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BRILLIANT
CLASSICS

ARVO PART

MAGNIFICAT · STABAT MATER

Ensemble Le Nuove Musiche · Krijn Koetsveld

Arvo Pärt b.1935

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|--------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1. Magnificat (1989) | 6'17 | 10. Stabat Mater (1985) | 25'11 |
| 2. Nunc dimittis (2001) | 7'15 | | |

Maria Antifonen (1988, 1991)

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|------|----------------------------------|--|
| 3. O Weisheit | 1'04 | Ensemble Le Nuove Musiche | |
| 4. O Adonai | 2'03 | Wendy Roobol <i>soprano</i> | |
| 5. O Spross aus Isias Wurzel | 0'56 | Hugo Naessens <i>alto</i> | |
| 6. O Schlüssel Davids | 1'41 | Falco van Loon <i>tenor</i> | |
| 7. O Morgenstern | 1'40 | Kees Hulsman <i>violin</i> | |
| 8. O König aller Völker | 1'29 | Bernadette Verhagen <i>viola</i> | |
| 9. O Immanuel | 2'24 | Sanne de Graaf <i>cello</i> | |
| | | Krijn Koetsveld <i>conductor</i> | |

Ensemble Le Nuove Musiche

Wendy Roobol · Mónica Monteiro

soprano

Hugo Naessens · Kaspar Kröner *alto*

Falco van Loon · Emilio Aguilar *tenor*

Berend Eijkhout · Bas Ramselaar *bass*

Krijn Koetsveld *conductor*

It seems so simple. Just a few notes, repeated harmonies, often at a very calm pace, declamations on a note or a chord. No complex patterns, with many surprising dissonant harmonies or extremely complex voice leading. Then what makes for this intriguing, dazing atmosphere, which is cherished by, and enraptures so many?

In 1977, Arvo Pärt (1935) invents a name for his new style: tintinnabuli, a Latin word meaning little bells. The crisp sound of those bells rings in a serene, almost meditative, religious environment and enthral the attentive listener, who is never shocked by sudden changes, but is softly led into an enchanted universe of sounds.

Is it correct to award Pärt, together with Henryk Górecki and John Tavener, the predicate of 'holy minimalist'? In a far more positive light we view his quest for a new idiom, inspired by the Gregorian style and old polyphony from the 15th and 16th centuries.

In the **Magnificat** (1989) he arranges the text in a free declamatory style. Sometimes on a note, or a dissonance stemming from that one note, like the entry of the soprano, or as a simple harmonic world, which subsequently emerges in the male voices. The declamation feels completely free, thanks to an accurate notation. Notes are slightly lengthened or shortened, resulting in a free, declamatory style rather than in a strict metrical idiom. The notation shows Pärt's intention: the intermittent measures are only there to order the words, not to put the words to music. Pärt's familiar song of praise is spoken with a soft and almost timid voice, with a surprising, triumphant 'et misericordia eius', and his mercy is from generation to generation. It is as if the very pious Pärt wants to present it to us as the qualifying message of a silently rejoicing Mary. Again, this movement ends with a whisper on a major chord: *Magnificat anima mia*.

Nunc Dimittis, the Song of Simeon, forms a liturgic unity with the *Magnificat*. We know that the composer doesn't consider them as such, nonetheless they connect strikingly well to one another. The *Nunc Dimittis* (2001) opens with a long chord,

which slowly reveals a fragment of a melody, with shreds of text passed on by the voices and gradually brought to rest on 'pace'. Here, again, there is a simple harmony, peacefully undulating and moving, with subtle dynamic wanderings, in the same notation, where each word fills a measure and has its own declamation. Suddenly a majestic major chord lights up on 'lumen ad revelationem gentium', an imaginative form of word painting. The Gloria Patri seems to be destined for eternity. On an harmonic base in the low voices, melodic fragments appear in a seemingly improvised way, not metric, but free and light and loose. Once the sound stops, it is not over, but a beautiful dissonance is released into the silence.

The seven **Maria Antiphons** (1988,1991) are invocations which in the Roman Catholic liturgy belong to the week before Christmas. These invocations are sometimes dubbed the o-antiphons and all originate from the Old Testament

Proverbs 8: 1-6 : O Weisheit

Deuteronomy 10: 16-22: O Adonai

Isaiah 11: 1-10: O Spross aus Israels Wurzel

Isaiah 22: 20-22: O Schlüssel Davids

Malachi 4: 1-3: O Morgenstern

Jeremiah 10: 1-7: O König aller Völker

Isaiah 7: 14: O Immanuel.

We can consider these miniatures as a sample sheet of variations of the seemingly simple compositional technique which Pärt applies.

Declamation on a single chord in parts 1, 4 and 7.

In part 2, O Adonai, a held fifth, alternately in the high and low voices, with the text in another voice above or underneath.

In deel 3, O Spross, with a variation with a third or second, with an unexpected climax and a colon leading to part 4.

Deel 5, O Morgenstern, has two layers, e major and e Phrygian, which softly chafing, fill one another, attract one another and assemble.

Deel 6, O König aller Völker, consists of three layers. The tenors and bases vary and declamate homophonically on a single d minor chord. In an entirely free rhythm, fully autonomous from the lower voices, the altos declamate the entire text on a single note, again a d. A striking feature is the intense repetition of the text O Komm und errette den Menschen. Finally, both soprani have the same text in longer notes, albeit in a free-standing alla breve. Together, the four voices lead to a dynamic climax, building up throughout the part from an extremely soft pianissimo up to fortissimo.

The last part, O Immanuel, has from the onset, with the syncopated placement of the text between the voices, only one direction: O Immanuel: A major, radiant and intense, and once more, soft and compact, O Immanuel.

In the **Stabat Mater** (1985) for three voices (soprano, alto and tenor) and three string instruments (violin, viola and cello), Pärt for 25 minutes uses only one tonality: the aeolian mode, the white keys on the piano, beginning at a. The melodic material fits within this old church mode and often is reminiscent of 15th and 16th century church counterpoint. Obviously the consonance is different, but nowhere it collides. The same goes for the instruments, which descend from very high and fragile down to comfortable positions. Two instrumental, volatile and poignant intermezzi are then taken over by the emblematic image of the mourning mother Mary at the crucified Christus.

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