

# RECORDING reviews

Eurydice" from his Parisian *Orphée*—it is thanks to the Queen that Gluck came to Paris, where he took audiences by storm and launched an operatic reform that opened a new chapter in the history of opera.

The performers gathered around Sandrine Chatron, who plays on an Érard single-action harp (Paris, 1799) are all equally admirable: Stéphanie Paulet (violin, David Tecchler, Rome, 1737) and Amélie Michel (six-keyed transverse flute by Claire Soubeyran, after Kirst) accompany the soprano Isabelle Poulenc and the tenor Jean-François Lombard. Both distinguished opera singers are well-acquainted with the 18th-century French repertoire, and they sing, without excessive affectation, works that could easily fall into the most overdone sentimentality. —Jacqueline Waeber

## Sonate di Celebri Autori

Ensemble Sonare:  
Iara Ungarelli, viola da gamba;  
Felippe Maravalhas, theorboed

guitar; Zoltan Paulinyi, violin  
<http://sonare.musicaerudita.com>

The *raison d'être* for this Brazilian ensemble is the "theorboed guitar," which substitutes for the theorbo as the continuo and solo instrument. The *guitarra teorbata* used



here is a standard late-Baroque guitar outfit-fitted like a theorbo with unstopped bass strings.

In the CD notes, the argument for the *guitarra teorbata* as an accepted substitute for the grander theorbo is made with a degree of plausibility, but in the end the interest lies not in the argument but in the unique musical performance, which is charming and convincing.

The recording consists of a potpourri of sonatas and duets spanning the mid-Baroque to the early Rococo and utilizes the *guitarra teorbata* as both a continuo and

solo instrument. There is an undeniable—dare I say—Latin quality to the performances, which the guitar serves to enhance. Two early Rococo selections stand out as especially charming: the *Duo pour guitare et violon*, by Christian Gottlieb Scheidler (1752-1815), and the *Concerto a Mondolino e basso*, by Giuseppe Vaccari (1704-1766). Oddly, the solo guitar rendition of J.S. Bach's sonata, BWV 1001, felt stiff and studied in comparison to the more unbridled Rococo selections.

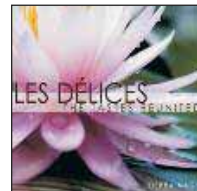
The disc is rounded out by solid performances of sonatas by Francesco Maria Veracini (1690-1768), Scheidler, and Giacomo Antonio Tinazzoli (1673-1730). There are intonation issues here and there in the violin; rather than being a matter of historical temperament, the problem seems to lie simply in moments of questionable pitch. The studio recording itself is clean and present—in fact, a little too present for this reviewer's taste. I imagine Ensemble Sonare in recital is quite a delightful experience, and it would have been nice to have caught a more ambient sound for this recording.

—Lance Hulme

## The Tastes Reunited

*Les Délices*; Debra Nagy, director  
[www.debranagy.com](http://www.debranagy.com)

Everything about the present CD is correct and up-to-date, from the instrumental combinations to the choice of repertoire, including appropriate ornamentation, good intonation, and judicious use of *flattements*. The members of *Les Délices* are first class musicians, the ensemble playing is irreproachable, and the quality of the pieces is the very finest. Besides the excellent level of musicianship, Peter Nothnagle, the recording engineer, is probably the best-known specialist in capturing period instruments in American recordings, so it is no



wonder that the final result is a joy to the brain and ear.

The program starts with one of the most characteristic and most frequently recorded sonatas by François Couperin. Two other works by the same composer are also prominent, and one figures as the last piece of the recording. A good idea: to open

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and close with works that are already familiar to the listener, who will be drawn into this "new" world by the quality of the composition, the lively, intelligent interpretation, and the colorful, brilliant tone. A tuning of A-392 is warm and dark, but the enthusiasm of the players, as well as resonant acoustics, prevent the resulting tone from becoming lackluster.

Philidor is also common fare. These works may be known to the music listener who particularly favors the music of 18th-century France, but even that rare beast will find in the next pieces enough novelty to sustain his curiosity and interest: Dornel, Corbetta, and especially Chauvon are hardly household names, and they are presented here with a loving approach that makes one eager for more.

This CD provides a varied menu, with all the right spices and ingredients: it can serve as entry to a marvelous world. The beautiful "Les Sylvains" by Couperin and the rare and curious chaconne by Corbetta highlight the theorbo, an instrument rarely heard as a soloist on chamber discs. The inclusion of these solo moments provides us with a change

that soothes the ear and makes the next work sound fresh. A smart move!

For Les Délices' next CD, I would suggest that liner notes be printed in a larger font; I also wouldn't mind a bit more volume on the harpsichord (sometimes it feels drowned by the other instruments), and—having a theatrical soul—I would welcome a more adventurous interpretative stance, one that would make this disc less politically correct. —*Laura Rónai*

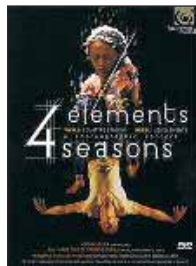
## DVD

### 4 Elements/4 Seasons: A Choreographic Concert

Midori Seiler, violin; Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola, dancer  
Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin,  
Harmonia Mundi DVD  
[www.harmoniamundi.com](http://www.harmoniamundi.com)

Popular interest in this live production DVD from Berlin will come from the *Four Seasons* by Vivaldi (1678-1741), but Rebel's *Les Éléments* is the more attractive performance. Jean-Féry Rebel (1666-1747) was a court composer for Louis XIV and *Les Éléments* has all the charm, invention, and humor of

the French Baroque. The raucous musical performance and choreography mirror the composer's combination of audacity and *sensibilité*.



Diaz de Garaio's sinuous earth-bound solo dance—it takes him eight minutes to stand up and expectorate a rock—has grace and power. This is exactly how dance can add spatial dimension to a musical performance.

In comparison, the staging of *Le quattro stagioni* is ponderous and obvious. Performers parade about with apples and *mouchettes* on their heads and leaves and red string in their mouths. The waifish Seiler dourly bows away while perched on the choreographer's shoulders. This reviewer is too familiar with European performance art not to find this all a little, well, corny. The choreography brings nothing to the performance; rather it detracts and becomes tedious.

Despite this, the DVD is worth experiencing. The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin is a laudable ensemble and the interpretation is solid and musical, if a little tame when compared to recent, more *outré* performances of Vivaldi's music. Seiler's virtuoso violin is consistently excellent. But I kept waiting for the light touch of the Rebel to manifest in the witty Italian's music as well. The heaviness is exacerbated by post-production tampering, which gives the recording a bombastic quality that may not be to everyone's taste. —*Lance Hulme*

## Meet the reviewer

Composer, conductor, and pianist **Lance Hulme** is based in North Carolina, where he is manager of the SKIN Ensemble. From 1986 to 2003, he lived in Europe, where he was director of Ensemble Surprise, a large, eclectic chamber ensemble that presented 700 years of "new" music. His compositions are heard on the Albany, LiveNotes, and Bridge labels.

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