Serenades for Flute, Violin, & Viola. Includes Serenade, Op. 141a? by Max Reger. Martin Lemberg, Peter Wachter, Kazumi Sato. Camerata 30CM 446, 1997.

Wind Music. Op. 103, WoO 25, Op. 87, WoO 28, Op. 71, WoO 30, WoO 29, WoO 18, WoO21, WoO 22, WoO 20, WoO 19, WoO 24. Manfred Klier, Peter Geisler, et al. Deutsche Grammophon 289 453 779-2, 1997.

Beethoven/Triebensee: Oboe Trios. WoO 28, Op. 87. Kathryn Greenbank, Marilyn Zupnik, Elizabeth Starr. ASV CD QS 6192, 1997.

Piano & String Quartets. WoO 36, No. 3; Op. 18, No. 3. Bamberg String Quartet, unidentified pianist. Point Classics 267010, 1997.

Oktett: Rondino; Septett. Op. 103; WoO 25; Op. 20. Sabine Meyer Bläserensemble. EMI Classics 5-56817-2, 1999.

*Complete Music for Winds and Brass, Vol. 1, Ottetto Italiano, ARTS 47550-2, 1999; Complete Music for Winds and Brass, Vol. 2, Ottetto Italiano, members of the Orchestra da Camera di Genova, ARTS 47551-2, 2000.

Music for Winds. Op. 16; Op. 17; WoO 37. Hexagon Ensemble. Arsis Classics 99072, 2000.

**BRIEFLY NOTED**

**Missa Mexicana.** Harp Consort/Andrew Lawrence-King. Harmonia Mundi HMU 907293, 2002.

In 1622, the Spanish composer Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla relocated to the Mexican city of Puebla de los Angeles to assume the post of cantor and assistant maestro de capilla at the thriving cathedral there. Part of his charge was to teach polyphonic singing to the choirboys, but he was also responsible for creating new music for use in worship services. Padilla’s *Ego Flos Campi* is a parody mass in the established European tradition, much of its thematic material borrowed from a long-lost motet. But the flavor of the music takes at least as much from the New World as from the Old, and is characterized by rhythmic and melodic features that are distinctly Central American. Masses are rarely as danceable as this one, and Andrew Lawrence-King and his cohorts are at pains to point up the relationship between Padilla’s liturgical compositions and the local vernacular music, alternating elements of the Ordinary with lusty dance tunes (all composed by Padilla himself or his contemporaries) and songs, most of which juxtapose decidedly earthy rhythms with at least nominally pious lyrics. These incidental pieces come from a variety of sources and are arranged thematically within the structure of the Mass: a *villancico* precedes the Kyrie, two *correntes* precede the Credo, etc. The result is perhaps more musicologically interesting than musically compelling; despite the clear influences of local musical traditions on the Mass itself, the disjunction between the lighthearted—and sometimes downright vulgar—songs and the traditional Mass sections is sometimes a bit jarring. There is no arguing, however, with either the quality of the performances or the historical/ethnographical significance of the music itself.

**Arias for Farinelli.** Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin; Vivica Genaux/René Jacobs. Harmonia Mundi HMC 901778, 2002.

Popular interest in baroque music written for castrati hit a brief peak in 1994 with the release of the hit film *Farinelli*, a dramatized biography of the great eighteenth-century castrato singer Carlo Broschi (better known by his stage name, Farinelli). Because the practice of castrating children for aesthetic purposes has thankfully been discontinued, and because women’s voices are noticeably different from those of male castrati, the makers of the film were faced with a dilemma, one which they met by means of technology, synthetically fusing
the voices of acclaimed countertenor Derek Lee Ragins and soprano Ewa Godlewska to approximate the complex sonority of a castrato’s voice. The result was interesting but not universally praised, and for those who care more about sheer sensual beauty and less about perfect recreation of historical sounds, this collection of arias written for Farinelli and sung by the brilliant mezzo-soprano Vivica Genaux will come as a welcome alternative. The pieces are invariably virtuosic, requiring the kind of vocal gymnastics in which Farinelli loved to indulge, much to the delight of his audiences; on Riccardo Broschi’s exhausting “Qual guerriero in campo armato,” for example, it is difficult to judge whether the brutally wide range, the seemingly endless coloratura passages, or the athletic intervallic leaps are the more impressive. If at times these pyrotechnics do not seem entirely to serve the music, it only underlines the fact that this music was not entirely high art; it was also spectacle in the most common sense, albeit spectacle designed for the elite rather than the masses. Genaux’s performances are not only technically impressive, however, but also highly aesthetically pleasing, her vocal tone rich and sweet even in extremis. The same is true of the playing of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin. Highly recommended.

**Johann Sebastian Bach.** Sonatas for Flute and Fortepiano. Partita for Solo Flute. Susan Rotholz; Kenneth Cooper. Bridge 9115A/B, 2002.

There is nothing especially startling about the presence of a fortepiano on a recording of Bach’s flute sonatas; Jacques Ogg played fortepiano on his two recordings with flutist Wilbert Hazelzet (Globe GLO 5091 [1993]; Glossa GCD 920807-2 [2002]), as did Susan Kaiser in her recording with Karl Kaiser (MDG Gold MDG 309 0931-2 [1999]). What is unusual about this recording is the combination of fortepiano with modern flute rather than the more traditional wooden *traverso*. The experiment was a worthy idea, but it cannot be considered an unqualified success. The problem is not with the playing of either Rotholz or Cooper; both approach the music sensitively and expertly, Cooper making tasteful use of the varied dynamic ranges available to the fortepiano (and not possible on a harpsichord) and Rotholz successfully avoiding romantic excess, keeping vibrato and dynamic variation to an appropriately moderate level. The problem is a mismatch in timbre between the two instruments which leaves the sound muddy and indistinct; at times the fortepiano is actually overpowered by the flute. To some degree this is a failing of the sound engineer, who should have been able to find a better balance between the two players and lend more definition to the keyboard’s sound. But any engineer would have had trouble making this particular musical marriage work. There is no dishonor in trying and failing on a project like this, but this recording cannot be recommended to most collections with confidence except as an instructive example of a misguided approach to period performance.

**Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.** Violin Concertos 1, 3, & 4. Viktoria Mullova; Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Philips 289 470 292-2, 2002.

For this delightful new recording of Mozart’s much-loved violin concertos, the young Russian virtuoso Viktoria Mullova replaced the metal strings of her 1723 Stradivarius with gut ones and adopted the lighter, more convex bow commonly used in the baroque period. She teamed up with the top-notch Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, which also uses period instruments, and took the approach (unusual for this repertoire) of acting as both conductor and soloist. The result is wonderful. Unlike many period-instrument ensembles, the OAE has made it a point to explore music from post-classical periods; where others dip their toes into the symphonies of Ludwig van Beethoven or the operas of Christoph Willibald Gluck, the OAE has plunged far deeper, reaping excellent notices for its concert performances of works by Aleksandr Borodin and Giuseppe Verdi. Mullova herself is a musician of catholic tastes and broad-ranging experience, and these pieces benefit from the broad stylistic perspective she shares with the ensemble. Their sound is warmer and richer than one might expect from a period-instrument group, and Mullova brings an aching sweet-
ness to her solo passages that is consistently moving. Heartily recommended to all library collections.

Gustav Mahler. Symphony no. 6. Alban Berg. Three Pieces for Orchestra. Franz Schubert. Andante in B Minor. SWR Sinfonieorchester Baden-Baden und Freiburg/Michael Gielen. Hänssler Classic CD 93.029, 2001.

This idiosyncratic compilation consists of recordings originally made between 1993 and 1999; they are brought together here (strangely, at full price) as a sort of illustration of the death of tonal music. The centerpiece is Mahler’s “Tragic” Sixth Symphony, a titanically emotional work which has been widely interpreted as an essentially nihilistic musical statement, and indeed as a refutation of hope itself. That symphony is given a muscular but nicely nuanced performance here by the SWR Sinfonieorchester under the baton of Michael Gielen. The piece would have been better served by a more detailed recording; as it is, one strains one’s ears at times trying to catch the nuances of the work and the performance. The Andante section from Schubert’s unfinished Tenth Symphony is presented as representing the last gasp of the Viennese classical school (a gasp cut short, in perfect romantic tradition, by the exquisitely tragic and untimely death of its creator) and the logical precursor of Mahler’s Sixth, and Berg’s Three Pieces are presented as the logical successor to Mahler’s tragic declaration of the end of hope. This program would have been more effective had the pieces been presented in the order prescribed by this argument: Schubert followed by Mahler followed by Berg. Nevertheless, the performances themselves are compelling and the compilation is handy, if overpriced for a reissue set.

Gabriel Fauré. Nocturnes. Sally Pinkas. Musica Omnia MO 0109, 2002.

For a window on Gabriel Fauré’s growth and development as a composer of piano music, one could hardly do better than listen sequentially to all of his nocturnes. These were written over a period of roughly forty years, between 1875 and 1921, and show Fauré, at various points, at his most moodily romantic, his most structurally conservative, and his most adventurously modern. Throughout all thirteen works, however, there is a constant concern for elegance of line and a general lyrical beauty that obtains whether the piece is light and happy (like the utterly charming No. 3, op. 33) or dark and disconsolate (like No. 11, op. 104). Even No. 9, op. 97, with its distinctly modernistic flavor and skewed harmonic progressions, retains a gentle accessibility despite its sometimes spiky complexity. Sally Pinkas plays here with a winning combination of sturdy confidence and sweet sensitivity, and the production quality is outstanding—the recording was made at the New England Conservatory’s Jordan Hall, a large and echoey space that is very effectively tamed to accommodate the intimate scale of these pieces, and the resulting sound is warm and rich without being wet or boomy. (On the second disc in the set, Pinkas offers an 18-minute commentary on the Nocturnes.)

Daniel Gregory Mason. Sonata in G Minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 5; Sonata in C Minor for Violin and Piano, Op. 14. Frederick Shepherd Converse. Sonata in A Major for Violin and Piano, Op. 1. Kevin Lawrence; Phillip Bush. New World 80591-2, 2002.

Daniel Gregory Mason (1873–1953) and Frederick Shepherd Converse (1871–1940) were both students of John Knowles Paine, perhaps the most celebrated American composer in the romantic tradition, while the latter was a professor at Harvard. Paine’s influence is felt strongly throughout the three violin sonatas presented here, though the works of Mason and Converse are markedly different in tone and style. Mason’s two sonatas, both written in minor keys, are dark and heavy, and are characterized by an interesting blend of emotional reserve and harmonic adventure. At least, emotional reserve by romantic standards—there is plenty of passion lurking beneath the carefully controlled surfaces of opus 5, while opus 14 (a slight rearrangement of a sonata originally written for clarinet) is more emotionally varied and, ultimately, a
bit less dark in its overall mood. The Converse sonata is, in comparison, downright cheerful, though not without the requisite elements of anguished yearning. Violinist Kevin Lawrence brings both instrumental virtuosity and what appears to be a truly fiery personality to these works, attacking the bravura passages with gusto and milking the more lyrical sections for every ounce of expressiveness they contain; pianist Phillip Bush keeps pace with him but seems primarily concerned with keeping out of Lawrence’s way. The combination of the two approaches works very well. The production is somewhat idiosyncratic—the piano and violin both sound a bit distant and to the left of the listener—but the violin is nicely detailed, the piano a bit less so. Recommended.

The Quintet. Jazz at Massey Hall. Debut/Original Jazz Classics DCD-124-4, 2002.

The Quintet is an oddly generic name for a jazz ensemble, but it was probably the only one that would work politically in this case: in 1953, when this concert was recorded, each of its members was a celebrated member of the jazz aristocracy and none would have been willing to take second billing to one of the others. The front line consisted of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie and saxophonist Charlie Parker, both widely regarded as the primary architects of the bebop sound, and the rhythm section was as illustrious as they come: pianist Bud Powell, bassist Charles Mingus, and drummer Max Roach. The recording is almost as famous for its curious details (the fact that Parker was playing a plastic saxophone, the fact that Mingus overdubbed his bass parts later in the studio, the way that Gillespie clowned around audibly onstage while Parker tried to play his solo on “Salt Peanuts”) as for the quality of the music itself, which is high but marred by low production standards. This recording, originally released on Mingus’s own Debut label in 1953, has been available in various formats since its LP reissue as part of the Original Jazz Classics series in the early 1980s. Its most current reissue comes as part of an audiophile series that presents albums from the OJC catalog in remastered versions; in this case, given the poor sonic quality of the source material, the audiophile treatment is wasted. Still, the content should be considered essential to any jazz collection, and this issue is as worthy of purchase as any other.

Eden Atwood. Waves: The Bossa Nova Session. Groove Note GRV1012-2, 2002.

Singer Eden Atwood’s return to the studio follows a six-year absence, during which her already impressive skills have only deepened and matured. This album is billed as a bossa nova program, and while that is a technically accurate characterization it is important to note the wide rhythmic and stylistic variety on display here: Atwood’s languid phrasing on the inevitable “Boy from Ipanema” subtly subverts the song’s rhythmic structure to create a pleasing tension; her rendition of another Anton Carlos Jobim composition, “Meditation,” is delivered with only piano accompaniment in an arrangement that hints delicately at the bossa nova rhythm; Duke Ellington’s “Don’t You Know I Care” is rendered as a gently swinging ballad with hardly any hint of a Brazilian beat. But her delightfully rollicking take on “O Pato” is straight-ahead bossa all the way, and the subtle Brazilian inflection that infuses her tender and nuanced performance of the John Lennon and Paul McCartney pop chestnut “Fool on the Hill” is all the more conspicuous for its foreignness to the source material. Atwood’s voice is smoky and warm with just the faintest hint of grit, and her delivery nicely balances assurance and gentleness. Her backing ensemble plays with a similar sensitivity and taste. Let us hope we will not have to wait another six years for her next effort.

Kerry Politzer Trio. Watercolor. Polisonic 01, 2002.

On her second album, pianist Kerry Politzer strips things down, foregoing vocals and limiting her accompaniment to drums and bass. As always, her compositions are complex and impressive: “Sparks” is something of a tone poem, in which melodic fragments dance upwards through
the air, propelled by a subtly bebopish rhythmic pattern; “Watercolor” takes a similarly literal approach to its titular theme, spreading its chordal washes broadly across the song’s structure; “Whim” is almost Thelonious Monkish in the angularity of its central theme; “Woodpecker” is curiously static, but “Silent Morning” finds Politzer turning to bebop again in a style that sounds almost like a tribute to Bud Powell. Her solos on the latter composition are particularly sharp, slyly evoking everything from barrelhouse blues to the cool mathematics of Lenny Tristano. All tracks on this album are original compositions, except for her idiosyncratically impressionistic performance of “A Foggy Day.” At times one wishes Politzer would build more of a robust groove, but there is no questioning her harmonic inventiveness or compositional skill, nor her considerable instrumental chops. Recommended.

156 Strings: Nineteen Totally Original Acoustic Guitarists. Cuneiform 163, 2002.

Henry Kaiser is one of the elder statesmen of avant-garde guitar, having played and recorded with such artists as Fred Frith, Diamanda Galas, Eugene Chadbourne, and Zoogz Rift (not to mention a few decidedly après-garde artists, among them Michael Stipe, Richard Thompson, and Bob Weir), and having helped to set the explorational bar for experimental jazz and rock music throughout the 1970s. This album is a collection of brief acoustic performances by guitarists who, in Kaiser’s estimation, “sound like themselves and have something special to say” (brochure notes). In some cases, such as “Access” by the always envelope-pushing Fred Frith and “Getting to Fifth Base” by Kaiser himself, this means exploding the boundaries of the instrument itself and drawing sounds that few would have thought possible from an acoustic guitar. In other cases, such as the beautiful slide playing of Peter Lang and the funk-soul derivations of Jean-Paul Bourelly, the music is unusually attractive without being technically or stylistically groundbreaking. And in just a few cases, the music sounds relatively pedestrian: Richard Thompson’s pretty but unexciting “How Does Your Garden Grow?” is one such example. Overall, though, there is plenty of musical food for thought on this generous program, and this disc can be confidently recommended to any collection supporting a curriculum in guitar or experimental music.

Oingo Boingo. Best of Oingo Boingo: The Millenium Collection. MCA 088 113 020-2, 2002.

Written off early and often by critics who were offended by their smug wit, occasionally right-wing lyrical viewpoint, and cluttered, chaotic production style, Oingo Boingo never did get the respect they deserved. But between the band’s 1981 debut album and its live 1996 swan song, brainy new wavers and high school jazz-band geeks united around the world to build a cult following that made up in devotion what it lacked in size. Oingo Boingo responded with a long string of increasingly sophisticated and pop-oriented albums that never completely lost touch with its origins in experimental postpunk goofiness. Best-ofs and retrospective collections abound, but this is probably the best single-disc compilation of the catalog’s high points; it focuses primarily on the band’s work since 1985, and includes its few chart hits (“Weird Science,” “Dead Man’s Party,” “Just Another Day”) as well as live versions of several items from the old book (“Only a Lad,” “Grey Matter,” “Wild Sex (In the Working Class)” ). It could have been a bit longer and it does overlap a bit too much with Best o’Boingo (MCA MCAD-10424 [1991]), but because it includes material from the entire span of the band’s career this is probably the best overview for a library collection.