



PRESS RELEASE

Seattle Pro Musica

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Run through May 14, 2005

SEATTLE PRO MUSICA

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presents

Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor*

and the world premiere of *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* by John Muehleisen

The *Great Mass in C minor*, written to commemorate his marriage to Constanze Weber, ranks with the *Requiem* as one of Mozart's highest achievements. This concert also features the world premiere of an NEA-commissioned choral work, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, by John Muehleisen, composed in celebration of the centennial of St. James Cathedral. Also included are works by the English Tudor composers Byrd, Sheppard and Philips, and Medieval music from the *Codex Calixtinus*, referencing the life of St. James the Apostle. Featured soloists for the *Great Mass in C minor* are Lisa Cardwell Pontén and Linda Strandberg, sopranos, Samuel J. Ludwig Rodarte, tenor, and Rick Scheyer, baritone.

Seattle Pro Musica, winner of the national 2003 Margaret Hillis Achievement Award for Choral Excellence, is widely considered to be one of the finest ensembles in the Pacific Northwest – American Record Guide ranks it “among America's very best choirs.” Choir and Organ magazine (Great Britain) writes: “Seattle Pro Musica presents a cappella singing at its best...” A resident ensemble of St. James Cathedral, Seattle Pro Musica was recently featured on the April 10, 2005 international broadcast of the radio program Saint Paul Sunday.

Friday, May 13, 2005 • 8:15 pm

Saturday, May 14, 2005 • 8:00 pm

St. James Cathedral • 9th & Marion, Seattle

General: \$18 advanced purchase reserved passes - \$21 at the door
Seniors: \$13 advanced purchase reserved passes - pay as able at the door
Student: \$10 advanced purchase reserved passes - pay as able at the door

Call (206) 781-2766 for reserved passes or order online at www.seattlepromusica.org

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The Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Nesholm Family Foundation,
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Additional information

Veni, Sancte Spiritus, composed by John Muehleisen, was commissioned by Seattle Pro Musica with support from the National Endowment for the Arts. Seattle Pro Musica is proud to present the world premiere of this stunning new work for a cappella choir. In writing *Veni, Sancte Spiritus*, composer John Muehleisen wanted to choose a text and thematic elements which would both celebrate the centennial of St. James Cathedral and pay homage to Mozart. Since the new work is being premiered on the same concert as Mozart's *Great Mass in C minor*, Muehleisen used as one of his motives a theme from Mozart's own setting of the *Veni, Sancte Spiritus* text. Muehleisen's luminous harmonies and ecstatic setting of the text focus on images of light – a fitting tribute to both Mozart and the centennial of St. James Cathedral.

As with his other monumental work, the *Requiem*, Mozart left the *Mass in C minor* incomplete. It is certainly his most ambitious and complex sacred work – almost one hour in length and immense in conception. The choral writing ranges from four-part and five-part choruses to the eight-part *Osanna*, and includes an impressive fugue for chorus and orchestra, *Cum Sancto Spiritu*. The contrapuntal writing in the *Mass in C minor* clearly shows the influence of Mozart's knowledge of the music of Bach and Handel, while the writing for solo voices owes much to Mozart's fluency in Italian operatic style (especially evident in the soprano aria *Laudamus te*.) The orchestration also goes beyond the forces Mozart had previously used in his liturgical music, calling for pairs of oboes, bassoons, horns and trumpets, as well as flute, timpani, three trombones and strings.

The *Mass in C minor* was not a commissioned work, and no one knows for certain why Mozart began to compose it. Historians speculate that the composition may have been prompted by Mozart's guilt over a falling out with his father, his marriage (against his father's wishes) to Constanze, or as a mass of thanksgiving for Constanze's recovery from illness. Perhaps Mozart planned to compose a grand full-scale mass both as a wedding present to Constanze and in an effort to appease his father. Whatever the impetus for the composition of the *Mass in C minor*, it is regarded today as one of the three greatest settings of the Mass Ordinary (the other two being Bach's *Mass in B Minor* and Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*).