

**Gounod Bicentennial
1818 - 2018**



Requiem in C

Major

Charles-Francois

Gounod

The Saint Dunstan Schola

The Reen Family String Quartet

Kathleen Coffee, *soprano*

Margaret Black, *alto*

Nicholas Ballester, *bass*

V.C. D'artay, *tenor*



“In the order of eternal things death precedes life, although in the order of temporal things life precedes death. Death is only the end of that existence which dies each day; it is only the end of a continual "dying." But it is the first moment, and, as it were, the birth, of that which dies no more.”

– Charles-Francois Gounod, *Preface to Mors et Vita*

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Many of the details and personal history surrounding the *Requiem* of Charles-Francois Gounod mirror those of his primary musical inspiration, Mozart. Both followed closely on deaths in the family (in Mozart's case his father; in Gounod's, the untimely death of his five-year-old grandson Maurice). Both composers had premonitions during the composition of their Requiems that this would be the last work they would ever compose, and both predictions would turn out to be correct – Gounod himself, allegedly, died at the piano after singing through the piece in entirety with his daughter. Both pieces would receive their final revisions thanks to their devoted pupils, F.X. Sussmayr finishing that of Mozart, and Henri Busser that of Gounod. (It is Busser's edition, reduced from the original orchestration for full orchestra, that is sung today.) Not least, both composers also had a talent for vivid melodic expression and a history of writing operatic works in addition to composing for the Church – a fact that can clearly be heard in each of these Requiems.

Perhaps if there is any point to distinguish between the two Requiems in character, it would be that of age. Mozart, dying at such a young age in tragic and mysterious circumstances, fills his work with passages alternating between anguish and a foreboding at the terrible Day of Wrath, the *Dies Irae*. Late Romantic composers, such as the agnostic Faure, would tend to distance themselves from these sentiments, and omit the *Dies Irae* entirely. Gounod's style can be seen as mediation between the two approaches. While he retains the movements from the Requiem which treat on the Final Judgment Day, his musical language is marked with extensive chromaticism, solo movements of tender intimacy, and melodic radiance throughout. The result is a piece clearly attests to the deep religious faith of the composer, written at the end of a long and productive career.

Finally, it should be noted that only a few months before the completion of his ultimate work, Gounod had written an article for the

musical journal *Le Correspondant* where he outlined the relation between the language of the Church and that of the Artist. The Church, which throughout its history had expressed itself through the “impersonal” language of Gregorian Chant, had (through allowing music in addition to the voice and organ) had recognized and elevated the place of individual expression in the musical language of the Church.

It is our hope that, in attending and participating in this Requiem, the listener might be able to adopt the spirit of Gounod in offering his own prayers up for those dearly beloved souls who have passed to their reward – prayers of the individual which will join in unison with the prayer of the Church universal. Perhaps this spirit can best be summed up by comments made by Gounod’s contemporary, Giuseppe Verdi, upon hearing the piece for the first time:

“It is in the face of blessed immortality that Gounod was able to find his language of the soul, which leaves the earth to commit itself, loving and repentant, into the arms of God.”

Feast of Ss. Simon & Jude, October 28, 2018



THE SAINT DUNSTAN SCHOLA

Timothy Lewis Fox, Director

SOPRANOS

Maddalena Hedrick*
Mary Revelant
Lori Schwartz

TENORS

Christopher Newquist*
Patrick Redmond

ALTOS

Kathleen Murphy*
Katherine Lamb
Christine Hack

BASSES

Oliver Goodwin*
Mark Shaffran†
George Hedrick

Jacob Minns, *Organist*

Mary Berkebile, *Rehearsal Organist*

THE REEN FAMILY QUARTET

Virginia Reen, *First Violin*

Dominic Reen, *Second Violin*

Stephen Reen II, *Viola*

Bernard Reen, *Cello*

Emily Goins, *Harp*

* Denotes Section Leader

†Denotes Choral Historian

Miss Goins appears courtesy of the Ball State University School of Music.