

Benjamin Britten - Death in Venice (2005)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 16 November 2010 17:52 - Last Updated Thursday, 08 October 2015 17:03

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CD1

1. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 1: My mind beats on (Aschenbach)*
2. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 1: Who's that? (Aschenbach)*
3. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 1: I have always kept a close watch over my development (Aschenbach)*
4. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 2: Hey there, hey there, you! (Youths)*
5. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 2: Overture*
6. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 3: Ah Serenissima! (Aschenbach)*
7. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 3: Mysterious gondola (Aschenbach)*
8. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 4: We are delighted to greet the Signore (Hotel Manager)*
9. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 4: So I am led to Venice once again (Aschenbach)*
10. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 4: The Lido is so charming, is it not? (Hotel Guests)*
11. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 4: How does such beauty come about? (Aschenbach)*
12. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 5: The wind is from the West (Aschenbach)*
13. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 5: Le bele fragole (Strawberry Seller)*
14. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 5: Ah, how peaceful to contemplate the sea (Aschenbach)*
15. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 5: Adziu, Adziu! (Chorus) [play](#)*
16. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 5: As one who strives to create beauty (Aschenbach)*
17. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 6: Aou'! Stagando, aou'! (Gondolier)*
18. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 6: Naturally Signore, I understand (Hotel Manager)*
19. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 6: There you are, Signore, just in time (Hotel Porter)*
20. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 6: I am become like one of my early heroes (Aschenbach)*
21. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 6: A thousand apologies to the Signore (Hotel Manager)*
22. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Beneath a dazzling sky the sea ? (Chorus of Hotel Guests)*
23. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: No boy, but Phoebus of the golden hair (Chorus)*
24. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: See where Hyacinthus plays (Chorus)*
25. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Phaedrus learned what beauty is (Chorus)*

CD2

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1. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: First, the race! (Chorus)*
2. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Try your skill (Chorus)*
3. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Young discobolus (Chorus)*
4. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Up and over (Chorus)*
5. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: Measure to fight (Chorus)*
6. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act I Scene 7: The boy, Tadzio, shall inspire me (Aschenbach)*
7. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II: Orchestral Introduction*
8. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II: So, it has come to this (Aschenbach)*
9. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 8: Guardate, Signore (Hotel Barber)*
10. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 9: Do I detect a scent? (Aschenbach)*
11. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 9: And now I cannot let them out of sight (Aschenbach)*
12. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 9: Kyrie eleison (Chorus)*
13. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 9: Gustav von Aschenbach, what is this path you have taken? (Aschenbach)*
14. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 10: This way for the players, Signori! (Hotel Porter)*
15. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 10: La mia nonna always used to tell me (Leader of the Players)*
16. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 10: Fiorir rose in mezo al giasso (Leader of the Players) [play](#)*
17. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 10: One moment, if you please (A Young English Clerk) - Scene 11*
18. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 12: So it is true, true, more fearful than I thought (Aschenbach)*
19. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 12: So - I didn't speak! (Aschenbach)*
20. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 13: Receive the stranger god (Voice of Dionysus)*
21. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 14: Do what you will with me! (Aschenbach)*
22. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 15: Yes! a very wise decision, if I may say so (Hotel Barber)*
23. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 16: Hurrah for the Piazza (Aschenbach)*
24. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 16: Does beauty lead to wisdom, Phaedrus? (Aschenbach)*
25. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 17: The wind still blows from the land (Hotel Manager)*
26. *Death in Venice, Op. 88: Act II Scene 17: Ah, no! (Aschenbach)*

Personnel:

Gustav von Aschenbach - Philip Langridge

The Traveller - Alan Opie

The Elderly Fop - Alan Opie

The Old Gondolier - Alan Opie

The Hotel Manager - Alan Opie

The Hotel Barber - Alan Opie

The Leader of the Players - Alan Opie

The Voice of Dionysius - Alan Opie

The Voice of Apolle - Michael Chance

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BBC Singers
City of London Sinfonia
Richard Hickox, 2005

Benjamin Britten was a composer far beyond his time, a musician with a genius for orchestration, for intellectually stimulating and emotionally profound operas, and a man who is one of the few composers who has been able to write in the English language and find the music hidden there. His final opera is a tough one, a challenging story (Thomas Mann) translated into a dignified libretto by Myfanwy Piper, and a work that is primarily a monologue for tenor set against myriad scenes that change as quickly as the wind.

When Britten composed 'Death in Venice' he was in his last days of heart disease and though he never saw the opera composed for his lover, brilliant tenor Peter Pears, he did hear the premiere at Aldeburgh on his radio. The opera was first recorded in 1974 with the original cast (Peter Pears, John Shirley-Quirk, James Bowman with Steuart Bedford conducting) and for obvious reasons subsequent recordings feared comparison. Fortunately, now some thirty-two years later there is a splendid second recording, a recording so fine that for this Britten devotee is equal to the original - and in some ways better!

Philip Langridge inherits the near impossible role of Aschenbach, the aging, brilliant, detached 'Apollonian' who through a series of recitatives and encounters with a 'traveler' decides to go to Venice to revive his spirit. Included in this recording is the original first recitative of Aschenbach, a character-defining piece Britten out of uncertainty removed from the premiere (and the subsequent recording). It is now essential. Langridge has a fine tenor voice, perfect enunciation, and he creates an Aschenbach that conveys the tortured downfall of this famous character. He is amazing.

Britten and Piper created Aschenbach's nemeses (The Traveler, The Elderly Fop, The Old Gondolier, The Hotel Manager, The Hotel Barber, The Leader of the Players, and the Voice of Dionysus) to be sung by one baritone. And it is the choice of Alan Opie for this recording that adds great dimension to these changing roles. His is a voice rich and supple and completely able to portray different characters while simultaneously reminding us that they are interrelated and each part of Aschenbach's illusionary view of his world.

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Add to this the superb countertenor voice of Michael Chance who intones Apollo in the major scene that contrasts the Apollonian vs Dionysian conflict that is central to Mann's story and the 'cast' of main characters is complete. The many small roles are all well sung. Richard Hickox conducts the City of London Sinfonia with insight into all of the complexities of the score and creates a lush and languid sound that is thoroughly appropriate for 'Serenissima' - Venice. The overall momentum of this opera is devastatingly beautiful, and for one who thought that the original Pears/Shirley-Quirk/Bedford recording could never be bettered, this recording is absolutely as fine and deserves to be proudly beside the other on the shelf. Highly Recommended on every level. *Grady Harp, August 05*

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