
David Hill

Selected Reviews

From the Ground Up / Regent Records (November 2020)

David Hill's gorgeously coherent programme from Peterborough showcases some of the best of the genre by a septet of English-born composers, starting with Walter Alcock's cornerstone *Introduction and Passacaglia* of 1933. He captures the work's nobility with authority and grace...Needless to say that David Hill's enthusiasm for this generous programme shines through.

Malcolm Riley, *Gramophone Magazine* *Editor's Choice*

brilliantly played by David Hill... The masterwork on this CD is Willan's splendid *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue*, [which] remains one of the great organ works of the 20th century and is given a superlative performance here.

John France, *Music-Web International*

Bach, Ives, Mahler and Beethoven opening night of Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, 2020

The longest break in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra's 127-year history has ended in heartwarming fashion...David Hill conducted with meticulous attention to detail...Britten's chamber orchestra arrangement of *What the Wild Flowers Tell Me* was perfectly paced...and Beethoven's Symphony No 7 was played with tremendous vigour, a joyous statement from a band that sounded thrilled to be back in business - **Richard Morrison, *The Times* *******

David Hill, a hugely respected guest conductor whose appointments include musical director of the Bach choir, led off the program fittingly with the J S Bach 'Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott'...Smooth, soothing, comforting, it brought forth a wealth of sound from the orchestra...This, their first night back playing for us after this long break was a truly wonderful and emotional evening with our BSO - **Lesley Dedman, *Bournemouth Echo***

The Bach Choir / Howells: Missa Sabrinensis (Hyperion CDA68294 / May 2020)

"Hill's uplifting performance, magnificently sung by the choir and the soloists Helena Dix, Christine Rice, Benjamin Hulett and Roderick Williams, proves a complete vindication." – **Hugh Canning, *The Sunday Times***

"This new recording perfectly captures the radiance of the writing, the grandeur of the vision—just wait for the Gloria that comes after [the Kyrie] when you listen to this—and the connection with landscape and tradition. A perfect way to hear Howells at his most expansive" - **Andrew McGregor, *BBC Radio 3 Record Review***

"A texturally high-definition performance from David Hill and the superbly trained amateurs of The Bach Choir...It's an electrifying performance: one of those you never knew you were waiting for but can't imagine now ever doing without"

Alexandra Coglan, *Gramophone Magazine*

"The combined forces certainly make a glorious noise, at its most impressive with the extensive Gloria section"

BBC Music Magazine

The Bach Choir are fitting performers, along with the BBC Concert Orchestra, of this challenging, rhapsodic piece in a new recording (Hyperion) conducted by David Hill. The quartet of soloists – Helena Dix, Christine Rice, Benjamin Hulett and Roderick Williams – is well-matched and fearless. - **Fiona Maddocks, *The Guardian***

David Hill

Selected Reviews

This may be one of this year's most significant choral recordings, and it is a performance not to be missed

David Smith, *Presto Classical* *Recording of the Week*

This is a highly impressive account of Missa Sabrinensis. It's one that does full justice to the stature of the work... David Hill reveals the work's stature more compellingly and convincingly... David Hill has certainly increased my appreciation of this neglected important score very significantly - **MusicWeb International**

Howells' Missa Sabrinensis is a masterpiece, its true genius revealed in this exceptionally sensitive performance, recorded so lucidly that it defies its reputation for being difficult to perform. This is essential listening for anyone into Howells and the true greatness of his work - **Opera Today**

The redoubtable David Hill has seen to all hurdles; preparing his Bach Choir with meticulous attention to detail and editing the score and parts in conjunction with Howells scholar, Paul Spicer...The resulting recording is nothing short of extraordinary. It is hard not to be moved by this music...Missa Sabrinensis has been a hidden masterpiece that has now come to light, thanks to this landmark performance. It undoubtedly puts Howells in a different light. Be borne away on its powerful tide.

Tony Way, *Limelight*

By any standards, this recording of Howell's Missa Sabriensis (Mass of the Severn) is a major event and superior in every way to the work's previous account on disc...Led by conductor David Hill, who clearly believes in every note of this piece, the Bach Choir, BBC Concert Orchestra and the fine quartet of soloists offer an exhilarating performance, which reveals this work to be a forgotten British masterpiece from the middle of 20th century.

Philip Reed, *Choir & Organ*

Bach B minor Mass at the Royal Festival Hall with The Bach Choir and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (February 2020)

"All the big thrills belong to the choir's 220 black-clad figures as they negotiate the work's vast and variegated landscape, with moments of heart-stopping beauty along the way. I have to keep reminding myself that these people are amateurs: I can't imagine a professional choir giving a more perfect and passionate performance" – **Michael Church, *The Independent***

Yale Schola Cantorum / New England choirworks (Hyperion CDA68314 / December 2019)

"[A] richly rewarding recording of choral works sung by Yale Schola Cantorum under David Hill"- **Gramophone**

"Tawnie Olson's *Magnificat* immediately grabs attention with its pungent evocations of Bulgarian women's choirs, conveyed convincingly by Elm City Girls' Choir, which then combine and interleave with the Yale voices to reimagine medieval organum for the 21st century ... David Hill's affecting *God be in my head* and Daniel Kellogg's high-spirited *Shout joy!* make an effective contrasting pair at the heart of this rewarding disc"- **Christopher Dingle, *BBC Music Magazine*, performance *****, recording *******

"David Hill has devised a most interesting and varied programme for this CD and his highly accomplished choir sings it with tremendous skill"- **John Quinn, *MusicWeb-International***

David Hill

Selected Reviews

Yale Schola Cantorum / Schütz: The Christmas Story & other works (Hyperion CDA68315 / December 2019)

"Venturing outside the British sound world, the Yale Schola Cantorum, under David Hill, give a refreshingly clean and athletic American account of Schütz's 17th-century *Christmas Story* and assorted motets" – **The Times** ****

"The American choir Yale Schola Cantorum, conducted by David Hill, gives an ample and well-honed account of Heinrich Schütz's *The Christmas Story* (Hyperion)" – **The Guardian**

"The Yale Schola Cantorum comprises roughly 30 singers and a dozen instrumentalists, but they sound light and bright nonetheless...David Hill's sense of shaping and narrative sweep is equally positive" – **Fabrice Fitch, Gramophone**

"Schütz's Italianate oratorio is one of the masterpieces of the early Baroque and is performed beautifully here. Voices and instruments are superbly balanced within the rich recorded texture" – **BBC Music Magazine** ****

"Yale University's Schola Cantorum sing and play like seasoned professionals" – **Arts Desk**

Dvorak's Stabat Mater with Leeds Philharmonic Chorus & RLPO (Leeds Town Hall, 2019)

"A fine performance...David Hill's pacing and dynamic shading allowed this epic work to unfold in luminous orchestral and vocal detail... a performance of powerful emotional impact" – **Geoffrey Mogridge, Ilkley Gazette**

Yale Schola Cantorum / Brahms 'Ein Deutsches Requiem' (Hyperion; CDA68242)

"The 32-member Yale Schola Cantorum is full of young, vibrant voices, and they respond with alacrity and sensitivity to David Hill's vastly experienced direction" – **Terry Blain, BBC Music Magazine - performance** ****, **recording** ****

"David Hill's instincts are sound, especially in the Requiem's outer pillars and its keystone, 'How lovely are thy dwellings'" – **Peter Quantrill, Gramophone Magazine**

"Shaped by Hill's sensitive pacing and dynamics, the music rises and falls with the meaning of the words in just the way the composer intended... This recording beautifully conveys [the work's] human feeling and its pure aesthetic magic. There's a striking warmth to the performance overall – a sense of intimacy founded in the immersive work of the singers and instrumentalists, aided by Farrington's sparkling new chamber arrangement, and richly informed by conductor Hill's deep understanding of the Brahms *Requiem*"

– **John Sobel, Blogcritics.org**

Yale Schola Cantorum / Palestrina; Missa Confitebor tibi Domine (Hyperion; CDA68210)

"David Hill produces a marvellous sound from his choir, beautifully tuned, beautifully balanced and with many truly exciting moments... These tracks are an unalloyed pleasure" – **David Fallows, Gramophone**

"Under the masterly direction of David Hill, this crack student choir produces a clean yet luxuriant sound, reflecting the sumptuous vocal resources that might have been used on a major feast day in one of the Roman churches"

David Hill

Selected Reviews

- Kate Bolton-Porciatti, *BBC Music Magazine*, Recording *****, performance *****

"Palestrina's *Missa Confitebor tibi Domine* (1572) is a real find, a glorious work...This stylish, immersed-in, performance is characterised by David Hill's directness, underpinned by forward momentum" - David Truslove, *Classical Source* *****

Yale Schola Cantorum / Fauré; Requiem & other sacred music (Hyperion November 2017; CDA68209)

"The real glories of the disc come with the handful of rarely heard choral miniatures which are, without exception, absolute gems. Hill's overall approach is to produce a smooth sound rather than present significant interpretations of the music, and this is an approach that serves these shorter pieces particularly well, investing them with simple beauty rather than emotional or spiritual depth"

- Marc Rochester, *Gramophone*

"The motets are a treasure trove of elegant modulations, each in every way beautifully crafted with never a bar too many. Hill's instrumentally expanded version of the *Cantique de Jean Racine* is equally effective" - Roger Nichols, *BBC Music Magazine*

Rossini's Petite messe solennelle / BBC Singers (Proms at ... The Chapel, Greenwich / August 2016)

"This Mass [...] sparkled with vitality and wit under David Hill" - Denise Prentice, *Classical Source*

"The BBC Singers under chief conductor David Hill did much to enliven the choral elements within the work. They produced singing that had a cleanliness to their collective tonal blending from the opening Kyrie and throughout, a subtlety to their articulation of the intricately scored text in the Credo in particular, and thrillingly fulsome yet unforced sound was in evidence in forte passages"

- Evan Dickerson, *musicOMH*

Mahler Symphony No 8 (Symphony of a Thousand) with the Orchestra of Opera North (Leeds International Concert Season at Leeds Town Hall, June 2016)

"And, best of all, David Hill fully justified his reputation as a fine choral conductor by obtaining immaculate singing from the Leeds Festival Chorus, the Leeds Philharmonic Chorus and the Bradford Catholic Youth Choir" - Ron Simpson, *thereviewshub.com*

Bach's Christmas Oratoria with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Singers (City Halls Glasgow, December 2015)

"David Hill's conducting was a bullseye job in sheer style" - Michael Tumelty, *The Herald* *****

David Hill

Selected Reviews

Prom 48: Late-night Bach / Academy of Ancient Music, BBC Singers and Soloists (Royal Albert Hall, 21 August 2015)

"The BBC Singers, directed by David Hill, were impeccable" – **Alexandra Coghlan, Artsdesk*******

Bob Chilcott: The Angry Planet (Signum Classics: SIGCD422)

"All [pieces] are clearly articulated and differentiated in performances directed by David Hill" – **Alexandra Coghlan, Gramophone**

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra and Chorus: Elgar, Bruch and Finzi (18 March 2015, The Lighthouse, Poole)

"David Hill clearly knew the work well and paced it perfectly" – **Rob Barnett, Seen and Heard International**

"Hill's energy, enthusiasm and masterful direction [...]" – **Phil Smith, Bachtrack**

London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus: Duruflé, Debussy and Fauré (1 March 2015, The Barbican)

"Given the testosterone and star spectacle in many London Symphony Orchestra concerts, it's an unusual pleasure to spend one night with the judicious, the modest and the shy [...] the original conductor, Donald Runnicles, caught influenza; David Hill arrived as a reliable late replacement and the sea [Debussy's *La Mer*] was replaced with Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande suite*, music so dainty and loveable that it could have been written by a dormouse [...] The silken LSO strings in the suite's *Sicilienne* were one of the concert's special joys. Similar beauty arrived during the prelude to Debussy's early cantata *La demoiselle élue*. [...] I was grateful for Hill's lyric flow as the London Symphony Chorus coursed through Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poem, like a Burne-Jones painting daubed in words [...] Curled up in my seat, I was content" – **Geoff Brown, The Times*******

"Duruflé's *Requiem* is at once an acquired taste and difficult for its performers. Steady rhythms are offset with continuous metrical irregularity. It can easily sound forced, though Hill allowed it to evolve naturally and with great ritual solemnity. The choral singing was first rate and wonderfully majestic" – **Tim Ashley, The Guardian*******

"Serenity was strikingly evident in Sunday night's concert-opener, Debussy's lyrical cantata *La damoiselle élue* (The Blessed Damsel). [...] Its musical language (a heady cocktail of Franck, Massenet and Wagner) was a perfect match for the poem's imagery and both were magnificently recreated by David Hill and the London Symphony Orchestra. Amongst the many notable qualities of his account was the hushed opening prelude where Hill coaxed from his players some of the most tender playing I've heard in this rarely performed work [...] With David Hill taking over at such short notice from an indisposed Donald Runnicles, it was perhaps inevitable that there would be a programme change. Fortunately, the all-French theme remained [...] In the [Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande*] Suite's four movements, Hill responded effortlessly to the work's melodic contours and summoned just the right wistful evocation in the first movement and brought to the second a brightly-lit scene where the clarity of Fauré's scoring is superb [...] [in Duruflé's *Requiem*] It is the chorus which make the strongest contribution to the work's emotional impact and in this aspect they were gloriously responsive to Hill's energising and passionate gestures. [...] Having taken on this programme with just twenty-four

David Hill

Selected Reviews

hours notice Hill might also have felt some sense of serenity in those closing bars. If he did then it was richly deserved and he must be congratulated for the quality of these fine performances" – **David Truslove, *bachtrack********

"David Hill conducted sympathetically and skilfully. Having stepped in at such short notice I hope he will be given the chance to conduct the LSO again soon" – **Alan Sanders, *Seen and Heard International***

Herbert Howells: Stabat Mater (Naxos: 8573176)

"David Hill uses a score marked up by Howells with several radical tempi changes that he discovered by chance just a month before recording. The result is a fine reading" – **Stephen Pritchard, *The Guardian********

"David Hill gets into the very soul of the music and extracts an intensely gripping interpretation [...] Conductor, chorus and orchestra are completely at one, which makes this CD memorable" – **Shirley Ratcliffe, *Choir & Organ********

"All three works here thrive in the hands of these singers, this orchestra and this conductor" – **Rob Barnett, *MusicWeb International***

"When the choir suddenly interjects with the words 'Stabat Mater dolorosa', Hill brings a colossal impact that is then allowed to surge and fall, bringing out all of Howells' glowing, passionate emotion. The dark, ominous opening of 'Cujus animam gementem' is picked up by the male voices with Hill allowing Howells' fine development to grow naturally with lovely harmonic shifts and surges of ecstasy. [...] Hill holds a terrific hushed tension as the choir enters on 'Vidit suum dulcem Natum'. [...] It is in the quiet moments such as the hushed orchestral section towards the end that Hill's mastery of orchestral shaping is at its most profound. Soon the tenor enters again, bringing such drama and tension" – **Bruce Reader, *The Classical Reviewer***

"The Bach Choir and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, under David Hill's brilliant direction, execute Howell's numinous *Stabat mater* ... with fluency and insight...Though there is much emotional turbulence in this music, Hill maintains a compelling life and forward momentum in Howells's immensely contrapuntal score [...] A stunning disc [...] A very moving performance"
– **Jeremy Dibble, *Gramophone Editor's Choice***

"Two exemplary moments must suffice to illustrate why this is an essential Christmas gift for any lover of English music [...] The piece is almost unutterably moving, the present performance fully worthy [...] the whole team of singers and instrumentalists respond with the utmost fervour to Hill's evidently inspiring leadership" – **Piers Burton-Page, *International Record Review, IRR Outstanding***

Prom 37: Steve Reich – It's Gonna Rain, The Desert Music / BBC Singers & Endymion, August 2014

"Accuracy and stamina...the BBC Singers and Endymion were expertly marshalled by David Hill" – **Tim Ashley, *The Guardian********

"It is Hill who deserves the highest praise; his direction communicated the vitality and fragility at the heart of the piece – a thrilling sense of life on the edge" – **Laura Battle, *Financial Times********

David Hill

Selected Reviews

"The lion's share of the credit for this performance should go to David Hill, whose knowledge of and clear love for the score kept the chorus on the front foot, rhythmically tight and vocally expressive" - **Ben Hogwood, *ClassicalSource***

The BBC Singers' 90th Anniversary Celebration (24 September 2014, The Barbican)

"[The sequence of Judith Weir *Vertue*, John Tavener *Song for Athene* and Britten *Hymn to St Cecilia*] gave the chorus under its chief conductor, David Hill, a chance to show off some versatility...Hill shaped the music with affectionate warmth"
- **John Allison, *The Telegraph********

Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra / The Bach Choir, David Matthews Symphony No. 7 & Vespers CDLX7305

"A mightily impressive find, make no mistake - and another stellar performance, too, this time under the watchful supervision of David Hill" - **Gramophone**

BBC Prom 70: BBC Singers, Royal Albert Hall, September 2013

"With the BBC Singers and the Choristers of Temple Church Choir under David Hill, the result was magical" - **The Guardian**

"Britten's *A Boy Was Born* - got a stunning performance by a combination of the Temple Church Choir and the BBC Singers under David Hill's direction" - **The Independent**

"Under their director, David Hill, the BBC Singers cherished the softly undulating melodies, their syllables striding out in the *Dies Irae*, their words lightly held, flowing as clear and transparent as a wash of English watercolour" - ****** The Times**

"David Hill, choral conductor par excellence, directed with clarity and evident passion... The BBC Singers were joined for this by the boys in red, from the Temple Church Choir, all with angel voices. This was a treat: sophisticated, many-layered music, stamped with signs of the Britten to come, most dextrously performed, with due regard even paid to "authentic" medieval pronunciations"

- **The Arts Desk**

BBC Singers, The Cheltenham Festival, July 2012

"The BBC Singers, led by conductor David Hill were meticulous in their approach to the score and subtleties in the music"
- **Bachtrack, 9 July 2012**

"The BBC Singers gave no fewer than four premieres, each in their way extraordinary, in a towering performance directed by David Hill, at Cheltenham College Chapel" - **The Guardian, 6 July 2012**

"... the breathtakingly brilliant BBC Singers under David Hill's wise and remarkable direction came through it all with flying colours" - **Seen & Heard International, 5 July 2012**

David Hill

Selected Reviews

Delius Mass of Life and Prelude & Idyll - Naxos 8572861-62, June 2012

"David Hill's impressive new recording with his Bach Choir (in the original German) boasts confident, ardent choral singing and orchestral playing, and a strong solo team" - **** **BBC Music Magazine, July 2012**

"There is no doubt from the vivid opening choruses of Parts 1 and 2 of the recording (and what openings!) that the message of the work is a life-affirming one. There is a dynamic momentum to the tempi which perfectly evokes Zarathustra's ruling passion, the Will of Man, and there is a richness to the orchestral sounds which adds to the sense of muscularity. The chorus negotiate Delius's often awkward vocal intervals with great skill and the intonation is virtually flawless. Hill brings energy and élan to the third section, '*In deine Auge*' (for me perhaps the most exhilarating section of Part 1), where the parallel with the end of Act 2 of *Die Meistersinger* is almost palpable and where the most unusual example of a Delius fugue is given life, vigour and meaning. This is a must for any Delius *Liebhaber* and, with the added bonus of the later *Prelude and Idyll*, a marvellous starting point for anyone new to Delius's unique but compelling art." - **Gramophone, July 2012**

"... and this new [recording], from Naxos, has splendid modern sound, a thrilling choir and orchestra, and, in David Hill, a conductor no less devoted to Delius than his more celebrated predecessor"

- **Classical CD of the Week, The Sunday Times, 10 June 2012**

"This superb new [recording] from the Bach Choir and Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in fact increases by 100 per cent the number of versions readily available. ... David Hill launches the opening *O du mein Wille!* with terrific gusto, the chorus and orchestra responding with thrilling impulse and intensity. Even in Part 2, where the tension slackens and the music becomes more meditative, Hill maintains the inner momentum and points up the essential poetry of the piece. In this Delius anniversary year it is good to welcome such a stirring and perceptive interpretation of his work" - ***** **The Telegraph, 8 June 2012**

Bach St Matthew Passion at The Royal Festival Hall, April 2011

"...conductor David Hill ensured that every dynamic and articulation served not only the particular musical moment, but also the broader narrative... with such generous soloists and a choir so expertly guided by Hill this truly is the real deal as far as Passions go"

- **The Arts Desk, April 2011**

Vaughan Williams Dona Nobis Pacem & Sancta Civitas on Naxos, May 2010

"David Hill directs both these works with a strong sense of their overall shape. Dramatic as they are, it is the sense of each as a symphonic journey that emerges most strongly, and convincingly" - **** **BBC Music Magazine, May 2010**

"The present performance is magnificent. In particular David Hill and the engineers between them balance RVW's often-complex many-layered textures expertly. For newcomers to these glorious works I can only urge you to invest confidently in David Hill's interpretations" - **Music Web Bargain of the Month, May 2010**

"These performances under David Hill are fine, responsive to the beauty and the terror...[they] impress as more impassioned than Hickox's and the recorded sound has a keener range and depth of perspective" - **Gramophone**

David Hill

Selected Reviews

"The high-octane emotion Vaughan Williams injected is captured here with alacrity. Keen orchestral colours and pure diction from the chorus and choristers combine with Hill's vivid reading of both scores to make this pairing a superb new addition to collectors' shelves" - **Choir & Organ**

"Conductor David Hill creates a beautiful nostalgic-numinous atmosphere, but he also has a keen sense of drama and whips up some thrilling climaxes" - **Classic FM**

Bach St Matthew Passion at the Royal Festival Hall, March 2010

"Could anyone but David Hill have achieved such a fusion of English choral tradition and state-of-the-art baroque performance practice? I don't think so. What an extraordinary contribution to our nation's musical life he has made."

- **The Telegraph, March 2010**

Carl Rütli Requiem on Naxos

"The Bach Choir has clearly taken this Requiem to its collective heart (by no means an automatic reaction to a commission!) and performs it with involving fervency under the experienced direction of the excellent David Hill"

- ***** **BBC Music Magazine, Christmas 2009**

The People Shall Hear – Handel Choruses on BIS, October 2009

"Hill's Handel is characterised by concise rhythms and flowing tempi, blended with an agreeable softness, permitting no harsh tones" - **(translation) Klassik.com, November 2009**

"... the power of the divine gesture is exalted with dramatic fervour, yet with agility and flexibility, by the well-trained voices of the Bach Choir. Directed here by David Hill, one of the most accomplished British chorus masters, The English Concert displays the most limpid of sounds and rhythmic precision" - **(translation) Musica, October 2009**

The Seasons in Dresden, January 2009

"It was remarkable how naturally Hill combined expert knowledge with historical performance practice, scenic effects, and also symphonic strength. There was no rigid stylistic arrangement; first and foremost was the effective interpretation of the text, the colourful and tasteful transposition of the onomatopoeia in Haydn's 'The Seasons'" - **Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten, July 2009**

Judith Bingham Remoter Worlds with The BBC Singers on Signum

"Under David Hill's direction, this superb choir gives precise, passionate and powerful readings"

- **The Sunday Times, January 2009**