

[BACH Played by the Flanders Recorder Quartet](#)

A contrabass recorder handles the lowest notes for the delicate wind ensemble



AE-10136, 64:09 ****

Bach didn't spend a lot of time sitting around writing music for a recorder quartet. In fact he wrote not a blessed note. However, he did include parts for a recorder or two in a number of his cantatas, and the instrument was a major music-maker in the home along with clavichords, harpsichords and violins. The sound of the recorder, especially of four of them, is a sort of chamber music version of the pipe organ, and it turns out that many of the works on this disc were transcribed from his works for organ. Even if the connection were not so close, it seems that any of the music of Bach for any instrument of his time transcribes beautifully and without serious losses to even the wildest producers of music in our present age - such as the synthesizer.

This fine program takes Bach chorales, Italian-flavored concertos already once transcribed from Vivaldi, inventive preludes and fugues, and a magnificent passacaglia, and makes them all work effectively for the virtuoso players of this recorder quartet. Assigning the different voices in Bach's originals to the four wind instruments was probably not that difficult, and the quartet - who collectively did the arrangements themselves - had less problems in the bass end than one would expect for these higher-pitched instruments. The reason is that among the ten different recorders they have at their disposal for different selections is a unique Baroque contrabass recorder in F made by Friedrich von Huene, which is 2.2 meters long. On the works requiring it, the quartet assumes a rich and deep sonority that would not normally be expected from a recorder quartet.

My favorites of the disc were the two Vivaldi concerto transcriptions, which are among my Bach favorites anyway, whether in the original with harpsichord, Stokowski's arrangements, or even W. Carlos' Moog synthesizer. I found the chorale preludes fresher-sounding than the organ originals, which tend to make me drowsy. The voice-leading of the various lines seemed crisper and easier to follow. Bach's rich musical language is ideal for performance in this way, and the clarity of the surround reproduction aided getting into the music. Highly recommended.

John Sunier, for Audiphile Audition
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