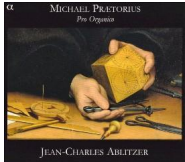


Michael Praetorius - Pro Organico (2005)



1 *Hymnus In Festo Trinitatis: O Lux Beata Trinitas* 3:30 2 *Hymnes In Festo Nativitatis Christi: A Solis Ortus Cardine* 2:05 3 *Hymnes In Festo Nativitatis Christi: Summo Parenti Gloria* 4:30 4 *Choralfantasia: Wir Gläuben All An Einer Gott* 11:19 5 *Hymnes In Adventu Domini: Alvus Tumescit Virginis* 1:43 6 *Nun Lob Mein Seel Den Herren (Prima Variatio / Secunda Variatio)* 6:45 7 *Choralfantasia: Christ Unser Herr Zum Jordan Kam* 14:08 8 *Hymnus In Festo Trinitatis: Te Mane Laudum Carmine* 2:02 9 *Hymnus In Festo Resurrectionis: Vita Sanctorum* 2:26 10 *Choralfantasia: Ein Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott* 10:40
Jean-Charles Ablitzer - organ

Michael Praetorius has long been known to lovers of late Renaissance and early Baroque music, mainly for his tuneful and fascinating dance music from "Terpsichore". But in fact that collection represents only one facet of the composer's vast and varied output, for in truth he was a genius of the first rank, a musician of great versatility and erudition. Ample evidence of this is available on a number of discs of his sacred choral music, and as further proof we now have the present programme of his organ works consisting of the Lutheran chorale fantasias from "Musae Sioniae" and the Latin hymns of "Hymnodia Sionia" - all played on a superb early Baroque organ by the outstanding Jean-Charles Ablitzer.

It has to be said right away that Praetorius' settings of the Lutheran chorales are simply magnificent - early but fully-developed, and truly beautiful, examples of the great German tradition of the organ chorale variation, fantasia and partita as represented in the works of composers such as Scheidt, Buxtehude, Pachelbel, Böhm and Bach. Particular highlights of this disc for me are the majestic fantasia on "Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott", and the glorious "Nun lob mein Seel den Herren" which culminates in seemingly endless (I mean this as a compliment!), miraculously ornamented variations on the closing line of the chorale.

All of this lovely music is performed with both brilliant energy and profound insight by the organist Jean-Charles Ablitzer. What is more, his instrument, the superbly restored 1624 Scherer organ of the St. Stephanskirche, Tangermünde in north Germany, sounds wonderful and could hardly be better suited to this music; and Alpha's recorded sound is superb too. To complete the picture, Ablitzer's own booklet notes are excellent and informative and altogether the disc is beautifully illustrated and presented.

In short, any lover of the Baroque organ and its music should not hesitate to acquire this exceptionally fine disc. And, if you fit that description, you might also like to investigate "Auch auff Orgeln", a lovely CD of organ transcriptions of Praetorius' sacred and secular pieces again played by Ablitzer, this time on the wonderful 1610 Compenius organ at Frederiksborg Castle in Denmark. At the time of writing it is available from Amazon and other sources in Germany and France. ---Stephen Midgley, amazon.com

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