

Chapter 1

Context and History

No work of art, however great, is created in a vacuum, and an artist cannot approach a new project without, to however small an extent, being aware of the historical and intellectual context within which they work. But composers—at least, not perhaps until well into the twentieth century—are not historians or social scientists: they don't search for trends or historical relationships; they don't categorise, generate theories, or propose systems of interpretation. Rather, their sense of context and history is filtered through their own creative personality: they absorb whatever is useful to them and transform it to suit their needs.

Fortunately, the study of the history of music has long rid itself of the notion that the arc of musical time represents a unidirectional arrow of progress from a less sophisticated past towards the more enlightened present. No longer are earlier works seen mostly as necessary pre-cursors of later, greater ones, but are evaluated in their own right. In fact, if anything, the splintering of compositional techniques in the early twentieth century into many different schools, and the development of avant-garde philosophies encouraged a new reverence for the past, and a determination to unlock its secrets. An important component of this approach has been the desire to avoid anachronistic approaches to earlier works, attempting instead to recreate the context within which a composition was produced.

In the last half-century or so, a large body of articles, books, performances and recordings covering a sometimes bewilderingly wide spectrum of perspectives has provided audiences with a rich array of choices for encountering the music of the past. However, whilst the modern listener can now easily trace the lineage of a work directly backwards from its inception to any particular point in the past, the composer must do something much harder—start with a blank piece of music paper and peer into the future.

From a contemporary perspective, an unfinished work occupies a fascinating point on the continuum between looking backwards and forwards, between evaluating what was written in relationship to its context and circumstances and projecting forward to what it might have become. A work that was left incomplete by its composer but finished by a contemporary (or contemporaries!) is a *rara avis* indeed, and presents an even more complex web of contexts.

As if that web were not already impenetrable enough in the case of the Mozart Requiem, in order to begin to assemble the context within which it came into being, three different threads need to be untangled: the multiple contemporary (and near contemporary) claims, counterclaims and controversies about its authorship; the exaggerations, fond imaginings and even downright fabrications by members of the immediate circle of Mozart's friends, supporters and family about how the piece came to be in the state it was when Mozart abandoned work on it towards the end of November 1791; and finally, the accretions of more than two centuries of performance history that profoundly affect how the modern listener experiences the work.

Superfluous as it might seem, an important first step is to remember that the term 'requiem' would have meant something quite different to Mozart at the end of the 18th century than it does to musicians and audiences who are familiar with the masterpieces of the genre composed by Berlioz, Verdi, and Brahms in the century that followed, which were largely conceived for concert performance. Partly because of the time in which it was composed—at the beginning of a tectonic shift in the position of arts in European intellectual society—and partly because of the methods (often orchestrated by Mozart's widow) by which the work was kept before the public eye in the first half century after its composition, the Mozart Requiem quickly acquired a larger-than-life, almost mythic aura that helped to define the genre and make the later 19th century masterpieces possible. The layers of legend that soon multiplied around it infused the work with exactly the right kind of supernatural qualities craved by the highly excitable Romantic imagination.

Ironically, one of the roots of the work's fame and reputation was not so much that Mozart died before he could finish it (much as that appealed to the *zeitgeist*), the nature of the music that Mozart composed, or even the way in which his widow accomplished its completion: it was the music he *didn't* compose that gained the work early notoriety. While the music supplied by the various 'masters' that Constanze engaged to fill in the missing parts of Mozart's score undoubtedly helped create a deeper realisation of his genius, the criticism of the non-Mozartian parts was focused not only on their being unworthy both of Mozart, but of the form itself. Indeed, Mozart's last masterpiece helped establish the requiem form as an artistic expression of considerable cultural importance that was rapidly becoming detached from its original, purely liturgical purpose.

The liturgy for the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead, *missa pro defunctis*, was codified by Pope Pius V in the Papal bull *Quo Primum* on July 14th, 1570, which standardised the texts to be used for all rites of the church throughout the Catholic world, including the funeral rite. Of course, music for these occasions existed well before 1570, but after the standardisation, the *missa pro defunctis* began to acquire a gravitas of its own, both for the composer and for the

commissioner. While works for purely liturgical use continued to be composed, a new type of more public expression began to emerge, often commissioned to commemorate people of a certain social standing, and not always within the church. “Composers were aware of the importance both of the prominent figure behind the commission and the public nature of the performance of their music.”¹ Notable examples are the *Messe de morts* of Jean Gilles (1668-1705), commissioned by members of the Toulouse parliament to mark the passing of two of its members, and the *Emperor’s Requiem* of Johann Joseph Fux (1660-1741), composed for the funeral of the widow of Leopold I.² Relevant to any discussion of Mozart’s addition to the genre is Michael Haydn’s Requiem in C minor, whose dedicatee is enshrined in the full title of the work: *Missa pro defuncto Archiepiscopo Sigismundo*, composed following the death of Count Archbishop Sigismund von Schrattenbach. It is well known that, as members of the archiepiscopal chapel,³ Mozart and his father participated in a performance of the work in Salzburg in 1772, an encounter that was to prove seminal, when, in mid-1791, he came to consider how to fulfill the famously secret commission to commemorate the passing of Countess Anna Walsegg. In its use of a plainsong melody for the text ‘Te decet hymnus’⁴, the Haydn work displays one of the salient features of a *missa pro defunctis* that differentiates it from other purely liturgical masses or other concerted church music, namely its use of, or reference to, older musical styles and techniques.⁵ There is no space here to discuss the reasons for the development of this practice, but the borrowing of the solemnity of previous masters undoubtedly amplified the austerity of the occasion and infused the musical language of the day with a depth it might not usually possess.

Such a tradition seems very well suited to where Mozart’s musical imagination was leading him in 1791, because when the commission arrived, he had been undertaking a self-directed study of earlier church music for some time. In his letter to city council of Vienna requesting to be appointed adjunct (unpaid!) Kapellmeister to Leopold Hofmann at St. Stephen’s Cathedral, Mozart ends by saying: “I believe I may claim to be better fitted for it than many others, in view of the knowledge of church music that I have cultivated...”⁶ While this might be the expected hyperbole of a job application, Alan Tyson’s research has shown that the many unfinished pieces of church

¹ Pamela McDermott, *The Requiem Reinvented: Brahms’ Ein deutsches Requiem and the Transformation from Literal to Symbolic*, PhD Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2010, p. 30

² Premiered on March 5th, 1720, significantly in Vienna

³ cf Wolff, *Mozart’s Requiem: Historical and Analytical Studies* (trans. Mary Whittall) University of California Press, 1994, p. 65

⁴ at exactly the same point that Mozart introduces one in his own requiem

⁵ This was a very early development: one of the first polyphonic settings, the *Missa pro defunctis* by Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410–1497), is untypical of the rest of his music in that he uses the chant in the top voice while the other voices accompany almost fauxbourdon style, an archaic practice by that time

⁶ As translated in Wolff, p. 119-20

music and transcriptions of liturgical works by Georg Reutter (1708-72)⁷ found in Mozart's *Nachlass* date from 1789 or 1790 onwards, before he wrote to the city council. This must surely be the cultivation to which Mozart was referring. He noted in his application letter that Hofmann had been ill (and rejoicing in his recovery): had Mozart been immersing himself in liturgical music in the expectation that Hofmann would not recover and he would succeed him? Or did this study truly represent his feelings about the genre? According to Constanze via Niemetschek,⁸ church music was Mozart's "favourite form of composition" and that therefore the requiem commission represented the opportunity to "try his hand at this type of composition, the more so as the higher forms of church music had always appealed to his genius."⁹ Whether this is another of Constanze's fabrications or a true representation of Mozart's feelings, the transcriptions and incomplete scores are proof of Mozart's cultivation of a knowledge of church music, with the result that he was almost uniquely well-prepared to take on the requiem commission.

Contributing further to this absorption of older music was Mozart's relationship with Gottfried van Swieten (1733-1803), who was Prefect of the Imperial Library and a strong supporter of Mozart, personally paying the expenses of his funeral. Van Swieten was also a collector of musical scores by past masters, and the host of concerts at which many of them were performed. Mozart wrote of their acquaintance in a letter to his father on April 10th, 1782: "I go every Sunday at twelve o'clock to Baron van Swieten, where nothing is played but Handel and Bach. I am now making a collection of the Bach fugues (Sebastian's) – and also those of Emanuel and Friedemann Bach, and likewise of Handel."¹⁰ At a time when Mozart's fortunes (in both meanings of the word) were at a low ebb, van Swieten not only provided him with income by engaging him to conduct his concert series, but also the opportunity to get to know Handel's music on a deeper level. Van Swieten commissioned Mozart to provide new orchestrations of *Messiah* (K. 572, 1789), *Alexander's Feast* (K. 591, 1790) and *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* (K. 592, 1790) which were performed at the salons. Given the Handelian provenance of the themes of the *Kyrie* fugue of K. 626, it is astonishing how little weight has been given to Mozart's scoring of *Messiah* as it pertains to the orchestration of the Requiem. These implications will be discussed in Chapter 6.

⁷ former Kapellmeister at St. Stephen's, succeeded by Hofmann

⁸ Franz Xaver Niemetschek (1766-1849), *Lebensbeschreibung des K.K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart* (1808)

⁹ As translated in Wolff, p. 123-4

¹⁰ The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Vol. II, translated from the collection of Ludwig Nohl, by Lady Wallace Hurd and Houghton, (1866), p. 124. Interestingly, in the same letter he asks his father to "send him the six fugues of Handel and Eberlin's toccatas and fugues"

In addition to the Sunday morning salons, the concerts and the Handel orchestrations, Mozart seems to have had access to van Swieten’s fine library, which contained such Baroque masterpieces as Bach’s *Magnificat* (BWV 243). It is not known whether saw it there or studied it, so it may never be known whether it is merely a strange co-incidence that Mozart used the same plainsong melody for “Te decet hymnus” that Bach had used for “Suscepit Israel” at the same place in his opening movement where Michael Haydn used the *Lamentatio*, or whether he made a some sort of textual (or even theological) connection between God helping “his servant Israel” and the hymn sung to God in Zion.

A more direct connection with Bach’s choral music resulted from his 1789 visit to Leipzig and his meeting with Bach’s successor at St. Thomas, Johann Friedrich Doles (1715-1797), where he heard a performance of *Singet dem Herrn* (BWV 225). Mozart procured a copy which it seems he studied carefully and on which he wrote “NB Müsste in ganzes Orchester dazu gesetzt werden.”¹¹ Sadly, no such orchestration exists, but it is noteworthy that the observation comes around the time of his *Messiah* orchestration and during the period when he was ‘cultivating a knowledge of church music.’ Whether he undertook the project (and the score is now lost) or not, there can be no doubt that the counterpoint in K. 626 owes more to Bach than Handel.

Van Swieten’s library may well have been where Mozart encountered Handel’s Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline “The ways of Zion do mourn” (HWV 264) on which he based the opening of his requiem, transposing it from G minor to D minor and off-setting the bass and upper voices by a quaver:

Larghetto e staccato

The musical score consists of six staves. From top to bottom: Oboes, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Alto, and Continuo. The Oboe staff has a melodic line starting with a half rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note C5, a quarter note Bb4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, a quarter note E4, a quarter note D4. The Violin I and II staves play a rhythmic accompaniment of quarter notes. The Viola staff plays a similar rhythmic accompaniment. The Alto staff is mostly silent. The Continuo staff has figured bass notation below the staff: 6, 7, #, 7, 6, 6, 7, 6, 6, 6, #, 6, 6, 6.

¹¹ “should really have a full orchestral accompaniment written for it” (as translated in Wolff, p. 83, n. 29)

The ways of Zion do mourn, do mourn

7 6 7 6 6 # 6 6 6 7 6 7 6 6 #

As noted above, this reference to older music had long been an essential part of the *missa pro defunctis*, but here Mozart so transforms the source material that it sounds fully modern rather than archaic. While the text of the Handel anthem is not liturgical, it may be that Mozart saw a connection between funeral for the beloved spouse of a monarch¹² and the recently deceased wife of his commissioner; perhaps he was drawn to such an evocative expression of public grief, or simply reacted as a composer to the plangent suspensions and pathetic harmonies.

It is harder to see a contextual connection between his borrowings of the dual fugue subjects of the final movement of Handel’s *Dettingen Anthem* (HWV 265),¹³ composed in honour of a somewhat inconsequential military victory, and the occasion of the funeral rites of the Catholic church. But the much-noted similarity of the Anthem’s “Alleluia” fugue subject to that of *Messiah*’s “And with his stripes” that he had orchestrated just two years before must have struck Mozart immediately. For the Requiem he transposed both subjects to the minor mode, making small adjustments here and there in the semiquaver melismas, sometimes as late as writing the final version into the Requiem autograph. The use of the two themes together clearly identifies the *Dettingen Anthem* as the source rather than happenstance, and perhaps the fact that their provenance is a joyful secular occasion rather than a solemn liturgical one warns of the danger of reading too much into the context of Mozart’s sources: it could simply be that his boundless musical imagination found material that inspired him and he transformed it according to his personality and the needs of the occasion.

¹² as Queen Caroline had been a staunch patron and even friend of Handel, the profound outpouring of grief in this movement probably expresses Handel’s own feelings, not just the result of a composer’s art

¹³ also presumably in van Swieten’s library

Allegro moderato (voice parts only)

We will re-joice in thy sal-
 va-tion. We will re-joice in thy sal-va-tion.
 Al-le-lu-ja, al-le-lu-ja. We will re-joice in thy sal-va-tion.
 etc.

6 6 6 7 6 6 5 3

The importance of this brief discussion of the genesis of K. 626 is that it shows how Mozart clearly thought deeply about what a requiem was and what he wanted his to be, and prepared carefully before embarking on it.¹⁴ The importance of this for the modern editor-completer is that the team of composers who were tasked with finishing Mozart's incomplete realisation of that plan, hadn't. They had done none of the background work and there is no evidence that they even knew the music he had studied as part of his preparations, or even realised that it hadn't sprung fully-formed from his pen. Essentially, they were presented with a score whose intricacies were so outside their sphere of experience that they must surely have been nearly overwhelmed with a sense of their inadequacy.

While it may perhaps be misleading to refer to them as a 'team', four composers have traditionally been linked with different stages of the completion. Of the four, Joseph Eybler (1765-1846) and Franz Xaver Süssmayr (1766-1803) are the best known and undoubtedly did the most work. It is to be regretted that Eybler abandoned his attempt so early in the process, for his orchestrations are skillful, but it may not be a coincidence that he withdrew from the project at the point where the composition of new music was required. Two observations are noteworthy about

¹⁴ it is hard to imagine, even for Mozart, that he did all this in his head. There must have been pages of sketches and workings out that are now lost

Eybler's contribution quite separately from their content. First, his handwriting is noticeably different from Mozart's and he made no attempt to make it look like Mozart's. Second, he wrote his additions directly into Mozart's autograph score.¹⁵ It therefore follows that, since the score that was handed to Count Walsegg would need to have a unified appearance to maintain the fiction that Mozart had completed more than he had, the score with Eybler's work could not be what would be presented to him. It must therefore have been the plan from the very beginning that Mozart's pupil would not be the only person involved in the forgery. Since the secret commissioner was, by definition, unknown to her, Constanze could not be sure that he didn't own other manuscripts by her husband and therefore able to make a comparison and reject the work of an imposter. That would have endangered the second half of the commission fee owed to Mozart on completion of the work, money she desperately needed. What Constanze needed was someone either whose hand writing was similar to Mozart's or who would be both able and prepared to imitate it. Enter Süßmayr on the scene: having worked with Mozart as recently as *Die Zauberflöte*¹⁶ and *La clemenza di Tito*,¹⁷ he fit the bill nicely. It cannot be ruled out that it was Constanze's first idea to use the unfortunate brunt of so much of Mozart's occasionally sharp tongue as only a copyist, not a composer, for when she engaged Eybler¹⁸ she cannot have known that he would eventually feel unequal to the task and withdraw from the project.

So much opprobrium has been heaped on poor Süßmayr that the enormity of what he achieved has too often been overlooked. Only approached as a last resort, he kept going when other more favoured¹⁹ or more experienced composers were either unwilling or felt unable to. He was prepared to risk filling the enormous gaps left in Mozart's autograph despite being quite aware that his work would be "unworthy of [Mozart's] great name."²⁰ Generations of music lovers owe him a debt of gratitude, and recently there has been somewhat of a revival of the popularity of his completion in preference to the (now many) modern editions.

In 1973, based on handwriting analysis, Leopold Nowak identified Franz Jacob Freystädler (1761-1841) as the composer who provided the string and wind parts of the *Kyrie* fugue,²¹ suggesting that he was engaged to help ready the first two movements so they could be performed

¹⁵ From our perspective two centuries later, it is quite astonishing that people so close to Mozart would sanction the marring of a historical document in that way

¹⁶ Presumably making rehearsal materials

¹⁷ Possibly writing some of the secco recitatives

¹⁸ He signed a contract with her to complete the Requiem on December 21st, 1791

¹⁹ Mozart's opinion of Eybler was that he was: "a young musician about whom one's only regret can be that there are so few like him" (see Wolff, p. 25 n. 70)

²⁰ Letter to Breitkopf & Härtel, February 8th, 1800

²¹ "Wer hat die Instrumentalstimen in der Kyrie-fuge des Requiem von W.A. Mozart geschrieben?" Mozart Jahrbuch, (1973-4) p. 191-201

at the funeral service held for Mozart at St. Michael's church on December 10th. It should be noted that, while Freystädler had received a grounding in Fuxian counterpoint from Mozart, up to 1791 he had composed no church music, so he was perhaps far from an ideal candidate for all but the simpler tasks. Recently, doubt has been cast on his participation,²² and it may be that the author of the parts of the score that Nowak attributes to Freystädler will never be known.

Finally, there is Maximilian Stadler (1748-1833), a long-standing friend of the Mozart family, a respected musician and scholar. A copy of the *Domine Jesu* and *Hostias* exists in his handwriting, containing what is probably his own orchestration of the movements. It is not known exactly when (or why) he made this score, but since it is virtually identical to Süssmayr's version, and there would seem to be no reason for Stadler to copy the work of the younger and less experienced musician, it is more likely that the copying was done by Süssmayr.²³ Ultimately, Stadler's greatest impact on the shape of the Mozart Requiem as we know it today was as the most respected authority on the work when it came to trying to untangle the myriad threads of "who did what, when and why" during the preparation of the Requiem for publication in the early 1800s. His his detailed and impassioned defence of the work from the attacks of Gottfried Weber²⁴ in his *Vertheidigung der Echtheit des Mozartschen Requiem*²⁵ is invaluable in clarifying many issues regarding Mozart's autograph score, and sometimes as important for what it doesn't say as for what it reveals.

This is only a very brief summary of some of the issues relating to how the score as we know it came in to being. Much more detailed writings on the topic are numerous, occasionally contentious, and widely available. What must be emphasised at this point is that for the modern editor-completer, such discussions can be of lesser consequence than the act of evaluating and, if necessary, attempting to ameliorate the passages of the traditional version that are not in Mozart's hand. There is no less debate about whether a modern editor-completer can ever be an improvement on the work of Mozart's contemporaries, who knew him well and were involved in performances of his music in the last six months of his life. However, this line of argument only raises a question that has not yet been given a satisfactory answer: if temporal and physical proximity to Mozart

²² see for example, Michael Lorenz, <http://michaelorenz.blogspot.com/2013/08/freystadtlers-supposed-copying-in.html>

²³ Meaning Stadler's score must have been made some time in early 1792. It cannot be ruled out that he did so to lighten Süssmayr's work load, but that remains in the realm of conjecture

²⁴ *Über die Echtheit des Mozartschen Requiem* (1825) with three more articles from 1826-7

²⁵ 1826, followed by two addenda in 1827

were the most valid qualifications for finishing his final masterpiece, how could Eybler and Süssmayr be of such divergent opinions on the subject of how to do so?

What was it about the Requiem that made the task of completing it so very far from the *'mere remplissage'* as the task was described by Vincent Novello,²⁶ or, in the words of Maximilian Stadler 'what most composers leave for their amanuensis to do'.²⁷ Stadler's statement is extraordinary, even if one allows for the fact that it may have been made more in generous support of Mozart's widow by exaggerating her husband's contribution to the work and therefore its commercial viability rather than as an objective 'expert' evaluation. He had seen Mozart's incomplete score, even made his own copy of some of it, and therefore knew just how much was missing. So, the question remains: why was the task so hard?

Some of the difficulty must surely have stemmed from the extended and detailed study Mozart had undertaken, described above: neither Eybler nor Süssmayr had done so. Another contributing factor may have been Joseph II's *Gottesdienstordnung* in 1783, which had made orchestral accompaniment of church music less attractive to composers.²⁸ Eybler and Süssmayr can have heard very little, if any, new music in the genre, and certainly none by Mozart, who had composed no masses since the Mass in C minor some eight years before. Even if they had been able to examine the score of K. 427, they would have realised that the nature and purpose of the two works were so different that the earlier incomplete work was of little help in finishing the second. Not only must they have found the contrapuntal complexity of the Requiem autograph intimidating (to say the least), there was also the unusual sound world created by the rare bass horns in F. Everything about the Requiem spoke of both a new direction in Mozart's liturgical music and the exploration of an expressivity unusual at the time in liturgical music in general.

Had Mozart completed all the movements identically—with the choral parts and basso continuo completed and the occasional instrumental figure 'here and there'—then Eybler's task would have been much closer to the role of amanuensis that Stadler suggested, since there would have been only the instrumentation left to complete, for which he was well-qualified. But three movements were completely lacking, and one consisted of only its opening. It is now generally accepted that the first eight bars of the *Lacrymosa* were not, as was once thought, the last music Mozart wrote into the score, but that he merely paused or hesitated at the point, moving on to compose the choral parts for the *Domine Jesu* and *Hostias*.²⁹ It follows therefore that it was not ill-

²⁶ A Mozart Pilgrimage: Being the Travel Diaries of Mary and Vincent Novello in the Year 1829, Novello, 1955 p. 130

²⁷ Maximilian Stadler, *Vertheidigung der Echtheit des Mozart'schen Requiem*, Vienna, 1827, as quoted in Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem, Historical and Analytical Studies*, trans. Mary Whittall, University of California, 1994, p. 150 [Doc 22]

²⁸ Recently David White has made the case that the effects of the *Gottesdienstordnung* have been somewhat exaggerated

²⁹ for a more detailed discussion of this topic see Chapter 4.

health or lack of time that left the *Lacrymosa* hanging in mid-air. It is inconceivable that as gifted a melodist as Mozart would break off composition because he couldn't think of the next eight bars: it is far more plausible that it was how what followed fit into the framework of the piece that gave him pause. How should the old and new elements be integrated into the structure of the work? What did his requiem need at that point? I believe that is what caused the Requiem autograph to be in the incomplete state it was when Mozart took to his sick bed on November 20th, *but intending to return to it on his recovery*.³⁰ If Mozart himself had not yet fully decided on how to proceed in the *Lacrymosa*, why would anyone expect that lesser composers would have an easier time of it, however well they knew him?

The *Gottesdienstordnung* was not solely concerned with musical matters. Whilst its more fundamental motives many have had a political origin, *in toto* it reflected one of the goals of the Enlightenment, to bring about a new balance of influence between church and state. During Mozart's lifetime a 'general process of rationalization and secularization...rapidly overthrew theology's age-old hegemony...'³¹ Unlike Franz Joseph Haydn, who was a sincere and devout Catholic, Mozart was not a religious man: any search for the spiritual during his stay during his Vienna years seems to have been satisfied as much by his activities as a Freemason than as a religious observer. Even if his interest in freemasonry was influenced partly by the opportunity to meet potential patrons he might meet there and only in part by its ceremonies and philosophies, the fact that Mozart wrote more music for masonic lodges than for the church after he arrived in Vienna is illustrative of the declining influence of the church on intellectual thought, and of its concomitant monopoly on religious or spiritual expression in the arts. The title of the lodge Mozart attended in 1791 was 'Zur Neugekrönten Hoffnung' (To new-crowned hope) and this seems to have described Mozart's spiritual philosophy as well as any religious affiliation, which, outside any musical duties, did not extend much beyond attending the baptism of his children. The extent to which this was a reflection of personal conviction, a lessening of the need to display religious orthodoxy in public, or the result of the decline of the church in many areas of Viennese life—or a blend of all three—is hard to determine.

Reports that Mozart believed he was writing in anticipation of his own demise soon attached themselves to the mythos that surrounded the requiem. What did that idea mean to a man who had no strong belief system? It must be remembered that attitudes to death in Mozart's time were quite different from what they are today. To a very great extent, modern medicine, hygiene

³⁰ See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the Amen fugue sketch.

³¹ Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, Oxford, 2002, p. 4.

and nutrition have shielded modern developed countries from the everyday nature of mortality that was the reality for Mozart's contemporaries. For them, death was much more present: it was a common occurrence to lose children either at birth or in the early years of childhood,³² frequently women did not survive childbirth, disease and infection were rife, epidemic struck quickly and killed indiscriminately.³³ Their approach to death was much more pragmatic, one might almost say phlegmatic. A good example comes from Mozart's own writing, in a letter to his father on the 4th April, 1787:

As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relationships with this best and truest friend of mankind that death's image is no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling, and I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity...of learning that death is the key which unlocks the door to our happiness.³⁴

Note that it is death that he mentions as the 'best and truest friend of mankind', with whom he has a close relationship, not God. Mozart's description shows a young man grappling with his own mortality, confident not only of his ability to do so, but, more importantly, of his right to do so, free from any sense of doctrinal compunction, not out the sense of individual self-absorption of the Romantic, but the rational 'enlightened' entitlement of all people to do so.

The opera *Don Giovanni* is revealing regarding Viennese attitudes towards death and redemption in the late 1780s. The famous Commendatore scene presents the sinning Don with not just a choice between repentance and death, but between self-determination and bowing to theological doctrine, between self-determination (however depraved) and submission. Beyond the somewhat formulaic "Questo è il fin di chi fa mal, e de' perfidi la morte all vita è sempre equal"³⁵ there is remarkably little discussion of Giovanni's choice, no moralistic "that's the end that awaits us all unless..." Clearly this was not a taboo subject in Vienna. Whilst the audience at the second production in 1788 probably enjoyed watching "Il Dissoluto" receive his just reward and disappear into the pit of fire, they were quite content without the return of the rest of the cast to discuss their post-Giovanni plans with which Mozart and Da Ponte thought it necessary to end the premiere in Prague. While that ending perhaps provides a better balance of the tragic and comic elements necessary for a 'drama giocosa' as Da Ponte's libretto calls it (Mozart himself called it an *opera*

³² Wolfgang and Constanze had six children, only two of whom survived into adulthood

³³ One of the latest theories of the cause of Mozart's death is from just such a 'mini epidemic', namely a streptococcal infection in Vienna from December 1791-Jan 1792 (Richard H. C. Hegers, Andreas Weigl and Andrew Steptoe: The Death of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: An Epidemiologic Perspective, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, August 18, 2009, published online [<http://www.annals.org/content/151/4/274.abstract>]

³⁴ see Andrew Steptoe, *The Mozart-Da Ponte Operas*, OUP, 1988, p. 84

³⁵ 'This is the end of the evil-doer, the death of a sinner always reflects his life'

buffa in his *Verzeichnis*), the temperament of contemporary Viennese audiences embraced the darker side of the story. They were quite content for the Don to meet his deserved end in purely human terms, without the need for religious commentary.

It would make sense, therefore, that the times were ready for a Requiem that was not just a well-executed interpretation of the liturgical text with its traditional metaphors and musical gestures, but one which explored the subject of death, redemption and the threat of hell from a human perspective. Mozart, the supreme opera composer, was the perfect person to provide them with one. As Brigid Brophy puts it: “Mozart’s value as an operatic dramatist lies not only in his musical ability as a classical artist, but also in the psychological understanding and the relevance of that understanding for today.”³⁶ Mozart had a deep understanding of the psychology of the Vienna of his day, and that insight and his Enlightenment-influenced *Weltanschauung* were vital parts of his conception of the narrative arc of his Requiem.

While the core of the work in purely structural terms is the chorus, the orchestra plays a much larger role in the psychological drama of the Requiem than was customary in religious music of the time. Here again, Mozart lived at a turning point, for the instrumental element of K. 626 fulfills more than just an accompanimental function. Indeed, it is not too strong to say that after Mozart’s Requiem audiences *expected* a requiem to have a psychological drama, even if they would not have described the experience in those terms.³⁷

The idea that music without a text could have an inherent narrative and even ‘meaning’ arose parallel with the proto-Romantic *Sturm und Drang* movement of the 1760s and 1770s. Moving beyond the symbols of the *Affektenlehre*, musical forms began to achieve a somewhat universal cohesion, wherein the structure and discourse of a particular genre began to be imbued with an inner narrative not only understood by the educated listener, but looked for and engaged. ‘The symphony could take over from drama not only the expression of sentiment but the narrative effect of dramatic action, of intrigue and resolution.’³⁸ This change can also be traced in the decline of the *da capo* aria—which places equal emphasis on singer and composer—in favour of arias shaped entirely by the composer, often along sonata-style principals that favoured musical/character development over the dramatically static and predictable form that featured only

³⁶ David Naugle, Søren Kierkegaard’s Interpretation of Mozart’s Opera Don Giovanni: An Appraisal and Theological Response, p. 2, n.2. See http://www3.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/kierkegaard_dongiovanni.pdf, accessed 1/28/2016

³⁷ Although obviously not a requiem, one only has to compare Beethoven’s Mass in C with his Missa Solemnis to see just how far this process would be taken in the first quarter century after Mozart’s death.

³⁸ Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, Norton, 1988, p.9

ornamented repeats. Similarly, the gradual demise of improvised cadenzas in concertos in favour of fully-notated music provided by the composer allowed a more precise balancing of the dramatic argument of the piece and maintained the ascendancy of composer over performer.³⁹ By the last decade of the 18th century, the idea that a piece of music should have a narrative arc that was served by the structure, rather than subservient to it, was in the ascendancy. Mozart had excelled in all these forms—opera, symphony and concerto—infusing each successive work with a unique expressivity rather than merely skillfully executing a pre-set structural design with well-crafted, appropriately designed music. Indeed, his works helped to establish the idea that musical gestures could, and should, be imbued with a psychological depth of their own.

After he moved to Vienna in 1781, which required making a living from the proceeds of teaching, commissions and subscription concerts, Mozart composed the string of piano concertos and symphonies upon which his reputation still rests, and which, like the Requiem ten years later, played a large part in establishing these forms as major artistic statements independent of noble patronage. However, as Mozart's letters to his father show, he was acutely aware of the distinction between what was popular and what was for the connoisseur. Father and son were often in disagreement over what direction his career should follow. Leopold usually advocated the path of popularity, no doubt out of parental concern for his son's financial security, whereas Wolfgang preferred to compose music that he considered worthy of his prodigious talent (about which he was in no doubt). A letter to his father dated December 28th, 1782, not only echoes their frequent arguments, but shows Wolfgang's attempts to bridge the two approaches. Speaking of the piano concertos K. 413, 414 and 415 he writes:

These concertos are a happy medium between what is too easy and too difficult; they are very brilliant, pleasing to the ear, and natural, without being vapid. There are passages here and there from which the connoisseurs alone can derive satisfaction; but these passages are written in such a way that the less learned cannot fail to be pleased, though without knowing why. . . .⁴⁰

Leopold's fears for reception of his son's music were not without foundation. Early reviews of the "Haydn" quartets (and K. 421 and 428 were composed within months of the above letter to his father) show the dilemma quite clearly:

An anonymous early reviewer, writing in Cramer's Magazin der Musik in 1789, gave a judgment characteristic of reaction to Mozart's music at the time, namely that the works were inspired, but

³⁹ This practice became increasingly important as concerts featuring specialist performers presenting concertos they had not themselves composed became more popular

⁴⁰ Mozart's Letters, Edited and Introduced by Eric Blom, trans. Emily Anderson, Penguin, 1956, p. 204

too complex and difficult to enjoy: “Mozart’s works do not in general please quite so much [as those of Kozeluch] ... [Mozart’s] six quartets ... dedicated to Haydn confirm ... that he has a decided leaning towards the difficult and the unusual. But then, what great and elevated ideas he has too, testifying to a bold spirit!”⁴¹

Too often, for Leopold’s tastes, his son gravitated towards the ‘difficult’ and the ‘unusual’, he ‘would repeatedly assert that his music was not “for those with long ears”⁴² who were unprepared to give more than superficial attention to his music argumentation.’⁴³ If his music was to embody this new taste for psychological intent and content, his audience had better pay attention. Perhaps this is at the root of Mozart’s concentration, as he reached his mid-thirties, on music during which the audience ‘was expected to concentrate solely on listening to the music from beginning to end ... music for connoisseurs who could be offered a more demanding fare.’⁴⁴ So many of Mozart’s mature works from 1788 onwards show this tendency, from the famous finale of the Jupiter Symphony K. 551, the Prussian Quartets (K. 575, 589 and 590) the Clarinet Quintet K. 581, the last Piano Concerto K. 595,⁴⁵ and the Clarinet Concerto K. 622 to name but a few. All show the increasing integration of counterpoint, a growing equality between the voices, a pairing down of musical gestures, a higher degree of motivic development and therefore thematic unity, a love for modulation to remote chromatic keys not out of a desire to be shocking but rather from a desire to investigate all the possibilities of a theme, idea or character: all these elements show Mozart formulating a new highly integrated and flexible musical language. As Wolff notes, the music of this period ‘reveals a clear intensification in the inventive exploitation of the musical possibilities, while the means of employed were reduced...[and in many other late works there is an] intensification of thematic-motivic working alongside an increasingly simplified rhythmic-melodic profile.’⁴⁶

These seminal works were composed at a time, when church music was not an attractive field for composers, and as a freelancer without any contractual requirement to do so, Mozart composed none. Therefore the stylistic development he had undertaken in those other forms had not been applied to a church music context: when he contemplated how to approach the Requiem he must quickly have realised the gap in style and intent between his older church music and the language he was using in mid-1791. The closest he came to church music in this period was the

⁴¹ see Deutsch, Otto Erich, *Mozart: A Documentary Biography*, Stanford, 1965, p. 349

⁴² Mozart’s derogatory term referring to the musically illiterate as donkeys

⁴³ Volkmar Braunbehrens: *Mozart - The Conservative Revolutionary*, a talk given on January 27th, 2006 in Schetzingen, translated by Bruce Cooper Clarke, p. 8. See www.aproposmozart.com under Volkmar Braunbehrens, p. 8

⁴⁴ Braunbehrens, *ibid*, p. 8

⁴⁵ dated 5th January 1791 in Mozart’s *Verzeichnis*, but probably started in 1788 (See Tyson, *Mozart: Studies of the Autograph Scores*, Harvard, 1987. p. 34

⁴⁶ Wolff, p. 73

cantata *Davidde Penitente* K. 469, premiered in 1785, which is notable for two reasons: first, it is almost entirely a re-texting (plus some new arias) of the unfinished (abandoned?) C minor Mass K. 427. Second, and perhaps more important, the work whose original text was liturgical, and whose new text was a series of psalm translations and selections from the Book of Samuel, was premiered not in a religious context, but the very secular Burgtheater, which had seen the premiere of his *Entführung aus dem Serail* three years earlier in 1782 and which would present *Le Nozze di Figaro* to the world a year later. Perhaps Mozart deemed the texts suitable to a Lenten concert (a fundraiser for the Vienna Tonkünstler-Societät), or perhaps sheer pressure of work prevented him from starting a brand new work from scratch, so he simply reached for the nearest choral music he had to fulfill a commission that did not thrill him and stood little chance of winning him much acclaim. But it is revealing that he did not think it inappropriate that a work of religious origin, re-envisioned with an Old Testament text, should be performed in an entirely secular environment for a non-religious event. If the church were no longer the sole arbiter and provider of religious thought and expression, then neither should its buildings be the sole permissible venue for the musical expression of religious subjects and even expressions of faith. ‘The cultural seriousness of the concert hall drew large works such as requiem masses to the stage...the exploration of religious themes and ideas was [no longer] confined to church sanctuaries. Thus the appearance of masses and requiem masses on the concert stage was not automatically viewed as secular or separate from theological constructs.’⁴⁷

As the concert performances of Mozart’s Requiem after his death show, audiences were ready for public performances of sacred works separated from any liturgical function, and as savvy a composer as Mozart would surely have been aware that even this secretly commissioned work would, at some point, have a life beyond the confines of its premiere. The expectation of future public performances of the work must have been part of Mozart’s concept from the very beginning.

To summarise, by the end of the eighteenth century, it was possible to make the distinction between religious music, such as a grand Requiem commissioned for a public or semi-public event, and music for the church. The Requiem was well established as its own genre, and composers were drawn to it not only for the public nature of its performance, but for its musical potential in its own right. However, because of the *Gottensdienstordnung*, no significant new requiems had been written for eight years in Vienna—the years of Mozart’s greatest works—for Süßmayr or Eybler to use as a model.

⁴⁷ McDermott, *ibid*, p. 33

When the mysterious messenger brought the unsigned letter commissioning the Requiem to Vienna in the summer of 1791, Mozart was at the height of his powers, though of somewhat waning popularity. It represented both a coming together of many threads in Mozart's creative psyche and an opportunity for him to re-emerge as one of Vienna's musical luminaries once the secrecy demanded of the first performance had dissipated, allowing the work to emerge from the shadows into the light of day. In the Requiem he blended the music of the masters he had studied with the forward-looking language he had developed in his mature instrumental works and the deep humanity of his later operas to create a fluidity of style that was unprecedented. In it he achieved a work that was both conservative and ground breaking, religious and humanistic, personal yet universal, a work which relied on liturgical, theatrical, ancient and modern contexts for a complete understanding of its musical language.

To be more accurate, he *began* such a work. It survives only in torso form. Many other incomplete works survive in a similar form, abandoned for any number of reasons. As Konrad Ulrich has shown, the idea that Mozart formed entire pieces in his head and that the act of writing it down was merely a mechanical act is a romantic myth: 'As a rule, Mozart does not come to the final solution while sketching, but only reaches a certain plateau; thinking through the problem from this level yet again ultimately brings him to his compositional objective. In other words, [his sketches] can be looked on as points of transition in the creative process. They represent stages in his thinking, stages whose meaning for others can only be discerned retrospectively, from the context in which they are found.'⁴⁸

That is the problem of the would-be modern editor-completer in a nutshell: one cannot discern Mozart's processes retrospectively when they are incomplete. One has to project forward, using as much available evidence as possible, and as many 'contexts'. This chapter has been an attempt to define some of those contexts as they may have influenced Mozart as he formulated his thinking for the work. Fortunately, we also have the work of Joseph Eybler and Franz Xaver Süssmayr as another of those contexts. Before we go on to consider their contribution to the Requiem, we must turn briefly to two other areas that need to be considered before a thorough examination of the Requiem torso can be undertaken.

⁴⁸ Konrad Ulrich, *How Mozart went about composing: a new view*, from "Mozart's Schaffenweise". Translated by Bruce Cooper Clarke, p. 3. (See www.aproposmozart.com under Ulrich Volkmar)