

Avison

ENSEMBLE

reviews

ARCANGELO CORELLI VIOLIN SONATAS OPUS 5



THE AVISON ENSEMBLE
PAVLO BEZNOSIUK (VIOLIN),
PAULA CHATEAUNEUF (ARCHLUTE AND GUITAR),
RICHARD TUNNICLIFFE (CELLO),
ROGER HAMILTON (HARPSICHORD AND ORGAN)
2 CDs on Linn Records, CKD 412

... an immensely enjoyable release
... these astounding performances [are] something
truly special
... poised and eloquent accounts

GRAMOPHONE

Julie Anne Sadie

01 April 2013

Considering how important the Corelli Op 5 duo sonatas are in the history of violin playing, performances and recordings of these exquisitely crafted works are surprisingly rare. Andrew Manze and Richard Egarr released the last complete recording of note in 2003. Now it's the turn of the Avison Ensemble, with the solo violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk, to take up the challenge with this stylish new two-disc set.

Beznosiuk plays with enormous affinity and charm, his fluent and imaginative ornamentation always within the bounds of the pulse and good taste. Having chosen not to ornament the repeats slavishly, he retains the power to surprise and delight us even to the last sonata. In the opening Grave of the Sixth Sonata, he gradually increases the ornamentation over the course of the movement with great rhetorical effect (disc 1, tr 26); his own variations on the Gavotta of the 10th (disc 2, tr 16) are a breath of fresh air and more than stand comparison with those of Dubourg in the 11th (disc 2, tr 22). Beznosiuk makes the simplest line speak

eloquently and knows how and when to use silence to good effect (disc 1, trs 11 and 19). His greatest achievement, however, may be to make us occasionally think we are actually listening to a trio sonata by exploiting the different timbres of his violin strings to create the sense of two violins duetting, most strikingly in the Sixth Sonata.

Corelli's 12 Op 5 Sonatas, da chiesa and da camera, have inspired musicians as far back as Eduard Melkus in 1973 (Archiv, 5/91 - nla) to experiment with the continuo forces in their recordings. Particularly evident throughout this recording is the exceptional rapport between the members of the Avison, though they only play all together in the Sixth Sonata. Roger Hamilton, alternating between the organ and the harpsichord, is particularly sympathetic in the Eighth. Cellist Richard Tunnicliffe ably ensures further moments of trio sonata texture (disc 1, tr 1; disc 2, trs 12, 19 and 28); and with Paula Chateaneuf, alternating between the archlute and guitar, he provides some of the most colourful collaborative effects (disc 2, trs 3, 4, 24 and 29). This is an immensely enjoyable release.

BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE

Kate Bolton

01 May 2013



This disc in the Avison Ensemble's project to record the complete Corelli chamber music is devoted to his op. 5 collection of violin sonatas - works that swept Europe by storm when they were first published in 1700. Recent recordings include Accademia Bizantina, Purcell Quester, Trio Corelli, Trio Sonnerier, and a particularly charismatic version from Andrew Manze with harpsichordist Richard Egarr. One of the most immediate differences between these versions is their approach to the continuo, the Avison Ensemble favouring the varied timbres and textures of an ensemble (variously harpsichord or organ, archlute, Baroque guitar and cello) rather than solo harpsichord.

Violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk offers lyrical, intuitively musical performances, imbued with a placid, unpretentious grace, while his spontaneous ornamentation adds a dash of Baroque bravura. Beznosiuk is well matched by the outstanding continuo players Paula Chateaneuf, Roger Hamilton and Richard Tunnicliffe - the quartet conversing with the ease and familiarity of old friends. The set's dozen works culminate in the feted, and much imitated, set of variations on La Folia, its manic mood swings inspired by a frenzied Portuguese folk dance. Beznosiuk captures the folk-like quality of the Folia's origins, but the more virtuosic variations never quite catch fire (compare with Accademia Bizantina's flashier performances or the jazzy freedom of Manze and Egarr). But this is a small caveat to what are otherwise poised and eloquent accounts. The Linn recording is luminous and sensitively balanced, with the potential for SACD enhancing a particularly fine set.

BBC RADIO 3 CD REVIEW

Andrew McGregor

16 March 2013

Lovely balance between them and impeccable style, though sometimes not the same sense of freedom and fantasy that Andrew Manze brought to his account with harpsichordist Richard Egarr a decade ago but Beznosiuk tells us they are improvising for real in these performances, and the variations he contributes in the 10th sonata are beautifully done. There's compensation as well in the range of colours, because while Manze and Egarr stick with violin and harpsichord, Beznosiuk has Roger Hamilton switching between organ and harpsichord, Paula Chateauneuf on lute or baroque guitar over Richard Tunnicliffe's cello baseline. It's a lovely clean, clear recording as well, on hybrid SACD or digital download from Linn Records.

INTERNATIONAL RECORD REVIEW

Michael Jameson

01 March 2013

The 300th anniversary of the death of Arcangelo Corelli, one of the most prominent composers of his day, and a decisive influence upon the evolution of modern violin playing, passed largely unheeded on January 8th, 2013. Back in 1776, Charles Burney had been fulsome in his praise of Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas, describing the set as 'that upon which all good schools for the violin have been since founded'. That Corelli's Op.5 Sonatas figure widely in the record catalogues attests principally to their melodic inventiveness and originality. Corelli grouped them as six Sonate di chiesa and six Sonate di camera, so the complete set fits neatly onto two discs, as in the case here. The 'Church' sonatas assume four-movement form, alternating slow and fast movements, while the Sonate di camera begin with a 'Preludio' followed by dance movements, with only the last, No. 12, deviating substantially from this model. This is the famous D minor Sonata, variants upon a fifteenth-century Portuguese dance motif. Corelli was but one of many composers to have appropriated the melody, the most familiar perhaps being Rachmaninov, whose Op. 42 Variations erroneously attribute the 'La Folia' theme to Corelli himself.

This highly accomplished new recording by the Avison Ensemble, directed by the solo violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk, follows for the most part Corelli's 1700 texts, wisely eschewing revisions made by Etienne Roger (1710), who claimed these emendations were authorized by Corelli himself in order to clarify the correct manner of performance. There were other revisions, too, issued in subsequent decades by Dubourg, Geminiani, Matteis, Platti and others, though one of the extraordinary attributes of this new recording is that all ornamentation was improvised spontaneously during the sessions: an impressive feat indeed.

The playing of the Avison Ensemble, and in particular of Beznosiuk, has enough audacity, daring and originality to make these astounding performances something truly special. In June 2012 I considered Trio Corelli's new account on the Bridge label, finding the solo playing of Elizabeth Zeuthen Schneider to be alert

and vital, even if the essential clarity of her performances was marred somewhat by excessive vibrato.

Corelli's Op. 5 raises one further area of controversy. Is the music best supported by a single keyboard instrument, as with Manze's Harmonia Mundi version? Or is it permissible to employ slightly larger and more varied forces, as is the case with both the Linn and Bridge traversals? Early printed editions suggest that the supporting part could be supplied by a cello alone (the skilled continuo cellist here is Richard Tunnicliffe), with double stops used to flesh out the harmonies. More recent convention favours the addition of harpsichord or chamber organ (heard in Sonatas Nos. 1, 2 and 4), played here by Roger Hamilton, with guitar (Sonatas Nos. 7 and 12) and archlute played by Paula Chateauneuf. The overall effect is apposite, while the warm and natural recording ambience provided by St George's Church, Chesterton, Cambridge seems ideal for music of this scale and period.

The question of ornamentations, however, remains a vexing persistent one. As early as 1728, the diarist Roger North expressed the view that many of the tamperings ascribed to Corelli himself in Etienne Roger's 1710 reprint were unsupportable, adding that 'Upon the bare view of the print anyone would wonder how much vermin could creep into the works of such a master!' Linn's insert notes make it clear who was responsible, and for what, in this new recording, explaining that the closing movement of Sonata No. 11 includes four variations by Matthew Dubourg (1703-67), and that in the 'Gavotta' of the preceding work, the six variations heard are by Beznosiuk himself.

Much as I relished the superb playing and thoroughgoing musical intelligence informing these new Avison Ensemble accounts, Beznosiuk doesn't take the same chances with the music that prove so irresistibly compelling in Manze's survey. If perceived correctness is more of a priority for you than living on the edge in this music, then I have no hesitation in commending Beznosiuk ahead of Manze.

Most listeners, I suspect, would probably prefer not to have to choose between Manze and Beznosiuk, so distinguished are their respective offerings, and in the last analysis one would probably gain most from having the luxury of each of these outstanding traversals readily to hand.

THE STRAD

Robin Stowell

01 June 2013

In this second volume of the Avison Ensemble's project to record Corelli's complete chamber music, Pavlo Beznosiuk and his colleagues treat the twelve op.5 Sonatas not merely as unaccompanied duos for violin and violone/cello (with the option of substituting a harpsichord for the latter), but constantly ring the changes by including an organ, archlute and guitar in the instrumentarium. A true kaleidoscope of colours results.

These discs have all the virtues expected of the Avison brand - an exemplary recording with immediacy and presence and idiomatic, thoroughly polished performances with laudable improvisational flair, internal rapport and blend. Additional ornamentation is supplied in abundance, the stylised dances are sharply characterised, and the voicing of the polyphonic movements is crystal-clear. Tempos are generally carefully determined, even if the Gavotta of no.10 seems somewhat pedestrian at the outset. But there is good reason: Beznosiuk's own additional variations are technically very challenging, matching those of Matthew Dubourg for the equivalent movement of no.11.

The pitching of A=392Hz may play tricks with some ears - indeed, there are moments of questionable intonation - but Beznosiuk applies expressive vibrato generously, heightening the emotional weight of phrases. His reading of the 'La Folia' variations is especially fluent, well paced and exhilarating.

MUSICWEB INTERNATIONAL

Brian Wilson

16 April 2013

Having recently made a very successful recording of Arcangelo Corelli's Op.6 Concerti grossi (CKD411) the Avison Ensemble now turn, in commemoration of the tercentenary of his death, to his less well known Op.5 Sonatas for violin and continuo. The very name of the group almost guarantees sympathetic performances: Charles Avison had studied with Francesco Geminiani in London and had arranged both Geminiani's and Domenico Scarlatti's Corelli-inspired sonatas as concerti grossi.

Less well known these sonatas may be, apart, perhaps from the twelfth, la Folia, which spawned a whole genre - more on this anon - but they are both attractive and fearfully difficult. The members of the Avison Ensemble add variety to the continuo line, with Roger Hamilton alternating between harpsichord and organ and Paula Chateauneuf adding archlute or guitar to some of the sonatas. In addition, to the fourth movement of No.10, gavotta, are added six variations by Pavlo Beznosiuk, extending the movement by some seven minutes, and the fifth movement of No.12, another gavotta, consists of four variations by Matthew

Dubourg (1703-1767), again some five minutes longer than Corelli's published version.

The Op.5 sonatas were published in 1700 as a violino e violone ò cembalo, so Manze and Egarr and the Naxos performers are quite right to choose simply to employ violin and harpsichord - the text says cello OR harpsichord - and I've defended this as making perfectly sound musical sense in my review of the Naxos Volume 2. There's no question of the music sounding austere with that simple line-up.

On the other hand Corelli's ò is often taken to mean either/or and the new recordings do so without overdoing the variety. The use of the guitar in No.12, *la Folia*, is particularly appropriate in view of the Iberian origin of the tune which gave rise to these variations - probably a Portuguese folk song. Corelli was by no means the first to employ this tune but it was his Op.5/12 sonata which kick-started a whole series of imitations, most notably by Geminiani, as recorded by The Purcell Band on Hyperion CDH55234 and the Academy of Ancient Music on Harmonia Mundi HMX2907262, both at budget price.

The small additions to the two gavottes are stylish and it's nice to hear the variations in the performance of the bass line. I found the Avison Ensemble's recording of Corelli's Op.6 revelatory in several respects, even with very good performances already available directed by Trevor Pinnock (DG) and Roy Goodman (Hyperion). The Op.5 recordings may not be quite so revelatory but they can certainly more than compete with the opposition.

Though it's somewhat over-exposed, I imagine that most potential purchasers will be particularly interested in No.12, named by Geminiani as the ultimate work of the violin literature. I compared the new recording with that of Convivium on Hyperion, François and Wilson on Naxos and the BIS recording of Geminiani's arrangement of this work as a concerto grosso (see below). Overall Convivium clock in slightly faster overall (10:59) than the Avisons (11:13); paradoxically they seem to take the adagio sections rather more slowly - it's hard to be sure because Hyperion don't track the sections separately as Linn do. I didn't think that the music dragged on Hyperion and both recordings are sprightly in the faster sections, but I marginally prefer the new Linn recording, partly because of the use of the guitar in the continuo.

In the end, choice can safely be left to circumstances: if you want SACD or Studio Master 24-bit downloads you will have to choose the new Linn recording. The performances are at least as good as those on offer from the other recordings that I've mentioned and the price won't break the bank, even if you choose the 24/96 or 24/192 Studio Master download.

There's very little that I can contribute by way of bad news. The good news is that not only do these CDs maintain the high standard of performance, recording and presentation set by CKD411; I also understand that there are two more Corelli releases due from this source in 2013.

A worthy successor to the Avisons' recording of Corelli's Op.6 concerti grossi.

THE IRISH TIMES

Michael Dervan

12 April 2013



Arcangelo Corelli's 12 violin sonatas, the most highly regarded of their time, were famously re-published in 1710 in an edition that includes sections with written-out embellishments. These are said to have come from the composer himself, and so provide a valuable insight into 18th-century practices. The Avison Ensemble's violinist, Pavlo Beznosiuk, casts them aside in favour of spur-of-the-moment inventions of his own, which fill the bill with stylish and imaginative aplomb. His playing is often both busier and more laid-back than you'll usually hear in these pieces. And with accompaniments ranging across organ, harpsichord, archlute, guitar and cello, there's no lack of variety in these rewarding performances.

BLOG.CODAEX.DE

Nils-Christian angel

01 April 2013



This year, 2013, the music world does - it has already been mentioned several times here on the blog - two really great composers Benjamin Britten and Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713). On such occasions on one CD! What quality reach to other publications, timely anniversaries, I can not properly judge honestly. Recently some of Britten's finest titles have been released - and now the British Avison Ensemble with Baroque violinist Pavlo Beznosiuk have released the next part of their recording of the complete chamber works of Arcangelo Corelli, more precisely, Opus 5 - the twelve sonatas for violin and continuo. I am enthusiastic for the recording of Opus 6 (Concerti Grossi) which was released last October. This new CD is definitely "a must-have for active string" and for those who have any wire to baroque chamber music.

Let's start at the very end of this double SACD as the Concerti Grossi, at Linn Records has been released. Quite a few will hear the last six tracks on the second CD first because this is the most well know piece. And do not say that the bait has the fish? If so, then have Beznosiuk Pavlo and his Mitfischer Richard Tunnickliffe (cello), Paula Chateauneuf (playing the lute, and a surprise) and Roger Hamilton (harpsichord, organ) Sonata No. 12 in D Minor are peppered so temptingly. We are talking about the famous "La Folia", which gives the most popular entry point. The hook is where one likes to be dragged into Corelli's violin world. But what makes this special time so catchy and attractive? Of course, the great game Beznosiuks, intuitive, joyful-range celled interaction of the musicians - especially but the point of a animated by Iberian fire guitar, Chateauneufs surprise he not only plucks but where it needs to be, schrammelt with crackling energy.

So alive, like Captain Corelli's violin sonatas heard here, it becomes clear at once, why these compositions could have such an effect on the history of European music. More, one hears echoes its historical formally, and not only in Bach and Handel. It is a very transparent view of Corelli's "virtuosity" that still had to build quite a bit of playing techniques and could confidently leave it for some fast-paced runs, reckless broken triads, ornate decorations and little more magic tricks. No, the high art of the violinist Corelli, who has logged in this literature itself, proves just that so much is said so beautifully here in the language of music. Beznosiuk shows exactly this in the sense that he is a phenomenally good baroque violinist, and how intimately he has mastered this kind of expression. This includes extensions of the printed Corelli confident in this recording program, whether through four variations of the Irish virtuoso Matthew Dubourgto Gavotte Sonata No. 11 in E flat major - or six variations to Gavotte from No. 10 in F major Beznosiuk itself.

Not least demonstrates the deliberate, changing instrumentation, the harpsichord at the time, sometimes the organ, sometimes the sounds and sometimes the guitar play out, historical information and playing on baroque instruments must have to do with museum-dust. Had Corelli not written something for "Harpsichord or Bass" in the first edition of the sonatas of 1700? Inspiring here is not the deviation from this historic recommendation in itself, which indeed has never prohibited the sensitivity to timbre and melodic character that affectsthe aptly selected use of organ and guitart. Tunnickliffe, Chateauneuf and Hamilton play on replicas of instruments from Corelli's time which show the most beautiful way, reaches what level of instrument in this genre now.

Conclusion: This old music is alive! The Avison Ensemble has succeeded with their second Corelli release for the year, a stunning continuation of a great beginning. Our CD of the Month April 2013.

PIZZICATO.LU

Rémy Franck

17 May 2013

L'Ensemble Avison célèbre le 300e anniversaire de Corelli – injustement relégué au second plan à cause des anniversaires Verdi et Wagner – avec un double album très réussi.

Les douze sonates (dont la 12e consiste en une série de variations sur 'La Follia) sont admirablement jouées par les quatre membres de la formation britannique. Les Avison abordent cette musique avec sérénité. Les exigences techniques ne semblent leur poser aucun problème. Ils se libèrent de tout dogme pour recréer les sonates à leur façon, sans trahir le compositeur. Il devient vite évident que tout en ornementant abondamment, les Avison recherchent la profondeur du message et développent un maximum d'émotion. Au niveau du rythme et de la dynamique cependant, il y a dans cette approche une retenue que d'aucuns apprécieront moins que l'intensité que d'autres ensembles ont pu manifester dans cet opus 5, mais c'est justement dans cet ordre d'idées que l'on peut saluer la présente interprétation comme un enrichissement indiscutable du catalogue.

La production est accompagnée d'un texte informatif qui traite aussi des aspects musicologiques à propos des différentes versions disponibles.

These rhythmically and dynamically controlled and basically serene performances of Corelli's Opus 5 let the sonatas become more emotional than with other ensembles. Thus, the new Linn release is a very welcome addition to the existing recordings.