

David Robertson, conductor Joélle Harvey, soprano Kelley O'Connor, mezzo-soprano Stuart Skelton, tenor Shenyang, bass-baritone St. Louis Symphony Chorus Amy Kaiser, director Saturday, November 18, 2017 at 8:00PM Sunday, November 19, 2017 at 3:00PM

#### **BEETHOVEN**

(1770-1827)

### Mass in D major, op. 123, "Missa solemnis" (1823)

Kyrie

Gloria

Credo

Sanctus

Agnus Dei

David Robertson, conductor

Joélle Harvey, soprano

Kelley O'Connor, mezzo-soprano

Stuart Skelton, tenor

Shenyang, bass-baritone

St. Louis Symphony Chorus

Amy Kaiser, director

David Halen, violin (Sanctus)

This program is performed without intermission.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The 2017/2018 Classical Series is presented by **World Wide Technology**, **The Steward Family Foundation**, and **Centene Charitable Foundation**.

These concerts are presented by the **Thomas A. Kooyumjian Family Foundation**.

The concert of Saturday, November 18 is underwritten in part by a generous gift from **Steve and Laura Savis**.

The concert of Sunday, November 19 is underwritten in part by a generous gift from

#### Mr. and Mrs.\* Robert H. Duesenberg.

David Robertson is the **Beofor Music Director and Conductor**.

Amy Kaiser is the AT&T Foundation Chair.

Joélle Harvey is the Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist.

Kelley O'Connor is the Helen E. Nash, M.D. Guest Artist.

Pre-Concert Conversations are sponsored by Washington University Physicians.

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\*Deceased

# BEETHOVEN'S MASS "FROM THE HEART"

BY CHRISTOPHER H. GIBBS



#### **LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN**

**Born** December 16, 1770, Bonn **Died** March 26, 1827, Vienna

#### **TIMELINKS**

1823 President James Monroe introduces the Monroe Doctrine, opposing further European colonization in South America.

### Mass in D major, op. 123, "Missa solemnis"

Beethoven declared in a letter from 1822 that his Mass in D, "Missa solemnis," was the "greatest work I have composed so far." Even though he was pitching the piece to a publisher and by this late point in his career he had not yet composed the Ninth Symphony and last string quartets, the statement deserves to be taken seriously. The "Missa solemnis" is Beethoven's largest and longest composition (not counting his opera *Fidelio*), and yet one of his most intimate and personal. He inscribed the opening of the Kyrie with the words: "From the heart—may it go again to the heart!"

The work came at a crucial juncture in Beethoven's life. As the aging and deaf composer increasingly withdrew from society, he created a musical testimony that is a supreme expression of personal belief.

The initial impetus for Beethoven to write the Mass was also personal. Archduke Rudolph (1788–1831), son of Emperor Leopold II, was his student and foremost patron. Early in 1819, Pope Pius VII made him a Cardinal and then announced that he would become Archbishop of Olmütz (now in the Czech Republic). The installation was set for March 1820. In a letter of congratulations, Beethoven stated, "The day

on which a High Mass composed by me will be performed during the ceremonies solemnized for Your Imperial Highness will be the most glorious day of my life; and God will enlighten me so that my poor talents may contribute to the glorification of that solemn day."

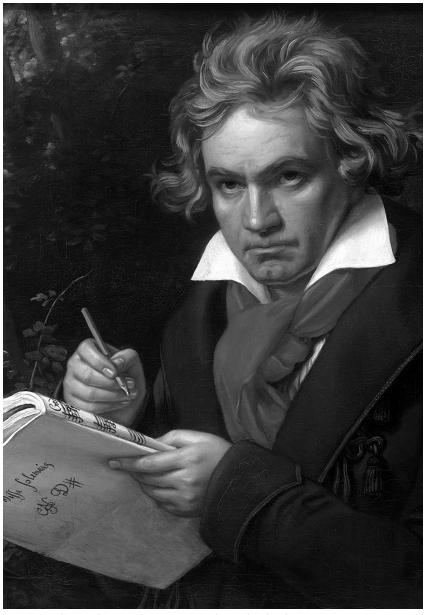
But Beethoven had set himself an impossible deadline, especially as the scope of the work grew and other commitments, together with health problems, distracted him. The Mass ultimately took some four years to complete and its first performance occurred in distant Saint Petersburg under the sponsorship of his Russian patron, Prince Nikolai Galitzin. Beethoven himself only heard (to the very limited extent he could hear anything at all at this late point) the Kyrie, Credo, and Agnus Dei, which were performed in May 1824 at the last public concert devoted entirely to his music, the occasion on which the Ninth Symphony also premiered.

**Beethoven's Beliefs** In the "Missa solemnis," Beethoven can be seen as attempting to reconcile conventional Christian views and Enlightenment rationalism with more personal spiritual impulses. Even though he initially conceived it for Archduke Rudolph's installation ceremony, he merged features associated with the traditional church Mass and music for the concert hall. The length of the work alone virtually precludes its liturgical use. Beethoven suggested that performances could be given as a "grand oratorio," and the movements presented at his 1824 concert in Vienna had to be billed as "three grand hymns" so as to bypass the censor's ban on liturgical pieces at secular concerts. He even explored publication of the composition with German words so that it might appeal to Protestants.

The "Missa solemnis" thus straddles church and concert settings. The religion of art and its spiritual potential were increasingly emerging as a new cultural force in nineteenth-century Europe. As music historian Carl Dahlhaus observed, "With the composition of a concert Mass, the concert hall was transformed into a church, and the Mass into a concert piece." Perhaps Beethoven recognized some of the greatness of the "Missa solemnis" was in the hard-won ability to combine so much of music history, so much of the sacred and the secular, all the while expressing his spiritual beliefs: "My primary goal in composing this grand Mass was to awaken and permanently instill religious feelings in both the singers and listeners."

The composer's own religious feelings are not easy to characterize. Although as a youth he was exposed to a considerable amount of sacred music in his native Bonn, and often participated as an organist in services, there is no indication that he later supported any organized religion. Nor did his Catholic upbringing lead to acceptance of conventional Church dogma. Rather, he sought to create his own combination of sacred systems, spirituality, and morality—what biographer Maynard Solomon has called his "quest for faith." We find frequent entreaties, prayers, and expressions of thanks to God scattered in his sketches, manuscripts, letters, and diaries. We even know some of the relevant materials he read, which included books on Eastern religious thought. Classical antiquity also attracted him; he once stated that "Socrates and Jesus have been my models."

Beethoven did not compose a large quantity of religious music and what he did came relatively late, when he was already in his mid-30s. The principal works of an explicitly religious nature before the "Missa solemnis" are some songs (most importantly the *Gellert Lieder*, op. 48), the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* (1803), and the Mass in C (1807). And yet many of his compositions have



Portrait of Beethoven with "Missa solemnis" manuscript, by Joseph Karl Steiler, c. 1820

long struck listeners as "spiritual." J.W.N. Sullivan's celebrated book *Beethoven:* His Spiritual Development (1927) explores the intimate engagement of Beethoven's music with his life experiences and the extent to which the spiritual substance of his art deepened over the years. The complexity of his inner life suggests that he did not limit his conception of the sacred to conventional liturgical works. A pantheistic celebration of nature in the "Pastoral" Symphony, for instance, ends with a shepherd's hymn of thanksgiving after a storm. After weathering his own personal storms later in life, he titled the exquisite slow movement of the Quartet in A minor, op. 132, "Song of Thanksgiving to the Deity on Recovery from Illness."

**A Closer Listen** The "Missa solemnis" unfolds in the five movements of the Mass Ordinary, those in which the words are the same at every service. The opening Kyrie has the shortest text and is the only part in Greek rather than Latin. Beethoven's music for this simple three-fold plea for mercy is restrained and reverent, presented by the full orchestra, four vocal soloists, and chorus. The majesty of the Deity finds expression in colossal blocks of sound on the word "Kyrie" (Lord). Although this is the simplest part in the Mass in terms of balance and structure, it nonetheless anticipates and prepares for the more unusual moments that follow. It is hardly surprising that Beethoven sought ways to unify a composition as long and complex. Various musical ideas, both thematic and harmonic, first presented in the Kyrie, reappear later. Some commentators have likened the entire Mass to a symphony in five movements, not only on account of its use of large orchestra and the nature of the instrumental writing, but also because of the organizational scheme. Richard Wagner called the Mass "a strictly symphonic work of the truest Beethovenian spirit" in which "the vocal parts are handled guite in the sense of human instruments."

The next two movements, Gloria and Credo, have many more words than the Kyrie and therefore call for greater proportions and more rapid declamation. Each lasts more than 15 minutes and Beethoven subdivides them into smaller sections, as Mozart had done in his great, unfinished Mass in C minor. The Gloria, a long hymn of praise, is particularly joyous. After a lyrical middle section ("Gratias agimus tibi"), the fervor mounts to the end. Beethoven includes an expected fugue ("in gloria Dei Patris. Amen"), and then surprisingly returns to the opening words. The codas to Beethoven's symphonies and overtures are remarkable for their scope and power, and here, too, he builds to an ecstatic presto conclusion and joyous choral shouts of "Gloria" at the very end.

The words of the Credo—the Nicene Creed from the fourth century—date from later than the other sections of the Mass. Placed exactly in the center, this longest movement offers a recital of belief. Beethoven's mighty opening testifies to an emphatic conviction. He uses an imposing four-note motif, first intoned by the basses at the opening, which returns at critical junctures and serves to support the larger architectural scaffolding. This allows for a variety of moods that reflect the meaning of the words, which can be quite graphic at times. A solo flute suggests the sounds of a dove, representing the Holy Ghost, in the "Et incarnatus est." The "Et resurrexit" is one of the most brilliant and exciting passages, with rising scales in chorus and orchestra representing the risen Savior. The movement ends with a monumental double fugue "Et vitam venturi."

The initial celebratory words of the Sanctus derive from ancient Jewish rites (Isaiah 6:3) and are followed by the serene Benedictus (Matthew 21:9). These sections invite contrasting musical treatment. The tempo increases within the Sanctus, from adagio, to allegro pesante, to presto. In many Masses, this is the point in the service when the Consecration and Elevation of the Host occurs, often accompanied by organ improvisation. Beethoven adapts this tradition by inserting an instrumental "Praeludium" leading directly to the Benedictus. The ethereal violin solo, which the theorist Sir Donald Francis Tovey characterized as a "kind of aria-concerto of violin, voices, and orchestra," is one of the most touching personal moments in the "Missa solemnis."

The final Agnus Dei also treats contrasting affects, alternating between peace and war. Beethoven headed the movement with the inscription: "Prayer for inner and outer peace" and his music shows the struggle to achieve this state. The drumrolls and military fanfares that evoke battle initially confused and upset some critics, who found the section inappropriately operatic. Beethoven's immediate model was probably that of his former teacher Haydn in his *Missa in tempore belli* (Mass in Time of War), although the musical tradition of warlike music for this part of the Mass goes back much farther. Eventually peace triumphs, but not before Beethoven adapts the music from the "Hallelujah" Chorus ("And he shall reign") from Handel's *Messiah*, a work he revered and was studying while writing the Mass.

Christopher H. Gibbs is the James H. Ottaway Jr. Professor of Music at Bard College.

**First Performance** April 7, 1824, at a concert organized by Beethoven's patron, Prince Nikolas Galitzin, in Saint Petersburg

First SLSO Performance April 17, 1965, Eleazar de Carvalho conducting

Most Recent SLSO Performance March 2, 2003, Donald Runnicles conducting

**Scoring** 4 soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, bass), 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, strings, and chorus

**Performance Time** approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes without intermission



#### **DAVID ROBERTSON**

Beofor Music Director and Conductor

David Robertson—conductor, artist, thinker, and American musical visionary—occupies some of the most prominent platforms on the international music scene. A highly sought-after podium figure in the worlds of opera, orchestral music, and new music, Robertson is celebrated worldwide as a champion of contemporary composers, an ingenious and adventurous programmer, and a masterful communicator whose passionate advocacy for the art form is widely recognized. A consummate and deeply collaborative musician, Robertson is hailed for his intensely committed music making.

Currently in his valedictory season as music director of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and his fifth season as chief conductor and artistic director of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, he has served as artistic leader to many musical institutions, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre National de Lyon, and, as a protégé of Pierre Boulez, the Ensemble Intercontemporain. With frequent projects at the world's most prestigious opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper, Théâtre du Châtelet, the San Francisco Opera, and more, Robertson will return to the Met in 2018 to conduct the premiere of Phelim McDermott's new production of *Così fan tutte*.

During his 13-year tenure with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Robertson has solidified the orchestra's standing as one of the nation's most enduring and innovative. His established and fruitful relationships with artists across a wide spectrum is evidenced by the orchestra's ongoing collaboration with composer John Adams. The 2014 release of *City Noir* (Nonesuch Records)—comprising works by Adams performed by the SLSO with Robertson—won the Grammy Award for Best Orchestral Performance. Robertson is the recipient of numerous musical and artistic awards, and in 2010 was made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.



Joélle Harvey is making her SLSO debut.

#### **JOÉLLE HARVEY**

Linda and Paul Lee Guest Artist

Soprano Joélle Harvey has quickly established herself as a noted interpreter of a broad range of repertoire, specializing in Handel, Mozart, and contemporary music. She is the recipient of a 2011 first prize award from the Gerda Lissner Foundation, a 2009 Sara Tucker study grant from the Richard Tucker Foundation, and a 2010 Encouragement Award (in honor of Norma Newton) from the George London Foundation.

Harvey begins the 2017–18 season in concert with the Knoxville Symphony, performing Barber's *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*. She subsequently makes her Pittsburgh Opera debut as Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and joins The English Concert as Almirena in *Rinaldo*. Further concert appearances include a return to the New York Philharmonic for Handel's *Messiah*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Handel and Haydn Society led by Masaaki Suzuki, and an appearance with the Laguna Music Festival for a concert of music by Brahms and both Clara and Robert Schumann. In the summer of 2018, she returns to the Glyndebourne Festival Opera for her role debut as Cleopatra in Sir David McVicar's iconic production of Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, conducted by William Christie.

Last season, Harvey joined the Milwaukee Symphony as Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, the Los Angeles Philharmonic as Pat Nixon in *Nixon in China*, and returned to Glyndebourne as Servilia in *La clemenza di Tito*. In concert, she appeared with the Mostly Mozart Festival for Mozart's Mass in C minor and his Requiem, which she also sang for the Kansas City Symphony and the Utah Symphony.



Kelley O'Connor sang most recently with the SLSO in March 2017 in St. Louis and at Carnegie Hall.

#### **KELLEY O'CONNOR**

Helen E. Nash, M.D. Guest Artist

During the 2017–18 season, Grammy Award-winning mezzo-soprano Kelley O'Connor's symphonic calendar includes performances of Bernstein's "Jeremiah" Symphony with Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic and with Jahja Ling and the San Diego Symphony, Mahler's Eighth Symphony with Andrés Orozco-Estrada leading the Tonkünstler-Orchester Niederösterreich, and Mahler's Des Knaben Wunderhorn with Krzysztof Urbański and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. She returns to the stage of the Kennedy Center for performances of John Adams' *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* and sings Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Jun Märkl on the podium of the Milwaukee Symphony.

John Adams wrote the title role of *The Gospel According to the Other Mary* for O'Connor and she has performed the work under the batons of Gustavo Dudamel, Grant Gershon, Sir Simon Rattle, and David Robertson. She has sung the composer's *El Niño* with Vladimir Jurowski and the London Philharmonic Orchestra and continues to be the eminent living interpreter of Peter Lieberson's *Neruda Songs*, having given this moving set of songs with several of the world's leading orchestras.

Recent seasons include performances of Wagner's Wesendonck Lieder with Matthias Pintscher conducting the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, Mahler's Das Lied von der Erde with Louis Langrée and the Detroit Symphony and with Donald Runnicles and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Iván Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Ravel's Shéhérazade with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia Orchestra, Berio's Folk Songs with Daniel Harding and the London Symphony Orchestra, and the role of Erda in performances of Wagner's Das Rheingold with the New York Philharmonic and Alan Gilbert.



Stuart Skelton sang most recently with the SLSO in April 2008.

#### STUART SKELTON

Stuart Skelton is one of the finest heldentenors on the stage today, critically acclaimed for his outstanding musicianship, tonal beauty, and intensely dramatic portrayals. His repertoire encompasses many of opera's most challenging roles, from Wagner's Parsifal, Tristan, Lohengrin, Erik, and Siegmund, to Strauss's Kaiser, Beethoven's Florestan, Saint-Saëns's Samson, Dvořák's Dimitrij, and Britten's Peter Grimes.

He makes his debut at Teatro alla Scala in the 2017–18 season in *Fidelio* conducted by Myung-Whun Chung in a production directed by Deborah Warner and joins the Salzburg Easter Festival, on tour in China, for *Die Walküre* conducted by Jaap van Zweden in a production directed by Vera Nemirova. Skelton's concert calendar includes performances of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* with Asher Fisch and the Milwaukee Symphony, Adam Fischer and the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, and with Sir Simon Rattle and the Symphonieorchester des Bayerischen Rundfunks and the London Symphony Orchestra. He also performs Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* with Sir Andrew Davis and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and with Sakari Oramo and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. With his frequent collaborator Edward Gardner, Skelton sings the title role of *Peter Grimes* in concert performances of the opera at the Edinburgh International Festival and the title role of *Otello* with the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.



Shenyang is making his SLSO debut.

#### **SHENYANG**

Bass-baritone Shenyang is recognized as the 2007 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World as well as 2010 winner of the Montblanc New Voices at Stars of the White Nights Festival and as 2008 winner of the Borletti-Buitoni Trust Award. This season, Shenyang returns to the Metropolitan Opera for Julie Taymor's production of *The Magic Flute*, conducted by Anthony Walker, and appears as Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with the Shanghai Symphony. Concert appearances include Handel's *Messiah* with the University Musical Society, a concert celebrating the Chinese New Year with Maestro Long Yu and the Philharmonia Orchestra in London, among other engagements.

Highlights of the 2015–16 season included the title role in *Le nozze di Figaro* for his house debut with Seattle Opera. He also made important debuts with the Sydney Symphony in Beethoven's "Missa solemnis" conducted by David Robertson, and with the New Japan Philharmonic for Mahler's Eighth Symphony conducted by Daniel Harding. He returned to the Beijing Music Festival for performances of Schoenberg's *Gurre-Lieder* and sang a duo recital program with soprano Susannah Phillips and pianist Brian Zeger at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

On the concert stage, Shenyang recently joined Yannick Nézet-Séguin and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Alan Gilbert and the New York Philharmonic, and Gianluigi Gelmetti and the Monte-Carlo Philharmonic for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and, in a return engagement, joined Michael Tilson Thomas and the San Francisco Symphony for Beethoven's Mass in C as well as "Missa solemnis." A frequent collaborator with the Metropolitan Opera, Shenyang has most recently returned to the house for *The Magic Flute*, conducted by Jane Glover, and for *La Cenerentola*, under the baton of the Met's Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi.



#### AMY KAISER

AT&T Foundation Chair

Director of the St. Louis Symphony Chorus since 1995, Amy Kaiser has prepared the chorus for performances with music directors David Robertson, Hans Vonk, and Leonard Slatkin and for many international guest conductors. She has also conducted performances with the chorus and the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra at Powell Hall and the St. Louis Cathedral Basilica in repertoire including Handel's *Messiah* and works by Vivaldi, Haydn, Mozart, and Schubert.

Guest conductor with Chicago's Grant Park Festival and the Berkshire Choral Festival, Kaiser conducted over fifty performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild and worked with many regional orchestras. Formerly music director of the Dessoff Choirs and conductor at New York's 92nd Street Y, Kaiser was director of choral music at the Mannes College of Music and taught conducting at Manhattan School of Music. Kaiser is a graduate of Smith College and recipient of the Smith College Medal for professional achievement. She was a Fulbright fellow at Oxford University and holds a master's degree in musicology from Columbia University.

In addition to her work with the chorus, Kaiser presents Pre-Concert Conversations for St. Louis Symphony concerts, "Illuminating Opera" for Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and leads the St. Louis Opera Club and Symphony Lecture Series, a sold-out series of illustrated musical talks.

The Choral Journal, national publication of the American Choral Directors Association, published an article about her career as a choral conductor. AARP Magazine recently recognized her 20-year anniversary with the St. Louis Symphony with an article and photo. She was honored with the St. Louis Visionary Award for Successful Working Artist in 2015.

#### ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY CHORUS 2017–2018

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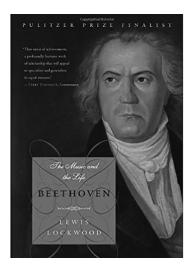
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#### Beethoven: The Music and the Life by Lewis Lockwood W.W. Norton, 2005

An excellent modern biography, looking closely at Beethoven's work in the context of his life and times.

#### Beethoven by Maynard Solomon Schirmer Books, 1998

This classic biography, originally published in 1977, offers a greater focus on Beethoven's psychology and conflicts with friends and family.

Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph by Jan Swafford Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014

Swafford's absorbing and comprehensive biography analyzes Beethoven's key works and provides a nuanced portrait of a deeply complicated man.

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