

pieces (two dances, and Prelude based on a recitative). The program features secular cantatas written in Italy between 1707 and 1709.

The cantata, *Siete rose rugiadose*, was written for the castrato Valentini in 1714; Senestino, too, sang it (in *Tamerlano*, to the words “Bella azeria, il tuo cor mi difenda”). My reference for *Siete rose* is Sonia Prina, whose shading of line is as perfect as her ornamentation on the A1 sections of her arias. She performed with La Sfera Amoniosa and Mike Fentross on her superb *Ludi musici* disc of Handel cantatas, over on Pentatone and with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin. Bejun Mehta gives a remarkably delicate account, his voice absolutely stunning (my enthusiasm matches that of J. F. Weber in *Fanfare* 42:1). Both Prina and Mehta perform with a continuo group; Ulla sticks to one instrument and Fernando Reyes. Shorn of the bass element of a basso continuo, the effect with Ulla is of music that seems to float in the air. Ulla’s voice is full and particularly rich in its lower reaches, but not plummy. His voice is free, too, with no intrusive “h”s to the more florid passages. There is a nice sense of dance to the final, “Per involami al duolo,” too.

As interlude, Reyes offers what is essentially an improvisation, a Prelude “based on ‘Io tremante’” from the 1708 *La resurrezione*; it creates a sense of space, of Handel and yet beyond him. If you are trying to source the original it might be a touch tricky from the titling: “Io tremante! (... Io si vile!)” is actually Lucifer’s riposte to the Angel’s “Taci, che or lo vedrai” from the Part I recitative, initiated by Lucifer with “E ben, questo tuo Nume,” all of which precedes Lucifer’s aria, “O voi dell’Erebo.” It is interesting to hear recitative (often thought of as linking passages, but in Handel, as in Mozart, moments of genius within themselves) as the basis for a prelude, but it so works here; and Reyes is his own best advocate.

As to the cantata, *Dolce pur d’amor*

*l’affanno*, again it is the intimacy created by Ulla and Reyes that is so impressive, the brief, one-minute connecting recitative between the two arias a moment of high import in itself. Only the final aria, “Se piu non t’amo” feels too restrained.

Prina’s continuo group includes organ here, and her characterization is as fine as one would expect from this singer. There is further competition from Jochen Kowalski on *Capriccio* with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin making a second appearance in comparisons. Kowalski’s voice is nicely pure (viola da gamba and harpsichord make up his continuo: this was reviewed in *Fanfare* 33:2). His phasing is occasionally a touch unsubtle, though. Another interlude: a Menuet from *Rodrigo*, which is fairly famous, having turned up in “suites” from the opera previously (Michel Corboz presented it as such with the English Baroque Soloists, for instance). The “Sarabande” from the same opera functions similarly.

One of the most persuasive items here is the aria “Crede l’uom” (Man believes) from *Il trionfo del Tempo* (not “Il trionfo,” as the back cover states). Slow, lachrymose, this is most persuasive. Although there is something magical about the scoring heard in the original; for that, try Carlo Vistoli’s version on *Arcana* with the group Le Stagioni, Vistoli’s voice beautifully firm, and yet nicely rounded.

Finally, another cantata: *Vedendo amor* (Seeing how love weaves). Plenty of competition here, from Kowalski to James Bowman and Andreas Scholl; perhaps because the aria, “Camminando lei pian piano” was to recur as “Va tacito” from *Giulio Cesare*. It is instantly recognizable, and again Ulla offers an interior painting here, his decorations full of expression and pain. There is real dignity here, and the A1 section decorations of “Rise, Eurilla,” are most impressive.

A lovely take on Handel, gentle, and yet in its own way powerful, and intimately recorded. **Colin Clarke**

**HANDEL** *Siete rose rugiadose*, HWV 162<sup>1,2</sup>. *La resurrezione*, HWV 47: Prelude<sup>2</sup>. *Dolce pur d’amor l’affanno*, HWV 109a<sup>1,2</sup>. *Rodrigo*, HWV 5: Menuet<sup>2</sup>; Sarabande<sup>2</sup>. *Il trionfo del tempo*, HWV 46: *Crede l’uom*<sup>1,2</sup>. *Vedendo amor*, HWV 175<sup>1,2</sup> • <sup>1</sup>Miguel Ulla (ct); <sup>2</sup>Fernando Reyes (thb, lt, gtr) • HR 327 (51:42)

Countertenor Miguel Ulla is one of the stars of the HR Recordings label (see interview in this issue). Here, on a disc entitled *Vedendo Amor: Handel in Italy*, he is joined by Fernando Reyes, who not only plays theorbo, archlute, and Baroque guitar, but also provides his own arrangements of various Handel

## Classical Recordings

### ABBREVIATIONS

**acc** accordion  
**alt, a** alto  
**arr.** arranged by  
**attr.** attributed to

**bar** baritone  
**bbar** bass-baritone  
**bdn** bandoneón  
**bh** basset horn

**bn** bassoon  
**bp** bagpipes  
**Br** Brass  
**bs, b** bass