

Program Notes . . .

“the least perfect, the least finished: indeed, it is scarcely worthy to be called a work of Mozart’s at all.” Jacob Gottfried Weber, 1825

The Mozart Requiem, one of the most beloved works in the choral repertory, contains only one movement, the opening *Requiem aeternam*, that was *completely* written by Mozart. But, in the traditional version completed by his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr, it has been regarded as one of the most sublime achievements in the history of sacred music for more than two centuries. “For just as long, however,” according to Yale University professor Jeffrey Douma, “critics have lamented the many apparent weaknesses in Süssmayr’s contribution, and have debated endlessly over which portions originated with him and which originated with Mozart.”

Examinations of the two autograph copies of the score have revealed additional information about the work’s completion and unraveled the mystery. After completing the opening movement in full, Mozart composed the choral parts and bass line from the Kyrie through the first 8 bars of the *Lacrimosa*, in addition to the Offertory. In a few places he also provided suggestions for the orchestration. The rest was completed by a student selected by his widow, and a third choice at that!

The Commission: During July of 1791, his final year, Mozart was visited by a solicitor with an anonymous offer for a commission. For the handsome fee of 225 florins (about half his fee for an opera like *The Marriage of Figaro*) Mozart was to deliver the sole copy of a requiem as soon as possible. After Mozart’s death it was learned that Count Franz von Walsegg of Schloss-Stupach, a fellow-freemason, had ordered the Requiem as a memorial for his 20 year-old wife who died earlier that year. As was his practice, Walsegg intended to copy the score into his own hand, and pass it off as his own work. To encourage Mozart’s immediate attention, the Count provided half the fee as a down payment.

While legends still circulate that Mozart, ill and distraught when the mysterious stranger (the Count’s solicitor) arrived during a storm, believed he had been summoned to write his own Requiem, July was actually a month of great happiness for the Mozarts. On the 26th Constanze Mozart delivered a son, Franz Xaver Wolfgang. At this time their first-born, Carl Thomas, was almost seven; between these two births, two sons and two daughters died at birth or in infancy.

Another long-held myth is that Mozart died in poverty. Historian H.C. Robbins Landon reports Mozart’s annual income during his years in Vienna ranged from 2,000 to 6,000 florins. These amounts were derived from performances (typically 500-1,500 fl), students (400-500 fl, when he did teach), commissions (450 fl per opera) and, beginning in 1787, 800 fl as imperial *Kammermusicus*. By comparison, domestic servants were annually paid 10-30 fl; minor administrators, tradespeople, and middle-class professionals 200-1,000 fl; and large merchants and senior government officials 1,000-10,000 fl. Mozart, who was considered little more than a servant in Salzburg, was attracted to Vienna because it was a center for Italian opera and concerts – the perfect place for him to benefit from his extraordinary abilities. Vienna, at the time of Mozart’s death in 1791, had a population of around 260,000.

The Work Begins: When Mozart accepted the commission to compose the Requiem he had already spent two months working on *The Magic Flute* but, for a while, was able to work on both projects. By mid-August he received a commission for *La Clemenza di Tito*, which was scheduled for production in Prague *in three weeks*. All work was halted on both *The Magic Flute* and the *Requiem*, and the new opera was completed within eighteen days! Mozart, accompanied by his wife Constanze and his student Franz Xaver Süssmayr, journeyed to Prague for the premiere on September 6.

Mozart then returned to Vienna, completed a clarinet concerto and attended the premiere of *The Magic Flute* three weeks later. Although illness began to limit his creative flow during the next month, he completed the Masonic cantata *Das Lob der Freundschaft* by November 15. He continued working on the Requiem as his health deteriorated. His letters suggest that, until the final days, he expected a full recovery.

During these final days friends would gather around Mozart’s bedside and sing portions of the *Requiem* with him. Mozart died on December 5, at 12:55 a.m., leaving the *Requiem* unfinished, however, he left instructions for its completion with Süssmayr, who was at his bedside. Many believe it is unlikely that the master would have ever intended such a task to actually be fulfilled by one in whom he apparently had little confidence: Constanze wrote in 1827, “I can still hear Mozart saying, as he often did to Süssmayr, ‘There you stand like a duck in a thunderstorm

again – aren't you ever going to understand?" It is known, however, that Mozart reserved his sharpest comments and scatological epithets for only those whom he liked the most!

The Completion by “Committee:” With the down payment already spent and her source of income now removed, it became imperative for Constanze to deliver a completed Requiem (she ultimately sold the Requiem five times!). To facilitate the completion she turned to three of Mozart's pupils. The incomplete work was first given to Jacob Freystädler, who completed the Kyrie fugue by filling in (not always accurately) the instrumental doubling parts. After he returned the score, it went to Joseph Eybler, who was also a pupil of Albrechtsberger and a protégé of Haydn. A composer of some merit, Eybler succeeded Antonio Salieri as Kapellmeister of the Austrian court. He was forced to resign as Kapellmeister in 1833, however, when he suffered a stroke while conducting, ironically, Mozart's Requiem. Eybler was at Mozart's side in his final weeks and helped care for him. He also was Constanze's first choice to complete the Requiem, but after working on it for several weeks he returned the score. Eybler filled in the instrumental parts from the *Dies Irae* to *Confutatis*, and composed measures 9 and 10 of the *Lacrymosa*.

Constanze then turned to her third choice, Franz Xaver Süssmayr, a 25 year old composer who eventually made his mark in German *Singspiel*. Süssmayr first removed all the contributions of both Freystädler and Eybler, and then completed all the unfinished movements. Although he claimed to have personally composed the *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*, years Constanze reported that she gave some of Mozart's sketches to Süssmayr; this claim is supported by the appearance of motives (brief musical ideas) in the *Sanctus*, *Hosanna* and *Agnus Dei* that link them to earlier passages clearly by Mozart. The opening theme to the *Benedictus*, can be traced to a theme Mozart wrote in a study book for one of his pupils. It is entirely likely that Süssmayr utilized many of the sketches provided to him by Constanze, and then destroyed them.

Süssmayr's Shortcomings: Already in 1800, an article appeared in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* deploring the “highly incorrect instrumental accompaniment” in Süssmayr's completion. Understandably, his level of orchestration was not up to the standard of one of the greatest musical geniuses of all time. Eventually, others tried their hand at making improvements, including Bruno Walter, Sir Thomas Beecham, Richard Strauss, and Benjamin Britten.

In 1971, Franz Beyer published the first alternate orchestration designed to correct Süssmayr's “faults.” In short, Beyer pointed out the crucial elements of Süssmayr's inadequate compositional technique as “accidental clashes, parallels, incorrect harmonies, and premature resolutions between instrumental and vocal parts.” Beyer also noted Süssmayr's “too frequent use of consecutive thirds and unnecessary sevenths, uncharacteristically rigid and repetitive string writing, blurring of the vocal parts by clumsy doubling in the woodwinds and trombones, inconsistent use of trumpet and timpani, and outright alterations of Mozart's own indications.” Beyer concludes that “the noble texture of Mozart's vocal setting is repeatedly and decidedly marred” by Süssmayr's “clumsy part-writing, harmonically wrong notes, elementary mistakes and lack of compositional craft.”

Another new completion, one that removed all of Süssmayr's contributions, was prepared and published by Richard Maunder in 1988; in 1985, by special arrangement with Dr. Maunder, I conducted its Midwest premiere by the Masterworks Chorale. Three additional versions have since appeared: H.C. Robbins Landon, published in 1991; Duncan Druce, published in 1993; and Robert Levin, published in 1994. The Bach Society has previously performed the editions by Süssmayr, Maunder and Druce. For tonight's performance, however, I have selected the completion and re-orchestration by Franz Beyer. I believe it provides the greatest faithfulness to the Requiem of 1791 while correcting the abundance of errors that Mozart would have never permitted.

The Requiem after Mozart: Parts of the Requiem were used shortly after the composer's death in memorial services. The first complete performance, conducted by Baron van Swieten, was given in 1792 in Vienna as a benefit concert for Mozart's widow and two young sons. Soon after the first public performance additional performances were given in Munich and Prague. By 1800 it had become well known throughout Germany and it soon became the only Requiem Mass used for solemn occasions. In 1804 Cherubini introduced the Requiem in Paris, and in 1840 it served as the official Requiem Mass for the interment of Napoleon. Many in our audience will join me in still remembering its being performed in 1963 during our nation's mourning of President Kennedy. It remains a solemn and uplifting experience, a work that feeds both our mind and spirit.

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7:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 23, 2011

St. Francis Xavier (College) Church, St. Louis

Johann Sebastian Bach

1685-1750

Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben, BWV 147

1. Herz und Mund und Tat und Leben

10. Jesus bleibet meine Freude

O Jesu Christ, mein's Lebens Licht, BWV 118

Komm, Jesu, komm, BWV 229

Violin Concerto in E major, BWV 1042

Lenora-Marya Anop, violin

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

1756-1791

Requiem in D minor, K. 626

Stephanie Ann Ball, soprano Erin Haupt, mezzo soprano

Joshua Stanton, tenor Tom W. Sitzler, baritone