



Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681 - 1767)

Totally Telemann

Concerto for transverse flute, violin, strings and bc in e minor (TWV 52,e3) [9:39]

Concerto for oboe, strings and bc in c minor (TWV 51,c1) [8:41]

Overture for strings and bc in B flat 'La Bourse' (TWV 55,B11) [21:54]

Concerto for violin, strings and bc in B flat (TWV 51,B1) [12:42]

Concerto for recorder, transverse flute, strings and bc in e minor (TWV 52,e1) [13:32]

Ingeborg Christophersen (recorder), Torun Kirby Torbo (transverse flute), Alfredo Bernardini (oboe), Kati Debretzeni (violin)

Barokkanerne/Kati Debretzeni

rec. 16-20 March 2014, Jar Church, Bærum, Norway. DDD

LAWO LWC1074 [66:31]

Georg Philipp Telemann is 'hot property' these days. Never since I started reviewing discs - about 30 years ago - have so many recordings of his music crossed my path and that's in the last five years or so. It seems that he has finally gained the status he deserves and which he had in his own time: that of a truly great composer. The overture and the four concertos which are brought together on the present disc are ample evidence of his creative powers.

During his long career Telemann became acquainted with the different styles and forms then in vogue. At an early stage he studied French music including the works of Jean-Baptiste Lully. This resulted in a large number of orchestral suites or overtures. The *Overture in B flat* is one of the around one hundred that he wrote. Like several others it bears a title; it is often assumed that these titles were given by the composer, but that is anything but certain. Most overtures have been preserved in copies by his colleague and friend Christoph Graupner or members of the Darmstadt court chapel where Graupner acted as *Kapellmeister*. It is quite possible that a number of titles were added by the copyist. In this particular case the title *La Bourse* - the stock exchange - was added by a 20th-century musicologist. It has been suggested that Telemann - who from 1712 to 1721 worked in Frankfurt, the seat of the German stock exchange - delivered a satirical comment on two major economic bubbles which burst in the autumn of 1720. The Mississippi Company played a part in these bubbles, and the last movement of the suite, *L'espérance de Mississipi*, could refer to this. However, the other movements give little if any reason to link them with these economic affairs. The liner-notes suggest a connection with the Great Northern War between the Swedish Empire and an anti-Swedish coalition under Tsar Peter the Great of Russia which lasted from 1700 to 1721. The third and fourth movements seem to refer to this: *La Guerre en la Paix* (the peace in war) and *Les Vainqueurs vaincus* (the vanquished victors). The second movement is called *Le Répos interrompu* (the interrupted rest) which is expressed through short fast passages interrupting the basic slow tempo.

The rest of the programme is a mixture of the familiar and the lesser-known. The *Concerto in e minor* for recorder and transverse flute ranks among the first. In fact, it is one of the most often performed and recorded instrumental works from Telemann's pen. The last movement exposes Telemann's love of folk music, in this case the music he became acquainted with during his time in Sorau (today Zary in Poland). The combination of these two instruments is also vintage Telemann: the flute was the most fashionable instrument of his time and represents modernity, whereas the recorder was a relic of the past, especially the 17th century. It is often in the closing movement that Telemann turns to folk influences. That is also

the case in the *Concerto in c minor* for oboe. Its first movement opens with a strongly dissonant chord which is repeated later and reminded me of the opening of the ballet suite *Les Eléments* by the French composer Jean-Féry Rebel where he illustrates the chaos before the various elements "took their prescribed place in the natural order", as the preface says.

On several occasions Telemann vented his distaste for virtuosity for its own sake. That kept at arm's length from the Italian solo concerto but it didn't prevent him composing quite a large number of solo concertos, among them more than twenty for violin. He himself admitted that he wasn't a virtuoso on that instrument, and that he needed to study extensively if he wanted to emulate other violinists. The *Concerto in B flat* is quite virtuosic, especially in the second movement. It was written for Johann Georg Pisendel, the star violinist of the court orchestra in Dresden who was a good friend of Telemann. Its third movement is remarkable for its polyrhythm. According to the liner-notes the *Concerto in e minor* for transverse flute and violin is of doubtful authenticity. It is the first time I have read this; the work-list in *New Grove* and the Telemann work-list on the Canadian website *Musique et Musiciens* make no such suggestion. It is unusual that this concerto is in five movements; however, such irregularities can be expected from Telemann, rather like the combination of flute and violin in the solo parts. In the end it doesn't matter that much who wrote it: Telemann or Heinichen, to whom it is also attributed. It is a nice piece and rightly ranks among the better-known of the early 18th century.

Given that so many discs with music by Telemann have been released of late it is not easy for an ensemble to make sure its recording stands out from the crowd. It is not so much the choice of repertoire that should make this disc attract attention; rather the performances. The soloists deliver top-notch interpretations. Kati Debretzeni is excellent in her account of the solo part in the *Concerto in B flat*, and with Torun Kirby Torbo she gives a fine performance of the just mentioned double concerto. I especially like the use of a slight vibrato as an ornament, for instance in the first adagio. There is some beautiful ornamentation from Ms Torbo and Ingeborg Christophersen in the *Concerto in e minor*. Alfredo Bernardini truly lets his hair down in the closing movement of the *Concerto in c minor*, especially in the cadenzas. He rightly plays them with a wink at the folk music which dominates this movement. The playing of the tutti is spot-on: clear articulation and strong dynamic accents. These are really gestural interpretations - exactly what this repertoire needs.

This is one of the best Telemann discs I have heard recently.

Johan van Veen

www.musica-dei-donum.org

twitter.com/johanvanveen