
The Cardinal's Musick

Selected Reviews

'Sacred Music by Robert Parsons', Hyperion Records CDA 67874

"Director Andrew Carwood draws earthy, visceral performances; the ensemble's virile sound and Parsons's sinewy polyphony are a far cry from what some critics describe as the 'whitewashed' English choral tradition. Carwood and his singers highlight the inherent drama of Parsons's style...The basses resonate magnificently in *Peccantem me quotidie*, in *Holy Lord God Almighty* and in the hauntingly austere *Libera me*, while by contrast, the monumental *Magnificat* sounds radiant. Perhaps the crowning glory of the disc is the final *Ave Maria*, the slow and poignant unfolding of which echoes long in the memory" – **Kate Bolton, BBC Music Magazine, December 2011**

"As is by now well-established, The Cardinal's Music is a highly skilled, tightly disciplined and energetic choir able easily to tackle even the most elaborate polyphony. Its performances' on this disc are true to form: colourful, forceful and dynamic. The *Magnificat* in particular is bursting with vitality, while the three funeral responds are sung with equal muscularity, albeit more sombre in mood. Even the performance of the delicate and graceful *Ave Maria* motet, whose music builds to a climactic final line and 'Amen', is rendered with pronounced drive, Carwood directing the voices with rhythmic élan" – **Christopher Price, International Record Review, December 2011**

"The Cardinal's Musick are at their best in this repertoire, and their performances have confidence and authority...Parsons certainly deserves the hearing that Carwood's musicians afford us, so this addition to the catalogue is very valuable" – **Fabrice Fitch, Gramophone, November 2011**

"one may expect the incidence of Parson's music on programmes to increase significantly especially after such a fine sound as Carwood generates" – **Rick Jones, Classic FM, December 2011**

"The recording has deep perspective and clarity with the sequence of works, mostly scored for low voices, given fluid, impassioned readings, with vibrant bass sonorities providing an almost instrumental foundation...tonal beauty, impeccable ensemble and blend." – **Rebecca Taverner, Choir and Organ, November/December 2011**

'Missa Cantantibus Organis' - Allegri/Palestrina Hyperion Records CDA 67860

"a fascinating work and a fine performance" – **Andrew MacGregor, BBC Radio 3**

"this is all really exciting stuff and should be heard by anybody who cares about music of the late-16th century."
– **David Fallows, Gramophone**

"Carwood nails it – again", "these performers capture the creative confidence of Rome's composing community in the decades either side of the 16th century's turn [...] exuberance and ensemble excellence [...] this album works like a finely tuned time machine. It's hard to imagine how its contents could be better served on disc".

– **Classic FM Magazine**

"wonderful build-up in sonority is deftly managed by the singers [...] utter transparency giving way to rich harmony", "thoroughly recommended [...] it's bracing, pleasingly unsentimental but still movingly expressive".

– **Simon Heighes, International Record Review**

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"the vocalists use declamation to emote, transporting the listener from sorrow to transcendent joy [...] this recording's breadth of moods, devices and styles is refreshing [...] Carwood teases out the work's numinous qualities".
- **Berta Joncus, *BBC Music Magazine***

"new treasure" of which the *Missa Cantantibus Organis* is "the chief delight", "sung here with the brilliance and clarity we have come to expect from this outstanding ensemble". - **Stephen Pritchard, *The Observer***

"The Cardinal's Musick offers a sumptuous body of sound that revives the well-known *Miserere* and brings to life the multiple-author Mass." - **Claudine Nightingale, *Choir&Organ***

"The Cardinal's Musick perform it with their usual refinement" - **Paul Gent, *The Telegraph***

"The word-(not sound-)based approach of The Cardinal's Musick plucks them from angelic realm with bigger, more individual voices (and vibrato!) that use what might be called 'Romantic' gestures. The ensemble's workshops in schools make a fine starting-point." - **Eric Whitacre, *Gramophone* 'The 20 Greatest Choirs' January 2011**

"the voices of Andrew Carwood and his eight cohorts could probably start a blaze in the Antarctic!" - **The Times**

"preserving their vocal personalities rather than striving for a mellifluous blend ... resulting in a vibrant texture of timbres" - **The Daily Telegraph**

"The performances could not be better... a blazing start to a project whose time has surely come." - **Choir & Organ**

'Missa Congratulamini Mihi'- Guerrero (*Hyperion Records*)

"They are superbly blended with just the right amount of individual vocal grain supplying texture."
- **Rebecca Taverner, *Choir & Organ* March 2011**

"The Cardinal's Musick have only just completed their wonderful Byrd project and here they are with this first-rate exploration of the music of Guerrero... the singers show verve and polish in equal measure... Andrew Carwood's singers respond with an equal measure of buoyancy and vigour... anyone interested in the *siglo de oro* will regard this as essential listening" - **Gramophone 'Editor's Choice' October 2010**

"[the pieces] are delivered with the combination of superb ensemble, and perfectly characterised vocal lines that is the persistent hallmark of this outstanding group; the sound is rich, full and gently resonant."
- **Andrew Clements, *The Guardian***

"a leading exponent of Renaissance music, retaining the essential quality of individual vocal timbres that contribute to a refined, characterful mix and with a polish that is second to none... the entire disc, with various shorter pieces as complements, is captivating in its fluency and expressive power." - **Geoffrey Norris, *The Telegraph***

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"[the mass is] sung with breathtaking subtleties of light and shade ... do not wait until next Easter to acquire this disc!" - **Early Music Today**

"Once again we are indebted to Hyperion and the Cardinal's Musick, this time for a fine recording... The singing, recording and presentation are every bit as good as one would expect from this source." - **Music-Web International**

Kilkenny Arts Festival, The Black Abbey, August 2010

"it was clear that this was to be an evening of compellingly-projected, full-toned, gorgeously resonant singing. It was the kind of evening which had one pinching oneself to check that such edifices of sound could be produced by such a small number of voices " - **Michael Dervan, Irish Times – 'Festival Highlight 2010'**

'Il Siglo d'Oro', Wigmore Hall, July 2010

"Carwood's vigorous sweep brought out an exhilaration bordering on a kind of theological ecstasy"
– **Richard Morrison, The Times**

"it is a sheer delight to be immersed in such entrancingly beautiful music... The Cardinal's Musick perform this music with consummate clarity, and not a trace of affectation or unnecessary embellishment. With just one singer to each of the four, five, six or eight parts, it was all perfectly scaled to the Wigmore Hall. One might have expected music composed for a church acoustic to seem undernourished in a concert setting, but there was never any suggestion of dryness; rather, the vivid immediacy of the sound only highlighted the group's distinctive qualities, in which the characteristics of each singer are never homogenised into undifferentiated choral textures ... it was a beautifully conceived programme, beautifully presented." - **Andrew Clements, The Guardian**

'Infelix Ego' – William Byrd Series volume 13 (Hyperion Records)

"a display of the best singing talent Britain can produce... truly exceptional performances ... deeply satisfying to the ear and the intellect ... an object lesson in unaccompanied part-singing, each voice perfectly in its place, the blend delightful to the ear, the lines warmly embracing each other and the overall architecture lovingly moulded by Carwood's subtle and distinguished direction. These are very much yardstick performances"
- **Marc Rochester, International Record Review 'Outstanding' February 2010**

"The Cardinal's Musick pays tribute to the whole landscape of Byrd's genius with a passion that ends the project on a high. As with the earlier instalments, Andrew Carwood's direction and programming are equally inspired ... The musical imagination of The Cardinal's Musick does full justice to that of Byrd. Unique about this ensemble is its expressiveness, whether members sing seamlessly as one or tug at each other's lines. The group's delivery is a sensual delight" - **Berta Joncus, BBC Music Magazine**

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"passionate performances by a superb choir, brilliantly directed" - **Classic fM Magazine**

"a journey of the very highest quality" - **James Inverne, Gramophone, 'Editor's Choice' April 2010**

"Hyperion has done Byrd proud ... It's a mixture also of the celebratory, as though the singers were congratulating themselves on a job well done - as well they might - and the penitential, concluding with the full ensemble in a finely judged and quite extrovert Infelix ego, surely one of Byrd's most memorable motets ... The commitment of singers and label alike is a cause for gratitude, perhaps even optimism. Congratulations to all concerned"

- **Fabrice Fitch, Gramophone**

'Magnificat and Motets' - Hieronymus Praetorius (Hyperion Records)

"These are stunning performances, which is of course to be expected from this remarkable vocal ensemble".

- **Robert Levett, International Record Review**

"Hieronymus Praetorius gains his place in the sun with this outstanding release" - **Classic fM Magazine '5 stars'**

"As one expects from [The] Cardinal's Musick, their interpretations are energetic, resourceful and varied, ranging from dramatic story telling in *Videns Dominus* to exquisite liquidity in the long lines of *O vos omnes*."

- **Anthony Pryer, BBC Music Magazine**

'Laudibus in Sanctis' – William Byrd Series volume 10 (Hyperion Records)

– **GRAMOPHONE AWARD WINNER 2008**

"If, according to Burney, the Mannheim orchestra of 1772 was 'an army of Generals', the Cardinal's Musick of 2006 is surely 'an exaltation of larks'... Performances of exquisite perfection" - **International Record Review**

"The 12 voices sing out, individuality intact and ideal for airing the awesome polyphony of Byrd's Latin motets, both fervent and meditative" - **The Times**

"This is the tenth disc in the ensemble's complete recordings of Byrd, but the first in the series with Hyperion... [The] engineering gains and the artists' freshness and conviction make this recording a high-water mark in the project. Carwood has captured the passion, delicacy and complexity of England's greatest Renaissance composer"

- **BBC Music Magazine**

"The grasp that Andrew Carwood and his Cardinal's Musick group have on Byrd's scores now seems unassailable; the fluidity and elevated level of internal detail in the opening 'Laudibus in sanctis' sets out their stall for the rest of this thoughtfully conceived album" - **Choir & Organ**

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"... Le volume X atteint une variété sonore qui rend justice à tous les registres du programme, jusqu'aux passages madrigalesques les plus échevelés, Apparebit in finem le premier. Toujours à un par voix, brillamment conduits, ces excellents chanteurs magnifient avec autant de maîtrise que d'engagement un immense compositeur. Magistral"

- **Diapason 'Diapason d'Or'**

'Gaude Gloriosa' – Thomas Tallis (Hyperion Records) – GRAMOPHONE AWARD WINNER 2007

"Recorded during the composer's 500th anniversary year, Andrew Carwood's recording of some of Tallis's most beautiful Latin settings captures the passion and devotion of the period. The Cardinal's Musick sing with a vibrancy that makes Tallis's musical feats of skilful audacity sound every bit as surprising and exciting as they would have done half a millennium ago. The monumental "Gaude Gloriosa" takes well deserved centre stage, but in its entirety this disc is a sublime tribute both to one of England's greatest composers, and to the skill and conviction of one of today's finest ensembles".

- **Gramophone Awards Issue 2007**

"one of Tallis's very best 500th birthday presents" - **The Telegraph**

York Early Music Festival, York Minster Chapter House, July 2007

"The Cardinal's, in any case, could make music out of a John Prescott speech. Clear tones; perfect intonation; an ideal balance between individual colour and an ensemble blend; emotional directness: Monday night found them on triumphant form" - **Geoff Brown, The Times**

'Elizabeth' - St John's, Smith Square, London, December 2003

"Christmas doesn't come more interesting or tasteful than here. Indeed in this illuminating programme by The Cardinal's Musick built around the life of Elizabeth I, there were just three short pieces evoking an Elizabethan Christmas and very beautiful they were too: an anonymous setting of *Sweet was the song the virgin sang* was among the most haunting music heard all evening. Under Andrew Carwood's direction this fine octet of singers has

concentrated on music of the English Renaissance bringing it alive in vivid performance free of the churchy preciousness so typical of many "period" choirs... The ensemble sings with colourful vigour, blending well but never too much" - **The Times**

'Elizabeth' - York Early Music Festival, July 2003

"Even if Carwood had skipped the Armada, and the flirting courtiers, his Elizabeth concert would still have dazzled. The open, forthright tone of The Cardinal's Musick is one of the world's current glories: the sound they make weaving through seven-part polyphony would bring even an earthworm joy. Elizabeth's dad, Henry VIII, showed his composing skills in the sturdy simplicities of *Pasttyme with good companie*; Byrd burst forth in *Sing joyfully* and *Haec dies*, programmed to celebrate the defeat of those pesky Spanish. A memorial madrigal by Thomas Bateson, *Hark, hear you not?* throbbed with a haunting, sad beauty. Could ugliness, though, ever arise from these mellifluous

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throats? Hard to imagine." – *The Times*

'The Field of the Cloth of Gold' - Bath International Music Festival, May 2003

"The English and French in perfect harmony? Well it happened once - in a French meadow in 1520, when the entourage of Henry VIII and Francois I came together for an 18-day peace conference in 24 pavilions so sumptuously decorated that the meeting-ground became known as the Field of the Cloth of Gold. And it happened again at the Bath Festival on Saturday, when musicians from England and France collaborated in reconstructing the elaborate Mass that brought that even to a suitably grandiose ending.

The Gallic contingent sang the Kyrie, Credo and Agnus Dei; the *rosbifs* responded with Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus. To recreate this lyric competition with the appropriate plainchant, Mass settings and motets was admirable scholarship. Yet what brought the evening to life was the quality of the performances. Under Andrew Carwood's direction the English vocal consort, The Cardinal's Musick, offered rich-toned and impassioned interpretations of highly intricate settings by William Cornysh, Nicholas Ludford and Robert Fayrfax. Sometimes the voices entwined in long, ornate melismas; sometimes they came together in fervent polyphony, rich in discords.

The pleasures of The Cardinal's Musick are well known however. The real revelation was the French group, Denis Raisin Dadre's Douce Mémoire a mixed consort of instruments and voices (the latter very Gallic and nasal) that performed settings by Claudin de Sermisy, Antoine Divitis and Jean Richafort. Not since the late David Munrow's day can sackbuts and cornets, Renaissance flutes and bombardes have been so characterfully played. I loved the comradely way that the instrumentalists shared their copies with the singers and sometimes embellished their lines with wild swirls of ornaments. Fittingly, the climax came when both English and French joined forces fir the most sonorous masterpiece of the age: Nicolas Gombert's 12-part *Regina caeli*.

Between the music, which was sounded from all areas of Bath's splendidly cleaned Abbey, Anthony Hardy's narrative concisely evoked the two preening royal courts. We went out into the night pondering that while life might have been nasty, brutish and short in Tudor times, it had its aesthetic compensations - at least for those on the A-list for the 16th century's most exclusive party." – *The Times*

"The Bath International Festival launched its 56th year with a look back into musical time. British and French musicians combined to recreate the High Mass celebrated as the climax of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the historic summit between Henry VIII of England and Francois I of France in 1520. ...This has a real sense of occasion. Most fascinating was the contrasting performing styles of the French and English camps, complete with differing Latin pronunciation. The pure English sounds of the 10 singers of Andrew Carwood's The Cardinal's Musick was set against the more florid mixed voices and instrumental colouring of the French ensemble Douce Mémoire, as they alternated, in keeping with history, in sections of the Mass.

No record remains of the actual music used, but Carwood and his French counterpart, Denis Raisin Dadre, used educated guesswork in compiling an appropriate sequence of English and French music of the period. The result was

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a vivid piece of history brought to life, thanks to the refined and absorbing musicianship on display but also to the narration by actor Anthony Hardy.

The setting of Bath Abbey, a far more solid structure than the temporary building constructed for the original event, made it all the more sublime." – **The Telegraph**