

theStrad

Marie Stockmarr Becker: Bach

By *Robin Stowell* | 22 JUNE 2021

Expressive, sweet-toned playing especially in the slow movements



The Strad Issue: July 2021

Description: Expressive, sweet-toned playing especially in the slow movements

Musicians: Marie Stockmarr Becker (viola) Ilaria Macedonio (harpsichord)

Works: Bach: Sonatas for viola da gamba and harpsichord BWV1027–29 (arr. for viola)

Catalogue number: CHANNEL CLASSICS CCS43721

Marie Stockmarr Becker draws a rich, unforced tone from her 1776 Joseph Hill viola, enhancing its mellow timbre with a restrained but tellingly sweetening vibrato. Expressive slow movements such as the lyrical opening Adagio of BWV1027 unfold with a graceful simplicity, its suspensions yearning for resolution. The austere Andante of BWV1028, with its anguished arching figurations, is also dispatched with appropriate pathos and expression. However, the bittersweet central Adagio of BWV1029, though suitably dignified, seems to drag, begging a more flexible response to the viola's written-out ornamented line.

The emphasis in the fast movements seems to be more on caution and accuracy than on vitality or imaginative communication. Ensemble is exemplary, but tempos tend towards the conservative, notably those of the second movements of BWV1027 and 1028 and the moto perpetuo finale of BWV1028, and the outcomes seem somewhat routine. Even with 'period' utensils, Becker's more sustained, lyrical approach fails to match the natural articulation of Ilaria Macedonio's harpsichord contribution and neither protagonist realises convincingly the exuberance of Bach's invigorating contrapuntal interplay, even in the ebullient, concertante outer movements of BWV1029.

Channel's recordings, captured in a reverberant church acoustic, are ideally balanced, but this disc's meagre 45-minute duration may leave purchasers feeling somewhat short-changed.

ROBIN STOWELL