

Great Sacred Music

Sunday, April 3, 2022

Traditional Byzantine Chant: Theotokion to Psalm 44
Greek Byzantine Choir, Lycourgos Angelopoulos

Heinrich Ignaz Franz von Biber: Stabat Mater
The Bach Sinfonia, Daniel Abraham

A Theotokion is a hymn to Mary the Theotokos, which is read or chanted during the Divine Services of the Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic churches. In 1679 he was appointed deputy Kapellmeister by Emperor Leopold I. After the death of Andreas Hofer in 1684 he became Kapellmeister and Dean of the choir school. In 1690 Emperor Leopold presented Biber with the rank of knight and the title of Biber von Bibern. That is why we know that his Stabat Mater dates from after 1690, because the manuscript materials carry the patrician “de” as part of his identification. (Source: stabatmater.info)

Commentary: Daniel Bishop

Sir William Harris: Bring us, O Lord
Worcester Cathedral Choir, Donald Hunt

W.A. Mozart: Misericordias Domine, K. 222
Gloriae Dei Cantores; Vox Caeli Sinfonia, Richard K. Pugsley

Sir William Harris (1883-1973) was organist of St. George’s Chapel, Windsor from 1933-1961. Who wrote the tune for Ode to Joy? Beethoven or Mozart? Listen to this seldom performed work of the nineteen year old Mozart and tell me what you think!

Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina: Tribularer, si nescirem
Magnificat, Philip Cave

Eugene Gigout: Scherzo from Ten Pieces
Andrew Lucas, organ
Willis/Mander Organ in St. Paul's Cathedral, London

From Linnrecords.com: “Magnificat was formed in 1991 by its conductor, Philip Cave, to explore the rich diversity of choral music from the last five centuries. The ensemble specialises in the restoration and performance of neglected choral masterpieces of the 16th and 17th centuries.” Andrew Lucas has been Master of the Music of St Albans Cathedral since 1998.

J.S. Bach: Motet, "Sei Lob und Preis mit Ehren", BWV 231
Holland Boys' Choir; Netherlands Bach Collegium, Pieter Jan Leusink

Instead of our usual cantata, we will listen to one of Johann Sebastian Bach's motets. This one dates from about 1724. Scholars seem to think that it actually is the opening movement of a lost cantata as it is scored for more instruments than usual.

Antonio Maria Bononcini: Stabat mater in C minor
Concerto Italiano, Rinaldo Alessandrini

Italian composer Antonio Maria Bononcini (1677–1726) wrote music both for the stage and the church. He left us over 40 motets, a Mass in g minor, and this beautiful setting of the Stabat Mater.

J.S. Bach: Partita on "O Gott, du frommer Gott", BWV 767
Masaaki Suzuki, organ
1692 Schnitger/Hinz organ in the Martinikerk, Groningen

Johann Sebastian Bach was a teenager when he composed this set of theme and variations on the hymn "O God, Thou Faithful God."

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi: Stabat mater
Soloists of the Scarlatti Orchestra of Naples, Ettore Gracis
Mirella Freni, soprano; Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano

Giovanni Battista Pergolesi (1710-1736) was another one of those musical geniuses who died at far too young an age. He was primarily known as a composer of comic operas. But he also wrote church music which has stood the test of time. His setting of the 13th century meditation "Stabat Mater" by Jacoponus is still widely performed. We have several versions of this work in our library. I've selected the version which features two of the last century's greatest voices: Mirella Freni, soprano and Teresa Berganza, mezzo-soprano.

William Byrd: Infelix ego
Tallis Scholars, Peter Phillips

"Infelix Ego" is one of the thirty-seven motets which comprise William Byrd's two books of Cantiones Sacred published in 1591-92.

Andre Campra: Requiem
Monteverdi Choir; English Baroque Soloists, Sir John Eliot Gardiner
Judith Nelson, Dinah Harris, sopranos
Jean-claud Orliac, Wynford Evans, tenors; Stephen Roberts, bass