

Requiem Quest: Movement, Reflection, and Debate

Adam Kasti

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Mozart died while writing his Requiem Mass in D Minor in December 1791, leaving much of the work unfinished. According to Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie, the Requiem—which, along with *Die Zauberflöte* and *La clemenza di Tito*, were all written in Mozart’s last year—belonged to “three genres with which [Mozart] had been little occupied for almost a decade.”¹ As a result, the Requiem “exploit[s] contrast to an extreme” and “hides its diversity.”² However, there is diversity in the work done by those who completed the work not long after Mozart’s death. Mozart’s widowed wife, Constanze, relied on several former students and close confidants of Mozart, most notably Franz Xaver Süssmayr, to help complete the piece. Süssmayr has been the subject of endless debate by musicologists regarding his role in completing the Requiem, whether he completed the work as envisioned by Mozart or fitting within Mozart’s style.

In the past century, one of the more famous takes on the Requiem was written in 1961 by German musicologist Friedrich Blume. In his work, “Requiem, but No Peace,” Blume examines the previous debates over the Requiem’s completion and Süssmayr’s contributions to it. After examining controversies over the authenticity of the original autographs and manuscripts, their dating, and the intended versus realized instrumentation, Blume concludes that since there is no sound evidence to the contrary, excluding the instrumentation, “the Requiem was composed by Mozart.”³ As for Süssmayr’s involvement with completing the Requiem, his instrumentation was contrary to “all experience,” as well as Mozart’s intentions in the manuscripts.⁴ Furthermore, as long as doubts concerning his ability exist, “the modest and certainly indigent” Süssmayr cannot be attributed as the composer who completed the missing parts of the Requiem.⁵ The “no peace”

¹ Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie, “Mozart, (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus,” *Oxford Music Online*, 2001, accessed February 9, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.6002278233>.

² *Ibid.*

³ Friedrich Blume, “Requiem but No Peace,” trans. Nathan Broder, *The Musical Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (1961): 169.

⁴ Blume, “Requiem, but No Peace,” 161.

⁵ Blume and Broder, “Requiem but No Peace,” 156.

Blume hints at in the title and conclusion of his essay still holds true to this day, as new evidence, score reprints, and reinterpretations of events emerged in the past almost half-century. They continue to spur debate as to the most reasonable conclusion given the limited evidence available both then and now.

In 1988, British musicologist Richard Maunder published *Mozart's Requiem: On Preparing a New Edition*, which accompanied his publishing of the Requiem's score.⁶ In his introduction, Maunder responds to Blume's arguments about Süssmayr's incompetence and limited involvement in the Requiem, stating, "Blume's case depends very much on the non-existence of church music by Süssmayr of comparable style."⁷ He goes on to suggest Blume's assertion that Mozart automatically gets credit without existing evidence to the contrary is "contrary to all logic."⁸ But this does not mean Maunder thinks highly of Süssmayr's work. After providing a brief introduction to the debate and history of the Requiem, Maunder organizes his arguments by examining the work's movements, before moving on to the orchestration. To make his arguments, he provides an "objective test" to determine and examine in subsequent chapters the extent of Mozart's works and Süssmayr's contributions: Mozart's counterpoint.⁹ Mozart used Joseph Johann Fux's *Gradus ad Parnassum* as a basis of teaching his pupils about counterpoint, and followed it rigorously himself.¹⁰ Maunder claims because of this, save the permissible rule-breaking common to his times, passages containing mistakes in counterpoint "almost certain[ly]... did not originate from a sketch from Mozart."¹¹ Comparing Mozart's adherence to Süssmayr's "grammatical mistakes," both in Süssmayr's own writing and his completion of the

⁶ C. R. F. Maunder, *Mozart's Requiem: On Preparing a New Edition* (Oxford England: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1988), Preface.

⁷ Maunder, *Mozart's Requiem*, 3.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Maunder, *Mozart's Requiem*, 25.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

Requiem, Maunder attributes “beyond reasonable doubt” the completion of “the ‘Lacrymosa’ [sic], the Sanctus, ‘Osanna,’ [sic] and Benedictus” to Süssmayr.¹² As a result, Maunder’s score omits the Sanctus, Hosanna, and Benedictus from the score due to “dubious craftsmanship,” instead attributing them as “Two movements by F.X. Süssmayr” in the Appendix.¹³ Instrumentation is “reworked” based on *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*) and *La clemenza di Tito*, and the end of Lacrimosa utilizes a 3/4 “Amen” fugue based on an autograph discovered in the 1960s.¹⁴ However, the “Agnus Dei” movement is kept in Mozart’s score as Maunder claims Süssmayr “based it on a reasonably extensive Mozart sketch, presumably given to him by Constanze.”¹⁵

In the same year as Maunder’s work, American musicologist H.C. Robert Landon published *1791: Mozart’s Last Year*, examining the last year of Mozart’s life. He does this through examining the letters Mozart and his wife Constanze sent, as well as other primary sources on or after 1791 about Mozart, his circle, and his works.¹⁶ Related to the Requiem, Robbins Landon uses letters from Constanze that explained how she gave the incomplete Requiem to Joseph Eybler before Süssmayr due to some annoyance (the origin of which she could not remember).¹⁷ However, Robbins Landon states this annoyance might have stemmed from Süssmayr’s gravitation towards Antonio Salieri, a contemporary (who was also possibly jealous) of Mozart, citing a document in the Viennese Court Chapel Archive and a letter from Süssmayr calling him the “dear Catholic creature to Salieri’s protection.”¹⁸ Robbins Landon

¹² Maunder, *Mozart’s Requiem*, 32.

¹³ Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, and C. R. F. Maunder. “Requiem, K 626 / Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; edited by Richard Maunder.” Oxford; Music Dept., Oxford University Press, 1988, vi.

¹⁴ Mozart and Maunder, “Requiem, K 626” 1988, vi.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ H. C. Robbins Landon, *1791: Mozart’s Last Year* (New York, NY: Schirmer Books, 1988), 161.

¹⁷ Constanze Mozart in Robbins Landon, *1791*, 161-162.

¹⁸ Salieri and Süssmayr in Robbins Landon, *1791*, 164.

established this connection between the Süssmayr and Salieri to highlight the reason why Süssmayr was immediately approached to complete the Requiem following Mozart's death, despite Süssmayr occasionally working with Mozart on it while Mozart was alive.¹⁹ For the next few years after the publishing of Maunder's score and commentary, scholarship and debate centered on points raised by Maunder. A year later, in 1989, Paul Moseley published "Mozart's Requiem: A Revaluation of the Evidence." Moseley dedicates most of his article to examining the letters, handwriting, and chronology of those who worked on the Requiem before Süssmayr. Moseley positively references Maunder's score and commentary in his writing, calling Maunder's analysis of the counterpoint "the most systematic analysis of the music to date."²⁰

Meanwhile, Thomas Bauman published an article titled (cleverly) "Requiem, but no Piece," in 1991. He follows Blume's arguments and Maunder's analyses, the latter of whom "raises anew several of the central problems" of the Requiem debate.²¹ However, Bauman scrutinizes Maunder's "objective test," instead calling the revised score an "adaption to modern needs."²² Bauman claims Maunder and many other musicologists are ascribing modern perceptions of classical standards and aesthetics onto the Requiem and Süssmayr's involvement on it.²³ This stems in part, according to Baumann, from a desire for authenticity and wanting to bring the accuracy of the past into the present.²⁴ However, there is difficulty in establishing that historical authenticity in part because not long after Mozart's death there were differences in the performances and aesthetics.²⁵ Bauman highlights two performances of the Requiem in 1801 to

¹⁹ Robbins Landon, *1791*, 164.

²⁰ Paul Moseley, "Mozart's Requiem: A Revaluation of the Evidence," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 114, no. 2 (1989): 217, JSTOR.

²¹ Thomas Bauman, "Requiem, but No Piece," *19th-Century Music* 15, no. 2 (1991): 152, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746369>.

²² Bauman, "Requiem, but No Piece," 154.

²³ Bauman, "Requiem, but No Piece," 160.

²⁴ Bauman, "Requiem, but No Piece," 155.

²⁵ Bauman, "Requiem, but No Piece," 156.

capture these aesthetic differences: one in Leipzig with the lyrics in German, which “provoked a violent reaction from one listener,” the other in Prague with the lyrics in Latin, where a listener was displeased by the theatre venue, not the lyrics.²⁶ Calling the “Amen” fugue at the end of *Lacrimosa* to be an abandoned sketch instead of a recovered one, Bauman calls Maunder’s version an “academic test of piety” that cannot be “genuine Mozart,” as past aesthetics have not created any way to derive true authenticity from what Mozart and Süssmayr’s score provides.²⁷

In 1994, German musicology Christoph Wolff published his own version of Mozart’s score titled, *Mozart’s Requiem: Historical and Analytical Studies, Documents, Score*. Wolff divides his writing into three parts: the first explaining the history and historiographical debates up to his time, the musical aspects, and the score itself. In the first part, Wolff states that debate over the sources and interpretation of the score and events “has scarcely changed” since Blume published his article.²⁸ Referring to Maunder’s score in a footnote, Wolff calls Maunder’s version “radical,” pointing to the exclusion of most of Süssmayr’s work to the Appendix, and basing the orchestration on Mozart’s later works, “[introducing] an alienating opera style into the Requiem’s sound-world.”²⁹ Although Maunder’s commentary provides “crucial insights” by the discussion of counterpoint, Wolff calls it “condensed.”³⁰ As for Süssmayr’s involvement in the writing process, Wolff approaches the sections Maunder omitted from a different angle, emphasizing “the nucleus” of Mozart’s vocal parts.³¹ For the Sanctus, Hosanna, and Benedictus, separating the choral and instrumental scores, according to him, creates “astonishing congruence” and reveals “fewer musical errors” between Mozart’s vision and Süssmayr’s

²⁶ Bauman, “Requiem, but No Piece,” 156-157.

²⁷ Bauman, “Requiem, but No Piece,” 160.

²⁸ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Christoph Wolff, *Mozart’s Requiem: Historical and Analytical Studies, Documents, Score*, trans. Mary Whittall (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 5.

²⁹ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart’s Requiem 1994*, 38.

³⁰ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart’s Requiem 1994*, 39.

³¹ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart’s Requiem 1994*, 52.

realization.³² For the Sanctus' introduction, although Wolff calls Süssmayr's realization "clumsy" and "awkward," he believes it to be "Mozartian from beginning to end."³³ He additionally dedicates a small section to a Horn Rondo Süssmayr wrote in Mozart's style as evidence for Süssmayr's imitation capabilities, thus proving Süssmayr's basic capability.³⁴ Wolff concludes that "rejecting Süssmayr's score... means rejecting the chance of preserving what traces there are of Mozart's original material."³⁵ Wolff's score includes the Sanctus, Hosanna, Benedictus in the Requiem proper, denoting Süssmayr's contributions in brackets.³⁶ He additionally retains Süssmayr's instrumentation and the realization of the Lacrimosa, removing the "Amen" fugue Maunder decided to include.³⁷

Musicologists after Wolff's work continued to focus on the debate around aesthetic anachronism and the tension between Mozart's vision and Süssmayr's realization. In 2002, David Allen McConnell completed a dissertation, "The Requiem Controversy," at the University of Cincinnati. In his analysis of differing versions of the Requiem, McConnell maintains Maunder's counterpoint test as a means of indicating Mozart's work versus Süssmayr's completion.³⁸ McConnell comments on the debate surround the "Amen" fugue, noting the possibility that Süssmayr had the sketches, but "chose to ignore it"³⁹ Several years later, in 2008, English musicologist Simon Keefe published an article focused on Süssmayr's orchestration and reactions to it. Initially, the movements that Süssmayr heavily orchestrated– the Sanctus, Hosanna, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei– received praise in the first decades of the nineteenth

³² Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 38.

³³ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 40.

³⁴ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 44-51.

³⁵ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 52.

³⁶ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 234-241.

³⁷ Mozart and Wolff, *Mozart's Requiem 1994*, 219-221.

³⁸ McConnell, "The "Requiem" Controversy," 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

century.⁴⁰ For the work as a whole, save for specific moments where Süssmayr is knowingly or unknowingly disregarding Mozart's intentions, Süssmayr's contributions provide "a positive aesthetic impact on the work..."⁴¹

In 2012, supplementing and borrowing partially from his previous 2008 contributions, Keefe published *Mozart's Requiem: Reception, Work, Completion*, which chronologically outlines the historiographical debate surrounding the work. He dedicates a section to the debate from 1950 to the present (2012 in his case). He says that in the latter half of the twentieth Century, "admiration— even ambivalence—," in Süssmayr's involvement "plays a meek second fiddle to critical condemnation."⁴² Keefe does not directly discuss Wolff's edition of the Requiem in this section but uses it for citations.⁴³ However, he dedicates four pages in this section to discussing Maunder's edition of the Requiem. Keefe says Maunder "undermine[s]" Süssmayr and calls the counterpoint test used by Maunder "unconvincing, in that Maunder's details do not match his rhetoric."⁴⁴ Keefe brings up Bauman's discussion of aesthetic anachronism Maunder's conclusions, saying he made them in "a spirit of pithy hauteur, [serving as] judge and jury at his own court..."⁴⁵ For his own arguments on completion, Keefe uses an 1800 letter from Süssmayr detailing his involvement and the choices he made for completing what Mozart did not leave behind as a guide, and Mozart's "uniqueness" as a composer makes imitation very difficult.⁴⁶ Keefe stresses from the letter that Süssmayr would have realized there

⁴⁰ Simon P. Keefe, "'Die Ochsen Am Berge': Franz Xaver Süssmayr and the Orchestration of Mozart's Requiem, K. 626." *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 61, no. 1 (2008): 11-12. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2008.61.1.1>.

⁴¹ Keefe, "'Die Oschen Am Berge,'" 41.

⁴² Simon P. Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem: Reception, Work, Completion* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 73.

⁴³ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 74.

⁴⁴ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 76.

⁴⁵ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 77.

⁴⁶ Süssmayr in Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 174-176.

was a certain limit to his ability to imitate Mozart and would have made several key decisions himself with Mozart's vision in mind.⁴⁷ He concludes "Süssmayr's letter... implicitly and explicitly asks its recipient to take his contribution seriously."⁴⁸ Concerning the "Amen" fugue sketch, Keefe shares a point made by McConnell and claims no evidence exists that Süssmayr saw it.⁴⁹ Additionally, after examining Süssmayr's completions of the *Lacrimosa*, he concludes that within limits, the aesthetics of the era makes Süssmayr's contributions noteworthy and praiseworthy.⁵⁰

It is the opinion of this paper's author that Keefe's and Bauman's arguments regarding the *Requiem's* composition and ascribing of aesthetic standards make the most sense and are the strongest arguments in the debate, as the desire for authenticity and aesthetic continuity has overshadowed the work done by Süssmayr, even if it may not be the strongest. Maunder's attempts to realize Mozart's vision, though notable, are very radical in their erasure of Süssmayr's contributions. Süssmayr had to work with what expertise he had, and the limited notes Mozart left, so credit ought to be provided to him for his completion of a work that continues to resonate with listeners, including this paper's author, to this day.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 177-178.

⁴⁸ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 179.

⁴⁹ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 206.

⁵⁰ Keefe, *Mozart's Requiem*, 230.

⁵¹ The *Requiem*, particularly *Lacrimosa*, still holds prominence in [modern meme culture](#) and has also been referenced in video game music. "[The Jepella Rebellion](#)" from *Honkai: Star Rail* uses variations on the *Lacrimosa* theme. [The trailer](#) features the character Kafka, an "antihero" who is characterized in-game by references to classical music. In promotional material or in-game music, she is characterized musically by remixes of notable classical pieces, including [Vivaldi's Four Seasons](#) and [Pachelbel's Canon in D Major](#).

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