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Evaluating the Eighteenth-Century Legacy of the Fuxian Liturgical Style: The Solemn Idiom and Michael Haydn

The significance of Vienna's elaborate liturgical music life under Emperor Charles VI (1711–1740) is hardly limited to the Baroque period; in the broader history of eighteenth-century church music it is seminal. Functions, styles and ideals attached to this musical environment endured through the so-called Classical period and the waning years of the Holy Roman Empire (officially dissolved in 1806). The solemn liturgical music idiom cultivated under Johann Joseph Fux's musical directorship of the court (1715–1741) fostered church music genres such as the *missa solemnis* and *vesperae solemnes*, genres that for decades remained central to the musical life of Vienna and its environs. Music of these genres share consistencies of function, style, and ideal. The writings and music of Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), understood in their Habsburg cultural context, impart a basic aesthetic for the idiom. An analytical approach to the corpus of elaborate church music composed in the later age of Haydn and Mozart demands an understanding of this aesthetic and its early eighteenth-century roots. The lesser-known Haydn, Johann Michael (1737–1806), provides a significant point of reference for exploring the later eighteenth-century repertoire. Among the composers prominent in Viennese church music at the conclusion of the eighteenth century, he stands as a Fuxian standard bearer.

THE EARLY SOLEMN IDIOM AND ITS CULTURAL BASIS

'Solemn style' refers to the type of music that became prominent in the early eighteenth century for its employment in festive liturgical celebrations connected to the imperial court. These occasions, such as a pontifical mass assisted by the imperial family and members of the Order of the Golden Fleece, called for sophisticated music that signalled both ecclesiastical authority and temporal power. For this reason, the highest level of solemnity was expressed through an idiom that combined trumpets and drums with the regular choral-orchestral forces used in the *stilus mixtus* as defined in

Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum*.¹ This solemn idiom persisted throughout the eighteenth century due largely to the continuity of the imperial system, a persistence of the *pietas austriaca*, and the influence of the Habsburg court on central-European musical life.

The roots of this idiom are bound to Viennese imperial ideals that were germinating by the dawn of the eighteenth century. In these years, as the court, ecclesiastical, and noble institutions of Vienna rebuilt in the aftermath of the seventeenth-century struggles against Protestantism and Turkish aggression, the Holy Roman inheritance of the Habsburg dynasty exerted its influence triumphantly upon the city's identity. The capital's artistic compass pointed to the south, as its ruling establishments buttressed their political and spiritual identity through the adoption of idealised, historic Roman styles, as well as the exploitation of their connections to Catholic Italy. This Austro-Roman spirit was expressed most forcefully in architecture and music, the arts that most publicly represented the power of the ecclesiastical and political institutions. The self-consciously majestic style displayed by many new and rebuilt churches of the time was based on the classic inspirations of Renaissance and Baroque Italy.

Viennese musical ideals were animated by similar values of majesty and authority. The musical aspect of the early eighteenth-century Austro-Roman spirit was concentrated on the authoritative style of the sacred polyphony of Renaissance Rome. However, this was an orientation towards the model of Renaissance polyphony as a fundamental skill, not as an exclusive ideal. While many leading composers of the time continued to compose music in the *a cappella* style, their approach was not restrained by historicism. Indeed, the eighteenth-century approach to ecclesiastical counterpoint was flexible. The so-called *a cappella* style remained the epitome of sacred music, but even in church services it was more often utilized in a synthesis with other styles.

It is the juxtaposition or combination of traditional contrapuntal and modern concerted styles that Fux identifies as the *stilus mixtus*. In the later chapters of *Gradus ad Parnassum*, he asserts that such a mixed style was valid and appropriate in ecclesiastical composition, describing it as 'the custom of the time, especially in churches.'² Of Fux's *oeuvre*, the *Missa brevis solennitatis* (K. 5) offers an outstanding example of the *stilus mixtus* in a solemn

¹ Johann Joseph Fux, 'Gradus ad Parnassum (1725): Concluding Chapters', translated by Susan Wollenberg, *Music Analysis*, 11 (1992), 236–237.

² Ibid.

guise.³ Despite its brevity and lack of discrete numbers, the Gloria of this mass renders the text in an impressive succession of contrasting styles and textures including solo voice, imitative polyphony, declamatory homophony, concertato and *a cappella*. Nevertheless the gravity of traditional *a cappella* style is manifest in its austere employment on the line ‘qui tollis peccata mundi miserere nobis’. Given this progressive approach to the concept of *a cappella* style, it is apparent that the use of contrapuntal texture in the eighteenth-century solemn idiom manifests not a mere traditional topic, but an essential, living style. Whether used strictly or in a modern concertato style, it embodies the Austro-Roman heritage of Viennese culture.

The distinguishing sonority of the solemn idiom, the martial sound of trumpets and drums, were united with the *stilus mixtus* due to the imperatives of court ritual. In the early eighteenth century trumpets and drums were generally available only to the most powerful of patrons. The triumphalism surrounding the house of Habsburg ensured an especially lavish use of them. Since the seventeenth century, these instruments were employed in imperial liturgy to render fanfares and sinfonias that heralded or punctuated ceremonial activity. During the reign of Charles VI their importance increased significantly. These years brought a substantial enhancement of the court trumpet choir.⁴ At the same time, these instruments were further integrated into formal settings of liturgical texts.

The simplest combination of trumpet fanfare with choral texture within an individual work is found in examples such as Fux’s setting of the Easter sequence *Victimae Paschali laudes* (c.1718), where the trumpet choir and vocal choir are heard essentially in alternation.⁵ In comparison, the actual integration of trumpets into the choral texture can be heard in Fux’s *Missa Corpus Christi* (c.1713), where the instruments are frequently used to ornament the declamatory choral writing and emphasize cadences. The *Missa Laetare* (1729) by Antonio Caldara (Vizekapellmeister, 1717–1736) presents an even better example of this integration. In its Kyrie II/*Dona nobis pacem* music, for example, a larger complement of clarini and trombe play a more active role, doubling and ornamenting the fugato choral texture.

³ Johann Joseph Fux, *Missa brevis solennitatis*, K. 5, ed. Josef-Horst Lederer [Johann Joseph Fux: Sämtliche Werke, III/1] (Graz, 1974).

⁴ A. Peter Brown, ‘The Trumpet Overture and Sinfonia in Vienna (1715–1822): Rise, Decline and Reformulation’, in David Wyn Jones (ed.), *Music in Eighteenth-Century Austria* (Cambridge, 1996), 16.

⁵ Johann Joseph Fux, *Victimae Paschali Laudes*, ed. Rudolf Walter (Vienna, 1997).

Compositions such as the *Missa Caroli* (1734) by Georg Reutter Jr (1708–1772) show how the solemn style was transmitted to a younger group of composers active in the generation following Fux.⁶ The manner in which Reutter sustains the practice of ornamenting a declamatory choral texture with a layer of fanfare material is conspicuous from the opening measures of its Kyrie. Equally conspicuous in this opening is the brisk eighth- and sixteenth-note accompaniment in the violin part; this innovation is known as hallmark of Reutter's church music.⁷

Through their synthesis of venerable and modern styles and their amalgamation of ecclesiastical and aristocratic signifiers, solemn compositions embodied the imperial-spiritual order and heritage of early eighteenth-century Vienna. By virtue of their employment in celebratory services at the court, cathedral, and major churches, they constituted one of the most widely heard types of music in the city and its environs.

THE SOLEMN IDIOM AT MID CENTURY

Though the ceremonial life of the court was reduced after 1740 due to political instability, diminishing resources, and reforms of the local ecclesiastical calendar, Vienna's cultural life continued to be marked by a dense schedule of liturgical celebration. The production of suitable music for solemn occasions remained central to the careers of Viennese musicians working in and around the court of Maria Theresia (r. 1740–1780) and Francis I (r. 1740–1765). During this mid-century period, it was Georg Reutter Jr. who stood at the centre of Viennese liturgical music, having become *Domkapellmeister* at St. Stephan's in 1738 and also *Hofkapellmeister* in 1751.⁸

During the 1750s a significant shift in the character of the solemn idiom was effected by the decline of the clarino trumpet.⁹ Due to this development, Reutter and his generation presided over the extinction of the elaborate, high-pitched obbligato trumpet passages and lengthy fanfares that recalled vividly the splendour of ceremony under Charles VI. Nevertheless the trumpet remained a fixture in liturgical music, since the voice of the *tromba*, or

⁶ Georg Reutter Jr., *Kirchenwerke*, ed. by Norbert Hofer [Denkmäler der Tonkunst in Österreich 88] (Graz, 1970).

⁷ Edward Olleson, 'Church Music and Oratorio', in Egon Wellesz (ed.), *The Age of Enlightenment: 1745–1790* [The New Oxford History of Music 7] (Oxford, 1973), 294.

⁸ David Wyn Jones, 'Reutter, Georg (ii)', in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23278> (accessed April 10, 2008).

⁹ Brown, 'Trumpet Overture', 32.

lower trumpet remained on the composer's instrumental palette. The solemn idiom remained prominent, though its defining sonority could only be employed in a more reserved manner. Aside from the occasional use of an abbreviated fanfare, such as that which opens the Sanctus of Salieri's 1788 Mass in D, composers active in the second half of the century used trumpets and drums mainly for harmonic reinforcement and the enhancement of *tutti* textures. The loss of the brilliant-style clarino, however, may arguably have been compensated by the increase in elaborate violin accompaniment that also took place under Reutter.¹⁰

CHALLENGES TO THE IDIOM, AND ITS LATER DEVELOPMENT

It was liturgical reform legislation that exerted the most dramatic impact on the practice of solemn liturgical genres in the second half of the century. In the 1750s, initiatives to curtail theatricality in the rendering of church music emanated from both Rome and the imperial court.¹¹ As is the case with the better-known liturgical reform efforts of Joseph II in the 1780s, it is difficult to evaluate the impact these measures had on the composition of formal liturgical settings, especially those for important churches independent of court administration. What we do know is that the Viennese taste for solemn liturgical style outlived all these challenges.

Furthermore, despite the reform efforts and the musical vicissitudes of the *Hofkapelle* and Cathedral, in the second half of the eighteenth century solemn liturgical music spread far beyond the court and cathedral milieu. The solemn became a traditional style of its own, appropriate for use on festive occasions in all churches that boasted the resources for such grandeur. By the middle of the century, solemn liturgical genres, especially the *Missa solemnis*, were supported by many influential abbey churches. By the 1770s, this type of music was heard even in the realm of well-endowed suburban parishes and minor nobility. Joseph Haydn's second *Missa Cellensis* (1782), for example, was commissioned by a retired military commander in order to commemorate his own elevation to the nobility.¹²

The development of solemn genres was advanced most significantly by composers who were trained in Vienna during the period of Reutter's

¹⁰ Antonio Salieri, *Mass in D Major*, ed. Jane Schatkin Hettrick [Recent Researches in the Music of the Classical Era, 65] (Madison, Wisconsin, 1994).

¹¹ David Black, 'Mozart and the Practice of Sacred Music, 1781–91' (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard Univ., 2007), chapter 1.

¹² Daniel Heartz, *Mozart, Haydn, and Early Beethoven: 1781–1802* (New York, 2008), 328.

predominance. Joseph and Michael Haydn, who entered the service of the Cathedral and Hofkapelle as boy choristers in the 1740s, are the most notable of this generation. Within the Viennese musical establishment, the young Haydns gained much of their early musical experience as performers of church music by Reutter, Fux, Caldara, and other figures. Fux's treatise *Gradus ad Parnassum* continued to be the principal music-theoretical manual in this milieu. Both Haydns, as well as numerous other aspiring composers, such as Ignaz Holzbauer (1711–1783) and Karl von Dittersdorf (1739–1799) are known to have studied the text.¹³ Michael Haydn's study of Fux's principles included making a personal copy Fux's *stile antico Missa canonica* in its entirety. It is one of numerous artefacts which reflect the continuity of the counterpoint tradition codified by Fux in 1725, and its durability as an ideal basis for all compositional training. The endurance of the Fuxian tradition through the end of the century is reflected by Johann Georg Albrechtsberger's 1790 composition treatise *Gründliche Anweisung zur Composition*, which updates Fux's precepts according to more recent harmonic practice.¹⁴

MICHAEL HAYDN AND THE FUXIAN SOLEMN AESTHETIC

While both Joseph and Michael Haydn experienced the legacy of the early eighteenth century solemn style as young choristers, it was Michael who capitalised upon this formation in a long career devoted mainly to church music. After leaving Vienna in the late 1750s, he worked briefly for the Prince-Bishop of Großwardein, then for forty years in the service of the Prince-Archbishop of Salzburg. At the archbishop's court he encountered a similar but distinct Salzburg tradition of solemn music that supported the ongoing development of his skills as a composer of liturgical music. The solemn works Michael Haydn composed for the important churches of Salzburg and, toward the end of his life, Vienna offer a compelling opportunity to evaluate the late eighteenth-century endurance of a solemn liturgical aesthetic provided by Fux's teachings and compositions. I will discuss this aesthetic, before returning to Haydn's music.

¹³ Floyd K. Grave. 'Holzbauer, Ignaz', in Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13269> (accessed November 13, 2008). Karl Ditters von Dittersdorf, *The Autobiography of Karl von Dittersdorf*, trans. Arthur Duke Coleridge (London, 1896), 76–77.

¹⁴ Jen-yen Chen, 'Church Music, "Classical" Style, and the Dialectic of Old and New in Late 18th-Century Musical Culture', in Mara Parker (ed.), *Music in Eighteenth-Century Life: Cities, Courts, Churches* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2006), 29–30.

Further examination of the last chapters of *Gradus ad Parnassum* offers a set of aesthetic aims for the composition masses utilising the solemn idiom. Here, Fux explains that the ideal for ecclesiastical composition is to encourage devotion and divine worship. To this end, he endorses the use of ‘all suitable means’ of exciting devotion. However, Fux is also emphatic that music offered for worship should ‘conform to the rigour of the rules, attaining perfection insofar as human imperfection allows.’ These statements indicate that the quality of an ecclesiastical composition is not measured against the narrow scale of the historical *stile antico*, but against a sense of precept and propriety. For this reason, Fux above all cautions against the confusion of the ecclesiastical style with the manners of theatrical and dance music.¹⁵

It was the tension between ‘worldly’ styles and a sacred ideal that spurred mid-century reform efforts and provoked repeated criticism in later decades. Nevertheless, we must realise that comprehending the line between sacred and secular in the eighteenth century is quite challenging, since opposite the pure *stile antico*, there stood secular-oriented music such as overt operatic contrafacta for use in church services. Between these poles stood, and still stands, a wide variety of opinion. We can deduce that in a style commensurate with Fux’s ideals, the music is tailored to the text above all. Fux writes that in doing so the composer should strive for clarity and singability. Still, he does not discourage the use of ‘different figurations’ to express varied text content, as long as the music and the text are not contradictory.¹⁶ These ideals were attainable even in elaborate compositions for choir, and orchestra replete with trumpets and drums. The cornerstone of a liturgical musical art is the ability to negotiate these ideals in a composition of majestic and sophisticated style. By liturgical art I mean the composition of music that is impressive but does not completely overshadow the ritual it is meant to accompany. It is undeniable that the compromising of liturgical ideals is almost as old as liturgical music itself. However, it offers a significant point of consideration for the study of every era in the history of sacred music. Through his writing and through many examples, Fux leaves us an important compass for evaluating modern approaches to liturgical music in the Viennese eighteenth century.

With this in mind, I turn to the example offered by Michael Haydn’s *Missa Sancti Ruperti* (1782). An impressive array of styles and textures is presented within its single-movement, single-tempo Gloria, which is organised along a sonata structure. Its final section, on the text ‘cum Sancto

¹⁵ Fux, ‘*Gradus ad Parnassum* (1725): Concluding Chapters’, 217–218, 237.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 218.

Spiritu in gloria Dei patris, Amen', moves without break from accompanied choral homophony, to a fugue, to a florid soprano solo, then concludes with a non-imitative polyphonic segment based on the fugue. Nonetheless, a high degree of textual intelligibility is maintained and the impression of theatricality is minimised. By virtue of its subtle balancing of this spectrum of musical elements, the work appears to fulfil Fux's ideals. Numerous other examples from the oeuvre of the lesser-known Haydn could be used for the same type of demonstration. Perhaps it was the composer's skill in fulfilling a historic ideal that earned him the respect and patronage of the last Holy Roman Empress, Maria Theresa (1772–1807), a dedicated connoisseur of Catholic liturgical music in an age which saw influential members of the Viennese nobility gravitate towards the Protestant oratorio.¹⁷ Michael Haydn's affinity with Fux's precepts and sense of liturgical propriety place him squarely in a Fuxian tradition. Considered this way, Michael Haydn's contemporary renown can be better understood.

At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Habsburg Dynasty and its capital faced a level of political and cultural upheaval it had not encountered since the seventeenth century. They would survive, but they would not triumph as they had in the earlier era. Similarly, the practice of setting the mass and other liturgical subjects to elaborate music also survived, but it did not triumph in the musical life of the nineteenth century. The socio-political changes of these years fostered a new order in musical culture, one which saw imperial and ecclesiastical patronage in Austria marginalised. In this new order the dramatic approach to liturgical texts predominated in high musical culture, while the liturgical approach became increasingly obscure. The influence and continuity of the solemn idiom until these years reflect the extent to which Viennese musical culture was oriented to historic artistic values throughout the eighteenth century. Understanding this enables us to appreciate how the orchestral liturgical music of the turn of the century still echoes the piety and triumphalism of the house of Habsburg.

¹⁷ John Rice, *Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court, 1792–1807* (Cambridge, 2003), 230–234.