

ETHEL SMYTH

# Mass in D

performed by Cappella Clausura  
& SHIFT Orchestra Project



*w/ debut of  
new edition  
by Amelia LeClair*



March 3rd, 2024 @ 4pm

Emmanuel Church  
15 Newbury St. Boston,  
MA 02116

[manager@clausura.org](mailto:manager@clausura.org)  
(617) 993-0013  
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CAPPELLA  
CLAUSURA

# **Mass in D**

## **Dame Ethel Smyth**

### **Kyrie** **Credo**

Soli: Carol Millard, Shiba Nemat-Nasser, Eduardo Ramos,  
Will Praepetis

### **Sanctus**

Solo: Lisa Hadley  
Conductor: David Flowers

### INTERMISSION

### **Benedictus**

Solo: Adriana Repetto

### **Agnus Dei**

Solo: Frankie Campofelice

### **Gloria**

Soli: Janet Stone, Jodie Fernandes, Connor Vigeant, Nathan Halbur  
Conductor: Amelia LeClair

### Cappella Clausura

Soprano: Adriana Repetto, Janet Stone, Carol Millard,  
Neva Corbo-Hudak, Shannon Larkin,

Courtney Rowe, Coco Chapman, Jessica Raine

Alto: Jodie Fernandes, Holly Druckman, Maggie Zheng, Lisa Hadley,  
Jean Monroe, Kate Meiffert, Shiba Nemat-Nasser, Adrian Baur

Tenor: Fausto Miro, Eduardo Ramos, Grant Yosenick, Frankie  
Campofelice, Connor Vigeant, Ethan Rowe

Bass: Will Praepetis, Nathan Halbur, Joseph Nizich, Matthew Tirona,  
Killian Grider, Anthony Garza

Amelia LeClair, Director

SHIFT Orchestra Project:

David Flowers, Director

**Organist/  
Rehearsal  
accompanist**

John Kramer

**Flute**

Elizabeth McCorak

Elena Rubin

**Oboe**

Izumi Sakamoto

Camden Ward

**Clarinet**

Yhasmin

Valenzuela-

Blanchard

Shannon Leigh

**Bassoon**

Dominic Panunto

Zoe Beck

**Contrabassoon**

Francesca Panunto

**Horn**

Paula Limberg

Angela Schmitt

Andy Kucenski

Ryan Ramey

**Trumpet**

Matt Nishida

Chloe Francis

**Trombone**

Kevin A. Virgilio

Connor Thummel

**Bass Trombone**

Joonhue Ng

**Tuba**

Hunter Farley

**Percussion**

Katie McInerney

**Timpani**

Jonathan Hess

**Violin I**

Ming-hang Tam

*concertmaster*

Kavita Shankar

K.J. MacDonald

Rebecca

MacInness

Nikole Stoica

**Violin II**

Kristina Sharra

Josefina Guzman

Peter Paetkau

Dana Ianculovici

Marta Dorovic

**Viola**

Roselyn Hobbes

Allyn McCourt

Ken Allen

**Cello**

Anna Seda

Natalia McDermott

Matthew Henegan

**Contrabass**

Samantha Donato

Caroline Samuel

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Cappella Clausura would like to say a huge thank you to our partner David Flowers with so much gratitude for his work in parts preparation as well as his work in preparing the orchestra for us all. It has been a joy to share this work with such a generous and exacting musician, and we know you will enjoy his conducting today.

We also acknowledge, with very special thanks and much gratitude, Ming-hang Tam, concert master and proof-reader for Amelia LeClair's scores for the Mass in D.

This performance could not have happened without both of these fine musicians and we are immensely grateful and privileged to work with them.

We also heartily thank Holly Druckman, our incoming Artistic Director, for rehearsing our volunteer choral folks, and joining us in the alto section!

## PROGRAM NOTES

### Periscope up! A Composer Puts Out to Sea

~ Amelia LeClair

Dame Ethel Smyth (1854-1944) said, "I want women to turn their minds to big and difficult jobs, not just to go on hugging the shore, afraid to put out to sea."

This is the story of a woman - in the long history of women stifled by important or influential men in their lives or eras – who did the big and difficult job over and over. Ethel Smyth, a strong-minded musician, fought against her father's pontifical noise and put out to sea in 1877 at age 19 to study at the Conservatorium in Leipzig. One of the top Smyth scholars, Dr. Amy Zigler, has a brief biography available on this terrific website:

<https://www.ethelsmyth.org/about/biography/>

Ethel characterized herself as making "on average twelve intimate friends per annum" (letter to Henry Brewster, 1892). Her first core in Leipzig was the Herzogenbergs, a musical family whose young matriarch, Lisl (only 11 years her senior), took a maternal interest in Ethel, and a deep, life-changing relationship began. Lisl's brother-in-law was Henry Brewster, who was also to become a deep and romantic partner, although married. Brewster, a poet, was the librettist for many of her operas. On her many trips to Germany, her friends introduced her to more friends, many of them the glitterati of the late 1800s: Brahms (her musical hero, along with Beethoven), Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Clara Schumann, Dvorak, and more.

She was able to attend concerts as well as give impromptu performances amongst these friends and had her own following as a singer who accompanied herself. Clara Schumann apparently told Ethel she loved to hear her play the piano but couldn't bear to watch her ungainly hands. Despite her lack of training, her singing voice attracted many admirers who said it was emotionally powerful and that no other singer could match her delivery.

Born into the middle class, but a force of nature when it came to making friendships, she succeeded in impressing and befriending upper-class women – and men - with influence and agency, who became her champions.

One young woman named Pauline Trevelyan was a devout Catholic whom Ethel compared to "a visitant from another planet lent to this world for the time being..." Pauline inspired Ethel to a curiously intense faith: "Oh what a mass I will write someday!...what words, what words!..." As with so much for Ethel, this faith lasted only about a year. The Mass in D was written between 1889-91 and is dedicated to Trevelyan. Smyth finished it while staying with another great and influential friend, Empress Eugenie (Second Empire), at Cap Martin. Her instructions on the score require it to be performed in the old-fashioned Anglican style, which puts the Gloria at the end as the final movement. This suited her need for a joyous and grand finale.

Upon completion of her Mass, she managed an invitation through her influential friends to Balmoral to see Queen Victoria herself, a singer

and musical aficionado: the Queen expressed an interest in hearing the young woman's work. Seated at the Queen's piano, Ethel sang and played several movements from her Mass. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh were so impressed they sponsored its premiere at the Royal Victoria and Albert Hall in 1893 under the baton of Joseph Barnby, conductor of the Royal Choral Society, of which the Duke was then President.

In addition to being a composer and conductor of some renown, Smyth was a great letter writer and began in 1919 to publish her memoirs. All six are fascinating and thoroughly enjoyable, written in her own unique, irrepressible style. As she put it, "I am by far the most interesting person I know." She also wrote volumes of letters to her many friends and acquaintances. She referred to writing as her "second string": "by simply replacing the music-nib of her pen with another sort of nib.... rather should Fate be thanked for providing a second string whereon to play, as well as one can, the tune life is always making up in one's heart."

This was largely because, around 1913, she began to hear "singing in her ears." Having Beethoven as a hopeful example, she thought to keep on composing – but it was becoming difficult, depressing, and frustrating. By 1920, she read through her Mass of 30 years prior and wrote: "God, what a stride I had in those days. What courage? morally, I mean. Where has it all gone? And Echo answers, into trying to take life's difficulties reasonably." By 1931, she'd given up composing altogether. In 1930, she met and fell in love with Virginia Woolf, and their almost daily correspondence and meetings lasted until Virginia's death in 1941. In a letter from 1936 to Ethel, Virginia writes, "Well, Ethel, I've finished your book... I think it's a triumph, and if I go halfway down the road to immortality, it will be because my name is on your title page." Ethel's last letter to Virginia is dated February 1941; she writes, "You have given me the greatest joy of my latter end. 'I am content,' said the soldier. Yes, by God, I am. Bless you, my dearest. E" In her 80s, Ethel found contentment at last.

Smyth was tireless in her pursuit of performances of her music in both Germany and England. Her opera *Der Wald*, with a German libretto by Smyth and her frequent collaborator, Henry Brewster, was performed in both Germany and London and, finally, in 1903, at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, becoming the first and only opera written by a woman to be performed at the Met until 2016. Her extraordinary and powerful opera, *The Wreckers*, was written about this time as well and is now enjoying a resurgence of performances worldwide: the BSO, as recently as February 8-10, 2024, only just performed the overture to "The Wreckers."

Recognized for both her compositions and her very popular memoirs, and despite two years of incendiary work as a suffragette with Emmaline Pankhurst, the leader of the Women's Social and Political Union in the UK, Smyth was named a Dame Commander of the British Empire in 1922. She revised the Mass in 1925, thinking it might finally be imprinted and therefore performed. However, her publisher at the time, Novello, declined, saying they

would never imprint a work for which there was no demand. Despite this, the Mass was performed more than a few times all over the UK, many with piano accompaniment. The final performance was for a jubilee in honor of her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, led by her dear friend, Sir Thomas Beecham, in 1933. Sadly, she was too deaf to hear it, but she did enjoy seeing the standing ovation. Beecham was famous for his quips, one of which was, “There are no women composers, never have been, and quite possibly never will be.” Dame Ethel had changed his mind: he was a champion of her work and wrote a glowing and affectionate obituary when she died in 1944.

The Mass in D in a beaten-up manuscript landed in my lap in 2012. I was immediately entranced. Having no idea how to create a performance edition, I nevertheless persisted because of my excitement at finding a work in the larger form by a woman. I immediately applied to continue my residency at Brandeis Women’s Studies Research Center to do just that. Several cognoscenti told me that no performance edition with orchestral parts existed and that I’d be doing the world a huge favor if I took that “big and difficult job”. Over the next several years I learned Sibelius (a music notation software) and orchestral writing. The edition was premiered by Eastman School of Music in December of 2023, with William Weinert conducting. It has since undergone further revision and correction.

As a musician I gave up composition at an early age because no role models were ever mentioned in my schooling. In 2001, I put my periscope up from the depths of child-rearing still neither heard nor saw any women composers. By then I had learned women have been singing and writing music for centuries: there is, in fact, a 4<sup>th</sup> century restriction against women singing, which must mean – well, women were singing! I founded Cappella Clausura to perform this repertoire. In our 20 years of performing music by women we have unearthed many treasures, taking full advantage of the remarkable work by female scholars from the 70’s onward. Inspired by Smyth’s talent, ambition, and personality, and in her honor, I offer my edition of her Mass in D so it can at last be heard the way she wrote it. Novello also finally imprinted the Mass in D, and so my work has been muted, but I am the richer for having delved into this composer and this piece, one of her first real triumphs. This is a piece that should sit firmly in the canon right alongside the Big Requiems, for all choral societies and ensembles. I hope my edition makes many, many more performances possible.

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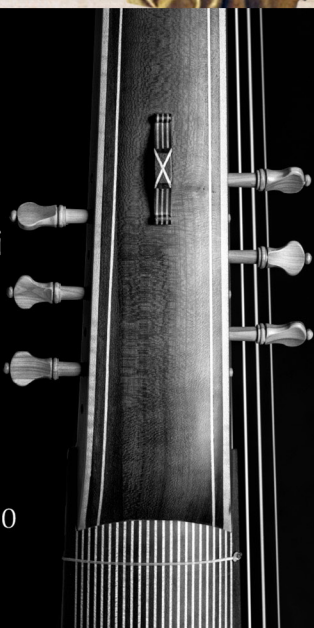
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