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_People _

_Mozart 'plagiarised ending to Requiem mass' _

Mozart plagiarised the music of an Italian contemporary for the last section of his great Requiem mass at a time when he was dying, badly in debt and short of ideas, it has been claimed.

Two musicologists researching in the Naples Conservatoire archives said that they had discovered the manuscript of a symphony by the 18th-century composer Pasquale Anfossi, and immediately noted "an uncanny resemblance" to motifs in the Mozart mass.

"Mozart was familiar with Anfossi's music," Enzo Amato, one of the two scholars, said. "He heard it in Italy, in Munich, in Paris and Vienna."

Amato's colleague Alberto Vitolo said that Anfossi was much better known than Mozart in his lifetime, "and it may be that Mozart also drew on other melodies by him".

There were similarities to Anfossi's work in Don Giovanni, The Magic Flute and The Marriage of Figaro.

The Naples musicologists say that Mozart unquestionably composed the greater part of the Requiem himself, but the theme of the final Confutatis maledictis section was clearly lifted from Anfossi's Venice Symphony, written 16 years earlier.

Mozart changed the key from D minor to A minor, and the tempo from 3/4 to 4/4.

Sandro Cappelletto, music critic of La Stampa, said the plagiarism may have been unconscious - Mozart had "a prodigious memory", and only had to hear something once to be able to transcribe it in minute detail.

The Requiem mass was commissioned by Count Franz von Walsegg after his wife died in February 1791.