

Barbara Strozzi - Arie, Cantate & Lamenti (Spagele) [1998]



1. *L'Eraclito Amorofo: Udite Amanti La Cagione* - *Ens Incantato* 2. *Amor Dormiglione: Amor, Non Dormir Piu!* - *Mona Spagele/Paulina Von Laarhoven/Detlef Bratschke* 3. *La Travagliata: Soccorrete, Luci Avare* - *Mona Spagele/Hubert Hoffmann/Detlef Bratschke* 4. *Il Lamento: Sul Rodano Severo* - *Ens Incantato* 5. *Tra Le Speranze E' Il Timore. Dialogo A Voce Sola: Timore E Che Sara?* - *Mona Spagele/Paulina Von Laarhoven/Detlef Bratschke* 6. *Per Un Bacio* - *Mona Spagele/Hubert Hoffmann* 7. *Basta Così V'ho Inteso* - *Mona Spagele/Detlef Bratschke* 8. *Lamento: Appresso A I Molli Argenti* - *Ens Incantato* 9. *Gite O Giorni Dolenti* - *Ens Incantato*
Mona Spagele - Vocals Detlef Bratschke - Hosepipe, Organ Hubert Hoffmann - Archlute, Chitarrone Paulina van Laarhoven - Lironi, Viola da Gamba Ensemble Incantato

This is a generous and rewarding collection of a composer better known, I suspect, for her gender than her music. Barbara Strozzi's biography (like that of her contemporary, the painter Artemisia Gentileschi, whose life has recently been the subject of a book and a film) easily lends itself to romanticisation. There is no need to dwell on it here: the music and performers deserve to stand on their own.

Most of the pieces derive from her Cantatas, Op 2, of 1651. The Serenata and Cantata are indeed large-scale pieces each lasting nearly a quarter of an hour, and they show a fluid alternation of genres and interleaving of arioso passages typical of the solo cantata. Then there are the laments, with their trademark ground-bass figures and highly conventionalised topics; and finally the arias, whose ritornellos and melodies show off Strozzi at her most felicitously tuneful. Listen to 'Amor dormiglione' or 'La vendetta' and you'll not forget them. Of the large-scale works the most effective in its pacing and dramatic effect, to my ear, is the Cantata 'Sino alla morte'. Yes, Italian opera does become highly dependent on convention during this period, but Strozzi's expression and range strike me as most impressive. The same might be said of Susanne Ryden, who copes for the most part admirably with the demands of the singer-composer: only in the extremes of register is there a slight falling off in effectiveness (the low notes at the conclusion of 'L'Eraclito amoroso' seem rather white, even for an evocation of

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death), and there is nothing here that would pall with repeated listening – quite the opposite, in fact. She is well supported by Musica Fiorita, whose accompaniment is unobtrusive but effective. These are the sort of forces that would have accompanied Strozzi herself, and there is an artlessness about the whole project that is rather special.' ---Fabrice Fitch, gramophone.co.uk

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