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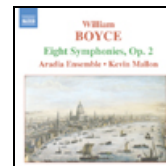
## Reviews

### Boyce

8 Symphonies, Op. 2.

**Aradia Ensemble/Kevin Mallon**

**Naxos New CD**  **8 557278 (62 minutes : DDD)**



### Selected Comparisons

*English Concert, Pinnock (9/87) (ARCH) 419 631-2AH*  
*AAM, Hogwood (4/94R) (DECC) 473 081-2*

### David Vickers

#### An ideal place to start discovering the music of the London-born composer

During the past 15 years excellent recordings of odes, masques and anthems have advanced our appreciation of William Boyce as Handel's most talented native British colleague. Regarding his music for the London stage, David Garrick apparently thought that Boyce was a more reliable composer than Thomas Arne. A modern listener might agree. The eight symphonies that form his Op 2 were published in 1760 (the year after Handel's death) although the content was assembled from earlier works, including theatre music and royal odes. There is a wealth of superb music in this anthology, much of it seeming to fall somewhere between Handel's *Water Music* and the later *galant* style of JC Bach.

While Trevor Pinnock or Christopher Hogwood might justifiably retain benchmark status, Kevin Mallon and his Canadian period-instrument Aradia Ensemble offer a nicely judged and pleasantly played alternative. Mallon's previous recordings for Naxos have almost single-handedly transformed the label's poor track record with late Baroque music. This trend continues apace with the Aradia Ensemble vibrantly conveying the difficult blend of dance-like wit and muscular energy in Boyce's music.

Apart from the list of participants being wildly incorrect (a choir where none exists, horns overlooked, no organ and uncredited harpsichord) my only mild reservation is that the over-reverberant recorded sound conceals occasional problems with intonation and washes everything in a mushy soup that does not always assist transparency and clarity. However, the acoustic lends an attractive bloom to the horns in Symphony No 4, and the effect of the resonant trumpets and timpani in Symphony No 5 is invigorating. If you are curious about Boyce's orchestral music, then this is an ideal place to start.

**David Vickers**

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