

The next recording is an important one. Composers with scant biographies often have raw deals, no matter how good their music, and Firminius Caron has long lived in the shadow of Ockeghem and Busnoys. Thanks to Rob Wegman's recent researches, however, Caron's life in Amiens has partly been traced, and now some of the music is revived in **Firminius Caron: Twilight of the Middle Ages** (DHM 88875143472, *rec* 2016, 55'), performed by Paul van Nevel's Huelgas Ensemble. This is a sampler disc, starting with five movements drawn from five different cyclic Masses by Caron, and closing with chansons, some of which are imaginatively arranged to show just how variant the sources can be when transmitting a single

work. The results definitely whet the appetite for more, and my main regret is that this is indeed a sampler, not a three-disc survey. It is also a pity that recordings were not supplied of the plainchant melodies on which three of the Masses are based; but the Kyrie from the *Missa L'homme armé* is easy to follow by anyone who knows the tune, and we are given Caron's chanson *Accueilly m'a la belle* as well as the Agnus Dei from the Mass of the same name.

As for the performances, I would place them a notch above those of The Orlando Consort, for two reasons. First, in the Mass movements each polyphonic line is allocated to two or three voices, which is true to the historical evidence, and Paul van Nevel encourages a lithe, muscular delivery in which the singers constantly move the lines forward and think ahead; this really does capture the look of the musical phrases as expressed so compactly in the unbarred notation of a 15th-century choirbook. Second, in the chansons—which are sung one voice to a part, without instruments—it is clear that these francophone singers are totally comfortable with the late medieval French texts, and they project them with subtle nuance. The Huelgas Ensemble really is in fine form here.