

Gioacchino Rossini – Stabat Mater (Kertesz) [1988]

Written by bluesever

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1. *Stabat Mater - 1. Stabat Mater dolorosa* Pilar Lorengar 8:26
2. *Stabat Mater - 2. Cujus animam gementem* Luciano Pavarotti 5:47
3. *Stabat Mater - 3. Quis est homo qui non fleret* Pilar Lorengar 5:38
4. *Stabat Mater - 4. Pro peccatis suae gentis* Hans Sotin 4:31
5. *Stabat Mater - 5. Eja Mater fons amoris* Hans Sotin 4:18
6. *Stabat Mater - 6. Sancta Mater istud agas* Pilar Lorengar 6:58
7. *Stabat Mater - 7. Fac ut portem Christi mortem* Yvonne Minton 3:59
8. *Stabat Mater - 8. Inflammatus et accensus* Pilar Lorengar 4:24
9. *Stabat Mater - 9. Quando corpus morietur* London Symphony Chorus 4:06
10. *Stabat Mater - 10. Amen* London Symphony Chorus 5:31

Pilar Lorengar, Luciano Pavarotti, Hans Sotin, Yvonne Minton
London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus
Istvan Kertesz – conductor

The traditional Stabat Mater text, which portrays Mary weeping beside the Cross, is so gloomy that it has attracted few great composers. The most memorable settings are by Pergolesi, Dvorak, and this one from Rossini. His innate bounciness and insouciance never go away, even under tragic circumstances, and the famous tenor aria from this work, "Cuius anima," became a hit because of its rollicking rhythm and cheerful tune - one can blank out what the text is actually saying.

The Kertesz version would stay afloat if for no other reason than Pavarotti's glorious singing; the sessions are from Dec. 1970 and March 1971, so the voice is fresh and thrilling. No other Italians appear in the vocal quartet, but Lorengar, Minton, and Sotin are a matchless set with the addition of Pavarotti, and they take care to blend beautifully in ensembles, not always true in

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big bowwow works like this one or the Verdi Requiem. Kertesz displays his abundant gifts as conductor, and Decca's sound, if a bit dulled over time, is by any standard very good. The LSO and its chorus are in top form.

The only real question is whether some new rivals over the past forty years have surpassed this recording. Of course they have, in isolated departments. The Muti on EMI is more visceral but was made in a cavernous acoustic. The recent Pappano, also on EMI, is thoroughly Italiante and won raves on all counts. I differ in finding both women, Anna Netrebko and Joyce DiDanato, not quite up to par. My choice for a viable rival would be Myung-Whun Chung on DG, featuring ear-catching sound, excellent conducting, and very balanced vocal forces, even if his solo quartet - Luba Orgonasova [Soprano], Cecilia Bartoli [Mezzo-Soprano], Raúl Gimenez [Tenor], Roberto Scandiuzzi [Bass] - isn't as starry as some. It's a refreshing account of a work that skims along with high spirits to begin with.

Between them, Chung and Kertesz cover every aspect of this engaging, thoroughly unreligious work, but it's hard to relinquish Pavarotti for any reason except the most compelling, so Kertesz it is. ---Santa Fe Listener, amazon.com

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