



Programme Notes: Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: Solemn Vespers For A Confessor:

In 1779, not being able to advance his musical career during his travels to Paris, Mozart returned as a humble man, to resume his post as court organist for the Archbishop of Salzburg.

Mozart's mother, who had been sent with him to Paris as a chaperone, had contracted a fever and died at the beginning of July 1778.

Additionally, Aloysia Weber, a copyist's daughter whom Mozart had been dissuaded by his father from taking to Italy as a 16-year-old *prima donna* in 1777, had greeted him coldly on his return to Mannheim, with him writing at the time: "I cannot write", "my heart is full of tears".

It was following these events, with the 23-year-old composer in reflective and solemn mood, that Mozart firstly wrote *Vesperae de Dominica* (Solemn Vespers For Sunday) in 1779, and a year later, in 1780, wrote *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* (Solemn Vespers For A Confessor).

Each work consists of five psalm settings followed by a Magnificat, and were most likely written for performance in Salzburg, for Mozart's employer Archbishop Colloredo - who demanded a very concise and conservative style of musical settings for Salzburg Cathedral, in comparison to the more Italian style at the time.

Due to the fact that the Vespers follow the Roman liturgy it is most probable that Salzburg Cathedral was indeed the intended location for performance, rather than its other major church, St. Peter's, which followed the Benedictine order with four, rather than five vesper psalms.

Although there is no information on the immediate circumstances surrounding the work's composition, it is considered that the *Vesperae Solennes de Confessore* were intended for performance on a saint's day, although it is not known which one.

Each of the psalms is not divided up into separate arias, ensembles and choruses, but forms a continuous movement in each case.

Dixit Dominus (Psalm 110) and Confiteor tibi (Psalm 111) receive a robust treatment with music of ceremonial character, while Beatus vir (Psalm 112) is set with a lighter touch.

Laudate pueri (Psalm 113) is an elaborate and methodical fugue and Laudate Dominum (Psalm 117), has a beautifully eloquent soprano solo.

The final Magnificat is a grand fanfare with all parts joining in the festive spirit.

It was assumed that the original score of this work had been lost. However, in the 1970s it turned up, along with many others, in the convent of Grassau, in Silesia, now part of Poland. It is now held in the Biblioteka Jagiellonska, Krakow.