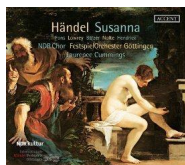


Handel – Susanna HWV 66 (2016)



CD1 01. *Susanna, HWV 66: Overture (Live)* - Laurence Cummings 02. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: How Long, O Lord (Live)* - NDR Chor 03. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Our Crimes Repeated (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 04. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Clouds O'ertake the Brightest Day (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 05. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Oh Joacim, When Thou Art By (Live)* - Emily Fons 06. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: When Thou Art Nigh (Live)* - Emily Fons 07. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Lives There in Babylon (Live)* - Raimund Nolte 08. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Who Fears the Lord (Live)* - Raimund Nolte 09. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: A Flame Like Mine (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 10. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: When First I Saw My Lovely (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 11. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Let Me Confess (Live)* - Emily Fons 12. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Would Custom Bid the Melting Fair (Live)* - Emily Fons 13. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Down My Old Cheeks (Live)* - Raimund Nolte 14. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Peace, Crown'd with Roses (Live)* - Raimund Nolte 15. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: O Pious Chelsias (Live)* - Emily Fons 16. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Without the Swain's Assiduous Care (Live)* - Emily Fons 17. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Source of Each Joy (Live)* - Emily Fons 18. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: The Parent Bird in Search of Food (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 19. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: On Joacim May Ev'ry Joy Attend (Live)* - Emily Fons 20. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: What Means This Weight (Live)* - Emily Fons 21. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Bending to the Throne of Glory (Live)* - Emily Fons 22. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Virtue Shall Never Long Be Oppress'd (Live)* - Laurence Cummings 23. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Tyrannic Love! (Live)* - Colin Balzer 24. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Ye Verdant Hills, Ye Balmy Vales (Live)* - Colin Balzer 25. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Say, Is It Fit That Age Should (Live)* - Colin Balzer 26. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: The Oak That for a Thousand Years (Live)* - Raimund Nolte 27. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Ye Winged Gales, Convey (Live)* - Colin Balzer 28. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: When the Trumpet Sounds to Arms (Live)* - Colin Balzer 29. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 1: Righteous Heav'n (Live)* - Laurence Cummings CD2 01. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Frost Nips the Flow'rs (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 02. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: On Fair Euphrates' Verdant Side (Live)* - Christopher Lowrey 03. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Lead Me, Oh Lead Me (Live)* - Emily Fons 04. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Crystal Streams in Murmurs Flowing (Live)* - Emily Fons 05. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Too Lovely Youth (Live)* - Emily Fons 06. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Ask If Yon Damask Rose Be Sweet (Live)* - Ciara Hendrick 07. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: In Vain You Try to Cure (Live)* - Emily Fons 08. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Beneath the Cypress' Gloomy Shade (Live)* - Ciara Hendrick 09. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Thy Plaintive Strains (Live)* - Ciara Hendrick 10. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Blooming as the Face of Spring (Live)* - Colin Balzer 11. *Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: We*

Long Have Languish'd (Live) - Emily Fons 12. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: The Torrent That Sweeps (Live) - Raimund Nolte 13. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Deceitful Wolves! (Live) - Emily Fons 14. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Away, Away! (Live) - Emily Fons 15. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Alas! I Find the Fatal Toils Are Set (Live) - Emily Fons 16. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: If Guiltless Blood Be Your Intent (Live) - Emily Fons 17. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Let Justice Reign and Flourish (Live) - Laurence Cummings 18. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Is Fair Susanna False? (Live) - Christopher Lowrey 19. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: On the Rapid Whirlwind's Wing (Live) - Christopher Lowrey 20. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 2: Oh Joacim, Thy Wedded Truth (Live) - Laurence Cummings

CD3

01. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: The Cause Is Decided (Live) - Laurence Cummings 02. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: I Hear My Doom (Live) - Emily Fons 03. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Faith Displays Her Rosy Wing (Live) - Emily Fons 04. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Permit Me, Fair (Live) - Colin Balzer 05. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Round Thy Urn My Tears Shall Flow (Live) - Colin Balzer 06. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: 'Tis Thus the Crocodile (Live) - Emily Fons 07. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: But You, Who See Me on the Verge of Life (Live) - Emily Fons 08. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: The Sentence Now Is Past (Live) - Colin Balzer 09. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: 'Tis Not Age's Sullen Face (Live) - Ciara Hendrick 10. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Oh Wond'rous Youth (Live) - Ciara Hendrick 11. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Impartial Heav'n (Live) - Laurence Cummings 12. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Thou Artful Wretch! (Live) - Colin Balzer 13. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Chastity, Thou Cherub Bright (Live) - Ciara Hendrick 14. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: But See! My Lord, My Joacim Appears (Live) - Emily Fons 15. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Gold Within the Furnace Try'd (Live) - Christopher Lowrey 16. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: The Joyful News of Chaste Susanna's Truth (Live) - Emily Fons 17. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Raise Your Voice to Sounds of Joy (Live) - Raimund Nolte 18. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Bless'd Be the Day (Live) - Laurence Cummings 19. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Hence Ev'ry Pang (Live) - Emily Fons 20. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Guilt Trembling Spoke My Doom (Live) - Emily Fons 21. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: Sweet Are the Accents (Live) - Christopher Lowrey 22. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: To My Chaste Susanna's Praise (Live) - Emily Fons 23. Susanna, HWV 66, Pt. 3: A Virtuous Wife (Live) - Laurence Cummings

Susanna - Emily Fons, mezzo-soprano Joacim - Christopher Lowrey, countertenor First Elder - Colin Balzer, tenor Second Elder, Chelsias - Raimund Nolte, bass-baritone Daniel, Attendant - Ciara Hendrick, mezzo-soprano Judge - Andreas Pruys bass NDR Chor Festspiel Orchester Göttingen Laurence Cummings - conductor Recorded live at Stadthalle Göttingen, Germany, May 5, 2016.

This year's release from the Göttingen International Handel Festival gives us *Susanna*, a work that dates from 1749, the same year as *Theodora*. Both works focus on a story of faith under pressure in an ancient environment, and both focus on a remarkable female figure as their central character. The story, from the Apocrypha, has been immortalised in countless Renaissance and Baroque paintings (many of which are reproduced in the attractive booklet for this release). The virtuous *Susanna* is surprised, while bathing, by two lecherous elders. They

accuse of her of adultery as revenge for her refusal of their advances, but the prophet Daniel exposes their crime and Susanna's virtue is rewarded.

In one sense it is a typically moral example of a story for an oratorio, but Handel's anonymous librettist turns it into a more dramatic story, with the elders being musically mocked for their lechery, and Daniel's entry in the final act treated like a deus-ex-machina hero.

The performance captured here is very good indeed. Emily Fons is marvellous in the title role, beautiful but also plangent and emotional. She evokes both the wedded bliss of Part One and the desperate stress of Part Two very effectively, and the crystalline clarity of her voice is a real benefit.

Christopher Lowrey sings the part of Susanna's husband, Joachim. His pearly countertenor is very pleasing on the ear, but also utterly distinctive so that there is never any danger of mixing him up with the female voices. He, too, evokes wedded bliss very effectively in Part One, and becomes heroic in the later acts.

Ciara Hendrick sings the small part of the attendant very beautifully indeed, and she makes an agile, wily Daniel to resolve the whole drama. "Chastity, thou Cherub bright" is a highlight of the whole performance; still, beautiful and wonderful.

Colin Balzer is a cracking elder, evoking the character's lechery very well, while tapping into the blackly comic aspects of the role every bit as effectively. The only slight disappointment is the nasal bass of Raimund Nolte, who sticks out like a sore thumb as the non-Anglophone member of the cast and, unfortunately, lets down the whole side. He does redeem himself, however, just about, with his final triumphal aria.

The chorus do an absolutely splendid job, and sing with impeccable English diction, as well as biting drama. They have clearly been brilliantly trained by their director, Edzard Burchards. Laurence Cummings directs the whole thing with typical sprightly elegance, and the orchestra play for him like experts. Recorded sound is also good, despite a few audience coughs, and some applause is retained at the end of each part. This recording deserves to win many more friends for this little-known late masterpiece. It certainly won one in me. ---Simon Thompson, musicweb-international.com

Handel – Susanna HWV 66 (2016)

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