

Beethoven – Missa Solemnis (2012)

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I Kyrie II Gloria III Credo IV Sanctus V Agnus dei Lucy Crowe – Soprano Jennifer Johnston - Mezzosoprano James Gilchrist - Tenor Matthew Rose – Bass Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique Monteverdi Choir Sir John Eliot Gardiner – Conductor Barbican Hall London , 17. October 2012

John Eliot Gardiner's 1991 Archiv recording of Ludwig van Beethoven's Missa Solemnis in D major, Op. 123, remains a high point of his catalog, but that hasn't prevented him from revisiting this masterpiece. On October 17, 2012, Gardiner led a live radio broadcast from the Barbican in London, and delivered a thrilling performance that has been released by BBC Radio 3. Performed by the Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, and featuring a virtuosic quartet of soprano Lucy Crowe, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnston, tenor James Gilchrist, and bass Matthew Rose, Beethoven's great mass is given a period reading, yet it sounds as robust and assertive as any mainstream interpretation. Gardiner has never been especially delicate in Romantic works, and even though one might think refinement is the hallmark of historically informed performances, he puts enough force and vigor into this rendition to dispose of that notion for good. Tempos are on the fast side, attacks are incisive, and the rhythms are strongly accented, so the music is almost combative in its directness. While this is an exciting Missa Solemnis, above all in the riveting Gloria, it falls a bit short of expressing Beethoven's compassion and humanity in the Kyrie, the Sanctus, and the Agnus Dei. Gardiner's version is clear-headed, if a little severe at times, and it is decidedly bracing, but there are more reflective and moving recordings available. ---Blair Sanderson, Rovi

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