

Inside Out **The Grape Composers**



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We sent Christopher Gillett on a mission to pair up fine wine and fine music. He found inspiration in a most unlikely place - the Glasgow home of his redoubtable Aunt Dodo - who turns out to have a prize-winning palate.



My aunt, Dorothy Anne, or Dodo as she is always known, is seriously knowledgeable about wine. In 1971 she was the Daily Telegraph's 'Lady Wine Taster Of The Year'. Her husband Graham is equally enthusiastic, and over the years they've acquired and drunk an extraordinary range of wines, most of which they've bought direct from the growers, rolling up in their tatty little Peugeot, a copy of *Le Guide Hachette des Vins* under the seat, the boot stuffed with cases acquired from little-known vineyards.

As it happens they are music-lovers too. So, given this perfect excuse, I flew to Glasgow and spent two days tasting wines, discussing pieces of music and investigating Dodo's suggestions online. This is the result of my selfless and exhaustive research. There is no science to matching wines with music. Most of the suggestions are based on reflex and instinct. The music isn't chosen to mirror the wine, or vice versa, but to balance or complement it. Is this an unrecognised form of synesthesia, drinking wine and hearing music? Dodo taught me a long time ago not to drink sweet wine with pudding. All that sugar is too much. It's far better to serve so-called 'dessert wine' with a rich, fatty appetiser such as *foie gras* or *pâté*. And that, generally, is the approach I've taken here.

Sommelier Christopher's recommendations for wine and music pairings

Red



Torre di Falco, Nero di Troia (<http://www.waitrosedirect.com/product/torre-del-falco-nero-di-troia/425868>) Waitrose £7.99

with **Handel ([uk/learn/composers/george-frideric-handel](http://uk.learn.composers/george-frideric-handel)):** Any Concerto di Grosso, opus 3 or opus 6 but if I have to pick one: opus 3, no 2 in Bb. HWV313

I was singing in Bari a few years ago and Nero di Troia was served everywhere, including at a farming co-op's little store near my digs, where they would fill your bottle from a steel tank. Grown almost exclusively in Puglia, Nero di Troia produces an earthy, rich, fruity red and I love it. It was almost impossible to find outside of Puglia, especially in Britain, and then Waitrose started selling some. It's not sophisticated but it's delicious, and a bargain.

More interesting than the now-ubiquitous Primitivo.

Pairing this wine with Handel is purely for my own enjoyment. I love Handel's Concerti Grossi, which I find complex yet thrilling. Same too for the wine. It's a no-brainer.



Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon (<http://www.waitrosedirect.com/product/waitrose-ipw-chilean-maipo-cabernet-sauvi/598211>) Waitrose £9.99

with **JS Bach ([uk/learn/composers/johann-sebastian-bach](http://uk.learn.composers/johann-sebastian-bach)):** solo cello suite No. 1

This was Aunt Dodo's pairing. I've singled out one Chilean Cabernet Sauvignon but really the important thing is the grape, and Chile will give you the best value for money at the moment. Hunt around. The point was to pair a big, classic, red wine with a piece of music that is small in scale yet big in body. The first undulating movement even sounds like wine being slowly poured into a big glass. Can any musical instrument sound more like a rich red? I agree with Dodo; it's a perfect combination.



Côte du Rhone, 2010 E. Guigal (<http://www.majestic.co.uk/Cotes-du-Rhone-zid06234>)
Majestic £9.99 (special offer)

with **Haydn (</uk/learn/composers/franz-joseph-haydn>)**: Symphony 104, London.

I'll come clean. I like my reds big. Call me a philistine but, unlike Paul Giamatti's character in the film *Sideways*, I actually prefer Merlot to Pinot Noir. This is a Syrah/Grenache and it's full of flavour. I think this should go with some Haydn, which is not heavy but certainly robust enough to take the weight of the wine... like some delicious lamb chops. People make the mistake of writing Haydn off as a jobbing lightweight, but his symphonies combine brilliant classicism with startling ingenuity, ebullience with deep sincerity.

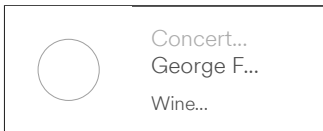


Vina del Portillo, Navarra 2002

(http://www.averys.com/jsp/product/productDetails.jsp?jsessionid=7B1FAA94EB82F4A982910CB793CDED4F.newnode3?productId=eprod30383&_requestid=169412) Avery's £9.99

with **Mendelssohn (</uk/learn/composers/felix-mendelssohn>)**: Piano duet, opus 92

We drank this one over a classic Scottish lunch of mutton pie and baked beans. It's quite lean, oaky and leathery but as soon as I tasted it I said, with typical pretentiousness, 'Mendelssohn chamber music!' Oddly, I had no idea that my Uncle Graham's great-grandfather was a minor composer, Emil Steinkühler, who, as it happens, was a friend of Mendelssohn's. So that sealed it. Navarra is a neighbour of the pricier Rioja region, so if you can't get any Navarra a Rioja will have to do. Stick with the Mendelssohn though.



LAUNCH IN APP

Rosé



Foncaussade Parcelles, Bergerac (<http://www.waitrosedirect.com/product/foncaussade-parcelles-bergerac-rose/066114>) Waitrose £7.99

with **Berlioz (</uk/learn/composers/hector-berlioz>)**: Harold in Italy

There's a lot of duff Rosé out there. Dodo reckons Bergerac produces the best, though it's tricky to find outside the region. I've tracked one down and I'm matching it with Berlioz, partly because Bergerac-Berlioz has a certain ring, but mainly because it seems like a good combination. There's heat in the music that the chilled wine will quench. As you glug it down, imagine yourself as the solo viola, Byron's Childe Harold, on your romantic adventures through Italy, sometimes melancholic, sometimes frenzied. It's the sort of piece for which neither a

white nor a red will fit the bill, so a good rosé is perfect.



Harold en Italie, Op. 16: III...
Hector Berlioz, David Aar...

Wine and Music - Rose

LAUNCH IN APP

White



Villa Maria Riesling, 2012, NZ (<http://www.majestic.co.uk/Villa-Maria-Private-Bin-Riesling-zid37120>) Majestic £9.99

with **Rameau (</uk/learn/composers/jean-philippe-rameau>)**: Suite from Dardanus

For good value, quality white wines, New Zealand has to be the destination. I'm not a great fan of Chardonnay so I'm not listing any. (It's my column....) We've gone for a Riesling with a bit of fruity zest and I think that Rameau will keep it good company. Rameau deserves more listeners. His operas can often seem incomprehensible so this suite is a good place to sample his limpid melodies and quirky counterpoint. It's an unfamiliar soundscape and the Riesling will help you through. Some of his dances reduce me to tears. They sound like forgiveness.



Quincy 2012 Jean-Charles Borgnat (<http://www.majestic.co.uk/Quincy-zid05273>) Majestic £10.99

with **Stravinsky** (</uk/learn/composers/igor-stravinsky>): Pulcinella Suite

We were after a Sauvignon Blanc and this is exceptional. A less famous appellation than Sancerre, but equally good. I'm not going to do that thing where you try and describe the wine using all the adjectives that you'd normally expect to find in a Mills & Boon novel. Just trust me. Or, rather, trust my expert aunt. To me it has a vitality that made me think of neoclassical Stravinsky, vibrant like a freshly restored Raphael painting.



Chateau Les Sablines, Monbazillac, 2010 (<http://www.waitrosedirect.com/product/chateau-les-sablins-monbazillac/023826>) Waitrose £7.49 (50cl)

with **R Strauss** (</uk/learn/composers/richard-strauss>): *Der Rosenkavalier*

A sweet wine to rival Sauternes. And, again, another happy coincidence as I'm singing in a new production of *Der Rosenkavalier* at Glyndebourne this coming summer. This was Dodo's choice. Her reasoning was that the rich, sweet wine with its hints of 'noble rot' would be perfect for the poignant scene in which the ageing Marschallin says goodbye to her young lover, Octavian. It all depends if you find Strauss's music sweet like apricot jam or rich like *foie gras*. Perhaps it doesn't matter. Once you've tasted the sweetness emerging from the shrivelling,

botrytised – there had to be an occasion to use that word – grapes, you'll see this combination is a winner.



Champagne, Nicolas Feuillatte 2006 (<http://www.majestic.co.uk/Nicolas-Feuillatte-zid22454?tracking=%7Csearchterm:>) Majestic £30 (£19.99 when you buy two)

with **Janacek** (</uk/learn/composers/leos-janacek>): *Cunning Little Vixen* Suite

This is the one higher-priced bottle I was allowed to select. Dodo suggested vintage Champagne and this is the best bet for the price limit. She urges you to eat food with it, just nibbles of some sort, rather than on its own. It's the French way. We both liked the idea of Janacek, the old, vintage composer who was obsessed with a sparkling young woman. Dodo wanted the Kreutzer Sonata string quartet but I've plumped instead for the *Cunning Little Vixen* suite. You could listen to the whole opera but you'd never make the bottle last long enough.



Suite Dardanus: 2. Entrée ...
Jean-Philippe Rameau, Or...

Wine and Music - White

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Port



Quinta do Noval, late bottled (<http://www.tesco.com/groceries/Product/Details/?id=262585580>) Tesco £11.79

with **Elgar** (</uk/learn/composers/edward-elgar>): 1st Symphony

Not really a proper vintage port but good nonetheless. Port and Elgar, like Spotted Dick and Custard, Lord's Cricket Ground and red trousers: made for each other. If you're not openly blubbing at the glorious return of the main theme in the strings during the last movement I'll eat my very English hat.



Symphony No. 1 in A-Flat ...
Edward Elgar, London Phi...

Wine and Music - Port

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