

## *Altera Luce*

Landini, Buene

Currentes/ Jostein Gundersen

LAWO 1132—54 minutes

9 of the 17 pieces here are by Francesco Landini (c 1325-97) with another six by Norwegian composer Eivind Buene (b 1974) from his 2010 *Miniatures for Currentes* written “for medieval instruments and voices”. I wrote about a similar combination of old and new music in *The Sebastians’* recording of Robert Honstein’s *Night Scenes From The Ospedale* coupled with four concertos from Vivaldi’s *L’Estro Armonico* (Sound 138, J/A 2015: 171).

In that case, Honstein’s music—as here, written for the performers—was programmatic: it depicted nighttime in Vivaldi’s Venice. In the present case, there is no connecting place or story: here the common ground is the make-up of the ensemble and its medieval performing style. The seven-member *Currentes* ensemble has both singers (SAT) and instrumentalists (harpsichord, 2 medieval fiddles, recorder).

*Currentes* excels in the artful blending of voices and instruments. For instance, in Dufay’s ‘Vergine Bella’ recorder, soprano, and fiddle melodies intermingle with seamless ease. One artistic ideal in the Renaissance was for instruments

to emulate the human voice, and I find great beauty in interpretations where one can’t easily tell which is which. Listening to a voice that might be a recorder or the offshoot of a fiddle

line always gives me a pleasing aural puzzle that sharpens my concentration. As a creative act, the result is a change in color, taste, and texture.

It’s like grafting two plants together or stirring yogurt into a hot soup.

On first hearing the Buene *Miniatures*, which are from 29 to 80 seconds in length and interleaved with the 14th-Century music, I was rather disconcerted because the timbres and textures are quite different from the Landini pieces around them. For example, fast repeated harpsichord notes through all of *Miniature VII* strike like relentless little hammers accompanied by a quivering shimmer of wordless

voices (or quiet instruments). Other textures in the *Miniatures* include a flutter-tongue sound (IV), an urgent buzz (VIII), and wordless voices in counterpoint with long held fiddle notes (VI). As I re-listened to the program, I found myself listening more carefully to the textures in the Renaissance pieces too, thus hearing that the *Currentes* ensemble starts Landini’s ‘*Altera Luce*’ with very soft recorder joined by fiddle and later with voices, an effect not unlike some parts of the Buene *Miniatures*. But the music remains quite different, and listeners’ own tastes will determine whether or not they like this combination of old and new. Buene wrote 8 *Miniatures*, and it’s rather odd that no explanation is given by *Currentes* for their decision to use only 6 here. The composer “would like the miniatures to be used freely in the ensemble’s programmes, in the number and order the ensemble wishes”. I’d like to hear more of Buene’s music, and found that his violin concerto—along with a set of six (different) *Miniatures*—was released by the BIS label in late 2017.

Notes, texts, translations.

C MOORE

## *American Record Guide*