

Georg Gebel d.j. - Christmas Cantatas Vol.2 (Ludger Remy) [2012]

Written by bluesever

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Mein Jesus A und O, der Anfang und das Ende (Kantate) 1.Choral: *Mein Jesus A und O (Vor der Predigt)* 2.Chor: *Der Name des Herrn ist ein festes Schloss* 3.Rezitativ: *Wär nicht des Höchsten Name* 4.Arie: *Die Wohlfahrt der Gerechten* 5.Accompagnato: *In Jesu Namen sei das Jahr nun angetreten* 6.Arie: *Lass Kind! Vom heiligen Weibessamen* 7.Choral: *Trotz der Sünde, Höll und Tod!* 8.Choral: *Nimmer kann ein Christenherz* 9.Chor: *Ihr seid alle Gottes Kinder* 10.Rezitativ: *Wer kann wohl Gottes Güt' ermessen?* 11.Arie: *Nimm, Jesu!* 12.Rezitativ: *Da ich im Glauben nun* 13.Arie: *Mein bester Schmuck* 14.Choral: *Wie wird der Glaube stark und dreiste* Begebet eure Leiber zum Opfer (Kantate) 15.Chor: *Begebet eure Leiber zum Opfer (Vor der Predigt)* 16.Rezitativ: *Dir, Jesu! Dir gehöret Leib und Geist* 17.Arie: *Das Haupt ist krank* 18.Rezitativ: *Drum gib mir deinen guten Geist* 19.Arie: *Heiliger Geist! Verneure ganz* 20.Choral: *Reicher Gott an Gütigkeit!* 21.Chor: *Stellet euch nicht dieser Welt gleich* 22.Choral: *Entreiße mich der Lust der Welt* 23.Rezitativ: *Mein Gott! Das, was du mir geschenkt* 24.Arie: *Geist der Weisheit, treibe mich* 25.Rezitativ: *Sollt ich mich ja zur Welt gesellen* 26.Arie: *Lass mich nach verbotner Frucht niemals trachten* 27.Choral: *Nun, reiner Geist der Stärke, des ich teilhaftig bin*
Andreas Post (Tenor) Ludger Remy (Organ) Veronika Winter (Soprano) Matthias Vieweg (Bass) Gesine Adler (Soprano) Les Amis de Philippe (Ensemble) Ludger Remy (Conductor)

Vol. 2 features Gebel's Cantatas from the 1747-48 cycle that he wrote for church services on New Year's Day and the 1st Sunday after Epiphany. These large-scale Christmas cantatas appear for the 1st time on CD. Once again, as in the St John Passion (also released by CPO), we admire the unparalleled harmonies, modern melodies and artfully intricate counterpoint of Gebel's distinctive and novel idiom. --- hbdirect.com

In 2003 it was the release of Ludger Rémy's recording of his St John Passion which put Georg Gebel the Younger on the map. Before that his music was almost completely ignored. In the liner-notes to this disc Manfred Fechner suggests this could partly be due to the rather negative assessment of Gebel's oeuvre by the German composer and writer Johann Adam Hiller (1784). In his time Gebel was held in high esteem by his employers, and especially Prince Johann Friedrich von Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt, whose service Gebel entered in 1746. He was not to enjoy this position for long: in 1753 he died of exhaustion, about a month before turning 44. He spent so much time composing that he often worked two days without sleep. It seems that he was driven by the desire to show that he was up to the high expectations of his environment. It is quite possible that this was an inheritance from his youth when his father trained him as a child prodigy and explored his great skills.

The recording of the St John Passion was followed by a recording of two oratorios for Christmas and New Year. In 2010 a disc of Christmas cantatas was released, followed one year later by this CD. A large part of Gebel's oeuvre has gone missing, but two annual cantata cycles have been preserved almost complete. The cycle of 1747/48 originally consisted of 74 cantatas: 62 of them have come down to us. The cantatas of vol. 1 and vol. 2 are taken from this cycle.

Mein Jesu A und O, der Anfang und das Ende (My Jesus Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end) is for New Year's Day. As with all the cantatas of this cycle it is divided into two parts: one was to be performed before, the other after the sermon. Both parts begin and end with a chorale setting. The festive character of New Year's Day is reflected by the two trumpets which appear in the opening chorale and the next chorus, a dictum (literal quotation from the Bible): "The name of the Lord is a mighty fortress". In the next recitative and aria pair the bass asserts God's protection for "righteous men". An accompagnato for the tenor is followed by a sweet aria for alto, accompanied by two transverse flutes and strings: "Child of the holy woman's seed, let your dear name of Jesus be an ointment (...)". The second part again begins with a chorale, followed by a dictum which quotes part of the epistle of that day (Galatians 3, vs 26-27). These two verses are set in contrasting style: the first as a fugue in the stile antico, the latter homophonic. The bass recitative emphasizes the forgiveness of human sins through Jesus' passion which is followed by a soprano aria - the only one without a dacapo - and a recitative and aria for tenor which dwell on the importance of Christ's blood for the faithful.

Begebet eure Leiber zum Opfer (Give your bodies as an offering) was written for the first Sunday after Epiphany. Both parts open with a dictum rather than a chorale. The opening dictum of the first part quotes St Paul's letter to the Romans (12, vs 1): "Give your bodies as an offering that is living, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service to God". This sets the tone for the cantata. The following pair of recitative and aria express the lack of

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power and capability of mankind to fulfil the requirements of the above-quoted verse: "[The] spirit is willing, he flesh is weak". Gebel has translated this into music in a quite evocative way, and the contrast with the next recitative and aria cannot be missed when the alto asks the Holy Spirit to "renew in me body, soul, heart and mind". The second part begins with a quotation of the second verse of chapter 12 from Romans in which the faithful are urged "not conform to this world". In the recitatives and arias God is asked to "[guide] me in every instance" and "never let me reach the forbidden fruit".

These cantatas reflect the style of the time. In one aria Gebel makes use of Lombardic rhythms, for instance. The connection between text and music isn't quite what it was in the baroque era. The orchestra creates the mood which suits the text rather than directly illustrates the text. A good example of this is the use of the flutes in the alto aria from the first cantata. The choice of texts is also notable. The librettist is unknown, and it is assumed he also compiled the texts of the chorales. In most of them traditional melodies are used, such as Nun danket alle Gott and Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan, but with new words. Rhythmically they also differ from the originals, dating mostly from the 16th or 17th centuries, and there are some melodic deviations as well. In my review of the first volume I stated that Gebel differs from other composers of his time in that his music is never superficial. That can be repeated here.

The performances are pretty much ideal. The cantatas are performed with one voice per part; only in the first cantata four ripienists are used in the chorales and choruses. I can't figure out why they are used only in this cantata and not in the second. In the tutti the balance is quite good; the exception being the opening chorale of the first cantata in which the upper voices are too dominant. In the tenor aria of the second cantata Andreas Post sings a cadenza in the A part. It underlines its rather operatic character. The soloists put across the content of their arias very well. Matthias Vieweg is quite drastic in exposing the closing phrase of his aria in the second cantata: "must become for me a burden and disgust".

This disc once again proves the commanding qualities of Georg Gebel the Younger as a composer of sacred music. I don't know whether more discs with his music are to come. I certainly hope so. --- Johan van Veen, musicweb-international.com

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