

'Leiden Choirbooks, Vol 1'

Anonymous Missa Sancta Maria **Appenzeller**

O magnum mysterium/Ave Maria **Cleeff** Peccata
mea/Quoniam iniquitatem **Crecquillon** Memento
salutis auctor/Maria mater. Recordare Domine/
Propterea maestum. Ave salutis ianua/Mysterium
mirabile. Servus tuus/Delaratio sermonum

J de Monte Angelus Domini. Christus resurgens/
Mortuus est enim **Gombert** Missa Beati omnes

Hollander Ego sum panis/Gloria **Richafort** Quem
dicunt homines/Petre diligis me

Egidius Kwartet (Peter de Groot *countertenor* Jon
Etxabe-Arzuaga *tenor* Hans Wijers *baritone* Donald
Bentvelsen *bass*) **Egidius College**

Et'cetera (F) (2) KTC1410 (126' • DDD • T/t)

**An enterprising project gets
off to a most promising start**



This double CD is the first instalment of a planned series devoted to a remarkable set of mid-16th-century manuscript choirbooks preserved in the Dutch town of

Vocal reviews

Leiden. It contains motets for four, five and six voices and a number of Masses; here, we're given 10 of the former and two of the latter. Alongside real gems by Appenzeller and Richafort there's more than a smattering of music by probably local figures, including one Johannes de Monte. Judging by the two pieces recorded here, his range was somewhat narrow, but both are beautifully judged, reminding us just how high was the general technical standard of composition of the time. That impression is surely reinforced by the two Masses that are heard on the second disc. This is not the first recording of Gombert's *Missa Beati omnes* but the anonymous *Missa Sancta Maria* must surely be new to the catalogue. You might expect me to say that the one is demonstrably more polished than the other but the anonymous Mass is in fact very accomplished, and on its own makes this recording worth discovering.

From its inception, the Egidius Kwartet have had a knack for enterprising programmes, though they've never attempted anything on this scale. That's doubtless why they've constituted themselves into a "College", in which they're joined by more than a dozen others, including four sopranos. The results are very encouraging, though for the moment the choir does at times sound like a "pick-up" ensemble that hasn't yet quite gelled. This is perhaps more evident on the motet disc than in the Masses, though the concluding Richafort motet is fittingly dispatched with eloquence and unanimity. Where the quartet is on its own, however, there are seldom any qualms. The only possible reproach might be a too consistent restraint in approach; but with voices of such suavity, that's easily overlooked.

Fabrice Fitch