

# Maxine Thévenot

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Review of **Missa Omnes Sancti** by Lindsay Koob - **American Record Guide** (Jan/Feb 2010)

Here's another first-rate recording of sacred works by living composers from one of America's finest church choirs; they're also one of America's foremost standard-bearers for Episcopalian church music. All of the works here—as in the previous album I reviewed from this group (Missa Orbis Factor) have some sort of special connection to the cathedral, either via commission or performance history. All of the works are for organ-supported choir, save for Simon Preston's "Alleluyas", a stirring virtuoso piece for solo organ.

The album's title piece—Malcolm Archer's Omnes Sancti Mass—is a compact, but supremely effective setting of the standard mass, sans Credo. The emphatic opening Kyrie immediately revealed distinct French stylistic echoes, bringing Vierne's Solemn Mass to mind. After the bright Gloria, the brief, light-hearted Sanctus leads directly into the like-toned, but even lighter Benedictus. The hushed Agnus Dei is especially sweet and pastoral.

Before that, we hear very inspiring and accomplished shorter pieces by five other composers. Quinn's own rarefied settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis are heard first. Two fine pieces by Philip Moore follow: his bright and triumphant 'Song of Christ's Glory' and the mostly quiet and stately (until its final climax) 'He that is Down Needs Fear no Fall'. Between them we get Peter Hallock's delicate and dreamy Evensong piece, 'The Lord is My light'. Anthony Piccolo's delightful 'O How Amiable' starts out as a sort of celestial dance, maintaining an irresistible, often lilting flow to the end. Well-known organist-composer David Briggs contributes 'O Lord, Support Us', a marvel of gentle, yet intense entreaty (another good Evensong number). In addition to the title piece, the works by Quinn, Piccolo, and Briggs are recorded here for the first time.

Any church composer would be pleased and proud to have first recordings from this superb choir. I'm in love with their exquisitely pure-sounding soprano section, in particular. Excellent sound engineering as well as a serviceable booklet complete a well-nigh impeccable package.