

Voices of Light

January 29, 2011, 7:00 PM, Broadmoor Community Church

January 30, 2011, 2:30 PM, First Christian Church

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Per pietà, non ricercate, K.420
Misero! O sogno—Aura, che intorno spiri, K.431
John Lindsey, tenor

Camille Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)

Symphony in A
I. Poco adagio; Allegro vivace
II. Larghetto
III. Allegro vivace
IV. Allegro molto

INTERMISSION

Georg Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

Anthem: The King Shall Rejoice, HWV259
Deborah Teske, conductor

Morten Lauridsen
(b. 1943)

Lux Æterna
I. Introitus
II. In te, Domine, speravi
III. O Nata Lux
IV. Veni, sancte Spiritus
V. Agnus dei
Movements played without pause.

I declare to you before God, and as an honest man, that your son is the greatest composer I know, either personally or by name. —Joseph Haydn, to Leopold Mozart.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) showed such a prodigious talent for music in his early childhood that his father, also a composer, dropped all other ambitions and devoted himself to educating the boy and exhibiting his accomplishments. Between ages six and fifteen, Mozart was on tour over half the time. By 1762, he was a virtuoso on the clavier—an early keyboard instrument and predecessor of the piano—and soon became a good organist and violinist as well. He produced his first minuets at the age of six, and his first symphony just before his ninth birthday, his first oratorio at eleven, and his first opera at twelve. His final output would total more than 600 compositions. Much has already been said and studied in the popular media about Mozart’s roguish lifestyle and apprehension of conformity. It was this aspect of his personality that never won him the support of royalty or the church, which, at that time, was critical to any composer’s survival. As such, Mozart died young, ill, poor, and relatively unappreciated ... only to become the mostly widely acknowledged orchestral composer in history.

Mozart wrote more than 40 arias that are considered his “concert arias.” Many were written out of friendship or love. There are four main sources: 1. Arias intended solely for recital or concert hall performance; 2. Short dramatic scenes, probably intended to stand alone or early drafts of full operas or pieces intended to secure funds to support production of a full opera; 3. Arias inserted into other composers’ operas, usually with Mozart’s consent; and 4. Alternative arias for Mozart’s own operas.

Per pietà, non ricercate, K.420, was composed on June 21, 1783 for tenor Johann Valentin Adamberger. It was intended for a production of Pasquale Anfossi’s opera *Il curioso indiscreto* but was never performed with the opera.

Per pietà, non ricercate
La cagion del mio tormento,
Sì crudele in me lo sento,
Che neppur lo so spiegar!
Vo pensando; ma poi come?
Per uscir; ma che mi giova
Di far questa, o quella prova,
Se non trovo in che sperar?
Ah, tra l'ire e tra gli sdegni
Della mia funesta sorte,
Chiamo solo, oh Dio, la morte,
Che mi venga a consolar!

For pity, not wanted
The cause of my torment,
The cruelty I feel,
I know but cannot explain!
I think, but then what?
To get through
this or that test;
Will I find hope in that?
Trapped between anger and indignation—
My fatal destiny;
Name alone, oh God, death,
To comfort me!

Misero! O sogno—Aura, che intorno spiri, K.431 was written for Johann Valentin Adamberger in December of 1783, but the genesis of the work remains something of a mystery. The intensely dramatic character of the aria seems to come from a larger libretto and was probably a key moment of a larger libretto, but the source of the libretto and what opera Mozart had in mind remain in obscurity. The protagonist finds himself imprisoned, at first demanding to be released and insulting his captors by using the Italian plural form for addressing women. He resigns himself to die and then thinks about his beloved, begging the breeze to carry his message to her.

Misero! o sogno, o son desto?
 Chiuso è il varco all'uscita!
 Io dunque, o stelle!
 Solo in questo rinchiuso
 Abitato dall'ombre!
 Luogo tacito e mesto, ove non s'ode
 Nell'orror della notte
 Che de' notturni augelli
 La lamentabil voce! I giorni miei
 Dovrò qui terminar?
 Aprite, indegne,
 Questa porta infernale!
 Spietate, aprite!
 Alcun non m'ode! E solo,
 Ne' cavi sassi ascoso,
 Risponde a' mesti accenti
 Eco pietoso
 E dovrò qui morir?
 Ah! negli estremi amari sospiri
 Almen potessi, oh Dio!
 Dar al caro mio ben l'ultimo addio!
 Aura che intorno spiri,
 Sull'ali a lei che adoro
 Deh! porta i miei sospiri,
 Di che per essa moro,
 Che più non mi vedrà!
 Ho mille larve intorno
 Di varie voci il suono;
 Che orribile soggiorno!
 Che nuova crudeltà!
 Che barbara sorte!
 Che stato dolente!
 Mi lagno, sospiro,
 Nessuno mi sente,
 Nel grave periglio
 Nessun non miro,
 Non spero consiglio,
 Non trovo pietà!

Misery! Am I dreaming, or am I awake?
 Closed is the exit gate!
 I have only the stars
 In this confinement
 and shadows my only companions!
 Silent and sad place, where no one hears,
 in the gloom of night
 the night birds'
 lamentable voice!
 This is where my days will end?
 Open, unworthy,
 This portal to hell!
 Ruthless captors, open this door!
 They do not hear me! My voice,
 It echoes in empty caves,
 Creating sad accents
 Pitiful echo
 And I'll die here?
 Ah! in extreme bitter sighs
 The wind could, oh God!
 Bring my dear love this last farewell!
 Winds that blow,
 Reach her that I love
 Bring my sighs,
 My dying words,
 That no one else will hear!
 A thousand pests all around
 The sound of many voices;
 What a horrible stay!
 What new cruelty!
 What cruel fate!
 This is painful!
 I cry, sigh,
 Nobody knows
 My terrible danger
 Nobody knows me,
 I hope for consolation
 But I find no mercy!

Without consideration of his many admirable compositions, one should bear this in mind: in the face of difficulties, discouragement, misunderstanding, sneers, he worked steadily from his youth up, and always to the best of his ability, for righteousness in absolute music; he endeavored to introduce into French music thoughtfulness and sincerity for the advantage and the glory of the country that he dearly loved.—Philip Hale.

Many composers began as freakish children, but by any standards Saint-Saëns was an extreme case. As a two-year-old he could read and write, and was picking out melodies on the piano. Shortly after his third birthday he began composing, and by the age of five had given his first piano recital. At seven he was reading Latin, studying botany and developing what was to become an eighty-year interest in lepidoptery, (the study of butterflies and moths). As an encore after his formal debut as a concert pianist, the 10-year-old Camille offered to play any of Beethoven's 32 sonatas from memory. In short, his childhood suggested Mozartian potential that was never realized. Saint-Saëns once remarked that he lived "in music like a fish in water" and that composing was as natural as "an apple tree producing apples." And there lay the problem. As with Mendelssohn, the technique came so easily to him that it virtually extinguished the spark of originality.

That said, for years he was considered by many to be France's greatest musical revolutionary, though his reputation grew more from his outspoken support for other composers' music—especially Wagner's—than from any work of his own. As well as promoting contemporary music, Saint-Saëns threw his energies into researching the work of his forerunners. Along with Mendelssohn, he was one of the first to reestablish the music of Bach (converting the skeptical Berlioz in the process) and he did much to restore Mozart to his rightful place, being the first to play a complete cycle of the piano concerti. Handel was another unfashionable composer to engage Saint-Saëns' attention, and (as with Berlioz) Gluck held a fascination that lasted most of his life. By the time Saint-Saëns reached his mid-fifties, the past had won the upper hand over the present. Embittered, ill-tempered and restless, he became the arch-traditionalist, opposing the progressive music of Debussy and Ravel, bellowing outrage at the first performance of *The Rite of Spring*, and yet, for all his reactionary pomposity, he was one of the first neo-classicists, embodying many of the finest traditional qualities of French music—neatness, clarity, elegance and dignity. His best epitaph is the rueful one he wrote for himself: "I ran after the chimera of purity of style and perfection of form."

Saint-Saëns' **Symphony in A** has a most notable cousin—Bizet's *Symphony in C*. Both were composition assignments for teacher Fromental Halévy at the Paris Conservatory, and both were lost in the Conservatory library's stacks until after both composers had died. Most likely, neither work was performed before their twentieth-century debuts. Nonetheless, Saint Saëns' *Symphony in A* is a finely-crafted, mature work and a fine addition to the composer's output. Written in 1850, the piece uses a Classical-size orchestra and strictly follows symphonic form, while revealing Saint-Saëns' fascination with German Romanticism. Whispers of Mozart, Beethoven, Schuman and Mendelssohn permeate the work, but, taken as a whole, the piece is undeniably original and a clear foreshadowing of Saint-Saëns' mature style. And, like Bizet's symphony, it is exceedingly challenging for any orchestra.

I should be sorry, my lord, if I have only succeeded in entertaining them; I wished to make them better.—Handel, to Lord Kinnoul, after the first London performance of *The Messiah*, Covent Garden, March 23, 1743.

There is an element of paradox about the career of **George Frideric Handel** (1685-1759). Born in Hallé in 1685, the son of a distinguished and elderly barber-surgeon by his second wife, the young Handel gave up other studies in order to become a musician, working first in Hamburg at the opera, as composer and harpsichordist. From there he moved to the source of all opera, Italy, where he made a name for himself as a composer and performer. A meeting in Venice with Baron Kielmansegge led him to Hanover as Kapellmeister and from there, almost immediately, to London, where he was invited to provide music for the newly established Italian opera. It was then, primarily as a composer of Italian opera, that Handel made his early reputation in England. Handel moved to England in 1716, employed by the Duke of Chandos, and in 1719 accepted the appointment as music director of the newly formed Royal Academy of Music. When fickle audiences brought rough times upon Italian opera in London, Handel turned to writing oratorios. In April 1759, Handel fainted during a performance of the *Messiah*, and died soon after.

Handel's Coronation Anthem No. 4, **The King Shall Rejoice**, was composed in September and October of 1727 for the Coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline. It was intended to be performed at the Recognition ceremony, but instead was performed for the Crowning on October 11, 1727 in Westminster Abbey. The text is from Psalm 21, verses 1, 2, 3 and 5. In contrast to many of his other anthems, Handel used a larger orchestra for the occasion, including trumpets and timpani to emphasize the Alleluias. Handel matches uses descriptive music to support the text throughout. This anthem is generally regarded as one of Handel's finest works, carefully crafted and often reminiscent of Bach.

Morten Lauridsen is “*the only American composer in history who can be called a mystic, (whose) probing, serene work contains an elusive and indefinable ingredient which leaves the impression that all the questions have been answered.*”—Nick Strimple, musicologist, author and conductor

The music of **Morten Johannes Lauridsen** has already won a permanent place in the vocal repertoire, and his instrumental compositions are quickly gaining popularity. Lauridsen served as professor of composition at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music for more than thirty years and as composer-in-residence for the Los Angeles Master Chorale from 1994-2001. A recipient of numerous grants, prizes and commissions, Dr. Lauridsen chaired the Composition department at the USC Thornton School of Music from 1990-2002, founded the School’s Advanced Studies Program in Film Scoring, and is currently Distinguished Professor of Composition. In 2006, he was named an “American Choral Master” by the National Endowment for the Arts and in 2007 received the National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the United States government.

Lauridsen’s *Lux Æterna* was premiered on April 13, 1997 and quickly become a sensation in concert halls around the world, winning a Grammy nomination in 1998. In five continuous movements, its texts are from sacred Latin sources containing references to light. Mortensen wrote, “The instrumental introduction to the *Introitus* softly recalls motivic fragments from two pieces especially close to my heart (my settings of Rilke’s *Contre Qui, Rose* and *O Magnum Mysterium*) which recur throughout the work in various forms. Several new themes in the *Introitus* are then introduced by the chorus, including an extended canon on *et lux perpetua*. *In Te, Domine, Speravi* contains, among other musical elements, the cantus firmus *Herliebster Jesu* (from the *Nuremburg Songbook*, 1677) and a lengthy inverted canon on *fiat misericordia*. *O Nata Lux* and *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* are paired songs -- the former the central *a cappella* motet and the latter a spirited, jubilant canticle. A quiet setting of the *Agnus Dei* precedes the final *Lux Æterna*, which reprises the opening section of the *Introitus* and concludes with a joyful *Alleluia*.”

Lux Æterna

I. Eternal Rest

Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. A hymn befits you, O God in Zion, and to you a vow shall be fulfilled in Jerusalem: hear my prayer, for unto you all flesh shall come. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.

II. In You, Lord, Have I Trusted

To deliver us, you became human, and did not disdain the Virgin’s womb. Having blunted the sting of death, you opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. A light has risen in the darkness for the upright. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. Let your mercy be upon us, O Lord, as we have trusted in you. In you, O Lord, have I trusted: let me never be confounded.

III. O Light Born of Light

O light born of light, Jesus, the redeemer of the world, mercifully deem worthy and accept the praises and prayers of your supplicants. You who once deigned to be clothed in flesh for the sake of the lost ones, grant us to be made members of your holy body.

IV. Come, Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, send forth from heaven the ray of your light. Come, Father of the poor, come, giver of gifts, come, light of hearts. You best of Consolers, sweet guest of the soul, sweet refreshment. In labor, you are rest, in heat, the tempering, in grief, the consolation. O light most blessed, fill the innermost heart of all your faithful. Without your grace, there is nothing in us, nothing that is not harmful. Cleanse what is sordid, moisten what is arid, heal what is hurt. Flex what is rigid, fire what is frigid, correct what goes astray. Grant to your faithful, those trusting in you, your sacred seven-fold gifts. Grant the reward of virtue, grant the deliverance of salvation, grant everlasting joy.

V. Lamb of God—Light Eternal

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, grant them rest everlasting. May eternal light shine upon them, O Lord, in the company of your Saints for ever and ever; for you are merciful. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. Alleluia. Amen.