

drastically subdued, lest the melody be swamped. Bezuidenhout adopts the opposite strategy, using an almost detached, uniformly strong touch for the ostinato, creating a fury of sound without compromising the overriding melody. Rage and grief, firmly established at the outset, pervade the entire movement. The *Andante cantabile con espressione* is beautifully contoured, with the flanking F major arias in stark contrast to the C minor eruption between them. In the wake of such violence, the return of the highly embellished F major recapitulation is transfigured, ennobled by suffering. The *Presto* unfolds in degrees of panic, with the brief *maggiore* providing no solace, though in the end, in place of defeat, defiance has the final word. This finely wrought, deeply felt performance alone is worth the price of the disc.

The *Variations*, K180, and the sunny D major Sonata, K284, in texture and colour a veritable 'Prague' Symphony for piano, that conclude the programme are no less fine, though their emotional portent is unavoidably overshadowed by K310.

John Irving's booklet notes, a feature of the series from the beginning, continue to provide satisfyingly detailed information, based on current scholarship, with grace and clarity. Though the series title is simply 'Mozart: Keyboard Music', with no suggestion of completeness, if my tally is correct, there are another four sonatas which haven't been recorded, along with nine variation sets and a scattering of miscellaneous pieces. If luck is on our side, the future may hold in store more of the robust, virtuosic and multi-faceted pleasures of Bezuidenhout's Mozart.

Patrick Rucker

## Piccinini

New

Aria di Saravanda in varie partite.  
Chiaccona 'Cappona alla vera Spagnola'.  
Chiaccona 'Mariona alla vera Spagnola'.  
Corrente – III; VI; VII; VIII; IX. Gagliarda V.  
Ricerca primo. Saravanda alla Francese.  
Toccate – II; VIII; XIII. Toccata cromatica.  
Mónica Pustilnik (archlute).

**Accent ACC24193** (full price, 1 hour 3 minutes).

Website [www.accent-records.com](http://www.accent-records.com). Producer/Engineer Jonas Niederstadt. Dates September 20th–22nd, 2013.

### Comparisons:

Conte (Carpe Diem) CD16288 (2009, rev. Sep 2012)

North (Arcana) A6 (1994)

It has been fashionable in recent years to play the lute music of Alessandro Piccinini (1566–1638), especially the pieces for chitarrone (or theorbo), with added accompanying parts and (most unforgivably) even percussion. The Argentine lutenist Mónica Pustilnik participated in a Piccinini recording in 2003, in which she and Jean-Marc Aymes accompanied the theorbo player Pascal Monteilhet on Baroque guitar and organ respectively (Zig-Zag Territoires ZZT040201). On her new disc, Pustilnik sets things right:

her focus is on the pieces for archlute in the two published collections of Piccinini's music from 1623 and 1639, which she plays solo.

The disc includes an excellent essay by Franco Pavan, himself a superb lutenist, providing a biography of Piccinini; a detailed history of his development of the archlute (a lute with an extended neck to hold additional bass strings) in collaboration with the Paduan luthier Cristofano Heberle in the mid-1590s; and a clear explanation of the stylistic influences in his music. According to Pavan, two of the original three archlutes Heberle built for Piccinini were given by his munificent Ferrarese patron, Duke Alfonso d'Este, to Carlo Gesualdo (who, besides being a skilled madrigalist, was an outstanding lutenist), and it was Gesualdo who then introduced the German-Italian virtuoso Giovanni Girolamo Kapsberger to the new long-necked instrument on his return to Naples, influencing in turn Kapsberger's development of the larger chitarrone (called by Monteverdi the 'liuto chitarronato') on which he built his fame. (Pavan does not mention Piccinini's claim to have influenced Giulio Caccini's development of the chitarrone in Florence, where the instrument was probably first conceived – apparently without neck extension – for vocal accompaniment.) The chitarrone sounded deeper than and was tuned differently from the archlute, which retained the 'standard' Renaissance lute tuning. Pavan reveals an interesting detail: Piccinini's first archlutes had two roses (sound holes) rather than the single one seen on reconstructions today, such as those played by Pustilnik and her colleagues in the comparison recordings, Nigel North and Rosario Conte.

Although Piccinini's 13- or 14-course archlute was probably also double-strung (that is, had paired strings) like a conventional lute at least for its second to eighth courses, Pustilnik's archlute is single-strung throughout. North's and Conte's double-strung instruments made a richer and less bell-like sound than Pustilnik's. This small historical divergence aside, Pustilnik's recording is very successful. Her playing is technically assured and remarkably free of unintentional fingerboard noises and, like North (whose disc encompasses both archlute and chitarrone pieces and has only five works in common with hers), she adopts an unhurried, almost ruminative approach to these fascinating works, exposing with impressive clarity the voice leading and inner parts in Piccinini's counterpoint. Her instrument has also been ideally captured in a lovely acoustic within the sixteenth-century Schloss Seehaus in Markt Nordheim (whether its tiny chapel or its small plaster-and-wood-lined concert hall is not disclosed) by the sound engineer, Jonas Niederstadt (who also owns the Carpe Diem label which issued Conte's sadly over-resonant recording – with only eight pieces in common with Pustilnik).

The result is a marvellous sense of intimacy, which is how it should be even with the most virtuosic lute music. Piccinini's writing, despite its prevalent counterpoint, leaves room for more flamboyant playing than Pustilnik's, as Conte demonstrated; but she is still captivatingly expressive. Her rhythmic freedom and dynamic sensitivity in the improvisatory-sounding toccatas is very attractive (she gives a particularly soulful account of the *Toccata cromatica XII* from Book 1), as is the measured virtuosity she displays in the two lilting sarabandes with diminutions (one each from Books 1 and 2) and two 'Spanish' chiacconas (both from the posthumously issued Book 2), which are strategically well placed in her recital.

In short, this is an attractively performed and superbly engineered recording that will delight lute fans and more general Baroque music enthusiasts alike.

Christopher Price

## Prokofiev

New

### Piano Sonatas, Volume 2.

Piano Sonatas – No. 9 in C, Op. 103;  
No. 10 in E minor, Op. 137 (fragment).  
Piano Sonatinas, Op. 54 – No. 1 in  
E minor; No. 2 in G. Cello Sonata in C,  
Op. 119<sup>a</sup>.

Peter Donohoe (piano), with <sup>a</sup>Raphael Wallfisch (cello).

**Somm SOMMCD256** (medium price, 1 hour 4 minutes). Website [www.somm-recordings.com](http://www.somm-recordings.com). Producer Siva Oke. Engineer Paul Arden-Taylor. Dates April 15th and 16th, 2014.

Of Peter Donohoe's Prokofiev Sonatas, Volume 1 (which I reviewed in July/August 2013), I observed that 'Donohoe ignites the music with his energetic, lively attack, capitalizing on the music's natural exuberance and youthful vivacity'. Luckily for me, Volume 2 landed on my mat the other day, and I was especially attracted by the fact that here Donohoe is joined by cellist Raphael Wallfisch for the Cello Sonata in C major, Op. 119, written in 1950 for Mstislav Rostropovich and Sviatoslav Richter, who gave the inaugural performance in Moscow. As Robert Matthew-Walker helpfully points out in his splendid notes, it seems surprising that Prokofiev penned only this one sonata for cello and piano, given his impressive affinity for the instrument; there is, however, the Symphony-Concerto for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 125, and the unfinished Sonata for solo cello, written for Rostropovich.

The opening movement of the Cello Sonata holds much of the most memorable material, and I quite agree with RM-W's idea that the two instruments are able to correspond so conversationally, at least at first, that there is not the slightest implication of one instrument overshadowing the other. Wallfisch's sound is immediately enticing in the menacing opening bars, and an appreciable intensity builds throughout the movement. The lyrical second