

Mozart Arias For Male Soprano (Michael Maniaci) [2010]

Written by bluesever

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Idomeneo, K.366 1 *Overture* 4:28 2 *Recitative And Aria: Ah Qual Gelido Orrore... Il Padre Adorato* 3:48 Lucio Silla, K.135 3 *Recitative And Aria, Dunque Aperar Poss'io... Il Tenero Momento* 10:24 4 *Aria, Ah Se A Morir Mi Chiama* 8:50
La Clemenza Di Tito, K.621
5 *Overture* 4:45 6 *Aria, Deh Per Questo Istante Solo* 6:25 7 *Aria, Parto, Ma Tu Ben Mio* 6:22
Exsultate, Jubilate, K.165
8 *Allegro* 4:31 9 *Recitative* 0:51 10 *Andante* 7:24 11 *Allegro: Alleluja* 2:39
Michael Maniaci – male soprano Boston Baroque (Ensemble) Martin Pearlman -conductor

American male soprano Michael Maniaci (he declines the descriptor countertenor) pursues beauty rather than power in his singing, which is entirely worth hearing. The booklet notes for this Telarc release, by an unidentified annotator, spend a lot of time speculating as to whether castrati might have sounded like this in the 18th century, and not enough asking how often they actually sang Mozart's music; by the time of the latest opera represented in this collection of arias, *La clemenza di Tito*, the castrati were in decline. Mozart rarely if ever wrote the "arias for male soprano" promised on the cover of this release; he wrote for female singers. All this said, Maniaci's voice is unusual enough to make news. There is none of the sheer power that is generally held to be the distinctive quality of the high male voice. Instead, Maniaci cultivates agility -- quiet high notes are always impressively precise -- and a delicate melodic quality. His lower register is a bit underpowered; if a line begins at the bottom of his range, he tends to get lost among the strings of the Boston Baroque orchestra. But in the warm, mid-range selections from *La clemenza di Tito* (tracks 6 and 7), he has an unusual shine that blends perfectly with the orchestra's period strings. The album concludes with the virtuoso cantata *Exsultate, Jubilate*, K. 165, which is a real soprano showpiece; Maniaci's almost quiet but superbly controlled version is a true surprise. The entire program is quite a departure for the U.S. Telarc label, known for its orchestral showpieces and pops spectacles, but the engineers, with the help of the fine acoustics at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, MA, present this smaller music to best advantage. Well worth hearing for aficionados of the high male voice. ---James Manheim, Rovi

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The highly-rated early music ensemble Boston Baroque and its conductor Martin Pearlman join forces with the talented American singer and true male soprano Michael Maniaci, in a recording of arias that Mozart originally composed for the castrato voice. The disc contains arias from *Idomeneo*, *Lucio Silla*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*, as well as the beloved motet *Exsultate, jubilate*. The recording also includes two brilliant orchestral pieces, the overtures to *Idomeneo* and *Clemenza*.

The first permanent Baroque orchestra established in North America, Boston Baroque is widely regarded as one of the world's premier period-instrument bands. The ensemble's performances and recordings of the Baroque and Classical repertoire have been hailed by audiences and critics in the Americas, Europe, Asia and Australia for their freshness, virtuosity, and exuberant appeal. Although Maniaci's voice is natural, his stunning performances give Boston Baroque the opportunity to add yet another "original" instrument, the male soprano voice, to their performing forces. A voice type that was enormously popular in opera and religious music in the 17th century but completely disappeared over a century ago, the male castrato's true chest voice – unlike falsetto singers – was in the soprano or alto range, yet extremely powerful due to the male lung capacity. Up until now, all we have really known of this voice are the verbal descriptions of contemporary listeners and a single, scratchy recording made late in the life of the last castrato performer. --- prestoclassical.co.uk

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