Gioacchino Rossini Petite Messe Solennelle

VOCAL SCORE

CONTENTS

1.	Kyrie	Chorus	Page 3
2.	Gloria	Quartet & Chorus	Page 15
3.	Gratias	Trio - Alt/Ten/Bass	Page 19
4.	Domine Deus	Tenor solo	Page 25
5.	Qui tollis	Duet - Sop & Alt	Page 32
6.	Quoniam	Bass solo	Page 43
7.	Cum Sancto	Chorus	Page 52
8.	Credo	Quartet & Chorus	Page 70
9.	Crucifixus	Soprano solo	Page 82
10.	Et resurrexit	Quartet & Chorus	Page 85
11.	Offertory	Harmonium solo	Page 112
12.	Sanctus	Quartet & Chorus	Page 116
13.	O salutaris	Soprano solo	Page 121
14.	Agnus Dei	Alto solo & Chorus	Page 126

Editorial Comments

This work was Rossini's last major composition and dates from 1863. With typical ironic wit, the Mass in neither 'Petite' (taking around 75 minutes in performance) nor 'Solennelle'. It was first performed on 14 March 1864 on the occasion of the dedication of the private chapel of the Comte and Comtesse Pillet-Will in their home in the Rue Moncey. The work is dedicated to the Comtesse.

The autograph score of the original version of this work is annotated by Rossini "Twelve singers of three sexes, men women and castrati, will be sufficient for its performance: that is to say eight for the chorus and four for the solos" This note is somewhat surprising, as 'castrati' had virtually died out by that period. It is of note that, in the first performance of this work, supervised by Rossini, the alto solo part was sung by a female contralto, not a male alto. Rossini also marked that the soloists should sing with the chorus. This would require a prodigious effort on the part of the soloists and modern concert choirs would not need this reinforcement. The current edition therefore does not suggest that the soloists double the chorus parts.

Rossini adopted the unique sound of harmonium and two pianos to accompany this work, and this should be replicated in performance where possible. The single piano accompaniment given here is for rehearsal purposes only. Rossini was later prevailed upon to orchestrate this work and he sought to ensure as little distortion of the work's timbres and textures as possible. But the original harmonium/piano version may be thought to be the best.

This edition is based on the Ricordi (London) edition of 1968. Unfortunately that edition is plagued with numerous typographical errors (wrong notes; wrong accidentals; rests missing or of wrong value etc). The best part of 100 of these errors have been corrected, hopefully without introducing too many errors of my own.

The Bass underlay in No 7 bars 231/232 has been changed to be consistent with similar passages elsewhere and some phrase endings have been shortened to facilitate breathing. Punctuation has been introduced (it is absent in Ricordi) where this might assist phrasing and breathing.

Any errors found in this score should be notified by e-mail to:-

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Petite Messe Solennelle

1. Kyrie

SATB Soloists and Chorus























