

Program Notes

Quilted Requiem

Ryan W. Sullivan, conductor

It my sincere hope that all in attendance, no matter their faith background, find this to be an inclusive performance. Since this is an academic recital, it will portray aspects of the Requiem as customs (e.g. eucharist, robing of clergy) and not strictly as religious practices.

Introduction

Several years ago the professional ensemble Chanticleer presented a concert program entitled “The Divine Tapestry: a Mass for All Time.” The concept was to present a musical setting of the Mass Ordinary in its entirety while moving fluidly through history. While taking in the performance, I was enthralled by the connection between each movement. This recital also aims to convey the timelessness of the Requiem, as if the entire repertoire as a whole is one great masterwork.

Audience Participation

You are invited to participate today in a few ways:

- 1) You may dedicate this performance by writing the name of a deceased loved one using the cards in the narthex. Names will be read aloud during the service.
- 2) You are welcome to partake in communion no matter what your religious background might be. Because this is an academic recital, you are free to participate (or not) on any level that is comfortable to you. (The bread is made without gluten or egg for those with dietary restrictions.)
- 3) You are invited to stand and join in singing the doxological hymn “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.”

Introitus from “**Missa Pro Defunctis**” (date unknown)

Music by Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410-1497)

Text from the Catechisms of the Roman Catholic Church

The *Chigi Codex* contains what is widely believed to be the oldest surviving setting of the Requiem Mass, the “Missa Pro Defunctis” by Ockeghem, and is significant for several reasons. Firstly, its composer was an early practitioner of polyphony. The top voice, or “superius” uses an incipit and clearly quotes the *Requiem aeternam* Gregorian chant. Secondly, the modal counterpoint frequently uses first inversion triads, or “fauxbourdon” consonance, which was a growing trend among Franco-Flemish composers. Lastly, the movements of Ockeghem’s early Mass for the dead are not written for similar performing forces; they are not a unified musical thought but a set of treatments of text.

Translation:

Rest eternal grant to them, Lord:
and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Kyrie from “Missa Syllabica” (1977, rev. 1996)

Music by Arvo Pärt (b. 1935)

Text based on pre-Christian Greek liturgy (Kyrios)

As a minimalist composer, Pärt’s primary device is known as “tintinnabuli,” meaning “small bells.” Gregorian chant inspired this technique and the complex overtones produced by a bell. The *Kyrie* movement heard today includes key features of Pärt’s work: text stress through a slow tempo or “ductus,” independent melody, and the tintinnabuli triad.

Translation:

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Variations on Sequentia (2015)

Music by Ryan W. Sullivan (b. 1985)

For the performance today, it is necessary to abbreviate the extensive text of the Sequence and also find musical ties across three hundred years of music. The saxophone, a modern instrument, evokes the popularity of reed instruments during the early Renaissance, and improvises on a theme from the Sequence chant. The phrase structure is partitioned with prolonged rests, like that found in the Kyrie above, in order to facilitate improvisation simultaneously with, and independent of, the choral parts. The first phrase is a direct quote from a setting of the Sequence by Franco-Flemish composer Antoine Brumel (c. 1460-1512), and facilitates a connection with the opening selection by Ockeghem. After the initial quote, each phrase is progressively modernized using mode mixture, counterpoint, and extended chords within modern tonality.

Pie Jesu from “Messe des Morts” (1695)

Music by Marc Antoine Charpentier (1643-1704)

Text from the 5th century Sequence of the Requiem Mass

In Charpentier’s setting of part of the Sequence we find a classic example of the French Baroque period. Accompanied by cello continuo and organ realization of a figured bass, the two Soprano voices develop primary and secondary themes and frequently use dotted rhythms and ornamentation all within 21 measures.

Translation:

Merciful Lord Jesus,
Give them rest.
Give them everlasting rest.

“Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” (1551)

Music by Louis Bourgeois (c. 1510-c. 1560)

Text by Thomas Ken (1637-1711)

Using the hymn tune “Old 100th,” this 17th century text is a Trinitarian Christian doxology, or praise. Though traditionally placed at the end of a hymn or canticle, its worshipful nature lends itself to function as an offertory. The tune first appeared in the *Genevan Psalter* during the time of Jean Calvin when homophonic singing in the vernacular was a centerpiece of worship.

Text:

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Sanctus & Benedictus from “**Messe Basse**” (1881)

Music by Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Texts from the acclamations in Isaiah 6:3, Matthew 21:9 (Roman Missal)

Though scored for treble voices and organ, the Mass’s title is not intended to be an ironic one. In this case “basse” means “low” or “unimportant” and is similar to a *Missa Brevis*. Recordings of this Benedictus often use a two-part female chorus, rather than soloist. However, the contrast of chorus and soloist alludes to the vision of an adoring crowd led by a crier as Jesus makes his famed ride into Jerusalem.

Translation:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts:
Heaven and earth are full of your glory:
Hosanna, in the highest.
Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord:
Hosanna in the highest.

Agnus Dei from “**Missa Brevis in D, K. 49**” (1768)

Music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Text based on John 1:29

The young Amadeus composed this music during a visit to Vienna while production of his first opera, *La finta semplice*, had stalled. During this period, most of his compositions were exercises. This, his first Mass, is an exception. Mozart’s genius becomes apparent when contrasted with his later *Mass in C minor* and the *Requiem in D minor*. At the end of the first part of this binary movement, the viola and bass figurations are a close paraphrase of the arrival of the heavenly hosts in No. 16 of Handel’s *Messiah*. This reference signifies both Mozart’s intentional study of conservative writing as well as his maturing intuition about invocations of the divine.

Translation:

Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.
Lamb of God, you who take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

O Taste and See (1953)

Music by Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Text from Psalm 34:8

Commissioned for the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II of England, this anthem reflects a conservative style reminiscent of the Tudor tradition. Vaughan Williams uses the soloist to establish two themes, which are then developed in the chorus. Though he uses the “English consonances” of parallel thirds and sixths, Vaughan Williams also employs seventh chords to embellish an otherwise slow harmonic rhythm.

Text:

O taste and see how gracious the Lord is: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Soar Away (1935)

Music and Text by Alfred M. Cagle (1884-1968)

The *Sacred Harp* tradition originated in New England in the 18th century and was popularized in the American South during the mid 19th century. The very name of this musical tradition is a reference to the belief that the human voice is the only instrument created by God. The practice of *Sacred Harp* singing is based on many democratic principles: all are welcome at their gatherings,

song leaders rotate during the course of an evening, sessions last until all are able to request a tune, and participation is highly encouraged from everyone present no matter his/her vocal quality or musical training. As a result, this genre has become known for an earthy and boisterous sound. This text aligns with that from the *Libera me*.

Text:

I want a sober mind,
An all sustaining eye,
To see my God above,
And to the heavens fly.
I'd soar away above the sky,
I'd fly to see my God above.
I want a Godly fear,
A quick discerning eye,
That looks to Thee my God,
And see the tempter fly.

In Memoriam & Reading of Names (2015)

Music by Ryan W. Sullivan

In order to facilitate the reading of names during this recital, some incidental music was composed. Its requisites included an unobtrusive texture to complement the readings, space in the harmonic rhythm to allow the saxophone's improvisation, and the ability to end after any phrase depending on the length of the reading. Three palindromic progressions, each seven measures, symbolize the coming and going of people. The open chords that begin and end each phrase symbolize receptiveness at the dawn and dusk of life. This music was inspired by Peteris Vasks' *Dona nobis pacem* and Colin Stetson's *All the Colors Fade to White*.

Thou Wilt Keep Him In Perfect Peace

Music by Samuel S. Wesley (1810-1876)

Texts from Isaiah 26:3a, Psalm 139:11, I John 1:5b, Psalm 119:175a and Matthew 6:13

In one of the marquis anthems in Wesley's repertoire, the influences of the Tudor consonances, continental textures, and Romantic chromaticism are present. Wesley was such an important member of the English cathedral tradition that this anthem was also a part of Queen Elizabeth II's coronation ceremony. The lyrics easily lend themselves as a substitute for the Requiem's closing movement *In paradisum* and *Lux aeterna*.

Text:

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee.
The darkness is no darkness with Thee, but the night is as clear as the day. The darkness and the light to
Thee are both alike.
God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.
O let my soul live, and it shall praise Thee,
For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for evermore.

* These program notes were written by Ryan W. Sullivan to supplement the degree recital requirement for the Master of Music in Choral Conducting at Texas Tech University.