

RECORDINGS

C. F. ABEL: SYMPHONIES OP. 7  
 La Stagione Frankfurt, Michael Schneider  
 62:02  
 cpo 777 993-2

Difficult as it is to believe, it is nearly 25 years since I first heard Michael Schneider direct La Stagione in performances of symphonies by Abel. Then it was op. 10, while now we have the slightly earlier op. 7. This set's "claim to fame" is the misattribution of the final work in the set to Mozart, since the young prodigy had made a copy during his 1764 London visit. Needless to say, the uplifting, exuberant playing of the previous release is a feature of the present performances. Re-ordered from the original print (3, 2, 1, 6, 4, 5), each has three movements and Schneider draws attention (rightly, I think) to the fact that the stand-out feature of each is the middle movement; none of Abel's symphonies is in a minor key and, although the sonata form of the first and the dance character of the faster ones almost require passing references to minor keys, it is in the slow movements that he more deeply probes them. Graciously crafted inner voices and more than a hint of romanticism give these movements a forward-looking character that looks to Mozart (who, as we have heard, was acquainted with Abel's music) and even brooding qualities of the *Sturm und Drang* movement. But there is little time for the listener to be overwhelmed by such thoughts, for along comes a boisterous final movement to wake us from our daydreams and fill us with verve and excitement.

Brian Clark

C. P. E. BACH: LIEDER  
 Mariví Blasco *soprano*, Yago Mahúgo *fortepiano*, Impetus Madrid Baroque Ensemble  
 62:51  
 Brilliant Classics 95462

This is certainly an interesting collection of a repertoire that was wholly unknown to me. This CD offers a selection of 26 of C. P. E. Bach's more than 180 Lieder, and the liner notes include interesting comments on the origins and development of the genre. I find that a little goes a long way.

There is some reference to an older style, like the almost Handelian *fugato* in the opening of *Trost der Erlösung* (track 4), but most pre-figure an almost Mozartian sense of tuneful line as in *Weihnachtslied* (8). In *Gott, der Ernährer der Menschen* (12) there are quotations from the chorale *Vater Unser*, that introduce a more churchy element to these largely drawing-room meditations.

In the second half of the disc, selected songs are performed – following the composer's suggestion – without the singer! The texts of the sung pieces are given in German and English, but only the titles of the rest. Are these mood pieces the original 'Songs without Words'? They underline the feature I find most trying about these Lieder, which is that the singer's line is almost always doubled by the fortepiano. Not only does this raise questions of tuning: the keyboard is tuned in Young at A=430, but occasionally the singer and the keyboard are not entirely on it, and it also makes ornamentation difficult.

Blasco's clean voice has some of the brittle clarity of the fortepiano, chosen for the earlier songs published in 1758 as well as the later that date from the early 1780s. Her diction fulfils the expectations of such Lieder collections – that the lyrics of such poets should be better known. The fortepiano playing is clean, and the CD has a gathering around a cottage piano on a Sunday evening feel about it. Perhaps I am just too out of sympathy with the theology as well as the compositional style to give this a fair review, but, in spite of perfectly good performances, it doesn't do much for me.

David Stancliffe

CARLO GRAZIANI: SIX SONATAS  
 Armoniosa, Stefano Cerrato  
 88:29 (2 CDs in a jewel case)  
 Rubicon RCD1018

Born in Asti in Piedmont around 1710, Carlo Graziani spent his life touring Europe, sharing his enthusiasm for the cello and soaking up a wealth of stylistic influences, which he incorporated into his compositions, including this op 3 set of cello sonatas recorded here complete on two CDs. Primarily designed to show off his mastery of the instrument, they seem to me rather humdrum fare with occasional moments of lyrical or technical felicity, such as the inventive use of high harmonics. The present performances are very effective, although to my ear the recorded sound is a little bit dead and favours the incidental sounds of the player (deep

breathing and other extraneous noises) over the tone of the solo cello. The continuo cello and harpsichord are helpfully placed back from the action, but I would have preferred a little more resonance generally. It is clear from the contemporary responses to Graziani's playing and the prestigious Royal post he held at the Prussian court that his cello playing was a cause for much admiration, and it has to be said that whether due to the slightly dull recorded sound or Stefano Cerrato's account of it, I was not similarly moved to enthusiasm. It also struck me that by the time Graziani died in 1787 his music must have sounded quaintly archaic.

### D. James Ross

#### HAYDN 2032 – NO. 5 L'HOMME DE GÉNIE

Kammerorchester Basel, Giovanni Antonini

78:25

Alpha Classics 676

Symphonies 19, 80, 81; Joseph Martin Kraus: Symphony in C minor VB142

I've heard plenty of good things about this planned *intégrale* of Haydn symphonies being undertaken by Giovanni Antonini, but this is the first to come my way. If they're all of this outstanding quality, then it could end up being *the* outstanding cycle if it gets to be finished (Haydn symphony cycles have a bad record when it comes to being completed, cf., Max Goberman, Solomons, Hogwood), being scheduled to do so in time for the 300th anniversary of Haydn's birth in 2032.

This is the fifth CD of the series and the first to feature the Kammerorchester Basel rather than Antonini's own Il Giardino Armonico, with whom the project is being shared. The present CD carries the title 'L'homme de génie', applied in this instance not to Haydn, but the words the great man used when speaking of the German-born Joseph Martin Kraus. 'He was the first man of genius that I met. Why did he have to die?', a sentiment inspired by Kraus' early death in Sweden in 1792 after a brief lifespan almost identical with that of Mozart. Haydn also tells us that Kraus wrote his stunningly dramatic C-minor Symphony in Vienna for him, though the symphony has a more complex history than that. Nonetheless Haydn was delighted with the dedication of a work he suggested would be 'considered a masterpiece in every century'. So the symphony, dating from 1783 or possibly before in an earlier version, makes for a fascinating comparison with a later minor key symphony of Haydn's, no. 80 in D minor, composed the following year. This intelligent juxtaposition

is one of the hallmarks of the care with which the series is being undertaken, with each CD including a work by a contemporary designed to cast light on the featured Haydn symphonies.

Haydn was right about the Kraus symphony, for it is certainly a near-masterpiece, with a first movement that is one of the great symphonic movements of the 18th century. It opens with a slow introduction whose dissonant suspensions, dark bassoon colouring, low strings and snarling horns immediately plunge the listener into a world of impending tragedy that somehow seems to extend beyond *Sturm und Drang*. When the main allegro blazes forth it is into an emotional world torn apart by burning grief. Later respite arrives and eventually a more reflective, if still disturbed, mood. It is as if the music can no longer bear the level of intensity with which it had set out. If the two succeeding movements don't quite attain the same level, neither do they come as an anti-climax. The central Andante wears an air of sturdy dignity, its contrapuntal writing occasionally glancing back to an earlier era, while the strong, thrusting finale does inhabit the world of *Sturm und Drang*.

Haydn's own involvement with that world of course stems from rather earlier in his career, so it is perhaps surprising to find him revisiting it at a time when his style had moved on to become rather more urbane. Nonetheless Symphony no. 80 is a magnificent work, overflowing with invention and energy. The opening introduces tautly dramatic urgency flecked with fizzing tremolandi, before leading us into a movement that manages to maintain seriousness while flirting with a cheeky codetta that will come to form the development's initial idea. This incorporation of both joke and serious drama is archetypal Haydn. The Adagio is both wistful and uneasily restless, the Minuet a strongly articulated minor key movement, while the Presto finale displays a muscular intensity never bought at the expense of balance or poise. The other two Haydn symphonies, no. 81 in G, a companion of the D-minor Symphony also dated November 1784, and the much earlier no. 19 in D (1766) are more conventional, which is certainly not to decry the G-major in particular, which has its own strongly dramatic moments, particularly in the development of the Vivace, which fluctuates between tempestuous vitality and a sense of expectant mystery.

The performances of all this music are quite exceptional, being full of spirit, beautifully balanced, and played with outstanding skill. Antonini captures the individual character of each work with consummate and unerring skill,

veering from a restless, at times near demonic drive in the opening movements of the Haydn D minor and the Kraus to poise and warmth in the friendly companionship of the G-major Symphony's Andante. Just occasionally I feel the tempo is driven just that bit too hard, a caveat that applies particularly to the finale of the same symphony, where Haydn's 'non troppo' tempering of his allegro marking is there for good reason. But make no mistake these are marvellous, life-enhancing performances beautifully presented in a richly-illustrated booklet. The disc indeed positively demands I make it my urgent business to catch up on the four CDs I've previously missed.

*Brian Robins*

HAYDN: STABAT MATER HOB. XXBIS

Sarah Wegener, Marie Henriette Reinhold, Colin Balzer, Sebastian Noack SATB, Kammerchor Stuttgart, Hofkapelle Stuttgart, Frieder Bernius

59:58

Carus 83.281

That there are relatively few musical settings of the 13th-century sequence devoted to the sufferings of the Virgin at the Cross is fairly easily explained. Although famous masters of the Renaissance such as Palestrina and Lassus composed a Stabat Mater, it was not officially admitted into the Roman Catholic liturgy until 1727. But perhaps more importantly, the long text, almost wholly lacking in drama and predominately sombre and penitential, makes considerable challenges to any composer who undertakes a setting. Among those who did so in the earlier part of the 18th century were both Scarlatti and, of course, Pergolesi, whose bitter-sweet Stabat Mater would become his most famous work.

Haydn's version for solo quartet, choir and orchestra is an early work, completed in 1767 and first given on Good Friday that year at Eisenstadt. The following year it was given in Vienna at the behest of Hasse, to whom he had tentatively sent the score, and who, Haydn recorded in a letter, 'honoured the work by inexpressible praise'. Subsequently it would become one of the most popular of the composer's sacred compositions, performed in churches and chapels throughout Austria, south Germany and Bohemia.

Hasse's appreciation of Haydn's Stabat Mater is no surprise. Like the versions by Domenico Scarlatti and Pergolesi, the major influence on the work is the Neapolitan style that had dominated sacred music in

Catholic countries since the early part of the century, and indeed was the most significant influence on Hasse's own church music. What is possibly more significant is Haydn's use of minor keys in nearly half the 13 movements, by no means common in music of the post-Baroque period, their use giving the music a deeply poignant reflective character, enhanced in two movements ('O quam tristis' [no.2] and 'Virgo virginum' [no.10]) by the replacement of oboes with the soulful tones of the cor anglais. Haydn pitches the heart of the work in the movements of supplication from nos. 8 to 10, the first a duet for soprano and tenor, 'Sancta Mater, istud agas' (Holy mother, do this for me), followed by a profoundly felt alto solo, 'Fac me vere tecum flere' (Make me truly weep for thee) and a solo quartet and chorus, 'Virgo virginum praeclara' (O Virgin, peerless among virgins) in which the beautiful madrigalian writing for the four solo voices juxtaposed with the chorus makes for an exceptionally gracious invocation.

The name Frieder Bernius is a virtual guarantee of sensitive, idiomatic direction and he doesn't disappoint here. Bernius takes the long sequence of slow to moderately paced movements – we have to wait for an allegro until the bass solo no. 11 ('Flammis orci' [Inflamed and burning]) – in an unhurried manner that admits to no extremes in the way Trevor Pinnock took some movements very slowly in his 1989 recording (Archiv). Is there perhaps the feeling that it is all a little too much on one level? Arguably..., and certainly his exceptionally capable soloists, chorus and orchestra do little to probe more deeply. But in this music far better than mannered affection or the temptation to introduce greater contrast simply for the sake of it. This is a thoroughly musical and respectful performance of a deeply thoughtful and poignant work. As such it offers much solace and satisfaction.

*Brian Robins*

HAYDN: "PER IL CEMBALO SOLO"

Pierre Gallon *harpsichord*

65:00

Encelade ECL1701

HobXVI: 6, 12, 24, 27; HobXVIIa: 17, 23, 24; HobXVII:1

Gallon makes a convincing case for playing early Haydn keyboard music on the harpsichord, in this recording on an instrument by Jonte Knif, generically based on German 18th-century originals. He has chosen eight works composed over a sixteen-year period from c. 1765 to 1781. Two sonatas (Hob XVI:24

and 27), a partita (Hob XVI:6) and a divertimento (Hob XVI:12) – both essentially also sonatas – are contrasted with a Capriccio (Hob XVII:1) and transcriptions of three Lieder. Gallon produces exciting but controlled playing, whose pacing is always well-judged and comfortable to listen to. He makes effective use of agogic accents and rubato to compensate for the lack of weight on the harpsichord, but also uses the registration possibilities of his double-manual instrument very effectively. It has a particularly mellow sound and is closely recorded to provide an intimate atmosphere appropriate to music composed, as pointed out in the accompanying booklet, for amateurs rather than as a showcase for a performing composer. The comprehensive booklet includes an informative discussion by C. Himelfarb about Haydn's place in keyboard music history and the instruments he would have known. I enjoyed this recording very much and am happy to give it the highest recommendation.

*Noel O'Regan*

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#### MOZART: FREIMAURERMUSIKEN

Jan Kobow, Maximilian Kiener, David Steffens *TTB*,  
Salzburger Hofmusik, Wolfgang Brunner  
62:58  
cpo 777 917-2

In recording all of Mozart's music for Freemasonry, even reconstructing two fragmentary sources, Salzburger Hofmusik have helped fill out an aspect of Mozart's life which was very important to him. While none of the music here strikes me as a masterpiece – and why would we expect such functional music to aspire to this status? – it is fascinating to hear the basic musical stock onto which Mozart would elsewhere graft his genius. The best of the bunch are the Masonic pieces for clarinets and bassetthorns – Mozart's clarinetist of choice and friend Anton Stadler was also a freemason; the beautifully crafted Adagio for two clarinets and three bassetthorns is certainly memorable. I have heard Salzburger Hofmusik sound fresher and more convincing in other repertoire, and felt that they had perhaps succumbed to the fact that some of this music is simply a bit dull. Better to hear the genre magically transformed in the likes of *The Magic Flute* than to listen to what is in effect occasional music.

*D. James Ross*

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#### F. X. RICHTER: TE DEUM 1781

Luise Haugk, Czech Ensemble Baroque, Roman Válek  
49:50

Supraphon SU 4240-2

+Exsultate Deo,\* Oboe concerto in F,\* Sinfonia no. 52 in D (\*premiere recordings)

This is the third recording by these forces of Richter's music, and once again it amply displays the many impressive facets of the composer's output; alongside a grandiose setting of the *Te Deum* we hear an impressive symphony packed with pomp and circumstance, a little-known virtuosic oboe concerto (recorded on period instruments for the first time), and the first of four motets for a procession in Strasbourg on the Feast of Corpus Christi. Famed as he may nowadays be for his Mannheim symphonies, the more we are able to hear his church music, the better we are able to understand that Richter was no second-rate composer; the rousing openings of the symphony and the choral works show that he had an ability to seize the listeners' attention and enough imaginative power to hold it for long periods – at over 22 minutes long, the *Te Deum* didn't seem to last any time at all. The composer cannot take all the credit, though; this is a team effort, and Válek and his excellent musicians (the choir has four singers per part and he uses 44221 strings) are perfect advocates of their compatriot's output; the soloists are taken from the tutti group (with the exception of tracks 5 and 9 where another tenor is used), and throughout the singing is first rate with nicely articulated lines and neat ornamentation. The booklet notes, which say no more than they have to (in four languages!), promise more releases in the series – I, for one, shall be waiting!

*Brian Clark*

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#### ARDE E FUROR: 18TH-CENTURY ANDALUSIAN MUSIC

Maria Espada *soprano*, José Hernández Pastor *alto*,  
Orquesta Barroca de Sevilla, Diego Fasolis

67:19

Passacaille 1031

Music by de Iribarren & Torrens

The Orquesta Barroca de Sevilla directed Diego Fasolis have unearthed music by two composers associated in the 18th century with Malaga Cathedral; a dramatic solo aria and cantatas by Juan Francés de Iribarren, and later *villancicos* for solo voice and orchestra by Jayme Torrens. Notwithstanding attempts in the programme notes to make out that this music is

distinctive of the region, Iribarren's output is firmly in the Mannheim tradition of the Stamitzes, while Torrens' is just as firmly in the style of Viennese classicism. Any elements of Andalusian flavour, such as the intrusive guitar cross-rhythms which appear in a couple of pieces, have clearly been confected by the performers. A nicely informative programme note laying out the two composers' training and influences would have been interesting, but, instead, we have a disappointingly trippy treatment including quotes from Stefan Zweig opining about 'coincidence, passion and friendship'. Fortunately, the music is all of sufficient standard to speak for itself, while the two soloists, soprano Maria Espada and male alto José Hernández Pastor make delightfully idiomatic contributions and the orchestral forces play expressively and dramatically under the dynamic direction of Diego Fasolis.

*D. James Ross*

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#### BEFORE MOZART: EARLY HORN CONCERTOS

Alec Frank-Gemmill, Swedish Chamber Orchestra,

Nicholas McGegan

66:05

BIS-2315 SACD

Music by Förster, Haydn, Leopold Mozart, Neruda, Telemann

**B**efore I write a single word of "criticism", let me state that I am a fan of all of the musicians involved in this recording; Alec Frank-Gemmill is a wonderful hornist and has shown his HIP credentials time and time again, and McGegan is famed the world over for his fine interpretations of baroque music. For whatever (legitimate) reason, this programme was conceived as a recital with modern orchestra, so as such it is really only of peripheral interest to our readers; they may wish to hear Frank-Gemmill's heroic mastering of Neruda's "stratospheric" writing, and I for one really enjoyed the piece by Leopold Mozart which they chose to play as chamber music. Sadly, and despite the fact that I really do like the Telemann concerto, I'm afraid the younger Mozart (or Richard Strauss!) will remain my "go to" composer of horn concerti for the time being...

*Brian Clark*

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#### INVISIBLE

*Porpora, Monn, Haydn: Cello Concertos*

Adriano Maria Fazio cello, Soloists of Cappella Neapolitana  
64:51

Brilliant Classics 95570

**T**he "invisible is the tangible sign of our emotions," writes the cellist inside the back cover of the booklet. I'm not quite sure what to make of that, and I'm equally at a loss as to what lies behind the recording of three concertos in such minimalist circumstances. There is no denying that Adriano Maria Fazio is a gifted cellist, or that the group formerly known as the "Cappella della Pietà de' Turchini" has years of experience in HIP music-making of the highest order; so why strip away all but the bare essentials of the Haydn concerto (all three works are accompanied by only a string quartet with double bass and harpsichord)? While it may be true that dispensing with the horns and oboes is really just a simplification of the colour scheme, those were the sounds the composer chose (and surely Count Esterházy would have expected to hear from the orchestra he paid to maintain). I can't find any reasonable explanation in the booklet and I leave it to readers to discover for themselves whether the approach works.

*Brian Clark*

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