



BRAHMS

A German Requiem

(1871 London Version)

Michelle Areyzaga, Soprano

Hugh Russell, Baritone

Madeline Slettedahl, Piano

Craig Terry, Piano

Bella Voce

Andrew Lewis, Artistic Director



Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Ein deutsches Requiem ('A German Requiem'), Op. 45 (1871 London Version)

On 1 October 1853, Johannes Brahms – 20, fresh-faced and practically unknown beyond his home town of Hamburg – met Robert and Clara Schumann. He had come at the recommendation of a mutual friend, the violinist and composer Joseph Joachim, and was warmly welcomed into the Schumann home and asked to play some of the compositions he had brought. The Schumanns' reaction to this first encounter is encapsulated in Robert's diary entry that evening: 'Visit from Brahms – a genius.' Convinced that this young North German would be the man to 'give expression to the times in the highest and most ideal manner', Robert wrote an article just a few weeks later in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, introducing Brahms to the musical world at large in the grandest terms. He predicted, furthermore, that 'when once he lowers his magic wand over the massed resources of chorus and orchestra, we shall have in store for us wonderful insights into the secret of the spiritual world.'

Brahms himself, dizzy from such adulation and naturally fiercely self-critical, was ambivalent about Robert's publication. He wrote shortly afterwards to thank the Schumanns (for it was thanks to their intervention that he now saw his first compositions into print), but added that above all, Robert's piece – and his praise – 'will compel me to exercise the greatest caution in my choice of pieces for publication ... You will naturally understand that I am straining every nerve to bring as little as possible disgrace to you.'

It was in the field of large-scale music most of all that Brahms came to struggle, over many decades, to reach a level of brilliance that he considered worthy of publication. His *First Symphony* was only premiered in 1876, over 20 years into his career – and over 20 years since his first attempt at writing in this form, prompted by Robert's article, in 1854. In fact it was through choral music that the young composer was to learn his craft and make his way to the city which finally became his home: Vienna.

Brahms arrived in the Austrian Imperial capital in 1862 to take up the conductorship of the Singakademie.

By this time he already had experience of conducting and writing music for several choirs, and had become particularly fascinated in the choral music of the 16th to 18th centuries. Consequently, he programmed music by Bach, Handel and then-obscure Renaissance repertoire at the Singakademie, which the singers found difficult and the audiences and critics baffling. It was far from standard fare, and after a year, Brahms resigned the post. Still, his own choral compositions had gradually moved from an almost pastiche Renaissance style towards a fully mature, Romantic approach which incorporated all manner of techniques from his older models. These were to bear fruit in 1865, when he began work on a large-scale piece for choir, soloists and orchestra. This piece was *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

The *Requiem* is not, despite the second part of its title, a mass for the dead in the traditional sense: it does not set liturgy, and is not in Latin. Instead Brahms chose to pull together sections of the New and Old Testaments and the Apocrypha in Luther's translation: a work in the vernacular for his singers and listeners, and a highly personal statement. Strikingly, Christ's name is not mentioned in any of the sections Brahms chooses, and overall one is left with the feeling that this piece is far more a message of consolation for the living, and acceptance of mortality, than the desperate imploring for the souls of the dead with which the Latin Requiem Mass is concerned. The unusual text and the slanting of its subject matter raised eyebrows at the time. When the first performance of the piece was planned in Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday, the cathedral authorities announced that it was not sufficiently '*geistlich*' ('sacred') to constitute the entire programme, and other pieces had to be added – excerpts from Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Handel's *Messiah* to bring it up to standard! After that first performance in Bremen – given without the soprano movement, which was added later – Clara Schumann wrote in her diary, 'As I saw Johannes standing there, baton in hand, I could not help thinking of my dear

Robert's prophecy, "Let him but once grasp his magic wand and work with orchestra and chorus", which is fulfilled today. The baton was really a magic wand and its spell was upon all present.'

The first performance of the complete work was given in Leipzig on 18 February 1869. Two years later, *Ein deutsches Requiem* was first performed in Britain. This time, the format was not a grand concert with large chorus and orchestra (that had to wait until 1873). Instead, the performance took place in a private home on Wimpole Street, in central London, at the home of the composer pianist Kate Loder. It featured a choir of around 30 voices, a solo soprano and baritone, and a piano duet pairing of Loder and Cipriani Potter.

Brahms had arranged the *Requiem*, as was quite usual with large-scale works, for piano duet. This had been published in 1869, with the chorus cues written into the texture of the pianists' four hands. On 7 July 1871, in that house on Wimpole Street, Brahms's duet score was judiciously doctored by the baritone Julius Stockhausen, long-time collaborator of the composer and the soloist at the Bremen Cathedral performance. The duet score was edited to remove the vocal doublings, so that the pianists would simply provide accompaniment to the singers present.

This recording follows a similar practice. Furthermore, the performance is given here not in German, but in English – as it was, in fact, at the first public performance in Britain in 1873. The translation, prepared by Lara Hoggard, is heavily based on the King James Bible. No doubt Brahms would have approved of the notion of performing in the audience's vernacular, since he famously remarked that 'I confess that I would gladly omit even the word German and simply put Human'.

The *Requiem* is in seven movements, with key architectural pillars at the outer points and middle. The opening movement, *Blest are they who are sorrowful*, is a gently consolatory choral number in which the mourners are told that they shall be comforted. The opening vocal lines weave and intertwine like Renaissance counterpoint, but in a distinctly Brahmsian idiom. This music returns at the piece's conclusion, in *Blessed are the dead*, bringing the work to a close in a peaceful F major. At the centre of

the *Requiem* sits *How lovely are Thy dwellings*, warm and impassioned, and frequently extracted as an anthem for church use. The second movement, which contains the oldest music of the piece, is a grim funeral march – but with three, rather than four, beats to the bar. This is followed by the third movement, the first appearance of the baritone soloist, though the bleak opening message eventually resolves into a mighty choral fugue over a D major pedal, *But the righteous souls are in the hand of God*. The baritone returns in the sixth movement in a thrilling struggle against death and hell, and the sounding of the last trump. The fifth movement, the last to be added in performance, introduces a soprano soloist and features the text '*I will give you comfort, as one whom his own mother comforts*'. Brahms's mother had died shortly after he began work on the piece; Clara Schumann remarked that 'we all think he wrote it in her memory though he has never expressly said so.' However, in later life, Brahms did admit to it being a Requiem written with one person in mind, at least: Robert Schumann, whose words had first welcomed him to the musical world at large over 30 years before.

Katy Hamilton

The Performer's Perspective

Johannes Brahms insisted that he could just as easily have called his *Ein deutsches Requiem* '*ein menschliches Requiem*'. A truly 'human' Requiem – especially one of the Romantic mould – would not set up but rather tear down barriers to immediate comprehension. Brahms clearly expected performances in England to be sung in English. In a letter to his publisher, who was trying to get the *Requiem* translated into Latin, Brahms replied, 'why then is it called a *German Requiem*? Who needs the Latin text, and where do you plan to get it from? For it cannot simply be translated at will, fits with difficulty under the same notes, etc. etc. The English, on the other hand, fits easily.' In another instance Brahms wrote, 'In Holland everything is sung in German. France is not under consideration. That leaves only England and an English text, which would do quite well, certainly, and in any case

already fits of its own.' The text in this version is a thoroughly researched, much revised and edited version by Lara Hoggard that fits the notes, declamation, and prosodic underlay of the original German while maintaining a King James and Spenserian/Elizabethan idiom, itself contemporaneous with Luther's translation of the Bible. There are very few commercially available recordings of *A German Requiem* sung in English. We here remedy that situation.

A German Requiem

Texts selected by the composer from the German Bible. Translation, paraphrase, adaptation, and prosodic underlay by Lara Hoggard.

❶ I. Chorus

Matthew 5:4

Blest are they who are sorrowful; blest are they that mourn; for they shall have comfort.

Psalms 126:5, 6

They who in sorrow with tears are sowing, shall with rejoicing in joy be reaping.
Who goeth forth and weepeth, and beareth precious seed, shall come with rejoicing, and bringing his sheaves with him.

❷ II. Chorus

1 Peter 1:24

For mortal flesh is as the grass, and all the comeliness of man is as the grasses' flowers.
The grass hath withered, and the flower thereof hath fallen.

James 5:7, 8

Now therefore be patient, my dear brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.

Additionally, the piano four-hands accompaniment is not a reduction of the work but rather a creative re-interpretation done by Brahms himself, a task normally left to arrangers working directly for the publisher. As such, the fourth movement loosely resembles the *Liebeslieder Walzer, Op. 52*. With a chamber chorus of professional musicians what arises from this version is intimacy and clarity, and also a lean, muscular, and expressive power.

Andrew Lewis

See how the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and how with patience abideth till he receiveth the morning showers and then the evening rain. So be you patient.

Repeat *1 Peter 1:24*

1 Peter 1:25

But still the Lord's word bideth forevermore.

Isaiah 35:10

The redeemed of the Lord shall return with singing unto Zion; unto Zion they shall come with rejoicing;
joy everlasting forever on their heads shall be;
joy and delight shall seize them and possess them,
and pain and sighing shall flee from them.

❸ III. Baritone Solo and Chorus

Psalms 39:4, 5, 6, 7

Lord, teach me to know the measure of my days on earth, that my life has an ending, and I must perish.
Surely all my days here are as a handbreadth to Thee, and my lifetime is as naught to Thee.
Surely as nothing are all of mankind, who yet securely dwell in their vanities!
Man liveth his days like a shadow, and he disquieteth himself in vain with prideful delusions; his treasures, he knoweth not who shall gather them.
Now, Lord, what then is my comfort?
My hope is in Thee.

Wisdom of Solomon 3:1

But the righteous souls are in the hand of God, and there no grief, nor pain, nigh them shall come.

❹ IV. Chorus

Psalms 84:1, 2, 4

How lovely are Thy dwellings, O Lord of Hosts!
For my soul desireth and longeth for the courts of the Lord; my soul and body sing with joy unto the living God.
O blessed! they who in Thy house are dwelling; they praise Thy name evermore!

❺ V. Soprano Solo and Chorus

John 16:22

You now are sorrowful;
grieve not: I will again behold you,
and then your heart shall be joyful,
and your joy shall no one take from you.

Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 51:35

Look upon me:
I suffered for a little time;
toil and labour were mine;
and I have found, at last, comfort.

Isaiah 66:13

I will give you comfort,
as one whom his own mother comforts.

❻ VI. Baritone Solo and Chorus

Hebrews 13:14

For we have on earth no abiding place: Howbeit we seek one to come.

1 Corinthians 15:51, 52, 54, 55

Lo, I unfold unto you a mystery:
we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,
at the time of the last trumpet!
For at last shall the trumpet sound,
and the dead shall then rise up incorruptible,
and we shall all be changed.

Then will be fulfilled the Word that is written:
then Death shall be swallowed up in the victory.

Death, where is thy sting?
Hell, where is thy victory?

Revelations 4:11

Lord, Thou art worthy to have all praise and honour and power and might,
for Thou hast heaven and earth created,
and by Thy good will do all things have their being and are created.

❼ VII. Chorus

Revelation 14:13

'Blessed are the dead, who in the Lord die, from henceforth,'
yea, the Spirit speaks,
'that they rest from all their labour;
for their works do follow after them.'

Publisher: Vocal: Hinshaw Music, Inc., Lara Hoggard, editor; Edition: choral score Third Edition.
Piano four-hands: G. Schirmer, Inc., Leonard Van Camp, editor.

This recording was made possible thanks to generous sponsorship from Scott Romans and Fran Bushhammer, Charles Metz, David and Sandy Lentz, Anne Evans, David Cloud, Gregory Jorjorian and Marlys Conrad, Doug and Christine Kelner, Dutchman Hospitality, Scott and Judy McCue, Erik Frey and Michelle Hartnett, Robert Acker and Alison Bleick, Alex and Ellen Moore, Cynthia Spiegel, Galen and Birch Burghardt, Andrew Lewis and Kirsten Hedegaard, Christopher Ruggles, Paula Harbage and David Gillingham, Catherine and Robert Graettinger, Richard and Susan Jamerson, Jeffrey Cohen and Brook Spangler, Anne Heider and Steve Warner.

Michelle Areyzaga



American soprano Michelle Areyzaga has performed with the New York City Opera, Chicago Opera Theater and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México among many others. She has become well known for her interpretation of the music of Leonard Bernstein, extensively touring the show *Bernstein on Broadway* together with Bernstein's daughter and various orchestras. As a soloist, she has appeared with orchestras across the US and has appeared in various capacities across Europe. Known as a foremost interpreter of vocal art song and chamber music, Areyzaga has been a repeat guest of the New York Festival of Song and The Chicago Ensemble, among many others. She has collaborated with the Avalon String Quartet, the Cavatina Duo and the Lincoln Trio, and has been selected to perform world premieres of many new works by American composers. She has recorded for Proteus Entertainment and Cedille, and appeared numerous times on Chicago's classical music radio station WFMT. Areyzaga studied at Roosevelt University and was a member of Ravinia's Steans Institute for Young Artists. www.michelleareyzaga.com

Hugh Russell



Canadian baritone Hugh Russell is widely acclaimed for his performances in the operas of Mozart and Rossini. At the centre of his orchestral repertoire is Orff's *Carmina Burana*, which he has performed with The Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, the Los Angeles, Chicago, New Mexico and Las Vegas Philharmonics, the Louisiana and Seoul Philharmonic Orchestras, the San Francisco, Houston, Seattle and Sun Valley Summer Symphonies, the Pittsburgh, Vancouver and Toronto Symphony Orchestras, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Costa Rica, and the Orquesta Sinfónica del Principado de Asturias in Oviedo, Spain, among others. He has also performed Rachmaninov's *The Bells* with the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montreal and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, joined Palm Beach Opera in the role of Major General Stanley in *The Pirates of Penzance*, and performed the role of Noah Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath* with the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, a role he reprised with Michigan Opera Theater.

Madeline Slettedahl



Pianist Madeline Slettedahl is currently in residence at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as ensemble coach, and pianist at the company's Ryan Opera Center for the 2018–19 season. A devoted recitalist and art song performer, Slettedahl made her Carnegie Hall debut in 2017 performing in a series of 'The Song Continues' masterclasses with Felicity Lott and Margo Garrett. Recent appearances include the Arts Club of Chicago and the Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago (CAIC) Lieder Lounge. A graduate of the Music Academy of the West, she was the 2016 winner of the Marilyn Horne Song Competition. Slettedahl holds a Master of Music degree from Rice University, where she was the recipient of the André Watts Scholarship and the Michael P. Hammond Preparatory Program Olshan Foundation Fellowship Award. She received her Bachelor degree from Western Washington University (WWU) where she was awarded First Prize in the WWU Concerto Competition and the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Young Artist Piano Competition, as well named as the Outstanding Music Department Graduate in 2014. www.madelineslettedahl.com

Craig Terry



Pianist Craig Terry currently serves as music director of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago after eleven seasons as assistant conductor. Previously, he served as assistant conductor at the Metropolitan Opera after joining its Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. Terry has performed with esteemed vocalists Jamie Barton, Lawrence Brownlee, Danielle de Niese, Joyce DiDonato, Renée Fleming, Bryan Hymel and Bo Skovhus, among many others. He has collaborated as a chamber musician with members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestra, the Gewandhausorchester, and the Pro Arte Quartet. Terry's discography includes recordings with Patricia Racette, Nicole Cabell and Stephanie Blythe, with whom he featured in a *Live from Lincoln Center* broadcast on PBS in April 2013. Terry received a Bachelor of Music degree from Tennessee Tech University, continued his studies at Florida State University and received a Masters degree from the Manhattan School of Music where he was a student of Warren Jones.



Photo: James Warden

Bella Voce crafts performances that engage audiences in the dialogue between early and contemporary music. Since its founding in 1983 under the name 'His Majesty's Clerkes', Bella Voce has delivered its unique, disciplined choral performances to live audiences in Chicago and beyond. The ensemble's name comes from the Italian for 'beautiful voice', and the choir takes great pride in its clean and precise sound, evolved from the Cathedral Choirs of Britain. For over 30 years, Bella Voce has cultivated the continuous living tradition of choral music from the earliest chant to contemporary works. Its wellspring is in the performance practices of the European Renaissance and Baroque traditions, and modern masters who invoke or innovate within those traditions. Occasionally, the choir explore beyond these

boundaries in order to help audiences discover and enjoy more fully this living tradition. Under the artistic leadership of Andrew Lewis, profiled in the 2014 *Chicago Tribune* as the top classical artist to watch, Bella Voce's world-class musicianship brings audiences the experience of extraordinary live or recorded musical performances that are disciplined, vital, and transcendent.

www.bellavoce.org

Andrew Lewis



Photo: Stephen Green

Andrew Lewis is artistic director of Bella Voce, founder and artistic director of the Bella Voce Sinfonia, music director of the Elgin Master Chorale, choirmaster at St Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston, assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony Chorus, and a member of the faculty of the School of Theatre and Music at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He has appeared as a guest conductor with the Milwaukee Symphony Chorus and the Elgin Symphony Orchestra. Lewis attended Northwestern University, where he received his Bachelor of Music degree and a scholarship to observe the rehearsals of Daniel Barenboim and Asher Fisch at the Staatsoper Unter den Linden, Berlin. After college he moved to California, worked as a church musician, and was an original member of the Philharmonia Baroque Chorale of San Francisco, having sung with Baroque specialists Nicholas McGegan and John Butt. He then attended the Eastman School of Music to study with William Weinert and David Eftron, receiving his Master of Music degree. Lewis has also studied with conductors such as Helmuth Rilling, Gustav Meier and Stephen Cleobury in the US, and Michel Tabachnik in Copenhagen, Denmark.

www.bellavoce.org

Brahms' fascination with music of the 16th to the 18th centuries was nurtured during his appointment in Vienna as conductor of the Singakademie. His own choral compositions had gradually moved from an almost pastiche Renaissance style towards a fully mature, Romantic approach, culminating in his large-scale choral masterpiece *Ein deutsches Requiem*. This performance is sung in a new English translation prepared by Lara Hoggard that fits the original German declamation and with the piano four-hands accompaniment written by Brahms himself.



BELLA VOCE

Johannes BRAHMS

(1833–1897)

Ein deutsches Requiem ('A German Requiem'), Op. 45 (1871 London Version • Sung in English)

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|---|-------|
| ❶ I. Blest are they who are sorrowful | 9:12 |
| ❷ II. For mortal flesh is as the grass | 14:03 |
| ❸ III. Lord, teach me to know the measure of my days on earth | 8:54 |
| ❹ IV. How lovely are Thy dwellings | 5:06 |
| ❺ V. You now are sorrowful | 7:28 |
| ❻ VI. For we have on earth no abiding place | 11:10 |
| ❼ VII. Blessed are the dead | 9:23 |

Michelle Areyzaga, Soprano ❺ • Hugh Russell, Baritone ❸ ❻

Madeline Slettedahl, Piano • Craig Terry, Piano

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The English sung texts can be found inside the booklet, and may also be accessed at
www.naxos.com/libretti/573952.htm

Recorded: 8–11 January 2018 ❶–❹ ❻–❼, 14 September 2018 ❺ at St Luke's Episcopal Church,
Evanston, IL, USA • Executive producer: Andrew Lewis

Producers: Brian Stroom, Hudson Fair ❶–❹ ❻–❼, Paul Nicholson ❺

Engineers: Hudson Fair, Ryan Albrecht, Paul Grigonis • Editors: Ryan Albrecht, Hudson Fair

Mixed by Hudson Fair • Booklet notes: Katy Hamilton, Andrew Lewis

Cover: *Angel, Cologne, Germany* by horstgerlach (iStockphoto.com)

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