

# Maxine Thévenot

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## Review of **Mystic Meaning in American Record Review** by **Lindsay Koob** - November/December 2014

I've already reviewed a couple of very good recordings from this church's most excellent choirs, and I'm always glad to get another one. Albuquerque's cathedral can lay claim to one of America's finest sacred music programs west of the Mississippi. There are three choirs at work here, though their members often join forces or augment each other. There's the Cathedral Choir and its sub-ensemble, the Cathedral Chamber Choir, as well as the Cathedral Choristers (children).

The album is billed as an offering of music for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The 18 tracks cover a very nice assortment of familiar seasonal hymns, motets, and traditional carols--many of the latter in striking arrangements. We also hear some very worthwhile original compositions by the likes of Jeremy Bakken, Philip Moore, Philip Ledger and Robin Fullalove. We are further treated to a choice array of very enjoyable organ arrangements and compositions, played to perfection on the church's magnificent Reuter instrument by three different organists of considerable accomplishment: Director Thevenot, her assistant Edmund Connolly, and guest organist Stephen Tharp.

The main Cathedral Choir and the chamber group drawn from its ranks are first-rate ensembles, as American church choirs go; very little, if anything, in the way of mainstream sacred music is beyond their capabilities. The young Cathedral Choristers are very sweet-sounding and secure, though the music we hear from them is confined to unison melodies and simple part-singing.

We get well-tailored sound, particularly for the organ pieces--always an engineering challenge. The booklet has succinct notes, complete texts, and translations.

## Review of **Mystic Meaning in Cathedral Music (UK)** by **Timothy Storey** - December 2014

I am not sure quite what I expected of this, but I was quite bowled over by it. The Cathedral of St John in New Mexico's capital city [sic] boasts a multi-choir program typical of the USA's greater churches; the cathedral choir is a mixed-voice ensemble of forty-three adults including ten professional section leaders

who form the nucleus of the eleven-strong chamber choir; there are also the cathedral choristers, fifteen boy and girl trebles, and finally (not included on this disc) there is a junior choir rather endearingly known as the Cherubs. The cathedral even has its own Friends of Cathedral Music to offer practical and financial support, including the commissioning of new works for the choirs. As the liner-notes tell us, 'this recording is not one that indulges in traditional carols or traditional texts made popular over the airwaves'. Three cheers for that! It is rather an anthology of choral and organ music appropriate to the seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany; especially welcome are the four works by Philip Moore, Organist Emeritus of York Minster, and the late Sir Philip Ledger's Advent Calendar to a text by Archbishop Rowan Williams. Most of the singing is done by the grown-ups, and their performances are full-toned, expressive and well controlled. The choristers' singing of Brahms, Handel and Mendelssohn is thoroughly delightful, bright-toned and tuneful, full of verve and enthusiasm. The cathedral organ is obviously an instrument of quality, well played and recorded here. Make sure you buy this splendid CD in time for Christmas.