



Bearing in mind these and other dilemmas that face the editor, this edition has been very carefully realized, choosing a cautious and intelligent middle way between the Charybdis of historical faithfulness and the Scylla of modern performance practices. No excessive additions have been made to features such as dynamics or figured bass. The editor has helpfully chosen not to normalize the beaming of small note values, thus preserving indications of articulation. Editions with standardized beaming according to modern usage unfortunately remain prevalent, obscuring many gestures and expressive markings that can be extremely useful to the performer by forcing the original notation into a rigid and sterile frame. A few pages of the source in facsimile would have been welcome, to give the reader an idea of its appearance. Since the Preface has been translated into English, a translation of the libretto might also have been a useful addition for non-Italian singers.

The edition of the text presents some inconsistencies with regard to editorial criteria. As is the custom in Italian philology, the editor rightly chooses to normalize some particularities of eighteenth-century orthography (such as the etymological *h*, the distinction between *u* and *v*, and the use of the modern *i* in place of *y* and *j*). Nevertheless, many of the notes in the critical apparatus of the text edition mention these kinds of changes and are therefore redundant. As for the music, the editorial procedures are valid and respectful towards the source. The presentation in the score, however, is occasionally too heavily charged with square brackets, which appear every time the editor chooses to add dynamics, ornaments, accidentals, figured bass or other accessory signs. A less fussy option might have been to choose italics, or a different font, thus avoiding these recurring and unnecessary brackets and facilitating reading. But *de gustibus non disputandum est*: this slight reservation should not obscure the fine work of the editor. It is good news that such Neapolitan sacred music is finally attracting scholarly attention, and that Vinci's oratorio benefits from so competent a modern edition as this.

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## RECORDINGS

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IGNAZ JOSEPH PLEYEL (1757–1831)

*SYMPHONIES CONCERTANTES, VIOLIN CONCERTO*

David Perry (violin), Isabella Lippi (violin), Victoria Chiang (viola), Baltimore Chamber Orchestra / Markand Thakar Naxos, 8.570320, 2009; one disc, 79 minutes

Recorded shortly after the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Pleyel's birth, this Naxos disc contains three of his most effective pieces: his two string *symphonies concertantes* (B112 in B flat, B114 in A), and his only violin concerto, B103/103A in D (following Rita Benton's numbering in her *Ignace Pleyel: A Thematic Catalogue of His Compositions* (New York: Pendragon, 1977)). London proved especially receptive to Pleyel's *symphonies concertantes*, and we owe Haydn's glorious example to the fabricated rivalry in Hanover Square when, as John Marsh commented in February 1792, Pleyel was 'pitted' against his former teacher (Brian Robins, ed., *The John Marsh Journals: The Life and Times of a Gentleman Composer (1752–1828)* (New York: Pendragon, 1998), 513).

Pleyel had begun writing *symphonies concertantes* in Strasbourg. The French fashion initiated around 1770 by Davaux and Saint-Georges was followed by composers like Barrière and Leduc, and exploited enthusiastically by the indefatigable Cambini, author of over eighty such works. In the 1780s Pleyel joined the ranks of exponents like Bertheaume, Devienne, Bréval and Viotti. Between 1785 and 1802 he produced five examples, B111–115, not the eight claimed by Barry S. Brook in *La Symphonie Française dans la seconde moitié*



*du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Institut de musicologie de l'Université de Paris, 1962), volume 2, 590) and in his 1980 *New Grove* article on the *symphonie concertante*. Jean Gribenski's revision of Brook for the 2001 *New Grove* reduced the number to six, compounding an error made by Benton, who identified as a sixth *symphonie concertante* a work for violin and keyboard (B116). Attributed to Pleyel in a manuscript housed in Genoa (Istituto musicale Paganini, MS n.2.1.25), this piece is actually an arrangement, *accomodata per il Piano Forte* (and almost certainly unconnected to Pleyel), of Viotti's first *symphonie concertante* for two violins (1786), which Viotti and Imbault performed before Marie Antoinette. A superb recording exists on Calig 50917 (1993). Steibelt arranged it for violin and keyboard, a combination recorded on Bongiovanni GB 5567 (1997). Similarly, Pleyel published his last two *symphonies concertantes* (B114 for two violins and B115 for wind) in alternative versions for violin and keyboard.

Pleyel's first work in this genre was B111 in E flat for violin, viola, cello and oboe, premiered in 1786 and soon known in London as his 'celebrated concertante'. It is more of a serenade than a conventional *symphonie concertante*, unlike the third, B113 in F, for seven soloists, which caused a stir in Hanover Square nine days before Haydn's *symphonie concertante* – more, one suspects, for the quantity of soloists than for its content. Somewhat more forthright than the London reviewers, John Marsh judged it to be, like his own compositions, 'certainly inferior . . . to the style of Haydn' (Robins, *The John Marsh Journals*, 513). Both B111 and B113, neither of which is otherwise available, have been recorded under the aegis of the Internationale Pleyel Gesellschaft (IPG), based at the delightful Pleyel museum in Ruppersthal, his birthplace in Lower Austria (IPG CD23, 2007, and ARS 38811, 2008). The second and fourth *symphonies concertantes* recorded by Naxos on the present disc are more accomplished works. The disc's back cover claims they are 'characteristic expressions of [Pleyel's] idiosyncratic style'. For idiosyncrasy we should read 'independence from Haydn's manner', and scotch the charge levelled repeatedly by H. C. Robbins Landon and others that Pleyel merely imitated his teacher. He certainly does not on this disc.

The B flat *Symphonie Concertante* for violin and viola, B112, was written for performance in Strasbourg and published in 1791, immediately spawning arrangements for piano and viola, for oboe and bassoon, and for two clarinets, the wind versions courtesy of Michael Joseph Gebauer (1764–1812). It was almost the first of Pleyel's works to appear on LP (Columbia M32937, 1974). Sadly this superb reading was never transferred to CD, despite the illustrious performers (Isaac Stern and Pinchas Zukerman with the English Chamber Orchestra under Daniel Barenboim). Five recordings to date attest to this work's strengths, its main attraction being the soloists' sparkling interplay. Consequently the two-clarinet version is a non-starter as the homogeneous sound of two clarinets cannot capture the violin–viola dialogue (CPO 777 241, 2008). Even less viable is the arrangement as a solo flute concerto (Talent DOM 291036, 1993). After an imposing Allegro Pleyel dispenses with a slow movement, in common with Bertheaume and with Viotti in his second *symphonie concertante*. His beguiling Rondo recalls the Andante of J. C. Bach's Symphony Op. 18 No. 5, and finally morphs into a 3/8 Allegro assai. On the Naxos disc conductor Markand Thakar is rather earthbound in the soaring melodies, but David Perry (violin) and Victoria Chiang (viola) respond thoughtfully to each other in the Allegro and elegantly in the Rondo. With their unflinching precision they outstrip Paul and Christoph Angerer, whose period-instrument Concilium Musicum Wien are let down by a solo violinist unequal to the work's technical demands (Cavalli CCD 422, 2002). In 2004 Christian Koch directed the Pleyel-Orchester for Cornelia Löscher and Christoph Angerer (again) in an excellent live performance, unfortunately almost wrecked by a loud unscheduled crash (IPG CD06). Löscher returned in 2010, partnering Johannes Flieder with the Camerata pro Musica under Paul Weigold in an admirable performance similar to Koch's (ARS 38815). This disc includes Pleyel's curious, undated A minor Adagio for violin and orchestra, B218. Stern and Zukerman's peerless performance of the *Symphonie Concertante*, despite two tiny cuts, would see off all these rivals if reissued on CD, but the present Naxos performance is a good substitute.

The A major *Symphonie Concertante* for two violins, B114, was first performed by Pleyel and the young Franz Cramer on 12 March 1792 and published five years later. It echoes Viotti's first *symphonie concertante*, being in three movements with an Adagio in the tonic minor. Pleyel's Adagio was particularly appreciated by the London audience and recycled in a piano sonata, B625. An LP box of 1977 contained the composer's violin



and keyboard version together with *symphonies concertantes* by Abel and others (cpo 777 009). IPG's recording of the two-violin version under Paul Weigold appeared shortly after this Naxos disc in 2009 (ARS 38814). Once more Markand Thakar inclines towards the stately rather than the dramatic on the disc under review. He is more ponderous than Weigold in all three movements, and notably less effective in the teasing Rondo. Referring to this work's 'catchy finale-tune with offbeat accents', Simon McVeigh has emphasized how 'far distant from Haydn's rondo style' it is (*Concert Life in London from Mozart to Haydn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 140). In the minor episode of the Rondo, Thakar and soloists David Perry and Isabella Lippi seem bland compared with their ARS counterparts.

In a diatribe against Pleyel ('placid', 'flaccid') which remarkably fails to mention even a single work, Landon wrongly claimed that 'he composed a large amount of both concertos and *symphonies concertantes*' ('The Pre-Classical Concerto and the Concerto Parallel to Mozart', in Robert Layton, ed., *A Companion to the Concerto* (London: Christopher Helm, 1988), 71). Saint-Georges, Devienne and Bréval all wrote more *symphonies concertantes* than Pleyel's modest five. Moreover, like Haydn, Pleyel composed relatively few concertos: just eight, in fact (seven, if B107 for bassoon is spurious, as seems likely). Of the six cello concertos (one lost), some appeared in versions for other instruments. Pleyel's solitary violin concerto escaped the notice of Chappell White in his *From Vivaldi to Viotti: A History of the Early Classical Violin Concerto* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1992). But Burnett R. Toskey considered it 'one of the most ambitious and dynamic violin concertos of the period . . . dramatic [and] ingenious' (*Concertos for Violin and Viola: A Comprehensive Encyclopaedia* (Seattle: Writers' Publishing Service, 1983), 649). The Breitkopf supplement XVI for 1785, 1786 and 1787 (Barry S. Brook, ed., *The Breitkopf Thematic Catalogue* (New York: Dover, 1966), 853–854) announced Pleyel's concerto B103 alongside a Rosetti concerto with a less happy fate (it is lost). Pleyel's work was printed in 1788, but that same year he published a revision of the whole concerto, B103a, replacing the finale. Naxos can boast a first recording of the earlier version, albeit in an awkward form. The first two movements are followed by the replacement rondo while the original finale needs to be downloaded. (Lasting seventy-nine minutes, the CD is of course generously filled.) The first version of the concerto on Naxos can be compared with the later version on Hungaroton, performed by Vilmos Szabadi and the Erdödy Chamber Orchestra, who also include the original finale (HCD 32241, 2003).

For his revision Pleyel pruned over a third of the opening Allegro. He focused on the development section, which occupied nearly a third of the movement and extended to four minutes, three of them in rather relentless minor mode. In his symphonies Pleyel could write lengthy, sometimes unfocused developments, but here he chose to slim the section down to just over two minutes. Similarly, the D minor slow movement is shorn of an episode. However, Pleyel proved unable to modify his massive original finale, lasting a full twelve minutes and insufficiently differentiated in tone from the opening Allegro. Instead, he opted for a replacement at half the length. This captivating jig must have enhanced his reputation in England, crowning a concerto graced both by elegant, muscular themes of the sort that characterize the viola/cello concerto B105 (c1788) and by an expressive, lyrical vein found in the slow movements of symphonies such as B126 in D (c1783) and B134 in E flat (c1784). David Perry, on a 1712 Gobetti, is consistently impressive throughout the Naxos recording, and well supported by the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, though, as before, their conductor Markand Thakar can seem pedestrian. While comparisons are not appropriate for the opening movements, elsewhere the palm goes to the Hungarians. The original finales weigh in within a second of each other, but the Hungarians are livelier. Their new 6/8 finale trips along deliciously but on Naxos it lacks sparkle. Happily the two discs together allow us to hear Pleyel's first and second thoughts. Further thoughts, not Pleyel's own, come in a piano concerto version (B1023), one of three such arrangements of B103a printed in 1789 (recorded in 2008 on ARS 38813).

This well-recorded Naxos CD offers a view of Strasbourg largely as Pleyel would have known it and contains an informative insert note by Artaria's Allan Badley, who edited the works. Suzanne Beia's cadenzas are stylish but generally longer than those on alternative recordings. Altogether this is a significant follow-up to Pleyel's anniversary, not perhaps providing the finest accounts imaginable, but persuasive enough to enhance his standing. In Simon Keefe's words, 'Pleyel has never recovered . . . from his reputational



nose-dive' (*The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 684). Evidently the recovery is underway.

TONY GABLE



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GOTTFRIED HEINRICH STÖLZEL (1690–1749)

TWO SERENATAS

Dorothee Miels, Elisabeth Graf, Knut Schoch, Ekkehard Abele / Telemannisches Collegium Michaelstein / Ludger Rémy

cpo, 777 094-2, 2007; two discs, 103 minutes

Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel's biography reads rather like a musician's ideal career. Several years spent studying in various countries, fending off offers of employment, were followed by a thirty-year 'steady job' as Kapellmeister at the court of Saxe-Gotha. Entering university in Leipzig in 1707, six years after Telemann, he was undoubtedly familiar with Telemann's work through his involvement (while still a student) with the *Collegium musicum* founded by the latter (though directed by Melchior Hofmann by 1707). Stölzel appears to have had the ability to make friends in high places throughout his life, for by 1710 he was teaching singing and keyboard amongst the aristocratic circles of Breslau, and subsequent time in Halle yielded a commission from the Zeitz court and the enthusiastic reception of a pastorale that he had written for the court at Gera, both of which resulted in offers of employment as Kapellmeister. The years 1713–1718 were spent in Venice, Rome, Florence, Prague and Bayreuth, and his success in each place is more than adequate testimony to the quality of his music.

The preservation of Stölzel's aria 'Bist du bei mir' (from the opera *Diomedes, oder Die triumphierende Unschuld*) in the second *Clavierbüchlein* for Anna Magdalena Bach is widely accepted as an indication of J. S. Bach's esteem for the composer (see Christoph Wolff, Hans-Joachim Schulze, Andreas Glöckner and Peter Wollny, 'Zurück in Berlin: Das Notenarchiv der Sing-Akademie. Bericht über eine erste Bestandsaufnahme', *Bach-Jahrbuch* 88 (2002), 165–180; the relevant section is Glöckner's 'Neues zum Thema Bach und die Oper seiner Zeit' on pages 172–174). Mattheson included Stölzel's autobiography in *Grundlage einer Ehren-Pforte* (Hamburg, 1740), though his admiration may have resulted at least in part from Stölzel's reputation as a theorist. Although the majority of his theoretical works are compilations, Stölzel's treatise on canon was printed in his lifetime (*Practischer Beweis, wie aus einem . . . Canone perpetui in hypodiapente quatuor vocum, viel und mancherley . . . Canones perpetui à 4 zu machen seyn*, 1725). His groundbreaking *Abhandlung vom Recitativ* (edited in Werner Steger, 'G. H. Stölzels *Abhandlung vom Recitativ*' (dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 1962)), written for Lorenz Christoph Mizler's Societät der Musikalischen Wissenschaften some time after 1739, when Stölzel was elected to the society, also earned him considerable respect amongst his contemporaries. After his death in 1749, however, his music seems to have fallen out of favour.

Armed with this biographical information, the listener may expect to hear similarities to the music of Bach, Handel and Telemann in Stölzel's music, and this is indeed the case in the two serenatas presented on this disc, *Alles, was sonst lieblich heißet* and *Seid willkommen, schöne Stunden*. Echoes of Bach occur particularly in the recitatives, and similarities to Telemann's *Harmonischer Gottesdienst* (1726) can be heard in some of the more daring obbligato arias. Similarly, the dramatic pacing of both serenatas can easily remind the listener of Handel's oratorios, particularly those on pastoral themes. Despite this, however, Stölzel's music maintains a strong individuality, at times even pushing the boundaries of contemporary compositional practice, most notably by combining traditional structural designs with elements of newer approaches to form that were developing at the time.