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 New release information
 May 2006

Marc-Antoine Charpentier

Messe & Te Deum à huit voix



Marc-Antoine Charpentier
 Messe & Te Deum à huit voix

Le Concert Spirituel
 Stéphanie Revidat, Hanna Bayodi,
 François-Nicolas Geslot, Anders J. Dahlin,
 Emiliano Gonzalez-Toro, Sébastien Droy,
 Benoît Arnould, Renaud Delaigue
 Hervé Niquet

Glossa GCDSA 920611
NEW RELEASE
 Hybrid SACD - full-price digipak

Programme

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704)

1-27
 Messe à 8 voix et 8 violons et flûtes
 [H.3]

28-40
 Te Deum à 8 voix avec flûtes et violons
 [H.145]

Production details

Total playing time: 79'33

Recorded at Église Notre Dame du Liban (Paris),
 in September 2005
 Engineered by Manuel Mohino
 Produced by Dominique Daigremont
 Executive producer: Carlos Céster

Booklet essay by Thomas Leconte (Centre de
 Musique Baroque de Versailles)
 Design 00:03:00 oficina tresminutos
 English - Français - Deutsch - Español



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NOTES (ENG)

Mr Charpentier benefited greatly by his three years in Rome, as demonstrated by his entire oeuvre. (Mercurie galant, February 1681)

Towards 1670 Marc-Antoine Charpentier returned from Rome following a sojourn of more or less five years, his ears and mind brimming with ultramontane music and culture. No sooner did he come back to Paris, where he was born in 1643 and where his skills arrived ahead of him, than Charpentier found considerable support amongst advocates of the Italian aesthetic who were themselves in contact with the leading centres of learning in Rome.

For a decade or so after his arrival in Paris, Charpentier was a regular contributor to the Saint-Louis Jesuits, who commissioned him to produce great two-choir compositions including the *Mass for 8 voices and 8 violins and flutes* [H.3] and the *Te Deum for 8 voices with flutes and violins* [H.145], which figure amongst the composer's most impressive and lavish works.

These masterly works of his youth, bearing out highly skilful composition, convey the foundations of a musical language that was already very agile and personal, a language that was to assert itself in the course of the composer's career and mark his contemporaries. Composers in his wake, such as Michel-Richard de Lalande and Henry Desmarest, even went so far as to incorporate the double Italian choir with two orchestras into the quintessentially French genre of the great motet.

NOTAS (ESP)

El Sr. Charpentier ha permanecido tres años en Roma, de los que ha extraído grandes enseñanzas. Todas sus obras son prueba de ello. (Mercurie galant, febrero de 1681)

Hacia 1670, Marc-Antoine Charpentier regresó de Roma al cabo de una estancia de alrededor de cinco años, con los oídos y el pensamiento rebosantes de música y de cultura ultramontana. Desde su regreso a París, donde había nacido en 1643 y donde sus cualidades ya lo precedían, Charpentier contó con el apreciable apoyo de algunos de los defensores de la estética italiana, quienes de por sí mantenían relación con los principales círculos romanos de erudición.

Desde su llegada a París y durante un decenio, Charpentier colaboró con asiduidad en las ceremonias de la congregación jesuita de Saint-Louis, que le encargó grandes composiciones para doble coro. Entre ellas figuran la *Misa a 8 voces, 8 violines y flautas* [H.3] y el *Te Deum a 8 voces, flautas y violines* [H.145], que se cuentan entre las obras más imponentes y suntuosas del compositor.

Estas magistrales obras de juventud, testimonio de una gran ciencia de la escritura, presentan los fundamentos de un lenguaje musical ya muy hábil y personal que se afirmaría a lo largo de la carrera del compositor y marcaría a sus coetáneos. Siguiendo sus pasos, compositores como Michel-Richard de Lalande o Henry Desmarest se atrevieron incluso a introducir el doble coro italiano con dos orquestas en el género francés por excelencia, el gran motete.

NOTES (FRA)

Mr Charpentier, qui a demeuré trois ans à Rome, en a tiré de grands avantages. Tous ses ouvrages en sont une preuve. (Mercurie galant, février 1681)

Vers 1670, Marc-Antoine Charpentier revint de Rome au terme d'un séjour de plus ou moins cinq années, les oreilles et les pensées pleines de musique et de culture ultramontaine. Dès son retour à Paris, où il était né en 1643 et où ses qualités l'avaient déjà devancé, Charpentier trouva d'appréciables appuis parmi les partisans de l'esthétique italienne, qui entretenaient eux-mêmes des relations avec les principaux foyers romains d'érudition.

Dès son arrivée à Paris et durant une dizaine d'années, Charpentier collabora régulièrement aux cérémonies des Jésuites de Saint-Louis, qui lui commandèrent de grandes fresques à double chœur. Parmi elles figurent la *Messe à 8 voix et 8 violons et flûtes* [H.3] et le *Te Deum à 8 voix avec flûtes et violons* [H.145], qui comptent parmi les œuvres les plus imposantes et les plus somptueuses du compositeur.

Témoins d'une grande science de l'écriture, ces magistrales œuvres de jeunesse présentent les fondements d'un langage musical déjà très habile et personnel, qui allait s'affirmer au fil de la carrière du compositeur et marquer ses contemporains. Dans son sillage, des compositeurs comme Michel-Richard de Lalande ou Henry Desmarest osèrent jusqu'à introduire le double chœur italien avec deux orchestres dans le genre le plus français, le grand motet.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Herr Charpentier hat großen Nutzen gezogen aus seinen drei Jahren in Rom, was sein gesamtes Werk bestätigt. (Mercurie galant, Februar 1681)

Um 1670 kehrte Marc-Antoine Charpentier nach etwa dreijährigem Aufenthalt in Rom nach Frankreich zurück, Ohren und Gedanken übertoll mit ultramontaner Musik und Kultur. Gleich nach seiner Ankunft in Paris, wo er 1643 geboren wurde, und wohin ihm nun die Kunde von seinen Fähigkeiten bereits vorausgeeilt war, fand Charpentier beträchtliche Unterstützung unter den Befürwortern der italienischen Ästhetik, die selbst im Austausch standen mit den führenden Kreisen des gebildeten Rom.

Nach seiner Rückkehr nach Paris arbeitete Charpentier etwa zehn Jahre lang regelmäßig mit den Jesuiten von Saint-Louis zusammen, die ihn mit großen Kompositionen für zwei Chöre beauftragten, wie die *Messe für 8 Stimmen und 8 Violinen und Flöten* [H.3] und das *Te Deum für 8 Stimmen mit Flöten und Violinen* [H.145], die zu den beeindruckendsten und überschwänglichsten Werken des Komponisten zählen.

Diese meisterhaften Frühwerke, die hohe Kompositionskunst ausweisen, machen das Fundament einer bereits flexibel vielseitigen und persönlich geprägten Musiksprache aus, die sich im Verlauf der Karriere des Komponisten noch weiter durchsetzen und seine Zeitgenossen beeinflussen sollte. In seinem Kielwasser wagten es Komponisten wie Michel-Richard de Lalande und Henry Desmarest gar, den zweiteiligen italienischen Chor mit zwei Orchestern in das französische Genre *par excellence*, die große Motette, einzuführen.

Hervé Niquet

A portrait



For much of his career Hervé Niquet has been – as he acknowledges – infatuated with the sacred choral music of Marc-Antoine Charpentier. For Glossa his recordings go from strength to strength – in performance requirements too! In the fourth of his series of Charpentier recordings for the label he and Le Concert Spirituel have chosen the *Messe à 8 voix et 8 violons et flûtes*, H3 (according to the Wiley Hitchcock catalogue) and the *Te Deum à 8 voix avec flûtes et violons*, H145. Fascinating booklet notes covering the origins of these two works have been supplied by Thomas Leconte from the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles.

Niquet is actively involved in a range of musical activities at the moment. Alongside the Charpentier SACD, a trilogy of operas by Jean-Baptiste Lully, Marin Marais and André Cardinal Destouches has been started in performance – including in Montpellier, Beaune, Metz and Paris – and on record. Yet Niquet is not just dedicating his time to the French Baroque: recently in Madrid as part of the San Isidro festivities in the Parque de El Retiro, Le Concert Spirituel dazzled an audience (numbered in thousands) with their programme of Handel's *Water Music* and the *Music for the Royal Fireworks*, complete with a spectacular firework display. Time during the year is also given over by Niquet to non-Baroque activities, including his Artistic Directorship of the Beethoven Academie orchestra in Antwerp and frequent conducting forays around the world into the works of Mahler or more modern French repertoire such as Saint-Saëns, Berlioz or Massenet. And Hervé Niquet the father is also faced with the conundrum of how to advise his three highly-motivated children keen to embark on the artistic life. His principal recommendation is 'hard work and lots of it!'

Prior to 1994 you had recorded plenty of sacred French Baroque music – Campra, Gilles, Lully – but no Charpentier. Was there a reason for this?

For a long time I had no interest in Charpentier's music because I had thought it just so Parisian, but I was properly introduced to it by Catherine Cessac (a great specialist in the composer). She showed me manuscripts, his own writings and I became fascinated by all of this. Think that Charpentier had written some 593 pieces and maybe 80% of them hadn't been recorded! And so, my big adventure started. The music is a mixture between Italian and French (particularly Parisian) music. I found it at the same time both so essential and so exotic. In its performing requirements it encompasses many configurations – from one unaccompanied singer to works scored for four choirs and four orchestras. In sum the breadth of Charpentier's output gives you the opportunity to organize your ensemble just around pieces by him and so at Le Concert Spirituel we started with music scored for four voices and continuo. After that I became infatuated by Charpentier; it was like a drug, and my musicians felt the same. It became more than a pleasure to play Charpentier.

I believe that to understand a composer you must know all the things around him, so I needed to know where so much of Charpentier's music was played (in the chapel of Mademoiselle de Guise), with what sort of musicians and singers and how he met them. For me, this is normal. I do the same thing for the music of Gounod, Ravel, Poulenc and so on. With Charpentier I discovered that he built a team of singers and instrumentalists around him and one curious thing is that all his singers in the Hôtel of Mademoiselle de Guise were his own personal choices, based on auditions that he held from people in her household; so there were singers from her chambre, her kitchens... He taught them singing and ten years later they were the best singers in Paris. For them he composed music and they became just singers for Charpentier's music. This idea became my idea; with my ensemble I chose to have all the time the same musicians, to have the same reflexes as his, the same ideas as his, the same vision of sound. It was a case of musical sociology, trying to do the same thing as Charpentier.

Twelve years later we have the experience of performing his larger-scale pieces – such as the *Mass* and the *Te Deum* on the new recording. We have learnt how to be very virtuosic and this recording represents a small part of the freedom that we have gained as well as happiness and pleasure! Once you have understood how the composer wrote and for where and with whom, you don't need your own opinion – you have the opinion of the composer and the singers that he employed. You put your feet in their shoes and after that it is easy! And, remember that Charpentier worked for Mademoiselle de Guise for more than 20 years. He became probably the best-paid composer in France – a star – writing principally for her. Occasionally, she accepted that he wrote for the Jesuits close to her house. But don't forget that he was a star – it is the

same thing as if you had Philip Glass writing just for George W Bush. Can you imagine his fee? So it is the same thing with Charpentier. Many people say, 'Ah poor Charpentier, he didn't have enough success because Lully was a bad man...'. I think that Charpentier had no need to be at the court of Louis XIV.

How do you consider the experience of performing these large-scale works?

For Charpentier all his works were important. If you take a small motet for three voices, this motet will have the same quality as the *Mass for 8 voices*. It is strange, but true. Maybe it is because Charpentier was a genius. He composed some 10-14 big motets for eight voices and orchestra. My plan, in the future, is to record all these. The *Mass* and the *Te Deum* here represent, I hope, a beginning to this new adventure – following a certain line of thinking one has the *Te Deum* representing the height of happiness and the *Mass* as the apogee of reflection. Between these two 'atmospheres' we plan to incorporate all these other large-scale works.

In the meantime you are concentrating with Le Concert Spirituel on another large-scale project.

Yes, we have been performing and are now recording three operas that are all different reflections of the same road being travelled by French opera. *Proserpine* comes in a great period in Lully's career and shows the initial construction of opera in France. From Marin Marais we have his 'tragédie en musique' *Sémélé* written at the end of the reign of Louis XIV – in it you sense that freedom is very close, the Regency is coming and the times of Louis XV. Destouches' *Callirhoé* comes from 1712 when you can feel that French opera is indeed French opera. Yet the plan of the three operas is the same and the three composers all respect that plan. Across the three operas you can feel how the model created by Lully was one of such genius and we hope to show (using the same team of performers) all the different vocabularies and atmospheres in these three great French operas.

The musicians of Le Concert Spirituel know what they are up against?

Indeed, they are part of my inheritance. I formed Le Concert Spirituel nearly twenty years ago and many of the musicians have been with me since the beginning. They know how to move in this sort of music with me and the singers, so it is always a big pleasure. For me there is no difference between the star singers on the stage and the last musician in the pit, so everybody knows everybody and for me everybody is important. In these productions we have the feeling of being in a big musical feast and I think that it is crucial for the conductor to try and get everybody to think in the same way at the same moment. When it works it is such a great pleasure – and don't forget that for me the music is just an opportunity to be happy together and to offer pleasure to many, many people.

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