

DESERT ISLAND DISCS

These are recordings either that I have known and loved over many years or of works which I could not do without on that Desert Island.

1. TALLIS – TAVERNER CONSORT – ANDREW PARROTT. VIRGIN VERITAS – 562230-2

Although they now rarely come together, the Taverner forces, Consort, Choir and Players under Andrew Parrott produced, on EMI, from the 1970s, many recordings of great choral works from Machaut to Handel which remain to this day as fine as any. These performances of Tallis's Latin sacred music, including the Lamentations of Jeremiah – one of the earliest masterpieces of music, and the mammoth Spem in Alium for 8 4 part choirs, are superb and, like many of their EMI treasures, are now available at budget price on Virgin. In 1988 this group played music from Restoration Times beneath a portrait of Charles II in the Great Hall of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham in the first of the 5 Dublin International Early Music Festivals which I curated.

2. SCHUTZ – RICHARD WISTREICH – HIS MAJESTIES SAGBUTTS AND CORNETTS. MERIDIAN CDE 84096

One of the many joys of the Taverners' issues was the richness of the bass line – often thanks to the presence of Richard Wistreich. He remains my favourite bass soloist with his deep fundament and lovely tone and lightness in the upper register. He and His Majesties Sagbutts and Cornetts were also regular visitors to the Early Music Festivals. This recording, from 1994, is of music by Heinrich Schutz, my prize-winner for the composer whose music is most deserving of wider exposure with his mix of north German seriousness and Venetian sparkle learnt on his two visits to Venice to study with Gabrieli and – very likely – Monteverdi.

3. RACHMANINOV ALL NIGHT VIGIL (VESPERS) – ESTONIAN PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER CHOIR – PAUL HILLIER. HARMONIA MUNDI – HMU807504

I will always remember a performance of this rich work by the Choir of Christ Church Cathedral Dublin under Mark Duley in front of an Ikonostasis constructed in the Cathedral as part of the Ceiliuradh Festival in 2000. Paul Hillier conducts the superb Estonian Philharmonic Chamber Choir with spine-tingling moments, many due to the presence of another great bass, an Oktavist (ie a bass who sings an octave below other basses!!) otherwise a Basso Profundo - Vladimir Miller. The slow descent of the basses to a low B at the end of the Nunc Dimittis is one of the most riveting moments in all choral music.

4. BACH - B MINOR MASS – BACH COLLEGIUM, JAPAN – MASA AKI SUZUKI. BISSACD 1701/2

This is I think the most wonderful choral experience of all – hugely taxing yet gloriously rewarding. I have thrilling memories of singing it with the Guinness Choir under Victor Leeson a number of times – including the Dona Nobis Pacem in the Eisteddfod in Llangollen in 1964 – The adjudicator was Herbert Howells who said we had the best bass line in the Festival! : with the Goethe Institute Choir under the inspiring John Beckett and the Camerata Singers under David Milne. However well you think you know the music it surprises and delights you at every listening – surely the best definition of a “Classic”. There is no perfect B Minor this side of heaven but, as for all Baroque music, I will sacrifice grandeur for dance and drama for phrasing – the grandeur and drama is in the music – it doesn't need 19th century forces or styles to express it. This recording by Masaaki Suzuki has that lightness of touch and clarity which bring out all of Bach's delectable counterpoint – this wonderful group have given me such joy over the years. *These artists will sing this masterpiece at the National Concert Hall in Dublin on 12th April 2016 – book early – tickets will be like gold dust!!!*

5. MONTEVERDI - VESPRO DELLA BEATA VERGINE – 1610 VESPERS. L'ARPEGGIATA –

CHRISTINA PLUHAR. VIRGIN - 64199429 This is the work which has effected me more than any other. A performance by the Belgian Ensemble Currende under Erik van Nevel was one the most wonderful concerts I have ever attended in North Cathedral in Cork, as part of the East Cork Early Music Festival in 2005, with a dream team of soloists including tenors James Gilchrist and Charles Daniels. Never has that very special silence after the final notes been so intense – and the applause so fervent and prolonged. This 2010 Recording by L'Arpeggiata under theorbist Christina Pluhar is brilliant from start to finish – ravishing singing both solo and choral, with all the thrilling instrumental colours of the early Italian Baroque – especially the brass. It's the first to fit on one CD – there is no attempt to give it a liturgical context – no chant – no additional instrumental works – unadulterated

sublime dancing Monteverdi. Like a number of CD issues nowadays it comes with an accompanying DVD filmed during rehearsal – supremely skilled young musicians making great music with 5. such obvious joy – quite irresistible. *The Sixteen*, whose recording is also excellent, will perform this great masterpiece in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin on October 10th 2015. I'm sure this will be a musical highlight of the year too.

6. BENJAMIN BRITTEN – CEREMONY OF CAROLS. WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL CHOIR – DAVID HILL. HYPERION CDA66220

I can't remember – and couldn't imagine – a Christmas without this beautiful work. I've sung it in its 4 part arrangement but the original version for unbroken voices is magical – and this recording is a winner with the solo boys voices especially fine – and it also includes the lovely *Missa Brevis*. This will remind me of the 15 years I spent singing in the choir of Boys and Men in St. Bartholomew's Church in Dublin, including visits to some of England's finest Cathedrals including Westminster Abbey – and the great Parisian Churches of St. Sulpice and La Madeleine – and in the great Cathedral in Chartres. Singing in front of that breathtaking Rose window was one of my most amazing memories.

7. "LA SPOSALIZIO" – THE KING'S CONSORT – ROBERT KING – HYPERION – CDA67048.

The King's Consort played in one of the Dublin Early Music Festivals – both Bach Cantatas and music by Monteverdi and his Venetian Contemporaries. Since then I have become infatuated by "La Serenissima" and visit every year. La Sposalizio celebrates the Ascension Day ceremony of the Marriage of Venice to the Sea. It includes a wonderful array of music both sacred and secular, instrumental and choral and also the sound I most associate with the floating city - bells – especially that deep tenor bell of the Campanile of San Marco nicknamed Marangona – the Carpenter. When it rings I am totally floored – and these 2 CDs will take me straight back to my favourite city.

8. IGOR STRAVINSKY – THE RITE OF SPRING. BERLIN PHILHARMONIC – SIMON RATTLE. EMI 723611-2

There were 3 main areas of music which thrilled me most growing up in Cambridge in the 1950s, Tallis and Byrd in King's, Jazz from the cool West Coast and the equally cool classical leading edge of the time – Bartok – especially his String Quartets and Stravinsky. Well, that renowned premier of *The Rite of Spring* actually was in 1913 – how amazing to think that this glorious score is over a century old! This scintillating recording is from one of the world's great orchestras has the bonus of a contrasting work of great charm – *Apollon Musagette*.

9. FRANCIS POULENC – MOTETS AND MASS. RIAS CHAMBER CHOIR, BERLIN – MARCUS CREED – HARMONIA MUNDI – HMC901588.

It was with the Cantata Singers under David Milne that I grew to love Poulenc's music. His motets for the Time of Penitence and Christmas are so beautiful with his unique bitter/sweet musical language. The RIAS Chamber Choir is another of the great European choirs – the performance of *Salve Regina* is particularly riveting – sopranos to die for!!

10. FESTIVAL OF NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS – KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE. DVD OPUS ART OA0815D

Back to where it all began, for me such an important place with its fan-vaulted ceiling - the 8th Wonder of the World. This DVD recorded in 2000 has 2 great advantages – the visuals of this astonishing building and a historic film of Boris Ord directing the Service in 1954, round about the time of my first visit to Evensong at Kings. I have paid many visits since then and have never missed the sound which for so many people around the world heralds the beginning of Christmas – the solo treble singing the opening verse of *Once in Royal David's City*.