



This welcome and important disc contains some superb and largely unknown music, but it does not preclude some reservations. The liner notes could have said more about the symphonies that were recorded, and avoided characterizing them vacuously and falsely as ‘transitional works between the “Sturm und Drang” of Haydn and Mozart and the pre-Beethovenian style of Méhul’. Despite this disc’s being a first outing for Rigel as a symphonist, the notes confidently assert his pre-eminence over Gossec and Leduc (who, unlike Rigel, have not languished in obscurity). The final symphonies of Gossec and Leduc should not be underestimated. Fortunately, the performances themselves have the great strengths familiar from previous discs; the driving energy is matched by impeccable precision, and the performers are well served by the excellent quality of the recording. Tempos are predictably fast in outer movements while the ensemble is unhurried in the appealing slower music. The oboists are especially deserving of praise but the relentless keyboard continuo remains frankly a wearisome presence in the four later works.

Sondheimer claimed that Mozart lifted material from Rigel’s symphony Op.12 No. 5 (Sondheimer, ‘Henri Joseph Rigel’, 221) for his Fantasy K475. That work would be worth hearing, and also Op. 12 No. 3 in C major, whose incipit in Garland foretells – startlingly – the opening of Mozart’s ‘Jupiter’ symphony. One assumes that the two composers met in 1778, some years before Rigel produced his masterpieces in G minor and D minor. It is a pity that Haydn’s Paris symphonies, glorious though they are, dealt Rigel the symphonist the *coup de grâce*, but Concerto Köln have demonstrated resoundingly how fine a composer he could be.

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GIUSEPPE TARTINI (1692–1770)

SONATE A VIOLINO SOLO; ARIA DEL TASSO

Chiara Banchini (violin), Patrizia Bovi (soprano)

Zig-Zag Territoires, ZZTo80502, 2006/2007; one disc, 69 minutes

GIUSEPPE TARTINI (1692–1770), FRANCESCO MARIA VERACINI (1690–1768)

THE DEVIL’S TRILL: SONATAS BY GIUSEPPE TARTINI [AND FRANCESCO MARIA VERACINI]

Rodolfo Richter (violin), Susanne Heinrich (viola da gamba), Silas Standage (harpsichord), William Carter (archlute, baroque guitar) / Palladians

Linn, CKD 292, 2008; one disc, 61 minutes

The engraving of Giuseppe Tartini by Carlo Calcinotti (dating from the early 1760s) depicts the composer in an oval frame beneath which there is a violin, some music clearly labelled ‘Corelli’, and books by Plato and Zarlino. These accessories are all apposite. Tartini began as a disciple of Corelli, but as he grew older he became increasingly preoccupied with music theory (hence Zarlino) and with one of the philosophies underpinning it (Plato). These interests are reflected in a quite distinctive and personalized late style. The two recordings considered here – both characterized by beautifully polished performances – illustrate this shift in stylistic orientation. The Palladians offer a selection of Tartini’s Op. 1 sonatas which, generally speaking, have a recognizably Corellian cast. Chiara Banchini, on the other hand, plays some of the later *piccole sonate* found in an autograph manuscript in the Biblioteca Antoniana of the Basilica del Santo (MS I-Pca 1888), where Tartini had held the position of *primo violino e capo di concerto*.

The manuscript is notable for the fact that, alongside the sonatas, Tartini has included transcriptions of folksongs from his native Istria (now part of Slovenia) and of the melodies used by Venetian gondoliers to



sing verses from Tasso and Ariosto. These melodies provide the basis for many of the cantabile movements in the sonatas.

The Banchini/Bovi CD opens with Patrizia Bovi singing one of these *Arie del Tasso*, which plunges the listener straight into an exotic sound world. This particular aria is embedded (complete with its text) as the third movement of Sonata XVII. (The autograph has another version of this same song transcribed immediately before Sonata XII.) Bovi's performance emphasizes the modal character of these melodies and their sense of being metrically free (not just in the vocal flourishes, whose irregularity is precisely notated by Tartini, but in the space taken between phrases). The sense of material that owes nothing to the periodic structures and functional tonality of eighteenth-century Italian instrumental music is carried through into the sonatas themselves.

Banchini admirably communicates an equivalent feeling for a vocal folk idiom in the movements that are transcriptions but extends this into movements that Tartini would have described as 'suonabile' rather than 'cantabile' (in other words, instrumentally rather than vocally conceived), notably in the *Regole per arrivare a saper ben suonar il violino*. Virtuosity (and there is plenty) is made subservient to simple melodic structures and – in the case of the concluding Furlana of Sonata XVII – popular dance. (This movement includes left-hand open-string pizzicato providing a bass to arco melodic gestures on the E string.)

Apart from the use of folksong, the *piccole sonate* are notable for the epigraphs (some of them in cipher) that Tartini appends to many of the movements. These are mostly incipits of verses from Metastasio's dramas. According to the *Elogi di Giuseppe Tartini* (1792) by Francesco Fanzago, Tartini 'always had on his desk the dramas of Metastasio, and before he began composing he read and reflected on them' (translation from *The Devil's Trill: Sonatas by Giuseppe Tartini* liner notes).

Tartini's orientation in the *piccole sonate* is explained in a passage from his 1767 *De' principi dell'armonia musicale contenuta nel diatonico genere*:

[Each nation] has its own folk songs, many of which are hallowed by tradition, and many renewed and adapted by the popular genius. They are for the most part extremely simple . . . The people listen more readily to one of these songs than to some delicate and skilfully modulated melody . . . Nature possesses greater force than art. And I add in all candour that the greater and better style is the diatonic, but it is very difficult to handle well, precisely because it is extremely simple, being the closest to nature. (Translation from *The Devil's Trill* liner notes.)

Some of the sonatas in MSI-Pca 1888 are supplied with rudimentary bass lines. Others are laid out with a staff into which a bass line could be written, and still others are presented as pure melody without any provision for a bass. Tartini told Francesco Algarotti in a letter of 1750 that he had provided bass lines for his *piccole sonate* as a formality ('per cerimonia') but that he himself played them 'senza bassetto', adding 'e questa e la mia vera intenzione' (Foreword to *Le sonate del volume autografo per violino e basso continuo o violon solo 'ad libitum'*, ed. E. Farina, *Le Opere di Giuseppe Tartini* (Milan: Carish, 1979–1992), volume 19[vi]). Banchini does exactly this, from time to time incorporating something of the implied or written bass in (usually quite straightforward) double or triple stops.

The accompanying booklet makes a rather beautiful companion to the CD. Exquisitely designed and printed, it has a separate section devoted to each sonata, each with a beautifully reproduced painting that relates to the subject of the verses referred to by Tartini in his score. These verses (all provided in full, with French and English translations) are supplemented by other apposite readings from (mostly) eighteenth-century sources. Thus the Sonata XXIV pages reproduce the verses from Metastasio's *La Galatea* and *Siroe* whose incipits are written above the third and fourth movements. (The epigraph for the first movement, 'Care dell' idol mio', remains unexplained.) A reproduction of an anonymous eighteenth-century 'Marina con pescatore' from the Pinacoteca Tosio-Martinengo in Brescia sets the scene for one of these Metastasio stanzas: 'Amico il fato | mi guida in porto . . .'

All of this seems an appropriate (and generous) response to Tartini's openness to extra-musical inspiration. The readings include various accounts of the gondoliers singing Tasso and Ariosto to each other across the water. Goethe, in his *Italienische Reise* (1816), describes this as being 'like a lament without sadness'



(translation from *The Devil's Trill* liner notes). This is altogether a very attractive little anthology – though one could have wished for more accuracy in the attributions. A Claude-Joseph Vernet painting is assigned to his son Carle Vernet (misspelt ‘Carl’) and there is confusion about which treatise Tartini published in 1767 (not the *Trattato di musica secondo la vera scienza dell'armonia*, which is given as the source for Tartini's views on folksong quoted above).

The instinct to link an instrumental composition to a dramatic idea was already evident in Tartini's early work. (There were, incidentally, two *opere prime* published by Le Cène: the first set of violin concertos, dating from the early 1730s, and the first set of violin sonatas, published in 1734.) The Sonata Op. 1 No. 10 has long been known as ‘Didone abbandonata’, though the source of this association is not certain (*pace* William Carter in the liner notes to *The Devil's Trill: Sonatas by Giuseppe Tartini*, who says that it is Tartini's autograph, long since lost for this piece). Op. 1 No. 4, however, is named ‘il trillo del diavolo’ in a Tartini autograph (though not in the Le Cène publication). Moreover, Tartini told Joseph Jérôme de Lalande the now-famous story of its genesis:

One night I dreamt that I had made a pact with the Devil; he was my servant and anticipated my every wish. I had the idea of giving him my violin to see if he might play me some pretty tunes [beaux aires], but imagine my astonishment when I heard a sonata so unusual and so beautiful, performed with such mastery and intelligence, on a level I had never before conceived was possible! I was so overcome that I stopped breathing and awoke gasping. Immediately I seized my violin, hoping to recall some shred of what I had just heard – but in vain. The piece I then composed is without a doubt my best, and I still call it The Devil's Sonata, but it falls so short of the one that stunned me that I would have smashed my violin and given up music forever if I could but have possessed it. (Translation from *Sonate a violino solo* liner notes.)

The story is, of course, archetypal. It crops up in various guises right through to Stravinsky's *Histoire du soldat*. But it continues to capture violinists' imagination and Op. 1 No. 4 must surely be one of the most recorded baroque sonatas. Andrew Manze's CD *The Devil's Sonata* (Harmonia Mundi USA 907213, 1998) combines this piece with one of the *piccole sonate* and Tartini's *L'Arte del Arco* variations – all played unaccompanied. This, although accomplished with his usual imaginative flair and virtuosity, is in the case of the ‘Devil's Trill’ completely at odds with the Op. 1 title page, which unequivocally describes the collection as *Sonate a Violino e Violoncello e Cimbalo*.

The Palladians share none of Manze's restraint in their treatment of the bass line. Perhaps encouraged by the repeated conjunction ‘e’ in that title (rather than the more conventional phrase ‘violoncello o cimbalo’ found on Tartini's Op. 2 title page), they use every combination possible of viola da gamba, harpsichord, archlute and baroque guitar. Mostly, they do so to good dramatic effect. The opening *Larghetto affettuoso* (a siciliano) of Op. 1 No. 4 has the beguiling combination of viola da gamba and archlute, the second movement (*Allegro*) has viola da gamba and harpsichord, while the final ‘Devil's Trill’ movement has solo archlute for the Grave introduction, while adding in viola da gamba and harpsichord for the more active sections. Those musicians (and there seem to be many) who wish to interpret conventional title page descriptions as narrowly prescriptive will doubtless be offended by this – but it all seems to sit well with the extravagance of Tartini's own narrative. Rodolfo Richter's violin playing is beautifully expressive (throughout the disc, in fact) and his final cadenza is suitably mysterious, conjuring up a vision of the Devil's playing half-remembered.

This is an attractive CD. My only real objection is to the special pleading for the inclusion both of Veracini's Sonata in A Major, Op. 1 No. 7 (yes, it is true that Tartini withdrew from the public gaze in order to refine his own technique after he heard Veracini in 1716), and of a Largo from one of his cello concertos (described here as a ‘viol concerto’), written for Tartini's close friend, Antonio Vandini.

Both recordings reviewed here present Tartini in context. While the linking material in the Banchini/Bozi compilation seems better integrated and to have more integrity than in the Palladians' disc, both make for enjoyable and instructive listening.

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