

**ANTONIO SALIERI**  
Overtures & Stage Works, Vol. 2  
Mannheim Mozart Orchestra

Thomas Fey

Hänssler Classic- 98.554(CD)  
No Reference Recording

*Artistic Quality* **10/10** *Sound Quality*

If anything, this second volume of Salieri orchestral works is even better than the first. The music is unfailingly colorful, inventive, and wholly winning. Perhaps the most impressive piece is the five-movement suite of incidental music from the patriotic play *The Hussites at Naumburg*, but none of these mostly short and peppy pieces lacks interest. The overture to *Tarare* (libretto by Beaumarchais) is especially tantalizing. This is not the overture to the whole opera, whose prelude scene starts with its own separate introduction, but rather to the first act. If you're interested, there's an excellent critical edition of the complete work published by Henle Verlag.

The "Turkish" setting calls forth the usual percussion effects, but even more suggestive is the second subject, which bears a striking resemblance to the march-like second subject in the first movement of Beethoven's Second symphony. Given that *Tarare* was composed in 1787, and a year later revised as *Axur, Re d'Omus*, it became perhaps Salieri's greatest Viennese success, so it's probable that Beethoven knew it. Listen and judge for yourself. Conductor Thomas Fey also includes a small interlude from *Axur* in this collection, but the two other major overtures, *Il mondo alla rovescia* and *La grotta di Trofonio*, are terrific works too. As with Volume 1, the performances are simply the last word in precision and vivacity, and the engineering is first-rate. [4/12/2010]

--David Hurwitz

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