

Klaus Mäkelä conducts Beethoven's Missa solemnis

Wednesday, March 10, 2027 · 20:15 · Concertgebouw

Klaus Mäkelä, conductor · Chen Reiss, soprano · Wiebke Lehmkuhl, alto · Andrew Staples, tenor · William Thomas, bass · Netherlands Radio Choir, choir
approximately 80 minutes

Ludwig van Beethoven

1770–1827

80 minutes

Missa solemnis in D major, Op. 123

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Kyrie is marked 'Mit Andacht', with devotion. Its opening is broad and calm. In the middle section, 'Christe eleison', the music turns to the minor, the four soloists come forward and the texture grows busier.

The Gloria breaks in at full speed and rarely lets up. Beethoven follows the text phrase by phrase, changing tempo and texture as he goes, and ends with a fugue. The Credo opens with a firm two-note figure on the word itself, repeated like a slogan. Listen for the hush at 'Et incarnatus est', where the harmony turns archaic and modal, the tenor's 'Et homo factus est' (and was made man) in a burst of D major, the stabbing accents of the 'Crucifixus' and the sudden unaccompanied shout of 'Et resurrexit'. The movement closes with a long fugue on 'Et vitam venturi saeculi' (and the life of the world to come), whose theme returns at about twice the speed. It is among the hardest passages a chorus is ever asked to sing.

The Sanctus begins quietly, with the soloists and without the chorus. Before the Benedictus the orchestra plays a dark, slow Praeludium, and then a solo violin enters very high and floats downward, like something descending from above. The violin sings with the voices for the rest of the movement.

The Agnus Dei starts in B minor, with men's voices alone pleading for mercy. When the music turns to D major for 'Dona nobis pacem', Beethoven adds a heading of his own: 'Prayer for inner

and outer peace'. Twice the prayer is cut off. First come distant trumpets and drums, the sounds of war, and frightened cries of 'miserere' from the soloists; later a restless passage for orchestra alone. The mass does not end in triumph. The plea for peace comes back, and the close is brief and plain.



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