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Mark Ringer - 5 out of 5*

The best complete Couperin harpsichord in 40 years - November 22, 2018

Verified Purchase

For anyone who loves the harpsichord and this repertoire the present recording is an absolute must. Ms. Cerasi, a British based harpsichordist has won many awards for her thoughtful, musically penetrating recordings over the years but this is a tour de force that will be difficult even for her to surpass. These 10 discs reflect a profound and consistent understanding of these most elusive of works. Here is on display the most severe and sensual beauty of phrasing and characterization sustained throughout these varied miniatures helping to musically distill an entire civilization. Couperin's many contrasting moods are vividly characterized and contrasted. There are numerous manifestations of the music's delicate ache or melancholy. Cerasi's achievement may be summed up by comparison with other prominent complete recordings. She shares some of Scott Ross's intense concentration and clarity of form while enjoying a recording of greater attractiveness and instruments that are in a better state of preservation. (Ross' still classic yet almost unobtainable account may be sampled on youtube). Cerasi's playing often recalls hypnotizing moments found in Kenneth Gilbert's cycle without that player's stylistic fussiness. She accents the music's sensuality without falling into exaggeration as Rousset may be accused of doing. Her approach is subtle yet without a trace of the blandness that occasionally may be found in Baumont's interpretation. These interpretations are personal and breathe with inner life while avoiding the (often endearing) mannerisms of Blandine Verlet. In short, Cerasi's is a treasurable cycle that is difficult to imagine being bettered in the near or distant future.

Metronome Notes:

Metronome is delighted to announce the release of new recordings by Carole Cerasi of the complete works for harpsichord of Francois Couperin to coincide with the 350 anniversary of his birth on 10th November 1668. Carole has spent the last 18 months recording these wonderfully varied, subtle and elegant works on 6 harpsichords including two outstanding original instruments across Europe. It continues a long record of distinguished performing of the music of the French baroque, which launched her association with Metronome when she won the Gramophone Award and the Diapason D'Or D'Annee for her recordings of the music of Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, and features in her concert repertoire

today - she gave a recital of Couperin at the recent Utrecht International Early Music Festival. This recording has been a labour of love and commitment and has engaged musicologist Nicholas Anderson in writing new articles on the music of Couperin in the notes.