

DELITIAE MUSICÆ
Marco LONGHINI

Claudio Monteverdi
Madrigali, Libro VII
Naxos – 3 CD

Gramophone,
January 2009

Monteverdi

Madrigals, Book 7, 'Concerto'
Delitiae Musicae / Marco Longhini
Naxos © © 8 555314/6 (2h 43' • DDD)

**A zestful traversal of Monteverdi's
monumental Madrigal collection**



Delitiae Musicae's account of Monteverdi's lengthy Seventh Book of Madrigals has more to recommend it than an attractive price.

Where Book 8 lays much emphasis on ensemble pieces, its predecessor favours accompanied duets, and there's nothing involving more than four voices. So it's a more intimate experience, and Delitiae Musicae respond to it with a directness that can make La Venexiana's reading for *Glossa* seem fussy or tentative in parts, and a touch perfunctory elsewhere. The numbers for two high voices are done with countertenors, and these are perhaps the weaker link (to say weakest wouldn't be quite fair) in the set. These are done first, after a reflective "Tempo la cetra" and a rather laboured "A quest' olmo", so the project gets off to an uncertain start; thereafter things improve markedly.

The duets for tenors are particularly satisfying. When the high voices return towards the end they seem in far better form: "Ohimè dov'è il mio ben" is charming, and "Chiome d'oro" has some genuinely witty touches that left me smiling – I'm fairly certain that they'll bear repeated listening. Though not over-nourished, the continuo section is full of character and often incisive – a fully engaged protagonist. Despite the odd blemish, the set as a whole breathes a sense of commitment often lacking from La Venexiana's, and the sound recording has greater presence. The concluding *ballo*, "Tirsi e Clori", is something of a showstopper: the cast is audibly enjoying itself. Earlier instalments of this series have sometimes left me questioning the wisdom of an all-male cast in this repertoire, but here there's more than enough to silence the sceptic.

Fabrice Fitch