

Goldberg Magazine August 2008



Polyphonic settings of Lamentations are a richly mined seam within discography, but this new offering does more than fill a few more gaps in the repertoire. The Egidius Kwartet has chosen carefully and well. As far as I know this is the first recording of the sets by Arcadelt and Agricola (there also exists a three-voice set by the latter, but this one is more elaborate and involving). Morales' short setting of Taedet animam meam is also most memorable, its obsessive minimalism redolent of Spanish sensibility. Lassus' settings are better known of course, but prospective buyers needn't fear duplication, for Egidius Kwartet brings a rare intensity to these more familiar pieces. Most of these pieces may appear relatively restrained on paper (even the usually irrepressible Agricola), but they come alive in these full-throated performances, which strike a balance between drama and restraint: though it's all deeply felt, with affective moment taken by the scruff of the neck, nothing is overdone. Those who enjoy the Dutch (or, perhaps more accurately, Flemish) approach to vocal timbre will be in their element here. A few chant Responses are appropriately interleaved, performed by the specialist vocal trio Gregoriana. Again, these do more than cleanse the ear, since the chant is sensitively and compellingly ornamented. This is essential listening.

**FABRICE FITCH**