

# BETHHOVEN

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XR

## MISSA SOLEMNIS IN D MAJOR, OP. 123

TOSCANINI, NBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

LOIS MARSHALL NAN MERRIMAN

EUGENE CONLEY JEROME HINES

ROBERT SHAW CHORALE

- 1 Introduction - Ben Grauer (0:25)
- 2 Kyrie - Assai sostenuto (10:36)
- 3 Gloria - Allegro vivace (17:07)
- 4 Credo - Allegro ma non troppo (17:51)
- 5 Sanctus - Adagio (16:32)
- 6 Agnus Dei - Adagio (14:49)
- 7 Applause and credits - Ben Grauer (2:07)

NBC broadcast live from Carnegie Hall, 5:45pm, Saturday 28 March 1953  
A benefit broadcast for the Hospitalized Veterans Music Service

Source recording from the private collection of Christophe Pizutti

Radio announcements and audience applause have been edited in order to fit CD duration limit

NB: An organ malfunction during the Kyrie rendered it inoperable for the rest of the performance

XR remastering by Andrew Rose at Pristine Audio, October 2009

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Arturo Toscanini



# BEETHOVEN

## MISSA SOLEMNIS IN D, Op. 123

The **Missa Solemnis in D Major, Op. 123** was composed by Ludwig van Beethoven from 1819-1823. It was first performed on April 7, 1824 in St. Petersburg, under the auspices of Beethoven's patron Prince Nikolai Galitzin; an incomplete performance was given in Vienna on 7 May 1824, when the Kyrie, Credo, and Agnus Dei were conducted by the composer. It is generally considered to be one of the composer's supreme achievements. Together with Bach's Mass in B Minor, it is the most significant mass setting of the common practice period.

Unquestionably a great work, representing Beethoven at the height of his powers, it has notably failed to reach the popularity of many of the symphonies and sonatas. Written around the same time as his ninth symphony, it is Beethoven's second setting of the mass, after his Mass in C, Op. 86, a work far less admired.

The mass is scored for 2 flutes; 2 oboes, 2 clarinets (in A, C, and B $\flat$ ); 2 bassoons; contrabassoon; 4 horns; 2 trumpets; alto, tenor, and bass trombone; timpani; organ continuo; strings (violins I and II, violas, cellos, and basses); soprano, alto, tenor, and bass soloists; and soprano, alto, tenor, and bass chorus.

Like most masses, Beethoven's Missa solemn is in five movements:

**Kyrie:** Perhaps the most traditional of the mass movements, the Kyrie is in a traditional ABA' structure, with stately choral writing in the first movement section and more contrapuntal voice leading in the Christe.

**Gloria:** Quickly shifting textures and themes highlight each portion of the Gloria text, in a beginning to the movement that is almost encyclopedic in its exploration of 3/4 time. The movement ends with the first of the work's two massive fugues, on the text "In gloria Dei patris. Amen", leading into a recapitulation of the initial Gloria text and music.

**Credo:** One of the most remarkable movements to come from Beethoven's pen opens with a chord sequence that will be used again in the movement to effect modulations. The Credo, like the Gloria, is an often disorienting, mad rush through the text. The poignant modal harmonies for the "et incarnatus" yield to ever more expressive heights through the "crucifixus", and into a remarkable, a cappella setting of the "et resurrexit" that is over almost before it has begun. Most notable about the movement, though, is the closing fugue on "et vitam venturi" that includes one of the most difficult passages in the choral repertoire, when the subject returns at doubled tempo for a thrilling conclusion. The form of the Credo is divided into four parts: (I) allegro ma non troppo through "descendit de coelis" in B-flat; (II) "Incarnatus est" through "Resurrexit" in D; (III) "Et ascendit" through the Credo recapitulation in F; (IV) Fugue and Coda "et vitam venturi saeculi, amen" in B-flat.

**Sanctus:** Up until the benedictus of the Sanctus, the Missa solemn is of fairly normal classical proportions. But then, after an orchestral prelude, a solo violin enters in its highest range — representing the Holy Spirit descending to earth, in a remarkably long extension of the text.

**Agnus Dei:** A setting of the plea "miserere nobis" ("have mercy on us") that begins with the men's voices alone yields, eventually, to a bright D-major prayer "dona nobis pacem" ("grant us peace") in a pastoral mode. After some fugal development, it is suddenly and dramatically interrupted by martial sounds (a convention in the 18th century, as in Haydn's Missa in tempore belli), but after repeated pleas of "miserere!", eventually recovers and brings itself to a stately conclusion.

The musical form of the Missa solemn is more akin to a symphony with choral accompaniment than a "traditional" choral Mass. The writing displays Beethoven's characteristic disregard for the performer and is in several places both technically and physically exacting, with many sudden changes of dynamic, metre and tempo. This is consistent throughout, starting with the opening Kyrie where the syllables Ky-ri are delivered either forte or with sforzando, but the final e is piano. As noted above, the reprise of the Et vitam venturi fugue is particularly taxing, being both subtly different from the previous statements of the theme and counter-theme, and delivered at around twice the speed.

The orchestral parts also include many demanding sections, including the violin solo in the Sanctus and some of the most demanding work in the repertoire for bassoon and contrabassoon. The difficulty of the piece, and the requirement for a full orchestra including leader solo, mean that it is not often performed by the amateur and semi-professional choirs which produce the majority of oratorio performances.

NOTES FROM WIKIPEDIA - FURTHER NOTES ONLINE AT [WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM](http://WWW.PRISTINECLASSICAL.COM)