

Johann George Roellig: Missa brevis in D

Born on 20 November 1710 in Bergießhübel, near Pirna, Saxony, from 1727 Johann George Roellig was a pupil at the Dresden Kreuzschule, where he studied cello, organ and harpsichord and – later – music theory under Karl Hartwich (1709–1750) and composition with Kreuzkantor, Theodor Christlieb Reinhold(t) (1682–1755). With composition lessons with Zelenka c1732–1734, paid for by Count Heinrich von Brühl, Roellig was able to develop his compositional technique further, especially his handling of the orchestra. He subsequently enrolled at the University of Leipzig to study theology for two and a half years, graduating in June 1736.

In June 1737, Prince Johann August von Anhalt-Zerbst heard Roellig play the organ and cello in Leipzig and appointed the young musician as Court Organist and Chamber Musician. Roellig arrived in what was still a time of considerable growth in the musical life of the court under the Kapellmeister, Johann Friedrich Fasch (1688–1758), who had by that time built a reputation in Germany for his sacred and instrumental works. Roellig contributed a considerable amount of music for performance in the court chapel, including at least five cantata cycles and three oratorio Passions, as well as occasional cantatas to celebrate courtly events such as weddings and noble birthdays. Roellig appears to have taken on responsibility for the provision of music and control of the repertoire in the court chapel in around 1755, taking on the role of vice-Kapellmeister. Following the Fasch's death, Roellig was eventually promoted to Kapellmeister, though official confirmation was not made until 1777!

It was Roellig's bad luck that the Seven Years War (1757–1763) impinged so dramatically upon court and musical life at the court of Zerbst. In 1757, Prince Friedrich August had welcomed to the court a Frenchman by the name De Fraique. In early 1758, Prussian soldiers marched into Zerbst. On 8 April 1758, just before they arrived, presumably forewarned of the military advance, Prince Frederick August, together with his mother, Johanna Elizabeth, Countess of Oldenburg, fled quickly and in secret to Paris. This was the last time that either would set foot in Zerbst. The occupying Prussian military demanded huge payments from the Zerbst exchequer, forcing severe economic strife on the principality, which also was obliged to finance a lavish lifestyle for the exiled rulers. Initially courtly life continued, but in 1760, players were dismissed due to financial pressures. In 1764 the prince remarried and took his wife to live permanently in Switzerland. From this point, the performance of concerted music at weekly services on Saturdays and Sundays withered, as did the Kapelle, and soon ceased altogether. From 1766, Roellig's responsibilities were to play organ in services in the court chapel and to raise forces from the court and town to perform occasional works on festive days such as Christmas, Easter, and Whitsun, and to celebrate royal birthdays. This is he did well into the 1780s; in 1786 there are reports of special music that was supplied for the birthdays of the Russian Empress, Catherine the Great, and that of the Empresses' grandson and protégé, Duke Constantin Pawlowitz, and the Queen of Sweden.¹

¹ See Nigel Springthorpe 'Correspondence between Johann George Roellig and the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst; Musical Responsibilities in the 1780s and the Swedish Connection' in *Fasch-Studien 13: Zerbst zur Zeit Faschs – ein anhaltischer Musenhof: Bericht über die Internationale Wissenschaftliche Konferenz vom 17. bis 18. April 2015 im Rahmen der 13. Internationalen Fasch-Festtage in Zerbst*, (Ortus Musikverlag, Beskow, 2016), pp.229–246

MUSIC TO CELEBRATE THE CORONATION OF GUSTAV III

The sole source of the music written to celebrate the coronation of Gustav III is a specially bound dedicatory score in the hand of the composer that was presented to the Swedish court. It is preserved in the Statens Musikkbibliotek, Stockholm (S-Skma, *Kung.Musikalska Akademien Z*).

The dedicatory score sent to the Swedish court features a printed title page and frontispiece in rhyme, celebrating the accession of the new King:

Dem	To
Allerdurchlauchtigsten Großmächtigsten	<i>the highly renowned and all-powerful</i>
Fürsten und Herrn,	<i>Prince and Lord,</i>
Herrn	<i>Lord</i>
Gustav	<i>Gustav</i>
König der Schweden, Cöthen und	<i>King of Sweden, Cöthen and</i>
Wenden u.	<i>Wenden, etc</i>
meinem allergnädigsten Könige und Herrn.	<i>my all gracious King and Lord.</i>

O König, groß durch Macht,
noch mehr durch Gnad und Huld;
Hier wagts ein ferner Knecht,
der Tonkunst Werck zu weihen,
Und will um Deinen Thron,
der Ehrfurcht reine Schuld
Der Wünsche frommen Zoll,
aus freien Triebe streuen;
Ganz Schweden dränget sich
um diesen hohen Thron;
In Finn=und Lapland
kann man Jubellieder hören.//

Der halbe Norden beut,
sein Herz, als süßen Lohn,
Zum Opfer für Dich hin
mit dichtvereinten Chören.
O warum dürft ich nicht
auf Anhalts stiller Flur,
Von Deiner Krone Ruhm,
von Schwedens Freude singen?
Auf meines Fürstens Winck;
durch Kunst, Geschmack, Natur,
Kann mir ein sanftes Werck
harmonisch schön gelingen.
Als Friedrich Adolph einst,
den Norderthron bestieg,
Den Gustav voller Geist
mit Götterthaten schmücket,
Sang meine Setzkunst Ihm
so Ruh, als Glück und Sieg,
In Tönen gleicher Art!
O wärs mir nur geglücket!
Wolan, o König, wirf den hulderfüllten Blick

O King, great through might,
again more through mercy and grace.
Here dares a distant servant,
to consecrate a musical composition
And wishes to spread around
Thy throne, the reverence of pure debt [and]
The wish of devout duty,
of his own volition;
All of Sweden throngs
to this high throne;
In Finland and Lapland
can one hear songs of jubilation.

Half the North offers
its Heart, as sweet reward,
To offer for Thee
with densely united choruses,
O why may I not
on Anhalt's still fields,
Sing of thy crown of glory,
of Sweden's joy?
At my Prince's sign,
through [fine] craftsmanship, taste, and nature,
can I successfully [create]
a peaceful harmonic work.
As Friedrich Adolph once
the northern throne ascended
which Gustav, full of spirit,
had adorned with divine deeds,
my musical composition sang to him
so softly, with fortune and victory,
in sound as in art!
O had I only achieved success!
Come, O King, cast a grace-filled glance

Auf dieß geringe Werck!
 Vielleicht wirds Dich vergnügen:
 Dich und Dein kennend Ohr!
 Bekrönt mich solch ein Glück;
 So mag ich immer bald
 in finstern Grüften liegen!

On this insignificant work!
 Perhaps it will give Thee pleasure:
 To Thee and Thy knowledgeable ear!
 Crown me with such fortune;
 So I may always rest
 easily in gloomy graves.

Such a combination of printed matter with hand-written music is unusual but not unknown. The language of this presentation is notable for the manner in which the composer speaks directly to the monarch (though the use of the first person is not unusual in poetry of the time). Roellig indicates that he was prompted by his Prince (Friedrich August) and requests the dedicatee to cast a critical eye on the creation and crown the composer with fortune. The style and content of this dedicatory text suggest that Roellig himself may well be the author.

There was a close relationship between the courts of Anhalt-Zerbst and Sweden created by marriage. Not only was Princess Johanna Elizabeth (1712-1760) a distant cousin of her husband (Christian August, Prince of Zerbst, 1690-1747) and a descendent of Gustav I of Sweden, she was also sister to Adolf Friedrich of Holstein-Gottorp (1710-1771) who was elected heir to the Swedish throne in 1743 and ascended the throne in 1751. Thus, she was also aunt to Gustav III of Sweden (1746-1792). Following the death of Adolf Friedrich on 12 February 1771, a memorial service was conducted later in the year in the Zerbst Schloßkirche on the tenth Sunday after Trinity (4 August 1771). For this event Roellig composed the funeral cantata *Sey getreu bis in den Todt*, which is scored for solo soprano and bass, SATB choir, a pair of oboes doubling flute, strings and muted timpani. A copy of the score (in Roellig's hand), specially bound with a hand-written frontispiece (in the hand of an unknown scribe), had also been sent to the Swedish court to mark the official condolences of the Zerbst court. The funeral cantata was followed a year later by a celebratory service to commemorate the coronation of Gustav III of Sweden.

There was a rich tradition of concerted music in the Schloßkirche in Zerbst. However, constant pressure was placed upon the Kapellmeisters (J. F. Fasch and J. G. Roellig) by the church authorities to limit the duration of the music in any of the normal weekly services and most single cantatas performed on most Sundays of the year from 1750s onward in Zerbst were rarely more than 10 minutes in duration.² This restriction clearly did not apply for 'special' events and Roellig had scope to write a longer work; the newly composed music for each of the memorial for Adolph Friedrich (1771) and the coronation of Gustav III (1772) last some 30 minutes. On both occasions the service in Zerbst took place in the months following the actual event in Sweden. The coronation took place on Friday, 29 May 1772, while the service of commemoration in the Schloßkirche in Zerbst took place a month later on the morning of Sunday 28 June 1772.³

While the use of Latin in Lutheran services in Northern Germany in the 1770s was most unusual, the Kyrie, Gloria and Credo normally being sung or spoken in the vernacular at this time, the status of the event appears to have prompted setting of the text in Latin. Indeed, a setting of the Kyrie and Gloria was performed on Sundays on which noble and Royal birthdays (such as those of Catherine the Great of Russia, formerly a princess of Zerbst) were celebrated in the court chapel in Zerbst.⁴ The mass was performed in the first half of the service. Communion was celebrated and the hymns sung (the numbers relating to the *Zerbster Gesangbuch*) included *Ihr Christen, fürchtet Gott* (No. 331), *Nun danket alle Gott* (No. 602), and *Herr Gott dich loben wir* (No. 587). The sermon, given by 'Der Herr vicarius Köselitz',⁵ was based upon the reading for the day: Romans II, verses 1-7, a text with the theme of those who judge, are judged by God, clearly chosen with the power invested in a new king in mind.

2 An example is the Ascension cantata *Gott fähret auf mit Jauchzen* by Roellig, first performed in 1742 (ed. Nigel Springthorpe, Ortus Verlag (Berlin, 2015)).

3 The contents of the service are recorded in: *Verzeichnis Wie es mit dem GottesDienst in heisigen Hoch=Fürstl: Schloßkirche gehalten wird*; in D-LASA, DE, Konsistorium Zerbst Rep. 15a IXa. 351-357 and 377.

4 For a discussion of the music performed in Zerbst in honour of Catherine the Great, see Barbara Reul: 'Catherine the Great and the Role of Celebratory Music at the Court of Anhalt-Zerbst.' *Eighteenth-Century Music* 3/2, (Cambridge 2006) pp. 269-309)

5 Johann Augustin Köselitz (1721-1790) was born in Wittenberg. He attended school in Zerbst and continued his studies at the University of Leipzig where he gained the academic degree of Magister. In 1752 he was appointed subdeacon at the Zerbst Schloßkirche and at the Bartholomäikirche. He then moved away to become pastor to the communities in Görlitz and Pülzig, only to return to Zerbst in 1762 to become deacon and preacher at the Trinitatiskirche, rising to first pastor in 1765. At the same time he commenced teaching at the Gymnasium. Admitted to the consistory as assessor in 1769, he was promoted eventually to Chief Superintendent of the Zerbst diocese.

By 1772, the Kapelle of Zerbst had been greatly reduced in numbers as a result of some dismissals in 1760 (for financial reasons) and natural attrition. In 1772 the Kapelle consisted of the elderly Karl Höckh (*Konzertmeister*/violin); Poll (*Kammermusicus*/tenor); Roellig (Organist/cellist); Johann Gottfried Just (*Hofmusicus*/violin(?)); Joachim Christian Schoene (temporary *Kantor*/bass(?)) and *Hofkirchner*/violinist(?)) as well as *Kalcant* [organ blower] Richter. The court could also draw upon the services of the organist of the Bartholomäikirche. There were also four choir boys, and various town musicians who are known to have been called upon.

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

The source appears mostly reliable and is neatly and clearly notated. In this edition, dynamic indications have been modernised and missing ones inserted (indicated in brackets). Ornamentation added by the editor is also bracketed. Where the placing of dynamics has been ambiguous or clearly in error, they have been tacitly placed in the correct point in the bar while missing slurs have been indicated with dotted lines.

Specific changes or additions to the notation have been made as follows:

Kyrie

Bar 2	oboe 1	note 1	F♯ changed to A
Bar 14	viola		A added (previously an empty bar)
Bar 33	bass solo		Two equal minims (half notes)

Gloria

Bars 22, 24	tenor & bass solo	Rhythm dots added to match oboe on notes 1-2
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Nigel Springthorpe (Welwyn, March 2020)

[1] Kyrie eleison

Horn 1 (in D) C

Horn 2 (in D) C

Oboe 1 C[#]

Oboe 2 C[#]

Violin 1 C[#]

Violin 2 C[#]

Viola C[#]

Tenor Solo C[#]

Bass Solo C[#]

[Basso] C[#]