

## Chapter 17

# Agnus Dei

Even Richard Maunder allows that a Mozart sketch helped Süssmayr with the *Agnus Dei*, thus changing the task to a completion rather than a composition from scratch.<sup>1</sup> The often quoted comment in Constanze's letter to Stadler dated the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1827 can certainly be read as suggesting both that such sketches existed, and that Süssmayr knew of them: 'Let us suppose that Süssmayr did in fact find some fragments by Mozart (for the Sanctus, etc.), the Requiem would nevertheless still be Mozart's work.' While Constanze was not above obfuscation where the Requiem was concerned, especially when it helped either create or maintain an aura of mystery around the work and thus keep it in the public eye, her comment, and Mozart's regular working methods, tantalizingly suggest that there may indeed have been more than the one sheet of sketches related to the Requiem that has come to light so far. However, written some thirty-six years after the events, her comment seems as much intended to contradict the assertions of Gottfried Weber<sup>2</sup> as to illuminate the process of how the score that was presented to Count Walsegg came into being, so caution is warranted in evaluating her statement.

What is surprising about Maunder's assertion is not so much that he concludes that Süssmayr 'very probably' made use of such a sketch for the *Agnus Dei*, but that he goes to such great lengths to dismiss that possibility for any other movement.<sup>3</sup> As pointed out in Chapter 11, Maunder is quick to excoriate the composer of hidden fifths and octaves when he wants to suggest Süssmayr must be their author, while finding extenuating circumstances when he wants to bolster the possibility of Mozart sketches.<sup>4</sup> In the end it is simply inconsistent to suggest that near quotations of and similarities to known Mozart works support the sketch hypothesis in the *Agnus Dei*, but to dismiss the same logic for the *Benedictus*: '...there is no good reason to doubt that [Süssmayr] simply hit on the theme by accident.'<sup>5</sup> Why is there 'no good reason' in the *Benedictus*, but good reason in the *Agnus Dei*?

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<sup>1</sup> 'comparison with earlier Mozart masses, and analysis of the form of the *Agnus Dei* and its relation to the rest of the Requiem, will show at least that Süssmayr very probably based this movement on a Mozart sketch, presumably given to him by Constanze.' Maunder, p. 58

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Weber, "Über die Echtheit des Mozartschen Requiem" (1825)

<sup>3</sup> See such passages as Maunder p. 58: 'Straightforward tests of technical competence have shown that the 'Lacrymosa' completion, the Sanctus, the 'Osanna' and the Benedictus are almost certainly spurious.'

<sup>4</sup> see Maunder p. 61 'One might at first sight question the hidden octaves between soprano and tenor into bar 4, and between soprano and alto into bar 9...which shows that Mozart must have preferred the hidden octave as the lesser of two evils'

<sup>5</sup> Maunder, p. 51

Until or unless more documentary evidence is discovered, the ‘sketch or no sketch’ argument will never be resolved, so the same analytical method that was observed with regards to the *Lacrymosa*, which started with authentic Mozart but was completed by Süssmayr, will be useful here too: does the traditional version fall within the parameters of Mozart’s practices? Since there is no Mozart autograph, a quotation, or near quotation, from a piece of Mozart is no less or more valuable whether it came from a sketch, a verbal instruction or an attempt ‘to construct synthetic Mozart out of genuine pieces...in the same way that [Mozart himself] reused his own and other composers’ ideas elsewhere in the Requiem.’<sup>6</sup>

Maunder’s discussion of the similarities between the *Agnus Dei* and works of known Mozart authorship such as K.220 is both excellent and germane. He gives many examples of the similarities between its opening chord progression and sections of the *Gloria* of K. 220, such as:

Gloria of K 220  
biv 39 transposed down a tone

K 626

Ag - nus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta mun - di

and he also ties the bass motion to that of the opening of the *Requiem aeternam*:<sup>7</sup>

Another example of the relationship between the two pieces is given in the example below, though it must be pointed out that it is not a rare chord progression in music of the mid to late 18<sup>th</sup> century (as is also seen in the excerpt from the Stadler Requiem below):<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Maunder, p.59

<sup>7</sup> though he doesn’t note that this also relates to the *Cantabo in aeternam* melody of K. 222 (205a)

<sup>8</sup> note how the *Agnus Dei*’s parallel fifths between soprano and bass in b. 28-9 are avoided in K. 220

Gloria of K. 220  
bar 47, transposed down a tone

K 626 bar 24

do - na, do - na  
do - na e is re - qui - em  
do - na, do - na e - is re - qui - em

There is an interesting echo of this last progression in the *Agnus Dei* of Maximilian Stadler's own Requiem in F, composed in 1821, which may reflect the deep relationship he had with Mozart's work (note also the repeated quaver pattern in the bass):

Stadler, *Requiem*, *Agnus Dei*, b. 9-14

do - na e - is, do - na e - is re - qui - em.

Arguments against this section of K. 220 being a model are the necessary transposition, and the *Allegro* tempo. Maunder himself raises the transposition issue: 'It might be objected that Mozart is known to have had perfect pitch, and is therefore unlikely, even unconsciously, to have reused earlier ideas at a different pitch.'<sup>9</sup> The change of tempo from fast (the *Allegro* of K. 220) to slow—although there is no tempo indication, tradition and Mozart's practice in his other masses would strongly suggest a subdued tempo for the *Agnus Dei*<sup>10</sup>—is perhaps more problematic. If Süssmayr had been casting around for models to form a concluding movement for the Requiem, would he not have looked for slow music, with the same text, in the right key? If K. 220 is indeed a model for the *Agnus Dei* of the Requiem, the transformations to which it has been subjected are of an order of magnitude very different from those occasions where it is known that Süssmayr used Mozartian material. As Maunder points out, to have constructed opening of the *Agnus Dei* in this way, he would have had to have access to the autograph of

<sup>9</sup> Maunder, p. 59

<sup>10</sup> in all but one of Mozart's masses the *Agnus Dei* is marked either *Adagio* or variants of *Andante*

K.220 (for which there is no evidence), copied not from the *Agnus Dei* of that work but a passage from the *Gloria* and changed its key, rhythm, tempo and accompaniment pattern. Furthermore, there are significant divergencies in the two passages: for example, where do Süssmayr's repeated quavers come from? The passage in K. 220 has a simple crochet-crotchet rest bass line:

Gloria of K 220  
bar 39 transposed down a tone

*f* Qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta pec - ca - ta mun - di

*f* vlns in unison etc

But the *Agnus Dei* of K. 220 does have a running quaver accompaniment:<sup>11</sup>

Ag - nus De - i qui tol - lis pec - ca - ta, qui tol - lis

qui tol - lis

If Süssmayr were synthesizing an *Agnus Dei* from the *Gloria* section of K. 220, is it not more likely that he would have retained its principal features and not altered the basso continuo? Given the literal nature of his borrowings elsewhere,<sup>12</sup> and the need to complete the Requiem as quickly as possible, the easiest solution would surely have been the path Süssmayr would have chosen. Surely Maunder is correct then that it is far more plausible that the thematic and harmonic relationships of the *Agnus Dei* sprang from Mozart's own fertile imagination than from the result of a complex synthesis by Süssmayr of sources to which he did not have access.<sup>13</sup> Whilst it cannot be ruled out with certainty that Süssmayr composed it unaided, both the chromatic complexity of the opening, and the uneven quality of how that phrase unfolds later in the piece strongly suggest that there is more than one creative mind at work.

<sup>11</sup> As do five other *Agnus Dei* movements in Mozart's masses

<sup>12</sup> see the discussion of K. 514 in Chapter II

<sup>13</sup> The argument with Maunder is that he dismisses this logic for the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*.



If Süssmayr did possess any indication of Mozart's intentions, what form might it have taken? The possibility that it would have been as complete as the opening of the *Lacrymosa* can be quickly dismissed: not only would there be a tempo indication and much more clearly delineated dynamics,<sup>14</sup> surely Süssmayr would have incorporated any such fragment into his autograph, as he did with the *Lacrymosa*. One can say with confidence that anything Mozart sketched for the *Agnus* would have contained neither wind nor brass writing, and as far as the choral parts are concerned at least the soprano line of the first phrase: anything less would have been of so little help as to be useless. The harmonisation of the sopranos' B flat in the third bar with a diminished seventh chord rather than a simple subdominant is by no means obvious, nor is the diminished chord under the F (or the half diminished chord that precedes it), which suggests that there would have been at least some indication of the choral bass part, if not the internal vocal lines. If the chromaticism of the main violin motif is not enough to cast doubt on Süssmayr's authorship, the difficulty at evidence in its realisation as the movement unfolds suggests quite strongly that the idea is not of his own creation. With these observations, the following could quite easily have been jotted down on a 'Zettelchen':



Whatever the source, these are the building blocks from which Süssmayr assembled his last contribution to the Requiem. While the existence of such a sketch is of course speculation, the empty measures above hint at the enormity of the task Süssmayr undertook, and reveal just what a debt of thanks audiences and musicians of the last two hundred years owe him, because without his *Agnus*, however flawed, the Requiem would scarcely be performable.

Sadly, as was the case in the *Benedictus*, there are serious problems with how Süssmayr created the *Agnus Dei* from the above elements, issues that arise in the very first phrase. Whilst criticism justifiably focuses on pitch issues later in the movement, most commentators overlook the problem in the opening iteration of the text, namely Süssmayr's dynamics. This is a remarkably under-discussed topic, but one that sheds an interesting light on the disconnect between idea and implementation.

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<sup>14</sup> see the discussion on Süssmayr's dynamics below

Like the diminished chords in the third and eighth bars, the violin motif's drop from *mezzo-forte* on the first beat to *piano* on the second is by no means an obvious thing to do, so much so that one wonders if Süssmayr would have come up with it unaided.<sup>15</sup> It is a dramatic gesture and sets an unsettled mood that is a very effective counterpart to the serenity of the recall of Mozart's "Lux aeterna" that is to come. It is a bold opening bar,<sup>16</sup> but sadly the way Süssmayr continues creates quite the conundrum when the chorus enters, since they are marked *forte* while the orchestra drops to *piano*,<sup>17</sup> an apparent contradiction. Whilst on the surface it might seem to help the chorus be heard more easily, when one looks a little deeper it makes much less sense on the downbeat of the fourth and sixth bars where, if the pattern is repeated, the orchestra changes to *forte* on the second unstressed syllables of 'De-i', and 'tol-lis':

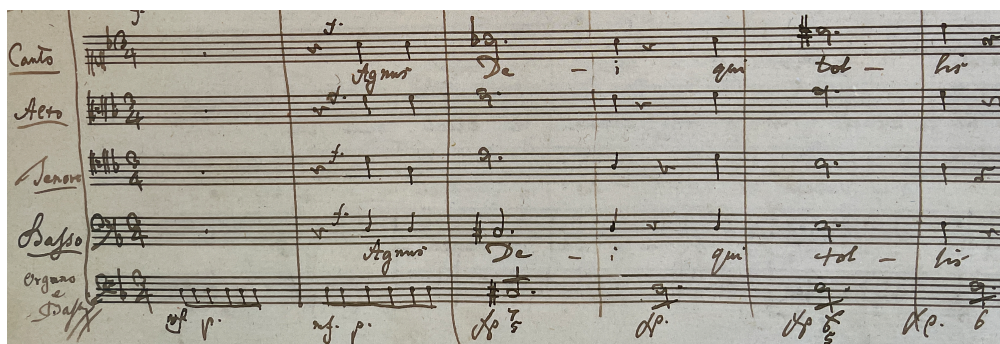
Perhaps Süssmayr realised this and tried to avoid the issue by simply never changing the chorus dynamic, but it seems rather heavy handed and doesn't really solve the problem: if the chorus is doubled by *colla parte* trombones, surely their *forte* will overwhelm the *piano* violins? And why *forte* in the chorus parts, not *mezzo forte*, to match the orchestra? Note also how Süssmayr changed the dynamic indication in the orchestral bassi changes in bar 3 to *fp*<sup>18</sup> (not *mf**p*) and the notation to a slashed dotted minim, a notation that would normally mean that the first quaver is *forte*, followed by five *piano* quavers:

<sup>15</sup> K. 220 has nothing like it, reinforcing that it was not a 'model' for Süssmayr.

<sup>16</sup> perhaps reminiscent of passages in the Commendatore scene of *Don Giovanni*

<sup>17</sup> Assuming that the opening motif is repeated over it

<sup>18</sup> silently edited to *mf* in the NMA (p. 135 ff)



This not only seems inconsistent, but leads to the inevitable questions ‘is the original *p* placed sloppily?’<sup>19</sup> and ‘did he intend the *piano* to be on the second or third quaver in the first two bars’? These dynamics are problematic,<sup>20</sup> as is the *ff* marking in the strings at the end of the phrase while the rest of the ensemble is only *f*, at which point he also abandons the loud-soft component of the motif altogether. Whilst this makes a certain sense as the phrase intensifies, it is strange to jump from *p* to *ff* so abruptly: can one infer that he was concerned, rather belatedly, that the strings would not otherwise be heard?

How should the modern editor-completer solve the conundrum? In a composer of Mozart’s sensitivity to the text, that is what the starting point should be. The problem observed above was the *forte* of the orchestra against unstressed syllables of the text: if the proper accentuation of the text is to be observed, the downbeats of bars 4 and 6 need to be *piano*. How can that be achieved? One possible method is by removing the sudden drop from *mf* to *p* on the second beat of the violin motif, thus removing the *forte* on each downbeat. This is the path Beyer followed in his edition: he makes the whole motif *piano*, and adds a *crescendo* through to the diminished chord in bar 8, which he marks *forte*, not *ff*.<sup>21</sup> This is an elegant solution,<sup>22</sup> but loses the sudden contrast from loud to soft of Süssmayr’s score, throwing the baby out with the bathwater, as it were: the dynamic contrast is central to Süssmayr’s conception of the movement.

How to reconcile these apparently contradictory threads? On the one hand you have an idea that generates much of the expressivity of the movement, and on the other a flawed realisation of that idea which undermines that very expressivity. This in turn leads to the question ‘did Süssmayr get the idea from Mozart and just misunderstand how it was meant to work?’ If one allows the possibility of a Mozart sketch for this movement, then it is easy to see how a scribbled

<sup>19</sup> note the positioning of the *fp* at the beginning of bar 6, nowhere near the note to which it applies

<sup>20</sup> one is reminded of the opening of the *Domine Jesu* in this regard, when there can be no doubt that he was working with Mozart’s choral parts (see Chapter 13)

<sup>21</sup> see Beyer, pp 132-3

<sup>22</sup> As Levin says, Beyer’s solution “...has great deal to offer.” Levin, XXIV

idea like the following could be misinterpreted as *mf* to *p* within one bar rather than the motif played first *mf* then repeated *p*:<sup>23</sup>



Of course, this is complete speculation, and I suspect that to propose it will be, in the opinion of many, to enter the realm of fantasy writing, not scholarship. All I offer in support is Süssmayr's dogged determination to continue with an idea whose implementation caused many problems, and with which he clearly struggled. Süssmayr was not a great composer, but at the age of 25 he was not inexperienced: he must have found himself in a situation in his own music where trying to continue an idea causes too many problems and has to be abandoned. Every composer does, including occasionally even Mozart himself. Why would Süssmayr cling to the *mf-p* idea in the *Agnus Dei* so assiduously unless he believed it came from Mozart, and he therefore thought it his duty (and the best way to cover his tracks) to include as much authentic material from the master as possible?

For the modern editor-completer, whatever the derivation of the idea, whether it is of his own invention or gleaned from Mozart, to remove Süssmayr's dynamics solves the immediate, local problem, but causes another, more serious one: namely the possibility of losing Mozart's intention, however remote that possibility may be. In the present edition, the idea is retained by alternating *mf* and *p* on a bar by bar basis, so that bars 1, 3 and 5 are *mezzo forte*, while bars 2, 4 and 6 are *piano*:

<sup>23</sup> Mozart often wrote the word 'bis' (twice) in sketches when indicating a repeated passage

This interpretation has the merits of embodying the natural inflection of the text into the form of the music, an essential element of Mozart's vocal writing. The chorus also has *mf* on the stressed syllables for added expressivity appropriate to the diminished seventh chord, and to allow the violin motif greater prominence with its plangent appoggiaturas and cross relations.<sup>24</sup>

There are other clues that Süssmayr was working with another composer's ideas. First, why did he add the flat sign to the sopranos' note on the 'de' of 'Dei' in bar 3?<sup>25</sup> It is in the key signature, and certainly did not need to be added. But, since Mozart's sketches often had no key signatures, if he were copying from that, the sketch would not have had one. Perhaps more significant is his use of the violin motif:



Bar 3 copies this motif up a step to mirror the rising soprano line, with a wonderfully plangent false relation C natural against the bass C sharp, and the functions of the notes stay the same. Bar 4 is a repeat of bar 2. Bar 5 keeps basically the same shape, but has to alter the opening leap of an octave to a seventh, keeping the double neighbour figure: these two bars could easily have been reverse engineered from the opening model. However, bars 6 and 7 change the pattern completely: the upward octave leap and double neighbour figure are both gone in favour of simple scale movement, which at least maintains the appoggiaturas:



A much more drastic departure happens in bar 34, the opening of the third statement of the text 'Agnus dei' in C major, where the violin motif is missing entirely for the first measure, entering somewhat unconvincingly in bar 35:

<sup>24</sup> note also the re-written violin part (see Andrews pp. 182 ff)

<sup>25</sup> see the facsimile of Süssmayr's score above

The reason may well lie in the previous three bars, where Süssmayr is repeating the choral ‘dona eis requiem’ from bar 11–14 in the new key. In the previous section he had achieved contrast by echoing the choral phrase in the basset horns and bassoons (b. 14–16) thus giving the strings two bars of rest, so that there was a change of three elements at the beginning of the second statement of the text: dynamic, orchestration and motif. In bar 31–34 he chose to echo the phrase in the strings (perhaps to avoid a *piano* entry on the highest note of the first basset horn?) and thus could not create the same sense of contrast continuing immediately with the same instrument group. His solution was to eliminate the first bar of the principal motif!

The problem is compounded because bars 31–33 recall music that has not been heard in this stanza. When the winds echo the chorus ‘dona eis requiem’ music in bars in the first section, it is a repeat of what had just been sung in a different timbre. This is not the case in the second stanza, where the music of ‘dona eis requiem’ is different, rendering the re-use of bar 14–17 at best out of context, at worst, redundant:

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The first system, starting at bar 10, shows a vocal line and two woodwind lines (basset horns and bassoons). The second system, starting at bar 25, shows a vocal line and a string line. The lyrics are: 'do - na, do - na e - is re - qui - em.'

If Süssmayr had repeated the music in the winds,<sup>26</sup> he would have been able to adapt the opening violin motif to the new C major context to open the third stanza. That he chose neither to do this or use the beginning of the principal motif is extraordinary, and gives the impression once again of a composer trying to realise someone else’s idea and struggling with the task.

The question inevitably arises then: does this out of context, literal repeat<sup>27</sup> support the possibility that bars 11–14 (and therefore 14–17) might also have a Mozartian provenance? In terms of the form of the movement, this repeat in the second stanza is out of place, but its insertion there is consistent with Süssmayr trying to get the maximum use out of an idea he believed to be Mozart’s, especially as he uses it a third time in the last stanza. The present edition

<sup>26</sup> as Levin does in his edition.

<sup>27</sup> not quite literal, the bassi ‘should’ have an F sharp on the last quaver of b. 32

omits these bars, achieving an intensification of the final iteration of the petitionary prayer by introducing it sooner than expected.

The musical content of ‘dona eis requiem’ is worthy of discussion for two more reasons. First, the introduction of the relative major key at the text ‘dona eis requiem’ has theological implications: the minor key opening portrays the sorrow of those who are mourning the death of the requiem’s dedicatee, while the major mode expresses the certainty of that person’s salvation, now residing in paradise. These implications should not be overlooked, and are to be expected of a dramatist of Mozart’s calibre, but they demonstrate a level of insight found all too infrequently in Süssmayr. It should not be forgotten that the previous two movements, the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* are part of the Ordinary of the Mass and therefore do not refer to death at all. The *Agnus Dei* itself is also part of the Ordinary, and it is not until the text ‘dona eis requiem’ replaces the customary ‘dona nobis pacem’ that we are pulled back into the solemn world of the *Missa pro defunctis*. It was Mozart’s practice in *Agnus Dei* movements to achieve a complete contrast at the text ‘dona nobis pacem’: all but one of his masses<sup>28</sup> change tempo and mood (sometimes even key) at that point. While it would obviously not be appropriate to switch to a faster tempo and a joyful tone at this point in a Requiem, a move to the major mode at the equivalent point is consistent with Mozart’s practice, whether it is the result of religious conviction or dramaturgical insight.

Second, the switch to the relative major directly from the dominant is not the obvious choice, but it is one featured in many Mozart works,<sup>29</sup> and can be found earlier in the Requiem in such places as bars 8–10 of the *Dies irae*. Similar mediant key relationships can also be found between the *Dies irae* and the *Tuba mirum*, the *Domine Jesu* and the *Hostias* in the Mozart autograph, and the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus* of Süssmayr’s completion. Like the opening note of the *Benedictus*, the F natural of the basses’ ‘dona eis requiem’ could be heard as the third of D minor, and it is not until the other voices enter that we experience it as the tonic of the relative major. This is a sophisticated progression that makes one wonder just how far into the movement any sketch by Mozart might have gone. Whether Süssmayr was capable of such subtlety is a matter of debate, but for the modern editor-completer, it is clear that the *Agnus Dei* in K. 626 is demonstrably within the parameters of Mozart’s usual practice.

Being comprised of a text that is repeated three times, the large-scale structure of the movement cannot have been hard for Süssmayr to construct, but the remaining sections are not devoid of errors or bizarre moments, such as the extraordinary second inversion chord in bar 19:

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<sup>28</sup> K. 258

<sup>29</sup> Maunder cites the *Agnus Dei* from K. 192, also in D minor, on p. 62



Surely the choral basses should follow the orchestral bassi, creating a root position chord? It is much less likely that the bass choral part is correct and the tenor note and basso continuo part are wrong. Note also the unnecessarily shared note of the altos and sopranos. It is hard to imagine how even a copyist could have made such errors, but in a composer notating his own ideas it is even more difficult to believe. The second and third stanzas also contain an easily avoided hidden octave between tenor and bass from bar 23–24, the nasty (and famous) parallel fifth between soprano and bass in bars 29–30 mentioned above,<sup>30</sup> and a needless doubled third between tenor and soprano on the downbeat of bar 41, which are all easily removed. When compared to the opening choral section, which was virtually free of such errors,<sup>31</sup> these bars seem to have been written by someone much more careless, reinforcing the idea that two composers were at work.<sup>32</sup>

If stylistic inconsistencies are remedied, and errors like these are removed—a relatively simple task, and not dissimilar to edits made elsewhere in the NMA’s edition of K. 626—the result is, as Maunder points out in a rare moment of affirmation of Süssmayr’s work, ‘very nearly as complete as most of the movements in Mozart’s autograph score, and in its masterly construction is fully worthy to stand beside them.’<sup>33</sup>

Beyond structural considerations, in this movement too Süssmayr’s orchestration is occasionally as uneven in quality as some of the details discussed above. His crotchets for the winds at the opening admirably separate them timbrally from the chorus’s dotted minims when they enter, but they run the risk of being overshadowed by the trumpets and timpani. The present edition moves them to the second beat, where they will be heard better and underline the chorus rhythm. The Commendatore scene in Act Two of *Don Giovanni* suggests that Mozart preferred

<sup>30</sup> see the musical example comparing K.220 and K. 626 on p. 203

<sup>31</sup> There are hidden fifths between soprano and tenor from bar 3–4, and soprano and alto from bar 8–9, but the alternatives would seem to be worse: the only other possible tenor note in bar 4 is a D resulting in a parallel fifth (the alto G must fall, so F is not available to the tenors) and an A in the altos in bar 9 is the same situation.

<sup>32</sup> Perhaps that is why Levin re-wrote the choral parts for the second and third stanzas, not limiting his changes to internal parts, but also re-writing the soprano melody

<sup>33</sup> Maunder, p. 72. One can only wish that he had been as open minded elsewhere in his analysis of Süssmayr



trumpets on *sol* rather than *do* in restless *piano* passages in D minor,<sup>34</sup> and Süssmayr's timpani in bar 8 is rather extraordinary, playing the same rhythm as the violins!

His *divisi* violas make a certain sense at the beginning, but can't be maintained: while Mozart had shown a fondness for divided violas in *Die Zauberflöte* (which Süssmayr may have been trying to emulate having no doubt heard the opera), when he did so he only returns to *tutti* playing when the string texture changes, not arbitrarily, as Süssmayr seems to, when it has no apparent reason to. For example, why is the viola writing of bar 4 different from the opening bar? Every other parameter of the orchestral writing is the same:

The same thing happens in bar 8 and 39–40, and the middle stanza has no *divisi* at all. In addition, the bottom part often doubles the bassi line (see bars 6–7 and 35–38) not only rendering it inaudible but reducing the number of players available for the top part. The present edition eliminates all *divisi* writing in the violas.

With the exception of bars 25, 45 and 51 (the last bar), Süssmayr's orchestral bassi maintain a repeated quaver movement whenever they are playing. This makes sense in the *Agnus Dei* sections: having started with that gesture, the tri-partite nature of the text renders it necessary to use it in each stanza, but could more contrast not be achieved with the music for 'dona eis requiem' by changing to crotchet movement? The present edition makes that change, as does Levin.<sup>35</sup>

With Süssmayr's *forte* entrance for the chorus, it makes sense that his trombones double them note for note.<sup>36</sup> However, since the present edition re-interprets the dynamics of the opening gesture, the new trombone parts support only the stressed syllables, entering with an indication of *mf*.<sup>37</sup> Süssmayr abandons the *mf-p* pattern in the third stanza, maintaining *forte* throughout bars

<sup>34</sup> see *Don Giovanni* Act Two, Scene XV, bars 443 ff

<sup>35</sup> Levin also changes Süssmayr's bass melody "in order to keep the motive (cf soprano) organic" (see Levin, p. XXVII)

<sup>36</sup> He helpfully marks 'senza tromboni' in the *piano* sections

<sup>37</sup> see p. 208 above

34 to 41, and his trombones play accordingly, though surely it would have been more effective to eliminate the crotchet rest between ‘tollis’ and ‘peccata’ in b. 38?<sup>38</sup> This dynamic changes is dramatically very effective, as it enhances the third iteration of the petitionary prayer, and provides the greatest possible contrast with the final ‘dona eis requiem’.

Much has been written about the deceptive cadence in bar 45: it is one of Süssmayr’s masterstrokes. The debate has focused on whether the bass note should be G or G flat. Both Levin and Maunder change Süssmayr’s G into a G flat, but the present editor can see no good reason to do so other than personal preference, since there are no errors or weaknesses in the part writing. It’s an arresting moment whichever note is chosen. Süssmayr’s G natural makes perfect sense, however, so why change it?<sup>39</sup> In many ways it is preferable. Whoever the composer of these last bars was, he was careful to leave the listener in suspense: the sopranos’ B flat hangs ambiguously in the air for three beats—and should be *a cappella* for maximum impact—with the effect that time stands still until a new and unexpected tonality introduces a new word: ‘sempiternam’. What better way to portray the contrast between the struggles of this world and the peace of eternity than to suspend both time and tonal relationships? Saving the surprise G flat until bar 47 gives the audience two surprises instead of one: by introducing the G flat two bars earlier, the *coup de théâtre* is lost. If this insight is Süssmayr’s, it is a flash of true genius.

Sadly, this sublime moment is all too soon painfully undermined by the *crescendo* marking to *forte* over the last four bars, which seems to completely misunderstand the situation. For the last time we wonder at how Süssmayr’s completion swings between the sublime and the mundane with such head-spinning rapidity. It is perhaps too fanciful to interpret this crescendo as portraying Süssmayr’s relief at arriving at the end of his arduous and thankless task, of finally reaching the point where Mozart’s music can return? If only his last six bars had remained *sotto voce*, the strings had remained silent and the choir, if accompanied at all, had been enhanced only by the ghostly timbre of the basset horns and bassoons, Süssmayr could have bowed out gracefully, almost imperceptibly, and stepped gently and more appreciated into the pages of history.

Score: <https://www.simonwandrews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/12-Agnus.22.pdf>

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<sup>38</sup> The present edition makes that change in the choral and trombone parts

<sup>39</sup> Either way, the cadence would be enhanced with the addition of the trombones and basset horns