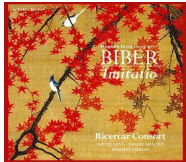


Biber Schmelzer Poglietti Kerll - Imitatio (2016)

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1 Biber - *Serenada à 5* 9'36 2 Biber - *Balletti Lamentabili à 4* 9'45 3 Schmelzer - *Sonata representative* 11'33 4 Schmelzer - *Sonata à viol. è viola* 6'36 5 Schmelzer - *Serenata con altre arie à 5* 7'07 6 Poglietti - *Toccatina sopra la Ribellione di Hungheria* & Kerll, Halter. *Der steyrische Hirt* 3'42 7 Biber - *Sonata VI* 13'01 8 Kerll - *Sonata A 3 ex G Bmol* 7'15 9 Biber - *Battalia* 10'47 Ricercar Consort: Sophie Gent, Tuomo Suni [violins] Philippe Pierlot [alto & bass viols] Kaori Uemura, Rainer Zipperling [bass viols] Frank Coppieters [violone] Maude Gratton [harpichord] Julien Wolfs [organ, harpsichord] Philippe Pierlot – director

At the end of the Thirty Years War, the support of the Viennese Imperial Court allowed the emergence of an extraordinarily talented generation of musicians speaking with virtuosity, humour and depth. Schmelzer, Biber and Kerll were at the forefront. For Carnival festivities where music has pride of place they regale us with earthy works that mimic the sounds of nature and everyday life. They also had to meet the taste of Emperor Leopold I, who particularly appreciated imitative counterpoint, and for whom they composed these sonatas which have the power to elevate the soul and spirit.

"the Ricercar Consort, whose offerings on Mirare over the years are always exquisitely rendered." Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, Gramophone

The Austrian baroque era produced a wealth of outstanding instrumental music, among which the works of Biber, Muffat, Schmelzer and Fux spring to mind. The present programme is on the theme of instrumental works in the 'representative' style, setting out to imitate the sounds of life,

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nature and human activities. The composers represented here are Schmelzer, Biber, Kerll and Poglietti - the latter also well worth hearing for his other keyboard output, available in several recordings.

The choice of works for the present disc is fascinating, and the playing absolutely outstanding. The period-instrument Ricercar Consort, consisting here of strings and keyboard, produce beautiful, pointed playing and a lovely blend of instrumental tone. Viol player Philippe Pierlot's direction is extremely stylish and expressive. Biber's oft-recorded opening 'Serenada à 5', which includes a Ciacona movement based on the Nightwatchman's call, is very nicely done, the vocal part sung by Matthias Vieweg. The same composer's Balletti Lamentabili (track 2) is outstanding for its expressive rendition by the ensemble. Schmelzer's Sonata rappresentativa (3) brings a catalogue of imitation bird calls and other animal noises which will surely delight fans of David Attenborough; this is a fine example of the work of this extraordinarily inventive composer, and it's rendered here with both virtuosity and feeling.

Schmelzer's Serenata con altre arie (5) is another atmospheric and affecting work. The two keyboard pieces by Poglietti and Kerll (6) make an entertaining pairing, very nicely played although we're not told in the listing which of the two keyboard players to thank for this. Another brilliant work by Biber, Sonata VI, with its superb Passacaglia, is also beautifully performed (7). The programme is rounded off with a dashing rendition of Biber's Battalia (9), with some lovely melodies and a Lamento to end the disc on a subdued note.

There are many fine recordings of selections from this Austrian baroque repertoire, and rightly so, including those from the likes of Musica Antiqua Köln, Ars Antiqua Austria, Concentus Musicus Wien, Accentus Austria and Freiburger BarockConsort. But this one from Pierlot's Ricercar Consort is among the loveliest I've heard, both in selection and in execution. The recorded sound and booklet notes are excellent, and altogether this is an extremely entertaining baroque programme graced by outstanding musicianship. --- Stephen Midgley, amazon.com

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