Jan Zach - Requiem Solemne · Vesperae de Beata Virgine (2016)

- Requiem solemne in c minor *1. Requiem aeternam 01:36 2. Te decet hymnus 02:08 3. Kyrie 01:57 4. Dies irae 02:24 5. Recordare, Jesu pie 01:39 6. Lacrymosa dies illa 01:09 7. Dona eis requiem 01:00 8. Domine Jesu Christe 01:16 9. Sed signifer 05:21 10. Quam olim Abrahae 01:29 11. Sanctus 00:45 12. Benedictus 02:43 13. Osanna in excelsis 00:34 14. Agnus Dei 02:14 15. Lux aeterna 00:27 16. Cum sanctis 02:03*
- Vesperae de Beata Virginie in D major
17. Dixit Dominus 02:08 18. Juravit Dominus 02:09 19. Dominus a dextris 01:20 20. De torrente 02:12 21. Gloria 00:40 22. Laudate pueri (Psalm 112/113) 03:13 23. Laetatus sum (Psalm 121/122) 06:56 24. Nisi Dominus (126/127) 02:56 25. Magnificat 00:32 26. Quia respexit 02:00 27. Fecit potentiam 01:24 28. Deposuit potentes 02:33 29. Gloria 00:47
Michaela Šrůmová - soprano Sylva Čmugrová - alto Čeněk Svoboda - tenor Jaromír Nosek - bass Musica Florea, Collegium Floreum Marek Štryncl - conductor

Jan Zach, a new name in this editorial series, ranks among the "Czech music migrants" of the 18th century. However, before leaving war-struck Bohemia in 1741 when he was twenty-eight years old, he had already composed a substantial amount of music. The focus of his work lies in liturgical music - solely the text of the requiem mass has been set to music by Zach three times. His Requiem solemne in c minor was one of the most frequently performed requiems on Prague church choirs (a fact witnessed by a great number of surviving copies) and could still be heard as late as the 20th century. Today's audiences can listen to this mass as a resounding textbook of compositional styles used at the time and admire Zach's impressive array of style elements ranging from strict counterpoint to modern coloratura arias. His Vesperae de Beata Virgine (introduced here in a modern-time premiere) were also widely used in Prague in Zach's time. Here we can already trace the first echoes of the style of the Viennese classicist school. Both works give us an idea of music that sounded in newly built Prague churches in the 1730s. Members of the internationally renowned ensemble Musica Florea have accomplished this premiere with their characteristic lively engagement. ---cdmusic.cz

Jan Zach was part of the great Bohemian composing diaspora of the 1730s and 1740s. Though not born in the city, he grew up in Prague where he worked as a professional organist and won a series of commissions in the late 1730s for a sequence of pieces to celebrate the feast day of St John of Nepomuk. Soon afterwards he left Bohemia, enduring a torrid time as Kapellmeister of the orchestra of the court of the Prince-Elector of Mainz. After this he seems to have taken to a freelance life, travelling throughout Europe. By all accounts he lived modestly and diligently and never sought advancement.

His biography makes him a most fitting candidate for Supraphon's long-established series of music from Eighteenth-Century Prague. There are two large-scale works of which the Vespers are making their first appearance on disc. Both were recorded live though I assume patching sessions were necessary because, as so often in these circumstances, the performances are technically excellent and the audience noise notable largely by its absence.

The Requiem solemne was for long one of Zach's best-remembered works. Its Kyrie was extracted and transcribed for the organ and had a long after-life well into the twentieth century as an independent piece. And indeed, the boldness of its conception is striking, as it passes through all twelve tones of the chromatic scale forming a concentrated two-minute exegesis of Baroque fugal procedure. There are novel compositional features in the Requiem, which draws on models established by that most distinguished and influential of Czech composers, Zelenka, as well as Italianate models like Caldara. I even detect the influence of Pergolesi in the concluding Lux aeterna, though I'm not sure if Zach could have known the 1736 Stabat Mater. The Requiem has its conventional procedures – a kind of Euro-cosmopolitanism of expression – but it's in its more coloratura moments, in its arias and in the distinctive choral writing that it comes into its own. The choral sighing figures, the pathos of the overlapping vocal writing in the Agnus Dei – all these are distinctive and attractive. Sorrow and exultation are here held in a true balance.

The companion Marian vespers, always a popular feature of Prague's musical life at the time, offers a more affirmative work, perhaps more revealing of the so-called Pre-Classicism that Zach was to embrace. Although it's a more avuncular piece it possesses some dramatic word setting and elements that may remind the listener of his great contemporary, Vivaldi. The psalm settings may also remind the listener occasionally of developments in Viennese classicism, though some of the contrapuntal writing remains conventional.

Marek Štryncl with his Musica Florea forces directs with great aplomb, carefully delineating between the very different demands of both pieces. The soloists are mostly attentive to the technical flourishes as well as to the lyricism embedded in the music – I admired soprano Michaela Šrůmová the most in these respects - but plaudits must also go the orchestral and especially choral forces. ---Jonathan Woolf, musicweb-international.com

Jan Zach, nové jméno v této ediční řadě, bývá řazen mezi „českou hudební emigraci“ 18. století. Než však ve svých 28 letech ve válečném roce 1741 opustil Čechy, měl už za sebou hezkou řádku skladeb. Těžiště jeho tvorby leží v oblasti hudby liturgické; jen text zádušní mše zhudebnil třikrát. Requiem solemne c moll patřilo na kůrech pražských kostelů k těm nejčastěji provozovaným (svědčí o tom množství dochovaných opisů) a zaznívalo z nich až do století dvacátého. Tuto mši lze dnes poslouchat i jako znějící čítanku tehdy obvyklých kompozičních stylů, s úžasem nad autorovým širokým záběrem – od přísného kontrapunktu až po moderní koloraturní árie. Zachovy Mariánské nešpory (zde v novodobé premiéře) měly v tehdejší Praze také hojné uplatnění a zaznívají v nich již názvuky stylu vídeňských klasiků. Obě díla nám skýtají představu, jaká hudba zněla v novostavbách pražských kostelů 30. let 18. století. Musica Florea, soubor mezinárodního renomé, se ujal této premiéry s nasazením sobě vlastním. ---cdmusic.cz

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