



### **Fanfare Issue 31:1 Sept/Oct 2012**

Credit where it's due: Vihuelist Jesús Sánchez doesn't hide the fact as so many early music groups do that these are modern arrangements, or that Delitiae Musicae has improvised selectively, according to rules of the period, turning several of the more complex, distinguished solo vihuela pieces into duets. This is prominent mainly in ostinato-based pieces such as Mudarra's famous *O Guardame las vacas*, and harmonically static ones such as Valderrábano's *Música para discantar sobre un punto*, where imitative textures invite alterations in a way that turns the result into variation form. It's modestly and stylishly done on this album.

Just as sacred institutions of the day took from the secular to create contrafacta for religiously inspired performance, so secular entertainments borrowed from religious music. Intabulations of Valderrábano provide more intimate performances of Gombert's *Assiste parata* and Morales's *Et in Spiritum Sanctum* than a cathedral choir would understandably furnish, to which Sánchez and Manuel Minguillón Nieto (second vihuelist in these recordings) add works by Guerrero and Victoria. They include as well both an arrangement of Josquin's beautifully expressive *Mille regretz*, and of the ornamented vihuela variations written by Narváez upon it, often called *Le canción del Emperador*.

It's a program in varied musical character, with extensive differences in textures and tempos from piece to piece, though a reflective, melancholy quality pervades much of the music. Whether this was a cultural preference for the vihuela during its time of great popularity or a result of Delitiae Musicae's program-building tastes, it deserves to be noted. The playing is first-rate, with even tone, absolute unity of purpose, impeccable phrasing, and solid technique in the face of the occasional flurry of ornamented notes. The engineering's a bit plummy for my tastes, but not excessively so, and the close miking yields a harvest of overtones without any mechanical sounds. In short, recommended.

**Barry Brenesal**