



Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen – Choir and Organ Christmas Music

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Gramophone (Fabrice Fitch - 2010.12.01)

GRAMOPHONE A festive feast

Bach! The Herald Angels Sing

Few countries have shaped the experience of Christmas more decisively than Germany and, with one exception, the remainder of these discs are from German labels and ensembles. A highly enjoyable and off-the-beaten-track pair comes from the label Audite, whose releases are commonly issued in Super Audio format. The all-organ recital by Johannes Strobl on the great organ of the Abbey of Muri consists of music by 18th- and 19th-century South German, Austrian and Bohemian composers of whom I'd never heard. These preludes, pastorellas, pifas and the like, undemanding and undemonstrative as they are, make for instructive listening: the common emphasis on rocking cradle rhythms is a sufficient programme in itself. And let's be honest: no century has, more than the 18th, been confined to such a restricted pantheon of composing figures. It makes a change from Bach ... on which, however, more presently. The second disc, "Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen", features the organist Stefan Horz and the vocal ensemble Vox Bona in a wide-ranging programme centred on the famous tune. The choral items, composed in an accessible, modern style, are a mixed bag, but as an enterprising move away from the same old Christmas programming both discs together give a positive, coherent impression of the label's aims.