

Simon, singing the ploughman's song and shooting aria with unforced relish (though he sounds unhappy in his brief bouts of coloratura). In *Winter*, Boesch brings a subtle feeling for colour and word-pointing to Haydn's picture of the frozen wastes.

True to form, Herreweghe takes immense care over internal balancing, both of orchestra and chorus. If the Collegium Vocale's timbre is slightly more soft-grained than their rivals', they throw themselves with spirit into the marvellously varied music that Haydn provides for them. The opening chorus of *Spring*, with its musette drones, has a gentle, graceful lilt (Jacobs and Gardiner are brisker and earthier here). Perhaps Herreweghe is a shade sober in the Ländler-ish evening chorus in *Summer* and the noble fugue in praise of hard work ('O Fleiss, o edler Fleiss'). But the autumn wine harvest goes with a lusty – and increasingly tipsy – swing, while Herreweghe yields to no one in the cataclysmic summer tempest, the hunting chorus (gloriously raw, raucous natural horns) and the exultant closing fugue. While Jacobs remains, by a whisker, my first choice, Herreweghe and his forces do eloquent justice to the poetry, grandeur and, crucially, the sheer joy of this least solemn, most life-affirming of oratorios.

Richard Wigmore (September 2014)

Selected comparison:

Jacobs (A/O4²) (HARM) HMC97 1829/30

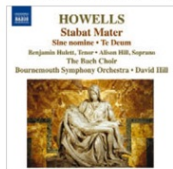
Howells

Stabat mater^a. *Te Deum*. *Sine nomine*^b

^aAlison Hill *sop* ^{ab}Benjamin Hulett *ten*

The Bach Choir; Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / David Hill

Naxos © 8 573176 (70' • DDD • T/T)



It is now 20 years since Howells's substantial setting of the *Stabat mater* was recorded by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky and the LSO on Chandos. A work deeply imbued by the composer's grief at the loss of his son from polio, its first performance dates from 1965, 15 years after the premiere of its other cathartic counterpart, *Hymnus Paradisi*. Though there is much emotional turbulence in this music, Hill maintains a compelling life and forward momentum in Howells's immensely contrapuntal score (it being three minutes shorter than Rozhdestvensky's). The Bach Choir has a palpable vibrancy in its range and layers of dynamics which are complemented by the extensive and highly sensitive palette of Howells's orchestra (beautifully executed here by the

Bournemouth SO) and the incisive solo tenor role of Benjamin Hulett. Particularly impressive are the opening movement, the procession-like 'Cujus animam genentem' and the powerfully climactic last two movements, 'Fac ut portem' and 'Christe, cum sit hinc exire', true *tours de force* of balance and textural control.

Hill's exhilarating affinity for this music is also evident in the orchestral, neo-Elizabethan fantasy *Sine nomine* of 1922, an example of impressionistic pastoralism at its most numinous, while the orchestration of the *Te Deum*, composed in 1944 for King's College, Cambridge, transforms the familiar into something quite new.

A stunning disc. **Jeremy Dibble (November 2014)**

Stabat mater – selected comparison:

LSO, Rozhdestvensky (1/95²) (CHAN) CHAN241-27

Leighton

'Crucifixus'

Magnificat & Nunc dimittis, 'Collegium Magdalene Oxoniense'. God's Grandeur. Give me the wings of faith. Missa brevis, Op 50. Missa de Gloria, Op 82 – Ite, missa est. What love of this is thine?. The Second Service, Op 62. Crucifixus pro nobis, Op 38^a

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge / Stephen Layton with ^aAndrew Kennedy *ten*

Jeremy Cole, Eleanor Kornas *org*

Hyperion © CDA68039 (72' • DDD • T/T)



Kenneth Leighton's remarkably consistent musical style means that his characteristic traits, such as extensive use of chromaticism and syncopation, plus intricate counterpoint, are ever present. However, anyone expecting his music to sound all the same should listen to the two radically different settings of the *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis*. The adventurous harmonic language often leads to tonal ambiguity, and one feels that the calm repose of a simple quiet major/minor chord is only reached via a troubled musical journey.

The uncompromising complexity of Leighton's music presents severe challenges to singers and organists but the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge cast these aside with performances of unsurpassed excellence. Under the experienced direction of Stephen Layton, their articulation and phrasing are always faithful to the texts, and the composer's detailed markings are meticulously observed. High praise is also due to tenor Andrew Kennedy, and organists Jeremy Cole and Eleanor Kornas.

My only reservation with this disc is the resonant acoustic of Lincoln Cathedral,

which sometimes reduces clarity in works which include the organ. Despite the best efforts of singers and organists, fast and loud passages become somewhat muddled in the vast spaces, and listeners may prefer the clearer, more transparent recording by the Choir of St John's College, Cambridge, on Naxos. Under Christopher Robinson's direction, their singing is consistently first-rate; however, the emotional intensity of the Trinity College singers places their performances in a class of their own. Hyperion's richer and warmer sound also gives their disc the edge over the Naxos CD; it may well turn out to be one of the finest choral recordings I'll hear this year.

Christopher Nickol (May 2015)

Selected comparison:

Ch of St John's Coll, Cambridge, Robinson (3/04) (NAXO) 8 555795

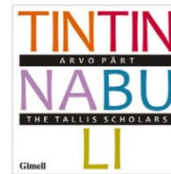
Pärt

'Tintinnabuli'

Seven Magnificat Antiphons. Magnificat. Which was the son of... Nunc dimittis. The Woman with the Alabaster Box. Tribute to Caesar. I am the true vine. Triodion

The Tallis Scholars / Peter Phillips

Gimell © CDGIM049 (67' • DDD • T/T)



Given that the music of Arvo Pärt is among a vanishingly small group by whom it is possible to follow a clear line back to 'early' music, The Tallis Scholars are, on paper, the best group imaginable to record his music. Peter Phillips has disagreed in the past with the idea that there is a direct link between the two – it is certainly the case that the stasis that underpins Pärt's harmony creates a kind of timelessness that is less, not more, in need of historical context – but either way, the purity of The Tallis Scholars' sound provides the perfect scaffolding for the pieces on this disc.

The argument about whether Pärt is a composer affected by context or simply creating music out of a vacuum continues, but in many ways its calm equilibrium is an engaging mystery that could only be considered regressive if viewed in its dimmest light. And in their performance (immaculate as always, apart from a very few issues – largely at the top of the texture – with vowel sounds and clarity of words), The Tallis Scholars have presented their chosen repertoire in the way they have always done best – as a sound world of profound beauty.

Caroline Gill (March 2015)