



## Early Music

**Dowland** *Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares*

**Phantasm** with  
**Elizabeth Kenny** lute  
 Linn © CKD527  
 Producer & Engineer  
**Philip Hobbs**

Followers of **Phantasm** will be shedding tears of joy at the news that Dowland's *Lachrimae* has won this year's Early Music Award. The critical reception since its release has been universally glowing, and, it should be said, some of the most perceptive insights came from our own Lindsay Kemp, writing in July 2016. **Phantasm** is no stranger to the *Gramophone* Awards, having been a frequent finalist in both the Early Music and Baroque Instrumental categories as well as a previous winner of both awards for its recordings of Gibbons (2004) and Purcell (1997).

Among **Phantasm**'s defining strengths are the clarity, vision and determination of its leader, Laurence Dreyfus. Blessed with a formidable intellect, acute musical sensibilities, insatiable curiosity and a measure of self-belief, he chose to challenge an already crowded field of professional viol consorts specialising in the Elizabethan and Jacobean repertoires by putting together a crack ensemble of players after his own heart who could play as one and with whom he could develop freshly informed performances of the highest calibre.

Over the years, Dreyfus's gifts for teaching and research made him welcome in some of the finest British and American academic institutions where the marriage of musical performance and scholarship is encouraged. In that environment, musicians like Dreyfus are encouraged to delve deeper, to test and refine their interpretations before committing them to disc, a luxury most professional performers can ill afford. This approach is precisely what marks out **Phantasm**'s Dowland recording from many of those issued from the mid-1980s onwards. **Phantasm** inevitably stands on the shoulders of its predecessors, relying on Lynda Sayce and David Pinto's 2004 Fretwork edition of the music and Peter Holman's indispensable 1999 handbook, *Dowland: Lachrimae (1604)*. Another veteran of a previous *Lachrimae* recording, the lutenist Elizabeth Kenny, makes a thoughtfully judged contribution to this disc.

Lindsay Kemp's assessment is worthy of reprise: 'Phantasm's performances are totally convincing and absorbing. Drawing richly on their depth, intensity and homogeneity of tone, their acuity to the music's ever-active emotional flux leaves them unafraid to use forceful gestures of articulation and dynamics to make a point.' **Julie Anne Sadie**



## Baroque Instrumental

**'The Italian Job'**

**Albinoni. Caldara. Corelli. Tartini. Torelli. Vivaldi** Concertos and sinfonias

**La Serenissima / Adrian Chandler** *vn*  
 Avie © AV2371  
 Producer & Engineer  
**Simon Fox-Gál**

**La Serenissima** have a glorious and all-too-rare ability to make one's pulse race afresh with every new project, and 'The Italian Job' – a programme of sinfonias and concertos from four musical cities – contains all their typical hallmarks: crisply precise articulation, bang-on intonation, elegant blending and zinging sonority, but all this perfection is by no means straight-laced. Instead there's a fearless, fun-filled naturalness to the whole, and always the impression of an ensemble who believe in every single note they strike or stroke.

Looking at the programme itself, it's a feast of contrasting textures and colours. Compare the reedy bite and bounce of Vivaldi's Bassoon Concerto in C with the lighter, all-strings elegance of Tartini's Violin Concerto in E, for instance. Or indeed the disc's climactic work, Torelli's Sinfonia in C, because while with recordings I'm usually only focused on the finished

package, with this sinfonia's monster-sized solo line-up of four trumpets, timpani, and two each of oboes, bassoons, violins and cellos, I can't help but dream of what an extraordinary listening experience the recording sessions must have been. It's certainly come across wonderfully on disc.

Back in my initial review in April I commented that it felt almost unhelpful to draw readers' attentions to 'highlights' when the whole was so wonderful, but then couldn't resist pointing out that aforementioned Tartini violin concerto. Now, months on, this is still the work I'm most regularly pressing the repeat button on: think gently flowing metronomic ticking, graceful ensemble playing, and exquisitely voiced and ornamented solo violin lines from Chandler himself which dance and glide along with the fine-tuned warmth, sweetness and delicacy of spun brown sugar. Bravo **La Serenissima!** **Charlotte Gardner**