

*A Millennium of Music in
The Benedictine Tradition*

III

Exaltation: Music of Spirit

**Choral and instrumental masterpieces
of the 19th and 20th centuries
performed by the
Millennium Festival Orchestra, Chorus,
and soloists and conducted by
Yuval Waldman**

**Magnificat for a New Millennium
composed by
Stephen Perillo
and commissioned for the
Benedictine Millennium Celebration**

EXALTATION: Music of Spirit

1. L. von Beethoven *Choir of Angels: Welten singen* 4:42

Christ on the Mount of Olives, op. 85

2. F. Schubert *Ave Maria*, op. 52, no. 6 6:27

3. Anonymous *Gloria* :12

Gregorian chant from Sant'Anselmo

4. A. Bruckner *Gloria* 7:35

from the Mass in e minor

5. G. Rossini *In sempiterna saecula* 6:07

from Stabat Mater

6. Anonymous *Introit* 1:53

from the Requiem Mass(1930 Recording)

7. G. Fauré *Libera me* 5:07

from the Requiem Mass, op. 48

8. G. Fauré *In Paradisum* 3:23

from the Requiem Mass, op.48

9. O. Messiaen *Praise to the Immortality of Jesus* 7:19

from Quartet for the End of Time

10. S. Perillo *Magnificat for a New Millennium* 22:38

(First Recording)

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Liner Notes

Music of Spirit illustrates the extreme diversity of musical styles through which God's voice has been heard for the past two centuries. Whether it is the robust proclamation of Beethoven, Rossini, or Perillo, the tender, lyrical song of Schubert, the liturgically inspired Masses of Bruckner and Fauré, or the transcendent mysterious instrumentation of Messiaen, all the selections promote harmony and unity with humankind and with God.

Beethoven, inheriting compositional styles from Mozart and Haydn, expanded upon them with great skill and intensity of feeling. His music, characteristic of the Romantic period, reflects a sense of striving rather than achieving, of becoming rather than resting in Divine Being,

of emotional rather than rational inspiration. Expressive of a relentless new energy, fruit of the democratic values of liberty, equality, and fraternity proclaimed by the French Revolution, Beethoven's music is a triumphant affirming of the composer's personal faith in God and optimism even when faced with adversity. The universal appeal of his finale from the Ninth Symphony, set to the words of Schiller's "Ode to Joy," may perhaps echo the way that St. Benedict was declared "the principal, heavenly patron of the whole of Europe" by Pope Paul VI. Both call humanity to a closer, more cooperative unity, based on love of God.

Contemporary to Beethoven, Schubert was as true to the subjective nuances of inner feelings as Beethoven was to social and personal struggles. One, with full and commanding voice, addressed himself to millions; the other spoke with great sensitivity, to the human heart. Although the *Ave Maria*, presented here in the original German text used by Schubert, is non-liturgical, it is a reverent song of love and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The maiden's prayer, simple and direct, becomes the perfect vehicle for Schubert's sensitive romantic lyricism.

It would be hard to choose two nineteenth-century composers more different in their approach to music than Bruckner and Rossini. Bruckner was a simple man with boundless faith who continued Bach's tradition of the composer as servant of God. With a purity of tone rooted in the sound of the organ, he elegantly succeeds, perhaps more than anyone else, in uniting the spiritual and technical resources of the nineteenth-century symphony with a reverent and liturgical approach to the sacred texts of the Mass.

In sharp contrast to Bruckner's quiet, studious, deeply religious way of life, Rossini lived among the socialites of Europe, where he was known not only as the most commercially successful operatic composer of his generation but also as a famous host and gourmet. His well known operas---*The Barber of Seville*, *Cinderella*, and *William Tell*---establish him as a secular composer of lasting renown; his *Petite Messe solennelle* and *Stabat Mater*, the Finale of which is recorded here, reveal his considerable abilities in choral writing as well.

In the early nineteenth century the artistic life of various European nations began to be concentrated in the capitals and larger cities. As shown by the popularity of Rossini's music, it was the Golden Age of Italian opera. Whereas the classical composers, court and church musicians generally, whose work is recorded on the second compact disc in this series, valued moderation, stability, clarity of form, and a sense of balance and unity in their writing, their Romantic successors revealed a more emotional and personal type of expression. Choral pieces continued to be inspired by religious texts, and nearly every composer used the text of the Mass as a vehicle for his creative genius; however, these masterpieces found their way more often into the concert hall than the church. Composed with elaborate instrumentation and extremely challenging vocal parts, they were often beyond the technical means of church choirs and their intense individuality of expression was deemed too egotistical to meet the God-centered needs of the liturgy.

Around the middle of the century a call for musical reform arose within the Roman Catholic Church. The

Cecilian movement, named after St. Cecilia, the patron saint of music, was stimulated by a revival of the sixteenth century a cappella style of composers such as Palestrina and the restoration of Gregorian chant by the monks of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Pierre de Solesmes in France. Included here is a fine example of their singing first recorded in 1930 and updated by sound technology.

Traditionally the purpose of music was to make the transcendent perceptible to humanity. Composers believed, like Plato, that music was formative. Though we may not view it in that way, music is as much a reflection of our view of the world as it is a factor in forming that view. It is therefore no coincidence that, as John Adam, the popular contemporary American composer puts it, “Tonality died somewhere about the time Nietzsche’s God died.” Indeed, a chaotic view of the world eventually generates a chaotic music and conversely. From the tonal system of the Greeks and the medievals to the tempered clavier of Bach we reach the twelve-tone system of Schoenberg, who found himself “cured of the delusion that the artist’s aim is to create beauty” and “conscious of having removed all traces of a past aesthetic.” Pierre Boulez went further declaring, “Once the past has been got out of the way, one need think only of oneself.” This is certainly a musical existentialism that may come close to narcissism. We are here one hundred eighty degrees away from *La parole de Dieu qui chante!* The irony, of course, is that Pierre Boulez was the most famous student of Messiaen, a devout composer who did much to restore music’s medieval freedom. He did this in part by rediscovering the device of isorhythms which are unequal patterns of chords, pitches, and rhythms revolving around

each other---wheels within wheels---worthy of the vision of Ezekiel.

But in music, as in human affairs, all extremes eventually generate counterforces to bring back some sort of equilibrium. The counter-current that was present all along in Debussy, Fauré, and Messiaen has been strengthened these days by other composers such as Albert and Tavener. The late American composer Steve Albert said, “Art is about our desire for spiritual connection” and John Tavener, a contemporary British composer, declares, “My goal is to recover one simple memory from which all art derives. The constant memory of the paradise from which we have fallen leads to the paradise which was promised to the repentant thief.”

The *Magnificat* of Stephen Perillo, commissioned for the millennium celebration by the International Order of Benedictines, is an example of this effort. It finds its place alongside the work of composers such as George Rochberg, who said that “music can be renewed by regaining contact with the tradition and means of the past to reemerge as a spiritual force with reactivated powers of melodic thought, rhythmic pulse, and large-scale structures; and, as I see it, these things are only possible with tonality.”

Fauré and Messiaen looked to the liturgy of the Church and especially to the influence of the newly restored Gregorian chant for their inspiration. Their music spoke out gently but firmly against the organized noise of the first half of the twentieth century. The two sections of the Fauré Requiem presented here (directly after the Gregorian chant from Solesmes) clearly illustrate the strong influence of the Gregorian chant that the composer had

studied, particularly in their attention to fine shades and nuances of melodic line and their calm, spiritual treatment of the Mass for the Dead. Messiaen, in speaking of his Quartet for the End of Time speaks directly of the purpose of his work, saying, "Its musical language is essentially transcendental, spiritual, Catholic. Certain modes, realizing melodically and harmonically a kind of tonal ubiquity, draw the listener into a sense of the eternity of space or time...This Quartet contains eight movements. Why? Seven is the perfect number, the creation of six days made holy by the divine Sabbath; the seventh in its repose, prolongs itself into eternity and becomes the eighth, of unfailing light, of immutable peace."

And yet Messiaen insists, "All this is mere striving and childish stammering if one compares it to the overwhelming grandeur of the subject!"