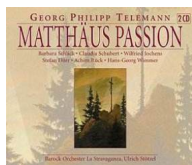


Telemann - St Matthew Passion (1995)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 27 March 2010 18:05 - Last Updated Sunday, 08 June 2014 11:44

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Disc 1 1 *Matthaus-Passion: Choral. Lasst Uns Mit Ernst Betrachten* 2 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Da Sie Den Lobgesang Gesprochen Hatten* 3 *Matthaus-Passion: Choral. Treulich Hast Du Ja Gesuchet* 4 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Wenn Ich Aber Auferstehe* 5 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria, Recitativo, Chor. Ich Dich Verleugnen* 6 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Da Kam Jesus Mit Ihnen* 7 *Matthaus-Passion: Choral. Reiche Deinem Schwachen Kinde* 8 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Zum Andernmal Ging Er Aber Hin* 9 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Den Sanften Schlaf* 10 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Als Er Noch Redete* 11 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Aufruhr, Aufruhr! Es Empört Sich Ein Haufen* 12 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Siehe, Einer Aus Denen* 13 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Die Unschuld/Mögen Wir Doch Ohne Grauen* 14 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Aber Das Ist Alles Geschehen* 15 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Die Wahrheit/Zerreiss Das Herz* Disc 2 1 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Sie Antworteten Und Sprachten* 2 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Da Hub Er An* 3 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Was Gehet Und Das An* 4 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Er Warf Die Silberlinge* 5 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Es Taugt Nicht* 6 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Sie, Hielten Aber Einen Rat* 7 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Dein Königreich Ist Ohne Ende* 8 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Da Es Verklaget Ward* 9 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Barabbam, Barrabam!* 10 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Pilatus Sprach Zu Ihnen* 11 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Lass Ihn Kreuzigen* 12 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Der Landpfleger Sagte* 13 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Lass Ihn Kreuzigen* 14 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Da Aber Pilatus Sahe* 15 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Sein Blut Komme Über Uns* 16 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Da Gab Er Ihnen Barrabam Los* 17 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Die Bussfertige Seele* 18 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Beugten Die Knie Vor Ihm* 19 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Gegrüssest Seist Du, Juden-König* 20 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Speiten Ihm An* 21 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Meinen Rücken Hielt Ich Dar* 22 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Da Sie Ihn Verspottet Hatten* 23 *Matthaus-Passion: Aria. Der Glaube* 24 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Sie Sassen Allda Und Hüteten Sein* 25 *Matthaus-Passion: Choral. Gegrüssest Seist Du, Meine Kron* 26 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Da Wurden Zweene Mörder Mit Ihm Gekreuziget* 27 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Der Du Den Tempel Gottes Zubrichst* 28 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Desgleichen Auch Die Hohenpriester* 29 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Andern Hat Er Geholfen* 30 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Desleichen Taten Auch Die Mörder* 31 *Matthaus-Passion: Choral. Du, Ach Du Hast Ausgestanden* 32 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Von Der Sechsten Stunde An* 33 *Matthaus-Passion: Chor. Er Rufet Den Elias* 34 *Matthaus-Passion: Recitativo. Und Alsbald Lief Einer Unter Ihnen*

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Barbara Schlick (Soprano),
Claudia Schubert (Alto),
Wilfried Jochens (Tenor),
Stefan Dör (Tenor),
Achim Rück (Bass),
Hans-Georg Wimme (Bass)

Collegium Vocale des Bach-Chores,
Siegen Barock-Orchester,
Ulrich Stötzel – conductor

It is rather difficult to understand why Telemann's Passions are not better known. Perhaps it is the fault of the statistics, which are rather astounding. Whereas Bach developed his St. Matthew Passion over a number of years as it was repeated, Telemann simply wrote a new St. Matthew Passion when needed. Whilst in Hamburg he wrote one passion setting per year for performance in one of the city churches. This amounts to 46 passion settings, of which 20 survive. In addition to this there are the Passion Oratorios, settings of Gospel paraphrases designed for the concert hall rather than church. There are also eleven St. Matthew Passions in Telemann's catalogue. This one dates from 1746, midway through his tenure in Hamburg.

Telemann's Passion settings are often rather more congregation-friendly than Bach's. For a start, this one lasts a mere 75 minutes. The chorales are harmonised in a simple way as befitted their liturgical function, designed to encourage congregational participation (the original text books printed just the first line of the chorale along with a page reference to the Hamburg Hymnal). The Passion has an altogether lighter feel than Bach's. Telemann uses relatively modest orchestration (perhaps because at Passion-tide, aesthetic listening pleasure was not to be a primary consideration). In the arias he eschews the baroque contrapuntal approach in favour of the newer "galant" style. Using this sensitive style he is less interested in counter-pointing an obbligato instrument to the vocal line. Here, he uses charm, delicacy and clarity to enable the vocal line to attain expressivity. A similar procedure can be seen in some of Handel's later operas where he consciously thinned and modernised his style.

This musical difference between Telemann's and Bach's Passions is reflected in the moral aspect of the pieces. Bach's Passions give a dramatic account of the passion of Christ to emphasise to the congregation their own sinfulness and the need for the remission of sins via Jesus's death on the cross. Bach uses his substantial and complex choruses and arias to bring this home to the audience. Telemann's Passions, by contrast, are more affected by the

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Enlightenment where the aim of religious music was to make the congregation better people. The music had to be easily accessible and stir up the listeners emotions.

The Passion opens directly with a choral. Telemann uses these sparingly: three near the beginning of the Passion, one after Jesus is crowned King of the Jews, one whilst Jesus is on the cross and the final choral. The remaining chorus contributions are mainly turbae and all have a dramatic function. The chorus never really comments or meditates on the meaning of the action. Telemann is imaginative when it comes to the choruses and they serve a strong structural function within the Passion. On this recording the Collegium Vocale des Bach-Chores Siegen are excellent. They sound a smallish group and articulate the music with lucid diction and vigour.

The bulk of the work is carried by the Evangelist - the part written mainly in secco recitative. Wilfried Jochens makes a fine, expressive Evangelist, keeping the tempo going but articulating the words with admirable clarity and meaning. Jesus's words are sung by the bass, Achim Rück. He has a fine, dark voice and makes a suitably strong Jesus. Telemann sets Jesus's words as arioso, accompanied by a rich string accompaniment and Wimmer takes advantage of the expressive opportunities that this gives him.

The first aria is given to Peter. Stefan Dörr sings the tenor arias as well as the tenor parts (Peter, Caiaphas) in the recitative. An interesting feature of Peter's aria is that after the B section, the Evangelist and the Chorus continue in a naturalistic way, before the tenor repeats the A section. Dörr sings this aria in a fine, dramatic fashion and his timbre is nicely differentiated from Jochens as Evangelist. Dörr gets two arias, this first one as Peter and a second one, as Jesus, during the flagellation - another interesting feature of this work.

A further intriguing feature is the fact that some of the Soprano and Alto arias are allocated to allegorical figures. Soprano, Barbara Schlick, has four Arias included one as 'Innocence' and another as 'Faith'. Her first aria, as 'Innocence', is a fine piece with a rather Handelian horn part. Her singing of the final aria in the piece, as the allegorical figure of 'Faith', is one of the highlights of the disc. Her fragility is ideal for this music and she is adept at using Telemann's virtuoso lines for expressive purposes.

Alto, Claudia Schubert, has two arias one as 'Truth' and another as 'The Repentant Soul'. She has an attractive, firm voice but is rather taxed by the more virtuoso sections of the arias. Interestingly, she also sings Judas's recitatives. Perhaps Telemann was trying to make a point

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or perhaps he was simply being practical.

The arias owe something to the style of the contemporary opera arias (Telemann also wrote operas for the Hamburg opera). But it is also noticeable that in the final section of the Passion, Telemann manages to construct an almost operatic sequence out of the rather unpromising mix of recitative, arioso, chorus and choral.

Barock-Orchester "La Stravaganza-Köln" gets no overture to play and the arias have no substantial ritornelli, but they bring a warmth and clarity to Telemann's orchestration, accompanying in a stylish and sympathetic manner. Their accompaniment of the arias has a rhythmic crispness and bounce that is appealing. This shows a real feeling for the underlying dance rhythms. Conductor Ulrich Stötzel, who throughout shows sincere empathy with this music, keeps the work flowing, without it ever seeming rushed.

This is not the work's first outing on disc. I have a recording with forces from Darmstadt under Wolfgang Seeliger, issued in 1994 on Christophorus. This uses modern instruments, but is a historically aware performance that has the advantage of Hans Peter Blochwitz as a mellifluous (if somewhat light-voiced) Evangelist. There the soloists, particularly Anton Scharinger as Jesus, try to give the piece more dramatic weight than it needs. Stötzel's performance is spread over two rather sparse CDs (at bargain price) whereas the Darmstadt performance is on one, very well filled disc. ---Robert Hugill, musicweb-international.com

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