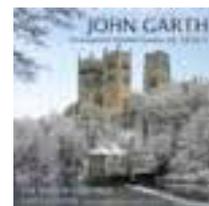


CD REVIEW 110

JOHN GARTH, Accompanied Keyboard sonatas... the six that make up Opus 2, and the six that make up Opus 4.

Gary Cooper (harpsichord, fortepiano and organ) with the Avison Ensemble: Pavlo Beznosiuk (violin), Caroline Balding (violin) and Richard Tunnicliffe (cello).

Divine Art dda 25115 (DDD)
(Two CDs 48.32 and 48.50).



Well done, Divine Art for a welcome set of works by John Garth, probably unknown to most people.

Garth was born in 1721 at Harperley near Wilton-le-Weir and may have been a pupil of Charles Avison. They were certainly friends up to Avison's death in 1770. Garth supported Avison even when the older man was criticised for dominating the Newcastle concerts.

As organist at St Edmund's Church, Sedgefield, this was probably Garth's first appointment sometime before 1742 and, by the 1770s, he was sharing these duties with other organists. He was also the organist at Auckland Castle, the residence of the Bishop of Durham up to 1794. Garth gave recitals and opened organs at various local venues.

He had moved to Durham in 1742 and became a member of the Masonic Lodge. In 1789 or 1790, he moved to Bishop Auckland and then to a farmhouse near Wolsingham. On 20 July 1794, he married Nanny Wrightson at St Cuthbert's Church in Darlington and moved into her property in Cockerton and later, in 1806, they settled in Cockerton Hall. Garth's advanced age meant that they had no children and he died on 29 March 1810 and was laid to rest in the north aisle of St Cuthbert's Church in Darlington.

Of his other works, there are six cello concertos Opus 1 of 1760, available on Divine Art DDA 25059, and Organ Voluntaries Op 3 of 1771. He produced an eight volume set of the English version of the psalms of Benedetto Marcello around 1757.

The sonatas on these CDs are all in two movements sometimes ending with a minuet or gavotte.

They are beautifully played with excellent sound and have a vigour that prevents them from being dull and predictable. They have an elegance and gracefulness.

All the performers are exemplary and Gary Cooper has done much to encourage us with early music, a genre which many foolishly dismiss.

He has been called a Durham composer and the excellent sleeve notes has a beautiful picture of the glorious Durham Cathedral which, in itself, is inspiring.

The sleeve notes are by Simon D I Fleming to whom I owe my gratitude. All I can do is recommend this handsome set.

I do urge you to purchase this set even those of you who may have a closed mind to this type of music.

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