CLASSICAL

O Jerusalem! City of Three
Faiths (Avie) ****

Jerusalem has long been a
hotbed of political, religious
and racial conflict. In this
thought-provoking
exploration of its transient
musical identity, the American
eyear music group, Apollo’s
Fire, and singers take us on a
whistle stop “musical tour”,
sacred and secular, of the old city’s Four Quarters: Jewish, Armenian,
Muslim and Christian. From searing Sepharic chant and ballads, a soulful
Armenian hymn and red-hot Turkish/Arabian Longha dance, to the
sumptuous Catholicism of Monteverdi Vespers’ extracts (illuminating the
perceptible Middle-Eastern inspirations in his settings), and concluding
with exuberant “party numbers” that imagine joint feasting by the various
communities, the story is as much one of rich singular identities as shared
cultural expression. Jeanette Sorrell directs a heady mix of performances,
ranging from soulfully supplicant to lusty abandon. The instrumental
playing is gutsy and colourful, the singing movingly visceral. Who’d have
though this would be such a hit? Ken Walton