

Marc-Antoine Charpentier – Te Deum

Written by bluesever

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Perhaps no piece of music evokes more pungently our image of the court of the Sun King, Louis XIV, than the well-loved 'Prelude' to Marc-Antoine Charpentier's 'Te Deum.' Yet, though Louis may at some time have heard this setting of the canticle, it was not in fact written for the court at all but, in all probability, for one of the Paris churches with which Charpentier was at one time associated. It is one of the ironies of music history that Marc-Antoine Charpentier never held formal ties to the royal court of France. Nevertheless he became most famous for this "Te Deum H.146 in D," which was written in celebration of a military victory by King Louis XIV.

Marc-Antoine Charpentier – Te Deum

Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704) had no formal links with the court, where Lully's music held sway. But he did have limited contact with the court, mainly through relatives of the king. Charpentier worked as house composer to Marie de Lorraine, duchesse de Guise, who was known familiarly as "Mlle de Guise."



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It is not quite certain for which event the Te Deum was written, but it seems likely it was the victory at Steinkerque in August 1692; François Couperin refers to this event in his “Sonata La Steinkerque.” The choice of the key of D major is highly appropriate: the German theorist Johann Mattheson links this key to *'military things'*. Charpentier considered the key D-major as *'bright and very warlike'*.



Louis XIV - Sun King

The composition is scored for five soloists (SSATB) and choir (SATB), accompanied with an instrumental ensemble of 2 nonspecified recorders or flutes, 2 oboes, 2 trumpets (second trumpet in unison with timpani), timpani, 2 violins, 2 violas ("haute-contres de violon" and "tailles de violon") and basso continuo.



Te Deum (Versailles)

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The composition consists of the following parts:

Prelude (Marche en rondeau) Te Deum laudamus (bass solo) Te aeternum Patrem (chorus and SSAT solo) Pleni sunt caeli et terra (chorus) Te per orbem terrarum (trio, ATB) Tu devicto mortis aculeo (chorus, bass solo) Te ergo quaesumus (soprano solo) Aeterna fac cum sanctis tuis (chorus) Dignare, Domine (duo, SB) Fiat misericordia tua (trio, SSB) In te, Domine, speravi (chorus with ATB trio)



Marc-Antoine Charpentier

This Te Deum may reflect the pomp and circumstance which one expects from such a composition. There is also a close connection between text and music. The triple "Sanctus" causes the use of three solo voices and so does the reference to the Trinity in the fifth section (Te per orbem terrarum). "Pleni sunt coeli" (Heaven and earth are full of the majesty of Thy glory) is obviously set for the *tutti*. The intimate prayer "Te ergo quaesumus" (We therefore pray Thee) is given to a solo soprano.

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Charpentier (European Broadcasting Union) Royale de Versailles)