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Exequies for Mozart: A new documentary finding
concerning the requiem mass held for W.A. Mozart
in St. Michael's church in Vienna on 10 December 1791

Of all the decrees issued by Emperor Joseph II, those that the people as a whole found most upsetting probably were the radical decisions concerning the handling of religious matters and the new regulations for the burial of the dead, measures that completely disregarded traditions and customs of long standing. Despite lacking legitimacy through the people, still, within the context of enlightened absolutism, the Emperor presumed to exercise his rule with the common welfare of his subjects in mind.

So, for example, on 25 January 1782, Joseph II had published a new schedule of church-related fees for the middle and lower classes in Vienna and the suburbs within its customs district. The schedule was modelled after a similar decree for the Archduchy of Lower Austria, whereby each person of means regardless of social class could choose as he liked from the price categories on offer, "so that no one could be forced to pay costs greater than those of the specific category one had freely chosen." Persons in poverty whose situation was attested either by official affidavit or by a judge did not have to pay any fees. The upper classes, on the other hand, had to pay twice the amount of the set fees.

At the time of Mozart's death on 5 December 1791, this schedule of fees was still in force. The 3d class funeral with a minimum number of attendants arranged for him by Gottfried van Swieten cost 8 gulden 56 kreuzer. From the church regulations, we can with some confidence reconstruct the funeral procession as it moved from the house where Mozart died in the Rauhensteingasse to St. Stephen's cathedral for the consecration on the afternoon of 6 December: at the head of the cortege was the person carrying the cross, next came four men with the casket covered by a black ceremonial cloth, accompanied by four altar boys bearing lanterns. Just which of the family members took part and whether someone had undertaken to alert friends and acquaintances concerning the procession cannot be clearly answered. Certainly members of the Weber family were there along with Constanze. The presence of Johann Georg Albrechtsberger seems established, Mozart's students Franz Jacob Freystädtler and Otto Hatwig maintained they were there, Antonio Salieri's participation rests on the testimony of his student Anselm Hüttenbrenner, and that of Franz Xaver Süssmayr can be assumed.

In accordance with church regulations then in effect, the consecration, accompanied by the sounding of the *Totenglocke*, took place in the afternoon in the Crucifix Chapel that had been erected over the steps, unused since 1783, leading down to the catacombs. Contrary to what is often asserted, the consecration did not take place at the Chapel of the Cross inside the cathedral;

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because the victor over the Turks, Prince Eugene of Savoy, had been interred there, public access to it had been withdrawn. That "the burial ceremonies in the parish church come to an end with the consecration by the priest" is confirmed by Johann Schwerdling in his 1791 compilation of legal ordinances. Following consecration, the coffin was "laid to rest" – as the saying went – in a mortuary at St. Stephen's to await transportation to the cemetery at St. Marx.

Transfer "during the winter [is never to occur] before 6 o'clock in the evening," according to an imperial decree of 17 July 1790, whose conscientious observance by the parish churches in and around the city was the subject, six days later, of a circularized instruction by the Archbishop's consistory. To spare Mozart in his last journey the (usual, gratis) conveyance along with the caskets of other deceased persons, a hired hearse drawn by two horses was provided at a cost of three gulden, according to the entry in the St. Stephen's parish register of funeral fees.

There is no indisputable source as to exactly when the casket with the body of Mozart was buried. Given the widespread fear of contagion from "*hietziges Frieselfieber*" (acute military fever), the burial could have taken place even in the late hours of the 6th of December, although it seems more likely that it occurred some time in the course of the next day. To go by the burial regulations promulgated for Vienna and its environs on 13 December 1784, the mass burial of several persons in a single trench appears not to have been the custom: for one thing, the corresponding passage from the imperial court decree is not to be found in these regulations, and for another, the city council of Vienna had levied a strong protest to the Lower Austrian authorities against such a burial practice, citing aesthetic considerations.

Mozart was buried in a "common individual grave" ("*allgemeines einfaches Grab*"), whereby in keeping with usage in the era of Joseph II, the word "common" ("*allgemein*") cannot be equated with "joint" or "communal" ("*gemeinschaftlich*"). It was no pauper's grave in the sense of a potter's field, but rather, as opposed to a vault or a tomb, a gravesite without any right of property or ownership and one, then, which could be cleared and reoccupied after ten years' time.

Moreover, in none of the cemetery regulations applicable at the time was the placing of a gravestone or a cross forbidden. The imperial decree of 12 August 1788 expressly stated: "For each person it is allowed. . .to have the symbol appropriate to his religion placed at his gravesite." His contemporaries would undoubtedly have found it appropriate to place a gravestone for Mozart. That certainly is the implication to be drawn from the following insert found in the *Wiener Zeitung* of 31 December 1791 (published in the *Grazer Bürgerzeitung* on 3 January 1792, as well), in which an epitaph signed simply "K" (Leopold Koželuch?) appeared:

MOZARDI
TUMULO INSCRIBENDUM
Qui jacet hic, Chordis Infans Miracula Mundi
Auxit; et Orpheum Vir superavit.
Abi! Et animae ejus bene precare!

MOZART
AN INSCRIPTION FOR HIS GRAVE
Who rests here, as a child, swelled the world's wonders
with the strings of his lyre; as a man, he surpassed
Orpheus himself.
Go hence! and pray earnestly for his soul!

Mozart's funeral and burial can be regarded as a faithful reflection of interment practices in the late Josephinian period. A 3d class funeral had nothing to do with an *Armenbegräbnis* but was rather the ceremonial category customary among the middle class, one that Gottfried van Swieten, himself deeply rooted in the court etiquette of the day, also found fitting for Mozart. It was not reasons of money that primarily determined Mozart's funeral arrangements, but still deep-seated judgmental societal attitudes towards those who lived artist's lives. Even in dying, Mozart was consigned to those ranks of imperial lackeys that he thought he had escaped by leaving Salzburg for Vienna ten years before.

The 1782 schedule of church fees not only set forth the amounts for the burial ceremonies but also those for the exequies, that is, for the funeral rites. In the city parishes, one could choose between two classes of exequies, in the suburbs only one plain celebratory mass was available. A requiem mass of the most costly category, with prolonged tolling of the church bells and the celebration led by an ordained priest as well as the installation of a catafalque, cost 45 gulden 48 kreuzer, of which 20 gulden went "for a complete orchestra including trumpets." A requiem mass of the second class cost 30 gulden 33 kreuzer, including 15 gulden "for a less-than-complete orchestra." In the outlying suburbs, one paid 16 gulden 57 kreuzer for the exequies, with 8 gulden charged "for a vocal ensemble."

It can now be confirmed that a requiem mass was in fact held for Wolfgang Mozart, something that Mozart research has previously only surmised. According to a recently discovered entry in the book of accounts of the Viennese Barnabite religious order, the Mozart exequies were held on 10 December 1791 in St. Michael's imperial parish church next to the Hofburg:

[Source: itemized funeral accounts, December 1791, archives at St. Michael's church]

<i>Tag</i>	<i>Ru- brica</i>	<i>Clas- sis</i>
		<i>fl. xr</i>
	<u>Exequien</u>	<i>Translat.</i>113.52
10.für den(titl) Herrn Wolfgangus		
	<i>Amadäus Mozart.</i>	14. 2
	<i>Geläut.</i>3.36
	<i>Seelenamt</i>6.--
	<i>Ornat bey m Seelenamt.</i>1.30
	<i>Kreuztuch.</i>	-.45
	<i>den 2 Leuchterträgern</i>	-.18
		_____ . . . 12. 9
Date	Sub- ject	Class
	<u>Exequies</u>	<i>Bal.fwd.</i>113.52
10.for (titles) Herr Wolfgang		
	<i>Amadeus Mozart</i>	14. 2
	<i>Tolling of bells</i>3.36
	<i>Requiem mass</i>6.-
	<i>Vestments for requiem mass</i>1.30
	<i>Pall</i>	-.45
	<i>for 2 pallbearers.</i>	-.18
		_____ . . . 12. 9

The expenses for the church service amounted to 12 gulden 9 kreuzer and correspond to the second class of the fee schedule. According to a previously unpublished report in the 13 December 1791 issue of the Viennese journal, *Auszug aus aller europäischen Zeitungen*, the expenses were paid by the two theater directors, Emanuel Schikaneder and Joseph von Bauernfeld.

Looking at the itemized costs listed in the account book from St. Michael's, one is struck by the absence of any outlay for music. This almost certainly means that the musicians of St. Michael's, which was the former seat of the Caecilian association of court musicians founded in 1725, provided their services without charge and wished in this way to do last honors to the departed Mozart, who had been appointed *Kammermusikus* to the court in 1787 and reimbursed as *Hofkompositor* since 1790.

The obvious question of interest – what music was performed on this special occasion – can only be answered with some reserve. We can, however, infer from reports in the local Vienna newspaper, *Der heimliche Botschafter* of 16 December 1791, and in the Berlin journal, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* of 31 December 1791, that parts of Mozart's Requiem were performed. In *Der heimliche Botschafter*, we find: “. . .and in this connection the Requiem he had composed during his final illness was performed as part of the service.” And in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, it says: “One of his last compositions is said to have been a mass for the dead, which was performed at his last rites.”

This is also referred to in a report printed in the *Salzburger Intelligenzblatt* of 7 January 1792 (and repeated verbatim in the 18 January 1792 issue of the *Zeitung für Damen und andere Frauenzimmer* in Graz), even though the event was long since past when the report first appeared and until now it has usually been thought to refer to the St. Michael's church in Salzburg: “When it [Mozart's Requiem] has been copied, it is going to be performed at a memorial service for him in St. Michael's church.” (NB: For a further discussion of this report and its relevance to the inception of Mozart's Requiem, see the article, “The Requiem's Inception: Footnote to a Footnote,” found in under Group 2 of this website.)

At the time of Mozart's death, the composing of the Requiem had reached as far as the close of the Hostias. In his characteristic *particella* form, Mozart had composed ninety-nine pages altogether, although he had completed instrumenting only those containing the Requiem aeternam. Franz Jacob Freystädler completed the instrumentation of the Kyrie with the exception of the trumpets and drums, which clearly show the hand of Franz Xaver Süssmayr. The remaining pages contain only the vocal parts and the basso continuo part in Mozart's handwriting. So far as the instrumental parts are concerned, his compositional intentions are mostly only hinted at with brief transitional passages. In this connection, it is worth noting that Mozart abruptly broke off composing the Lacrimosa after eight measures in order to go ahead with the Offertory, as though, because time was pressing, he did not want to waste it writing down what was for him (and perhaps for Süssmayr as well) a perfectly straight-forward compositional task.

If Mozart's friend Benedikt Schack can be believed, the dying man had the score of the Requiem brought to his bed on that last evening so that he and Schack could go through it once again, together with Franz Hofer and Franz Xaver Gerl:

“He (Mozart). . .sang the alto part; Schack, a close friend of the family, sang the soprano part as he was used to doing before, Hofer, Mozart's brother-in-law, the tenor part, and Gerl, later bass at the Mannheim theater, the bass part. They had reached the first measures of the

Lacrimosa when Mozart began to sob bitterly, laid the score aside, and eleven hours later at one in the morning passed away. . . ."

Contrary to the contemporary newspaper accounts cited above, it was not the whole Requiem but only those parts that had been completed by Mozart – specifically, the Requiem aeternam and the Kyrie – that could have been heard in St. Michael's church in Vienna on 10 December 1791. Although the time available was short, copying out the parts would have been no more of a problem than rehearsing the church musicians under their choir director, Johann Michael Spangler. A short organ part (which begins with the soprano solo, "Te decet hymnus. . ." and goes to the end of the Kyrie) has been preserved among the papers of Süßmayr held in the Széchény national library in Budapest and is perhaps connected with this performance.

Karl Pfannhauser has pointed out (in his article in *Epilegomena Mozartiana*, 1973) that, in this period, there was nothing unusual in performing incomplete or fragmentary church works; for example, the uncompleted requiem of Florian Leopold Gassmann, with additions from Joseph Krottendorfer as well as Father Joseph Kaintz, remained in the repertory of the Hofburg chapel well into the first half of the 19th century. And Abbé Maximilian Stadler fitted out this work with movements of his own composition for the Benedictine abbey at Kremsmünster.

Mozart's sister-in-law, Sophie Haibel, must have carried the memory of the requiem mass at St. Michael's church in Vienna deep in her subconscious. When, in April 1825, she was writing a letter to Constanze's second husband, George Nissen, recalling for him those last hours at the bedside of the dying Mozart, she spoke of her hunt for a priest. Her sister had asked her "to go to those priests at St. Peter's church." But in this passage in her letter, there is a correction in Sophie's own hand, as shown by a comparison of it with the original held in the archives of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna. For originally it had read, she intended "to go to those [priests] at St. Michael's church."

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