

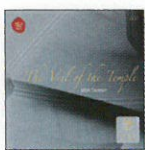
CHORAL & SONG

TAVENER offers drama and contemplation; **ROBERT KING** explores Michael Haydn; **IAN BOSTRIDGE** provides a double dose of Schubert; and **ANNE SOFIE VON OTTER** sings Baroque melodies

CHORAL CHOICE

From darkness to light

STEPHEN JOHNSON enjoys *Tavener's shortened Easter vigil*



TAVENER

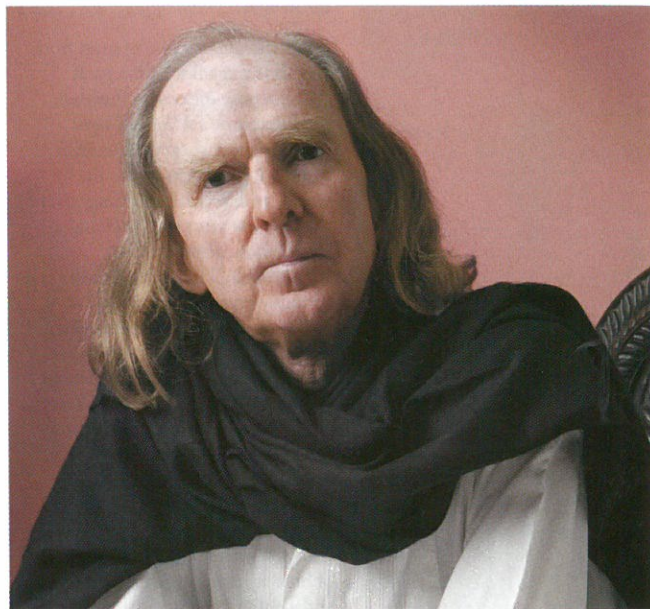
The Veil of the Temple

Patricia Rozario (soprano);
Holst Singers, Temple Church Choir/
Stephen Layton
RCA Red Seal 82876 66154 2 (hybrid
CD/SACD) 147:54 mins (2 discs) ... £ £

The Veil of the Temple is a condensed, concert version of John Tavener's immense *All-Night Vigil*. In the church calendar it's the grand rite that follows the progression from the darkness of night to the dawn of Easter Day, paralleling it with Christ's suffering, death and resurrection. So, despite its enormous length, it's a ritual with a sustained, often very moving

narrative thread. Tavener's setting is far from operatic – though there is a touching reference to Wagner's *Tristan* at the darkest point in the Passion story. It is, as one would expect from this composer's music, highly ritualised, with much of the music firmly anchored to sustained, primal drone bass. But the way in which Tavener manages to combine the timeless, primordial element with a compelling sense of underlying progress is masterly. Broadly speaking the means to this end are very simple: the drone bass slowly rises, the harmonies become richer, the choral forces grow in size, until the apocalyptic C major *fortissimo*, enriched by massed brass and timpani, of the culminating New Jerusalem Hymn.

The performance is outstanding, capturing the range of colour and expression in

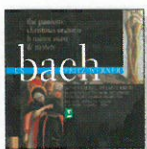


JOHN TAVENER: highly ritualised and primordial music

Tavener's highly original choral writing to magical effect, while the recording is finely responsive to the atmosphere of London's Temple Church, with only a slight

loss of clarity in the climactic Hymn. Warmly recommended.

PERFORMANCE ★★★★★
SOUND ★★★★★
•BBC Music Direct £15.99



JS BACH

St Matthew Passion; St John Passion; Christmas Oratorio; Mass in B minor; Motets, BWV 118, 147, 225-230

Various soloists, choirs & orchestras/
Fritz Werner
Warner 2564-61403-2 ADD mono/stereo
(1957-68) (10 discs) £

These 10 discs form the second instalment from Fritz Werner, champion of Bach on record from 1957 to 1972. Many of my earlier comments (see January) hold good – a single leap back over 30-40 years exaggerates the impact of changed attitudes to tempo, articulation and instrumental/vocal sound quality. Some of the earliest recordings creak with age, notably the 1958 B minor Mass in mono, its Gloria laboured, the horn in 'Quoniam' like a Salvation

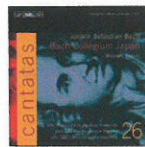
Army flugel on a cold night, and the total up to half an hour longer than we expect nowadays. Yet even here there are delights – the beautifully matched sopranos of Ingerborg Reichelt and Elizabeth Fellner, and Helmut Krebs's fine tenor. He is Evangelist in the Passions with a clear sense of their dramatic impetus, helped by a wide stereo 'stage' and by the Heinrich Schütz Choir's lively 'crowd' choruses. Their chorales, too, are impressive – stately but never sanctimonious. Some pearls are timeless: in the *St John Passion*, soprano Frederike Sailer in 'Ich folge...'; in the *Christmas Oratorio*, bass Barry McDaniel with Maurice André's impeccable trumpet in 'Grosser Herr...'; Agnes Giebel's witty dialogue with echo and oboe in 'Flosst mein Heiland'. The six motets fare particularly well, with fresh choral lines and bass etched with continuo support.

Discs are numbered differently from their listing in the notes and all texts need downloading

from the internet. Remastered sound is commendable considering some of its age.

These won Grands Prix du Disque in their time. It is our taste and technological expectations which have changed, not the performances. *George Pratt*

PERFORMANCE ★★★
SOUND ★★
•BBC Music Direct £22.99



JS BACH

Cantatas, Vol. 26: BWV 96, 122 & 180
Yukari Nonoshita (soprano), Timothy Kenworthy-Brown (countertenor), Makoto Sakurada (tenor), Peter Kooij (bass);
Bach Collegium Japan/Masaaki Suzuki
BIS CD-1401 52:57 mins £ £ £

Masaaki Suzuki has maintained the reduced choral strength first

encountered in Vol. 25 of Bach Collegium Japan's cantata series (reviewed last November). The result is an even greater linear clarity than before and an additional luminosity, too, which serves particularly well the lyrical opening chorus of BWV 180. As Suzuki reminds us in his introductory essay, this movement, one of three in the cantata which incorporates a stanza of Johann Franck's communion hymn with Johann Crüger's celebrated melody, is among the most beautiful in Bach's vocal repertoire. The 12 voices of the choir achieve an ethereal and altogether magical effect in this dance movement with its softly coloured accompaniment of treble recorders, oboe, oboe da caccia and strings. But there is an important contemplative dimension to this hymn which is better understood, perhaps, by Gustav Leonhardt (Teldec) and Fritz Werner (Erato), both of whom allow the music to unfold at a much more leisurely