



New York Polyphony recording at Länna Church in Sweden, 'an acoustic that we can play with'

character in a series of dramatic scenes, with the orchestra providing conversation and support. Fiterstein employs all of the suppleness and virtuosity at his beck and call to animate the narratives. He plays the First Concerto in F minor with an astute ear for subtle phrasing and inflection, and he turns *bon vivant* in the finale's buoyant writing.

The heart of the Second Concerto in E flat major beats most affectingly in the slow movement, which Fiterstein shapes like an opera singer lending poignant voice to Weber's blend of doleful aria and impassioned recitative. Throughout the work, the clarinetist pays meticulous attention to detail, placing his focused sound, velvety fluency and acrobatic vibrancy at the service of the music.

As in the extended pieces, Fiterstein manages the fiendish feats in the Concertino with commanding aplomb and precision. He teams in all of the fare with conductor Martin West and the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, who are at once light on their feet and keenly responsive to Weber's outpouring of lyrical, flamboyant and ingratiating creativity.


Donald Rosenberg

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'Times go by Turns'

RR Bennett A Colloquy With God **Byrd** Mass for Four Voices **G Jackson** *Ite missa est* **Plummer** *Missa sine nomine* **A Smith** Kyrie: Cunctipotens Genitor Deus **Tallis** Mass for Four Voices

New York Polyphony

BIS  BIS2037 (78' • DDD/DSD • T/T)



New works woven among Masses for troubled times

Taking their theme from the 16th-century Roman Catholic martyr Robert Southwell's realist poem, New York Polyphony weave a complex, clear-eyed yet still painfully beautiful tapestry of 15th- and 16th-century Masses. Interwoven with brief, surprisingly compatible interludes by Richard Rodney Bennett, Andrew Smith and Gabriel Jackson, each composed in 2012 for the ensemble, the music vividly reflects what remains the universal confrontation between religious faith and political torment (Southwell, who was canonised by Pope Paul VI in 1970, had suffered drawing and quartering for refusing to abandon his religion after Henry VIII's suppression of the monasteries).

Perhaps because of its rarity (this is only its second available recording), John Plummer's *Missa sine nomine*, written in the previous century when Catholicism in England was still in bloom, stands out for its free response; in fact, it has much in common with the 21st-century contributions, most notably Jackson's *Ite missa est*, which effectively tempers its central spirituality with angular dialogues to bring the programme to a bracing conclusion. For listeners accustomed to the more ecstatic choral visions of groups such as the Oxford Camerata and Tallis Scholars, New York Polyphony's four members capture the ecclesiastical and musical impact on a more down-to-earth, personal level which benefits tremendously from BIS's audiophile sound, recorded in one of the label's favourite venues, Länna Church in Sweden. And while the conventional stereo playback is impressive, highlighted by bass Craig Phillips's opening lines in Plummer's *Gloria* and *Credo*, there is added dimensionality and tangible bloom in its SACD surround-sound configuration.

Laurence Vittes

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