

Lost Voices of Hagia Sophia
Cappella Romana/ Alexander Lingas
Cappella Romana 420 [CD+Blu-ray] 76:50

This new release from Cappella Romana contains selections from the Orthodox liturgy for the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross as it would have been celebrated at Hagia Sophia. As in all their previous releases (N/D 2008: 215, J/F 2013: 206, M/J 2015: 203), the scholarship of director, Lingas, and the musicality of the ensemble is evident. The music includes excerpts from the Office of Sung Vespers and Matins, the Ceremony of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and the Divine Liturgy. The booklet includes an extensive essay by Lingas and complete texts in Greek and English.

There is another reason to recommend this recording to the audiophile. It includes a blu-ray disc with a bonus track; and audio options include 2.0 LPCM Stereo 24bit/48kHz, 5.1 DTS-HD MA 24bit/48kHz, Doby Atmos, and Auro-3D. The rationale for this elaborate digital processing is explained in the 24-minute film by Duygu Eruçman, also included on this supplemental disc. It documents the extensive research and digital processing that was involved in creating the recording. The idea was to recreate digitally the actual sonic environment in Hagia Sophia. It is no longer allowed to make recordings in the building. Many recordings of early music and chant have been made in either the original place or at least similar places where the music may have been performed (such as the recent video of Biber's *Salzburg Mass* in Salzburg Cathedral, J/A 2018). Since this is no longer possible in Hagia Sophia, an "auralization" digitally recreates that unique sound space. The sonic ambiance of the recording (on the CD and the Blu-ray) is especially vivid and does truly enhance the spiritual quality of the music and allows our ears to travel to a place where these chants have not been heard for centuries.

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