

Minehead Choral Society – Saturday 5th April 2025

7.30pm Avenue Methodist

Programme:

First Half Rossini Stabat Mater

1. Stabat Mater dolorosa	Chorus and SATB Quartet
2. Cujus animam	Tenor Aria
3. Quis est homo	Soprano Duet
4. Pro peccatis	Bass Aria
5. Eja Mater	Chorus and Recitative (Bass)
6. Sancta Mater	SATB Quartet
7. Fac ut portem	Soprano II Cavatina
8. Inflammatus	Soprano I Aria and Chorus
9. Quando corpus morietur	SATB Quartet
10. In sempiterna saecula, Amen	Chorus

Second Half Mozart **Requiem**

I	1.	INTROITUS: Requiem	Chorus / Soprano Solo	5.22
II		Kyrie		2.53
III		SEQUENZ :		
	2.	Dies Irae	Chorus	1.46
	3.	Tuba Mirum	SATB quartet of soloists	4.21
	4.	Rex Tremendae	Chorus	2.22
	5.	Recordare	SATB quartet of soloists	6.11
	6.	Confutatis Maledictis	Chorus	3.01
	7.	Lacrimosa	Chorus	3.18
IV		OFFERTORIUM		
	8.	Domine Jesu	Chorus + SATB quartet	4.02
	9.	Hostias	Chorus	5.23
V	10.	SANCTUS	Chorus	1.42
VI	11.	BENEDICTUS	SATB quartet + Chorus	5.51
VII	12.	AGNUS DEI	Chorus	3.33
VIII		COMMUNIO		
	13.	Lux Aeterna	Soprano Solo + Chorus	6.17
				56.07

Programme Notes:

I am delighted to welcome tonight members of the former Taunton Sinfonietta who have joined us for numerous concerts over the past 17 years. We also welcome back our wonderfully talented soloists Stephanie Berner (Soprano) and Helena Payne (Contralto) joined by **XXXX (Tenor) and XXXX (Bass)**. Our concert tonight consist of two great choral works, the Rossini Stabat Mater and the Mozart Requiem. Personal favourites, these works complement and contrasts with each other, presenting challenges to the choir, soloists and orchestra alike whilst uplifting the spirit and allowing us all to enjoy an evening with the masters.

Marcus Capel, April 2025

Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868)

Stabat Mater

The son of a trumpeter and an opera singer, Rossini grew up a talented singer and accomplished horn, viola and harpsichord player. He composed his first opera as a student at the Bologna Academy of Music and experienced a meteoric rise to fame, with a string of commissions and a growing international reputation. At the age of 23 he was engaged as Musical Director of the two Naples opera houses, for each of which he was required to compose a new opera annually, one of which included

the *Barber of Seville*. His working pattern tended towards the indolent, interspersed with frantic activity in order to complete the commissions. He travelled widely and in 1824 settled as the Director of the Theatre Italien in Paris. His Masterpiece *William Tell* was completed in 1829 when he was still only 37, his 36th opera in 19 years, after which he composed nothing more for the rest of his life, other than two important religious works, the *Stabat Mater* and the *Petite Messe Solennelle*. It is suggested that he may have run out of inspiration and energy after *William Tell*, or perhaps he had just made so much money that he could enjoy his life of luxury and self-indulgence, with an endless line of visitors to his villa at Passy welcomed with good food and entertainment.

In 1831, Rossini wrote the *Stabat Mater* at the request of Don Francisco Fernandez Varela, archdeacon of the Madrid Cathedral, whom he met while visiting that city. Rossini agreed on condition that the work never be published. When Varela died in 1837, a Paris publisher bought the manuscript from his estate and sought permission from Rossini to publish it. Rossini refused, not wanting to admit that only six of the original 12 movements were his own (Rossini had asked his friend and colleague Giovanni Tadolini to complete the rest, and Varela was none the wiser). After managing to stop the publication, Rossini completed the remaining movements, shortened the whole from 12 to 10 sections and finished it in 1841.

The text of the *Stabat Mater* dates from the 13th century. It describes the suffering of Mary, mother of Jesus, as her son is crucified; it is part of the Catholic liturgy of Our Lady of Sorrows, observed on Sept. 15. Musically, Rossini's *Stabat Mater* combines two entirely different styles of composition: traditional church music in the Renaissance manner of Palestrina and Pergolesi, and arias that would not sound out of place in a typical Rossini opera. The austere choral movements, such as the men's unaccompanied *Eia, Mater, fons amoris* contrast sharply with the purely operatic style of the solos and duets, like the *Fac ut portem* for tenor and soprano and the *Cujus animam gementem* for solo tenor.

With his setting of the *Stabat Mater*, Rossini intended to honour the Catholic tradition within which he was raised, even though he no longer practised it as an adult. The *Stabat Mater* also served as a perfect vehicle for Rossini to express his grief over the deaths of his parents, as well as two close friends, and the loss of his theatre, the *Théâtre Italien*, which had burned down in 1838.

The work was criticised, notably by Richard Wagner, for the incongruous contrast between the theatrical music and the extreme solemnity of the thirteenth-century text, however, Rossini brushed such criticism aside and declared that most important of all should be music of the finest quality, with which he succeeded in this glorious *Stabat Mater*. The Minehead and District Choral Society last performed Rossini's *Stabat Mater* in 2013, this repeat performance is long overdue!

Text and Translation

I. Introduction/Chorus and Quartet

Stabat Mater dolorosa
juxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendebat Filius.

The grieving Mother stood
beside the cross weeping
where her Son was hanging.

II. Aria (Tenor)

Cuius animam gementem
contristatam et dolentem
Per transivit gladius.
O quam tristis et afflicta
fuit illa benedicta
Mater Unigeniti!
Quae maerebat et dolebat
Et tremebat, dum videbat
nati poenas incliti!

Through her weeping soul,
compassionate and grieving,
a sword passed.
O how sad and afflicted
was that blessed
Mother of the Only-begotten!
Who mourned and grieved,
and trembled, as she witnessed
the torment of her glorious Son.

III. Duet (Soprano I & Soprano II)

Quis est homo, qui non fleret,
Christi Matrem si videret
in tanto supplicio?
Quis non posset contristari,
piam Matrem contemplari
dolentem cum Filio?

Who is the man who would not weep
if seeing the Mother of Christ
in such agony?
Who would not be have compassion
on beholding the devout mother
suffering with her Son?

IV. Aria (Bass)

Pro peccatis suae gentis
vidit Jesum in tormentis
et flagellis subditum!
Vidit suum dulcem Natum
moriendo desolatum,
dum emisit spiritum.

For the sins of His people
she saw Jesus in torment
and subjected to the scourge.
She saw her sweet Son
dying, forsaken,
while He gave up His spirit.

V. Chorus & Recitative (Bass)

Eia, Mater, fons amoris,
me sentire vim doloris
fac ut tecum lugeam.
Fac ut ardeat cor meum
in amando Christum Deum
ut sibi complaceam.

O Mother, fountain of love,
make me feel the power of sorrow,
that I may grieve with you.
Grant that my heart may burn
in the love of the Lord Christ
that I may greatly please Him.

VI. Quartet

Sancta mater, istud agas,
Crucifixi fige plagas
cordi meo valide.
Tui Nati vulnerati

tam dignati pro me pati
poenas mecum divide.
Fac me vere tecum fieri
Crucifixo condolere,
donec ego vixero!
Juxta crucem tecum stare
Te libenter sociare
in planctu desidero.
Virgo virginum praeclara,
mihi jam non sis amara;
fac me tecum plangere.

Holy Mother, grant this of yours,
that the wounds of the Crucified be well-formed
in my heart.
Grant that the punishment of your wounded
Son,
so worthily suffered for me,
may be shared with me.
Let me sincerely weep with you,
bemoan the Crucified,
for as long as I live.
To stand beside the cross with you,
and for me to join you
in mourning, this I desire.
Chosen Virgin of virgins,
to me, now, be not bitter;
let me mourn with you.

VII. Cavatina (Soprano II)

Fac ut portem Christi mortem,
passionis fac consortem
et plagas recolere!
Fac me plagis vulnerari,
cruce hac inebriari
Ob amorem Filii.

Grant that I may bear the death of Christ,
Let me share His torments with Him
and the remembrance of His wounds.
Let me be wounded with distress,
and through this cross, let me be filled
with love for your Son.

VIII. Aria (Soprano I and Chorus)

Inflammatum et accensum
per te, Virgo, sim defensum
in die iudicii.
Fac me cruce custodiri,
morte Christi praemuniri,
confoveri gratia!

Lest I be destroyed by fire, set alight,
then through you, Virgin, may I be defended
on the day of judgment.
Let me be guarded by the cross,
fortified by the death of Christ,
and cherished by grace.

IX. Quartet

Quando corpus morietur,
fac ut animae donetur
paradisi gloria.

When my body dies,
grant that to my soul is given
the glory of paradise.

X. Chorus

In sempiterna saecula.
Amen.

World without end.
Amen

Our second half consists of the dramatic and glorious “**Requiem**” by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791). Last performed by the society 9 years ago, this work reflects the melodramatic circumstances of its composition: Just a few weeks before his own death in 1791 at the age of only thirty-five, Mozart was approached by a gentleman acting on behalf of an anonymous patron who wished to commission from him a Requiem Mass. This patron we now know to be Count Franz von Wazlsegg-Stuppach, whose wife had died in February that year. The Count, who was a keen and able amateur musician, wished to be regarded as a major composer and saw in this commemorative commission an opportunity to further his own ends by passing off the Requiem as his own. He therefore conducted all business transactions with Mozart in secrecy so as to preserve his own anonymity; hence the subterfuge of sending a business agent to act on his behalf. On several occasions this gentleman arrived unannounced at the composer’s house. To the dying Mozart, well known for his superstitious nature and quite possibly sensing his own impending demise, these mysterious visitations had all the hallmarks of the supernatural

By the time he started work on the Requiem Mozart was already terminally ill, and parts of the composition were actually written whilst on his death-bed. In the event, he died before he could complete it, to the great consternation of his widow, Constanze. Payment for the work had already been received, and she feared that if it was handed over incomplete the commissioning patron would refuse to accept it and expect his money to be returned. She therefore decided to elicit the help of some other composer who might be able and willing to finish it for her, but despite several attempts being made, notably by Joseph Eybler and Maximilian Stadler, none came to fruition. Eventually Constanze approached Franz Süssmayr. There were many advantages to this arrangement; Süssmayr was one of Mozart’s more able pupils and had been with him a good deal during the final year of his life. He had several times played through the completed parts and discussed the instrumentation with Mozart.

Of the work’s twelve movements only the opening *Kyrie* had Mozart managed to complete in its entirety. For most of the others he had written the vocal parts and a figured bass line (a kind of harmonic shorthand), leaving just the orchestration, for which he had clearly indicated his intentions. These movements may therefore be regarded as essentially the work of the master. For reasons unknown, Mozart postponed writing the seventh movement, the *Lacrymosa*, until after writing movements eight and nine, but managed only the first eight bars before death at last overtook him. He left a number of other fragments, such as the trombone solo at the opening of the *Tuba Mirum*. Süssmayr completed the Lacrymosa, and composed the whole of the last three movements, Mozart having passed away before he could even begin these sections.

Süssmayr used substantial parts of the orchestration begun by Stadler and Eybler, and for the closing passages he repeated Mozart’s own music from the opening movement, an idea which according to Constanze, Mozart himself had suggested. Much more daunting, however, was the task of writing the entire *Sanctus*, *Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei* himself, the prospect of which had defeated his reputedly more talented fellow-composers. Eybler, for instance, despite contributing some worthwhile orchestration, had managed only two very unconvincing bars of the Lacrymosa before giving up and returning the entire portfolio to Constanze. Süssmayr was evidently made of sterner stuff, and by the end of 1792 he had finished the task. Opinions differ as to the quality of the Süssmayr movements, though it is generally agreed that the Agnus Dei is the most successful.

A copy was made of the completed score before it was handed over to Count Walsegg's envoy, but no mention was made of Süßmayr's part in its composition and for many years it was generally believed that Mozart had indeed written the entire Requiem. Amongst Mozart's circle, however, it was common knowledge that the composer had not lived to see its completion. Consequently, some considerable controversy later ensued as to the work's authenticity, compounded by the fact that Count Walsegg's score disappeared for nearly fifty years, to be rediscovered only in 1839. Fortunately, this complete score and Mozart's original unfinished manuscripts did both survive, and are now securely housed in the Vienna State Library. Comparison of the two sources has shown quite clearly which parts Mozart either wrote down or indicated in the form of sketches and footnotes, and which parts were completed and composed by his pupil. However, the matter is not quite that straightforward. Since Mozart is known to have played through and discussed the music with Süßmayr, it seems more than likely that he would have passed on ideas that he carried in his head but had not yet written down, and for this reason we can never be entirely sure of precisely what is Mozart's and what Süßmayr's. But all this conjecture is of little consequence as we listen to the music. It is Mozart's genius that shines through.

Mozart notes taken from John Bawden