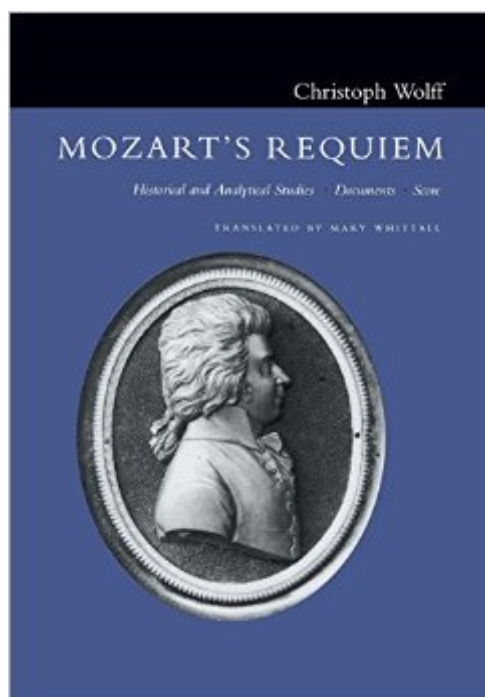


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Mozart's Requiem: Historical And Analytical Studies, Documents, Score



Synopsis

Mozart's unfinished Requiem has long been shrouded in mystery. Mozart undertook the commission for an Austrian nobleman, little knowing that he was to write a requiem for himself. Inevitably, the secrecy surrounding the anonymous commission, the circumstances of Mozart's death, the unfinished state of the work, and its completion under the direction of Mozart's widow, Constanze, have precipitated two centuries of romantic speculation and scholarly controversy. Christoph Wolff provides a critical introduction to the Requiem in its many facets. Part I of his study focuses on the tangled genesis and completion of the work and its fascinating early reception history until Constanze's death. Wolff summarizes the current state of research on the subject, provides new perspectives on Mozart's conception of the whole work, and surveys his contributions to the movements composed posthumously by his assistant, SÄ ssmayr. Part II provides a musical analysis of Mozart's composition, including contextual, structural, and interpretive aspects. Part III consists of an annotated collection of the principal literary documents (1791-1839) that illuminate the fascinating early history of the Requiem. The book concludes with a complete edition of the work that is at the center of Wolff's study, the authentic score of the Requiem—Mozart's fragment—supplemented by crucial excerpts from SÄ ssmayr's 1792 Requiem completion.

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Customer Reviews

I was drawn to this book after joining an amateur choir that will be performing the Requiem in its

entirety, and am reading it with the eyes of a layperson, neither academic nor musicologist. From that perspective I found the book extremely illuminating. I believe it will also interest other general readers, though some familiarity with Mozart's biography and a general understanding of musical terminology will definitely help substantially. The book is divided into four principle divisions: an analysis of the problems pertaining to our understanding of the Requiem's history and authorship, a short musicological analysis of the mass, a collection of historical documents pertaining to its composition, and a copy of the score that Mozart left behind, along with Süssmayr's score. With respect to the problems of authorship, the basic facts are well-known. The Requiem was anonymously commissioned by Count Franz von Walsegg, who desired a suitable mass to memorialize his recently-departed wife. He presumably acted in secret in order to abet his proclivity for passing off commissioned works as his own. Mozart fell ill during its composition and died, leaving a partially-completed score and sundry "scraps of paper" with notes for the uncompleted sections. The widow Constanze, desperately needing the balance of the commission, persuaded Mozart's student Franz Xaver Süssmayr to complete the work. What we now possess are Mozart's autograph in a substantially uncompleted state, and Süssmayr's work. What we lack are the scraps of paper, so it is now a matter of conjecture how much Süssmayr contributed to the remaining sections.

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