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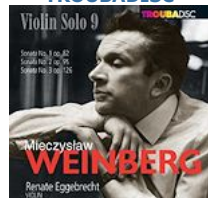
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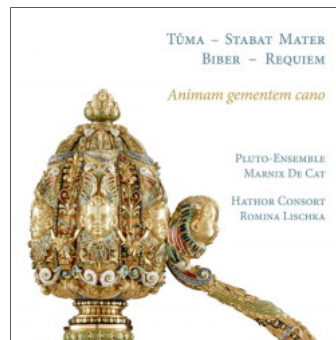
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Animam gementem cano
Heinrich Ignaz Franz BIBER (1644-1704)
Requiem in f minor [25:48]
Johann Heinrich SCHMELZER (c1620-1680)
Sonata IX in G [4:42]
Andreas Christophorus CLAMER (1633-1701)
Partita I in e minor [10:32]
Heinrich Ignaz Franz BIBER
Sonata VIII à 5 in G [4:51]
František Ignác Antonín TŮMA (1704-1774)
Stabat mater in g minor [15:42]
Pluto-Ensemble/Marnix De Cat; Hathor Consort/Romina Lischka
rec. 2019, Église Notre-Dame de la Nativité, Gedinne, Belgium
Reviewed as a stereo 16/44 download with pdf booklet from Outhere
RAMÉE RAM1914 [61:35]



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At first sight the compositions brought together on this disc have little in common. The composers of the two main works, Biber and Tůma, belong to different periods in music history. Liturgically, there is no connection between their respective compositions either. The main thing that all the works performed here have in common is that they were written in Austria. Moreover, both Biber and Tůma were Bohemian by birth.

Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber was educated as a violinist, and developed into arguably the greatest virtuoso on his instrument of his time. In 1670 he was appointed violinist at the court of archbishop Maximilian Gandolph, and this resulted in the composition of his famous Mystery Sonatas. In 1684 he was appointed Kapellmeister, and this explains why he composed music for the liturgy. His most famous work in this department is the Missa Salisburgensis. His Requiem in f minor is one of two Requiem masses. This one dates from around 1692, and is scored for five voices, each of them joined by a ripienist in the tutti sections, and an ensemble of two violins, three viole da gamba, three trombones and basso continuo. Trombones played a major role in music in Austria, also at the imperial court in Vienna, and this lasted until the time of Mozart. Here they lend the Requiem additional dark colours, and so do the three viols. The instruments play either colla voce (for instance in the opening section) or separately. As so many sacred works of the 17th century, Biber mixes concertato episodes with passages in the stile antico, as well as polyphony and homophony. The Dies irae opens in dramatic fashion, and in 'Quanto tremor est futurus', the strings imitate the trembling the text refers to by repeating one note, suggesting a tremolo.

Whereas this Requiem has been recorded before, the Stabat mater by Tůma receives its first performance. It is one of five settings of this text by Tůma, and was discovered by Marnix De Cat. The composer was born in Kostelec nad Orlicí in Bohemia and received the first music lessons from his father, who was an organist. He may have studied then in Prague at the Jesuit seminary. Later he was probably a pupil of another organist, Bohuslav Matěj Černohorský. At some time he settled in Vienna, where he became Kapellmeister to Count Franz Ferdinand Kinsky, Chancellor of Bohemia, member of one of its leading aristocratic families, and Imperial envoy. His employer gave him the opportunity to study with Johann Joseph Fux. When his employer died in 1741, he entered the service of the Empress Dowager, Elisabeth Christine of Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel (Charles VI's widow). He remained in her service until her death in 1750, and as the Stabat mater was first performed on 30 March 1748, he very likely composed this work for performance at her court.

The Stabat mater is scored for four solo voices, which are joined by four ripienists in the tutti episodes, and an instrumental ensemble of strings and basso continuo. It is notable that the string ensemble comprises two violins, viola and violone. The latter instrument played a major role in Austrian music of the time, whereas the cello was usually omitted. The opening movement is a duet of tenor and bass, and includes strong dissonances. Another section with marked dissonances is the fourth section, Pro peccatis. The piece ends, as so many sacred works of the baroque period, with a fugal section. Milan Poštolka, in his article on Tůma in New Grove, writes: "His sacred works, which were known to Haydn and Mozart, were noted by his contemporaries for their solidity of texture and their sensitive treatment of the text as well as for their chromaticism." This setting of the Stabat mater is a perfect illustration of this statement. It has to be considered a major discovery, and it is to be hoped that it will be available at some time in a printed edition.

In between the two vocal items, the Hathor Consort plays three instrumental works. Biber and Schmelzer are two of the best-known composers of their time, and their music, including the two pieces included here, are frequently performed and recorded. They both comprise sections of a contrasting character, following each other attacca, which is one of the hallmarks of the stylus phantasticus. The third composer,

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Andreas Christophorus Clamer, is a largely unknown quantity. Little is known about him; in 1682 he was appointed master of the choristers at Salzburg Cathedral. His *Partita I* is taken from a collection that he published that same year. It comprises four separate movements. It is scored for two violins, viola da gamba and basso continuo. The first movement is a lamento, which has to be played as slowly as possible. The viola da gamba part includes double stopping.

The Pluto-Ensemble and the Hathor Consort work closely together on a regular basis, and that pays off. It is an ideal partnership of two ensembles which approach the repertoire they perform with the same intensity. Here this results in profound performances of the two vocal works. The five soloists do a marvellous job. The voices of Joowon Chung, Griet De Geyter, Marnix De Cat, Charles Daniels and Harry van der Kamp blend perfectly, and thanks to that and their precise intonation, the dissonances and other harmonic peculiarities come off to the full. The instrumental pieces receive equally incisive performances.

The qualities of the performers and the character and quality of the music justify a special recommendation.

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