

Johann Jacob Froberger - Hommage à l'Empereur (2003)

Written by bluesever

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- Disc 1 Suite (No.7), for keyboard in E minor, FbWV 607/607b/607c 1.Allemande (05:38) 2.Gigue (01:25) 3.Courante (01:00) 4.Sarabande (03:02)
- Suite (No.8), for keyboard in A major, FbWV 608 5.Allemande (02:58) 6.Gigue (01:13) 7.Courante (00:59) 8.Sarabande (01:57)
- Suite (No.9), for keyboard in G minor, FbWV 609 9.Allemande (04:11) 10.Gigue (02:30) 11.Courante (01:42) 12.Sarabande (02:45)
- Suite (No.10), for keyboard in A minor, FbWV 610 13.Allemande (03:39) 14.Gigue (01:59) 15.Courante (01:18) 16.Sarabanda (02:48)
- Suite (No.11), for keyboard in D major, FbWV 611/611a/611c 17.Allemande (03:42) 18.Gigue (01:46) 19.Courante (01:05) 20.Sarabande (02:02)
- Suite (No.12) "Lamento sopra la dolorosa", for keyboard in C major, FbWV 612/612a 21.Lamento sopra la dolorosa perdita della Real M[ai]està di Ferdinando IV, Ré de Romani etc. (06:09) 22.Gigue (01:14) 23.Courant (01:29) 24.Sarabande (02:41)
- Disc 2 Suite (No.21), for keyboard in F major, FbWV 621 1.Allemande (02:45) 2.Double (02:15) 3.Courante (01:12) 4.Double (01:20) 5.Sarabande (01:45) 6.Double (01:49)
- Suite (No.15), for keyboard in A minor, FbWV 615/615a 7.Allemande (03:38) 8.Gigue (01:50) 9.Courante (01:37) 10.Sarabande (03:15)
- Suite (No.17), for keyboard in F major, FbWV 617 11.Allemande (03:40) 12.Gigue (01:59) 13.Courante (01:22) 14.Sarabande (02:36) 15. Allemande, for keyboard in G major (Ihre MS, attributed) (02:54) 16.Courante, for keyboard in G major (Ihre MS, attributed) (01:18) 17.Gigue, for keyboard in D minor ("Aria Froberger", attributed) (02:01)
- Bob van Asperen (Harpsichord) Anonymous French harpsichord (c.1700), Villa Medici Original Italian Harpsichord "F.A. 1677" (Collection Kenneth Gilbert, Chartres)

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This two-disc set, part of Bob van Asperen's splendid survey of the great baroque pioneer's keyboard music, is simply magnificent. The first CD covers the six Suites of Froberger's Libro Quarto, while the second disc contains three other suites and some additional movements from manuscript and other unpublished sources. Once again, the player has made a fine choice of instrument, this time an anonymous French harpsichord from around 1700, now in the Villa Medici in Rome. Like the other volumes in this series, the sound quality of the instrument is beautifully captured in the recording.

The Suites generally follow the pattern of Allemande-Gigue-Courante-Sarabande. And the music is glorious - grave, soulful, with the Sarabandes in particular reaching right into the listener's heart. Suite XI, titled "Hommage à l'Empereur", is an especially noble and beautiful work - the emperor referred to being Froberger's employer, Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand III. Following this, Suite XII is an absolute stunner, its first movement titled as a lament on the tragic death of the 21-year-old heir to the throne Ferdinand IV; but in fact it's the suite's closing Sarabande that I found the most deeply affecting movement here, and you'd need to have a heart of stone to remain unmoved by this music.

CD2 brings us more very fine music, my own favourite being the first item, the lovely Suite XXI - according to the booklet notes it is not certain that it's by Froberger, but who cares? All the music is superbly played by Bob van Asperen with style, spirit and impeccable technique - and, to cap it all, the booklet is splendidly produced and illustrated, and the player's own notes are detailed and informative. Altogether, this is another very strong recommendation for baroque enthusiasts, especially if you are thinking of gathering a systematic collection of Froberger's music; its companion discs in the series, especially volume 2 "À l'honneur de madame Sibylle" (Froberger Edition Vol 2: A l'honneur de Madame Sibylle), are also highly recommended.
---Stephen Midgley, amazon.co.uk

Johann Jacob Froberger. Keyboardist and composer. Probably studied with his father, Kapellmeister at Stuttgart, and possibly also with local organists Steigleder and Eckhardt. Shortly before the musically talented and accomplished Ferdinand III was elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1637, Froberger was appointed a court organist at Vienna, continuing in Imperial service for the next 20 years. However, he often spent long periods away from Vienna, beginning in the late summer of 1637 when he received a stipend to study with Frescobaldi in Rome through 1641; returned to Vienna as organist, 1641-45. He seems from 1645 to 1653 to

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have travelled extensively through various German states, Italy, the Low Countries, France and even England. During his travels, he perhaps visited Italy again in 1649, making contact with Carissimi at Rome and performing in Florence and Mantua; back in Vienna, a presentation manuscript of his keyboard works dedicated to Emperor Ferdinand III is dated Sept. 29, 1649. He evidently was in Brussels in 1650, where for a time he was attached to the court of Ferdinand's brother, Archduke Leopold, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands, in France in 1652 (where he performed successfully and met Chambonnières, Louis Couperin, and Denis Gaultier), and also in England around this time. Mattheson refers to a competition with Weckmann (whom Froberger later befriended) in Dresden. He was reinstated as Viennese court organist in 1653 but after the Emperor's death in 1657; although Ferdinand's successor, Leopold I, was also very musical, he permitted Froberger to be dismissed at the end of June 1657, although most of the Imperial Chapel musicians were kept on. Froberger's final position was as tutor to Princess Sibylla of Württemberg-Montbéliard at Héricourt, where he died suddenly during a vespers service. ---hoasm.org

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