

# Musical

— Founded 1877 —

NUMBER 1349

MAY 1990

VOLUME 113

# OPINION

£1.50

INCORPORATING ORGAN WORLD

## CONCERT REVIEWS

### GLORIA DEI CANTORES

The American choir, *Gloria Dei Cantores*, based in Massachusetts, paid London a visit which proved very rewarding. At St John's, Smith Square on 22 March, under its regular conductor, Elizabeth C Patterson, it presented a lengthy programme which ranged from Gregorian Chant to the present day. Lassus' *Missa Bell' amfitrit' altera*, one of that great composer's noblest works, was given with remarkable idiomatic insight. I have no doubt that some anchorites would have preferred boys' voices for America's beautifully responsive sopranos and altos, but their balance with their male colleagues was so firm, their phrasing and diction so secure, that all quibbles faded away. The music's deeply spiritual quality came across with great force. So, too, in some Gregorian Chants, these singers produced awesomely lovely sound; performances which produced rapt response from the large audience (graced by a distinguished selection of ecclesiastical dignitaries).

Purcell's moving *Funeral Music for Queen Mary* was somewhat less successful. Here a touch of blandness crept in: the composer's plangent dissonances passed by with less than their due effect. But three *Motets* by Bruckner found the choir excelling in their exalted character. Yet their best singing came at the end of the evening, in Gerald Near's cantata *Resurrexi*. This work, which runs for about an hour, is based on ancient chants, but indulges in modern textures as well, the whole being a meditation on the Gospel accounts of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. A tenor Evangelist strings everything together with arioso and recitative. The music has undeniable character. Near is well-known in the USA: English choirs should enjoy coming to grips with this unusual but rewarding work.

While the choir was resting we were able to hear two of its assistant musicians, James E Jordan Jr and David H Chalmers, in rarely heard organ pieces by Bull and Byrd — nicely played, and a welcome idea.

GC