Marc-Antoine Charpentier – Messe a Six Voix et Symphonie 'Asumpta est Maria' (1953)

1. Kyrie 2. Gloria 3. Credo (début) 4. Credo (fin) 5. Sanctus 6. Antienne « In odorem unguentorum » pour les vępres de l'Assomption de la Vierge, H. 51 7. Agnus Dei   Martha Angelici (soprano) Solange Michel (alto) Jeannine Collard (alto) Jean Archimbaud (haute-contre) Jean Giraudeau (ténor) Louis Noguera (basse)   Chorale des Jeunesses Musicales de France Ensemble instrumental non identifié Henriette Roget (orgue) Louis Martini (direction)

Missa Assumpta est Maria, the last of Charpentier's many mass settings, written about 1700, is considered his greatest work in the genre, and this splendid recording by Hervé Niquet supports that assessment. The mass offers further evidence that Charpentier, whose music was virtually unknown except to scholars until the late twentieth century, deserves a spot in the pantheon of the most exceptional Baroque composers. His music was controversial during his lifetime, and he wrote of his discouragement that he had as many vociferous detractors as supporters. What is most striking to modern listeners is probably the transparent emotion expressed in his music, which gives it an extraordinarily modern sensibility. He is best known for his noble and often achingly poignant religious works, but his secular love songs dazzle with their simplicity and unmannered charm, and other works reveal a wicked wit.

This mass is notable for the warmth of Charpentier's choral and vocal writing, which often has an intensity and harmonic richness that practically give it a Romantic character, particularly in movements like Et incarnatus, from the Credo. ---Stephen Eddins, Rovi

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