

SIX VIVALDI CONCERTOS IN ARRANGEMENT BY JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH AND GUNTHER ROST • Gunther Rost (org) • OEHMS OC 642 (72:00)

L'Estro Armonico: Concerto in a, RV 522 (arr. Bach); **in a**, RV 580 (arr. Rost); **in F**, RV 310 (arr. Rost); **in d**, RV 565 (arr. Bach). **La Stravaganze: in G**, RV 383a (arr. Rost). **Concerto in C "Il grosso Mogul"** (arr. Bach)

Bach was an inveterate transcriber, not only of his own music, but that of others as well. The process of transcription enabled him to get deeply into a piece of music and, along the way, unearth more of its sonic and affective possibilities. It is safe to say that through Bach's transcriptions of various of Vivaldi's concerti grossi, he was able not merely to get into Vivaldi's musical mind, but to grasp the general procedures of the Italian Baroque as well. As an indirect, or perhaps quite direct consequence, he also created a clutch of undisputed organ masterpieces.

Many pre internet years ago, I reviewed a number of Jean Guillou's releases on the Dorian label. Among them was an offering titled *Vivaldi for Organ*, (DOR-90118) which contained much of the music found here, specifically, the Concerto for solo organ No. 5 in D minor (after Vivaldi Op. 3/11, RV 565), BWV 596; No. 3 in C major (after Vivaldi Op. 7ii/5, RV 208), BWV 594; and No. 2 in A minor (after Vivaldi Op. 3/8, RV 522), BWV 593. He performed on the high tech 1988 Great Kleuker Steinmeyer Organ of the Tonhalle, Zürich. As I recalled, both the sound and the performances were spectacular. Unearthing the disc these many years later, they are as fresh and thrilling as ever. Guillou's clarity of musical vision, registrations, rhythmic elan, and lightning quick articulation are indeed remarkable.

If stereotypes be true, Gunter Rost's approach should be stolidly Germanic—slowish, rhythmically steady, and textbook clear. In fact, he is a lot more fanciful and seemingly improvisatory than Guillou, who received quite a bit of criticism for those two qualities. A case (one of many) in point, is Rost's take on the Concerto in C major (RV 208, BWV 594). In his hands it comes across as a free improvisation. Rubato is everywhere, and his rapid fire passage work is jaw droppingly stunning. As a result, one has the sense that the piece is unfolding before the ear. The single commonality between both players is that each, in his own way, seduces me into living in the moment. No small feat, that.

As opposed to the high-tech oriented Guillou, Rost performs on the venerable Hildebrandt organ in St. Wenzel's in Naumburg. In 1746 both Bach and Silbermann were deputized to evaluate Hildebrandt's thorough restoration, indeed ground up rebuilding, of the instrument, and both, after painstaking examinations of each of its constituent parts, wrote it off as a success. Given Oehms' sound—full bodied and pure in all registers—it is indeed a remarkable instrument that adds an aura of authenticity to the proceedings. Full organ specs are provided.

As a technician Gunther Rost is astonishing. Add to this his probing and boundless imagination, and the result is 72 minutes worth of thrilling music making.

William Zagorski