

Stabat Mater – double woodwind, pairs of horns, trumpets and trombones, timpani, percussion, harp and strings – but is here performed with the alternative organ accompaniment. It is a composition in which again is demonstrated, from his training and long experience in Moravia, Tučapský's masterly understanding of how to write for choral forces with great sensitivity and effect. From the opening description of the women preparing the house for the springtime Holy Feast, the soprano solo is a moving account of Mary washing Christ's feet with her tears and drying them with her hair, while the final part conflates the foreseeing of the rending of the veil of the Temple, the agony of the Crucifixion and faith in the Resurrection.

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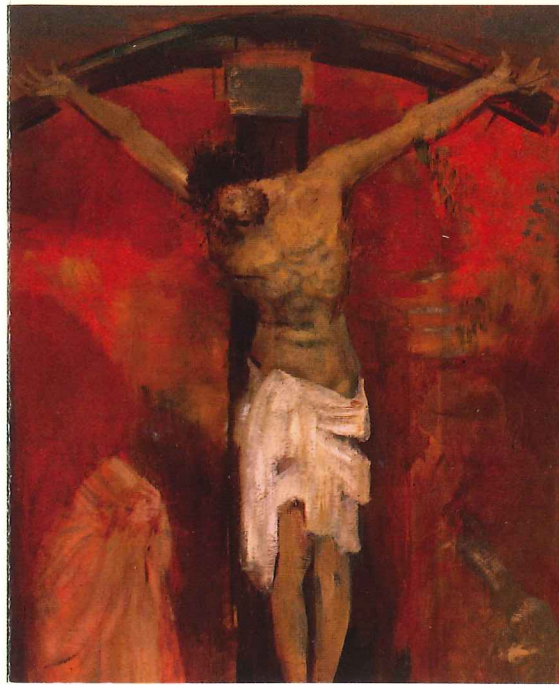
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ANTONÍN TUČAPSKÝ

Premier Recordings



STABAT MATER

Pavla Aunická
Roman Janál

Czech Radio Symphony
Orchestra

Conductor:
Vladimír Válek
Prague Mixed Choir
Director:
Miroslav Košler

Cantata
'MARY MAGDALENE'
Nao Higano
Jan Steyer

Stabat Mater (1989)

Antonín Tučapský was born in Opatovice, near Vyškov, about thirty kilometres north-east of Brno in the Czech Republic, on 27th March 1928. He studied musicology and music education at the university in Brno, graduating in 1951. During that period he undertook parallel studies at the Janáček Academy of Music in choral conducting, as well as studying composition with Jan Kunc, himself a former pupil of Janáček and Novák. After a period as a secondary school teacher, in 1959 Tučapský was appointed as a lecturer at the university in Ostrava. During this period his reputation as a choral trainer and conductor grew, with notable successes with the Children's Choir in Ostrava and particularly with the famous *Pěvecké sdružení moravských učitelů (Moravian Teachers' Male Voice Choir)*, which had been founded in 1903 and already had earned an international reputation. In 1972 Antonín Tučapský met and married the English soprano Beryl Musgrave, then studying at the Music Academy in Prague with Marie Budíková, Czechoslovakia's leading singing teacher of that period. Given the political climate of the time, this cost him his professional posts and life grew more and more difficult for the Tučapskýs. In 1975 they left for London where, after a period mainly as a freelance choral conductor, Antonín Tučapský was appointed professor of composition at Trinity College of Music, where he was to remain until his final retirement in 1997. Although he has lived in London since 1975, his traditionally based and individual compositions remain true to his Moravian origins. His strong choral background has meant a preponderance of vocal works in his output but his instrumental writing equally carries the conviction and character of his music which owes allegiance to no particular school.

The *Stabat Mater* was completed in 1989 to a commission from the Croydon Philharmonic Society, which gave the first performance on 18th November with Catherine Wyn-Rogers (contralto) Brian Rayner-Cook (baritone) and the London Orpheus Orchestra conducted by James Gaddam. Scored for medium sized orchestra and a chorus often divided and sometimes reduced, the writing for both voices and instruments employs no unconventional techniques.

In setting such a well-known religious text, Antonín Tučapský approaches the work from the viewpoint of the human emotions felt in the loss by a mother for her only son, whether as part of the religious ritual or in the trauma felt as adapted to parallel human experience from everyday life. In depicting the individual and personal elements, the composer has not neglected his own emotional response to Mary's grief. Indeed, he recalls that he was deeply affected by the power of the symbolism of such pain in seeing a wood-carving of Mary, with the sword of grief through her heart, in a South Tyrol church. Central to the mood of the work lies the solitude of Mary standing alone in her loss on Calvary when all the others had fled.

Antonín Tučapský's music is his own, without any obvious direct influences but he acknowledges the greatness of settings of the same text by Szymanowski and his own fellow countrymen, Dvořák and Hanuš. He finds each line full of meaning yet, in setting this beautiful and symmetrical text, he does not try to depict it literally, rather finding the mood and meaning as it appears to himself, dividing the work as his own musical feeling determined its form.

The opening solo cor anglais depicts Mary alone, peaceful and motionless, before the chorus sings quietly the opening lines, following the earthquake and panic of the momentous event. Then follows a lament (*O quam tristis*) for contralto solo, accompanied by brighter transparent sounds from celeste and glockenspiel. A violent contrast follows in the agitated and strongly rhythmic *Quis est homo*, the sharp piercing of Mary's heart heard in the semiquaver triplet figures. Men's voices are joined by the women, divided into eight parts, with both soloists commenting before a slow string passage links to the *Eia, Mater*. This brings a happier tranquil mood, with a slow waltz depicting Mary's acceptance of God's will.

The sense of tragedy returns in the *Tui Nati vulnerati*, the gloomy opening chords full of grief rather than morbidity. The alto soloist offers to brighten the gloom. The baritone soloist presents a quiet personal prayer, over a simplified accompaniment, in the *Virgo virginum* and the following *Vae me plagis* develops from the slow waltz of the *Eia, Mater* to regain a sense of consolation and acceptance. Following the climax, the music subsides into the final *Inflammatum*. The opening cor anglais solo is heard again, the chorus returns with rhythmic force, now divided antiphonally, before the tranquil conclusion in a confident A major, confirming the message of hope eternal through the darkest hours.

Cantata: Mary Magdalene (1991)

The cantata *Mary Magdalene* was commissioned for the 1991 Bournemouth International Festival and first performed in the Winter Gardens there on 9th June of that year by Gillian Fisher (soprano), the English Concert Singers, the Bournemouth Sinfonietta Choir, Festival Chorus and Bournemouth Sinfonietta Orchestra, conducted by Roy Wales. The setting is of a poem from Boris Pasternak's *Dr Zhivago* in an English translation by Eugene Kayden. The work is in one continuous movement but divided into three sections, the first for choir and orchestra, followed by a short central section marked *Lento* and introduced by oboe, bassoon and strings (here a suitable oboe reed stop on the organ) for solo soprano (Mary Magdalene) and then a final section for accompanied choir into which the soprano soloist re-enters shortly before the quiet ending. The work was scored originally for an orchestra similar to that of the