A Guide to the Concerto edited by Robert Layton. O.U.P. (paperback), £12.99.

Arthur Rubinstein: a Life by Harvey Sachs. Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £25.00.

The Penguin Guide to Compact Discs by Ivan March, Edward Greenfield and Robert Layton. New Edition, Revised and Updated. Penguin, £18.00.

Klassizistische Moderne: Werkeinführungen, Essays, Quellentexte edited by Felix Meyer. Publications of the Paul Sacher Foundation Volume 4 (to accompany the concert series '10 Jahre Paul Sacher Stiftung').

Canto d'Amore: Classicism in Modern Art and Music 1914-1935 edited by Gottfried Boehm, Ulrich Moesch and Katharina Schmidt. Offentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum and Paul Sacher Foundation, Basel. (This volume accompanies the exhibition at the Basle Kunstmuseum of 27 April-11 August 1996.)

Don Carlos and Company: The true stories behind eight well-loved operas by Christopher Morgan. Oxford University Press, £10.99 (paperback).

Britten: War Requiem by Mervyn Cooke and Philip Reed. Cambridge University Press Cambridge Music Handbooks, no price quoted.

Letters to the Editor

From John C.G. Waterhouse

May I belatedly comment on Michael Graubart's letter in *Tempo 195*, referring to the octatonic elements in Petrassi's *Noche oscura*? He cautiously suggests that 'the octatonic scale would [probably] have been rare' in 20th-century Italian music, and that Petrassi may therefore have derived his use of it from Bartók and from the Russian tradition, especially Stravinsky.

Petrassi did indeed learn much, over the years, from Stravinsky and Bartók; yet one should not underestimate the octatonic tendencies discernible in some Italian music even as early as the 1920s. I would draw attention especially to the enterprising minor composer Vito Frazzi (1888-1975), whose pupils included Dallapiccola, Bartolozzi, Bucchi and Bettinelli, to name but a few. Not only did Franzi make extensive – though as yet largely instinctive – use of octatonic processes in his opera *Re Lear* (composed in 1922-28, though not staged until 1939), but his treatise *Scale alternate* (Florence: Forlivesi, 1930) seems to predate *all* other systematic theoretical studies of the subject – even though conscious *practical* use of the octatonic scale can be traced back at least as far as Rimsky-Korsakov! (Rimsky's own surviving statements on the subject, though thought-provoking, are too fragmentary to amount to a 'system'.) It is no coincidence that Frazzi was himself an admirer of the 19th-century Russian nationalists; but is it possible that his pioneering attempt to set octatonic processes on a firm theoretical basis may itself have influenced Petrassi at an impressionable early stage of his career? Certainly Dallapiccola – whose own octatonic practices are the subject of Michael Eckert's 'Octatonic Elements in the Music of Luigi Dallapiccola' (*The Music Review* XLVI/1, February 1985, pp.35-48) – *must* surely have picked up such ideas at least partly from his teacher.

Unfortunately very little has been written about Frazzi in English (though my own brief entries on him in *The New Grove* and *Opera Grove* may at least help to 'place' him, and Eckert says a little about him in his first four paragraphs). However, those who know Italian can find a magnificently thorough account of his significance as a theorist in Giorgio Sanguinetti, 'Il primo studio teorico sulle scale ottatoniche: le scale "alternate" di Vito Frazzi' (*Studi musicali* XXII, 1993, pp.411-446).

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From Paul Rapoport

In his CD review in *Tempo 198*, Guy Rickards inadvertently found an omission in my recent catalogue of Vagn Holmboe's music. The title *Sinfonia in memoriam* displaced *two* others: Symphony No.9 ('Sinfonia in memoriam (Nr.9)' was written by someone else on Holmboe's ms.), and *Metamorfose* (which is the only title he did write on the ms.: Danish for *Metamorphosis*).

Although this work may in retrospect be a precursor to those he subtitled *Symfonisk metamorfose*, it was not so called. Furthermore, I numbered those four works; the composer did not consider them a series.

Holmboe's working titles are often important. Another for his Thirteenth Symphony was

'L'estremo vale della viola'. But he never considered that a real, public title, and it's not in my book.

I thank Mr Rickards for considering my catalogue 'authoritative', which certainly does not mean maximally detailed, nor even wholly correct.

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(concluded from p.59)

said that Flagello left some pieces in short score only when he died).

The music of his mentor, Giannini, expounds with great skill the neo-baroque revivalism so popular amongst Italian composers in the earlier part of this century. Especially eloquent is the Prelude and Fugue for strings (1955), by turns elegiac and joyful. Flagello trumps him with his *Serenata* (1968), one of his finest creations. The gently nocturnal Canteloubeian first movement soon yields to the gawky *Passe-Pied* and the even more nocturnal Siciliana. The concluding *Giga* could easily be by William Alwyn, but it is the breadth of Flagello's versatility that calls to mind so many other musical figures, rather than any craven imitation.

Of the other composers represented, Morton Gould (1913-96) rarely wrote tone poems. *Harvest* (1945) is one such; open strings and shimmering vibraphone recalling Cowell and Roy Harris. Works for speaker and orchestra (often on Lincolnesque themes) abound in American music and tend to the stereotypical. Joseph Schwantner's *New Morning for the World* (1982), to texts by Martin Luther King, calls for a time and a place too but no one can deny the lofty nobility of King's prose, matched in equal measure by the arresting grandeur of Schwantner's alarums and excursions, the tender central theme and the quiet resolve of the ending. But Flagello is the star of these three releases and he is well served by some good orchestral playing (very good indeed when the Oregon Symphony are on hand). A disc of his chamber music is due soon. Another welcome revival is well under way.

Bret Johnson

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