

WHOLENOTE (Music Magazin Toronto), John S. Gray, May 2006, Disc of the Month

It's about time that Karg-Elert enjoyed a revival. The German composer's post-romantic organ works will surely make a good impression on listeners with this, the second volume in a series by organ virtuoso Elke Völker. Recorded at the massive 98-stop Wilhelm Sauer 1893 organ in the acoustically rich interior of the St. Petri Dom in Bremen, this is music to shake rafters from cathedral to condominium.

The 1910 Three Symphonic Canzonas are spellbinding. Unexpected appearances by instruments and voices beyond the organ make this set utter magic, especially in the third part, Fuge, Kanzone und Epilog. Two Pieces for violin and organ, dating back to 1903, continue this display of Karg-Elert's inventive pairing, showing us his more introspective side.

The last piece, Passacaglia and Fugue on B-A-C-H, op. 150 is from very late in Karg-Elert's life, and controversy and confusion about the authenticity of parts of the score still remain. As presented it is a densely chromatic work, nearly 20 minutes in length.

Völker plays all with ease and grace; violinist Immanuel Willmann is well-matched to the organ in the Two Pieces. There are four singers: Inka Henze, Ratraut Reidel, Hanna Wardetzki and Ulla Kostia-Mielke, and they deserve much praise for their work here. Trumpeter Michael Boese is excellent. As expected, the organ stops have a whole page in the notes, and even the microphones are credited. Splendid!