

**September 2020**

**CD: The Magic of Polyphony : review**

**AllMusic:**

The general trend in recordings of Renaissance polyphony has been toward typing music to specific surroundings: royal festivities, religious feast days, and the like. This collection by the **Huelgas Ensemble** goes in the other direction, providing three CDs' worth of music ranging from the medieval era to **Anton Bruckner**, with most of the pieces falling into some stretch of the High Renaissance. The music was recorded, beautifully, in a Romanesque church near Dijon in 2019, and the programme is unified loosely by a set of general guidelines for the selections at that event: the music emphasized "unknown repertoire, undeservedly obscure composers, and experiments that fall outside the scope of the normal concert season." All of those factors are present here, with that undeservedly obscure composer **Anonymous** heading the list, and the ensemble makes a strong case for the large body of rarely performed Renaissance music that's out there. Listen to the gorgeous *Lamentations of Jeremiah* of **José de Vaquedano** at the end of the first disc, or the delicate but serious chanson *Que null'étoile sur nous* of **Claude Le Jeune**, otherwise known mostly for a few metrical chanson experiments that turn up in music history classes. Each piece is given a careful and often affecting performance by the veteran **Huelgas Ensemble** and director **Paul Van Nevel**, and with the extraordinary sound, this release may be just the thing for listeners who want to luxuriate in some unfamiliar Renaissance music for a couple of hours.

James Manheim