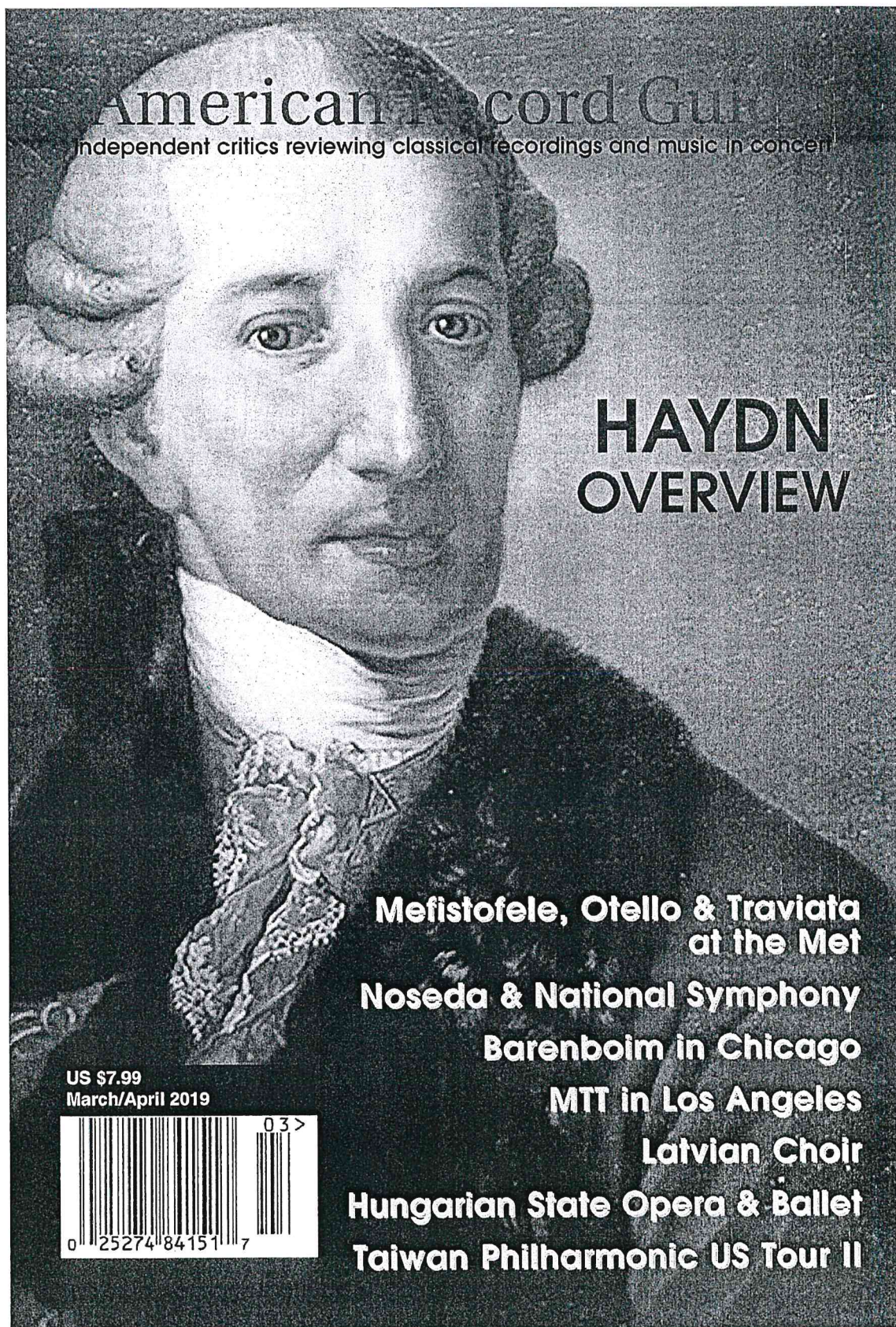


NV. RECENSIONE



American Record Guide

Independent critics reviewing classical recordings and music in concert

HAYDN OVERVIEW

**Mefistofele, Otello & Traviata
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Latvian Choir

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Taiwan Philharmonic US Tour II

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color from the accordion to hint that the Holy Spirit has arrived by way of Buenos Aires.

Zeitler's musical mediations can be light and buoyant, as in the opening 'Veni Sancte Spiritus,' but he's ready to change inferences and moods when the liturgy suggests them. There are sighs of sorrow from the viola when the tears come in Sequence V. "Our enemy is driven off by menacing voices," the text tells us in another spot, and the celebration that follows inspires the most ebullient jazz in the piece. I also get a kick out of Sequence IX, which (if I counted right) goes into 7/8 as the "Seven Gifts" (Sacrum Septenarium) are proffered to all who need them, believers or not.

In sum, there are clever touches all over the place, and Zeitler's jazz-inspired idiom brings the metaphysics down to earth with refreshing, affirming energy. The singing and playing are as glamorous as can be, as is MDG's Super Audio sound. Full translations and helpful notes on the music are included, along with an exegesis on the liturgy itself, which might be the most impenetrable, hyper-intellectualized treatment of anything I've ever read in a record booklet.

GREENFIELD

ZELENKA: *Votive Mass*

Hana Blazikova, Stanislava Mihalcova, s; Marketa Cukrova, a; Tomas Korinek, t; Tomas Kral, Lisdoro Abadie, b; Collegium 1704/ Vaclav Luks
Alpha 355—71 minutes

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745) was a formidable composer, and here is a snappy and tuneful Mass to prove it. He composed it in 1739 after recovering from an illness that nearly claimed his life. Grateful for his survival, the composer titled the Mass with sentiments from Psalm 115: "I will pay my vows to the Lord" (Vota mea Domino.)

The music-making here embodies the good and the not-so-good about the period movement. The performance is energetic to a fault, textures couldn't be clearer, agile counterpoint jumps out at you, and the bright, youthful voices dovetail with the spirit of gratitude that animates the work.

So far, so good. But there are places where you would love to hear an overwhelming crescendo, a truly cathartic cadence, or a deep, dark pianissimo digging down into the mystery of faith. You can't, of course, because of the lithe, peppy, scaled-down approach of period practices. Sigh. Still, it's the antique-meisters who are seeking out the Zelenkas of

the world in the first place, so what's not to be grateful. Once I shut down my inner dialog and just listened to this estimable composer celebrating his new lease on life, Zelenka, the Collegium, and I got along just fine.

GREENFIELD

ZUCCARI: *Mass; Magnificat (excerpts)*

Anna Piroli, Arianna Stornello, Camilla Biraga, Salvatore Gaia, Marco Piretta; Conento Vocal Ensemble; Cremona Baroque Orchestra/ Giovanni Battista Columbro

Urania 14042—70 minutes

I had never heard of Francesco Maria Zuccari (1697-1782) and I'm guessing I'm not the only one. He was born in the Italian province of Mantova (Mantua). The Zuccari were a musical lot, and the gift was not wasted on Francesco. He became a Franciscan kapellmeister who would compose more than 400 works, which are preserved in a pair of Italian libraries where they haven't seen the light of day in nearly 300 years.

The vocal portions of this hour-long Mass in C minor (Kyrie and Gloria only) were crafted in 1723 when Zuccari was one of Assisi's most accomplished musicians. He orchestrated it in 1745. It hasn't been performed since then, which makes this the first-ever recording. Rounding out the program are five excerpts from Zuccari's *Magnificat*, which also was written for voices in the 1720s, orchestrated two decades later, and squirreled away in an Italian library after the composer's death.

Both works make it abundantly clear that Zuccari was a composer who knew his business. The deep sonorities of the Mass dig into the liturgy with suspensions and cadences that tingle with spiritual energy. The second Kyrie is memorable, as is the 'Domini Fili' where the composer demonstrates his flair for drama with some nifty writing for obbligato violin. (I only wish the *primo violino* and his antique fiddle had given us more to remember them by.) Both sopranos are given lovely things to do. The recording is pretty good, if a bit more cavernous than ideal. In sum, this was a lot more than I expected; and I came away pleased to have made Francesco Maria's acquaintance.

GREENFIELD

The bar line is only for the eye, not for the ear.

—Hans von Bülow