

Bach – Cantatas Vol.40 (Suzuki)

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01 – 05. *Lobe den Herrn, den mächtigen König der Ehren, BWV 137* 06 – 11. *Tue Rechnung! Donnerwort, BWV 168* 12 – 17. *Gott, der Herr, ist Sonn und Schild, BWV 79* 18 – 23. *Ihr, die ihr euch von Christo nennet, BWV 164* Makoto Sakurada (Tenor), Peter Kooy (Bass), Yukari Nonoshita (Soprano), Robin Blaze (Countertenor), Bach Collegium Japan Masaaki Suzuki – conductor

Japanese historical-performance specialist Masaaki Suzuki reaches the 40th volume of his complete traversal of Bach's cantatas with this disc. The series has attained an impressive level of technical consistency, and technical ensemble precision is what Suzuki's style is all about. Start with the German pronunciation of his Bach Collegium Japan, which has been tested on native Germans and found flawless. Among the various Bach cantata series, you can think of Suzuki and John Eliot Gardiner as being at opposite ends of the spectrum, with Gardiner's humanistic readings closely connected to the text, and varying widely in style according to the text, while with Suzuki the focus is on the instruments, and even the able soloists somehow seem subsidiary to the overall effect. The distinctive moments in Suzuki come in moments of unusual texture, for example in the duet "Lobe den Herren, der künstlich und fein" from the Cantata No 137 (track 3), where Bach wrote a mysterious squiggly line above the staff, similar to those that appear in other Bach autographs but of unknown significance. Not to give anything away: what Suzuki makes of this marking is both extremely unusual and also a perfect example of something that only he could get away with. More generally, these cantatas are of the type he does best. The Cantata No. 137 and the familiar Cantata No. 79, "Gott der Herr is Sonn und Schild," BWV 79, are big pieces with several brass instruments and timpani, and absolutely nobody is better than Suzuki at clarifying textures with Baroque brass instruments, which are challenging to play to begin with. The two sonatas are nicely set against works featuring wind instruments deployed in subtly dramatic ways. Most impressive of all is the sound; the environment of the Kobe Shoin Women's University Chapel is uncannily well suited to the music and to the conductor's aims. Superb as usual, this is a good milestone disc for those starting out with Suzuki's series. --- James Manheim, Rovi

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