Mozart's Requiem

SCHERMERHORN SYMPHONY CENTER
LAURA TURNER HALL

November 6, 2008 at 7 p.m.
November 7 & 8, 2008 at 8 p.m.

Nashville Symphony
Giancarlo Guerrero, *conductor*
Kelley Nassief, *soprano*
Beth Clayton, *mezzo-soprano*
Philippe Castagner, *tenor*
Nathaniel Webster, *baritone*
Nashville Symphony Chorus
George Mabry, *Chorus Director*

ARVO PÄRT — Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI — Concerto for Orchestra
- Intrada
- Capriccio Notturno e Arioso
- Passacaglia, Toccata e Corale

intermission

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
Completed and edited by Robert D. Levin — Requiem, K. 626

- Introitus
  - Requiem aeternam
  - Kyrie
- Sequenz
  - Dies irae
  - Tuba mirum
  - Rex tremendae
  - Recordare
  - Confutatis
  - Lacrimosa
  - Amen
- Offertorium
  - Domine Jesu
  - Hostias
- Sanctus
  - Sanctus

Benedictus
Agnus Dei
Agnus Dei
Communio
Lux aeterna
Cum sanctis tuis

Kelley Nassief, *soprano*
Beth Clayton, *mezzo-soprano*
Philippe Castagner, *tenor*
Nathaniel Webster, *baritone*

ARVO PÄRT
(born in Paide, Estonia, 1935)
Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten

Scored for strings and chime

estimated length: 6 minutes

In 1960 while still a student at the Talinn Conservatory, Arvo Pärt's *Nekrolog,* dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust, brought him national attention. It was the first work by an Estonian composer to use Schoenberg's 12-tone system, creating something of a scandal. But Pärt soon tired of his "serial phase," beginning a series of alternations between creative output and withdrawal to search for a new style.

During the 1970s, Pärt supported himself by writing some 50 film scores. His Third Symphony (1971) followed one of his "withdrawal" periods, in which he studied 14th- to 16th-century polyphony. Another "creative silence" was followed by *For Alina* (1976), a small piano piece of high and low extremes — a "new plateau" for Pärt. "It was here that I discovered the triad series, which I made my simple, little guiding rule." He has written in this triadic style, which he calls "tintinnabuli," ever since, with only slight modifications.

Cantus in Memory of Benjamin Britten — along with *Fratres* and *Tabula rasa,* some of his best-known pieces — was composed in the creative burst of 1977, and takes advantage of his triadic style. About his *Cantus* the composer wrote: "Why did the date of Benjamin Britten's death — December 4, 1976 — touch such a chord in me?… Inexplicable feelings of guilt…arose in me. I had just discovered Britten for myself. Just before his death I began to appreciate the unusual purity of his music — I had had the impression of the same kind of purity in the ballads of Guillaume de Machaut."

Three bell strokes initiate a series of descending lines in successive string parts, creating a sense of tranquil sadness. Underlying the whole effect is a carefully devised structure, in which each descending line (always a natural A minor scale) begins at the top and adds the next lowest note with each repetition. Rhythmically, the lines are just as systematically organized: Each of the string sections plays its descending line in notes that last twice as long as those in the next higher part, making the descending progress extremely slow in the lowest voice, the basses. As the bell continues to toll, the layered string passages increase in tempo and dynamics only to sink deeper in pitch and somberness. The sustained final chord is eventually released in one last stroke of the bell.

WITOLD LUTOSŁAWSKI

(born in Warsaw, 1913; died in Warsaw, 1994)
Concerto for Orchestra

Scored for 3 flutes (2nd and 3rd doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling English horn), 3 clarinets (3rd doubling bass clarinet), 3 bassoons (3rd doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, tuba, timpani, cymbals, suspended cymbal, tambourine, glockenspiel, tam-tam, tenor drum, snare drum, bass drum, field drum, xylophone, 3 tom-toms, 2 harps, celesta, piano and strings

estimated length: 26 minutes

Begun in 1950 and completed in 1954, Lutosławski's Concerto for Orchestra stems from his early folk-music phase, when he was greatly influenced by Bartók. Deciding to write a concerto for orchestra in the wake of Bartók's celebrated example, Lutosławski may have felt like Brahms deciding to write a symphony in the wake of Beethoven. Aside from the brilliant orchestration and the use of a chorale, however, his work is clearly and purposefully different from his model. Lutosławski's folk materials have been so transformed from their sources as to carry the methods of Bartók's late style to extremes.

Lutosławski explained how his experiments with manipulating folk motives led directly to the composition of the Concerto for Orchestra: "[In 1950,] the director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, Witold Rowicki, asked me to write something especially for his new ensemble. This was to be something not difficult, but which could, however, give the young orchestra an opportunity to show its qualities. I started to work on the new score not realizing that I was to spend nearly four years on it. Folk music and all that follows with it…was to be used in my new work. Folk music has in this work, however, been merely a raw material used to build a large musical form of several movements which does not in the least originate either from folk songs or from folk dances."

Rowicki premiered the Concerto for Orchestra to enthusiastic response in Warsaw on November 26, 1954. The work became the composer's signature piece, one that he conducted many times and the only one from this period that he continued to regard as important.

Lutosławski chose Baroque movement titles, opening with an Intrada. Creating a mood of portent, a gigantic pedal point in the low instruments with unrelenting timpani beats underlies the opening section. When this section returns at the movement's conclusion in altered form, the pedal lies in the upper register. The composer used folk sources from Masovia (a region around Warsaw) as building materials: The opening section transforms a tune from the village of Czersk combined with other folk fragments, and the central section alternates folk-derived material with completely original material.

The second movement is organized in scherzo-trio-scherzo fashion, with the Capriccio notturno — literally a fanciful night piece — surrounding the more lyrical Arioso, a term from vocal music for a text setting in between the style of a recitative and an aria. The trumpets play the main arioso melody, which is derived from a folk tune, but completely unrecognizable as such.

The longest movement, the Passacaglia, Toccata and Chorale, shows Lutosławski's early concern for shifting the dramatic weight of a composition to the end. The introductory Passacaglia is modeled after the Baroque form in which a series of variations unfolds over a repeating pattern. Lutosławski's pattern, derived from a folk source, migrates from the lower to the upper register, carefully engineered to peak and subside. The bulk of the movement is the Toccata, which Lutosławski developed using sonata form, but without the traditional recapitulation. The Chorale elaborates on musical motifs first developed in the Toccata and returns majestically toward the end of the coda.

It seems incredible that Lutosławski originally planned something “not difficult” for the fledgling Warsaw Philharmonic, for he ended up requiring virtuosity from every player. Imaginative orchestration touches pervade the score: for example, the exquisite contrast of the sustained strings that close the Intrada and the scurrying muted strings that open the Capriccio notturno; the impudent wind passages that interrupt the Arioso; and the sparkling harp, piano and celesta accompaniment during the strings’ statement of the Chorale. Lutosławski’s winning choices of instrumentation, texture and register not only show off the capabilities of the orchestra, but they colorfully reveal his complex forms.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART
(born in Salzburg, 1756; died in Vienna, December 5, 1791)
Requiem, K. 626
(Robert Levin Edition)

Scored for 2 basset horns, 2 bassoons, 2 trumpets, 3 trombones, timpani, organ and strings

estimated length: 50 minutes

Mozart’s Requiem has been surrounded by more mystery, legend and controversy than any other work in the history of music. Though modern research has clarified the historical circumstances and discredited some of the myths, certain nagging questions will never be answered. Works left incomplete at the time of a composer’s death always spark a certain amount of disagreement, especially in cases that involve completion by other hands. With Mozart’s Requiem, we idolize and accept the work, knowing that some of it was completed by others — but we *want* as much of it to be by Mozart as possible.

Facts about the Requiem

After the death of the young Countess Anna von Walsegg on February 14, 1791, her husband, Count Franz von Walsegg, traveled to Vienna to arrange memorial tributes to her — a stone monument and a Requiem. He had a dubious practice of commissioning works, then passing them off as his own, hence his “discretion” in handling the commission. The highly romanticized, mysterious “Gray Messenger” was most likely a clerk sent to Mozart by Count Walsegg’s Viennese lawyer.

Mozart began the Requiem in September 1791, but his priority was to finish *The Magic Flute* for its September 30 premiere. He finally began continuous work on the Requiem about October 1, writing down the movements in order, having composed most of it in his head. The long-held belief that he knew he was writing his own Requiem was surely true at the end, but at the outset he was presumably composing with the great joy of applying his genius to one of the higher forms of church music — something that had always interested him.

Mozart’s final illness lasted 15 days; he was bedridden, and writing was difficult. When he died on December 5, 1791, he had completely finished the Requiem aeternam, had drafted eight more movements including the closing Cum sanctis tuis (orchestration to be supplied), and had begun or sketched two more sections (Lacrimosa and Amen).

Only relatively recently did the record of a first performance of any part of the Requiem come to light: The Introitus was performed on December 10, 1791, just a few days after Mozart’s burial, as part of a Requiem Mass for the composer. The memorial tribute took place at St. Michael’s, organized by his colleagues. Thus the myth that Mozart went unmourned by his Viennese friends is simply untrue.

The first performance of the "complete" Requiem took place on January 2, 1793, organized as a benefit for Mozart's widow, Constanze, and their two small children. Count Walsegg, no doubt, had no knowledge of the performance. The score he had commissioned appears to have been delivered to him by early March 1792, but at least two copies had been made, one for King Friedrich Wilhelm II of Prussia and one for Constanze. The count, once he had copied the Requiem in his own hand, passed it off in performance as his own composition on December 14, 1793, in Wiener Neustadt as part of a Mass for his wife.

Various completions

Constanze had asked several of Mozart's pupils in turn to complete the work so that she would be able to collect the remaining half of the commission fee. Most likely it was Franz Jacob Freystädtler who fabricated string and wind parts for the Kyrie fugue, completing them in time for Mozart's December 10 memorial service. (A later hand apparently added the trumpets and timpani.) For unknown reasons Freystädtler abandoned the work, as did a couple of other contributors: Joseph Eybler orchestrated five sections of the Sequence, and Abbé Maximilian Stadler likely completed the orchestration of the Offertory, following Mozart's indications.

Most of the credit for completing the Requiem goes to Franz Xaver Süssmayr, the only one to admit making contributions when the "controversy" was aired in public with Walsegg's and Constanze's lawyers present. Süssmayr stated that he had often played and sung through the music with Mozart before he died, and that the composer "had frequently talked to me about the detailed working of this composition and explained to me the how and the wherefore of his instrumentation."

Süssmayr's statement that he not only completed the Sequence, but also composed the Sanctus, Benedictus and Agnus Dei has always been debated. Most recently, scholars have concluded that whereas he certainly had to do some composing, much of his task involved deciding how to implement numerous sketches left by Mozart. This would help explain the uneven quality of many sections — that is, he possessed Mozart's ideas for them, but not his architecture or graceful part writing. The closing sections — Lux aeterna and Cum sanctis — repeat music from the Introitus, presumably as part of the design Mozart had discussed with Süssmayr or, as Süssmayr said, for reasons of uniformity.

Attacks against Süssmayr's completion began appearing as early as 1825, citing errors in idiom, part writing and instrumentation. Relatively recent arguments hold that the Sanctus/Hosanna, Benedictus and Agnus Dei cannot be totally by Süssmayr because they contain elements of Mozartean unity that never occur in Süssmayr's own works!

In recent times a number of musicians have made revisions seeking to rectify Süssmayr's shortcomings. In 1993 Robert Levin took on the task, saying: "On the one hand the compositional problems of the Lacrimosa, the Amen fugue and the movements surviving only in Süssmayr's hand have not been overlooked out of blind piety to their 200-year-old origin. On the other hand, the historical and performance tradition of the Requiem demands respect…. The goal was to revise not as much, but as little as possible, attempting in the revisions to observe the character, texture, voice leading, continuity and structure of Mozart's music."

Levin's alterations focus on a retouching of the Lacrimosa and, most importantly, a complete realization of the Amen fugue that does not change key and contains dramatically justified dissonance. His further adjustments include a violin obbligato solo in the Sanctus, a newly composed Hosanna fugue more in keeping with Mozartean church fugues, adaptations in the Benedictus to clarify the relationship to the Introitus, and a shortened reprise of the Hosanna fugue in D major rather than Süssmayr's B-flat major version. Levin also addresses "infelicities" in the second and third sections of Süssmayr's Agnus Dei, and introduces textual consistencies into Süssmayr's Cum sanctis fugue. Furthermore, Levin sought to bring the vocal parts to the

foreground by reducing Süssmayr's "overly thick" orchestral texture, following the style of Mozart's church music rather than his late operas.

Mozart's music in the Requiem

Mozart respectfully showed the influence of earlier composers in his Requiem. He borrowed ideas for the Introitus from Handel's *Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline* and for the Kyrie fugue from Handel's Dettingen Te Deum, a variant of which also appears in Handel's *Messiah* ("And with His Stripes We Are Healed"). The Kyrie motive was also used by Michael Haydn and by Mozart himself in his Vesper Psalms, K. 339, but the "funeral anthem" and "healing" connections are significant for the Requiem. Mozart's contrapuntal elaborations in the Rex tremendae, Recordare, Confutatis and Domine Jesu, possibly influenced by Handel, have long since been recognized for their indebtedness to Bach. Mozart clearly wanted to honor past traditions in his Requiem as well as forge something new.

The six movements of the Sequence begin with the portentous Dies irae in D minor and return to the home key for the Lacrimosa. (The Dorian mode of the medieval Dies irae chant may have prompted the key of D minor for the entire work, even though the original chant is never used.) The trombone solo that opens the Tuba mirum was Mozart's idea, carried out by Süssmayr. The trombone, long associated with solemn church music, reflects the text "Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth."

The Recordare is one of the most pure, most enraptured movements Mozart ever wrote; its poignancy stems in large part from its wonderful harmonic tension and release. The stern entry of the men's voices in the Confutatis contrasts greatly with the preceding, balanced by the quiet entry of the women's voices.

The sighing and sobbing of the Lacrimosa text — traditional opportunities for word painting — are expressively portrayed in the music. Süssmayr lacked the confidence to write out the fugue his teacher had sketched for the Amen and wrote a simple cadence instead. Levin works out a "Mozartean" fugue here, more appropriately realizing Mozart's aim to end each of his major sections in glorious counterpoint.

Contrast plays a wonderful part in the Domine Jesu, the first phrase sung quietly and the second as a joyful outburst. Both the Domine Jesu and the lovely Hostias, with its wonderful rising opening phrase, are followed by the "Quam olim Abrahae" fugue, which unifies the Offertory. Süssmayr employed the same structure for the Sanctus and Benedictus, capping each with the Hosanna fugue, altered by Levin to coincide more closely with his reading of Mozart's intentions. The Agnus Dei leads to the return of Mozart's ethereal music from the Introitus, now set to the words "Lux aeterna." Precedents exist in Mozart's earlier Masses for the return of material from earlier parts of the composition, and Süssmayr's ending, reworked by Levin, brings a great sense of unity and closure.

— Program notes ©Jane Vial Jaffe