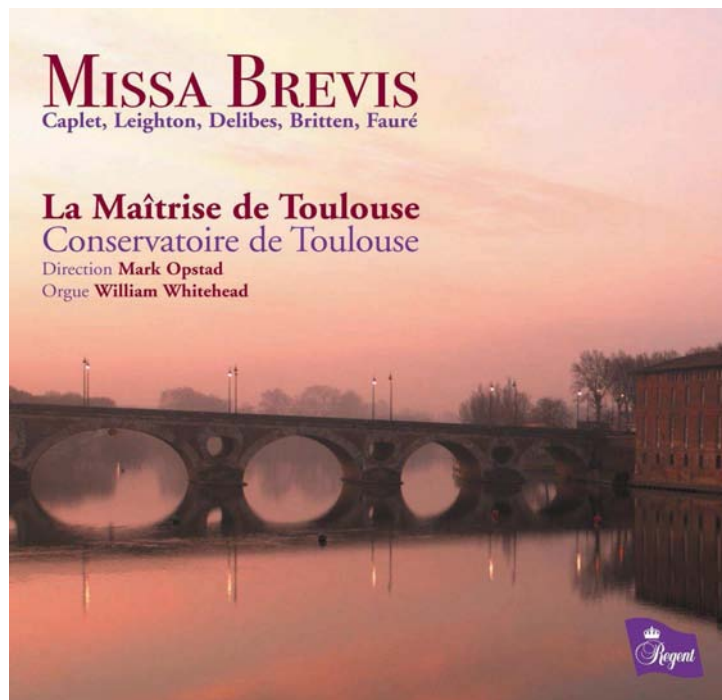


La Maîtrise de Toulouse
Conservatoire de Toulouse
Direction Mark Opstad

CD 'Missa Brevis'
REGCD340

revue de presse



La Maîtrise de Toulouse fut créée en 2006 au sein du Conservatoire de Toulouse sous la direction du chef de chœur britannique Mark Opstad.

En 2010 le chœur a enregistré son premier CD 'Missa Brevis' (Regent Records) des messes de trois compositeurs français : André Caplet (Messe à trois voix), Léo Delibes (Messe brève), Gabriel Fauré (Messe basse) et deux compositeurs anglais : Benjamin Britten (Missa Brevis) et le premier enregistrement du Missa Cornelia de Kenneth Leighton.

Depuis sa sortie ce CD a suscité beaucoup d'intérêt : de nombreuses critiques élogieuses (quatre et cinq étoiles) ont été publiées dans la presse musicale française, britannique et américaine.

Par ailleurs, le chœur et son CD ont été le sujet de l'émission de la BBC radio classique 'The Choir'. Des extraits du CD ont également été entendus sur France Musique.

www.maitrise.crr.toulouse.fr

www.markopstad.com

www.conservatoirerayonnementregional.toulouse.fr

www.regentrecords.com

(mensuel musical, septembre 2011)

Missa brevis

Ψ Ψ Ψ Ψ Ψ Caplet : Messe à trois voix. **Leighton** : Missa Cornelia op. 81. **Delibes** : Messe brève. **Britten** : Missa brevis. **Fauré** : Messe basse.

Maîtrise de Toulouse, William Whitehead (orgue), Mark Opstad. Regent REGCD340. Ø 2010. TT : 1h 11'.

Technique : 3/5



Une maîtrise de conservatoire française peut-elle rivaliser, chez Fauré ou Britten, avec des *college* ou *cathedral choirs* anglais ? La preuve que oui, avec le premier disque de la maîtrise créée en 2006 au sein du conservatoire de Toulouse par le Britannique Mark Opstad. Va-t-on pour autant confondre les bords de la Garonne avec les rives de la Cam ? Certes non. L'ensemble toulousain est mixte, un peu plus garni (une

vingtaine de collégiens) que la plupart des chœurs de garçons anglais, et n'a pas de contre-ténors pour explorer la tessiture d'alto - d'où quelques sonorités endurcies et poitrinées émanant de voix manifestement trop sollicitées dans le grave. Mais justement, la culture sonore du chef et les caractéristiques propres de son effectif se conjuguent pour susciter un bel équilibre entre une quête de lumière et de finesse dans l'aigu typiquement anglais et la rondeur fruitée des timbres, qui vient largement d'ailleurs. Ces qualités, ajoutées à d'autres (stabilité de l'émission, discours animé et structuré en plans de nuances cohérents, musicalité), nous enchantent dans les raffinements mélismatiques de Caplet (*Messe à trois voix*).

On découvre avec intérêt la *Missa Cornelia* de Leighton (1929-1988), dont c'est la première gravure. Les maîtrisiens semblent chez eux dans ces harmonies subtiles et complexes, ce rythme induit par le texte, ce contrepoint souple puisant aux meilleures sources de la Renaissance. Décidément à l'aise dans le répertoire britannique, les Toulousains signent une *Missa brevis* de Britten très en beauté, assez flamboyante et virtuose, où passe même un peu de l'espièglerie si distinguée du compositeur.

Peut-être parce qu'elles nous surprennent moins, la modeste *Messe brève* de Delibes et la rebattue *Messe basse* de Fauré semblent en deçà du reste du programme - et certains des sons ici exposés en deçà des notes parfois... Problème d'intonation banal chez des voix d'enfants, dont le charme dissipe bien des scories. Il faudra suivre ce chef et ce chœur, promesses que le renouveau maîtrisien initié il y a un quart de siècle en France n'a pas dit son dernier mot.

Benoît Fauchet

(bi-mensuel musical, mars, avril 2011)

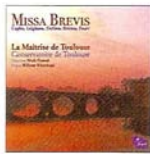
MISSA BREVIS (CAPLET, LEIGHTON, DELIBES, BRITTEN, FAURÉ)

Maîtrise de Toulouse, Conservatoire de Toulouse, William

Whitehead (org) / Mark Opstad (dir)

Regent REGCD 340 [71:11]

★★★★



This premiere recording from the Toulouse-based children's choir under their founder-director augurs well for an ensemble only created in 2006.

Drawn from a specialist music school attached to the Toulouse Conservatoire, these choristers

make light work of this fascinating programme of short Masses, three French and two British. The latter includes a satisfactory account of the well-known Britten *Missa Brevis* in D of 1959 and a welcome first recording of Leighton's highly attractive *Missa Cornelia*. Only in the latter does Leighton's use of English cause difficulties; elsewhere the Latin texts are delivered in exemplary fashion. Among the French items, Caplet's three-voiced Mass for unaccompanied voices is impressive, both as a composition and for the performance Opstad elicits from his youthful performers.

PHILIP REED

« ... ces maîtrisiens interprètent aisément ce programme fascinant...

...la messe de Caplet à trois voix à capella est impressionnante, en tant qu'œuvre tout d'abord mais également du fait de l'interprétation que Opstad obtient de ses jeunes chanteurs. »

(mensuel musical, avril 2011)

Caplet, Delibes, Leighton, Fauré, Britten ★★★★★

Short Masses

La Maîtrise de Toulouse, William Whitehead
(org)/Opstad

CHORAL REGENT RECORDS REGCD340



The Music Missa brevis means short mass. Britten's was written for continental voices such as the performers here. Fauré's and Delibes' settings are tuneful and Caplet's is the only one without organ. Leighton's gets its first recording.

The Performance Formed in 2006 by English organist Mark Opstad, this mixed boy-girl French choir makes a vigorous, refreshing sound on its debut CD. The voices are full of enthusiastic stresses in the Britten, digging out his staccato *Benedictus* with robotic enthusiasm. In the *Agnus Dei*, the car-horn organ inspires a gush of melody. So too in the Caplet; the opening phrase climbs and dives

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as gracefully as a returning swallow. They revel in the melodic inspiration of the Fauré. Tuning is excellent throughout, soloists have characterful voices and only a few barely audible blemishes at entry points mar the overall performance. British organist Whitehead never outplays the voices.

The Verdict The French are coming. Up till now, they've produced great music, beautiful organs and brilliant organists. Now here's the (English-trained) choir to match. Allez France!

WANT MORE? Try Britten's cantata *St Nicholas*, in the composer's own Decca recording (425 7142).

RICK JONES



On song: the Toulouse choristers

« ... *Ce chœur français mixte, garçons et filles, produit sur son premier CD un timbre vigoureux et rafraichissant...*

...Ils excellent dans l'inspiration mélodique de Fauré...

...La justesse est excellente tout au long de l'enregistrement et les solistes ont des voix pleines de caractère... »

Gramophone Magazine (Grande Bretagne)

(mensuel musical, mars 2011)

'Missa brevis'

Britten Missa brevis **Caplet** Messe à trois voix
Delibes Messe brève **Fauré** Messe basse
Leighton Missa Cornelia, Op 81
Maîtrise de Toulouse; Conservatoire de Toulouse
/ Mark Opstad with William Whitehead *org*
Regent © REGCD340 (71' • DDD)

French choristers are fresh and unaffected in five short Masses



Created in 2006 by the English choral director Mark Opstad, the Maîtrise de Toulouse offers a specialist musical education to young choristers aged 11-15.

The mixed-gender group of 21 singers recorded here is blessed with a fresh, clear, unaffected tone, blending effortlessly, especially in Caplet's unaccompanied three-voice Mass, with its soaring, arched phrases, which float beautifully in the spacious acoustic of Toulouse's neo-Gothic Temple du Salin.

Of the two other French composers represented here, Delibes's simple but charming *Messe brève* is certainly the equal to Fauré's better-known though more limpid and richly harmonised *Messe basse*. The latter suffers occasionally from some slightly flat intonation despite consistently excellent and solidly helpful support from organist William Whitehead. A special mention should also go

Vocal reviews

to soprano soloist Anaïs Rabary who sings with an affecting maturity and musical sensitivity beyond her years.

The two English works on the disc are Britten's oft-sung *Missa brevis*, composed in 1959 for George Malcolm and his Westminster Cathedral choirboys, and Kenneth Leighton's unaccountably previously unrecorded *Missa Cornelia* of 1980. These young French singers cope admirably with Leighton's English text, with only one or two slightly mangled vowels, and manage to bring out all the dramatic nuances of the Britten, particularly in the striking *Agnus Dei*.

As part of a recent resurgence of interest in youth choral singing across France, this timely disc serves as an important and worthwhile stepping-stone. **Malcolm Riley**

« ...Le groupe mixte de 21 chanteurs enregistré ici est mu par un timbre frais, clair, spontané, parfaitement homogène, surtout dans la messe de Caplet à trois voix a capella, au cours de laquelle les phrases élancées flottent superbement au sein de l'immense acoustique du néo-gothique Temple du Salin à Toulouse.

... Une mention spéciale à Anaïs Rabary, qui chante avec une maturité et une sensibilité musicale bien supérieure à son jeune âge.

... Ces jeunes choristes français réussissent admirablement à chanter le texte anglais du Leighton... et arrivent particulièrement à faire ressortir toutes les nuances dramatiques du Britten, particulièrement dans le remarquable *Agnus Dei*.

Dans le cadre d'un regain d'intérêt porté aux chœurs de jeunes en France, ce disque apporte une importante pierre à l'édifice. »

Fanfare Magazine (Etats Unis)

(mensuel musical, juin 2011)

Mark Opstad: MISSA BREVIS on REGENT

Classical Reviews - Choral

Written by Alan Swanson

Monday, 06 June 2011

MISSA BREVIS • Mark Opstad, cond; William Whitehead (org); Maîtrise de Toulouse • REGENT REGCD 340 (71:11 Text and Translation)

Masses by CAPLET, LEIGHTON, DELIBES, BRITTEN, FAURÉ

A "short Mass" is not really a matter of time, but of text: It normally omits the Creed, the longest of the recurring texts of the Mass. Fauré went further and also omitted the Gloria. André Caplet (1876–1925) wrote his three-part unaccompanied Mass in 1919 for the little Norman village of Saint-Eustache-la-Forêt, but it was apparently first performed in the Saint-Chapelle in Paris three years later. Caplet concludes his Mass with a setting of the hymn *O salutaris hostia*, a medieval text normally found in a different service that turned up in various French Masses through the 19th century, often replacing the Benedictus. Caplet's Mass has real charm and was a surprise to me.

Kenneth Leighton (1929–88) wrote a fair amount of church music. His *Missa Cornelia*, op. 81, comes from 1979 and uses English words, which the children here pronounce almost without accent. This is its first recording and, according to the notes, was the impetus for this disc. William Whitehead's organ accompaniments are suitably English on the relatively new Daldosso organ of the Temple du Salin in Toulouse. It's a fine piece, but perhaps without that edge of surprise that Britten, say, could bring to music for young singers. Leighton was no stranger to the combination of treble voices and organ; there is also *An Easter Sequence* (1969), written with English words but first performed in Paris.

Léo Delibes (1836–91) is known today almost solely as the composer of an opera and a ballet, though he wrote more of each and plenty more music besides. This unpretentious short Mass with its simple, charming melodies is attractive in the best sense of the word. Delibes replaced the Benedictus with *O salutaris hostia*. One of the curious aspects of all the French settings of the Agnus Dei on this program is that the rather penitential words are so warmly melodic.

This is quite a contrast with the darkness Benjamin Britten (1913–76) saw there in his 1959 setting, with the threatening iterated seconds in 5/4 time of the Agnus Dei. This setting never fails to grab the attention of children who sing it, and the notes affirm that such was the case here, as well. One of Britten's great gifts to young performers was to make the form absolutely clear to them as they performed. This is true here from the Kyrie to the end; this is also the least-French Mass on the program and it gets a fine, spirited performance.

The even shorter short Mass of Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) is frequently heard, though never in its original 1881 form, with the Kyrie and an *O salutaris* by André Messager. When the Mass came to be published in 1907, the publisher removed these pieces and Fauré wrote a new Kyrie. Fauré's graceful melodies remain in the ear afterward and, following the acerbic sounds of Britten's Mass, this comes as a soothing finish to the program. (As far as I can tell, no one has risked recording this Mass on the optional—and, as I understand it, original—harmonium instead of the organ.)

As we know from Mozart, among others, *Missa Brevis* need not imply high voices, but it has proven an attractive disposition for many composers, as we can see here. La Maîtrise de Toulouse, founded in 2006, is a children's chorus associated with the music conservatory in that French city. It consists here of 21 treble voices and, though still a new ensemble, it is clear that Mark Opstad, their director, has brought them quickly into good form for their first recording. Regent has given them a clean if slightly distant sound. For those interested in something different in the choral repertory, this recording can be recommended. Alan Swanson

« ...Malgré la jeunesse de cet ensemble, il est évident que Mark Opstad, leur directeur, les a très vite amenés à un niveau musical élevé pour leur premier enregistrement ... Cet enregistrement peut être recommandé ».

0 tweet

La Maitrise de Toulouse - Missa Brevis



STYLE: Choral
RATING: ■■■■■■■■□
OUR PRODUCT CODE: 105700-
LABEL: Regent REGCD340
FORMAT: CD Album
ITEMS: 1

This product is currently not available from Cross Rhythms Direct

Reviewed by Steven Whitehead

This CD is the first commercial release from La Maitrise de Toulouse, an outstanding French children's choir founded and directed by the English choral director Mark Opstad and funded by the French government so that some children can receive a "choir school" education and musical training. In a generous 71 minutes we get five Masses, three from France and two from England, and all for upper voices. The singing is excellent with fine accompaniment by the distinguished award-winning British organist William Whitehead (who, for the record, is not related to this reviewer). The acoustic of Le Temple du Salin in Toulouse suits the voices very well indeed and, yet again, producer/engineer Gary Cole has done a superb job. The three French Masses are "Messe a Trois Voix" by Andre Caplet (1878-1925), "Messe Breve" by Leo Delibes (1836-1891), and the ever-popular "Messe Basse" by Gabriel Faure (1845-1924). From our side of the Channel we get a first recording of "Missa Cornelia" by Kenneth Leighton (1929-1988) and "Missa Brevis" by Benjamin Britten (1913-1976). Other than the Leighton the chances are you already have some of these settings but, trust me, the standard of performance on this new release is such that you will not mind hearing whatever you already have once again and the Leighton is well worth investigating. Playing all five straight through was perhaps too much of a good thing but when I returned to them and played one a day over five days I enjoyed them much more.

«... Un chœur d'enfants exceptionnel créé et dirigé par le directeur de chœur anglais Mark Opstad...

Le chant est excellent et très bien accompagné par l'organiste britannique distingué et récompensé, William Whitehead.

L'acoustique du Temple du Salin convient très bien aux voix et, encore une fois, le directeur artistique et technique Gary Cole a fait un travail magnifique.

A part le Leighton, il est probable que vous ayez déjà entendu quelques unes des œuvres, mais croyez-moi, le niveau musical est tel que cela ne vous dérangerait pas de réécouter ce que vous connaissez déjà et l'œuvre de Leighton mérite d'être découverte. »