

William Boyce – Solomon (1990)

Written by bluesever

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1. Part 1: Overture
2. Part 1: Behold, Jerusalem, behold thy king
3. Part 1: From the mountains, lo! he comes
4. Part 1: Tell me, lovely shepherd
5. Part 1: Fairest of the virgin throng
6. Part 1: As the rich apple, on whose boughs
7. Part 1: Beneath his ample shade I lay
8. Part 1: Who quits the lily's fleecy white
9. Part 1: Balmy sweetness, ever flowing
10. Part 1: Let not my prince his slave despise / Ah, simple me! my own, more dear
11. Part 1: Fair and comely is my love
12. Part 1: Forbear, O charming swain, forbear!
13. Part 1: Fill with cooling juice the bowl!
14. Part 2: Sinfonia
15. Part 2: The cheerful spring begins today - Arise, my fair, and come away
16. Part 2: Together let us range the fields
17. Part 2: How lovely art thou to the sight
18. Part 2: Let me, love, thy bole ascending
19. Part 2: O, that a sister's specious name
20. Part 2: Soft, I adjure you, by the fawns
21. Part 2: My fair's a garden of delight
22. Part 2: Softly rise, O southern breeze!
23. Part 3: Arise, my fair, the doors unfold
24. Part 3: Obedient to thy voice I hie
25. Part 3: Ye blooming virgins, as ye rove
26. Part 3: Who is thy love, O charming maid!
27. Part 3: On his face the vernal rose
28. Part 3: This, O ye virgins
29. Part 3: Sweet nymph, whom ruddier charms adorn
30. Part 3: O take me! stamp me on thy breast!
31. Part 3: Thou soft invader of the soul! - In vain we trace the globe

A Serenata by William Boyce was recorded on 18,19,20 September 1989 and includes

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She - Bronwen Mills, soprano,
He - Howard Crook, tenor
and choir and Orchestra of The Parley of Instruments.
Roy Goodman - conductor

The conductor of this disc describes it as "the composer's masterpiece." As I do not know all of Boyce's oeuvre I have no way of judging if he is right, but Solomon certainly is a masterpiece. The text derives from the Song of Solomon, but librettist and composer place it firmly in the then-new tradition of the English Pastoral. There is even a suggestion of the four seasons passing siting the work firmly somewhere between Handel's Acis and Galatea and Haydn's The Seasons.

But that gives no idea of the charm of the music. Boyce always has a gift for melody, but here, drawing on an inspiration that often recalls Purcell, he outdoes himself. The climax of the score is an exquisite painting of summer with baroque bassoon accompanied by shimmering strings.

The performance ought to merit 5 stars, chorus and orchestra are excellent and the conductor's love of the music is obvious. The only slight reservation that I have is the quality of the soloists and in particular the soprano whose voice is alas not the last word in lushness. But the reservation is slight and does not spoil one's enjoyment of a rediscovered masterpiece. ---T. Coleman, amazon.com

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