
linked by a continuous instrumental tapestry using psaltery, oud, flute, vielle, harp and gentle percussion. A most effective presentation of beautiful and moving songs.

David Owen Norris was billed to discuss the improvisation of cadenzas in the early piano concerto, with demonstrations at the fortepiano but, in practice, spent much of the time talking about Gershwin and David Owen Norris – with equal enthusiasm.

The Akademie für Alte Musik gave a concert based on 'Baroque Improvisations', exploring the elaboration and ornamentation of a simple structure, such as the rhythmic patterns of a dance or a sequence of chords, and weaving melodies and variations over it in an improvisatory manner. They included works by Biber, Muffat, Vivaldi and Geminiani, starting with *Ouverture-Suite 5* by the underrated Philipp Heinrich Erlebach. Midori Seiler gave an outstanding performance of Biber's *Passacaglia* for solo violin – indeed her contribution to the whole concert was exemplary, as was that of the extremely keen cellist, Jan Freiheit, and Björn Colell, lute. In recent years I have found the Akademie für Alte Musik have veered towards the aggressive, but there was no sign of this in this performance, which combined vigour with musical sophistication.

The final concert of the weekend was L'Arpeggiata, one of the most interesting of the improvisation-based groups around. They combined modern Neapolitan songs by their exotically earthy singer, Lucilla Galeazzi, with works by Monteverdi, Cazzati and Strozzi and free improvisations on them. In these they were joined by jazz clarinettist, Gianluigi Trovesi and an extremely impressive young counter-tenor, Philippe Jaroussky. The latter's expressive, agile and technically superb voice (which approaches the tone of a male-soprano), combined with his excellent communication and stage skills, mark him out as a singer to watch.
