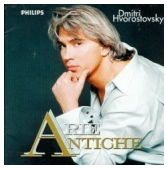
Dmitri Hvorostovsky - Arie Antiche (1998)



Academy of St Martin in the Fields Director: Sir Neville Marriner *01. Carissimi: Vittoria mio core 02. Vivaldi: Se il cor guerriero 03. Gluck: O del mio dolce ardor 04. Giordani: Caro mio ben 05. Handel: Dignare o domine 06. Vivaldi: Orribile lo scempio 07. Cakdara: Selve amiche 08. Gluck: Che faró senza Euridice 09. Handel: Ombra mai fu 10. Sorge infausta 11. Caldara: Come rragio di sol 12. Durante: Vergin, tutto amor 13. Handel: Che sprezzando 14. Scarlatti: Gia il sole dal gange 15. Anon: Nina 16. Durante: Danza, danza, fanciulla 17. Caccini: Amarilli, mia bella 18. Cesti: Si mantiene il mio amor 19. Stradella: Pieta, signore*
Dmitri Hvorostovsky (Baritone) Academy of St. Martin in the Fields Sir Neville Marriner (Conductor)

Hvorostovsky brings to these works the beauty of tone and elegance of phrasing that he acquired from bel canto, sometimes having an extra degree of intensity that puts the emotion of the music before its mere form.

Taking time out from his nights at the opera in Eugene Onegin and Don Carlo, Dmitri Hvorostovsky is here found moonlighting with the music of an earlier era. There is no point in being snooty about this, as he is following in an honourable tradition. Any favourite among the one antiche, such as Giordani's Caro mio ben, has acquired quite a roll-call of major recording artists down the years: Caballe, Wunderlich, Pavarotti, De Luca and Schlusnus, to name only the most prestigious. Most of them have favoured an orchestral arrangement of the music and Hvorostovsky is no exception, employing a rather sweet-toothed one made by his conductor, Sir Neville Marriner. The Gluck and Handel arias are naturally performed in their original orchestrations, but the other items on this disc have all been arranged by various hands. Marriner and the ASMF make sure the accompaniments are always lively, not least thanks to a hyperactive harpsichordist who is overkeen to make his presence felt, and the recording is well balanced.

How does Hvorostovsky deport himself in this baroque apparel? Of course, there is nothing 'authentic' about his approach, but the cut of the music suits him well enough and he brings with him the style that he has acquired from the bel canto repertoire. That means beauty of tone and elegance of phrasing, heard typically in the sacred extracts from Handel's Dettingen Te Deum and Brockes Passion. On the best tracks he goes further: Caldara's moving Come raggio di sol and Durante's Vergin, tutto amor are both sung with an extra degree of intensity that puts the emotion of the music before its mere form.

It is surprising how many of these songs and arias coincide with the choices made by Dame Janet Baker in her various recital discs devoted to Gluck, Handel and arie amorose, the latter also conducted by Marriner (Philips, 1/93). Comparisons show Baker to be the one who illuminates the music from within, while Hvorostovsky is more generalized — for example, a sad and passive Gluck Orfeo alongside her urgently dramatic portrayal. I enjoyed the two numbers arranged by Hvorostovsky himself, where he sings with a nice freedom. The final track — Niedermeyer's sombre Pieta, Signore, powerfully delivered — is the longest item and gives the disc a last-minute sense of substance. Hvorostovsky's many admirers have no reason to hold back. -- Gramophone [3/1998], arkivmusic.com

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