

REVIEWS CHORAL & SONG



ROGIER

Missa Domine Dominus Noster; Missa Domine in Virtute Tua; Motets: Domine Dominus Noster; Regina Caeli; Laudate Dominum; Videntes Stellam; Verbun Caro; Palestrina: Domine in Virtute Tua Magnificat; His Majestys Sagbutts and Cornetts/Philip Cave

Linn CKD 348 (hybrid CD/SACD) 74:36 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.99

Philippe Rogier served at the royal court in Madrid in the 16th century, and this is a second, enterprising disc from Philip Cave devoted to his excellent music. Oddly, given the many surviving works by the composer, Cave includes the *Missa Domine Dominus Noster* which has already been recorded in a liturgical reconstruction by Jean Tubéry (on Ricercar). But the motet *Domine Dominus Noster* on which the Mass may have been based was only recently discovered in Valladolid Cathedral, and is here recorded for the first time.

Following the Spanish custom these performances accompany some of these pieces with a glorious jamboree of instruments doubling and decorating the vocal lines; this creates a particularly awesome climax in *Verbum caro factum est*. Of the works for three choirs, the spatial effects captured in the Christmas story of the Three Wise Men (*Videntes Stellam*

BACKGROUND TO...

Alessandro Striggio (c1536-92)

Born the illegitimate but only son of a soldier, Striggio was made his legitimate heir in 1547. He



had a reputation as a virtuoso on various instruments including the viol and lute, and the *lira da braccio* (a bowed instrument) and its larger relation the *lirone*. In 1567, Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence, sent him as an emissary to the English court for 15 days. It seems highly likely that he brought his 40-part Mass on *Ecce Si Beato Giorno* with him, and this was the inspiration of the 40-part *Spem in alium* composed by Thomas Tallis (pictured above).

Magi) are very effective, although the theatrical tricks are somewhat overdone, such as the instrumental blasts at the mention of their gifts.

Occasionally the singing can sound slightly shrill without depth or warmth, as in the unaccompanied motet *Regina Caeli*, though there's adroitness here too: the word 'Resurrexit' conjures from them a wonderful dancing rhythm.

Anthony Pryer

PERFORMANCE

★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★



STRIGGIO

Missa Ecce Si Beato Giorno; Ecce beatam lucem; Fuggi, spene mia; O giovenil ardire; Altr'io che queste spighe; D'ogni gratia et d'amor; O de la bella Etruria; Caro dolce ben mio; Misero ohimè

GALILEI • TALLIS

Galilei: Contrapunto Secondi di BM; Tallis: Spem in alium; plus Sarum plainchant Spem in alium

I Fagiolini/Robert Hollingworth
Decca 478 2734 69:19 mins plus DVD
BBC Music Direct £15.99

Alessandro Striggio wrote his astonishing 40-part Mass on *Ecce Si Beato Giorno* in the 1560s in Florence. Recently a copy was discovered by Davitt Moroney, who performed the work at the 2007 Proms with the BBC Singers and Tallis Scholars. I Fagiolini have seized the initiative here, recording the Mass alongside its supposed motet model (the 40-part *Ecce beatam lucem*), along with another work apparently inspired by that motet – Tallis's 40-part *Spem in alium* (Striggio visited England in 1567). The Striggio motet has been recorded before (by Van Nevel on Harmonia Mundi), but not with instruments. I Fagiolini also present world premiere recordings of seven of Striggio's madrigals.

The instruments transfigure much of this music. They do the heavy lifting for some of the choir parts in the Mass and *Ecce beatam lucem*, contribute to the spacious sonorities, and add delicate moments of colour. In the madrigals the effect is less happy, especially in *Fuggi spene mia* where a nimble soprano valiantly competes with what seems to be a stodgy arrangement of a lute intabulation. Without instruments, the I Fagiolini voices can be tender and nuanced, as in *Caro dolce*, though tuning problems are then a danger.



ECHOING ENCORES:
Christine Brewer
takes flight in song

The accompanying DVD contains three excellent surround-sound tracks, some murkily shot but informative pieces-to-camera by Hollingworth and Adrian Hunter (recording producer), and all-to-brief glimpses of the performances. Anthony Pryer

PERFORMANCE

★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★★



VILLA-LOBOS

Cor dulce, cor amabile; José; As Costureiras; Bachianas Brasileiras No. 9; Choros No. 3 Pica-Páu; Prêces sem palavras; Duas Lendas Amerindias em Nheengatu; Ave Maria; Bazzum; Na Bahia Tem; Bendita Sabedoria; plus Bach's Praeludium & Fugue No. 8, BWV 853 – arranged Villa-Lobos for six-part mixed choir SWR Stuttgart Vocal Ensemble/Marcus Creed
Hänssler CD 93.268 62:04 mins
BBC Music Direct £13.99

Twenty short dips into a rare repertoire reveal a stream of surprises and delights. Villa-Lobos draws on endlessly varied combinations of voices and vocal attack to make some of the 20th century's most inventive and affecting choral music. All of it is unaccompanied, much of it wordless, entailing a captivating virtuosity from the Stuttgart choir.

At one extreme two early pieces could almost be Gounod as they serenely evoke early church music. At the other – where do you start? *Bazzum* is an African-tinged elegy

in the aftermath of a slaves' revolt. One work each from the *Choros* and *Bachianas Brasileiras* series ratchet up the energy levels in dance rhythms and vocal onomatopoeia. An alchemical transcription of the E flat minor Prelude from Bach's Book 1 becomes pure Villa-Lobos as its soaring lines and reiterated chords head for the intense climax.

It's possible to imagine more dynamic and fiery performances, but on its own terms this is a superb survey, warmly recorded and delivered. Robert Maycock

PERFORMANCE

★★★★

RECORDING

★★★★★



A LESSON IN LOVE

Vocal works by Copland, Debussy, Duparc, Schubert, Strauss, Wolf etc Kate Royal (soprano), Malcolm Martineau (piano)
EMI 948 5362 64:47 mins
BBC Music Direct £12.99

Kate Royal's earlier recital CDs have earned this young British singer fulsome praise. And her skill in programme-building has not deserted her on this new disc in which she follows the path of true love from a young woman's first emotional stirrings, through ecstatic first love, marriage and then the inevitable disillusion when the man she loved moves on to fresher pastures. A stern lesson.

Royal bookends her lesson in love with William Bolcom's haunting cabaret song 'Waitin' with its bluesy