



Stage to gallery: Jean Tubéry gestures to Ensemble La Fenice's semi-chorus as they perform Purcell at Lyons Trinity Chapel

imagery of the *Quatre Chansons pour enfants* and the mix of contemplation and gaiety in Poulenc's last cycle, *La courte paille*. Hélène Guilmette is radiantly animated in the *Airs chantés* and *Fiançailles pour rire*.

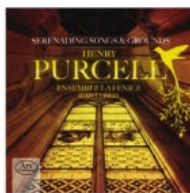
This complete set of Poulenc's cycles and single songs – 170 songs in all – emphasises that it was the interweaving of voice and verse that he found to be the most fertile medium for his imagination to take wing. The language of his chosen poets ignites brilliant, beautifully crafted miniatures, and even his rare forays into non-French territory such as the *Huit Chansons polonaises*, beautifully sung here by Julie Boulianne, are marked by the same immediacy and sensibility. **Geoffrey Norris**

Purcell

'Serenading Songs & Grounds'

Hark how the wild musicians sing, Z542. Soft notes and gently raised (A Serenading Song) Z510. Sonata, Z795. King Arthur - Fairest Isle; Hornpipe (Act 3). A New Irish Tune, Z646. A Ground in Gamut, Z645. Voluntary on the 100th Psalm, Z721. How pleasant is this flowery plain and grove!, Z543. Three Treble Parts upon a Ground, Z731. A New Ground, Z T682. Music for a while, Z583. The Tempest - No stars again shall hurt you

Hana Blažiková, Céline Scheen *sops* **Paulin Bündgen** *counterten* **Jan Van Elsacker** *ten* **Stephan MacLeod** *bass* **Ensemble La Fenice / Jean Tubéry**
ARS Produktion © ARS38 525 (54' • DDD)



apart from its prolific melody, it also has two highly individual features – the manifest appeal of the often haunting poems and, structurally, the regular use of the ostinato bass (ground) in both his vocal and instrumental music. With regard to the texts of his songs, the editor of the posthumous anthology *Orpheus Britannicus* (published in 1698), Henry Playford, praised Purcell's 'particular genius to express the energy of English words' and especially the 'serenading songs'.

The opening number here, 'Hark how the wild musicians sing', is a prime example, with two or three singers alternating tenderness and wildness, accompanied by two treble recorders and basso continuo. 'Soft notes and gently raised' which follows (rapturously sung by Céline Scheen) is a lyrical song with a recorder obbligato, which soon becomes a duet with the bass, Stephan MacLeod. We all know 'The Old Hundredth' and it is presented magnetically in three forms, including an organ voluntary, vividly played by David Van Bouwel on the fine organ at the Lyons Trinity Chapel where

the recordings were made.

The ambitious instrumental Sonata in Three Parts shows Purcell's skill in following the style of the 'most fam'd Italian masters' and how inventively he did it, while the Three Treble Parts upon a Ground is equally resourceful and ear-tickling. But it is Purcell's tunes that count, not least the lovely 'Fairest Isle', sung here very beautifully by Hana Blažiková, and 'Music for a while', again featuring the delightful Céline Scheen. Throughout the Ensemble La Fenice directed by Jean Tubéry give admirable support.

Ivan March

JC Smith

The Seasons

Emma Kirkby *sop* **Tim Mead** *counterten* **Hans Jörg Mammel** *ten* **Markus Simon** *bass* **Musica Franconia Festival Choir; La Banda / Wolfgang Riedelbauch**
Christophorus (M) © CHR77382 (93' • DDD)



Ah yes: John Christopher Smith, *geboren* Johann Christoph Schmidt,

whom Handel invited to London in 1716 to look after his business affairs. But no: this is John Christopher Smith (1712-95), to whom Handel dictated music after he had gone blind, and who helped keep the