Verdi's Requiem Mass (Concluded)

Author(s): Joseph Bennett

Source: *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*, Vol. 17, No. 387 (May 1, 1875), pp. 71-73

Published by: [Musical Times Publications Ltd.](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3352245>

Accessed: 11-11-2015 17:51 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Musical Times Publications Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE MUSICAL TIMES

AND SINGING-CLASS CIRCULAR.

MAY 1, 1875.

VERDI'S REQUIEM MASS.

By JOSEPH BENNETT.

(Concluded from page 43.)

A BRIEF passage in C minor, for tenor solo, makes the verse. "Ingemisco tanquam reus," &c., serve as introduction to an air for the same voice (*poco meno mosso*—E flat) "Qui Mariam absolvis," &c. The opening phrase of this air furnishes a key to the whole—it is accompanied by the strings in simple fashion:—

No. 34. *dolce.*

Qui . . Ma - ri - am ab - sol - vi - - sti

A continuance of the melody introduces a passage of quaver triplets for bassoon, and ends with a half close, immediately upon which the instrument just named has a short phrase:—

No. 35.

suggested by the vocal opening, and now made an important feature. At the words, "Inter oves locum præsta," Verdi adopts the familiar plan of dividing the violins in their highest register while the voice and oboe employ themselves with a theme which also may be said to grow out of that already quoted (No. 34):—

No. 36. *Oboe.*

The rest of the solo is constructed well-nigh exclusively from the materials shown. At its close a chromatic scale passage leads from E flat to B natural, upon which note, as the dominant of E major, begins a bass solo (*Andante*), "Confutatis maledictis." The words of this verse, as need hardly be pointed out, suggest great contrast, and Verdi uses the opportunity well. We recognise him, and remember *Rigoletto*, as soon as the first two bars are heard:—

No. 37. *Andante, con forza.*

Con - fu - ta - tis ma - le - dic - - tis

Orchestra. *ff*

The contrast follows immediately, and is best exemplified in the subjoined gentle phrase, accompanied by strings alone with repeated quavers:—

No. 38.

O - ro supplex et ac - clin - is, O - ro supplex et ac - clin - is,

Ge - re - cu - ram me - i - fin - is.

Subject to some variety of treatment, the "Confutatis" returns, leading now by one of those chromatic scale passages which the composer is fond of using, to a new episode, beginning as shown below, and ending very gracefully in A flat:—

No. 39. *espress.*

Vo - ca me . . cum be - ne - dic tis

A return is made to the passage quoted in No. 38, after which a *Coda* serves for a modulation into the key of G, and as a lead to a repetition of the opening movement of the "Dies iræ," which itself conducts, by means of some new matter, to the "Lachrymosa"—a quartet and chorus (*Largo*—B flat minor). The theme is given out by the mezzo-soprano, accompanied by strings with detached chords, and deserves quotation in full:—

No. 40. *Largo, con molto espressione.*

La - chry - mo - sa di - es . il - la, Qua re -

- sur - get ex fa - villa Ju - di - can - dus ho - mo

re - us Hu - ic er - go par - ce De - us.

It is next taken up by the bass solo, while the first voice, aided by oboes and clarinets, has a series of detached syncopated notes, *piangente*, which add much, in a style distinctive of the composer, to the poignant expression of the music. The *ensemble* following is constructed in masterly fashion and heavily scored, contrasting thus with an episode on the words, "Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem," written for the solo voices only, and beginning as subjoined:—

No. 41.

Pi - e Je - su Do - mi - ne, Do - na e - is re - qui - em, &c.

pp Soli.

A second *ensemble* follows, also built upon the leading theme (No. 40), but with some novelty of treatment. The *Coda* deserves particular notice on account of a device which is at once bold and effective. All the voices declaim the final "Dona eis requiem," in monotone on the dominant, while the instruments end a harmonized passage with a full close in the major of the key. But, instead of either of the ordinary cadences on "Amen," we have two chords of G major, after which the full orchestra, *pp*, returns to the tonic and so concludes.

The Offertorio, "Domine Jesu Christe," is set as a quartet (*Andante mosso*—A flat), and scored for full orchestra, including four bassoons. Solo passages for the *celli* play a conspicuous part throughout both the orchestral introduction and the brief duet for mezzo-soprano and tenor with which the movement opens. One of these passages announces a theme afterwards to be made important:—

It is with this that the bass voice begins the second section of the movement—a trio in which it is joined by the voices already heard. We have in the opening bars an epitome of the whole:—

The trio section ends on the chord of C major, and now the soprano enters with a long-sustained E natural, accompanied by repeated quavers for the divided violins, while two violins, *con sordini*, take up the leading theme (No. 42) as thus:—

The same phrase is also repeated by the voice. Eventually the other voices join in succession, and soon arrive at a full close, which leads to an *Allegro mosso* in the same key, "Quam olim Abrahæ," beginning imitatively:—

Nothing in this brief movement calls for particular notice, and we pass on to the "Hostias et preces tibi" (*Adagio*—C major), which is also given to a quartet. The theme is announced by the tenor, accompanied only by strings, *trem.*:—

Out of this passage, and a reply first heard in the form subjoined:—

the *Adagio* is chiefly constructed. At the close a return is made to A flat, and to the "Quam olim Abrahæ," which, with a slight addition, leads back to the original theme (No. 40), now given to all the voices in unison, and followed by a short *Coda*.

The "Sanctus," written for a double choir (*Allegro*—F major), begins with an emphatic exordium upon

the dominant and dominant seventh chords, and takes the form of a fugue in eight parts with two subjects—the notes below the vocal staff in the extract following show an orchestral variation of the subordinate theme:—

These subjects are ingeniously worked at the outset, but it is not long before the second disappears, and the first comes to be treated more as matter for obvious imitation than fugally. Nevertheless, the music swings along with emphasis till a full close brings us to an extended and beautiful *Coda* which claims rank among the happiest portions of the work. Its character may be seen at a glance in the following extract:—

The antiphon here shown is sustained to the end, the only change made being a larger use of the orchestra in a succession of chromatic scales, respecting the exact value of which, as a means of appropriate effect, different opinions will be entertained.

Among the most original sections of the Mass must be placed the "Agnus Dei," a movement for two sopranos and chorus (*Andante*—C major). It begins with an extended theme announced by the solo voices in octaves, without accompaniment:—

The chorus and orchestra follow with the same melody, also in octaves, after which it is repeated, in the tonic minor, by the soli, still in octaves, albeit the orchestra employs harmony. Next, the second

half of the theme is given in harmony by the chorus, preparatory to the re-entry of the soli with the subject in its original form, but attended now by an orchestral counterpoint of quavers. The second half is again repeated by the chorus, this time in the major, and a short *Coda* ends the whole. No means could be more simple than these, but we may search long for a corresponding example of their use.

We now arrive at the closing section of the Mass, and find the "Lux eternæ" set as a trio for mezzo-soprano, tenor, and bass. It begins (*Molto moderato*—B flat) with a declamatory solo for the first-named voice, accompanied by the now familiar *tremolo* from the strings, and followed by a distinctive phrase for the bass, with a characteristic answer:—

No. 51.

pp Requiem æ - ter - nam do - na e - - -

pp Re - qui - em æ - - - ter - nam.

After repetition in a slightly varied form, the voices alone are heard, *poco più animato*, in a passage beginning thus:—

No. 52.

f Et lux per - pet - u - a, et lux per - pet - u - a

and ending in G flat major, from which we pass to the original theme in B flat minor, now further varied. A half close introduces a new subject:—

No. 53.

Et lux per - pet - u - a.

and with this the movement is continued, in a manner that scarcely calls for special remark, till it reaches a tranquil end.

As though to prove that too much could not possibly be done in honour of his illustrious countryman, Verdi does not stop with the Mass, but proceeds to the "Libera me, Domine"—a portion of the Catholic funeral service solemnized immediately around the coffin of the deceased. The prayer to be saved from eternal death takes the form of a soprano solo and chorus (*Moderato*—C minor), the single voice beginning in monotone and *quasi-recitative*, echoed by the unaccompanied chorus. This is but an exordium, and now we enter upon an extended solo, of such a character that no extract would serve to give an adequate idea of the whole. Leaving it therefore, to speak for itself in performance we pass on to find the close of the solo followed by another repetition of the *Allegro* which opened the "Dies iræ." This is

given in its complete form, and leads to an Andante in B flat minor, "Requiem æternam," which allots to the voices precisely the music, with some expansion, heard at the beginning of the Mass from the orchestra (see Nos. 2 and 3). The device is a happy one, and secures unity in a most effective way. With this it may be supposed that Verdi ends, as Beethoven closes his Mass in C, but once more the recitative prayer is heard, leading to an *Allegro risoluto* (C minor), which takes the form of a fugue upon the following subject:—

No. 54.
Allegro ris.

Li - ber - a me Do - mi - ne de mor - te æ -

ter - na . . in di - e il - la tre - men. &c.

Verdi works this theme at some length, both in a direct and inverted form, eventually adding a solo soprano to the *ensemble*, and largely using the first five notes throughout an important *Coda*, a striking feature of which is an episode on the words "Dum veneris judicare," &c. One passage in this episode deserves to be quoted if not imitated:—

No. 55.

Ju - di - ca - re,

Ju - di - ca - re

sæ - cu - lum per ig - nem.

sæ - cu - lum, sæ - cu - lum per ig - nem

All that follows is very impressive because full of intensest feeling, and after the recitative prayer has once more been heard, responded to by the closing "Libera me" of the chorus, we feel that it may be said respecting Verdi's monument to Manzoni, "Finis coronat opus."

As we anticipated, the Dean and Chapter of Worcester do not find matters progress so smoothly as they expected, in organizing a Musical Festival of their own, in place of that which has been held for so many years. It was at first intended that there should be a Festival of Church Services on two days in September next, in the course of which such works as the Dettingen or Utrecht *Te Deum*, new services by living English composers, and (in the place of anthems in the afternoon) Mendelssohn's *Lauda Sion*, or *Hymn of Praise*, Spohr's *Last Judgment*, &c., should be introduced, with full choir and orchestra; but to accomplish this a subscription of £700 or £800 was necessary; and, as this modest sum did not appear forthcoming, it seems probable that the idea of an orchestra and full choir will be abandoned, and the Worcester Festival of 1875 dwindle down to a two days' "Service of Song." What possible good this change can effect for the cause of religion, music or charity is known only to the Dean and Chapter and the select few by whom they are supported: neither their motives nor