

Choral Treats 7

Gabriel Fauré (1845 - 1924)

This collection breaks my budget of 50 minutes, but only by a little. It's just under an hour but included is the entire, much-loved Faure Requiem. I have many connections with this sublime mass. I've sung bass and tenor parts at times and the Agnus Dei and In Paradisum take me to wonderful places. I've performed the baritone solos here and abroad, but my favorite time was at an informal sing with Sir David Willcocks at the piano. I thought I was going to faint, but got through it with a "bravo" from the master. The Faure remains my favorite requiem even though the Brahms German Requiem is my favorite massively beautiful concert piece. No conflict there, is there?

Faure Requiem, 36 min

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnilUPXmipM>

Full score with extensive editorial notes at

http://www1.cpd.org/wiki/images/e/ea/Faure_Requiem_FS_PML.pdf

Igor Stravinsky (1882 - 1971)

Is it possible that Stravinsky is easy to listen to? We all have a unique pair of ears. When I think of various composers and pieces, textures come to mind. Mozart's music plays on a glass surface. Its beauty comes from perfectly clear and clean form. Its simplicity is part of the appeal. Brahms adds more voices to enrich the sound. I think of a plush velvet or a deep brocade.

Twentieth century music often makes me think of burlap, frankly, but every so often the dissonance rings true to the times or the theme. Recall that many fine rugs are woven into a coarse base. In the finale of Symphony of Psalms, Stravinsky presents us with a lovely, pleasing dissonance — a Persian carpet of awesome beauty.

Symphony of Psalms

III. Alleluia, laudate Dominum 11:03

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A7eRj18QCDU>

Ave Maria, 1:50

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luh-UIFvxEk>

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897)

Now to the velvety Brahms. He doubles up on the low voices, altos and basses. The effect is somber and at times weighty but always lush in sound. Brahms is well into the autumn of his years, and thereby hangs a brocade.

Five Partsongs, Op. 104, 12:21

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k61GMOzwYYs>

The site above includes commentary on the individual choruses. Our college choir sang three of these choruses and I never, never have forgotten them. The director didn't think we were up to the fifth "Im Herbst," but he had us read through it, and I never forgot this one either. I later had the privilege of leading a small group through three of these, including "Im Herbst." Consider the fact that Brahms trimmed this last chorus down to four voice parts as you listen to the richness and emotional impact he achieved.