

CC 72193 moderntimes_1800: Sinfonias from the Enlightenment

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by Uncle Dave Lewis

The imaginatively named Austrian chamber group moderntimes_1800 was founded in 2003; this Challenge Classics release *Sinfonias from the Enlightenment* is its third release. Its two discs survey some especially important, and unfamiliar, eighteenth century symphonies, including the jewels in this particular crown: two sinfonias of [Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach](#) completely unknown to either [Wotquenne](#) or [Helm](#) that surfaced as part of the missing [Berliner Singakademie](#) collection discovered in Kiev in 1999. The goal of moderntimes_1800 is to create a group that is proficient in both historic and modern literature and they play both original instruments and standard ones. The effect is a very pleasing, warm, and well-rounded sound that delivers the concision of a period instrument ensemble without sounding scrawny or errant in pitch.

The "new," never before recorded C.P.E. Bach sinfonias are truly the highlights of the collection; they sound incontrovertibly like him, unpredictable, unapologetically bipolar and rich with elements that stray off the beaten path. In such music, you really need an ensemble that's on its toes to get it to come off; otherwise the music sounds confused and underpowered. moderntimes_1800 is more than sufficiently up to the task and delivers this music, despite countless changes in dynamics and direction, with a sense of authority, ease, and aplomb. The same can be said about its rendering of No. 1 Bach brother [W.F. Bach's Sinfonia in D F. 64](#), which has been recorded a number of times, even effectively elsewhere. Perhaps aware of this, moderntimes_1800 and its leaders – [Ilia Korol](#) and [Julia Moretti](#) – decided to pull back on the reins a bit, giving a highly seasoned reading that concentrates on dynamics and texture in this similarly wayward bit of eighteenth century music. The second disc concentrates on two of the lesser-known symphonies of heavyweights [Franz Joseph Haydn](#) and [Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart](#), and the results are enjoyable indeed. moderntimes_1800 maintains a light touch, but is swift, fleet; *Sinfonias from the Enlightenment* is well done and should easily please most listeners who even have only a passing exposure to the finer points of the eighteenth century symphony.

Performance Sound

★★★★★ ★★★★★

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Label

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