

celsis,” and concluding with the re-sponsorial-like “benedictus” with its chamber-choir clarity.

Also of interest are the soloists Susan Gritton, John Mark Ainsley, and Christopher Maltman. Ainsley and Maltman’s timbres and interpretations clearly delineate the soldier’s journey and its moral arc. The initial jaunty articulations and jovial tone of the soloists create youthful—slightly cocky—personas (“Out there, we’ve walked quite friendly up to death”), an effect even more striking when compared to the world-wearied passages at the work’s conclusion (“Let us sleep now”).

Gritton’s angelic performance carries both assuaging tones of comfort and hell-fire proselytization, often within the same movement (“lacrimosa”).

The production design of this CD is of highest quality. It is the third installment in a series of recordings by Signum that celebrate the collaboration between McCreesh and the Wratistavia Cantans, Wrocław’s musical festival that focuses on choral-orchestral repertoire. In fact, this recording series is to choral-orchestral music as the Criterion Collection is to art house cinema. The superb audio recording is accompanied by in-

sightful CD notes by Britten scholar Mervyn Cooke, and contains quotes from musicians, artists, and audience members from the *War Requiem*’s premiere, including Susan Hill (author of *The Woman in Black*), Edward Higinbottom (director of the Choir of New College Oxford), Maggie Cotton (percussionist during the premiere), and Tony Palmer (British Film Director). These quotes are paired with testimonies from musicians and producers of the 2013 recording—placing them, and the listener, in communion with those at the premiere. Of special note are the archival photos from World War I that augment the translations.

The care taken in both the musical and visual elements of McCreesh’s *War Requiem* recording makes this a staple for any choral music devotee and educational institution. In fact, its commitment to this composition’s genesis not only makes for a powerful recording but succeeds in documenting a conscientious performance of Britten’s eternally relevant *War Requiem*.

Michael Porter
Boise, Idaho

Buxtehude and his Circle

Theatre of Voices
Paul Hillier, conductor
Da Capo 6.220634 (2016; 75:27)

Paul Hillier and the Theatre of Voices are well recognized throughout the choral community. In writing this review, it is easy to praise their wonderful music-making efforts. The most interesting aspect, howev-



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er, is the choice of repertoire and the connections that lie within. Though most choral musicians are familiar with the work of Buxtehude, the names Geist, Bruhns, Tunder, and Förster are likely much less familiar. *Buxtehude and his Circle* provides an exceptional introduction to these composers alongside two marvelous compositions by Buxtehude.

In addition to consistently pleasing performances, this album provides extensive CD notes in both English and Danish. The essay by Jakob Bloch Jespersen does an excellent job of introducing the lesser known composers, and particularly entertaining is the story of Buxtehude's *Abendmusiken* performances drawing such crowds that police had to be called to manage the event.



The album opens with Christian Geist's quintessentially Baroque *Dixit Dominus Domino meo*, likely new to most listeners. With the triumphant "Dixit" opening, the voices and instruments set an exciting tone for the rest of the album and will entice the listener to want more.

Jesu, meine Freude, BuxWV 60, begins with an understated and contemplative instrumental section. The voices enter homophonically and the text is set quite simply. There is just a hint of reverberation in the recording, which might be expected in an old Baroque church. However, anyone who has visited the Marienkirche in Lübeck (where Buxtehude spent a majority of his later career) knows that it is quite large. With an all-stone interior, there is a ringy

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openness that is not quite present on the album. The choice Hillier makes for a drier acoustic is required by the recording; however, the lack of ring demonstrates that some of the magic of this music is served by the kind of spacious acoustic for which it was intended.


Nicolaus Bruhns's *De profundis clamavi* is a remarkable piece for bass soloist, and it is a great transition here after the two previous pieces performed by larger ensembles. The more rapid passages of "De profundis" are quite exciting, and it is wonderful to have these joyous passages highlighted here, as much of the

music on the album maintains a bit of a melancholy thread, which the CD notes claim as ubiquitous within Buxtehude's sound and that of his contemporaries.

Franz Tunder's *Dominus illuminatio mea* is an intriguing find, tucked in as the middle of the album. It is upbeat and light, which is appreciated in an album of otherwise more somber music. It moves through five-voice polyphony, to voice pairs, to fully homophonic passages. There is a great deal of text painting here, which aptly captures the emotion and meaning of the text. The final text, "in hoc ego sperabo" ["in this I

shall be confident"], exemplifies the type of text painting in the piece.

The next two tracks, Geist's *Die mit Tränen säen* and *Gott, hilf mir*, BuxWV 34, are a return to the more reflective atmosphere present on much of the recording. Both are subdued with glimmers of more joyous emotion. The final piece, Kaspar Förster's *Confitebor tibi Domine*, is a return to the uplifting, festive mood that was heard at the onset of the album. This selection certainly makes sense as a closer to the album from a text standpoint; however, the composition is not particularly climactic. It is surprising to this reviewer that

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it was Tunder's *Dominus illuminatio mea* that leaves everything else feeling a bit wanting. The Tunder is the highlight of the recording and probably new to most listeners. Overall, this album is an excellent introduction to several lesser known composers. It also presents the music of Buxtehude exquisitely and paints a superb picture of his life and time.

Brad Pierson
Toledo, Ohio

Deo: Jonathan Harvey

The Choir of St. John's College,
Cambridge

Andrew Nethsingha, director

Edward Picton-Turbervill, organ
Signum SIGCD 456 (2016; 60:24)

Deo is a recording of sacred works by British composer Jonathan Harvey (1939–2012), whose familiarity and skill in writing for college cathedral choirs is continually apparent. Harvey grew up singing as a chorister at St. Michael's College, Tenbury, later studied at St. John's, Cambridge, and spent much of his career teaching and composing in the U.S. and Britain. His music pushes "the boundaries of church music, without ever losing the intensity of spirituality which underpins all the great religious music," as director Andrew Nethsingha points out in the CD notes. Harvey's influences include Britten, Bartok, the serial techniques of Webern and Schoenberg, and the mysticism and modality of Messiaen. These inspirations can be heard in his interesting, innovative, and sometimes dissonant works.

The recording took place in the St. John's College Chapel and features the well-known and expressive Choir of St. John's College, made up of college-aged male Choral Scholars and boys singing the treble parts. Nethsingha draws out rich and well-crafted sounds from the ensemble, and his relationship and experience with Harvey's music adds great depth. Most tracks feature the *a cappella* or organ-accompanied ensemble, but two tracks are for organ alone, played expertly by Edward Picton-Turbervill: *Laus Deo*, the earliest composed work on the album (1969), and the *Toccata for Organ and*

Tape (1980). The latter demonstrates why and how Harvey was a leader in the field of electro-acoustic music.

While each piece shows Harvey's fascination with the mysterious, three stand out as the most alluring and programmable. *Come, Holy Ghost* uses the ancient plainsong "Veni Creator Spiritus" as the basis for this theme and variations, and gives a new and welcome beauty, freshness, and innovation to the well-known chant. *I Love the Lord* is built on a simple G major triad that is repeated throughout by a small group. The larger group's harmonies shift so that the constancy of the G chord is

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