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The Music of Maria Luisa Di Bourbon Tania Bossi (soprano) Paolo Mora (violin) Lorentz Martenz (harp). Sung texts or translations not included. All premiere recordings Rec. August 2018, Villa Paganini, Gaione, Italy. **TACTUS TC740002** [72:52]

At first sight the title of this disc might seem to promise works by a Royal composer - but the Bourbon Maria Luisa was not, so far as I know, a composer. She was, though, a great lover of music.

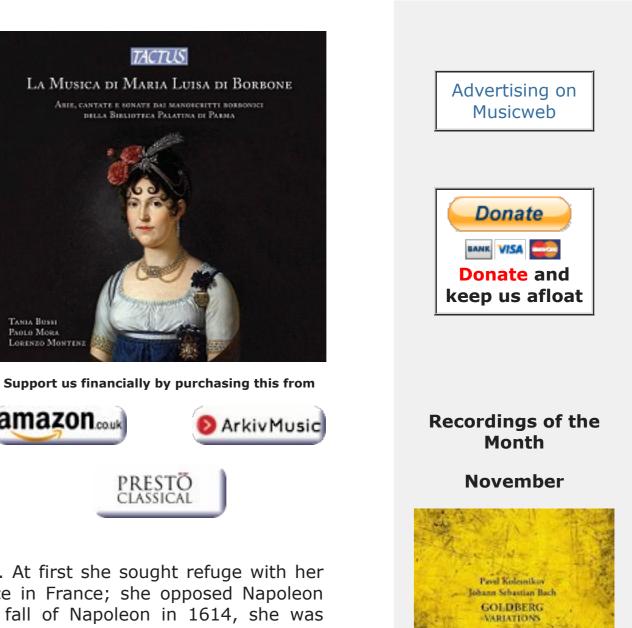
She was born in Spain in 1782, the daughter of Charles IV of Spain and his wife Maria Luis of Parma; in 1795 she married Louis, Hereditary Prince of Parma, who was her first cousin. They appear to have spent the early years of their marriage mainly in Spain, until in 1801 a treaty (The Treaty of Aranjuez) signed between Napoleonic France and Spain involved, amongst other things, Luisa's husband renouncing power in Parma; by way of compensation he was made King of Etruria, a newly created territory with its capital in Florence. Louis and Maria Luisa took up residence in Florence in 1801, but Louis died in 1803. His widow ruled Etruria until,

PRESTO CLASSICAL in 1807, Napoleon forced her and her children to abandon Florence. At first she sought refuge with her family in Spain, but later spent time at Passy, Compiégne and Nice in France; she opposed Napoleon bravely, but was eventually imprisoned by him in Rome. On the fall of Napoleon in 1614, she was

TANIA BUSSI

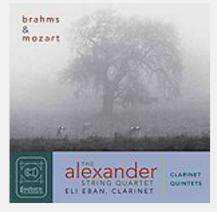
PAOLO MOR

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released and initially stayed in Rome. Under the terms of the Congress of Vienna (1815), she lost her claims on Parma, but was created Duchess of Lucca. She died in Rome, of cancer in 1823, aged 41.

100th birthday of Mieczyslaw Weinberg on December 8, 2019. Renate Eggbrecht has recorded all 3 violin Sonatas



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In his booklet essay accompanying this CD, Lorenzo Montenz writes of Maria Luisa that "in all her peregrinations, music was her companion ... all of her movements were followed or preceded by her vast collection of music and musical instruments (harpsichords, fortepianos, harps, clarinets, string instruments)." Her music must have provided solace for her, as well as being just a companion through a life which brought her much distress and pain. In 1848 Maria Luisa's son Carlo Ludovico (1799-1833) arranged for her collection of music to be brough to Parma (he had become Charles II of Parma in the previous year). The collection is now kept in the Biblioteca Palatina in the centre of Parma.

It is from works – manuscripts, printed scores and specialised periodicals such as *Feuilles de Terpischore* and Journal de Pleyel – in Maria Luisa's collection that harpist Lorenzo Martenz has put together this selection of little-known works (much of it by, it has to be said, little-known composers). It makes for over an hour's attractive listening. It isn't hard to imagine hearing this music in a royal salon and the recorded acoustic of these performances in the Villa Paganini in the province of Parma encourages such an act of imagination; online images of the Villa Paganini suggest that it is a very substantial and elegant building – on a palatial scale, indeed.

Maria Luisa's taste in music seems to have lain, for the most part, with works belonging to the ancien régime, the time of Bourbon power and security or at any rate to the years before 1800, rather than to more 'modern' periods. Such is the case, for example, with the two arias, Grace au ciel and Juste ciel, from Paisello's Barbiere di Siviglia (1782), performed here in versions by Louis-Charles Ragué which were published in 1785 in the pages of *Feuilles de Terpischore*. Ragué, who studied with Sacchini, and was himself a harpist and teacher of the harp, was also responsible for the transcriptions of Viotti's aria 'Consola amato bene', which was written for a 1791 Paris performance of Martin y Soler's Una cosa rara and of the overture to Sacchini's opera *Dardanus* (1784).

Ragué seems to have been a particular favourite of Maria Luisa's – Martenz reports that in her collection there are "full transcriptions of Haydn's Symphonies and Sonatas for harpsichord ... together with some original work, such as the duets of Op. VIII, for either two harps, harp and violin or harp and harpsichord." Given that so much of Ragué's work is in her music library, one wonders whether perhaps Maria Luisa had some kind of personal relationship with him, perhaps as a patron.

Tania Bussi is best known as an operatic soprano, having sung such roles as Violetta, Musetta and Susanna. That background was certainly good preparation for the singing of the several transcribed arias here – which, as well as those already mentioned, include 'Lasciami o ciel pietoso' from Niccolò Piccinni's Zenobia of 1756, and 'Ombra adorata aspetta', an aria written by the castrato Girolamo Crescentini for himself to sing when cast as Romeo in Niccolò Zingarelli's Romeo e Giulietta (1796). Fortunately, Ms. Bussi adapts her attractive voice to the different demands of these salon-scale performances very well. She also impresses in the three cantatas by Giuliani. Giovanni Francesco Giuliani, unrelated to the betterknown Mauro Giuliani, was a violinist, who studied with Pietro Nardini. Though his work is essentially classical in style (many touches remind one of Haydn), his fondness for applying the epithet 'notturno' to his work, (as in these brief cantatas and his *Nocturnes for Clarinet and Harp*) might justify our describing him as a pre-Romantic.

Of the purely instrumental works on the disc the two-movement sonata for harp and violin by Raqué is neither profound nor dazzling, but has a certain slightly heavy-handed charm. The sonata by Francesco Petrini, also in two movements and for the same combination of instruments, is more vivacious in its elegance, but also has rather more musical substance and invention than Raqué's sonata. This, indeed, is a piece that ought to find its way into the repertory of some of our modern harpists. (Francesco Petrini was born in Berlin, where his father was harpist of the Chapel Royal; he became an admired harpist and composer, as well as a well-respected teacher of the harp, making his career first at the North German court of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and then in Paris.) Before hearing the current disc, I was familiar only with his Harp Sonata in B-flat major Op.3 No.1, as played by Csilla Gulyás on her CD Classical Sonatas for Harp (Hungaroton) I suspect that we ought to hear more of Petrini's music.

There is nothing here of which future historians of music will need to take account, but there is more than a little which speaks eloquently of a sad life and a disturbed period of European history



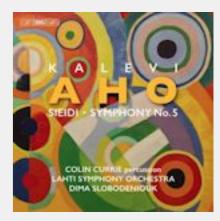






Symphonies 1, 2, 3

October



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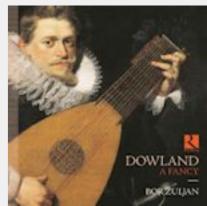
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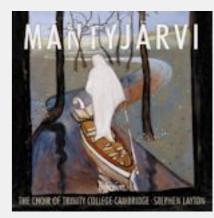
Contents Giovanni Francesco GIULIANI (c.1760-c.1822) 1.Nice la ria tempesta [3:45] Girolamo CRESCENTINI (1762-1846) 2.*Ombra adorate aspetta* [2:53] Giovanni Francesco GIULIANI 3.La Partenza [9:14] Louis-Charles RAGUÉ (c.1758-post 1793) 4.Sonata Op.8 No 1, Allegro maestoso [5:20] 5. Sonata Op.8 No 1, Rondò [2:21] Giovanni Francesco GIULIANI Cantate notturne: 6.Auretta leggiera - Scherza intorno piuttosto - Auretta ah tu non sai [5:01] 7.Tu fuggi o notte - Dal vicin colle fuora - Scorgi o Dea - Lasso, l'ora trascorre – Se insulta a' mali miei [5:48] 8.Tu mi domandi ingrata - La pena mia tu vedi - Del mio rival pur seppero [3:45] **Francesco PETRINI** (1744-1819) 9.Duos Op.30, No.2: Allegro [7:31] 10. Duos Op.30, No.2: Rondò [4:37] Giovanni PAISIELLO (1740-1816) 11.*Grace au ciel* [3:46] 12.Juste ciel [2:34] Giovanni Battista VIOTTI (1755-1824) 13.Consola amato bene [5:47] **Antonio SACCHINI** (1730-1786) 14.Overture to Dardanus [6:15] Niccolò PICCINNINI (1728-1800) 15.Lasciami oh ciel pietosos [3:09]







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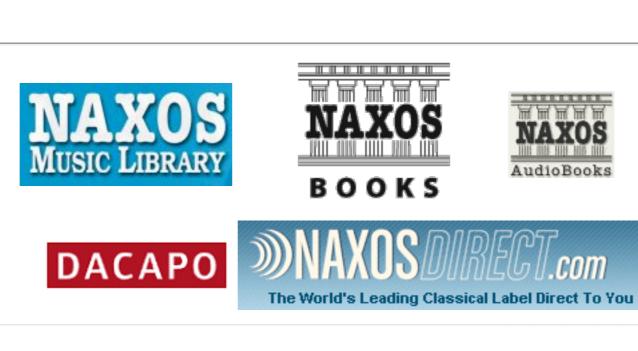
Rachmaninov_ Babayan

September



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