

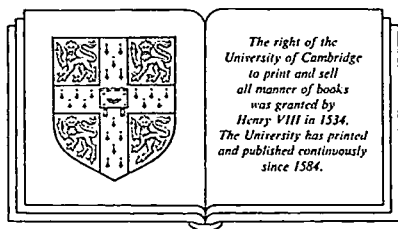
Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-36309-9 - Choral Music on Record
Edited by Alan Blyth
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge
New York Port Chester
Melbourne Sydney

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Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1991

First published 1991

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

British Library cataloguing in publication data

Choral music on record.
1. Choral music. Sound recordings
I. Blyth, Alan, 1929–
780.266

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Choral music on record/edited by Alan Blyth.
p. cm.
ISBN 0-521-36309-8
1. Choral music – Discography. 2. Sound recordings – Reviews.
I. Blyth, Alan.
ML 156.4.V7C54 1990
016.7825'026'6 – dc20 90-1638 CIP MN

ISBN 0 521 36309 8 hardback

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Preface

In compiling this volume, we have endeavoured to cover the major choral works that a music lover is likely to encounter in the concert hall or to sing in a choral society. I am well aware that there are omissions. To keep the book within reasonable bounds I have had to exclude, for instance, Tudor and Renaissance works, Haydn's, Schubert's and Bruckner's Masses, and a number of more recent works on the margin of popularity. The most frequently recorded pieces are included, however, and most recordings up to the end of March 1990 have been considered. As has been my practice in earlier volumes in the 'On Record' series, I have let the work and the author dictate the format of each chapter. For instance, it was essential in the case of *Messiah* to let Teri Noel Towe have the freedom to describe in detail the various performing editions and to indicate anomalies in their performance.

We have endeavoured to make each chapter as comprehensive as possible in its coverage of the work in hand, but inevitably, even with the help of several collectors and libraries, certain sets have eluded us. As in previous volumes, it has amazed me how, without any collusion, different authors have come to similar conclusions about certain artists. There is also an astonishing uniformity in the adverse criticism of conductors and singers in ignoring composers' wishes, in particular as regards tempo. In most cases this criticism is aimed at slow speeds: too many performers today seem to equate a deliberate tempo with deep meaning. Important interpreters of the past seldom make that mistake. Another marked tendency evident throughout is one away from individuality of utterance to a more generalised approach, mostly occasioned by the internationalisation of musical performance. It is a habit to be deplored. In spite of these strictures, enough great performances are chronicled here to make the effort of listening to so many recordings well worthwhile. At least I hope my hard-working contributors feel that way. I am sure that they, like me, are also fascinated by the study of the history of performance throughout some seventy years, which is now available on disc.

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Preface

Once again thanks are due to fellow-authors for their many hours of fruitful labour, and also to John T. Hughes for his inestimable help in compiling and editing the discographies, and in proof-reading. He has also helped authors through the loan of rare records, as have Brian Gould, Peter Lack and Christopher Norton-Welsh. Derek Lewis, BBC Record Librarian, has again given considerable assistance. Penny Souster, as publisher's editor, has given constant encouragement.

Teri Noel Towe's chapter on Handel's *Messiah*, though heavily revised, is derived from articles previously published in *American Record Guide*, *High Fidelity*, *Opus*, and *The American Organist*. Thanks are due to the Editors of these journals for permission to use those materials. My own chapter on Verdi's Requiem is a revised version of a chapter which first appeared in *Opera on Record 3*, Hutchinson (1984). Thanks are due to the publisher for permission to use this chapter.

Alan Blyth

Discographies for all chapters have been placed at the end of the volume.