



RAMEAU

**Les Indes galantes; Naïs;
Zoroastre; Les Boréades**

Le Concert des Nations/Jordi Savall
Alia Vox AVSA 9882A+B (hybrid CD/SACD)
107:53 mins (2 discs)
BBC Music Direct £13.99

With a large and varied orchestra and (optional) surround sound, Jordi Savall revels in the unmatched opulence, extravagance and scale of mid-18th century France. For this programme of theatre music from Paris and Versailles, he has created four ingeniously revealing orchestral suites. They include overtures, followed by sequences of dances and character pieces from Rameau's stage works, encompassing almost 30 years of the composer's career at the court of Louis XV.

The music is divorced from its dramatic context and the visual accompaniment of costume, dancing and scenery, but it speaks splendidly for itself, displaying Rameau's kaleidoscopic orchestration and arresting devices. After the grand *Ouverture of Les Indes galantes* of 1735, two 'musettes de cour' – sweet-toned bagpipes – play a charming dance. We then hear the airs of Incas, soldiers, breezes, and a terrifying storm. Some of these pieces have been recycled from last year's 'Concert Spirituel' recording. The *Ouverture to Naïs* thunders out off-beat chords bar after bar; that of *Zoroastre* (1749) contrasts extreme violin virtuosity with two languid flutes. *Les Boréades* (1763) introduces some fine horn-playing; a wind machine; bassoon, horn and piccolo fragments in a delightful Gavotte; and a final *Contredanse 'très vite'*, whirling ever faster to its close. In all, it's a vivid demonstration of the way in which Rameau's boldness and imagination increased over the decades.

The scale of Savall's forces softens the sonority, though soloists are brightly characterised. In surround sound, the performance

space is splendidly expanded, though individual instruments are sometimes difficult to place within it.

A magnificent production – the high Baroque doesn't get higher than this. *George Pratt*

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
RECORDING ★★★★★

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