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Chaconne: Harpsichord works by Frescobaldi, Storace, F. and L. Couperin, Muffat, Handel, Duphy, Ligeti and others

Jory Vinikour, harpsichord (Consonance)

Originally dance forms, the chaconne and passacaglia enjoyed great popularity among musicians throughout the Baroque era and beyond, inspiring numerous composers to test their creative powers against the principle of continuous variation that is common to both. Here we have a recital of harpsichord pieces in both forms spanning the early Baroque to the present. The music is of sufficient variety and contrast to guarantee that one's ears are never bored. This imaginative, 72-minute program is splendidly performed by the young Chicago-born harpsichordist Jory Vinikour, based in Paris, where he performs regularly with Marc Minkowski's Les Musiciens du Louvre ensemble.

Vinikour divides the dozen pieces among three excellent modern reproductions of 17th and 18th Century harpsichords, two of them the property of museums in Boston and Paris. Conspicuous care seems to have been taken to match the music to the most tonally appropriate instrument. His subtle rhythmic inflections and boldness of ornamentation over a firm metrical pulse triumphs in every respect.

After all this fiendishly virtuosic Baroque keyboard music Gyorgy Ligeti's 1971 "Passacaglia ungherese" and "Hungarian Rock (Chaconne) " make a nicely clattery, modern coda. First-rate sonics.

John von Rhein

DIAPASON, avril 1998

Compacts ~RECITALS

JORY VINIKOUR, Clavecin

« Chaconne ». Œuvres de Frescobaldi, Storace, Kerll, L. Couperin, Muffat, Fischer, Jacquet de La Guerre, Fr. Couperin, Haendel, Duphy et Ligeti.

Elève d'Huguette Dreyfus et de Kenneth Gilbert, collaborateur régulier de Marc Minkowski, musicien volontiers éclectique (il joue tant Falla, Martinu et Poulenc que les baroques), le claveciniste américain Jory Vinikour a choisi pour son premier disque en solo de nous faire voyager dans l'univers de la chaconne et de la passacaille, autrement

dit en compagnie de pages construites sur une basse obstinée. Doté d'une virtuosité extrêmement efficace, Vinikour peut enchaîner les morceaux de bravoure (exceptionnelle Chaconne en sol majeur de Haendel, pétulante Passacaille de Muffat) mais paraît moins à l'aise avec les pages plus dépouillées, qu'il convient d'habiter ou de «poétiser» (Frescobaldi ou Couperin). Vinikour fait néanmoins admirer sa facilité digitale et son sens des coloris, magnifiant deux belles copies d'instruments anciens, notamment un Garlick d'après le Goujon de 1749 du Conservatoire de Paris, et registrant toujours avec goût, par exemple dans la Chaconne de Duphly. Ce disque en forme de carte de visite - plutôt flatteuse -, et qui servira aussi bien d'anthologie initiatrice aux pratiques baroques de la variation sur ostinato, s'achève sur deux pages de Ligeti. La Passacaille ungherese et l'Hungarian Rock sacrifient au même rite structurel ajouté à une virtuosité diabolique qui ne désarçonne jamais Vinikour.

• JEAN-Luc MACIA

Student of Huguette Dreyfus and Kenneth Gilbert, regular partner of Marc Minkowski, happily eclectic musician (he plays Falla, Martinu, and Poulenc as well as the Baroque), the American harpsichordist Jory Vinikour has chosen for his first solo disc to take us on a voyage through the universe of the chaconne and the passacaglia, or to put it otherwise, in the company of pages built on a basso ostinato. Equipped with an extremely efficient virtuosity, Vinikour can play bravura pieces one after the other (exceptional Chaconne in G Major by Händel, exuberant Passacaglia by Muffat), but seems less at ease with the more bare pages, which should be inhabited or “poeticised” (Frescobaldi or Couperin). Vinikour none-the-less makes us admire his digital facility and his sense of color, bringing out the best of two lovely copies of old instruments, notably one by Garlick after the 1749 Goujon at the Paris Conservatory, and always registering tastefully, for example in Duphly’s Chaconne. This disc in the form of a business-card - rather flattering - , and which will also serve as an anthology of initiation in the Baroque practices of the variation on a ground bass, finishes with two pieces of Ligeti. The Passacaglia Ungherese and the Hungarian Rock both sacrifice to the same structural rual, added to a diabolical virtuosity which never disconcerts Vinikour.

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CHACONNE

Jory Vinikour (clavecin)

During the 17th century, the chaconne and passacaglia were much favored forms, coming from 16th century Spanish folk dance. But throughout Europe, tempi were slowed down, a noble style was attached to the chaconne and the original spirit slowly disappeared. It was Frescobaldi (1583-1643) who initiated this noble-style for popular dance music. His contrapuntal art and his brilliant use of all of the harpsichord’s resources (Cento Partite sopra passacagli) influenced all of the harpsichordists of the 17th century. Kerll (1627-1693) developed the idea of the chaconne as a set of variations, tingeed by Italianism,

with frequent virtuoso gestures, while Muffat (1653-1704) distances himself a bit from Frescobaldi by a highly original mixed style. Fischer (1670-1746) published in 1699 a collection of dances and chaconnes, from which is taken the chaconne in F Major (with Italian sonorities). The majestic chaconnes and passacaglias Louis Couperin (1626-1661), with couplets separated by the same refrain (Passacaille in g minor), use brilliant devices to break the formal monotony. Francois Couperin (1668-1733) takes the chacone from its austere shell of French rhythms and brings to its apex the art of varying the initial dance theme. Although the 18th century produced some fine pieces, the form died out after 1800. Gyorgy Ligeti's homage reminds us of the historically important place of the chaconne.

The harpsichordist Jory Vinikour conducts this didactic journey with brio. He shows himself to be brilliant (L'Amphibie, Hungarian Rock, Chaconne in G Major by Haendel) or majestic (Chaconne in D Major by Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre). The listener will appreciate the judicious use of three different instruments (according to the composer) with contrasting sonorities.

Alain Stoghens