

texts, translations, and notes



In the 18th century as today, a musician's fondest wish was often a regular salary. Then, unlike now, many composers worked as elevated servants in the employment of wealthy nobility—an arrangement broadly known as the *patronage system*. Writing music at the direction of a non-artistic boss could bring creative limitations along with the financial stability, of course, but Franz Joseph Haydn found ways to thrive and flourish within the bounds of his job.

Haydn wrote his **Lord Nelson Mass** during a prosperous time in his own career, but a tempestuous one in Europe and a lean one in the court of his Austro-Hungarian employers, the Esterházy. Napoleon's armies had thrown Austria and most of the rest of the continent

into turmoil, and dire political and economic straits had caused Haydn's patron to reduce his staff of paid musicians. Gone were the flutists and oboists; remaining were the strings and trumpets. Fortunately, Haydn was a lifelong master of cheerfully mining virtue from necessity, and he used his scaled-back orchestral forces to create one of his greatest masterworks.

Kyrie eleison.
Christe eleison.
Kyrie eleison.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

The martial blare of the trumpets and timpani and the severe descending D-minor triad of the strings open the mass with an angry flourish, to which the chorus adds its furious cries of “Kyrie eleison!” This movement also introduces the soprano soloist and the fiery role she’ll play for the duration of the piece—initially in a more hopeful role with the text “Christe eleison,” but later in full musical mania with the return of the “Kyrie eleison” text at the end of the movement.

Gloria in excelsis Deo.
Et in terra pax
hominibus bonae voluntatis.
Laudamus te; benedicimus te;
adoramus te; glorificamus te.
Gratias agimus tibi
propter magnam gloriam tuam.
Domine Deus, Rex coelestis,
Deus Pater omnipotens.
Domine Fili unigenite Jesu Christe.
Domine Deus, Agnus Dei,
Filius Patris.

Qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.
Qui tollis peccata mundi,
suscipe deprecationem nostram.
Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris,
miserere nobis.

Quoniam tu solus Sanctus,
tu solus Dominus,
tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christe.
Cum Sancto Spiritu
in gloria Dei Patris. Amen.

Haydn makes a sandwich out of the Gloria section of the mass: The contemplative “Qui tollis” is the filling, and the perky “Gloria” and “Quoniam” are the bread. After the *Sturm und Drang* of the “Kyrie,” the D-Major opening of this section is like sun after a tornado (a common occurrence in Haydn’s music—he simply never stays angry for very long). Listen for the soprano’s entrance in the slow section (“suscipe”), which floats downward like a blessing; for the ingenious fugue on the text “in Gloria Dei patris” in the third section; and for the exciting ending of the sequence, which makes full use of the timpanist Haydn’s boss hadn’t yet laid off!

Credo in unum Deum;
Patrem omnipotentem,
factorem coeli et terrae,
visibilium omnium et invisibilium.
Et ex Patre natum ante omnia saecula.
Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine,
Deum verum de Deo vero,
Genitum non factum,
consubstantialem Patri:
per quem omnia facta sunt.
Qui propter nos homines,
et propter nostram salutem
descendit de coelis.

Glory be to God in the highest.
And in earth peace
to men of good will.
We praise Thee; we bless Thee;
we worship Thee; we glorify Thee.
We give thanks to Thee
for Thy great glory.
O Lord God, Heavenly King,
God the Father Almighty.
O Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son.
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father.

Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.
Thou that takest away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer.
Thou that sittest at the right hand of the
Father, have mercy upon us.

For thou only art holy,
thou only art the Lord,
thou only art the most high, Jesus Christ.
Together with the Holy Ghost
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

I believe in one God;
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
and of all things visible and invisible.
And begotten of the Father before all worlds;
God of God, light of light,
true God of true God,
begotten not made;
being of one substance with the Father,
by whom all things were made.
Who for us men
and for our salvation
descended from heaven.

This movement represents Haydn at his most ingeniously crafty: The entire movement is a double canon, in which the sopranos and tenors begin each melody and the altos and basses answer one bar (two beats) later and five pitches lower. Not until the last line—in the interest of ending together—does he alter the structure. As is true of the best artists, though, he works within his self-imposed rules without calling undue attention to them; the prevailing mood here is one of bustling joy, not rigid compliance!

*Et incarnatus est de Spiritu Sancto
ex Maria virgine et homo factus est.
Crucifixus est pro nobis
sub Pontio Pilato,
passus et sepultus est.*

And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost,
of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.
He was crucified also for us,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
and was buried.

Haydn doesn't get as much credit for his melodies as his fellow Classical-era Austrian, Mozart. But this movement demonstrates that he was more than capable of writing ravishingly beautiful music. The lusciousness of the opening turns to wounded indignation when the chorus sings "Crucifixus est pro nobis," and then time and breath seem to stop at the moment of Christ's burial.

*Et resurrexit tertia die
secundum Scripturas.
Et ascendit in coelum:
sedet ad dexteram Patris.
Et iterum venturus est cum gloria,
judicare vivos et mortuos:
cujus regni non erit finis.
Et in Spiritum Sanctum,
Dominum, et vivificantem:
qui ex Patre Filioque procedit.
Qui cum Patre et Filio simul
adoratur et conglorificatur:
qui locutus est per Prophetas.
Et in unam sanctam
catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.
Confiteor unum baptisma,
in remissionem peccatorum.
Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum
et vitam venturi saeculi. Amen.*

And on the third day He rose again
according to the Scriptures:
and ascended into heaven.
He sitteth at the right hand of the Father;
and He shall come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead;
and His kingdom shall have no end.
I believe in the Holy Ghost,
the Lord and giver of life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together
is worshipped and glorified;
as it was told by the Prophets.
And I believe in one holy
catholic and apostolic Church.
I acknowledge one baptism
for the remission of sins.
And I await the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

If you had to sum up Haydn's musical personality in three minutes, you could point to this movement and hit most of the key points: The element of surprise (at the beginning); the bounding, bouncing rhythms (especially in the violins) throughout; the clever text-painting; and the infectiously jazzy "amens" at the end, to name a few! Most of all, though, listen for Haydn's sense of humor revealed through the repeated, insistent "et...et...et" ("and...and...and"); we can't help being reminded of a late-night infomercial: "*And* if you order now you'll get this knife set for free, *and* we'll send you one for a friend, *and*..."

*Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua.
Osanna in excelsis.*

Holy, Holy, Holy,
Lord God of Hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in the highest.

*Benedictus qui venit
in nomine Domini.
Osanna in excelsis.*

Blessed is He that cometh
in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

The vision delivered by the seraphim in the book of Isaiah arrives quietly, then bursts into song and dance at the “Osanna.” (Remember that dark, descending D-minor motif [D-A-F-D] that opened the whole mass? It’s turned upside-down [D-F#-A-D] at the words “Pleni sunt coeli.”) The “Benedictus” that follows returns to the forbidding mood of earlier movements, especially in its extended orchestral introduction, which uses the trumpets and timpani to great militaristic effect.

*Agnus Dei,
qui tollis peccata mundi,
miserere nobis.*

Lamb of God,
Who takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

Dona nobis pacem.

Grant us peace.

The only movement in the mass not to involve the chorus is the “Agnus Dei,” a sweet-tempered meditation introduced not by the flashy soprano but by the contemplative mezzo-soprano. The other soloists enter in turn, setting the stage for Haydn’s final flourish: the “Dona nobis pacem,” a rocking musical party for a good cause. The message is sincere, but that doesn’t stop Haydn from throwing in a few jokes; toward the end of the movement, listen for the cheeky, softly-sung “dona nobis pacem” from the chorus followed by unmistakable giggles from the violins. Haydn knew more than a little about keeping faith during the difficult times, and keeping his sense of humor amid the stress. Both skills are richly in evidence in the Lord Nelson Mass, and neither has gone out of style since.