

Benedetto Marcello - Estro Poetico-Armonico (2000)

Written by bluesever

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01 - Salmo 10 - *Mentro lo Tutta Ripongo* 02 - Salmo 40 - *O Beato Chi Pietoso* 03 - Salmo 3 - *O Dio Perche* 04 - Salmo 47 - *Questa Che Al Ciel S'innalza* 05 - Salmo 44 - *Dal Cor Ripieno*
Juris Teichmanis - Cello Menno van Delft - Harpsichord, Organ Konrad Junghanel -
Conductor, Lute Cantus Cöln - Vocal Ensemble

It's a funny thing, the way reputations rise and fall and fade. Nowadays, Antonio Vivaldi is about as well-known as a Baroque composer can be, while his contemporary Benedetto Marcello is familiar to only a few (so far). Yet in early 18th-century Venice, both composers were equally respected--in fact, Marcello's music was performed regularly as late as 1790, while Vivaldi's music was considered passé 50 years earlier. Benedetto Marcello, as the scion of a prominent and wealthy Venetian family, didn't have to please the music-buying public (as Vivaldi did) to make a living--and he took advantage of the freedom to follow his own muse. Where Vivaldi stuck closely to established, recognizable forms (such as the ABA da capo aria and the slow-fast-slow-fast church sonata), Marcello subordinated his musical setting to the text in much the way Monteverdi, Cavalli, and Schütz did a century earlier.

In *Estro poetico-armonico*, a collection of Italian-language Psalm-settings for one to four solo voices, this means that the scoring, meter and/or key may change--sometimes quite abruptly--whenever there's a new idea in the text. The result sometimes seems disjointed or even downright weird, but the music is often quite lovely--and arguably very appropriate for the Psalms, whose sudden changes of mood and imagery have confounded more than one reader. Members of Cantus Cöln--here, just four singers and continuo--give a sensitive and skillful performance of five selections from the *Estro*. On first hearing, one might wish for more Italian-style extroversion, but the more you listen, the more subtlety, intelligence, and feeling you'll find. It's always that way with Cantus Cöln--the better you know them, the more admirable they seem. ---Matthew Westphal

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