

pmr 0020 – Couperin, Organ Masses
American Record Guide
12 Nov 2012

Donald E Metz

Tibbles, an unfamiliar name in organ circles, is a New Zealander who studied at Auckland University, later at the Royal Conservatory, The Hague. He is Senior Lecturer in Early Music Performance at Auckland University.

The Couperin family was a major player in the late 17th and early 18th Century French church music scene. Most organists include some music by François Couperin (1668–1733) in their repertory, and the two Masses occupy a central place in early French music history. Superb liner notes by the performer supply valuable information about chant style and organ player demands. Making this recording special is the choice of instrument, a 3–26 anonymous c.1680 organ in the 13th Century parish church, Notre-Dame de Rozay-en-Seine, Rozay et Marne, France. The keyboards may well be the oldest playable keyboards in France and surely would have been played by the Couperin family when they were in the area visiting relatives in Chaumes-en-Brie. The stop disposition is of interest: Grand-orgue with 16 stops; Positif with 8, Pedal with 4, and the Recit just 1. The organ also has a Tremblant fort, Vielle, Rosignol, and Clochette. Chants, taken from the Graduale Romanum (Paris:1640;1697) and Monasticum (Paris 1686), were recorded in the Music Theater in the University of Auckland.

Details aside, this will be the recording of choice if you interested in Couperin's music. The keyboard work is impeccable and the choral chants, performed by six women and five men, are in the appropriate style—simpler for the Parish Mass, less so for the Convent Mass. Uncertain listeners may be convinced of the historic "rightness" of this organ by the comment made by Cochereau in 1973: "The organ of Rozay, not simply restored but very well restored, could be considered the finest instrument in the Paris region, even in France." Highest marks for this performance. Listeners seeking comparable recordings should try Vernet on a 1640 Levasseur organ (M/J 2003) or Schoonbroodt (J/A 2010).

© 2012 American Record Guide