

ORGAN CDS

◀ THE GRAND ORGAN OF THE TEMPLE CHURCH

Roger Sayer (org)

Orchid Classics ORC 100090 [74:15]

★★★★★



This recording provides compelling evidence that large organs by Harrison & Harrison really do project the romantic repertoire very well. The programme of Mendelssohn's first Sonata, Karg-Elert's kaleidoscopic Symphonic Chorale 'Jesu, meine Freude', Reger's *Hallelujah! Gott zu loben* (written for Karl Straube) and Reubke's *Sonata on the 94th Psalm* all demonstrate a wide range of colourful tonal resources and dynamic contrasts, expertly controlled by Roger Sayer. Details of the organ are not given, and the notes on the music are brief, but the performances are authoritative, with appropriately flexible tempi and an empathy with 19th-century style, well projected.

DAVID PONSFORD

OLIVIER MESSIAEN: LA NATIVITÉ DU SEIGNEUR

Richard Gowers, King's College Cambridge

Kings College Recordings KGS 0025 [67:40]

★★★



'Dieu parmi nous' has regularly brought to a close the King's College Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols since the 1960s, and here lies the logic behind Messiaen's *La Nativité* forming the first organ recording on King's College's own label. The piece which has now become a Christmas classic sounds suitably magisterial in the hands of former organ scholar Richard Gowers, with the familiar King's acoustics wrapping around the exotic sounds of the Christmas narrative. While the newly restored instrument sounds more vibrant than before, I find Gowers's rendition a little sterile in places, lacking the poetic nature of many other recordings available.

RUPERT GOUGH

STRAUBE PLAYS BACH

Dean Billmeyer, Sauer organs in the Michaeliskirche, Leipzig (1904), and the Evangelischen Stadtkirche, Bad Salzungen (1909)

Rondeau ROP 614546 (2CDs) [63:09; 67:26]

★★★★★



The musical source for this recording is Karl Straube's edition of ten Preludes & Fugues, published in 1913, which, as Christopher Anderson states in his informative liner notes, offers an 'excruciating degree of detail': fingering, pedalling, tempi, phrasing, touch, dynamics, registration, supplemented by a plethora of footnotes. Dean Billmeyer has recreated Straube's interpretations on restored organs by Wilhelm Sauer. Presumably, the microphone position is situated far back to capture the enormous power of these organs, aiding smooth crescendi and diminuendi through the stops. This is a real time machine, often with slow tempi, but a kaleidoscope of romantic organ colour.

DAVID PONSFORD

THEMA MIT VARIATIONEN

Richard Brasier, Kenneth Tickell organ (2003), St Laurence, Upminster Ravensbury RRCD 0181 [66:51]

★★★★★



On this CD, Richard Brasier presents works by Byrd, Rogg, J.S. and C.P.E. Bach, Schumann, Mendelssohn and Rinck. It is nice to hear one of Kenneth Tickell's parish church organs, a fine colourful instrument, albeit in dry acoustics.

Brasier is here more at home with the later repertoire. The Bach *Passacaglia* is registered with many piston changes of stops, a halt before the Fugue (where Bach writes to carry through continuously), and a sudden large dynamic change in the middle of the Fugue – all detrimental to the structure of this work. The two Rogg *Études* are very effective, with clean and precise playing, and Brasier's interpretation of the Schumann *Sketches* is a delight. It is welcome to have a set of variations by Rinck, a composer whose music we should hear much more.

DOUGLAS HOLICK

J.S. BACH: TOCCATAS, PRELUDES & FUGUES (BWV NOS. 565, 578, 545, 767, 534, 550, 546, 532, 579, 540, 766, 536, 543, 544)

Kåre Nordstoga, St Johannis, Lüneburg

Lawo LWC 1153 (2CDs) [65:47; 73:02]

★★★★★



The organ of St Johannis, Lüneburg, is an exceptionally fine instrument. It contains a significant amount of old pipework from Niehoff, Stellwagen and Dropa, and was restored in the original cases by Beckerath in 1976. This is the organ, before the addition of the pedal towers by Dropa in 1715, that Böhm played, and on which he no doubt taught the teenage J.S. Bach. Superbly recorded and faithful to both clarity and the large acoustics, this organ sings, even in the plenos with maybe 20 ranks of mixture work! Kåre Nordstoga is a fine player with a natural feeling for tempo and articulation to match the acoustics, and an excellent sense of style; these are very fine performances. There are ten Toccatas, Preludes & Fugues here, plus the little Fugue in G minor and the Fugue on a theme of Corelli. Wonderful varied plenos, gentle singing principals, and some ravishing flutes and reeds all make for a very satisfying whole. The programme for each disc is divided by a chorale partita, allowing Nordstoga to use many of the lovely quieter registers not heard in the large works. An ideal match of music, organ and performer. Highly recommended.

DOUGLAS HOLICK

JOHN KITCHEN PLAYS BRITISH LIGHT MUSIC

John Kitchen, Usher Hall, Edinburgh

Delphian DCD 34212 [69:52]

★★★★★



John Kitchen's delightful recording pays homage to cinema organ talent Michael Thomson. His entertaining compositions with titles such as *Whirly-Granny* present British light music at its best. There is a Scottish flavour to many of these