



PHIL KLINE: John the Revelator: A Mass for Six Voices – Lionheart/ Ethel/ Phil Klein, organ – Cantaloupe

An intriguing and attractive new piece packaged in a substandard format without libretto.

PHIL KLINE: John the Revelator: A Mass for Six Voices – Lionheart/ Ethel/ Phil Klein, organ – Cantaloupe 21047, 49:19 **: [Distrib. by Harmonia mundi]**

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This unique mass setting (Is it really a mass? This reminds me of Leonard Bernstein's work of the same name when he said that it "is and is not a real mass") uses, as with the Bernstein, a concept where the normal parts of the mass are written for chorus alone, while the Propers—taken from such disparate sources as "Blind" Willie Johnson's *John the Revelator* to the American poet David Shapiro, to Samuel Beckett's monologue *The Unnamable*, to treatments of two early American shape-note hymns from the The Sacred Harp: Northport and Wondrous Love—are more personal in nature. This is of course a vastly religious and semi-political work (inasmuch as the ashes floating down from 9/11 are invoked in Kline's website notes), but on an intensely private level.

I wasn't sure if I was going to like this or not, feeling that eclectic pieces—and this one is admittedly that—fail far too often. Kline unabashedly makes use of his influences, or rather, the music he likes (are eclectics really influenced by anything? I am not sure), but he finds a way of making it all work. Perhaps it is simply his idea of consistent ensemble use that gives the piece it's glue, I don't know, but whatever the technique is—and we can't be sure that it isn't something as simple as pure inspiration translated into concrete form—he has definitely accomplished his goal of a unified work within a normalized and traditional structure. Again, Bernstein's *Mass* must be given some credit...

-- Steven Ritter