

## Tuba Mirum

The use of the trombone as an obbligato instrument in Viennese church music had been well established since the 1740s. Composers such as Georg Christoph Wagenseil (1715–77) and the Czech František Ignác Antonín Tuma (1704–74)—usually referred to as Franz in his time in Vienna—frequently wrote music for either solo or two trombones to accompany solo sections in their masses, most frequently in the Agnus Dei movements.<sup>1</sup> Tuma's *Messa delle morte*, composed in 1742, and performed fairly regularly in Vienna thereafter, is generally credited with being the first Requiem to pair a solo trombone with a solo voice for the *Tuba mirum* section of the Sequence (in this case alto trombone with alto voice) as does the *Requiem in C minor* of Georg Reutter (1738–93)—who, it will be remembered, preceded Leopold Hofmann at St. Stephen's—composed in 1753.

It should be no surprise then that Mozart also decided on the pairing of a solo voice with solo trombone for the *Tuba mirum* of his own Requiem, although, in spite of the fact that he only writes 'Trombone solo', the tenor clef indicates that it should be performed on that instrument.<sup>2</sup> Rather than matching the tessitura of the trombone and soloist, Mozart opts for contrast, opposing the upper range of the tenor trombone with the bass soloist. On the first page all the staves other than those designated for the soloists and the strings are left blank, and the continuo line lists only 'Bassi'—no mention of 'organo' as in the choral movements—and there are no figures.<sup>3</sup> Is this an oversight on Mozart's part? Was it simply understood that the organ should play along—with a registration appropriate to the dynamic and style of the movement—or is this a considered choice? The structural design of the Sequenz movement shows—after the *Dies irae*, which could hardly be set any other way—an alternation of sections in *moderno* and *antico* styles starting with the *Tuba mirum*, so perhaps it could be inferred that the organ was indeed intentionally omitted from this movement. It is hard to imagine what the organ would add to the opening, with its wonderfully sparse evocation of the last trumpet,<sup>4</sup> so even if the organ might find somewhere to play later in the movement, surely the opening would eventually have been marked 'senza

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<sup>1</sup> Mozart himself included three trombones in the Agnus Dei of his *Waisenhausmesse* K. 139 (114a) where it is a trio of trombones accompanied only by continuo, but they are not used in an obbligato fashion after the entry of the solo voices at which point they are mostly doubled by the strings.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note, however, that Mozart seems momentarily to have been confused in bar 5, first writing the notes a third lower, or in the alto clef before correcting the error.

<sup>3</sup> This is slightly different from the *Recordare* two movements later, also for solo quartet following a tutti chorus, where, although there are no figures, the continuo line is designated 'Organo e Bassi'.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 2 for a discussion of the association of the trombone with biblical references to trumpets.

organo’? Given the key of the movement, B flat major, the trumpets and timpani are obviously precluded, which means that the remaining staves can only have been intended for the basset horns and bassoons.

Mozart’s solo trombone stops after the entrance of the tenor soloist on the downbeat of bar 18, and there has been much debate as to whether Süssmayr’s continuation of it from bars 24 to 34, during the tenor’s second phrase, is well-wrought or not. Mozart was also singularly unhelpful as far as the string accompaniment is concerned, since he doesn’t write anything until just before the soprano soloist’s ‘cum vix justus’, where Eybler’s and Mozart’s contributions are helpfully delineated by Stadler (both Süssmayr and the present edition omit Eybler’s viola part):

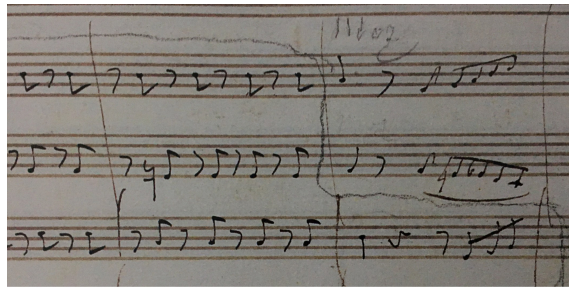


Fig. 1

Strangely enough, the NMA did not have a problem overruling Stadler on the next page of the autograph (bars 45-53), where the second violins are also outside the penciled circle while the viola is inside, suggesting that whoever wielded the pencil thought that the second violin part was by Mozart, although it is in a very similar hand to the viola. While it is true that a comparison of the two natural signs in Fig. 1 show that they are quite different, and that the second is not only consistent with Mozart’s method of writing a natural but is unlike any other natural sign in Eybler’s contribution to the Requiem, it does pose an interesting possibility. Süssmayr also used this joining motif, so had he seen Mozart’s autograph of the *Tuba mirum* (either before or after Eybler’s work)? Or were both men so familiar with Mozart’s music that the idea occurred spontaneously? From bar 45 to the end the first violin line is completely notated, but, once again, there is no indication of whether, or how, the winds might participate.

Unlike the *Dies irae*, Eybler wrote only string parts for this movement, whether because he envisaged no winds for it, intended to return to the movement when he had completed the string parts but failed to, or did not feel competent to add them in a manner which his teacher would have deemed acceptable, we do not know. His string writing is stylistically sophisticated—Süssmayr’s changes are often not improvements—and seem to follow the implications of Mozart’s bass line well. Perhaps his (inferred) discomfort at adding wind music was a part of his decision to abandon his completion attempt? Süssmayr too eschews winds almost completely until all four soloists sing together as a quartet in bar 51, and though his automatic (and

characteristic) doubling of the voices might be questioned and perhaps improved upon, it would seem that their absence at the beginning was by design, not oversight.

Indeed, how else should the last trumpet sound but alone? Surely Maunder misunderstood the text when he said: ‘The first two bars should obviously remain unaccompanied, but the bare fifth between bass and trombone in the second half of bar 3 shows that one should beware of jumping to the same conclusion about bars 3–4. Since Mozart wrote rests in the instrumental bass part here, any filling-in must be done by woodwind: but what could be a more fitting accompaniment to Sarastro-in-disguise than sustained chords on (dovetailed) basset horns and bassoons?’<sup>5</sup> On the contrary, far from representing ‘Sarastro-in-disguise’, the role of the bass singer in this movement is to announce the summons to the Last Judgment, since the trombone, representing the Last Trumpet, is not capable of speech. The choice of bass tessitura represents the ‘sepulchra regionum’ from which all are summoned, since low voices traditionally represent darkness and death<sup>6</sup> while high voices represent light and heaven. Mozart uses this distinction to great effect later on in the *Confutatis*, where the tenors and basses represent figures writhing in Hell, while the sopranos and altos represent the prayers of the faithful.

Furthermore, an examination of Maunder’s principal models<sup>7</sup> also reveals far more differences than similarities, since in the first not only are there no trombones, but the cadence he cites as containing ‘some thematic resemblances’ is accompanied by a flute and two oboes, and the second, far from the orchestration being ‘almost identical’, contains no violins for the entire movement and all three trombones playing in three parts as part of the ensemble. *O Isis and Osiris* is, of course, wonderful music for a solo bass voice, but there the similarities end: Sarastro is praying to Egyptian deities that Tamino and Papageno be protected as they go through a human (masonic) ritual which they have chosen to undertake: the *Tuba mirum* represents a divine call that none of us can escape. A dramatist of Mozart’s calibre would not have set such different scenes in the same way, so, although some of the musical phrases, if chosen carefully enough, might appear similar on the surface, the text dictates that Sarastro cannot be a model for this movement. Indeed, it is exactly the sparseness of Mozart’s texture that gives the *Tuba mirum* its dramatic impact—especially following the complex, breathless *Dies irae*—and it should not be messed with.

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<sup>5</sup> Maunder, Mozart’s Requiem, *On Preparing a New Edition*, Oxford, 1988, p. 142

<sup>6</sup> Is it possible, for example, to imagine Don Giovanni’s nemesis, the Commendatore, as anything other than a basso?

<sup>7</sup> The Act I Finale of *Die Zauberflöte*, bars 395–440 and “O Isis and Osiris” (p.141)

For the opening both Eybler and Süssmayr use off-beat crotchets to accompany the second half of the first phrase—though it is a shame that both men anticipated the solo trombone’s flattened seventh on the third beat by introducing it in the strings on the second:<sup>8</sup>

\* the A is only in Eybler, not Süssmayr

The main difference is that Süssmayr removed Eybler’s double stops in the viola. Eybler’s string rhythm in bars 11–13, which starts on the soloist’s rest, is a better counterpoint to the soloist’s dotted quaver–semiquaver figure on ‘et sepulchra’ than Süssmayr’s flat crotchets moving at the same time as the soloist, but it might have been better if he had not fallen to the third on the downbeat of bar 14: not only does it create a parallel octave with the soloist, but having risen by sequence to the fifth on the last beat of 13, it would have been more effective to stay there. Also, surely the solo voice would have more prominence, and the cadence in bar 15 would be more effective, if the second and fourth beat pattern were maintained in bar 14? It is not a coincidence that the solo trombone drops out just as the singer reaches his upper range, allowing him to have the listener’s full attention, and string chords on the strong beat with the singer weaken the effect. Conversely, the strings drop out entirely as the soloist turns to the low end of his range and the sinuous line of the trombone resumes the spotlight.

Right before the tenor entry, bar 17 presents an interesting dilemma: although there are no figures, the shape of the trombone line shows clearly that the harmony is a second inversion F major chord for the first two beats, with the F forming a 4-3 suspension above the bass on the first half of the fourth beat, resolving to a dominant seventh on C on the next quaver. The problem lies with the fact that it doesn’t resolve until the second half of the fourth beat:

<sup>8</sup> Like the present edition, Beyer’s edition avoids this

Süssmayr's harmonisation anticipates the resolution by placing the E natural in the first violin against the trombone's F, resulting in an unpleasant clash:<sup>9</sup>



Eybler avoids the issue by leaving the violins and violas silent in this bar, but this solution just seems unsatisfactory in a different way. The correct voicing of the chord would be to avoid the third in the chord altogether, allocating the root, seventh and fifth of the chord to the first violins, second violins and violas respectively.<sup>10</sup> This in turn has implications for the next bar, since the first violins cannot rise to the F of the traditional version on the downbeat without being in parallel octaves with the bass, so the fifth must remain at the top for at least the first two beats:

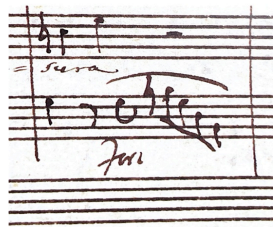


With the entry of the tenor voice, we have a new tonality and change of texture: that is, Süssmayr introduces F minor on the downbeat, whereas Eybler opens the bar in the major mode for two beats, not turning to the minor until the half bar, thus considerably undercutting the drama of the tenor's introduction of the word 'death'. Both men however agreed that a repeated quaver accompaniment was implied by the change of motion in Mozart's bass line. The first issue comes in bar 20 where Mozart clearly writes crotchet appoggiaturas: if this is correct, then Süssmayr's E natural in the first violin is once again an anticipated resolution, as is Eybler's second violin part an octave lower. Many performances change these appoggiaturas to a quaver to avoid the issue (indeed, the NMA suggests just that in square brackets above the part), and, since there is evidence in the *Requiem aeternam* of Mozart adjusting his *aides-mémoire* to accommodate instrumentation additions, it can't be ruled out that it is the kind of edit Mozart may himself have

<sup>9</sup> one he had also not avoided in a similar on the fourth beat of bar 10, that time resulting not from a suspension but an appoggiatura. There are also several instances of anticipated resolutions in his orchestration of the *Quam olim Abrahae* fugue. (See Chapter 13)

<sup>10</sup> See also Beyer, p. 44, but with the violins and violas an octave lower

made if he had lived to go back and orchestrate the movement himself.<sup>11</sup> To do so would also bring these appoggiaturas in line with the others in the movement, all of which are written as quavers (see bars 27, 32, 35, 36 (semiquaver), 38, 41 and 43). It is, however, a fairly simple matter to re-voice the string accompaniment for the first half of the bar to accommodate both possibilities, and of the two men Eybler's second half of the bar is much more expressive, and Süssmayr's awkward augmented jump on the second beat is probably best avoided. Eybler decided not to have the upper strings join the basses in unison in the *forte* joining motif at the end of bar 23. Süssmayr did use them, but for some reason decided to change Mozart's clearly marked slur over all five notes:



adding a staccato mark to the anacrusis quaver (followed in the NMA.):



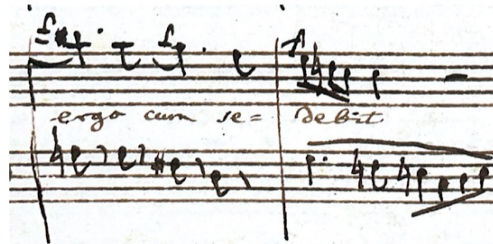
Mozart's slur is restored in the present edition (and the upper strings added).

In bar 24, given that the text refers once more to the theme of 'judgment' with the line 'Liber scriptus proferetur, in quo totum continetur unde mundus judicetur' (A book will be brought forth in which all will be written by which the world will be judged), in some ways Süssmayr's re-introduction of the trombone soloist makes some sense: since we have only had strings as the accompanimental instruments for the tenor soloist up to this point, and this is the second theme of the section and in a new key (g minor), a new colour is highly desirable. Arguing against this is that it is not the *act* of being judged that is referred to here, but the criteria in the context of which the judgment will take place: the opening statement is a universal one—a trumpet will announce the last judgment for us all—but the book of our lives is a much more personal matter. To portray these two different situations with the same instrument does not make

<sup>11</sup> Although Süssmayr, as noted elsewhere, was not immune to dissonant early resolutions, Eybler was more meticulous and his instrumentation of this bar assumes quaver appoggiaturas.

that distinction. Beyer's solution is to introduce two bassoons with the tenor soloist in bar 18, fashioning music for them in F minor.<sup>12</sup> While the present edition also transforms Süssmayr's single trombone line into a bassoon duet, the change in soloist, key and string accompaniment in bar 18 was considered enough contrast for the opening of a new section, so the entry of the bassoons is held until bar 24 to highlight the change of key into G minor, and the new text "Liber scriptus proferetur."

With the introduction of the alto soloist and new key in bar 34, Eybler's and Süssmayr's off-beat quavers seem exactly right,<sup>13</sup> but his addition of the '*sf*' to the strings on the second half of the third beat of b. 36 is probably best omitted, as it wasn't in Mozart's original:<sup>14</sup>



The change of key to D minor and the return to a strings-only texture are also sufficient for a new section. Mozart is progressing through a wonderful set of key relationships: tonic (bass)—surprise dominant minor to relative minor of tonic (tenor)—relative minor of dominant (alto)—finally back to tonic (soprano). The arrival of the last soloist and home key should be highlighted by an orchestration change: by merely continuing with the same figuration Süssmayr misses an important moment. The only instruments not yet heard are the basset horns, and to introduce them here would have highlighted the moment. The present edition adds pedal basset horns in bar 40, joining with the bassoons in repeated chords to point the cadence in bars 42-44.

From bar 45 to the end, the first violins are in Mozart's hand, and Eybler's and Süssmayr's filling out of the seconds and violas is almost identical. However, Süssmayr's automatic woodwind doubling of the soloists' rhythm in bars 51-56 seems unimaginative. The present edition uses sustained winds to preserve more timbral differentiation. The new second violin part doubles the firsts an octave lower in bar 54, with the bassoons taking Süssmayr's second violin and viola duet (copied from Eybler?), and this voicing of the last four bars has been re-written to avoid the doubling in the last cadence of the alto with the bassoon an octave lower.

Score: <https://www.simonwandrews.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/3-Tuba-Mirum-score.22-.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> see Beyer, p. 44

<sup>13</sup> as they had done for the second half of the tenor soloist's section in b. 29

<sup>14</sup> It is in the NMA edition (see p. 44)