

Chapter 11

Confutatis

Once again, in this movement, although none of the upper staves are assigned to a specific instrument, all the chorus parts and orchestral bass line—without figures until bar 26¹—are by Mozart, with music for the first violin in the following places:

bar 7–12	SA “Voca me”
bar 17–25	SA “Voca me”
bar 25 to the end	b. 26 SATB “Oro supplex”

In addition, there are four bars of music on the fourth and fifth staves from bar 26–29, which, although there are no clefs assigned to those staves on the first page, can only be intended for two basset horns and two bassoons.² Surely in a movement that opens so dramatically both Eybler and Süssmayr were correct to assign the third and fourth staves to the trumpets and timpani.

The movement is cast in two distinct halves, bars 1–25 and 26 to the end. The first of these is in A minor, and alternates and contrasts *forte* settings of the text ‘confutatis maledictis, flammis acribus addictis’ where the tenors and basses in the lower register depict the damned in hell (bars 1–6 and 10–16), with *piano* settings of the text ‘voca me cum benedictis’ (7–10 and 17–25) in the upper register for the sopranos and altos, who are praying to be called among the blessed and saved from the pit. Mozart’s *aides-mémoire* for first violin are associated with the *piano* soprano/alto music, during which Mozart writes rests in the orchestral bass part. The only exception is in bars 10.5-12 where for two and a half bars, at the reentry of the *forte* tenor/bass music, Mozart’s violin part doubles the orchestral bass line at the unison, strongly indicating that it should be its role throughout the *forte* sections.

In the second section the texture changes completely: instead of alternating high and low voices, the four-part chorus is homophonic and leads through a set of astonishingly chromatic modulations descending by semitone from A minor to F major. For this passage Mozart notates all of the first violin part—a restless semiquaver rest followed by three repeated semiquavers pattern which responds to a throbbing quaver/quaver rest rhythm in the bass. Supporting sustained chords in the basset horns and bassoons are shown for the first four measures of this section, and it is here that Mozart’s figuring starts. A single chord, separated from the final cadence by a pause, sounding the second inversion of the dominant seventh of the key of the next movement (D minor) provides a suspenseful link to the *Lacrymosa*.

¹ the *Org.:tasto* solo was added by Süssmayr

² Leopold Nowak in the NMA suggests that the bass clef on the second staff added immediately before Mozart’s whole note in bar 26 was added by Maximilian Stadler

After the contrapuntal rigours of the *Recordare*, Eybler and Süssmayr must have turned to this relatively short movement with a sense of relief. The contrasts in the choral parts make the structure of the movement, and therefore the broad strokes of its orchestration, quite clear. Although Mozart did not give any indications of a dynamic for the opening, both the text and the mono-rhythmic two demisemiquaver–three semiquaver motif of the cellos and basses (repeated no fewer than nineteen times) strongly suggest an extremely vigorous interpretation to contrast with his instruction *sotto voce* above the sopranos and altos in bar 7, which indicates both a dynamic and an intensity level. As important as the notes Mozart wrote in the first violin inserts in bars 7–12 and 17–24 are the rests, indicating that the violas and continuo section—and therefore in all likelihood everyone else except the violins—shouldn't play, and both his music for the winds in bars 26–29 and his first violin part through to the end show how the rest of that passage should be orchestrated.

Easiest of course, are the strings, and Eybler and Süssmayr agreed that both violins and violas should play in unison with Mozart's basses for the *forte* sections, and that the second violins should double the firsts at 'voca me.' There are a few minor differences in the details, such as where the violas should drop down the octave, the voicing of the triple stops for the violins on the downbeat of bar 6, and whether the violas should play on the beat with the cellos and basses (Eybler) or with the violins (Süssmayr, though surprisingly down the octave at the same pitch as the cellos). It is not clear why Eybler's triple stop in bar 16 is voiced differently than in bar 6, and since the ensuing descending scale here falls to A instead of C, Süssmayr's violas must play an octave higher, at the same pitch as the violins. The voicing of the repeated semiquaver chords under Mozart's first violins in bars 25 to the end is virtually identical.

One would have thought that the trombones too would have been a fairly easy matter, and perhaps for Eybler they were, since he gave no indications of where they should play or sit out. It would seem to go without saying that the tenor and bass trombone should double their respective voice parts during their (presumably) *forte* outbursts describing the torment of the souls in hell. It would seem equally unquestionable that the alto trombone mustn't join the altos in the *sotto voce* passages. This was Süssmayr's point of view for the first section, but for some reason he treats the trombones completely differently during the second iteration of the text 'confutatis' in bars 10–16, where, instead of two parts doubling the voices, he introduces a three part texture for the trombones, the alto having a smoothed out version of the tenor part, and the tenor and basses fashioning lines partly from the voices and partly from the main beats of Mozart's bassi. There are two problems here: the first is the confusion of roles, which, as we have seen, while it may be all too common in Süssmayr's Requiem completion, runs counter to Mozart's usual practice. The second, and probably worse, is that the slower moving trombone notes not only obscure the string

writing and make the texture very thick³—note how the trombones have a different rhythm than the voice they are doubling (unless they double dot the crotchet)—but also spoil the difference in timbre between the voices and the strings, destroying Mozart’s carefully balanced texture:⁴

The image shows a musical score excerpt with three staves. The top two staves are for trombones in F major, 4/4 time, marked 'f'. The vocal line is in G major, 4/4 time, with lyrics: 'Con - fu - ta - tis ma - le - di - ctis, Con - fu - ta - tis ma - le - di - ctis, flam - mis'. The organ part is marked 'Org. Tasto solo' and 'f'.

It is rather like the overuse of the sustaining pedal on the piano during a passage whose lines need to remain clear. Whilst you could make the case that the trombones’ ‘otherworldly’ connotations are appropriate to the text, and that they make a fine sound together in three-part harmony, this use of them in context of the rest of the music is deleterious. In any case, if he believed this was the best use of the trombones, why did Süssmayr not orchestrate the opening this way? Surely the opening was the better handled of the two passages and should be replicated in the second section.

The inclusion of the trumpets and timpani is problematic in this movement, because, while the (implied) *forte* dynamic and subject matter would benefit from their presence, the key of A minor limits the participation of trumpets in D. The trumpets at least can use the upper *re*, but this is of course not available to the timpani, limited to D and A.⁵ Fortunately there are passages in *Don Giovanni*—where the afterlife and the underworld are similarly being invoked—which can serve as a model for how Mozart used trumpets and timpani in D in an A minor environment. In the penultimate scene, bars 42–44, as the Commendatore sings ‘parlo, ascolta,

³ perhaps the fact that Süssmayr added ‘Org.: tasto solo’ to the bassi shows that he too was worried about this?

⁴ Maunder’s argument that ‘At any event, independent trombones seem more probable than trumpets and drums in this movement’ (Maunder, p. 166) does not hold water. Not only does he give no reason to explain why they seem ‘more probable’, while there is undoubtedly music for independent trombones in the works he cites (the C minor Mass K. 427, *Don Giovanni* and *Die Zauberflöte*), the musical contexts are quite different. It is also interesting to note that he uses the penultimate scene of *Giovanni* to support his trombone thesis, but ignores the same scene that shows how Mozart used trumpets and timpani in D in an A minor environment.

⁵ For this reason, like Maunder (see note 5 above), Beyer omits the trumpets and timpani altogether from this movement. While Mozart did naturally ask the timpani to re-tune in the relatively long gaps between numbers in his operas, and it could be argued that in the liturgical context there could be time for the player to do so here, it seems extremely unlikely that he would have asked them to do so in the Requiem

più tempo non ho', and the music is moving towards an imperfect or half cadence in the dominant, the trumpets and timpani play a unison pedal tone A which the trumpets follow with a high *re* on the downbeat of bar 45 (at the cadence point) without the timpani, a situation exactly analogous to the cadence in bar 6 of the *Confutatis*.

Trumpets (transposed)

timpani

Don Giovanni

Commendatore

Par - lo, as - col - ta piu tem - po non ho; Par - la

Mozart had done the same thing in bar 73–76 of the overture, where the trumpets also hold the upper *re* at a cadence where the timpani can't follow:⁶

Trumpets (transposed)

Timpani

1st vlns.

Bassi and Bsns.

Both Eybler and Süssmayr seem justified then in including them in their orchestrations of bars 1–6. Süssmayr uses them for emphasis on the first and third beats, Eybler on the off-beat second and fourth, thus coinciding with the vocal entrances, but this runs the risk of pulling focus from the voices. Once again, Eybler doesn't seem to be fond of using the upper *re*, as his trumpets stop after bar four, in the middle of the phrase and before the cadence, which is a shame. Since the passage from bar 10–17 moves quickly through C minor—if only very briefly—where neither the trumpets or timpani have any place, the penultimate scene of *Don Giovanni* would also seem to suggest that, since they can't participate in the entire section or phrase, they should not be included at all in the tenors' and basses' second utterance, because they have available notes for only some of the bars. Both men's versions have unconvincing gaps, and Eybler's version is now somewhat inconsistently on the beat and with an additional quaver-two semiquaver rhythm,

⁶ Other interesting uses of the trumpets and timpani in *Don Giovanni* occur in the overture: in bar 60 the trumpets have E, the root of the chord, while the timpani plays D, the 7th of the chord; finally and most dramatically, in the diminished 7th chord in bar 72 the trumpets play F sharp, the third of the chord, while the timpani plays A, an augmented fourth above the bass!

which, whilst ingenious, seems too different from the first section. Once again he unaccountably avoids the available high *re* that which could have extended his phrase.

Since he added relatively little music for the winds to Mozart's autograph—even where they are clearly required, as in the previous movement—it is hard to assess Eybler's practice in wind writing. Normally very sensitive to timbre and balance, and usually discerning a little more clearly than Süssmayr just where Mozart's textures needed little, if any, enhancement, it must be said that Eybler did not distinguish himself in his wind writing in the *Confutatis*. From the very opening his winds form slow moving (semi-breve) sustained chords which have as smothering an effect on the texture as Süssmayr's trombones in bars 10–16. Since he doesn't write *tasto solo* for the organ—or perhaps more correctly, add it to Mozart's orchestral bassi part⁷—it might be assumed that he expected the organ to play chords too, which, depending on the registration used and the number of notes played, would result in a thick texture, draw the ear away from the vocal lines and, most importantly, rob Mozart's introduction of the four part wind chords in bar 26 of much of their dramatic impact. Süssmayr's thinner texture (without basset horns, the bassoons doubling the tenors and basses) seems better suited to the drama, allowing the primary focus to be the voices who are calling out as if in anticipation of being consigned to the fires of hell: 'flammi acribus addictis' ('doomed to the flames of woe'). This is reinforced by his direction for the organ to play *tasto solo*. Unfortunately, neither man saw the third option, which is for the bassoons to play *a2* with the orchestral basses, as they do in the present edition, which allows the timbre of the trombones—with all its symbolism—to be heard unadulterated by other instruments.

Neither Eybler or Süssmayr support the sopranos and altos in their 'voca me' sections, which seems correct given the *sotto voce* marking.⁸ This just leaves the orchestration of the falling 'bridge' figure in bars 6 and 16, which Eybler leaves unadorned by the winds, writing only off-beat quavers in unison with the cellos and basses. By contrast, Süssmayr, who must surely have seen the similarity between this passage and bars 10–11 of *Der Hölle Rache*, adds winds to Mozart's falling string scale, using both bassoons and basset horns. While he is to be applauded for adding this obviously Mozartian touch, it is difficult to see the logic of having the first bassoon and second basset horn play identical notes in bars 6–7. A closer look at *Der Hölle rache* also shows that Mozart uses a two-part voicing in the winds (albeit in three octaves), so it would follow that Süssmayr's four parts in bar 16–17 is too thick.⁹

⁷ Mozart did not actually designate this line in the autograph with any name at all, but the figures in bar 26 show that he intended the organ to participate

⁸ Maunder's statement 'Since it appears that the basset horns should support the sopranos and altos in bars 7–10 and 17–25' is once again given without any supporting evidence and ignores Mozart's *sotto voce* marking

⁹ His first bassoon also produces a rising 7th from bar 16–17

fl., ob., bsn., three octaves
 vlns.
 Bassi

f *fp* *f* *fp*

etc.

Der Hölle Rache b. 10-11

Basset hns (transposed)
 Bsn.
 Vlns.
 Bassi

p *p* *p*

etc.

Confutatis b. 6-7

Comparison with *Der Hölle Rache* also shows that it is not necessary to double the string notes in the winds, which would therefore exclude Süßmayr's second bassoon as well in bars 6–7, leaving just the basset horns playing. It is also interesting that in this same passage in the famous aria the winds are silent for three bars before their four-note linking motif:¹⁰ if the basset horns were silent for the first five bars of the *Confutatis* the same situation would pertain, and their first entry would coincide very effectively with a new section of music in a completely contrasting mood, exactly the kind of orchestrational *coup de théâtre* one would expect in Mozart. Furthermore, the entry of the wind section as a complete unit in its own right would not occur until bar 26, exactly where Mozart has it.

Indeed, it is a mystery as to why Süßmayr added the winds in bar 25, a bar before Mozart's wonderfully evocative diminished seventh chord thereby completely undercutting its impact. It is equally surprising that he changed Mozart's second basset horn part in bar 28 that falls by step to the third of the chord on the downbeat of bar 29: Süßmayr made the minim B flat a semibreve and repeated it on the downbeat of bar 29 (i.e. he copied the alto part) thus leaving out the third of the chord. He compounded the error by changing Mozart's clearly indicated crotchet and rests in bar 29 to a semibreve lasting the whole bar: Mozart clearly intended the winds to end with the chorus, allowing the strings to continue alone.¹¹ Mozart's indication of *piano* on the downbeat of bar 25 would seem to imply that the trombones should not play during this passage: indeed, what could they play which would not merely duplicate the basset horns and bassoons? While the sepulchral tones of the trombones would add much to the mood of this passage, they can only provide three parts: Mozart clearly wanted four because he wrote four, and not only is the timbre of the basset horn equally evocative, as Albrechtsberger pointed out in his treatise, since the instrument was virtually unknown in Viennese church music¹² their colour here would have struck Mozart's audience as wonderfully unique.

¹⁰ notice also how the winds play only in the rests of the voice part, which suggests that Süßmayr's on beat chords for the trumpets and brass are better than Eybler's second and fourth beat notes which coincide with the vocal entries

¹¹ presumably the organ is playing a chord here, making Süßmayr's wind redundant

¹² see Chapter 2, note 7

For the string writing of this section, the music both men provided for the second violins and violas to complete the harmony under Mozart's first violin part is virtually identical. Issue could be taken with the voicing of some of the chords in the work of both men, because in this kind of accompaniment Mozart rarely voiced the top three parts with more than an octave between first violin and viola unless the viola is doubling the 'cellos. Sometimes, though, to observe this practice in this passage would take the violas just too high. Eybler's unresolved rising seventh in the second violins on the second and third beats of bar 37 is easily remedied, and, as Maunder notes,¹³ the violas' anticipation of the seventh on the second beat of bar 38 is absent in Mozart's figuring. Neither Eybler or Süßmayr could find a way round it,¹⁴ but that does not mean, as Maunder asserts, that it is 'almost unavoidable':

bars 37-39, string parts only

(from the present edition)

Mozart did not write *tasto solo* under the last chord—a second inversion dominant seventh in the key of the next movement, D minor—and neither Eybler or Süßmayr added it, although they had added similar indications earlier in their completions. Perhaps the context alone would have been a sufficient clue to the continuo player that no chord was required. The only question would seem to be whether it should be played by 'tutti bassi' or the 'cellos alone.

Score: <https://www.simonwandrews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/6-Confutatis.16.pdf>

¹³ Maunder, p. 168

¹⁴ Beyer's version, replacing the second beat seventh of the chord with a doubling of the 4th of the 4-3 suspension an octave lower is unsatisfactory in a different way