

Byrd: Infelix ego, Mass for 5 Voices, Motets CD review – intimate, expressive, hypnotic

Collegium Vocale Gent/Herreweghe (Outhere)

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William Byrd's music to Latin texts, written in the turbulent religious times of Elizabethan England, was probably intended for small-scale performance in recusant circles. So this intimate account of his wonderful five-part mass is appropriate and, as conjured up by Philippe Herreweghe's direction, quite different from the usual English choral style. The 12 singers are flexible, gentle and expressive, rising to sustained power in the rich Agnus Dei. Byrd's long and magnificent *Infelix ego* is not quite as strong, but the hymn "Christe, qui lux es" is hypnotic. Though advertised as a disc of music by Byrd, there are two motets by Ferrabosco and De Monte, yet the whole thing lasts under 50 minutes, which almost leaves room for another Byrd mass.