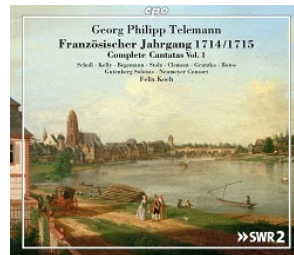




April 2022

<http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2022/Apr/Telemann-cantatas-v1-5554362.htm>

A fascinating first volume of Telemann's French Annual Cycle of church cantatas, excellently recorded and beautifully performed.



RECOMMENDED

Georg Philipp TELEMANN (1681-1767)

Kantaten - Französischer Jahrgang (French Annual Cycle, 1714/15) – Volume 1

Jesu meine Freude TVWV 1: 966 [16:13]

Ich werfe mich zu deinen Füßen TVWV 1: 882 [13:18]

Valet will ich dir geben TVWV 1: 1458 [12:24]

Der Herr verstößet nicht ewiglich TVWV 1: 288 [13:34]

Ach, sollte doch die ganze Welt TVWV 1: 32 [10:55]

Christus hat einmal für die Sünde gelitten TVWV 1: 140 [15:50]

Muß nicht der Mensch immer in Streit sein TVWV 1: 1146 [9:34]

Herr, wie lange wilt du mein so gar vergessen TVWV 1: 777 [12:48]

Gott schweige doch nicht also TVWV 1: 678 [13:38]

Wer ist der, so von Edom kömmt TVWV 1: 1585 [14:37]

Gutenberg Soloists, Neumeyer Consort/Felix Koch

rec. 7-10 December 2020 & 13-16 April 2021, SWR Studio Kaiserlautern, Germany

CPO 555 436-2 [2 CDs: 133:43]

If, like me, you are mystified by the TVWV catalogue numbers above, here is the explanation. All of Telemann's works are catalogued with TWV numbers (Telemann-Werke-Verzeichnis), like Bach's with BWV numbers. However, Telemann's vocal music is separately catalogued with TVWV numbers (Telemann-Vokalwerke-Verzeichnis).

Telemann's French Annual Cycle of cantatas consists of no fewer than 72 works, and it is the aim of CPO, in conjunction with various other bodies, to record a complete set of these. This is Volume 1, and it contains ten of the cantatas on two CDs. The works here are on average shorter than those of J.S. Bach, ranging between nine and sixteen minutes in length. They exhibit a variety of forms and vary considerably in instrumentation and the number of movements. As with J.S. Bach, there is no sense here of the weekly production line. It is worth noting that Bach himself repeatedly performed many of Telemann's cantatas for services at St Thomas' Leipzig.

Out of the 64 movements on this pair of CDs, let me highlight just a handful of examples. The first cantata is *Jesu, meine Freude*. It starts with a chorale which, in Bach, would last several minutes and would contain the entire chorale text uninterrupted. Here, there is but one line sung by the chorus before the bass soloist interrupts with much faster music and comments on the opening line. Then there is one more line of the chorale followed by another interruption by the bass soloist. This punctuated presentation continues for the whole four-minute movement. The type of *da capo* we are used to from Bach rarely occurs. A similar approach to form is taken in the opening movement of *Valet will ich dir geben*, only here the punctuations are sung by bass, then tenor, then alto. The soprano in this cantata, having been left out of the opening movement, has the next section to herself, again in the form of one line of chorale followed by commentary. Working through the set, I was struck by the sheer variety of forms and by the vitality of the music. Every movement of every cantata is worth careful listening. A further example is *Christus hat einmal für die Sünde gelitten* where this punctuation of the chorales is entirely absent. The opening choral *andante* leads into a full statement of the chorale and is followed by a sequence of recitatives and arias of the utmost lyrical beauty; one aria a *sarabande* and another a *rigaudon*. There is no routine at all in these works and the inventiveness is astonishing. Telemann is always introducing something new in terms of instrumentation, tempo and form. There are complex fugal movements which are just as brief as the simpler chorale melodies. He uses dance rhythms in all of the works here, many in the French style, as expected from the title *Französischer Jahrgang*. The notes also mention resemblances to Lully in the scoring of a *gigue*, for example. Fortunately, there are detailed notes on each work highlighting things to listen out for. The ten examples on this pair of discs show a much less expansive approach to the church cantata, when heard after long exposure to Bach. Whether this is typical is impossible to say because this is a small segment of one collection in an output of cantatas that dwarfs that of Bach. The Telemann-Vokalwerke-Verzeichnis suggests he composed over 2000 of them! Hard to believe but see [here](#).

The solo parts are divided between seven members of the Neumeyer Consort, all of whom display very considerable skill. Since there are fewer than twenty singers involved, this speaks well of the high standard throughout the ensemble. The Gutenberg Soloists are as good as any period band I have heard, with crisp, accurate and committed playing. If the plan to record all 72 cantatas in these French cycles from 1714-15 comes to fruition, we are set to discover a lot of excellent music in performances of the highest standard. This pair of CDs is a mere taster and should be regarded as an essential purchase for lovers of the German Baroque. The notes in German and English are very full and accompanied by parallel translations of Neumeister's poetic texts. CPO have provided a clean studio recording which gives a slightly drier sound than if a church had been used, but it places the performers in a believable stereo space for the many exchanges between soloists, chorus and instrumentalists.

For the listener, then, this is a cornucopia of delights. Once again Telemann shows himself to be not only staggeringly productive but a great master. One looks forward to the remaining 62 works in future volumes.

Dave Billinge