

ment of the English carol *This Is the Truth Sent from Above* (famously arranged in the opening of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on Christmas Carols*.) The unaccompanied setting is haunting and stark, evolving from a lovely, lone tenor solo and unfolding to reveal verses set for high voices, low voices, and the full choir, respectively. It is a rare opportunity on this album to get to hear the pure beauty of each voice part in such an intimate and transparent texture, and also serves to introduce conductors to this newer arrangement of one of this season's most underserved carols. It is for this anthem, as well as the aforementioned premiere works, that *Christmas from Tewkesbury* might find its way into your holiday collection this year.

Anne Lyman
Tacoma, Washington

***Missa Conceptio tua:
Medieval and Renaissance
Music for Advent***

Schola Antiqua of Chicago
Michael Alan Anderson, conductor
Naxos 8.573260 (2012; 57'29")

The advent of historically informed practice in classical music has not only changed the way we perform and listen to early music but has also inspired ensembles to program music of lesser known composers in the genre. Naxos, a music label that began as an "off-brand" by featuring lesser-known musicians performing a wide variety of music, continues to produce fine albums of rarely recorded music (or, at least, less frequently

performed) sung by groups with great skill but without as much international notoriety. Schola Antiqua of Chicago ably meets this union in this lovely collection of Advent antiphons and English carols.

While the album's title draws the listener to the Advent season, the musical selections have a strong Marian theme, beginning with the 'O' Antiphons and the antiphon "Alma Redemptoris Mater." The plainchants are sung with superb blend and legato without losing any of the intelligibility of text. The real highlight of this album, however, is the world-premiere recording of Pierre de la Rue's *Missa Conceptio tua*. In the CD notes, Schola Antiqua's conductor, Michael Alan Anderson, speculates that the "exceptionally low range" of the piece explains the lack of recordings of la Rue's mass. The mass has many wonderful moments, from the sublime two-voice duet beginning the "Sanctus" to the immaculate full-choir blend throughout (especially the thrilling "Hosanna"). The superb richness and resonance of the bass section (Jack Parton and Wilbur Pauley), frequently singing low E-flats with ease, balances exquisitely with the rest of the group to create a marvelously warm, full sound that is remarkable for a group its size (eleven total singers, nine singing the mass setting). The disc concludes with three Marian English carols, highlighted by a rousing *Nova, nova!* that would be a welcome addition to any Advent or Christmas choral program.



The Marian and Advent themes in this disc are developed nicely from beginning to end, with lovely variety between plainchant and polyphony. This disc serves not only as a wonderful introduction to Pierre de la Rue's mass setting but also as the definitive recording of the work.

Nathan Windt
Davenport, Iowa

***Heinrich Schütz:
Weihnachtshistorie***
Dresdner Kammerchor
Hans-Christoph Rademann,
conductor
Carus 83.257 (2014; 61'38")

Hans-Christoph Rademann, who has conducted the Dresdner Kammerchor since it was founded in 1985, has undertaken the task of recording the complete works of Heinrich Schütz, the most notable composer in Dresden's history. This recording is the tenth volume in a series containing twenty-two CDs. For this recording of six pieces of Christmas choral music, the eighteen-voice Dresdner Kammerchor is accompanied by eighteen instrumentalists of the Dresdner Barockorchester.

Three trombones, strings, and continuo accompany the opening *Magnificat* (SWV 468). The choral forces require double choir and a solo quartet. When the quartet is not isolated from the ensemble, they almost serve as a third choir, with parts completely

