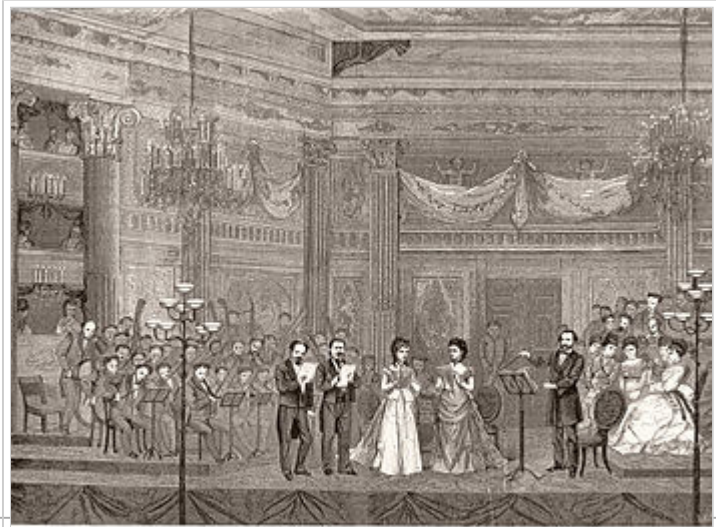


Requiem (Verdi)

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The *Messa da Requiem* by Giuseppe Verdi is a musical setting of the Roman Catholic funeral mass (Requiem) for four soloists, double choir and orchestra. It was composed in memory of Alessandro Manzoni, an Italian poet and novelist much admired by Verdi. The first performance in San Marco in Milan on 22 May 1874 marked the first anniversary of Manzoni's death. The work was at one time called the **Manzoni Requiem**.^[1] It is typically not performed in the liturgy, but in a concert of around 85–90 minutes.



LA MESSA DI VERDI SUL PALCOSCENICO DELLA SCALA
(Disegni del vero del signor Felice, sotto del signor Rodi)

The second performance of the *Requiem*, at La Scala on 25 May 1874, with Verdi conducting. The soloists depicted are (left to right) Ormondo Maini, Giuseppe Capponi, Maria Waldmann, and Teresa Stolz

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Composition history

When Gioachino Rossini died in 1868, Verdi suggested that a number of Italian composers should collaborate on a *Requiem* in Rossini's honor, and began the effort by submitting the conclusion, *Libera me*. During the next year a *Messa per Rossini* was compiled by 13 composers, famous at the time, of whom the only one well known today is Verdi himself. The premiere was scheduled for 13 November 1869, the first anniversary of Rossini's death.

However, on 4 November, nine days before the premiere, the organising committee abandoned it. Verdi blamed the scheduled conductor, Angelo Mariani, for this. He pointed to Mariani's lack of enthusiasm for the project, even though he had been part of the organising committee from the start, and it marked the beginning of the end of their long-term friendship. The piece fell into oblivion until 1988, when Helmuth Rilling premiered the complete *Messa per Rossini* in Stuttgart, Germany.

In the meantime, Verdi kept toying with his *Libera me*, frustrated that the combined commemoration of Rossini's life would not be performed in his lifetime.

On 22 May 1873, the Italian writer and humanist Alessandro Manzoni, whom Verdi had admired all his adult life and met in 1868, died. Upon hearing of his death, Verdi resolved to complete a Requiem—this time entirely of his own writing—for Manzoni. Verdi travelled to Paris in June, where he commenced work on the *Requiem*, giving it the form we know today. It included a revised version of the *Libera me* originally composed for Rossini.

Performance history

The *Requiem* was first performed in the church of San Marco in Milan on 22 May 1874, the first anniversary of Manzoni's death. Verdi himself conducted, and the four soloists were Teresa Stolz (soprano), Maria Waldmann (mezzo-soprano), Giuseppe Capponi (tenor) and Ormondo Maini (bass).^[2] As Aida, Amneris and Ramfis respectively, Stolz, Waldmann, and Maini had all sung in the European premiere of *Aida* in 1872, and Capponi was also intended to sing the role of Radames at that premiere but was replaced due to illness. Teresa Stolz went on to a brilliant career, Waldmann retired very young in 1875, but the male singers appear to have faded into obscurity. Teresa Stolz was also engaged to Angelo Mariani in 1869, but she later left him amid rumours (never substantiated) that she was having an affair with Verdi.

The *Requiem* was repeated at La Scala three days later on 25 May with the same soloists, and again Verdi conducted.^[3] It won immediate contemporary success, although not everywhere. It received seven performances at the Opéra-Comique in Paris, but the new Royal Albert Hall in London could not be filled for such a Catholic occasion. In Venice, impressive Byzantine ecclesiastical decor was designed for the occasion of the performance.

It later disappeared from the standard choral repertoire, but made a reappearance in the 1930s and is now regularly performed as well as being a staple of many choral societies.^[4]

The playwright and music critic George Bernard Shaw was a great admirer of the work from its first London performance, and had the *Libera me* played at his funeral.^[5]

The Requiem has been staged several times in recent years. Achim Freyer created a production for the Deutsche Oper Berlin in 2006 that was revived in 2007, 2011 and 2013.^{[6][7]} In Freyer's staging, the four sung roles — Der Weiße Engel (The White Angel), Der Tod-ist-die-Frau (Death is the Woman), Einsam (Solitude), and Der Beladene (The Load Bearer) — are complemented by choreographed allegorical characters.^[8] In 2011, Oper Köln premiered a full staging by Clemens Bechtel where the four main characters were shown in different life and death situations: the Fukushima nuclear disaster, a Turkish writer in prison, a young woman with bulimia and an aid worker in Africa.^{[9][10][11]}



Alessandro Manzoni, in whose honour Verdi wrote the *Requiem*

The requiem was performed 16 times between 1943 and 1944 by prisoners in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt under the direction of Rafael Schächter, providing a basis for dignified self expression as well as an attempt to symbolically communicate the circumstances at the camp to a visiting Red Cross delegation in 1944.^{[12][13]}

Versions and arrangements

For a Paris performance, Verdi revised the *Liber scriptus* to allow Maria Waldmann a further solo for future performances.^[4]

Versions accompanied by four pianos or brass band were also performed.

Franz Liszt transcribed the *Agnus Dei* for solo piano (S. 437). It has been recorded by Leslie Howard.

Sections

- 1. **Introit and Kyrie** (chorus, soloists)
- 2. **Dies irae**
 - *Dies irae* (chorus)
 - *Tuba mirum* (chorus, bass)
 - *Mors stupebit* (bass)
 - *Liber scriptus* (mezzo-soprano, chorus)
 - *Quid sum miser* (soprano, mezzo-soprano, tenor)
 - *Rex tremendae* (soloists, chorus)
 - *Recordare* (soprano, mezzo-soprano)
 - *Ingemisco* (tenor)
 - *Confutatis* (bass, chorus)
 - *Lacrymosa* (soloists, chorus)
- 3. **Offertory**
 - *Domine Jesu Christe* (soloists)
 - *Hostias*
- 4. **Sanctus** (double chorus)
- 5. **Agnus Dei** (soprano, mezzo-soprano, chorus)
- 6. **Lux aeterna** (mezzo-soprano, tenor, bass)
- 7. **Libera me** (soprano, chorus)
 - *Libera me*
 - *Dies irae*
 - *Requiem aeternam*
 - *Libera me*



First edition title page, Ricordi, 1874

Music of the Requiem

Throughout the work, Verdi uses vigorous rhythms, sublime melodies, and dramatic contrasts—much as he did in his operas—to express the powerful emotions engendered by the text. The terrifying (and instantly recognizable) *Dies irae* that introduces the traditional sequence of the Latin funeral rite is repeated throughout for a sense of unity, which allows Verdi to explore the feelings of loss and sorrow as well as the human desire for forgiveness and mercy found in the intervening movements of the *Requiem*. Trumpets surround the stage to produce an inescapable call to judgement in the *Tuba mirum* (the resulting combination of brass and choral quadruple-fortissimo markings resulting in some of the loudest unamplified music ever written), and the almost oppressive atmosphere of the *Rex tremendae* creates a sense of unworthiness before the King of Tremendous Majesty. Yet the well-known tenor solo *Ingemisco* radiates hope for the sinner who asks for the Lord's mercy. Verdi also recycles and reworks the duet "Qui me rendra ce mort? Ô funèbres abîmes!", from act 4 of *Don Carlos*, in the beautiful *Lacrimosa* which ends this sequence.

The joyful *Sanctus* (a complicated eight-part fugue scored for double chorus) begins with a brassy fanfare to announce him "who comes in the name of the Lord" and leads into an angelic *Agnus Dei* sung by the female soloists with the chorus. Finally the *Libera me*, the oldest music by Verdi in the *Requiem*, interrupts. Here the soprano cries out, begging, "Deliver me, Lord, from eternal death ... when you will come to judge the world by fire."

At the time the Requiem was composed, female singers were not permitted to perform in Catholic Church rituals (such as a requiem mass).^{[14]:60} However, from the beginning Verdi intended to use female singers in the work. In his open letter proposing the *Requiem* project (when it was still conceived as a multi-author *Requiem* for Rossini), Verdi wrote: If I were in the good graces of the Holy Father [i.e., the Pope], I would beg him to permit -- if only for this one time -- that women take part in the performance of this music; but since I am not, it will fall to someone else better suited to obtain this decree."^[15] In the event, when Verdi composed the *Requiem* alone, two of the four soloists were sopranos, and the chorus included female voices. This may have slowed the work's acceptance in Italy.^{[14]:60}

At the time of its premiere, the *Requiem* was criticized by some as being too operatic in style for the religious subject matter.^{[14]:59-60} According to Gundula Kreuzer, "Most critics did perceive a schism between the religious text (with all its musical implications) and Verdi's setting." Some viewed it negatively as "an opera in ecclesiastical robes," or alternatively, as a religious work, but one in "dubious musical costume." While the majority of critics agreed that the music was "dramatic," some felt that such treatment of the text was appropriate, or at least permissible.^{[14]:60-61} As to the music *qua* music, the critical consensus agreed that the work displayed "fluent invention, beautiful sound effects and charming vocal writing." Critics were divided between praise and condemnation with respect to Verdi's willingness to break standard compositional rules for musical effect, such as his use of consecutive fifths.^{[14]:60-61}

Instrumentation

The work is scored for the following orchestra:

woodwind: piccolo, 3 flutes,^[instr 1] 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 4 bassoons

brass: 4 horns, 8 trumpets, 3 trombones, Ophicleide^[instr 2]

percussion: timpani, bass drum

strings: violins I, II, violas, violoncellos, double basses.

- [^] the third flute doubles on piccolo
- [^] an obsolete instrument usually replaced by a tuba or cimbasso in modern performances

Recordings

Main article: Verdi Requiem discography

References

Notes

- [^] Summer, Robert J. (23 February 2007). *Choral Masterworks from Bach to Britten: Reflections of a Conductor*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press. ISBN 0-8108-5903-3. OCLC 74988115 ([//www.worldcat.org/oclc/74988115](http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/74988115)). "Verdi revered Manzoni for this great contribution to his beloved Italy [a primer of the Italian language], and wished to find a way to thank him. His gift was the Manzoni Requiem."
- [^] "Messa da requiem" (<http://www.giuseppeverdi.it/Inglese/page.asp?IDCategoria=162&IDSezione=580&ID=19746>). *Giuseppe Verdi: Official Site*. 2 July 2003. Retrieved 5 October 2010.
- [^] Resigno, Eduardo (2001). *Dizionario Verdiano*. Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, p. 14. ISBN 88-17-86628-8
- [^] ^a ^b *CD liner notes* (http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.550944-45&catNum=550944&filetype>About%20this%20Recording&language=English) (*Verdi: Requiem / Quattro Pezzi Sacri*). Naxos Records. 1997. 8.550944-45. http://www.naxos.com/mainsite/blurbs_reviews.asp?item_code=8.550944-45&catNum=550944&filetype>About%20this%20Recording&language=English.
- [^] Michael Holroyd, *Bernard Shaw: A Biography*, p.792
- [^] Freyer staging: director's description, images, links to cast info (http://web1.heimat.de/deutscheoperberlin/index.php?page=spielplandetail&id_event_cluster=848458&ausgabe=inhalt&language=en_EN) on Heimat.de
- [^] Freyer staging: YouTube video clip (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHXgxiqAkHA>). Uploaded by DeutscheOperBerlin
- [^] Freyer staging: review («Messa da Requiem» de Verdi d'une sombre beauté au Deutsche Oper de Berlin) (http://www.musicologie.org/publire/messa_da_requiem_de_verdi.html) in musicologie.org **(French)**
- [^] Bechtel staging: details and cast (<http://www.operkoeln.com/programm/54777/>) from Oper Köln website.
- [^] Bechtel staging: YouTube video clip (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QePUYWuT9vQ>). Uploaded by OperKoeln.
- [^] Bechtel staging: review (<http://www.der-neue-merker.eu/koln-palladium-messa-da-requiem-von-verdi-szenisch>) in Der Neue Merker. **(German)**
- [^] "PBS Religion & Ethics. Defiant Requiem: Verdi at Terezin. Originally Published 10 December 2010." (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/december-10-2010/defiant-requiem-verdi-at-terezin/7628/>). Retrieved 6 March 2013., see Theresienstadt concentration camp for "Terezin"
- [^] "Music and the Holocaust. Rafael Schächter." (<http://holocaustmusic.ort.org/places/theresienstadt/schachter-rafael/>). Retrieved 6 March 2013.

14. [^] ^a ^b ^c ^d ^e Kreuzer, Gundula (2010). *Verdi and the Germans : from unification to the Third Reich* (1. publ. ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 9780521519199.
15. [^] *Gazzetta Piemontese* (in Italian). Nov. 22, 1868. p. 3. "Se io fossi nelle buone grazie del Santo Padre, lo pregherei a voler permettere, almeno per questa sola volta, che le donne prendessero parte all'esecuzione di questa musica, ma non essendolo, converrà trovar persona piu di me idonea ad ottenere l'intento"

Sources

- Kennedy, Michael (2006), *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*. ISBN 0-19-861459-4

External links

- Live Recording of *Liber Scriptus* portion of *Requiem* (Mary Gayle Greene, mezzo-soprano) (<http://www.music.appstate.edu/faculty/greene/Verdi-Liber-Scriptus-Mary-Gayle-Greene-www.marygaylegreene.tk.mp3>)
- *Requiem* (Verdi): Free scores at the International Music Score Library Project
- Free scores of *Requiem* (Verdi) in the Choral Public Domain Library (ChoralWiki)
- Public Domain MP3 Recording (<http://www.classicistranieri.org/dblog/articolo.asp?articolo=707>) – Beniamino Gigli – Real Opera Choir and Orchestra, Rome – 1935
- Schuth, Brian (30 July, 2013). "Montanaro Conducts Verdi on Short Notice" (<http://www.classical-scene.com/2013/07/30/montanaro-verdi/>). Boston Musical Intelligencer. Retrieved August 2013.

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Categories: Compositions by Giuseppe Verdi | Requiems | 1874 compositions

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