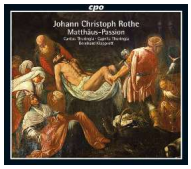
Johann Christoph Rothe - Matthäus-Passion (2010)



Disc 1 *1 Sinfonie 2 Chor: Herr Jesu Christ wahr Mensch und Gott 3 Arie: Kommt, kommt, ihr Gott ergebnen Herzen 4 Rezitativ: Und es begab sich, da Jesus alle diese Rede - Chor: Ja nicht auf das Fest - Rezitativ: Da nun Jesus war 5 Arie: So wandle doch, du liebe Seele 6 Rezitativ: Da ging hin der Zwölfen einer 7 Arie: O, unerhörtes Bubenstück 8 Rezitativ: Aber am ersten Tag der süßen Brot - Chor: Wo wiltu, daß wir dir bereiten - Rezitativ: Er sprach 9 Arie: Der Herr will noch zu guter Letzt bezeugen 10 Rezitativ: Und da sie den Lobgesang 11 Arie: Jesus stellt sich ganz und gar 12 Rezitativ: Und er kam zu seinen Jüngern 13 Arie: Jesu, der du dich für mich 14 Rezitativ: Da kam er zu seinen Jüngern 15 Arie: Freilich muß es also gehn 16 Rezitativ: Zu derselbigen Stunde sprach Jesus 17 Arie: Alle Jünger laufen weg 18 Rezitativ: Die aber Jesum gegriffen hatten - Chor: Er ist des Todes schuldig! - Rezitativ: Da speieten sie aus 19 Arie: Ihr Augen, laßt die Tränen fließen 20 Rezitativ: Des Morgens aber hielten alle Hohenpriester - Chor: Was gehet uns das an? 21 Arie: Was Wunder, Jesus will den Willen 22 Rezitativ: Auf das Fest aber hatte der Landpfleger - Chor: Barrabam - Rezitativ: Was soll ich denn machen mit Jesu 23 Arie: O Schmerz, der Heiland wird verlacht 24 Rezitativ: Da aber Pilatus sahe - Chor: Sein Blut komme über uns 25 Arie: Schweig, du tolle Jüdenbrut 26 Rezitativ: Da gab er ihnen Barrabam los 27 Chor: O Lamm Gottes unschuldig* Disc 2 *1 Rezitativ: Da nahmen die Kriegsknechte des Landpflegers - Chor: Gegrüßet seist du, der Juden König! 2 Arie: Jesu, deine Dornenkrone 3 Rezitativ: Und da sie ihn verspottet hatten 4 Arie: Was läßt du, mein Herz 5 Rezitativ: Und da sie an die Stätte kamen 6 Arie: Dies soll die Wahlstatt sein 7 Rezitativ: Da sie ihn gekreuzigt hatten 8 Duett: Jesu, unter deinem Kreuz 9 Rezitativ: Die aber fürüber gingen, lästerten ihn - Chor: Der du den Tempel Gottes zerbrichst 10 Arie: Es ist vollbracht 11 Rezitativ: Und siehe da, der Fürhang im Tempel zerriß - Chor: Wahrlich, dieser ist Gottes Sohn gewesen 12 Arie: Jesu, du liegst in der Erd 13 Rezitativ: Es war aber allda Maria Magdalena - Chor: Herr, wir haben gedacht - Rezitativ: Pilatus sprach zu ihnen 14 Chor: Wir danken dir von ganzem Herzen*

Christoph Dittmar Alto (Vocals) Beat Duddeck Alto (Vocals) Wolf Matthias Friedrich Bass (Vocal) Margaret Hunter Soprano (Vocal) Carsten Krüger Bass (Vocal) Mirko Ludwig Tenor (Vocal) Hans-Jörg Mammel Tenor (Vocal) Gudrun Sidonie Otto Soprano (Vocal) Manja Stephan Soprano (Vocal) Cantus Thuringia Choir/Chorus Capella Thuringia Orchestra Bernhard Klapprott Conductor

The new CD series »Musikerbe Thüringen« (Thuringian Musical Heritage) funded by the Free State of Thuringia and produced by cpo depicts a historical musical landscape that is unique in it kind and of international significance. The first release in this edition dedicated to the discovery, publication, and dissemination of important Thuringian musical monuments features the oldest extant oratorio passion from Central Germany: Johann Christoph Rothe's St. Matthew Passion. Biographical information about Rothe is scant, and it remains unclear whether he was familiar with the figural passions composed during prior decades. In any case, his passion composed in Sondershausen in 1697 offers eloquent testimony to the genre history of this musical form. The stylistic features of Rothe's passion were probably typical of the passions performed in Thuringia during Johann Sebastian Bach's youth. The formal spectrum represented in Rothe's settings ranges from the simple strophic aria to highly expressive solo songs in the style of the contemporary opera framed by ritornellos of the two violins or of the four-part gamba consort. ---jpc.de

It's a little hard, now, for us to imagine just how ubiquitous music-making was in many German States throughout the Baroque era. How vibrant and essential it was to their communities. Communities which were both closely-knit internally, yet connected on many levels one with the other. Even a casual perusal of the life of J.S. Bach reveals how typical (except in number!) were his connections, ties and allegiances across (and beyond) rural Thüringia and Saxony in the central south-eastern corner of what is now Germany. Johann Christoph Rothe was probably born in 1653 in Roßwein southeast of Leipzig into a family which (as the Bachs') had a distinguished tradition of varied musical service to their communities. He was very much a part of this society and part of similar "networks".

Like members of the Bach family, Rothe is believed to have received musical training (in Coburg, some distance south) as a performer; and to have changed appointments at his own request – presumably in the (vain?) hope that the next one would be better than the present. Other details of his life are sketchy. But we do know that he ended up in Sondershausen, which is now capital of the Kyffhäuserkreis district and lies about 50 km (30 miles) north of Erfurt. There it was that we know he wrote his only extant work, the Matthäus Passion in 1697, three years before his death, when he was just 47.

Musikerbe Thüringen (Music Legacy Thuringia) is a laudable project supported by the Free State of Th&uum;ringia with the aims of identifying, publishing and disseminating the rich musical heritage (into which J.S. Bach was born) of the region between 1500 and 1780. The CD set under consideration is the first in a series of an equally to be admired and supported

collaboration with the enterprising CPO label.

The work lasts just over an hour and a half, on two CDs. It makes an illuminating context for otherwise appreciating Bach's Matthew Passion of 20 years or so later. It's a valid and compelling piece in its own right, though; and we are fortunate to have an equally inspired performance by Cantus Thuringia and Capella Thuringia under Bernhard Klapprott. And apart from the obvious invitations to compare Rothe's with Bach's works, several contrasts emerge immediately. They bear examination in that they help us to appreciate this earlier Passion for its own sake.

Rothe's work is more operatic, which is not to say more dramatic, than Bach's… the older composer was exposed to opera at Coburg and often makes a liturgical impact by contrasting instrumentation, texture, tempi… and by his use of the pause. Bach's work is much longer, of course; more varied and with as greater range of emotional and human insights. Unsurprisingly, then, Rothe's Matthäus Passion is more intimate, less ambitious; it generally attempts to draw on less spectacular music and dramatic traditions than does that of Bach. Whether or not Rothe was familiar with the Matthew Passions of Johann Sebastiani (printed in 1672 in Königsberg) and Johann Theile (1673, Lübeck) we don't know. In any case, the present work remains the earliest surviving oratorio passion (as opposed to the chorale passion, which is based on a single Gospel's text) from this part of Germany. And as such is of considerable interest. It's performed beautifully enough on this set, though, to make great listening even were it not for the historical interest. It should be acquired by any lover of the German Baroque.

Despite Rothe's Matthäus Passion's not making anything like the impact through variety and rhetoric that Bach's work does, the pace, musical architecture and alternation of chorus, aria, recitative, and a purely instrumental opening make Rothe's a compelling work and one which draws the listener in immediately and holds his/her interest to the last note. Few of the numbers are longer than three minutes or so; the longest is only seven. Yet this is not a flurry of lightweight or diluted ideas. Rather, there is an integrity and deep understanding of and empathy with the passion story which is very well brought out by three soloists in addition to members of Cantus and Capella Thuringia, of five singers and nine instrumentalists (including Bernhard Klapprott, organ, harpsichord as well as director) respectively. They were formed in 1999 in Weimar. Performers take the parts of the Evangelist, Christus, Pilate's wife, Peter and Judas etc.

What may surprise you, though (there are no other recordings currently available of music by Rothe, let alone of this work) is the extent to which the development of the passion narrative is so precisely, delicately yet uncompromisingly pursued. No spare sequences or superfluous

emotional "backwaters", for instance. What's just as pleasing is the drive, and yet a considered and sensitive drive, with which these performers approach the highly charged and indeed passionate story they're telling. In full accord with the way in which the idea of a Bible story in accessible form (music) was conceived. Listen to the way in which the Evangelist provides weight to the longer recitatives describing the events after the crucifixion itself [CD.2 tr.s 9, 11, 13], for example. No let up in intonation. Yet no overplaying. The sense we are left with is a superb balance of fulfillment yet grief.

The booklet that comes with this resonant yet direct recording provides clear and informative background information – on the likely performance practice in Sondershausen at the close of the seventeenth century, for example. (We are particularly fortunate that the chapel library in the town preserves documents supporting this.) The text is reproduced in German and English, with indications of the instruments (and singers) used for each.

This is a performance which has a great deal more than curiosity value. The singing is first rate; the performers' familiarity with and skill at conveying the finer points of the idiom are evident, without ever intruding. The melodies are pleasing, if not so original as those of Bach. Textures and tension are thoughtful and contribute towards making an impact which must surely have both enthralled and satisfied the communities in one of those quiet, self-confident and very human-sized towns in that delightful part of Germany. ---Mark Sealey, classical.net

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