

at Leipzig. They may well have been included in the Collegium's concert programmes, perhaps featuring Bach's two elder sons as soloists. The two D minor Concertos are arrangements of earlier works for violin and oboe, BWV 1060, and for two violins, BWV 1062. The C major Concerto, BWV 1061, by contrast seems to be an entirely original work, almost certainly intended by Bach initially as a duo for two harpsichords without strings.

Olivier Fortin, Emmanuel Frankenburg and Ensemble Masques give warm-blooded performances of the music. Their approach is stylish in matters of ornament and articulation, and the pervasive fugal content is argued clearly and authoritatively. Each concerto possesses a notably lyrical middle movement and the poetry of each of these is alluringly realised by all concerned. It is, though, the concluding movements which fare best of all. The musicians inject an infectious rhythmic energy into them, while preserving a pellucid linear clarity which highlights those strands of the score too often treated as mere filling.

The remaining item on the menu is a translation for two solo harpsichords of the resplendent organ Prelude and Fugue in E flat which frame the remaining contents of Part Three (1739) of Bach's *Clavier-Übung*. I found myself longing for the regal radiance of an organ in the Prelude, but the five-part fugue is rewarding for the light which the harpsichords shed on the counterpoint. *Nicholas Anderson*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Chopin

Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor, Op. 11; Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor, Op. 21

Benjamin Grosvenor (piano); Royal Scottish National Orchestra/Elim Chan

Decca 485 0365 69:43 mins



Probably the most common concerto pairing in recorded history, Chopin's two piano

concertos might have been made to fill a disc. Any newcomer to this crowded field thus has to justify their place alongside many of the starriest pianists, and it is a challenge that Benjamin Grosvenor



Colourful Haydn:
Ana de la Vega adds
a touch of brightness

meets bravely in his latest Decca release. Surely the most successful British pianist of his generation, and uncommonly introspective too, Grosvenor takes a slightly old-fashioned approach that works both in his favour and disfavour here. With playing that can be quite big-boned, he occasionally sacrifices the elegance of this music on the altar of the modern concert grand, yet he has already lived with these works for long enough to strike a balance between thoughtfulness and youthful spontaneity – this early Chopin contains so many features that were to remain characteristic of the composer's output.

In performances that underline how different the two works are, Grosvenor is most successful of all in the second and third movements of the E minor Concerto, where he captures the music's dreamy introspection and brilliant lightness. The deeper lyrical beauty of the F minor Concerto – full of subtler interpretative challenges – can seem a little lost on everyone here, where an all-purpose style suggests less feeling for the soul of the work and the sound that 19th-century instruments would have made. Still, Elim Chan and the RSNO offer solid support.

There is plenty to relish here if your shelves are not already full with the greatest Chopin pianists.

John Allison

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Haydn • C Stamitz

Haydn: Flute and Oboe Concerto No. 1 in C, Hob. VIIh:1; Flute and Oboe Concerto No. 3 in G, Hob. VIIh:3; **C Stamitz:** Flute and Oboe Concerto in G; Flute Concerto in D

Ana de la Vega (flute), Ramón Ortega Quero (oboe); Trondheim Soloists
Pentatone PTC 5186 823 64:38 mins



The Lira Organizzata was a curious 18th-century keyboard contraption

combining a hand-cranked hurdy-gurdy with a rank of small organ pipes. Although wheezy in tone and limited in the range of tonalities it could encompass, it was the favourite instrument of King Ferdinand IV of Naples, who played the thing himself and in 1786 commissioned Haydn to supply a set of concertos for Lira duet and chamber orchestra. Far from discouraged by the oddity of the task, Haydn came up with a series of divertimento-like miniature three-movement concertante symphonies, surprising and inventive enough to recycle material from in later works – the Romance movement of the G major Concerto proves to be a pre-run of the slow movement of his *Military Symphony No. 100*.

But he also made sure that, given the less-than-universal availability of Lira Organizzatas, the solo parts

could be played by flute and oboe, as they are here with bright elegance by Ana de la Vega and Ramón Ortega Quero, with the crisp horns, strings and continuo of the Trondheim Soloists, lead by Geir Inge Lotsberg.

Equally deft are the accounts of the two concertos by Carl Stamitz, vastly prolific son of pioneering Mannheim symphonist Johann Stamitz. Carl's style, however, is closer to early Mozart, with the same fluent command of the *galante* conventions of the day, if less memorable in ideas and with a certain reluctance to stray far from the home key. Still, spaciouly recorded, these lively and charming pieces should give pleasure.

Bayan Northcott

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

Saint-Saëns

Rhapsodie d'Auvergne, Op. 73; Piano Concerto No. 3 in E flat, Op. 29; Allegro appassionato, Op. 70; Piano Concerto No. 5 in F, Op. 103 'Egyptian'

Louis Lortie (piano);

BBC Philharmonic/

Edward Gardner

Chandos CHAN 20038 66:51 mins



This gathering of concertante works shows the remarkable range and versatility of Saint-Saëns's

genius. In the Third Piano Concerto of 1869, a work of his early maturity, alongside the Lisztian virtuosity it is also clear that he was susceptible to the influence of Wagner. If not quite at the other end of the scale, his Fifth Piano Concerto is quite different in tone; subtitled *Egyptian*, it was composed during a long winter holiday in Egypt and evokes the sights and sounds of his surroundings and makes use of a Nubian love song. In outline, it is something of a portmanteau work with the first two movements ranging across numerous subsections, but it also shows Saint-Saëns, for all the exoticism on display, turning his back decisively on the modernist advances of Debussy. Alongside these more substantial concertos are two works from 1884, the engaging *Rhapsodie d'Auvergne*, uniquely for Saint-Saëns, based on a French folk song, and the suavely brilliant *Allegro appassionato*.