

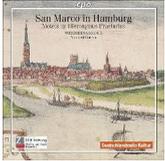
## Hieronymus Praetorius – Motets: San Marco in Hamburg (2008)

Wpisany przez bluesever

Sobota, 03 Październik 2015 15:56 - Zmieniony Sobota, 03 Październik 2015 16:00

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1. *Jubilate Deo omnis terra* 2. *Ecce Dominus veniet* 3. *Hodie Christus natus est* 4. *Ab oriente venerunt Magi* 5. *Nunc dimittis servum tuum* 6. *O bone Jesu* 7. *Magnificat quarti toni* 8. *Wie lang, o Gott* 9. *Surrexit pastor bonus* 10. *Ascendo ad patrem meum* 11. *Hodie completi sunt* 12. *Adesto unus Deus* 13. *Cantate Domino canticum novum*   Weser-Renaissance (Ensemble) Manfred Cordes - Conductor

The title *San Marco in Hamburg* refers to the style of this group of Latin motets, composed by Hieronymus Praetorius and published between 1599 and 1625: Hamburg had several churches that were large enough to accommodate the polychoral style of Andrea and Giovanni Gabrieli, developed at Venice's St. Mark's cathedral, and that style had become known by this time even as far north as Hamburg. These motets, in Latin (German came for the most part later), aren't really precursors to Schütz's dramatic reimaginings of the polychoral style in terms of Lutheran directness. They lie between Renaissance and Baroque, with generally polyphonic textures intensified by changes in texture rather than affective word-painting. The historically informed accompaniment by the north German ensemble *Weser-Renaissance* consists of brasses and strings. The period trombones and cornett are played with an impressive smoothness, at a low enough dynamic level that they don't overwhelm the rest of the ensemble. The group's one voice per part performance practice nevertheless has a strange effect in this ambitiously sized music. Especially in the murky sonic surroundings of a church in the Saxon town of Bassum, the voices just aren't the dominant forces in the music. Instead, they seem to be peeking around the corners of the instrumental lines. There is doubtless evidence for the one-voice-per-part practice, and there are intimate pieces of seventeenth century sacred music in which it can work beautifully. But evidence of the existence of this practice does not constitute evidence that it was always, or ever, a sound ideal, and in this music it yields less-than-ideal results. --- James Manheim, Rovi

In the Renaissance and Early Modern periods most composers were musicians first and only secondarily composers. They earned their living from royal, ecclesiastical or civic patronage. Specialist label, CPO's, enterprising "Musica Sacra Hamburgensis 1600-1800" series aims to highlight the contribution made to music by composers who benefited from their employment in Hamburg - specifically at one or more of the city's churches. The list of these composers includes Reincken, Mattheson, Telemann and C.P.E. Bach.

Hieronymus Praetorius served from the 1580s in various such roles until his death in 1629. By then he was chief organist at Hamburg's St. Jacobkirche. Other members of Hieronymus Praetorius' family held corresponding posts in the city, taught Hieronymus and forged a style and approach which he retained and continued. Although they were not related to their perhaps more famous namesake, Michael Praetorius.

The traditions in which Hieronymus Praetorius worked were heavily influenced by the developing styles of North Italian (and particularly Venetian) music. After all Schütz had visited Venice twice and absorbed the ideas of the Gabriellis, amongst other such innovators. The music written and heard in the (north) German states at that time was equally extrovert, it too used divided choirs, otherwise extended polychoral novelties, and experimented with contrapuntal ideas. Perhaps it also seems to our ears to emphasise the grandness of the music as much as its sacred import.

This CD contains a dozen or so sacred pieces ranging in length from two and a half to eleven and a quarter minutes from the very centre of that tradition. At times (the *Nunc dimittis*, [tr.5], for example) the atmosphere is utterly Venetian. Hence the CD's title... the spirit of San Marco transferred to Germany. Somehow, though, the music never achieves the brilliance, brightness or shine of a Canzon by one of the Gabriellis. Probably it's not meant to: Protestant, not Catholic. Not that it's in any way unpolished or deficient. Just more self-consciously ruminative... the *O bone Jesu* [tr.6], for instance, takes few simple musical ideas and appears to expand them logically as the composer ponders the Christ.

So it was necessary for the quietly distinguished Weser Renaissance of Bremen to approach the music in its own right and not as Gabrieli manqué. Their sensitivity and eagerness to give breadth and space to the music mean this balance is achieved admirably.

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In places they confer a greater intimacy on the singing and playing than the Basilica ever allows... even the Magnificat [tr.7] is as thoughtful and subdued as it is resplendent. The music - and its performance here - is devotional, not spectacular. It's certainly more inward looking, though Weser Renaissance never lingers, indulges, stumbles.

Indeed the entire CD, whilst not being constructed to any internal or explicit sequence or progression, has a pleasant and discernible sense of movement. The instrumental playing is authoritative and contained. The singing full and calm. As a sampler of how music in provincial North German cities of the period sounded and what must have been the experience of those attended its performance. Justifiable claims to greatness were being made for the music - despite its lowly location. And this CD makes the case for such claims very well indeed. As an exposition of the work of a distinctly minor yet worthy composer a thoughtful one. As over an hour of uplifting and stimulating sacred music a delight. -- Mark Sealey, MusicWeb International

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