

Puccini - *Messa Di Gloria* (Pappano) [2001]

Written by bluesever

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1 *Preludio Sinfonico for Orchestra, Op.1* 2 *Kyrie: Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth.* 3 *Gloria in excelsis Deo - In terra pax - Laudamus te: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 4 *Gratias agimus tibi: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 5 *Gloria in excelsis Deo - Dominus Deus, rex coelestis: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 6 *Qui tollis peccata mundi -: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 7 *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 8 *Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris - Gloria in excelsis Deo: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Gloria* 9 *Credo in unum Deum: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 10 *Et incarnatus est: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 11 *Crucifixus etiam pro nobis: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 12 *Et resurrexit tertia die - Et in Spiritum Sanctum: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 13 *Et unam sanctam catholicam -: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 14 *Et expecto resurrectionem - Et vitam venturi saeculi: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Credo* 15 *Sanctus Dominus Deus sabaoth: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Sanctus & Benedictus* 16 *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Sanctus & Benedictus* 17 *Agnus Dei - Agnus Dei tollis peccata mundi: Messa di Gloria, Op.posth., Sanctus & Benedictus* 18 *Crisantemi for string orchestra - London Symphony Orchestra/Antonio Pappano* Roberto Alagna (tenor) Thomas Hampson (baritone) London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra Antonio Pappano – conductor Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, London in September 2000.

This is a stunning disc which goes to demonstrate just what the advocacy of a masterly conductor and equally fine engineers can achieve. Maestro Pappano's obvious belief in lesser-known Puccini seems to have inspired the London Symphony Chorus and Orchestra to the peak of their abilities.

The idea of a disc of Puccini wrested away from his beloved opera stage might seem a strange, even slightly disquieting, one. Persevere: this is an eye-opening excursion.

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The Preludio sinfonico in A major of 1882 is an examination piece from the Milan Conservatory, but heard on its own terms it becomes a real find. It is powerfully emotive and the LSO's phrasing under Pappano is supremely sensitive, every inch the equal of Muti's 1997 La Scala performance (Sony SK63025). Crisantemi of 1890 provided material for Act Four of Manon Lescaut. Pappano ensures it receives the tenderest possible performance.

Puccini's first forays into composition were of a predominantly religious bent, and it was their success which inspired him to study at Milan. The Messa a quattro voci (or Messa di Gloria) in A flat of 1880 is on a fairly extended scale and there is no doubting the young Puccini's ambition. If bits sound familiar, they should: there are correspondences with Edgar and also the Madrigal from Act Two of Manon Lescaut.

The fugue at the end of the 'Gloria' (at 'Cum sancto spiritu') brings out a less familiar side of this composer. It is superbly performed here, the London Symphony Chorus giving it every inch of life they have got and, most importantly, delineating the lines and textures triumphantly (it could all so easily become muddy). In fact, the choir carry this performance to bring it to the powerful experience it becomes, from the half-toned basses of the 'Crucifixus' to the peace of 'Et incarnatus est'. They even manage to instill a certain dignity to the main theme of the 'Gloria': quite a feat, as it happens (it is far too jolly for its own good).

Thomas Hampson is by far the better of the two soloists (listen to his beautifully focussed contribution to the 'Benedictus'). Alagna, by contrast, is the only blot on this landscape. He gives out too much in the 'Gratias agimus tibi', destroying the delicate balance of the woodwind, and swoops his way through 'Et incarnatus est'. Everything else in this performance falls beautifully into place, unfortunately throwing Alagna's shortcomings into sharp relief. The solo passages are not extensive, however, and this is not enough to preclude a recommendation. ---Colin Clarke, musicweb-international.com

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