

Our 86th Season

Session 1 – April 11, 2021

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Missa • c-Moll, KV 427

A Virtual Sing with

John Elliot Gardiner, Conductor

Sylvia McNair, soprano

Diana Montague, mezzo

Anthony Rolfe Johnson, tenor

Cornelius Hauptmann, bass

Monteverdi Choir and The English Baroque Soloists

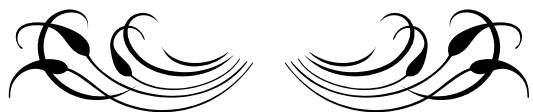
A YouTube Sing-Along with an introduction by

Marjorie Herman, DTM

***W. A. Mozart (1756-1791) – Mass in C minor,
“The Great”, K. 427***

The last two works of music for the church, the C minor Mass and the D minor Requiem were both left incomplete by Mozart. In the latter case the reason is obvious: Mozart died while feverishly working to complete the Requiem. In the case of the C minor mass, we do not really know why the work was not completed. In January of 1783, in a letter to his father, Mozart describes a half-finished mass. He refers to an unfinished promise he made before his marriage. The mass in question is undoubtedly the one in C minor, K. 427; his greatest and most deeply felt work in this form. Mozart eventually reused the music for the Cantata *Davidde Penitente* in 1785. No additional music has ever been found and we can only speculate on why it was never finished. The manuscript contains the *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Benedictus* and nearly completed *Sanctus*. Of the *Credo*, only the sections *Credo in unum deum* and *Incarlates* exist and even these are in partial form. No *Agnus dei* or *Donna nobis pacem* have been found. It has been speculated that the promise Mozart made was to write a mass in honor of his dead mother and deliver it to his father in Salzburg. The music speaks of personal loss. It is more subdued than most masses of the classical era. There is none of Haydn's smile in the thought of God here. This may also explain why the work remained unfinished. As with Schubert's B minor symphony, Mozart may not have found ways to set the missing text that met the lofty level of the completed sections. A significant interest in the music of Bach and Handel can be documented to this time and may explain the use of more than four part chorus as well as the more baroque nature of the fugues involved. As far as we know the work was never performed in Mozart's lifetime.

Notes by Randall Wilson



Musical Amateurs was started in 1935 by professor Roy Dickinson Welch, chairman of the Princeton University Music Department. Patterned after Henry Drinker's Sunday night singing parties in Philadelphia, an informal group of about twenty musicians met in the living room of Mrs. MacKenty Bryan's house on Sunday afternoon, to sing for their own pleasure, works from the choral literature. Professor Welch conducted, and had the assistance of a piano accompanist. The group gradually grew too large for a living room, and moved the meetings to the old Miss Fine's School building (present site of Borough Hall) after World War II, with Mrs. Bryan as its manager, chief cook, and bottle washer. She served a magnificent supper at intermission time!

The popularity and subsequent growth of the organization led to the use of the *new* gymnasium of the school, built around 1955, where there was enough room to house the current membership of that time – 175 or so – and experiment with having an orchestra. Certain traditions evolved, such as singing either Handel's *Messiah* or the Bach *Christmas Oratorio* in December – and the Bach *Mass in B-minor* in May. The sessions were generally conducted by J. Merrill Knapp or Elliot Forbes, both of the University Music Department, with an occasional guest conductor being introduced. Eventually Mrs. Bryan's glorious suppers had to be reduced to "refreshments" because of rising food costs and the tremendous labor involved.

In 1963, Mrs. Bryan retired, the organization was incorporated, a set of Bylaws written, and an Executive Committee pressed into service. Finally, when Miss Fine's School was sold to the Borough, the Musical Amateurs moved to its present quarters. Over the years the repertoire has been expanded to include an occasional 20th century work, such as Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and usually a G & S operetta. Nowadays, each session is conducted by one of over a dozen prominent conductors from the central Jersey area that lend their talents to this remarkable organization.

The stated purpose of the organization is as follows: *Members of the community gathered together for the common and joyful enterprise of making music, to sing through for their own pleasure the great works in choral literature, with chorus, orchestra, and soloists as the works require. The meetings are not in any sense performances, but informal readings in which any musically interested person may participate. There are no preliminary rehearsals, except for the conductor and soloists, and no auditions are required to sing in the chorus.*

