

Review

Morales: L’Homme Armé masses and Magnificat Secundi Toni album review – choral sounds of 16th-century Rome

★★★★☆

De Profundis/Hollingworth (Coro)

Aiming to perform Renaissance music as it was originally heard, De Profundis find richness and precision in the Spanish composer’s finely wrought settings



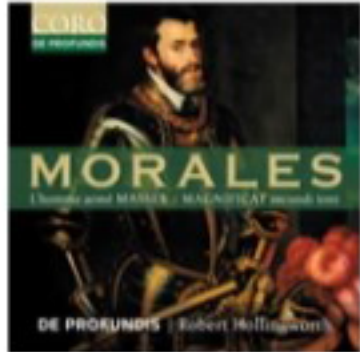
Erica Jeal
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Replicating the Renaissance ... De Profundis and Robert Hollingworth. Photograph: Helena Cooke

The Spanish composer Cristóbal de Morales, Palestrina’s predecessor at the papal chapel, was internationally famous in the mid-16th century, his music reaching as far as Mexico and Peru. His choral music is gaining attention again today, not least from the chamber choir *De Profundis*, whose adult male lineup seeks to replicate the standard choral sound on mainland Europe at the time. This is the third release of their planned series of 12 recordings encompassing all Morales’s masses and magnificats.

The Magnificat Secundi Toni is a finely wrought example written for Rome that blossoms into six vocal lines towards the end. Framing it are Morales’ two mass settings based on *L’Homme Armé*, a song dating from the time of the fall of Constantinople which spawned its own tradition of mass settings – more than 40 survive from this period. The two masses use the song in different modes, giving the five-part mass a more mellifluous, less sombre air than the four-part one; in the five-part mass the addition of organ and bajón – a medieval precursor of the bassoon – adds to the richness of the texture. *Robert Hollingworth*, also known as the director of I Fagiolini, conducts precise and sonorous performances.



The artwork for Morales: L’Homme Armé masses and Magnificat Secundi Toni.