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**Review of Georg Philipp Telemann, Ein feste Burg, Carus Records,  
2005**

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# Compact Disc Reviews

David Castleberry, editor <castlebe@marshall.edu>

Georg Philipp Telemann, *Ein feste Burg: Vokal- und Instrumental musik*. Reinhold Friedrich, Vocalensemble Rastatt, Les Favorites, Holger Speck, conductor. Recorded 5-10 October 2004, Alt-katholische Auferstehungskirche, Karlsruhe. 2005 Carus-Verlag, Carus 83.166, 74'32"

**G**eorg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767) found his niche as the Kantor/Kapellmeister of the Johanneum Lateinschule and principal churches in Hamburg, for it gave him the opportunity to compose numerous works in a variety of media, both sacred and secular. During his tenure in this position, from 1721 to his death in 1767, his sacred music output encompassed some twenty cycles of cantatas, as well as significant numbers of passions and oratorios and a sprinkling of motets and psalm settings. While in sheer volume his cantata output far outstripped that of Johann Sebastian Bach, Telemann's reputation in music history classes resides chiefly in his instrumental music, particularly his *Tafelmusik*. Early on, recordings of Telemann's instrumental music have been somewhat plentiful. Attention has now turned to his cantatas, passions, oratorios, and a smattering of operas. This recording of a few of the relatively unknown motets and psalm settings is, therefore, quite a welcome addition to the ever-growing Telemann discography, affording a glimpse into the craftsmanship that characterizes Germany's leading early 18th-century composer. The three motets *Halt, was du hast* for double SATB chorus especially reveal Telemann's command of the

sacred vocal style and his experience as a composer of dramatic works. Both of the psalm settings featured here are set as cantatas, with soli interspersed among the choruses. Telemann's sense of the dramatic shines through, exemplified best in the final chorus *Die Furcht des Herrn* [The fear of the Lord is the source of wisdom] of Psalm 111 which begins in minor, almost like an Actus Tragicus, then turns to a sprightly dance in major, complete with trumpet and drums to underscore the notion of everlasting praise.

At the center of the recording is a compilation of instrumental works from music that Telemann supplied for the funerals of two of Hamburg's mayors. The music publishing side of Carus-Verlag oversaw this publication of the suite, gathered under the title *Hamburgische Trauermusik*. The result, though arguably artificial, is anything but; indeed, this is hauntingly beautiful music that warrants preservation and performance no matter what lengths it takes for that to be achieved.

Such fine and brilliant music deserves a worthy performance. Holger Speck, the Vocalensemble Rastatt, and Les Favorites do not disappoint. Speck, whose specialty is music of the 17th and 18th centuries, never takes an aggressive approach to these historically informed performances, but exercises restraint and care that capture Telemann's sense of drama and passion. One is first struck by the amazing

clarity and cleanness of the ensemble and soli performances. Then, there is that sound: light, crisp, and translucent. The voices of the Vocalensemble Rastatt are young and unforced, yet full-bodied; their diction and tuning are impeccable. The soloists, soprano Ruth Ziesak and alto Arnon Zlotnik in particular, possess the gem-like quality that defines the choral singing, as well. Les Favorites, likewise, shows impeccable tuning, and its performances are controlled and smooth in a way one does not always hear from historical instruments. Trumpeter Reinhold Friedrich's playing is exquisite, even in the difficult muted passages of the *Trauermusik*. All in all, the performances featured here rank among the best of the authenticity movement. For the listener wanting an alternative or even complement to Bach's sacred works, this disc is highly recommended.

Since this recording features some of Telemann's least known works, it is heartening to read in the accompanying booklet that Carus-Verlag has also issued each work in score. Since the performances have been carefully prepared and researched (the *timpani* were muffled to match the muted trumpets called for by Telemann in the *Trauermusik*), one anticipates that these score editions will exhibit the same care. Interestingly, the three motet manuscripts were housed in Weimar at the Herzogin Anna Amalie Bibliothek, which suffered a very damaging fire on September 2nd, 2004, just one month before these works were recorded. Some 35,000 books from the 17th and 18th century collection in the Rococo Hall were lost and another 27,000 damaged, including 2100 music books and some 700 music manuscripts. While there has been no report that the Telemann manuscripts





were among those irrevocably damaged, one cannot help feeling that the foresight of the publishing house and the timing of this disc are somehow fortuitous.

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**The National Youth Choir of Great Britain World Tour 1996**

Schutz: *Psalm 84*; Mendelssohn: *Kyrie Eleison*; Frolochet *Ihr Volker auf Erden*; Victoria: *Salve Regina*; Harvey: *How Could the Soul Not Take Flight*; Rachmaninoff: *Vespers* (3 extracts); Allain: *Salve Regina*; Holst: *Nunc Dimittis*; Mozart: *Vamo di Core*; Lechuga: *Malaguena*; Brewer: *Hamba Lulu*; *Let Me Shine*; Pearsall: *Lay a Garland*; *La Muerte del Angel*; [arrangements]: *Lullaby of Broadway* (arr. Prest); *Sourwood Mountain* (arr. Rutter); *Agincourt Hymn* (arr. Swingle); *Dream a Little Dream* (arr. Isaacs); *Wade in the Water* (arr. Luboff); *Shenandoah* (arr. Erb)

National Youth Choir/Mike Brewer  
NYCCD, 2 CD, 93 minutes

**National Youth Choir of Great Britain World Tour 1999**

Victoria: *Magnificat Sexti Toni*; Schein: *Was Betrübst du Dich*; Monteverdi: *Cantate Domino*; Purcell: *Hear My Prayer*; Rheinberger: *Kyrie*; Tchaikovsky: *Khvali-*

*tye Gospode Nyebyes*; Brahms: *Fest-und Gedenkspruche*; Busto: *Laudate Pueri Dominum*; Allain: *Ubi Es?* Howells: *Salvator Mundi*; *Requiem*; Klatzow: *Cover Me with the Night*; *The Great Amen*; Brewer: *Tour-dion*; *Shut the Door*; Paranjoti; *Dravidian Dithyramb*; Hruskovsky: *Rytmus*; Porter-Bussey: *I've Got You Under My Skin*; *The Battle of Jericho* (arr. Hogan); Garfunkel-Marshall: *Bridge Over Troubled Waters*; *Dubula* (arr. Van Der Merwe)

National Youth Choir/Mike Brewer  
NYCCD, 2 CD, 92 minutes

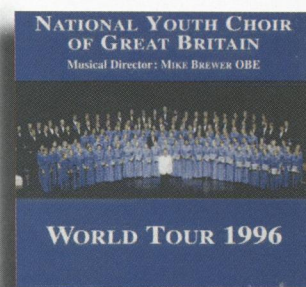
**The National Youth Choir of Great Britain World Tour 2003**

Schutz: *German Magnificat*; Lotti: *Crucifixus*; Holst: *Ave Maria*; Villette: *O Magnum Mysterium*; Schonburg: *Friede auf Erde*; Mahler: *Ich Bin der Welt Abhanden Gekommen*; Martin: *Sanctus & Benedictus*; Part: *Tribute to Caesar*; Macmillan: *Christus Vincit*; Bach-Swingle: *Organ Fugue*; Wood: *A Clear Midnight*; Hearne: *The Seagull*; Enkbayer: *Naiman Sharag*; Jansson-Ericksson: *Salve Regina*; Hogan: *I Can Tell the World*; Lagan Love (arr. Powell); Joel/Beardsell: *Lullaby*; *Dream a Little Dream* (arr. Isaacs); Brewer: *Hamba Lulu*; *Movin'*; *Pastime with Good Company* (arr. Swingle)

National Youth Choir / Mike Brewer  
DCD 34707, 2CD, 102 minutes

The National Youth Choir Great Britain (hereafter NYC) was formed in 1983 for a first performance, held at Royal Albert Hall. Since then, members have assembled twice yearly for 10 days of intensive training, leading to performances throughout Great Britain. In 1986, they made their first world tour and have maintained that tradition every three or four years. The popularity of the NYC prompted the creation of training choirs for young people 13-18 years of age, girls 11-16, and boys 9-14. There are now seven choirs: NYC (about 140 voices), NYC Training Choir, Girls Northern, Girls Midlands, Girls Southern, Boys Northern, and Boys Southern. Each has its own schedule, program, and director. Sir David Willcocks is the President of the entire choral organization. These discs, available through [www.nycgb.net/wordpress/store/cds/](http://www.nycgb.net/wordpress/store/cds/) <<http://www.nycgb.net/wordpress/store/cds/>>, provide a fine introduction to the remarkable breadth of repertoire accomplished by this outstanding organization and acquaint American choral conductors with some of the work being done by young singers in England.

Each choir displays a distinctive sound, owing to constantly changing personnel. From the 1996 group, the *divisi* pieces by Schutz and Mendelssohn are absolutely superb, while the Allain work demonstrates the choir's ability to handle difficult intervals and overlapping sonorities. Harvey's most unusual *How Could the Soul* includes whistling and sectional glissandi against straight homophonic choral textures, a challenging work to perform and conduct. The girls-only performance of *Dream a Little Dream* is as smooth as one could want, with the swells and lingering here and there that would delight any fan of pop music. Erb's



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