

# Vocal



## Andrew Mellor enjoys Rautavaara's distinctive All-Night Vigil:

*'Rautavaara creates a tapestry that ebbs and flows – the mood can turn on a sixpence from lamentation to radiant joy'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**



## Mark Pullinger enters the spirit of a 'Soirée' chez Rattle:

*'There is lovely singing from Kožená, whose fawn-tinted mezzo retains its attractive quality from her earliest discs'* ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 113**

## JS Bach

### 'Cantatas and Arias for Bass'

Cantatas – No 56, *Ich will den Kreuzstab gerne tragen*; No 82, *Ich habe genug*; No 158, *Der Friede sei mit dir*; No 20, *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort – Gott ist gerecht*; No 26, *Ach wie flüchtig, ach wie nichtig – An irdische Schätze das Herze zu hängen*; No 101, *Nimm von uns, Herr, du treuer Gott – Warum willst du so zornig sein*

**Dominik Wörner** *bass* **Zefiro / Alfredo Bernardini**  
Arcana © A466 (62' • DDD • T/T)



The billing looked promising. Dominik Wörner is a seasoned Bach specialist and

Alfredo Bernardini's Zefiro are among the most spirited of period bands. With Bernardini's own charismatic oboe-playing to the fore, accompaniments in these solo bass cantatas, saturated by death-longing, are a delight: nimble (single strings are used), subtly nuanced, always minutely sensitive to Bachian rhetoric. There's an intimate rapport between singer and players, epitomised by the blithe oboe-bass duetting, animated by burbling bassoon, of the aria 'Endlich, endlich will mein Joch' in No 56, and the interweaving of voice and solo violin (poetically shaped by Olivia Centurioni) in No 158's central aria.

Wörner's light, agile baritone is at its most persuasive in these arias and in the celestial dance that closes *Ich habe genug*, No 82. Reactions to singers are notoriously subjective, of course. Yet elsewhere, while I admired his thoughtful phrasing and expressive diction, I too easily tired of his dryish, monochrome timbre. In No 82's sublime lullaby 'Schlummert ein', performed in the version with oboe da caccia, Wörner and Bernardini choose a natural, flowing tempo and add telling touches of ornamentation. But I was left unmoved, here and in the burdened opening arias of Nos 82 and 56. With richer, more

colourful voices and a more palpable sense of involvement, Matthias Goerne (Decca, 4/00), Thomas Quasthoff (DG, 1/05) and, in No 56, Peter Harvey (with John Eliot Gardiner – SDG, 1/06) all drew me far more deeply into these dramas of the soul.

Three oboe-rich arias from lesser-known cantatas make a welcome bonus, especially the one from No 26 where voice and a hyperactive oboe trio vie in their denunciation of the world's vanity. Zefiro's playing remains an abiding pleasure. Yet for my taste, Wörner's clean, stylish singing never seems quite enough in some of Bach's most searching and, it's tempting to add, intensely personal music. **Richard Wigmore**

## Biber • Lully

**Biber** *Missa Salisburgensis* **Lully** *Te Deum*

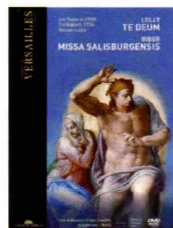
**Les Pages du Centre de Musique Baroque**

**de Versailles; Collegium Vocale 1704;**

**Collegium 1704 / Václav Luks**

Château de Versailles Spectacles © DVD CVS012  
(89' • NTSC • DD5.1 • O • T/T)

Recorded live at the Basilica of St John Lateran, Rome, October 28, 2018



This performance comes not from the chapel at Versailles but from the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome, presented by the French and Czech governments to commemorate the end of the First World War. The conductor, choir and orchestra are Czech; the children's choir is French.

Lully composed his *Te Deum* in 1677 for the baptism of his eldest son; it was this very piece that indirectly caused his death from gangrene when he hit his foot with a staff while directing a later performance. His scoring for strings and trumpets is bulked out here so that, for example, the symphony before 'Te ergo quaesumus' is assigned to recorders. The

prevailing mood is, naturally, festive; but just when you think that you can't take any more C major jollity Lully varies the mood and the key – most tellingly in the pleading section beginning 'Dignare Domine die isto' ('Vouchsafe, O Lord'). The choir and orchestra perform with vigour. The soloists are not named, or, rather, not identified; all are excellent, but the bass is particularly impressive in his rhetorical passages. In the final chorus the trumpets briefly get out of sync (and the percussion – timpani and bass drum, by the sound of it – is too loud) but otherwise the ensemble can't be faulted.

Václav Luks, the conductor, has no problems of ensemble with Biber's *Missa Salisburgensis*, which must have been even more of a challenge. It was composed in 1682 to mark the 1100th anniversary (not the 'one thousand and one year anniversary' of the translated article in the booklet) of the founding of the archbishopric of Salzburg. The '53-part' scoring breaks down into double choir, soloists and six instrumental groups, but it's certainly lavish – 10 trumpets are required – and it must have sounded glorious in the wide spaces of Salzburg Cathedral.

The problem is that on film there's no sense of the sound coming at you from all directions. What's more, there are close-ups and long-distance views but no panning sequences, so you are denied a visual impression of the spaciousness as well as an aural one. Actually the music is not terribly interesting: 'passus et sepultus est', for instance, is solemn but bland. There's an awful lot of C major trumpeting (sounding, as with the Lully, a semitone lower) and it's a relief to get to the awestruck 'miserere nobis' of the *Agnus Dei*. Hang on at the end, and you get an encore of 'dona nobis pacem' and 'Et resurrexit', in that order. It's a terrific performance but I think that, as they say, you had to be there.

**Richard Lawrence**