THE BUSINESS OF ANGELS: English Recorder Music from the Stuart Era • Alison Melville (rec); Lucas Harris (lt, gtr); Nadina Mackie Jackson (bsn); Borys Medicky (hpd); Joëlle Morton (b vl); (period instruments) • PIPISTRELLE MUSIC PIP1110 (57:52)
Music by **HANDEL, PURCELL, ECCLES, MERCY, PAISIBLE, FINGER, TOPHAM, TOLLETT, CORELLI,** and **ANON**

The 17th and 18th centuries were a golden age for arrangements of everything for home use, and this ad hoc ensemble has had the great idea of collecting a number of them using recorder as the melody and/or division instrument. Queen Anne was the last of the Stuarts, allowing the program to begin with an arrangement of Handel's overture to *Rinaldo* (1711). Arrangements for home use were frequently just melody and bass lines, sometimes figured, sometimes not, and the melody was often said to be "suitable for violins, flutes, or oboes." Handel's *Rinaldo* was a hot item, for instance, and John Walsh published household arrangements of it the same year it played in the theater. All of the many pieces on this recording have similar origins. About the turn of the century, Arcangelo Corelli achieved enormous popularity in London, largely through such arrangements of his concerti for recorders and accompaniment. The present program closes with one of his most memorable, the variations on "La Follia." In between, we get a number of small pieces, some arranged into larger sets.

It is a pleasure to note that Alison Melville's recorders make a cheerful noise. Most of the accompaniments seem to be with guitar, and Lucas Harris plays with enthusiasm. If I sound hestitant on the matter, the fact is that the rather metallic sound of his Baroque guitar is rather like that of a bright harpsichord and I am not always sure I can tell the difference. To be sure, in the Corelli he uses an archlute, which is more what we are used to hearing these days in this music. One must also note the bumptious presence of Nadina Mackie Jackson's bassoon. Only Borys Medicky's harpsichord seems in the background. This ad hoc group seems to have no collective name, but they play well together. One thing a program like this does is to suggest strongly at how high a level home music-making was expected to be 300 years ago.

The recording is clear, bright, and rather close, though there seems to be sufficient reverberance in the venue. One annoying feature, however, is that final notes are cut off dead as soon as they cease to sound. The program is unduplicated, but for another view of the Corelli variations, listen to that by Maurice Steger on Harmonia Mundi (*Fanfare* 34:1). **Alan Swanson**

This article originally appeared in Issue 34:6 (July/Aug 2011) of *Fanfare* Magazine.