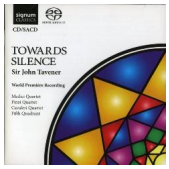
John Tavener - Towards Silence (2010)



Towards Silence - For Four String Quartets And A Large Tibetan Singing Bowl (33:45) *1 Vaishvānara 0:00 2 Taijasa 4:59 3 Prājnā 11:10 4 Turīya 19:20*
Ensemble – Cavaleri Quartet, Fifth Quadrant, Finzi Quartet, Medici Quartet Tibetan Singing Bowl – Louisa Golden

Violinist Paul Robertson, a founder of the Medici Quartet, asked John Tavener to compose a work on near-death experience for the Music Mind Spirit Trust and the Rubin Museum in 2007. The resulting work, Towards Silence, scored for four string quartets and large Tibetan temple bowl, was performed later that year in Winchester Cathedral. This recording features the original performers Medici Quartet, Finzi Quartet, Cavaleri Quartet, and Fifth Quadrant. Tavener described Towards Silence as "a meditation on the different states of dying." It's a piece whose title pretty well describes its content. In four continuous movements, it begins with a monumental cacophony and ends in silence. Along the way, the tone is one of mystery; there is ebb and flow of volume and activity, with the players sometimes called on to vocalize, but the overall direction of the piece moves from more to less. Just before the ending, Tavener thins out the textures to create a moment of radiant, transparent harmonies reminiscent of Pärt's Fratres, which dissolves into an evanescent haze that gradually fades into nothingness. Towards Silence makes for a very short CD, lasting only 34 minutes, but like John Adams' On the Transmigration of Souls, which is even shorter, it is just about impossible to imagine any other piece being paired with it. It's not an easy work, but it's one that should appeal to adventurous new music lovers, especially fans of musical mysticism and of Tavener's late style. The program notes very strongly suggest that the piece is best experienced in quadraphonic sound, with the listener directly in the center of the four speakers. ---Stephen Eddins, AllMusic Review

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