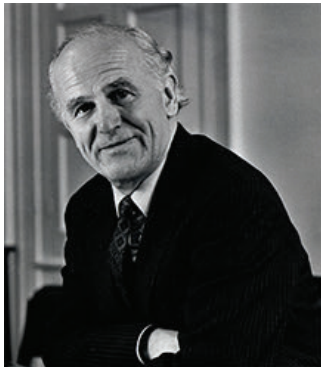


David Willcocks was a chorister at Westminster Abbey from ages 10 through 14, and later studied at Clifton College, before becoming an organ scholar at King's College, Cambridge in 1939. His studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II, during which he served in the British Infantry, winning the Military Cross in 1944. He returned to King's College in 1945 to complete his studies, and became a Fellow of King's College in 1947 and conductor of the Cambridge Philharmonic Society that same year, as well as conductor of the Salisbury Musical Society and organist at Salisbury Cathedral. In 1950, he took the post of organist at Worcester Cathedral, and became conductor of the Worcester Festival Choral Society and the City of Birmingham Choir, a position he kept for seven years.



By the end of the decade, he was the director of music at King's College Cambridge, the organist of Cambridge University, and conductor of the Cambridge University Music Society, posts that he held into the 1970s, when he accepted the post of director at the Royal College of Music. In 1960, he also became music director of the Bach Choir. Willcocks conducted in most European countries, as well as Japan and the United States, and edited several collections of choral music.

Willcocks made relatively few recordings since the end of the 1950s, principally with the King's College Choir and the Bach Choir, the English Chamber Orchestra, the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the Jacques Orchestra, the Philharmonia Orchestra, and the London Symphony Orchestra. His repertory ranged from England's Tudor era -- especially the music of John Taverner -- to such 20th century composers as Ralph Vaughan Williams. In addition to such works as Haydn's The Creation and the Nelson Mass, masses by Palestrina and Charpentier, and Taverner's The Western Wind, he conducted such modern music as Britten's War Requiem and Hymn to St. Cecilia, Vaughan Williams' Mass in G, Hodie, and Sancta Civitas, and a relative handful of pure orchestral works, such as Vaughan Williams' gorgeous Five Variants of Dives and Lazarus (of which he made the definitive recording). Willcocks' 1962 recording of Haydn's Mass No. 9 almost single-handedly began the restoration of the composer's choral music before the modern listening public. His crowning achievement, however, could be his recording of Handel's Messiah, featuring a contingent of all male singers (with counter-tenor replacing the alto) with the King's College Choir and the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields for EMI, a superbly paced, exquisitely textured recording.

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN / THE NELSON MASS



HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

Sylvia Stahlman Wilfred Brown Helen Watts Tom Krause
The Choir Of King's College, Cambridge The London Symphony Orchestra

Directed by DAVID WILLCOCKS



The Nelson Mass according to Joseph Haydn's biographer is arguably the composer's "greatest single composition". It is a work that was written at a time of intense fear for the future of Austria, whose citizens were not in the best of spirits. In 1797–1798 Napoleon Bonaparte had defeated the Austrian army in four major battles, even crossing the Alps and threatening Vienna itself.

The prevailing political and financial instability even impacted the musical forces that Haydn had at his disposal in the Esterhazy court where he spent some 30 years of his career. Haydn's patrons had dismissed their wind players and the composer was left with a mere string ensemble.

Haydn was also feeling the effects of only recently completing and premiering *The Creation*. Exhausted, he was confined by his doctor to his room. But a new work was required in a short period of time to mark the saint's name day of the Esterhazy princess.

No wonder then that Haydn called his latest work the *Missa in Angustiis* or *Mass for Troubled Times*. As the public mood approached the point of terror, Haydn wrote an opening movement in D minor, a key that he had loved ever since hearing it used to evoke doom in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. With his limited ensemble, bolstered by a few hired trumpets and timpani, Haydn created a stark and powerful sound world.

What he didn't know however as he penned the work was that the British had dealt Napoleon a stunning defeat in the *Battle of the Nile*. As the

news reverberated around the world, Nelson was heralded as the 'saviour of Europe'. It's possible that reports of his victory may even have reached Haydn and his audience on the day of the Mass's first performance in September 1798.

Perhaps because of this coincidence, the Mass gradually acquired the name which it still carries today. The title however became firmly fixed when in 1800, Nelson himself visited the Esterhazy court, accompanied by his mistress, Lady Hamilton, where they met the composer.

It is very probable that the Mass was performed to honour Nelson during his visit, along with a brief cantata, *Lines from the Battle of the Nile*, which Haydn composed for Lady Hamilton. Nelson and Haydn reportedly became friends; some accounts say that the heroic Admiral gave Haydn a gold watch in exchange for the pen that he had used to compose Lady Hamilton's cantata.

Napoleon's defeat changed the way that the Mass was heard from then on. The menacing opening leading into the drama that followed became a depiction of danger and agitation supplanted by triumphant victory.

FRANZ JOSEF HAYDN / THE NELSON MASS

Sylvia Stahlman Wilfred Brown Helen Watts Tom Krause

The Choir Of King's College, Cambridge

The London Symphony Orchestra

Directed by **DAVID WILLCOCKS**

- 1 Kyrie 5:06
- 2 Gloria: Gloria In Excelsis Deo 3:30
- 3 Gloria: Qui Tollis 4:29
- 4 Gloria: Quoniam 2:46
- 5 Credo: Credo In Unum Deum 1:53
- 6 Credo: Et Incarnatus Est 4:17
- 7 Credo: Et Resurrexit 3:46
- 8 Sanctus 2:23
- 9 Benedictus 6:01
- 10 Agnus Dei: Agnus Dei Qui Tollis 3:29
- 11 Agnus Dei: Dona Nobis Pacem 2:47

Transferred from a 15ips 2-track tape
Producer: Andrew Raeburn Engineer: Kenneth Wilkinson
Recorded August 1962 at King's College, Cambridge by Decca



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