



audite

Vol. 2

Gregor Joseph

WERNER

Requiem

Harer · Bierwirth · Hunger · Flaig
Voktett Hannover

la festa musicale
Lajos Rovatkay

GREGOR JOSEPH WERNER (1693-1766)

Der verlorene Sohn III/6, Introductio

- I. Grave 3:04
- II. Allegro 2:15

In monte oliveti (Eisenstadt) 4:35

Absalon III/3, Introductio

- I. Largo 1:20
- II. Allegro 2:42

Ecce vidimus eium (Eisenstadt) 3:58

Job III/7, Introductio

- I. Adagio 1:50
- II. Vivace passato 1:47

Requiem c-Moll III/37

- I. Requiem aeternam 2:14
- II. Kyrie 1:20
- III. Dies irae 2:57
- IV. Lachrymosa 2:40
- V. Homo natus 3:57
- VI. Sanctus 1:14
- VII. Osanna 0:55
- VIII. Benedictus 1:38
- IX. Osanna at supra 0:55
- X. Agnus Dei 2:12
- XI. Lux aeterna 0:41
- XII. Cum Sanctis tuis 0:45
- XIII. Requiem aeternam 1:12
- XIV. Cum Sanctis ut sopra 0:50

Sonatina g-Moll III/272

- I. Larghetto 1:50
- II. Vivace 1:22

Miserere mei Deus III/264 8:47

Sopran Magdalene Harer
Alt Anne Bierwirth
Tenor Tobias Hunger
Bassbariton Markus Flaig

Voktett Hannover

Sopran I Esther Tschimpke
Sopran II Felicia Nölke
Alt I Lea Wolpert
Alt II Susanne Veeh
Tenor I Steffen Kruse
Tenor II Justus Barleben
Bass I Sebastian Knappe
Bass II Steffen Schulte

la festa musicale

Altposaune Alexander Brungert
Tenorposaune Cas Gevers
Violine I Anne Marie Harer
 Jörn-Sebastian Kuhlmann
 Alexandra Wiedner
Violine II Daniela Gubatz
 Hannah Visser
 Adam Lord
Viola Maria Pache
 Karoline Stemberg
Violoncello Christoph Harer
Kontrabass Niklas Sprenger
Truhenergell Daniel Trumbull

leader / conductor Lajos Rovatkay

This second volume in the musical survey of the works of the largely unknown composer Gregor Joseph Werner (1693-1766) is dominated by dark shimmering colours. Werner elevates the rich facets of the Good Friday, requiem and penitential psalm texts with fervent individual spirituality and with all the dramatic and expressive means of his art. In this context, this recording also demonstrates the composer's superior contrapuntal mastery. Apart from the differing fugue styles in the introductions to the oratorios, the requiem and the sonatina, impressive throughout is the linear part writing, perfect imitative technique and the informality of the canonic microstructures. Polyphony and counterpoint are no conservative props for Werner – as they also never were with Bach – but instead are vehicles of progressive harmonic expression and thus components of a new musical whole. The renewed dramaturgical function of traditional contrapuntal techniques in Werner's oeuvre is already remarkably similar to the music of Viennese classicism. Doubtless the high esteem in which the artistically astute Haydn – father of Viennese classicism – held his predecessor at the Esterházy court was based on this.

Some of Werner's instrumental Introductions (2 violins, viola, basso continuo) to his eighteen German-language Holy Week Oratorios document their creator's epoch-spanning significance, thanks simply to having survived. The oratorio librettos are paraphrases of Old Testament stories associated with famous penitential characters. The introductions share the two-movement structure of the late baroque Viennese church sonata, consisting of a slow introduction and a fast fugue, and feature, in keeping with the textual content, an emphatic and solemn tone. Amidst the general unawareness of the composer, it was six "Werner fugues" for string quartet which managed to buck the trend thanks to a printed edition overseen by Haydn towards the end of his life. This was later followed by several reissues, designed as performance editions. The title page of Haydn's publication (1804) reads: "VI fugues in quartets of two violins, viola and violoncello by G. J. Werner, formerly *Kapellmeister* to Prince N. Esterhazy. Out of special respect for this famous master, now published by his successor, J. Haydn [...]". For a long time, nothing was known about the origin of these fugues, and there was repeated speculation as to whether the slow introductions to the fugues – which are not mentioned in the title of the publication – might have been written by Haydn himself. It was not until 1963 that it was clarified (by László Somfai in the 1963 *Haydn Jahrbuch*) that the "VI fugues" are introductions to six of Werner's oratorios, including the slow fugue introductions. Haydn's high esteem for these works and the fact that the fugue introductions could be assumed to be Haydn's works is an impressive confirmation of Werner's pre-eminence. Our three introductions, *Der verlorene Sohn* [The prodigal son] (1747), *Absalon* (1743) and *Job* (1748), correspond to half of Haydn's selection, but are played in Werner's original format with basso continuo. Their expressivity and quality of contrapuntal conception are not surpassed by anything later. The aged Haydn, who by that stage was no longer able to compose, was entirely aware of the significance of his final musical publication – a form of legacy.

Werner's many A Cappella Motets (mostly with organ, according to the practice of the time) are jewels of *stile antico* polyphony. Werner was one of the last composers to master the traditional *stile antico* "alla Palestrina", which he intensified both melodically and harmonically, as inspired by his Viennese teacher, Antonio Caldara. Once again, however, Werner manages to outdo his role model, especially in stylistic consistency and musical coherence. On the one hand, he adheres more closely to the ecclesiastical tonal order and diction of the sixteenth century; on the other hand, he permits himself even bolder, more "modern" chromatic-dissonant excursions (licences), whose "madrigalistic" clarification of the textual content itself followed an ancient tradition. Both Passiontide motets recorded here – responsories of the nocturnal Liturgy of the Hours for Maundy Thursday – are significant examples of this stylistic variety. In the motet *In monte oliveti*, the inner turmoil and simultaneous composure of the tormented Christ on the Mount of Olives is reflected in the taut complexity of the musical spectrum. The motet *Ecce vidimus* is on the same level in terms of expressivity, profoundness and artistry.

Werner's three requiem settings in D minor, G minor and C minor demonstrate their creator's independent spirituality in manifold ways. On the one hand, all three works expand on the liturgical text by referencing the nocturnal Office for the Dead; on the other hand, several obligatory parts are not set to music, which, however, was not uncommon elsewhere. In addition, the G minor setting is a coded, autobiographical confession by the composer, who also designed his own epitaph. Moreover, all three works bear an ancient patina harking back to the seventeenth century, clearly transcending their basic contrapuntal layout. It seems that the words, pointing towards eternity, may well have inspired the stylistic, epoch-spanning musical conception of these settings. In the late Requiem in C minor (1763) the emotionally charged Introit already bears an ominous sense of darkness, which remains characteristic of the entire work, even in the dramatic interplay of the choral and solo passages, assisted by the two trombones. In the subsequent Kyrie fugue, the painful diminished third appears in the fugue theme – an intervallic inversion of the taut augmented sixth so typical of Werner – for the third time in our recording. The passionate pull of the movement is partly created by the inclusion of the “Christe eleison” in the fugue theme, a textual-musical stretto no less suggestive than in the double fugue of the Kyrie in Mozart's *Requiem*. The violence of the “Dies irae” with the Sibylline “Tuba mirum” and the lament of the “Lacrimosa”, the profound “Homo natus” (borrowed from evening prayer), the mystical “Sanctus” with the amiable “Benedictus” in the “galant” style, and the shattering of the “Agnus Dei” create a perfectly shaped dramaturgical arc. The celestial light of the “Lux aeterna” and the round dance of the saints in the final fugue “Cum sanctis tuis” open the concluding view towards eternal life. The sweeping, compact choral fugues heighten the intensity and sacred dignity of the work.

The Sonatina in G minor (1759) – one of Werner's fifteen surviving significant works – is written in the style of the Viennese church sonata and exploits both of the traditional musical means of expression of the lament. In the introduction, a series of six chromatic notes (*passus duriusculus*) is heard continuously; in the fugue, the no less memorable two-note “sighing” formula dominates. A true jewel of sonic organicism and concentration.

Werner's very late *a cappella* setting of the penitential psalm Miserere mei Deus (1764) already refers back to the great past in its subtitle: “Miserere mei Deus, da cantare al Sabbato Sancto per il Matutino a 4 voci in Contrapuncto Semplice alla imitatione Romana del Signore Gregorio Laeti Italiano del Gregorio Werner del Anno 1764” (“Miserere mei Deus, to be sung at Matins on Holy Saturday for 4 voices in simple counterpoint in imitation of the Roman manner of the Italian Mr Gregorio Laeti, by Gregorio Werner in 1764”) – “Laeti” is Werner's Latinisation of the surname of Gregorio Allegri (1582-1652), whose famous “Miserere” setting was sung in the Sistine Chapel every Holy Week until 1870. The main motivation for the new setting is probably Werner's self-identification (“Gregorio Joyful”) with the creator of the magical model, which Mozart, Goethe and Mendelssohn, among others, had also admired during their visits to the Vatican. Werner translates Allegri's very modest *contrapunctus simplex* style into a musical language that retains simplicity, but is infinitely more personal. Werner populates his carefully chosen archaic sound sequences with suspensions and all manner of “modern” devices with astonishing seamlessness. In no other work does the composer's sophistication, culture and spirituality reveal itself so brightly and directly. The even-numbered verses of the psalm are recited in the simplest lectionary tone, following traditional antiphonal practice. Werner's low B flat creates additional interest and suspense.



MAGDALENE HARER soprano

As an internationally sought-after concert singer, for many years Magdalene Harer has been regularly engaged to perform the central roles in the great oratorios. Her extensive repertoire ranges from the music of the Middle Ages to contemporary works of the twenty-first century. In concerts in Europe, Israel and the USA she performs as a soloist with orchestras such as Concerto Köln, Lautten Compagny, Academy for Early Music Berlin, la festa musicale, North West German Philharmonic, Göttinger Symphonieorchester, Neue Philharmonie Westfalen, Neue Düsseldorfer Hofmusik and Munich Chamber Orchestra.

Another focus of her work is ensemble singing. Magdalene Harer is a permanent member of the six-part ensemble Polyharmonique, with whom she performs on the stages of the major concert halls and at renowned festivals. Polyharmonique's extensive discography, which includes many award-winning releases, testifies to the ensemble's high artistic reputation.

Magdalene Harer has also worked closely for many years with the conductor and early music specialist Konrad Junghänel and his solo vocal ensemble Cantus Cölln. Magdalene Harer is a music graduate of the Musikhochschulen in Detmold and Hanover.



ANNE BIERWIRTH alto

Anne Bierwirth, alto, studied singing and historical performance practice at the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst in Frankfurt am Main with Prof. Heidrun Kordes.

As an internationally sought-after concert and oratorio singer, she regularly performs in major cities in Germany and Europe. Concert tours have also taken her to Brazil, China, Russia and South Africa.

As a soloist she has worked with conductors such as Ivor Bolton, Thomas Hengelbrock, Pablo Heras-Casado, Hermann Max, Wolfgang Schäfer, Michael Schneider and Florian Heyerick. She is also a regular guest at renowned festivals such as the Bachfest Leipzig, the Telemann-Festtage Magdeburg, the Rheingau Musik Festival, the Zermatt Festival and the Whitsun Festival Baden-Baden.

Sacred music remains a focal point in Anne Bierwirth's artistic work, which is reflected in numerous CD recordings and radio broadcasts. In addition, she devotes herself to a varied repertoire ranging from the Renaissance to the classical, romantic and contemporary eras.

**TOBIAS HUNGER** tenor

Tobias Hunger, tenor, appeared as a soloist with the Dresdner Kreuzchor whilst still a student. At the same time, he gained important insights from masterclasses with Peter Schreier, Scot Weir, Gerd Türk, Eva Randová as well as the King's Singers.

Today he is especially committed to the interpretation of the works by Johann Kuhnau and Johann Sebastian Bach. In addition to music from the Renaissance and baroque periods, he is also fascinated by the music of the 1920s and 1930s, and he regularly appears on the opera stage in a variety of tenor roles.

Tobias Hunger is also a sought-after lied, concert and oratorio singer, and has been invited to perform in major European concert halls such as the Berlin and Cologne Philharmonie, the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the Zurich Tonhalle and the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, working with conductors including Philippe Herreweghe, Václav Luks, Hans-Christoph Rademann, Ton Koopmann and Wolfgang Katschner.

Tobias Hunger graduated under the tutelage of Prof. Christian Polster at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" in Leipzig.



MARKUS FLAIG bass-baritone

Since his success at the Leipzig Bach Competition, Markus Flaig has been one of the most sought-after singers of his generation. Concert tours have taken the bass-baritone all over Europe, to Colombia, Mexico and Korea as well as to Japan for a tour under Masaaki Suzuki, and most recently to Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina for performances of JS Bach's B minor Mass with the Thomanerchor Leipzig. Numerous recordings for radio, television as well as on disc under conductors such as Thomas Hengelbrock, Hermann Max and Konrad Junghänel document his wide-ranging repertoire.

Markus Flaig came to music via the organ, and to singing via his music teaching and church music degree courses. Whilst still at university, he received his first guest contract at the Städtische Bühnen Freiburg for the role of Azarias in Benjamin Britten's church parable *The Burning Fiery Furnace*. Since then he has appeared in operas by Monteverdi, Purcell, Rameau, Strauss and Britten on the stages of Baden-Baden, Schwetzingen, Bayreuth, Hanover, Freiburg and Frankfurt, as well as in rediscoveries of long-forgotten operas such as Joseph Schuster's *Il marito indolente* and Christian Ludwig Boxberg's *Sardanapalus*. During the last five years, Flaig has completed a Latin degree course at the University of Frankfurt and has since been researching musical recitation of poetry in antiquity. He presents his research results on his YouTube channel "Muis amicus".



LAJOS ROVATKAY leader / conductor

The harpsichordist, organist, chamber musician, ensemble director, music researcher and educator Lajos Rovatkay studied at the conservatories of his native Budapest as well as in Frankfurt am Main, and played a prominent role in establishing historically informed performance practice in Germany. His detailed knowledge of the vocal and instrumental music of several centuries is fundamental both to his artistic work – concerts in Germany and abroad, as well as several CD recordings – and to his research activities.

The focal points of his work are the Venetian early baroque period, late baroque church music in Venice and Vienna, the Caldara pupil and Haydn predecessor Gregor Joseph Werner, as well as Agostino Steffani, whose first Hanoverian opera *Henrico Leone* Rovatkay presented as a modern premiere in 1989 at the 300th anniversary of the Hanover Opera House with Capella Agostino Steffani (founded by Rovatkay), and performed in concert at the Boston Early Music Festival.

In 2014 Rovatkay founded the Forum Agostino Steffani for the public communication of the high baroque musical culture of the Welf court in Hanover. He is currently focused on recording the music of Gregor Joseph Werner.

As a professor of harpsichord and organ, Rovatkay taught at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hannover, where he directed the “Studio for Early Music”, whose former participants have become indispensable pillars in renowned baroque ensembles in Germany and abroad.

VOKTETT HANNOVER

To perform outstanding works at a high level – that is the vision which the Voktett Hannover passionately pursues.

Since the ensemble's foundation in 2012, its eight singers have devoted themselves primarily to *a cappella* works representing the polyphonic vocal music of European music history in as many facets as possible. Their repertoire ranges from the beginnings of polyphonic vocal music to the present.

Voktett Hannover has won prizes at several renowned competitions, including the Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy Conservatory Competition and the vocal ensemble category of the German Choir Competition.

With its versatile programmes, the ensemble has thrilled audiences at renowned festivals such as the Bachfest Leipzig, Rheingau Musik Festival, NDR Musikfest and the Hitzacker Summer Music Festival.

Since 2017, the Voktett Hannover has also been performing regularly with instrumental accompaniment.

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LA FESTA MUSCALE

The North German baroque ensemble *la festa musicale*, founded in 2014, stands for excellent artistic standards, which are reflected in creative, cross-disciplinary concert formats and top-class cooperation projects. Concertmaster Anne Marie Harer is the artistic director.

The ensemble has appeared at major festivals including the Schleswig-Holstein Musik Festival, the Handel Festival Halle, the Tage für Alte Musik Knechtsteden and the Niedersächsische Musiktage.

la festa musicale regularly performs with internationally renowned soloists such as Anna Dennis, Peter Kooij, Joanne Lunn, Klaus Mertens, Alex Potter, Andreas Scholl and Zachary Wilder. Joint projects have connected *la festa musicale* to conductors such as Jörg Breiding, Lajos Rovatkay, Hermann Max and Jörg Straube.

Concerts performed by the ensemble have been recorded by Deutschlandfunk and Norddeutscher Rundfunk. *la festa musicale* has already released several CD recordings, including a much-praised album of concertos by Francesco Venturini (audite 97.775), motets by JS Bach (together with the Kammerchor Hannover) and church music by Bonifazio Graziani (alongside Collegium Vocale Hannover), Diogenio Bigaglia and Antonio Lotti (together with Knabenchor Hannover).

The musicians enjoy sharing their enthusiasm for early music with diverse and inquisitive audiences. They are particularly interested in creating their own programmes and performance formats. Creatively curated programmes, music education projects as well as family and children's concerts bring musicians and listeners together in an intensive way.

la festa musicale is an official partner of the UNESCO City of Music Hannover and cooperation partner of the Forum Agostino Steffani.



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Dipl.-Tonmeister Ludger Böckenhoff

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Dipl.-Tonmeister Justus Beyer

recording format:

pcm, 96kHz, 24 bit

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detail of tendril from the treasury chamber's vaulted ceiling at Forchtenstein Castle, c.1696; picture credit: Esterházy private foundation, photo credit: Manfred Horvath

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p. 14: Esterházy Palace, Eisenstadt; engraving by Carl Franz Rohrich after a drawing by Ludwig Rohbock, mid-19th century

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p. 11: Nadja Mahjoub (Voktett Hannover)

p. 13: Jérôme Gerull (la festa musicale)

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