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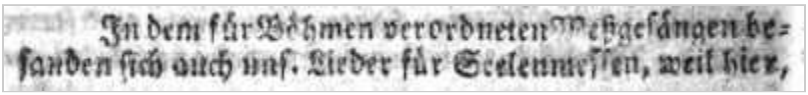
Mozart sacred songs for St. Nicholas church in Prague (1787)

David Black

***Lieder zur öffentlichen und häuslichen Andacht, mit Melodien*, 5th edition (Prague: k.k. Normalschulbuchdruckerey, 1805), lii–liii**

[lii]

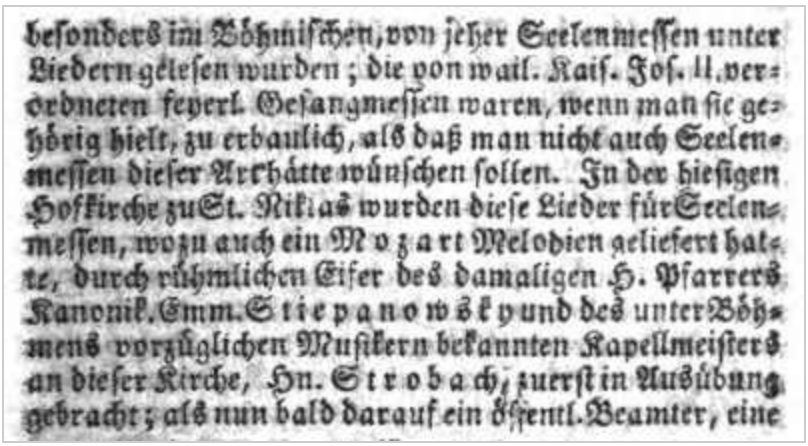
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Commentary

Among the least-known works of Mozart's maturity are two religious songs for voice and continuo, *O Gottes Lamm* and *Als aus Ägypten*, K. 343. Both the autograph and first edition of K. 343 were long unavailable (including for the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*), and the history of scholarship on the songs is rather involved (see Black 2007, 158–61). The autograph, which resurfaced briefly in 1999 and again in 2014, is undated, but from the handwriting alone it is reasonably clear that the songs date from the Viennese period. The first known publication of the songs was in the second edition of the Prague hymnbook *Lieder zur öffentlichen und häuslichen Andacht, mit Melodien größtentheils von den besten vaterländischen Meistern* of 1788. There is no entry for the songs in Mozart's *Verzeichnüß*.

The first edition of *Lieder zur öffentlichen und häuslichen Andacht* appeared in 1783 and was published "auf Veranlassung der k. k. Normalschuldirektion." The chief editor of the hymnbook was Franz Anton Steinsky (1752–1816), lecturer at the Normalschule, professor, artist and polymath of the Bohemian enlightenment. Steinsky mentioned the project in a letter he wrote to fellow polymath Benjamin Franklin in August 1783: "J'ose Vous ajouter comme à un amateur de Musique quelques Melodies de nos meilleurs Maitres que j'ai fait graver pour un livre de cantiques dont on m'a chargé de faire la compilation, a l'usage des écoles, et du Public." (Cohn 2011, 433). A contemporary review notes that the songs "sind größtentheils von Hrn. Prof. Steinsky neu verfertigt" (Dobrowsky 1787, 93–94). Steinsky's co-editor was Ferdinand Kindermann, Ritter von Schulstein (1740–1801), an educational reformer.

Apart from a variant text of *O Gottes Lamm*, the first edition includes neither the texts of K. 343, nor Mozart's settings of them, although it does feature 118 melodies by other composers (*pace* Haberkamp 1986, i:145). The second edition of 1788 features an expanded range of songs and liturgical observances, with melodies by "vaterländischen Meistern" including Duschek, Steffan, Johann Anton Kozeluch, and the editors themselves. The appearance of the non-Bohemian Mozart, whose two songs appear as Nos. 124 and 137, perhaps shows the esteem in which he was held in Prague. The melodies were printed separately on large sheets (*Faltblätter*), signed by the

engravers Johann Berka and Joseph Koch. The texts of the two Mozart songs, without the melodies, had appeared slightly earlier in a Prague service book (Anon 1787), with a note that the melodies were to be found in the (forthcoming) hymnbook.

Although Mozart's songs appear in the second edition of the hymnbook, there is no mention of the composer in its preface, and no copies of the third edition (date unknown) or fourth edition (1794) are known to survive. It is not until the fifth edition of 1805 that we find the expanded preface, quoted above, that mentions the background to the Mozart songs. Johann Joseph Strobach (1731–1794) is well-known as director of the National Theater orchestra at the Prague premiere of *Figaro* and the world premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Mozart wrote Strobach a letter, now lost, thanking him and the orchestra for their excellent performance of his music (*Briefe*, iv:22). Strobach was also *regens chori* at a number of Prague churches including St. Nicholas auf der Kleinseite, where an unidentified Mozart mass was performed in December 1787 for the patronal festival (*Dokumente*, 270). Little is known at present of the St. Nicholas priest and canon Emmanuel Stiepanowsky.

The precise relationship between Mozart, Strobach and the editors of the *Lieder* in the genesis of K. 343 is not entirely clear: were the songs written for the church, or specifically for the hymnbook? Mozart first arrived in Prague and met Strobach in January 1787, and this provides the likely terminus post quem for the composition of the songs. The papertype of the autograph is Tyson 62-IV, found otherwise in works of 1785 and the song K. 518 of 1787 (Arthur, personal communication and Arthur 2018, 96). The presence of a Viennese papertype suggests that Mozart took the spare leaf with him to Prague and wrote the songs on one of his visits to the city in 1787 (11 Jan to c. 8 Feb, and 4 Oct to 13 Nov), or wrote them in the interim back in Vienna. The autograph version of K. 343 differs from the published version in several ways: the latter adds continuo figuration to the bass and shortens the ending of *Als aus Ägypten* to remove the repetition of the final line; it is unknown whether Mozart made these changes or authorised them. A melody by Strobach also appears in the second edition (No. 82).

Although long in use in Catholic Europe, hymns in the vernacular assumed a particular importance following the liturgical reforms of Joseph II, which were introduced to Prague in 1784 (see the *Andachtsordnung and Normalgesänge* 1784). Joseph attempted to create a uniform state-sanctioned observance with increased congregational participation and a reduction in elaborate choral music, but this was naturally resisted in some quarters and much was ultimately rescinded (see Hollerweger 1976 for the Austrian lands and Black 2007 for the effect on Vienna).

According to the preface to the *Lieder*, both the songs set by Mozart were used for commemorations of the dead, and the book does indeed print *O Gottes Lamm* in a section devoted to requiem masses (as equivalent to the Agnus Dei). *Als aus Ägypten*, a metric translation of Psalm 113, forms part of a collection of Vesperlieder that "sind auf alle Sonn- und Festtage des Jahrs ohne Unterschied zu nehmen", but its theme of deliverance would make it suitable for commemorations. In Prague, vespers with organ accompaniment were permitted only on Sundays and feast days, and concerted settings were not permitted at all (*Andachtsordnung*, 8).

The occasion for the first performance of K. 343 is unknown, as are the identities of those commemorated; one possibility is All Souls’ Day (2 Nov 1787), a few days after the premiere of *Don Giovanni*. Four years later, St. Nicholas was the venue for the famous requiem for Mozart himself, directed by Strobach (*Dokumente*, 375–76; *Neue Folge*, 80).

This item was cited but not quoted in Ballin 1964 (116), and is partially quoted in Haberkamp 1986, i:146. It is not included in *Dokumente* or its supplements.

Notes (⇧)

We are grateful to John Arthur for details of the autograph of K. 343 and for informing us of its sale in 2014. According to the catalogue of the Czech National Library in Prague, its copy of the second edition of the *Lieder* is dated 1786. We have not had the opportunity to verify whether this is an error.

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