

This is an interesting and well-produced recording for those of us who are interested in the transitional period between the *stil brisé* and the cantabile style of the high-baroque, that is still arguably under-represented in recorded music.

Peter Cains

*Silvius Leopold Weiss. Suites en do mineur et fa# mineur du manuscrit de Dresde pour Luth Baroque*, Mauricio Buraglia, Société Française de Luth SFL 1004.

As the title indicates, this recording consists of two Suites (or Sonatas) from the Weiss Dresden Manuscript (Mus. 2841) played by Mauricio Buraglia. Buraglia is an extremely accomplished player (whom I have had the pleasure to hear playing live on one occasion in Germany), and this recording is delightful in the quality of sound and in the excellence of both playing and recording. Buraglia plays a large 13-course lute with bass rider, with a very strong and positive bass sound, and his style of playing exploits this characteristic to maximum effect.

Brief bibliographic notes are given for both player and composer, but as so often virtually nothing is said of the pieces themselves or their provenance. Both suites are late works, probably composed in the 1740s, and in their style and innovation they probably represent the zenith of the composer's achievements. They are both in the fully-developed later cantabile style. The first, in C minor (Ouverture-Courante Assai moderato-Bourrée-Siciliana-Menuet-Presto), is no. 52 in the Smith/Crawford system of numbering. The second is the only full suite composed by Weiss in F# minor (Prelude-Allemande Andante-Courante (sic)-Bourrée-Sarabande Andante-Menuet-Presto), and is Smith/Crawford No. 48.

Both of these suites have been included, and reviewed, in the excellent series of recordings of Weiss by Robert Barto on Naxos. I find it interesting to compare the styles and interpretations of the two players. Both are equally interesting and valid, but Buraglia plays in a more pensive and possibly introspective way, with generally slower fast movements, making optimum use of the deep resonant bass of the instrument.

We are probably spoilt for choice nowadays with the wide range of recordings of Weiss' music that are available. But this one stands in line with the best, and the pieces selected here are certainly amongst the finest.

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*The early mandolin: 18th century Italian music for one or two baroque mandolin and basso continuo*. Vol. 1. Ensemble Baschenis. Ducale CDL 025.

*The early mandolin: 18th century Italian music for one or two baroque mandolin and basso continuo*. Vol. 2. Ensemble Baschenis. Ducale CDL 036

*Hoffmann/Giuliani, The violin and the mandolin: accomplices and rivals*, Ensemble Baschenis. Concerto CD 2036 [www.baschenis.com](http://www.baschenis.com)

Following the revival of the renaissance lute several decades ago, many players have explored larger versions of the lute and lute-related instruments such as 11 and 13-course 'D minor' lutes, and archlutes and theorboes.

Smaller lutes have not fared so well in the lute community although small and even tiny lute-like instruments have been

played for centuries. The medieval gittern must have been a very popular instrument as representations of it appear in many European countries and it is often seen alongside medieval lutes. The tiny mandore is well documented in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Although larger lutes are much more popular today than their smaller counterparts in the early music scene, small lutes, in the form of the mandolin, not only survive but are flourishing. The mandolin (unlike the lute) has an unbroken tradition going back to the middle of the 18th century. The plectrum-played Neapolitan mandolin, with its metal strings, and 'violin' tuning in fifths is nowadays played in many different genres. Makers have made mandolins with unusual body shapes and the flat-backed mandolin is a popular instrument in its own right.

The modern mandolin, in all its guises, exists in a different world from that of early music and the lute revival. However some mandolinists are exploring early music from a more historical perspective. Ensemble Baschenis (with mandolinists Dorina Frati and Marco Capucci) play the repertoire of the mandolin from the 17th to the early 19th centuries. They play on reproductions of original instruments with an historically informed technique (avoiding the ubiquitous use of the tremolo, for example). They also explore different kinds of accompaniments using a mixture of bowed and plucked instruments.

*The Early Mandolin* and *The Early Mandolin Vol. 2* are fairly old recordings. The first CD was recorded in 1996 and Vol. 2 is from 2001. The CDs present a range of compositions and composers from an Italian perspective.

The group use three different kinds of mandolin in these recordings: the familiar Neapolitan instrument (but the early instrument is in some ways different from the modern instrument), the 'Brescian' mandolin (tuned like the Neapolitan instrument but with single gut strings) and the fourth-tuned mandolino (or mandola). This latter instrument they refer to as the 'mandolino lombardo'. (These Italian regional names: *mandolino napoletano*, *mandolino lombardo* and *mandolino bresciana* are later terms and don't reflect usage of the time.)

The fourth-tuned mandolino (*mandolino lombardo*) of the 17th century overlaps with the French 'mandore' Or rather, it is the same instrument with a different spelling and different tunings. The excellent accompanying notes discuss the mandore but no music is featured as these CDs are exploring Italian music.

All the music for mandolin is played with a plectrum. The plectrum is discussed at length in the accompanying notes with references to contemporary tutors for the Neapolitan mandolin. Quill or cherry bark would be more likely than the later, heavier, tortoiseshell.

However, there is no definite evidence for the use of a plectrum when playing music written for the fourth-tuned mandolino (*mandolino lombardo*). Very probably, later music written for the instrument (after c.1750) would have been played with a plectrum but ~~some~~ earlier music strongly suggests fingerstyle play (or, at least, some kind of hybrid technique).

There is an unaccompanied mandolin solo on each CD. Marco Capucci plays a Fuga by N. Ceccherini (with a plectrum) forcefully on a mandolino. This piece really does suggest fingerstyle play and Marco Capucci must have made some compromises to play it. (The accompanying notes suggest that this seems to be the only Fuga for mandolin solo although a 9-bar Fuga opens F.Sauli's *Partita VI*.)

The other unaccompanied mandolin solo is 'La Fustemburg', played by Dorina Frati on a Neapolitan instrument. 'La

