

Karina Zybina

Eliette and Herbert von Karajan Institute/University Mozarteum Salzburg, Austria
 karina.zybina@karajan.org

Completing the incomplete: the first eight bars of W.A. Mozart's *Lacrimosa* in the 20th century

ABSTRACT

Background

Taking as a starting point some recent work, such as Simon P. Keefe's *Mozart's Requiem. Reception, Work, Completion* (Keefe 2012) and Matthias Korten's *Mozarts Requiem KV 626. Ein Fragment wird ergänzt* (Korten 2000), this paper concentrates on the reception and perception history of just one small but very famous fragment from W.A. Mozart's *Requiem* in D minor, K. 626, the **first eight bars of *Lacrimosa***. Written in 1791, but left unfinished by the composer himself, this piece became a perpetual 'work in progress', ever open to all kinds of experimentation by those who dared to complete the legendary fragment, and/or record one of those completions. Changing the form and the character of the original score, these numerous arrangements and editions of the 20th century incorporate their own ideas and approaches into Mozart's original conception, thus creating many new 'faces' of the famous work and revealing its complex reception history. This reception as well as perception history, in turn, forms an integral part of performance practice: by recording various versions of the piece and adding their own interpretations to the already complicated mixture of Mozart's piece, different conductors **and orchestras added new layers to the reception history that I aim to trace in my paper.**

Aims and repertoire studied

The purpose of this paper is, therefore, **to uncover the multi-layered reception history of the *Lacrimosa* sketch. First focusing on the form and orchestration of Mozart's original (kept in the Austrian National Library, shelf number Mus.Hs.19057 Mus), I will then compare several editions of the fragment prepared by such musicians and scholars as Franz Xaver Stüßmayr (in 1792; I will examine the version published in 1965 by Leopold Nowak as a part of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*), Franz Beyer (1971/1979; Beyer 2005), Richard Maunder (1986; Maunder 1988), Howard Chandler Robbins Landon (1992; Robbins Landon 1992), Robert D. Levin (1994; Levin 2004), and Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs (2013; Cohrs 2013). Finally, I will concentrate on some of the most important interpretations of those later complete versions recorded during the last 100 years. My selection of those performances that I aim to scrutinize includes the following: first, a sample of the earliest performances of the *Lacrimosa* that came down to us, among them the very first preserved version released in 1928 as a single vinyl record by an unknown conductor with the Choir of St. William's, Strasbourg (The Parlophone Co. London, xxP 6765 E 11082). Second, a selection of 'classical' interpretations, such as the ones recorded by Karl Böhm (in**

1971 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, issued by Deutsche Grammophon, 413 553-2), Herbert von Karajan (his last performance in 1986 with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsche Grammophon, 439 023-2), and Leonard Bernstein (in 1989 with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Deutsche Grammophon, 427 353-2). Lastly, I will focus on some historically informed performances led by Nicolaus Harnoncourt (1982, Concertus Musicus Vienna, Teldec 8.42756 ZK), John Eliot Gardiner (1986, English Baroque Soloists, Deutsche Grammophon, B000ASAEKI), and Philippe Herrewé (1996, Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, Harmonia Mundi France, 901620). All this provides enough analytical data that will help illustrate a variety of trends and tendencies in the reception and perception history of Mozart's fragment.

Methods

First, I wish to outline several different approaches to Mozart's score that result from its numerous orchestral versions. I will view these approaches, on the one hand, as reflecting Mozart's original plan and style and, on the other, as revealing the editors' own stylistic tastes and preferences, and even some larger contemporary trends in the music/musicology of their times.

Second, my focus will be on various recordings of these orchestral versions. Here, I will base my approach on some of the methods taken from the 'performance studies' — most importantly, on sonic analysis (made with the help of the software designed specifically for this purpose, the *Sonic visualiser*) aimed at revealing and visualizing the nuances of the interpretations under consideration, e.g. dynamics, articulation, and tempo.

Implications

By merging together some of the methods offered by various musicological disciplines (music analysis, sociomusicology, performance studies), this study will propose a new multifaceted view of Mozart's original score, in which the attempts to complete and record the incomplete fragment made in the 20th century will be viewed as superimposing their own layers of (mis)conceptions and (mis)understandings on Mozart's unfinished work.

Keywords

Music analysis; performance studies; reception history; Requiem; Mozart

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