

MOZART STUDIES

Simon P. Keefe



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Mozart Studies

Since the bicentennial of Mozart's death in 1991, the principal concern of much Mozart research has been to situate the composer and his music in increasingly well-informed biographical, historical, critical and analytical contexts. The contributors to *Mozart Studies* share this desire to paint ever-more rounded, focused and sensitive pictures of the composer by drawing upon wide-ranging historical materials and critical tools, and to project scholarly understandings considerably beyond the narrow frames of reference that traditionally characterized Mozart research. While chapters are grouped according to the principal areas and topics covered, it is intended that other thematic links between chapters will also emerge, drawing scholars' attention to areas primed for future investigation. In the best traditions of Mozart research, it is hoped that these essays will collectively affirm the vitality of Mozart scholarship and the significant role that this scholarship continues to play in defining and redefining musicological priorities.

SIMON P. KEEFE is Professor and Head of Music at City University London. He is the author of Mozart's Piano Concertos: Dramatic Dialogue in the Age of Enlightenment (2001), editor of The Cambridge Companion to Mozart (2003) and The Cambridge Companion to the Concerto (2005), and, with Cliff Eisen, is co-editor of The Cambridge Mozart Encyclopedia (2006). In 2005 he was elected a life member of the Akademie für Mozart Forschung at the Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg.

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Trans.: 'Your spirit blew and the sea covered them: they sank like lead into the violent sea' (Exodus 15:10). '[The wicked] play the tambourine and lyre and rejoice to the sound of the pipes: they spend their days in prosperity and in an instant descend down to hell' (Job 21:12–13). [141]

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Contributors

DANIEL K. L. CHUA, Reader in Music, King's College London

JAMES CURRIE, Assistant Professor of Music, State University of New York at Buffalo

CLIFF EISEN, Reader in Music, King's College London

EDMUND J. GOEHRING, Assistant Professor of Music, University of Western Ontario

SIMON P. KEEFE, Professor and Head of Music, City University London DOROTHEA LINK, Associate Professor in Music, University of Georgia JULIAN RUSHTON, Professor Emeritus, University of Leeds ELAINE SISMAN, Anne Parsons Bender Professor of Music, Columbia University

JESSICA WALDOFF, Associate Professor of Music, College of the Holy Cross

Preface Proposition of the Propo

In the final stages of work on this volume in early August 2005, I drove out to see friends close to White Lake in marshy southern Louisiana, one of the wildest and remotest corners of the United States. Getting out of my car on arrival I was greeted by a plethora of unfamiliar sounds ('music'?) the pleasures of which are so rarely accorded to a provincial Englishman – humming birds, cicadas rattling their distinctive crescendos and diminuendos, alligators splashing in a nearby gulley and water moccasins rustling through the grass. As I entered the house, after an embarrassment of natural riches, the first sounds (*certainly* music) I encountered were from the rondo theme of the finale of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 19 in F K. 459, broadcast on the radio.

Hearing Mozart's music rarely surprises us these days, and when it does, it only serves as a reminder of the composer's ubiquitousness. The flurry of Mozart-related activities to coincide with the latest anniversary – 250 years since his birth – will no doubt add to the aura of omnipresence and enable him to tighten his grip still further on our collective musical consciousness. For the classically inclined musical public, Mozart continues to hold centrestage, alternately a figure of fascination, an emblem of beauty, and a musical symbol, indeed, of the wonders of Western culture. For this reason, and many more besides, Mozart also provides inexhaustibly rich material for scholarly speculation.

Since the bicentennial of Mozart's death in 1991, the principal thrust of much Mozart research has been to situate the composer and his music in increasingly well-informed biographical, historical, cultural, critical and analytical contexts. The contributors to *Mozart Studies* share this burgeoning scholarly desire to paint ever-more rounded, focused and sensitive pictures of the composer by drawing upon sophisticated and wide-ranging historical materials and critical tools, and in so doing project scholarly understandings considerably beyond the narrow frames of reference that traditionally characterized Mozart research. Thus, appreciation of Mozart's Requiem is enhanced through consideration of late eighteenth- and nine-teenth-century conceptualizations of death (Chapter 1); awareness of

¹For a succinct summary of important literature published on Mozart from 1991 onwards, see Peter Branscombe, 'Trends in Mozart Research Since the Bicentenary', in

Dorothea Link and Judith Nagley (eds.), Words About Mozart: Essays in Honour of Stanley Sadie (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY, 2005), pp. 1–19.

orchestration skills in Mozart's instrumental music through attention to practical, pragmatic and aesthetic principles governing his choice of specific sonorities and rescorings (Chapters 2 and 3); understandings of Mozart's operas through musical and aesthetic contextualization of both broad and specific historical trends (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7); and appreciation of Mozart's relevance to contemporary discourse and constructions of meaning through new and provocative lines of critical enquiry (Chapters 8 and 9). A volume of free-standing scholarly essays cannot hope to be comprehensive in coverage; nor should it aspire to methodological or hermeneutic uniformity. We celebrate the fact that very different historical and critical perspectives on strict counterpoint (Chapters 5 and 9) and on the reception of Mozart (Chapters 1 and 8) provide diverse insights into the composer and his music, that different viewpoints on Mozart's wind writing (Chapters 2 and 3) lead in discrete hermeneutic directions, that Don Giovanni still provides rich fodder for diverging critical, contextual and analytical enquiries (Chapters 6 and 7), that Mozart's operatic corpus as a whole, in fact, encourages writers to paint with a broad brush and a refined palette in equal measure. It is not simply our choice but also our obligation as scholars to continue to open the historical and critical lens on Mozart in order to deepen our understanding of how and why he continues to fascinate us.

Mozart Studies is designed to accommodate the reader wishing to progress from beginning to end (who will, we trust, value diverse methodologies and topics) as well as the reader wanting to home in on a particular area of Mozart research. While chapters are therefore grouped according to the principal areas and topics covered, it is intended that other thematic links between chapters will also emerge, drawing scholars' attention to areas primed for future investigation. In the best traditions of Mozart research, it is hoped that our essays will collectively affirm the vitality of Mozart scholarship and the significant role that this scholarship continues to play in defining and redefining musicological priorities in general.

Abbreviations

Literature

- LMF Emily Anderson (ed. and trans.), The Letters of Mozart and His Family, 3rd edn (London, 1985)
- MBA Wilhelm A. Bauer, Otto Erich Deutsch and Joseph Heinz Eibl (eds.), Mozart: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen, Gesamtausgabe, 7 vols. (Kassel, 1962–75)
- MDB Otto Erich Deutsch, Mozart: A Documentary Biography, trans. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe and Jeremy Noble (Stanford and London, 1965)
- MDL Otto Erich Deutsch, Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens (Kassel, 1961)
- MGG1 Friedrich Blume (ed.), Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Kassel, 1949–86)
- MGG2 Ludwig Finscher (ed.), Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, 2nd edn (Kassel, 1994–)
- NG1 Stanley Sadie (ed.), The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London, 1980)
- NG2 Stanley Sadie (ed.), The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edn (London, 2001)
- NMA Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke (Kassel, 1955–)

Journals

- AMZ Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung
- COJ Cambridge Opera Journal
- JAMS Journal of the American Musicological Society
- JRMA Journal of the Royal Musical Association
- ML Music & Letters
- MQ The Musical Quarterly

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1 Mozart's leap in the dark

Cliff Eisen

The first book devoted entirely to Mozart's Requiem, by Albert Hahn, a small-town music director in northern Germany, describes the work in this way: 'Now... we find ourselves in the beautiful morning light, led there by the inspired composer who through his passionate art banishes the loneliness of the barbaric night after long years of struggle'. Hahn's account attributes to the Requiem a character that was commonplace for much of the later nineteenth century and most of the twentieth as well. Abert, Saint-Foix, Bruno Walter and countless others describe the work as consoling, the pious personal expression of a dying genius. For Eric Blom, the Requiem alternates 'noble grandiloquence' with 'heart-searching supplication' while Karl Geiringer describes it as 'a composition as transcendental as it is human . . . it leads us gently towards peace and salvation'. Einstein wrote that, whoever composed the later parts of the work, 'The total impression remains. Death is not a terrible vision but a friend.'²

No doubt these characterizations derive in part from Mozart's famous letter to his father of 4 April 1787, barely a month before Leopold's death:

As death, when we come to consider it closely, is the true goal of our existence, I have formed during the last few years such close relations with this best and truest friend of mankind that his image is not only no longer terrifying to me, but is indeed very soothing and consoling! And I thank my God for graciously granting me the opportunity... to learn that death is the *key* which unlocks the door to our

¹Albert Hahn, Mozart's Requiem. Zu besseren Verständnis bei Aufführungen mit einer neuen Uebersetzung, nebst einer Nachtrage und den Resultaten eines Vergleiches der Breitkopf und Härtelschen Partitur mit den Original-Manuscript der k. k. Hofbibliothek zu Wien (Bielfeld, 1867), p. 62: 'Nun . . . aber befinden wir uns schon in des schönen Tages Morgenhelle, welche durch das von begeisterten Künstler geleitete und durch eifrige Kunstfreunde gepflegte Vereinswesen der barbarischen Nacht langer Jahre siegreich entgegenarbeitet'.

²Hermann Abert, W. A. Mozart (Leipzig, 1919–23), vol. 2, pp. 700–29; Georges de Saint-Foix, W.-A. Mozart. Sa vie musicale et son œuvre. V: les dernières années (Paris, 1946), pp. 281–301; Bruno Walter, Theme and Variations (New York, 1946), p. 32; Eric Blom, Mozart (London, 1974), p. 181; Karl Geiringer, 'The Church Music', in H. C. Robbins Landon and Donald Mitchell (eds.), The Mozart Companion (London, 1956), p. 375; Alfred Einstein, Mozart: His Character, His Work, trans. Arthur Mendel and Nathan Broder (New York, 1945), p. 369.

true happiness. I never lie down at night without reflecting that - young as I am -I may not live to see another day.3

This letter, reprinted in virtually every Mozart biography since 1828,4 is freighted with biographical implications: not only does it show us a sympathetic, human Mozart but its nobility strengthens us to accept his own premature death with the courage and trust we believe the composer himself must have displayed - a courage and trust evident in the Requiem. But does it really reflect Mozart's attitude towards death? In November 1771 he witnessed a hanging in Milan but this elicited no particular reaction from him.5 And when Leopold's favourite poet, Gellert, died in 1770, Mozart wrote to his sister: 'I have nothing new except that Herr gelehrt [Herr learned, a pun on the name Gellert], the poet from Leipzig died, and since his death has composed no more poetry. 6 Voltaire's death prompted Mozart to write, 'that godless arch-rascal Voltaire has pegged out [crepirt] like a dog, like a beast⁷⁷ and when the court violinist Joseph Hafeneder died in 1784, Mozart wrote that he was sorry chiefly because it would mean extra work for his father teaching the boys at the Chapel House.8

By the same token, early accounts of the Requiem say nothing about its consoling character. Ignaz Arnold, in his Mozarts Geist of 1803, noted the work's 'gloomy seriousness and dark melancholy' while Christian Friedrich Schwenke looked in vain for the 'pious humility of expression proper to such a solemn appeal to the mercy of the Redeemer.9 During the so-called Requiem-Streit of the 1820s, Gottfried Weber asserted that the Confutatis could not be by Mozart because it 'emphasizes, con amore, the egotistical baseness of the words and by the ferocious unison of the stringed instruments maliciously incites the Judge of the World to hurl the cursed crowd of sinners into the deepest abyss'. 10 Hans Georg Nägeli, in his Vorlesungen über Musik, objected to the many violent changes of key and arbitrary alternations of major and minor that turn the Kyrie fugue into a 'barbarous confusion of sounds'.11

³See *LMF*, p. 907; *MBA*, vol. 4, p. 41. ⁶Letter of 26 January 1770: *MBA*, vol. 1, ⁴It first appeared in Georg Nikolaus Nissen, p. 309. Biographie W. A. Mozarts (Leipzig, 1828), pp. 7Letter of 3 July 1778: MBA, vol. 2, p. 389. 524-5.

⁵Apparently Mozart had also seen a hanging p. 301. in Lyon when the family visited there in late Milan of 30 November 1771 in MBA, vol. 1, p. 452: 'ich habe auf den domplatz hier 4 kerl henckensehen, sie hencken hier wie zu lion' ('I saw four scoundrels hanged in the cathedral square. They hang people here just as they do in Lyon').

⁸Letter of 20 February 1784: MBA, vol. 3,

⁹Ignaz Arnold, Mozarts Geist (Erfurt, 1803), July and early August 1771. See his letter from p. 418. For Schwenke, see AMZ, 4 (1801-2), col. 8.

> 10Otto Jahn, Life of Mozart, trans. Pauline D. Townsend (London, 1891), vol. 3,

11 Hans Georg Nägeli, Vorlesungen über Musik (Stuttgart, 1826), p. 99.



Fig. 1.1 Franz Schramm, Ein Moment aus den letzten Tagen Mozarts (c. 1850)

How is it, then, that the Requiem acquired its consoling character? And to what extent does this reflect only one cultural model when, in fact, there may be other critical frameworks for reading the work?

'Someone should have painted [a picture of] the dying Mozart, the score of the Requiem in his hand' wrote Nissen in his biography of 1828. 12 In fact, they did, but only later. And what these pictures show is a transformation, not only in the representation of Mozart's death, but in the meaning of the Requiem as well.

The earliest, a lithograph by Franz Schramm titled Ein Moment aus den letzten Tagen Mozarts, 13 probably dates from mid-century (Fig. 1.1). It shows Mozart with the score of the Requiem open on his lap; Süssmayr

¹²Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts*, p. 564: ¹³Schramm's lithograph was widely 'Man hätte Mozart sterbend malen sollen, die Partitur des Requiem in der Hand'. Künstleralbum (Vienna, 1857). Figures 1.1,

disseminated in Friedrich Leybold's Wiener



Fig. 1.2 Henry Nelson O'Neill, Mozart: The fulfillment of his strange presentiment about the Requiem (1862)

receives last-minute instructions from the composer on how to complete the work; Constanze prays at the foot of a crucifix in a room off to the side; and an unidentified stranger - no doubt the 'grey messenger' who brought the Requiem commission to Mozart in the first place – appears to be leaving through the main door. It is an intensely private scene, inhabited only by the composer, those closest to him and the spirit of death itself who, presumably having delivered his message, takes an unsympathetic leave. 14

Henry Nelson O'Neill's Mozart: The fulfillment of his strange presentiment about the Requiem (Fig. 1.2) from 1862, elaborates on this scene. Mozart

1.2 and 1.4 are reproduced courtesy of akg-images London.

14It seems to me more likely that the grey messenger is leaving, rather than arriving. Given the traditional accounts of Mozart's last days and the Requiem commission, it makes better sense to believe Mozart already knew he was dying and that the Requiem was his swan-song - hence the grey messenger is probably not arriving with his commission but was already well known to the composer. It may be that he has just told Mozart that his

final moment is imminent; but it may also stand for the last of several visits reported in early anecdotes, visits that contributed in no small part to Mozart's alleged belief in his approaching end. In any case, the grey messenger is a central figure in the story and his appearance is a sign of the grander narrative, whether he is arriving or leaving. Another nearly contemporary painting, William James Grant's Mozart Composing his Requiem on his Deathbed, is similarly private, including only the composer and his wife.

once again has the Requiem on his lap; Constanze and Süssmayr are there too, as well as Sophie Haibel, Constanze's sister. The 'grey messenger' has disappeared but four men read through the work for Mozart. A cello and a violin lie silent at the foot of the bed. This picture purports to represent a gathering at Mozart's house on 4 December 1791, a gathering first reported in the 1827 obituary of Mozart's friend Benedikt Schack:

As soon as he had completed a number, he had it sung through, and played the instrumental accompaniment to it on his piano. On the very eve of his death, he had the score of the Requiem brought to his bed, and himself (it was two o'clock in the afternoon) sang the alto part; Schack, the family friend, sang the soprano line, as he had always previously done, Hofer, Mozart's brother-in-law, took the tenor, Gerle, later bass singer at the Mannheim Theatre, the bass. They were at the first bars of the Lacrimosa when Mozart began to weep bitterly, laid the score on one side, and eleven hours later, at one o'clock in the morning . . . departed this life.15

O'Neill's painting may be 'factual' and 'true to life' but it is more active, more crowded than Schramm's. And Thomas Shield's lithograph of c. 1880 (Fig. 1.3) is more crowded still: in addition to Mozart, Constanze and Süssmayr, the performance of the Requiem is now accompanied by a small orchestra. It is no longer a private performance and Mozart's death is no longer a private death: both have gone public. It is, rather, the death of the artist. Or at least this is what a final picture, an anonymous oil painting from the end of the century (Fig. 1.4), shows. Here is the most remarkable transformation of all: not only does Mozart conduct the work - he is a nineteenth-century director-artist, not an eighteenth-century participant-performer - but there are no singers. 16 The Requiem, finally, has become a work of absolute music and the essence of the Romantic spirit.17

This pictorial transfiguration of Mozart's death from the private to the public, and of the Requiem from sacred to secular absolute music, mirrors the performance history of the work. Almost from the beginning of

¹⁵MDL, pp. 459–60; as given in translation in MDB, pp. 536-7.

¹⁶Though treated only briefly here, these pictures of Mozart can also be interpreted in the context of nineteenth-century 'death' art, generally. See, for example, Philippe Ariès, L'homme devant la mort (Paris, 1977) or, specifically concerning Napoleon, Suzanne Lindsay, 'Mummies and Tombs: Turenne, Napoléon, and Death Ritual', century, as the example of Beethoven's The Art Bulletin, 82 (2005), pp. 476–502. The importance of shows.

nineteenth-century 'death' art also extends to the early days of photography; see Le Dernier Portrait. Musée d'Orsay, Paris, 5 mar-26 mai 2002 [exhibition catalogue] (Paris, 2002). 17 In general, see Daniel K. L. Chua, Absolute

Music and the Construction of Meaning (Cambridge, 1999). The Requiem, of course, was not the only sacred work or text to be secularized in the nineteenth Missa solemnis (or later Verdi's Requiem)



Fig. 1.3 Thomas Shield, Untitled (c. 1880)

the nineteenth century, the Requiem was performed by choral societies and in concert halls across Europe. It was given at Covent Garden in 1801, by students of the Paris Conservatoire in 1804 and in Mannheim, Braunschweig, Leipzig and Frankfurt. A performance in Breslau was prefaced by two movements from Haydn's 'Trauer' Symphony; in Berlin it was given with the overture to Gluck's Alceste. 18

The appropriation of the Requiem as secular (and as a work manifesting the German spirit) did not go unchallenged. When it was given in German at Leipzig in the spring of 1801, an anonymous correspondent for the AMZ wrote:

¹⁸For the Covent Garden performance, see [J. Ashley], The Requiem . . . as performed under the direction of Mr. Ashley at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, during Lent 1801 (London, 1801). For performances elsewhere, see AMZ, 6 (1803-4), col. 507; 7 n. 22).

(1804-5), col. 429; and 11 (1808-9), col. 624. Additionally, see Thomas Bauman, 'Requiem, but no Piece', 19th Century Music, 15 (1991), pp. 151-61 and esp. 157, in addition to the performances cited by Hermann Abert (see