

Most previous investigations into the origins of Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de Confessore non Pontifice*, K. 339, (1779-80) have concluded with an assertion that the saint celebrated in this work is unknown. There is, indeed, no concrete contemporary historical evidence indicating specifically which saint's feastday is celebrated. My recent preparation of program notes to accompany a performance of these *Solemn Vespers* stimulated me to hazard an educated speculation concerning the saint honored so signally by Mozart.

Mozart resided in Salzburg upon his return from Paris from January 1779 until November 1780. On November 5, he left for Munich to produce his *opera seria*, *Idomeneo*, K. 366, a work he had begun that previous August. Its premier performance took place in Munich's Hoftheater, January 29, 1781.

H. C. Robbins Landon has argued that the famous *Coronation Mass*, K. 317, was not, as is customarily asserted, composed for a pilgrimage to the Church of Maria Plain near Salzburg wherein existed a "crowned" image of the Virgin Mary but, rather, for the celebration of Easter Sunday, April 5, 1779, in Salzburg's Cathedral. According to Robbins Landon, the title "Coronation" arises from the fact that it was performed later under Antonio Salieri's direction during the coronation ceremonies in Vienna and possibly in Frankfurt for the Emperors Leopold II in 1790 and Francis I in 1792.<sup>1</sup>

After the morning performance of the *Coronation Mass* on April 5 we suggest that the Second Vespers Service for that Easter Sunday in the Cathedral saw the initial performance of Mozart's first setting of a Vespers, *Vesperae de Dominica*, K. 321 completed in 1779. What leads me to this conclusion is the fact that the 1964 revised edition of the Köchel Verzeichnis lists the famed *Regina coeli*, K. 279, also of 1779 with a revised number K. 321b.<sup>2</sup> *Regina coeli* is one of four seasonal antiphons to the Blessed Virgin Mary concluding the Office of Compline. It would have been sung for the first time liturgically at the Office of Compline for Easter Sunday. Compline follows Vespers in the se-

## For What Confessor Saint Did Mozart Compose His *Vesperae solennes de Confessore*, K. 339?

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quence of the liturgical Hours. Consequently with *Regina coeli* bearing as it does the same Köchel listing as the *Vesperae de Dominica*, we may reasonably assert that both works were conceived for initial performance along with the *Coronation Mass* on Easter Day, 1779. This conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that two Epistle Sonatas, K. 328 and 329, likewise have revised Köchel listings as K. 317 a and c, indicative that at least one of them was performed at the same solemn Mass as the *Coronation Mass*.

During 1780, Robbins Landon likewise asserts, Mozart composed his last Salzburg Mass, the *Missa solennis in C* (Mass for Archbishop Colloredo), K. 337, again for services on Easter Sunday, March 27, 1780.<sup>3</sup>

The last of Mozart's great quartet of C-major choral compositions of 1779-80 is his second more celebrated Vespers setting, *Vesperae solennes de Confessore non Pontifice* (K. 339) to specify the full title. The indication "solemn Vespers" prescribed that the feast celebrated use the Psalms for Sunday Vespers, the same we know he used in the *de Dominica* set. The antiphons to the Psalms, however, and other apparatus of the service differed from the usual Sunday Vespers.

One will note that only two Köchel numbers separate the *Solemn Mass*, K. 337, from the *Solemn Vespers*, K. 339. Between these two choral compositions falls the *Symphony No. 34 in C*, K. 338, the work Mozart so exultantly heard played with forty strings. This symphony received its first performance in Salzburg on August 29, 1780.<sup>4</sup>

One might thus reasonably conclude that the *Solemn Vespers of a Confessor*, K. 339, would probably have graced a celebration of an important saint's feast between August

29, 1780, and November 5, when Mozart left Salzburg for Munich with *Idomeneo*. Although it cannot be asserted apodictically that the Köchel number sequence is absolute respecting performance premieres, rather than to the initiated composition, one is led to see this as indicative of the procedure Mozart used to list his works.

Upon his return from Paris in January 1779, Mozart had rather obsequiously petitioned Archbishop Colloredo for a position in the Cathedral's musical establishment. He was so appointed, thanks to which we have these magnificent choral works. Colloredo strongly enforced, as we all know, those liturgical reforms for his Cathedral wherein he strove to limit the sprawling liturgies of his predecessors which, in true Baroque fashion, tended through excessively lengthy musical settings to prolong the Cathedral's services inordinately. Though he may not have appreciated his Archbishop's decrees, Mozart could do little but comply with his Prince-Bishop's mind. That he conformed manifests itself in his magnificently concise and taut compositions under discussion. For, indeed, his exposition of the Vespers Psalms is so concise that their performance would not have absorbed much more time than a normal monastic chanting of the Office.

Given his past record of some prolonged absences from his duties beyond the time conceded by the Archbishop, it must have been with some misgivings that Mozart approached the prelate for permission to depart for Munich. But a signal opportunity offered itself wherein Mozart could ingratiate himself with Colloredo.

If one examines the contemporary liturgical calendar of Non-Bishop Confessor feast days between August 29 and November 4, which

could have been celebrated in solemn fashion in Salzburg's Cathedral, only one Saint appears a likely candidate. Moreover, all remark that both Vespers were specifically composed for performance in the Cathedral.

Archbishop Colloredo enjoyed great prestige as a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire and as a reformer after the mind of Emperor Joseph II. He combined in his person the powerful ecclesiastical and political rule of "Land Salzburg," an exten-

sive archiepiscopal principedom. Inevitably within the Empire a ruler's namesday was the occasion for festive rejoicing throughout his dominions. Colloredo's Christian name was Hieronymus, Jerome. I submit that Mozart's *Solemn Vespers of a Confessor* was written for Colloredo's *Namensfeier*, or namesday festival, and performed at Vespers in Salzburg's Cathedral, Saturday, September 30, 1780, the Feast of St. Jerome.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>H. C. Robbins Landon, *Program Notes, Coronation Mass in C, K. 317 & Vesperae solennes de Confessore in C, K. 339* (Angel-EMI Record S 37283, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>L. von Köchel, *Chronologisch-thematisches Verzeichnis Sämtlicher Tonwerke Wolfgang Amade Mozart*, Ed F. Giegling, A. Weinmann, and G. Sivers, Sixth Edition, 1964.

<sup>3</sup>H. C. Robbins Landon, *op. cit.* and H. C. Robbins Landon, *Missa for Archbishop Colloredo (Mass in C), K. 337* (New York: G. Schirmer Octavo Ed. 2916, 1971), Foreword, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks, "(Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians XII* (Washington, D.C.: Groves Dictionaries of Music, Inc., 1980), pp. 725, 736.

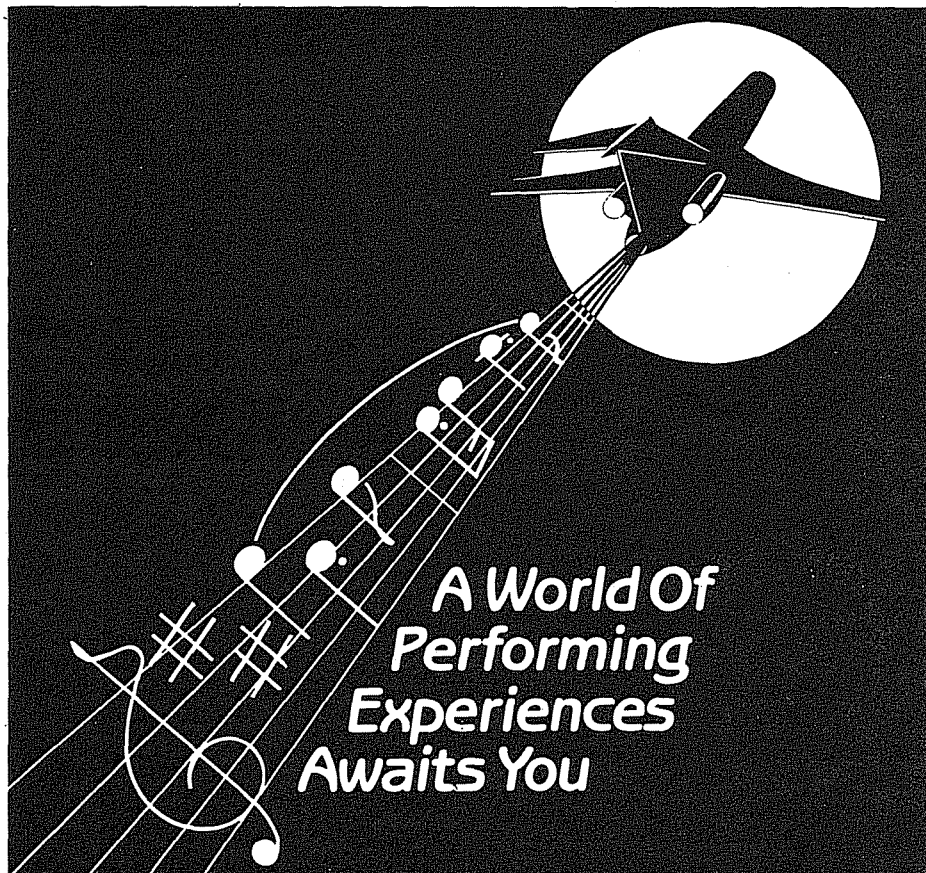
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The Hugo Alfvén Society of Sweden has granted its 1985 Gold Medal to the American conductor and composer, Norman Luboff—the first non-Scandinavian to be so honored. The society also awarded the recipient 15,000 Swedish kronor.

Hugo Alfvén [1872-1960] is recognized as the father of Swedish choral music. The Gold Medal from the society was first granted to the Swedish composer, Lars Edlund in 1974.

Norman Luboff receives this year's prestigious award in recognition of his outstanding contribution in making Swedish choral music known to an ever-increasing audience. To the American public, Mr. Luboff is best known as the conductor of the famed Norman Luboff Choir, as well as a composer and arranger of music for numerous television productions and feature films. For many years, Mr. Luboff has been involved with Scandinavian choral music through his concert performances, his recordings, and his many workshops and master classes across the United States. Under his aegis, an extensive body of Scandinavian choral music has been published for American choruses.



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