

Ross W. Duffin, the founding artistic director, whose two published books, *How Equal Temperament Ruined Harmony (and Why You Should Care)* and *Shakespeare's Songbook*, have gained international renown. As director of the Case Western Reserve University Historical Performance Program since 1978 and host of the 1980s radio show *Micrologus: Exploring the World of Early Music*, Duffin has promoted early music across the United States.

Because the recordings on this CD are from two different years, there are variances in the sound quality. The choir sings with excellent enunciation, and their voices are beautiful.



The acoustic is a cathedral, which gives the sound a historical authenticity.

But there is a deficiency in some of the pieces that originates solely in the placement and quality of the microphones used, causing many of the numbers on the disc to sound much the same. That said, Quire sings with great heart and power, and this writer would love to hear them live or in a studio recording that would show them in a better light. One of many stand-out pieces on the recording is a soul-rending version of the masterpiece "Verbum caro factum est" from *Piae cantiones* (1582); monophonic in the original manuscript, it has been harmonized by Duffin using period contrapuntal techniques to great effect.

This would be a lovely disc to give to people who have no knowledge of Christmas music before 20th-century carols, giving them access to a rich mosaic of music reaching back to the 13th century. For the early repertoire especially, this is a brilliant exploration. The programming proceeds from the very ancient to our own day, with Gustav Holst's "In the bleak mid-winter" and a world premiere of "Quiet Promise" by modern American composer Jennifer Conner (b.1962).

—Paul-James Dwyer

Ciaccona

Timothy Burris, lute and theorbo
www.baroquelute.com

The power of an ostinato base, or repeating harmonic progression,



lies in the ability of a composer to exploit permutations and reveal kaleidoscopic aspects of

the repeated pattern. Banging out "When I am Laid in Earth" with composer Betsy Jolas, examining every facet elicited from the descending line, was one of the great composition lessons of my career.

Lutenist Timothy Burris, who teaches at Colby College and the Portland Conservatory of Maine, has chosen a collection of passacaglias and ciacconas spanning the middle to late Baroque that ably demonstrate the genre's potential and his skill as performer.

Selections include works by great masters such as Georg Muffat, Silvius Leopold Weiss, and Johann Sebastian Bach, as well as lutenists such as Jacques Saint-Luc, Robert de Visé, and Giovanni Zamboni. All selections are interesting: Weiss's melodic invention stands out, as does the use of the theorbo's open strings in all three of de Visé's works.

Perhaps most harmonically striking is Georg Muffat's Passacaglia in A, which contains one particularly haunting progression. The recording ends with Burris's transcription of Bach's Ciaccona from the Partita in D Minor, BWV 1004: a satisfying repurposing of this great work.

Burris, a well-seasoned performer, presents these works with a clean and clear technique that allows compositional brilliance to stand in the forefront. There is a certain rhythmic jauntiness—an almost American syncopation—which, although pleasing, might be stylistically at odds with the material. I defer to his expertise. The recording quality is excellent, nicely profiling the different qualities of all three of luthier Richard Berg's instruments.

—Lance Hulme

Dei Due Mondi

Amazonas Baroque Ensemble
(Miriam Abad, soprano; Márcio Pascoa, flute, director; Gustavo Medina, Barbara Soares, violins; Gabriel Lima, viola; Oxana Sagaydo, cello; Silvanei Correia, bass; Vanessa Monteiro, harpsichord; Mário Trilha, solo harpsichord)
Numérica NUM 1244
www.amazonasbaroque.com

There is a world-class opera house in Manaus, Brazil, a city located in the Amazon rainforest near the confluence of the Amazon and the Rio Negro; it was inaugurated in 1896 with a performance of Ponchielli's *La Gioconda* and revived, after a long period of neglect, by a state government that budgeted generously enough for the company to attract players from Russia and Eastern Europe. Manaus also boasts a branch of Brazil's Federal University system, which is the institution hosting Amazonas Baroque Ensemble. One might be surprised to find a period instrument ensemble in a city where the annual temperature averages 81 deg. F., with humidity of 66 percent, but Amazonas Baroque Ensemble is thriving, having released its first CD on a Lisbon-based label.

This disc is evenly divided between operatic arias and instrumental concerti, written by composers with Portuguese connections and drawn from manuscript sources, of which several are in Lisbon. It is safe to say



that these composers and their works will be unknown to even those listeners with the most recondite tastes and collections. Soprano Miriam Abad displays world-class talent in four attractive selections, with a beautifully produced tone, technical expertise, expressive coloratura, and most importantly, an unmistakable flair for the dramatic (were I an American opera impresario, I would snap her up instantly). The final selection, "Misera me" from *Gli eroi spartani* (1788) by Antonio Leal Moreira, features Abad in duet with the flute.

The two flute concerti, by Davide Perez and Gaetano Maria Schiassi, feature director and flutist Márcio Pascoa (flute by Simon Polak after Willem Beukers), who makes a good case for these two *galant* works. Completing the instrumental side of

the disc is José Palomino's *Concierto o sia Quintetto* (1785), considerably later in style, well into the Classical period. The strings are one to a part, and their style uses virtually no vibrato, which to my ears at least connotes an earlier moment in the early music revival in North America. This is a valuable disc—let's hope for more such work from Amazonas Baroque Ensemble.

—Tom Moore

Das Glogauer Liederbuch: Songs, Comic Tales and Tails

Ensemble Dulce Melos
(Sabine Lutzenberger, soprano; Martin Hummel, baritone; Marc Lewon, lute)
Naxos 8.572576
www.naxos.com

The *Glogauer Liederbuch* is one of the most important late 15th-century musical repositories still extant. As the liner notes reveal, the *Liederbuch* is not one manuscript, but in fact the earliest set of part-books from central Europe. The three part-books, dating to around 1480, were originally used by a small group of amateurs from a monastic community in Silesia. The almost 300 pieces are a hodgepodge of sacred and secular works, both vocal and instrumental, and many of them are reworkings of popular songs of the day. Thus, not all of these works are of German origin, many having been imported from all over Europe; perhaps some of the *Liederbuch's* users brought back repertory from their travels or studies at foreign universities.

Because the inventory of the *Liederbuch* is so diverse, Ensemble Dulce Melos has organized this recording into sets of related works. Some consist of multiple settings of



the same tune, such as John Bedyngham's "O Rosa Bella," while others

are organized according to mode or subject matter. To round out these sets, works are also included from other contemporaneous sources, such as the *Buxheimer Orgelbuch*, the *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton*, and the *Trent Codices*.

Ensemble Dulce Melos specializes in resurrecting rare and extinct instruments, such as the *dulcemelos*, *hackbrett*, and *chekker*. In addition to having two fine vocalists, the

Continued on page 52