

**Antonia Padoani Bembo.** *The Seven Psalms of David*, Vol. 1. La Donna Musicale. [self-released], 2004.

La Donna Musicale performs these works with warmth and impeccable accuracy. While Antonia Padoani was not born into nobility, she was certainly a child of privilege – the daughter of a prominent Venetian physician; she had private music lessons from no less a teacher than Francesco Cavalli, then the *maestro di cappella* of the cathedral of San Marco. While some of the details of her subsequent musical career remain unclear, what is known indicates that her comfortable childhood gave way to a difficult adulthood: she married a Venetian noble and gave birth to three children, but she later filed for divorce and was left with little financial support. She left her daughter in the care of a local abbess (and her sons, presumably, with her ex-husband), and went to live in a “women’s community” in Paris, under the sponsorship of King Louis XIV, for whom she wrote a number of motets and other sacred and secular vocal works, including one opera. Her work is rarely recorded today, which, as this lovely disc demonstrates, is a great shame. This program includes four of Bembo’s seven psalm settings (along with a violin sonata by Bembo’s French contemporary, Elisabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, performed here by the fine baroque flutist Na’ama Lion). Bembo’s vocal writing is demanding and complex, and her particular take on the fusion of French and Italian styles that was popular at the time is idiosyncratic without being particularly revolutionary. The Boston-based La Donna Musicale performs these works with warmth and impeccable accuracy, and the recorded sound is excellent. Highly recommended to all classical collections. (To order the CD, contact La Donna Musicale at [laury@ladm.org](mailto:laury@ladm.org).)

Rick Anderson  
Editor, Sound Recording Reviews  
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