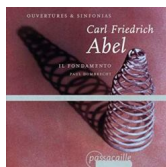


Abel - Ouvertures and Sinfonias (2002)

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Ouverture No. 4 in C Major, Op. V 1 *Presto* 3:53 2 *Andante* 3:08 3 *Allegro* 2:18
Ouverture No. 5 in G Major, Op. XIV
4 *Allegro* 3:23 5 *Andante* 4:45 6 *Allegro Assai* 2:51
Sinfonia No. 2 In B-Flat, Op. XVII
7 *Allegro* 4:55 8 *Andante* 2:38 9 *Allegro* 3:41
Ouverture No. 2 in C Major, Op. I
10 *Allegro Assai* 2:58 11 *Andante* 5:52 12 *Allegro* 2:08
Sinfonia No. 3 in E-Flat Major, Op. IV
13 *Allegro Maestoso* 2:36 14 *Andante* 2:42 15 *Allegro Assai* 2:00
Ouverture No. 3 in D Major, Op. VII
16 *Allegro* 5:01 17 *Andante* 3:46 18 *Allegro* 1:58
Il Fondamento Paul Dombrecht - conductor

Carl Friedrich Abel was a leading figure in London music during the 1760s and '70s, and with JC Bach played an important role in the city's concert life. His output includes six sets of symphonies (or 'overtures' - in this context the genres were indistinguishable), all of which are represented here. In style they are very like JC Bach's - in three movements, usually an expressive *Andante* between a busy *Allegro* and a finale in a jig-like 3/8 (often with prominent horns, hinting at the hunt).

This selection has some very spirited music: four of the first movements are in triple metre, which nearly always produces something lively from the symphonists of this period - the Op 14 is a fine, bustling piece, the Op 17 a harmonically and rhythmically subtler one. The Opp 4 and 7 examples show a rather grander orchestral style, with Mannheim crescendi and the like.

There is some eloquent music in the slow movements, especially the Op 7 and Op 14 works,

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and that of the Op 17 has much charm. But I fear that these performances by no means make the most of them, partly because the tempi are often far too slow (these are andantes, not adagios), in the Opp 1 and 5 examples in particular, but also because they are heavily played, the bass is over-recorded and the texture becomes excessively thick. The jolly, jiggy finales do better, although some are unsubtly done, such as that of the Op 5 work.

I am glad to have some Abel on record: his symphonies are far more deserving than many of others of that time currently in the catalogues. But this CD, which was recorded in 1994, would have been better for a less bass-heavy sound, with a less reverberant acoustic and a more attentive shaping of the melodic line. And he deserves a better informed booklet note. I hope someone will take up his cause. ---gramophone.co.uk

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