

CD Review: renaissance music

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- Thomas Tallis:**
The Complete Works
Chapelle du Roi
Signum SIGCD 016
- Jane Pickeringe's Lute Book**
Jacob Heringman
Avie AV0002
- The Songs of Alexander
Montgomerie**
Paul Rendall, Rob MacKillop
ASV CD GAU 249
- Coronation of the first
Elizabeth**
Magnificat, Forbury Consort,
Crispian Steele-Perkins
Griffin GCCD 4032
- The Triumphs of Oriana**
I Fagiolini
Chandos CHAN 0682
- Seaven Teares:**
The Music of John Dowland
The King's Noyse
Harmonia Mundi HMU 907275
- The King's Private Musick**
Brisk Recorder Quartet,
Christophorus CHR 77239
- Love and Reconquest:**
**Music from Renaissance
Spain**
Fires of Love
Dancian DCD 34003
- Cancionero**
Dufay Collective
Avie AV0005
- Ballads of Love and Betrayal**
Joglarena
Village Life 01013VL
- Philippus de Monte: Laudate
Dominum**
Currende
Eufoda 1306
- Jachet de Mantoue: Missa
anchor che col partire**
Ensemble Jachet de Mantoue
Calliope CAL 9310
- Jean Richafort: Requiem**
Huelgas Ensemble
Harmonia Mundi HMC 901730
- Balduin Hoyoul:**
Sacrae Cantiones
Hofkapelle
Christophorus CHR 77234
- Georg Forster:**
Teutsche Liedlein
I Ciarlatini
Christophorus CHR 77232
- Dangerous Graces:**
Music by Cipriano de Rore
Musica Secreta
Linn CKD 169
- Leonardo da Vinci**
various artists
Naxos 8.558057
- Hear the Voice**
Ensemble Amarcord
Apollon Classics apc 10201

The first group of CD to which I listened survey the wealth of surviving English music from the 16th and 17th centuries, as well as the more continentally-influenced repertory composed in Scotland during the period.

Chapelle du Roi, directed by Alistair Dixon, has recently released the fifth in a series of nine recordings covering the extant output of Thomas Tallis over five decades. This volume, prepared largely with reference to new editions, contains polyphonic hymns and responses for the Divine Office, and some lesser-known liturgical organ music. The performances of the choral pieces, which owe much to their plainchant background, reflect detailed attention to performance practice issues and convey a real sense of Tallis' craftsmanship and his music's uncluttered beauty. The keyboard music is nicely articulated, although the 16th-century Knole House organ (chosen for the recording as it is similar to the organ that Tallis would have known at the Chapel Royal) sounds tired and uninspiring. The ranks are out of tune with each other, with the two foot pipes generally flat on an organ pitched sharp at 460Hz; a hefty price to pay for authenticity.

The lute book bearing the signature of Jane Pickeringe is a personal document containing some of the finest sources of English lute repertory. We know nothing of Jane's life, but are able to glean from the collection information about her musical taste, her instrument and her proficiency as a lutenist. The anthology of late Elizabethan and early Jacobean dances and fantasias by many of the great composers of the day is also peppered with smaller-scale pieces copied into every available space, giving us a more complete picture of the nature of domestic music-making.

Jacob Heringman has earned himself a reputation for seeking out rare and unjustly neglected repertory, and performing it with precision and flair. This recording is no exception and contains some intimate, sensitive performances that transport the listener back to the world of the personal anthology of this long-dead English-woman.

Another lute recording takes us north of the border to the courtly music of Scotland, which became a quaint irrelevance in its day, when James VI of Scotland ascended the English throne. The



I Fagiolini: sumptuous recording

mythological poems set to music here are the work of Alexander Montgomerie, a great favourite of the king, and are mostly treated to simple syllabic settings. Accompanied by Rob MacKillop's characterful and stylish performances of his own lute arrangements in French style, Orkney tenor Paul Rendall gives an attractive, well-controlled performance with attention to historical pronunciation, yet marked by its clarity.

On a grander scale, a rather unlikely collaboration between Philip Cave's Magnificat ensemble, the young Leominster-based Forbury Consort, and the King's Trumpeters, directed by Crispian Steele-Perkins, attempts to recreate the musical content of the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth I. Recorded in the Great Hall of Hampton Court Palace, this cocktail of the sacred and the secular is divided into four distinct sections: the procession from Westminster Hall to the Abbey, the Coronation Service, the Mass and the Coronation Banquet. There are some surprises here, not least that the featured composers are mostly minor figures in our reading of history; the Mass setting, for example, is by Richard Alwood. Indeed, some will be surprised that there was a Latin mass of any sort sung at the coronation of a Protestant queen (the notes

explain that it took several years to overturn Mary's Catholic rulings and to reintroduce the *Book of Common Prayer*). The whole atmosphere of this disc is one of live performance rather than studio recording and it is all the better for it. The processional music is exuberant, colourful and reassuringly imperfect and the choral music swims in a bathroom-like acoustic, giving a real sense of space, although inevitably the sound lacks crispness. This is certainly a recording in keeping with the current jubilee spirit and gives us a glimpse of pageantry we can only imagine.

Continuing the Elizabethan theme, I Fagiolini's sumptuous new recording of *The Triumphs of Oriana*, the celebrated collection of 25 madrigals by 23 English composers, first published in 1601 and often believed to hail the queen as a living Oriana, contains madrigal singing of the very highest quality. Beautifully punctuated by lute solos from the Hirsch lute book by Byrd, Dowland and Holborne, the choral content is extraordinarily expressive; fresh and comes highly recommended, as does the purely instrumental disc, *Seaven Teares*. Exploring the melancholy form of the *lachrimae pavan* so fashionable in the time of John Dowland, whose compositions represent the genre's