



Echo & Risposta – Virtuoso instrumental music from the galleries of the Abbey Church of Muri

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Les Cornets Noirs (Black Cornettos) offers a program of 17th-Century Italian and German works that include striking examples of echo and response between instrumental groups or organs. Some of the composers are familiar (Salomone Rossi, Cesario Gussago, Dario Castello, Biagio Marini, Ludovico Grossi da Viadana, Giovanni Picchi, Alessandro Stradella, Samuel Scheidt) while others are less so (Dietrich Becker, Benedetto Re, Johann Sommer, Johann Staden).

Cornetto players Gebhard David and Bork- Frithjof Smith, violinists Amandine Beyer and Cosimo Stawiarski, and bassoonist Adrian Rovatkay are excellent. Sackbut player Franck Poitrineau's tone quality is quite nasal, something I disliked at first but grew to appreciate as interesting and unusual.

The Basel, Switzerland-based, early-music ensemble performs in the Abbey of Muri, an ancient monastery with an elaborately decorated, 18th-Century church. Two Bossard organs from 1743 are heard here (complete specifications included, as well as registration codes for each piece). Some of the program's most memorable pieces pit one organ against the other. The fine organists Markus Märkl and Johannes Strobl play Viadana's 'Sinfonia La Mantovana' with penetrating tone and exuberant ornamentation. In Scheidt's 'Echo ad manual duplex forte & lene', melodic passages, chord progressions, and even single chords are played stridently by one, and then imitated with softer tone (and seemingly from a distance) by the other. On and on it goes for almost nine minutes—Scheidt was enjoying himself and was in no hurry.