

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Messa da Requiem

Composed in memory of the poet Alessandro Manzoni who had died in 1873, Verdi's Requiem was intended for the concert hall, not the church from the very beginning. This gave the composer some freedom when setting the text, although he remained much more faithful to the standard liturgy than did Berlioz in his setting. **Verdi's** Requiem was first performed on May 22, 1874, in Milan, on the first anniversary of Manzoni's death.

Verdi conveys the solemnity of the Requiem Mass through the opening cello line, a muted, descending phrase. The orchestra has the thematic material in the first part of the Introit, "Requiem aeternam," as the chorus sings the text in snatches. To balance this, the central part of the movement, "Te decet hymnus," is for unaccompanied chorus. After the return of the "Requiem aeternam" the Kyrie begins, introducing the soloists.

The "Dies irae," opening the Sequence, is the most famous part of Verdi's Requiem. Brass and bass drum make their first appearance in this tumultuous outburst depicting the "day of wrath." Distant trumpets sound and are joined by the rest of the brass before the "Tuba mirum." Quietly, the solo bass begins the "Mors stupebit" (Death is struck), accompanied by pizzicato basses and bass drum. After the solo mezzo-soprano delivers the "liber scriptus proferetur," the chorus bursts in with a reprise of the "Dies irae," an event dictated by musical considerations that has nothing to do with the requiem mass text. For the "Lacrimosa," Verdi extended and rewrote a duet for Don Carlos and King Philip he had cut from Don Carlos before its premiere. Like Cherubini, Verdi unites the Sanctus and Benedictus.

Verdi composed the concluding "Libera me," for soprano, chorus, and orchestra in 1868-1869 as his part of a collaborative requiem for Rossini, the remaining sections of which were to be set by other Italian composers. The project came to nothing, but Verdi kept his "Libera me" and eagerly seized the opportunity to use it as part of a complete requiem. After the solo soprano begins the movement, the chorus again intercedes with the "Dies irae," which

is followed by a beautiful reprise of the "Requiem aeternam" and a closing, fugal setting of the "Libera me."

The work is organised in 7 sections -

- Introit – Kyrie (chorus, soloists)
- Sequence:
 - Dies irae (chorus)
 - Tuba mirum (chorus)
 - Mors stupebit (bass)
 - Liber scriptus (mezzo-soprano, chorus* - chorus only in first version)
 - Quid sum miser (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor)
 - Rex tremendae (soloists, chorus)
 - Recordare (soprano, mezzo-soprano)
 - Ingemisco (tenor)
 - Confutatis (bass, chorus)
 - Lacrimosa (soloists, chorus)
- Offertory (soloists):
 - Domine Jesu Christe
 - Hostias
- Sanctus (double chorus)
- Agnus Dei (soprano, mezzo-soprano, chorus)
- Communion (mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass):
 - Lux aeterna
- Libera me (soprano, chorus):
 - Libera me
 - Dies irae
 - Requiem aeternam
 - Libera me

Scoring: 3224 4431 Tmp+1 Str

Choir, 4 soloists