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Ensemble Concerts: The Treble and University Oratorio Choir; The University Symphony Orchestra and Honors Chamber Orchestra; May 23, 1971

Donald Armstrong Conductor

Robert Oppelt Conductor

Darlene Cech Bruno Soprano

Russell Gregory Bass

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ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC

present

The Treble Choir
The University Oratorio Choir

Donald Armstrong, Conductor

The University Symphony Orchestra
The Honors Chamber Orchestra

Robert Oppelt, Conductor

Darlene Cech Bruno, Soprano
Russell Gregory, Bass

May 23, 1971

3:00 p.m.

Capen Auditorium

PROGRAM

MISSA SAO SEBASTIAO

Heitor Villa-Lobos

(Mass in Honor of St. Sebastian) - 1937

1. Kyrie
2. Gloria
3. Credo
4. Sanctus
5. Benedictus
6. Agnus Dei

TE DEUM, Opus 103 - 1892

Antonin Dvorak

1. Chorus, soprano-Allegro moderato, maestoso
2. Bass, chorus-Lento maestoso
3. Chorus-Vivace
4. Soli, Chorus-Lento, allegro moderato

STABAT MATER, Opus 46-1956

Ernst von Dohnanyi

Roxanne Brauer, soprano
Donna Doud, mezzo-soprano
Vicki Davis, contralto

TE DEUM

We praise you, O God; we acknowledge you to be Lord.
All the earth worships you, the everlasting Father.
To you all the angels, the heavens, and all the Powers,
The Cherubim and Seraphim cry out without ceasing;
Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts!
The majesty of your glory fills the heavens and the earth
The glorious choir of apostles,
The admirable company of the prophets,
The white-robed army of martyrs praise you.
Through the world the holy church testifies to you;
The Father, whose glory is beyond our comprehension
Your adorable, true, and only Son,
And the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete.
You, O Christ, are the king of glory.
You are the eternal Son of the Father.
You did not disdain a virgin's womb to redeem man.
You overcame death, and opened the kingdom of heaven for the faithful.
Now you are seated at the right hand of God, in the glory of the Father.
We believe that you will come again as judge.
Help your servants, whom you have redeemed with your precious blood.
Number them among your saints in everlasting glory.
Save your people, O Lord, and bless your inheritance.
And govern them, and keep them safe forever.
Through each day we bless you.
And praise your name forever; indeed, forever and ever
Grant, O Lord, to keep us without sin this day.
Have mercy on us, O Lord; have mercy on us.
Let your mercy be upon us, O Lord, as we have trusted in you.
In your mercy, O Lord, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame forever.

STABAT MATER

At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.
Through her heart, His sorrow sharing,
All His bitter anguish baring,
Now at length the sword had passed.

Oh, how sad and sore distressed
Was that Mother, highly blest.
Of the sole begotten One!
Christ above in torment hangs:
She beneath beholds the pangs
Of her dying glorious Son.

Is there one who would not weep,
Whelmed in miseries so deep,
Christ's dear Mother to behold?
Can the human heart refrain
From partaking in her pain,
In that Mother's pain untold?

Bruised, derided, cursed, defiled,
She beheld her tender Child,
All with bloody scourges rent:
For the sins of His own nation.
Saw Him hang in desolation
Till His spirit forth He sent.

O thou Mother: fount of love!
Touch my spirit from above,
Make my heart with thine accord;
Make me feel as thou hast felt;
Make my soul to glow and melt,
With the love of Christ my Lord.

Holy mother, pierce me through.
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Savior crucified.
Let me share with thee His pain,
Who for all my sins was slain,
Who for me in torment died.

Let me mingle tears with thee,
Mourning Him who mourned for me,
All the days that I may live.
By the cross with thee to stay;
There with thee to weep and pray
Is all I ask of thee to give.

Virgin of all virgins best,
Listen to my fond request:
Let me share thy grief divine;
Let me to my latest breath
In my body bear the death
Of that dying Son of thine.

Wounded with His every wound,
Steep my soul till it had swooned
In His very blood away.
Be to me, O Virgin, nigh,
Lest in flames I burn, and die
In His awful judgement day.

Christ, when Thou shalt call me hence,
Be Thy Mother my defense,
Be Thy Cross my victory.
While my body here decays,
May my soul Thy goodness praise
Safe in Paradise with Thee.

PROGRAM NOTES

Musical settings of the ordinary of the mass for treble voices are rare indeed. No doubt much unpublished music lies hidden in convent libraries throughout the world, music suitable for use by treble voices in this sacrament. But published, or even printed, versions of music of this type are almost nonexistent before this century. And the number since 1900 is pitifully small. Settings by Gabriel Faure, Andre Caplet, and Benjamin Britten, in addition to the Villa-Lobos setting, complete the list. Of these four, only that by Villa-Lobos is a complete one. Both the Faure *Messe Basse* (1907) and the Britten *Missa Brevis in D* (1959) are truncated, both omitting the long *Credo*, and Faure also omitting the *Gloria*. The Villa-Lobos *Mass* is also the only a capella setting available. Consequently its unique characteristics signify it as a valuable composition of this century.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) spent the first thirty years of his life largely self-teaching himself, wandering throughout Brazil, assimilating the music of his native people. When he was thirty-one he became aware of the music of Debussy, and after a journey to Paris, his musical tastes began to broaden. His heretofore highly criticized compositions now gained some European audience and some were published. After his return to Brazil around 1930, he became interested in music for choirs, especially experimenting with massed choral sound. At one time he exhibited a performance by 40,000 singers. He was responsible in later years for the introduction of many masterpieces to the Brazilian public. In comparison to opera, ballet, and orchestral music, his choral production is relatively small. His largest work is *Descobrimento do Brasil*, four suites for chorus and orchestra, composed in the same year as the *Missa Sao Sebastiao*.

The musical language of this mass is difficult to describe generally. Textures are quite varied among the sections, with relatively little actual melodic development. Only the *Kyrie* is primarily imitative. The long sections, *Gloria* and *Credo*, are rather mosaic, presenting new musical material for each textual phrase. Villa-Lobos' delightfully unpredictable melodic and harmonic techniques are always fascinating. Although traditional in the strictest sense of that word, the music is anything but traditional in the methods used to organize the music. Textures, vocal styles, dynamic panels, and textual prosody are almost whimsically altered occasionally. The work however is wonderfully interesting to sing, and offers several beautiful moments, and a certain dramatic life of its own.

Antonin Dvorak (1841-1904) is not best known to the general audience as a composer of choral works. No doubt his American reputation at least is largely based on his last symphony, *From the New World* (opus 95, 1893). His operas, chamber music, and piano music are much more widely known in Europe. Of his sixteen choral works, three are folk-song collections for male voices and two are sets of songs for mixed choir, including the popular *Songs of Nature*, opus 63. His two major secular dramatic works are *The Spectre's Bride* (opus 69, 1884) and *St. Ludmilla* (opus 71, 1886). In addition he composed several patriotic songs for unison chorus.

His four liturgical works (*Stabat Mater*, opus 58, 1876; *Mass in D*, opus 86, 1887; *Requiem Mass*, opus 89, 1890; *Te Deum*, opus 103, 1892) have largely been neglected in America, and unjustifiably so. Dvorak of course wrote in a choral style that has certain Victorian-Romantic hallmarks which are unpopular today, but the freshness and originality of almost all the music assures them of an unhackneyed style and sound. *Stabat Mater* and the *Requiem* are monumental masterpieces in the literature.

Te Deum is the only one of the four that was written for American production during Dvorak's first American journey. It was premiered in New York seventy-nine years ago in October. It is the only liturgical work that is short, and that uses less than a quartet of soloists. Alec Robertson (*Dvorak*, 1964) states that is "is perhaps the most original contribution to sacred music he made," and calls it a "little masterpiece." The brevity and sheer spontaneous sheen of the work make it a delight to sing, play, and hear.

It's macroform is symphonic in four movements (without break between 1 and 2, and 3 and 4). The first movement is squarely ABA with the slow second section punctuated by brief quotations of the instrumental head-motive of the A sections. The remarkable element is that the A sections are totally built on tonic G major harmony, in ever ascending layers of vocal and instrumental sound. The slow movement for bass solo and divisi choir is a full-blown aria for the voice, with brief penitential passages for chorus. The third movement is clearly intended as a scherzo, and is characterized by rhythmic vivacity and declamatory vigor from the choir.

The final movement is the largest and most dramatic of the work, beginning with a beautiful soprano aria against isolated choral phrases. The chorus enters with alleluia over embryonic passages from the first movement in the orchestra, and finally the entire instrumental material returns to bring the work to a glistening close.

The medieval poem **Stabat Mater** has had an interesting life with regard to the Roman liturgy. Although its authorship is in doubt—most ascribe it to Jacopone da Todi (d. 1306), however it also has been thought to be by Innocent III or St. Bonaventure—it was not liturgical (that is it had no set position in the official Roman worship service) nor did it have music of its own. It became popular as a devotion in the 13th century and began to be found in worship books, and even to have musical settings. It did not officially enter the liturgy as a sequence (a usually florid addition to the Gradual) until 1727.

As a musical work, its history begins with Josquin's five part setting (ca. 1500) and Palestrina's famous double choir version (ca. 1590). Later works are also popular, especially that by Giovanni Pergolesi (1710-1736), for two castrato soloists, but often performed by female choir. Other settings are by Haydn, Rossini, Verdi, and Dvorak.

Ernst von Dohnanyi (1877-1960) was most famous as a concert pianist in Europe during the first fifty years of his life. He left his home in Hungary in 1948 for political reasons, and finally settled in America where he was composer in residence at Florida State University from 1949 until his death. His compositions are chiefly instrumental, with three symphonies, and much chamber music. His choral works are only four, and include one mass, 1930.

Dohnanyi's compositional technique has been criticized as bordering "upon slickness and academicism—valuable rather than eloquent, and there is little individuality" (Fuller-Maitland, Groves). This rather harsh judgement is based largely on the instrumental works. The language of the **Stabat Mater** is rather complex and perhaps academic in its thick chromaticism, but the vocal line is superb, and the tapestry of six voices is always carefully woven, if a bit thick at times. The composer shows nice sensitivity for dramatic climax, especially when faced with such a lengthy text. Above all, the music is beautifully exemplary of the expression of the pity and hope of the poetry.

Darlene Cech Bruno is a native Illinoisan, born in Chicago. She holds the Bachelor of Music Education Degree from Illinois Wesleyan University, 1964, and has had further study in voice at the American Conservatory in Chicago. She presently teaches voice in her home and part time at Bradley University, Peoria. She is constantly in demand as soloist throughout the central Illinois area. Her operatic roles include Mimi, Marguerite (**Faust**), Magda (**The Consul**), and Lauretta (**Gianni Schicchi**). Other oratorio solo performances include **Messiah**, **St. Matthew Passion**, Dvorak **Stabat Mater**, and Orff's **Carmina Burana**.



Russell Gregory is one of the most sought after soloists in the south-central Texas area. He has sung in community and University of Texas productions, as well as engagements in San Antonio, Houston and Dallas. All major oratorio roles are in his repertoire, including Vaughn Williams **Hodie** and **Sancta Civitas**, **Carmina Burana**, and Handel's **Te Deum**. Operatic roles are extensive, including **Gianni Schicchi**, **Marriage of Figaro**, **La Boheme**, **Oedipus Rex**, **Der Rosenkavalier**, and Britten's **Noye's Fludde**. Mr. Gregory is a native of Austin, Texas, and is a special agent of the Prudential Insurance Company of America. For the past twelve years, in addition to his insurance activities and special singing engagements, he has served as organist-choirmaster of several Austin churches. He holds the Bachelor of Music degree in sacred music from the University of Texas.

