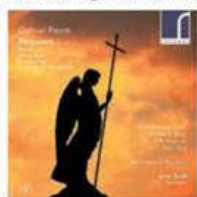




The late John Scott conducting the choir of St Thomas in New York, which offer 'a forthright, devotional interpretation' of Fauré's Requiem

## Fauré

Requiem, Op 48<sup>a</sup>. Cantique de Jean Racine, Op 11. Messe basse. Two Offertories, Op 65  
<sup>a</sup>Richard Pittsinger *treb* <sup>b</sup>David Pittsinger *bar*  
 St Thomas Choir of Men & Boys, Fifth Avenue, New York; Orchestra of St Luke's / John Scott  
 Resonus © RES10174 (58' • DDD • T/t)



The St Thomas Choir of Men & Boys take John Rutter's edition of

Fauré's 1893 score as the basis for their recording of the Requiem, carefully presenting it in the wider context of the composer's sacred works, well known or otherwise. Conducted by John Scott, it's a forthright, devotional interpretation that avoids heavyweight solemnity without losing sight of the work's ritual elements. Once past the opening chords, the *Introit* has a processional spring in its step. There's a dignified austerity in the playing, with a dark richness in the strings, and the St Luke's brass warm and dignified at the climaxes.

This is a fine choir, the treble tone appealingly bright, altos and tenors unearthly yet beautiful in the *Offertoire*,

and the tenors on their own super-refined at the start of the *Sanctus*. David Pittsinger is the admirably consolatory baritone, and his son Richard the secure treble soloist in the *Pie Jesu*. The reverberant acoustic of St Thomas's Church itself adds immeasurably to the liturgical atmosphere, though we lose some orchestral detail and the balance is top-heavy, the lower voices sometimes obscured. As one might expect with such a frequently recorded, editorially complex work, the competition is stiff, not least from Stephen Cleobury's scholarly account (King's College, 10/14) and Paavo Järvi and the Choeur de l'Orchestre de Paris (Virgin, 5/12), altogether grander in approach, using the 1900 score.

Cool, unsentimental performances of the *Cantique de Jean Racine* and the *Messe basse* are among its companion pieces. Less familiar is the Op 65 pairing of the *Ave verum* and *Tantum ergo* from 1911, possibly written for the Madeleine trebles, though the published score stipulates female voices. Plainchant morphs into something curiously like Gounod in the *Ave verum*; *Tantum ergo*, with its closely woven solo writing, is perhaps more immediately attractive. Both, however, are most persuasively done. **Tim Ashley**

## Furrer

Enigma I-VI<sup>a</sup>. voices - still<sup>b</sup>.  
 ...cold and calm and moving<sup>c</sup>  
<sup>a</sup>Helsinki Chamber Choir; <sup>b</sup>Uusinta  
 Ensemble / Nils Schweckendiek  
 Toccata Classics © TOCC0360 (66' • DDD • T/t)



Ambitious ensemble works such as *Nuun* and operas including *Fama*, *Begeben* and

*Westenbuch* (recorded on Kairos, along with as much else in a prolific output) have won the Swiss composer Beat Furrer (b1954) a high status in closeted avant-garde circles. This beautifully produced disc of choral music could usefully challenge that reputation and introduce him to a broader audience.

The first four of six *a cappella Enigmas* (2006-13) swell and throb around darkly mystical prophecies of Leonardo da Vinci while preserving line and sense. Such textual fidelity is dramatically splintered by the fifth in the series. Rough breathing and extended vocal techniques crumple and then shred Leonardo's words into the ghosts and shadows that are the object of his disturbed contemplation. Where the



dominant pitch direction was previously in descent to a piteously imagined abyss, the final *Enigma*, 'On Metals', inexorably rises through a thermal and abruptly vanishes.

The tests on performers are even stronger, the expression weaker and more diffuse, in *voices – still* (2001), which layers a lovely fragment of Virgilian pastoral over a previously composed ensemble piece. Restless, glittering textures offer much passing diversion on their way to another abrupt but satisfying conclusion.

Even so, Furrer's mastery of timing emerges with a more instinctively felt sense of rightness from the initially loose-leaved pages of *...cold and calm and moving* (1992). Scored for a Feldmanesque ensemble of flute, harp and string trio, the notes hang in suspended animation with no special place to go, and no pressing need to go there. Quiet poise and patience are required both by listeners and by performers, and supplied by the Uusinta Ensemble. As well as conducting with a sure hand, Nils Schweckendiek has written useful booklet-notes. **Peter Quantrill**

## Fux · Kerll

**Fux** *Kaiserrequiem*\* **Kerll** *Missa pro defunctis*<sup>b</sup>

**Vox Luminis**; \***Scorpio Collectief**;

<sup>b</sup>**L'Achéron / Lionel Meunier**

Ricercar © RIC368 (75' • DDD • T)



Kerll's *Missa pro defunctis* (published 1689) was dedicated to Emperor Leopold I,

and its preface reveals that the composer wanted it performed at his own funeral. Vox Luminis's consummate mastery of polyphonic textures, plangent sonorities and contoured phrasing is profoundly beautiful; the five soloists and five additional 'ripieno' singers declaim text with clarity and decorum. An organist and the four-part viol consort L'Achéron often double the voices but sometimes play independent *concertante* parts, such as the quivering accompaniment to 'Quantus tremor' (a tremulous bass solo), a fanfare-like attack to dotted rhythms during 'Tuba mirum' (a tenor solo), and mellifluous sustained lines and discreetly shaped suspensions in support of 'Mors stupebit' (an alto solo) and 'Lacrimosa' (a brief soprano solo). In contrapuntal choruses – whether the quick-moving detail of 'Quam olim Abrahae' or the unfurling serenity of 'Lux aeterna' – the combination of all 15 musicians is solemnly compassionate.

Fux's Requiem was performed at the funeral of the Dowager Empress Eleonore

Magdalene of Neuburg (widow of Leopold I) in 1720, and thereafter acquired the nickname *Kaiserrequiem* because it was revived for the obsequies of Charles VI in 1740. Fux's famed skill at counterpoint is also explicit in ritornellos that occur occasionally – usually for two violins, viola and basso continuo, but Mozartians will notice the use of solo trombone in 'Tuba mirum' (an alto solo); in larger-scale passages the instrumentalists of Scorpio Collectief double the choir with two muted cornets, two trombones and bassoon. The connected short movements in the Sequence present a lovely fluidity between the 'Recordare' (a solo quartet) and the ensuing 'Quaerens me' (full ensemble weaving gently); an elegant little trio for two sopranos and alto ('Inter oves') proceeds into a darker-hued choral 'Confutatis'. Polyphonic strands rise in arching phrases in the nuanced 'Sanctus', and a seamless progression of suspensions and resolutions from top to bottom of the musical texture caps off a consoling 'Communio'. An alternative recording of the *Kaiserrequiem* by Roland Wilson's Musica Fiata and La Capella Ducale has more pronounced rhythmical chiaroscuro but is vocally uneven, whereas the refinement of Vox Luminis is never anything less than sublime. **David Vickers**

*Fux – selected comparison:*

*Musica Fiata, Capella Ducale, Wilson*

(DHM) 88697 95997-2

## Jackson

'Vox clara'

**Aria for Joel and Vicki**<sup>a</sup>. **Cantate Domino**.

**Confirma hoc Deus. Factus est repente.**

**Herzliebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen?**

**Holy is the true light. Missa Triueriensis. Seven**

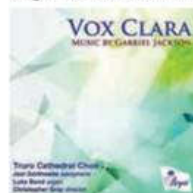
**Advent Antiphons. That wind blowing and that**

**tide. Vox clara ecce innotat**

**Truro Cathedral Choir / Christopher Gray** with

<sup>a</sup>**Joel Garthwaite sax Luke Bond** *org*

Regent © REGCD479 (75' • DDD • T/t)



This generously filled disc contains no fewer than eight premiere recordings among its 22 tracks. They reveal that Gabriel Jackson (b1962) continues to produce sacred choral music of the highest invention, responding to commissions with vivid panache. His music can – in an instant – switch from richly layered ecstasy to direct, hushed intimacy, for example in the anthem *Cantate Domino*.

It helps, of course, that as a former cathedral chorister he knows what makes

singers tick. The most recent fruit of his long association with Truro Cathedral Choir is the stunning Kipling setting *That wind blowing and that tide* (2015), a First World War commemoration composed in collaboration with the boy choristers. Here, Jackson's trademark 'organic succession' of ideas guides the listener with such a poignant ebb and flow that one can palpably sense the gently drifting fog of the Western Front. The boys also make the most of what Jackson terms their 'aleatoric rushing wind' in the Pentecostal motet *Factus est repente*, as well as the highly effective whispered mutterings of 'those who dwell in darkness' in the fourth *Advent Antiphon* ('O clavis David'). With its compact dimensions, the *Truro Mass* is clearly redolent of the Tudor masters Byrd and Tye, now passed through the austere filter of Stravinsky.

High praise, too, for organist Luke Bond, who soothes with the heart-stoppingly gorgeous chorale prelude on *Herzliebster Jesu* and accompanies saxophonist Joel Garthwaite with acute sensitivity in the *Aria for Joel and Vicki*. Garthwaite features variously on soprano, alto and tenor saxes, enhancing the Kipling piece and the disc's title-track.

With engaging and enlightening notes by the composer and superb engineering and production by Gary Cole, this glorious release is unbeatable. **Malcolm Riley**

## Josquin

**Masses – Di dadi; Une mousse de Biscaye**

**The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips**

Gimell © CDGIMO48 (71' • DDD • T/t)



One of the sad things about Josquin research is that works are judged spurious – or

even just possibly spurious – and then get forgotten entirely. That is partly because there are so many superb Josquin works that are beyond doubt; but all the same it is a pity. Besides, the case of the *Missa Une mousse de Biscaye* has been one of the most energetically argued over the years, both for and against. The main issues here are that there are a lot of dissonances that are uncharacteristic of his mature style; and the main counter-argument is that in his early years he was experimenting with many different styles. Either way, there seems not to have been a recording of it since 1959, which is a great pity, because it is a marvellous piece, whoever composed it. Some years ago I went on record as thinking that, on balance, it was probably