

GRAMOPHONE

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ESQUIVEL *Missa Hortus conclusus* & other works

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Juan Esquivel (c1560 before 1630) is another Spanish 16th-century polyphonist thus far denied the attention he deserves on record. First known to us as a choirboy in Ciudad Rodrigo near the Portuguese border, he trained under choirmaster Juan Navarro – one-time teacher of both Victoria and Vivanco – so if nothing else, his heritage is assured. This programme of his works is largely edited by Bruno Turner, who also provides the booklet note, and I should like to note Turner's great achievement in bringing so much of this music to the attention of performers and their public. This disc comprises the *Missa Hortus conclusus*, a loose parody of a motet by Rodrigo de Ceballos (c1530-1581) performed first. The Mass is then interspersed with motets by Esquivel and ends with his setting of *Alma redemptoris mater* before the disc continues with a sequence of music for Vespers.

De Profundis are an ensemble I admire. Founded by Mark Dourish to explore Renaissance music through male voices at low pitch, they work with visiting conductors and have previously recorded albums of music by Ribera with David Skinner (9/16) and Vivanco with Robert Hollingworth (8/18). They certainly fulfil their brief here: low, bold and more demonstrative than many of the English ensembles who also explore Iberian polyphony, their sound is rich – at times too rich on the top line for my taste – and anchored by the attractive grain of the bajón played by Nicholas Perry. From Hyperion's point of view the sound is superb: warm and gently resonant. One intriguing feature of this performance is the double intonation on the *Credo*: in 16th-century Spain it was apparently common for this to be heard twice as the Deacon cued the Celebrant, who would then proclaim the intonation to the congregation. Such details gesture towards liturgical verisimilitude, which combines with the passionate singing to create an extremely enjoyable and atmospheric recording.