

published concertos, and a number of them were transcribed by Bach and by Bach's cousin, Johann Gottfried Walther (1684-1748), including transcriptions for organ solo. Most of them have since been lost.

The present recording contains Bach's transcriptions of three concertos by Vivaldi and two by Prince Johann himself. The prince showed great talent for composition before his untimely death in 1715 at the age of 19, and were it not for Bach's transcriptions his music might be entirely unknown. In addition to these concertos, the recording includes trios after Fasch and Telemann and an Aria in F after Couperin.

When I first put on this recording, I nearly jumped out of my skin. The levels are ear-splittingly high, and even after turning the volume down the sound remains aggressive. The instrument is a medium-sized three-manual 1986 Tamburini at the Church of Santa Maria Segreta in Milan. It seems raw and unrefined, but I am not prepared to say how much of that is the instrument itself and how much to the way it was recorded. Perhaps the chief pitfall in this repertory is organ tone that is too heavy and ponderous to convey the sparkle and fleetness of the music. That is not the case here. On the contrary, the foundation tone is inadequate to balance the screaming mixtures that produce so much confusion in the outer movements of most of the concertos. In the largest in scale of these works—Vivaldi's *Grosso Mogul* Concerto in C—Alessio Corti avoids mixtures altogether, and the performance benefits.

Corti's playing is very good, with all the energy and animation these pieces demand. I would advise anyone considering the purchase of this recording to audition it to determine whether it is a sound you can live with.

A recording by organist Geneviève Soly combines concerto transcriptions by Bach with two by Walther (Analekta 3005—May/June 1996).

GATENS

## **BACH:** *Goldberg Variations*

David Korevaar  
Ivory 77005—66 minutes

Korevaar subscribes to the "more is more" school of ornamentation. His ornaments are never predictable, and he applies them consistently, playing with ideas of symmetry just as Bach did in the compositional structure of the *Goldberg Variations*. The effect is "baroque", to say the least.

More baroque is Tim Smith's essay that accompanies Korevaar's liner notes. Smith is somewhere on the cute-and-cuddly end of the Bach-cult spectrum—just short of idolatrous,

with a healthy heaping of self-indulgence. Smith's silly essay notwithstanding, this recording is worth hearing for the creativity, sincerity, and flexibility of the pianist's approach.

KATZ

## **BACH:** *Guitar Transcriptions*

Prelude, Fugue, & Allegro; Solo Flute Partita;  
Solo Violin Partita 2  
Rafaella Smits  
Accent 24206—67 minutes

Smits plays an eight-stringed guitar, and given the title and the picture on the cover, one might expect more to be made of the innovation. One might even expect to be told what the two extra strings are; based on the sound and that picture, she seems to have added two extra basses (this is not like Paul Galbraith's hybrid instrument, with added bass and treble strings). No word in the notes, though there is the occasional sound of a deeper bass.

The playing is very clean, expressive, and restrained. Smits doesn't feel it necessary to flaunt her technique, though she has plenty of it. It is elegant Bach, but what's lacking is exuberance—the joy this composer can express better than any other.

The program is interesting: three works for different media, all arranged by the performer. The *Prelude, Fugue, and Allegro* was originally for the *lautenwerk*, a keyboard strung with gut strings to make it sound like a lute. Her performance is perfectly lovely but overshadowed by Jason Vieaux's magnificent recent performance (J/A 2009). The *Partita for Solo Flute* is something of a rarity, and it is played beautifully. But here the competition is from the incomparable David Russell (M/J 2008, collections), and his reading far overshadows this one.

The Second Violin Partita is the one with the famous Chaconne. That is rarely heard in context of the entire suite, though it should be. Here, again, the competition is too much of a challenge—Pepe Romero's magnificent performance on Philips, with the third cello suite. And the weak link here is the Chaconne; according to the notes, Smits takes a different approach to this magnificent edifice, more in keeping with its French origins. The result is too episodic for the architecture to cohere effectively.

There are many beauties in this recording, and if you like your Bach subtle and contemplative, you will enjoy this. But I want more from this music.

KEATON