

Maxine Thévenot

Review of *In Dulci Jubilo* by Donald Vroon in *American Record Guide*, Fall 2016

We at ARG face Christmas In July and August every year, in the form of at least 50 CD issues. This one stood out for me. First of all, the choir is simply wonderful. They are beautifully balanced and sound utterly natural--yet much of what they sing is quite sophisticated. Even much-recorded pieces like David Willcocks's arrangements of 'Once in Royal David's City' and 'O Come All Ye Faithful' are beautifully done--and never overdone. The choral director is Maxine Thevenot, and you will hear men, boys, women, and girls in various combinations. Even the soloists--fine as they are--are mixed, and someone named 'Jordyn' may very well be a girl. It doesn't matter when they are so good.

Out of the 16 pieces (13 choral, 3 organ alone) I marked 7 that I especially liked, including some new pieces and arrangements. There were only 3 that I won't return to (all new). All 3 organ pieces are *In Dulci Jubilo*: Buxtehude, Milford and of course Bach--his ends the program gloriously.

Episcopal cathedrals are often great places for music.

Review of *In Dulci Jubilo* by James Hildreth in *The American Organist*, December 2016

The choirs of St. John's Cathedral in Albuquerque have assembled a delightful program of sacred Christmas music including the familiar and the new. The full choir comprises 46 voices (18-11-7-10) of which 20 form the mixed-voice Cathedral Chamber Choir and 8 form the Treble Cathedral Choristers.

A full listing of program details and notes can be found at the Raven website. Perennial favorites such as Darke's *In the Bleak Midwinter*, Franck's *Panis angelicus*, Rutter's *Star Carol*, and the Willcock's arrangements of *Once in Royal David's City* and *O Come, All Ye Faithful* are complemented by less familiar but equally attractive works such as Philip Ledger's *A Little Child There Is Yborn*, Andrew Carter's *Hodie*, *Christus natus est*, and Cecilia McDowall's *Before the Paling of the Stars*. Of special interest are first recordings of two works. Todd Parker, a tenor soloist with the Cathedral Choir,

composed his exquisite *Ave Maria* in 2014 as a gift to the choir. The late McNeil Robinson's arrangement of *Silent Night* is elegant in its simplicity, discreet, fresh harmonizations, and floating descant.

Maxine Thévenot masterfully guides her singers in performances that are distinctive in their thoughtful, carefully crafted phrases, lovingly wrought with excellent diction, uniform balance, effective dynamic shading, and clean rhythm governed by well-controlled tempos. The sound is vibrant and clear. Organist Edmund Connolly, who is also a professional lyric baritone, collaborates in the accompanied numbers, balancing the fine Reuter with technical skill and musical sensitivity.

Thévenot takes the organ bench in fine performances of three contrasting settings of *In Dulci Jubilo*. Opening the program is Buxtehude's setting (BuxWV 197) with its ornamented cantus. Concluding the program is J. S. Bach's vigorous setting (BWV 729) made famous as the postlude of the annual King's College Festival of Lessons and Carols. Robin Milford's setting serves as an interlude to the choral program. This is its first recording. Milford provides spicy harmonies that give a refreshing new cast to the familiar melody.

This recording will be a welcome addition to any Christmas collection.