

# Early Music

## Byrd

'One Byrde in Hande'

The Bells, MB38. Fantasias - MB13; MB25; MB62. Grounds - MB9; MB43. Lachrymae Pavan, MB54. Pavan and Galliard, MB16. Preludes - MB1; MB12; MB24. Ut, mi, re, MB65. Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la, MB64

Richard Egarr *hpd*

Linn © CKD518 (63' • DDD)



A joyous upwards flourish opens Richard Egarr's Byrd recital, added by him to the

beginning of a 50-second Prelude for which the composer has already written a flurry of fast notes as an ending. But if that's the kind of thing that's typical of Egarr's natural keyboard exuberance, it's surely also a sign of the particular excitement he feels when Byrd's music is under his fingers. And if his love and respect for the composer he first got to know as a chorister is revealed clearly enough in a readable booklet note, it is no less warmly expressed in his playing throughout the course of this disc.

At first glance, the selection looks challengingly serious, consisting mainly of fantasias and grounds, with none of the variations on popular songs that make up Byrd's more immediately appealing side. Yet Egarr has no problem keeping our attention. The sheer sound of his playing is one thing, produced on a crisp, punchy but resonant Ruckers copy, beautifully recorded by Philip Hobbs. Operating at A=393, it has a fruity bass; but Egarr also manages to make it sing sweetly in the middle and high registers thanks to a caressing legato and sure sense of when to leave certain notes held down. It may be relevant that he knew Byrd's choral music before his keyboard music, because in lengthy fantasias that might seem rather earnest compositional exercises – how excited can you get by a title such as *Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la?* – he is able not only to articulate Byrd's astonishingly resourceful counterpoint but also, in music that could sound dogged, to strike a thoroughly convincing balance between the music's formal structures, changing moods and metres, and moments of charming spontaneity or coursing brilliance. He



Richard Egarr's natural keyboard exuberance makes his Byrd fly

ends with Byrd's most extraordinary piece, *The Bells*, an improbable set of variations on a two-note ground which, with even more 'pedal wash' effects than usual, is here turned into an affectionate tone-picture. An outstanding celebration of Byrd as one of the first keyboard greats.

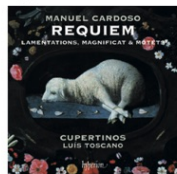
Lindsay Kemp (8/18)

## Cardoso

Missa pro defunctis a 4. Amen dico vobis. Cum audisset Johannes. Domine, tu mihi lavas pedes?. Ipse est qui post me. Lamentations for Maundy Thursday. Magnificat secundi toni a 4. Omnis vallis. Quid hic statis?. Sitivit anima mea. Tua est potentia

Cupertinos / Luis Toscana

Hyperion © CDA68252 (70' • DDD • T/t)



It's more than 20 years since a clutch of recordings put Cardoso on the map,

including one of his six-voice Requiem by The Tallis Scholars (Gimell, 10/90), a Mass and motet recital by The Sixteen (Coro, 8/94), and another from Philippe Herreweghe's Ensemble Vocal Européen (Harmonia Mundi, 5/97). Though not as opulent as its more richly scored companion, his four-voice Requiem is a compelling work, especially when sung with this degree of commitment. It's a quality that shines throughout the recording. The selection of motets is very satisfying: Cardoso is as adept in plainchant-based works as in freely composed ones. The well-known *Sitivit anima mea* is as compelling as ever. That said, a couple more extrovert pieces might have helped showcase this ensemble's skills more fully.

This is the first recording by Cupertinos for Hyperion and it is a pleasure to have a Portuguese ensemble tackle its native repertory. The sound is bright and privileges the higher voices, the lower ones being light baritones rather than basses.