



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

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Recorded between 4 August and 7 August 2008 at the Abbey Church of Muri, this music on this SACD was written during the early and middle parts of the seventeenth century. The musical dialogues to be heard here are indeed conversations between instruments, echoes and answers coming from deep within the acoustic of the abbey church. This sort of music is to be heard in both vocal and instrumental form to excellent effect in Monteverdi's Vespers of 1610, and this purely instrumental collection will appeal to those captivated by its spacious sounds.

The making of the two cornetti for Les Cornets Noirs was sponsored by the Friends of the Abbey, designed specifically to play at the same pitch, approximately 425 Hz, as the two Brossard organs there both dating from 1743. And very fine instruments they are in the hands of David and Smith.

There are four musicians' galleries at the Abbey church and the sounds - even in stereo - give an effective sense of three dimensions; multichannel recording is tailor-made for this sort of programme, and for me added to the enjoyment of this disc. The programme has been chosen sympathetically, so the disc works very well as a recital in itself. The variety of the instrumentation, and of the music's moods, ranging from contemplative to the breathtakingly exuberant, makes for an entertaining hour and a quarter's listening.

The music comes from Italian and German composers, Alessandro Stradella and Samuel Scheidt being perhaps the two best known of the fourteen included here, contemporary with Monteverdi but just postdating Giovanni Gabrieli, the father of the Venetian school. A mixture mainly of canzonas and sonatas, only Scheidt's "Echo ad manuale duplex forte & lane" is of substantial length, getting on for nine minutes.

Bellows' noise is just audible, as it would be in the flesh, and the sound quality is exemplary. Franck Poirineau's trombone sound comes across particularly well, a timbre somewhat removed from the modern trombone's. As is the norm with Audite, the documentation is first class, including an extensive essay on the music and the composers, and a list of instruments and their makers. There was, in my case, a restorative effect in listening to this lovely recording, the fourth in a series from Muri.

Very well worth investigating!