



overall and within the individual pieces. For instance, the three slow movements (Largo, Grave and Adagio) of the Valentini concerto are all performed roughly at the same speed and, more importantly, with much the same character. By contrast, other recordings of the same piece – Chiara Banchini with Ensemble 415 (Zig Zag 20801, 2007) or Reinhard Goebel with Musica Antiqua Köln (Deutsche Gramophon 0289 477 6728 2, 2008) – offer a wider and, for the present reviewer, more persuasive range of affects achieved not only through changes of speed but also through improvisation and dynamics. Whether unwittingly or not, playing always at the most comfortable tempo may also result in a lack of structural clarity. A case in point is the first composite movement of Montanari's No. 6, where, in Standage's rendition, one can hardly tell apart the three emphatic tutti sections (Adagio) from the two flowing solo sections (Andante). In the following movement (Allegro), the problem relates not so much to tempo as to the uniform, on-the-string bow stroke used for the fugal subject throughout – a sort of lighter *martelé* that makes down- and upbows barely distinguishable from one another. Whilst consistent, the effect is nevertheless monochromatic. One is reminded of those glorious string ensembles – I Musici, the Academy of St Martin in the Fields – which, back in the 1950s, revived eighteenth-century music on modern rather than period instruments yet, in so doing, prioritized energy over flexibility.

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JOSEF ANTONÍN GURETZKY (1709–1769), BOHUSLAV MATĚJ ČERNOHORSKÝ (1684–1742)  
 CONCERTOS OF JOSEF GURETZKY

Rodolfo Richter (violin), Kinga Gáborjáni (violoncello) / The Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen /  
 Robert Rawson  
 Chandos 0813, 2017; one disc, 73 minutes

The uncomplimentary laconic comment made by Leopold Mozart when he visited Olomouc in 1767 – ‘Die Musick in Dom ist schwach, ja sehr schwach’ (the music in the cathedral is weak, very weak) – hangs over the end of the career of Josef Antonín Guretzky (or Gurecký in the current Czech orthography). The situation of the Kapellmeister was surely unenviable in those times, as Jiří Sehnal has shown in his book about music in the Olomouc cathedral: he had to deal with a lack of money from the chapter and with old, uncooperative singers (*Hudba v olomoucké katedrále v 17. a 18. století* (Brno: Moravské muzeum, 1988)). Moreover, church music at the time was affected by the regulation imposed by Maria Theresa that prohibited the use of trumpets and timpani. Our sympathy with the Moravian musician and composer might even increase if we consider that the 1767 performance may not have been the first ‘failure’ of its kind during his life. But what matters is that nowadays anybody can make himself familiar with Gurecký's music thanks to new recordings, which are available at last.

Born in the Moravian town of Přerov, Josef Antonín Gurecký followed in the footsteps of his elder brother Václav Matyáš (1705–1743), entering the service of Cardinal Wolfgang Hannibal Count Schratzenbach after presumably also being educated by the Piarists in Kroměříž. While Václav could spend some time in Vienna at the cardinal's expense studying composition with Antonio Caldara, the younger Josef obviously had to make his own way through numerous courts abroad. These differing conditions seem to have affected the compositional output of the two brothers. In addition to sacred music, Václav composed Italian operas and oratorios (which unfortunately have not survived) in his capacity as the Cardinal's ‘compositore di camera’; his music bears the indisputable touch of the exquisite but rather conservative Viennese model. In contrast, Josef (only four years younger) composed instrumental and sacred music apparently from the



position of a 'composing instrumentalist', and his works can be characterized as galant. In 1736 Václav became Kapellmeister of the Cathedral in Olomouc, but six years later he died suddenly, and his younger brother, who was at the time back in Moravia in the service of Bishop Jakob Ernst von Liechtenstein-Kastelkorn, successfully applied for the vacant position.

Apart from Josef's application to the Olomouc chapter and several occurrences of his name in the court accounts from Wiesentheid, the only documents that bear witness to the composer's activity in the 1730s are the works that survive from Josef's time in Wiesentheid, Ebrach (today held in Bamberg) and Dresden. Instrumental music clearly prevails. Most of the sources are autograph manuscripts, which is very unusual for that time, especially for travelling Bohemian musicians. What is more, a good many of them are dated: several cello concertos in Wiesentheid were written between 1735 and 1740, and the solo sonata in Dresden bears the inscription 'fatta li 2 Agosto 1736'. It is clear that the prevalence of cello concertos was prompted by the interest of the passionate cellist Count Rudolf Franz Erwein von Schönborn. Beyond that, however, the nature and circumstances of Josef's activities in Wiesentheid are not known; both the time span of the manuscripts and the occurrence of works by his brother Václav in the same collection give rise to a number of unanswered questions about the brothers' relationship to the count and his officials. Two manuscripts with virtuoso violin parts in Dresden clearly arose from another situation. Was it only a tribute to the art of the violinist Johann Georg Pisendel, or did Gurecký use the compositions to apply for the position at the Saxon Hofkapelle? In any case, the violin concerto survived only in score and no traces of the existence of parts are known – could this circumstance indicate that Gurecký's potential request was unsuccessful?

The Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen (and one Gentlewoman, of course) under the artistic direction of Robert Rawson focus here on *Concertos of Joseph Guretzky*. The violin concerto and the well-balanced selection of four cello concertos (D-WD573 in A minor, D-WD574 in G major, D-WD577 in F major and D-WD575 in D major) are all marked as premiere recordings; the violin sonata from Dresden was the only work by Josef Gurecký available until now, recorded by Lenka Torgersen with Václav Luks and Libor Mašek on the CD *Il Violino Boemo* from the Music from Eighteenth-Century Prague series (Supraphon SU41512, 2014). But just as this review is being written, a brand-new six-CD set *Music of the Kapellmeisters at St Wenceslas' Cathedral in Olomouc in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Arta F10222, 2017) has opened up broad and significant context for the recording in question: each of the Gurecký brothers is represented by one CD in this set, performed by Musica Florea under the leadership of Marek Štrýncl. Their anthology of Josef's compositions opens and closes with exactly the same cello concertos as on the Chandos recording (D-WD573 in A minor and D-WD575 in D major); the only other overlap in the two recordings is the violin concerto.

Both pieces with solo violin from the Dresden 'Schrank II' collection are highly virtuosic and convey not only the high level of the composer's own instrumental ability but also his evident intention to captivate the listener's attention with a demanding solo part. In the violin concerto especially, the virtuosity of the solo passages seems to be a little overemphasized and the application of some figures in several places too mechanistic: one can feel that given the intensity of the soloist's effort, the overall effect is not entirely satisfactory. Could this have been the reason why the concerto was left in score only? In this regard, the cello concertos are better balanced, with more cantabile passages in the solos, which is obviously related to their purpose as music for the noble dilettante. As with many composers of concertos, particularly Vivaldi, Gurecký might be criticized for his overabundant use of sequences. Combined with the immediate repetition of some motifs or figures that looks forward to the two-bar periodicity of the galant style, some of the solos especially are at times too predictable. The plentiful use of anapestic or Lombard rhythm is another feature that represents the trends of the period.

The Harmonious Society is playing one to a part, which is functional in case of the cello concertos, but in the violin concerto the ensemble, which has two violins, has to deal with three violin parts. In the score there are separate staves for the solo violin and the first violin, although the latter is mostly blank to suggest a unison in the ritornellos. Only in several places is the first violin given an individual passage where it accompanies a solo together with the second violin. Consequently, Rodolfo Richter is busy with the solos and the first violin part, while during solos the second violinist has to play both violin parts in gentle double stops. But such



passages are relatively rare, and the prevalence of solos with basso continuo represents another characteristic of the concerto: in the use of a rather limited spectrum of accompanying ensemble textures we can identify another difference between Gurecký and, say, František Jiránek, his compatriot elder. In contrast, Musica Florea with Adéla Štajnochrová as the soloist in the Violin Concerto play in the more 'traditional' string configuration of 4–3–2–2–1, which allows them to work in Gurecký's favour with their greater plasticity of the sound. Marek Štryncl plays with a great sense for the organic whole of the solos, but Kinga Gáborjány's conception is also highly satisfying. The difference may be compared to the view through two different telescopes: with a smaller magnification we are easily able to capture important points and beautiful aspects of the landscape, while with a closer view we can appreciate all the details, twists and meanderings of each solo.

Despite all the reservations expressed above, Gurecký's concertos are beautiful pieces. As is sometimes the case in instrumental music of that time, it may of course be a little monotonous to hear (not play!) several of them in a row. Perhaps that was the reason why the track list has been enriched by the Fugue in A minor for harpsichord, beautifully played by David Wright. In his book *Bohemian Baroque*, Robert Rawson notes that the composition was published as a work by Černohorský, but in the manuscript sources it is attributed to Josef Seger and others (*Bohemian Baroque: Czech Musical Culture and Style, 1600–1750* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013)). Since the work was published in the well-known *Museum für Orgelspieler* (1832–1834), which is full of false attributions, and the style of music seems to be rather progressive, Czech scholars have long taken the attribution of this piece to Černohorský as dubious and are generally inclined to attribute the Fugue to Seger. In this respect, the information given in the booklet has to be corrected. Furthermore, from the point of view of musical style, the connection Gurecký – Seger seems to be much more logical.

The recording may be regarded both as aural documentation of one part of the aforementioned book by Rawson and as another contribution to his proliferating collection of publications on music and musicians from Hanakia. The disc greatly enriches the discography not only of Josef Gurecký himself but also of the instrumental music of the first half of the eighteenth century written by composers from the Czech lands. In this respect, *Concertos of Josef Guretzky* is most welcome and worthy of attention.

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