

Early Music (Lachrymæ Antiquæ) – Kronos Quartet [1997]

Written by bluesever

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Machaut (arr. Kronos): 1. Kyrie I Tye: 2. Rachell's Weeping
David Lamb (b.1935): 3. Långdans efter Byfåns Mats Dowland: 4. Lachrymæ
Antiquæ Arvo Pärt (b.1935): 5. Psalom Harry Partch (1901-1974; arr. Ben
Johnston): 6. Two Studies on Ancient Greek Scales Jack Body (b.1944): 7.
Long-Ge John Cage (1912-1992; arr. Eric Salzman): 8. Totem ancestor
Machaut (arr. Kronos): 9. Kyrie II Traditional-Sweden (arr. Mikael Marin): 10.
Brudmarsch frå Östa Kassia (810-867, Byzantium; arr. Diane Touliatos): 11. Using
the Apostate Tyrant as His Tool Louis Hardin (b.1916): 12. Synchrony No. 2
Cage: 13. Quodlibet Perotin (arr. Kronos): 14. Viderunt Omnes Machaut
(arr. Kronos): 15. Kyrie III Purcell: 16. Four Part Fantasia No. 2
Hildegard (arr. Marianne Pfau): 17. O Virtus Sapientie Traditional-Tuva (arr. Steve
Mackey): 18. Uleg-Khem Tye: 19. Farwell My Good I Forever Alfred
Schnittke (b.1934; arr. Kronos): 20. Collected Songs Where Every Verse is Filled with Grief
Bells Kronos Quartet: David Harrington (violin) John Sherba (violin) Hank Dutt (viola)
Joan Jeanrenaud (cello) + Marja Mutru (harmonium) David Lamb (bagpipe) Wu Man (zhong
ruan, da ruan) Olov Johansson (nyckelharpa) Huun-Huur Tu (vocals, igil, byzaanchi,
toschpuluur)

The Kronos Quartet, one of the premiere American chamber ensembles, has pushed the boundaries of genre, style, and interpretation for over 30 years. From its conception, ever since violinist David Harrington heard John Crumb's "Black Angels", a work inspired by the Vietnam War, featuring bowed water glasses, spoken word passages, and electronic passages, the quartet decided to pursue the path of innovation and exploration. A successful path indeed, marked by over 50 recordings to their credit, a consistent tour schedule and excited audiences to whom Kronos has become a household name.

The Early Music project CD released in 1997 features 21 works derived from the medieval and Renaissance period. Approximately half of the pieces are transcriptions of vocal music by such

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composers as Guillaume de Machaut, Christopher Tye, John Dowland, Perotin, Henry Purcell, and Hildegard von Bingen. They are interspersed with music by the composers of the twentieth century, including David Lamb, Arvo Part, Harry Partch, Jack Body, John Cage, Mikael Marin, Diane Touliatos, Louis Hardin, and Alfred Schnittke.

The meshing of the old music with the new is what makes this project so unique and captivating. The marriage of the old with the new proves to be an effective tool in transporting the listener into a new realm of experience. But that realm is neither old, nor new. It exists in its own independent category of otherworldliness, wonder, and enchantment. The pieces blend together and seem to flow from the same fountain as if the contemporary composers were on first name basis with Renaissance masters. There is no sharp contrast between Guillaume de Machaut and John Cage. The Kronos Quartet players have managed to create a bridge spanning through centuries, joining together, not simply the old with the new, but good with good.

The Quartet players conveyed the authentic aura of the medieval and Renaissance period by withholding all vibrato and carried this technique even to the contemporary pieces. This approach creates unity of the sound palette throughout the project. In addition to the traditional string quartet, the musicians are joined by such instruments as harmonium, bagpipe, zhong ruan, da ruan, nyckelharpa, drum, igil, byzanchi, toschpuluur, two vocalists, and church bells.

The recording is marketed to a contemporary music connoisseur, one who seeks music off the beaten path, but who does not necessarily move within the narrow circles of early music scholarship. The CD liner notes are designed with subdued hues of black, sepia, and burgundy. The artwork features photographs of two domes from Turkey, a tomb doorway from Petra, Jordan, Broken Mosaic Moon by E.E. Barnard, and Eclipse by J.M. Schaeberle, all in sepia tones. The recording package conveys a peaceful, sophisticated, meditative mood.

Any discerning listener tired of contemporary pop pulp spilling over the air waves will find this recording a refreshing escape to a world of imagination, wonder, and contemplation. ---Dosia McKay, musicwell.wordpress.com

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