

Holy Week at the Chapel of the Dukes of Braganza, A Capella Portuguesa, dir. Owen Rees, Hyperion CDA 66867 (1996)

This latest disc from A Capella Portuguesa (I am glad to see that the typographical mannerism "Portvgvesa", which made the group look as though it specialized in Czech polyphony rather than Iberian, has been dropped from the cover) is an anthology of works from the archives of Vila Viçosa. Not only does it cover a wide chronological range (from Mendes's *Asperges me* to works by Francisco António de Almeida and Giovanni Giorgi), but its geographical spread, including many Spanish composers and two Italians as well as Portuguese, provides a good indication of the breadth of the Vila Viçosa repertoire.

The disc begins with the Mendes, a really splendid piece which makes one lament the more the loss of practically his entire output, and is followed by a selection of further works for Palm Sunday, then groups for Holy Thursday and Holy Friday. The most outstanding music apart from the Mendes is Alonso Lobo's six-part *Tristis est anima mea* (which survives in no Spanish or Latin American source), *Caligaverunt oculi mei* by Juan de Castro y Malagaray and the group of works by Fernando de Almeida: a set of Lamentations, a *Miserere* and the responsory *In monte Oliveti*. These are a genuinely important addition by a composer of evident stature to the tradition of Holy Week music in the Iberian Peninsula, and reinforce the urgent necessity for the publication of the polychoral Christmas responsories by his teacher, Duarte Lobo: one wonders how much, for example, Lobo's polychoral writing is reflected in these eight-part Lamentations, whose

obvious stylistic ancestor is otherwise Cardoso's Holy Week music?

It is also clear from the quality of his *Clarifica me Pater* recorded here (and even though this work is deliberately archaic in style), as well as from the works of his yet to be edited present in Portuguese archives, that Giovanni Giorgi's *oeuvre* is in urgent need of investigation. The history of Portuguese music will remain inevitably incomplete and misunderstood until the work of foreign musicians, especially of the 18th century, is examined and placed in context. (Jommelli is another case in point, though the recent thesis by the Brazilian musicologist Maurício Dottori makes a decisive contribution to the reassessment of his work, and recordings have begun to appear.)

Cum descendentibus by Gines de Morata is surely described as being for Good Friday in the source because, as Manuel Joaquim observed, both this work and *Sepulto Domino* would have been used as motets for the Burial Procession.¹ Short as they are, if the relevant chant were added they would become complete settings of the responsories. There survive, incidentally, further copies of both these works in Brazil, in the Coleção Curt Lange held at the Museu da Inconfidência in Ouro Preto.²

The performances, which initially impressed me as being correct but somewhat understated, seem after repeated hearings more powerful, and certainly works such as the Almeida Lamentations and the Castro y Malagaray motet inspire A Capella Portuguesa to some very fine singing indeed.

IVAN MOODY

1 Manuel JOAQUIM, *Vinte Livros de Música Polifônica do Paço Ducal de Vila Viçosa*, Lisboa, 1953.

2 Régis DUPRAT, «A polifonia portuguesa em obras de brasileiros» *Pau Brasil*, ano III, n.º 15, Nov./Dez. 1986.