Johann Sebastian Bach: Highlights for Trumpet and Organ

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Fanfare (G. C. - 1988.07.01)

Both Güttler and Läubin have tapped a relatively obscure source of older music authentically intended for the trumpet. During the early 18th century some fairly well-known composers wrote music for an ensemble of trumpet, a small number of woodwinds (double reeds), and basso continuo. These unusual works have been called chamber concertos because of the degree of integration of solo and tutti instruments.

Läubin presents three of these concertos – by Albioni, the indefatigable Telemann, and Johann Wilhelm Hertel, son of Johann Christian, a prized student of J. S. Bach. Like Bach's son Carl Philipp Emanuel, Johann Wilhelm wound up in norther Germany and is associated with the so-called Berlin school, which included, as well as the younger Bach, such distinguished members as C. H. Graun and the Bendas. Audite rounds out the disc with a transcription for oboe, English horn and two bassoons of two contrapuncti from the Art of Fugue.

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Both Läubin's and Güttler's albums are recommended to general listeners as well as to trumpet enthusiasts. Both are brilliantly played and recorded, and, of course, both offer unusual repertory. Of the two, I preferred the Capriccio disc, in part, I suppose, because it offers a longer and more varied program, but also because Güttler is, in my opinion, the most exciting trumpet virtuoso now before the public. His playing has a remarkable virility but is, at the same time, perfectly controlled. But Läubin (who is the first trumpeter of Helmuth Rilling's Stuttgart Bach-Collegium) is no slouch either.

Nor is Michel, but his program, all Bach but all transcribed, is less interesting. I remain unconvinced that I need to hear, for example, the Air from the Third Orchestral Suite or the Eb Flute Sonata – which becomes an entirely different piece of music – on a trumpet. The best parts of Michel's album are the concertos after Prince Johann Ernst and Vivaldi, in which he added trumpet parts seem entirely plausible. This album is directed toward trumpet specialists, but they should find it quite listenable. The sound is excellent.

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