

Claudio Monteverdi - I 7 peccati capitali (2016)

Written by bluesever

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1 *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, SV 308, Act I Scene 4: *Speranza, tu mi vai* 06:51 2 *Quarto scherzo delle ariose vaghezze: Si dolce e'l tormento*, SV 332 05:05 3 *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, SV 308, Act I Scene 2: *Chi parla?* 03:59 4 *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, SV 325, Act III Scene 5: *Compagni, udiste?* 07:18 5 *VIII libro dei madrigali: Ardo e scoprir ahi lasso*, SV 158 05:15 6 *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, SV 308, Act I Scene 9: *Son risoluto al fine* 04:26 7 *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, SV 308, Act II Scene 6: *Or che seneca e morto* 05:26 8 *Selva morale e spirituale: O ciechi il tanto affaticar che giova*, SV 252 04:04 9 *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, SV 325, Act II Scene 3: *Pastor d'armenti puo* 02:13 10 *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, SV 325, Act V Scene 2: *Imparate mortali* 03:08 11 *IV libro dei madrigali: Si ch'io vorrei morire hora chio bacio amore*, SV 89 03:02 12 *L'Orfeo*, SV 318, Act III: *Orfeo son io* 05:07 13 *III libro dei madrigali: Vattene pur crudel con quella pace*, SV 67 06:35 14 *VIII libro dei madrigali: Altri canti d'amor*, SV 146 09:55
Mariana Flores - soprano Francesca Aspromonte - soprano
Christopher Lowrey - countertenor Emiliano Gonzalez Toro - tenor Cappella Mediterranea
Leonardo García Alarcón - direction, spinet, organ

Passions run high in the operas and madrigals of Claudio Monteverdi, and they dominate Capella Mediterranea's 2016 release on Alpha-Classics, *I 7 Peccati Capitali* (The Seven Deadly Sins). Interpreted here as the seven deadly sins of sloth, envy, pride, greed, gluttony, lust, and wrath, and accompanied by corresponding virtues listed as hope, extravagance, chastity, humility, temperance, charity, and courage, the excerpts from Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, and *Orfeo*, along with selections from *Selva morale e spirituale*, *Ariose Vaghezze*, and the *Libri dei Madrigali*, provide representations of 17th century morality and key examples of Monteverdi's *seconda pratica*, described by the group's leader, Leonardo García Alarcón, as "the rationalisation of emotions through music, and a meditation on human vanity." The intensely dramatic performances by this ensemble of six singers, joined by a consort playing period instruments, give an idea of the wide expressive range Monteverdi employed in his music and the theatricality and virtuosity of his artists. This extraordinary album was released in anticipation of the 450th anniversary of Monteverdi's birth, and the enthusiasm and high energy of Capella Mediterranea's performances suggest that their celebrations in 2017 will be quite lively and entertaining. ---Blair Sanderson, AllMusic Review

Cappella Mediterranea has already made several distinguished recordings, including a Monteverdi Vespers for the Ambronay label (review), and their Carmina Latina album for the Ricercar label (review). This is the first of Leonardo García Alarcón's recordings for Alpha Classics, and it marks the 450th anniversary of Monteverdi's birth.

This is both an original programme of music by one of Alarcón's favourite composers and a kind of sampler of Monteverdi's music - both the placing of arias and madrigals in a new context, and providing an introduction that can and should lead to further exploration. Monteverdi never wrote a work called I 7 Peccati Capitali, but this anthology alternates between sins and virtues, resulting in fourteen superbly performed and recorded tracks of pieces from L'incoronazione di Poppea, Il ritorno d'Ulisse, Orfeo, the madrigals, and including an excerpt from the Selva morale e Spirituale.

The booklet notes, presented in a gorgeously illustrated hardback cover, start with Alarcón's own comments on 'Monteverdi or the Garden of Delights.' He sums up L'incoronazione di Poppea as "perhaps the most amoral opera in the history of music," while "offering a moral remedy to vice, in the madrigals of the Selva morale."

Beyond concerns of vice and sanctity, this is the kind of album which you can kick off your shoes, sit back and revel in: following the texts in translation so you know what's going on if that has priority. With both excellent singing and acting, the vocal performances are second to none, and it's certainly worth being made aware of the emotional depth, irony and wit in both Monteverdi's settings and the performances themselves. Each track runs with a logical progression to the next, each cleverly chosen to suit the tonality of the last and to provide both contrast and continuity.

Purists may sniff a little at such a compilation of music from disparate sources, but they will be missing out on a real treat if they avoid this release. More than just a collection of highlights, this is a well-judged programme that creates its own narrative, from the opening 'Hope' to a finale that champions 'Courage' via Nero's lustful desires and designs on Poppea. There are plenty of other dramas and virtues along the way. This is a delectable box of musical treasures that you will certainly want to open more than once. ---Dominy Clements, musicweb-international.com

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