

THE INTIMATE SONATE
Fanfare Consort/Thom Freas

This anthology is centered around works for clarino, the valveless baroque trumpet, and Thom Freas is clearly among its best performers—clearly the equal in technical facility and accuracy of intonation of Friedemann Immer, Crispian Steele-Perkins, and Gabriele Cassone. The heterogeneous repertoire ranges from three of the earliest solo sonatas for the trumpet by Girolamo Fantini, through late 17th Century works by Corelli and William Corbett, to two sonatas by Carl Heinrich Biber from the early 18th Century, along with two anonymous works. While the Corelli sonata has been recorded a number of times (for example by Immer; Nov/Dec 2001:237), Freas's only competition in the Biber sonatas is from Cassone (Mar/Apr 2000), and though both soloists are virtuosic, Freas's string players are better.

As an effective contrast to the trumpet works, the other musicians perform two trio sonatas by Legrenzi, who has not been well served on modern recordings (see, for example, Mar/Apr 2005), and Margaret Irwin-Brandon performs Tarquinio Merula's 'Cromatica" on harpsichord. My one criticism is that the recording sounds a bit distant, as if the mikes were placed far from the instrumentalists; but otherwise this is a well-balanced and clean recording.

Both the shrink-wrap and the recording itself proudly proclaim "Performed on Historically Accurate Instruments", though I doubt that Mr Freas has eschewed the use of the modern vent-hole to improve the instrument's intonation difficulties. The use of a double bass is perhaps inappropriate, based on my understanding of the sources of the period, but Peter A Hoyt is an exceptionally sensitive continuo player. These caveats aside, and given that many of the older performances are now deleted, this would be an excellent introduction to the most subtle and melodious aspects of the baroque trumpet repertory.

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