

Listening Guide

Mozart: *Dies irae*, from Requiem

DATE: 1791

MEDIUM: 4 soloists, 4-part chorus, and orchestra

TEXT FORM: 8 three-line verses (with rhymed translation)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Strikingly dramatic opening with chorus and orchestra, loud and accented together (verses 1 and 2).
Trombone and solo bass singer exchange musical ideas in same range (verse 3).
Solo vocalists enter from lowest to highest range (baritone, tenor, alto, soprano in verses), then sing quartet (verses 4–7).
Powerful choral outcry accompanied by orchestra; timpani and trumpet prominent, closed by gentle plea for salvation.

VERSE	LATIN	TRANSLATION	DESCRIPTION
1.	Dies irae, dies illa Solvat saeculum in favilla Teste David cum Sibylla.	Day of anger, day of mourning When to ashes all is burning So spake David and the Sibyll.	Full chorus and orchestra; dramatic homophonic setting; clear text declamation.
2.	Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando iudex est venturus, Cuncta stricte discussurus!	Oh, what fear man's bosom rendeth. When from Heaven the Judge descendeth On whose sentence all dependeth.	Chorus and orchestra; more polyphonic texture.
	Dies irae, dies illa . . .		Verses 1 and 2 repeated.
3.	Tuba miram spargens sonum Per supulchra regionum, Coget omnes ante thronum.	Wondrous sound the trumpet flingeth, Through earth's sepulchers it ringeth, All before the throne it bringeth.	Trombone solo, echoed by bass solo; trombone continues with countermelody; homophonic orchestral accompaniment.
4.	Mors stupebit et natura, Cum resurget creatura, Judicanti responsura.	Death with wonder is enchained When man from the dust regained, Stands before the Judge arraigned.	Tenor solo, with homophonic orchestral accompaniment.
5.	Liber scriptus proferetur, In quo totum continetur, Unde mundus judicetur.	Now the record shall be cited, Wherein all things stand indicted, Whence the world shall be requited.	Tenor solo continues.
6.	Judex ergo cum sedebit, Quidquid latet apparebit, Nil inultum remanebit.	When to judgment all are bidden, Nothing longer shall be hidden, Not a trespass go unsmitten.	Alto solo with orchestra.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 7. Quid sum miser tunc dicturus? | What affliction mine exceeding? | Soprano solo with orchestra. |
| Quem patronum rogaturus, | Who shall stand forth for me pleading, | |
| Cum vix Justus sit securus? | When the just man aid is needing? | |
| Cum vix Justus sit securus? | | Last line repeated by all soloists. |
| 8. Rex tremendae majestatis! | King of might and awe, defend me! | Dramatic full chorus setting. |
| Qui salvandos salvas gratis! | Freely Thy salvation send me! | |
| Salve me, fons pietatis! | Fount of mercy, save, befriend me! | |

Verse 1 opening; full chorus with clearly declaimed text:

Allegro assai
(*f*) Tutti

Soprano
Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la

Alto
Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la

Tenore
Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la

Basso
Di - es i - rae, di - es il - la

Verse 3 duet, with trombone and bass solo:

Trombone

Bass solo

Tu - ba mi - rum spar - gens

5

SO - - - - - num