MISSA GAUDEAMUS

MISSA IOSQVINI
Mvsici Excellentissimi
Super Gaudeamus

by Josquin Des Prez
(ca. 1440-1521)

Transcribed and edited by Richard St. Clair
1996
Josquin Des Prez - Missa Gaudeamus

Why do we return to the music of long-bygone days for spiritual nourishment? Could it be that such music represents to us something pure and untrammeled, something we have lost in our headlong rush to tame the earth’s wildness and make its resources our plaything? Such concerns were assuredly unknown to the composer Josquin Des Prez, a great luminary genius of the High Renaissance in Europe. Born around 1440 and living until August 1521, Josquin (a nickname for his original Belgian name, Josse) had many concerns, primarily regarding his duties as a composer for the church.

Though born in Flanders, Josquin’s talents as both singer and composer brought him first notice and then acclaim throughout European chapels and royal courts where he sang or presented his music. He had a lengthy stint on the Papal Chapel Choir at the Vatican. He was highly thought of in his own time, in which he was accorded the honorific moniker “prince of music,” a term reserved for but a handful of the finest composers. Among his admirers was the Reformationist leader, Martin Luther. Though Luther revolted against the Catholic Church, he nevertheless retained a fondness for its sacred part-music, particularly that of Josquin, of whose mastery he spoke in profoundly reverential tones. Josquin’s music was not restricted to providing liturgical support for the Church: he composed many secular pieces on amorous themes, as was typical for composers throughout the Renaissance. It is, however, his music for the church that has made Josquin famous. As Josquin died in August, it is fitting that this Mass - whose feast namesake is celebrated in August - is being performed 475 years after his passing.

Our selection is a Mass which Josquin composed sometime before 1500 for one of the major Catholic feasts - the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This Mass carries the name “Missa Gaudeamus” because Josquin adapted the music of a famous Gregorian Chant by that name and molded it into a multi-voice or ‘polyphonic’ composition of his own making. When composers of the Renaissance so borrowed a pre-existing piece of music as a platform upon which to build their own music, they customarily named the new piece according to the name of the borrowed music. Hence, a Mass using the Gaudeamus chant is called “Missa Gaudeamus” or “Missa super Gaudeamus” (Mass based upon Gaudeamus). The Gaudeamus chant is the very first music of the service which one hears — called the “introit” or opening. It announces the Mass in a bold cantorial intonation.

When we say a composer “wrote a Mass” we need to explain this. The Mass of the Catholic Church is a complicated and lengthy rite. To set to music all of the daily prayers (called the “propers” of the Mass) was not considered necessary and would have been onerous, not to say necessitating an extraordinarily long service. Hence, composers of the Renaissance, and many composers to this very day, set only those parts of the Mass which were sung each and every day (called the “ordinary” of the Mass). Those sections are titled Kyrie Eleison (Lord, Have Mercy), Gloria in Excelsis Deo (Glory to God in the Highest), Credo in Unum Deum (I Believe in One God), Sanctus (Holy), and Agnus Dei (Lamb of God). As these prayers are the most highly venerated texts of the Mass, the composers who wrote polyphonic Masses went to considerable lengths to create music of enduring beauty and grandeur which some have compared to the great cathedrals of that era. When sung at Mass, the music provided by the composers - the “ordinary” (hardly ‘ordinary’ in a musical sense!) - was then interspersed with single-voice (monophonic) Gregorian chants for the daily prayers.

In his Missa Gaudeamus, Josquin has incorporated the general outline of the Gaudeamus chant in a manner called ‘paraphrasing’. The net effect of this technique is usually to ‘round the edges’ off the chant and make it almost invisible except to the singers themselves, who would be extremely familiar with the chant, having sung it dozens if not hundreds of times in their singing of the Mass. Add to that the fact that this paraphrased chant is surrounded by three other vocal lines, each in their own way elaborating upon or
freely diverging from the paraphrased chant melody, and one is scarcely able to discern the original chant melody at all.

Given all this obscurantism, then how can this elite musical technique interest us now? Perhaps because the opening six notes of the Gaudeamus introit are made to stand out vividly against the otherwise serene flow of this ornate tapestry. Those six notes, G-A-A-E-F-E, have a sweep to them, starting low and launching upward where it levels off a fifth higher. Sometimes Josquin uses this bare outline of notes and sometimes he fills it in with stepwise melody. Josquin was clearly struck by and even enamored of this motif, for he uses it throughout the Mass, sometimes as a ‘cantus firmus’ inner voice, sometimes as a descant melody atop all the other voices, and sometimes in imitation between two or more voices, but far more so than any other part of the chant melody. The closing Agnus Dei section of the Mass, on the text “Dona nobis pacem” (grant us peace) is a cascade of this motif in various transpositions and imitations -- a resounding musical denouement to the music of his Mass and a powerful reprise recalling the opening notes of the chant which began the Mass.

The manner of composing by the Renaissance masters is much different from any music since then. First off, the different voice parts are extremely fluid and crisscross each other continuously. There is no ‘tune’ to follow - instead, we hear a sinuous ‘continuous melody’ which is going on simultaneously in different ways in all of the voice parts. Secondly, the harmony of this music is not like the crystal clear tonality of Bach, Haydn or Beethoven: it is not conceived as melody plus accompaniment -- rather, it is the harmonious co-sounding of independent yet interdependent melodies. Further, it does not have ‘themes’ to latch onto, nor does it have ‘sections’ and harmonic markers called ‘cadences’ except at rare moments of transition or section endings. There are no trumpets and drums, no bells and whistles. It is a subtle style of music whose great power is felt subtly. The “Renaissance style” is a thing unto itself which we are obliged to approach on its terms if we are truly to appreciate it.

How then do we listen to this music? It might be likened to watching the ocean, where waves continuously break over each other, sometimes large and sometimes small. Sometimes there are periods of near calm. It is music for meditation, prayer, or reflection. It is not music which sets out to seduce us with its allure, yet it has its own pure kind of allure. If one is listening for a catchy melody or ‘beat’, one will be disappointed. But if one is willing to listen, be aware, and be carried along on this ocean of sound, one will find the voyage quietly exhilarating and fascinating. It is truly “the music of heaven and earth.”
Editorial Notes

In preparing this edition of Josquin’s Missa Gaudeamus, I first consulted the edition of Albert Smijers published in 1927. What followed was a search into the various manuscripts and prints. I decided early on to base this new transcription upon a single manuscript source, the particularly fine Cod. Mus. 46 at Stuttgart’s Württembergische Landesbibliothek. This choirbook is of 16th century vintage, on paper, and measures about 15” by 19”. The Missa Gaudeamus is the fourth and last mass in the choirbook, contained in folios 103v – 139r. The title page for this mass reads: “Missa Josquini, musici excellentiss[imi], super Gaudeamus” in bold lettering from one to two inches in height.

As this is a performing edition for SATB mixed choir, a few difficult decisions were reluctantly made. The “Et in spiritum sanctum” section of the Credo has a tenor part without text (aside from the opening words “Et is spiritum”). For this reason the decision was made to call this line an instrumental part rather than attempt a highly conjectural underlay for the Tenors. (It is left to the discretion of the performers as to the specific realization of this instrumental line.) Instead, the Altus part is divided between Altos and Tenors in an antiphonal style, which additionally solves the problem of the very low writing in parts of the Altus. In doing this the editor retained the integrity of phrasings; i.e., only phrases set off by rests were imported from the Alto line to the Tenor line.

There are variant readings between the Stuttgart MS and other sources. Occasionally a rest in the one is filled by a note in the other. Accordingly, the reading in the Stuttgart MS was respected throughout, with the sole exception of an obvious mistake in the Bassus part in the Benedictus (our m. 10), in which the bottom note of the ligature reads an erroneous B. This creates a stylistic impossibility and is corrected in other original sources for the Mass. Hence the editor silently corrected this obvious error.

It was also decided to dispense with the academically valid but visually confusing indication of ligatures by brackets except, and only in, those cases where it was felt necessary to underlay two ligatured notes. In all other instances ligatured notes are not underlayed by more than one syllable.

Text underlay which does not come directly (whether literally or by reasonable inference) from manuscript indications is indicated in italic print. The relaxed manner of writing underlay during Josquin’s time indicates a high degree of expertise among the singers, which is to say, a high degree of skill which obviated the necessity for hyper accuracy of notation (particularly, underlay). Nevertheless, it is necessary for the modern editor to specify exact underlay.

Every attempt was made to respect the underlay in the MS, but whenever so doing was awkward vocally or conceptually, an attempt was made to find a more elegant solution. The final version decided upon here is not presented as authoritative ‘urtext’: any transcriber or performer of music of this period, i.e. one who studies the music from original sources and not modern editions, is continually humbled by the futility at deciding upon any single underlay solution. This solution represents what the editor considers to be his best solution at this time. However, creative musicians are invited to consult the original sources and make any changes they feel would be an improvement upon the solutions given here.

Justification for musica ficta solutions will not be offered in detail at this time. The prevailing esthetic herein is to minimize ficta usage except when there is a clear-cut inflection around a 7-6 pre-cadence figure, or when the line requires the perfecting of the augmented 4th. The numerous transpositions in the Agnus III of the Gaudeamus head-motif do not lend themselves to a consistent literal transposition of the whole-tone at first and the half-tone at the end. Therefore, in those cases where a diminished vertical fifth would occur by applying “una nota super la” the vertical perfect fifth was preferred. This occurs at the conclusion of the Mass, where it is highly unlikely that the composer would have caused such an intrusive discord, particularly over the text “dona nobis pacem.”
Missa Gaudeamus

Josquin des Prez

Edited by Richard St. Clair

I. Kyrie

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Kyriе e-ley-son.

Christe
II. Gloria

Et in terra pax homina

minibus bonae voluntatis

Lauda

-6-
Qui Tollis

S.  

A.  

T.  

Qui toll - lis pec - ca -

B.  

Qui toll - lis pec - ca -

S.  

A.  

T.  

Qui toll - lis pec - ca -

B.  

da mundi, misere - re -

S.  

A.  

T.  

Qui toll - lis pec -

B.  

Qui toll - lis pec -

B.  
	nobis.  

-11-
Qui sesedes ad dexteram patriam patriae non misere re non misere re nobis.

Quoniam tu

Quoniam tu
Soprano: Pa - trem
Alto: Pa - trem om - ni - poten - tem, om
Tenor: Pa - trem om - ni - poten - tem
Bass: Pa - trem om - ni - poten - tem

S. om - ni po - ten - tem fac - to - rem coe - li et ter -
A. ni - po - ten - tem fac - to - rem coe - li et ter -
T. vi -
B. vi - si - bi - li -

S. rae vi - si - bi - li - um om - ni -
A. rae in vi - si - bi - li - um om -
T. si - bi - li - - um om - ni -
B. um om - ni - um om - ni - um, et in -
Veni, Sancte Spiritus

1. Veni, Sancte Spiritus, veni omnia
   humanae potestatis
   alem patri per quem omnia

2. fac tuaa sunt, qui propere
   nos homines et propere
   nos-tram sa-

3. et propere nostram sa-
   lam sa-

4. tem de-
   scendit de coe-

5. lum de-
   scendit de coe-

6. dit de coe-

7. tem de-
   scendit de coe-

8. lis.
Et Incarnatus

S. |
---|
Et in\-carn\-na\-tus est

A. |
Et in\-carn\-na\-tus est de spi\-ri\-tu san\-cto.

B. |
in\-carn\-na\-tus est

S. |
der spi\-ri\-tu san\-cto.

A. |
Ex Ma\-ri\-a vir\-i\-ne, ex Ma\-ri\-a vir\-i\-ne

B. |
de spi\-ri\-tu san\-cto.
et se - pul - tus est.

pas - sus et se - pul - tus est.

se - pul - tus est.

Et re - sur - re - xit ter - ti - a di - ve

Et re - sur - re - xit ter - ti - a di - ve

ter - ti - a di - ve

se - cun - dum scrip - tu - ras

se - cun - dum scrip - tu - ras

et as - cen - dit in coe - lu - m, se - det ad dex - te - ram pa -
Et in Spiritum Sanctum

Soprano

Et in Spiritum Sanctum

Alto

[=Altus]

Tenor

Et in Spiritum Sanctum

Instrumental

Et in Spiritum Sanctum

Bass

Et in Spiritum Sanctum Sanctum dominum

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S. ctum dominum

A. et vivificantem

T. et vivificantem

Inst. Sanctum dominum

B. Sanctum dominum

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S. vivificantem, vivificantem

A. cantem, et vivificantem

T. Qui ex patre,

Inst. Qui ex patre

B. Qui ex patre filioque procedit, procedit
dit, qui ex patre filiooque procedit, Qui cum pa

ce dit

ce dit

cum pa tre et filio o, et filio o, et
et conglorificatur Qui

adoratur et conglorificatur

conglorificatur Qui

locutus est, qui locutus est per

Qui locutus est per prophetaeitas.

locutus est per prophetaeitas.

prophetaeitas.
Et Unam Sanctam
IV. Sanctus
S. 

- - - - - ra, ter - - - - ra glo - - - - ri -

A. 

- - - - - ra et ter - - - - - -

B. 

- - - - - ra, et ter - - - - - -

S. 

a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a,

A. 

- - - - - ra glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a tu -

B. 

- - - - - ra glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a tu -

S. 

glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a tu -

A. 

a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a tu -

T. 

- - - - - - - -

B. 

- - - - - ri - a, glo - ri - a, glo - ri - a tu -

-38-
Benedictus

Be-ne-di-

ctus, be-ne-di-

ctus,

Be-ne-di-

ctus, be-ne-di-

ctus, be-ne-di-

ctus

B. ctus, be-ne-di-

ctus
in excelsis, in excelsis,

O sancta in excelsis,

in excelsis, in excelsis, O sancta in

ex-celsis, O sancta in excelsis, O -

O sancta, O sancta

O sancta in excelsis, O sancta, O sancta

in excelsis, in excelsis, -

in excelsis, O sancta in

ex-celsis, O sancta in excelsis, O -
V. Agnus Dei

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Agnus dei

Agnus dei, Agnus dei, Agnus dei

i, Agnus dei, Agnus dei, Agnus dei

qui tollis peccata

qui tollis peccata mundi

qui tollis peccata mundi, qui

muni

muni
di, qui tollis peccata mundi, mundi
S.

A.

T.

B.

S.

A.

T.

B.

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