

Mozart - Kraus - Vranicky: The Vienna Connection: *Great Mass in C Minor*

JOSEPH MARTIN KRAUS (1756–1792) was lauded by his contemporaries Joseph Haydn and Gluck as an ‘original genius.’ A talented composer, a prolific correspondent, and published author who during his youth produced a volume of poetry and one of the few music aesthetic treatises that can be associated with the literary *Sturm und Drang* movement.

After two years of study at the University of Göttingen, Kraus accepted a proposition to travel to Sweden in order to focus his career on music at the court of Gustav III. He spent two years of relative hardship attempting to break into the Stockholm musical establishment. A commission for an opera, *Proserpin*, whose text was drafted by the King himself, won him the post as Deputy Musical Director in 1781.

The following year he was sent on a grand tour by Gustav in order to observe the latest trends in music theater in continental Europe. This lasted four years and brought him into contact with major figures such as Haydn, Gluck, Antonio Salieri, Padre Martini, and others. Kraus’ travels also took him throughout Germany, Italy, France, and England, where he witnessed the Handel Centenary celebrations in 1785.

While in Paris, he experienced difficulty with cabals back in Stockholm that sought to prevent his return, but their resolution in 1786 made it possible for him to become the leading figure in Gustavian musical life. In 1787 he was appointed as director of curriculum at the Royal Academy of Music, and the next year he succeeded Francesco Antonio Uttini as *Kapellmästare*, eventually attaining a reputation as an innovative conductor, progressive pedagogue, and multi-talented composer.

Although he was a much sought after composer for stage music, his principal opera, *Aeneas i Cartago*, remained unperformed during his lifetime. In January of 1792 he was present at the masked ball wherein his patron, Gustav III, was assassinated, causing considerable turmoil in the cultural establishment that the monarch had nurtured. His own health deteriorated shortly thereafter, and he died only a few months later in December of 1792 from tuberculosis. He was buried in the Stockholm suburb of Tivoli following a ceremony where his coffin was carried across the ice of the Brunsviken by torchlight.

MISERERE, VB 4 : Movement 7. *Ne projicias me*

In 1775 Kraus traveled to the city of Erfurt to attend university. It was here that he “first learned what real musical composition was all about,” according to letters home. His teachers included both Kittel and Johann Peter Weimar, themselves students of Johann Sebastian Bach and his son Carl Philipp Emanuel. The *Miserere* represents a large-scale composition, of which the a capella chorus “Ne projicias” forms the seventh movement. It is a compendium of different contrapuntal techniques from canon to fugue and provides a contrast to the richly orchestrated other movements.

CONTRAPUNTAL MOTET, VB 17

This work exists as a two-movement fragment that was written about 1790 in Sweden. Kraus clearly finished off the notation, but whether these were intended as self-standing occasional works for the church or belonged to some large composition cannot be determined. Both are without text, and in the second, the composer has inserted a continuo organ line, which meant that they probably were intended to have some larger instrumental setting. Since the context of these works is completely unknown, the editor has artificially inserted two texts—an offertory “Communicantes Christi” and an introit “Tecum principium”. These were chosen solely on the basis that the words fit the music without more than the most simple (and logical) repetitions; it should be noted that they are not original to the work. This performance represents their premiere.

PAVEL VRANICKÝ (1756–1808) came, as did his brother Antonín, from the little west Moravian town of Nová Říše, where he received a basic musical education—on violin, viola, piano and organ—at the local Premonstratensian monastery’s Latin school. After completing his studies at the grammar school in the Moravian town of Jihlava, Vranický moved on to Olomouc to study Theology, and was then to go off to Vienna to round off his education in that field. But with his arrival in the musical capital of Europe, Vranický’s fate took quite a different turn, for he very soon resolved to follow a career in music. In the first half of the 1780s he took up the post of musical director at the residence of Duke Johann Nepomuk of Esterházy, and in 1790 he became orchestral conductor ‘from the violin’ (Direktor bei der Violine) at both of Vienna’s imperial opera houses, the Burgtheater and the Kärntnertortheater. Between then and 1805 Vranický composed twenty-one musical stage works—operas, operettas, singspiel and ballets—beginning with his most famous singspiel, *Oberon* (1789), which was to serve Emanuel Schikaneder as inspiration for his libretto to Mozart’s *Magic Flute*.

Pavel Vranický enjoyed considerable success both as a creator of stage works and as a composer of symphonies. An eminent figure in Viennese musical life, he was also very much in favor with the imperial court. He held a high standing in the Masonic lodge, whose members also included Mozart. He was one of the few among his contemporaries to have the fortune to be in friendly contact with all three stars in the great Viennese triad of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. At the request of the composer himself Vranický conducted the première of Beethoven’s *First Symphony*, and Haydn, too, insisted that his oratorios were given with Vranický conducting.

If we make comparison with chamber music composed by the Vranický brothers’ contemporaries, the Vranickýs’ works in the chamber genre are quite clearly closest to those of Haydn, not only in their Classical simplicity and clarity of form but also on the expressive plane, with their atmosphere of composure and good humor. The Vranický brothers contributed to the treasury of Viennese Classicism with their own, highly personal investment of vital energy (inherited from their peasant ancestors), a tender and unsentimental lyricism and a sense of wit.

The sextets for string quartet (with two violas), oboe and flute date from around the year 1790 and were probably composed for the regular concerts given by a fixed chamber ensemble that performed either at the Lobkowitz residence or in the drawing rooms at the homes of the two brothers. The sextets of Pavel Vranický are actually arrangements of works composed originally for symphony orchestra. The arrangement of symphonies and other works (such as oratorios) for chamber ensembles was, in those days, a common and popular practice. The Finale is a graceful Sicilian theme with variations which takes this composition definitively into the lucid and tranquil realm of ‘pure’ Classicism.

Program Notes Olga Zuckerová (@Supraphon)

MASS IN C MINOR, K 427 (417a)
Mozart

Wolfgang Amadeus

A Mass to fulfill a vow—a vow never completely fulfilled — that is Mozart’s *Mass in C minor*, reckoned by some to be among his finest works. From Mozart’s letters, it is certain that his ardent desire for marriage with his beloved

Constanze Weber, prompted a vow to write a new Mass, and to write it not because of a commission, but from an inner impelling sense of offering. (Some historians have suggested that the offering was as much to placate his earthly father, who was opposed to his marriage, as to his heavenly Father.) Mozart had completed the *Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus and Benedictus* when he brought his bride home to Salzburg in August, 1783 (they had been married in Vienna in January, 1783). Sketches remain of the two sections of the *Credo* and the *Sanctus* has been reconstructed by later composers. This performance used the edition by the scholar H.C. Robbins Landon. Tradition has it that the Mass was performed in St. Peter's Church in Salzburg in August, 1783, with the addition of sections from Mozart's earlier Masses, but there has been no substantiation of the details. What is fairly certain is that Mozart had his new wife, Constanze in mind during the composition of the soprano parts in the *Christe eleison* and *Laudamus te* movements, the difficult requirements of which (great leaps of at least one and a half octaves, rapid figural passages) match the pieces he wrote for her.

The *Mass in C minor* has some unique characteristics. It embodies the best of the Baroque heritage as perceived by a thoroughly Classical operatic composer. In this work, we hear Mozart, a seasoned opera composer, who had recently imbibed the best of Georg Frideric Handel and Johann Sebastian Bach through sponsored performances by an educated musical connoisseur in Vienna, Baron Van Swieten. Mozart was moved to appropriate their choral and contrapuntal techniques and put them to service for a totally different expressive purpose. The modern listener hears echoes of the "Hallelujah Chorus" in the opening *Kyrie* movement at the setting of the repeated phrase "in excelsis". Likewise, reminders of Bach's oratorios and other Handel settings come in mind throughout in the choral sections— as Mozart thoroughly integrates their compositional means with his own compositional ends. The result is not an imitation nor a parody, but a re-appropriation of older techniques by a modern master who is comfortable enough with his own mastery to pay sincere homage to former masters. Then, too, there may be also a sense of the younger master saying, "I can do that! But here's how I would do it!" The solo parts reveal the master of Italian operatic style, both contemporary and earlier. An important feature is the playful interplay between the solo voices and the solo wind instruments.

Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison

The opening, introductory section for chorus presents a fanfare-like motif in "slow motion." The fanfare thematic idea will return in various parts of the Mass. Then a fugal (imitative) movement begins, to return again after an aria for soprano, *Christe eleison*.

Gloria in excelsis Deo. Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.

Beginning again with a fanfare-like fugal theme, the chorus and orchestra out-Handels Handel, and easily appropriates Bach's expressive chromaticism (*et in terra pax hominibus*).

Laudamus te, benedicimus te, adoramus te, glorificamus te.

A lovely, Italianate aria for soprano with tender, delicate interplay between voice and oboe.

Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam.

A five-part choral setting declaims over a Baroque-like "agitated" instrumentation.

Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater omnipotens.

Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe Domine Deus,

Agnus Dei Filius Patris.

Two sopranos with string accompaniment recall an earlier operatic style in what appears to be an effortless rendering.

Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis.

Suscipe deprecationem nostram,

Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris.

A huge double chorus, in perfectly-independent, yet harmonized chromatic lines, maintains a steady pulse over a dotted rhythm (agitated) instrumental accompaniment.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus, tu solus Dominus, tu solus Altissimus.

A contrasting movement for three soloists, sopranos I, II, and tenor, it provides the ear with a refreshing contrast in tone color, texture, and relationship between the voices and orchestra. Syncopation (displacement of the beat) is evident.

Jesu Christe. Cum Sancto Spiritu in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

A brief Adagio (*Jesu Christe*) provides an introduction to an extended fugal movement (*Cum Sancto Spiritu*) in which the main theme consisting of long, held notes, heard first in the bass part, and the subsidiary theme consisting of more rapid passages, again heard in the bass part first, are heard again in all other parts until the word "amen," after which the two themes reappear, again in imitation in all parts, but in mirror-image form, that is, upside down, until after

the second “amen” passage in which both original and mirror themes sound together - a Mozartean creative *tour de force* and - no pun intended - without sounding forced.

*Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium, et invisibilium.
Credo et in unum Dominum, Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unigenitum,
et ex Patre natus ante omnia saecula,
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero,
genitum non factum, consubstantialem Patri,
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Credo, qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem
descendit de caelis.*

Over an ostinato-like (repeated pattern) bass, a five-part chorus declaims first in chordal style, then in contrapuntal style, then in overlapping parts, changing throughout.

Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto ex Maria Virgine et homo factus est.

In a Neapolitan-like *siciliana* (dance in 6/8 meter, most familiar in Nativity scenes such as in Handel’s *Messiah*), four soloists (soprano, flute, oboe, bassoon) alternately combine and contrast.

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.*

Again two four-part choruses (*Sanctus*) demonstrate Mozart’s awareness of the expressive possibilities for grandeur as well as his compositional ability to create eight independent yet related parts, together with a late-Baroque orchestral accompaniment. The texture contrasts with the contrapuntal *Osanna* for eight part chorus with its propulsive rhythms.

Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini. Osanna in excelsis.

A movement that was ordinarily set as a solo aria becomes in Mozart’s hands a contrapuntal, imitative movement for four solo voices, in which the voices act independently and in parallel combinations, accompanied by solo wind instruments and strings. The movement concludes with a return to the choral *Osanna*. We are left wanting more from this amazing “torso” of a Mass.

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