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by Hanh Doan

## INTRODUCTION

The Requiem of the late-Romantic period is one of four styles/genres that fall in AQA's GCSE AoS1, the Western Classical Tradition 1650-1910. This is one of four Areas of Study for which students will be required to answer unfamiliar listening questions in their summer exam. Students will be expected to identify and accurately describe musical elements, musical contexts and use musical language (including staff notation) when responding to a potential question about the Requiem.

This resource will give a brief overview of the context of the late-Romantic Requiem, followed by detailed analysis of some extracts from three key works.

## BEFORE YOU START

Before tackling the Requiem, ensure that your students are familiar with some of the key features of the Romantic period. Relevant features relating to this style will include:

- Melodies become longer: the clear cadences of the Classical and Baroque periods are often blurred by the use of distantly related chords.
- Movements and works therefore become longer.
- Modulations are often to more distantly related keys.
- The orchestra and choir become much larger than before, with the introduction of extensions of instruments in the former (to be discussed in more detail later).
- Textures are much denser and thicker, and melodies are often doubled.
- The Romantic period explored the extreme in many ways: the range of dynamics, as well as the instruments' and vocalists' ranges, making the music much more dramatic in general.

Like the *Coronation Anthems* and oratorios of Handel, the late-Romantic Requiem will allow for the study of vocal and orchestral textures, as well as the other more usual elements to be studied.

## THE REQUIEM

The Requiem is also known as the Mass for the Dead, and is part of the Roman Catholic liturgy, offered for the repose of the souls of the deceased. It is usually celebrated in the context of a funeral service, though not always. The Requiem Mass originally used plainchant and was sung in Latin, though many composers set the texts of the Requiem (and the Mass in general) to music, though not necessarily all sections – which particular ones depend on the individual composer.

The full Requiem has the following sections:

- Requiem aeternam
- Kyrie eleison
- Lacrimosa
- Dies irae
- Domine Jesu (or Offertorium)
- Sanctus
- Benedictus
- Pie Jesu

- Agnus Dei
- Lux aeterna
- Libera me
- In paradisum

### Noteworthy Requiems of the late-Romantic period

Known for their dramatic nature, the following works could naturally provide a foundation of your exploration with students (two of these pieces are discussed in more detail later):

- Berlioz: *Grande messe des morts* (completed 1837)
- Verdi: Requiem (completed 1874)
- Dvořák: Requiem (completed 1890)

These works were written for the concert hall rather than for a church service, given the scale of the instrumental and vocal forces they require.

In contrast to Berlioz and Verdi's Requiems, Fauré's setting (written between 1887 and 1890) is much more intimate, expressing perhaps a calmer acceptance of death compared to the more fearful approach of the two other composers.

Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* (completed 1868) is worthy of a brief exploration as another work that contrasts with Berlioz and Verdi's settings. Instead of setting the traditional Latin text of the Requiem Mass, Brahms set texts from the Lutheran Bible, which are in German.

#### WIDER LISTENING

Although they are not covered in this time period, students should be encouraged to listen to settings of the Requiem that came before and after. Mozart's Requiem (1791) bridges the gap between the Baroque and Romantic vocal textures (and is also a great work to supplement study of Classical orchestral music, another section of Area of Study 1) and of course has some well-known melodies. The Requiems of Duruflé (1948) and Rutter (1985) hark back to the Fauré in terms of their intimacy and serenity.

## VERDI'S REQUIEM

Known predominantly as an opera composer, Giuseppe Verdi completed his dramatic Requiem in 1874. With extremes of pitch, orchestration and dynamic range, the work is frequently performed and enjoyed in concert halls today. It was written to commemorate the death of the Italian poet and novelist Alessandro Manzoni, who Verdi much admired. Its first performance in 1874 marked the first anniversary of Manzoni's death. The premiere took place in the church of San Marco in Milan, and special permission had to be sought from the Archbishop, especially because of the female soloists (female singers were not allowed to sing in Catholic liturgy at the time of the Requiem's completion).

### Instrumental and vocal forces

Verdi sets the Requiem text for four solo singers (SATB), double choir and large orchestra, including a large string section, three flutes, piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, four bassoons, four horns, trombones, timpani and bass drum. The ophicleide is also used in the brass section, and is now often replaced by a tuba in a modern-day performance. This large orchestra provides the opportunity for some wonderful orchestration.

## Libera me

Verdi wrote the 'Libera me' for the *Messa per Rossini* (first performance intended for 1869), a Requiem Mass that he had proposed to be written and contributed to by himself and 12 other composers to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Gioachino Rossini. This went on to become the basis for the section in his own Requiem. It is a long movement for the students, but provides the listener with a broad overview of the musical elements that can be found elsewhere in the work.

In Verdi's setting, the 'Libera me' closes the work. The text and structure of the 'Libera me' in this particular setting is as follows:

<i>Libera me, Domine, de morte æterna, in die illa tremenda: Quando cæli movendi sunt et terra: Dum veneris iudicare sæculum per ignem. Tremens factus sum ego, et timeo.</i>	Deliver me, O Lord, from death eternal in that awful day. When the heavens and the earth shall be moved: When Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire. Dread and trembling have laid hold on me.	Solo soprano and chorus
<i>Dies irae, dies illa, calamitatis et miseriae, dies magna et amara valde. Dum veneris iudicare sæculum per ignem.</i>	O that day, that day of wrath, of sore distress and of all wretchedness, that great day and exceeding bitter. When Thou shalt come to judge the world by fire.	Chorus (this is a reprise of the 'Dies irae' earlier in the work)
<i>Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine: et lux perpetua luceat eis.</i>	Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them.	Chorus
Some of the text of the 'Libera me' is then repeated to close the movement and work.		Soprano solo followed by chorus (fugue).

### MELODY: TESSITURA

The melody dramatically exploits the range of the soprano soloist. She sings middle Cs (the bottom of her range) all the way to the C two octaves above. Much of Verdi's placement of the melody in the soprano range (including the chorus) is for dramatic effect in what is a terrifying text. The middle Cs can be notably found when the soloist sings 'Tremens factus ego...' ('trembling'). The soloist reaches a *pppp* top B flat at the end of the 'Requiem' section and finally a very long *forte* top C in the final 'Libera me' section, perhaps some sort of deliverance in itself. There are plenty more dramatic uses of tessitura for you and the students to explore in this movement.

### MELODIC SHAPES

Melodic shapes in this movement vary. At the very start of the movement, the soprano soloist's melody is a repeated note over the text. This solo plainchant reminds the listener of the roots of the Catholic liturgy and its use in services. The sudden leap to the top G on the word 'movendi' followed by a swift descent to the lower tessitura paints the words 'quando coeli movendi sunt et terra' ('when the heavens and earth shall be moved').

The descending step-wise melody (particularly a chromatic one) can be found frequently in this movement, reflecting the terror and fear behind the text and the overall mood of this setting. As well as in the 'Libera me', the descending phrase (along with the sustaining of the original note) has become one of the defining elements of the 'Dies irae', the descent perhaps reflecting the day of judgement.

Unlike the legato descending melodies above, the subject of the fugue (the second 'Libera me', beginning at bar 100) is still descending but opens with an arpeggiated descent. The subject is littered with accents and staccatos, and its detached nature is in great contrast to the longer legato melodies found earlier in the work.

## HARMONY

Detailed analysis of the harmony of this movement will go beyond the scope required for GCSE, but students should consider the following:

- The harmony of this movement is mainly diatonic, but chromatic chords (often diminished) are used to colour the harmony and for dramatic effect.
- The harmony is mainly functional, though there are moments when chords are not directly related to each other – a typical feature of the Romantic period.

## TONALITY

This movement begins in C minor. Like much of the music of the late Romantic period, the music modulates or passes through keys that are not directly related to the tonic. In the opening choral plainsong, the passage starts in E flat major, but the move to a D flat major chord on 'quando coeli' is not so related (though perhaps can be seen as a Neapolitan move in C minor?) before the music moves back to C minor as the soprano soloist re-enters. This section of the movement closes with a tierce de Picardie.

The 'Dies irae' section is in G minor, and ends with a transition section into the 'Requiem', which begins in B flat minor. This moves into B flat major for 'et lux perpetua' ('and let perpetual light shine upon them'), the tonality expressing the words. The fugue of the 'Libera me' returns to C minor. The rest of the movement passes through a number of keys, both related and less related to C minor.

## SONORITY (TIMBRE)

Much of the vocal sonority has been discussed in the tessitura of the vocalists above. Perhaps the most contrasting vocal sonority outside this is the unaccompanied 'Requiem aeternam' section, in which the soprano soloist is accompanied the chorus only.

Highlights of Verdi's dramatic orchestration in the 'Libera me' include:

- the use of the staccato bassoons before the 'Tremens' section in the opening section.
- the use of the extremely high pitch of the piccolo in the 'Dies irae', particularly the descending scales at the start as well as the ascending scales later underneath 'calamitatis et miseriae'.
- the rapid repeating staccato notes in the trumpets in the 'Dies irae', along with the flamboyant scales.
- at the end of the 'Dies irae', when the phrase is repeated quietly, the lower strings and brass contribute to a more sombre moment.
- after a calm 'Requiem aeternam', the tremolo violins herald the return of the plainchant and the return of the 'Libera me'.

## TEXTURE

The textures in the 'Libera me' are varied both in the vocal and orchestral sections. Highlights include:

- The **monophonic** nature of the plainsong at the opening of the movement. When the 'Libera me' returns, it is accompanied by tremolo violins.
- The **homophonic** texture is found in most of the vocal texture throughout the work (apart from the final section), but is most obvious in the choir's opening 'Libera me' section, in which they echo the plainchant of the solo soprano, but harmonised.
- There is a lot of **melody and accompaniment**, particularly when the soloist sings, accompanied by the orchestra.
- The final section (Allegro risoluto) opens with a **fugal** texture. The alto section opens with a monophonic **subject**, which is then **answered** by the sopranos, while the altos then sing a **countermelody**. The fugal texture ensues, giving an overall **polyphonic** texture to this section of the movement.

## TEMPO, METRE AND RHYTHM

Although the majority of this movement is in common time, Verdi varies the tempo to great dramatic effect. The *senza misura* ('without measure') at the opening of the movement for both the soloist and chorus reflects the lack of regular metre of plainsong. Interspersed with some bars of regular 4/4, this gives the opening of the movement some uncertainty for the listener. The movement speeds up for the return to the 'Dies irae' (Allegro agitato) to create a sense of urgency. This is followed by the calmer Andante of the 'Requiem' section, before launching into the final fugue (Allegro risoluto).

## DYNAMICS AND ARTICULATION

Verdi's use of extreme dynamics in this movement is typical of the style of many late-Romantic composers. His dynamics range from *pppp* (just before the 'Dies irae' and at the end of the entire work) to *ff* (in the 'Dies irae') – though the latter will always feel much louder due to the pitch of the singers and orchestra. Crescendos and diminuendos are also frequently used, again to create a dramatic effect.

Articulations are also used frequently. Accents and staccatos can be found frequently in the 'Dies irae' and final 'Libera me', contrasting with a much more legato middle 'Requiem' section.

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## FAURÉ: REQUIEM

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Completed between 1887 and 1890, Fauré's setting of the Requiem contrasts greatly with Verdi's, focusing on the eternal rest and peace of the soul. The work is scored for soprano and baritone soloists, a mixed choir, orchestra and organ. Fauré also employs an unusual division in the string section: the first and second violins play the same line, but the violas and cellos are divided. The lower strings are used more often than the violins, creating a much sonorous sound world, compared with Verdi's setting.

### 'Libera me' and 'In paradisum'

The 'Libera me' is worthy of study as a direct contrast to Verdi's setting, and the 'In paradisum' ('Into paradise') is not always set by composers. Fauré and Duruflé's settings of that section are probably the best known.

The text of the 'Libera me' in Fauré's Requiem is not too far removed from that of the Verdi, but below is the text of the 'In paradisum' and a translation:

*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 æternam habeas  
requiem.*

May the angels lead you into paradise;  
may the martyrs receive you  
at your arrival and lead you to the holy city Jerusalem.  
May choirs of angels receive you and with Lazarus,  
once a poor man, may you have eternal rest.

## MELODY

Both subtle and striking are the phrase lengths of the 'Libera me'. Apart from the first phrase (which is seven bars long), the other phrases are seven and a half bars long each. Though not necessarily noticeable by the listener, these unconventional phrase lengths perhaps convey a subtle sense of unease. The phrase lengths vary in the 'In paradisum', too. Much like the 'Libera me', the lengths are almost dictated by the text being set.

The melodic shapes of the 'Libera me' are characterised by a number of leaps. In the opening phrase, the first interval is the leap of a 5th, which is followed by a leap of an octave in the second phrase. Unlike in the Verdi setting, the range of this melody remains within an octave, giving a more restrained approach to Fauré's setting. The melody in the 'Tremens' section is much more scalic in its nature, followed by a more static 'Dies illa, dies irae', which contains more repeated notes.

In the 'In paradisum', the melody's tessitura sits perfectly for the soprano/treble voice. The leaps of the opening phrase give a clear indication of the change of the tonality from D minor to D major (as do the broken chords in the organ accompaniment). The melody rises each time the sopranos sing 'Jerusalem' before descending again.

## HARMONY

The chords in both the movements are mainly diatonic, with occasional chromaticisms. The harmony is largely functional: even when the music moves to what appear to be less related chords, there is either a cycle of 5ths, or the chords are related by a 5th:

**D minor**

The image shows a musical score for 'Libera me' in D minor. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system is marked *p* and features the lyrics: '- la day / Quan - do cre - li mo - ven di / when - when - heav - en and earth shall be / poco a poco'. The piano accompaniment includes chords: F7, B flat9, and Gm7. The second system is marked *crescendo.* and features the lyrics: 'sunt, quan - do / moved, when - heav - en and earth shall be / moved, et be'. The piano accompaniment includes chords: Cmin9, Adim, Dm9, and Bdim. The third system is marked *f* and features the lyrics: 'ter - ra / moved - when - Thou - shalt come - to'. The piano accompaniment includes chords: E7, A7, D7, and G7. Red annotations indicate 'V.....of.....B-flat' and 'V.....of.....D min' between systems.

## TONALITY

The 'Libera me' is in D minor, a key often associated with darkness and despair. The 'Dies illa' is more chromatic in its nature, passing through a variety of keys quite briefly, which reflects the uncertainty of the text. The section works its way back to the dominant of D minor (by the return of the music to duple time), ready for the return of the 'Libera me' sung by the choir.

The key of the 'In paradisum' is D major, forming a large-scale tierce de Picardie after much of the work being in D minor. The desire and effect are obvious: to reflect the movement of the soul into paradise.

## STRUCTURE

The 'Libera me' is in ternary form. Its dark, lyrical melody can be found framing the choral 'Tremens' section, with the baritone soloist singing the opening, and the choir singing the melody in unison in the final section. The baritone soloist closes the movement with a short repeat of the main idea, accompanied by the chorus.

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and his *Requiem* are both in D minor.

The 'In paradisum' is in binary form, the first section ending with the repetitions of 'Jerusalem', with the second section starting with 'Chorus Angelorum'. Similar to the 'Libera me', the final 'aeternam habebis requiem' comes as a final closing statement, using the melodic idea and texture from the movement.

### SONORITY

The sonority of this Requiem contrasts greatly with that of the Verdi. The *divisi* lower strings and harp give a more 'heavenly' or sonorous feel to the work. The absence of harsher timbres, including the oboe and extended woodwind instruments (as occur in the Verdi), again contributes to a more peaceful setting. The ranges of the singers are modest in comparison to those in the Verdi. Extremes of ranges are not explored, though the upper part of the register of the sopranos is exploited in the 'In paradisum' to reflect the movement of the soul into paradise. Pizzicato strings in the 'Libera me' create a detached accompaniment which contrasts with the more legato melody sung by the soloist and then choir.

### TEXTURE

The textures are based mainly around melody with accompaniment. At the opening of the 'Libera me', the orchestra accompanies the baritone soloist. When the choir enters, the choral texture is homophonic, accompanied by the orchestra in largely the same kind of texture. Perhaps the most notable texture is the unison of the choir when they sing the 'Libera me'. The orchestral accompaniment has thickened to support this texture, which never fails to move the listener.

The 'In paradisum' textures are again variations of melody and accompaniment. The sopranos are initially accompanied by the orchestra, and then by a homophonic choir on the word 'Jerusalem'. The choir and orchestra close the Requiem together in a homophonic texture for the final three bars.

### TEMPO, METRE AND RHYTHM

The tempos of both movements are generally consistent throughout. The pulsating ostinato rhythm of the accompaniment under the 'Libera me' creates a sense of foreboding. The metre changes to simple triple (6/4) time for the 'Dies illa', creating more unease, with a new syncopated ostinato rhythm in the brass. The metre returns to simple duple time with the return of the 'Libera me'.

The time signature of the 'In paradisum' is 3/4. The repeated off-beat arpeggios maintain the momentum in the music, perhaps propelling the soul into heaven.

### DYNAMICS AND ARTICULATION

Dynamics are used subtly by Fauré. Though they range from *pp* to *ff*, the move between dynamics is rarely sudden, with crescendos and decrescendos used carefully. The 'Dies illa' is *ff* to reflect the day of judgement, while the overall dynamic of the 'In paradisum' is based around a *piano* or *pianissimo*.

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# BERLIOZ: GRANDE MESSE DES MORTS

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Berlioz's *Grande messe des morts* was completed in 1837, after Berlioz was asked (by the French Minister of the Interior) to write a Requiem to remember the soldiers who died in the Revolution of July 1830.

The work is well known for its use of a huge orchestra, as well as four antiphonal off-stage brass ensembles. The exact orchestration intended by Berlioz is worthy of note for its exceptional forces:

<b>Voices:</b> Tenor soloist <b>Chorus:</b> 80 sopranos and altos (no ratio specified) 60 tenors 70 basses	<b>Strings:</b> 25 first violins 25 second violins 20 violas 20 cellos 18 double basses	<b>Woodwind:</b> 4 flutes 2 oboes 2 cor anglais 4 clarinets in B flat 8 bassoons
<b>Brass:</b> 12 French horns (variety of keys) 4 cornets in B flat 4 tubas	<b>Brass Choir 1 (North of stage)</b> 4 cornets 4 trombones 4 tubas	<b>Brass Choir 2 (East)</b> 4 trumpets in E 4 trombones
<b>Percussion:</b> 16 timpani (6 pairs, 4 single!) 2 bass drums 10 pairs of cymbals 4 tam tams	<b>Brass Choir 3 (South)</b> 4 trumpets in D 4 trombones	<b>Brass Choir 4 (West)</b> 4 trumpets in C 4 trombones 4 ophicleides (tubas often substituted)

After seeing this huge orchestra, it should come as no surprise that the movements of this work are also very long. Again, detailed analysis of this work goes beyond the scope of what is required at GCSE, but it's worth playing students some excerpts to demonstrate the scale of the work, especially the brass choir moments in the 'Dies irae'. Other moments and features to note include:

- The choir is interestingly divided. The sopranos and altos often sing the same line, with occasional divisions. The choral texture is often in three parts, though the tenors and basses are often divided as well. Berlioz does vary the textures and divisions, allowing for a great variety of choral textures in the work.
- Berlioz's off-stage brass choirs are unique to this work. Each brass choir is placed at the four corners of the stage (though in practice they are often placed around the concert hall). The huge fanfare in the 'Dies irae' should be essential listening for students.
- The third movement, 'Quid sum miser', features a TTBB chorus, and a sonorous orchestration of two cor anglais, eight bassoons, cellos and double basses.
- The 'Lacrimosa' section is in 9/8 and in sonata form.
- The 'Domine Jesu Christe' opens as an orchestral fugue, over which the choir sing a three-note motif, pleading for mercy at the judgement.

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## WHAT STUDENTS WILL BE EXPECTED TO ANSWER

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Students will be expected to answer simple questions based on the elements covered in the headings above, giving some features they can hear which make the music typical of the Requiem of the late Romantic period. Any extracts from the Requiems will therefore be appropriate for use.