

Program Notes

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For most of 1779 and 1780, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) had been the court organist and concertmaster assisting his father Leopold, deputy Kapellmeister for the Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Colloredo. Leopold Mozart, who was still guiding his son's career, had decided that by accepting the organist/concertmaster post, Wolfgang would ensure the Mozart family's security. For his part, the younger Mozart felt exploited and hindered, working under a contract in which the archbishop stipulated that Mozart "unbegrudgingly and with great diligence discharge his obligatory duties both in the cathedral and at court and in the chapel house, and as occasion presents, to provide the court and church with new compositions of his own creation." For most of his two years of service to the archbishop, Mozart composed steadily, producing three symphonies, the "Posthorn" Serenade, the Sinfonia Concertante for violin, viola, and orchestra, a two-piano concerto, chamber music, and several liturgical works, including the "Coronation" Mass in C. Yet, actual performances of his works in Salzburg during this time of prodigious creation were few. Because he was aware as never before of his compositional powers, he felt imprisoned--by his father, who in his sixties cared for little more than a secure position, and by the archbishop, who regarded Mozart as a lackey, whom Colloredo frequently subjected to verbal abuse.

The "Coronation" Mass K. 317 was among those works that *were* performed during Mozart's time in Salzburg. The autograph manuscript is dated 23 March 1779, so the work was clearly intended for use on Easter Sunday 4 April 1779, when the archbishop himself celebrated the mass. (This was not the occasion from which the C-major Mass gets its nickname; the origin of the title was most likely the coronation of Emperor Francis I of Austria a few months after Mozart's death, because a set of copyist's parts for K. 317 bears the title "Mass

in C for the Coronation Celebration of His Majesty Francis I as Emperor of Austria.") The "Coronation" Mass features the concision characteristic of all of Mozart's Salzburg masses, reflecting Archbishop Colloredo's preference for liturgical music that was short and to the point. During the period of his first employment (1768-1777) by the Salzburg court, Mozart wrote in a letter to Padre Martini that

Our church music is very different from that of Italy, all the more so since a mass with all movements—the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, the Trio Sonata, the Offertory or Motet, *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, even for the most solemn occasions, when the sovereign himself reads the mass—must not last more than three quarters of an hour. One needs a special training for this type of composition, and it must also be a mass with all instruments: war trumpets, timpani etc:

In fact, the "Coronation" Mass—albeit lacking a church sonata and offertory—rarely lasts more than twenty-five minutes in performance. Another reason for the brevity of this mass is that Mozart (again, as in nearly all of his Salzburg masses) composed no closing fugues for the *Credo* or the *Gloria*. In comparison, we may note the elaborate fugues Mozart wrote for the liturgical works composed after he left service to the Salzburg court, such as the Great Mass in C minor K. 427 or the Requiem. But brevity does not detract from quality in this most popular of all Mozart's masses. Mozart created a tight structure with the use of instrumental forms, such the rondo in the *Credo*. He achieved thematic unity by devices such as the recapitulation of the *Kyrie* theme in the *Dona nobis pacem*. And there is a wealth of marvelous instrumental detail, from the wind writing throughout, to the ghostly muted violins at "Et incarnatus est" in the *Credo*. Maynard Solomon wrote that Mozart's "Coronation" Mass "is arguably his finest Salzburg composition in this genre."

In the summer of 1780, the court of Elector Karl Theodor in Munich sent Mozart the commission for the opera *Idomeneo*. Near the completion of composition, it was with great joy that Mozart accepted six weeks' leave to go to

Munich to supervise the premiere of his opera. The experience of working with a fine opera company in a beautiful theater did not prepare Mozart for a return to his post in Salzburg; he now had a glimpse of what was possible in the wider world. After the final performance of the tremendously successful first run of *Idomeneo* in March 1781, Archbishop Colloredo commanded Mozart to join him in Vienna, with the intention to invite the local nobility to hear performances by the Salzburg court's best musicians. Although Mozart did not yet know it, Vienna was to be his home for the remaining ten years of his life. Increasingly heated disputes with Colloredo precipitated Mozart's discharge from the archbishop's service in late May 1781. The break with the archbishop was also a break with his father Leopold: Mozart began on that day his autonomous career as a freelance composer. His courtship of the young soprano Constanze Weber further widened the rift, and on 4 August 1782 the couple married at St. Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna, without having received Leopold's blessing.

In embarking on his new career, Mozart was taking a risk. With the exception of the very successful years 1784-85, during which he enjoyed the status of a star as the soloist in his own piano concertos, Mozart was often in debt and desperate for additional income. In the late 1780s—despite phenomenal compositional productivity—matters became so serious that by 1790 Mozart fell into depression and practically stopped writing music. But in January 1791, he roused himself, realizing that with his responsibilities to Constanze and their son Karl (with another son on the way), to stop making music was not an option. Early in the year, Mozart began accepting commissions for small works, then from May through July he was largely occupied with composing *Die Zauberflöte*. Sometime during that period, he also accepted a down payment for an anonymous commission (now known to be from Count Franz Walsegg) for a requiem (with a final payment due at completion), but a mid-July commission for the opera *La clemenza di Tito* put off all other work for several weeks. After putting final touches on the score of *Die Zauberflöte* for its 30 September premiere, Mozart completed his Clarinet Concerto in early

October, and then devoted most of his time to the Requiem until he was stricken ill on 20 November. During his worsening illness, Mozart continued composing in fits and starts, writing his last words in the score (at the end of the *Hostias*) on 4 December: “quam olim da capo” (indicating a repeat of the fugue “Quam olim Abrahae promisisti” already composed for the offertory *Domine Jesu*). He died the next day, 5 December 1791.

In her need after Mozart’s death, Constanze sought the help of other musicians to complete the Requiem, so that she might collect the final payment on the commission. In the manuscripts that he had left, Mozart had completed only the Introit (“Requiem”) in its entirety, and drafted vocal parts and instrumental bass—with a few instrumental parts for preludes and interludes—for the *Kyrie*, *Dies irae*, *Tuba mirum*, *Rex tremendae*, *Recordare*, *Confutatis*, *Lacrymosa* [first eight bars only], *Domine Jesu*, and *Hostias*. For a memorial service five days after Mozart’s death, his students Franz Jacob Freystädtler and Franz Xaver Süssmayr completed instrumentation for the *Kyrie* fugue. On 21 December, Constanze gave the manuscripts (now with additions by Freystädtler and Süssmayr) to Franz Eybler, with the admonition that the Requiem should be completed by the middle of Lent 1792. Eybler soon gave up, and Constanze entrusted Süssmayr with the job.

Süssmayr added underlying instrumental parts to movements Mozart had drafted, devised a completion for the *Lacrymosa*, and composed the movements Mozart had not been able to draft: the *Sanctus* (with “Osanna” fugue), the *Benedictus* (also with “Osanna” fugue), and the *Agnus Dei*. For the concluding Communion, Süssmayr recapitulated Mozart’s music from the Introit (“Lux aeterna” – “Requiem aeternam”) then concluded with the music from Mozart’s *Kyrie* fugue, fitted to the text “Cum sanctis tuis in aeternum.” While many have criticized Süssmayr’s completion, and others have prepared their own versions of Mozart’s Requiem, Ulrich Leisinger has written that “the crucial advantage of this version lies in the fact that Süssmayr never attempted to compete with his

master.” As Süssmayr himself said in a letter to the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel in 1800, “I was content to have worked in such a way that experts will be able to discover some traces of his [Mozart’s] teaching here and there.”