DEATH IN MUSIC
Death is an essential fact of human existence, and humans have conceived innumerable ways to try to make sense of what dying is like, what death is, and what happens after death.

Since death is such mysterious experience, music has provided a medium to express human concerns and conceptions about death.

Music has also provided a way for human beings to confront death in ritual, such as funerals.
The Christian Requiem Mass a service for the dead, frequently performed for funerals

“Requiem” title from the opening line of the introit (the first movement of the mass): “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine” [Grant them eternal rest, Lord]
One of the most famous parts of the Requiem mass is the “Dies irae”

Composed by Thomas of Celano (c. 1200-c. 1270)

A Sequence = special type of rhymed Latin hymn
# DIES IRAE

**Dies irae!** Dies illa  
Solvet saeclum in favilla:  
Teste David cum Sibylla!  

**Day of wrath!** That day  
Will dissolve the world in ashes  
As foretold to David by the Sibyl!

Quantus tremore est futurus,  
Quando iudex est venturus,  
Cuncta stricte discussurus!  

How much trembling there will be  
When the judge will come,  
Strictly investigating everything.

Tuba, mirum spargens sonum  
Per sepulchra regionem.  
Coget omnes ante thronum.  

The trumpet, scattering its sound  
Through the sepulchers of the world  
Will summon all before the throne.

**The text describes the end of the world, or Apocalypse**
Image of the Apocalypse
By Gustave Doré
“Dies irae” sequence from the *Liber Usualis*
REQUIEM MASS

Many composers have written Requiem masses

Many of these masses are written for concert performance rather than liturgical use
W. A. Mozart
DIES IRAE
Requiem in D minor
W. A. Mozart
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

The Requiem is anonymously commissioned by Count Franz von Walsegg to commemorate his wife’s death.

Walsegg meant to have Requiem performed as his own composition.
Mozart left his Requiem unfinished at his death on December 5 1791.

Mozart’s wife Constanze hid the fact that Mozart left it unfinished in order to collect the commission fee.

Hires Mozart’s student Franz Süßmayr to finish the work
Many **legends** about Mozart’s Requiem and his death—mostly started by his wife.

“Mozart wrote the Requiem for his own funeral.”

“Mozart died because he was **poisoned** by a rival composer.”

*None of these stories are true.*
LACRIMOSA
Requiem in D minor
W. A. Mozart
“Dies irae” text is very long

Many composers set sections of the “Dies irae”--such as the “Lacrimosa”--as individual movements
Mozart sets the “Lacrimosa” as a separate movement

Mozart *dies ten measures* into the “Lacrimosa,” and the movement was completed by his student Süßmayr.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lacrimosa dies illa Qua resurget ex favilla Judicandus homo reus Huic ergo parce, Deus:</th>
<th>Tearful will be that day On which from the ashes arises The guilty man who is to be judged. Spare him, God!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pie Jesu Domine, Dona eis requiem. Amen.</td>
<td>Merciful Lord Jesus, Grant them eternal rest.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The “Lacrimosa” section asks for **mercy** from God.
Orchestral opening. Mozart left the rest of the measures blank to fill in later.

Opening chorus

First page of the “Lacrimosa” in Mozart’s handwriting
Second page of Mozart’s “Lacrimosa”
Where Mozart left the movement unfinished
Giuseppe Verdi
DIES IRAE
Missa da Requiem
Giuseppe Verdi
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Setting of the full Requiem service

Composed as a tribute to the novelist Alessandro Manzoni
Alessandro Manzoni wrote Verdi’s favorite book.
Chi mi comanda? rispose Don Abbon-dio ai Bravi.

Manzoni Cap. 1.
Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Verdi’s Requiem is very operatic
(Verdi was an opera composer)

Not meant as a liturgical work, but as a concert piece.
Written for:

*4 vocal soloists: Soprano
  Mezzo-Soprano
  Tenor
  Bass

*Chorus
*Full Orchestra
Verdi sets the “Dies irae” text as 
10 individual sections

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</table>
| Dies irae! Dies illa  
Solvet saeculum in favilla: 
Teste David cum Sibylla! | Day of wrath! That day  
Will dissolve the world in ashes  
As foretold to David by the Sibyl! |
| Quantus tremore est futurus,  
Quando iudex est venturus,  
Cuncta stricte discussurus! | How much trembling there will be  
When the judge will come,  
Strictly investigating everything. |
| 2 |   |
| Tuba, mirum spargens sonum  
Per sepulchra regionem.  
Coget omnes ante thronum. | The trumpet, scattering its sound  
Through the sepulchers of the world  
Will summon all before the throne. |

We will listen to the first two: “Dies irae” and “Tuba, mirum”
DEATH in MUSIC

- **REQUIEM MASS**: Catholic funeral service for the dead
- **“DIES IRAE”**: Chant from the Requiem depicting the end of the world (Apocalypse)
- **“LACRIMOSA”** and **“TUBA MIRUM”**: Two sections from the “Dies irae”
Frédéric Chopin
MARCHE FUNÈBRE
Frédéric Chopin
One of the main elements of funerals is the funeral procession. Many funeral processions are accompanied by music—usually funeral marches.
Funeral Procession with Marching Band
FUNERAL MARCH = slow march, in minor key

Many composers write funeral marches as a part of a longer work
Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Chopin’s *Marche funèbre* [Funeral march] is the third movement of his *Piano Sonata No. 2*, Op. 25 (1839)
A Theme

Slow Tempo ("Lento")

“Dotted” Rhythm

Ostinato in Bass
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
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</table>
| **A** | **A**: B-flat minor “March Theme”  
**B**: D-flat major, with B-flat minor “March Theme” coda | **A**: Lyrical Theme [2x]  
**B**: Lyrical Theme, cont.[2x]  
TRIO |
| **B** | | |
Played at Chopin’s own funeral

Used as **funeral procession music** for:

*John F. Kennedy (1963)*
*Leonid Brezhnev (1982)*
*Margaret Thatcher (2013)*
Chopin’s Marche funèbre is also used in many cartoons… such as Sylvester the Cat and Tweety Bird Looney Tune cartoon “Tweet and Sour” (1956)
“Tweet and Sour” (1956)
Attributed to the Baroque composer Tomaso Albinoni (1671-1751) by music historian Remo Giazotto (1910-1998)
Fragments of the movement—a slow movement from a sonata—are found by Giazotto

Giazotto “completes” the composition and publishes it in 1958 as . . .
“Adagio in G minor for Strings and Organ on Two Thematic Ideas and on a Figured Bass by Tomaso Albinoni”
Giazotto’s “Albinoni manuscript” has never been found.

Giazotto claims manuscript was in the Saxon State Library in Dresden

The Dresden Library has no official record of such a manuscript
Unfortunately, the Dresden State Library was destroyed in bombing raids by British and U.S. in February and March 1945 during WW II
Dresden after Allied bombing February 13, 1945
A short “transcription” of the manuscript by Giazotto found after his death, so work may be based on Albinoni.

Giazotto, however, probably composed the piece, inspired by Albinoni.
“Adagio” from the Italian *adagio* [“slowly”] and the phrase *ad agio* [“at ease”]

One of the slower tempo markings in music
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLOWER</th>
<th>FASTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grave</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lento</td>
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<tr>
<td>Largo...Larghetto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adagio...Adagietto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andante...Andantino</td>
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Slower .............. Faster
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>“Walking” Bass with Organ solo Theme in String Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Violin Cadenza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>“Walking” Bass with Organ solo Theme in String Orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coda</strong></td>
<td>Dramatic Coda for Orchestra based on Cadenza</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- One of the most important composers in the generation after Beethoven
- Considered one of the greatest orchestrators, and for pushing the boundaries of what an orchestra can do
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Writes a *Treatise on Orchestration* (1844) that is still used by composers
- Famous for writing for huge forces: large orchestras, large orchestras with large choruses
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Does **not** come from a musical background
- Begins studying music “late” at age of 12, and almost immediately starts to compose music
- Father is not encouraging, and Berlioz never learns to play piano very well
- Learns about music from books
- Berlioz later describes his peculiar education as both a **curse** and **blessing**
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Forced to study medicine in Paris, which he later abandons
- Discovers the Paris Conservatoire, and begins to check out scores
- Eventually begins studies at Conservatoire, and struggles to win the Prix de Rome to gain its financial support
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- A lover of English literature—Shakespeare and Sir Walter Scott—Berlioz sees and English-language production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and falls in love with the actress playing Ophelia, Harriet Smithson
- Is obsessed with Smithson, and begins to write a string of letters to her that bewilders her
Harriet Smithson
(1800-1854)
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

- Eventually marries Smithson in 1833
- The marriage does not work out, and Smithson moves out in 1843
- Berlioz continues to financially support her
In 1830, under the inspiration of his obsession for Smithson, Berlioz begins to write a symphony. The symphony is programmatic and is literally a drug trip.
In the story Berlioz imagines the trials and tribulations of a young man in love with a woman—represented by a theme he calls the *IDÉE FIXE* [the fixation]—which eventually takes a supernatural turn as he imagines himself being executed, and then watching a witches’ sabbath with his love as the head witch.
Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

Berlioz writes out an elaborate story to accompany the symphony, which he calls the *Symphonie Fantastique* [Fantastic Symphony]
Songe d’une nuit de sabbat

The 5th movement is the “Dream of a Witches Sabbath”

Berlioz writes:
“He sees himself at a **WITCHES’ SABBATH**, in the midst of a hideous gathering of shades, sorcerers and monsters of every kind who have come together for his funeral. Strange sounds, groans, outbursts of laughter; distant shouts which seem to be answered by more shouts.
Francisco Goya, *Witches’ Sabbath*
Franz Francken, *Witches’ Sabbath*
“The **BELOVED MELODY** appears once more, but has now lost its noble and shy character; it is now no more than a **vulgar dance tune**, trivial and grotesque: it is she who is coming to the sabbath ... Roar of delight at her arrival ... She joins the diabolical orgy ...

The **funeral knell tolls**, burlesque parody of the “**DIES IRAE**”, the dance of the witches. The dance of the witches **combines** with the ‘Dies irae’.”
Berlioz uses many unusual orchestral combinations and effects, including

Col Legno—playing with the wood of the bow instead of the hair side for a percussive effect
“Songe d’une nuit de sabbat”

Movement begins with a slow introduction

A Dance tune begins—a kind of fast jig—that is a grotesque version of the idée fixe tune, played very high in the clarinet

The entrance of funeral bells signals midnight and the beginning of the witches’ dance

The “Dies irae” chant begins to play in the tuba

The Chant is combined with the Jig tune
Pieces to Know

- W. A. Mozart, “Dies irae” and “Lacrimosa” from the Requiem (Track 30 and 65 in 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces)
- Giuseppe Verdi, “Dies irae--Tuba mirum” from the Missa da Requiem (Track 55 in 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces)
- Frédéric Chopin, “Marche funèbre” from the Piano Sonata No. 2 (Track 50 in 50 Most Essential Piano Pieces)
- Remo Giazotto, Albinoni Adagio (Track 23 in 99 Most Essential Classical Pieces)
Terms to Know

- Requiem mass
- "Dies irae" and "Lacrimosa"
- Apocalypse
- Funeral march = slow march in minor key
- Dotted rhythm
- Adagio = “slowly,” “at ease”
- “Walking Bass”
- Col legno
- Idée fixe