sound leaves a dull impression about the playing despite the clarity.

Paul Fried has played principal flute with the Pittsburgh Symphony, New York Chamber Symphony, Boston Symphony, and Berlin Phil-

harmonic. He has also recorded more than 200 film scores as a studio musician in Los Angeles. Harpist Maria Casale won the 1989 USA International Harp Competition held at Indiana University. She has since played in many orchestras in Southern California, including the Philharmonic, Opera, and Chamber Orchestras of Los Angeles, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, and San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival. Both Fried and Casale attended Juilliard.

Although Maria Munoz lacks no gifts, Paul Fried's playing is more delicious. His sound expresses a joy that is absent from the other recording, and it's just the way I like to hear Mozart—except the tendency toward over-enthusiastic trills. Harpist Maria Casale comes though high and low and matches Fried's splendor with vibrant playing of her own. The string complement in this group is too small, which gives the winds of the orchestra too much presence. The violins get lost in the horns sometimes. Also, very slight intonation problems exist, but pass by quickly. The fine playing in the cadenzas more than makes up for this. Fried wrote the cadenzas in the two concertos for solo flute, and the ones in the Flute and Harp Concerto are given a dazzling rendition.

Both recordings, then, are quite good with slight defects that can have a larger influence since they affect everything. There is reason enough to hear both. Based merely on this comparison, Fried and Casale offer first-rate delight with less than first-rate backing. For other choices, consult the Overview (May/June 2008).

GORMAN

## **MOZART:** *Flute & Harp Concerto*; *Wind Symphonie Concertant*

Per Flemström, fl; Pavel Sokolov, ob; Leif Arne Pedersen, cl; Per Hannisdal, bn; Inger Besserudhagen, hn; Birgitte Volan Havik, hp; Oslo Philharmonic/ Alan Buribayev, Arvid Engegard

LAWO 1071—58 minutes

All of the soloists here are principals of the Oslo Philharmonic. The winds in the *Sinfonia Concertante* have tight ensemble, upbeat buoyancy, excellent forward pulse, fine inflection to their phrases, and not only balance one another but dovetail nicely when stitching their lines together—except, that is, in the second movement, which is quite plodding. So is Arvi Engegard's orchestral introduction, not because of the tempo but the length with which the strings hold their notes at the end of phrases and the lack of rhythmic uplift. The

orchestra sounds better once the soloists enter.

The Flute and Harp Concerto is done in by Flemström's lack of pulse and rhythmic character. He sounds very pedestrian. That's a pity because Havik manages to keep her harp articulate and flowing, and Buribayev gives the orchestra much more character than Enggard.

Engineering is clear, warm, and balanced. In the concerto I'm inclined to blame the conductor rather than the engineers for the lack of orchestral projection. On the whole I would describe this as a competent but not memorable album. I don't have a favorite recording of either work, but I do find both Pahud-Langlamet with Abbado and the Berlin Philharmonic on Warner and Coles-Yoshino with Menuhin and the English Chamber Orchestra on Virgin much better in the concerto.

FRENCH

## MOZART: *Organ Pieces*

Ivan Ronda—Brilliant 95099—64 minutes

Every time I see a disc of Mozart's organ music, I am suspicious. He didn't really write organ music. In this collection you will hear an Adagio that very obviously was written for glass harmonica. You will hear a few pieces written for a musical clock or a mechanical organ that played like a music box. You will hear a piece written for flute, cello, oboe, and glass harmonica! There is one church sonata here—written for organ and strings and played here without the strings.

So what do we have? If you are crazy about the organ, here is Mozart on the organ. But if you are simply a music lover you will want to hear some of these pieces as originally set. On the other hand, I have an E Power Biggs LP of Mozart—actually I just listened to it—that makes real organ music out of some of these pieces. (The menu is not the same, but three pieces are common to both.) Biggs argued that since Mozart played his music on the organ at Haarlem, Holland (where he recorded the Mozart album) he must have revved it up for such a strong instrument. I agree that that is very likely, and I like the Biggs recording. I especially like what Biggs did with the two great Fantasias in F minor, originally written for that damn clock.

I can't warm up to this; it makes me think of a music box.

VR00N

## MOZART: *Piano Concertos 21+23; Rondo in A*

Ingrid Jacoby, Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields/ Marriner—ICA 5135—67:27

In the notes to this release Richard Wigmore calls No. 21 "one of Mozart's grandest works in his grandest key" and tells us it is scored for a large orchestra with trumpets and drums. But the pianist, in the same notes, stresses that No. 23 is very intimate and personal. I think she is more in tune with 23, actually; but I don't hear it as intimate in any way.

The trouble is, she plays both works that way, and the result is what I call "tinkly delicate". Certainly 21 needs to be more majestic, needs more sweep and lustre. And 23 is a "big" work—could almost be Beethoven. But it is against current rules to make Mozart majestic or passionate. That's why I only recommend old recordings of these pieces. Kempff, Casadesu, and Haebler are great—and in No. 23 Curzon and Ashkenazy as well.

Neville Marriner never had much sweep or majesty in his conducting, though he was often quite acceptable. Here he sounds pretty detached. Of course, he is very old, and it is easy for him to go thru the motions and produce something quite respectable.

It is that. He observes all the rules, he keeps things bouncing. It's never sluggish, always lively. The strings play with vibrato—thank goodness. It is a small orchestra. What we are left with is the idea that Mozart was rather bloodless—maybe even English!

VR00N

## MOZART: *Piano Sonatas 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18; Fantasia; Gigue; Rondos*

Marc-Andre Hamelin

Hyperion 68029 [2CD] 155 minutes

*Sonatas 11, 17, 18*

Menahem Pressler—LDV 19—61 minutes

Pressler's single CD clearly tells us of his intention to record all the composer's piano sonatas, whereas Hamelin's two-disc set does not. Neither entry gives a volume number. In the case of Hamelin, I suppose this leaves things open should he decide to follow up this first recording. In the case of Pressler a major disappointment is playing time that could easily have accommodated another sonata.

Pressler, now in his 90s, joins that select group of performers who continue to play with some artistic relevance and respectable technique far into their golden years. The two