

# Vocal



Alexandra Coghlan on Handel duets from soprano and mezzo: *'Neither singer is afraid of ugliness; their directness brings an operatic palette and scope to these domestic works'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 76



Richard Croft on 'Cary' from *'The Merchant of Venice'* ► REVIEW ON PAGE 76

## JS Bach • Schelle

**JS Bach** Cantatas - No 44, Sie werden euch in den Bann tun; No 48, Ich elender Mensch, wer wird mich erlösen; No 73, Herr, wie du willst, so schicks mit mir; No 109, Ich glaube, lieber Herr, hilf meinem Unglauben

Schelle Komm, Jesu, komm

Dorothee Mields *sop* Damien Guillon *countertenor*

Thomas Hobbs *ten* Peter Kooij *bass*

Collegium Vocale Gent / Philippe Herreweghe

PHI Ⓢ LPH012 (69' • DDD • T/T)



These four cantatas all come from the first year of Bach's time in Leipzig, during which

he had just started working hard on the 'well-regulated church music' project that would produce five complete annual cycles of church cantatas in as many years. Not surprisingly, the 1723-24 cycle is a diverse one, but the centrality of chorale melody is a constant here: No 73's opening chorus uses its chorale's first four notes as a motto, then intersperses choral renditions of its individual lines with bursts of recitative; No 44 has it halfway through as a simple tenor solo over the continuo's agile tread; and No 109 closes with a rolling chorale prelude-style setting for choir and orchestra. Most touchingly, No 48 overlays its opening chorus, wearily pondering the question 'who shall deliver me from this body of death?', with a wordless answer: trumpet and oboe intoning a chorale melody associated with the text 'Ah, Lord, forgive me yet'. It is a subtle touch that most of us will have needed Christoph Wolff's booklet-note to point out. But its quiet reassurance for those with the faith - religious, musical or both - to listen is a perfect example of why one should never write off a release like this as just another disc of Bach cantatas.

Not that Philippe Herreweghe is a conductor to hammer these things out. His is a wisdom that looks to let the music speak by its sheer sonic and intellectual beauty, and his ear and mind enable him

to achieve that aim with unerring grace, humility and skill. With his superb 12-strong choir matched by an orchestra of deep but unfussy expertise, he produces a purring model of modern-day Bach performance. His four like-minded soloists, familiar from his other recent Bach recordings, gather for the final track, a strophic 'aria' affectingly alternating duple and triple metres by Bach's Leipzig predecessor-but-one, Johann Schelle.

Lindsay Kemp

## JS Bach



Mass in B minor, BWV232

Regliant Bühler *sop* Susanne Krumbiegel *mez*

Susanne Langner *contr* Martin Lattke *ten* Markus

Flaig *bass* St Thomas's Choir, Leipzig; Freiburg

Baroque Orchestra / Georg Christoph Biller

Accentus Ⓢ DVD ACC20281; Ⓢ ACC10281

(114' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS-HD MA, DTS5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 + s)

Recorded live at St Thomas's Church, Leipzig,

June 23, 2013



There is a natural attraction in a live performance of Bach's choral masterpiece made in the church where

he worked and is now buried, performed by (the successors of) the choir that he directed. The work's high points (by which I mean the fugal numbers) come across with all the requisite grandeur, and it's they that find this performance at its best, musically speaking. In the opening section of the *Credo*, however, one senses the trebles flagging, unless it's those held notes that are overly taxing: once the 'Patrem' kicks in, things improve noticeably. The absence of pathos in the 'Crucifixus' is in its own way very poignant, drawing attention to the formula of the descending bass by failing to overload it until the hushed tones of the conclusion (which are here more a matter of orchestration than interpretation). More hushed still is the conclusion of the 'Confiteor': the transition from its fugue to the 'Et expecto' is nicely