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[Daniel Taylor, Absolutely Brilliant](#)

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Posted by [mwblogger](#)
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It is raining. It is cold. I am woefully behind on everything I have to do because the cleaning of the office slotted to take just under three hours (in my febrile mind) took most of the weekend (though honestly, you should see it in here...). I'm tired, worn down, not looking forward to starting the week with fewer of my pistons firing than usual. And so I put on Daniel Taylor's recital CD *The Voice of Bach* and am totally smitten.

It lives up to the academic hype of its spectacularly erudite liner notes with its sheer musicality—but this is not one of those “period instrument” recordings which, in aiming to do everything “right” does everything wrong, treating Bach as a sacred text and arguing, unmusically, for the unimpeachably of their own scholarly point of view. No, not at all, this is in fact a perfect little cobbling of music culled from many Bach pieces into a disc (or concert) that makes excellent sense as a whole. Yes it's historically fascinating, for those who want to delve deep (Nicholas Anderson's liner notes get even woollier, in the best way), but as far as some gorgeous music for the contemplation of the divine (or whatever) it's an excellent record.

Daniel Taylor is a rare talent: not only is he a glorious countertenor (oh that unearthly sound, it gets me every time, so rare, so out-of-the-range-of-human-conception, so oddly sexy) but also a fine conductor, leading here his own group, the Theatre of Early Music. This is not a vanity recital for a singer to strut their stuff—though he's got stuff to strut (don't take my word for it, listen to the second track, the haunting “*Erbarme dich, mein Gott*” from the St. Matthew Passion, or the minor-key jaunt of the surprising closing track, “*Bereite dich, Zion*” from the Christmas Oratorio)—but a program that is a conceived whole. There are the arias, but there are also instrumental sinfonias, choral motets (which feature the ToEM's choir to great effect) and duets. Without a scrap of preening, an astounding singer/conductor/belle-lettrist/musical thinker offers a complete—and deeply musical—package. Homage to he who is arguably the greatest composer ever designed to titillate and instill reverie, done, no doubt, to the imagined approval of the composer himself. He's not here to comment (darn it all, because I have a few questions...) but I suspect he'd be pleased.