

29. Haydn

'Quoniam tu solus' from The Nelson Mass

(For Unit 6: Further Musical Understanding)

Background information and performance circumstances

A brief outline of Haydn's life

Haydn was born in the small village of Rohrau in Austria in 1732. His father, an amateur folk musician, recognised his son's talent and he was sent to Hainburg at the age of six to be trained by a relative, Johann Matthias Franck, the local schoolmaster and choirmaster. Haydn's reputation as a chorister spread and Georg von Reutter, the Director of Music for St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, who happened to be passing through Hainburg, enlisted him as a member of the choir in St Stephen's Cathedral, Vienna.

Eventually his voice broke and after being dismissed from the Cathedral, Haydn was taken in by a friend, Johann Michael Spangler, enabling him to seek work as a freelance musician. He taught himself composition and as his work became better known he was able to gain regular employment and eventually in 1761 he became Kapellmeister to the wealthy Esterházy family. He was a paid servant but had at his disposal a court orchestra, and over a period of thirty years composed an impressive number of symphonies, quartets, operas and keyboard works.

Though based in the palace at Esterháza in remote rural Hungary, Haydn's reputation grew and eventually he started to accept commissions throughout Europe. After his patron Prince Nikolaus died in 1790, Haydn was able to travel more freely, particularly as the new prince needed to economise and dismissed most of the court musicians. One of his major trips was to London where he composed a number of symphonies for the Salomon Orchestra. He returned to Vienna in 1795 and in 1798 composed the Mass in D minor, one of six masses written for the latest Prince Esterházy, Nikolaus II, who based himself mainly in Vienna and Eisenstadt.

Haydn died in Vienna, aged 77, in May 1809 only a few days after a bombardment by Napoleon's army. The title of the D minor Mass, *Missa in Angustiis* (Mass in troubled times) reflects the difficult conditions prevailing during this period.

Background to the composition

The autograph score is simply entitled "Missa" and the title "*Missa in Angustiis*" (literally "narrow" or "constricted", so perhaps, loosely, "Mass in Time of Fear".) was added by Haydn in his draft catalogue. He had already written a "Mass in Time of War" two years earlier during the Napoleonic invasion of Austria. According to the autograph score the Mass was composed between 10th July and 31st August of 1798. At this time Napoleon had invaded Egypt in order to cut off Britain's trade routes to the east. Haydn could not have heard the news that Lord Nelson had won the famous Battle of the Nile at Abukir Bay until the work was finished. It was composed to celebrate the Name Day of the Princess Esterházy. It is possible the news of this victory filtered through to Austria on the day of the first performance at the Bergkirche in Eisenstadt on 15th September and the work had a vague association with Admiral Horatio Nelson. The association was cemented when Nelson and Lady Hamilton passed through Austria in 1800. They stayed at Eisenstadt as guests of Prince Esterházy and were treated to a performance of what is now known as "The Nelson Mass".

Performing forces and their handling

By May 1798, Prince Nikolaus II had restored the court musicians but even he had to make cuts in these troubled times. As a result, Haydn was left with strings, trumpets, timpani and organ. However, as the celebrated Haydn scholar, H. C. Robbins-Landon, has pointed out, if Haydn had wanted wind players for the occasion he would have been able to hire them specially.

The autograph score specifies the following:

3 trumpets

Timpani

Strings

Organ

Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass soloists

SATB chorus.

There are various editions where wind parts are added to cover the organ part but the autograph score clearly indicates just trumpets. References to flutes and oboes in the reduced score in the Anthology originate in these spurious later editions. The anthology recording uses only the forces specified by Haydn, and indeed it is normal to use just trumpets today. There is good evidence that the third trumpet was a so-called ripieno part which may well have been played by more than one player. The part is only played in the Kyrie and the Benedictus, and would have made for a dramatic opening to the work. It does not play in the Quoniam.

A bassoon is used to double the Basso part. As indicated in the full score, this is distinct from the cello part. In the piano reduction used for Nam 29 the distinction is indicated in the fugato section. When Haydn indicated just cellos (e.g. bar 28), it was because the lowest choral part at that point was the tenor line. Once the choral basses re-entered at bar 30, he reverted to the full orchestral bass section.

The Quoniam opens with strings and organ accompanying the soprano soloist. The full orchestra answers the opening phrase supporting the SATB chorus, so providing a strong dynamic contrast. This alternation of strings and soprano with the full resources continues until the fugal section using the text 'In Gloria dei patris' starting at bar 22.

Here the Basso and organ establish a walking quaver movement over which the strings double the choral entries starting with violas doubling the chorus Basses. There are occasional trumpet and timpani entries usually reinforcing a cadence e.g. bar 60/61(Tutti).

As the choral fugue comes to a conclusion the string writing becomes more independent with semiquaver figures in the violins. At bar 61 the string writing is independent of the vocal lines as the soloists weave an elaborate counterpoint for the 'Amen' over a tonic pedal in the Basso and organ with simple chords or quaver arpeggios in the upper strings.

On the repeat of this idea the timpani are used to reinforce the pedal with a dramatic roll while the organ, a part played by Haydn himself at the first performance, elaborates on a florid semiquaver passage. As the trumpets join at the climax, the chorus return producing a full tutti for the final statements of the 'Amen'. The final cadence is highlighted by trumpets and repeated notes on the timpani.

The dynamics throughout are determined by the contrast between solo singers and strings (piano), and the tuttis which are forte. At bar 17 there is a short piano passage for the chorus in preparation for the fugato.

Texture

The opening bars are melody dominated homophony with the soprano singing the melody with chordal accompaniment from the lower strings and quaver movement in the violins. The antiphonal repeat of these bars is a full orchestral tutti with violins now doubling the soprano melody in the chorus and fanfare-like calls in the trumpets plus scales in the bass part.

The chorus is homophonic until bar 22 with the orchestra providing some more elaborate lines e.g. bar 5 - the soprano solo is repeated by the choir in bar 6 but with heterophonic elaboration of the descending scale figure in the first violins.

The first violin continues to elaborate the melody line (heterophony) throughout this section while the rest of the strings support the choral homophony with interjections from trumpets and timpani.

Bar 15 - 21 has a tonic pedal with repeated quavers in the organ and lower strings (Bassi).

Bars 22 – 61: A fugato starting with a two bar subject in the basses. There is imitation in tenors (answer), then altos (subject) and sopranos (answer). The counter-subject initially appears in the lower strings in bar 22. It is heard in invertible counterpoint at bar 30, i.e. it now appears above the subject whereas previously it had always appeared below.

The entries start to vary with the subject extended in the altos at bar 40.

Entries get closer at bars 39-40 between altos and sopranos where they imitate after one bar (stretto).

Even closer stretto occurs at bar 44 as the entries between basses and tenors are only a half bar apart and the tenor first note is reduced to a crotchet.

The counterpoint becomes freer as it sits over a dominant pedal in the organ and lower strings from bar 54.

Throughout this section the orchestra has been doubling the chorus but as it leads toward the cadence at bar 60 the first violins elaborate with semiquaver figures.

Over a tonic pedal the bass and tenor soloists start a new imitative idea at the octave a bar apart.

The chorus concludes homophonically.

Structure

The mass structure has five core movements known as the Ordinary of the Mass, i.e. the portions which do not change from one day to the next. These sections are:

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Sanctus (with Benedictus)

Agnus Dei.

Since it is the final section of the Gloria, the Quoniam is usually a rousing piece contrasting with the more sombre setting of the previous Miserere Nobis (Have mercy upon us).

The setting of the text determines the internal structure of the first portion of the movement:

Bars 1-2	Quoniam tu solus sanctus (For you alone are the Holy One)	Opening two-bar phrase for soprano and strings (the same music as the opening of the Gloria)
Bars 3-4	tu solus Dominus (you alone are the Lord)	A two-bar repetition of the opening music by the full chorus and orchestra with some rhythmic alteration to accommodate the text
Bars 4 ⁴ -6	tu solus Altíssimus (you alone are the Most High)	A one-bar phrase for soprano and strings repeated by the full chorus and orchestra
Bars 7-9 ¹	Jesu Christe (Jesus Christ)	Phrase for soprano with just violins accompanying.
Bars 9 ¹ -15	Tu solus	Bars 3-9 ¹ now repeated by full chorus and orchestra
Bars 15-22	cum Sancto Spiritu (with the Holy Spirit)	Tonic pedal for 6½ bars, with choral homophony and syncopated chords on violins (piano). The passage closes with a sudden switch to A major.

Bars 22 - 61: In gloria Dei Patris. Amen (in the glory of God the Father. Amen.)

A fugato section (i.e. a passage in fugal style which appears in the course of a longer movement), proceeding as follows:

Bar 22 - The choir basses enter with the subject on the dominant with the countersubject (in quavers) in the lower strings.

Bar 24 - The tenors answer on the tonic with the basses singing the countersubject, doubled by lower strings.

Bar 26 - Altos enter with the subject on the dominant, with countersubject in tenors and a contrasting part in basses, starting on the off-beat.

Bar 28 - The sopranos sing the answer on the tonic, the altos sing the countersubject and the tenors the three note quaver figure while the basses rest.

Bar 30 - The basses start again with the subject on the dominant, the countersubject in the sopranos and the three note quaver figure in the altos.

Bar 32 - From here on the counterpoint becomes freer with closer entries, e.g. the tenors are imitated at the octave by sopranos after one bar in bar 33. The tonality also begins to range more widely (see below).

Bar 40 - The alto extends the theme with tied crotchets and minims. This syncopated rhythm begins to pervade the texture, e.g. bar 57, leading to the close of the fugato.

The final Amen section (bars 61-82) starts with imitations involving bass and tenor soloists. (Their melodic material relates to bar 21 of the Gloria.) The theme is not immediately taken up by the soprano, as she sings a broken chord quaver figure before concluding with the idea from the bass.

A shorter version of this solo passage is heard before the chorus join in for the final cadence figure.

Tonality

The overall tonality of the Mass is D minor, but the Quoniam is in the bright and cheerful key of D major as it sings of the Glory of God. It briefly touches on related keys in the fugato.

After the first four entries, the basses re-enter at bar 30, followed by the tenors, starting on an F# in bar 32, precipitating a move to B minor with an entry in that key by the basses in bar 35.

This immediately moves to A major for the tenor entry in bar 37.

The music then builds through a preparation for E minor but it is interrupted at bar 45 as the B major chord moves to C major, the submediant of E.

There follows a transitory movement to G major at bar 49 from which point the music builds to the dominant pedal at bar 54 in preparation for the final statement of D major to end the fugato section.

In the final part of the movement (Amen), the tonic is reinforced by tonic pedals, supporting alternating dominant and tonic chords, D major scales and perfect cadences.

Harmony

The harmony is functional with frequent perfect cadences. E.g. the opening bars are based on the progression I-V-I-IIb-Ic-V, leading to a repetition of the progression creating a series of perfect cadences.

There are many inversions of chords e.g. the V7b, V7d and Ib on beats 1, 3 and 4 of bar 5.

Haydn frequently uses diminished chords e.g. bar 7 where he sharpens the D to take him to E minor (II) in preparation for the perfect cadence in the tonic at bar 9.

He later turns this chord into to a full secondary seventh with the addition of the B in bar 13.

The theme of the fugato is characteristically both simple in its triadic structure and complex in its potential harmonisation, with the quaver countersubject introducing a cycle of fifths.

At bar 45 there is an interrupted cadence.

Haydn concludes the movement emphatically with three perfect cadences.

Melody

The melody of the opening section involves both repeated notes (bars 1 and 19) and scalar ideas (bar 5).

There are some larger leaps e.g. minor 7ths in the sopranos at bars 10-12 and the octave leap in the sopranos at bar 55.

The theme of the fugato is triadic and includes a short sequence. This sequential idea is used in the countersubject and in the three quaver motif.

The sopranos sing the countersubject of the lower strings and basses at bar 30 with a short extension.

Heterophonic elaboration of the soprano melody occurs in the violin in bar 6.

The melodic fragment used for the imitation at 62 in the bass is simply a dominant to tonic idea with semiquaver passing notes creating the scale.

An extended ascending sequence appears in the solo soprano part at bar 68.

There is an appoggiatura in bar 10 in the 1st violin part. The A creates a strong dissonance with the underlying E minor chord.

Rhythm and metre

The metre is simple quadruple throughout.

The rhythm in the choral parts is defined by the text setting.

The energy of the piece is maintained by constant quaver movement:

- The opening bars in the violins where they play a quaver accompaniment to the solo soprano (see also bar 61).
- The repeated quavers of the tonic pedal at bar 15 contrasting with the longer note values in the upper parts and chorus.
- The countersubject in bar 22 which maintains its momentum throughout the fugato.

Within this constant quaver movement there are passages of:

- Semiquavers, e.g. bar 6.
- Very long tied notes, e.g. the tonic pedal at bar 61.
- Syncopation, e.g. violins at bar 17.
- Dotted notes, e.g. the opening phrase in the soprano solo and the imitation in the soloists at bar 62.
- Tied notes, e.g. the chorus sopranos and altos at bars 57-60 and the tied crotchet to semiquaver of the figure in the final chorus bars 77-80, which is copied from the solo soprano in bars 68-69.
- Anacrusis, necessitated by text setting, in the form of quavers (bar 5) or crotchets (bar 16).