

## Chapter 2

# From concept to realisation

### Symbolism and Meaning

Since the commission came to Mozart from an anonymous patron, he must surely have concluded that a public, concert-like event was unlikely to be the setting for the première of the Requiem he was being asked to compose. However, while he could not expect to garner much public attention from such a secret setting, he must also have concluded that the mysterious commissioner would be wealthy, perhaps minor nobility or well-placed official, and therefore, in all probability, a ‘Kenner’, or connoisseur who would appreciate his best work. Of course, no-one could have predicted that secrecy was required because the commissioner intended to claim the work as his own.<sup>1</sup>

The most likely venue, he would have surmised, was to be a private chapel, which would not allow for large forces. Although the idea of massed public choral singing was gaining ground, the 1784 performance of *Messiah* in Westminster Abbey, where the performers numbered in the hundreds, was still very much the exception rather than the norm. It was not unusual for even respected musical establishments in Vienna, such as St. Stephen’s Cathedral, to have relatively modest forces at their disposal. This was not a new development: when Georg Reutter (1708-1772) became Kapellmeister in 1738, the twenty-seventh to occupy the post, he supervised a musical staff of just thirty-one musicians:

- 5 choir boys, who sang the treble part
- 12 adult male singers, basses, tenors and countertenors
- 12 string players
- Organist
- Subcantor, who assisted Reutter

When trumpets, timpani or trombones were needed, they were recruited on an *ad hoc* basis, often borrowed from the musical establishment of the Hofkapelle. The forces were not appreciably larger in Mozart’s day: a brief description in the document *Der Stephansdom zur Zeit Mozarts – Geschichte und G’schichterln von Reinhard H. Gruber*<sup>2</sup> lists even fewer adult singers in 1787, though a few more string players:

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<sup>1</sup> Whether Count Walsegg expected his subterfuge to remain secret after ‘his’ première despite approaching a composer of Mozart’s stature can only be a matter of (incredulous) speculation

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dommusik-wien.at/Dommusik/media/DerStephansdomzurZeitMozarts.pdf>, page 11, accessed 19 iii 2020

- singing boys <sup>3</sup>
- 3 altos
- 3 tenors
- 4 basses
- 15 string players
- 5 wind/brass players

As a well-traveled musician, Mozart would have been aware that the number of available musicians available was not likely to be greater in a private establishment. Indeed, Anton Herzog, a musician employee of the Walsegg estate who participated in the orchestra for the first performance of the Requiem that Count Walsegg conducted on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1793, noted that ‘because in the region of Stuppach not all the necessary musicians could be brought together, it was arranged that the first performance take place in Wiener Neustadt.’<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the first performance of the Requiem in Leipzig in 1794 could muster only twenty-four singers from the choir of St. Thomas.<sup>5</sup> This was considerably larger than the forces at Mozart’s disposal for a performance of his version of *Messiah* on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1789, where there was a chorus of only twelve.<sup>6</sup>

With such a modest cadre of singers likely to be participating, coupled with the probability of a less than spacious performance venue, a small orchestral component would be the most practical choice. While the masonic cantata *Laut verkünde uns’re Freude* K. 623 calls for flute, two oboes and two horns,<sup>7</sup> in addition to the trumpets and drums surely obligatory for such a solemn occasion, the Requiem adds only a pair of basset horns and bassoons and a trio of trombones to the complement of strings. The inclusion of bassoons is hardly surprising. Quite apart from their function appropriate to the Baroque works that were the source material of the opening movements, the instrument was indispensable to him in the music he composed around the time of the Requiem: in *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito* the bassoon is virtually omnipresent, playing in every movement of *Die Zauberflöte* not scored for strings only, and all

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<sup>3</sup> sadly, not given a number

<sup>4</sup> See Wolff, p. 136 (Doc 14)

<sup>5</sup> Malcolm Bruno, *The Many and the Few*, Choir and Organ, December 2006, p. 22

<sup>6</sup> Robert W. Gutman, *Mozart: A Cultural Biography*, Houghton, Mifflin and Harcourt, 2001, p. 683 n3

<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising that the instrumentation of K. 623 should emphasise the higher winds to counterbalance the lower register of the all-male chorus, but it is perhaps curious that in a masonic setting Mozart does not use trombones or basset horns, when he had just used both to such effect in the ritualistic sections of *Die Zauberflöte* which have such strong masonic overtones. (Perhaps the basset horn players were already busy playing in *Die Zauberflöte* ?)

but one in *Tito*.<sup>8</sup> His use of the instrument is wonderfully flexible: they are by turn soloist, tenor/bass voice in the wind ensemble, or reinforcement for the cellos and basses. Relevant to the modern editor-completer, it should be noted that in the choruses of neither of these operas do the bassoons ever double the choral bass line except where the orchestral basses also do: *where the choral and orchestral bass lines differ, the bassoons always double the orchestral basses*. This is consistent with the advice of Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809), famed theorist and composer, whose treatise states “Die Fagotte müssen mit dem Violon, wenn sie nichts obligates haben, einhergehen.”<sup>9</sup> Sadly this advice was ignored in Süßmayr’s orchestration of the Requiem.<sup>10</sup>

By contrast, not only would Mozart’s decision to use a pair of basset horns have been considered unusual, since it could be virtually guaranteed that the secret commissioner would not have access to them, it would have raised eyebrows indeed. The basset horn was not a regular member of court or ecclesiastical orchestras, and not every clarinet player doubled on the instrument, or even owned one. Albrechtsberger,<sup>11</sup> also noted in his treatise that basset horns were ‘seltsame Blasinstrumente in den Kirchen und Kappellen’<sup>12</sup> (unusual wind instruments in churches and chapels). Yet Mozart, writing for an ensemble he didn’t know, not only chose the ‘seltsame Blasinstrumente’, but ignored instruments that would certainly have been available, regardless of whether it might lead to complications once the anonymous commissioner saw the score. It would seem that he took the Grey Messenger quite literally when informed that he should compose “nach der Stimmung und Laune seines Geistes”<sup>13</sup> (according to the mood and whim of his imagination).

Mozart normally only included the basset horn in his works when he knew a specific player was available,<sup>14</sup> as he had done in *Die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito*, in which they featured prominently, although in very different roles. This would suggest that either he thought

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<sup>8</sup> No.16 “Tardi s’avvede”.

<sup>9</sup> Albrechtsberger, *Grundliche Anweisung zur Composition*, Breitkopf, 1790, p. 379

<sup>10</sup> There is much to be observed about Mozart’s orchestration of these operatic choruses writing that is relevant for the modern editor-completer that will be discussed in future chapters.

<sup>11</sup> who succeeded to the post of Kapellmeister at St. Stephen’s in 1793 on Hofmann’s death

<sup>12</sup> Albrechtsberger, p. 379

<sup>13</sup> Franz Xaver Niemetschek, *Leben des K.K. Kapellmeisters Wolfgang Gottlieb Mozart nach Originalquellen beschrieben*, Edition Holzinger, Berliner Ausgabe (2015) p. 28

<sup>14</sup> usually one of the Stadler brothers, either Anton (1753–1812) for whom he wrote the Quintet and Concerto, or Johann (1755–1804). Both are mentioned by name in Albrechtsberger’s discussion of the basset horn as innovators of the instrument. Anton even travelled with Mozart to Prague to perform in the premiere of *La clemenza di Tito*.

he would be involved in the premiere of the Requiem despite being told that any efforts to discover the name of the commissioner would “certainly be in vain” (*gewiss vergeblich*),<sup>15</sup> or he always envisioned a life for the work beyond its secret commission from the very outset.

So the question must be asked, why did he choose the basset horn? When used as an ensemble instrument, Mozart very rarely uses its lower range:<sup>16</sup> for example, he doesn’t stray lower than written G3 in *Die Zauberflöte*, so it follows that he did not select the instrument to cover notes that the regular clarinet couldn’t play. Since whatever instruments he chose would also, at some point, presumably need to support the voices, the basset horn was not a practical choice for its upper range either, since its highest note is written D6, a limit not infrequently passed by the choral sopranos. The basset clarinet, for which Mozart had just completed the concerto K. 622, could have covered all the notes the sopranos sing and had most of the lower notes of the basset horn available should he have chosen to use them.

At this point it must be emphasised that, since Mozart left so much of the orchestration of the Requiem incomplete, the majority of what the basset horns play in any version of the Requiem is largely conjecture. The only music for the instrument that is unequivocally in Mozart’s hand is in the *Requiem aeternam*,<sup>17</sup> the opening bars of the *Recordare*, and the top two parts of the whole-note woodwind passages accompanying the text that starts “oro supplex et acclinis” at the end of the *Confutatis*.<sup>18</sup> In any performance of the Requiem, in either Süssmayr’s version or any of the now numerous modern edition-completions, the majority of the music played by the basset horns is editorial, added by someone else. It is, of course, possible that he had a plan which would have made the reason for his choice of instrument clear (and at which we can sadly now only guess), but since his usual method of sketching was to commit the principal ideas to paper on the first draft and leave their realisation for a later stage, it follows that either he had already decided the role of the instrument and written the necessary *aides-memoire* into the autograph, or was planning for one of the movements for which nothing in his hand has survived (if it ever existed) to feature the instrument prominently. For the modern-editor completer, the first of these possibilities is the only choice for a point of departure that respects the historicity of Mozart’s incomplete manuscript. So what was it about the basset horn that caused Mozart to eschew the ‘usual’ instruments and make a potentially contentious choice, beyond the observation

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<sup>15</sup> Niemetschek, p. 28

<sup>16</sup> K. 411 (440a/484a) being a notable exception, though this may be due to its unique ensemble being a quintet of two clarinets and three basset horns, the basset horn being therefore the only instrument with notes in the bass range

<sup>17</sup> although probably not the whole movement: for a detailed discussion of this topic see Chapter 5

<sup>18</sup> which Süssmayr brings in a bar earlier

of some of the earliest commentators, that its timbre was ‘otherworldly’, and therefore uniquely suited to the occasion?

One is led to the conclusion that, in the middle of 1791, the basset horn had special connotations for him. As has often been pointed out, his use of the instrument in *Die Zauberflöte*—which he was composing when the Requiem commission arrived—is connected to Sarastro and the ritualistic themes of the opera. Indeed, the first time we hear the basset horns is also the first time we meet the High Priest of Isis and Osiris, during the Finale of Act One.<sup>19</sup> The basset horn also adds a distinctive colour to the solemn March of Priests (No. 9), and the aria with chorus ‘O Isis und Osiris’ (No. 10) in Act Two. Since these two were the last music, other than the Overture, to be composed for the opera,<sup>20</sup> it is also tempting to make a connection between the ritualistic connotations of the instrument and the Requiem itself, his most pressing task after Schikaneder’s opera was completed, and which surely must have been on his mind.

But intuiting this connection may be to overstate the case, for not all of Sarastro’s music features the basset horn. Neither his aria “In diesen heil’gen Hallen” (No. 15) nor the Priest’s Chorus (No. 18) use the instrument at all. If it weren’t for their appearance in the Finale of Act One, it would be logical to speculate that the role of the basset horn as “Sarastro’s instrument” came relatively late in Mozart’s thinking, if it came at all. While the case could be made that *In diesen heil’gen Hallen* is about human motivation, and the ennobling effect of love independent of temple ritual—and therefore didn’t “need” basset horn—its absence in the Priest’s Chorus is much more puzzling. The theatrical accoutrements and mood of solemnity are virtually identical with the setting of the Priest’s March that opened the act. Why are they not present here?

This is, of course, not the place for a discussion of the orchestration of Mozart’s last opera. Suffice it to say here that the reason for their non-inclusion in No. 15 and 18 may simply be that their instrumentation is the result of the needs of the moment, of where they are situated in the unfolding drama. After the emotional intensity of the full orchestral *tutti* of *Der Hölle Rache* that immediately precedes it, Sarastro’s serene calm is perfectly captured in the scoring of his aria, with the flutes, bassoons and horns providing only light touches here and there. Similarly, in No. 18, the men’s chorus with its accompanying low-lying trombones needs the brighter timbre of the flutes and oboes to contrast light and dark in quite magnificent word painting: “Die dust’re Nacht verseucht der Glanz der Sonne” (The darkness of night contaminates the glow of the sunlight).<sup>21</sup> This is very similar to the scoring of K. 623, also for men’s chorus.

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<sup>19</sup> b. 395, just before Pamina’s “Herr, ich bin zwar Verbrecherin!”

<sup>20</sup> entered into his catalogue on September 28<sup>th</sup>, two days before the premiere

<sup>21</sup> The idea of moving from darkness to light is an important symbol in Masonic rituals

Perhaps more important in his calculations as he was contemplating his setting of the Requiem was the memory of having used the basset horn in his first ‘funeral’ music, the *Maurerische Trauermusik* K. 477. However, there are several counter arguments to this possibility. First, it has sometimes been misstated that, like the Requiem, this work also uses the *tonus peregrinus*, making the connection between the two pieces explicit. However, while Mozart does indeed use a Gregorian chant, the melody in K. 477 is actually more closely related to Psalm Tone 1, associated with the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the same melody that Michael Haydn used in his Requiem.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, in K. 477 the plainsong melody is not played by the basset horn, rather two oboes and clarinet in unison, rendering the connection between the two pieces more tenuous. Third, and last, originally the work was not funeral music at all, but composed for the ceremony to elevate a friend to the rank of Master at the “Zur wahren Eintracht” lodge on August 12<sup>th</sup>, 1785,<sup>23</sup> for which occasion it had the title *Meistermusik* (K deest).<sup>24</sup> In this first version, the plainchant melody was sung to the text “Replevit me amaritudinibus,” (Lamentations 3:15, confirming the derivation of the melody). Since a later verse in this passage says: “waters flowed over mine head; then I said I am cut off”<sup>25</sup> this passage is thought by some commentators to refer to the masonic trial by Earth and Water.<sup>26</sup> It should also be noted that in this first version there was only one basset horn part (the third part in K. 477, playing a bass line role): it was only for a third performance in December 1785—a benefit concert for Mozart’s basset horn playing fellow masons Vincent Springer and Anton David—that the extra parts for basset horn were added.<sup>27</sup>

These caveats aside, it cannot be doubted that in general, as Colin Lawson has pointed out: “The basset horn came to be associated with Masonic ritual...he produced over a period of two years thirteen works for that instrument...This remarkable activity was undoubtedly brought about by the availability of four excellent basset horn players—the Stadlers, David and Springer.”<sup>28</sup> Lawson points out that Anton Stadler was admitted to the Lodge “Zum Palmbaum”

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<sup>22</sup> Where it is also in E flat major in within a C minor tonality. By a strange coincidence, this is also the plainchant melody Süßmayr inserted into his version of the Horn Rondo

<sup>23</sup> This date would make sense of the composition date of “in July” in Mozart’s *Verzeichnis*, but does not explain the dedication to Meklenberg and Esterhazy, or the title. The second and third basset horn parts are never mentioned in the *Verzeichnis*

<sup>24</sup> Zaslav/Cowdery, *The Compleat Mozart*, Norton, 1990, p. 37-8.

<sup>25</sup> Lamentations 3: 54 (King James Version)

<sup>26</sup> Mozart seems to have been fascinated not only by ancient melodies in 1791, but with connecting them to Masonic rituals, cf. his use of the chorale melody “Ach Gott in Himmel sieh’ darein” during Tamino’s “Trial of Fire and Water.”

<sup>27</sup> Parts one and two, largely covering the horn parts

<sup>28</sup> Colin Lawson, *Mozart Clarinet Concerto*, Cambridge University Press, (1996) p. 19 (see also n. 17)

in 1785, and that was one of two lodges that held the benefit concert for Anton David and Vincent Springer in the same year, as mentioned above. Music played an important part in masonic ceremonies and rituals, and for Mozart, the connection between the basset horn and masonic ritual was strong.

Connections to freemasonry were extremely common among the nobility and wealthy in Vienna. Count Walsegg, the secret commissioner of the Requiem, was a mason. Among the masons that Mozart knew well were Karl Alois, Prince Lichnowsky<sup>29</sup> (who was a lodge brother), Gottfried van Swieten<sup>30</sup> and Michael Puchberg, a close friend and frequent loaner of money to Mozart.<sup>31</sup> It is a strange coincidence that in late 1791, Puchberg's apartment in Vienna was rented from none other than Count Walsegg himself.<sup>32</sup> If, as we surmised above, Mozart would have assumed that the secret commissioner was wealthy, or minor nobility, it would have been extremely likely that he was also a mason, making choice of the basset horn for his Requiem virtually *de rigueur*.

I find it surprising that Mozart's use of the *tonus peregrinus* rather than the *Lamentatio* of Haydn's Requiem and K. 477 is such an under-discussed topic. One frequently mentioned explanation is that he did so in *homage* to J.S. Bach, who had used the melody in his *Magnificat* BWV 243.<sup>33</sup> As Wolff points out, this work "was to be found among the scores in van Swieten's library.... [but] it is true that we do not know if Mozart knew of it, or even studied it."<sup>34</sup> However, in a work so rich with symbolism, this reasoning seems inadequate, and relies entirely on Mozart's knowing BWV 243: without that (unprovable) connection the theory evaporates.

However, a more convincing theory emerges if we take the concept "Meine Seele erhebt den Herren" (My soul magnifies the Lord) and combine its meaning with the text to which the melody is first sung in the Requiem, "Te decet hymnus in Sion" (To you, O God in Zion, a hymn

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<sup>29</sup> who was also a friend and generous supporter of Beethoven

<sup>30</sup> see the discussion in the previous chapter for details of the many musical interactions between Van Swieten and Mozart

<sup>31</sup> loans which were paid back by Constanze after Mozart's death from the proceeds of public concerts and sales of his autograph scores, including the Requiem

<sup>32</sup> in *Auftrag, Entstehung und Vollendung von Mozarts "Requiem"* Brauneis speculates that Puchberg may even have given Walsegg the idea of commissioning a Requiem from Mozart. See Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem: Reception, Work, Completion*, Cambridge, 2012, p. 2 n.3

<sup>33</sup> See J.S. Bach *Magnificat*, BWV 243, *Suscepit Israel*

<sup>34</sup> Wolff, p. 83. He continues: "Since visiting Leipzig in 1789...Mozart himself had owned a copy of *Singet dem Herrn*, BWV 225, which it may be possible to regard as a key to his conception of contrapuntal vocal music." (see also note 29)

is fitting). In this line of reasoning, the *Magnificat* becomes the hymn that is sung to God to gain entrance into heaven. This is followed by the phrase “et tibi reddetur votum in Jerusalem” (and a vow will be made to you in Jerusalem), which is, in a sense, the second part of the bargain: when the soul is successful in entering heaven, a vow will be made in Jerusalem. This is essentially the dramatic arc of the initiation ceremony to be accepted into the Third Degree of Masonry (Master Mason), where the initiate is led blindfolded (representing death) into the Chamber, says the password (the hymn to God) and then takes a solemn oath (the vow in Jerusalem).

This argument is reinforced by the second appearance of the melody at the text “Lux aeterna luceat eis” at the end of the Requiem. Masonic rituals symbolise the intellectual journey from ignorance to enlightenment in the progression from darkness to light, representing the death of ignorance being transformed into the light of knowledge (hence the dramatic removal of the blindfold at the end of the ceremony). The same journey is taken over the course of the whole Requiem which leads us from the darkness of mourning and petitionary prayer into the light of the world to come: what better form of Light is there than the eternal light shed by the ultimate radiance of God? Freemasons did not see an inconsistency between the strictures and tenets of Christianity and the practice of masonry: for them it was the highest form of Christian expression. Indeed, Freemasonry was often designed to counter what many of its practitioners saw as the corruption of the Church. Mozart had become a Fellow (the Second Degree) on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 1785 and a Master (Third Degree) sometime in the spring of that year.<sup>35</sup> Thus he would have known the specifics of the ceremony and the similarities of its symbols to those of the progress of the soul into heaven would not have been lost on him, and, suspecting that his commissioner would almost certainly be a mason, these symbolisms would not go unnoticed.

For the modern editor-completer, the upshot of this line of discussion is that for Mozart the basset horn had symbolic meaning, and to cover up its timbre by excessive doubling is just one of many reasons why Süssmayr’s orchestration must surely be counter to Mozart’s intentions.

To the expected solemn trumpets and timpani, and this unusual scoring of bassoons and basset horns, Mozart added only three trombones, although, as will be discussed later, the incompleteness of the Requiem autograph means that the exact nature of their participation is much less clear than is often asserted. What symbolic meaning might they have had for Mozart and the audiences of the day?

When Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714-1787) introduced of a trio of trombones into the opera orchestra in his *Alceste*, which premiered in the Burgtheater in Vienna on December 26<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>35</sup> Robert W. Gutman, *Mozart: a Cultural Biography*, Pimlico, 1999, p. 644. See also his note 6 on p. 645 regarding Mozart’s *Meistermusik* K deest)



1767 (revived in 1781), they were used to create a supernatural air and mood of solemnity to the oracle scene. Whether their use outside the usual ecclesiastical context lent an air of authority, or the fact that three different tessituras of a single wind instrument was such a unique sound (from a long-lost tradition of single instrument ‘families’), their three-voiced timbre became a symbol for the unworldly. Mozart knew *Alceste* well enough as early as 1778<sup>36</sup> to transform one of its recitatives into an aria for Aloisia Weber,<sup>37</sup> his future sister-in-law (but the current object of his amorous intentions until she refused him). As he later showed in *Idomeneo* in 1781, he had absorbed *Alceste*’s sound world well enough that trombones were to be used to help create a sense of the supernatural or ecclesiastical.

But this association between instrument and idea goes deeper than a debt to any one composer or specific work. As Eugene Narmour points out in *Explorations in Music, the Arts, and Ideas: Essays in Honor of Leonard B. Meyer*, ‘it is not necessary to establish the exclusiveness of a similarity [to a particular work]. Quite simply, a similarity between two works may be meaningless in a discussion of influence if the feature exists in many other works, or forms part of the common style of the period.’<sup>38</sup> In other words, the use of trombones to suggest the supernatural became such a part of the convention of late eighteenth century Viennese music<sup>39</sup> that their selection in a mass for the dead would have been virtually automatic. Certainly, their *forte* introduction in the Requiem on a weak beat diminished seventh chord before the chorus has even started singing could hardly be more dramatic.

In the establishment of this association, it is important to remember that in biblical passages where the English translation refers to a blast of trumpets, the musical instrument in German translations is often referred to as ‘Posaune,’ especially on occasions where they represent the power of God. For example, see Joshua 6:5 in the Luther bible of 1545:

Und wenn man des Halljahrs Horn bläset und tönent, daß ihr die Posaunen höret, so soll das ganze Volk ein groß Feldgeschrei machen, so werden der Stadt Mauern umfallen;

rendered in the New King James Version as:

It shall come to pass that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, that all the people shall shout with a great shout; then the wall of the city will fall down flat;

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<sup>36</sup> He had first seen it with his father at the Burgtheater in January 1768 (see Daniel Hertz: *Haydn, Mozart and the Viennese School: 1740-1780*, Norton, 1995, p. 230)

<sup>37</sup> “Popoli di Tessaglia/ Io non chiedo” K. 316/300b

<sup>38</sup> Pendragon Press, 1988, p. 49

<sup>39</sup> as amply borne out in Don Giovanni and *Die Zauberflöte*

Is this not an excellent description of the emotional impact of the entry of the trombones in bar 7 of the *Requiem aeternam*? Similarly, where the English text of the familiar and ever-popular aria from *Messiah* ‘The trumpet shall sound’ tells us that the power of the last trumpet is such that ‘the dead shall be raised incorruptible’, it is usually translated in German as ‘Sie schallt, die Posaun’. Indeed, that is the text as Mozart set it in his orchestration of *Messiah*. It can be no coincidence then that it is the trombone that Mozart uses to portray the instrument that will “send its wondrous sound throughout the tombs of the world” at the Day of Judgment in his *Tuba mirum*.

Nor is it a coincidence that the entry of the trombones in *Don Giovanni* is reserved until the Commendatore returns from the dead to summon Giovanni to join him. Their sepulchral tones augment the recall of the overture, *in which they did not play*, announce that the nature of the tragedy has changed radically: where the music of the overture tells us that a tragedy is going to unfold—but a purely human one—the arrival of the trombones announces just as surely as the arrival of the Commendatore that the story is now a supernatural one.

All these elements must have entered into Mozart’s calculations as he contemplated the secret commission. He assembled a highly flexible ensemble capable of both grand statements (trumpets and timpani) and intimate, inward-looking reflection (basset horns), and one which was capable of the necessary degree of clarity in the contrapuntal textures he intended—and with a small number of singers, great care would be needed to maintain the primacy of the text, even in a relatively small chapel. As noted above, the chorus would have been very small, probably less than ten singing boys and no more than three or four to a part on the lower voices. When seen from this perspective, Süssmayr’s doubling of the lower three choral parts by three sets of different timbres (strings, trombones and bassoon/basset horn) and the boys by two (violins and basset horn) seems at best heavy-handed: it is hard to imagine boys’ voices being heard at all in the *forte* passages and semiquaver runs. But it not only makes the choruses Requiem of a similar timbre throughout, absolutely contrary to Mozart’s usual practice, but ignores the symbolic meaning of the carefully chosen ensemble.

In this sense the Requiem is the product of a time when the symbolic roles attributed to musical forces were changing. The 1780s had marked the beginning of a shift in taste, as far as instrumental music was concerned, from what Neal Zaslaw calls the ‘Neoplatonic’ view—that because it lacks words instrumental music is necessarily abstract and therefore lacks any meaning<sup>40</sup>—to what might be called a ‘Protoromantic’ view that, on the contrary, its lack of

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<sup>40</sup> see Zaslaw, p. 521

specificity makes instrumental music the ideal medium to suggest emotions that cannot be expressed in words. Far from being merely a convenient vehicle to introduce and then support the musical ideas with which the text would be presented, the orchestra of the Requiem imbues its text with a deeper meaning. In the same way that in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the relationship in an instrumental sonata or art song between soloist and accompaniment was transformed from leader and subordinate into equal protagonists in the narrative of the music,<sup>41</sup> the role of the orchestra in the Requiem is not that of an accompanist, but rather that of explicator and expounder of the subtext. It should not be surprising in a master composer of opera, but Mozart's Requiem goes far beyond its immediate liturgical purpose and focuses in equal parts on both the supernatural/religious and human aspects of the text. In this sense it is very much the product of its time, when music was reaching a tipping point between the Enlightenment's rationality and the Romantic conviction that music could express volcanic, subliminal forces. The modern editor-completer should not lose sight of that.

Mozart was fortunate to live at the time when this concept of the power of art—and therefore the autonomy and social standing of the artist—was becoming a symbol of the emancipation of the middle class,<sup>42</sup> when the arts broke free of their ecclesiastical or courtly function to exist in their own right, when they called into existence works not just tailored to an occasion but created to express ideas that were at once deeply individual and also speaking of, to and for their time. More than a decade before *Eroica*, Mozart's mature music in general, and the Requiem in particular, with its miraculous synthesis of *stile antico* and modern innovations, 'perhaps gives us a glimpse of [his] dreaming of escaping his oppressive past and giving utterance to his fondest hopes and highest aspirations for the future.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> a relationship exemplified by Schubert's *Erlkönig*, composed in 1815

<sup>42</sup> an idea expressed in his mature operas (except *Tito*, composed for a very specific royal occasion), which are remarkable for the fact that it is the low born characters who are the heroes and heroines

<sup>43</sup> Zaslav, p. 544