

Bigaglia & Lotti by Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale

Reviewed by Jamie Hillman

In 2018, Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale joined forces to record and release a recording of music by two Italian Baroque masters, Antonio Lotti (1667–1740) and the lesser known, yet noteworthy Venetian composer Diogenio Bigaglia (1676-1745). It has been refreshing to hear this combined ensemble's skillful and inspired performances.

The recording opens with Bigaglia's pleading *Misere*. Every instrumental and vocal line is intentionally shaped and weaved into the whole. The lines converge and result in a full sound at the homophonic cadences. *Messa di voce* is incorporated on long notes and there is a sense of escalation to the melodic and harmonic sequences that adds to the pleading character of the music and text.

In the duet *Amplius lava me*, the voices of soprano Veronika Winter and countertenor Alex Potter are perfectly coupled. Winter's and Potter's voices share clarity of tone. The shaping and direction of the lines in the voices and strings is equally thoughtful and masterful.

In the short duet *Ecce enim*, there is a beautiful colour contrast between the darker timbre of bass Markus Flaig and the lighter sound of tenor Georg Drake. The singing of Flaig and Drake is innately musical. They sing with an informed sense of the natural stress and emphasis of the text. I didn't want this short movement to end!

The solo *Cor mundum* is sung skillfully by countertenor Alex Potter. There is a beautiful sense of movement and dance to this performance. Potter possesses an agile voice, singing the melismas with clarity and ease. He and the strings are perfectly united.

The *Kyrie* from Bigaglia's *Missa in F* begins from a tiny seed that grows and blossoms into a glorious climax. In this fugue, the theme can always be heard because the ensemble performs with great clarity and transparency. It is impressive how the sopranos effortlessly ascend the musical staff, always singing with a focused tone. The melismas are equally effortless-sounding and refined. The young treble singers have been carefully trained. Together, the choir and orchestra highlight the suspensions, resulting in a sense of tension and release.

The *Credo* from Lotti's *Credo in F* is performed at a brisk, yet perfectly chosen tempo. It is sung and played with great conviction. The diction in this lengthy text is impeccable. Consonants are energized and the vowels are unified throughout the choir. The decision to use closed vowels works well for the choir.

Throughout the recording, the music making has great integrity. In my imagination, as I listen, I can see the music being performed generously.

I commend this recording to colleagues, students of choral music, and music lovers. I am looking forward to following Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale more closely in the future and I eagerly await their next recording. A hearty congratulations to the singers and instrumentalists of Knabenchor Hannover and la festa musicale, so capably led by conductor Jörg Breiding. Congratulations, also, to the production team!



Jamie Hillman is a Canadian and American musician, active as a conductor, singer, pianist, music educator, and composer. He holds the endowed Elmer Iseler Chair in Conducting at the University of Toronto where he is Director of Choral Studies and an Associate Professor. He conducts the U of T MacMillan Singers and leads the master's and doctoral degree programs in Choral Conducting, as well as the annual international Choral Conducting Symposium. Dr. Hillman is an examiner for Conservatory Canada and has adjudicated, guest conducted, performed, and presented throughout Canada and the United States, and in France, India, Indonesia, Portugal, and Taiwan. Most recently he conducted two national festival choruses at Carnegie Hall with National Concerts and Manhattan Concert Productions. He returns to Carnegie Hall in 2024 to conduct. Hillman has conducted world premieres by Shireen Abu Khader, Matthew Emery, and Sarah Quartel, among others. www.jamiehillman.net



Diogenio Bigaglia: Miserere & Missa in F

Antonio Lotti: Credo in F

Knabenchor Hannover

La Festa musicale

Conductor: Jörg Breiding

Rondeau Production ROP7023

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