

Representative Nineteenth-Century Settings of the Mass Ordinary

Franz Jozef Haydn: *Nelson Mass* (1798) Hob. XXII/11

Ludwig van Beethoven: *Mass in C*, op. 86 (1807)

Missa Solemnis in D (1819-23)

Franz Schubert: *Mass in G major*, D. 167 (1815)

Deutsche Messe, D. 872 (1827)

Robert Schumann: *Missa solennis in C*, op. 147 (1852)

Charles Gounod: *Messe solennelle de Ste. Cécile* (1855)

Gioacchino Rossini: *Petite Messe Solennelle* (1863)

Franz Liszt: *Missa choralis* (1865)

Anton Bruckner: *Mass no. 2 in e minor*, WAB 27 (1869)

Jospeh G. Rheinberger: *Cantus Missae*, op. 109 (1878)

Antonin Dvořák: *Mass in D* (1887)

Mass settings in the Nineteenth Century

- 1. Because of the widely variable musical assets, mass ordinary settings took many different shapes.
- The a cappella style of Palestrina survived the end of the Renaissance, persisting throughout the Baroque period as the “stile antico.” Orchestrally accompanied masses tended to assume one of three basic types:
 - Cantata Mass: Texts divided to allow separate movements of varying character, key, meter and scoring (e.g., J. S. Bach’s Mass in b minor and Mozart’s Mass in c minor, K. 427). Such works were clearly not doable on a regular basis for weekly services.
 - Missa Brevis: Much simpler, shorter compositions that employed various means to get through the text as quickly as possible with minimal musical forces. Both Haydn and Mozart composed such mass settings, often using homophonic texture with textual telescoping.
 - As orchestral compositions became the dominant musical style, the so-called “symphonic” mass gained prominence. Solemn masses used larger vocal and instrumental forces and the liturgical text was shaped by the symphony’s movement format.

Mass composition (cont.)

- J. Haydn's last six masses (1796-1802) exemplify this "symphonic" approach" to formal construction. Most typical was the use of sonata-allegro form and multiple movements to accommodate the longer texts of the Gloria and Credo, which were typically cast in three movements (F-S-F).
- Beethoven's Mass in C, op. 86 (1807) was written for the same feast as all six of Haydn's late masses and while Beethoven thought he had written a mass "in the style of Haydn," N. Esterhazy clearly disagreed.
- Beethoven's primary innovation was in the tonal structures he used; otherwise, he did follow Haydn's format.
- Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123 (1819-23) completely redefined the parameters of mass composition in terms of duration, level of difficulty and performance forces required.

Schubert, Schumann and Bruckner

- The first four masses by Schubert are *Missae breves*. The second, the Mass in G (D. 167, 1815) sounds more “classical” than “romantic” and is far less adventurous in its formal dimensions and scoring.
- Schubert’s last two masses—Mass in A-flat (D. 872, 1827) and Mass in E-flat (D. 950, 1828)—clearly attempt to achieve the symphonic dimensions of Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis*.
- Robert Schumann’s *Mass in c minor*, op. 147 and *Requiem*, op. 148, both composed in 1852, are modest works that seek to serve both church and concert hall. John Daverio views them as the work of a “religious person without religion.”
- Anton Bruckner’s eight masses mirror his transition from a country schoolteacher to prestigious posts as organist of the cathedrals in Linz and Vienna. Two of the last three masses (d minor and f minor) are symphonic masses, while the e minor mass has become the poster child of the Cecilian movement, the deliberate invocation of the Palestrina style.

Franz Liszt and Gioacchino Rossini

- It is hard to imagine two more unlikely contributors to the mass repertory of the nineteenth century than Liszt and Rossini.
- Rossini called his *Petite Messe Solennelle* (1864) the “last Mortal Sin of my Old Age.” It is a work utterly without precedent—scored for 12 voices (presumably soloists), 2 pianos and harmonium.
- Franz Liszt composed four masses and a requiem:
 - *Missa Quattuor Vocum ad aequales* (1846-7, rev. 1869)
 - *Graner Festmesse* (1855)
 - *Missa Choralis* (1859-65)
 - *Hungarian Coronation Mass* (1866-9)
 - *Requiem* (1867-71)

Recommended Reading

Kirkendale, Warren. "New Roads to Old Ideas in Beethoven's 'Missa Solemnis'." *Musical Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1970), 665-701.