

Bodinus

New

Musicalisches Divertissement IV.

Toutes Suites (Julia Belitz, Nils Jönsson, oboes; Heike Hümmer, violin; Regina Sanders, Baroque bassoon; Anke Dennert, harpsichord)/
Marianne R. Pfau (oboe).

Genuin GEN89528 (medium price, 59 minutes).

Website www.genuin.de. Producer/Engineer Holger Busse. Engineer Christopher Tarnow. Date October 2008.

Regular readers of these pages may remember a two-CD Genuin release of oboe sonatas by Johann Michael Müller, or Jean-Michel Muller as he was better known, which I reviewed enthusiastically in April 2008. Now the excellent Toutes Suites ensemble has turned its attention to six trio sonatas for two oboes and continuo by Sebastian Bodinus. Bodinus was a Thuringian contemporary of Bach and Telemann who was born near Arnstadt in 1700 and who died further south in Pforzheim in 1759. Toutes Suites celebrates the 250th anniversary of his death with a recording of these trio sonatas, which date from the early to mid-1720s and which comprise the Fourth Part of his *Musicalisches Divertissement*.

These are beautifully crafted trio sonatas which possess a character of their own, almost as distinctive as that of his Dresden contemporary Zelenka, though, generally speaking, less virtuosic in their demands. The faster movements, many of them fugal, have an airy, formally unencumbered quality which looks towards the *galant* style. Sometimes they recall the idiom of Handel, sometimes that of other contemporaries, but there are many instances where Bodinus speaks with arresting individuality. One such occurs in the catchy *Andante en Polonaise* of the Fourth Sonata in D minor. Here a throbbing bass underpins an almost hypnotic melody introduced by the bassoon and taken up in turn by the oboes: an exotic moment in the programme which is likely to make wide appeal. As the director of the ensemble, Marianne Pfau, remarks in her excellent introductory note, the music aims to delight and surprise.

Pfau and her fellow musicians give technically secure and expressively refined performances of pieces that are well worth getting to know. The strands of texture are lucid and evenly balanced and tempos are effectively judged. The players furthermore make the most of the contrasts which exist between fast and slow movements. These last mentioned sometimes yield a melancholy utterance which is affecting. The *Aria en Sarabande* of the Fifth Sonata and the *Affettuoso* of the Sixth provide appealing examples. In short, this is a fascinating discovery of music hitherto rarely if ever recorded, and probably hardly ever played since the demise of its composer. I eagerly look forward to further recitals by Toutes Suites – a current top favourite in this household. Recorded sound is first-rate.

Nicholas Anderson