



(LEMS 8058)

BAROQUE MASTERWORKS AMA DEUS ENSEMBLE

Ama Deus Baroque Ensemble:
Valentin Radu, solo organ/conductor
Andrea Brown, soprano
Elin Frazier, solo trumpet
Sarah Davol, John Ostendorf

PROGRAM NOTES

This CD features favorites from the great works of Baroque composers Handel, J.S. Bach and Vivaldi, as performed by Philadelphia's premiere early music concert group, the Ama Deus Ensemble. Its music director, Valentin Radu, serves here as both conductor and solo organist. The masterworks heard here are well-known, indeed, best-known--the Bach and Handel organ works represent the composer's finest; Bach's Cantata #51 is his surely most popular; and the Handel Trumpet Suite and Vivaldi Oboe Concerto demonstrate the virtuosity of two of the most popular Baroque solo instruments.

The recording was made at the historic Arch Street United Methodist Church in Center City, Philadelphia. Maestro Valentin Radu is presently its organist and choirmaster. The history, character and specifications of the church's renowned organ are fascinating.

-- John Standbridge, Organ Builder

JOHN C.B. STANDBRIDGE

John C. B. Standbridge was born in Birmingham, England in December 1801, and came to Philadelphia as a child. He attended the University of Pennsylvania, studying medicine and after graduation helped in his father's pharmaceutical business, although music was becoming a prominent avocation.

Standbridge was hired as organist of increasingly prestigious churches, finally accepting a much-sought-after post at Old Christ Church in Philadelphia and thereafter devoted himself entirely to music, studying and teaching. In 1840 he began building organs possessing superior tonal qualities, particularly in the reed stops. These delicate stops were perfected to a point not equaled in his lifetime. The stops, claimed the Philadelphia Press in his obituary, "combined with each other harmoniously, and were smooth and mellow in tone, free from all nasal quality and singularly musical."

As large orders for church organs came in, Standbridge established a factory to fill them. He was a perfectionist, preferring to lose money on a contract rather than allow an instrument to leave his shop whose tone did not reach his standards. The organ at Arch Street United Methodist Church, heard here, was among his last. At age 70, having lost his wife and eldest son, Standbridge was beginning to fail physically. Yet, his concern for the perfection of his craft was undiminished. Upon completion of its organ, Arch Street Church dedicated a gala concert in Standbridge's name. A testimonial concert, performed on December 7, 1871, paid public recognition to his lifetime achievement. Mr. Standbridge must have been particularly pleased that the choir sang one of many hymns he had written. His life's work done, John Standbridge died 8 days later.

THE ORGAN

Standbridge's Arch Street Methodist Church organ was built and installed in the choir loft after completion of the church's sanctuary and demonstrated with a grand series of concerts between May 4-11, 1871, given by eight well-known organists prior to that December concert honoring the builder himself.

The original Standbridge organ had 17 registers with 1,008 pipes in the Great Organ, 9 registers and 489 pipes in the Choir Organ, 14 registers and 709 pipes in the Swell Organ, and 4 registers and 116 pipes in the Pedal Organ, with 7 additional couplers and mechanical stops for a total of 52 registers and 2,322 pipes.

The organ was electrified and rebuilt in 1916. The renovated organ and console were installed by J. W. Steere & Sons of Springfield, Mass. Another rebuilding in 1958 required only re-leathering of the bellows, replacement of Diapason pipes and reeds and a new console, done by the Canadian organ firm of Casavant Frères Limités. Its rededication was celebrated with an organ recital by world-famous organist, E. Power Biggs on April 23, 1959.

Today only the decorative case and pipes in the organ loft, and perhaps one or two stops remain of the original Standbridge organ. However, the quality of its tone has never wavered since the day it was first dedicated nearly a century and a half ago.

TRACKS:

HANDEL: Organ Concerto, Op. 4, No. 2

1. A tempo ordinario / Allegro - 5:35

2. Adagio / Allegro ma non troppo - 3:08

VIVALDI: D Minor Oboe Concerto, RV 454

3. Allegro - 3:23

4. Largo - 2:02

5. Allegro - 2:46

BACH

6. D Minor Toccata - 2:07

7. Fugue - 4:36

BACH: Jauchzet Gott [Cantata #51]

8. Aria: Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen - 3:50

9. Recitative: Wir beten zu dem Tempel an - 2:14

10. Aria: Hochster, mache deine Gute ferner alle Morgen neu - 4:50

11. Choral...Air: Sei Lob und Preis - 3:23

12. Final Aria: Allelujah - 2:01

13. BACH: Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring - 2:57

HANDEL: Trumpet Suite in D Major

14. Overture - 1:39

15. Gigue - 1:49

16. Menuetto - 1:50

17. Bourree - 0:52

18. March - 1:09

BACH

19. E-flat Major Prelude - 7:23

20. Fugue - 4:56

CREDITS

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