

Mozart • Requiem

[Süßmayr Remade] version, 2016

Mozart's Requiem is sublime, but we will never hear it. After more than two centuries of listening to, performing, commenting on and analysing this unfinished masterpiece, we still have not come to terms with its incompleteness. The oft-criticised imperfections of the 'usual' version of the Requiem, the one completed by Franz Xaver Süßmayr shortly after Mozart's death, leave us unsatisfied, and yet we always come back to it. Because the music by Mozart it contains is exceptional. In 1825 Gottfried Weber, a lawyer at the court of appeal in Darmstadt and an enlightened music lover, summed up this paradox in terms that have lost none of their relevance today: 'Of all the works of our glorious Mozart, there is hardly another that enjoys such general admiration, such veneration, as his Requiem. But this is actually striking, one might even say strange, since this very work is among them all undoubtedly his most imperfect, his least complete: indeed, it can hardly even be called a work of Mozart.'¹ This paradox, with which I concur, is one of the primary reasons that prompted me to embark on the work of completion: for the urge to work on this piece was born of my passion for the Requiem, but also of a vague, impalpable but stubborn feeling of frustration that had always accompanied my listening.

My first task was to consult the literature, to collate the sources and go back to the manuscript, again and again, in order to familiarise myself with its history before venturing to continue it. Never has the production of a work given rise to so many legends, debates and contradictory theories, to such an extent that it is difficult even today to disentangle myth, reality and

mere hypotheses. From romantic fictions to musicological research, emotional reactions have often left their mark, so desperate are we to *know* when the subject is Mozart's Requiem – in the absence of any possibility of ever hearing it. So let us immerse ourselves for a moment in the work done by the composer and the posthumous history of his Requiem before shedding some light on my project itself.

Unfinished. Mozart's Requiem

The story begins in the early summer of 1791, when Mozart received an anonymous commission for a Requiem Mass in return for the amount of 50 ducats, a tidy sum that represented half of what he had received for *Le nozze di Figaro* and part of which was paid in advance. Although this commission was a windfall for the Mozart household, which had been in financial difficulties for months, it added to what was already a very busy schedule. Following his 'wilderness year' of 1790, Mozart had begun composing intensively again from the month of December. By June 1791 he had already written two string quintets (K593 and K614), a piano concerto (K595), numerous arias and dances, two pieces for mechanical organ (K608 and K616), one for glass armonica and quartet (K617) and the motet *Ave verum corpus* (K618). When the commission for the Requiem arrived, he had already started work on *Die Zauberflöte* and had still to write *La clemenza di Tito*, another urgent and well-paid commission that was to be delivered in time for the coronation of Leopold II in Prague on 6 September.

¹ Gottfried Weber, 'Über die Echtheit des Mozartschen Requiem' (On the authenticity of the Mozart Requiem), in *Cäcilia: eine Zeitschrift für die musikalische Welt, herausgegeben von einem*

Vereine von Gelehrten, Kunstverständigen und Künstlern (1825).

Mozart therefore put off the composition of the Requiem until later.

When did he actually begin? It is hard to say, but analysis of the paper used for the manuscript and of the constraints of his schedule suggest that he did not buckle down to it until early October: he came back from Prague in mid-September and still had to write half a dozen numbers for *Die Zauberflöte*, the premiere of which was fixed for the 30th. From that point on and until 20 November (the date on which he took to his bed, remaining there until his death on 5 December), he still found time to compose the Clarinet Concerto (K622), a Masonic cantata (K623) and two movements of a horn concerto (K412/514) – all of this in addition to the Requiem. Of all these pieces, only the Requiem and the horn concerto remained incomplete. One might almost come to the conclusion that the Requiem was not a priority for Mozart, despite its considerable financial allure... The hypothesis would not be absurd. After all, it is often alleged that Mozart's attitude to sacred music was a reluctant one.² But that supposed reluctance merits qualification.³ From 1788 onwards, he copied out several sacred works by Viennese composers, including Reutter's *De profundis*, without any apparent necessity linked to performance: it would seem, rather, that he took to studying the sacred style practised in Vienna at the time. Between 1787 and 1790, he started on at least five masses, the surviving fragments of which all bear the marks of a new departure in stylistic experimentation, and also made several arrangements of sacred works by Handel, including *Messiah*. In 1791, he was appointed deputy Kapellmeister at St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna: never had he had such

² Often mentioned in this connection are his tribulations with the archdiocese of Salzburg, the abandonment of his C minor Mass in 1783 (also left unfinished), his apparent preference for secular music after his move to Vienna in 1784, and the reforms of church services instigated by Emperor Joseph II in the 1780s, which limited the use of music in the liturgy.

responsibilities as a church musician, which might be expected to open his path to a post as Kapellmeister in a few years' time. In June he composed the *Ave verum corpus*. And all of this at the very time when the restrictions imposed by Joseph II were beginning to be relaxed by his successor. So the hypothesis seems to be invalidated: at this period Mozart was showing increasing interest in sacred music, and in this context the commission for the Requiem came at just the right moment, financially but also musically. Whatever the constraints he may have encountered in the conception of the work, his procrastination may well reflect not lack of enthusiasm but, on the contrary, the desire to present an extremely well-crafted and fundamentally new composition.

In fact, it is when one examines his manuscript that one fully realises how great an interest Mozart took in his Requiem. No other work of this period so clearly bears the imprint of the new style he had been developing for several years in his projected masses and the *Ave verum corpus*, but also in some parts of his secular works, from the String Quartet K590 to *Die Zauberflöte*. That style, still in gestation at the moment of his death, is not easy to define, but we can single out two of its principal characteristics: a paring down of the material to its simplest expression and a growing inclination for contrapuntal writing, notably for the genre of the fugue. Several indications in the manuscript of the Requiem show the rigorous standards Mozart fixed for himself: contrary to his usual practice, he made sketches, a fact that bears witness to a need to test his ideas. He composed two fugues and sketched out a third, thus initiating a plan that might have seen the finished work

³ On this subject, see the thesis of David Ian Black, which also contains numerous discoveries concerning the gestation of the Requiem and the role of Mozart's inner circle after his death: *Mozart and the Practice of Sacred Music, 1781-1791 (Mozart and the practice of sacred music, 1781-1791)*, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2007).

containing a total of four or even five. He broke off the 'Lacrimosa' after eight bars, once again contrary to his habit of writing a piece down only once its conception was complete.⁴ Without giving a detailed analysis of the manuscript here, one can say that observation of its thematic material demonstrates that all the themes of the Requiem can be reduced to a handful of simple formulas, and suggests an extreme intellectualisation of its composition, verging on *leitmotif*.⁵ In short, Mozart's manuscript shows an aesthetic conception in full flower and an urge to surpass himself that is rarely pointed out. The score he left behind when died in the early morning of 5 December 1791 constitutes, in its elaborate structure, its extreme refinement, its economy of resources and its inspiration, a masterpiece in the making.

Finished? The Requiem of Mozart, Eybler, Stadler and Süßmayr

The Requiem owes its fame in part to its posthumous history, to the legends that very quickly surrounded it, and to all the controversies about its authenticity and its genesis. Very soon after Mozart's death, rumours began to circulate that he had been murdered by an envious rival, perhaps Salieri. The idea has enjoyed a long posterity: Pushkin took it up in his play *Mozart and Salieri* (1830), in which he depicts a jealous Salieri who poisons his

colleague, and Peter Shaffer harked back to it in his play *Amadeus* (1979), the source of the eponymous film by Miloš Forman (1984). The mysterious 'messenger in grey' who came to commission a Mass of the Dead from Mozart has also passed into legend: the spectre supposedly haunted the composer's nights for months, so much so that he purportedly told Da Ponte in a letter that he had the impression he was hurriedly writing the Requiem for himself, faced with the prospect of his impending death... Unfortunately, none of this is true.⁶ Two centuries later, many matters concerning the posthumous history of the Requiem remain obscure, and even today the musicological literature still jumbles established fact and contradictory hypotheses.

One thing is sure: at Mozart's death, the manuscript was very incomplete. Of the fourteen movements that go to make up the Requiem as it stands, he had finished only the first, the Introit. From the Kyrie to the 'Hostias', he had written the vocal lines and a few fragments of the orchestration, including a partially figured bass. As regards this part of the work, we may say that Mozart had *composed* the music, but had not *arranged* (or *orchestrated*) it.⁷ Even here, the music for the 'Lacrimosa' breaks off after eight bars. By contrast, he wrote nothing at all for the final movements of the Requiem, from the Sanctus onwards. Although we can calculate their approximate dimensions – the text is dictated by the liturgy and the proportions

large a scale.

⁶ The source of the commission was Count Franz von Walsegg, and the work was intended to honour the memory of his young wife, who had died in February 1791. The commission was anonymous because the Count was in the habit of passing off the works he financed as his own compositions, and the mysterious messenger was probably a clerk from the office of his Viennese notary. As to the colour of his clothes...

⁷ We will return later to this distinction between *composition* and *orchestration*.

⁴ The legend that Mozart died at this precise point in the score has little factual basis. There is nothing to suggest that he composed the movements of his Requiem in the liturgical order and that the 'Lacrimosa' was the last piece he worked on. In this respect, Christoph Wolff's hypothesis that Mozart was waiting until he had written the Agnus Dei in order to link the end of these two movements thematically on the common words 'dona eis requiem' seems much more likely (Christoph Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem, Historical and Analytical Studies, Documents, Score*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1994)

⁵ Other pieces by Mozart carry the seeds of this approach (the Piano Concerto K466, for example), but he had never taken it so far and in a work on so

are more or less implied by the length of the preceding movements – there are few elements that can help us guess at the choices Mozart would have made.

The transformations of the Requiem probably began very soon after Mozart's death. Several sources state that excerpts from it were performed at the Mass held for his funeral on 10 December. This first completion concerns only the Kyrie, in which the orchestral parts were hastily produced – the vocal parts are simply divided among the sections of the orchestra according to their pitch – by an anonymous hand that was long assumed to be that of Franz Jacob Freystädtler.⁸ Even though this contribution may be regarded as 'mechanical copying', it has nonetheless been taken over as it stands in all the subsequent completions. What happened after this is still more uncertain. On her husband's death, Constanze Mozart found herself in a precarious financial situation. She was in debt and expecting another child. She needed to get the work finished quickly in order to be paid the outstanding amount for the commission. She approached several musicians to do this – with the utmost discretion, since the person behind the commission must not learn that the work was not entirely in Mozart's hand. In this respect, it is striking how closely the various hands found on the manuscript resemble Mozart's handwriting, and it has been suggested that this was one of Constanze's criteria for choosing the person who was to complete the work... On 21 December she entrusted the score to Joseph Leopold Eybler, a twenty-six-year-old pupil of Albrechtsberger, who had taken part in rehearsals for *Così fan tutte*.⁹ He

⁸ Freystädtler (1761-1841) was a pupil of Mozart's. The hypothesis of his contribution to the Requiem was put forward by Leopold Nowak, who edited the work for the New Mozart Edition (*Neue Mozart-Ausgabe*) in 1961, and was often repeated subsequently until it was brilliantly refuted by Michael Lorenz in 2006.

⁹ Mozart had written him an extremely laudatory letter of recommendation in 1790.

¹⁰ Stadler reports that Mozart said to Süßmayr in the

produced a fragmentary orchestration of the Sequence (from the 'Dies iræ' to the 'Confutatis') and sketched two bars of composition in the 'Lacrimosa'. His additions – circled in pencil on Mozart's manuscript – are clearly identified, but we do not know why he stopped there. A third confirmed contribution was that of Maximilian Stadler, a composer and music historian close to Mozart and his wife. On a copy in his hand, he made a fragmentary orchestration of the Offertory ('Domine Jesu' and 'Hostias'), but we have no way of determining whether this was at Constanze's request or on his own initiative. Whatever the case, the manuscript was still incomplete and time was getting short.

Early in January, Constanze turned to the twenty-five-year-old Franz Xaver Süßmayr, who – contrary to what is often stated – had never studied with Mozart. He was a pupil of Salieri with experience in the field of comic singspiel, who had arrived in Vienna in 1788. He had helped Mozart with writing the recitatives of *La clemenza di Tito* and copying the orchestral parts of *Die Zauberflöte*. Mozart's letters and comments of his reported by Stadler demonstrate the lack of consideration, indeed open mockery the composer showed for him.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Süßmayr finished his work in record time and handed in his final copy in February.¹¹ He built on the earlier work of the anonymous hand, Eybler and Stadler to complete the orchestration of the pieces written by Mozart, and composed the Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei himself. Finally, he copied out the end of the Introit, adapting it to fit the text of the 'Lux æterna', and did the same for the Kyrie

course of a conversation about part-writing: 'Oy – there you are at a total loss again [*Da stehen die Ochsen wieder am Berge!*] You are far from understanding that...' See also Mozart's letters to Constanze in 1791.

¹¹ Süßmayr's score includes Mozart's manuscript for the two first movements, on which he added the trumpets and timpani for the Kyrie and a note on the first page 'di me W. A. Mozart 1792' (sic). The rest of the score is a copy, entirely in Süßmayr's hand.

on the text of the 'Cum sanctis tuis'. It is this score that was delivered to the patron who had commissioned the work and that remains the version most often performed today. All sorts of contradictory things have been said about the sources that may have been available to Süßmayr. Had he received instructions or advice from Mozart? Did he have access to drafts that have since been lost? No one has been able to produce conclusive evidence to support such hypotheses. Right to the end of her life, Constanze refused to give publishers any further information on the history of the completion of the Requiem, restricting herself to saying that it was 'mostly by Mozart'. But she and her entourage are the source of the accounts alleging that Süßmayr was close to Mozart while he was writing the Requiem,¹² that they had lengthy discussions about the details of his conception, and that Mozart had directly instructed him to reuse the opening of the work at its conclusion.¹³ All these sources are to be treated with caution, for it is very hard to assess the extent to which they were intended to serve the obvious interests of each of the protagonists. Mozart's last wishes concerning his Requiem will probably remain in the realm of hypothesis for a long time to come and perhaps for ever.

However one looks at it, 'Mozart's Requiem' as we have it today is also the Requiem of Eybler, Stadler and above all Süßmayr: a composite work, written 'by several hands'. We can continue

¹² This conjecture is doubtful, to say the least. In his thesis (op. cit.), David Ian Black investigates Süßmayr's schedule during Mozart's illness; it would appear that he was employed on three simultaneous productions in the theatre. In these conditions, did he really have the time to visit Mozart regularly?

¹³ The last two assertions are difficult to prove or disprove. We must at least call them into question, given Mozart's (lukewarm) opinion of Süßmayr and what we know of the process of composition of the Requiem. Until 20 November, a priori, Mozart had no reason to think that he would die before being able to finish his work. Even if Süßmayr managed to visit him before 5 December, there are few reasons to imagine that Mozart was already thinking of giving someone the task of finishing his Requiem, and even fewer to

commenting on the score indefinitely, we can decry its many weaknesses, but we cannot remake history and the absence persists: we will never hear Mozart's Requiem.

Never finished. Mozart's Requiem, continually reinvented...

Nothing, however, dictates that the history of the Requiem must stop there. Its status as a masterpiece commands respect, to be sure, but its unfinished character opens up possibilities and its defects insidiously invite one on the adventure of completing it. And, of course, other people have already tried their hand at it in the past. It was that same task I embarked on more than five years ago: passion and frustration prevailed over prudence...

But how is one to revisit the score of the Requiem? What can one do today to complete a score that, in any case, will always remain unfinished? In fact, every period has its own way of hearing and passing on the music of centuries past, and we no longer perform that music as we did in the 1930s or the 1970s. The perception we have of Mozart's style has undergone many upheavals in the past half-century, notably with the 'Baroque revolution' initiated in the 1960s and constantly fuelled by research, the new upsurge in practices current in the eighteenth century such as improvisation or arrangement (whether

suggest that he had Süßmayr in mind for the job: if that had been the case, would Constanze not have turned to him in the first instance to complete the work? Mozart's last wishes concerning the Requiem remain hypothetical. Süßmayr himself, in a letter to the publisher Breitkopf in 1800, says that he took the liberty of reusing the first movements at the end 'for greater coherence', without mentioning any instructions from Mozart. At this time Breitkopf wished to elucidate the gestation of the work for the first edition of the score – which did not stop him from failing to mention Süßmayr's name! Although his description of his contribution seems honest, it is not detailed enough to allow us to draw any precise conclusions.

respecting the original style or taking a creative distance), or the possibilities offered by contemporary music: all these factors have stimulated the emergence of generations of musicians who are both better informed about the historical context of the repertory they perform and increasingly free in their relationship to the heritage document constituted by the score. We are perhaps at an ideal moment today for combining the search for authenticity with artistic audacity.

My completion project does indeed aim to break away from the weight of tradition and custom by starting out from Mozart's manuscript in order to extend it by cross-fertilising historical, aesthetic and formal criteria. I have sought to call upon analysis of Mozartian style and contextualisation of his period as tools in the service of an overall vision of the piece that goes beyond the quest for a 'correct' score, beyond a historical reconstruction. Admittedly, my work does lay claim to a form of historical truth, and I set myself a rule of constant vigilance, testing each avenue I explored with meticulous research. Yet to take rigour as my sole guide would have led me to avoid taking risks and obliged me to be overcautious. I must therefore acknowledge that the work I have done contains an irreducible element of arbitrariness, the mark of my singularity, with the aim of offering listeners the impression of a finished whole, a complete work in the double context of a Requiem of the late eighteenth century and a creation of the early twenty-first.

Looking at the manuscript left by Mozart, the task might well have seemed enormous. I had to arrange (or orchestrate) the movements for which Mozart composed the vocal parts, and in addition to this both compose and orchestrate those for which he wrote nothing. The distinction is important, for the challenges are very

different between arrangement and composition. To *arrange* is to produce the accompaniment (here orchestral) and settle the details of the score in such a way as to show the composition (here vocal) to best advantage, if possible on the basis of elements deriving from the composition itself. To *compose*, on the other hand, one must invent, then develop the melody, the form, the harmony: this is above all a task of creation, by its nature much more subject to arbitrariness and to the subjectivity of the author. For the pieces composed by Mozart, from the Kyrie to the 'Hostias', I therefore concentrated on arrangement, in order to produce the best possible setting for the jewels of his compositions. I carried out this task using Mozart's manuscript alone, taking the fullest advantage of our knowledge of his style of orchestration, which is very well documented today.¹⁴ In this respect, the deliberate decision to 'forget' earlier completions encourages a certain objectivity as to the needs of the arrangement that musicological rigour alone would not permit. But what was to be done about the movements that Mozart did not compose, from the Sanctus onwards?¹⁵ The dilemma of creation confronted with history is inevitable here. The very purpose of my project – to reconcile historical rigour and the need to open up the field of possibilities – led me, for those movements, to offer two variants: the version *Süßmayr Remade*, printed here, takes account of Süßmayr's compositions, whereas the version *Mozart Extended* (yet to be published) eliminates them entirely and presents new compositions in their place.

Why did I choose, in the version presented to you here, to retain the pieces composed by Süßmayr? After all, his faults have been underlined often enough: inexperience in the sacred repertory, gaps in his compositional skills, numerous

¹⁴ Today we have access to all Mozart's orchestral works, at least the surviving ones, which represent the vast majority of his output for orchestra. Such was not the case for Eybler and Süßmayr...

¹⁵ And also the 'Lacrimosa', of which Mozart composed only the first eight bars.

'grammatical errors' in the part-writing, the lower level of inspiration of his additions in comparison with the grave tone of Mozart's movements. First of all, because the Süßmayr score is the 'historic' version, the manuscript delivered in fulfilment of the commission, the one we all have in our mind's ear. Taking account of Süßmayr's contribution also enables me to avoid any misunderstanding as to the nature of my project: the idea is obviously not to claim that I have discovered what the Requiem would have been if Mozart had been able to finish it, but to attempt to improve the movements composed by Süßmayr and to complete the orchestration of the whole work in order to make them as consistent as possible with the music written by Mozart. Finally, and above all, there is strong creative potential to be derived from the perspective of building on Süßmayr's compositions, those unloved pieces whose weaknesses have been insisted on at the expense of their qualities. I have appropriated them and remodelled them while preserving their substance and making every effort to take the same care over their orchestration as over Mozart's. And I did so with the constant aim of heightening their flavour rather than merely softening their asperities – which sometimes are so beautiful. Hence the version *Süßmayr Remade* is a game with history and the different ways of understanding, rewriting and transmitting it. It is also a game of mirrors with the version *Mozart Extended*. Each in their own way, these two completions aim to cast new light on a work that we will never hear, in order to reveal in it riches that we do not usually hear.

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Mozart's Requiem will never be finished. We cannot remake history, but we can endeavour to ensure that the tradition derived from it continues to live. My work of completion is merely a single point somewhere in the middle of a longer evolution, composed of endlessly renewed endeavours and discoveries. The process of carrying it out has profoundly changed my perception of the work, far beyond anything I could have imagined. In sharing it with the public, I hope that it will offer in some small measure a means of conveying the power of what the Requiem might have been, or at least of compensating for the frustration we feel at its incompleteness.

Pierre-Henri Dutron
july 2017

translation: Charles Johnston

I want to express my sincere gratitude to Sébastien Loisel, who proofread this preface many times. His precious counselling has been crucial in the development of this project.

I want to thank with all my heart Clemens Flick for proofreading this score and for his unwavering support during its writing.

For more information on the score of the Requiem and this new version: phdutron.com

This score can be downloaded freely and printed from the website.

If you wish to rent the orchestra material, get access to the choir-piano reduction, or perform this work in public, please contact me:
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