

◁ energetic; sometimes the quicker word setting sounds muddled, though the declamatory homophony is powerful. The singing is engaging but lacks polish in places. There is skill and originality here, and these pieces deserve more exposure.

MATTHEW POWER

SING, YE BIRDS, A JOYOUS SONG (TAVERNER: WESTERN WIND MASS; RICHARD RODNEY BENNETT: THE GLORY AND THE DREAM*; GIBBONS: GLORIOUS AND POWERFUL GOD; SECOND EVENING SERVICE; TALLIS: TE LUCIS ANTE TERMINUM)

Yale Schola Cantorum, Thomas Murray (org)*, Lucas Wong (org) / Simon Carrington (dir)

Delos DE 3458 [65:57]

★★★★★



It's good to be reminded of the late Sir Richard Rodney Bennett's skill as a choral writer. *The Glory and the Dream*, a setting taken from Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*, shows his unerring grip of the genre and his deep understanding of a text.

The organ part, beautifully played by Thomas Murray, adds an extra dimension to the words, and the young Yale Schola Cantorum gives a beautifully rounded performance. To surround the work with music of the English renaissance makes for a pleasing contrast. It was a time of upheaval and change in the church, and the early clarity of lines was beginning to move into a more harmonic form, exemplified by the verse anthem, and the compositional ingenuity of Taverner, Gibbons and Tallis in walking a tightrope is beyond dispute. Tallis's *Te lucis ante terminum* cleverly gives us a reminder of what had been previously. The lucidity of the singing and phrasing under the expert guidance of Simon Carrington together with excellent soloists taken from the singers makes for very pleasurable listening.

SHIRLEY RATCLIFFE

VOICE OF THE SOUL (HILDEGARD VON BINGEN, DAVID CHILDS, MORTEN LAURIDSEN, HELEN FISHER, CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL, BENJAMIN BRITTEN, DAVID HAMILTON)

Voices New Zealand Chamber Choir, Horomona Horo (taonga puora) / Karen Grylls (dir)

Atoll ACD 213 (www.atollcd.com) [61:00]

★★★★★



Voice of the Soul is one of the most original and innovative discs I have come across for a long time. It marries western music and Maori tradition through language and traditional instruments combined with improvisation, producing a primal and elemental atmosphere. It's a haunting landscape of sound, and the talented 16 singers from the New Zealand Chamber Choir led by Karen Grylls enter into this genre with great finesse. Horomona Horo draws evocative sounds from the *taonga puoro* (traditional instruments). Helen Fisher's *Pounamu* shows how the two traditions can work together to stunning effect, as does David Hamilton's *Karakia of the Stars*, the beauty of which I found quite overwhelming. Perhaps the most intriguing work is Hildegard's *O viridissima virgo* chant, with improvisations on traditional instruments, and the singers also improvising to Latin and Maori texts around chant extracts. I'm sure it

would have found approval with the visionary saint who had taken chant into places it had never been before – and what is more, it works!

SHIRLEY RATCLIFFE

MENDELSSOHN IN BIRMINGHAM: SYMPHONY NO.2, 'LOBGESANG'

Sophie Bevan (s), Mary Bevan (s), Benjamin Hulett (t), CBSO Chorus (Julian Wilkins, chorus master), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Julian Wilkins (org) / Edward Gardner (dir)

Chandos CHSA 5151 (SACD hybrid) [73:01]

★★★★★



Edward Gardner manages to make sense of Mendelssohn's hippogriff, which started life as another crowd-pleasing oratorio but, lacking a satisfying subject, devolved into the hybrid form the composer called 'symphony-cantata'. The results have been dismissed as genteel kitsch, but Gardner and his singers locate the nobility in the music's odd mish-mash of baroque and romantic elements, and let it speak without excess drama. The two sopranos and tenor mesh convincingly and the final chorus is genuinely moving. The 'Second' (actually the fourth) is paired here with the composer's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*.

BRIAN MORTON

ORGAN MUSIC

ROBERT HELMSCHROTT: CORDOBA - POÈME SYMBOLIQUE

Schott ED 21922, €17.50

FREDRIK SIXTEN: PRÉLUDE, CHORAL VARIÉ ET FINALE

Cantando Musikforlag C3638, NOK 236.25 (c.£20.34)

BERNARD WAYNE SANDERS: VIER ORGELKOMPOSITIONEN

Edition Dohr 14204, €24.95

ECHOES - A TRIBUTE TO ALAN SPEDDING

Banks Music Publications, £8.95

THE EBOR ORGAN ALBUM

Banks Music Publications, £9.95

Cordoba's distinguished history as a religious and cultural centre of notable ecumenical tolerance is the inspiration for Robert Helmschrott's substantial fantasia – 'to be played like a Toccata', as the opening rubric requests. A chromatic scale (something like Verdi's *scala enigmatica*) forms the basis for all the material of the piece, both melodic and harmonic. This kind of single-mindedness can get rather wearing, but there's considerable variety of texture and mood, and much of the piece consists of fast, driving rhythms, which sweep things along and generate some excitement. Players who enjoy (and are capable of doing justice to) Nazi Hakenmusik testing works might enjoy investigating this, and it would be very impressive on an incisive instrument in resonant acoustics, when the big gestures can swirl around to suitably exotic effect.