

**Florilegium Chamber Choir**  
March 2012

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)	<i>Mass in G</i> (1815)
Wolfgang A. Mozart (1756-1791)	<i>Misericordias Domini</i> , K.222 (1775)
Georg Reutter (1708-1772)	Excerpt from <i>Kyrie</i> from <i>Mass in D</i> (erroneously attributed to Mozart as K.91)
W.A. Mozart	<i>Ave verum corpus</i> , K.618 (1791)
Anton Bruckner (1824-1896)	<i>Locus Iste</i> (1869)
	<i>Christus Factus Est</i> (1884)
	<i>Ave Maria</i> (1861)
	<i>Os Justi</i> (1879)
	<i>Virga Jesse</i> (1885)

Johann Joseph Fux's 1725 treatise on counterpoint, *Gradus Ad Parnassum*, was as much a practical textbook as it was a conservative rebuke to the newly florid and highly non-Renaissance compositional practices of one J.S. Bach, practices which were rapidly growing in popularity by 1725, and which deeply flummoxed Fux's conservative sensibilities. In *Gradus*, Fux presents lessons in counterpoint via a Socratic dialogue between an imagined teacher and an imagined student, which reads something like a script to a (probably excruciatingly dull) stage play.

We all know that Bach won the aesthetic battle of the day, as the compositional practices of Palestrina (on whose music Fux's method was based) never returned, but, in the robust assertion of his Palestrinian conservatism, Fux managed to create what is arguably *the most* influential work in the history of music. Mozart was a student of Fux's method, having worked on the lessons with both his father, Leopold, and later with Haydn. Beethoven went through the lessons with Haydn, and with Haydn's substitute teacher, Albrechtsberger, who taught Ludwig the ideas of *both* Bach *and* Fux. There is little evidence of what Bruckner's early studies may have included, but, as was the practice in rural Austria, in addition to studying the music of his predecessors (Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert), it is highly likely that Fux's dialog figured into the musical conversation. My own first composition teacher at the Oberlin Conservatory, Richard Hoffmann (whose compositional pedigree is only two teacher degrees of separation from Bruckner), studied Fux; I myself know the book better than I know nearly any piece of actual music, and I have walked dozens of students up Fux's steps to enlightenment.

Before the lessons begin, Fux's fictional teacher, Josephus, demands that his fictional student, Aloysius, assert the noble purity of his intentions. Josephus warns,

"But are you not aware that this study is like an immense ocean, not to be exhausted even in the lifetime of a Nestor? You are indeed taking on yourself a heavy task, a burden greater than Aetna. If it is in any case most difficult to choose a life work – since upon the choice, whether it be right or wrong, will depend the good or bad fortune of the rest of one's life – how much care and foresight must he who would enter upon this art employ before he dares to decide...Perhaps the hope of future riches and possessions induces you to choose this life? If this is the case, believe me, you must change your mind...Whoever wants riches must take another path."

Well said, Josephus. Well said.

Fux is not only an invisible hand guiding musical thought for nearly 300 years and a very direct link between the three composers (and the conductor!) on this concert; he is also a kind of musical index fossil on the socio-economic status of musicians. This highlights exactly *why* issues of authenticity, issues which abound even in the small sampling of pieces on this concert, were (and are) so hotly contested. On some level, it comes down to simple economics. Outside of the occasional economic bubble, musicians generally have never been a wealthy subset of the population. Whereas it could greatly benefit a publisher to publish

a spurious piece under Mozart's or Beethoven's name, it could likewise benefit a composer of lesser abilities to pass off a work by Mozart or Beethoven as his own; and naturally we, the consumers, want an iron clad guarantee that the Mozart we are consuming is real Mozart, and not some kind of third-rate Mozart knock-off picked up for \$10 on Canal Street. Branding has real implications; had Mozart spent more time cultivating brand awareness, he may not have come to such a woeful end.

Anton Bruckner is such a thorny subject for authenticity that he has an entire dilemma named after him: "The Bruckner Problem." Bruckner was a famously shy and insecure man, a country transplant making his way through ever more urban and cosmopolitan environs, ultimately landing in Vienna with a career that slowly grew to match his wildly prodigious talent. Later in his life, he began to revise his published symphonies, a move that unleashed an avalanche of subsequent editing and revisions (by his students, by scholars, by conductors) and resultant searches for Bruckner's "authentic" intention, the aftershocks of which still linger today. The motets, occasional pieces written over the course of his entire career, are not subject to the same doubts, and I admit that there is something reassuring about this certainty. I know that the small windows these pieces offer into his mind – his religious fanaticism and his extraordinary technique – are real. This is Bruckner at his most naked: polyphony, texture, color, pacing, dramatic intention, all of the foundations of his compositional practice are here in a transparent form not unlike Fux's boiled down *Gradus* exercises.

Schubert's *Mass in G* was the subject of a different sort of authenticity questioning. The second of his six masses, written when Schubert was 18, it was commissioned following the success of his first mass celebrating the centennial of the Church in Lichtental (now part of Vienna). There is a version in Schubert's hand that uses strings and organ, a version that adds wind instruments, and one that includes trumpets and timpani. As it turns out, these were all versions made by Schubert himself, but that question was muddled for over a century by the fact that the mass was originally published posthumously in 1844 under the name Robert Führer, the music director at St. Vitus in Prague, who made a habit of expanding his catalog via such bits of appropriation.

Georg Reutter's *Kyrie*, curiously cataloged as Mozart's K.91, is actually a mere excerpt from the final fugue of the full *Kyrie* (now lost) of Reutter's *Mass in D*. The inclusion in Mozart's catalog was due to the fact that there exists a manuscript of this fragment from the late 1780s in Mozart's handwriting. Musicologist Daniel Beller-McKenna noted that Mozart probably copied it as an exercise to study Reutter's contrapuntal technique, which is to say that it was likely a small step in Mozart's ongoing exploration of ideas initially learned from Fux. And, in fact, the mislabeling doesn't stop with Mozart. Apparently Mozart did not even copy the fugue out completely, and there is debate as to whether it was completed by Franz Süssmayr or Maximilian Stadler.

Mozart's counterpoint is brought to full, rarely heard force in the *Misericordias*, also an occasional piece, written in a couple of days in 1775. Of this piece, Mozart wrote: "I composed for last year's carnival at Munich an opera buffa, *La finta giardiniera*. A few days before my departure, the Elector expressed a desire to hear some of my contrapuntal compositions. I was therefore obliged to write this motet in a great hurry, in order to have time to have the score copied for his Highness and to have the parts written out and thus enable it to be performed during the Offertory at High Mass on the following Sunday." The commissioning church authority gave a very conservatively Fux-ian reply: "I find in it all that is required by modern music: good harmony, mature modulations, a moderate pace in the violins, a natural connection of the parts and good taste."

Mozart's late-in-life *Ave verum corpus* ties the program together as a petite but powerfully expressive work, surprisingly similar in simplicity and expressive dimension to Bruckner's motets of a hundred years later.

Indeed – "not to be exhausted in a lifetime."