

Critic's Pick: Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana – VAL

By Jonathan Slawson, Journalist

Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana – VAL

Stojan Kuret, conductor



Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana, a relatively new vocal ensemble from Slovenia has already distinguished themselves among the international choral community. The group, comprised of 16-20 experienced male singers, is thrilled to present their first CD, entitled *VAL*, which the choral world will surely embrace.

Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana proudly claimed the Grand Prix at the “Guido d’Arezzo”, an international polyphonic competition in Arezzo, Italy. They subsequently earned the European Grand Prix in 2010 for Choral Singing – they are the first male ensemble to do so. That same year, they were invited to the renowned “Polyfolia” festival in France. Shortly

thereafter in 2011, they were asked to present Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* with singers Marcos and Bernarda Fink. In September, the ensemble was awarded the prestigious Guidoneum Award for artistic achievements and their contribution to the world of choral music. They look forward to representing Europe in the World Choral Summit 2012 in Beijing (July, 2012).

The artistic director and conductor of Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana is maestro Stojan Kuret. Frequent guests and collaborators of the ensemble are pianist Mojca Prus, soprano Martina Burger (also a vocal technique specialist), cellists Urša Kržič, Kaja Kapus and mezzosoprano Barbara Sorč.

This disc is particularly impressive in the breadth of music it covers, and the depth at which the singers explore each individual piece. As a relatively new group, they prove to their audience that they are equally capable at mastering Schubert, as they are Wolf, as they are music of today. The group sings, with great elegance and ease, challenging pieces from the Classical and Romantic era and concludes with 6 equally challenging pieces by living composers.

The dichotomy between the first part of the CD and the last six tracks is remarkable. The final six pieces are written by living composers: Lojze Lebič, Ambrož Čopi, and Giovanni Bonato. In what would otherwise feel like an awkward and mismatched end to a wonderful presentation of Mendelssohn, Schubert, Haydn, etc., they bring such individuality to each piece that it truly is captivating.

Nothing should be more exciting to the choral community than a relatively new group that has already begun to make their mark in the community. Let us continue to embrace Vokalna Akademija Ljubljana and support their wonderful work moving forward.

Do you have a CD that you would like to be reviewed in the

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