

La Serenissima

Works by Richard Rijnvos

Jane Chapman (harpsichord),

Jan Hage (organ)

Nimbus NI6460 121:65 mins



For 25 years already, the Dutch composer Richard Rijnvos (born 1964) has been engaged on a collection of compositions dedicated to the city of Venice. Described as a 'multi-year work-in-progress', *La Serenissima* consists so far of seven series for various ensembles, of which the two recorded together here are the most recent; together they also represent his complete keyboard works, and add up to a transporting listening experience.

Completed in 2018, the 'four paintings' of *quattro quadri* for organ reference Paolo Veronese's depictions of St Sebastian's life, while also aiming to show Venice and its decline, 'one of joy and sorrow... life and death'. The first picture, 'sofferenza silenziosa', opens ethereally at the top of the instrument, but all four employ the organ's full range. Rijnvos wrote these works for the Dutch organist Jan Hage, who has recorded them here on two organs in Amsterdam. Though Rijnvos has been influenced by modernists like Morton Feldman and John Cage, those who enjoy the organ music of Messiaen and Alain will respond to these works.

The *lettura del labirinto* (2024) for harpsichord explores the six neighbourhoods of Venice, starting with Castello and heading over to Dorsoduro. Rijnvos's departure point is Italo Calvino's 1972 novel *Invisible Cities* but the outcome is different: each set comprises a series of short pieces named after each of a district's many campi (squares), and most last little longer than a minute. Jane Chapman plays these absorbing miniatures with imaginative virtuosity.

John Allison ★★★★★



Pulling out all the stops: Jan Hage breathes life into Richard Rijnvos's works