



Reviews

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La Guitarre Royal: Francesco Corbetta
Simone Vallerotonda, I Bassifondi, Bor Zuljan
Outhere AS56

They say two heads are better than one, but in this case the collective meeting of the minds of Simone Vallerotonda, I Bassifondi, and Bor Zuljan creates a synergy that results in a lively and unusual presentation. From the opening drums to the last vocal, *La Guitarre Royal* is full of surprises. It combines a refined Italian style with Spanish and French (during Corbetta's stay at Versailles) influences. The addition of I Bassifondi creates a new perspective for these tunes. The variety of percussion and the colascione, with its angular, tight voice, add a depth of clarity to the baseline. The ensemble used various settings depending on the style, characteristics, and interpretation.

Vallerotonda (theorbo, baroque guitar, and chitarra battente), I Bassifondi (percussion, colascione, and guitars), and Zuljan (baroque guitar) are all accomplished musicians. They are joined for several selections by sopranos Monica Piccinini and Francesca Boncompagni, and bass Davide Benetti.

"La Générale de la Garde Française" by Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687), a short percussion piece, leads directly to "Trompette," "Tambour de France et de Suisse fait sur la prise de Mastricht," with percussion, guitars, and colascione. This rustic opening gives way to a change of character before reprising the beginning theme. *Folia sopra E* features castanets, guitar, and theorbo, clearly showing the Spanish influence on Corbetta's style.

"Filli Mia s'enteneri" (*My Children be Moved*) combines vocals with colascione and guitar. The soprano and bass create a pleasing blend with the accompaniment to provide a fresh harmonic mood. "Passacaglia per la L. O. E" is another ground with chitarra battente and percussion that pulls from many creative sources. "Fanfare" is a happy tune that makes use of guitars and colascione. This short repeated harmonic progression gives the impression of a pop/folk tune. "Autre fanfare" continues with a shake of the tambourine and a playful show of ideas. "Non si può star sempre altero" (*You Can't Always be Haughty*), with the vocalists supported by the full ensemble, is both regal and haunting.

On "Sinfonia a 2" with guitar, theorbo, and colascione, the subtlety of technique and craftsmanship delivers a beautiful result. The slow and more vigorous sections alternate back and forth in a radiant dialogue. "Sarabande en Ami la re" features mesmerizing harmonies and a full, rich palette. The sound lingers in the

air until the final cadence. "Folie" for solo guitar, performed with an elegant touch by Vallerotonda, is both featherlight and warm. "Mantovana" (Vallerotonda and I Bassifondi) is a husky, vibrant piece. "Chi vuol la libertà" (Who Wants Freedom) sounds like a full, operatic anthem. The vocalists' vibrant reading blends seamlessly with the instrumentalists.

"Sarabande du depart du Roy" is slow and solemn. Its steady rhythm, graceful melody, and pleasing accompaniment make it especially effective. "Gigue chérie du Roy" is a lively piece; its Spanish influence is ubiquitous with castanets, strums, and a driving beat.

"La Dauphine: Sarabande" is slow and introspective with perfect ensemble playing. In "Concert en e mi, la," the two guitars exude elegance and dazzle. The interplay between the players is exceptional. The final minuet provides a bright and animated end to the suite. "Tombeau de Mr. Franc.que" (Robert de Visée) for solo guitar, played by Zuljan, creates an air of reflection. "Dal cielo d'Amor" (From the Sky of Love) makes effective use of vocals and guitar to create a radiant and sonorous piece of music.

The CD's packaging is first rate with information (in English, French, and Italian) about Corbetta, his compositions, musical influences, and the instruments used in this production. The sound is pristine and well balanced. And the playful photos are a nice touch.

Frank DeGroodt

Giovanni Antonio Terzi: Lute Music
Florent Marie

Carpe Diem Records CD-16327

Little is known of the composer Giovanni Antonio Terzi. We do know he was from Bergamo in northern Italy, and that his music was published in Venice in two volumes: one in 1593 and the other in 1599. These publications contain a variety of music that one would expect for the lute: fantasies, dances, vocal arrangements, and some contemporary musical forms such as the canzona and toccata. (Fantasies from both volumes are available in a modern critical edition containing both tablature and transcriptions, edited by Suzanne Court, A-R Editions, 2001.)

On the music found in these two volumes, David van Ooijen concluded about twenty years ago that Terzi's intabulations "made every effort to preserve as many notes of the original as possible and sustain these." Because of this, according to van Ooijen, they are impossible to play ("Terzi's Intabulations," *LSA Quarterly* 41, No. 2: May 2006). His suggestion was to simplify, or that we "should leave out notes with keeping as much of the polyphonic structure intact as our fingers are able to play."

With the complexity of the music in mind, I turn your attention now to Florent Marie's 2022 recording of Terzi's solo

lute music. In his liner notes, Marie mentions the virtuosic quality of the solo pieces, and states that Terzi's music has an "extreme sense of the text of the vocal music he intabulated." The fast divisions are not just virtuosic, but "underline the patterns of the vocal sources," which is precisely what van Ooijen had noted. Just before Giovanni Artusi entered a war with Monteverdi, also in northern Italy, over the primacy of the music versus the text in 1600, we see Terzi starting a "conversation" through his music over the primacy of the vocal polyphony over the idiomatic qualities of the lute.

While others have recorded Terzi's duets (Paul Beier and Craig Marchitelli, 2002; and David van Ooijen and Michiel Nielsen, 2008), Florent notes that few of the solo pieces have been recorded; indeed, nineteen of the twenty-eight solo works on this album are marked as world premiere recordings.

The album contains five vocal arrangements and a broad spectrum of dance pieces such as courante francese, saltarello, gagliarda, ballo tedesco and francese, branle, volta, passamezzo, padoana, and ballo alemano. There is one toccata ("Toccata Seconda dell'Autore"), one canzone ("Canzone Settima del Mascara"), and a few preludes and fantasies. With this wide range of old and new styles, we get a taste of what musical life was like in northern Italy at the end of the sixteenth century. Even with the bass-forward dance pieces, we easily hear that a clear polyphonic line is key to Terzi's musical style.

Florent's playing emphasizes the melodic flow and interplay of the voices in the various works. All notes are clear, and his diminution speed flows naturally like one might hear with a virtuosic vocalist performing late 1500s music.

One prime example of this is "Candide perle del Bicci nel medesimo Libro," which is a faithful transcription of Bicci's six-voice madrigal from 1591. The work starts out with four homophonic voices, and soon we hear the independence of the bass. By the second line, the tenor and bass lines begin to pair, as do the alto and soprano. With Florent's finesse, the work starts to sound like a madrigal sung by strings rather than voices. By the middle of the work, we are enrapt by the virtuosity of the independent lines. Florent's playing forces the listener to hear the music, not the technical aspects of the instrument. This work truly sings in his hands, and each voice sounds independent and unique just as vocal lines would.

"Canzone Settima del Mascara" is another great piece to highlight Florent's ability to isolate the individual polyphonic lines on the lute. With its imitative polyphony and strong bass lines, the music drives forward organically to the cadential points. On the one hand this fluidity of the music is Terzi's work, but more so, this is because of Florent's musicality. The fast passages do not feel forced, and the voices are appropriately balanced.

One thing I noted about this recording is the clarity of the instrument. The way the mics were placed, we hear little of the string noise or the performer's breathing. There is adequate reverb to fill the space from the lute's inimitical quick decay. The benefit of this wet/dry mix is that all notes are clear and balanced. We don't hear a top- or bottom-heavy instrument, but one that is perfectly suited to allow the virtuosic lines to sing and the polyphonic voices to be heard distinctly.

The listener will get from hearing only a handful of tracks

that Florent Marie has proven David van Ooijen wrong: Terzi's music is not only playable, but also well composed and adapted for the lute in the right hands. It is fascinating music that should be programmed by more skilled soloists. In the right hands, the music is fluid and vocal. Florent's recording should be used as a master class for lutenists to learn how to make the lute sing, a potential that this plucked string instrument has. The entire album should be listened to without distractions.

Anna F. Porcaro

Gorzanis 1567: Lute Dances on Every Fret
Michele Carreca
AYROS, AY-CD06

The mid-sixteenth century saw the rise of many lutenists whose popularity grew in the dance and theatre traditions of popular entertainment, such as Pietro Borrono, Giovanni Pacolono/Pacoloni, Antonio Rota, Julio Abondante, and the subject of this recording, the blind lutenist from Trieste, Giacomo Gorzanis (c.1525–after 1574). Between 1561 and 1579 (the final posthumously by his son), he published five books of solo music and two of a vocal genre called napolitane. The solos are generally dances along with a handful of ricercare and popular madrigals; Douglas A. Smith (*A History of the Lute from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, LSA, 2002), counted 170 dances, including sixty passamezzo/saltarello pairs.

Michele Carreca has recorded, in its entirety, Giacomo Gorzanis's solo book of 1567, which is a fascinating anomaly among the general lute literature. It exists only as a manuscript held by the Bavarian State Library, Munich, with the dedicatee importantly indicated on the title page and in such a form that it may be a record of a concert performance. The book, including the title page, is carefully scribed, in contrast to the usual quick copying we see in other manuscripts for personal use. The first forty-eight pieces offer a single variation on the antico and moderno settings of the passamezzo/saltarello pair before moving to the next set, a half step higher. It is noteworthy that hitherto, he generally included many, many variations printed in each book. For example there are twenty-five antico variations (passamezzo, padoana, saltarello) in his fourth book in C before moving to the moderno, then thirteen more in G with those in F following. I mention this only to point out that it's rare for him to stop playing after a single statement. Another oddity is that each saltarello begins with a hemiola, which often restates a similar phrase from the passamezzo's first measure. The upshot is that if the saltarello was played immediately following and in tempo, the saltarello switch would not become noticeable as such until the second measure. It would hardly be out of form for Gorzanis to present twelve variations of either the antico or moderno; it would certainly be a tour de force performance. The book ends with six solo settings of his napolitane and one ricercar, which Mr. Carreca includes in order.

Gorzanis has enjoyed a growing interest of late, and this is Mr. Carreca's second dedicated CD of his work, the first being reviewed by Michael Stover for the *Quarterly* (Vol. 51, no. 3), which I recommend for more details and history concerning Gorzanis.

I enjoyed the performance; the anticipation of each rising variation adds an uncanny joy to the momentum. The variations