
Liverpool John Moores University Series
Mozart's Requiem
Saturday 3 March 2018 7.30pm
sponsored by Liverpool John Moores University

JOSEPH HAYDN (1732-1809)
Symphony No.104 in D major 'London'

Adagio – allegro / Slow – fast
Andante / At a walking pace
Menuetto and trio: allegro / Minuet and trio: fast
Finale: spiritoso / Finale: with spirit

Known in English-speaking countries as the 'London', Haydn's Symphony No.104 in D major is only the last of twelve such works written for performance in London between 1791 and 1795. So why it should have been singled out in that way, by a nickname that could have been applied to any of them, no one really knows. It could be, however, that it is the only one of the twelve which seems to have anything of London in it, the opening theme of the last movement having been claimed as an allusion to the street cry 'Hot Cross Buns'. On the other hand, since that same tune has been identified as the Croatian folksong 'Oj Jelena', by Bartók among others, the symphony could equally well have been nicknamed the 'Croatian'.

First movement

It is actually more remarkable that the construction of the work is motivated by a self-renewing melodic impulse and, as a result, uncommonly well unified by thematic links between the four movements. The purpose of the rising fifth and the falling fourth in the fanfare opening to the slow introduction is not to draw

attention to their own unremarkable presence but to highlight the subversive quality of the chromatic little phrase postulated by the first violins immediately afterwards.

Emphasised by sforzando colouring, this phrase assumes such a high profile in the Adagio that the beginning of the Allegro – just after a brief but significant oboe solo – seems at first to be part of the same introductory process. It is a beautifully contrived transition and at the same time a way of establishing the melodic shape of the first four notes of the main theme of the Allegro as basic to the work. That theme has another important characteristic in the repeated notes which, though it seems unlikely at this stage, are to take obsessive hold of the development section and to become a percussive feature of the recapitulation as well. But it is the opening phrase of the theme which, in the absence of a true second subject, supplies most of the melodic interest of the movement.

Second movement

Those same four notes form also (with the help of one other) the opening phrase of the main theme of the G major Andante. For all the drama of the movement, its spontaneously extended reprise and its thoughtful flute solos, that phrase is virtually the sole source of melodic interest here.

Third movement

Wisely in the circumstances, Haydn gives his basic motif a rest in the next movement – but not without alluding to the main theme of the first movement in another way: it is represented in the theme of the Menuet, though not that of the mellifluous Trio section, by an allusion to the repeated notes which were of such obsessive interest earlier in the work.

Fourth movement

As for the vigorous main theme of the last movement, whether Croatian folk song or London street-cry, it takes only a minor adjustment of the basic motif of the work to match its opening

phrase. Its rustic vigour is balanced by a lyrical, almost languid second subject which, though no thematic relation, shares the harmonic subversiveness of the seminal little sforzando phrase of the introduction to the work. The balance is so well calculated, in fact, that it allows Haydn to build one of the most impressive of all his finale constructions on it.

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WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756-1791)

Requiem in D minor, K626 60'

completed by Franz Xaver Süssmayr (1766-1803)

1. Introit

Requiem aeternam

2. Kyrie

3. Sequence

Dies irae – Tuba mirum – Rex tremendae – Recordare –
Confutatis – Lacrimosa

4. Offertory

Domine Jesu – Hostias

5. Sanctus

6. Benedictus

7. Agnus Dei

8. Communion

Lux aeterna

The myths surrounding Mozart's Requiem go back far beyond Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* (1980), Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Mozart and Salieri* (1898) or the Pushkin play (1831) upon which both are based. And Mozart himself must take responsibility for some of them. He was the first person to start drawing sinister conclusions about the anonymous patron who, sometime around early July 1791, sent a "middle aged, serious, impressive man" to commission a Requiem mass.

Mozart was unwell that summer. Unknown to anyone, he was already in the late stages of the kidney disorder (undiagnosable by 18th-century medicine) that would lead to his death. He experienced mood-swings, during one of which – according, years later, to his wife Constanze – he declared that “I know I must die – someone has given me acqua toffana and has calculated the precise time of my death – for which they have ordered a Requiem, it is for myself I am writing this”. Add an extravagant claim (in 1823) by an elderly and depressed Antonio Salieri, and the ingredients for two centuries of colourful and romantic legends are all present. (Beethoven swallowed Salieri’s claims whole.)

Mozart’s untimely death was a major event in Vienna. On the very day (5 December 1791; he died in the early hours of the 6th) well-wishers gathered in the street beneath his Rauhensteingasse apartment. It’s unsurprising that his unfinished final work – of all things, a Requiem – should have attracted rumours. But since the Second World War, Mozart’s final illnesses have been convincingly diagnosed, and the identity of the Requiem’s mysterious commissioner has been established beyond question.

He was Franz, Count von Walsegg, a kindly, music-loving and mildly eccentric nobleman who enjoyed commissioning works from major composers of the day and having them performed, un-named, to his friends and household (an early variant of the “guess the recording” game that record-collectors like to inflict on their dinner guests even today). The Requiem was for Walsegg’s adored wife Anna, who’d died on Valentine’s Day 1791 aged only 20. Walsegg paid Mozart half of his fee up front; the rest was to be paid on delivery of the completed score.

Hence the secrecy; and hence the haste with which Constanze arranged for the Requiem to be completed after Mozart’s death. Mozart had completed only the Introit in full score, but the Kyrie was largely complete, as were the vocal parts and a figured bass

for the Sequence (as far as the first eight bars of the Lacrimosa) and Offertory. Constanze gave the job of orchestration and completion to Mozart's student (and recent assistant on *La Clemenza de Tito*) Franz Xaver Süssmayr, who later told a Leipzig publisher that he had himself composed the Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei and all but the opening bars of the Lacrimosa.

As more than one scholar has pointed out, Süssmayr was in a no-win situation. He was a capable craftsman but an undistinguished composer ("There you stand like a duck in a thunderstorm" Mozart reportedly teased him "You won't understand that for a long time"). Where the quality of the music is high (such as the Agnus Dei) it's been assumed that he had access to sketches (now lost) by Mozart. Where it's low (the perfunctory Sanctus, and the final Amen of the Lacrimosa – Mozart had clearly indicated a full-dress fugue at this point), it's blamed on Süssmayr. Yet this is the perfectly workable form in which the Requiem has become part of our culture. Ultimately, the major creative decisions – from the haunting dark-hued instrumentation, with its basset horns and trombones, to the decision to conclude the work with the music of the opening – were Mozart's.

For the rest, we can choose from several completions by modern scholars, or one by an actual 18th-century composer, who, moreover, discussed the work directly with Mozart. Like Count Walsegg, Süssmayr deserves sympathy, not scorn; his name, too, might with fairness be added to the blessing with which Walsegg's servant Anton Herzog concluded his account of Mozart's final masterpiece:

"Peace be on the ashes of the great master, and also on his revered patron, to whose liberality we are indebted for this priceless work of art."

1. Introit

Over a heavy tread, bassoons and clarinets sing a lament; the violins heave a mighty sigh and the chorus intones the traditional opening lines of the Requiem Mass. Baroque solemnity alternates with warm consolation (soprano solo).

2. Kyrie

The Kyrie that follows is a stern, powerfully-worked fugue; by this stage, Mozart had assimilated his studies of JS Bach entirely into his own expressive language.

3. Sequence

The terrifying vision of the Dies Irae is traditionally the angriest point of the Requiem Mass; Mozart unleashes dramatic power worthy of Don Giovanni. For the Tuba Mirum, however, he takes a more serene approach, with a lyrical trombone solo making the Last Trumpet a voice of consolation rather than threat.

In the Rex tremendae the full chorus begs for mercy first to music of baroque severity, and then, more beseechingly on a dying fall. The Recordare is like a vision of paradise at the heart of the Sequence; the words explore Jesus' role as redeemer and Good Shepherd and Mozart matches them with expressive, serenely unfurling vocal solos.

The furious ostinato of Confutatis comes as a savage jolt, though the womens' pleading cry of Voca me echoes the compassion of the Recordare and the music winds down, over a quietly pulsing heartbeat, into the Lacrimosa. Mozart completed only the first eight bars, but it seems certain that he left sketches and instructions sufficient to allow Süßmayr to complete one of music's most poignant expressions of grief.

4. Offertory

Mozart refrains from all but the most basic expressive comment on the text of the Domine Jesu; for all its bustling contrapuntal figuration and masterly vocal ensemble writing, it has a strangely subdued quality – as if Mozart was stepping back in awe from the Biblical vision. The more hopeful words of the Hostias are set to music by turns luminously serene (reminiscent of his great communion anthem Ave Verum Corpus), and blazing with spiritual conviction. The final appeal to the word of the Law, Quam olim Abrahae is set – of course – to another masterful fugue.

5. Sanctus

Left with only the most basic of sketches by Mozart, Süssmayr first evokes the necessary sense of majesty, and then appends a vigorous Osanna fugue – sensibly choosing to try and match Mozart neither in ambition nor complexity.

6. Benedictus

The Benedictus is a peaceful blessing, in the sunlit key of B flat major. No sketches by Mozart survive either of this movement or of the Agnus Dei, and Süssmayr claimed that both were entirely his own work. If so, he handles his forces – from poised solo quartet to quiet trombones – with an assurance that would have done his teacher proud, and rounds the movement off with a reprise of the Osanna fugue.

7. Agnus Dei

The ominously swirling violins and sense of pain at the start of this usually tranquil movement have led some commentators to speculate that it is substantially by Mozart himself. Süssmayr was clear that he alone was the composer.

8. Communion

The music of the opening returns, now in a sunlit major key, and with angelic solo soprano replacing the sepulchral mens' voices of the Requiem aeternam: "Let everlasting light shine upon them, O Lord". Mozart specified that the final section of the Mass should be set to the music of the first; thus it was his vision that it should close with a return to the Kyrie fugue, bringing his life's work to an end in tones of solemn and sorrowful grandeur.

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