

The grammar of *Missa Solemnis* ... Music Director Steven Schick

No one really fights about grammar anymore. In fact nobody much thinks about grammar anymore. But it wasn't so long ago that saying "disinterested" when you really meant "uninterested," or using the simple future when the occasion called for the "future perfect" would earn you a quick rebuke from the local grammar police. In some countries people still throw down on account of an erroneous conjugation. I lived in Paris for a short time, in a beautiful little apartment on the Île St. Louis. When the local prefecture posted a notice outside my front door that mistakenly used the indicative mood instead of the correct form of the subjunctive, a passer-by savagely crossed out *est* and scrawled *soit*. Later that day someone else came by and circled the change in red with an exclamation point. Oh, if the subjunctive were only so charged a cultural issue in my La Jolla neighborhood!

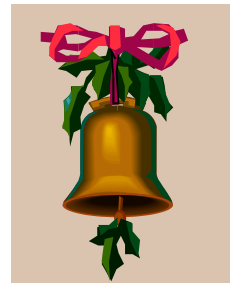


But for most of us the goal in communication is simply to be understood. Today the finer points of grammar seem arcane and frankly a little foppish. (Although I duly note that when a student of mine asks at the end of a sentence, "know what I mean?" then usually I don't.) But grammar becomes relevant again in fine distinctions in communication. And these finer points have led me to think about Beethoven's grand *Missa Solemnis*, which we are about to present here this weekend.

The Latin mass (with occasional contributions from the Greek) is a finely tuned study in grammar, which when read carefully, illuminates the often confusing relationship between God and His human flock. Take *oremus* (let us pray), for example. This verb is in the subjunctive signifying that prayer is special state. Its hortatory mood suggests that the act of prayer is an eternally desirable, if sometimes unattainable, state of mind. Then there are parts of the mass in the imperative. Beethoven starts with one of these in the beseeching cries of "Kyrie Eleison," (Lord, forgive us.) This phrase is then followed by "Christe Eleison" (Christ, forgive us.) For ten minutes in the opening movement of *Missa Solemnis* Beethoven uses no other text, but he still manages to underline subtle distinctions. "Lord forgive us" is a cry to the distant reaches of the universe. Here the music is implacable, and starting on the weak beat of the bar seems unbalanced as though a music without its downbeat is the mirror of a people without the anchor of its God. The "Christe Eleison" phrase is humanized and flowing in an easily triple meter as though the imperative here is more a request than a demand.

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In the second movement, the "Gloria," Beethoven turns to the uncomplicated present indicative. "Glorificamus te." We are glorifying you. It's simple. Easy to grasp. And by extension, as the mass would imply, something that we are or should be doing all the time. Beethoven combines this straightforward language with extraordinary music—his Gloria rivals the flights of emotion that we find in the Ninth Symphony. It's an interesting message: playing a role in the most thrilling and glorious music is, at least from the standpoint of grammar, a simple thing and well within the grasp of each of us merely for the asking. Scattered throughout any mass are other interesting twists of language. For example, in the "Agnus Dei" (the Lamb of God), there is a softer use of the imperative in "misere," a petition for mercy rather than a demand. But the part that always moves me in any setting of the mass is the "Credo." It is the only title of a movement in the mass that is a verb – in this case the first-person singular of the verb "to believe." When you sing, "credo," you are singing, "I believe." What's fascinating in *Missa Solemnis* is that "Credo" is almost always sung by a group. Is Beethoven telling us that no matter how large and potent the group, it still consists fundamentally of individuals? Or perhaps he is saying that an individual creed gains strength through the resonance of a community. In any event the "Credo" of the *Missa Solemnis* is a fascinating and troubling movement. It begins as a straightforward march tempo with voices at full strength (think "Onward Christian Soldiers") but soon alternates with thorny fugal writing in many voices. So, there are moments of certainty where the group speaks as one and gives no hint of doubt, but these are cast into doubt by means of meandering vocal pathways where individual voices are launched on long outward paths. In this latter music getting lost is both the metaphorical and actual fear. So in Beethoven's world "credo," the simplest utterance of the *Missa Solemnis*, is also the most charged. How difficult it is, Beethoven seems to be saying, for an individual simply to stand and say what he or she believes.

The *Missa Solemnis* is astounding. Much has been made of its grandeur, and rightly so. It is a magnificent and mighty piece of music. But look closely at its language and you will see that at its root it is not grandness but the story of individuals trying to find their places in the world. The sharpness of human relations, reflected in language as people reach out to each other and the universe around them, is at the core. And while the words themselves have great strength, they are amplified by *Missa Solemnis* to an extraordinary force and power. How fortunate we are to have this music, this mirror in words and sounds of our deepest thoughts and desires!

Know what I mean?



...A word from Mr. Shaw ... David Chase

It will come as no surprise to those who have known me for a while that I keep a number of Robert Shaw artifacts close to my heart, and I find special inspiration in his writings from time to time. (If you are unaware of his unique communication style, I recommend a compendium of his many letters to his choruses and other writings entitled "The Robert Shaw Reader," published by Yale University Press.)

In girding my loins for the present *Missa Solemnis* challenge, I've returned to a lengthy mimeographed treatise that I've harbored since long before I thought I'd ever have a chance to work on this Beethoven behemoth. It's too detailed to share in its entirety, but I just have to pass on a small taste of it. At the very least, these comments about the first movement give us a sense that we're not alone in trying to understand—and to adequately perform—this music!

...Beethoven begins his work with silence. He deliberately obscures the metric function of the very first explosion – as though to add to its elemental chaos and mystery, and to our doubts and confusion...

Contributors:

- Barbara Peisch, Ed.
- David Chase
- Ellie Elphick
- Anne Gero-Stillwell
- Anita Hansen
- Sharon Jones
- Pablo Mason
- Shiela Podell
- Satomi Saito
- Diane Salisbury
- Steven Schick
- Carol Slaughter
- Mary Ellen Walther
- Joyce Yin



...some rational answer has to be found for the mind-blowing gag tossed down the throat of the opening choral "Kyrie!" (The perfect metaphor for this delectation is not easy to find – but I'm getting closer: The scene is an old-fashioned Western hanging. You're standing there with a noose around your neck, and an extra six feet of rope. Some idiot with a badge springs the trap, and as you fall you shout "KY-RI --!!" – The "eh" comes when you run out of rope.)

The most obvious "interpretation" is possibly the correct one. The *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord, have mercy upon us") has existed since pagan antiquity, and its polarity is the awesome power of the Almighty Whatever as against the frail and whimpering little me. In Beethoven's setting, this "interpretation" may well be reinforced by the fact that the Almighty Whatever is sounded by the orchestral and choral tutti in extreme ranges and forte / fortissimo; and precisely at that sudden piano the lonely solo voice enters (without separate dynamic instruction) over a quiet, questing, descending figure.

This is a small example of Mr. Shaw's combination of insight and humor; there's so much more of both. (The whole essay is reprinted in the "Reader" mentioned above.) I offer it to you mostly in order to give context to our project: We are on a mission to discover—and to maintain!—one of the monuments of our culture. It's nice to know that others—some smarter, deeper and even funnier—have been here before us. They found it daunting, too. . . but more than worth the effort!



News from the Executive Director ... Diane Salisbury

Concert and Subscription News

Our season-opening concert was greeted by a near-full house and wonderful response from our patrons. We also received excellent publicity, including a video promotion on NBC that ran twice on Friday, October 29, and preview articles in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *Voice of San Diego*, and *La Jolla Light*. We had no less than four classical music writers/reviewers in our audience on opening night. What a great way to start the season.

To say that advance ticket sales for the upcoming *Missa Solemnis* concert are brisk is an understatement. Typically concert sales are light until the week of the concert. But for December, we have already sold more than 100 single tickets! I expect a very full house, if not a sell-out. If you have friends and family who plan to attend, please encourage them to purchase tickets early.

More good news: As of this writing, we have exceeded our subscription goal of increasing membership this year from 600 to 660! Our subs are currently at 662. And ensemble subscriptions alone are up 40% from last year! Thank you to all orchestra and chorus members. Your commitment to this effort makes an enormous difference in our financial success and building new audience!

LJS&C on Facebook

Though the LJS&C has had a Facebook page for more than a year, many of you may have been discouraged from visiting because of the lack of frequent updates. Be discouraged no more! Danbi Ahn, a UCSD student member of the chorus, has volunteered to take over updating the site. If you haven't stopped by our page lately, please check it out.

Major Gift to Endowment

We are very grateful to the family of Colin Bloor who have made a \$10,000 gift in his memory to the LJS&C endowment fund. Colin and Maxine Bloor are members of our Therese Hurst Musical Heritage Society, which acknowledges donors who have made a gift of \$5,000 or more to our endowment or who have named LJS&C as a beneficiary of their estate. More information about our endowment will be in the next issue of *Tutti*.

You can view *Tutti* online!

You can download this and previous issues of *Tutti* from:

www.peisch.com/tutti



XLNC1 "Gala" Series

As part of our advertising program on XLNC1 (104.9 FM), we are sponsoring a Wednesday night Gala Series program directly before each of our concerts. In our sponsored program, Steven Schick introduces selections from the upcoming concert. The first Gala Series program aired on October 27 and featured *Candide*, *Prometheus*, and the first movement of Mahler's *Symphony No. 1*. Tune in again on Wednesday, December 1, at 8:00 p.m. to hear *Missa Solemnis*.



Love in the Symphony Redux

Some of you may remember that back in 2005 and 2006 I ran a series in *Tutti* that featured couples in the ensembles. We've had a few new couples since that time, so I'm bringing back the series to highlight couples that weren't performing with us back then.

Bill Miller and Ida Houby

It is a sign of a new chapter in Bill's and Ida's marriage that they have become a couple in the chorus at last.



While they both found out about the LJS&C at a Messiah sing in 1996, Ida joined as a soprano in January of 1997, as she had achieved sufficient control over her time as a clinical psychologist in private practice, and was longing to sing in a choir again. Bill's role in the LJS&C has, for all the years since, been that of an enthusiastic audience member and chorus travel companion—waiting for the day when

he could join. After a stint as guest singer in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, Bill auditioned and joined as a member of the bass section in the fall of 2009.

The reason for Bill and Ida's new status?

Bill cut down on his busy medical practice in hematology/oncology in January 2009, and now works only with the bone marrow transplantation team, which has given him time to devote to making music, now a favorite pursuit.

Bill thus connected with a happy time in his youth, when he sang in his high school choir, which he enjoyed so much that he sought out the choir at Williams College. Since Williams was an all male school at the time, an added incentive for joining the choir was the chance to meet the women who came to sing in the (many) works needing sopranos and altos.

No, this is not how Bill and Ida met.

They were introduced by letter. (Rather quaint even in 1976.) Then they spoke by telephone. (Ida's initial impression of Bill was his nice voice.) And finally, a few months later, saw each other for the first time on East 91st Street in New York City.

Need to contact the LJS&CA?

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At that time, Ida was on a journey...literally and figuratively. Having graduated some years earlier from the University of Copenhagen with a double major in Music and Scandinavian languages and literature, she had supported herself teaching Danish as a second language at the University Extension in Copenhagen, while singing in a couple of choirs. Over time she had made several friends among her students, and was traveling that summer to California to visit one of them. While mulling over her next career move, she had decided to see more of the country by taking the train across the United States from California to New York, before flying back to Copenhagen. Not knowing anyone in New York, a friend of Ida had arranged for a contact for her there: his friend in New York—a certain Bill Miller—who at that time was a medical intern at Metropolitan Hospital.

In New York Ida found a very tired, but interesting, young man in a sparsely furnished apartment, the only decent piece of furniture a book case which, to her delight, contained among other volumes several musical scores and Albert Schweitzer's book about J.S. Bach. (Another auspicious sign!)

Bill & Ida spent about five days together in New York, went hiking and camping (unbeknownst to Ida, the Miller family of four sons auditioned their potential wives in outdoor activities—skiing came later), and had long conversations, discovering a wealth of common interests. They corresponded for a few months, then in 1977, Ida visited Bill again in New York, Bill visited Ida in Copenhagen, and they travelled Europe together and saw each other through the obligatory mishaps on such journeys. In September 1977, Ida moved to San Diego as a Ph.D. candidate in psychology. Bill followed her to San Diego in 1978, having arranged a transfer to Mercy Hospital for his final year of medical residency.

Now they have been together for 32 years, married for 30 – perhaps the oldest **new** chorus couple—and absolutely loving this new exciting facet of their marriage, making music together, and with so many wonderful and dedicated people.



The LJS&CA Board

(Board representatives to the ensemble in bold)

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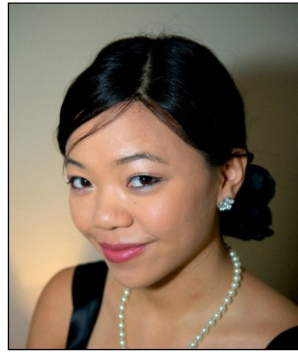
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Congratulations, Joyce!

Soprano Joyce Yin auditioned for The Metropolitan Opera National Council, San Diego District on Saturday, October 16th at the Birch North Park Theatre. This is an audition/competition held by the Met each year. Winners of district auditions go on to compete in regional and final auditions. Although Joyce didn't advance to the next audition, she did receive the Audience Choice Award, in which audience members vote for their favorite performer of the day. Joyce is also singing with the San Diego Opera Chorus this season.



It's Berkshire Choral Festival application time ... Mary Ellen Walther

If you or anyone you know is interested in singing with the Berkshire Choral Festival this summer, now's the time to get your application in. Information on the program can be found at <http://www.choralfest.org/> and you can apply online at <https://www.chorus.org/sing/apply/apply.php>.



Member Spotlight

This season, I'm focusing on the viola section

Sheila Podell

Perhaps I am one of the few members of the LJS&C who grew up in a completely non-musical family. Although my mother occasionally played classical music on the radio, that was pretty much the extent of my early childhood musical exposure.

Luckily, at the age of 13, a junior high school music appreciation class offered me the opportunity to pick up and "try out" an orchestral instrument as an enrichment activity. The instrument they put in my hands was a viola, and after 5 minutes, I was totally hooked. In those days (ancient history!) the Los Angeles city school district offered group classes in "beginning strings", which included instruments for students to take home for practice. If it hadn't been for this public school music program, I would probably never have learned to read music or play an instrument.



Sheila with husband, Art

I was a pretty rebellious teenager, and the fact that my parents were not particularly enthusiastic about my playing an instrument was a strong motivation for me to continue doing it. Although I was generally a good student, I've always had difficulty accepting authority figures, and my disrespectful behavior sometimes got me in trouble. On one occasion, I don't remember exactly what I did wrong, but my parents decided to punish me by taking away my viola for a week. I was totally indignant, because the punishment had nothing to do with the crime. However, my parents came around to my way of thinking pretty quickly after I stole and hid their car keys as ransom for returning the viola.



Have some news to report?

Let the editor know!

barbara@peisch.com

I left home at 17 with a scholarship to UC Santa Barbara, pursuing a double major in music and biology. I worked extremely hard to keep up both subjects during my first two years, but by my third year, felt forced to make what I still think of as one of the most painful decisions in my life—to drop my music major and concentrate on science as a career instead. Fortunately by that time I was able to lean on the emotional support of my future husband, Art Baer, who I had met during my first year in the college dormitory. Although Art doesn't play any instruments, he comes from a large, very musical family. The fact that I played viola scored a lot of points with his father, a former high school music teacher and choir director. One of our most cherished family memories is of Art's 91-year-old dad singing the "Comfort Ye" tenor solo in a local church performance of Handel's Messiah, conducted by Art's 30-year old niece and including 15 other family members over 3 generations in the chorus and orchestra (including Art and myself).

My 32 years with the LJS&C began in 1978, when I moved to San Diego as a biology graduate student, working at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO). Although my Ph.D. advisor made no secret of his disapproval (is there a pattern here?), I not only continued my commitment to the orchestra throughout graduate school, but also found time



Sheila playing with the LJS&C in 1985

to play chamber music for fun and occasional church gigs to supplement my meager student stipend. I also started playing recreational co-ed softball, which rapidly became another passion for me. Softball schedules have sometimes conflicted with La Jolla symphony obligations, but fortunately, it's been several years now since I've had to wear my softball uniform underneath my black concert clothes and change in

the car while driving, in order to make 6:00 p.m. games after Sunday LJS&C concerts.

After finishing my Ph.D. thesis at SIO (on sperm-egg interactions in sea urchins), I did a postdoctoral fellowship at the Salk Institute, cloning and sequencing cancer-causing genes, then spent the next 14 years developing molecular biology and pharmaceutical products for local biotech companies. Unfortunately, as I rose up the corporate ladder, I found the work to be less and less satisfying, spending most of my time on stressful supervisory tasks and losing touch with the science. In 2002, I decided to make a drastic career change, and went back to school to study computer programming. I currently work at SIO (again), as a bioinformaticist, combining biology with computer science. I now love my job, because it involves finding creative solutions to interesting new puzzles every day. There is a web page describing my work at <http://microbiooceans.ucsd.edu/People/spodell/index.htm>.

During the turbulent years of my Ph.D. studentship, postdoctoral, and biotech industry career, playing viola in the symphony and spending Monday (and sometimes Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday) evenings with my musical friends has been a rock of stability and a source of joy that has kept me going through a lot of tough times. I hope I can continue (at least) another 32 years!

Young artists winners recital at new venue

Our 2011 Young Artists Winners Recital on Sunday, January 30, will be held at the Torrey Pines Christian Church near campus. Those of you who attended our "Forty Shades" concert in late August, an encore performance from the chorus' tour to Ireland, know the fine acoustics of the church sanctuary, where the Winners Recital will be held. The church offers lovely grounds and ample parking. A reception will be held in the church parlor following the 2:00 p.m. recital. Contact Adam Perez for ticket information at 858-534-4637.

Below are photos from last year's 50th anniversary recital. All pictured except for Jeff Nevin are past YAC winners.



Monica Abrego accompanied by Jeff Nevin



Bridget Dolkas and Nancy Coade reunite for violin duet

“Let’s Face the Music & Dance” proved winning theme for 2010 Gala ... Photos by Pablo Mason

Our October 16 Gala at the Del Mar Marriott was a stunning success, raising nearly \$33,000 for the LJS&C—more than double last year’s income. The Gala Committee, co-chaired by former board member Liza Perkins-Cohen and three-time committee veteran Julie Croom, set lofty goals this year, all of which were met, including a 20% increase in attendance. The 120 guests were greeted by the La Jolla Strings (Wendy Patrick, Caitlin Fahly, Loie Flood, and Serena Cohen), which was also an auction item. In the silent auction/reception area, guests enjoyed tray-passed champagne, hors d’oeuvres and an open wine bar, while bidding on more than 70 items. As guests entered the ballroom for dinner it was to the tune of Irving Berlin’s “Let’s Face the Music & Dance,” performed by the 16-piece Big Band Express.



The highlight of the evening may have been the live auction, emceed by Joe Bauer. Four items were auctioned off including an evening of song with Ann Chase, “working the crush” at Fallbrook winery with limousine transportation and alfresco lunch for a party of 8, and a three-night stay at Parallel Wines’ private guesthouse in Napa for a party of 4. The final live auction item was “fund-a-musician,” aimed at filling the budget gap between the cost of putting on a concert and what we raise through ticket sales and sponsorship. It was thrilling to see dozens of hands raised, with donations of \$100 to \$1,000, in support of our orchestra and chorus as this one item brought in \$9,400.



Caitlin Fahly, Wendy Patrick, Loie Flood and Serena Cohen



Bill Miller, Ida Houby and Peter Jorgensen



Steven and Brenda Schick talk with Scott and Jenny Smerud



Sally Dean, 2 unidentified guests, Diane Salisbury, Mea Daum



Michael Latz and Joan Forrest



Sue and Mark Taggart



Joe Bauer



Wendy Patrick & David Chase



Karen Johns & Sandra Timmons

Article watch

From Satomi Saito:

SanDiego.com, October 30, 2010

"La Jolla Symphony Opens Season with Scriabin and Mahler"

By Kenneth Herman

A review of our last concert

<http://www.sandiego.com/arts/la-jolla-symphony-opens-season-with-scriabin-and-mahler>



From Anita Hansen:

Opera Company of Philadelphia "Hallelujah!" Random Act of Culture

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wp_RHnQ-jgU



From Carol Slaughter:

Día Europeo de la Ópera 2010

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?v=NLjuGPBusxs&vq=medium



From Ellie Elphick:

"3 year old Jonathan conducting to the 4th movement of Beethoven's 5th Symphony"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0REJ-ICGiKU>



From Sharon Jones:

Sweet Adelines International - The pitch pipe lite, August/September, 2010

"The aches and pains of standing on the risers"

<http://www.sweetadelineintl.org/PPL.AugProspective.pdf>

The contents says it's on page 6, but it's really page 10 of the PDF.



From Anne Gero-Stillwell:

NPR Music, November 10, 2010

"Out Of The Concert Hall, Into The Street: Random Acts Of Classical Music"

By Ashalen Sims

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/deceptivecadence/2010/11/09/131191618/random-acts-of-classical-music>



If you find an interesting, music-related article or Web site, send the information about it to me at barbara@peisch.com. For Web sites, send me a link to the site. For articles, you may either send a link to the article or just the name and date of the publication, along with the title of the article, and I can find it online. You may also hand me the article during rehearsal or mail it to me at:



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