

A second flowering for the lute concerto

Evangelina Mascardi is an elegant advocate for her instrument, writes Kate Bolton-Porciatti

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Beyond Vivaldi

Lute Concertos by Krebs, Hagen, Vivaldi, Kleinknecht & Kohaut Evangelina Mascardi; Estrovagante/riccardo Doni Arcana A593 72:33 mins

Beyond Vivaldi explores the late flowering of the lute concerto in the German-speaking courts of the mid-18th century, a repertoire that flourished briefly before the instrument's eventual eclipse. The Lautenkoncert evolved under Italian influence in the Habsburg lands and at courts such as Bayreuth, where the musically ambitious Margravine Wilhelmina cultivated an active ensemble of musicians. This programme traces the genre through Vivaldi's Concerto RV 93 and four rarities by Johann Ludwig

Krebs, Jakob Friedrich Kleinknecht, Joachim Hagen and Karl Ignaz Kohaut – the last two receiving their premiere recordings here.

Opening the disc is the F major Concerto by Krebs – Bach’s favourite Leipzig pupil. Evangelina Mascardi, playing a 14-course Baroque lute, brings eloquence and clarity to its fluid melodies and lacy figurations while *Estrovagante* highlights Krebs’s galant rhetoric. Hagen’s D minor Concerto and the C major work attributed to Kleinknecht evoke the elegance of Bayreuth’s courtly style. In Kleinknecht’s concerto, stately outer movements frame an exquisite Andante, its arching lines subtly sculpted by Mascardi and supported by refined ensemble playing.

The disc’s centrepiece is Vivaldi’s RV93, composed for the Bohemian dilettante lutenist Count Johann Joseph Vrtba and, in more recent times, embraced by guitarists. Mascardi’s reading of the Largo is especially affecting, its wistful melody breathed rather than declaimed. The real revelation of the programme, though, is Kohaut’s Concerto in E major – a work full of yearning suspensions, chromatic turns and filigree passage-work. Balancing the lute’s delicate timbre with the orchestra’s fuller textures is no easy task, yet Arcana’s recording and the ensemble’s airy sound overcome the challenge. ★★★★★

Kate Bolton-Porciatti, BBC