Chapter 7

Dies Irae

In this movement all the *coro* parts, basso continuo (with figuring) and the opening four bars of the strings are in Mozart's hand. After bar 5 the string staves are blank except for the first violin figuration in four places:

bar 5-9

bar 19 to the downbeat of bar 31

bar 40 (beat 3) to 57

bar 65 to the end.

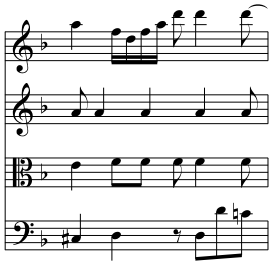
There is no music provided for the winds or trumpets and timpani, those four lines of the score being left blank and unattributed. It seems logical to assume, however, as both Eybler and Süssmayr did, that these staves should be assigned to the same instruments as in the opening movement: basset horns in F, bassoons, trumpets in D and timpani. It is hard to imagine the composer of *Don Giovanni* evoking the Day of Judgment without trumpets and drums, and even allowing for spoken or sung prayers in the liturgy between the movements, there can scarcely have been time to change the basset horns to clarinets after the *Kyrie*, and even if there were, to what end?

As his contract with Constanze shows, Eybler took possession of Mozart's autograph on December 21st and wrote his additions directly into it.[1] Since his work on this movement pre-dates Süssmayr's, it is a little puzzling why Süssmayr chose to ignore it in his version of the score. The only way he could have been unaware of Eybler's work would have been for him to have made a copy of the original before Eybler worked on it, which, given the time parameters involved, is unlikely. It seems then that he worked after Eybler, but chose to ignore his work, perhaps in a fit of pique at having been passed over in favour of a rival for Mozart's affection, and only being entrusted with the task after Eybler gave up. This is a shame, because Eybler's orchestration is frequently better than Süssmayr's, with more rhythmic interest and differentiation from the choral parts.

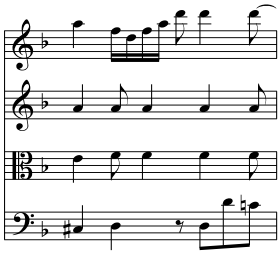
Despite its short length of just 38 bars, in the *Dies irae* Mozart provided more indication of his intentions than in any other movement, providing not just links—bars 9, 19–21, 29–30, 56 and 65 to the end—but almost thirty bars of accompanimental figures—bars 22–31 and 40–57. It would seem that the music was sufficiently complex for him not to trust completely even his prodigious musical recall. With their restless syncopations and muscular tremolo arpeggios, his

[1] Though it cannot be ruled out that he started work before that date and only formalised the arrangement on the 21st, it must surely have been after the funeral service on December 10th.

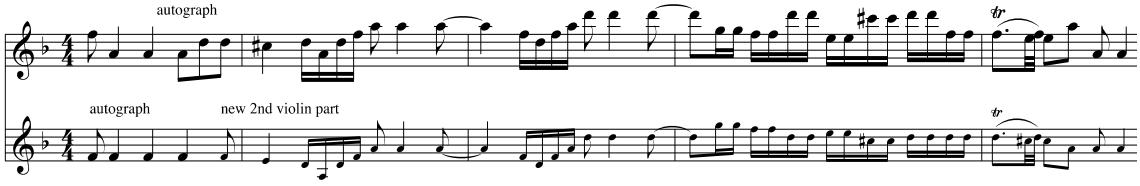
violin figures are infused with an almost volcanic energy appropriate to the terror of the Day of Judgment. With this much help from the Master, it might be imagined that the task of filling in the rest of the string writing would be a fairly simple task, but as a comparison of Eybler's and Süssmayr's work shows, that proved not to be the case. When to use Mozart's syncopated idea and when not to, when the second violins should double the firsts and then whether at the unison or octave, all proved to be complicated issues. A good example of the muddle Süssmayr sometimes gets himself into is bar 6, where his additions introduce two different and contradictory rhythms:



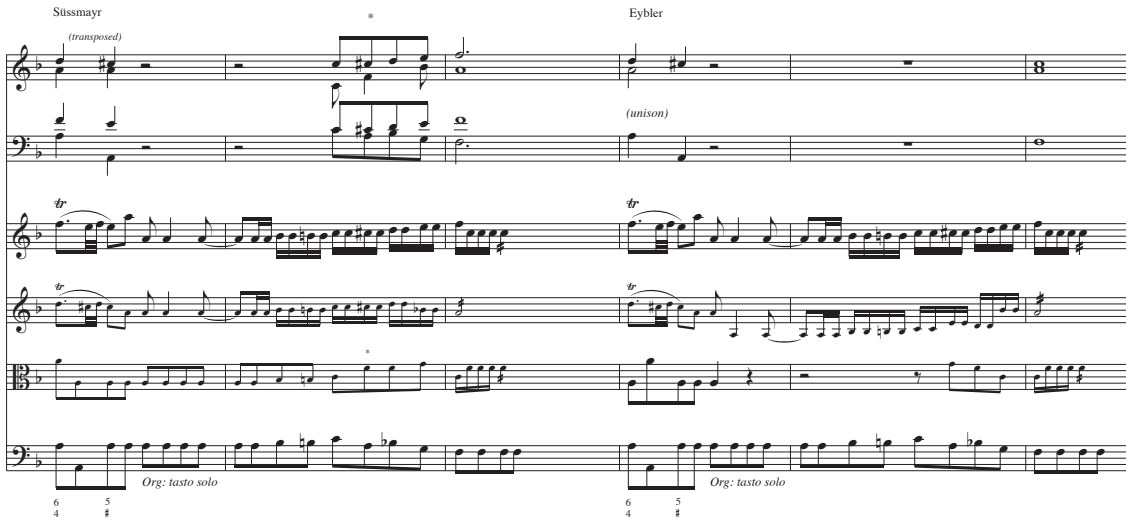
His second violins re-use Mozart's syncopated rhythm from bars 2 and 4, which is all well and good, but what is the viola doing? The first two beats double the sopranos an octave lower, but then he introduces the syncopated figure in the middle of the bar, which is at odds with the second violins. Eybler does a little better in this bar:



This is rhythmically stronger than Süssmayr's, but this solution does not work well with the dotted quaver-semiquaver rhythm on the second beat of his winds and brass, so neither version is very satisfactory. Both men completely ignore Mozart's first violin part, which is a shame because it is such a strong motif that should surely be highlighted: Mozart's second violin part of the first four bars leads naturally to a doubling of the firsts an octave lower:



Another potential pitfall arrives in bars 8–9, where Mozart wrote *tasto* in the organ part, indicating that the player should provide no harmonies. Therefore surely Süssmayr's winds are wrong in bar 9, where he has added harmonies on beats 3 and 4 (Eybler did not, instead inserting rests in the whole bar):



But what should the second violins and violas do? Both men added harmonies in the viola on the last three notes of bar 9—Süssmayr's F on the third beat resulting in a somewhat alarming augmented dominant chord—and added a seventh in the second violin on the last beat. The question is: how long did Mozart intend the *tasto* to last? Does the lack of figuring represent Mozart's final thinking, or merely the first draft that would have been added to when he went back and completed the instrumentation? As it stands, the figuring does not resume until bar 12, on the diminished seventh chord, but it is tempting to suggest that the organist should play a full chord on the down beat of bar 10, where the chorus re-enter and the modulation to the relative F major is confirmed: since it is a root position chord, the argument can very reasonably be made that it does not require figures. However, should the *tasto solo* end even before that, on the last three notes of bar 9 when the bassi are no longer in unison with the first violins? Mozart is quite precise later in the movement about exactly when the figuring resumes—see bars 42–50 and especially the downbeat of bar 57, where he instructs the organist to play a chord after only 5 notes of *tasto solo*[2]—so perhaps this precision should be noted and taken into consideration. Therefore both Eybler and Süssmayr were wrong to add string harmonies at the end of bar 9. The only question is whether Eybler's second violins an octave below the firsts is correct, or Süssmayr's unison.[3] The present edition chooses the latter.

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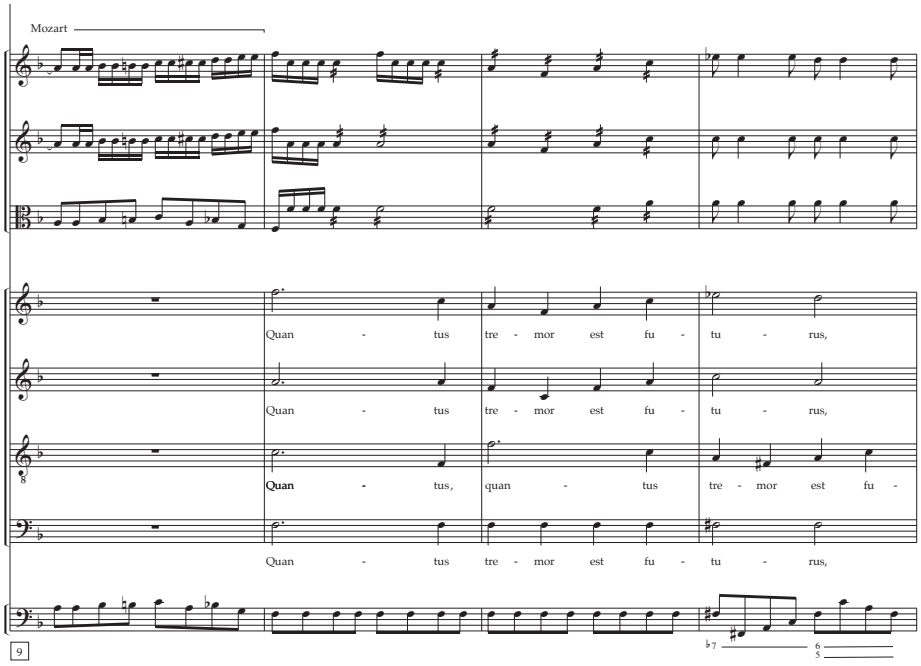
[2] but bar 57 is an arpeggiated figure, and the organist is instructed to play a single chord, so it could be argued that it is not an analogous situation

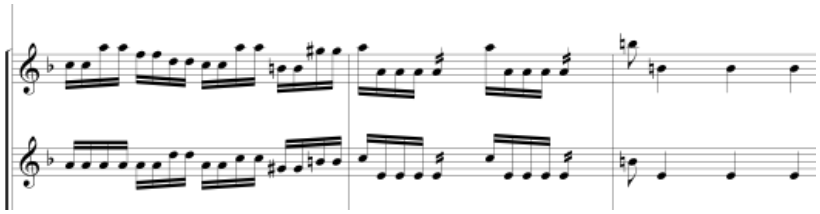
[3] The violas should go with the bassi either way

As a rule of thumb, Eybler's strings are more independent than Süssmayr's, whose tremolos follow the vocal lines in bars 10–15, whereas Eybler's don't move until there is a change of harmony. Süssmayr seems to follow the implications of Mozart's opening phrase well, but neither composer alternates tremolos and syncopated crotchets and quavers as Mozart does at the opening, which is a shame, because that rhythm adds not only variation in the texture but extra impetus: the change in the bassi from repeated quavers to arpeggiated diminished chords in bars 12 and 15 would have benefitted from such a change in energy, and refer back to the opening, reinforcing the motivic unity of the movement:

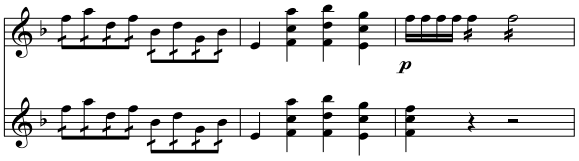


In the bridge from 19–21, Eybler again doubles Mozart's first violin part an octave lower in the second violins, using the violas to complete a basically three-part texture, whereas Süssmayr prefers motion in sixths using the violas to realise fully Mozart's figuring. The present edition follows Süssmayr. Astonishingly, both men alter Mozart's first violin part in bar 22, changing the bottom note of the octave jump from an A to a C, presumably to save the A for the second violins, but surely it would have been better not to go against Mozart's intentions, since there is a clear progression of octave jumps in the first violins rising by step from bar 22 to 25. While it would have been simple to keep what Mozart wrote and move the second violins to the C so that there is third in the chord, one has to ask whether having the seconds above the firsts undermines the strong octave leap progression. The voice leading seems to work best if the second violins stay below the firsts, falling from a C to an E on the second semiquaver, with the violas rising to the C in the same place: in this way the violas lead naturally into the seventh (D)

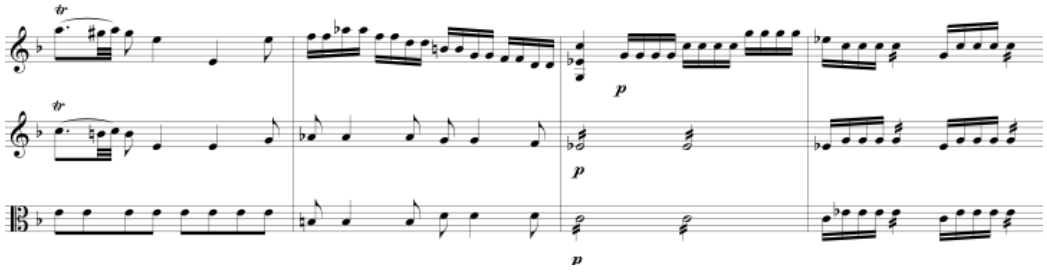
in the next bar and the second's C on beat one and three follows the alto part. In this way the passage also resembles the opening very closely:



As Maunder has pointed out,[4] Eybler's second violin part in bar 28, while motivically interesting, creates a parallel fifth with the altos, and it also has the added disadvantage of dropping to two octaves below the first violins. It would seem wiser to reinforce the first violins. Both Eybler and Süssmayr shorten Mozart's crotchet C minor triple stop on the downbeat of bar 31 to incorporate it into the continuing tremolo: while it is not impossible that Mozart might have made this change as he went back and completed the instrumentation, it is extremely awkward to reach a triple stop and immediately launch into a semiquaver tremolo. There is an illuminating example of this kind of scenario in bar 51 of *Der Hölle Rache,*[5] where, after a series of triple stops, the first violins start a tremolo on a single note while the seconds have a triple stop:



it would seem to be the better solution here for the violas and seconds to start the tremolo on the beat and retain Mozart's crotchet, the firsts rejoining on the second beat:[6]



[4] Maunder, *Mozart's Requiem: On Preparing a New Edition*, OUP, 1988, p.137

[5] see p. 228 of the NMA edition of *Die Zauberflöte*

[6] The piano marking is editorial

Süssmayr re-uses Mozart's syncopated idea ingeniously in bar 33 and 36 while Eybler maintains the tremolo, and for the piano iterations of "Dies irae" in bar 42–44 and 46–48 sung by the sopranos, altos and tenors in reply to the basses stentorian "Quantus tremor est futurus," Eybler uses the seconds to double Mozart's given first violin line and divides the violas to complete the harmony, when all that was necessary was to give the alto part to the violas.[7] Both of these solutions result in a dubious parallel unison from beats one to two of bars 43 and 44 between the first and second violins (Süssmayr) or the upper line of the violas and both violins (Eybler).

Under the chorus' block chords 'quando judex est venturus' in bars 53–56 Süssmayr continues with the tremolo in the second violins and violas under Mozart's syncopated first violin line (doubling the sopranos and altos) which seems to ignore the precedent set in Mozart's opening bars, as does his alternation of tremolo and doubling the firsts' semiquaver arpeggio in bar 54. Eybler re-inforces the chorus' rhythm with triple stops in the second violins, which also leaves the firsts by themselves. The present edition has the seconds play in unison with the firsts. Mozart's repeated note arpeggio figure in bars 57–65 is doubled in unison by Süssmayr and in octaves by Eybler, which occupies the same register as the violas, which seems unsatisfactory.

As one would expect from their instrumentation of the bridge from 19–21, the string writing of Eybler's coda is basically a three-part texture with either unisons or octaves between the violins (though with a surprising double stop on the fourth beat of bar 65 in the second violins!) whereas Süssmayr prefers a four-part texture except in the series of first inversion chords in bar 66. Süssmayr's second violins have a quaver rest on the second half of bar 65, which seems strange, and his viola part in b. 65 to the first beat of b. 66 is below the bassi which results in a muddy texture that is surely best avoided.

In many ways, Eybler's version is to be preferred, and the present editions follows his lead, with minor alterations such as continuing the unison of the violins through to the end.[8] The violas follow the figuring. In the last bar, Süssmayr doubles the violins' downward octave leap an octave lower in the violas, which brings their last note into the same register as the cellos, which surely works against Mozart's intentions of finishing with an upper voice alone. This note should be excised.

The Winds

Other than the *Confutatis*, the *Dies irae* is the only movement for which Eybler composed parts for the winds and brass. As many have noted, an obvious model for this movement is 'Der Hölle Rache' from *Die Zauberflöte* with its off-beat punctuating woodwind

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[7] Süssmayr merely doubles the soprano and alto voices in the second violins and violas respectively.

[8] with the exception of the last quaver of b. 65, where the seconds' G sharp fills out the figuring

chords, which Eybler used in bar two and analogous passages. Composed very close to the same time as the Requiem, it is not difficult to imagine that both Eybler and Süssmayr may not only have been aware of the score among Mozart's papers, but even seen the opera at the Freihaus-Theater auf der Wieden. One has to remember, however, an essential difference between orchestrating *Die Zauberflöte* and the Requiem: the latter has an organ continuo that operates in the same register and, depending on the registration and instrument used, in a similar sound palette as the winds. Mozart's figuring suggests sustained chords in the right hand of the organ both over the arpeggios in bars one and three and the syncopated repeated notes of bars two and four.

At the opening Eybler made the winds an independent unit, not just merely doubling the voices, and the rests he provides not only help the ear distinguish the two timbres, but also give rhythmic impetus in addition to harmonic support. The antiphonal effect between the chorus and the winds in bars five and six is particularly effective. By comparison, Süssmayr's doubling of the chorus is bland.

Unfortunately, from bars 10–19 Eybler himself abandoned short chords and syncopation in favour of sustained winds, and the energy level drops correspondingly. He does return to the idea at the dominant statement of the main theme in bar 22, but for some reason the chords in the first bar are now two minims rather than crotchets separated by rests, and the winds play through the chorus' rest in bar 26, which is a shame. The same sustained sound, punctuated only by repeated notes rather than rests, pertains through to the end of the section in bar 40, and then the winds remain silent until the outburst 'quantus tremor' half way through bar 50, where the choral parts are interestingly re-voiced rather than doubled. Shadowing the vocal parts finishes off the movement, and the winds do not play in the instrumental coda.

Süssmayr's use of the bassoons is sometimes confused: he doesn't seem to be able to decide whether to use them as an ensemble instrument with the basset horns or in a more baroque fashion as one of the continuo unit. For example, from bars 19–21 they play *a2* with the cellos and basses independently of the basset horns, and then in bars 22–26 they do both, doubling the bassi in 22 and 24 but providing a purely 'woodwind' function in bars 23 and 25, where their syncopation provides rhythmic impetus (which is sadly ignored by the basset horns). In bars 27–29 they again switch to doubling the bassi only to rejoin the basset horns in a chord progression that underpins the modulation to C minor. Such a multiplicity of roles is rare in late Mozart, since it results in a considerable loss of colour in the orchestration. Eybler's bassoon writing is much more consistent, though, as his early introduction of the C on the beginning of the fourth beat of bar 6 rather than on the last quaver where Mozart's figures indicate, it is not flawless. The present edition uses Eybler's woodwind parts where ever possible, and adapts where necessary.

Trumpets, Timpani and Trombones

With the modulations in this movement, the trumpets and timpani are of course quite limited as to when they can participate. As a generalisation, Eybler uses them more sparingly than Süssmayr (for example, he doesn't use them in bars 12 and 13 where they are very effective), but when he does they are often more rhythmically interesting—compare Eybler's dotted quaver-semiquaver figures in bars 2, 4, 5 and 6 with Süssmayr's relatively bland quavers. However, he might have been better advised to match the choir's even quavers on the last beat of bars 52 and 54, where his dotted rhythm undermines the homophonic rhythm. He also does not use the trumpets and timpani in the instrumental coda, leaving that task entirely to the strings: Süssmayr's version seems much more satisfying, though without the expected anacrusis to bar 67.

Eybler doesn't take the trumpets beyond *do* and *sol* until bar 55*,* whereas Süssmayr uses the available upper *re* more often and effectively, though his use of that note simultaneously with the lower *do* in bar 16 is a little alarming, since the seventh can't resolve properly. Somewhat surprisingly, where he could very effectively and safely use it (as Eybler does) in the dominant harmony in bar 55, he doesn't. Eybler elected not to reinforce the basses 'quantus tremor est futurus' in bars 40, 44 and 48, or the tutti chorus' declamation of the same text in bar 50 with the trumpets and timpani, but surely Süssmayr was correct to do so, as he was to include them in the final tutti, although it is a mystery why he has a rest on the second beat of bar 67.

As discussed at length in previous chapters, it was of course understood that the three trombones would double the three lower voices, with the possible exception of *piano* passages, even where it was not specifically indicated in the score. Neither Eybler or Süssmayr gave any indications as to the participation of the trombones in this movement, and since Mozart didn't specify *any* dynamics, the argument could be made that it is a matter of conjecture and personal taste whether the strongly implied *forte* of the opening should be maintained throughout, and therefore whether the trombones should play whenever the choir is singing.

However, there are passages where the texture of the music implies or suggests performance at a lesser dynamic than *forte,* for example in measures 42 and 46 where the upper voices respond to the basses unison 'quantus tremor est futurus' with a more pleading 'dies irae': the cellos are instructed to play without the basses, and the texture changes from a basically homophonic declamation of the text to an antiphonal division of the musical forces. It seems sensible for the orchestration to follow that change of technique, and therefore for the trombones to drop out, returning to underpin the (traditionally) *forte* entry of the whole choir in bar 50, where the four part homophonic declamation returns.

Another possible passage for the trombones to sit out is the ‘cuncta stricte’ dialogue between the sopranos/altos and tenors/basses in bars 57–8 and 61–63, the trombones playing, once again, only where the four-part texture returns in bars 59 and 63. That is the course followed by the present edition, where only the basset horns support the upper voices and the bassoons the lower in bars 57–8 and 61–63 (with different voicing). In this way the alto trombone does not play alone, as it would have to in automatic *colle parte* doubling, and the orchestration follows Mozart’s vocal combinations more closely.

Score:

https://www.simonwandrews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2-Dies-Irae-score.22.pdf