

Nantwich Choral Society

MOZART

MASS IN C MINOR : K 427

MASS IN C MAJOR : K 317
(CORONATION)

NANTWICH SINFONIA
Leader: Ralph Chadwick

Catrin Ley, soprano
Sarah Wright, soprano
Alice Wakefield, contralto
Peter Smith, tenor
Kieron McNiff, bass

conducted by
Stephen Buckman

SATURDAY 7th APRIL 1990

The Parish Church of St. Mary, Nantwich
at 7.30 p.m.

— PROGRAMME —

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

(1756 - 1791)

Coronation Mass
K 317

Kyrie
Gloria
Church Sonata in C, K 329
Credo
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

Great Mass in C Minor
K 427

Kyrie
Gloria (Gloria, Laudamus te, Gratias,
Domine Deus, Qui tollis, Quoniam,
Jesu Christe, Cum Sancto Spiritu)
Credo (Credo, Et incarnatus est)
Sanctus
Benedictus

Mozart : Coronation Mass, K 317
Church Sonata, K 329

All of Mozart's completed mass-settings were written between 1768 and 1780 while he was living in Salzburg. The Coronation Mass, K 317 is the last but one of these and is dated 23 March 1779. It was probably composed for a service held each year in the Cathedral on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost to celebrate the miraculous crowning of an image of the Virgin which had occurred in the pilgrimage church of Maria-Plain near Salzburg in 1744.

Although the orchestra at Salzburg Cathedral was only a small one, it could be augmented with extra wind instruments and timpani for special services such as this one, but the number of string players available was quite limited, and so to redress the balance - particularly in loud passages - Mozart often writes for the two violin parts in unison or octaves. Another consequence of the size of the string band is that there were no violas and so none of Mozart's music for the cathedral contains a separate viola part. If there were any viola players present, or if the music were later used at another church, the violas would simply have used a bass part, playing an octave higher where necessary. (As we have violas in the orchestra tonight for the C Minor Mass, we have adopted this practice for the music in the first half of the concert.)

Since the Archbishop of Salzburg had decreed that Mass at the cathedral must not last more than three-quarters of an hour, the Coronation Mass is remarkably compact and Mozart sets the two longest sections (the Gloria and the Credo) as continuous movements. The Gloria is similar in form to the first movement of a classical symphony and the Credo is a rondo with two contrasting episodes for the solo quartet. In the Agnus Dei however, Mozart allows himself the luxury of an extended solo for the soprano, foreshadowing the Countess's aria "Dove sono?" in The Marriage of Figaro. This leads into the final section of the mass ("dona nobis pacem") and a return to the music of the middle of the Kyrie which is then taken up by the choir in a lively conclusion.

Mozart's Epistle or Church Sonatas were, like his masses, written for use in Salzburg Cathedral where it was traditional to have a piece of music played between the Epistle and the Gospel reading. Most are scored just for organ solo and strings (again without violas), but a few call for larger forces. The Sonata in C, K 329 was written at the same time, in the same key and has the same orchestration as the Coronation Mass and was therefore almost certainly intended for use in the same service. Its festive mood certainly fits such an occasion, and tonight it is being played at the appropriate point in the Mass, between the Gloria and the Credo.

— INTERVAL —

Mozart: Great Mass in C minor, K 427

Mozart began work on the C minor Mass in Vienna towards the end of 1782, a few months after his marriage (despite his father's opposition) to the singer Constanze Weber. Mozart's father disapproved of Constanze and was probably afraid that she would have a bad effect on his son's work. So, to prove him wrong and show his father what sublime music she could inspire, Mozart promised to perform a new mass when the couple first went to visit him in Salzburg.

He must have wanted Constanze to make a good impression on this occasion and the solo soprano part in the C minor Mass, with its extraordinarily wide compass and range of styles, was clearly intended to display all her skills as a singer. The ravishing "Christe eleison", for example, must surely have softened even Leopold Mozart's heart.

Freed from the restrictions of his old employer, the Archbishop, Mozart conceived the new mass on a grand scale, and when the couple arrived in Salzburg (rather belatedly) in August 1783, he had finished only the Kyrie and Gloria and had just begun work on the Credo. By the time the mass was performed in St. Peter's Church, he had added a Sanctus and Benedictus but no Agnus Dei. The Credo (which is not always liturgically necessary) still consisted only of two incomplete sections and so this was omitted. Sadly, Mozart did no more work on the C minor Mass and it was never performed again during his lifetime, although he later re-used the music of the Kyrie and Gloria in the cantata Davidde Penitente.

If marriage awoke in Mozart the deep religious feeling so evident in the C minor Mass, it was his recent study of Baroque music which provided him with a suitable means of expression. As Constanze was the inspiration for the solo sections, so the spirit of Bach and Handel can be felt in the great choruses.

The tragic outer sections of the Kyrie (reminiscent of Bach's B minor Mass) are separated by the soprano's radiant and consoling "Christe eleison". The Gloria begins in a burst of joy, falling to a hushed, expectant "Et in terra pax". In the "Laudamus te" (usually given nowadays to the second soprano soloist) we have a coloratura aria straight from the world of Italian opera, whose virtuosity would not be at all out of place in the first movement of an instrumental concerto. In the "Gratias" which follows, the five-part chorus solemnly declaims the text against a pointedly rhythmic figure in the strings (a device often used by Handel). The "Domine Deus", which brings the two sopranos together in a competitive display of leaps and runs, is followed by another solemn Handelian chorus, this time for double choir with a relentless dotted rhythm in the strings. The "Quoniam" is, like the earlier solo aria and duet, in a more modern (though for Mozart, still old-fashioned) Italian style. The brief "Jesu Christe" introduces a rigorous double-fugue to end the Gloria, whose two contrasting subjects are set to the words "Cum Sancto Spiritu" and "in gloria Dei Patris, Amen".

The first section of the Credo is a robustly ceremonious chorus with alternating fanfare motifs for the strings and the wind. The following aria "Et incarnatus est" includes concertante parts for flute, oboe and bassoon and even has a fully written-out cadenza for the four soloists. (Where some of the wind and upper string parts of these two movements are missing, they have been completed for this performance, based on the edition by the musicologist, H.C. Robbins Landon.)

The grandiose splendour of the "Sanctus" is followed by a lively double-fugue for double chorus in the "Osanna". The "Benedictus", an extended setting for all four soloists, is similar in mood to the "Quoniam" and uses melodic material from the "Osanna". This leads straight into a brief recapitulation of the "Osanna" itself, with which the work (or at least the "noble tonso", as Alfred Einstein described the C minor Mass) ends.

Notes by Colin Bromelow

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

30th June	7.30 p.m.	Poulenc	Gloria
Nantwich Parish Church		Puccini	Messa di Gloria

28th July	7.30 p.m.	Concert of Popular Choral Classics	
Shugborough Hall, Staffordshire			