

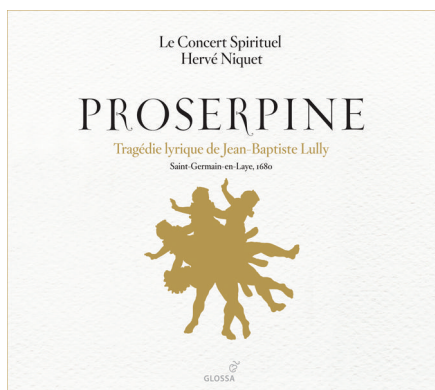
GCD 921615

New release information

July 2008

Jean-Baptiste Lully

Proserpine



Jean-Baptiste Lully
Proserpine
 Tragédie lyrique
 Saint-Germain-en-Laye, 1680

Le Concert Spirituel
Hervé Niquet
 Proserpine: Salomé Haller
 La Paix: Bénédicte Tauran
 Cérès: Stéphanie d'Oustrac
 Aréthuse, Cyané: Blandine Staskiewicz
 La Victoire: Hjórdís Thébault
 Alphée: Cyril Auvity
 Mercure: François-Nicolas Geslot
 Ascalaphe: Benoît Arnould
 Jupiter, Crinise: Marc Labonnette
 La Discorde: Pierre-Yves Pruvot
 Pluton: Joao Fernandes

Programme

Proserpine
 Tragédie lyrique de Jean-Baptiste Lully

CD I [75:25]
 Prologue
 Acte Premier
 Acte Deuxième (Scènes 1-7)

CD II [76:55]
 Acte Deuxième (Scènes 8-9)
 Acte Troisième
 Acte Quatrième
 Acte Cinquième

Production details

2 CDs in slipcase, 132-page booklet

Recorded in Versailles and Poissy in September 2006 and November 2007
 Engineered by Manuel Mohino
 Produced by Dominique Daigremont
 Executive producer: Carlos Céster

Design: Valentín Iglesias (00:03:00)
 Booklet essay: Benoît Dratwicki (CMBV)
 English Français Español Deutsch



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NOTES (ENG)

Hervé Niquet's long-term project to breathe new life into the French Baroque operatic tradition yields another exciting new discovery with the *tragédie lyrique* composed by Jean-Baptiste Lully in 1680, *Proserpine*. Following a three year gap in their collaboration, Jean-Baptiste Lully and librettist Philippe Quinault had reunited to create *Proserpine*, a reflection of the increasing maturity of Lully as a composer as much as the mastery of Quinault in penning lyrical dramas centred on mythological stories. Three centuries after the first performance in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Hervé Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel pay tribute to the genius of Lully with a new recording of *Proserpine* made just after stagings in both Paris and Versailles. *Proserpine* helps to place in context the two other *tragédies* recently released by Niquet and his team – Destouches' *Callirhoé* and Marais' *Sémélé*, both written a generation after Lully's masterpiece. Together with a cast of top soloists well-versed in the demands of French Baroque singing and with his incomparable Le Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet once more conjures up a dramatic feast.

NOTIZEN (DEU)

Mit der aufregenden Entdeckung der im Jahr 1680 komponierten *Proserpine*, *Tragédie lyrique* von Jean-Baptiste Lully, trägt Hervé Niquets Langzeitprojekt zur Wiederbelebung der Tradition der französischen Barockoper abermals Früchte. Nach einer dreijährigen Unterbrechung ihrer Zusammenarbeit fanden Jean-Baptiste Lully und der Librettist Philippe Quinault wieder zueinander, um die Oper *Proserpine* zu schaffen, die Lullys zunehmende Reife als Komponist ebenso widerspiegelt wie die Meisterschaft Quinaults beim Verfassen lyrischer Dramen über mythologische Sujets. Im direkten Anschluss an Bühnenaufführungen in Paris und Versailles drei Jahrhunderte nach ihrer Uraufführung in Saint-Germain-en-Laye zollen Hervé Niquet und Le Concert Spirituel dem Genius Lullys mit einer Neueinspielung der *Proserpine* Tribut. Mit Hilfe dieser Aufnahme fällt es leichter, zwei weitere *Tragédies* im Kontext zu sehen, die Niquet und sein Ensemble vor kurzem aufgenommen haben: Destouches' *Callirhoé* und Marais' *Sémélé* – beide entstanden eine Generation nach Lullys Meisterwerk. Zusammen mit einer Besetzung erstklassiger Solisten, die mit den Anforderungen der Gesangstechnik im französischen Barock bestens vertraut sind, und dem unvergleichlichen Concert Spirituel, lässt Hervé Niquet abermals ein dramatisches Fest vor den Ohren der Zuhörer entstehen.

NOTES (FRA)

Réalisant, d'une merveille à l'autre, son projet à long terme de donner une nouvelle vie à la tradition opératique de la France baroque, Hervé Niquet fait la découverte fascinante de la tragédie lyrique composée par Jean-Baptiste Lully en 1680, *Proserpine*. Après une parenthèse de trois ans, Jean-Baptiste Lully et Philippe Quinault reprennent leur collaboration pour créer *Proserpine*, une œuvre qui reflète non seulement la maturité atteinte par le compositeur mais encore l'art absolu du poète façonnant un drame lyrique inspiré de la mythologie. Trois siècles après la création de l'œuvre à Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Hervé Niquet et Le Concert Spirituel célèbrent le génie de Lully dans ce nouvel enregistrement de *Proserpine*, réalisé dans l'élan des représentations de Paris et Versailles. *Proserpine* permet d'autre part de mieux replacer dans leur contexte les deux autres tragédies récemment enregistrées par Hervé Niquet et son équipe – *Callirhoé* de Destouches et *Sémélé* de Marin Marais – écrites une génération après le chef-d'œuvre de Lully. Entouré par des merveilleux solistes rompus aux exigences du chant baroque français et par son incomparable Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet nous convie à ces nouvelles fêtes de la dramaturgie.

NOTAS (ESP)

El proyecto a largo plazo de Hervé Niquet, que pretende insuflar nueva vida a la tradición operística de la Francia barroca, ha dado nuevos frutos con esta grabación de la *tragédie lyrique* compuesta por Jean-Baptiste Lully en 1680, *Proserpine*. Tras un paréntesis de tres años en su colaboración, Lully y el libretista Philippe Quinault consiguen reflejar en esta obra tanto la madurez del compositor como la maestría del escritor a la hora de crear dramas líricos de tema mitológico. Más de trescientos años había dormido esta ópera en los archivos después de su estreno en Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Y ahora Hervé Niquet y su equipo, tras los reestrenos de París y Versalles en 2006, han plasmado en disco el prólogo y los cinco actos de los que consta esta genial obra del Superintendente – y ya es la tercera *tragédie en musique* que ve la luz en el contexto de este proyecto de recuperación tan especial, tras *Callirhoé* de Destouches y *Sémélé* de Marais, dos óperas nacidas una generación después de *Proserpine*. Al lado de un plantel de solistas de primerísimo nivel, profundos conocedores de las exigencias del canto barroco francés, y del siempre espléndido Concert Spirituel, Hervé Niquet vuelve a regalarnos un festín dramático inolvidable.

Lully's *Proserpine*: a model for the *tragédie lyrique*



Taking a leading role in the revival of *tragédies lyriques* (or *tragédies en musique*), the best of the French Baroque opera tradition, is a long, daunting (and expensive) challenge but one which Hervé Niquet has been keen to accept. Present as a singer in the chorus of Les Arts Florissants in 1987 when William Christie put on Lully's *Atys*, Niquet formed his own ensemble, Le Concert Spirituel that same year. Since that time he has balanced his own endeavours to stage (and record) key French *tragédies* with his other musical interests, which extend from Monteverdi to Purcell and Handel (soon to be reissued – now on SACD – is Niquet's recording of the *Fireworks* and *Water Music* suites) right the way through to later composers such as Schumann, Gounod and d'Indy.

Niquet's latest incursion into French Baroque opera comes with Lully's prologue and five-act *Proserpine*, joining Destouches' *Callirhoé* and Marais' *Sémélé* (both works premiered over three decades after that of Lully's): a group which Glossa has been releasing in elegant editions over the last three years, with the French-language editions appearing in an expanded book/recording format, complete with additional essays. And, additionally, the recordings have all followed on from performances of the works, especially at the Opéra de Montpellier where Le Concert Spirituel is currently in residence. The earlier recording of the opera *Daphnis et Chloé* by Boismortier will shortly also be joining this series and Hervé Niquet has his sights set on more *tragédies lyriques* to perform and record.

All this attention to the *tragédie lyrique* is neither hindering nor diluting Hervé Niquet's fascination with the choral music of Marc-Antoine Charpentier and admirers of his approach will be heartened to know that another recording is soon due to be made. Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel are also touring a recreation of a French Requiem Office whose centrepiece is the five-voice *Requiem* by the rather unknown Pierre Bouteiller. From the early Baroque in France to its sibling in England is but a light step for Hervé Niquet, who will be reprising his earlier production of Henry Purcell's *King Arthur* across the coming year (performances in Montpellier, Luxembourg, Paris and London's Barbican Centre – as part of the Purcell, Handel and Haydn Celebration next May – have already been lined up.

As a hectic summer and autumn awaits Hervé Niquet we caught up with him in Paris.

How does Lully's *Proserpine* form part of your efforts to help revive the French baroque operatic tradition?

Although the three works which we have recorded recently are very different, I wanted to show that they respond to the same general plan. Performing and recording *Proserpine* was an important opportunity for Le Concert Spirituel to do an opera by Lully. As well as being the earliest, *Proserpine* is definitely a typical French *tragédie en musique*, complete with a mythological story: it became the model for other composers for more than 60-70 years. Everybody in the audience in its day would know their mythology, so the stories of these works would need no explanation. In any case, the most important thing for such audiences was to be at the opera house and to feel the mood and the magical atmosphere created by the incredible machinery, music, singers, choreography.

When Destouches wrote *Callirhoé* he was actually not very prudent with the audience because although he chose to compose a *tragédie en musique* with all its ingredients, he subverted this scheme (while respecting the basic plan). *Callirhoé* was more a bloody drama than a mythology-based piece – there are just three people in the plot and it could almost be a slice of contemporary life. A big surprise for the audience of the time. That is why this piece was such an incredible discovery for me. Conversely, Marais' *Sémélé* is a 'comfortable' tragedy – there is a drama but at the same time there is pleasant choreography, attractive paintings and costumes; a thoroughly decent musical, if you like. So with these three works you have many surprises: it is strange to find in the same vase so many different flowers!

I myself love old things from the past: furniture, chairs, paintings, houses and, naturally, music. For the first time in 300 years we have been able to experience these *tragédies en musique*, a very exciting situation, and we also learn so much by putting into practice all the musicological discoveries from over the least fifty years. The whole process of staging and recording them is organic, even down to the way the performers move and breathe – the new life that is created explains for me many things that I needed to know about this period.

These days, in opera houses, Handel and Vivaldi appear to have displaced French operas. Why do you think this is?

It basically comes down to a question of money; there is more chance of filling your theatre if on your poster you write 'Handel' or 'Vivaldi'. That is the reason why we have been trying to make recordings of *tragédies en musique*. Alas, it is not enough because when opera producers see that you need to have five principals and four or five performers for secondary roles and a big choir and a big ballet and machinery, they say it is all too expensive. Maybe it is true also that French music needs more work or greater understanding on the part of the audience to appreciate the story lines, but I think that opera producers need to show more courage as well. The form that these *tragédies en musique* represent is considered to be more difficult

than the *da capo* aria kind of opera, but this is strange for me to appreciate because these Italian operas are so boring: A-B-A then A-B-A again, then A-B-A again! And no chorus, and no dance... I find it strange also because French *tragédies* are closer to Broadway musicals than are Italian operas and I don't understand why the audience prefers the comfort of the melody of Handel or Vivaldi. Of course, they are very good pieces – their composers were geniuses – but for me it is so boring. So, we have also been trying to issue these *tragédies en musique* in a deluxe book/recording format. At the moment selling recordings is very difficult but we have that this mixed format transforms the way of buying music. It is a big success in France – we sell all the recordings that we press – because everybody wants to have the books as well as the recordings. A very good idea and one that is very good for the French *tragédie en musique*.

Is the sacred music of the French early Baroque, especially that of Marc-Antoine Charpentier, still a driving force for you and Le Concert Spirituel?

Indeed, Charpentier's music is so physical – it is a question of bodies, minds and pleasure – and my whole team adores it. For a group like ours it is an extremely important house of repertoire since Charpentier created so many different solutions for us: pieces with singers only, with instruments only, large and small forces, male voices only, female voices only... And what is more, you know that he is a real composer: you need to hear only three bars of Charpentier to know that it is him. Like Debussy, Ravel or Brahms, for example. Our next recording of Charpentier will have the *Missa Assumpta est Maria* as its centrepiece, a really attractive work, which we have performed extensively in concert, but I am also very excited about the *Requiem* of Pierre Bouteiller, which we are currently touring. Although an unknown work, it is a diamond, an incredible jewel of our culture.

You are also reviving your production of a stage work from around the same time, but from a different country: Purcell's *King Arthur*. What is the attraction of Purcell's music for you?

I love the theatre, and we now have an opportunity to perform *King Arthur* again and theatrically, explaining the drama with music and actors – using a completely crazy staging that we have come up with! In the same way as with the *tragédies en musique* in France, *King Arthur* is like a Broadway musical (Purcell could even have been a composer for films). I love this improbable mixture of drama, music, dance and comic effects. The reason why Purcell's music is so exciting is that he had a huge flair for drama and like all geniuses he didn't need a lot of space to demonstrate this; that is why you can see this genius at work not just in an extended semi-opera like *King Arthur* but in his short incidental pieces which contributed to the many Restoration plays.

Mark Wiggins
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