

New Recordings

***Bach: The Great Eighteen Chorales,* Renee Anne Louprette. Metzler organ, Trinity College Chapel, Cambridge, England. Acis Productions, APL 58180 (2-CD set), www.acisproductions.com.**

The Great Eighteen Preludes (BWV 651–668) by Johann Sebastian Bach represent the pinnacle of the chorale prelude form, both in his own output and in the context of the wider repertoire of the Baroque period. Disappointingly, they also represent his lost genius in the same way that the *Requiem* does for Mozart: had the great man lived beyond 1750 we would undoubtedly have more of these superb chorale preludes.

The 1976 Metzler instrument of three manuals, 42 ranks, on which this disc is recorded, sounds magnificent in the warm, resonant acoustic of Trinity College Chapel and was designed and built around the original case and seven ranks of seventeenth-century Father Smith pipework. The reeds are fiery and thrilling, the Cornet full and rich, the principal choruses sonorous and grand, and the flutes delicate and subtle. The mixtures are a touch on the aggressive side, but they combine beautifully with the pedal reeds for a thrilling and commanding plenum. It is certainly one of the best examples of Metzler's work in the UK, if a slightly unorthodox choice of instrument for a traditional English choral foundation!

Louprette's performances here are excellent—technically assured, highly articulate, and musical, demonstrating much of the instrument's tonal palette and a great sensitivity to the chosen music, which is some of the most mature and intricate Bach organ writing. It is quite easy to see from this disc why she is regarded as one of New York City's most compelling performers. Perhaps this will become the first disc in a series of complete Bach recordings; if so it would certainly rival the best current recording out there, which, for my money, remains Regent's set performed by Margaret Phillips.

—James M. Reed
Glasgow, UK