

Fieri Consort Awarded Cambridge Early Music Prize at York Festival



Fieri Consort will be at the Little Missenden Festival on 18th October. Click [here](#) for details

Read what one of Judges, Paul James, had to say about their award winning performance:

Fieri Consort

This was notionally the only completely British entry and the only vocal ensemble of the competition - and it did not disappoint. Coming up through the Genesis project of The Sixteen, the group of eight unaccompanied singers (SSAATTBB) focuses on 16th and 17th century repertoire. In this performance we were taken from the early Italians of De Rore and Marenzio, through the Flemish masters of Willaert and de Wert and on chronologically to the English Dowland and Gibbons. Split into two SATB choirs they opened the programme of 'Love and Fortune' with De Rore's gentle yet powerful *O sonno*, which had his signature stamped all over it in the luscious sumptuous harmonies. Segueing effortlessly into Marenzio's *Zefiro torna* the second choir on the right of the stage took over, full of bucolic love and laughter. My initial concern over the lack of a countertenor on the stage was salvaged by the brightly focused voice of alto Helen Charlston. I also enjoyed the youthful freshness of the two tenor voices. The Fieri singers then reformed as SATTB in De Wert's *Giunta alla tomba*. This was gritty stuff - sighs, hand-wringing, kisses and tears aplenty - rising to a passionate (*fiamme*) central climax of lamentation (*pianto*) and then finally coming to rest with a chord of impeccable intonation on the perfect landing spot (her bosom!). A clever arrangement for solo soprano (sung by Hannah Ely) of Dowland's tale of the "hapless man" with a backing trio standing in for the lute elicited a tear from many of the audience (and me). The Fieri Consort had excellent communication with each other across the stage throughout, but this was especially noticeable in the interaction between the SATTB in Gibbons' astute setting of 'What is our life'. And a *tutti* to finish, but again in two choirs, with a flirtatious smiles-all-round ditty by Willaert, delivered from memory and accompanied by tambourine flourishes. Seems almost a cliché to say so, but young British singers do wear this repertoire with consummate ease. But this was a very impressive performance and well-deserving of the Cambridge Early Music Prize.

Paul James, Director General of the European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO)

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