

Wenzel Ludwig Edler Von Radolt – Viennese Lute Concertos (2008)

Written by bluesever

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1. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Overture 2. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Allemande 3. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Courente 4. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Sarabande 5. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Menuette 6. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Gigue 7. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Menuette 8. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Bouree 9. Concerto Minor (Transponiert) - Retirada 10. Aria C Major - Aria 11. Aria C Major - Allemande 12. Aria C Major - Courente 13. Aria C Major - Sarabande 14. Aria C Major - Gavotte 15. Aria C Major - Bouree 16. Aria C Major - Menuette 17. Aria C Major - Gigue 18. Toccata F Major 19. Concerto F Major - Overture 20. Concerto F Major - Aria/Pastorale 21. Concerto F Major - La Querelle Des Amantes 22. Concerto F Major - Menuette En Canon 23. Concerto F Major - Capricio En Canon 24. Concerto F Major - Gigue 25. Concerto F Major - Menuette 26. Concerto G Minor - Allemande Et Gigue 27. Concerto G Minor - Courente Et Menuette 28. Concerto G Minor - Sarabande Et Aria 29. Concerto G Minor - Gavotte Et Bouree 30. Symphonia G Minor 31. Concerto C Minor - Overture 32. Concerto C Minor - Allemande 33. Concerto C Minor - Courente 34. Concerto C Minor - Sarabande 35. Concerto C Minor - Menuette 36. Concerto C Minor - Gavotte 37. Concerto C Minor - Menuette 38. Concerto C Minor - Gigue 39. Concerto C Minor - Bouree 40. Concerto C Minor – Retirada

Hubert Hoffmann, Sven Schwannberger, Klaus Köb (lute) Ars Antiqua Austria
Günar Letzbor - violin & direction rec. Church of Tre Colli, Italy

We as music-lovers admire the great masters of the 17th and 18th centuries. They were often admired by their contemporaries as well, including their employers. But we should not forget that this appreciation was not reflected by their social status. They moved in the highest circles, it's true, but they were not part of them. They were outsiders and from time to time they were reminded of their low social status. It is therefore not surprising that members of the social elite didn't want to be known as composers. In addition, composers were working to earn money, and members of the aristocracy never did that.

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It is therefore an exception when one finds an aristocrat in the ranks of the composers. Wenzel Ludwig Edler von Radolt, who was born and died in Vienna, was such an aristocrat. Both his parents belonged to aristocratic families and he had the title of 'baron'. Being "so allured by the beguiling countenance of most pleasurable music", he said that he was able "to dedicate the course of my life to her".

His favourite instrument was the lute, and he must have been a very accomplished player. His only publication, called 'Die Aller Treüeste Freindin' of 1701, contains a preface in which he explains the French lute tablature. In his compositions he meticulously adds the fingerings, giving a good insight into the way the lute was played in Vienna.

The full title of this publication is (in translation): "To my most true and confiding friend, inclined both to the merry and to the sad humours, herewith in the company of other faithful vassals of our innermost sensibility". It contains twelve lute concertos, usually scored for strings, lute and bass. There is some variety in the scoring, going from three lutes (in three different tunings), two violins, descant viol and bass (Concerto in e minor) to lute, one violin, one viola da gamba and bass. In the Aria in C the addition of a wind instrument is suggested - here the transverse flute is used.

The 'concertos' have little to do with the concerto in the style of Vivaldi with its three movements (fast - slow - fast) or the older four-movement form. They have much more in common with the overture-suite, very popular in Germany and Austria at the end of the 17th and the first half of the 18th centuries. The Concerto in e minor, for instance, begins with an overture, which is followed by a series of dance movements: allemande, courante, sarabande, menuette, gigue, menuette and bourée, and closes with a 'retirada'. The 'retirada' often appears in Austrian music of the late 17th century (Biber is an example). The Aria in C and the Concerto in c minor follow the same structure. The Concerto in F begins with an overture and contains some dances, but it also sports a character piece - especially popular in France - called 'La Querelle des Amantes', and an aria with the addition 'Pastorale'. There are also two movements in the form of a canon.

A remarkable piece is the Concerto in G. It contains four movements, all of them with two different dance rhythms played simultaneously: allemande and gigue, courante and menuette, sarabande and aria, gavotte and bourée. The two single pieces on this disc, the Toccata in F and the Symphonia in g minor, reflect the Italian style of Frescobaldi, which had considerable influence in Vienna in the late 17th century.

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The history of this recording is just as remarkable as the music itself. Hubert Hoffmann was aware of this collection, and for years tried to bring all the part-books together. It seemed that this would never happen: the first violin part just couldn't be found. One of the concertos had been published before World War II, so the missing part must have been available at the time. On the basis of this concerto Hubert Hoffmann started to make reconstructions of the first violin parts of the other concertos. By the time he had almost finished the job the missing parts were rediscovered.

Gunar Letzbor and his colleagues were very impressed by the quality of these works, and that is easy to understand. As the description of these concertos show there is a lot of variety in both scoring and musical forms. And the different 'humours' the title of the publication refers to are certainly reflected in this recording, the more so as here unequal temperament is used.

Hubert Hoffmann, Sven Schwannberger, Klaus Köb and the members of Ars Antiqua Austria give wonderful performances of great sensitivity, showing a thorough understanding of the Radolt's particular musical language. The rhythmic pulse is given much attention through clear articulation and strong dynamic accents. And the fight of the lovers (Querelle des Amantes) - a quite funny piece - is brilliantly depicted by the two violinists which each represent one of the participants.

This is a most enjoyable recording and considering the quality of the music will be attractive ... and not only to lute aficionados. ---Johan van Veen, musicweb-international.com

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