



The Tallis Scholars and their director Peter Phillips perform Josquin with confidence and elegance

band climax in miniature, at Josquin's triumphal *Credo* ending, 'et vitam venture saeculi, Amen'. They find a wonderful sway in the garlands of polyphony and a sense of expectance in the tenors' long final note.

Conversely, *Missa Gaudeamus* is almost certainly a middle-period work, and I am charmed by how the opening of the plainchant model presents a joyfully wide rising interval which permeates the polyphonic texture. The Tallis Scholars allow much light to filter through Josquin's complex textures and they clearly delight in his beautifully spacious three-part setting of 'Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua'. Their sound may have softened slightly with a new generation of singers but it suits *Missa Gaudeamus* particularly well. This disc is surely one of their best recent releases. **Edward Breen (11/18)**

'Melancholia'

'Madrigals and Motets around 1600'

Byrd Come to me grief forever. Lullaby, my sweet little baby. Tristitia et anxietas **Gesualdo** Mercè grido piangendo. O vos omnes (two versions). Tristis est anima mea **Gibbons** What is our life? **Luzzaschi** Quivi sospiri **Marenzio** Crudele acerba inesorabil' morte. Solo e pensoso **Nenna** La mia doglia s'avanza **Tudino** Altro che lagrimar **Weelkes** O Care, thou wilt despatch me **Wilbye** Draw on, sweet night. O wretched man

PHOTOGRAPHY: NICK BUTTER

Les Cris de Paris / Geoffroy Jourdain

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2298 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Les Cris de Paris are pretty hard to capture in a brief paragraph. Readers will recognise

them as the chorus in Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles*, admired by Mark Pullinger in the August issue, yet they have a much wider repertoire and deliciously rampant musical appetite. This, their first disc with Harmonia Mundi, is to be welcomed and I hope to hear much more from these brilliant musicians in future.

For this programme, 'Melancholia', they delve into an adventurous and sumptuous moment of musical history: the 16th century's own *fin de siècle*, which Geoffroy Jourdain dubs a musical avant-garde. Many listeners will readily associate this period with the virtuoso Italian madrigalists – Wert, Gesualdo et al – but Jourdain convincingly argues for closer connections between such audacious Italian lamenting and the exquisite English melancholia of Byrd, Dowland and their ilk. For me this works incredibly well, painting intriguing connections between the extrovert chromaticism of Gesualdo and

the introvert density of Byrd's consort textures as well as freely crossing the sacred/secular divide.

The singers make a beautifully balanced sound with impressive fluency across each style. I especially love the countertenors and their cheeky but knowing presence in the intense chromatic moments of Gesualdo's *O vos omnes*; warmer, but less sure-footed than The Tallis Scholars (Gimell, 12/87). Here, and throughout this album, there is a pleasing tension between a consort blend and the vital quirkiness of individual voices.

Perhaps the most impressive tracks are the recurring instrumental performances of Byrd's *Lullaby, my sweet little baby* 'imbued with sad premonition' and his elegy on the death of Philip Sidney, *Come to me grief forever*. The juxtaposition of forward-looking and retrospective portraits of melancholia are touchingly referenced in the booklet notes and in both pieces I have been long preoccupied with the superb performances by Fretwork with Michael Chance (Virgin/Erato, 3/91, 11/98). I never thought their intimate, sinewy sound could be matched; but here Jourdain's pairing of serpent, cornet and viols brings a gloriously rich hue to Byrd's music. To bastardise Victor Hugo, never was there such pleasure in being sad. **Edward Breen (10/18)**