

## REVIEWS: (cont.)

runs for almost ten minutes. This piece is a good example of how the composer continued to rework his pieces even after he had copied them into the book: He scratched out some passages and added new ones, letting them spill onto other pages of the book wherever there was room, and then renumbered the variations to change the order in which they would be played.

Next to the *Passacaille*, the two longest pieces are the fugue on track 10, over six minutes long, and another on track 12, almost five minutes in length. In the first, Campion's writing goes up to the twelfth fret (marked "n" in the tablature, and the highest fret available on Hofstötter's instrument) as he takes his time exploring a greater variety of tonalities than was customary on the Baroque guitar. In the second, he notates a subject entry at the climax of the piece completely in natural harmonics—the first known notation of this technique.

A peculiarity of the Baroque guitar, in certain re-entrant tunings like the ones here, is the ability to use the fifth course for treble notes co-equally with the first and second. In track 9, *La somptueuse*, bars 6 and 7 of the B section present a melodic motive on the fifth course and immediately echo it at the same pitch on the first course. The two courses have different timbres, so the effect is one of an antiphonal dialogue, even though it is all taking place on one instrument. Here we see how truly idiomatic Baroque guitar music can often be when played on the instrument for which it was written, and why transcriptions for modern guitar must always be considered arrangements.

Track 11, *Les Ramages*, may be the moment when Hofstötter takes his greatest liberties with Campion's text. The piece is in two repeated sections, notated throughout in 12/8, but with the added instruction that it should be "arpeggiated continuously." Hofstötter plays the A section without alteration the first time, but begins arpeggiating on the repeat, and keeps it up until the end of the piece. His arpeggiation, however, changes the meter to 4/4 with steady 16th-note motion. What is more, he ends the B section partway through, repeats it, and then plays the last part as a coda. I note these modifications not as a criticism, but rather as an illustration of the artist's commitment to creating a musical statement he can fully stand behind. This kind of commitment flows through the entire recording, and makes for challenging yet satisfying listening.

Bernhard Hofstötter's *François Campion: Music for Baroque Guitar* is masterfully played and well-recorded. It offers a sound world and a repertoire we hear only too rarely. It is packaged in an attractive jewel case with a well-written and informative booklet. It is a welcome addition to the limited discography for this instrument and this composer.

—ELLWOOD COLAHAN

## CD Review:

*Ma Guitte je te chante: 16th Century Guitar Solos and Chansons*. Nelson, Jocelyn & Amy Bartram. Nelson 5637610050, 2010. 1 CD.



### *A Four-Course Bouquet of Renaissance Love Songs*

Jocelyn Nelson and Amy Bartram's *Ma Guitte je te chante: 16th Century Guitar Solos and Chansons* is a well-conceived and executed testament to the vitality of 16th-century repertoire for the four-course "Renaissance" guitar, both as a solo instrument and as an accompaniment to the voice. The four-course instrument was especially cultivated in France. The disc is attractively packaged in a gatefold-style case with an informative booklet of scholarly notes and song texts (so *that's* how you pronounce *bransle*); it focuses on pieces anthologized by two Parisian music publishers, Guillaume de Morlaye and Adrian Le Roy. It also includes one piece from a Lyonnaise source by Simon Gorlier, and another vocal arrangement by a non-Parisian publisher, to be discussed presently.

Nine of the tracks are vocal works arranged with guitar accompaniment, and the remainder are instrumental tracks. This is really a guitar CD with a generous sample of pieces for voice, or if one prefers, a jewel-like bouquet of vocal works—all on themes of romantic love—placed in a lush and varied setting of instrumental greenery.

The selection of repertoire is quite varied, including refined and sophisticated *chansons* (*Tant que vivray* and *J'ay le rebours*) next to simple, strophic songs with humorous or even nonsense texts (*Au jour au jour au jour* and *Margot labourez les vignes*). The instrumental pieces include dances like galliards and pavaues, along with more abstract forms like canons and fantasias. As for accompaniment practice, Nelson's notes concisely summarize the ambiguities confronting the modern performer who would take account of historical evidence, even to the point of footnotes for those who wish to explore the issue further. She and Bartram have carefully considered their options for each piece, and chosen an approach that seems contextually appropriate in each case.

Bartram's voice is well-suited to this material: light but strong, agile and clear. Her French is modified to encompass certain archaic pronunciations, such as *avoit* or *soit*, distancing the language of the songs just enough. Nelson's execution on the guitar is facile and articulate. She is equally comfortable supporting Bartram's voice or executing virtuosic passagework, as for example in the *fantasies* by Le Roy.

The vocal composer most represented is Jacques Arcadelt, a major Renaissance figure and something of a musical chameleon. Probably born in Flanders, Arcadelt

rose early to prominence and spent his youthful maturity in Italy, where he was an influential early madrigalist. Later in life he returned north and settled in Paris, where he made his mark on the *chanson*. *Si ce n'est amour qu'est-ce* is a light-hearted love song with a clever lyric full of verbal paradoxes. Arcadelt's setting is tuneful in a flowing 9/8 meter, and Nelson carefully crafts the accompaniment to support the arc of the song. *Que te sert amy d'estre ainsi* shows another, more refined side of Renaissance composition. This song is a setting of a text by the aristocratic poet Mellin de Saint-Gellais, as is the next piece by Arcadelt, *Dieu inconstant*. All the works by Arcadelt presented here are arrangements for guitar and voice by Le Roy of polyphonic vocal originals. *Dieu inconstant*, a mournful song of disappointed love, especially shows Le Roy's skill as an arranger. The guitar accompaniment is completely original and not just an intabulation of the lower parts of the *chanson* (although it does exploit the more active voice-leading of the last line). To my ear, it approaches the contrapuntal richness of John Dowland's lute song accompaniments. The duo might have felt the same way, because they chose to separate the first and second strophes of the song with a purely instrumental statement of the accompaniment. The last song by Arcadelt on this recording is *Margot labourez les vignes*. Howard Goodall believes the lyric of this piece tells a humorous story whose meaning is lost in time; others have said it challenges the idea that love and marriage are limited by social class. The polyphonic original is often performed at a quick tempo, lending it the character of a "patter song" and accentuating the humorous character. The performance here is gentler, with an air of innocence and sincerity.

Although Le Roy shines as an arranger, he is represented as a composer by two songs: *Une m'avoit promis* and *Mes pas semez*. The first is a rather long, strophic *pavane*. The performers introduce more or less instrumental and vocal ornamentation in different verses, and also vary a distinctive metric elision at the end of each verse. The second is a mournful *chanson* based on the *folias* ground bass pattern in a slow triple meter with a prominent hemiola in the third couplet of each verse. Here Bartram performs the first verse *a cappella*, after which Nelson enters with block chords for the second verse, then performs the published contrapuntal accompaniment for the third verse, and accompanies the last verse with a *rasgueado* texture, building to a dramatic finish. Another song on the CD, *J'ay le rebours*, is credited to Le Roy but is almost certainly his arrangement of a polyphonic work originally by Pierre Certon.

A brief song by Laurent Bonard, *Au jour au jour au jour*, shows a large-scale metric alternation between duple and triple organization of the kind that is seldom credited to 16th-century music. The text tells a humorous tale of a wife's dalliance in the face of her husband's shortcomings.

The jewel of the recording is the last track, Claudin de Sermisy's *Tant que vivray*, transcribed by both Attaingnant and Bianchini for lute and by Fuenllana for solo vihuela. Jocelyn Nelson has created her own convincing version for four-course guitar and solo voice. As a noble and soaring anthem of fidelity to romantic love, it is a fitting and inspiring close to this recording, reaching out across the centuries to touch our hearts and fire them anew. With this setting, Nelson may fairly claim her place alongside Le Roy, Attaingnant, and other notable guitarist exponents of the *chanson*.

—ELLWOOD COLAHAN

## AV Review:

*Men, Women and Guitars in Romantic England.*

Six-lecture video series (2014-2015) hosted at the Gresham College website,

<<https://www.gresham.ac.uk/series/men-women-and-guitars-in-romantic-england/>>.

### *The Eyre Guitar*

At first glance, a detailed examination into the conditions of the governess class in early 19th-century England might seem like it has little to do with understanding the guitar. Yet medievalist and scholar of the guitar Christopher Page patiently lays out an array of evidence to show that it is, in fact, central to a number of themes connected to the guitar in this period: its intimate performance context, its role as a tool of striving, its overwhelming identification with women. This is just one of a number of vivid socio-historical perceptions he offers in the course of his six-part lecture series, *Men, Women and Guitars in Romantic England*.

These lectures, each about 45 minutes long, are engagingly delivered and sprinkled with musical performances on period instruments and voice by accomplished artists. Although there is more lecture than recital (the music makes up something less than one-third of each video), the musical interludes both illustrate the speaker's points and return us at regular intervals to the sounds inspiring Dr. Page's scholarship in the first place.

The first lecture, *The "Romantic" Guitar*, introduces the general topic and raises the themes that will be examined in the other five. Here Page outlines what he portrays as the early 19th-century English craze for the guitar. He notes, for instance, that twice as many self-teaching methods were published in London during the period than in supposedly more musical Vienna. He proposes that, while "symptoms of musical Romanticism" came late to the instrument's repertoire, its culture was Romantic on a much deeper and more symbolic level.