

musica Dei donum

CD reviews

"La Muse et la Mise (en concert)"

Redherring Baroque Ensemble

rec: August 2015, Antwerp, Begijnhof

Antarctica Records - AR 003 (© 2016) (76'58")

Liner-notes: E/F; lyrics - no translations

[Cover & track-list](#)

anon: Dans les chansons que je compose^a [2]; *François BOUVARD* (c1683-1760): Chantez charmants oyseaux^a [8]; *François COUPERIN* (1668-1733): 4e Concert Royal in e minor [5]; 1er Ordre in g minor (Les Silvains) [3]; 2nd Ordre in d minor (Les Papillons) [3]; 8e Ordre in b minor (La Raphaële; Passacaille) [4]; 11e Ordre in c minor (L'étincelante ou la Bontems; Les graces naturelles) [3]; 15e Ordre in a minor (Musette de Choisy; Musette de Taverni) [3]; *Charles (François) DIEUPART* (1667?-1740?): 4e Suite in e minor [1]; *Jean-Baptiste LULLY* (1632-1687): Le bourgeois gentilhomme (LWV 43) (Je languis nuit et jour; Se que me muero de amor)^{ab}; *Michel Pignolet DE MONTÉCLAIR* (1667-1737): La bergère, cantate avec simphonie [7]

Sources: [1] Charles (François) Dieupart, *Six Suites de Clavessin*, 1701/1702; [2] Ch. Ballard, ed., *Brunetes ou Petits Airs Tendres*, 1703; François Couperin, [3] *Pièces de clavecin* [1er Livre], 1713; [4] *Second Livre de pièces de clavecin*, 1717; [5] *Concerts Royaux*, 1722; [6] *Troisième Livre de pièces de clavecin*, 1722; [7] Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, *Cantates, troisième livre*, 1728; [8] François Bouvard, *Ve Recueil d'Airs*, 1740

Soetkin Elbers, *soprano*^a; Patrick Denecker, Ruth Van Killegem^b, *recorder*; Ryo Terakado, *violin*; Kaori Uemura, *viola da gamba*; Floris De Rycker, *theorbo*; Guy Penson, *harpsichord*

One of the annoying things of the music industry is the repetition of the same stuff over and over again. The number of recordings of so-called 'masterworks' is uncountable and they are also performed in concert time and again. That would be less of a problem if not at the same time large parts of the repertoire would be ignored. However, the extension of the repertoire can be achieved in different ways. Much repertoire that is never performed certainly is well worth being dug up, but it is also possible to approach the standard repertoire from a different angle.

French composers of the early 18th century often mentioned various instruments with which their sonatas or suites could be played. The title pages usually list violin, transverse flute, oboe, viola da gamba and sometimes even the guitar as possible instruments. That in itself offers opportunities to perform the same music in different ways. But that is not all. Even when music was intended for a specific instrument composers sometimes suggested different ways of performing it in their prefaces. François Couperin is just one of them: in the preface to his *Apothéoses* he stated that they could be played on two harpsichords. "I play them this way with my family and with my students,

and it works very well, by playing the premier dessus and the bass on one harpsichord and the second dessus with the same bass in unison on the other one". This is how Jochewed Schwarz and Emer Buckley have recorded the *2e* and *4e Ordre* from *Les Nations*.

The Redherring Baroque Ensemble plays Couperin's music the other way round: pieces written for the harpsichord are performed with an ensemble of various instruments which is called *mise en concert* in the liner-notes. This practice is historically documented, for instance in the way compositions were published. One of the best-known examples is the set of six suites which Charles (or François) Dieupart published in 1701 in Amsterdam in two different editions. One was for harpsichord solo, the other for transverse flute, violin and bc. Redherring plays the fourth suite from this set; they make use of both editions as in the *allemande* one section is played by the harpsichord alone.

Couperin's *Concerts Royaux* bear further witness to the fact that there was no clear watershed between keyboard and instrumental chamber music at the time. They were published as an appendix to the *Troisième Livre de Clavecin* on two staves, suggesting a performance on the harpsichord. However, in his preface Couperin explains that they can also be played on a variety of instruments, such as the violin, the flute, the oboe, the viola da gamba and the bassoon. He himself played them at the chamber concerts of Louis XIV with André Danican Philidor (oboe), François Duval (violin), Pierre Dubois (bassoon) and Hilaire (Alarius) Verloge (viola da gamba). From this set we hear the *4e Concert Royal*.

Dieupart's suite and Couperin's *Concert* are taken as models for the ensemble's own 'transformations' as Patrick Denecker prefers to call them rather than 'arrangements'. "We consciously opted not to create genuine 'arrangements', but - following Couperin's example - to perform on the basis of the keyboard score, and arriving through practice to a 'mise en concert sur place' or 'mise en concert au moment de l'exécution'. (...) [We] could opt freely to double parts, to change the instrumentation, to add or omit notes, to turn a base line into a thorough bass or to just leave the harpsichord score untouched. The only guide that we have endeavored to follow most loyally, was 'le bon goût'...". This seems all well within the boundaries of what is historically tenable and sheds light on a practice which is still rather rare. I could imagine that not every piece from Couperin's harpsichord oeuvre is equally suited to such an approach but in the case of the pieces chosen here this practice works very well, also thanks to the fine performances by Redherring.

The programme is a little inconsistent in that it includes several vocal items; I can't see any logical connection between them and the *mise en concert* practice which is clearly the *raison d'être* of this recording. The *airs* from Lully's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* are also considerably older than the instrumental works. That said, they are all very well worth listening to and they receive an outstanding performance from Soetkin Elbers. She has a nice voice which is well suited to French repertoire. There is a slight vibrato now and then but it didn't really bother me. I especially appreciate her use of historical pronunciation which is still pretty rare in French secular music of the baroque era. Montéclair's cantata *La bergère* is done particularly well; in the last aria Ms Elbers' voice dies down at the closing words: "Let nothing disturb my slumbers". The closing section of the cantata, called *Sommeil*, is certainly one of the highlights of this disc.

The booklet omits translations of the lyrics; not even a French translation of the Spanish aria from Lully's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* is included. This is a little but very regrettable blot on a most interesting disc which is not only inspiring in regard to its approach of well-known repertoire but also delights the ear.