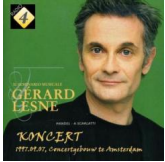


Gérard Lesne & Il Seminario Musicale – Live Concert - Amsterdam 1997



1. Alessandro Scarlatti, motet *De tenebroso lacu* 2. Henry Purcell, *Music for a while* 3. Georg Friedrich Händel, *Sonata G-dur for violin and basso continuo op. 5 nr 4. HWV 399 – część III. Passacaille* 4. Georg Friedrich Händel, *Rinaldo HWV 7a, Act I – aria Cara sposa, amante cara, dove sei?* 5. Georg Friedrich Händel, *Orlando HWV 31, Act II – aria Ah! Stigie larvae* 6. Georg Friedrich Händel, *Serse HWV.40, Act I – aria Ombra mai fu* Gérard Lesne (alto) Il Seminario musicale

The French counter-tenor and conductor, Gérard Lesne, defines his voice as ‘contralto’ and in so doing rises above petty disputes over terms like counter-tenor, male alto, falsettist, and so on. His initial vocation as a rock singer was eventually abandoned in favour of other no less adventurous areas and has left him with a keen appetite for exploring new areas, frequently delving into a past desperately in need of revival. This was clearly the case when, in 1979, the tenor Zeger Vandersteene, who belongs to the ‘second generation’ of those won over to the Baroque cause, introduced him to René Clemencic, whose pioneering work in the medieval repertoire so enriched the musical scene.

Blessed with a voice whose bright top register and powerful low register blend with a miraculous smoothness which many singers only achieve after years of hard work, the young ‘contralto’ of just 23 began travelling across Europe with the Clemencic Consort. It was only in 1991 that he moved on from this repertoire, having taken part in the rediscovery of Gregorian chant with Ensemble Organum, got a taste of French Baroque music with William Christie and Les Arts Florissants (from 1984 to 1990) and J.S. Bach with Philippe Herreweghe (from 1988 to 1992).

Through his contact with so many different approaches and personalities, Gérard Lesne perfected a stylistic versatility and technical mastery eminently suited to Italian music. The richness of timbre and agility of his voice, his mastery of colour and the full gamut of Baroque

affetti, the very lifeblood of Scarlatti, Antonio Vivaldi and Stradella, prompted him to found Il Seminario Musicale in 1985, an ensemble with which he began to explore this most challenging of repertoires.

For anyone wishing to follow Gérard Lesne through the many adventures which have inspired him and see for themselves how amazingly versatile he is, his numerous award-winning recordings are the most enlightening guides. Particularly noteworthy are Gérard Lesne's interpretations of cantatas by Bononcini, Antonio Caldara and George Frideric Handel, motets by Monteverdi and Scarlatti, his collection of Portuguese songs entitled O Lusitano, and an album of sacred works by A. Vivaldi. Of outstanding merit are the Charpentier Leçons de Ténèbres, which won the coveted Victoires de la musique award in France in 1993 for the Good Friday CD, which was followed by those devoted to the Wednesday and Thursday of Holy Week, all of them winning the distinguished Diapason d'Or award; his Byrd disc with Ensemble Orlando Gibbons and recently Hasse's I Pellegrini al Sepolcro di Nostro Signore. These recordings were released by Virgin Classics, for which he is an exclusive artist.

Every year since 1993, Gérard Lesne has been giving courses in vocal interpretation at Royaumont Abbey in France, the very place where his career was launched amid enthusiastic applause for a concert in which he stood in at the last minute for a soloist in the Clemencic Consort. It is a telling sign of his consistently successful development ever since that he should have returned to Royaumont as a fully recognised master of his art.

Personal remark (from Countertenors Website) One of the first Frenchmen with a truly international reputation. Not the broadest range; he is a definite contralto, with little above D, but he possesses exquisite tonal beauty, a fine coloratura and an intelligent musician's instincts. Has made a speciality of the Italian Baroque repertoire, with the odd foray into such as François Couperin. --- bach-cantatas.com

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