

# musica Dei donum

## CD reviews

**José DE BAQUEDANO (1642 - 1711): "Música para la catedral de Santiago"**

**La Grande Chapelle**

**Dir: Albert Recasens**

rec: June 26 - 28, 2021, Lisbon, Igreja do Menino Deus

**Lauda - LAU 022** (© 2022) (67'22")

Liner-notes: E/D/F/ES/GAL; lyrics - translations: E/F/ES

[Cover & track-list](#)

Assumpta est Maria a 8; Domine ne in furore a 8; Incipit Lamentatio ... Aleph. Quomodo sedet a 8; Interveniatur pro nobis a 8; Iod. Manum suam a 6; Laudate Dominum a 12; Miserere a 10; O crux, ave spes a 4; Senex puerum a 8; Viri Galilaei a 8

Jone Martínez, Aurora Peña, Lorena García, *soprano*; Gabriel Díaz Cuesta, Kaspar Kröner, *alto*; William Knight, Tore Tom Denys, *tenor*; Raitis Grigalis, Javier Cuevas, *bass*  
María Alejandra Saturno, Miriam Rignol, Sara Ruiz, *viñuela de arco*; Marta Vicente, *violone*; Benny Aghassi *bajón*; Manuel Vilas, *harp*; Jorge López-Escribano, *harpsichord, organ*

Since 2004, when the first disc on his label Lauda was released, Albert Recasens has performed and recorded a large repertoire of music that was hardly known, often by composers many music lovers may never have heard of. Having heard nearly all of them, I always wondered why the music included in them had been given so little attention, considering its quality. The present disc is another example: the name of José de Baquedano did not ring a bell with me, and I can't remember ever having heard any of his works. And that is a big shame, I have to conclude after listening to the sacred works that Recasens selected for this recording.

Baquedano (or Vaquedano) was born in Puente la Reina (Navarra), where he - as so many composers of his time - started his musical career as a choirboy. He became a "very skilled" singer, and at the age of 21 - then singing as an alto - he tried to find a position as a singer in several cathedrals, but to no avail. He then moved to Madrid, where he entered the Convento de la Trinidad Calzada. In addition to taking part in religious services and the collection of alms - one of the main preoccupations of the convent - he continued his musical activities, probably in training friars and composing music. He extended his musical knowledge with Matiaz Ruiz, *maestro de capilla* of the Real Monasterio de la Encarnación.

In 1680 Baquedano was invited to succeed Diego Verdugo as *maestro di capilla* of the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. At the time it was a rather small city of about 12,000 inhabitants, but that does not reflect its importance. It was the head of an important bishopric and the goal of many pilgrims, who came to venerate the relics of the Apostle James - the patron of the city - who the cathedral claimed to own. Santiago and its cathedral also enjoyed a considerable wealth, due to what is known as the 'Santiago vow', an annual payment of half a bushel of wheat from every farmer in the Kingdom of Granada. "The Catholic Monarchs had promised to collect this vow on their visit to Compostela in 1486 when entrusting themselves to the Apostle James for the conquest of that Islamic stronghold" (Ofelia Rey Castelao in the booklet). As a result the cathedral could afford a highly qualified chapel of singers and instrumentalists. When they tried to convince Baquedano to become *maestro di capilla*, the salary of 800 ducats per year - much higher than what was given to any of his predecessors - may have been a strong argument.

However, when he took over that position, Spain was facing a serious crisis, which had quite some financial implications for Santiago and its musical establishment. It was a matter of good luck for Baquedano and the cathedral that in 1686 Antonio de Monroy became archbishop. He preached poverty, but at the same time he was active in artistic patronage. He promoted works in the Cathedral, such as the construction of the Pilar Chapel, and in 1705 and 1709 two organs were erected, which he financed. Towards the end of Baquedano's life, the financial situation improved, and this allowed for his being granted an excellent retirement of 400 ducats a year in 1710. His resignation was due to bad health, and in 1711 he died.

His extant music comprises exclusively sacred music, in Latin and in the vernacular; the latter category concerns the genre of the *villancico*. In addition, only one instrumental work has been preserved, a trio sonata which is the first piece of this kind written in Spain. The present disc offers a survey of the Latin part of Baquedano's output. The pieces cover a large part of the ecclesiastical year, from Candlemas to Ascension, and two Marian celebrations, the Assumption and the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

Baquedano seems to have had a strong predilection for the *cori spezzati* technique: many works are for eight voices in two choirs, and he even wrote music for five choirs. That undoubtedly reflected the forces he had at his disposal in Santiago. As most sacred music in Spain at the time, his works are written in the *stile antico*. However, one should not expect much similarity with the music of, for instance, Palestrina. First, more than their Italian counterpart, Spanish composers were able to add a strong emotional touch to their music. Their masses and motets, and especially pieces that reflect the veneration of the Virgin Mary, have a passion that lacks in music written elsewhere. Second, like Italian composers of the late 17th century who wrote sacred music in the *stile antico*, Baquedano pays much more attention to the text than was common in the previous century. He does so by making use of the devices that were part of the style of his time, such as musical figures to illustrate elements in the text, episodes with a more declamatory character, and harmony. Moreover, he creates contrasts by changing the scoring, from episodes for solo voices to passages for the entire ensemble.

As mentioned above, the chapel of Santiago Cathedral also included instrumentalists. It is not entirely clear what role instruments played in sacred music of the 16th and 17th centuries, and when exactly they participated in performances. There can be little doubt that they did play a role in Santiago. Interestingly, one of the Lamentations performed here, includes obbligato parts for *viñola da gamba*: *Iod. Manum suam* has the addition *lamentación III de Jueves Santo a 6 con vihuelas*. It seems right that Recasens took the freedom to include instruments in performances of some other pieces as well.

This survey of Baquedano's Latin church music is quite impressive. Among the highlights are undoubtedly the two lamentations. They are different in character: in *Incipit Lamentatio ... Aleph*, Baquedano creates a contrast between the letters of the alphabet, opening each lamentation, which are set in melismatic style, whereas the text itself is more chordal, often almost declamatory, which furthers the intelligibility of the text. In the second lamentation, the text is treated in a more imitative manner. There are more Lamentation settings, and I very much hope that these will be recorded one day too. The *Miserere* is an *alternatim* work: the verses are alternately sung in polyphony, plainchant and *fauxbourdon*. Notable is here that there is one passage, in which Baquedano explores the double choir structure for echo effects. The splendour which the *cori spezzati* technique can create, comes to the fore in *Laudate Dominum*.

In my view, Baquedano is a real discovery. I am impressed by his music, and I hope that more of his oeuvre is going to make it to disc in the near future. One can only hope that such performances are as good as what we get here. I have heard nearly all of La Grande Chapelle's recordings, and I appreciated all of them. This is a top-class ensemble that deserves to be much better-known than it seems to be. The singing is as good as one would like, and Recasens manages to get the best out of them. The blending of the voices is immaculate, and there is some good dynamic shading, which helps to explore the emotional touch of Baquedano's music.

This is one of those discs that one wants to return to on a regular basis.

Johan van Veen (© 2023)

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## CD Reviews

### Home