

Chapter 18

Communio

It is well known that when Süssmayr re-used music from the opening of the Requiem to complete the work, he believed he did so on Mozart's instruction, as reported to him via Constanze.¹ This must have come as an enormous relief to him, since, even if we allow the possibility of some form of sketch for him to construct the *Agnus Dei*, the thought of finishing a work of this magnitude unaided by the master that started it must truly have been daunting. It should be remembered that the *Agnus Dei* of a Requiem is not a self-contained movement as it is in the Ordinary of the Mass, but the beginning of a much longer movement that returns the text to themes of death and eternal rest. Süssmayr had obviously never composed a requiem, and his experience as a composer for the stage had not equipped him to tackle a dramatic situation of this scope or depth. To be not only able, but instructed, to use material that Mozart had already composed not only made matters immeasurably easier, but allowed the work to close with an air of authenticity that would help the listener—or in this case, the commissioner—overlook any weaknesses that may have been present during the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*. The secret commissioner had paid for, and was therefore expecting, a work of genuine Mozart: Süssmayr must have been concerned to cover his tracks as much as possible, and re-using material from earlier in the work gave the best chance of achieving that goal.

Indeed, whether out of loyalty to Constanze, to Mozart himself, or out of a sense of personal integrity, all the principal players in the completion of the Requiem seem to have been anxious to downplay their part in what in many ways amounted to a hoax. Eybler failed to mention his role in the orchestration of Mozart's torso in his autobiography, Stadler didn't say a word of his involvement at any point during the *Requiemstreit*, and Süssmayr himself only came forward when approached by Breitkopf & Härtel to clarify his role because the true story was beginning to come out. His participation in the cover-up was twofold, since he was both part of the hoax and, by designing the score that was handed to Count Walsegg to resemble Mozart's handwriting as possible—even signing 'manu popria' (in his own hand) on the front page, a bald-faced lie—he committed an act of forgery. Their silence contributes in no small way to the difficulty of the task of unraveling the events of the first three months of 1792 as they pertain to

¹ In a letter to Breitkopf & Härtel dated 27th March 1799, Constanze wrote 'When he saw that death was upon him, he spoke to Herr Süssmayr ... and asked him if he died without finishing [the Requiem], to repeat the first fugue at the end' (see Wolff, Doc 16, p. 139)

the score of the Requiem. Further complicating matters is Constanze's (perhaps deliberate) obfuscation. Her dealings with the Requiem after Süßmayr's score was delivered to Count Walsegg are not always above reproach,² and some of her statements seem intended to generate mystery and intrigue. It is difficult to know whether this is due to her own sense of confusion, or as the result of what would today be called a 'marketing strategy'.

The web of stories surrounding the Requiem that originated with Constanze's circle did not limit themselves to how the score came into being: many of the various different tales seem designed to establish that Mozart was more lucid in his final days than was actually the case, surely for the purpose of relegating the 'masters' that were engaged to complete the score to the role of amanuensis, not the creative artist that the task required. Accounts of the final illness after he took to his bed on November 20th often have the aura of hagiography about them. Romantic, almost gothic, descriptions and quotations attributed to Mozart abound, such as the following from the biography by Georg Nikolaus Nissen (Constanze's second husband):³

Just now (he often lamented during his illness) 'I must die, when I could live quietly! Now to leave my Art, when I must no longer be a slave to fashion, no longer chained by speculators, when I could follow the flights of my fantasy, when I could compose freely and independently whatever my heart dictates!'⁴

There are so many such stories that one can quite understand why the publisher Johann Anton André believed that many of the myths and legends surrounding the Requiem were 'a fairy tale concocted by Mozart's widow.'⁵ Therefore Constanze's contention that her recently deceased husband had communicated directly with Süßmayr and given him precise instructions on how to finish the piece should be treated with some skepticism. If such a conversation had taken place, why did she first give the task not to the man to whom her husband had entrusted the information, but to Eybler? Eybler himself never mentioned such conversations, even when there would have been ample opportunity for them to take place while he "carried [Mozart], put him to bed and helped him during his last painful illness."⁶

Indeed, it is the case that, if one puts the gothic post-mortem 'accounts' of Constanze's circle to one side, there is no reason to assume that Mozart ever thought that he would not recover and finish the work himself. He had previously suffered through not infrequent bouts of illness, so why would he even consider the possibility that he would not survive this one? Eybler's failure

² She sold the score at least twice before Count Walsegg performed it in 1793

³ published in 1828, two years after Nissen's death, compiled by others from chapters he had completed and from his copious notes

⁴ see H.C. Robbins Landon: *1791 Mozart's Last Year*, Thames and Hudson, 1998, p. 153

⁵ see H.C. Robbins Landon, *ibid*, p. 157

⁶ Eybler, *Selbstbiographie*, Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung, Leipzig, May 1826

to mention any such conversation is consistent with that assertion, and in any case, Mozart was so convinced that his talents were by far superior to any of his contemporaries (except perhaps Franz Joseph Haydn) that one wonders whether he wouldn't have preferred to leave the work unfinished rather than have someone else make a hash of it.

Süssmayr was both faced with the task and acutely aware of Mozart's assessment of his abilities.⁷ Whether he hit on the idea of re-using the opening movement to close the work as the result of instruction directly from Mozart (very unlikely), indirectly via Constanze (possible, but unlikely) or out of sheer desperation to conclude his labours with genuine Mozart that just needed to be re-texted (plausible), there can be no doubt that using the *Te decet hymnus* and *Kyrie* fugue to conclude the work does give a satisfying sense of closure on many fronts.⁸

The idea of returning to the opening material to conclude a mass is not without precedent in Mozart's works. Most germane to the Requiem is the *Agnus Dei* of the Coronation Mass, K. 317, which recasts the opening *Kyrie eleison* to the text 'dona nobis pacem'. Since this mass was among the music by Mozart that Salieri brought with him to be performed as part of the festivities surrounding the coronation of Leopold II on September 6th, 1791, and it is difficult to imagine that Mozart was not at the very least present to be seen as such a prestigious event, it is not unreasonable to wonder whether the same idea should occur to him as he was planning the Requiem. Even if it were Süssmayr's idea all along, since he accompanied the Mozarts to Prague, he too probably heard the performance and could therefore just as easily have formulated the same idea himself. Once again, the musical world is in his debt.

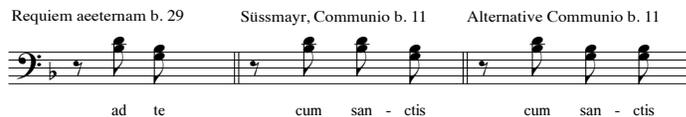
Since the *Lux aeterna* and the *Cum sanctis* are a reprise of earlier material, little needs to be added here. Süssmayr's changes to what came before are mostly necessitated by the new text, which has more syllables than the original:

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>Te decet hymnus Deus in Sion,</i> | 10 |
| <i>Lux aeterna luceat eis Domine</i> | 12 |
| <i>et tibi redetur votum in Jerusalem</i> | 13 |
| <i>cum sanctis tuis in aeternum, quia pius es</i> | 14 |

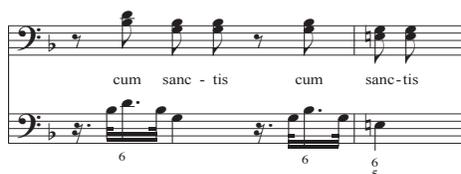
⁷ Even if only some of the stories that originate among Constanze's circle on the topic of Mozart's humour at Süssmayr's expense are true, his letters to Constanze are peppered with derogatory comments, however playful

⁸ Richard Maunder's reasoning on this issue is muddled: on the one hand, when he is arguing in support of his theory of a sketch for the *Agnus Dei* and his inclusion of the *Amen* fugue at the end of the *Lacrymosa*, he posits that: 'the whole of the Requiem can be conceived of as a sort of extended sonata form, in which the 'Requiem aeternam' is the exposition and the *Agnus Dei* starts the recapitulation' (p. 66), while later describing the repeat of the *Te decet hymnus* as 'Süssmayr's makeshift repeat' (p. 72). If it is a good idea to repeat the *Kyrie* fugue recast with the text 'Cum sanctis tuis in aeternam,' what better way to approach it could there possibly be than the way Mozart himself did?

These changes can be easily accommodated for the soprano soloist. In a sense it is a shame that the chorus has to enter with a repeat of the soloist’s text rather than new words (as had been the case in the *Requiem aeternam*), but in this movement there are only two lines of text left in the work, so Süssmayr’s hands were tied. It is a little mystifying why he changed Mozart’s tenor and bass line in bar 11: the extra syllable of ‘cum sanctis’ instead of the two syllable ‘ad te’ is better accommodated thus:



which also follows the basso continuo line better:



The implications of the tonic timpani note in bar 44 of the *Requiem aeternam*, altered by Süssmayr in bar 26 to the dominant (thereby pre-empting the cadence in bar 28) were discussed in that chapter. It has been restored in the present edition. Was this just a simple miscopying made in haste, automatically mirroring the trumpets, or does it represent a hint that Süssmayr knew that the orchestration of the end of the *Requiem aeternam*, was not by Mozart, and therefore felt free to change another man’s work?⁹

Cum Sanctis fugue

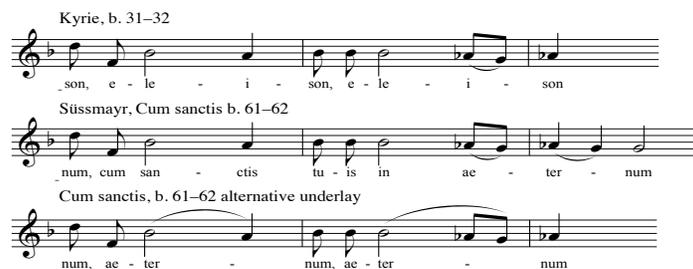
Obviously, Süssmayr’s principle task in this final movement was adapting Mozart’s fugue to the new text. This is not as simple a task as it might at first seem: part of Mozart’s genius in the design of the *Kyrie* fugue is that he chose to compose a double fugue with each line of the text—*Kyrie eleison* and *Christe eleison*—having its own subject, so that the listener can distinguish the fugal entries by both their text and their theme. This choice was not available to Süssmayr, who had but one line, ‘cum sanctis tuis in aeternum’ (choosing quite sensibly to save ‘quia pius es’ for the final, *Adagio* cadence). Not only that, but Mozart’s two subjects have seven and six syllables

⁹ see Chapter 5. See also the comment in the NMA edition on p. 150: “This departure...seems to express Süssmayr’s deliberate intention

respectively, whereas the text that Süssmayr had to use has eleven. It helps that both subjects have very considerable melismas, which Mozart designed to be on the second syllable of ‘eleison’, which he nearly always set as a four-syllable word ‘e-le-i-son.’¹⁰ Süssmayr managed to get most of these melismas on the second syllable of ‘aeternam’, so that the stress was the same and the vowel similar, but right away one can see the problem that ‘aeternam’ has three syllables against the four of ‘eleison’, and ‘cum sanctis tuis in’ has six to the two of ‘Christe’. Whilst a trifle awkward, it is difficult to find a better solution than Süssmayr’s:¹¹



However, with only two exceptions,¹² Mozart reserves the use of the first word of each phrase for the head motif of the subject only, using ‘eleison’ for all other entries required musically to fill out the harmony. This helps considerably with comprehensibility in a complex texture. Süssmayr did not observe this technique, using the phrase ‘cum sanctis tuis’ almost indiscriminately for both primary and secondary material.¹³ A particularly egregious example is the sopranos in bars 61–63 where he gets himself in such a muddle he had to add two notes to Mozart’s line:



Correcting Süssmayr’s underlay is more than just an academic exercise: to embody the structure of the music in the way the text is laid out results in a greater clarity of texture, vital in a musical fabric of this complexity. This could be achieved by removing the text ‘cum sanctis tuis’ for any

¹⁰ the exceptions being the alto countermelody in b. 18, and altos again in b. 38

¹¹ while a case could be made in the first entry of this subject for assigning a group of four semiquavers for each syllable of ‘tu-is in ae-’ instead of two, it would not work in later contexts (cf. soprano b. 76, for example)

¹² the basses in bar 6 and the altos in bar 17

¹³ see the example below

music except a fugal entry, mostly by substituting the word ‘aeternum,’ to match as closely as possible Mozart’s use of the word ‘eleison.’ A detailed list of each occurrence of such changes would make for extremely tedious reading, so the example below is but one example from which a general practice may be deduced. The top line of text is Mozart’s underlay from the *Kyrie* fugue, the second line Süssmayr’s from the *Cum sanctis tuis*, the bottom line a possible emended version (used in the present edition):

le - i - son e - lei - i - son e - le - i - son e - le - i - son
 ter - num cum san - ctis cum san - ctis cum san - ctis tu - - - is
 ae - ter - num ae - ter - num ae - ter - - - num

One final observation: a comparison of the first basset horn of bars 70-1 with bars 40-1 of the corresponding passage in the *Kyrie* fugue shows that Süssmayr once again changed what had occurred earlier.¹⁴ What is interesting about this passage is that it comes at a place where the soprano line it is doubling exceeds the range of the basset horn (which extends only to written D, sounding G). Does the fact that Süssmayr made this change reflect the fact that he knew that the orchestration of the *Kyrie* fugue was not by Mozart and therefore felt free to change it? This line of argument would imply that he did not orchestrate the *Kyrie*. Or simply that he was under so much time pressure that he didn’t go back and check? The present edition makes the two sections match, and orchestrates the fugue in the same way as the *Kyrie* fugue, discussed at length in that chapter.

¹⁴ see the discussion of this passage in Chapter 5