

Bartolotti was Italian by birth but like so many of his compatriots, he spent much of his career abroad. He was one of a group of Italian musicians employed at the court of Queen Christina of Sweden in the early 1650s and after her abdication was part of her entourage as she travelled first to Innsbruck and then on to Rome. He finally settled in France after 1656 and died there sometime before 1682. He was clearly influenced by contemporary French lute music and in turn may have inspired later French composers for the guitar. Ferries plays three groups of pieces, in G major, E minor and G minor from Bartolotti's *Secondo Libro di Chitarra* dedicated to Christina and printed in Rome sometime after 1655. His playing is relaxed but with a strong sense of rhythm. The contrapuntal passages are nicely balanced with the strumming and there is some appropriately elaborate ornamentation and neat little riffs in all the right places. He relishes the unusual harmonies which occur in the strummed passages—in particular the dissonant alfabeto chord 'L' which is a feature of the Ciacona in G minor is played with a striking portamento which merges it into the correct chord. Ferries plays two different guitars, a modern instrument after Sellas by Martin Haycock and an anonymous late 18th-century French instrument now in the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instrument. Both have a clear and open sound which does the music full justice. On both instruments he uses the so-called 'French tuning' with a low octave string on the fourth course but not the fifth—the method of stringing as likely to have been used by Bartolotti himself as any other. My only quarrel with this was that the open bourdon sounded over-resonant either because an over-wound string was being used or the recording was slightly unbalanced. Perhaps an argument for the fully re-entrant tuning!

Although Bartolotti is known today for his music for 5-course guitar he was also highly esteemed as a theorbo player. The Dutch scholar, Constantyn Huygens, mentions having heard him play the theorbo in Paris in the 1660s and two manuscripts which date from the 1660s include music for theorbo attributed to Bartolotti (RISM nos.: A: Wn Mus. Ms. 17706 (c.1660) and ETGoess Ms. XV 912-2277 (1665)). Ferries plays three pieces from the latter source, the Sarabande in C major and Allemande and Sarabande in C minor. These are rather

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different in style from his guitar music with clear and widely separated treble and bass lines which are difficult to balance evenly. Ferries brings them off with consummate ease and adds some really impressive ornamentation to the melodic lines. His instrument, also by Martin Haycock, has a powerful but rather raw sound which grates at first but once you get used to it does bring out the exceptional quality of the music.

As Ferries state in his notes the significance of Bartolotti's music in the history of the guitar cannot be overestimated. It hasn't attracted the attention that it deserves and this recording is a very welcome opportunity to hear more of it sensitively and lovingly played.

*Monica Hall*