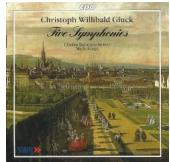


Gluck - Five Symphonies (2011)

Written by bluesever

Friday, 29 November 2013 17:02 -

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01] Symphony in G major: Allegro 02] Symphony in G major: Andante 03] Symphony in G major: Allegro 04] Symphony in D major: Allegro capriccioso 05] Symphony in D major: Menuetto 06] Symphony in A major: Allegro 07] Symphony in A major: Andante 08] Symphony in A major: Allegro 09] Symphony in F major: Allegro 10] Symphony in F major: Andante 11] Symphony in F major: Alla breve 12] Symphony in F major: Presto 13] Symphony in D major: Andante 14] Symphony in D major: Allegro L'Orfeo Barockorchester Michi Gaigg – conductor

Michi Gaigg and the Orfeo Baroque Orchestra are back with another interesting collection of lesser-known 18th century Austro-German symphonies. So far they have recorded volumes for CPO of symphonies by Georg Wagenseil, Anton Fils, Ignaz Holzbauer (review), Josef Mysliveček (review) and Leopold Mozart (review). On the whole critical reception has been positive.

Gluck probably does not have very much in common with Richard Wagner, but it is safe to say that both wrote very little not destined for the theatre, and that their musical immortality will always remain independent of those non-theatrical works. Gluck composed a handful of chamber pieces and up to about 20 symphonies - depending on one's definition of 'symphony'. Of those on this disc, only the two Overtures are listed by Alfred Wotquenne in his 1904 thematic catalogue of Gluck's works, along with seven others he takes to be from stage works - hence their title. The three Symphonies proper have been ascribed to Gluck by Taiwanese musicologist Jen-Yen Chen.

None of these works is ground-breaking exactly - in fact they are utterly conservative! - but they are all clearly written by a man, probably still young, who knew what he was doing, and how to achieve his desired effects with considerable imagination and audience-pleasing brio. The

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Overtures in particular are easy-going, but peppered throughout the programme there is some lovely writing, especially for the horn pair and, from time to time, the oboes. The two works in D - both in two movements only, incidentally - are probably the most memorable, Chen D6 for its concertante interplay, Wq 165.2 for its catchy simplicity.

Under Gaigg's assured violin-in-hand guidance, the Baroque Orchestra's playing is Classical: refined and restrained, with attention to detail, yet still light and bright. Period instruments and techniques are used to authentic effect.

Sound quality is good, although 'atmospheric' is not a word that will spring to the mind of many. The trilingual CD booklet is attractive and informative. However, the English translation has been done by a non-native German-speaker whose knowledge of English is very good but which nevertheless inspires sentences of Germanic proportions, as well as numerous German-flavoured oddities of word and phrase, like "preprint", "initial triadic chord thematic construction" and "would otherwise perhaps be brought into connection only with Mozart", and in one or two cases mistranslations of meaning, such as "delicate feast for our ears" instead of "exquisite feast" ('delikat') and "hardly original, not to mention revolutionary" instead of "hardly original, let alone revolutionary" ('geschweige denn'). ---Byzantium,
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