

Mp3 Bach Babes - Stravagante



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Chamber music spanning the Baroque era (1600-1775) 23 MP3 Songs CLASSICAL: Traditional Details: The Bach Babes are a unique, Milwaukee-based chamber music ensemble, the focus of which is to bring audiences the joy, warmth and excitement of a full range of Baroque repertoire. Recognizing the need to revitalize public interest in the Baroque Era (1600-1775), harpsichordist and founder Martha Stiehl gathered together professional musicians from the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and since 1996, the Babes have delighted concert-goers with their versatile performances of both well-known and more obscure Baroque compositions. The group has gained popularity as a result of its welcoming and informal concert atmosphere and the playfully-delivered educational information that the individual members offer with each program. The nine musicians (two violins, viola, flute, oboe, cello, double bass, harpsichord and voice) comprising the ensemble's permanent core share a passion for blending historically faithful performance with contemporary flare and creativity that makes this music accessible to modern audiences. The Babes further broaden their appeal by featuring guest artists in many of their programs. As the works showcased on this recording attest, the Bach Babes present selections that are diverse in both instrumentation as well as expression. Reviews of the ensemble's rare combination of humor and musical enchantment have been universally enthusiastic. Artist-in-Residence conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony Nicholas McGegan has summed up the aura achieved by the ensemble with the statement "The Bach Babes are absolutely fabulous!" The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel's Elaine Schmidt states that the "Bach Babes are definitely an ensemble to be taken seriously." While giving a nod to the group's "varied, well-chosen programs and evident musicianship," Shepherd Express critic Charles Grosz affirms that "the Bach Babes are all accomplished musicians who clearly enjoy making music together. And they do it well." W.L. Butler From American Record Guide, May/June 2005 Stravagante Bach Babes---BP

51304----63:19 (414-481-4129) Having managed to survive the onslaught of the (we hope short-lived) "Mediaeval Baebs", are we yet ready for "Bach Babes"? The opening moments of this disc convinced me easily that we certainly are, and are the better for it. The centerpiece of the program is Bach's Cantata 202, Weichet nur, Betrubte Schatten, the Wedding Cantata, and on that basis one might have been tempted to place this under the composer's name---making life easy for Bach trollers---rather than in the collections. Given the work's familiarity, it is a bold choice for a novice ensemble to offer, given the formidable lineup of sopranos who have recorded it---Ameling, Baird, Kirkby, Murphy, Nelson, Elisabeth Schumann, Schwarzkopf, Seefried, Stader, and Zadori, to mention just the more ear-catching. But this group's singer, Jenny Gettel, has a mature, attractive, and carefully handled voice; and the performance has intelligence and appeals on its own honest merits. The program opener, the one that caught my ear from the start, is Telemann's Concerto in E Minor, originally scored for recorder and flute with strings and continuo. The soloists here are flute and oboe, but the contrasting colors work well that way. The music is familiar from many recordings, but this one is unusual in the darker intensity and pointed inflections these players bring to it. A stately pre-classical Sinfonia in B-flat by Frantisek Tuma (1704-74) is a pleasant tidbit, if not unknown on records. But the culminating work---and the longest---is the one that gives the program its title. This is an example of the Capriccio Stravagante, a kind of virtuoso instrumental work popular in the early Italian Baroque. This one is by Carlo Farina (1604-39), a short-lived master who has yet to be recognized as a true forerunner to Biber in playing with grotesque sound-effects for comic or descriptive purposes. This example is a textbook of that kind of thing, full of clever gags. The performers consist here of eight instrumentalists---flute, oboe, two violins (one a guest), viola, cello, bass and harpsichord, plus the soprano. Their instruments are frankly "modern", which may commend them to listeners who seek this literature but avoid "period" playing (though others may say that a certain pungency is lost thereby). Above all, they play with confident sonority and artistic refinement. Add to that startlingly vivid recorded sound, and you have a striking hour's-worth of listening. I thoroughly enjoyed this. May the Bach Babes flourish and endure! BARKER

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