

COUPERIN, L: *Harpsichord Pieces 3*

Bob van Asperen

Aeolus 10124 [SACD] 71 minutes

This is part of Van Asperen's complete survey of music by Louis Couperin (c1626-1661), who was part of a large family of expert musicians. As with the recently-completed series of Froberger's music by this same performer and label (reviewed later in this issue), the performances are terrific and the documentation is worthy of scholarly journals. As Andrus Madsen wrote about the release of Volume 1 (S/O 2007): "This is a truly magnificent recording. The music of Louis Couperin is exquisitely beautiful, and Van Asperen's playing is brilliant—full of personality and grace at every turn."

This Volume 3 is from 2007, released 2013. The two remaining volumes of the five-disc series are yet to come. For comparison I have Blandine Verlet's set (*Astree*, completed in 1992) and many single discs by other players. I have heard part of Richard Egarr's 4-disc set from 2011, but it appears to be difficult to obtain already.

This album begins with the Couperin prelude that quotes Froberger's music (Tocatta 1 at the beginning of Volume 8 from that series). There are six suites here. Van Asperen plays from Davitt Moroney's modern edition, augmented by consulting various manuscripts. There are a few items here not in Verlet's set: a recently discovered Prelude in D minor and several pieces by other composers brought in for direct comparisons with Couperin's elaborated arrangements of them.

Van Asperen's performances are more moderately tuned than Verlet's, and he makes the ornamentation sound more tender, less twitchy. His phrasing catches all the gentle moments, and the lively parts have plenty of

dash. This harpsichord dates from about 1700 and is by an anonymous French builder. Everything is so superlative, there is nothing more to say but to hope that the series will be completed soon.

B LEHMAN