

Georg Philipp Telemann – Kapitänsmusik 1738 (2007)

Written by bluesever

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Oratorio 'Wohl dem Volke' 67'49" 1 Chor: Wohl dem Volke Start 2 Rezitativ: Mit nimmersatter Lust und Achtsamkeit Start 3 Chor: Stimmt in unsre frohen Lieder Start 4 Rezitativ: Der reiche Segen läuft in meinen Hafen ein Start 5 Aria: Freue dich an diesem Tage Start 6 Rezitativ: Doch, da sich Glück und Wohl... Start 7 Aria: Heiliges Wesen Start 8 Rezitativ: Jawohl, Hammonia Start 9 Aria: Kann dies wohl ein Mensch erwägen Start 10 Rezitativ: Nein, Freundin, nein, nein Start 11 Aria: Licht des Lebens Start 12 Rezitativ: Hammonia, so recht... Start 13 Aria: Im Gerichte soll mein göttlich's Gewichte... Start 14 Rezitativ: O wahres Glück für mich Start 15 Aria: Mein Blitz durchdringt Wahn und Lügen Start 16 Rezitativ: Ja, Freundin, steh mir bei Start 17 Aria: Eintracht, Ruhe, Fried und Segen Start 18 Rezitativ: O Glück für mich Start 19 Aria: Ein ewiges Verbinden verknüpft uns an deinen Staat Start 20 Rezitativ: O Hamburg, merke doch... Start 21 Tutti: Herr mein Gott Start 22 Rezitativ: Hammonia, verzeihe meine Frage Start 23 Arie: Was hab ich nötig zu erwägen Start 24 Rezitativ: O Himmel! Dieses ist die Unempfindliche Start 25 Choral: Herr Gott, wir danken dir Start

Serenata 'Es locket die Trommel' 60'45"

1 Chor: Es locket die Trommel mit wirbelnden Schlägen 2 Rezitativ: So recht, ihr unerschrocknen Söhne 3 Aria: Ein heller Strahl aus den entwichnen Zeiten 4 Chor: Es locket die Trommel mit wirbelnden Schlägen 5 Rezitativ: O weh! 6 Aria: Schäfer, stellt die Freuden ein 7 Rezitativ: Was für ein Angstgeschrei... 8 Aria: Verberget den Vorrat 9 Rezitativ: Verzagte, seht, ich bin's, der euch bewacht 10 Aria: Ihr suchet euer ganzes Glück in meinem Schutz 11 Rezitativ: Des Friedens Zuspruch... 12 Aria: Dein Heldenmut sucht stets durch Blut 13 Rezitativ: Nein, stelle deinen Kummer ein 14 Aria: Der Adler führt die Legionen 15 Rezitativ: Wohlan, so geh 16 Tutti: Auf, rühret die Trommel 17 Rezitativ: Ja ja, dies soll doch wohl geschehen 18 Aria: Ja, es muss dein Fall erscheinen 19 Rezitativ: Schweig, wahnwitzvoller Neid 20 Aria: Ihr Deutschen, auf! 21 Rezitativ: Die Tapferkeit begeistert Herz 22 Aria: Ergreift den Degen 23 Rezitativ: Und du, Hammonia, hör hier des Schicksals Willen 24 Tutti: Deutschlands Ruhm soll ewig stehen 25 Freudenlied beim Capitäns-Convivium: Schließet die Kette der Einigkeit feste

Veronika Winter - Soprano Cornelia Samuelis - Soprano Jan Kobow - Tenor Immo Schröder - Tenor Ekkehard Abele - Bass Gregor Finke – Bass Rheinische Kantorei Das Kleine Konzert Hermann Max – director

One of the many duties of Georg Philipp Telemann as Musikdirektor in Hamburg was the composition of the Kapitänsmusik. This was to be performed every year during the convivium, the festive banquet of the sixty-seven members of the officer corps of the civic guard. This event took place on the first Thursday after St Bartholomew's Day (24 August). The Kapitänsmusik consisted of two parts. It started with an oratorio which was performed during the midday meal; the serenata was played in the evening. Telemann composed 36 such works, of which only nine have survived.

In the (sacred) oratorio the many blessings of Hamburg are spelled out, mostly by a character called Hammonia (Hamburg). She calls on the citizens to praise God for his blessings. Here this is expressed, for instance, in a chorus of Hammonia with her children: "Holy being, you source of good, blessing and prosperity issue forth from you. You make sure that Hamburg's wall forever stand. Take from us the thanks for this." Various allegorical characters turn up which declare their bond with the city: Die Andacht (Devotion), Die Gerechtigkeit (Justice), Die Wahrheit (Truth) and Das Vertrauen (Trust). As in most such pieces there is an opposing character: Die Unachtsamkeit (Negligence). He acknowledges that there is much to enjoy in Hamburg, but for him the blessings are rather the earthly pleasures, like food and drink: "I look forward to the oyster season". He doesn't want to waste any time thinking about "the source of the blessing and its surplus". The other characters react with abhorrence, as Negligence "forgets that our God is the origin of good", as Devotion says. Hammonia then says he should "avoid my domain". The oratorio ends with the last stanza from the hymn 'Herr Gott, wir danken dir' (Johann Franck, 1618-1677).

The serenata is quite dramatic. This is to be expected because Telemann was a successful opera composer; from 1722 until its closure in 1738 he was the director of the Oper am Gänsemarkt. But this serenata is more dramatic than those in other Kapitänsmusiken in that its central subject is war. There was a historical reason for that. Hamburg was part of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, and its emperor, Charles VI, had been involved in a war against the Ottoman empire since 1737. Although Hamburg was not directly struck by the war, it was part of the empire and therefore involved in the conflict. The serenata begins with a 'Chorus of the Heroes' in the form of a battaglia: "The drum calls with rolling beats, the mortars roar, the swords flash - this brings joy to our brave hearts". The warriors are encouraged by Der Kriegsgeist (The Spirit of War), the Elbe asks the shepherds to end their joy and "lay down your gentle flutes". It is then Die Zaghaftigkeit (Timidity) who describes the horrors of the war: "My heart beats in my horrified breast to think of the ominous gloom of signs of misfortune. (...) O who, who will save us from ruin?" Then Der Friede (Peace) enters and declares that "I am the one who watches over you". This gives Timidity new strength.

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In the last part of the serenata the enemy is specifically mentioned. The Spirit of War says: "The eagle leads the legions before Istanbul's now horrified gate. He displays in sharpened talons, the sword drawn for Turkish ruin". He is encouraged by the Elbe: "Go, let German courage accustom the wild Saracens even more to servitude". This is followed by an aria which has again the form of a battaglia. As in the oratorio there is an opposing character. This time it is Der Neid (Envy) which expresses his "pleasure in Germany's misfortune". "I even see now with happy eyes the whole burden and your demise coming". But then Der Schutzgeist Deutschlands (Germany's Guardian Spirit) turns up and declares: "Germany is loved by heaven itself. Up, heroes, up to the fight". The serenata ends with a chorus: "Germany's glory shall always stand, and your happy prosperity, Hamburg/Schwerin, is ordained by God".

Considering that Germany was no political unity, but a patchwork of largely independent territories the use of the term 'Germany' is remarkable. It was hardly used in those days, and in his liner-notes Eckart Kleßman sees it as an expression of the wish "to put an end to the notorious threat posed to the practically defenseless German states, to strengthen their self-confidence, and to reinforce this self-confidence with military security". Whatever the reason may be, this aspect and the pronounced treatment of the subject of war makes this Kapitänsmusik rather unique in this part of Telemann's oeuvre.

One of the dramatic features of the serenata is the representation of the various characters. In particular The Spirit of War and Timidity are remarkable, as well as Envy. The characteristics of these protagonists are impressively explored by the various singers. In the oratorio it is the role of Negligence which attracts attention. Here Immo Schröder shines in his humorous portrayal of this character. Veronika Winter gives an immaculate performance of the role of Hammonia. As Germany's Guardian Spirit she sings the last aria of this work, 'Ergreifet den Degen' (Grip the sword) which is quite virtuosic. But most arias are pitched at a considerable technical level, and Telemann again shows his creative spirit, not only in the vocal parts but also in the instrumental score.

This Kapitänsmusik was first performed in modern times in 1965 in the former GDR, but its text had to be changed in many respects, for political reasons. Therefore the live performance in 2007 in Knechtsteden which was recorded by the German classical channel WDR Cologne and released by CPO, is the work's first modern performance in its original state. Hermann Max and all other participants deserve our gratitude for bringing this very fine piece of music to our attention. I am looking forward to the Kapitänsmusiken which are still waiting to be recorded.
---Johan van Veen, musicweb-international.com

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