

WINCHESTER MUSIC CLUB

J.S.Bach: Magnificat Mozart: Mass in C minor

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ANNE-MARIE CONNORS	Soprano
DAVID CHEETHAM	Alto
MARTYN HILL	Tenor
JULIAN SMITH	Bass

WINCHESTER MUSIC CLUB CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA

FRANCIS WELLS	Leader
ANGUS WATSON	Conductor

Winchester Cathedral

Thursday 3rd March 1977

7.30 p.m.

Magnificat

J.S.Bach

- Chorus:** *Magnificat anima mea* (My Soul doth magnify the Lord)
Soprano 2: *Et exultavit* (And my Spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour)
Soprano 1: *Quia respexit* (For He hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden)
Chorus: *Omnes generationes* (For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed.)
Bass: *Quia fecit mihi magna* (For He that is mighty hath magnified me, and Holy is his name.)
Alto/Tenor: *Et misericordia* (And His mercy is on them that fear him throughout all generations.)
Chorus: *Fecit potentiam* (He hath shewed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.)
Tenor: *Deposuit potentes* (He hath put down the mighty from their seats and hath exalted the humble and meek.)
Alto: *Esurientes implevit bonis* (He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away.)
Sopranos 1/2/Alto: *Suscepit Israel* (He remembering his mercy hath holpen His servant Israel.)
Chorus: *Sicut locutus est* (As He promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed for ever.)
Chorus: *Gloria* (Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.)

Bach composed this Magnificat for Christmas 1723 in Leipzig, finally revising it in its present form in D major in 1730. Although it is of much the same length as his more substantial cantatas, it is in many ways as the same level artistically as the two Passions and Mass in B minor. But of course the subject of the Virgin Mary's song is joy and radiance; and Bach, the universal genius, is just as capable of expressing joy at this transcendental level as is he the anguish of the Passion story. If we are looking for parallels, the Magnificat has most in common with the triumphant D major movements in the Mass in B minor, sharing as it does the same orchestration, crowned and radiant with three trumpets symbolising the angel Gabriel and the Annunciation here, and the Heavenly Hosts' cries of Sanctus! Osanna! in the Mass. As in the Mass too, Bach finds little need for Chorales, apart from the oboes' playing "meine seel erhebt den Herren" as cantus firmus in 'Suscepit Israel'. Although Bach's handling of chorales is one of the wonders of the world, his music does seem to take on a special quality of freedom and jubilation when he is free of them. The chorale, or Lutheran hymn, was after all the simple vehicle of human response, and Bach uses this vehicle with touching and sometimes overwhelming emotional effect in the Passions and cantatas. But the Mass in B minor and the Magnificat he seems to be composing in a world in which human responses have transcended themselves.

INTERVAL

Mass in C minor

Mozart

Mozart composed this Mass in 1782/83 to celebrate his marriage to Constanze Weber. Whether he failed to finish the Mass, or whether some of it was lost is still unknown, but part of the Credo and the whole of the Agnus Dei have either disappeared or were never started. The work remains a masterpiece however, even as a torso.

Various factors contribute to make this work one of Mozart's highest achievements. It was written at a time of great spiritual certainty, when his convictions were not yet affected by the doubts which were later to lead him to freemasonry. It was composed as the result of an inner impulse which could be satisfied by nothing but the best which his art could give. In addition, Mozart had recently been studying the music of Bach and Handel, both of whom had a profound musical impact on him, and had deepened his whole musical outlook. The spiritual exaltation of his religious life, the emotional elation of his marriage, the excitement of the discovery of the music of the two great baroque masters could hardly fail to have an electrifying effect on a composer of his genius. Add to this that he composed one of the solo soprano parts with his wife as a soloist in mind, and the work emerges as a personal monument of the utmost importance.

1. **Kyrie eleison** (*Soprano and Chorus*)

'Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison'.

After a short orchestral introduction and a suppliant cry from the Chorus, an intensely moving double fugue follows, in which the impact of the counterpoint is heightened by Mozart's expressive use of chromaticism. The tension relaxes as the music melts into the relative major for the first soprano solo — 'Christe eleison'. For Christ, 'our advocate with the Father', the style of writing becomes personal and direct; and if the idiom seems operatic, that for Mozart was the most personal and natural medium of expression; for as Professor Dent pointed out, Mozart's music can only be seen properly in the context of his operas. The chorus returns with the double fugue intensified still further.

2. **Gloria**

'Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus'.

Handel in his 'big bow-wow' manner stands behind this exciting chorus. The vigour of the opening contrasts strongly with the expressiveness of the falling phrase 'et in terra pax'.

Laudamus Te The clue to this virtuoso soprano aria is its tempo marking - 'allegro aperto'. The music is fresh and open, free as air and full of vitality. 'Praise', Mozart seems to be saying, 'is unselfconscious and natural, the bubbling over of enthusiasm of man for his Creator'.

Gratias (*Chorus*). To thank however, is a solemn duty — a conscious act of mankind. This sense of formality in the music extends to *Domine Deus, Rex coelestis*, a duet for the two sopranos. It is scored for strings and organ, and is constructed contrapuntally.

In **Qui tollis peccata mundi** (*Chorus*) Mozart resorts, consciously or unconsciously, to the same rhythmic figure Bach uses in the St. Matthew Passion to illustrate the scourging of Christ. The descending chromatic bass, and the reiteration of the Choral phrase indicate the anguish and pain of the Passion.

Quoniam tu solus sanctus (*Trio*). The striking thing about this trio is the fusion of contrapuntal technique and bel canto. Only a Mozart could achieve so successful a balance between two such opposite styles. The Gloria concludes with

Jesu Christe a magnificent introduction, which is followed by

Cum Sancto Spiritu, a four part choral fugue, reminiscent of the finale of the 'Jupiter' Symphony. The movement ends with a blazing unison Amen.

3. **Credo**. The repeated tonic/dominant figure, with which the Credo opens, together with the block choral writing, gives the music a feeling of absolute and stunning conviction.

Et incarnatus est is basically a carol of the utmost simplicity. But like a mediaeval painter of the Nativity in an illuminated manuscript. Mozart frames his subject in wonderful patterns, minute tracteries and glorious colours. This is in fact a concerto movement for flute (used for the only time in the Mass to give a pastoral flavour to the picture), oboe, bassoon, soprano and strings, complete with its own cadenza.

4. **Sanctus**

The Sanctus is portentous and massive. The Chorus drops to piano and the music builds up to a noble climax giving dramatic point to the words 'pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua'. This leads into an ecstatic and jubilant fugue, Osanna in excelsis.

5. **Benedictus**

The coda of the fugue returns for the second time after the quartet Benedictus, and the Mass ends on a note of joy.

Angus Watson

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