

LIVE FROM LINCOLN CENTER
August 22, 2001 8:00 p.m. on PBS
Mostly Mozart Festival
MOZART'S REQUIEM

Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival has spawned imitators throughout the world. There is something about the balance and inner logic of Mozart's music that makes it ideal summertime listening. Our next Live From Lincoln Center telecast, on Wednesday evening, August 22, will bring us one of the culminating events in this year's Mostly Mozart schedule, a concert not only "Mostly" Mozart, but All-Mozart! Conductor Gerard Schwarz, in his last season as the Festival's Music Director, has programmed the Piano Concerto No. 22 in E Flat, K. 482, with Festival favorite Emanuel Ax as soloist, and the composer's last work, the D Minor Requiem, K. 626.

The E Flat Concerto has been overshadowed by its neighbors on either side, the C Major Concerto, K. 467, which attained great popularity through its use in the soundtrack of the film "Elvira Madigan", and the radiant A Major Concerto, K. 488. On its own terms, however, the E Flat Concerto is a thoroughly ingratiating and endearing work. It came into being during an amazingly prolific period in Mozart's life. His father, Leopold, wrote that Wolfgang was "over head and ears in work. He has put off his pupils to the afternoon so that he may have his mornings free....Hitherto he has, no doubt, procrastinated in his usual easy manner and taken his own time, but now he must be in earnest." And earnest he was, working simultaneously on the three Piano Concertos, a Sonata for piano and violin, a Rondo for piano, and two operas, "The Impresario" and "The Marriage of Figaro."

The E Flat Piano Concerto is a fully-realized, totally-integrated score, the product of a comparatively happy time in Mozart's life. Not so the "Requiem," which was composed at a time when he was already fighting the illness that was to prove fatal. Thereby hangs a tale, a tale most convincingly told by critic and annotator Pitts Sanborn in his biographical sketch of Mozart. "In July 1791 an ominous looking stranger clad in gray called upon Mozart and ordered from him a Requiem Mass for an unnamed patron. Mozart dwelt upon the mystery of this incident, until in his rundown and feverish condition it became a portent of disaster. Yet, as a matter of fact, the whole thing was no more than one Count Franz van Walsegg sending his steward to induce a composer of recognized worth to compose secretly for him a work that he fondly believed he could palm off as his own, thus establishing himself as likewise a composer of worth."

A much-troubled Mozart accepted the commission and in the final five months of his life he was obsessed with the Requiem, completing about two-thirds of it before he died in the evening of December 5. The uncompleted portions, comprised of much of the Lacrimosa and all of the Sanctus, Benedictus and

Agnus Dei, have over the years prompted some dedicated Mozarteans to complete the composition. The most recent effort was by the American scholar and pianist, Robert Levin. The earliest, however, was by Mozart's pupil, Franz Xaver Süssmayr, and it is the Süssmayr version that Maestro Schwarz has chosen to perform.

Before he took up the baton, Gerard Schwarz was one of the premier trumpet players of our time. As conducting began to take up more and more of his time, he put his trumpet back into its case and stopped playing altogether. In fact he recently told me he no longer even owns a trumpet! He became founding conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony and served for several seasons as Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. For nearly two decades he has been Music Director of the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, bringing that ensemble to international attention. He has conducted opera in Washington, D.C., Seattle and elsewhere. His long association with Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival, first as Principal Conductor and for more than a decade now as Music Director, has raised the level of the concerts to unprecedented heights. He will soon take up new responsibilities as Music Director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra in England while continuing his extraordinary work in Seattle. All of us connected with Live From Lincoln Center wish our admired Gerry much good luck in all his activities.

Assisting the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in the performance of the "Requiem" are New York's famed Desoff Choirs and four distinguished soloists: Ute Selbig, soprano; Florence Quivar, mezzo-soprano; Michael Schade, tenor; and Richard Zeller, baritone. This Live From Lincoln Center performance on August 22 promises to be a highlight of the 2001 summer television season. I leave you again with the suggestion that you contact your local PBS station for information concerning the exact day and time of the broadcast in your area. See you then!