

Johann Baptist Vanhal – Missa pastoralis in G; Missa solemnis in C (2000)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Czwartek, 30 Czerwiec 2011 18:41 - Zmieniony Czwartek, 12 Czerwiec 2014 09:57

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1. *Missa Pastoralis* – Kyrie [play](#) 2. *Gloria* 3. *Credo* 4. *Sanctus* 5. *Benedictus* 6. *Agnus Dei* 7. *Missa Solemnis* – Kyrie 8. *Gloria* 9. *Credo* [play](#)
10. *Sanctus* 11. *Benedictus* 12. *Agnus Dei*

Mary Enid Haines (soprano); Nina Scott Stoddart (alto); Colin Ainsworth (tenor); Steven Pitkainen (baritone) Arcadia Ensemble Tower Voices New Zealand Uwe Grodd - conductor

Johann Vanhal's life (1739-1813) mirrored Haydn's in its longevity, but none of his music enjoys comparable popularity. New exhumations like these fine masses could change all that. This disc, produced in August, 2000 at Napier, New Zealand's St. John's Cathedral, combines world-premiere recordings of two Vanhal masses in capable, attentive, fresh-sounding performances by Uwe Grodd, who directs the Canadian period-instrument orchestra Arcadia and Tower Voices of New Zealand, joined by four able Canadian vocal soloists.

Vanhal wrote a huge corpus of choral music (approximately 50 mass settings), which seems surprising given that at no stage of his career was he employed as a church musician. Nor was there much financial gain to be had from writing independent liturgical settings, so Vanhal's masses came from direct personal impulse, not workaday commissions, which probably accounts in some way for their high quality. This CD includes the *Missa pastoralis* in G and the C major *Missa solemnis*. The former (c. 1782) contains a remarkable setting of the Gloria, in which a through-composed soprano/alto duet ("Domine Jesu") leads directly to a thrillingly dramatic "Qui tollis". The near-symphonic grandeur of the "Credo" also is noteworthy, and as you listen to the work you'll be impressed by Vanhal's skill in balancing the simple imagery of a pastoral mass setting with orchestral episodes of great power and forcefulness.

The *Missa solemnis* in C (c. 1778) must have enjoyed some initial success since a dozen or so

copies exist in monastery collections. Interestingly, the score dispenses with the obligatory trombones of the solemn mass. The level of craftsmanship here is again extremely high; the final fugue ("Dona nobis pacem") is just one instance of Vanhal's contrapuntal mastery. In general these performances are excellent, and the recording is amply detailed if sometimes slightly too resonant. Unhelpfully, the booklet omits all tracklistings. [7/24/2001] --- Michael Jameson

The Missa Solemnis is the earlier of the settings on this disc. The date of composition is uncertain but the work had been written by 1778. The orchestral scoring is for pairs of oboes and trumpets, timpani, organ and strings. At various points both the first violinist and the organist enjoy important obbligato roles. In terms of style and form the mass is pretty typical of its period and I do not mean that in a pejorative sense. To be sure, Vanhal works within the conventions of the time but he does so to good effect. His setting is not only fresh; it is properly joyful or reflective at the appropriate moments. I should think it is most enjoyable to perform. That is certainly the impression conveyed by the artists here.

The Missa Pastoralis is probably a slightly later work. It had been composed by 1782 and it is scored for similar forces. Like its companion it receives a thoroughly well prepared and convincing performance.

This admirable CD represents an interesting international collaboration. The Aradia Ensemble, who play on period instruments, are based in Toronto. The ensemble was formed in 1995. Three years later TOWER Voices, a 32-strong choir came into being. This evidently expert group draws singers from all over New Zealand. To judge by their performances here the choir is bright toned and flexible and their Canadian colleagues provide stylish and alert accompaniments. All four soloists are Canadian. They do not have tremendously big roles to sing here but they are effective: I particularly enjoyed the singing of the two ladies. The conductor, Uwe Grodd, is German born but he is now based in New Zealand. His direction is lively and clear.

A thoroughly enjoyable disc, with good quality sound. I have one small quibble: it is a pity that there is no separate track listing. Otherwise the documentation is good and informative (the author of the notes also prepared the performing editions of the works used in this recording). ---John Quinn

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