

# pressquotes

## **MATTHEW BEST, CONDUCTOR**

**Simpson *Media morte; Templi; Eppur si muove; Canzona* (Hyperion CDA 67016)  
Corydon Singers and Brass Ensemble**

"In the *Media morte* and the contrasted *Canzona*, Matthew Best's first-class Corydon Brass demonstrate as much fugal versatility as the exquisitely controlled choir."

*Roderic Dunnett, BBC Music Magazine*

**Goethe Nacht, St John's Smith Square  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

"Best's account of Mendelssohn's *Die erste Walpurgisnacht* caught all of its freshness and vigour. The chorus was lively and the soloists strong. The score of *Calm sea and prosperous voyage* inspired alert, upfront singing from the choir. The orchestra revelled in Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*, moving from a soft-grained opening to a blazing close."

*John Allison, The Times*

**Beethoven *Cantatas* (Hyperion CDA 66880)  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

"Matthew Best conducts a superb performance, at once fresh, incisive and deeply moving, with excellent soloists as well as a fine chorus."

*Edward Greenfield, Gramophone*

**Bruckner *Te Deum* and masses (Hyperion CDS 44071/3)  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra, English Chamber Orchestra Wind Ensemble**

"In the November 1993 BBC Music Magazine, I gave a rave review for the *Te Deum* and D minor Mass which now form part of this Corydon set. I am happy to award further accolades to all concerned. Bruckner's Mass in F minor contains music of a singular beauty and profound mysticism. It gets a committed performance. So too does No.2 in E minor, the ECO wind providing rich sonority and the chorus (sopranos with pure, cathedral treble-type sound) mastering this demanding score."

*Christopher Fifield, BBC Music Magazine*

**Beethoven programme, Queen Elizabeth Hall  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

"This week there occurred one of those rivetingly rewarding experiences when you go to a concert and find yourself engrossed from beginning to end, with expectations of performance and interpretation far surpassed. The concert that riveted me this week was the Corydon Singers at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. To my shame, I had only previously heard them on disc, above all in a performance of Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil* which has all those qualities of vocal resonance and textural lucidity that suggest you do not necessarily have to be a Russian choir to sing Orthodox music with feeling. In this Beethoven concert, words were precise, delivered with complete

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confidence. The orchestral playing was absolutely to the point, close of ensemble and keenly disposed to asserting interpretative thoughts that Best indicated from the podium. There was a sure sense of structure and of span, too. Taut but with an acutely judged expressive breadth and depth within a chosen, concise framework, these performances drew out the meaning of the texts with exciting immediacy. A memorable concert.”

*Geoffrey Norris, The Telegraph*

**Finzi *Dies Natalis; Intimations of Immortality* (Hyperion CDA 66876)  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

“Matthew Best’s magnificent series of recordings with the Corydon Singers and more recently the Corydon Orchestra is one of the jewels in Hyperion’s crown. Equally distinguished in the music of composers as varied as Rachmaninov, Villa-Lobos, Mendelssohn, Duruflé, Bruckner and Berlioz, the Corydon team seem incapable of producing a dud disc. So it proves in this ravishing coupling of two major Finzi choral works which arguably surpass even the high standards achieved by Richard Hickox and the composer himself respectively. It is the more reflective side of man’s nature which is Finzi’s true metier, and in this important respect the present recording reaches the parts that no other recording quite manages.”

*Julian Haylock, Classic CD*

“These performances are marvellously good at clarifying the strengths of these works. Rather more than their predecessors, they clarify structure and texture. Best takes a very slightly quicker tempo and that helps to focus attention. Another factor is the sharper differentiation of instruments, more distinctive in flavour. Highly recommended.”

*JBS, Gramophone*

**Berlioz *L’Enfance du Christ* (Hyperion CDA 66991/2)  
Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

“Matthew Best’s Corydon players imbue the sequence of mysterious string unisons with an extraordinary intensity. Best and his team maintain the balance between realising the full import of the emotional subtext without distorting its beautifully composed surfaces to perfection. No previous recording of *L’Enfance du Christ* has moved me like this one. The choral singing is a joy, the orchestral playing poised, resourceful, so aware. Technically, this version is magical, exploring the full theatrical potential of shifting perspectives. In a word: heavenly.”

*Edward Seckerson, The Independent*

“With a broadly phrased prologue and a crisp fugal *Marche nocturne*, Best promises in his *L’Enfance du Christ* ‘a more operatic treatment than it sometimes receives’. It is not often, of course, that the conductor himself is capable of a pretty mean Scarpia. But the approach is not eccentric; it takes the work as it is. Both stylish and enjoyable, the recording is surely the best available at present. It has a wide dynamic range: it may be difficult to find the optimum volume setting, but this is as it should be in Berlioz.”

*Julian Rushton, BBC Music Magazine*

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**Vaughan Williams *Hugh the Drover*** (Hyperion CDA 66901)  
**Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

"I am delighted to report that Matthew Best's new version of *Hugh the Drover* has made it seem a far more worthwhile piece. The singer/conductor proves a superb interpreter of this music, his lively, loving approach revealing an inherent toughness that lifts the score right out of the category of the rural picturesque. He also seems able to tap into the 'vision thing' – a factor regularly present in the music of Vaughan Williams, whose intention of writing an English equivalent to *The Bartered Bride* no longer seems over-ambitious. The Corydon orchestral and choral forces are superb."

*Opera Now*

"A great sense of theatricality emerges at the very opening of Best's recording, where the tempo honours the marked *Allegro vivacissimo* and the fairground bussle is vividly drawn. Groves' Ambrosian chorus is no match for Best's Corydon Singers, whose diction and ensemble are well-nigh perfect. Best's superb vocal and instrumental forces are all more warmly balanced and integrated than Groves', with a more romantic aura to the sound. If this scrupulously prepared new recording doesn't inspire a professional opera company to stage *Hugh the Drover*, nothing will."

*Matthew Rye, BBC Music Magazine*

**Bruckner *Te Deum* and *Mass in D*** (Hyperion CDA 66650)  
**Corydon Singers and Orchestra**

"What better to mark the Corydon Singers' 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary than this resplendent coupling of two choral works by Bruckner? The singing is aptly glorious, and Matthew Best's account stands with such earlier classics as Forster's and Haitink's. A triumph for Matthew Best and all others involved."

*Christopher Breunig, Hi-fi News & Record Review*

"Bruckner's *Te Deum* is a work I've sought out frequently since I first heard Baremboim's recording, but only now has the spine-tingling thrill of that first encounter been vividly relived. Earth-shaking is the only way to describe it. The orchestra plays with a self-assurance and conviction which belie the fact that they have only once before been brought together for the recording studio, while the considerably enlarged Corydon Singers sing with consummate skill, rooting out all the subtleties and nuances of Bruckner's magnificent score yet always faithful to Matthew Best's thrusting, athletic direction. What a way to celebrate their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday! And how to follow that? With a performance of the D minor mass of extraordinary power and strength. There is an excellent team of soloists, but the greatest accolades must go to Matthew Best and his Corydon Singers: quite simply this is the best thing they have ever done."

*MR, Gramophone*

"All the performers give a committed and stylish performance under Best, whose grasp of quintessential Brucknerian tempo relationships is admirable."

*Christopher Fifield, BBC Music Magazine*

"Mathew Best's performances combine spiritual intensity with great physical impact."

*Robert Cowan, The Independent*

**intermusica**

16 Duncan Terrace, London N1 8BZ  
Tel: 020 7278 5455 Fax: 020 7278 8434  
mail@intermusica.co.uk www.intermusica.co.uk

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"Best's idea of taking the piece in one basic pulse has resulted only in freshness and a truly Brucknerian sense of flow. Best understands the basic terms of reference well, but there's a balancing affection for the music which ensures a warm afterglow."

*Stephen Johnson, The Independent*

**Rachmaninov *Vespers*** (Hyperion CDA 66460)  
**Corydon Singers**

"The Corydon Singers give a performance that is full of feeling under the guidance of Matthew Best. The music has the large aura of a religious building and the appropriate sense of religious supplication."

*Classic FM Magazine*

**Tchaikovsky *Liturgy of St John Chrysostom; Sacred choruses*** (Hyperion CDA 66948)  
**Corydon Singers**

"Best and the Corydon Singers bring out the freshness and energy in this inspired music, with basses focussed down to subterranean depths."

*Edward Greenfield, The Guardian*

"Corydon Singers serve the music beautifully. I would even go as far as to say that this recording carries more musical conviction than any of its rivals. Even the St Petersburg Chamber Choir seem detached and solemn compared to Matthew Best's inspired forces."

*Brian Hunt, Classic CD*