

Zelenka – Missa Dei Filii Litaniae Lauretanae (Bernius) [1990]

Written by bluesever

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1. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: I. Kyrie: Kyrie eleison* 2:34
2. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: II. Kyrie: Christe eleison* 5:51
3. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: III. Kyrie: Kyrie eleison* 2:31
4. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: IV. Gloria: Gloria in excelsis Deo* 10:37
5. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: V. Gloria: Qui tollis peccata mundi* 10:52
6. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: VI. Gloria: Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris* 2:01 [play](#)
7. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: VII. Gloria: Quoniam tu solus Sanctus I* 1:55
8. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: VIII. Gloria: Quoniam tu solus Sanctus II* 5:54
9. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: IX. Gloria: Cum Sancto Spiritu I* 0:25
10. *Missa Dei Filii, ZWV 20: X. Gloria: Cum Sancto Spiritu II* 7:55
11. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: I. Kyrie eleison* 5:48
12. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: II. Pater de coelis* 5:01
13. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: III. Mater divinae gratiae* 3:09 [play](#)
14. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: IV. Virgo prudentissima I* 0:17
15. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: V. Virgo prudentissima II* 2:00
16. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: VI. Salus infirmorum* 4:49
17. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: VII. Regina Angelorum* 3:16
18. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: VIII. Agnus Dei I* 1:34
19. *Litaniae Lauretanae "Salus infirmorum", ZWV 152: IX. Agnus Dei II* 5:47

Kammerchor Stuttgart, Nancy Argenta, Christoph Prégardien, Gordon Jones
Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra
Frieder Bernius - conductor

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679 - 1745) ~ another splendid Bohemian baroque composer ~ was never much recognised during his lifetime professionally, serving as a court musician in Dresden for most of his career. He travelled little, and only to study or participate in music research, and played a rather obscure instrument ~ the double bass ~ in the Court Orchestra.

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As for his training, he may have been educated by the Jesuits in Prague. We do know that in 1717 Zelenka studied with Fux in Vienna, during which time he also taught counterpoint to Quantz; that same year he accompanied the Elector to Italy where he studied with Lotti.

Zelenka was awarded a title created especially for him by the Royal Court at Dresden, that of 'Court Composer of Church Music'; under this title he composed numerous sacred works for the Dresden Catholic Church. At that time Saxony was predominantly Lutheran and the staunchly Lutheran Bach had already been awarded with the title of 'Royal Court Composer', so Zelenka's title was little more than a political-social nod to those not of Martin Luther's persuasion.

Zelenka conducted the Court Orchestra for five seasons and assisted the Kapellmeister in his duties but never received the position after his demise. This oversight disappointed and disillusioned Zelenka, who went to his death feeling he'd not received a proper due for his achievements which indeed were many and numerous. In addition to several secular instrumental compositions (none of his keyboard works are known to survive), he penned some 30 masses, plus psalms and three oratorios with biblical subjects, totaling in all around 150 sacred works.

Certainly one might agree that Zelenka deserves his due if one were to judge solely by this particularly splendid disc of his sacred choral works. Zelenka, as Biber (another Bohemian), pushed the musical envelope ~ expect the unexpected. His music is crammed with catchy counterpoint and sparkling syncopation, it's full of creative, compelling harmony and demanding instrumentation. Zelenka was a stickler for dynamics and much fond of the crescendo. Perhaps one might dub these 'Zelenka Crescendos' as he tended to describe each progression in intensity, to the point where 'piano', 'forte' and 'piu forte' might be inscribed beneath one single instrumental note.

Both the Mass and the Litaniae are impressive works, intensely festive, glittering with runs and vocal fireworks. Surprisingly contemporary in sound, as opined one critic, 'to the uninitiated it is difficult to place Zelenka's place in time'. J.S. Bach greatly admired Zelenka, and Zelenka's contemporaries referred to him as a 'dreamily pious' man. This rather ambiguous description suits Zelenka to perfection, as there remains a bit of a mystery surrounding the details of his life. He may have been in ill-health, as one title of his works attests : 'Hypochonria' which is scored for Zelenka's pet instrument, the oboe. It's a devilish work, almost unplayable for the average oboe and oboist, which further underscores Zelenka's intensely creative attitude toward his compositions. It is widely accepted that no picture of Zelenka is believed to exist, so thus in addition to a poor constitution it is speculated he may have suffered from some physical deformity which held him back socially, artistically, and professionally, and would certainly

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explain his aversion to having his portrait done.

Whatever the actuality of Zelenka's life, here is one reality that I can happily vouch for ~ this CD is a jewel, and the Canadian original-instruments ensemble 'Tafelmusik' and the soloists generally superb. The only weak link to the group, and this is purely subjective opinion, was the choice of Michael Chance as alto. I would have preferred a fuller, richer female voice as accompaniment to Argenta's pure, fluid, solid soprano as opposed to a countertenor ~ which is, incidentally, the more historically correct. Introduce yourself to Zelenka through this disc and see where it leads you. Here is a most underrated and underappreciated composer, well worth exposure and exploration and a far wider audience. ---Polkadotty

If Handel and Bach are the first two members of the Baroque Musical Trinity, then Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679-1745) is the third. For this recording transported me to the celestial realm and kept me there for some 70 minutes. From its opening 'Kyrie' I was 'hooked'. Zelenka's entire repertoire only runs to some 150 compositions and consists of a small number of instrumental selections, and a larger group of sacred vocal selections such as masses and requiems, psalms, magnificats, hymns and a few secular vocal works. The works on this disc are melodious, harmonically satisfying and very creative throughout both in the instrumental accompaniment and solos. His repeated use of ascending and descending scale passages is unique and pleasing to the ear as is his harmonic progressions.

The 'Missa Dei Fili' ZWV20 is a mass in honor of the Son of God. As was usual in the first half of the eighteenth century, Zelenka's masses and litanies are so-called 'number works' in which the five parts of the ordinary of the mass (Kyrie-Gloria-Credo-Sanctus/Benedictus-Agnus Dei) are subdivided into smaller, musically independent single movements. The 'Litaniae Lauretanae' ZWV152 is subtitled: 'Salus Infirmorum'. It's hard to believe that it took this long for Zelenka's music to surface, but I hope that more recordings of it are on the way. All the music herein, as a whole, demands excellent technical ability and brilliant virtuosity from all the singers and instrumentalists involved. Just one example of this: "Quoniam tu solus sanctus II" as sung by Michael Chance in the 'Gloria' requires great vocal flexibility and tremendous vocal control, as you will hear for yourself if you purchase the recording.

The overall performance of this 1989 recording is impressive because the excitement never ceases at any time during the recording: Nancy Argento (soprano) seems to be more involved

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emotionally than usual; Michael Chance (countertenor) is perfection exhibiting flawless diction, great flexibility and enchanting tone quality; Christopher Pregarden (tenor) has a warm and resonant sound; and Gordon Jones (bass) sings with ease and lightness. The Kammerchor Stuttgart is very fine with a buoyant and 'yummy' sound. Tafelmusic: great as usual 'Bravo' Jean Lamon. And all is brought together by that very excellent conductor Frieder Bernius! ---George Peabody 'Ariel'

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