

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745)

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745) was a contemporary of Vivaldi and Bach, but his music has a different sound. This can be traced back to Zelenka's origins and career. He was baptised in Louňovice pod Blaníkem, about 80 km south-east of Prague on 16 October 1679. Zelenka grew up in Prague, where he attended the Jesuit grammar school in the Collegium Clementinum. The thorough knowledge of the Latin language that he acquired there later stood him in good stead when he set sacred texts to music. During his time with the Jesuits and also in the house of the Habsburg Governor in Prague, Baron von Hartig, Zelenka had the opportunity to become familiar with music of a high quality, such as masses by the Venetian composer Antonio Lotti (around 1666–1740). Since he played the violone (double bass), he would certainly also have taken part in performances. But the few documents available are not sufficient to allow a reconstruction of Zelenka's musical activities over these years.

In 1710, Zelenka was engaged as a violone player at the Court in Dresden, where he remained until his death on 23 December 1745. He continued his studies, primarily with the Dresden Royal Kapellmeister Johann Christoph Schmidt (1664–1728) and also in the course of several visits to Vienna between 1716 and 1719 with the Imperial Kapellmeister Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), in order to become a composer. Among Zelenka's early works – the works of a composer who was already around 40 years of age – special mention should be made in particular of the “Capricci” for orchestra and the six large trio or quartet sonatas, mostly for 2 oboes, obbligato bassoon, and basso continuo. These works reveal an extremely original and boldly inventive composer.

The Court in Dresden used Zelenka's abilities in quite a different way, however. After 1720, Zelenka composed almost exclusively works for the Catholic Court's church services in Dresden and not only masses and vespers but also more rarely encountered parts of the Catholic Liturgy – such as the Litany for Saint Francis Xavier, the “gloria Societatis Jesu”, as it is described in the text of the Litany.

In order to understand Zelenka's path, one must first know some facts about the history of the state of Saxony. The Electorate of Saxony and its capital, Dresden, was completely Protestant in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Heinrich Schütz (1585–1672) served the Court for over half a century as Kapellmeister. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) composed his Passions and most of his Cantatas in his role as Lutheran Cantor in the Thomaskirche in the Saxon town of Leipzig. In 1697 however, Elector Frederick Augustus I, who had been the ruling Saxon monarch since 1694 and who was also called Augustus the Strong (born 1670, Prince Elector of Saxony from 1694, King of Poland from 1697, died in 1733), had the opportunity to acquire the crown in the Elective Monarchy of Poland. But only a Catholic could become King of Poland. For this reason Augustus converted to Catholicism, which remained the denomination of the ruling family in Dresden, while the Electorate of Saxony remained Protestant.

In 1696 an heir to the throne was born in Dresden, who, like his father, was given the name of Augustus (Elector of Saxony from 1733, King of Poland from 1734, died in 1763). The heir to the throne spent many years abroad in his youth – in France, in Italy, and above all in Vienna. The Saxon politicians found a suitable wife for him there: Maria Josepha (1699–1757), an ardent Catholic and daughter of the Habsburg Emperor Joseph I, who had died in 1711. In 1719, they married and the young couple resided from that time onwards in the Dresden Palace. Only then was the Catholic form of worship, which had never particularly interested Augustus the Strong, developed further. The heir to the throne and his wife ensured that church music in particular blossomed at that time. The

Dresdner Hofkapelle, one of the best orchestras in Europe, performed works composed by Johann David Heinichen (1683–1729), who was appointed Kapellmeister in 1716, by the opera composer Giovanni Alberto Ristori (1692–1753) and also many works by Jan Dismas Zelenka.

With the exception of a few older pieces, Zelenka's works for the Dresden Court church services began shortly after 1720; the last dated works – two big Marian litanies (*Litaniae Lauretanae*) – are from the year 1744. The services took place in a chapel within the palace that had been created by converting the former court theatre. (The famous Dresdner Hofkirche by the Italian architect Chiaveri was first dedicated in 1751). The period of Zelenka's work as church composer in Dresden can be divided into three phases: first, the years 1721–1729, in which he and the Kapellmeister, Heinichen, created many works and put on performances; secondly, the time between Heinichen's death and the appointment of Johann Adolf Hasse as the new Kapellmeister in 1733; and thirdly, the years up until Zelenka's death in 1745 which are characterised by a few significant late works, particularly masses and litanies.

Masses and Litanias

Missa Sancti Josephi Litaniae Xaverianae

Missa Sancti Josephi in D major, ZWV 14
(1731 or 1732)

Kyrie

1. *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison*

Gloria

2. *Gloria in excelsis Deo*
3. *Et in terra pax*
4. *Laudamus te*
5. *Qui tollis peccata mundi*
6. *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris*
7. *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus*
8. *Cum Sancto spiritu*

Sanctus

9. *Sanctus, Pleni sunt coeli, Osanna*
10. *Benedictus*
11. *Osanna*

Agnus Dei

12. *Agnus Dei*
13. *Dona nobis pacem*

Evidence of a striking change in style

The *Missa Sancti Josephi* (ZWV 14) has only been passed on in Zelenka's autograph score, which is badly damaged but can be reconstructed with a little effort. No title page has been preserved, but from Zelenka's handwritten catalogue of works that were performed in church services, which he had kept since 1726, it is possible to identify the title clearly. In Zelenka's “Inventarium rerum musicarum Ecclesiae servientium” (Catalogue of musical pieces that serve the Church), the following entry can be found under No. 42 (here somewhat simplified): “D# [D-Dur]. Missa S. Josephi facta occasione

annomastiae diei Serenissimae Nostrae Principessae ac Dominae nostrae. 4: C. A. T. B., Violini 2, Oboe 2, Traversieri 2, Corni 2, Tubae 2, Viole 2, Tympani 2, Fagotto, Violone e Basso Continuo. Zelenka". This entry can only relate to the Mass in D Major recorded here. The large-scale ensemble that includes the flutes as well as the brass section and the usual oboes is not to be found anywhere else in Zelenka's work.

The title of the Mass also explains a further peculiarity of this particular Mass. The relevant words can be translated as follows: "Missa Sancti Josephi, written (or performed) on the occasion of the name day of our Most Serene Highness, Princess and Mistress", by which is meant Maria Josepha, whose name day "Joseph" was apparently celebrated on the Feast of Saint Joseph, 19 March. On saints' days, however, the Credo is left out of the Ordinary of the Mass. The "Missa Sancti Josephi" has no Credo; because of the reason for its composition, however, it is still to be considered complete. If the mass for the name day "Maria" had been meant, which in Dresden was celebrated on 8 December (Feast of the Immaculate Conception), Zelenka would have composed the Credo too. March 19 always falls in Lent, and sometimes even in Easter Week. During this time, church music is supposed to cast off its festive attire but contemporary indications show that some feast days could be celebrated even in these quiet times with musical brilliance; this can also be assumed to be the case for the Feast of St. Joseph and Zelenka's Mass.

The position of entry No. 42 in Zelenka's catalogue, together with the style of handwriting and the style of the Mass – as well as the consideration of external circumstances – point to the year 1732 (or 1731) for the creation and performance of the work; there will never be certainty about this. In Zelenka's works, the *Missa Sancti Josephi* is the key piece of evidence for a change of style that the composer, already in his fifties, carried out around and after 1730, which cannot be understood without acknowledging the influence of the modern Italian opera in the style of Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1783). Hasse's appearance in Dresden was documented for the first time in the late summer of 1731; in September of that year his opera "Cleofide" was performed in Dresden, arousing tremendous interest and demonstrating the new musical style that left clear traces with Zelenka. But only after Augustus the Strong had died on 1 February 1733 and after the national period of mourning was over was Hasse appointed by Frederick Augustus II to be his new Hofkapellmeister. The office had been vacant for four years since the death of the two older Kapellmeisters, Schmidt (died 13 April 1728) and Heinichen (died 16 July 1729). Zelenka's Mass was created during this interval; it is possible that the composer wanted to recommend himself for the office of Hofkapellmeister through the modern musical language in this work.

All of Zelenka's masses are conceived as "number masses", as is the *Missa Sancti Josephi*. The composer first arranged the text into numerous smaller sections which he then set to music as independent movements ("numbers"). The arrangement of the text and the way in which the individual sections were set to music was variable within certain limits. Certain constant features can be identified in Zelenka's work, as with his contemporaries, but of his approximately twenty masses no individual one has exactly the same structure as any other. Over the course of the years, the types of movement did not change – arias, duets, trios, concertato arrangements, chorale fugues, and homophonic choral blocks were there from the first Mass (*Missa Sanctae Caeciliae*, ZWV 1, 1712 with later stages of composition) until the last Mass (*Missa Omnium Sanctorum*, ZWV 21, 1741). What changes is the method of musical expression, the "musical language". Polyphonic structures can often be found in the earlier works, even in the arias. The rhythm is considerably more influenced by syncopation than in the works of other composers from this era. The harmonies change rapidly and the singing voices can sometimes produce, even in the arias, broken chords and wide leaps that have an instrumental effect. In the later works the rhythm becomes very variable; low and differentiated note values are often encountered and the so-called "Lombard rhythm" (the inversion of the usual dotted

rhythm) becomes a real stylistic feature of some movements. The harmonies change more slowly; secondary chords become more rare. As a consequence, long vocal melismas are encountered in the arias. The later music sounds generally “sweeter”, although this does not exclude some spirited choral movements and melancholy passages. It would not be difficult to identify features of this style in the opera music of Hasse and his generation, which Zelenka had apparently studied thoroughly.

The composition of the orchestra that Zelenka could count on was predetermined. The nucleus was the two groups of string instruments: 2 violins, viola (occasionally 2 violas), and basso continuo. The two violins were frequently doubled with oboes. On high feast days, a trumpet choir was added that consisted of 2, 3, or 4 trumpets (in Zelenka’s works always tuned in D) and timpani. Four trumpets and timpani were used by Zelenka for instance in the Easter Mass *Missa Paschalis* (ZWV 7, 1726) and the *Missa Divi Xaverii* (ZWV 12, a Mass for a Saint’s Feast Day without a Credo, 1729). The horns that were typical of Dresden (Corni da caccia, in Zelenka’s Masses always tuned in D) could, unlike the trumpets, also be used for “normal” occasions, but in Zelenka’s work they are only used in church music when the trumpet choir is also used. In Heinichen’s masses, incidentally, this is not the case. The flutes are still missing from the orchestration; they were added to the orchestra quite late – around the middle of the 1720s – and they occur almost exclusively in Zelenka’s masses as obbligato instruments in arias; the *Missa Sancti Josephi* is a notable exception to this. In Zelenka’s time the most important flautist of the period, Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), played in the Dresden orchestra; he did not go to the Court in Berlin until 1741.

The *Missa Sancti Josephi* gathers together the largest orchestra formation that Zelenka ever used. This is a sign of the importance of the occasion, but also a sign of Zelenka’s intention to show himself at his best. The trumpet choir consists of 2 trumpets and timpani; 2 horns are added. The pieces are to be played on natural instruments, which is an indication of the high level of virtuosity of the Dresden horn players who usually came from Bohemia, the real home of artistic horn-playing up to the present time. The woodwind group consists of 2 flutes and 2 oboes; then come the strings. The large ensemble of instruments is in no way only an accompaniment to the singing voices; its role is thoroughly independent, perhaps even dominant, which can be heard in the instrumental opening of the Kyrie, which is not at all usual in Zelenka’s masses. The *Kyrie* itself (Track 1) is set in three sections according to the text but is composed in a single movement. Zelenka forms a da capo structure by taking up again the (greatly shortened) first Kyrie after the expressive Christe. The form is closed and vocal soloists, choir, and instrument groups carry out a lively dialogue. Fugue-like entrances by the singing voices are treated playfully and are not condensed into a strict polyphonic movement.

In the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* immediately following this (Track 2), the principle of dialogue is continued. A simple unisono thema by strings and basso continuo rings out in alternation with instrumental and singing groups. The following movement *Et in terra pax* (Track 3) forms the strongest contrast to the splendid glorification of God on high: a soft string movement in low tones accompanies a choir that has been extended by including two bass voices to create a five-part harmony. The *Laudamus te* (Track 4) written for solo voices unites in the instruments several characteristics of a new, rhythmically refined melody featuring differentiated and low note values, springing syncopated turns and extended passages in trio parallels in the flutes, oboes, and violins. Rhythmically lively pedal points favour the playful interchange of instruments and voices. Expressive, chromatically enriched chorale fugues such as *Qui tollis peccata mundi* (Track 5) are a speciality of the church works by Zelenka in all phases of his composition; particularly moving here is the ending with the simple plea “suscite depreciationm nostram”. Then Christ sitting at God’s right hand is praised with great pomp in the movement *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris* (Track 6), in which the “Lombard rhythms” already mentioned can be clearly heard. The movement *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus* (Track 7) is composed as a soprano aria that would certainly also be feasible in a cantata or opera. The

powerful chorale fugue *Cum Sancto Spiritu* (Track 8) concludes the *Gloria*. Its theme is broken up by intervals and contains some rhythms that are very difficult to sing, but it is not at all untypical of Zelenka's fugues on this section of text.

The first large block of the Ordinary of the Mass, consisting of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* and performed together in the liturgy, is then effectively concluded; a bare half hour has passed. It is known that during the Baroque period, many masses consisted only of the *Kyrie* and *Gloria*; for instance, the so-called B-Minor Mass by J. S. Bach in its first edition, presented in 1733 to the new Dresden Elector Frederick Augustus II (BWV 232/I). Such *Kyrie* and *Gloria* masses, when released from their liturgical context, are good to listen to as complete musical works of art. This is not the case for saint's day masses when the long, drawn out *Credo*, rich in text, is left out. In this case, after a long introductory section there follow only the relatively short sections of the *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*, which – as the conclusion of the work that was introduced with the *Kyrie* and *Gloria* – carry too little weight. This shows the extent to which such saint's day masses rely on the liturgy; the motto of the "Mass as a work of art" is only valid to a limited degree. It is nevertheless regrettable that the *Missa Sancti Josephi* has no *Credo*.

In the *Sanctus* (Track 9), Zelenka again offers all the means at his disposal and in the *Pleni sunt coeli* he even takes the solo soprano voice up to d''. In direct contrast to this is the singularly sad soprano aria *Benedictus* in B minor (Track 10). A short Hosanna fugue in D Major (Track 11) closes the *Sanctus*. The invocations of the *Agnus Dei* (Track 12) are made even shorter, ending with the final request *Dona nobis pacem* (Track 13). Here, Zelenka is reverting in a familiar way to the music of the *Kyrie*, to which the new words are set. This connects the end of the *Ordinarium Missae* with its beginning, and in this way gives – at least to the liturgical celebration – a certain musical quality of completion.

In the *Missa Sancti Josephi*, Zelenka reached the zenith of his work in the new style, derived from operatic music. In no other work did he allow the Dresden Hofkapelle with all its groups of instruments to play with such variety and to such a high technical level as here when the opportunity offered itself to him. It goes without saying that even today, this Mass can only be performed by highly qualified musicians. If Zelenka had indeed had hopes of gaining the post of Kapellmeister, they would have been finally destroyed when Johann Adolf Hasse was appointed in 1733. Zelenka apparently withdrew more and more. He wrote 7 other masses including the five last ones, which form a group of their own beginning with the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* (ZWV 17) composed in 1736. Any external brilliance has now fallen away; there are no more horns or trumpet choir with timpani. Only once more (in the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*) do the flutes occasionally have a role as obbligato instruments, but otherwise Zelenka confines himself to minimal orchestration: the orchestra of strings, basso continuo and doubling oboes, the four-part choir, and the vocal soloists. Although the instrumentation of the late masses is on a small scale, the works themselves are extremely comprehensive, multi-faceted, sophisticated, and in the best sense idiosyncratic. The lack of external sumptuousness of sound – whether consciously chosen or determined by the circumstances – is offset by compositional qualities.

Litiae Xaverianae in c minor, ZWV 155

(1727)

1. *Kyrie*
2. *Sancte Francisce*
3. *Firmamentum*
4. *Fidelis Imitator*

5. *Salus aegrotorum*
6. *Fugator daemonum*
7. *Gloria Societatis Jesu*
8. *Pauperrime, castissime Xaveri*
9. *Sancte Francisce*
10. *In quo uno omnium*
11. *Agnus Dei I*
12. *Agnus Dei II*

A masterpiece of musical text presentation

A work that has up to now been almost inaccessible – but which is an uncommonly lovely work from his first creative phase – is the *Litaniae Xaverianae* in C minor (ZWV 155), also called the *Litaniae de Sancto Xaverio* and dated 28 November 1727. The Xaverius Litanies with their long text have apparently not often been set to music in the course of music history; there must have been special circumstances for it. Saint Francis Xavier (Franciscus Xaverius) is the most highly honoured saint in the Jesuit Order. The Spaniard Francisco de Jassu y Javier (1506–1552), together with Ignatius of Loyola, was one of the founding fathers of the Jesuit Order. As early as 1541, however, he travelled on behalf of the King of Portugal and the Pope to Goa (India) and remained in Asia until his death in 1552. He worked as a missionary, particularly in India and Japan, and is considered the patron of all Christian missionaries. In 1619 he was beatified, and in 1622 he was canonised.

The veneration of Francis Xavier at the Court in Dresden is easy to understand. On the one hand, the Jesuits were the most influential clerics at the many Catholic courts of the Baroque period and thus also in Dresden; it is therefore understandable that the Jesuits celebrated this particular saint. On the other hand, Protestant Saxony and the town of Dresden must have seemed (from the Jesuits' point of view) to be a country that urgently needed missionaries, which is why the Dresden base was also termed "missio" in the Jesuit terminology. From the chronicle records, it is possible to see that the 1720s were the heyday of the Dresden Figural Litanies in honour of Francis Xavier. Zelenka himself composed three Xaverius Litanies (ZWV 154, 1723; ZWV 155, recorded here, 1727; and ZWV 156, 1729). Johann David Heinichen, who remained a Lutheran all his life, also wrote two Xaverius Litanies (in 1724 and 1726). Finally, Giovanni Alberto Ristori and a less well known Dresden musician called Tobias Buz (1692/93–1760) composed Xaverius Litanies. The total number of Xaverius Litanies written in the 18th century has still to be researched.

The text of a litany is not easy to set to music. At the beginning of the Xaverius Litany there is a Kyrie, at the end an Agnus Dei (the concluding Christe/Kyrie verses have not been set to music by Zelenka), each with modifications in respect of the appropriate texts in the Ordinary of the Mass. In between, however, there is a long series of invocations first of all to God, to Christ, to the Holy Ghost and the Holy Trinity, then to Mary and Saint Ignatius (the founder of the Societas Jesu), before *Sancte Francisce Xaveri* is called by name four times altogether. Following this, the saint is described by his qualities or even in vivid expressions: "Speculum verae pietatis" (mirror of true piety), "Orientis splendour" (splendour of the East), each time with the call "Ora pro nobis" (pray for us), which rings out in the liturgical recital of the complete text 58 times in all. A composer must intervene here; one cannot compose the constant repetition of the petition. For this reason, Zelenka often groups together individual invocations and composes at the end of such a group the words "ora pro nobis". On the whole, however, he keeps very precisely to the text.

Zelenka's large-scale Xaverius Litany in C Minor was composed for the Xaverius devotions in Dresden in December 1727; as usual, the work was finished just a short time before that. Unlike the Mass orchestration, Zelenka limits himself here to the small standard orchestral ensemble: the four-

part choir with vocal soloists and the orchestra of 2 violins with doubling oboes, a viola, and basso continuo. The richness of the music is in the musical thought, not in an elaborate clothing of sound. The Litany is, like every larger liturgical composition of this time, divided into numbered sections that are designed partly as choral movements, partly as arias, and partly also as mixed forms. All the 12 movements of the piece are evidently organised according to an easily comprehensible arrangement of keys, in which the keys follow one another in intervals of either fifths or thirds. Shortly before the middle, in numbers 5 and 6, D minor reaches the greatest distance from the home key of C Minor. The way back is the inversion of the way there (with a doubled step: 8/9=10/11): (1) C Minor (2) G Minor (3) E flat Major/G Minor (4) B flat Major (5-6) D Minor (7) B flat Major (8) E flat major (9) G Minor (10) E flat Major (11) G Minor (12) C Minor. A notable feature is that at the turning point of the arrangement there is a short choral movement, made highly expressive through chromatics, which has the words, “ora pro nobis” – “Salvation of the sick, pray for us” (No. 5; the liturgical books write synonymously “*Salus aegrotantium*”). This choral movement ending in a half cadence forms the introduction to the highly virtuosic bass aria *Fugator daemonum* (No. 6); one can only guess at whether it was given this emphasis for a particular reason, but one cannot prove anything.

In the Litany in particular, it becomes clear how Zelenka again and again follows the words of the text with new musical inflections and occasionally intervenes in the structure by taking up the petition “Ora pro nobis” or even the salutation “Sancte Francisce Xaveri” The music can hardly ever lean on predictable melodic or periodic stereotypes or even large-scale formations such as the da capo form. The goal of many sections is the petition “ora pro nobis”; this goal lends the music its character, which is directed forwards and is extraordinarily suggestive. And even at the place where Zelenka repeats an already known movement (No. 9: *Sancte Francisce Xaveri, Animarum* cites No. 2: *Sancte Francisce Xaveri, dignissime*), the forward-leading character is maintained since the ninth movement is considerably longer in execution (112 bars) than the second movement (69 bars) and has a richer vocal setting. If one wants to uncover the beauties of this piece, one should first become familiar with the text of the Litany – since Zelenka’s composition is to a large extent “text music”, not primarily in the sense of a musical strengthening of significant dimensions of the text (that is, not in the sense of a “pictorial rhetoric”), but in the sense of the text presentation, the prosody, which is related to music at a deep, quite elementary level.

The Mass and the Litany – two sides of a multi-faceted composer

The two works could be described as being antitheses. The Mass is a work in which the tonal sumptuousness is combined with a new type of subject matter for which Zelenka evidently received inspiration from another direction (from the opera of Hasse) and which possibly did not correspond to his nature in every detail. The Litany can be seen as an exemplary prototype of the compositional style that Zelenka developed after his intensive studies with Johann Joseph Fux, which was characterised by intensive closeness to the text and to the contrapuntal methods of working that were not aimed at ostentatious external pomp but at internal illumination, as it were. If one considers the Mass as belonging to the more recent Italian style, then one can relate the Litany to an older contrapuntal and at the same time melodic style that may also have Italian roots, but that was above all used by Austrian and Bohemian composers around 1700 and later. The works in each of the styles remain distinctive and vital, however, because of the individual who created them, Jan Dismas Zelenka.

Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis

Gaude laetare

Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis in a minor, ZWV 17

(1736)

Kyrie

1. *Kyrie eleison I*
2. *Christe eleison*
3. *Kyrie eleison II*

Gloria

4. *Gloria in excelsis Deo*
5. *Qui tollis peccata mundi*
6. *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus*
7. *Cum sancto Spiritu I*
8. *Cum sancto Spiritu II*

Credo

9. *Credo in unum Deum*
10. *Et incarnatus est*
11. *Et resurrexit*
12. *Et unam sanctam*
13. *Et vitam venturi saeculi*

Sanctus

14. *Sanctus, Pleni sunt coeli, Osanna*
15. *Benedictus*
16. *Osanna*

Agnus Dei

17. *Agnus Dei I*
18. *Agnus Dei II*
19. *Dona nobis pacem*

Among Zelenka's twenty or so musical settings for the Ordinary Liturgy, the five late masses stand out. The series begins with the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*, composed in 1736, and ends with the *Missa Omnium Sanctorum* in 1741. The orchestration in the late masses may be on a small scale but the works themselves are wide-ranging and varied in form: great concertante choral movements are interspersed with impressive choral fugues, extended solo arias and solo ensemble movements.

In the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* (and also in the other four late masses), Zelenka does not subordinate himself either to the requirements of court prestige or to the restrictions arising from the integration of the mass into the liturgy. The instrumental ensemble is – as in almost of Zelenka's late works – reduced to chamber music dimensions with two violins and supporting oboes, viola and basso continuo. Solo obbligato instruments such as transverse flutes (in No. 2, *Christe eleison*, and No. 6, *Quoniam tu solus Sanctus*) as well as a chalumeau (in No. 17, *Agnus Dei I*) supplement this ensemble. This instrument, which was occasionally used in the early 18th century, had a simple reed and cylindrical pipe and is considered a forerunner of the clarinet.

In Zelenka's late masses, there is a complete absence of the typical brass instruments: not only is the blaring trumpet ensemble with kettle drums missing, but also the horns that were otherwise very popular in Dresden (corni da caccia). The character of the music is restrained for long stretches, but at the same time (and in contrast to the rather modest-seeming instrumentation) the scale of conception

of the mass cycle is extraordinary. One should not be deceived by Bach's B minor Mass: it does not in any way represent "late Baroque standard", even in its dimensions. Masses of this scope are rare even in the elaborate late Baroque period. Zelenka's late masses belong to an exclusive species.

The title of the mass should also be mentioned in this context: Missa "Sanctissimae Trinitatis" definitely does not mean that the work can be classified liturgically as being for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, on the first Sunday after Pentecost. For Zelenka's handwritten score shows the date "1st November 1736". The Holy Trinity is rather the "dedicatee" of the mass, just as Zelenka wrote a few years later a Missa "Dei Patris", a Missa "Dei Filii" and – as his last mass – a Missa "Omnium Sanctorum", that is, a mass each for "God the Father", "God the Son" and the "Communion of Saints".

In Zelenka's masses, we find again and again clear musical contrasts. But in hardly any other work are they so clearly expressed as in the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*. The intensity of Zelenka's mass music – and particularly the music of the late masses from the "Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis" onwards – is clearly indicated. The music no longer functions as a pure mirror or as festive clothing for the given text of the mass, as can perhaps be said about the masses of Palestrina, but as the forceful expression of a dimension both human and humane. Zelenka's music for the text of the mass seems to say as clearly as possible that it is not only a question of depiction, glorification or adoration of an "object", but also, and more importantly, of the salvation of the subjects. Zelenka's mass music seems therefore to say: "tua res agitur", "it is a matter that concerns you"!

Gaude laetare, ZWV 168

1. *Gaude, laetare turba fidelis* aria
2. *Hodie alma illa corruscat dies* recitativo
3. *Alleluia* aria

Unlike the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis*, the piece *Gaude, laetare* (ZWV 168), consisting of two tenor arias framed by a recitativo secco, actually was created for the Feast of the Holy Trinity. The handwritten score, the only source for the work, is dated 17th May 1731, which was the Thursday after Pentecost, the following Sunday (20th May 1731) was Trinity Sunday. There is no doubt about the attribution of the piece. The recitative includes the lines (translated): "Today is the day on which the name of the highest light is adored and the Trinity is worshipped in One, One in the Trinity".

Zelenka classifies a work such as *Gaude, laetare*, which we would call a short sacred "cantata", under the title of "Mottetti" in his largely handwritten inventory of music. As with other Catholic composers of this period (for instance, with Hasse), the difference is that a "cantata" has a secular text in the Italian language; a "mottetto", on the other hand, has a newly-written sacred text in the Latin language. Our piece was documented by Zelenka with the added note "de SS: Trinitate". The beginning of the text was erroneously written as "Gaude Plaude", but the key and instrumentation leave no doubt as to which piece was meant.

It is not immediately obvious how such "Mottetti" were connected to the Liturgy. The following notes from the "Diarium" of the Dresden Jesuits (a continuous chronicle of notable religious events at the Court in Dresden) are helpful. This source has nothing to say about Trinity Sunday 1731, but does have a note to the effect that Zelenka led the music four days later on Corpus Christi, which will also have been the case for Trinity Sunday. In the Diarium on the other hand, there is a clear note for the Feast of the Holy Trinity, 8th June 1732: "Vesperae hora 3. musicam produxit D. Zelenka (...) post Vespertas (...) cantulus in choro, et benedictio", "The Vesper took place at 3 o'clock; Mr. Zelenka led the music (...) after the Vesper a short sung piece was performed in the choir of the church, after which the blessing was given". That "in choro" does not mean "with choral singing" but indeed means the

choir of a church can be seen from the entry for 31st May 1732: “Reparaverunt in choro musicorum scamna”, “In the choir, the musicians’ benches have been repaired”. Finally, we read about the Feast of the Holy Trinity 1728 (23rd May): “Musicam produxit D. Zelenka (...) hora quarta concionem dixit R. P. Wolff. Post hanc motetta cantata in choro cum instrumentis et tandem benediction”, “Mr. Zelenka conducted the music (...) at four o’clock, the Most Reverend Father Wolff held the sermon. After this, a “motetta” with instruments was sung in the choir and finally the blessing”.

From these quotations, it seems that the “Motetto” with the text “*Gaude, laetare*” was very probably heard for the first time after the Vesper, perhaps even a sermon, on the afternoon of the Feast of the Holy Trinity in 1731. Afterwards, the blessing was given. The almost opera-like production of the piece could have made the Jesuit chroniclers call a similar piece on Trinity Sunday 1732 rather pejoratively a “*cantulus*” or “little sung piece”.

The arias *Gaude, laetare* and *Alleluja* show Zelenka’s increasingly “galant” style of composing in the years after 1730; the syncopated rhythms in the “*Alleluia*” stand out particularly. Something similar can indeed already be found in the work of Zelenka’s colleague Heinichen, who died in 1729, the influence of Johann Adolf Hasse, who only later came to Dresden, can be ruled out. On the other hand, there is a clear sign of Zelenka’s previous preference for changing rhythms in the striking mixture of duplets and triplets in instruments and voice in the introductory aria. While the music of the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* has a particularly serious nature on the whole, we hear in his *Trinitatis* motetto *Gaude, laetare* another side of Zelenka, cheerful and lighthearted, which, it must be admitted, is not typical of his work as a whole.

Missa Dei Patris

Jan Dismas Zelenka (1679–1745) was a contemporary of Vivaldi, Bach and Handel. But the music of his later masses created round about 1740 sounds different: it does not obey the usual ideas of “baroque music”. Unlike Bach’s late works, Zelenka’s late masses provide music in the taste of their time, to put it more exactly: the essential taste, marked by Italian opera, of the electoral Saxonian and royal Polish court in Dresden where Zelenka worked. The dates of the lives of Bach and Zelenka only feign contemporariness: in reality, Zelenka’s late masses already embody the ideal of style as seen by a later generation, which in the absence of precise terms could at the most be vaguely labelled the “gallant-sentimental” style.

Jan Dismas Zelenka was born in the Bohemian village of Launowitz (today called Lounovice) in 1679. Hardly anything is known about his youth; he could be traced to Prague at the beginning of the 18th century, where he attended a Jesuit grammar school. Round about 1710, he was engaged as a double-bass player at the Dresden court. He died 35 years later, on December 23, 1745, as the “Church Composer” of this court. Zelenka had little visible success in his life. Most events which we know of show him to be a person unable to assert himself in the hurly-burly of the glorious late baroque court life in the Dresden of Augustus the Strong and his son and successor.

Since 1697, the Electorate of Saxony had experienced opposing faiths practised by the House of Wettin and the Lutheran population. The Elector Augustus the Strong had at that time taken up the Catholic faith to enable him to become ruler of the electoral Kingdom of Poland. However, it was not until the years after 1720 that the Dresden court church music experienced a fast and significant upswing. It was during this period that the music director Johann David Heinichen (1683–1729), who incidentally remained a protestant all his life, and Jan Dismas Zelenka as assistant to and representative of Heinichen, whose health was suffering, focussed their attention mainly on composing and performing music for the Catholic court church service. One of the reasons why the double-bass

player Zelenka was qualified for this task was that from 1717 to 1719, he had studied composition in Vienna under Johann Joseph Fux (1660–1741), the imperial director of music.

After Heinichen's death in 1729, Zelenka for some years shouldered the main responsibility for the extensive service for the church, which in addition to composing encompassed above all obtaining, working over and rehearsing compositions by others. His hopes of being appointed Heinichen's successor as director of music were, however, dashed; the court had chosen Johann Adolf Hasse (1699–1785) for this office. This personnel decision brought with it a musical change of direction. Hasse, the shining light on the Italian *opera seria* horizon, was to make Dresden the centre of the court opera culture in the northern part of the European continent. The late appointment as the “church composer” in 1735, which did not even carry with it an increase in salary, was the moderate highlight of Zelenka's court career. It was not only the lack of due recognition, it was also his steadily worsening health which darkened the last decade of Zelenka's life.

Missa Dei Patris in C major, ZWV 19

(1740)

Kyrie

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. <i>Kyrie eleison I</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 2. <i>Christe eleison</i> | <i>Soprano, Alto, Bass</i> |
| 3. <i>Kyrie eleison II</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |

Gloria

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 4. <i>Gloria in excelsis Deo</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 5. <i>Domine Deus</i> | <i>Soprano, Alto, Chorus</i> |
| 6. <i>Domine Fili</i> | <i>Alto</i> |
| 7. <i>Qui sedes</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 8. <i>Quoniam tu solus Sanctus</i> | <i>Soprano, Tenor, Bass</i> |
| 9. <i>Cum Sancto Spiritu</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |

Credo

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 10. <i>Credo in unum Deum</i> | <i>Soprano, Alto, Chorus</i> |
| 11. <i>Et incarnatus est</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 12. <i>Crucifixus</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 13. <i>Et resurrexit</i> | <i>Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass, Chorus</i> |
| 14. <i>Et vitam venturi saeculi</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |

Sanctus

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| 15. <i>Sanctus</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 16. <i>Benedictus</i> | <i>Bass</i> |
| 17. <i>Hosanna</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |

Agnus Dei

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| 18. <i>Agnus Dei I</i> | <i>Alto</i> |
| 19. <i>Agnus Dei II</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |
| 20. <i>Dona nobis pacem</i> | <i>Chorus</i> |

Despite the failure of his plans to become director of music, Zelenka does not appear to have lived in enmity with the new director of music, Hasse. The interest he showed for Hasse's new music, which was inspired by the Italian style through and through with its long drawn out lines of melody, whose rhythms are finely-cut yet always divided into comprehensible sections, is reflected all too obviously in the late masses. And through Hasse – or his wife, the celebrated singer Faustina Bordoni – Zelenka appears to have become aware in quite a new way of the possibilities open to the human voice. Any search for the calm lead and the great staying-power, such as threads its way through the *Domine Fili*

aria in the *Gloria* of the *Missa Dei Patris*, in the works created before Zelenka met Hasse, will be in vain. At the age of over fifty, Jan Dismas Zelenka again mastered a new style. The mixture of opera finesse and contrapuntal purity contributes substantially to the individuality and attraction of his late works.

However, nothing was further from Zelenka's mind than merely exciting the senses. On the title page of his own score of the *Missa Dei Patris* (ZWV 19), there is the following dedication: *Missa ultimarum prima dicta: Missa Dei Patris; eidem Magno Deo Creatori rerum omnium, ac Patri optima maximoque, in summa humilitate, in demississima veneratione, in profundissima adoratione, corde contrito et humiliato (quod ille non despicit) consecrata ab infima, subjectissima, indignissima sua creatura Joanne Disma Zelenka* ("The first of the *Missa ultimae*, called: *Mass for God, the Father*; the almighty God, the creator of all things, the greatest and best Father, in the utmost humility, the most humble admiration, in the deepest adoration with remorseful and humble heart which God does not reject, dedicated by his lowest, most humble, most unworthy creature Jan Dismas Zelenka"). This is not hypocrisy – concept scores were private documents and not intended for the public – but was written in all seriousness. However great the attraction of Zelenka's late works is, it must never be forgotten that they were created by a composer who was at the end of his path in life and in suffering.

Amongst Zelenka's roughly twenty musicalizations of the ordinary of the Mass, the five late masses stand out, whose series begins with the *Missa Sanctissimae Trinitatis* (ZWV 17) composed in 1736, Zelenka wanted to crown his life's work with a cycle of six *Missae ultimae* ("last masses"). Of this cycle, however, he was only able to finish three masses: the *Missa Dei Patris*, the *Missa Dei Filii* ("Mass for the Son of God"; ZWV 20, around 1740), and the *Missa Omnium Sanctorum* ("Mass for all Saints"; ZWV 21, 1741).

In the *Missa Dei Patris* (as in the four other late masses, too) which he finished on September 20, 1740, Zelenka bows neither to the requirements of court representation nor to the restrictions which grow from making the mass part of the liturgy. The instrumental ensemble has been reduced – as in almost all of Zelenka's late works – to one of chamber music dimensions consisting of two violins and supporting oboes, viola and basso continuo. The representative brass wind instruments are missing: not only the brassy trumpet section with the timpani, but also the natural horns (*corni da caccia*) otherwise popular in Dresden. The character of the music is restrained for long parts of it, yet at the same time (and as a countermove to what strikes one as being moderate scoring), the size of the mass cycle concept is unusual. One should not be taken in by the immense dimensions of Bach's Mass in B Minor: masses of this extent are rare even in the splendour-loving late baroque era.

All of Zelenka's masses have been conceived as "number masses", which thus includes the *Missa Dei Patris*. The composer first of all split up the text into numerous smaller sections, which he then set to music as independent movements ("numbers"): great concertante choruses alternate with impressive choral fugues, extensive solo arias and solo ensemble movements. The splitting up of the text and the way the individual sections have been put to music was variable within limits. A certain constancy can be seen in Zelenka's works – as can also be said of his contemporaries – nevertheless, none of his twenty masses is exactly like another in the way it has been constructed.

A trick frequently met with, not only in Zelenka's work, to give the impression of formal unity is the reversion to a Kyrie part to the words *Dona nobis pacem* at the end of the *Agnus Dei*. Zelenka proceeds differently in the *Missa Dei Patris*. He already reverts to the *Kyrie eleison II* in the *Osanna in excelsis* at the end of the *Sanctus*. The *Dona nobis pacem* however rings out to the words of the final fugue of the *Gloria*, *Cum Sancto Spirito*. There could not be a more striking ending to the mass.

Zelenka's late compositions are no "naive" creations in whatever idiom just happens to be the current one. Only if one takes them in as "sentimental" music in the search for lost and at the same time innocent beauty – or rephrased theologically: searching for deliverance – only then does that at times melancholic, at times deeply transfigured, at times ecstatic sound (for instance in the movements *Credo in unum Deum*, *Agnus Dei*, or *Gloria in excelsis Deo*), which characterizes its individuality, reveal itself. The late masses of Zelenka's have come far from the sphere of opera music, to which they owe so much.

Bibliographical references:

W. Horn, Th. Kohlhase: Zelenka-Dokumentation, 2 volumes, published in Wiesbaden in 1989
(Breitkopf & Härtel)

W. Reich, Jan Dismas Zelenka, Thematisch-systematisches Verzeichnis der musikalischen Werke
(ZWV) [=Zelenka index], published in Dresden in 1985

Wolfgang Horn