



Semiramide:

La Signora Regale

Anna Bonitatibus (m-sop),

La Stagione Armonica,

Accademia degli Astrusi,

Federico Ferri (dir)

DHM 88725479862 (2 CDs)



Full marks for thoughtful originality here.

The legendary Assyrian queen and warrior Semiramis is best known to opera lovers from Rossini's opera *Semiramide* of 1823, an excerpt from which is included. Yet as this set comprehensively demonstrates, operatic treatment of Semiramis extends much further than that. In a prefatory note Bonitatibus suggests that over 100 compositions have been inspired by her; Metastasio's *Semiramide riconosciuta* alone was set no fewer than 33 times. This disc includes extracts from his text not only by Jommelli and Traetta, who we know (but should know much better), but also by the unknown Andrea Bernasconi (1706-1784), whose 1765 version includes the exquisitely beautiful 'Ah non è vano il pianto'.

It is not easy to describe Bonitatibus' performances, except perhaps to call them mixed. The intrinsic vocal quality is creamy, but the voice has a fast vibrato that at times spreads. Notes are not always accurately placed nor in the higher register, under control. Yet Bonitatibus has a rare gift. She is a splendid vocal actress who demands from the listener full attention to what she is singing *about*. One need only listen to the Bernasconi mentioned above to be intensely vulnerable world of the queen. She is supported by moderately good orchestral playing. A compelling issue. **BR**