



ars organi

Booklet Notes

for

The Gates of Vienna

IT WAS A.J.P. Taylor, most naturally epigrammatic among modern British historians, who summed up the Habsburg clan's rule over centuries. 'In other countries dynasties are episodes in the history of peoples; in the Habsburg Empire peoples are a complication in the history of a dynasty ... No other family has endured so long or left so deep a mark upon Europe.' From the 1400s the Habsburgs adopted the cryptic initials AEIOU, short for *Alles Erdreich Ist Österreich Untertan*: German for 'All the earth is subject to Austria.' There arose Latin-language versions of the tag as well, including *Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo*: roughly 'Austria is fated to rule the whole world.'

And for much of the period from 1516 to 1700, the Habsburgs did rule a great deal of the world. During that span of years, they controlled not merely the Holy Roman Empire itself (which included Austria, many of the German-speaking states, much of Italy, crucial areas of western Europe, and swathes of eastern Europe) but Spain also. Furthermore, for six decades (1580-1640) Portugal found itself governed directly from Spain. Preferring dynastic alliances to overt combat – late in the fifteenth century Hungary's King Matthias Corvinus had sardonically observed 'Let others wage war: you, happy Austria, marry!' (*Bella gerant alii: tu, felix Austria, nube!*) – the Habsburgs nevertheless fought hard for their rights when forced to do so. Perhaps the most crucial of all Habsburg pacts was the 1683 Treaty of Warsaw, by which Leopold I (Emperor since 1657) promised to defend Poland if the latter was attacked by the Ottoman army, and by which Poland likewise vowed to defend the Empire from that same army.

Within months of the treaty being signed, it was acted on. Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa and his troops (at least 140,000) laid siege to Vienna in July 1683. Dramatically and, it seemed at first, hopelessly outnumbered, the European powers could muster only around 90,000 soldiers, including 27,000 Poles under the leadership of King John Sobieski. The final battle took place on 12 September, and it included history's biggest cavalry charge, which Sobieski himself commanded. By nightfall, the Ottomans had been put to flight; by the end of the year, Kara Mustafa had been strangled in Belgrade on the orders of Sultan Mehmet IV.

Of the battle, Louis XIV (whose determination that France should reign untrammelled over Europe had led him to hope for a Polish-Imperial defeat) said: 'It is not Leopold I

fear, but rather, his miracles.' Poland's monarch, for his part, updated Julius Caesar's celebrated aphorism by proclaiming *Veni, vidi, Deus vicit*: 'I came, I saw, God conquered.' The victory gives to the present CD its title, *The Gates of Vienna*.

As patrons of the arts, and in particular as patrons of music, the Habsburgs had few equals and no superiors: not Louis XIV himself, not Henry VIII, not Elizabeth I, and not Frederick the Great. Three successive Holy Roman Emperors – Leopold's father Ferdinand III (reigned 1637-1657), Leopold himself, and Leopold's son Joseph I (reigned 1705-1711) – wrote music with impressive competence, as well as playing several instruments. Without Habsburg patronage, the fortunes of Gluck, Haydn and Mozart (to name just three great figures) would have been very different and a good deal harsher. Those musicians not directly hired by the Habsburgs often answered to Habsburg surrogates. Habsburg emperors frequently had power of veto over the appointment of Liège's prince-bishops, for example. In return, the prince-bishops possessed votes in the Imperial Diet, as did the King of Bohemia (even when not himself a Habsburg), and the Archbishops of Cologne, Mainz, and Trier.

If one can speak of an overriding international idiom which The Gates of Vienna's selection of organ works exhibits, one would need to characterise that idiom as broadly conservative. The Monteverdian harmonic and textural revolutions largely passed it by. Only rarely are there the novel harmonic progressions that had been already manifest in Frescobaldi and that would sometimes occur in Buxtehude (the so-called *stylus phantasticus*). Yet within such fundamental conservatism can be found substantial variety of mood and approach.

The disc begins with a brief but grand *Intonation* by **Sebastian Anton Scherer** (1631-1712), who spent nearly all of his life in Ulm, although in addition to being the chief organist in that city's cathedral, he had connections with St Thomas's Church in Strasbourg. This piece appeared in 1664, along with no fewer than thirty-two similar works (also by Scherer), and its title means exactly what it says. During the sixteenth century, the Venetian school of organist-composers – including Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli – had made a virtue from the age-old necessity of giving choristers their starting-notes, and had produced numerous organ preludes that were played before sung sections of the Mass. Against the slow-moving bass-lines, which remain static for bars on end, the organist's hands trace elaborate semiquaver-dominated filigree.

Gérard Scronx was a monk of Liège whose Christian name sometimes appears in Latinate form as Gherardus. He left behind him no clues as to the exact dates of his birth and death. Echo imitations enjoyed a good deal of popularity among composers in the seventeenth century (not keyboard composers alone, since such devices appear in a good deal of Italian vocal music from the same era), and this echo imitation from 1617 is among the most beguiling of all that have come down to us. It presupposes the use of two manuals with clearly differentiated timbres, one of the very earliest organ compositions to do so. In the original manuscript, the echo passages are written with red ink, by contrast with the black ink elsewhere.

Of Scottish parentage, but born in Savoy, **Georg Muffat** (1653-1704) spent most of his life in either Austria or Bavaria, though on an excursion to Italy he came under Corelli's pedagogic influence. Leopold I thought well of Muffat, who held prestigious organ-playing posts in Salzburg and Passau. Given this cosmopolitan background, it comes as no surprise that Muffat's contemporaries recognised him as having united in his own person the musical languages of Italy and France. Indeed, in the preface to his 1695 publication *Florilegium Primum*, Muffat alludes to having 'avidly pursued this [French]

style which then flourished in Paris under the most famous Jean-Baptiste Lully: an ambiguously worded statement that might, or might not, have been meant to signify a specific teacher-pupil relationship. It is strange how often this five-movement *Toccata* suggests Purcell, in its passing dissonances (and, with the quiet central ostinato movement, a fleeting invocation of the dominant minor key in an otherwise major-key context). Originally the *Toccata* appeared in a 1690 collection of Muffat's organ music, which bears the imposing title *Apparatus Musico-Organisticus*.

Johann Kaspar Kerll (1627-1693), resident mostly in Vienna but also by turns in Munich and Brussels, is often credited with having taught the young Pachelbel. Certainly he was more prolific than his list of extant works would indicate. He wrote, for instance, eleven operas, not one of which survives. The present *Beispiel's* origins are mysterious. Some experts have questioned whether Kerll really wrote it (and it has occasionally been ascribed to the Rome-based Bernardo Pasquini); but it appeared under Kerll's name in the second (1901) volume of the Leipzig collection *Denkmäler deutscher Tonkunst*. Amiable yet with gravitas and much close imitation, the *Beispiel* is dominated by a rhythmically robust main theme in quavers and semiquavers. As for the *Canzona* that is indisputably Kerll's own work, its delightful (to modern ears) use of modal writing in quite strenuous polyphony would have sounded rather old-fashioned to Kerll's contemporaries, and suggests a musician whom Kerll almost certainly never knew about: the Frenchman Jehan Titelouze (died 1633). Not remotely Titelouzian, though, are the *Canzona's* frenzied, virtuosic, and startling final bars, dominated by a lengthy right-hand trill.

Between 1637 and 1641, **Johann Jakob Froberger** (1616-1667) was a Frescobaldi student in Rome. He exhibited much of the Italian master's restless, quasi-extempore style in this *Toccata No. 5*, intended for performance at the climactic moment of the Mass: the priest's Elevation of the Host. When not in the Italian peninsula, Froberger worked in Stuttgart (his birthplace) and, principally, in Vienna. There, he gave music lessons to Ferdinand III, for whom he performed various diplomatic missions, which took him to Dresden, Brussels, Antwerp, and even Oliver Cromwell's London.

Liège-born **Lambert Chaumont** (1630?-1712) served as a priest at nearby Huy for the latter part of his life, having originally been a Carmelite monk. His significance in organ music's annals lies in his 1695 publication *Pièces d'orgue*, comprising 111 individual movements (few taking more than two minutes each in performance), grouped in eight suites, of which this recording concentrates upon the first. Although Chaumont had – so far as can be ascertained from his career's scanty records – no direct experience of the French organ school that during the 1690s reached its apogee in Couperin, he clearly knew that school's publications (his choices of movement titles and of stops are repeatedly similar), while he displays creative talent fully matching all but the very best among the school's products. German-American musicologist Willi Apel, in his monumental 1972 survey *History of Keyboard Music to 1700*, aptly eulogised Chaumont's 'melodious imagination, good taste, and solid technique.'

Even more obscure than Chaumont is **Jacob La Fosse** (1660?-1721), also known as Jacques Fosse and Jacobus Fosse, organist at Antwerp Cathedral (Antwerp having been part of the Austrian Netherlands after 1714) for his last eighteen years. Fewer than a dozen pieces by him – including the spirited, Gallic-style *Trompet Bas* ('Low Trumpet') which is included here – are known to us. They can all be found in the Cocquiel Manuscript, which dates from 1741, and which takes its name from its compiler J.I.J. Cocquiel, a Walloon priest. Currently the collection resides in Brussels's Bibliothèque Royale.

Occupying cathedral posts in Habsburg-controlled Antwerp and Brussels, **Joseph-Hector Fiocco** (1703-1741) issued two harpsichord suites, the first of which (1731) includes the present dolorous *Andante* (several times arranged for organ before now). Its long, flowing right-hand theme would not have disgraced Vivaldi, who repeatedly exploited a similar style of lavishly decorated, quasi-vocal melody against gently throbbing chords in the accompaniment.

From 1679 comes the Vietórisz Tablature, so called because it belonged at first to Hungary's Vietórisz landowning family. (Since 1903 – despite all the political vicissitudes implied by two world wars and four decades of communism – it has remained in the manuscript library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.) It contains no fewer than 375 pieces, mostly sacred, though with substantial quantities of secular material. The name *chorea*, which appears frequently in the tablature, refers to a round dance; and the work included here is No. 47b in the collection.

František Ignác Antonín Tůma (1704-1774), Czech-born, lived mostly in Austria and often used the Teutonic forms of his Christian names: Franz Ignaz Anton. Remarkably versatile, he played the theorbo and the viola da gamba as well as the organ. He worked mainly for two influential figures at the Viennese court: first, Count Franz Ferdinand Kinsky, Bohemia's *de facto* Prime Minister from 1729 till his death in 1741; and afterwards, Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick. The latter, daughter-in-law of Leopold I, was also the mother of the great Maria Theresa. Tůma's notably severe idiom, dominated by sequences, came – as this brief *Trio in E Minor* indicates – closer to the Bach-Handel generation than it did to what his own contemporaries produced.

Jan Zach (1699-1773), from Čelákovice near Prague, sometimes used the name Johann, sharing Tůma's periodic taste for Germanising his identity. Unlike Tůma, though, Zach led a peripatetic existence involving travel to Italy and marked by frequent quarrels with his chief employer, the Elector of Mainz, who dismissed him from his post in 1756. Thereafter a freelance, the itinerant Zach is said to have suffered from mental illness. His *Prelude and Fugue in C Minor*, an astonishing and powerful utterance, conveys unmistakable tragedy through its fretful chromatic progressions; in fact, the *Fugue*, with its bleak first subject, is a predominantly literal arrangement of the *Kyrie* that can be found in the composer's Requiem setting.

To dispel the gloomy atmosphere of Zach's contribution, the CD ends with another vigorous dance from an anthology: this time the Kájoni Codex, which takes its name from its compiler, **János Kájoni** (1629-1687). A Franciscan monk, Kájoni – who sometimes used the Latinised identification Johannes Caioni – was an ethnomusicologist three centuries before the job description even existed. Not content with having written down folk melodies that he heard in eastern Europe's villages, Kájoni enterprisingly disseminated these melodies via his own printing press. His harmonic treatment of them was spartan in the extreme; usually he supplied no more than a bass line for the melody, and performers must therefore furnish appropriate chords, as well as the expected ornamentation and repetition.