

Music Notes for March 9th

Prelude: L.V. Beethoven: *Prelude* through all the major keys

Introit: W.A. Mozart: *God is Our Refuge* KV 20

Anthem: W.A. Mozart: *Ave verum corpus* KV 618

Offertory: W.A. Mozart: *Adagio in C* KV 356

Postlude: Felix Mendelssohn: *Notturmo* from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

This Sunday's service music contains a brief survey of Mozart's career as a liturgical composer. Unlike many composers of his day, he did not ever hold a position as choir master or organist at a church but rather worked under a number of noble patrons. He did write religious music for their private use, including a dozen and a half Masses of various lengths and complexities, the famous *Requiem* and a number of shorter pieces, three of which will be heard today. The introit is Mozart's earliest surviving vocal composition (written at the age of nine!), and the only piece he is known to have set in English. It is a verse from Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

The anthem, by contrast, is one of Mozart's very last compositions and probably his final completed sacred work. It is often performed with the *Requiem*, though liturgically the text is a communion prayer probably intended for Holy Week. It is a quiet, contemplative, and very well-known work.

Not being a church musician, Mozart did not write grand organ pieces, in fact the only organ works that he wrote at all were for miniature organs placed inside of mechanical clocks. An *Adagio in C*, originally written for an instrument called a glass harmonica, was transcribed for organ by the English-American organist E. Power Biggs. Unlike Mozart, Beethoven was an organist in his home city of Bonn for a short while in his teens, and among his compositions are found two particularly ingenious preludes that take the player through all of the major keys. Perhaps they were intended as exercises, but they are fun pieces to play all the same.

Mendelssohn's incidental music to Shakespeare's play *A Midsummer Night's Dream* gives us one of the most played of all church organ pieces, the *Wedding March*, traditionally used for the recessional. But the same composition also includes a beautifully still and quiet *Notturmo* or "Night Piece" originally with solo horns in the orchestra and a softly murmuring string accompaniment.

Thomas Dawkins, organist/choir director