

liberties he took? So, now that you know what is involved, I leave it to you to decide. The music is definitely worth hearing, if only because of its novelty – you don't hear many Italian Viennese symphonies! I won't give the second movement of the third symphony's secret away. BC

de Grassi *Sei Sonate per organo* Manuel Tomadin 65' 19"
Tactus **TC 760401**

This is one of a number of "if you think organ music is boring" CDs I am reviewing this month, with its delightfully attractive, light-hearted and rather theatrical late Classical Italian pieces by the little know composer Luigi de Grassi (1760-1831). He was born in Grado, on the coast between Venice and Trieste and became cathedral organist in Cividale. These six sonatas are from a manuscript in Udine, not far from Cividale, dating from a few years after de Grassi's death. The sixth sonata is incomplete; the others are all in three-movements with a sonata-form first movement and a central Andante. The organ, S. Stefano, Palazzolo dello Stella (not far from Udine and Cividale) dates from 1857, but speaks with something of the voice of an earlier period. Andrew Benson-Wilson

Morandi *Sonate per organo a quattro mani* Chiara Cassin, Federica Iannella (1792 Callido organ, San Paolo Apostolo, Civitanova Marche Alta, Macerata, Italy)
Tactus **TC 771302** (51' 12")

And another in the "organ music isn't boring" series, with an insight into the compositions of Giovanni Morandi. It is thanks to the 1967 arrival of a new Abbess of the convent of Santa Christina and Senigalla on the eastern coast of central Italy that we owe the rediscovery of the music of Morandi, son of the more famous Pietro Morandi. He was a singing teacher and organist who married his famous pupil, singer Rosa Paolina Morolli and spent 19 years travelling and accompanying her in her concerts. When she died, he settled in Senigalla until his own death, teaching singing to the nuns in the convent and composing for them – with some rather up-to-date instructions about chaperones, etc. A special permit allowed him to teach organ to one of the talented nuns, and many of his pieces are dedicated to her. These pieces, composed between 1830 and 1843, are in the distinctively theatrical style of early 19th-century Italy with the unusual feature of

being composed for two players on one organ. Federica Iannella, who also plays on the *Atmosfera Teatrale* CD reviewed below, is an excellent interpreter of the little-known music of this period.

Andrew Benson-Wilson

Schubert *Symphonies Nos. 3 & 4* Freiburger Barockorchester, Pablo Heras-Casado 54' 33"
Harmonia Mundi HMC902154

Roughly half the 20,000 bars of music Schubert composed in 1815 were for orchestra; the 3rd Symphony was among them, with the 4th following in the Spring of 1816. They are not traditionally accorded 'masterwork' status but as is so often the case an uninhibited period instrument performance manages to suggest that there is more here than may traditionally have met the ear. To be sure, there are regular derivative echoes of Haydn, Mozart and, above all and inevitably, Beethoven, but the music overall is no less interesting than, say, the last-named's 1st Symphony. The Freiburgers are encouraged to throw everything they have at the score and the result is performances which, if you have always passed over these pieces in favour of the sweetness of Schubert's 5th and the perhaps greater glories of the 8th and 9th, might just make you think again.

David Hansell

Spontini *L'opera vocale da camera completa* Patrizia Cigna, Elisa Morelli, Ashley Slater, Alessio Tosi SSST, Sabina Belei *fp/early piano*, Gianni Fabbrini *piano*, Filippo Farinelli *fp/early piano*, Marianne Gubri *early & modern harps*, Fabiano Merlante *early guitar*, Chiara Sidoli *fp*
Tactus **TC 771960** 355' 10" (5 CDs)

This is another huge undertaking. Four singers and six accompanists on a range of instruments fill five CDs (some very generously indeed) with the complete known salon music (which I suppose is the best English translation of this genre – music intended for private entertainment or, at best, performance among polite company). Much of it was published by his wife's company "Mlles. Erard", based in the same building where pianos and harps (such as the ones used for the recordings) were made. Spontini's reputation is as an opera composer, so it should come as no surprise that he writes very well for the voice. I have to say that I far prefer the tenor from this group of four (though he seems to have problems

pitching with the harp on CD1 Track 9). The sopranos occasionally astonished me with some wonderfully accurate chromatic singing, the general approach is vibrato when possible: to be fair, many of the texts – which are not given in the box, but will be made available online – are the pathetic (in the original sense of that word) and distraught outpourings of separated lovers and the like, but I should have thought that women of that period might sooner have swooned than bellowed! Like the Sarti boxed set, this is a marvellous piece of documentation – as complete a collection of part of a fairly important composer's output performed on instruments of the period as one is ever likely to come upon. It is strange that while p. 15 of the booklet tells us which instruments play on which track, there are no such indications to identify the singers. That apart, well done, Tactus! BC

Deutsche Motette: German Romantic choral music from Schubert to Strauss Choirs of Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge (Geoffrey Webber) & King's College, London (David Trendell) 61' 30"
Delphian DCD34124

Brahms *O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf* op. 74/2
Cornelius *Liebe* op. 18, Rheinberger *Abendlied* op. 69/3, Schubert *Gott ist mein Hirt* D706, Schumann *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge* op. 141, Strauss *Deutsche Motette* op. 62

At the end of a day in St Petersburg I fell into conversation with an American visitor who remarked that he'd seen 'a lot of opulence' that day. Well, there's a lot of opulence to be heard on this disc even if you stop after track 1 (Strauss's op. 62). Combining these two excellent choirs produces the kind of sonority that these composers expected, though I suspect they could only have hoped to hear performances as good as these. There are around 60 singers, plus three guest low basses and a guest solo quartet (two of whom are choir alumni) for the Strauss. A welcome bonus, and perfectly placed for the listener in the middle of the programme, is David Ward's exquisite accompaniment (on fortepiano) of the Schubert. A high standard of phrasing and dynamic shading and just sheer energy is maintained throughout. Quite frankly, these are the kind of performances that just make you want to stand up and cheer even if you're the only person in the room. And yes, I did. David Hansell