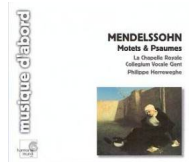


Felix Mendelssohn - Motets & Psalms (Herreweghe) [2006]

Wpisany przez bluesever

Piątek, 23 Październik 2009 16:45 - Zmieniony Czwartek, 20 Luty 2014 21:22

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1. *Warum toben die Heiden, Opus 78 No. 1* 2. *Mein Gott, warum hast du mich verlassen, Opus 78 No. 3* 3. *Herr nun lässest di deinen Diener, Opus 69 No. 1* 4. *Ehre sei Gott in der Höhe* 5. *Mitten wir im Leben sind, Opus 23 No. 3* 6. *Sechs Sprüche, Opus 79* 7. *Hymne: 'Hör mein Bitten, Herr'* Rebecca Evans (soprano) Greta de Reyghere (soprano) La Chapelle Royale, Collegium Vocale Ghent Johan Huys (organ) Philippe Herreweghe - conductor Rec May 1984, l'Église des Carmes, Gand

This welcome reissue of beautifully recorded performances from 1984 reinforces my view that Mendelssohn is too often represented by the same few pieces which are not necessarily his best. Of course the Scottish and Italian Symphonies, to name but two examples, are splendid pieces in their own right, but relatively speaking they are over-played and over-recorded, and the composer did better elsewhere: in chamber music and in vocal works such as these.

Yet this collection is no more than a representative sample of a field in which Mendelssohn was prolific. And besides that there are the larger works, such as the oratorios and the setting of Goethe's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*; but these smaller pieces find him at his most inspired.

Philippe Herreweghe is a major artist and deals with the issues of scale and phrase with consummate judgement. The chosen acoustic is absolutely right too, allowing for plenty of bloom in the sound amid a spacious and expansive context.

Herreweghe's La Chapelle Royale and Collegium Vocale of Ghent perform with the utmost sensitivity of line and phrase, while the acoustic really does allow the music to float away when required, or conversely to make maximum impact during climactic phases. There might be one

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or two queries about the editions used. Opus 69, for example, is a group of 'English Church Pieces' from 1847, and the featured item, Herr nun lässest du deinen Diener, is a setting of the Nunc Dimittis. Perhaps these European editions should be seen as a tribute to Mendelssohn's sophisticated eclecticism. But in these performances the versions sung in German do sound entirely right, for example the Opus 79 Anthems, of which the same question can be asked.

There are abundant examples of really beautiful singing, beautifully recorded. In selecting for special praise the lower and upper voice contrasts at the beginning of Mitten wir im Leben sind, the third of the Opus 23 Motets, the tribute is as much to Mendelssohn's beautifully judged scoring and pitching of the parts as to the tone quality and pacing of the performers. There is nothing finer on the disc, despite this music being from 1830 when the composer was just twenty-one. But then not even Mozart outshines Mendelssohn in the child prodigy-teenage master stakes.

Greta de Reyghere is a fine soprano soloist in this repertoire. The balancing does not give her undue favour in the recorded perspective, which is therefore absolutely true to the musical aesthetic, since under-statement and beauty of line and texture have priority at every turn.

The clearest evidence of this occurs in the final item in the sequence, the fresh and ardent hymn Hear my Prayer, O Lord, in which the opening phase places the solo voice beautifully against the tasteful tones of the organ.

There is an interesting accompanying essay on Mendelssohn's sacred vocal music by Herreweghe himself. However, this would have been better as an extra item to a conventional note itemising the background and nature of each individual piece. Alas nothing of the latter type is included. There are full texts and translations, printed and presented very clearly.

---Terry Barfoot , musicweb-international.com

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