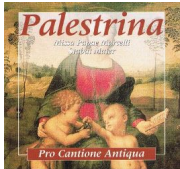


Palestrina – Masses CD5 (2001)



MISSA PAPAE MARCELLI 1. *Introitus: Gaudeamus omnes in Domino* 2. *Kyrie* 3. *Gloria* 4. *Graduale/Alleluia: Propter veritatem* [play](#) 5. *Credo* 6.

Offertorium: Assumpta est Maria 7. *Sanctus* 8. *Benedictus*

[play](#)

9. *Agnus Dei I* 10. *Agnus Dei II* 11. *Communio: Optimam partem* 12. *STABAT MATER*
PRO CANTIONE ANTIQUA Countertenors: Charles Brett, Timothy Penrose, Ashley Stafford
Tenors: Wynford Evans, James Griffett, Neil Jenkins Basses: David Beavan, Michael George,
Gordon Jones, Christopher Keyte Mark Brown, conductor

Pro Cantione Antiqua has always delivered a robust, almost beefy sound, as if the all-male ensemble had just shed their "old school" rugby togs and put on choir robes. With steady changes in personnel, especially among the countertenors, Pro Cantione Antiqua has been performing since the 1960s, making them 'antique' indeed by Early Music standards. What they do, they usually do well, although they are limited in their expressive, affective range and they tend to sing most things in a kind of default tempo that's neither slow nor fast. They're head and shoulders better, most of the time, than the Westminster Choir or the Oxford Camerata, and I usually find them less mushy than the Tallis Scholars. They're nowhere close to The Clerks' Group or the Orlando Consort, or the Hilliard Ensemble on its better days, but all in all they're a joy to hear.

The 5 CDs in this Brilliant Classics box are all re-issues of recordings PCA made over the past 20 years, with various singers and on various labels. The newest recordings, I believe, are disks 3 & 4 - *Missa Brevis*, *Missa Lauda Zion*, *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera*, and *Missa L'Homme Arme* a 4 - which are still available new in a 2-CD release. These are the best performances, with the best sound. At the other end, disk 1 - *Missa L'Homme Arme* and *Missa Assumpta est Maria* - must be a much older performance, a little crude in recording technology and, to my ears, a little too beefy in style. Palestrina masses want to be vigorous but not brusque.

There are numerous recordings of the Missa Papae Marcelli, and most of them are awful. Pro Cantione Antiqua's performance is sturdy and tuneful. It's not, to my ears, the ultimate interpretation, but it's probably the best around.

Not all the compositions in the box are masses. CD2 features Palestrina's "Lamentations of Jeremiah the Prophet." There is a much better performance of that music on CD, by the French Ensemble Gilles Binchois; it's different enough almost to constitute another composition. This box set also includes Palestrina's motets Super Flumina Babylonis and Stabat Mater. All in all, this is an excellent value, a lot of great music for a reasonable price. --- Giordano Bruno, amazon.com

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