



News
 Features
 Editor's Choice
 Awards
 Reviews
 Competitions
 Industry
 Forum
 Concert Listings
 eNewsletter
 Home

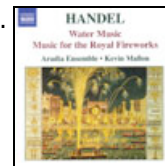
Reviews

Handel

Music for the Royal Fireworks, HWV351. Water Music, HWV348-50.

Aradia Ensemble/Kevin Mallon

Naxos New CD ⓘ **8 557764 (71 minutes : DDD)**



David Vickers

Exemplary Handel playing – just don't mention the rogue tambourine

The *Water Music* has traditionally been divided into three suites, as it is here, but a recently rediscovered early manuscript copy confirms that Handel originally created one long sequence of movements. A more regretful aspect of this recording is a superfluous percussionist rattling away on a tambourine in several movements (for example, the hornpipe in Suite No 1). Kevin Mallon claims that this 'was often the practice in the 18th century' but there is not a single piece of evidence that Handel would have agreed. Otherwise, Mallon's performance is exemplary. Handel's melodies are nicely shaped, with colourful accompaniments that range between assertive energy and understated pathos. Resonant horns and elegant trumpets synthesise stylish wit and regal pomp in the famous 'Alla hornpipe' (Suite No 2). Brightness and subtlety co-exist with a charismatic swagger.

Mallon's sense of an attractive flowing pulse in the music carries through to the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. The Overture has crisp, articulate phrasing, in which important details are stressed and then shade away to allow the next musical detail to come to the fore. The zesty Aradia Ensemble never succumb to monotonous tub-thumping. Naxos is wrong to claim that this is the first recording of 'La paix' to feature a transverse flute (Michel Piguet used seven Baroque flutes in a 1975 recording only ever issued on LP, and perhaps there are others). There is no shortage of excellent recordings that pair these beloved works together, but Mallon's interpretation is an attractive contender at budget price.

David Vickers

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