

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



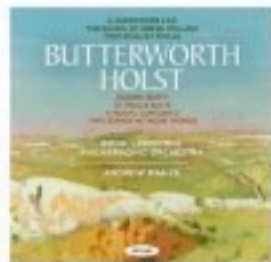
MERULA
 'Concerti spirituali'
 InAlto / Lambert Colson *cornett* with Bernard Foccroulle
 org
 Ricercar
 ▶ **DAVID VICKERS'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 60**

The extraordinary creativity and imagination of 17th-century composer Tarquinio Merula is presented with deep care, radiant beauty and musicality by InAlto and Lambert Colson.



BONDS Montgomery
 Variations **STILL**
 Symphonies Nos 2 & 4
 Philadelphia Orchestra /
 Yannick Nézet-Séguin
 DG

The melodic skills of William Grant Still and Margaret Bonds are demonstrated with both sensitivity and sumptuousness by Nézet-Séguin and his Philadelphia forces. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 63**



BUTTERWORTH. HOLST
 Orchestral works
 RLPO / Andrew Manze
 Onyx
The Banks of Green

Willow and *A Shropshire Lad* from one composer, *Egdon Heath* and the *St Paul's Suite* from the other, plus much more, beautifully played with a moving affection. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 65**



MOZART
 Violin Concerto No 3;
 Symphonies Nos 35 & 36
 Aylen Pritchin *violin*
 Il Pomo d'Oro /
 Maxim Emelyanychev

Aparté
 Emelyanychev is a master at bringing out the joy and grace of Mozart's music on the latest of this unfolding symphony cycle. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 71**



MARTINŮ
 String Quartets
 Nos 2, 3, 5 & 7
 Pavel Haas Quartet
 Supraphon

One of the very finest of today's groups – and multiple *Gramophone* Award-winners – the Pavel Haas Quartet offer consistently compelling advocacy for this music. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



TCHAIKOVSKY
 Solo piano works
 Daniil Trifonov *pf*
 DG
 Works including
Album for the Young

and the *Sleeping Beauty* suite, plus much more, all performed with immense style – 'a high point in Trifonov's discography', writes reviewer Jed Distler. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 97**



DOWLAND. PURCELL
 'Songs of Passion'
 Lea Desandre *sop*
 Jupiter / Thomas Dunford *lute*
 Erato

These powerful songs are performed with vividly engaging personality by an ensemble united in story-telling and a genuine love of this music. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 102**



LOEWE
 My Fair Lady
 Sols; 'My Fair Lady'
 Ensemble; Sinfonia of
 London / John Wilson
 Chandos

Could this music have a more brilliant champion than John Wilson? His devotion to making this score shine with the sparkle it deserves comes across gloriously. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 106**



'ELEGY'
 Mary Bevan *sop*
 Joseph Middleton *pf*
 Signum
 A deeply moving
 recital, spanning

a significant breadth of composers, performed with immense sensitivity by soprano Mary Bevan, with Joseph Middleton offering poetic pianism. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**



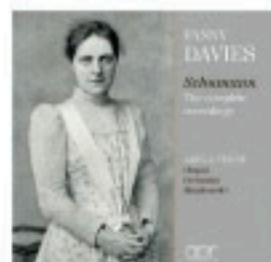
MOZART
 Idomeneo
 Sols; Bavarian Radio
 Chorus and Symphony
 Orchestra /
 Sir Simon Rattle

BR Klassik
 Rattle's glorious sense of the sweep of the score and drama alike makes for a superb experience, both theatrically and musically. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 122**



VIDEO
PIERRE BOULEZ
 Rituel In memoriam Bruno Maderna
 Bavarian Radio SO / Sir Simon Rattle
 ardmediathek.de

Another Rattle Editor's Choice this issue reinforces his pioneering excellence and repertoire-spanning versatility. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 116**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
SCHUMANN
 'Fanny Davies - The Complete Recordings'
 APR

A pupil of Clara Schumann playing music by Robert – a fascinating historical document that will be a discovery even for enthusiasts, but just as importantly, an outstanding musical one. ▶ **REVIEW ON PAGE 94**

GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

David Vickers welcomes a collection of canzonas and motets by Tarquinio Merula, an Italian master of the early Baroque, in dazzling performances led by Lambert Colson



Merula

'Concerti spirituali'

Ballo detto Pollicio. Canzon II. Canzon V. Canzon La Marca. Capriccio. Capriccio cromatico. La Cavagliera. Chi vuol ch'io m'innamori. Favus distillans. Gaudeamus omnes in Domino. Hor ch'è tempo di dormire. Intonazione cromatica del terzo tono. Intonazione cromatica del quarto tono. Intonazione cromatica del nono tono. La Lusignuola. La Merula. Sonata prima a 2. Sonata seconda a 2. Toccata del secondo tono. La Treccha

InAlto / Lambert Colson *cornett* with

Bernard Focroulle *org*

Ricercar (RIC474 • 77' • T/I)

Lambert Colson and his ensemble InAlto have produced captivating albums that explored Schein (Ramée, 2015), Schütz and his pupils (Passacaille, 2017), Roman music for the Chiesa Nuova (Ricercar, 2019), the careers of imperial court cornettists Zenobi and Sansoni ('Cavalieri imperiali', Ricercar, 2020), German ritual music by Buxtehude, Bach and Beethoven (Ricercar, 2022) and a survey of repertoire for the mute cornett ranging from Lassus and Gabrieli to Praetorius and Sances ('Still und lieblich', Ricercar, 2024). Several of these projects were close partnerships with soprano Alice Focroulle, and now they turn their scrupulous attention to Tarquinio Merula (1595-1665). The organist-composer worked most of his career in Cremona (particularly the cathedral), apart from intervening brief stints in Lodi, the Polish royal chapel in Warsaw, Padua and Bergamo's Santa Maria Maggiore, where he succeeded Grandi as *maestro di cappella* but was fired for misconduct.

Merula's manifold creativity, imaginative expressivity and



'Merula's manifold creativity, imaginative expressivity and harmonic ingenuity are realised with textural sophistication'



Cornettist Lambert Colson with Alice and Bernard Focroulle

harmonic ingenuity are realised by intimate forces with textural sophistication in a cross-section of solo-voice motets and instrumental canzonas taken from six different publications issued in Venice between 1615 and 1651. Recording sessions took place in Leuven, Flemish Brabant. However, an extra-special ingredient is the interspersal of plenty of organ pieces played enthrallingly by Bernard Focroulle (Alice's father) on the historic Graziadio Antegnati instrument (1565) in Mantua's Basilica of Santa Barbara; its keyboard has split sharp keys useful for exploiting the sonorous chromatic piquancy in the aptly named *Intonazione cromatica* that begins the album and the twisting clashes of the *Capriccio cromatico* positioned about midway through proceedings. The famous Mantuan organ's other magnificent colours are revealed in a demonstrative *Toccata del secondo tono* and cheerful *Canzon La Marca*.

The hypnotic and dissonance-laden lullaby *Hor ch'è tempo di dormire* – Mary's cradle song for the sleeping infant Jesus laced with her prophetic forebodings of his torturous passion – is taken from Merula's *Curtio precipitato et altri capricci*, Op 13 (1638). Easily his best-known piece, it has notched up 40-odd recordings including interpretations by eminent singers Sara Mingardo, Magdalena Kožená, Nuria Rial, Marianne Beate Kielland, Silvia Frigato, Montserrat Figueras, Jill Feldman, María Cristina Kiehr, Emily Van Evera, Suzie LeBlanc and Carolyn Sampson, among many others. Its incongruity of hushed tenderness and disquieted ominousness is achieved spellbindingly by Alice Focroulle, supported intelligently by the continuo duo of her father



Lambert Colson proves a first among equals with the musicians of InAlto, combining his distinctive cornett tone with solo violin, trombone ensemble and continuo

Bernard (organ) and Christoph Sommer (theorbo). Even among such a crowded discography, this outstanding performance balances gentleness and plangent emotion immaculately. Taken from the same 1638 publication, the moralising canzonetta *Chi vuol ch'io m'innamori* is a strophic contemplation on *vanitas vanitatum*; it reaps benefits from Alice Focroulle's direct simplicity and Sommer's sympathetic theorbo accompaniment (Monteverdi also set this poem to music published three years later in *Selva morale e spirituale*). The concise *Gaudeamus omnes in Domino*, printed in Merula's *Pegaso*, Op 11 (1640), culminates joyfully in a florid 'Alleluia' navigated sweetly by Focroulle and violinist Marie Rouquié. The soprano, cornettist Colson, trombonists Guy Hanssen and Bart Vroomen and continuo duo impart enraptured seductiveness in *Favus distillans*, a setting of seductive words from the Song of Solomon in Merula's *Il primo libro de motetti e sonate concertati* (1624).

InAlto's instrumental moments in the spotlight strike a perfect balance between conversational naturality and dazzling

technical facility. A quartet of cornett, violin and two trombones mingle intimacy and splendour perfectly in the canzona *La Merula*. Fluent exchanges between violin, cornett and trombone shine brightly in the three-part *La Cavagliera* and the dancing *Ballo detto Pollicio*. Two-part sonatas from Merula's *Primo libro* are an animated pairing of cornett and trombone (*Sonata prima*) and an exquisitely shaded dialogue between violin and trombone (*Sonata seconda*). Colson's rapid yet elegant repeated notes and Rouquié's felicitously *cantabile* phrasing combine delightfully in the canzona *La Treccha*.

It is relatively seldom that entire albums are devoted to Merula's talents, and even these cover only a small fraction of his output. Best of the crop among sometimes patchy prior endeavours are Ensemble Fitzwilliam's assortment of canzonas, motets and sonatas (Avidis Valois, 1989), the complete *Pegaso* by La Galania (Anima e Corpo, 2014), Francesco Cera's admirable stab at the complete organ works (Tactus, 1999) and a recital of solo voice pieces performed by the all-star quintet

of Montserrat Figueras, Jordi Savall, Ton Koopman, Rolf Lislevand and Andrew Lawrence-King (Alia Vox, 1/94). Far more often we get just one or two of Merula's pieces smattered within mixed programmes of early 17th-century Italian fare. Viewed in this context, InAlto, Colson and the Focroulles serve up a landmark achievement of sophisticated artistic planning and peerless musicianship. **G**

KEY TO SYMBOLS

②	Compact disc (number of discs)	📀	Historic
📀	SACD (Super Audio CD)	T	Text(s) included
📺	DVD Video	t	translation(s) included
📺	Blu-ray	s	subtitles included
⦿	Dolby Atmos	n/a	no longer available
📀	LP	aas	all available separately
📶	Download/streaming only	oas	only available separately
🔄	Reissue		



Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue