

FORM PARTICULARITIES IN THE MONUMENTAL WORK MISSA IN SI MINOR, OF THE COMPOSER JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

FELIX C-TIN GOLDBACH¹, CRINUȚA POPESCU², ANA MARIA NICOLAE¹,
VERONICA DEMENESCU³

Manuscript received: 17.07.2011. Accepted paper: 10.02.2011.

Published online: 15.05.2011.

Abstract. *The Monumental vocal-symphonic work “Missa in si minor” of the composer J. S. Bach is included in the series of genius creations of the Baroque period, representing at the same time a composition model of polyphonic structure, having a humanist content, philosophical. From a structural point of view, the musician used the regular parts of the traditional Missa, which he structured in an original way.*

Keywords: *Baroque, Johann Sebastian, Bach, Missa in si minor, religious content, polyphonically content.*

1. INTRODUCTION

J. S. Bach represents for the universal music a real compositional and interpretative school. Preoccupied for the perfecting of the genders and pre-classic musical forms, owed to his talent of counter punctist, polyphonist, the composer lifted the baroque music to the highest peaks of success. Composing in all the consecrated musical genders and preoccupied with the development of the interpretive technique to the harpsichord – the instrument of weather, the musician composed ample and valuable works out of which we mention “The well tempered harpsichord” (the work that contains 48 preludes and flee), “The art of running”, “Inventions”, In the symphonic gender, J. S. Bach composed: 6 Brandemburgic Concerts for an instrumental grup and orchestra: in the ample vocal-symphonic gender: The solemn Oratory “Magnified” for four soloists of choir on five voices and orchestra; the oratories “Passions for Joan”, “Passions for Matthew”, “Christmas Oratory”, “Missa in si minor”, works that all employ musical and vocal forces, lifting anthems of glory in a perfect writing, gorgeous. “Missa in si minor” is the fruit of the composer’s work for 24 years – in the Kothen and Leipzig periods – time in which he activated as an organist, bandmaster.

¹ Valahia University of Targoviste, Faculty of Science and Arts, 130082, Targoviste, Romania.

E-mail: felixgoldbach@yahoo.com, amnicolae@hotmail.com.

² “Spiru Haret” University, Faculty of Arts, Bucharest, 030045, Bucharest, Romania.

E-mail: crinuta_popescu11@yahoo.com.

³ West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Music, 300223, Timisoara, Romania.

E-mail: veronica_demenescu@yahoo.com.

2. CONTENT

Mass in B minor, broad religious creation, the most important of this kind from the creation of composer J.S. Bach, is joined by its value to "Passions", to the oratory "Magnified", "Easter Oratory" and "Christmas Oratory" of the same composer [1]. In the nearly two music hours required for listening of this work, we can listen 24 numbers with different character and different sonorities, bringing together 15 choirs, three duets and 6 areas, performed in a wide variety of bands performing and composition of polyphonic writing, numerous simple and double fugues, canons that make High Mass "an encyclopedia of art counterpoint".

As structure, Mass in B minor consists of four blocks of sound divided into two main sections: first section contains Kyrie and Gloria, the second section also has two parts: *Symbolum Nicenum* (Credo) and *Sanctus* (consisting of *Hosanna*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*). „*Missa in si minor*” contained initially two parts (Kyrie – Credo) to which the composer then added the other regular parts of the *Missa* (Gloria, *Sanctus*, *Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei*).

All Mass have as incipient structure "Kyrie eleison", "Christe eleison" and again "Kyrie eleison", but the bachian genius used for each of them his own musical structures and not only a single part with form A-B-A or A-B-A var. as do other composers. Thus, the first "Kyrie" has nothing to do in terms of melody with the second "Kyrie". The first section of the Mass in B minor can be considered as a form A-B-A only in terms of text (Kyrie-Christe-Kyrie). The text is a repeated line, as happens in both Orthodox and Catholic liturgy. (Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy), and represents a pretext for music in case of this Mass. Words are repeated until the depletion of all musical idea [2].

The second section, "Gloria" begins and ends with "pairs moments". "Domine Deus"; and form symmetrical center of the "Gloria", surrounded by a couple of choruses and then a couple of areas, and in the peak the coral ensembles that begin and end the section of "Gloria".

Symbolum Nicenum (Creed) seems to have his own structure cohesion. Musicologists consider that this is the superlative example of Bach's concerns about symmetry, which is facilitated by adding an independent momentum "Et incarnatus Est" at a later stage of compilation. With this insertion, "Crucifixus" is the center of Trinity, all attention goes to the Crucifixus, for Jesus Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. "Creed" begins and ends with pairs of choruses, each consisting of a motion in palestrinian style (complete with Gregorian Cantus firmus). This match also helps pinpoint the two central choirs. Symmetrical model certainly reflects the position of the main doctrine of the Creed as the main basis of the Christian faith. Using the archaic (references to Gregorian coral) emphasizes both tradition and timeless qualities of the text.

Another proof of the composer's concern for symmetry is found in the "Christmas Oratorio", in which the first coral melody from the first part is the one that closes the sixth part, each part being interpreted in a similar way in a different time. In case of Mass in B minor, the most obvious cyclical feature is the return of music in "Gratias tibi agimus" (from "Gloria") to "Dona nobis Pacem" that closes the entire work [3].

Mass' tone scheme is also significant, "Kyrie" covering the triad of B minor tonality (Si-Re-Fa #) and Gloria based on D major, tonality set from the second part of Kyrie, respectively "Christe eleison". However, tonality that occurs mainly in this work is D major and Mass is entitled "Mass in B minor". The reason of the title may be that the work is opened with this tone. This scheme of the tonality of Mass brings back in attention "Crucifixus" which is thought in E minor tonality, the only occurrence of this tone in the work studied. Thus "Crucifixus" is held on the subdominant of B minor tonality, in the last four measures

unexpectedly modulates the relative (G major), which in turn is subdominant for D major, which starts next section, "Et resurrexit". We can talk about the relationship of a series of IV-I cadence.

The work consists of several existing works of the composer, Mass' few numbers being especially intended for this music. Underpinning this extensive creation are sung, like that occurs very frequently in all vocal-symphonic works, and not only, of the great composer. Many of the numbers of this score are processes of cantatas composed for various occasions. Although some parts of the Mass do not have an original model, however, they remember of lost cantatas whether religious or secular [4].

Bach used in the music of Mass in si minor many fragments of his own creation, as a true compendium of all the styles he used throughout his career [5]. Measure of bachian genius comes from the fact that the musician managed to adapt material to suit the new context. Moreover, abstracting fragments of his vocal works originally interpreted for different occasions and Sundays during the clerical year, he certainly tried to maintain the specific character of Latin rite. Thus, half of numbers of whole Missa are working in some older music, independent, and adapted to the new context: in the second section of Mass, "Gloria in Excelsis" and "Et in terra pax" make part of the beginning choirs of the sung BWV 191. From this sung is also taken the music from "Domine Deus" and respectively "Cum sancto spiritu". Also, "Gratias agimus tibi" is a processing of the second moment of Ratwechsel Cantata BWV 29, and coral "Qui tollis" is a processing of the first half of Cantata BWV 46. The "Credo: of Mass in B minor, "Patrem omnipotentem" is a processing of the coral from the opening of the singing BWV 171 [6].

Among the parts whose models survive, "Crucifixus" is the part that comes from the earliest source, respectively the first section of the choir that opens the cantata "Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen" composed in Weimar on April 22, 1714. It is noticed that Bach added the flute melodies that bind together by vibrant quarter in motion, and the 4 measures of orchestral introduction. The final measures, with the extraordinary modulation to G major are new in the "Crucifixus", perhaps representing Jesus in the tomb, or prefigure his resurrection.

Music for "Et expect" is the most complex version. Bach practically took the part "da capo movement" from Cantata 120, removed the beginning and the end "ritornellos" and he added a second half treble.

This final section of Mass contains, also, musical fragments taken from earlier works. For example, "Sanctus" is a choir of six voices derived from his earlier work; a play now lost, for three sopranos and an alto, written in 1734, "Hosanna" - 8 voice choir is a processing of the choir from catalog BWV 215; "Agnus Dei" is derived of an area of a wedding cantata (1725) that Bach reused as an alto in the area of the Ascension Oratorio (BWV 11). "Dona nobis Pacem" concludes the paper cycle, using the same music from "Gratias agimus tibi" from section two of Mass, proving once again the composer's mastery to process the same musical ideas using them in different contexts [7].

3. CONCLUSIONS

What is remarkable about the overall shape of Mass in B minor is that Bach was able to give rise to a coherent series of movements using a different material. To remember that in the Great Missa, the composer showed a special attention to the polyphonically writing, reason for which the musicologists think of it as a true encyclopedia of the counterpoint art, that is subordinated to an artistic concept, ideological, to high philosophy. The prioritized forms of musical expressions in work are the canon and flee, along with the regular harmonic

ones. We conclude strengthening the idea that the genius work „Missa in si minor”, along with Passions, Oratorios, Cantata Magnificat of the composer J. S. Bach, are included in the series of the most wonderful creations of the genius of philosophical humanist essence [8].

REFERENCES

- [1] Andreescu, H., *Arta dirijorala*, Ed. Universitatea Nationala de Muzica, Bucuresti, 2005.
- [2] Sandu-Dediu, V., *Studii de stilistică și retorică muzicală*, Ed. Universitatea Nationala de Muzica, Bucuresti, 1999.
- [3] Petzoldt, R., *J. S. Bach. Viața în imagini, Traducere din limba germană de Horia Stanca*, Ed. Muzicală, București, 1962.
- [4] Iliuț, V., *O carte a stilurilor muzicale*, Ed. Academiei de Muzică București, 1996.
- [5] Benteiu, P., *Gândirea muzicală*, Ed. Muzicală, București, 1975.
- [6] Brâncuși, C., *Estetica muzicală în viziunea lui Dimitrie Cuclin*, Ed. Universitatea Nationala de Muzica, Bucuresti, 2006.
- [7] Popescu, C., *Mesaje comune și definitorii ale unor geniali creatori din literatura și muzica germană*, Revista de cultură „Forum V”, 1, Râmnicu Vâlcea, 2010.
- [8] Goldbach, F., *Incursiuni în creația camerală pentru clarinet în perioada clasică*, Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2009.