

CHRISTOPHER HERRICK - INTERNATIONAL CONCERT ORGANIST

BACH

1998 was the memorable year that I gave 14 concerts on 14 consecutive days in the Lincoln Center Festival, playing all Bach's organ music. Since then I have completed the Hyperion Bach recordings on Metzler organs in Switzerland and, during the year 2002, the 16 CD Complete Bach Box Set was issued.

Here are three rather special reviews celebrating that achievement...

San Francisco Chronicle BREATH TAKING BACH COLLECTION

There is no shortage of superb Bach recordings, but even in such a crowded field, Christopher Herrick's monumental achievement stands out. **Here is a fresh and gripping account of Johann Sebastian Bach's complete works for the organ where each performance seems to be a discovery.**

Herrick's touch, his unflinching taste and his innate feeling for the dance rhythms at the heart of even the most austere pieces all make for a musical adventure with few parallels. The use of several stunning Metzler organs from all over Switzerland brings both a variety of voices and an exhilarating uniformity of style to the colors of this organist's palette. **These are the most persuasive, exciting and idiomatic performances of Bach's organ music to come around in at least half a century.**

The organist's articulation is as crystalline as his sense of rhythm is free. In the lesser-known miniatures, he suggests a most un-Protestant sense of fun that will be a revelation to many: The "Fasch" Trio BWV 585 in particular is delicious. He can unveil the different lines in the Trio Sonatas, shade the Toccatas with a chiaroscuro of surprising registers and even gently

highlight the contemporary musical relevance of Bach's genius.

The recorded organ sound is consistently impressive, full and warm, yet without a hint of later romantic opulence. Herrick's ease where other organists can sometimes be heard to struggle makes the music that much more breathtaking in his hands.

Certainly the way Herrick brings out the tension within the slow section of the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C Major, BWV 564, goes a long way to explain why an entire generation of French jazz artists turned to Bach for inspiration.

There, in Bach's most famous organ score, Herrick's rests are dramatic without violating the spirit of the period; his phrasing is dancelike and natural. There is nothing artificial in his playing.

His rhythm in the opening movements of the toccatas tend to the impish, his way with the adagios to the monumental. This organist makes it easy to understand why Bach ran into trouble in Arnstadt when the congregation complained that his organ music was too hard to follow during services. **There are enough layers of beauty for a lifetime of discovery in this music.**

BBC Radio 3 CD Review Building a Library: Bach Trio Sonatas

I've looked not for a performer challenging the spirit of Bach - with extremes of tempo, ornamentation, articulation - but **communing with it**, reflecting Friedemann's virtuosity, sustaining momentum in fast movements, and expressiveness without inhibiting the flow in slow ones. And from the instrument itself, a seductive range of sound, kept within the limits of the

sonatas' chamber music heritage in both registration and recording ambience. **For the special demands of repeated listening, my first choice, full-price on Hyperion CDA 66390, is Christopher Herrick playing the fine Metzler organ in Switzerland.**

George Pratt

The Independent

Everything Bach ever wrote for the organ, fitting onto 12 CDs and costing some £70: that's quite a bargain. But what makes this fine repackaging of previously released single discs is the inherently sensible playing of Herrick, who matches each of the

works to one of the seven Metzler organs he used in this monumental project. **Few get as close to the very essence of Bach's organ music as Herrick; this set makes the enormity of his achievement clear. *******

I am always delighted when a concert organiser asks for an all-Bach programme. In January 2005 I'll be playing such a programme as part of the University of Alabama's Church Music Conference, as well as giving a talk on Bach's Free Works for organ. Here is the programme...

Bach Recital

University of Alabama
29 January 2005

Toccat, Adagio and Fugue in C [BWV 564]

Pastorale in F [BWV 590]
Prelude / allemande / aria / gigue

Trio Sonata No. 3 in D minor [BWV 527]
Andante / Adagio e dolce / Vivace

Fantasia in G [BWV 572]

Concerto in C after Ernst [BWV 595]
Allegro

Prelude and Fugue in A minor [BWV 543]