

PURCELL: DIDO AND AENEAS

Ama Deus Ensemble

Valentin Radu, Conductor

Soloists: **Julianne Baird** (Dido), **Timothy Bentch** (Aeneas), **Andrea Lauren Brown** (Belinda)

Recorded: February 2007 at Arch Street United Methodist Church, Philadelphia, PA

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“Lyrichord Early Music Series' release of Dido and Aeneas is a powerful reminder of the greatness of Purcell's only opera. The early music group Ama Deus Ensemble conducted by Valentin Radu turns in a performance of wrenching simplicity and musical and dramatic directness. Julianne Baird sings with pearly luminosity as the doomed queen Dido, whose grief so overwhelms her that she can hardly whisper her despair. Andrea Lauren Brown as Belinda is fresh-voiced and pure, and Timothy Bentch's Aeneas is open and heroic. The minor characters and the chorus perform with limberness and idiomatic sensitivity, as does the orchestra of strings and continuo. The excellent sound is spacious and clean.”

Stephen Eddins, All Music Guide.

“Although a new recording of Purcell's eternally moving "Dido & Aeneas" may not be the first recording for the great American soprano Julianne Baird... it is one of her finest. Surrounded by a fine original-instrument band and a fresh-voiced, enthusiastic cast, she and conductor Valentin Radu produce a performance that should be the envy of many more polished attempts. Her final lament is wonderfully moving, and a tribute both to the composer and Ms. Baird. The Ama Deus Ensemble, founded by Radu in 1991... specialized in authentic performances of vocal and instrumental music of the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries play with both style and, most important, heart.”

Lawrence Vittes/ Southern California Early Music News/ October, 2007.