

# THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

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## Music in this Number.

ALMIGHTY AND EVERLASTING GOD—SANCTUS—  
KYRIE ELEESON.

Composed by ORLANDO GIBBONS.

## MOZART'S MASSES.

### THE REQUIEM.

Contributed by E. HOLMES.

HITHERTO we have considered in these writings the productions of a very young man, exercising his invention amidst every possible disadvantage in choir and orchestra to find the means of pleasing in his music. During the twelve years which Mozart spent at Vienna, on his removal from Salzburg, his genius had borne the fruits of these preparatory studies principally in secular music, for the stage, the orchestra, and the chamber; and, except the Mass in C minor, composed the year after his marriage, which now forms the ground work of *Davidde Penitente*, he had rendered no tribute to the church—though this nursing mother, who had brought him up to maturity under her especial care, always maintained his interest and affection. On the vicissitudes of his public life at Vienna we might still think with some degree of indignation and grief, were it not better to

Let determined things  
To destiny hold unbewailed their way.

Without the antecedents of such a career, we could not have possessed the *Requiem*, which owes its chief peculiarities and impassioned style to the circumstances under which it was produced; the mind bright and unimpaired, the body wasting,—the hand of death tracing notes in which the composer fully believed he was celebrating his own obsequies, and bidding final adieu to earth and its concerns.

The history of the composition of the *Requiem* is too familiar to be repeated: we all know what tender domestic scenes and embarrassments it occasioned—how Mozart worked at it sometimes to swooning—how often the score was taken from him by his wife, and again, at his earnest solicitation, returned, to be finally completed by the time when he took to his death-bed; his imagination being through the whole period filled with fatal presentiments and images of the other world—that he had received a supernatural commission—that his health was undermined by poison—with other 'sick men's dreams.' He appears to have been surprised by the sudden summons; he

thought how young he was to die, estimating life by years rather than by sensations—forgetting that he had compressed in thought, feeling, and action, three lives into one—forgetting the nine hundred works which he had composed—the night how often turned into day by him, for business or pleasure—the masquerades, the balls, and the occasional convivial excesses in which he had shared with the actors; for all which, as it may have been too much on either side, the laws of our mechanical being demand a reckoning, and even the favoured Mozart could claim no exemption. Preoccupied with the effort to understand his own genius, and with the desire to accomplish what seemed open to him in music, he seems in his personal conduct to have acted at times with an indifference to consequences, which the enthusiasm of youth and the abstract character of his pursuits may alone explain, if not quite excuse.

It was in the autumn of 1791, when his health had suffered a serious change, though it at first occasioned no ground for alarm, that he received a commission from some unknown hand to compose a Requiem, which was to be in his best manner, and entirely in the style which he himself approved. For what purpose the original possessor of the work treated for it in the manner he did, making no restrictions on him from retaining a score, or even publishing it when he thought fit, remains to this day a mystery. We have heard a Count Wolfegg named as this individual 'stranger.' Desiring to celebrate the anniversary of the decease of a lady whom he had tenderly loved, by the performance of a Requiem exclusively his own, he procured this; some say that he wished it to pass as his own composition—a dangerous fraud if he had done nothing, and still more if the contrary: but to this story we give no heed, for his first business in such an attempt should have been to destroy all traces of Mozart's handwriting; and even then his secret must have remained in jeopardy, from the free intercourse with his friends and family which the composer always maintained while writing. Instead of finding base and unworthy motives for the instigator of the *Requiem*—accusations which bear with them their own refutation—we can only express the obligation of the world to him, and wish that Mozart had earlier found so discerning a patron.

The composer himself innocently founded the tale of mystery which has circulated with his *Requiem*—the origin of which may be distinctly traced to the excited and gloomy imagination which accompanied his sickness. That a rich and tasteful nobleman who knew Mozart's power of writing in the most elevated style of sacred music, should wish to possess a Requiem by him was not wonderful; but that, in treating for it, he concealed his name, paid handsomely beforehand, and transacted the whole affair through the agency

of one who seemed to watch Mozart and to come upon him at unexpected times and places, was strange, and appeared to the composer almost supernatural. He was haunted from time to time by the presence of a man whose sole care seemed to be the *Requiem*; and this mysterious figure approached him just as he was stepping into the carriage which conveyed him to Prague, to compose *La Clemenza di Tito*. With his head and heart full of the beautiful melodies which distinguish that opera, the disagreeable effect of such an apparition—the new train of ideas called up by it—may be imagined. “Who can it be that is thus earnest on this ghastly funeral theme? Certainly a messenger from the other world, and he foretells my death.” Thus reasoned on false grounds the sick Mozart, and he arrived at a right conclusion by the instinct which is beyond reason.

Another circumstance brought to this application for the *Requiem* a kind of supernatural interest. Mozart had all his life been secretly wishing for the opportunity of composing one, and now it occurred almost miraculously, and just as he could have desired. The subject coincided exactly with his frame of mind in failing health, and the composer, who had been educated among theologians, and in the strictest observances of his community, was eager for the opportunity of once more doing honor to that church of which he had been of late a lax and somewhat pardonable member.\* He knew that the first privilege of composing for the church is independence of the public and freedom from the prejudices of taste and fashion; and to be able to write his best without fear or hesitation was, to him who had sacrificed himself continually to others, a rare and much desired opportunity. Possibly, also, he thought with humility that his good works might deserve the favor of heaven—that *voca me cum benedictis*, the humble prayer of his music, might be fulfilled on his own behalf, and that at the general consummation he might himself, though unworthy, be admitted to nestle among the wings of the angels. The composition breathes these feelings; though suppliant and religious, it is full of human passion,—it casts a longing, lingering look at the past, amidst the terrors of the future,—it is, in fact, Mozart revolving his experience of life, and lost in a dream of the final Judgment, with feelings which he was the first to express in the mysterious language of music.

All the incidents of the fatal autumn which put a period to Mozart were deeply impressed on the memory of his widow and her sister; and when, in the early part of the present century, the score

\* In the records preserved by Rochlitz of Mozart's conversations at Leipzig, amidst familiar friends, on his northern tour, about three years before his death, his attachment to the Catholic religion is strongly manifested. Had he lived to enter upon the office of Kapellmeister of St. Stephen, we should most probably have received from him a new collection of Masses with complete orchestral accompaniment.

was published, the story of the ‘stranger,’ drawn out in form and detail, and adapted to the popular taste, circulated with it. Advantage was taken of the mystery to excite the public to an interest in a work whose intrinsic merit needed no adventitious aid. The taste for music and the fame of Mozart were not, however, general enough at this period to support the expensive publication of a great score. And now came a matter tending more to embarrass opinion and involve the origin of the work in obscurity. A claim was put in by another hand to a share in the composition. A musician in habits of intimacy with Mozart, and who assisted him in filling up the accompaniments of some of his later scores—a man named Süssmayer, who had accompanied him to Prague to perform this office for *La Clemenza di Tito*, which was dispatched in a fortnight—presented himself as the author of a part, from the Sanctus to the end. Unreasonable as these pretensions to some of the greatest beauties of the work appeared, from a composer known only by one obscure opera, called *The Mirror of Arcadia*, there was no one to contradict them. A work had been published complete, of which only two fragments of the score were known to exist in the composer's handwriting—one possessed by the Abbé Stadler, and the other by Eybler. Mozart's widow confirmed, according to the best of her recollection, the statement of Süssmayer, and believed that he completed the score of the *Requiem* which was delivered to the ‘stranger;’ and it must be pardoned in her, if, in her distracted condition respecting her husband, she was not very attentive to, or not very accurately informed respecting, his works.

The *Requiem* began to be known in England to musicians soon after the first introduction of *Don Giovanni*, when Mozart became an object of general curiosity and interest. It came over to us with its full quota of rumours. Mozart was believed to have died during the composition, and some, indulging their speculations on this head, would fain point out the chord at which the pen dropped from his hand. To confirm this idea of death having overtaken the composer at his task, we have been shown the last movement made out of the materials, and nearly a repetition of the opening—whence it was argued that a man so full of ideas would not have resorted to that expedient had he possessed his usual powers and free-will. But in this opinion a common habit of Mozart's, of connecting the end with the beginning of compositions—since become of great authority in music—is overlooked. That this was done by him with deliberation and choice, we have since had proof.

No one in England gave credit to Süssmayer's claim to have composed the Sanctus. There were his words of assertion on the one side, and Mo-

zart's notes to confront them on the other—an overwhelming evidence. Who could believe that the sublimity of the Sanctus, or the sweetness and elevation of the Benedictus—although this last is newly and most unusually scored—could have any origin but in the mind of Mozart? And yet there were Germans who until within these few years affected to believe the truth of Süßmayer, and to doubt the authenticity of the *Requiem* as a genuine work of Mozart, from the secular taste of the melody displayed in some of its movements—in the close of the *Tuba Mirum*, for example—for which it was affirmed that any other composer than Mozart would have received the castigation of criticism. The beginning of Handel's Funeral Anthem for Queen Caroline, as also the subject of a fugue from *Joshua*, were quoted to show that the subjects of the introduction and fugue were not quite original. There certainly is a slight—possibly an accidental similarity. While musicians were enjoying the beauties of the *Requiem*, the musical critics of Germany, with the late M. Gottfried Weber at their head, were engaged in a long profitless discussion concerning its genuineness, on which one little fact has since rendered all their reasonings nugatory. The discovery of a full score of the *Requiem*, in Mozart's handwriting, was notified in the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, No. 5, for Jan., 1839, with the promise of a dissertation on the same from Herr Hofrath von Mosel. This fortunate event silenced all question as to its authenticity, and reduced the contention of those who would still dispute to a mere point of taste. It was one thing to maintain that the work was not genuine, because no complete score existed—another to contend that Mozart had failed in parts confessed to have been written by him. A secular character in some of the melodies was chiefly blamed; and, by implication, Beethoven even seems to cast a slur on this work, when, in writing to Cherubini, he observes, that should he compose a Requiem, his design of composition would be the one he should adopt. That Cherubini's Requiem, founded on the old church music, is more gothic, passionless, and ecclesiastical, cannot be denied—but this same quality, in as far as it is imitative, rendering the work rather one of combination and study than of original power, detracts from its merit. Productions in art take their standing through the force of invention which gave them birth; whatever has been once magnificently done cannot be repeated, and all works formed on acknowledged models and styles bear a feeble existence.

Let us, in endeavouring to appreciate the *Requiem*, try to approach it from the composer's point of view. That the models of the severe church style are here in part superseded, is at once confessed. To have kept within the limits of custom and authority, would have been to have surrendered the opportunity; and, as all the later

productions of Mozart—operas, symphonies, &c., are memorable commencements in different styles of music, in which he, as pioneer of the art, opened paths of unexplored novelty and effect, he was naturally desirous to carry this on into church music. All his boyish studies in fugue and canon—all that art of counterpoint which had been growing stronger in him from year to year at Vienna, but which only broke out occasionally in his operas, being there held in subjection to melody and dramatic effect—flourished in the *Requiem* as in a fitting soil. Handel's art of double counterpoint is even outdone; we have the same depth of learning—the same elaborate contrivance, with more refinement and effect. As a fugal writer, Mozart was by nature so strong, that, had he lived in the time of Sebastian Bach, he might have been his rival. His part writing shows the natural clearness of his mind, and profound insight into the problems of harmony. He knew his strength, and rejoiced in it.

At Vienna, Van Swieten and other patrons of Mozart carried the taste for Handel and Bach's counterpoint to the court; and the writings of Mozart at this period were greatly modified and influenced by these scientific predilections. He quitted now the method he had pursued in his Salzburg Masses, and sought out subjects which could be treated in double fugue, and inverted above or below according to the received methods. His first sacred production written at Vienna, *Davidde Penitente*, exhibits this change, and the ascendancy of learned counterpoint. The opening chorus, if we remember, has subjects which invert three several times, and there is one duet wholly in canon.

The contrapuntal and profoundly scientific forms of the movements of the *Requiem* form a very striking feature of that production. Had these, however, exhibited merely new combinations of the old art of counterpoint, they would not have satisfied Mozart. He blended the severe old style with what was new and beautiful in the art of modern times, and made both in the highest degree subservient to expression. The melodies are so flowing and so natural, even when they move in canon, that the ear is unconscious of the restraint of rule. Hundreds receive delight from the symmetry which they perceive in the construction of the movements of the *Requiem*, who cannot trace the cause of their pleasure in the scientific forms of composition employed. One of the most wonderful qualities of Mozart's mind was certainly his power of fusion. He could melt the old into the new—he could be Handel or Bach at will, and show his own lineaments blended with theirs. The peculiar instrumentation of the *Requiem*, in which solemn and sombre wind instruments alone are used, affords another interesting aspect of the science of the composer. But science and taste in combination merely con-

tribute towards the poetical design. The *Requiem* may be considered as a kind of tragic drama, the action and scenery of which are left to the imagination. It combines the old church music, with the dramatic effect of the serious opera, and has introduced into music a perfectly new creation.

(To be continued.)

## CHOIR AND CHORUS SINGING.

(Continued from page 136.)

### CHAPTER VII.

#### ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF WORDS, AND VOCAL ARTICULATION.

55. Experience has shewn that the effect of music is augmented by a clear and well articulated pronunciation of the words: the sound has more life, more brilliancy, by the impulse which it receives from the action of the lips and the tongue. With regard to expression, there can be no doubt that the accent impressed on the words by the singers adds much force to the meaning of musical phrases. However, although the advantages of a good pronunciation are known and acknowledged by all the world, it cannot be denied that the majority of vocal artists neglect this portion of their art, and that they frequently leave the sense of what they sing to be guessed at rather than understood. But if this defect is perceptible in a great number of solo singers, it is almost universal among choralists, especially when they sing French

words, of which the rhythmical accent is much less perceptible than in Latin, Italian, or German [or English] words. The individual defects of each one of the singers of a Choir or Chorus, increase by the combinations of the mass; and from their bad articulation results I know not what chaos of syllables, in which the audience can seize upon nothing precisely.

56. The Director of a School of Choralists should pay great attention to this part of their execution, and make his pupils practise exercises first in groups of a few, and then in masses, on a free, clear, and vigorous pronunciation of the consonants, to attain to that which is called in good singing schools, striking the syllables well (*bien battre les syllabes*), with the lips and the tongue ["trippingly, on the tongue"]. The exercises should be made at first in moderate time, on simple syllables of two or three letters, which only require a single movement of the lips or the tongue, such as Ba, ca, da, la, ma, pa, ta, ton, tan, pan, &c. Words composed of syllables of this kind can be used, arranged one after the other, without its being necessary for them to make sense. The Director of the School, or the Head of the Choir or Chorus, should ascertain if the striking of the syllables is made simultaneously by all the choralists, for a slight delay or anticipation on the part of some choralists will ruin the effect, while powerful results will be obtained by unanimity in striking the notes, and by energy and articulateness.

After having practised the exercise in moderate time, it should be quickened by degrees:—

Example for acquiring force and clearness in the pronunciation of Chorus-singers.

*Moderato.*

1st Treble. Bâ - ton, Canon, Pan - tin, Lutin, Ca - non, Bâton, Lu - tin, Pantin, Pa - pa,  
 2nd Treble. Bâ - ton, Canon, Pan - tin, Lutin, Ca - non, Bâton, Lu - tin, Pantin, Pa - pa,  
 Tenor. Bâ - ton, Canon, Pan - tin, Lutin, Ca - non, Bâton, Lu - tin, Pantin, Pa - pa,  
 Bass. Bâ - ton, Canon, Pan - tin, Lutin, Ca - non, Bâton, Lu - tin, Pantin, Pa - pa,

Maman, Battant, Content, Piment, Pimpant, Ban - dit, Banni, Lambeau, Landeau, Tombeau, Tonneau.  
 Maman, Battant, Content, Piment, Pimpant, Ban - dit, Banni, Lambeau, Landeau, Tombeau, Tonneau.  
 Maman, Battant, Content, Piment, Pimpant, Ban - dit, Banni, Lambeau, Landeau, Tombeau, Tonneau.  
 Maman, Battant, Content, Piment, Pimpant, Ban - dit, Banni, Lambeau, Landeau, Tombeau, Tonneau.

57. After the Choir or Chorus have acquired the habit of pronouncing with ease those syllables which are formed by the simple action of the lips, the tongue, and the teeth, the Director of the School should make them sing exercises on those syllables in which the

simple elements are combined by the union of two consonants with one vowel. These syllables are more difficult than the former to be distinctly heard in singing:—