

**OY HASEMOS FIESTA: Music from 16<sup>th</sup> Century Guatemala for Voices and Winds.** • Ensemble Lipzodes; John Poole, dir; Carolina Gamboa Hoyos, cond; The Pro Arte Singers • FOCUS (56:54)

The resurgence of interest in early music from Latin America has resulted in some excellent recent recordings by ensembles including Lucidarium and Sphera Antiqua (see my reviews in FANFARE March/April 2012.) The Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University's house label, Focus Records, has produced a welcome new addition to the offerings that shed light on this fascinating and appealing repertoire. The music on this album comes from several manuscripts discovered in Guatemala in the 1960s and preserved at the Lilly Library at Indiana University. From these sources, Ensemble Lipzodes and the Pro Arte Singers have put together a captivating miscellany of plainchant, falsobordón, choral, and instrumental music by mostly anonymous composers, weaving an appealing tapestry of musical colors and textures that brings to life the lively interactions between Old World and New at the end of the Renaissance.

One of the most memorable elements of this album is the four selections of chant, including plainchant, antiphony, and falsobordón (chanting in simple, usually parallel harmony) sung by tenors Wolodymyr Smishkewych and William Hudson. Smishkewych's bright and focused sound blends remarkably well with Hudson's round and warm color, both bathed in a rich, supportive acoustic. Their timing and sensitivity to the text's natural flow is truly admirable and a pleasure to hear, especially in the *Cuentas a Santa Maria*, which highlights both singers' individual tone colors and their fine blend. The voices of the Indiana University Pro Arte Singers, under guest conductor Carolina Gamboa Hoyos, sing with warmth, overall good intonation, and precision, with only a touch of breathiness in the upper voices. The group's sense of rhythmic verve and vitality that pervades this repertoire comes across very successfully on this recording, and the choir's sound and gentle color is very pretty, verging on too pretty for the more rustic songs such as *Aparejad Ballesteros* and the final track, the joyful romp *Oy hasemos fiesta todas*. Soprano Angelique Zuluaga's sweet tone adds a welcome spice to the mix, especially in *Maria de Solo un Buelo*, a wonderful example of the best qualities of the repertoire – infectious dance rhythms and catchy tunes – performed with both gusto and finesse.

The musicians of Ensemble Lipzodes, performing on shawms, recorders, and dulcians, met while students at Indiana University and work with many of the world's most prestigious historical performance ensembles. Together, they blend serious musicianship with a sense of fun that comes through very clearly on this recording, playing a selection of dance pieces and embellished instrumental versions of sacred polyphonic vocal pieces. Their phrasing is lovely, paying attention to the syntax and rhetoric of each line with a good singer's skill.

The recording was produced by members of the ensemble as well as by students and staff of the Jacobs School of Music. The soundstage is wide and deep, with a healthy amount of room present in the mix. My only complaint is that the percussion, especially the drum, is a little too close and loud in the mix. Other than that, this is a very fine album, interestingly and thoughtfully programmed, with well-researched and informative liner notes and beautiful graphic work. Nicely done.

**Henry Lebedinsky**