

disc is *Handel in Italy*, but as anyone familiar with the life story of George Frideric Handel knows, his music from Italy encompasses a rather wide variety of works, far more than can be contained within a single recording. Moreover, it is likely that, without his sojourn in Italy, his career path would have been significantly altered, quite possibly remaining stuck as an ordinary court musician in backwater Germany. OK, that is perhaps a bit of hyperbole, but Italy served as the spark for his development as an opera composer. During his various stays there, he delved into the world of the Roman Arcadian Society, a group whose main focus was upon the melding of words and music. The ideal genre for this was the secular cantata, with composers such as Alessandro Scarlatti writing copious examples. Handel too indulged in this task, and the main core of this disc, besides introducing the work of countertenor (here himself styled as an alto) Miguel Ulla, consists of three of these, all dating from around 1706–1708 and scored for voice and continuo. To fill out the disc, he has included an aria from the oratorio *Il Trionfo del Tempo*, and well as three instrumental pieces drawn from his stage works, presumably to provide some solo work for plucked instrument specialist Fernando Reyes. The result is a rather nice, tidy package that offers something rather interesting from a performance practical viewpoint, a basso part that is more intimate by using only the lute, theorbo, and Baroque guitar to offset the vocal line. This adds a much lighter tone to these cantatas, allowing the voice more expression.

First off, the various arranged instrumental pieces, well played and easy to listen to, are basically dividers, meant to offset the three cantatas and the concert aria arranged by Ulla. I find them quite pleasant but not standing out against these vocal pieces. The first cantata, *Siete rose rugiadose*, consists of only a pair of arias, divided by a short recitative. The first is lengthy and quite lilting and plaintive, while the second is a sort of mincing dance, with leaping lines in the vocal part and a steady rhythmic gait in the accompaniment. As it is half the length of the first, it serves more as a contrasting colophon. The second cantata, *Dolce pur d'amor l'affanno*, follows suit, with a liquid and lyrical long first aria that has some subtle and

↓ **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) Reviewed from a WAV download: 44.1 kHz/16-bit

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quite effective ornamentation in the voice. The second aria (“Se più non t’amo”) is forceful and quite declamatory, a brittle exclamation of love unreturned with a jagged line. The aria “Crede l’uom” from the oratorio is quite lovely, making it appear in this arrangement that it could easily have been adapted from a secular cantata. Finally, the third cantata (*Vedendo amor*) begins with a rather declamatory recitative that moves easily into the first aria, where Ulla’s diction is crystal clear, even as the text speaks of forest shadows. The second aria (“Camminando lei”) is plaintive, even slow and operatic, and I suspect that this is the sort of lamento that Handel could make further use of in his stage works. The final aria (“Rise Eurilla”) is lyrical and fluid, more emotional than conclusive, and a brief recitative ends the cantata with a sort of musical question mark.

Miguel Ulla has a nicely sonorous and quite clear voice, with excellent intonation and a good sense of the emotions of the text. His phrasing emphasizes the vagaries of the text, allowing Handel’s often lyrical music to emerge with considerable sensitivity. While this set of works may make a short, perhaps even pithy program, this is one that is finely tuned and shows that Ulla has a great future in this sort of Baroque repertoire. **Bertil van Boer**

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## Classical Recordings

### ABBREVIATIONS

<b>acc</b>	accordion	<b>bar</b>	baritone	<b>bn</b>	bassoon
<b>alt, a</b>	alto	<b>bbar</b>	bass-baritone	<b>bp</b>	bagpipes
<b>arr.</b>	arranged by	<b>bdn</b>	bandoneón	<b>Br</b>	Brass
<b>attr.</b>	attributed to	<b>bh</b>	basset horn	<b>bs, b</b>	bass