

Program Notes

O vos omnes

Richard Burchard is a composer and educator at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. Rapidly gaining a reputation as a fine choral composer, Burchard has written more than forty commissioned works for choirs. "O vos omnes" was premiered at the 2012 conference of the National Collegiate Choral Organization. It opens with thick chord clusters that give way to the lush beautiful harmonies that permeate this stunning, breathtaking work.

A Procession Winding Around Me

Jeffrey Van's four-movement song cycle "A Procession Winding Around Me" is an enthralling and cathartic backward gaze into American history. To empower his masterful word-painting compositional style, Van utilizes poetic reflections produced by Walt Whitman upon his own return from visiting American Civil War camps. Setting the text for mixed choir accompanied by a single classical guitar, Van achieves a great breadth of texture, from full and frantic to sparse, isolated, and pure.

The work in four movements takes us into the mind's eye of a Civil War soldier: in the first movement, experiencing the winding, restless, fitful, fearful, and longing thoughts of a quiet camp or "bivouac" the night before battle. In the second movement, we awake to the violent heat and terror of battle, fighting for life and ideals and without regard, as was common in our terrible Civil War, for family-relation, youth, age, position, or gender. Nothing could stand in the way of the beating drums and sounding bugles of the marching war machine.

Movement three: the heat of the battle has gone with the sun, and the bright light of the moon and quiet of the night reveal the eerie and abhorrent remains left in the wake of war. It is easy to forget how much the carnage of battle has changed since cannon-and-rifle warfare. Van bleakly cradles the bloated bodies, purple and death-rattled corpses, in a detached but gentle and serene moon-glow.

It is said that the population takes two generations to forget. When the time comes that a dark era in our history is not remembered by anyone still living, we simply release the emotions that were attached to it. Van calls his final movement, "Reconciliation." Here we have a sharp, audible contrast to the other, more dissonant movements, which explore forms of fear: worry, terror, and haunting. "Reconciliation" reassures us with consonant, soothing, rich strokes of sound that as time passes, the violence and injustice of the past is cleansed from our hearts and memories, we see not enemies but only humanity, and the world renews itself.

By Kevin Hindley

Mass in C Major, HOB. XXII:9: *Paukenmesse; Missa in Tempore Belli; Mass in Time of War*

Haydn's final years were devoted almost exclusively to vocal music and there were several reasons for this. During his extended visits to England, he had heard Handel's oratorios and had been amazed by them. He returned to Vienna in 1795, anxious to write oratorios of his own, and the splendid result was *The Creation* (1798) and *The Seasons* (1801). There was a further reason to write vocal music in these years. When Prince Anton reconstituted the Esterházy Orchestra and asked Haydn to resume his duties as kapellmeister, he established only one requirement for his court composer, now in his 60s: that he write a mass every year for the

name-day celebration of his wife, Princess Maria Hermenegild. This was a duty Haydn willingly embraced, for he and the Princess were good friends – between the years 1796 and 1802 he wrote six masses in her honor.

One more influence, this one much darker, intruded on some of this music. These were the years of the Napoleonic wars, and the Hapsburg Empire found itself threatened as Napoleon mounted successful campaigns that drove north through Italy and into southern Austria. A few years later, Beethoven planned to dedicate his Third Symphony to Napoleon, but in the final decade of the eighteenth century Vienna regarded him as a danger. That military threat made itself felt in two of the masses Haydn wrote for the princess, and the composer himself gave them names that reflect the gravity of the times: the *Missa in tempore Belli* (Mass in the Time of War) composed in the fall of 1796 and the *Missa in angustiis* (Mass in Straited Times) composed in 1798; the latter is better known as the *Lord Nelson Mass* in honor of one of those who helped defeat Napoleon.

And so the Mass in C Major, originally the *Missa in tempore Belli* but these days more commonly

known as the *Paukenmesse*, is at once a celebration piece and a reflection of something darker. Haydn underlines this through the shifting tonality of the mass: it is nominally in C Major, a good key for the festive sound of trumpets and timpani, but much of this mass slips into dark C minor, and we are frequently aware of the threat that lies just over the horizon. The *Mass in the Time of War* is sharply mixed music – light and dark, festive and troubled – and that duality is the source of its considerable expressive power. Haydn scores the mass for four vocal soloists, four-part chorus and a large orchestra. Its first performance is believed to have taken place in Vienna on December 26, 1796. Sometime after that first performance, Haydn expanded the orchestration, adding a part for flute and elaborating some of the other wind parts.

Haydn divides this particular setting of the Mass into six movements: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. His setting of the text is quite clear and may be easily followed, though a brief overview of the movements may be useful.

The *Kyrie* begins quietly and slowly, but the Largo section leaps ahead at the Allegro moderato. Some have compared this to Haydn's symphonic first movements, in which a slow introduction gives way to fast main body of the movement, though that may be reading too far as this movement is not in sonata form. The ringing trumpet outbursts that punctuate the *Kyrie* will return in various forms throughout the entire mass.

Both the *Gloria* and *Credo* take a fast-slow-fast structure: a fast opening chorus gives way to a slow central episode featuring the soloists; the movement is rounded out by the return of the chorus and a fast tempo. Some points of interest: the central section of the *Gloria* is introduced by a long cello solo whose "popular" character has often been noted; Haydn was quite ready to use such music, even in a setting of the mass. The harmonic progression of the *Credo* is noteworthy: it begins in bright C Major, but at the "Et incarnatus" Haydn slips into C minor. This

makes the explosive return to C Major at “Et surrexit” all the more brilliant, and Haydn rounds the movement out with a busy fugue on “Et vitam venturi.”

The *Sanctus* opens slowly with a long and lyric violin melody, then leaps ahead exultantly at the “Pleni sunt,” which Haydn marks *Allegro con spirito*. The *Benedictus* undulates slowly along its 6/8 meter and gradually moves from the opening to C minor to conclude in C Major. The *Agnus Dei* begins with a subdued *Adagio* that is punctuated by insistent timpani interjections. (Their prominence has given this mass its nickname *Paukenmesse*, which translates to “Timpani Mass.”) The middle of the movement, once again in C minor, is full of strident fanfares and the sound of timpani and trumpets; the tension of this movement is Haydn’s clearest statement of wartime sentiments. But the *Allegro con spirito* leaps into resplendent C Major on the words “Dona nobis pacem” (Grant Us Peace), and Haydn swiftly propels the *Mass in the Time of War* to its optimistic (and no doubt hopeful) conclusion.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

Dona nobis pacem

Norwegian composer Egil Hovland studied composition at the Oslo Conservatory, Copenhagen, and Florence. He also came to the United States to study at Tanglewood with Aaron Copland. Hovland’s music includes chamber music as well as works for orchestra, wind ensemble, piano, organ, and chorus. The majority of his output is sacred. *Agnus Dei* is a four-movement composition for chorus and solo bassoon written in 2000. In the final movement, “Dona nobis pacem,” the chorus and bassoon are equal musical partners in a plea for peace. The chorale setting of the voices in this movement is reminiscent of the chorales of J.S. Bach, perhaps a nod to Hovland’s Lutheran background. This hauntingly beautiful piece serves as a fitting, peaceful conclusion to our concert, filling us with the hope that ultimately peace will prevail.