

Cecilia Bartoli - St. Petersburg (2014)



01. Francesco Domenico Araia - 'Vado a morir' (*La forza dell'amore e dell'odio*) 02. Hermann Raupach - 'Разверзни пѣс гортани, лая' (*Gerkules*) 03. Hermann Raupach - 'Иду на смерть' (*Altsesta*) 04. Hermann Raupach - 'O placido il mare' (*Siroe, re di Persia*) 05. Domenico Dall'Oglio / Luigi Madonis - 'De miei Figli' (*Prologo a 'La Clemenza di Tito'*) 06. Vincenzo Manfredini - 'Fra' lacci tu mi credi' (*Carlo Magno*) 07. Francesco Domenico Araia - 'Pastor che a notte ombrosa' (*Seleuco*) 08. Hermann Raupach - *Marcia* (*Altsesta*) 09. Vincenzo Manfredini - 'Non turbar que' vagi rai' (*Carlo Magno*) 10. Domenico Cimarosa - 'Agitata in tante pene' (*La vergine del sole*) 11. Vincenzo Manfredini - 'A noi vivi donna eccelsa' (*Carlo Magno*) Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo-soprano Marco Brolli, flute Michele Pasotti, archlute Pier Luigi Fabretti, oboe Jean-Marc Goujon, flute Corrado Giuffredi, clarinet Silvana Bazzoni, soprano Coro della RSI Radiotelevisione svizzera, chorus Gianluca Capuano, chorus master I Barocchisti, Baroque ensemble Diego Fasolis, conductor

For the later part of her career, Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli has apparently settled on a campaign of major conceptual releases covering all-but-unknown repertory, and St. Petersburg fits right in. It's a collection of arias from operas written in the second half of the 18th century for the Russian imperial court, which had imported the best Italian and German composers money could buy. The names of all but Mozart's contemporary Domenico Cimarosa are unknown today. Most of the arias are in Italian, but a couple are in Russian, and to untutored ears Bartoli brings her trademark passion to them. This is the kind of release where one can quibble with any number of details. Bartoli sounds thick in some places, strained in others. The material is a bit uneven, with especially the last two pieces creating a bit of a letdown, although much of it does indeed live up to major-forgotten-works billing. The booklet brings up the Catherine the Great horse legend for no very good reason. Yet, as so often with Bartoli, the whole adds up to so much more than the sum of the objections. She is fearless in many ways here, not just in convincingly bringing home repertory her listeners will never have heard, but in blowing past classifications of vocal range: Bartoli may conventionally be seen as a mezzo, but the material here ranges from full-blown opera seria soprano almost down to contralto in a few cases, where Bartoli's voice takes on a lovely burnished tone. Whatever faults you might find, this is tremendously exciting stuff, not boring for a second. ---James Manheim, AllMusic Review

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