

October 13, 2005

Classical



GAIL ARCHER

Sweelinck and his Pupils (Cala)

★★★ (out of 4 stars)

Travel back a century from Domenico Scarlatti's day and up toward the Low Countries, and you'll find one of the great masters of early organ music, Jan Pieterszoon Sweelinck (1562-1621). He literally inherited the organist's post at the Oude Kirk in Amsterdam, but extended his reach well beyond through his compositions and exceptional students. On this disc, veteran American organist and scholar Gail Archer has assembled a nicely varied overview of works by Sweelinck as well as contemporaries and students Samuel Scheidt and Heinrich Scheidemann. Archer's work is beyond criticism, but the recording engineers have somehow managed to make the glorious Charles B. Fisk organ at Wellesley College sound tinny and dry, which is a shame. This organ is tuned using the mean-tone system, which makes some intervals sound out of tune to our ears. Toronto has it's own mean-tone organ (built by Helmuth Wolff) at Knox College.

- JT