

American Record Guide
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Peter Loewen



KL1508
Zürcher Barockorchester – La Dresda Galante

La Dresda Galante (The Dresden Style) is the music from the first half of the 17th Century, at a time when Dresden was becoming known as ‘Venice on the Elbe’. It includes composers like Hasse and Heinichen, but also the many Italian composers and musicians who joined their ranks in Dresden, and also the Augustan Saxon Dukes who employed them – Friedrich August I and II. Their tastes leaned toward Italian music, so the court violinist, Johann Georg Pisendel, copied large numbers of works, particularly Vivaldi’s, while traveling in Italy. Nicola Schneider claims Dresden had the largest library of Italian music outside of Italy.

Apropos of this “Italian diaspora”, the program opens with Vivaldi’s G-minor Concerto (R 577). The Zurich Baroque Orchestra likes a tight, intense sound that puts one on the edge of one’s seat. So much the better! They play the concerto with such gusto that one can hardly imagine what could follow. But it is the perfect set up for the fireworks in Hasse’s motet ‘Alta Nubes Illustrata’, sung by Miriam Feuersinger, who is quickly becoming one of my favorite sopranos. Her voice is remarkably supple, adaptable to every requirement – the decorative coloratura in the opening and closing arias ‘Alta Nubes Illustrata’ and ‘Alleluja’ and the gentle contours of ‘Coelesti Incendio Amoris’. Feuersinger’s voice also breathes life into Giovanni Alberto Ristori’s cantata Lavinia a Turno. Ristori came to Dresden in 1715, 16 years before Hasse, though his music bears many of the characteristics that Hasse would make famous – coloratura and rich contours.

I also recommend Feuersinger’s recordings of Graupner cantatas (Christophorus 77381, July/Aug 2014) and arias by Erlebach (Christophorus 77366; July/Aug 2013). Friedemann Bach’s Harpsichord Concerto in D comes between the vocal pieces, and the program closes with Heinichen’s Concerto a 7 in G. Texts and notes are in English.