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Requiem Mass for Chamber Orchestra and Choir

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Requiem Mass
for Chamber Orchestra and Choir

An Honors Thesis
Presented to the Department of Music
Bates College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
by
Miles Isacke
Lewiston, Maine
March 22, 2013
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Contents

• Conductor’s Score in C of *Requiem Mass* by Miles Isacke

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Miles Isacke

Requiem Mass
Instrumentation

- 8 singers SSAATTBB
- Flute, Alto Flute
- B-flat Clarinet, Bass Clarinet
- B-flat Trumpet
- 2 F Horns
- 2 Violins
- 2 Violas
- Cello
- Organ
- Percussion: 4.5 octave Marimba, Glockenspiel, 1.5 octave Crotales with Bow, 32” and 29” Timpani, Bamboo Chimes, Tam Tam, Snare Drum, Bass Drum, Suspended Cymbal, Tubular Bell on F-sharp.
Introit et Kyrie

Miles Isacke

Score in C
molto rit., \( \text{\( \frac{\text{b} = 40}{\text{b} = 82} \)} \)
Dies Irae

Miles Isaac}

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Flute

Bass Clarinet in B

Trumpet in B

Horn in F

Horn in F

Violin I

Viola

Violoncello

Organ

8"+16"

Pedals

Bass Drum
20 cresc poco a poco

S.

A.

T.

B.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Tpt.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Org.

Ped.

B. D.

es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la
es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la
es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la Di-es ir-ae di-es il-la
il-la ir-ae il-la

sul tasto

8' Fl-4'
Ludex ergo cum sedebit

slowly start pushing in 16'
_er-go cum se-de-bit, Quid-quid_ la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit:

A. _er-go cum se-de-bit, Quid-quid_ la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit:

T. _se-de-bit_ Quid-quid_ la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit; la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit:

B. _se-de-bit_ Quid-quid_ la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit; la-tet, ap-pa-re-bit:
Preces meae non sunt dignae
S. non sunt dignae: Sed tu bonus fac benign
A. non sunt dignae: Sed tu bonus fac benign
T. non sunt dignae: Sed tu bonus fac benign
B. non sunt dignae: Sed tu bonus fac benign
To A. Fl.

B. Cl.

Tpt.

Hn.

Hn.

Vln.

Vla.

Vc.

Org.

Ped.

B. D.

\[f\text{ sempre} \]

\[\text{Bass Drum let ring} \]

\[f\]
et profundo lacu. liberaeas de orcleonis,
ne ab-sor-be-at e-as tar-tar-us, ne ca-dant in ob-scur-um;

ne ab-sor-be-at e-as tar-tar-us
B

Hos-ti-as et pre-ces ti-bi,_ Do-mi-ne, lau-dis of-fers-mus;

mp

Hos-ti-as et pre-ces ti-bi,_ Do-mi-ne, lau-dis of-fers-mus;

p

S.

A.

T.

B. Cl.

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Org.

Ped.

Glock.
tu sus-ci-pe pro an-i-ma-bas il-lis, qua-rum ho-di-e me-mor-i-am

as quiet as possible, whistle-like

half pulled 16'+8', slight whistle

Cymbals yarn mallet on the cup

Glockenspiel let ring
S.

fac - i - mus: fac e - as, Do - mi - ne,

A.

fac - i - mus: fac e - as, Do - mi - ne,

T.

B.

Fl.

B. Cl.

Vln. I

Vla.

Vc.

Org.

Ped.

Glock.
strike wooden windchimes with hand
T.
Sanc—tus, Do—mi—nus De us Sa—ba—oth;

B.
Sanc—tus, Do—mi—nus De us Sa—ba—oth;

Cl.

Vln. 1
mf

Vln. 2
mf

Vla.

Vc.

Timp.

Mar.
pleni sunt caeli et terrae
et terrae gloria tua

T.

B.

Cl.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Timp.

Mar.
T.

B.

Cl.

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vc.

Timp.

Mar.

-ra glori-a tu-a.

Hosanna

Hosanna

w/ inverted cymbal

w/o cymbal

57
Lūx, lūx æ-ter-na luce-ät e-is, Do-mi-ne, cum sánctis tu-is æ-ter-num, qu-a pius es
Requiem æternam dona eis Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine, et lux læcit.

Requiem æternam dona eis Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine; et lux læcit.

Requiem æternam dona eis Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine; perpetuæ.
Pie Jesu - Introduction

Conductor with stopwatch

Miles Isacke

Alto Flute

Trumpet in B♭

Organ

Pedals

Slowly pull out completely on pedals:

5" - no stops 10" - 16' 15" - 8' 15" - 8' 15" - gross quint (letting it squeak as you pull)
Sparsely improvise with any of the boxed pitches at any octave. Hold every pitch for a duration of 5-10". Imitate organ squeaks and trumpet. Overblow for harmonics on notated pitches, if desired. fade in last 15"

Sparsely improvise with any of the boxed pitches at any octave. Hold every pitch for a duration of 5-10". Imitate organ squeaks and flute. Use cup and stem mute, sliding the stem in and out for timbral shifts. fade in last 15"

Slowly pull fourniture stop until it squeaks then push back in. Repeat intermittently. "Sine wave"-like. Try to "bend" the pitches. fade in last 15"
Li - ber-a me, Do-mi-ne, de mor-te ae ter-na, in di-e il-la tre-men-da:
Repeat fountaine pattern w/ silence on beat 4...  ...end pattern.
poco rit. \ldots \ldots \ldots

sæculum per ignem

sæculum per ignem

becoming breathy

blow air through horn

blow air through horn

speak sounds through teeth

speak sounds through teeth

speak sounds through teeth

speak sounds through teeth

becoming breathy

blow air through horn

poco rit. \ldots \ldots \ldots
Reflections on a Requiem Mass

Miles Isacke

March 22, 2013

A requiem mass is endowed with a certain amount of gravity. It seems fair to say that the requiem mass is saturated in some of the most profound and basic of human emotions. It is with this in mind that I light-heartedly set out upon the task of composing a requiem, not only a notedly grave subject, but one that has been spun out by countless composers before me. It will be the goal of this paper to, first, illuminate why I chose to undertake such a fraught task, paying special attention to the compositional influences that brought me to such an idea. Secondly, I will give a brief description of my process as well as some reasoning for the treatment of the mass texts and development of the movements.

Before we delve too deeply into my particular composition, there should be some background given into the abundant history of the requiem. For almost two-thousand years the requiem mass has served as a funerary tradition in some of the oldest Christian faiths, most notably Catholicism. The mass serves as a ritual for the recently dead, one that is meant to serve as a plea for the well being of the departed in the afterlife as well as a reminder to the faithful practitioners in attendance; a reminder that life is transient and that there is salvation through the church, as well as the chance of eternal damnation.

The musical setting of the requiem texts have evolved along with trends in Western musical practices through the history of its composition. As Robert Chase notes, the Gregorian
mass exists as the oldest version of a musical setting for the requiem mass texts (Chase, xv). Although plainchant had existed for centuries prior, the particularly Catholic establishment of Gregorian chant left a large impact on the way that composers have since dealt with the requiem. The draw of Gregorian chant has inspiring composers to evoke such stylistic elements in their pieces centuries after the popular composition of Gregorian chant diminished.

Another interesting point of note is that the requiem mass continued to be written, for the most part, in the original Latin well after Latin was commonplace within society (xiv). It should be noted, however, that it took until well into the 20th century for Latin to be replaced by local languages in Catholic masses. Nevertheless, the retention of the original Latin points to weight that the requiem texts possess in the mind of composers. Composers have sought to explore the array of emotions that are evoked by such texts in their original form, a trend that is still present to this day.

Jumping through centuries of music, some composers in more recent times have reinterpreted the traditional form of a requiem, often setting non-religious texts or even writing requiems that lack text altogether. Some could call such instances ‘secular requiems’, yet the fact that they carry the same name necessarily signifies on the vast history of requiem music as well as the religious connotations (whatever they may be).

I bracket the history of requiem music for the purpose of emphasizing its particular focus, one that intrinsically grapples with the emotions surrounding death as well as the place that religion plays in its consideration. Knowing this to be true of the requiem, I was drawn to the rich opportunity that composing such a work offered. I would be forced to look in and around myself for inspiration and interpretation.

Before examining the development of my composition, please see Appendix A for the
selection of texts used in my requiem mass. There you can find both the Latin as well as an English translation given based upon Chase translation (Chase, 2-10). It should also be noted that a requiem mass is usually though to consist of the standard elements of liturgy, such as the Kyrie, Offertory, and Agnus Dei, in addition to requiem specific texts such as the Dies Irae sequence, Lux Aeterna and the Libera Me.

I was initially drawn to the requiem by the works of two quite distinct composers, Gabriel Faure and Alfred Schnittke. Encountering Faure’s 1888 requiem first, I was drawn by the masterful conveyance of emotion he was able to attain (Chase, 262). His ability to personify wide ranges of emotions, from exaltation to fear, seemed effortless and proved deeply moving at first listen. As I spent more time listening to the piece I felt the desire to recreate such pure and concise moments of emotional outpour. (Whether, as a listener, one experiences such moments as those found in Faure’s work while listening to my piece is yet to be seen.) Nevertheless, it was with an aim to express varying emotional states in particularly simple terms that the project was initiated.

Encountering Schnittke’s requiem second, I was at first taken aback by the orchestration, treatment of text, and overall emotional state that is put forth in the short 35-minute work. Schnittke’s requiem takes on a very different demeanor than that of Faure’s. Perhaps due to the inclusion of a long Dies Irae sequence, something that was notably missing from Faure’s work, Schnittke’s 1974 requiem takes the listener on a fraught emotional journey though a combination of sonoristic and atonal styles (362). Furthermore, his work makes great use of orchestral as well as choral ostinati, which adds to a intense feeling of foreboding and anxiety that the requiem portrays.

Another point of interest was his treatment of the text. He omitted standard movements such as the Offertory and Libera Me, while including non-standard ones such as the Credo.
At the time Schnittke’s work would have been problematic to receive, both by the Soviet government and by the Christian church at large; the government essentially forbid the composition of sacred music and people of Christian faith might have trouble reconciling some of the more frightening moments of reflection. So perhaps Schnittke wrote it solely for himself as a composer, possibly even without the motivation of religious experience or at least a normative Christian one. If that was the case, he would not have to worry about appeasing a government nor a whole religious community, both with strong ties to tonal music.

One last slightly mysterious note, his requiem is flanked by two movements simply titled *Requiem* that sound as if they could be some of the oldest pieces of religious music. The simplicity of the pedal points and double cannons in these movements really highlight the contrast with the much more frenetic and intricate moments found in the other movements. How is the listener meant to rectify the differences between the middle and outside movements? Schnittke’s enigmatic piece of music opened my eyes to the array of expression and meaning that a requiem could possess. As Schnittke illustrated, at no point can the requiem feel limited in scope. It was with Faure and Schnittke in my back pocket that I began my compositional process in the hopes of producing a piece that confronted all of the above questions about emotion and perceived religious experience.

The first step in the composition process was deciding upon the structure and inclusion of movements. A unique aspect of writing a mass is that, when it comes to the movements, there is a certain amount of established structure, i.e. texts are set and their ordering is based off of the ritual funeral service. So for me I had to include the movements and texts that I thought would best suit my goals for the piece. Here I looked to Faure and Schnittke for inspiration. Both requiems include some, what could be called, non-standard texts in comparison to the more standard form of Mozart’s and Verdi’s requiems. For example, Faure’s inclusion of the concluding *In Paradisum* is strikingly in its effect upon the piece
as a whole, as the listener is transported to a heavenly realm both in the text as well as
the music. Perhaps even more striking is the exclusion of the Dies Irae, a movement that is
intrinsically linked with a requiem mass in the minds of listeners. Additionally, Schnittke’s
minimalist structure, one that mostly highlights the Dies Irae sequence, gave me the idea of
being able to shrink and expand the focus and intention of particular movements.

In the end I settled upon a hybrid of the two pieces, including the Dies Irae sequence
as well as some of the lesser heard movements such as the Pie Jesu and In Paradisum. I
made a point of including some of the more standard, ritual movements like the Offertory
and Sanctus in order to provide contrast to the very striking and narrative moments of the
Dies Irae and Libera Me. Please see Appendix A for a full listing of movements.

One note should be made about the ordering of the movements. With one exception, the
movements are ordered as is traditional for requiem masses. I decided to move the setting of
the Pie Jesu text, usually delivered prior to the Agnus Dei, until after said movement. I did
this because the Pie Jesu text is the combination of the last line of the Dies Irae sequence
and the last line of the Agnus Dei. Hence it was my intention to allow for the Pie Jesu to
serve as an echo of the two previous recitations of the same text.

I began the writing process by outlining the three major moments I wanted to emphasize
in my piece, namely the Dies Irae sequence, the Agnus Dei & Lux Aeterna, and the Libera
Me. I specifically wanted each of these movements to have a distinct character, so I graphi-
cally, as well as in words, presented the instrumentation, texture, dynamics, and distribution
of the Latin text. Without any notions of pitch or durations, I set up the desired form and
relationships between the instruments. This helped me extract my intentions for the text
and the shape of the piece as a whole before ever sitting down at a keyboard. With these
three movements mapped, I began writing.
For me this writing process was very new in two ways. First, I had never written extensively for voice, let alone a whole choir. (When I think about it, the same goes for a chamber orchestra.) Hence, I have never particularly had to compose based upon pre-determined text; one that conveys a certain amount of meaning as well as requires the composer to present the text in an intended manner. Secondly, I have never approached such a large piece of music. For the most part I have written music intended to be under fifteen minutes in duration. So I was forced to explore many different emotions and ideas, as opposed to spinning out just one in particular.

More than anything, the writing process was a meditation on the moods that the texts evoked in me. Moving beyond the precompositional outlining, for almost every movement I would read through the text and translation, then immediately start to play. Most, if not all, harmonic and melodic gestures that make up my movements were a result of improvisation that lead to more concrete ideas, based upon my regard for the particular text at hand. The movements grew often times from one simple backbone that was meant to reflect the text. As a result, I believe that each movement, no matter how dense or undirected it may seem on the surface, really conveys very simple intention, be it in mood or emotional content.

Reflecting this desire, the writing for the choir is kept, for the most part, quite unitary and heterophonic in nature. At no point is a single voice heard, instead all vocal parts are written for a multiple of two voices. The choir, as opposed to representing eight individuals, is meant to represent one in various states of regard for the text. To emphasize the oneness in mind of the choir I often write octave doublings for two or three voices in order to create one heterophonic voice. There are often times when two voices end phrases at the interval of a minor second, again meant to represent a quasi-singular voice. Furthermore, when the choir pushes and pulls against itself for a period of time it almost always resolves down into
one motive or gesture.

The text is mostly set in quite traditional, often chant-like, phrasing schema. Very rarely do the singers have phrases that contradict the inflection of the word at hand, again trying to allow the music to be very pure and transparent in objective. However, the intentional contradiction of inflection in the music is meant to emphasize the text more than anything else. For the most part I try to convey general impressions of the text as a whole, however on occasion certain words of phrases call for special consideration and comment, and it is in these cases that I stray from traditional vocal music conventions.

Turning to the instrumental accompaniment, the orchestra is often meant to be the commentary upon the emotional content of the vocal music. Again noting that much of the music arose from improvisation, the orchestra often plays ostinati, all meant to reflect the mood of the choir and text. Many times the orchestra is placed musically in opposition to the choir, while others it is there to directly support it, all depending on how I reacted to the texts and amount of confidence (or lack thereof) it inspired in me. Often times, text meant to be reassuring or triumphant fell flat in my perception, while other times of meditation or beseechment in the text drew out of me strong emotional reactions.

With all the movements written, I hope I have created a piece of music that, although maybe not directed in the most obvious sense, leads the listener through a series of reflections on the state of human existence and the way that religious experience and traditions can amplify as well as diminish one’s trepidation about that very existence. Religion has played varying roles in my life. Composing this mass has caused me to look inside myself and attempt to try to reconcile my feelings about the texts, the Christian church and the musical legacy of the requiem. What came out was completely organic in nature and I hope that is apparent in the score as well as the performance of this composition.
Appendix A

Introit & Kyrie

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them.

Te decet hymnus Deus, in Sion, et tibi reddetur votum in Ierusalem.
In Zion a hymn is fitting to You, O God, a vow is paid to You in Jerusalem.

Exaudi orationem meam; ad te omnis caro veniet.
O hear my prayer; all flesh shall come to Thee.

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine, et lux perpetua luceat eis.
Grant them eternal rest, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon them.

Kyrie eleison;
Lord have mercy;

Christe eleison;
Christ have mercy;

Kyrie eleison.
Lord have mercy.

Sequence

Dies irae, dies illa,
Day of wrath, that day

Solvet saeclum in favilla:
Will dissolve the earth into ashes.

Teste David cum Sibylla.
As David and the Sibyl testify.

Iudex ergo cum sedebit,
When the Judge is seated,

Quidquid latet apparebit:
Whatever is hidden will be revealed:

Nil inultum remanebit.
Nothing will remain unavenged.
Preces meae non sunt dignae, My prayers are not worthy,
Sed tu bonus fac benigne, But Thou in Thy mercy, grant
Ne perenni cremer igne. That I burn not in everlasting fire.

Offertory

Domine Jesu Christe, Rex gloriae, Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory,
libera animas defunctorum free of the souls of the departed
de poenis inferni et de profundo from the pains of hell and from the bottomless
lacu. pit.
Libera eas de ore leonis, Deliver them from the mouth of the lion.
ne absorbeat eas tartarus, Neither let them fall into darkness
ne cadant in obscurum. nor the black abyss swallow them up.

Hostias et preces tibi, Domine, We offer unto Thee this sacrifice of
laudis offerimus; prayer and praise.
tu suscipe pro animabus illis, Receive it for those souls
quarum hodie memoriam facimus: whom, today we commemorate
Fac eas, Domine, de morte transire. Let them, O Lord, pass over from death to life.

Sanctus

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus, Holy, Holy, Holy,
Dominus Deus Sabaoth! Lord God of Hosts!
Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.
Hosanna in excelsis. Hosanna in the highest.
Agnus Dei & Lux Aeterna

_Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,_  
dona eis requiem,

_Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,_  
dona eis requiem,

_Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi,_  
dona eis requiem sempiternum.

_Lux aeterna luceat eis, Domine,_  
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,  
quia pius es._

_Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine;_  
et lux perpetua luceat eis;  
cum sanctis tuis in aeternum,  
quia pius es._

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant them rest,

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant them rest,

O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant them eternal rest.

May eternal light shine on them, O Lord, with thy saints forever,

because thou art gracious.

Grant the dead eternal rest, O Lord;

and may perpetual light shine on them;

with thy saints forever,

because thou art merciful.

Pie Jesu & Libera Me

_Pie Jesu Domine, dona eis requiem._

_Dona eis requiem sempiternam._

_Merciful Jesus, Lord, grant them rest._

_Grant them eternal rest._

_Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death, on that dreadful day:_

_when the heavens and earth shall be moved._

_When you come to judge the world through fire._

_Liber me, Domine, de morte aeterna, in die illa tremenda:_

_Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra._

_Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem._
Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo, dum discussio venerit, atque ventura ira.
Quando caeli movendi sunt et terra.
Dum veneris iudicare saeculum per ignem.
Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine.

I am made to tremble and fear, at the coming destruction and also at your coming wrath, when the heavens and earth shall be moved. When you come to judge the world through fire. Grant them eternal rest, O Lord.

In Paradisum

In Paradisum deducant te Angeli; in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres, et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem.
Chorus Angelorum te suscipiat, et cum Lazaro quondam paupere aeternam habeas requiem.

May the angels lead you into Paradise; at your coming may the martyrs receive you, and conduct you into the holy city, Jerusalem. May the chorus of Angels receive you, and with Lazarus, once a pauper, eternally may you have rest.
References

