



The Philadelphia Singers: 'not only technically superb but exceptionally warm and passionate' in Randall Thompson's Requiem

life and death. It is beautifully written for the chorus, occasionally quite thrilling, with lovely lyrical touches along the way, but it is a shade more anonymous than such large-scale self expressions need to be. Perhaps that explains why, although the Requiem was premiered in May 1958 at the University of California, Berkeley, which had commissioned it, and then presented again in 1959 at Harvard, it took until 2014 for the first complete recording to be made.

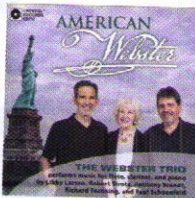
Thompson set his music to 18 Biblical verses in the form of a nominally dramatic dialogue between choruses of mourners and faithful; and though there are several sections that require each choir to divide again, to a maximum of 16 parts, the music largely flows gracefully along muted emotional parameters, suggestive of the Italian Renaissance madrigal cycles Thompson said were his inspiration.

After waiting more than half a century, this first recording, by the 32-voice Philadelphia Singers conducted by David Hayes, is not only technically superb but exceptionally warm and passionate; the singers, who are now Resident Chorus of the Philadelphia Orchestra, know both the music and the words, and claim to have given the first-ever live performances of the Requiem by a professional chorus.

Laurence Vittes

'American Webster'

Brandt Round Top Trio **Larsen Barn Dances**
Schoenfeld Sonatina **Sirota Birds of Paradise**
Toensing Children of Light
The Webster Trio
 Crystal Records © CD717 (67' • DDD)



The Webster Trio's premiere recordings of music by five American composers show that the rare combination of flute, clarinet and piano has considerable range and depth, in addition to its obvious mellifluous charms.

The most ambitious work is Richard Toensing's *Children of Light*, a spiritual journey written for The Websters, set in five movements of differing mood and pace, drawing on the theology, language and music of the Orthodox Church, whose final vision is a radiant, impressionist haze. Robert Sirota's *Birds of Paradise* celebrated the 20th anniversary of flautist Leone Buyse and clarinetist Michael Webster's marriage, quoting Shelley's 'profuse strains of unpremeditated art' and commenting that 'every culture has its images of paradise, all of which include the sights and sounds of birds' – in Sirota's case those of Singapore and coastal Maine. It is by turns contemplative and excitable, and engages in

moments of explicit, intertwined love and beauty before ending on quieter notes.

The Websters provide lighter fare in the form of Libby Larsen's gently rousing set of four *Barn Dances*, including a homage to cowboy star Gene Autry; Anthony Brandt's brilliantly suspenseful *Round Top Trio*; and Paul Schoenfeld's Sonatina, a magnificent *tour de morph* of three popular dances, the last a delirious Jig.

The trio, in residence at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston, play to their credentials: Buyse was principal in Boston and Webster principal in San Francisco, while Shepherd colleague pianist Robert Moeling adds exceptional sensitivity and poetry to his virtuosity. **Laurence Vittes**

'Songs of Struggle & Redemption'

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.
 My Lord, what a mornin'. Go down, Moses.
 Wade in de water. Nobody knows de trouble
 I've seen. I want to be ready. Joshua fit de battle
 of Jericho. Steal away. Deep river. Go tell it on
 de mountains! Give me Jesus. Ride on, King
 Jesus! I've been in de storm. Were you there.
 He never said a mumberlin' word. Don't you
 weep after me. Keep your eyes on the prize.
 We shall not be moved. This train. If you miss
 me from the back of the bus. Freedom in the air.
 We shall overcome