

2020

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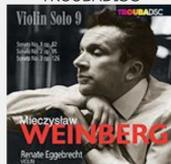
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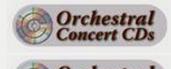
Mozart Brahms Clarinet Quintets



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Méditations pour le Carême et Motets
Marc-Antoine CHARPENTIER (1643-1704)
Méditations pour le Carême, H. 380 à 389 [29:33]
Robert de VISÉE (c.1655-c.1732)
Tombeau de Mesdemoiselles de Visée [4:39]
Sébastien de BROSSARD (1655-1730)
Salve rex Christe, Motet pour trois voix d'hommes et basse continue [8:07]
Marin MARAIS (1656-1728)
 Premier livre des pièces de violes, suite n°1 en ré mineur : I. Prélude en ré [4:20]
Sebastien de BROSSARD
O plenus irarum dies, Motet pour basse solo et basse continue [13:02]
 Ensemble les Surprises/Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas rec. 9-11 September 2019, Lutheran Church of Saint-Pierre, Paris, France
AMBRONAY AMY056 [59:49]

One expects Charpentier's music to be exuberant. Here we have the more spiritual and personal side of his output. *Méditations pour le Carême* are a set of meditations for the season of Lent. This is coupled with two meditative motets by the interesting Sébastien de Brossard, and two instrumental pieces by Robert de Visée and Marin Marais.

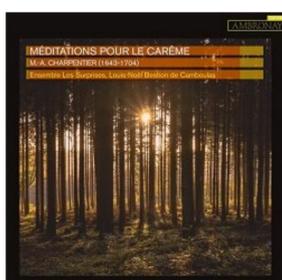
Méditations pour le Carême is not the Charpentier of the ever-popular *Te Deum*, but that of the *Leçons de Ténèbres*. It is a soulful and, as the title suggests, meditative series of ten short sombre reflections on the suffering of Christ and the meaning of divine love. They can in fact be seen as an extension of *Leçons de Ténèbres*. They are meant for the Sacrum Triduum, to be sung throughout Lent; the whole forty days are a time of reflection, penitence and spiritual renewal that culminates in the main feast of the Christian Church, Easter. These pieces were not intended as a set, but as short pieces that can be sung on their own, although the do sit together well as recorded here. I have a very good mid-1980s recording by William Christie (Harmonia Mundi HMA 1905151), and a great recording by Le Concert Spirituel and Hervé Niquet (Glossa GCD 921604). Niquet only recorded five of the pieces, otherwise that would be my top recommendation. As it is, this new recording must take that accolade. I particularly like the use of the organ, something that Niquet also employs, as this gives the work a greater sense of gravitas. The recorded sound of the Christie is now showing its age, whilst this new recording is much clearer; the three singers have greater presence.

Of Brossard's two motets on this disc, it is the longer *O plenus irarum dies* which I find the finer; the bass Étienne Bazola has a real presence. The works are well placed alongside the Charpentier, because *Méditations pour le Carême* would be lost if it was not for a copy in Brossard's collection. He was a priest and a music theorist as well as a composer. He spent some time as the *maître de chapelle* at Strasbourg Cathedral, which is where I first came to know his music. He was a fervent champion of Italian music, and especially the music of Giacomo Carissimi, who had also influenced Charpentier. In *O plenus irarum dies*, Brossard calls upon all his skill to expertly depict 'O day full of wrath!', another Lenten text. I have *O plenus irarum dies* sung by Alain Buet, whose bass voice is not as strong as Étienne Bazola's; this disc, then, had the edge over that by Robert Weddle (Assai 207582, see [review](#)).

The two instrumental pieces divide the vocal settings well. They are both in character – brooding, almost sombre works that keep the penitential atmosphere of the vocal music. They are wonderfully performed by the instrumentalists of the Ensemble les Surprises. The viol of Juliette Guignard is particularly fine.

This is a super disc, especially recommendable for *Méditations pour le Carême*, which deserve greater recognition. It now sits at the top of a very small heap of recordings of the work. Its clean, sharp recording is nearly the equal of the Niquet. The added bonus of a complete set of Brossard's ten short pieces making it a very rewarding disc. All the singers are excellent, as are the instrumentalists. They are aided by beautifully recorded sound, and by informative and detailed booklet essay by the Ensemble's director and keyboard player, Louis-Noël Bestion de Camboulas. A disc to listen to and enjoy, and not just during Lent!

Stuart Sillitoe



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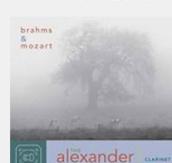


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August



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Respighi

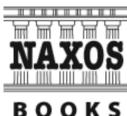


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53 Studies on Chopin Études 1 Konstantin Scherbakov (piano)



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