



Carl Philipp Emanuel BACH (1714-1786)

Empfindsamkeit!

Symphony in E minor, WQ 178 [10:52]

Oboe Concerto in E flat, WQ 165 [21:37]

Harpsichord Concerto in D minor, WQ 17 [24:34]

Symphony in D, WQ 183 No. 1 [10:57]

Alfredo Bernardini (oboe); Christian Kjos (harpsichord)

Barokkanerne

rec. 19-22 April 2012, Østre Fredrikstad Church, Fredrikstad, Norway

LAWO CLASSICS LWC 1038 [58:00]

Here's another wonderful addition to the CPE Bach revival trend. A Norwegian period-instrument ensemble called Barokkanerne puts its best foot forward in a collection of two concertos and two symphonies. As with all the CPE Bach concertos and symphonies I've heard so far, there's always something to intrigue and fascinate.

Oboist Alfredo Bernardini is a period-instrument luminary who's worked with Jordi Savall's orchestras, the Freiburg Baroque, La Petite Bande, and the English Concert. His solo reading is magisterial, especially in the moving minor-key *adagio*, and his instrument appealingly dusky compared to today's squeakier versions. It's really an oboe *d'amore*, I think. Christian Kjos, Barokkanerne's in-house harpsichordist, is an able soloist too.

For me the scene is stolen by the two compact, muscular symphonies, especially the opener in E minor. It's like Haydn's evil twin, with a first movement that seems by harmonic sleight of hand to lead directly into the second - like the second and third movements of Beethoven's Eighth. There are innumerable rhythmic tricks, gnarly instrumental flourishes and other ear-catching details. The other plus enjoyed by CPE Bach's symphonies is their brevity, at eleven minutes each. The concertos are short, too (21 and 24 minutes), but the harpsichord work especially brings to mind Stravinsky's comment about music that's over before the band stops playing.

Barokkanerne plays very well throughout, and has an appealing sound; they are warm, rather than dry or dusty, in slow movements, and attack CPE Bach's darker hues with vigour. The concert-like program and digipak presentation are pluses in my book.

As for competition: the harpsichord is available in a modern-instruments version with even a new piano, on Hänssler. It's also on Volume 4 of the complete BIS concerto series with Miklos Spányi. Heinz Holliger recorded the oboe concerto, though again period-instrument performances are far less common. The E-minor symphony is available on a similar Harmonia Mundi symphonies-and-concertos collection, and on a Freiburg Baroque album. For the symphony in D, though, this is the only game in town.

If you have the Harmonia Mundi album, grab this too. If you don't, grab both. After two centuries of unjustified neglect, one can never have too much CPE.

Brian Reinhart

After two centuries of neglect, CPE Bach is coming into his own. As long as the albums are this good, it's great news.