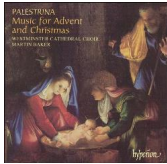


Palestrina - Music for Advent and Christmas (2003)

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 07 December 2013 17:22 -

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1 - *Alma Redemptoris mater*, motet (unspecified of 4) 2 - *Canite tuba*, motet for 5 voices (from *Motets Book II* for 5, 6, & 8 voices) 3 - *Deus tu conversus*, offertory for 5 voices (from *Complete Offertories*) 4 - *Hodie Christus natus est*, for 4 voices 5 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Kyrie* 6 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Gloria* 7 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Credo* 8 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Sanctus* 9 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Benedictus* 10 - *Missa Hodie Christus natus est*, for 8 voices - *Agnus Dei* 11 - *O magnum mysterium*, motet for 6 voices (from *Motets Book I*) 12 - *Tui sunt caeli*, offertory for 5 voices 13 - *O admirabile commercium*, motet for 8 voices 14 - *Christe redemptor omnium*, hymn for 6 voices 15 - *Magnificat*, Tone 1, (even) for 5 voices (undated, H XXVII 147) Westminster Cathedral Choir Martin Baker (conductor)

Although the "big work" here is the Christmas mass *Hodie Christus natus est*, the biggest musical thrills (if such a word can be used in this context!) come from the various motets, particularly *O magnum mysterium*, *Tui sunt coeli*, *O admirabile commercium*, and *Christe, redemptor omnium*. These motets show Palestrina at his most refined and concise, artfully spinning and expertly weaving lines of polyphony as sublime as anyone has ever conceived. The Choir of Westminster Cathedral is as well versed in this music as any modern choir could be, and the performances are not only accurate and musically sound but are charged with an enthusiasm that we don't often hear in today's renditions of ancient church music. Some listeners will object to the extremely bright sound quality, which at times borders on harshness, but this is typical of recordings made in this venue and seems to be a reflection of the space rather than any engineering decision. Palestrina and Christmas choral music fans will glean hours of pleasurable listening from this generously timed (78-minute) program, whose repertoire fills yet another gap in the ever-growing recorded catalog focusing on this great and timeless Renaissance master. -----David Vernier, ClassicsToday.com

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Martin Baker's first disc of Palestrina with Westminster Cathedral Choir (CDA67353, released in January of this year) was highly praised across the world [my favourite quote being 'Palestrina's mellifluous counterpoint resonates like whipped cream in the cathedral acoustics ... Delicious' (The Scotsman)]. Here follows another delicious disc of Palestrina, this time dedicated to Christmas, the main work being the stunning Missa Hodie Christus natus est—one of Palestrina's most popular works.

What better way to encapsulate the spirit of Christmas than with works of such devotional beauty, all sung with Westminster Cathedral Choir's customary finesse and atmospheric reverence. --- hyperion-records.co.uk

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