



(sung here with great power and conviction by Diana Moore), the energetic hunting chorus 'O quanto bella gloria' and the pastoral 'Non tardate Fauni ancora': material sufficiently original to prompt Charles Burney's claim that *Parnasso* was 'new to the ears of the greatest part of a London audience'. With a plot involving Apollo and the Muses there are inevitably pastoral items with the requisite recorder accompaniment, deftly played here by Rebecca Miles and Katy Bircher. This was the type of music that Handel often reused for scenes set in grottoes featuring shepherds, sheep and idyllic Arcadian surroundings, and which was often lampooned in ballad opera. Unsurprisingly, pastoral material from *Parnasso* later found its way into the considerably less cohesive *Jupiter in Argos*. On 11 March 1734 the *Daily Journal* reported that with *Parnasso* Handel had 'exerted his utmost skill'. His efforts were rewarded by *The Bee* reporting on 'the greatest Applause' for 'the most exquisite Harmony ever furnish'd from the Stage'. Likewise this disc deserves applause for the vigorous, stylish and precise playing of The King's Consort under Matthew Halls. By far the most outstanding vocal contributions are Carolyn Sampson's effortless and mellifluous soprano tones as Clio in the aria 'Con un vezzo lusinghiero', and Lucy Crowe's subtle and serene handling of 'Ho perso il caro ben' (Orfeo). The brief comment on sources consulted for the recording (principally Hamburg manuscripts and autograph fragments in English archives) is useful, but it could have discussed some of the issues connected with variations between sources. Nevertheless, this disc is to my knowledge the first complete recording of *Parnasso*, and as such is an invaluable contribution to the recorded repertory.

Alas, this cannot be said for the new Hyperion *Dettingen Te Deum*. Layton is unquestionably one of Britain's leading conductors, especially of Handel. The choral and orchestral forces under his control perform brilliantly here, and should please most Handel enthusiasts, but it is not clear what the disc aims to achieve. At a time when recording companies are under pressure to be innovative in the face of recession, another recording of the *Te Deum* seems unnecessary and the somewhat arbitrary addition of a *Zadok the Priest* and an organ concerto (with which there are unfortunate balance problems between the solo instrument and orchestra) must raise some questions. Even after more than twenty years the Archiv recording of the *Te Deum* and *Dettingen Anthem* performed by the Choir of Westminster Abbey under Simon Preston still competes well with this disc. The combination of boys' voices with period instruments in the Preston example also satisfies the demands of the purist. The *Dettingen Te Deum*, composed somewhat belatedly in honour of a victory over the French, must have seemed as noisy at the first performance in the Chapel Royal at St James's Palace in November 1743 as the battle itself. Even George II must have been overpowered by the orchestral forces crammed into the comparatively small space. Some contemporary reports of the rehearsals at Whitehall (reproduced in Donald Burrows's *Handel and the English Chapel Royal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)) were positive, others less so. The Marchioness Grey apparently found the music 'vastly loud' and 'not agreeable'. The sleeve notes for the disc indicate that a new edition of the *Te Deum* was prepared for this recording, yet they convey nothing about the sources consulted or the editorial decisions that may have had an important bearing on the performance and might also have been interesting to scholars and performers.

PETER LEECH



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GOTTFRIED AUGUST HOMILIUS (1714–1785)

EIN LÄMMLEIN GEHT UND TRÄGT DIE SCHULD, PASSIONS-KANTATE

Monika Mauch (soprano), Bogna Bartosz (alto), Markus Brutscher (tenor), Hans Christoph Begemann (bass) / Neue
Düsseldorfer Hofmusik / Basler Madrigalisten / Fritz Näf

Carus-Verlag, Carus 83.262, 2007; two discs, 94 minutes



GOTTFRIED AUGUST HOMILIUS (1714–1785)

JOHANNESPASSION

Jana Reiner (soprano), Katja Fischer (soprano), Franz Vitzthum (countertenor), Jan Kobow (tenor), Tobias Berndt (bass), Clemens Heidrich (bass) Kruzianer Stephan Keucher (tenor), Kruzianer Chrian Lutz (tenor) / Dresdner Kreuzchor / Dresdner Barockorchester / Roderich Kreile
Carus-Verlag, Carus 83.261, 2007; two discs, 119 minutes

GOTTFRIED AUGUST HOMILIUS (1714–1785)

WEIHNACHTSORATORIUM

CHRISTIAN AUGUST JACOBI (1688–1725)

DIE HIMMEL STEHT UNS WIEDER OFFEN

Christiane Kohl (soprano), Annette Markert (alto), Marcus Ullmann (tenor), Tobias Berndt (bass) / Sächsisches Vocalensemble / Matthias Jung Viruosi Saxoniae / Ludwig Güttler
Carus-Verlag, Carus 83.235, 2008; one disc, 58 minutes

The name Gottfried August Homilius is practically unknown today, even among music scholars, though lately his stock has been on the rise. Credit for this is due in part to Carus's admirable and ongoing project of bringing forth rare works by now-obscure composers such as Homilius through published editions and recordings. Recent increase in name recognition is due also to the mounting evidence of Homilius's close connection to the Bach circle. This makes him a subject of particular interest to scholars at the Bach-Archiv in Leipzig, as well as to those at the Packard Humanities Institute in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who are working together to produce a complete edition of the works of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. While the link between C. P. E. Bach and Homilius might not be immediately apparent, it turns out to be essential. On the surface, it would seem unlikely that the two men's paths had crossed: Bach spent his professional life first at the Prussian royal court in Berlin and later as Music Director in Hamburg, while Homilius worked almost exclusively in Dresden. Emanuel Bach knew Homilius's music, however, and thought highly enough of his Passion settings to incorporate music from them generously and regularly into his own Passion music for Hamburg (see Paul Corneilson's Introduction to Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, *Passion according to St. John* (1776) in *Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach: The Complete Works*, series 4, volume 7.2 (Los Altos: The Packard Humanities Institute, 2009), xi–xiv). Bach's pattern of musical borrowing in this case demonstrates many things, not the least of which is the wider network of interpersonal connections among his musical contemporaries. We might not know much about Homilius today, but that is not because he was equally invisible in his own time.

As more of Homilius's music becomes available in modern editions, the reasons behind Bach's esteem for his colleague emerge. Homilius was raised and educated in Dresden, and spent his professional life there at the pinnacle of the city's considerable and well-deserved musical fame. He left the Saxon capital for only a few short years to pursue a law degree at the nearby University of Leipzig (from 1735), during which time he is reported to have been a student of J. S. Bach. There, he almost certainly participated in performances of Bach's church music while serving as assistant organist at the Nicolaikirche. In 1742 Homilius returned to Dresden, taking up the much-coveted position of organist at the Frauenkirche. In 1755 he won the even more important post of Cantor at the Kreuzkirche and in the very same year was promoted to the city's top musical position (outside of the Saxon court): Music Director in Dresden. In the context of his day, Homilius achieved greater public prominence as Music Director in the Saxon capital than old Bach had done in Leipzig. Considering his résumé, the least we might expect from Homilius is competence. We get that and more.

Of the three large-scale works by Homilius on these discs, the first, the Passion cantata *Ein Lämmlein geht*, stands out most strikingly above the rest for the quality of its composition as well as of the performance presented here. To begin with, it hangs together as a dramatic work far better than its sister work, the *Johannespassion* (reviewed below), which perhaps explains why the cantata was the better-known piece. The musicians of the Düsseldorfer Hofmusik along with the Basler Madrigalisten do an



excellent job of realizing the work not just technically, but musically. Particularly impressive is the dramatic pacing within and especially between movements. Homilius often spices transitions with bold harmonic effects (for example, No. 10, 'Daran ist erschienen', into No. 11, 'Die Mörder kommen schon'), and the force of his gestures is not lost in this performance because his strategy is consistently well understood by conductor Fritz Näf and his musicians. Their intelligent, sensitive rendering of this tightly constructed work allows its inherent drama to unfold as it should. The ensemble has achieved a level of virtuosity that allows it to play flexibly, expressively and free of distracting mannerism. The result is an elegant, natural and highly musical performance.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the Dresdner Barockorchester's performance of the *Johannespassion* under Roderich Kreile. While there are some very fine voices among the soloists, the orchestra frequently suffers from fundamental problems such as poor intonation (especially in the strings, and consequently between the strings and winds) and imprecise ensemble coordination. Plainly said, there is little technical rigour or sense of direction to be found. Additionally, attempts at musical expression are inconsistent, oddly placed and often awkwardly executed. I am thinking particularly of the sharply telegraphed grammatical breaks in most of the chorale movements as well as of some relatively undramatic moments that get singled out for special emphasis for no apparent reason, while so many other circumstances that call for it more urgently are allowed to pass unobserved. One example of this is the Evangelist's recitative 'Simon Petrus aber folgte Jesum nach' (No. 10), where the tenor lingers inexplicably over the depiction of servants and officers keeping warm by the fire, even though this is an insignificant detail in the sweep of the passage, which for some reason concludes with a less dramatic rendering of Jesus being questioned by the high priest. Overall, one gets a sense of underlying lack of commitment to the music, which is usually a symptom of uninspiring leadership.

In part, though, the problem with the *Johannespassion* is also rooted in the libretto, which is very different from that of the *Lämmlein* cantata, despite the fact that they celebrate the same liturgical event. Even the voice of admiration has to admit that the Passion is simply not one of Homilius's best pieces. The fundamental flaw is the librettist's awkwardly inserted reflective moments within the unfolding Biblical action of the story. Homilius compounds the librettist's dramaturgical misjudgment by composing recitatives that are more musically expressive than the arias. The brief recitative segments therefore end up being far more musically interesting than the arias themselves, which, while successfully communicative on a superficial level, are hardly profound stuff. Apart from problems of placement, the arias are also uncomfortably lightweight in the context of surrounding events. In short, they are not musically interesting enough to warrant as much structural repetition as they contain. The problem here is that the new type of expressive work expected of arias by the third quarter of the eighteenth century (which is to say direct communication with a general public of *Kenner* and *Liebhaber*) sits awkwardly with older forms such as the da capo aria. Homilius knew that there were other choices available, so he must have had some purpose in retaining da capo at this point. His reasons are up for debate.

The third of the discs under consideration here contains repertory for Christmas. Overall, the music is attractive, charming and absolutely worth hearing. The pairing of Homilius's *Weihnachtsoratorium* with a Christmas cantata by the totally unknown Christian August Jacobi is successful, even though Jacobi was a generation older than Homilius. It is difficult at times to resist comparing Jacobi's work to that of his contemporary, J. S. Bach, yet even in the face of such fierce competition, Jacobi's piece remains delightful. Homilius's Christmas oratorio is equally engaging and does not suffer from any of the weaknesses of his *Johannespassion*. The performances on this disc are fully respectable, although they do suffer from a sort of stylistic identity crisis. The orchestra plays on modern instruments in a historically informed way, but the singers, who overindulge in vibrato, do not attempt anything similar, which is a shame. The result is that the performance is neither fish nor fowl. Still, these two pieces are excellent examples of the value of Carus's various music-historical excavation projects. The publisher makes high-quality works accessible that would otherwise be effectively extinct, even though they were the real everyday fare of their time. Our understanding of the living context in which more broadly studied compositions appeared is enriched by every 'new'



piece that the publishers at Carus, and others like them, produce. It is important work they accomplish; music scholars whose work is rooted in this repertory should be grateful.

ELLEN EXNER



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HENRI-JOSEPH RIGEL (1741–1799)

SYMPHONIES NOS 4, 7, 8, 10 AND 14

Concerto Köln / Barry Sargent, Martin Sandhoff and Hannes Rux

Berlin Classics, 0016432BC, 2008; one disc, 70 minutes

When in 1784 or 1785 the directors of the Concerts de la Loge Olympique commissioned a set of symphonies from Haydn, whose music was so popular in Paris, they scarcely foresaw that these new works would deal a near-fatal blow to the French symphony. For many years French composers would avoid the genre, discouraged by Haydn's pre-eminence. As late as 1809 Méhul recounted his trepidation, as an admirer of Haydn, on re-entering the arena of the symphony after his brief attempt in 1797; of Gossec's forty-six extant symphonies, only one was definitely composed after 1788, remaining unfinished till 1809; and Ragué failed to follow up his Op. 10 symphonies (1786). Guénin published his last eighteenth-century symphonies in 1788, works which were premiered alongside Haydn's Paris series, and garnered praise for their independence from Haydn's manner; Rigel, more prolific than Guénin and Ragué, wrote no symphonies after 1785. Thus Concerto Köln fills a gaping lacuna in the catalogue with a recording of these works written prior to the performance of Haydn's Paris symphonies.

The neglect of a composer as impressive as Rigel is puzzling. Born Heinrich Joseph Riegel in Wertheim in 1741, he settled in Paris in the 1760s as Henri-Joseph Rigel. This move perhaps explains his neglect in modern times, since expatriate composers are often ignored in their native land or overlooked in their adopted home, or both. For example, Madrid seems oblivious of the highly original Gaetano Brunetti, while France, home to countless Pleyel manuscripts, has only ever produced one (mediocre) recording of his music. Rigel's fortunes are changing: there have recently been recordings of his oratorios and Op. 10 string quartets, and this is the first disc devoted to his symphonies.

Between approximately 1765 and 1785 Rigel wrote eighteen symphonies, of which four are lost, their incipits known from Breitkopf. All but one of the symphonies are in the three-movement form favoured in France and described by the composer and naturalist Lacépède in his 1785 study *La poésie de la musique* as corresponding to three acts of a drama, an aesthetic examined in Barry S. Brook's *La symphonie française dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle* ((Paris: Institut de musicologie de l'Université de Paris, 1962), volume 1, 334–335). The exception is a four-movement pastoral symphony (Op. 21 No. 4), which has not yet been recorded. Rigel published two sets of six symphonies: Op. 12 from 1774 contained a work offered by Breitkopf in 1767; Op. 21 from 1786 curiously also included two works appearing in Breitkopf in 1767. However, telling differences from the Breitkopf incipits led Brook to speculate that these early works were later extensively reworked (Brook, *La symphonie française*, volume 1, 364). Two other symphonies appeared in conjunction with works by Gossec (No. 7 in D major, 1780), and by Rosetti and Dittersdorf (No. 8 in G minor, 1783). Richard J. Viano adopted Brook's numbering of Rigel's symphonies, implausibly allocating twelve symphonies to 1767 (*Foreign Composers in France, 1750–1790* (New York: Garland, 1984), xliii–xliv). It is likely that the fourteen extant symphonies date from 1770–1785. Brook contested the claim of the early Rigel enthusiast Robert Sondheimer that Rigel had written his most significant symphonies by 1770 (Sondheimer, 'Henri Joseph Rigel', *The Music Review* 17 (1956), 221–228), and this disc clearly vindicates Brook's view that the works postdating 1780 are finer.