

EARLY MUSIC REVIEW

Hamburg 1705: eighteenth-century works for harpsichord

by Noel O'Regan

Benuzzi uses the coincidence of these three composers having worked in the opera house in Hamburg in 1705, prior to Handel's departure for Italy, to record a comparative group of works by all three. He includes two Handel suites (HWV 437 and 448, both in D minor), a partita in A by Graupner and a suite in D by Mattheson, plus some preludes and other incidental pieces by Handel. This provides a useful contextualisation for the young Handel's music while also being a reminder of the importance of Hamburg as a music centre at this time. Benuzzi is a very sympathetic player of this repertory and clearly revels in the rich sound of the Dulcken harpsichord from the late John Barnes' collection on which it is beautifully recorded with a warm close-up sound. Gaps between tracks seem unusually long, breaking up continuity in the suites, but this is a fine recording with much to recommend it.