

BACH'S MASS IN Goldberg

Preface

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How it came about

I ran for my life on September 11, 2001 when the World Trade Center was struck by two hijacked jetliners. I'm an engineer with the Port Authority, and was at my desk on the 74th floor of the North Tower when the first plane hit. There was a loud explosion, the building lurched, and burning debris showered down outside the windows. Strangely enough, this disaster, with its overtones of Islamic militancy, led directly to my realization that Bach's Goldberg Variations were inspired by texts from the old Latin Mass, which for centuries had been the centerpiece of Christian worship.

God watches over fools and children. The evacuation order was shouted out, and almost everyone headed for the stairs, but I and one of my colleagues stayed behind to give the stairwells time to empty, and to phone our wives and let them know we were safe.

Rosemary teaches, but the phone system at her school wasn't working when I called, and rather than leave a message with the automated service, I decided to wait a while and try later. When I called again, it still wouldn't go through, but this time I left a message that I was safe and would stay in the building until the smoke cleared. Then I called my son-in-law to let him know I was on top of things. Brian's a volunteer fireman, and I thought he might like a report from the scene. He was watching CNN, and said that the building had been hit by a 767 and looked like it was starting to tip. He told me to get out of there in a hurry, which I passed along to my colleague.

We actually started down about 10 minutes later, well after the second tower had been hit, and were still in the stairwell when the other building collapsed. For the first time I felt a real sense of danger, but after the noise and the shaking stopped, things seemed fine, and I had no idea that the other building had fallen. We finally made it out, a few minutes before ours came down. My cell phone didn't work, and I walked halfway uptown before finding a phone. I wanted to call home to leave a message that I had left the building and was ok, but instead of getting the answering machine, my daughter picked up. I was just as surprised to hear Karen's voice as she was to hear mine. She and Brian had gone to the house to comfort her mother, who had finally gotten my message at school, complete with the fire alarm sounds in the background.

I had the next few weeks to reflect on my close escape, while the Port Authority looked for new offices. I was so sore from climbing down the stairs, then running from the collapsing building, and finally making the long trek uptown, that I couldn't even walk without shuffling straight-legged across the floor. I also got one of the worst colds of my life, from breathing the dust. All I could do was sit in a chair and sniffle, so having earlier found a few of the more obvious Goldberg settings, I decided to take a serious look at the rest.

My Background

I'm an amateur musician, and was the organist and choir director at St. Ann's Church (RC) in Lenox, Massachusetts, a small town in the Berkshires, from late 1960's until the mid 1970's when my daughter was born and I no longer had time for two careers.

I'm also a Roman Catholic, and was an altar boy when the Church still was still using the traditional Mass. We had to memorize several simple responses in Latin, and I've never since felt it to be a foreign language. I had the good fortune to go to a Jesuit high school, where I had a few years Latin, taught by exceptionally talented men who could speak it conversationally. One of my teachers, a Boston Irishman named Jack Rahilly, also turned out to be a superb pianist, and he introduced me to the music of Bach. I didn't believe him when he predicted that while I would soon tire of Chopin, Bach would be forever, but of course, that's what happened.

Latin Today

There are two kinds of Latin, real Latin and the other kind. I had wondered for years how there could be two strikingly different pronunciations for one language, until I ran across the answer in one of Winston Churchill's books. His explanation sounds a lot better than one I had seen in a Latin grammar, which claimed that theoretical considerations had allowed the experts to deduce how a Roman voice had sounded two thousand years ago, while ignoring how it had sounded when it was spoken throughout Europe. This auditory archaeology seems to me the equivalent of reconstructing, theoretically, the look of a human skeleton while ignoring our stockpile of bones. The result is today's "Piltdown Latin".

Churchill gets right to the point. The following wonderful quote is from his autobiography My Early Life (sometimes titled A Roving Commission or Young Winston), which not only gives his opinion of the "other" pronunciation, but also implies a time frame for its introduction. The quote is found early on, when his teachers were trying to convince him of the utility of Latin, evidently no easy task. Here it is.

"I was fain to admit a practical value. But now even this has been swept away. The foreigners and the Scotch have joined together to introduce a pronunciation of Latin which divorces it finally from the English tongue. They tell us to pronounce 'audience' 'owdience'; and 'civil' 'keyweel'. They have distorted one of my most serviceable and impressive quotations into the ridiculous booby 'Wainy, Weedy, Weeky'. Punishment should be reserved for those who have spread this evil."

My personal opinion is that the Latin of Bach probably sounded like the Latin I learned, and which for the most part is the Latin used in good recordings. The problem with secular Latin is that it's not taught by people who speak or hear it on a daily basis except in their classrooms, and I suspect that the modern pronunciation was introduced as a reaction to the influence of the clergy. In any event, the reader who wants to explore the language, as it applies to music, should buy a good "Church Latin" dictionary, such as Stelten's Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin. Besides having a full liturgical vocabulary, it also features all the letters. My own middle initial is "J", and I was especially distressed to find that it's recently been banished. Even Stelten spells

a few words with "i" instead of "j" (majestatis). The modern trend, besides making Latin unreadable as well as unspeakable, could also eventually make it unsingable.

A grammar is indispensable for review and for first time readers. I found Wilson's Latin, Essentials of Grammar to be concise and portable, especially as a refresher. For self-teaching, Wheelock's Latin is superior, although the pronunciation guidelines are inappropriate and it won't fit in your pocket.

When singing Latin, try to avoid sounding silly. The Golden Rule is "Would I be embarrassed to be heard talking like this?" Occasionally "c" sounds like the "ch" in "church" (eg: coeli), "g" is sometimes soft, as in "regem angelorum", "v" sounds like, well, "v", as in video, and occasionally I yield to temptation and pronounce "j" like a soft "g" (majestatis), although my conscience bothers me. We would like to approximate the sounds that Bach knew, and he neither lived in Scotland nor in the time of the Caesars. Of course, spoken pronunciation is sometimes fine-tuned when singing (eg: excelsis to egg-shell-sis).

The Tridentine Latin Mass

This was the Mass I grew up with, and which few today have ever heard. It dated back to the Council of Trent in the 1500's, and contained a multiplicity of texts, some of which were used as a fundamental core, while others augmented or modified this core as liturgical season or circumstance directed. Today's musician knows settings for the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei, but these are just its basic parts.

The Tridentine Mass was retired in the mid 1900's, after almost 400 years. Requiescat in pace, as they used to say.

The Goldberg Mass

The Goldberg Variations continue to puzzle scholars after all this time. It amazes me that so many eminently qualified musicians, for example Landowska and Schweitzer, have written about the vocal quality of the variations without asking themselves the obvious question "well, if there are words, what might they be?"

Although I knew that a few of the variations were suitable settings for parts of the Mass, I didn't grasp the scope of Bach's plan. I just assumed that he took his inspiration where he found it, and that several of the pieces were probably little improvisations which he drew upon to bulk up his collection. Needless to say, this was foolish and an insult to his greatness, and I humbly apologize.

One of the advantages of being an old Roman Catholic is that I have an old Roman Missal, and with it I was able to look for parts of the Mass which agreed in sequence with the Variations already identified. This worked well until the Mass ran out of parts before the Variations ran out of music, but with guesswork and a little serendipity, I found the rest.

I recently bought Peter Williams's very interesting book Bach - The Goldberg Variations, and I was curious to see if any one else had solved the puzzle. I was pleased to see no mention of the Mass, but there's a great portrait of Bach on the cover, by Haussmann, from the Scheide

Collection at Princeton, which shows Bach looking out at the reader. I was drawn to his eyes. They're shifty, as if he's keeping something to himself, something which he knows would be of great interest to me and to you.

Professor Williams mentions that the Goldbergs form the largest single work to be published for a keyboard instrument during the eighteenth century. My suspicion is that they were also intended to be the most comprehensive Mass ever written, in terms of the number of settings contained. By comparison, the B Minor Mass is a mere *Missa Brevis*, with only the five basic parts.

The Translations

I have gone through all the Latin texts, word for word, and have tried to use traditional, well established English renderings where possible, except that I have deliberately sacrificed style and poetry where they do not coexist with a literal translation from the Latin. In the process, I've been reminded how vivid and graphic Latin can be. I've also found so many of my errors, that I'm sure some remain.

The Variations

The Goldberg Mass occurs in its natural order, with a few additions. The "Sub Tuum Praesidium", the "Nunc Dimmitis", and the "Te Deum" were not used every day, but were sung on special occasions, and I've taken Bach's word for it that they belong where he put them. I don't remember hearing them in church, although I might have been too young.

The Aria

The "Kyrie Eleison" (Lord, have mercy) is Greek, and is the only part of the Mass not in Latin. The phrases were spoken alternately by the priest and the server, three Kyrie Eleisons, three Christe Eleisons, and three more Kyrie Eleisons. Today, it is done with three groups of two, and in the vernacular.

Knowing the words gives sense to the music. Instrumentally, the appoggiaturas seem strange and intruding on the melody, but when sung, they sound completely natural and appropriate. Incidentally, throughout the variations, many of the ornaments seem to fall on God's name.

Variation 1

It didn't occur to me until I had worked out several variations that Bach had a grand scheme in mind, and I initially thought this one might make a nice Gloria Patri, with the instrumental accompaniment acting as an obbligato to an unwritten choral part. An Enigma Variation, so to speak, with the listener supplying an unwritten vocal line. When, after several false starts, I finally realized that the next variation was a perfect setting for "Et in terra pax", the problem was solved. "Gloria", stretched out a little, and "in excelsis Deo" (Glory to God in the highest). The key signature is "G", but there are a lot of C-sharps in there, and my ear leans towards D, with trumpets and timpani.

Variation 2

When I was a boy, my grandfather explained to me that one of the major differences between Catholicism and Protestantism was in the translation of "Et in terra pax" (And on earth, peace).

The Catholics, he said, believed in "peace on earth to men of good will", while the Protestants took the more lenient view of "peace on earth, good will towards men". He told me that the Catholic version was the true one, because the Latin said "bonae voluntatis". Much later, I found that both versions go back several hundred years.

The Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible makes no bones about it. If you want peace, you have to show some good will. The King James Bible, on the other hand, seems to offer peace to all men, whether or not they deserve it. My grandfather was Irish, his father having fled to America to keep from being hanged for killing an English soldier, and this might have influenced his reasoning. Bach follows the Catholic, probably for him the Lutheran, version.

The trouble with trying to fit words to music is that there are lots of possible combinations. The notes of Variation Two go quite well with "All we like sheep", the base line conjuring up little sheep-feet wandering across the fields. I'd already noticed that Variation 4 makes a pretty good "Glory of the Lord", and I was starting to wonder who might have borrowed from whom. Fortunately, "et in terra pax" worked perfectly, so I let the matter drop. The sound of sheep might not be an accident, when you recall that the first men to hear these words were shepherds, keeping watch over their flock by night.

Variation 3

Unlike the first two variations, this one doesn't jump out of the page, but the words which follow the "et in terra pax" are "Laudamus te" (We praise you), and they fit the notes, both in length and in sentiment.

Variation 4

Knowing the words to One, Two, and Three makes the "Domine Deus" (Lord God) easy. This one is often rushed, which is fine for playing before the public, but in private, or in discerning company, slow down, sing along, and enjoy the music. The music fits both the standard text, and also a slightly different one which Bach used in the B Minor Mass, which adds "altissime" after "Jesu Christe".

Variation 5

It took me a while to realize that in many variations Bach used both the bass and the treble for his melody, putting it first in one, and then in the other. The "Qui tollis peccata mundi" (You who takes away the sins of the world) starts out in the left hand, while the right hand plays accompaniment, and changes later. The words dictate the tempo.

Variation 6

The "Munda cor meum" (Cleanse my heart) is the first prayer which might not be familiar. Like most of the old Mass, it was said by the Priest, quietly, with his back to the congregation.

Variation 7

At first, I didn't know what went here, but once Variation Eight fell into place, so too did Seven. The Jube domne (Ordain - in the sense of make it happen - sir) is relatively obscure. In fact, when I first found it, I thought there was a typographical error, and that domne (sir, or perhaps

Mister) should have been Domine, or Lord (with a capital L). It was addressed to the officiating priest by the assisting deacon.

Variation 8

It took a while for me to realize that there was a "Credo" (I believe) in there, and I had a great deal of trouble getting the words to fit. It was one of the first long settings, and I didn't know if Bach would use one portion of text for the first sixteen measures, and the remaining text for the second sixteen measures, or would repeat the first sixteen measures until all the text was set, and then go to the second sixteen measures and repeat them until the full text was again set.

The solution was to set a third of the text in the first sixteen measures, and the remaining two thirds in the final sixteen measures, repeated once. In other words, skip the first repeat, but take the second.

Again, the text offers insights into the musical quirks of this variation. Here's one example: The mood of the piece starts to darken around measure twenty, reaches its most dramatic moment in measures twenty two and twenty three, and brightens up in measure twenty five. This corresponds to Christ's suffering and dying on the cross, his burial, and then as the musical clouds clear away, his resurrection. The "strange" harmonies go hand in hand with the words, and rubato is called for.

Variation 9

This one just sounds like a "Sanctus" (Holy, Holy, Holy), and I found it hard to believe that so many musicians had not recognized it, especially since it was followed by Variation Ten. At first, I could only guess that the great ones who knew the Goldbergs, and who would have recognized a Sanctus instantly, had merely smiled and held their peace. I have since found out that one smiled twice.

Variation 10

This is the "Hosanna" to Number Nine's Sanctus.

Variation 11

I'm not sure what Bach had in mind here, and I'm playing a hunch with the "Supplices te rogamus" (Humbly we ask you). It fits, and it works.

Variation 12

I was certain about the "Pater Noster" (Our Father) from the moment I first tried it. The Lord's Prayer is the greatest and probably best known of all Christian prayers, and the Latin version is still sung occasionally.

I was puzzled by the repetition of the base notes in the opening measures. Given that the piece is a prayer, in fact The Prayer, a case can be made for the Gospel imagery of knocking loudly on a door until it shall be opened. Played that way, the piece has bounce and vigor. I've been told that my own piano style tends towards pounding, so I might be biased. On the other, smoother, hand, cellos would also make a good accompaniment, as they would in several variations.

Starting around the twentieth measure, the whole texture of the piece seems to change, a loosening up of the discipline, as if Bach wanted to forget the rules, and simply let himself go. A few measures later, the structure tightens back up. I think he's depicting the words "lead us not into temptation", followed by "but deliver us from evil".

I was convinced this was the Pater Noster when the notes fit perfectly the words "panem nostrum quotidianum" (our daily bread). Latin seems to have a certain syllabic richness which English lacks.

Variation 13

The opening words to this variation might sound a little more familiar than they actually are. This "Libera nos " (Deliver us), said during the Mass, is completely different from the more musically familiar "Libera me", said over the coffin at the end of a funeral. It's a light and hopeful prayer, with Bach's music wonderfully matched to the words, especially measures twelve through sixteen.

Variation 14

I think the words "Per Omnia Saecula Saeculorum" (World without end) are right, but the variation isn't readily sung. The texts for Variations Thirteen, Fourteen, Fifteen, and Sixteen occur in close sequence in the Mass.

Variation 15

This is a beautiful "Amen". Perhaps the reason the Goldbergs are written in the two G's is that they correspond to a natural vocal range. This piece should sound fine, if sung exactly at the pitch, but not at the notation, written. Here's what I mean.

The piano is essentially a one pitch instrument: in organ terms, an eight foot pitch. A given note, for example Middle C, when played on the piano, has the pitch of Middle C. But when sung, it can have more than one pitch. For example, the same Middle C will sound at its natural eight foot pitch when sung by a man, but it will sound an octave higher, or at four foot pitch, when sung by a woman or a boy soprano. The point is that dropping the printed soprano line down an octave, but singing it with a natural soprano voice, will produce the same pitch as the original line would when played, as written, on a piano. In this way, several of the variations can be sung by amateurs, without having to transpose down to accommodate their normal range.

Variation 16

This variation is really two independent, but connected pieces. I don't remember if the Priest turned and faced the congregation at this point, but the drama of an overture would go well. The blessing "Dominus vobiscum" (the Lord be with you) and the response "et cum spiritu tuo" (and with your spirit) are, more or less, still used today (and also with you).

Variation 17

The Haec commixtio (This intermingling) refers to the priest's breaking off a small piece of the consecrated host, and dropping it into the chalice. At first, I used the words because there weren't any other prayers left at this spot in the Mass. They fit, but I didn't understand their connection to the music. None the less, the connection is there.

The variation is made up of thirds and sixths. Try this little experiment: First, write a couple dozen notes of each voice on the upper staff, transposing the lower voice up one, two, or three octaves, to bring it within a third of the treble. You will see a string of parallel thirds. Next, color the original treble notes one color, and the transposed base notes a second color. The colored notes swap places, first one is on top, and then the other. The effect is of the two voices mixing together, as in "Haec commixtio" (this intermingling) of the "corporis et sanguinis" (of the body and blood). Although Bach wouldn't have known about DNA, the visual effect of the colored notes suggests a schematic, two dimensional projection of a double helix. How's that for vitam aeternam?

Variation 18

I recognized the "Amen" after noticing that the next one made a nice Alleluia. The word sings out from the closing measures of each section.

Variation 19

The "Alleluia" was the first variation to catch my attention because it didn't sound like a harpsichord piece. The notes call out to be sustained, and purists notwithstanding, a little pedal gives a much better effect on the piano. An organ postlude, perhaps, and a good piece for a young pianist. It's short and tuneful, easy to play, and it's fun hearing the three voices pass the melodies back and forth.

By coincidence, my wife and I got an Christmas e-mail a few years ago from a former choir member, with whom we had lost contact. She asked how things were going, and brought up Bach. I replied that I was working on the Goldbergs, and how surprised I was that one of the pieces might have come from a choir loft, and that it made a nice Alleluia. Putting those thoughts down on paper gave me an incentive to see what else might be hiding in there, and I quickly found the Amen next door.

Variation 20

The "Sub tuum praesidium" (Under your protection) isn't a regular part of the Mass, but was sung on special occasions. Its words remind me of the Memorare (Remember, O most compassionate Virgin Mary). I didn't know for a long time what went here, and except for a little serendipity, I still wouldn't know. I had to let this one go until all but a few variations were identified, and it had become perfectly clear that Bach had indeed composed a complete Mass without words.

Here's where serendipity came in. Several years ago, Rosemary bought me a really great book for Christmas, a copy of Willi Apel's Harvard Dictionary of Music. It not only contains a wealth of information, it's good reading. And read it I did, until one day I lost it. I have a bad habit of leaving books wherever I put them down, and Rosemary has an equally bad habit of picking them up and putting them away, so technically it wasn't lost. It was somewhere in the house, but neither of us could find it. Two Christmases ago, Rosemary bought me a new copy, and I started reading again, making up for lost time. There, I found the two clues which let me set this and Number Twenty Three.

Variation 21

This was another easy piece. The "Agnus Dei" (Lamb of God) is one of the prayers whose words change depending on the context. It is said three times, twice with one ending, and the third time with another. In the Requiem, "dona eis requiem" (grant them rest) replaces the ordinary "miserere nobis" (have mercy on us), and then "dona eis requiem sempiternam" (grant them eternal rest) instead of "dona nobis pacem" (grant us peace). The giveaway to the whole piece, aside from the somber music and the fit of the words, is the little tag at measure sixteen, "dona nobis pacem".

Bach's music evokes the horror of the Son of God sacrificing Himself for us, and I woke up several times in the middle of the night, my head filled with the sound of a huge choir singing the Agnus Dei while a plane crashed into the office.

The irony is that I first became interested in the Goldbergs after reading a biography of Glen Gould, and deciding to find out for myself if they made it easier to get to sleep at night. As far as I know, I'm the only person to actually go to sleep to them over a period of several years, which, by the way, sums up my taste in research.

I'm not an insomniac, I was just curious if they worked, and they do. Even better, on the rare occasion when I wake up in the middle of the night and can't go back to sleep, I find it soothing to listen to them, just as Landowska and Schweitzer imagined they would sooth Count Kayserling ("Dear Goldberg, play me one of my variations").

I'm not so sure that Kayserling, remembering his generous payment to Bach, would have felt so soothed if he knew that his variations would go down in history named after his musician.

Variation 22

The "Ite, Missa est" (Go, the Mass is ended) confused me, not because it was hard to find words which fit, but because it was easy. The command is still used today, in English, with the words "The Mass is ended, go in peace". There are a variety of translations. My preference is "Go, the Mass is ended".

The notes, the time signature, the Alla breve, and the response "Deo Gratias" (Thanks be to God) said "Ite, Missa est" right from the start, and that's what threw me off. It marches us right out the door. I got it into my head that Bach stopped setting parts of the Mass with this piece, and that he was saying so in plain Latin. I assumed that from here to the end, the pieces were instrumentally written, especially considering the texture of the final variations. It took me months longer to realize that Bach had already used too many sections of the Mass to mix in a few unrelated pieces. I finally remembered that "Ite Missa est" wasn't really the end, it was almost the end, and the final part of the Mass was still to come.

Variation 23

The "Nunc Dimittis" (Now you send your servant on his way) is called the Canticum of Simeon. It's his prayer of gratitude for being allowed to live long enough to see the coming of the Savior. Because there weren't any suitable texts left at this point in the Mass, I assumed that Bach introduced texts of his own choosing, ones which would have been acceptable supplements to

the Mass. What might he have chosen to follow the words of dismissal? One reasonable guess seemed to be the Nunc Dimittis. I wasn't familiar with it, but I knew it existed, and sure enough, it was referenced in my Harvard. Next, I looked it up in a St. Gregory Hymnal, and there it was, with the added bonus of a reference to the Sub Tuum Praesidium, which, the hymnal said, usually preceded it. Within minutes I knew I had solved Twenty and Twenty Three.

Variation 24

"Placeat tibi" (May it be pleasing to you) is another lovely setting. It's a homage to the Trinity in triplets, and chosen by Bach, I believe, because it expresses his own hope that his lifelong offering of music, including, of course, the Goldbergs, would be pleasing to God.

Variation 25

This is another variation which gave me trouble, until one day I was looking over the B Minor Mass, and there was the "Dona Nobis Pacem" (Grant us peace) from the Agnus Dei. Of course. Once the words are known, the musical fit is obvious, but evidently not before.

Variation 26

The "Te Deum" (You O God) came easily, once the Nunc Dimittis was in place, because now I knew that Bach had introduced additional settings. What other major prayer would feel at home in the Mass? The Te Deum was a natural candidate, and the first line fit. I quickly realized that Bach had simply ignored the next couple of lines of the prayer, and had gone directly to the Cherubim and Seraphim crying out Holy, Holy, Holy, which is beautiful, powerful, and unmistakable.

The Te Deum is a long prayer, and I suspected that Bach had spread it over the next two or three variations. The problem was in determining which lines he had chosen, and the order in which he used them.

My Harvard gave me the clue. Under the Te Deum, it refers to Bach's chorale prelude "Herr Gott, dich loben wir" and identifies it as Luther's translation of the Te Deum. I went through my old organ music, and there it was. I had played it a few times, years ago, but it meant little to me then, and I had forgotten all about it.

My edition (Dupre) contains a few words identifying each section, and I used them to suggest which verses Bach might have chosen for the Goldbergs, assuming the same order.

Variation 27

This variation and the two which follow are continuations of the Te Deum. Here, "Tu rex gloriae Christe" (You, Christ, king of glory) taken at a singing tempo.

Variation 28

The melodic line "Aterna fac ... numerari" (Make them ... to be counted) is hidden among the notes. When isolated, it sounds like an old chant.

Variation 29

Bach seems to have anticipated Orff's "Carmina burana" in alternating the vocal line "Et benedic haereditati tuae" (and bless those whom you have inherited) and the accompaniment. The score's look also suggests he anticipated Picasso, and its choral nature is well hidden.

Variation 30

This is my favorite setting, and Bach himself must have enjoyed its hidden references. It's a Quodlibet, an old form in which two completely different melodies are blended together to make one song in which both melodies can be heard. The classic story about this variation is that one song has a son tell his mother that he's leaving home because she doesn't feed him properly, not putting enough meat on the table, while the other is a song about cabbage. Scholars consider it a fine example of Bach's sense of humor, which it is, but the joke is on them. The music, of course, is a gem.

I had never heard of a quodlibet before, although my choir had sung one or two of them unintentionally. I simply knew it as "the organist plays one hymn while the choir sings another", and I was impressed with the way authors tossed the term around until I saw where Bach had written it at the top of the page.

My son Mike and his wife Jody arrived for a visit late one night, and he asked why most of the kitchen table had been taken over by the computer. (Rosemary has been very tolerant of this project, but only to the extent that it stays out of her kitchen.) I described the old Mass to him, and told him about the "Last Gospel". It's the final prayer, which I had just set, and its words fit the first melody perfectly. The second melody could easily be sung to the words "Deum de Deo, Lumen de Lumine", from the Creed, which mean God from God, Light from Light.

While reading about Bach, you'll occasionally come across the mysterious Latin inscription "AMDG", which translates "For the Greater Glory of God". When I was in high school, many of my fellow students wrote it at the top of their quizzes and tests, presumably as an act of piety. The point is that we know independently that Bach was a devout Christian, and he must have taken special pleasure drawing on the words of the Last Gospel. I had forgotten how the old Mass sounded as it neared the end, but the memories came back as I showed Mike my missal, and happened to notice the words just before the Gospel itself.

The priest used to stand with his back to the congregation, and after making sure the altar was properly arranged, he would turn to face the congregation and give a blessing. He would then go to the left side of the altar and he would say the following: "Initium sancti Evangelii secundum Joannem" which means The beginning of the Holy Gospel according to John – that's Johann to you and me.

It opens with "In the beginning was the Word", and continues with a brief history of the fundamentals of Christian belief. It describes John the Baptist, and tells his role in giving witness to the Light, a role which Bach himself took on. There's also a touch of sublime humor. I woke up from a dream at 5 o'clock the following morning, hearing the next few words over and over - Et lux in tenebris lucet, et tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt - and the light was shining forth in the darkness, and the darkness grasped it not. An entire Mass, hidden in plain sight.

I have a Currier and Ives print which shows a fox looking into a forest, and I liked to use it when teaching chess. It makes the point that a chess position contains much more than what we see at first glance. A great big horse stares out at you, along with a wild boar, a sheep, and lots of human faces, but at first they are almost invisible. Once you know what to look for, they can't be missed.

Acknowledgments

I owe a great debt to the people who have guided, inspired, and influenced me throughout my life.

My wife Rosemary has somehow put up with me for over thirty years, which is more than should be asked of any mortal. When I would argue with my choir about notes and pitch, after first trying gently to suggest corrections, I noticed that Rosemary would usually take their side. At first this impressed me as a stroke of wifely diplomacy, until one day I realized that she actually thought that I was wrong and the choir was right.

My sister Kathleen Canning gave me many excellent suggestions on the narrative for the Goldbergs, and also some much needed help with the Latin, which she teaches. Best of all, she appreciated the humor in what Bach had done. I found myself envying her students as she described her classroom techniques, and it seemed that studying with her would be not just interesting, but also fun. Latin won't die out as long as there remain dedicated teachers cast from the same mold.

When I was very young I took piano lessons, but I didn't practice, and my weekly half hour crept along while my teacher, a Juilliard graduate, stared idly off into space, circling my last wrong note until I would finally notice and come back and fix it. Years later I found an old book with almost every note on the page surrounded with black circles. It wasn't an auspicious beginning, and except for a brief love affair with the accordion, which left me with a strange fondness for polkas, I retired from music. I didn't return until high school, when I began studying the piano with Amanda Kent, a fine pianist and organist, who had unlimited patience with her students. This time I took it seriously.

Mrs. Kent had given up her full time church job for a thriving private practice. She had met her husband when she first started playing and had advertised for a Tenor. They loved each other deeply, and I remember her concern when, in the middle of a lesson, she got a phone call that Bill had just been taken to the hospital. He was having dental work done, and instead of anesthesia, he had let the dentist hypnotize him into feeling no pain. Well, he did feel pain, excruciating pain, but every time the dentist asked him if it hurt, the hypnotic suggestion made him say "no", until he finally went into shock and collapsed. Admittedly, this doesn't have much to do with the Goldbergs, but I've always thought it was a great story.

I kept at the piano for several years, and had graduated from college and was working as an engineer when I decided to take up the pipe organ. Within a year or so I had my own church. I was studying with Andy Clarke, the organist and choir director at South Congregational Church in nearby Pittsfield, which gave me and my more ambitious choristers the opportunity to sing in

his concert group. Andy is the most gifted musician I ever met, and experiencing such a great talent, unfortunately not my own, helped me decide to remain an engineer.

We made many friends from our choir, but the two most special were Fred and Dot Raftery, whom Rosemary and I took as role models for raising a family. Fred was and remains a musical treasure, with an enthusiasm for choral music unmatched by anyone I know. Fred was an experienced singer long before I showed up, but Dot, and her friend and fellow chorister Gerry Halpin, were musical amateurs. These two, however, turned out to be professional fixer-uppers.

Many of our adult members joined the choir when their children started singing and then got their parents interested. Once the parents got involved, they wouldn't let their kids quit, so the choir grew. Dot and Gerry joined because of their kids. They also brought in my future wife, who had just moved into town to begin her first year of teaching, and who made the mistake of saying that she loved to sing.

When I told Dot, right after Christmas, that Rosemary and I were engaged, but that we weren't going to tell anyone yet, she gave me a funny look and said, "Oh Ed, we know that." A few days later, my mother got a phone call from one of my aunts, asking about our engagement. A friend of hers had just heard about it while visiting a ladies' retirement home, next door to the church. Knowing the family connection, the ladies told her our secret. My father had been born and raised in the next town down the road, and I had cousins living up the street, so aside from my church job, the ladies would have known all about my family. The surprise was that they also knew all about Rosemary, and all about our plans.

In the Spring of the year we were to be married, Rosemary and I sang the Saint John's Passion with Andy's group. This was an introduction for both of us into the great church music of the past and an overwhelming emotional experience. It was also a revelation into how high were the musical standards in the great Protestant tradition.

Although we have been gone from Lenox for many years, we still consider it our home, and hope to return when the time comes.

Coda

I've recently made the very interesting discovery that I'm not the first to spot a Mass in the Goldbergs. I might, though, still be the first to discover who got there ahead of me, but that's another story.

How have the Goldbergs kept their secret so well? I think there are a couple of reasons.

First, perhaps the musicians who have studied them are just a little too good, and like the favored ones I've known, comprehend music instantly. They don't have to think about it, they just do it and it comes out right. It's a gift, like being a natural athlete, and we don't all have it. It's possible, though, that a little mediocrity helps. I'm not a great musician. I don't mean it in the sense that I'm really bad, but that on a natural ability scale of one to ten, I'm about a six.

When I learn anything new, it's a fight to the death. I once spent months trying to improve my bowling skills by calculating how a bowling ball rolls down the lane. You can guess how well that worked. On the other hand, I took my music seriously, and I had excellent teachers. I'm also a good engineer, and occasionally have solved problems which others could not.

Second, most professional musicians are not Catholic, and were not exposed to the Latin liturgy when young. For all practical purposes, both Latin and the Tridentine Mass were eliminated about forty years ago, and without personal exposure to them both, it's hard to make the connection between Bach's "secular" music and an obsolete liturgy in a strange tongue. I grew up with the old liturgy, and I heard enough music in Latin while young, and again during my choir director days, to suspect a Mass, even when it's not wearing its collar.

References

Some of the following books are still in the bookstores. Others can be found on-line or in a good library.

Johann Sebastian Bach by Philipp Spitta, English Translation by Bell and Fuller-Maitland, Dover's re-publication of the original 1889 edition.

J. S. Bach by Albert Schweitzer, English Translation by Ernest Newman, Dover's re-publication of the original 1911 edition. The "play me one of my variations" quote is from Schweitzer, who credits it to Forkel.

Incidentally, one of Schweitzer's own autobiographies, Out of My life and Thought, (the title might not be exactly right) is a great musical read. It's about fifty percent Bach and fifty percent Schweitzer. He had a fine, dry sense of humor.

Landowska on Music, Collected, Edited, and Translated by Denise Restott, Assisted by Robert Hawkins, published by Stein and Day, New York, 1964. Contains Wanda Landowska's essays, insights, and speculations. I always felt that she was right in refusing to double dot the subject of the C Major Fugue in Book 1, and after the Goldbergs, I am sure of it.

The St. Gregory Hymnal and Catholic Choir Book, Compiled, Edited, and Arranged by Montani, published by the St. Gregory Guild, Inc., Philadelphia, 1940. Source of the traditional Latin texts for the Te Deum, the Nunc Dimittis, and the Sub Tuum Praesidium.

The Saint Joseph Daily Missal, published by the Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York, 1952. My source for the traditional Latin texts of the Ordinary of the Mass.

The Roman Missal, Translated into the English Language for the Use of the Laity, published by E. Cummiskey, Philadelphia, 1867. I found this in the New York Public Library, and used it to make sure that the Latin had not changed, at least since 1867, and to verify the English translations.

My Early Life, by Winston Churchill, has been published under various titles. In the United States, it was first published in 1930 by Charles Scribner's Sons under the title A Roving

Commission: My Early Life. It was later published under the title Young Winston, after the Movie of the same name. Churchill's quote on Latin pronunciation is found in the Second Chapter, Harrow.

Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin, Leo F. Stelten, published by Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., Peabody, Mass., in 1995. An excellent dictionary.

Latin – Essentials of Grammar, W. Michael Wilson, published by Passport Books, Lincolnwood, Ill., in 1996. It's a good pocket reference, although it's not indexed as well as it could be.

Harvard Dictionary of Music, Second Edition, Willi Apel, published by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. in 1972.

Johann Sebastian Bach - Keyboard Music, Dover's 1970 reproduction of the Bach-Gesellschaft Edition, containing the Goldberg Variations. I based the notes on this compilation.

Oeuvres Completes pour Orgue de J. S. Bach, Trente deux Chorals divers (A a J), Volume XI, annotees et doigtees par Marcel Dupre, published by S. Bronemann, Paris, in 1941. Contains the German setting of the Te Deum, Herr Gott, Dich Loben Wir.

Wheelock's Latin, Frederic M. Wheelock, Revised by Richard A. LaFleur, 6th Edition, published by Harper-Collins, New York, in 2000.

Bach - The Goldberg Variations, Peter Williams, published by Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, in 2001. Very interesting musical background of the variations.

Ed Kotski
Endicott, New York
January 20, 2003

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