



Paradisi Gloria - Sacred music by Emperor Leopold I

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[American Record Guide](#) (Peter Loewen - 2017.01.01)

Leopold I (1640–1705) was more than a music lover. In his youth he had an excellent musical training under Antonio Bertali. And he appears to have had enough talent to compose at least 69 works, most of them for voices. The program includes four of his most substantial pieces: two motets, Stabat Mater and Motetto de Septem Doloribus Beatae Mariae Virginis 'Vertatur in Luctum Cythara Nostra'; a Mass for the Dead; and a setting of three lessons from the first nocturne of the Office of the Dead, titled Tres Lectiones I. Nocturni Pro Defunctis Piaae Claudiae Felici Lugens Maestusque Leopoldus Posuit et Musicis Legibus Distinxit. These works exhibit solo vocal writing with continuo, chorus with orchestral accompaniment, and instrumental sonatas to open each one.

It is not the most inspiring music of the period, but it sounds glorious in the hands of these fine musicians. Leopold I combines choir and soloists with some skill, and the sonatas for cornetts, trombones, strings, and continuo sound quite lovely. There are striking moments in each work. For example, the setting of 'Lachrymantem et Dolentem' in the Motetto de Septem Doloribus Beatae Mariae Virginis has a descending chromatic subject for the opening point of imitation that seems to express the weeping inherent in the text. The Mass for the Dead, composed in 1673 for Leopold's first wife (and niece) Margarita Teresa, shows heartfelt pathos in its restrained use of dissonance in the setting of 'Requiem Aeternam'. Notes are in English, but the texts are translated into German only.