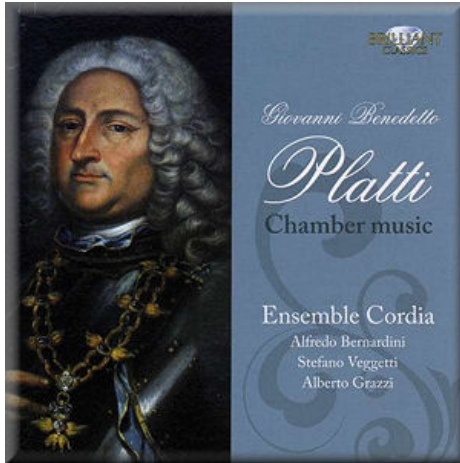


RECORDING OF THE MONTH



Giovanni Benedetto PLATTI (1697 - 1763)

Chamber Music:

Sonata for oboe, cello and bc in g minor [12:48]

Sonata for cello and bc in d minor [07:45]

Trio for oboe, bassoon and bc in c minor [09:36]

Sonata for cello and bc in g minor [10:21]

Sonata for oboe and bc in c minor [11:00]

Sonata a 3 for violin/oboe, cello and bc in G [14:03]

Ensemble Cordia (Alfredo Bernardini (oboe), Stefano Veggetti (cello), Alberto Grazzi (bassoon), Franziska Romaner (cello (basso continuo)), Anna Fontana (harpsichord))
rec. 2-4 November 2005, Verein Haus St Georgen, South Tirol, Austria. DDD

BRILLIANT CLASSICS 94007 [65:36]

During the last five years or so various recordings with music by Giovanni Benedetto Platti have been released. His oeuvre isn't that large, and therefore most recordings contain more or less the same repertoire. That is also the case here: with one exception all the sonatas on this disc have been recorded before.

As Platti is still a largely unknown quantity it is useful to give some background information. He was born in Venice in a time when many famous masters of music were active. These included Vivaldi, the Marcello brothers, Gasparini and Albinoni. It was perhaps because he felt that under these circumstances his chances to make a career were rather slim that he moved to Germany. Here he became the principal oboist at the court of Prince-Archbishop Lothar Franz von Schönborn in Würzburg. He was held in high esteem by his new employer, who in a letter called him an "incomparable oboist". He not only played the oboe, but also the violin, the cello, the flute and the harpsichord and was active as composer and as teacher. He was the best-paid musician at the court, earning more than twice what the *Kapellmeister* received. In 1764 an Italian musician reported Platti's death in a letter to Padre Martini, mentioning him in the same breath as Geminiani and Locatelli.

Things weren't always bright and wonderful in Platti's career, though: in 1724, just two years after his appointment, his employer died, and his successor disbanded the court orchestra. Platti had the good fortune to have built a good relationship with the former prince-archbishop's brother, Rudolf Franz Erwein. He was an avid player of the cello, and this inspired Platti to write cello sonatas and compositions with obbligato cello parts, some of which can be heard on this disc. It was thanks to this connection that he was able to spend the next years at Rudolf's court in Wiesentheid. Here he probably also composed the *Trio for*

oboe and bassoon in c minor. The Wiesentheid library contains another piece with a virtuoso bassoon part by the Italian composer Brescianelli. This could well be an indication of the presence of a highly skilled bassoonist at the court.

In 1729 the new prince-archbishop of Würzburg re-established the court orchestra, which now contained no fewer than 49 members. Platti returned to Würzburg, and in 1732 was appointed second violinist and *Kammertenor*. The appreciation of his employers through the years, his excellent salary and his marriage to Maria Theresia Lambrucker, first soprano in the court chapel, were all good reasons to stay in Würzburg; this despite the fact that it wasn't exactly one of the main cultural centres of Germany.

The programme includes two sonatas for the somewhat unusual combination of oboe and cello. There can be little doubt that these were written to be played by Platti and Rudolf Franz Erwein together. The latter must have been a very skilled player as the two parts are technically of the same level and are treated on an equal footing. The players and the sound engineer have made sure that the cello isn't overshadowed by the penetrating sound of the oboe. The second movement of the *Sonata in g minor* is quite theatrical and is followed by an adagio of great expression. Equally expressive are the slow movements of the *Sonata in G*, adagio and largo respectively, with notable broad gestures in the former. The two allegros are brilliant and sparkling. The upper part can be played by either violin or oboe; here we hear the latter.

The *Sonata for oboe and bc in c minor* reflects no doubt the virtuosity of Platti as a performer. It is a technically brilliant work full of rhetorical gestures, and some telling rallentandi in the second movement, an allegro assai. In the *Sonata for oboe, bassoon and bc in c minor* the bassoon part is also technically demanding; almost the whole tessitura of the instrument is explored. Lastly we come to the two cello sonatas, which Platti composed to please his patron. The second movements of both are especially brilliant. The latter, called 'non presto', is dominated by a fast descending figure which is repeated a number of times. This *Sonata in g minor* is recorded here for the first time.

As I have already mentioned, several recordings with Platti's sonatas are on the market. But the performance by the Ensemble Cordia surpasses them all. The recording took place in 2005, but the release dates from 2010. I don't understand why it has been on the shelf for five years. The booklet tells us that more recordings of the Ensemble Cordia are to be released by this label. We can look forward to those, because Platti here receives authoritative interpretations by some of the greatest players in the business. Right now Alfredo Bernardini is one of the world's best players of the baroque oboe. His performances are technically immaculate, and he fully explores the expression in Platti's sonatas. He was one of the founders of the famous ensemble Zefiro. Another founding member was Alberto Grazzi, who is of the same calibre on his instrument, the bassoon. I hadn't heard of Stefano Veggetti; he turns out to be a cellist with impressive technical and interpretational skills. The three soloists are given excellent support by Franziska Romaner and Anna Fontana, who play with great rhythmic drive.

The booklet is more informative than we are used to from Brilliant Classics. This disc is one of the best from this label which I have heard recently. If you want to get acquainted with Platti's music - and there is every reason to - this disc is the best possible way to start.

Johan van Veen

The best possible recording of Platti's music.