



## VIRTUAL BACH FESTIVAL

Saturday, June 20, 2020

### PROGRAM

*A note from Artistic Director Ken Nafziger:*

*If ever there was a summer when music was needed, it is the summer of 2020. If ever there was a summer when Brahms' magnificent Requiem was needed, it is the summer of 2020 – needed for healing, for the gathering, for the sounds of instruments and voices together again to celebrate life, to validate Brahms' wish that he had called this work "A Human Requiem" instead of "Ein deutsches Requiem." It is bittersweet to think what might have been in the summer of 2020 – bitter for all that didn't happen, for lives altered and for lives lost; sweet for what lives on, for art, for breath, for friends and families.*

*This performance dates from October 2019 and was conducted by New York born and Oberlin trained David Zinman. Zinman served as Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from 1985 to 1998; his work is internationally renowned. The orchestra is the Frankfurt (Germany) Radio Symphony. The choir is the MDR Radio Choir (Leipzig) with history stretching back to 1924. The vocal soloists are soprano Christiane Karg, born in Bavaria and a singer with the Frankfurt Opera, and baritone Michael Nagy, Hungarian born, Stuttgart trained, with broad international experience on both opera and oratorio stages.*

*This performance is superb and very moving. I also call your attention to the outstanding videography. You can see the work unfold before your eyes. I recommend that you watch it uninterrupted, especially if you think you know the work! The videographer captures the chamber music essence of this complex orchestral-choral work. If you don't know German well, print out the text and translation, and follow along. In this, the year 2020 when the whole world was brought to a sudden halt, Brahms and Zinman and the German orchestra, choir and soloists, sing and play for all of us; listen.*

**Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45 [1857 – 1868]**

**Johannes Brahms**

1833 – 1897

Christiane Karg, soprano  
Michael Nagy, baritone  
Frankfurt Radio Symphony  
David Zinman, conductor

## I. Chorus

Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,  
denn sie sollen getröstet werden.

Die mit Tränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten.  
Sie gehen hin und weinen, und tragen edlen Samen,  
und kommen mit Freuden und bringen ihre Garben.

## II. Chorus

Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras  
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie des Grases Blumen.  
Das Gras ist verdorret und die Blume abgefallen.

So seid nun geduldig, lieben Brüder,  
bis auf die Zukunft des Herrn.  
Siehe ein Ackermann wartet auf  
die köstliche Frucht der Erde  
und ist geduldig darüber, bis er empfahe  
den Morgenregen und Abendregen.  
So seid geduldig.

Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras  
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie des Grases Blumen.  
Das Gras ist verdorret und die Blume abgefallen.

Aber des Herrn Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit.

Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wiederkommen,  
und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen;  
Freude, ewige Freude wird über ihrem Haupte sein;  
Freude und Wonne werden Sie ergreifen,  
und Schmerz und Seufzen wird weg müssen.

## III. Baritone and Chorus

Herr, lehre doch mich,  
daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß,  
und mein Leben ein Ziel hat, und ich davon muß.  
Siehe, meine Tage sind einer Handbreit vor dir,  
und mein Leben ist wie nichts vor dir.  
Ach, wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen,  
die doch so sicher leben.  
Sie gehen daher wie ein Schemen,  
und machen ihnen viel vergebliche Unruhe;  
sie sammeln und wissen nicht,  
wer es kriegen wird.  
Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?  
Ich hoffe auf dich.

Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand,  
und keine Qual rühret sie an.

Blessed are they who mourn:  
for they shall be comforted.

*Matthew 5.4*

They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.  
They go forth and weep, bearing precious seed,  
and will doubtless come again with rejoicing,  
bringing their sheaves with them.

*Psalm 126.5–6*

For all flesh is as grass,  
and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.  
The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away.

*I Peter 1.24*

Be patient, therefore, brethren,  
until the coming of the Lord.  
Behold, the husbandman waits  
for the precious fruit of the earth,  
and has long patience,  
until he receives the early and latter rain.  
Therefore also be patient.

*James 5.7–8*

For all flesh is as grass,  
and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.  
The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away.

*I Peter 1.24*

But the word of the Lord endures forever.

*I Peter 1.25*

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with shouts of rejoicing  
and everlasting joy upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

*Isaiah 35.10*

Lord, teach me  
that there will be an end for me,  
that my life will end, and I must go hence.  
Behold, my days are as an handbreadth before you,  
and my life is as nothing before you.  
Ah, what vain things are all humans,  
that yet live so sure of themselves.  
They go about like a shadow,  
and make for themselves much useless anxiety;  
they amass possessions, and know not  
who will enjoy them.  
Now, Lord, in what shall I find solace?  
My hope is in thee.

*Psalm 39.4–7*

The souls of the righteous are in God's hand,  
and no pain will disturb their rest.

*The Wisdom of Solomon 3.1*

#### IV. Chorus

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth!  
Meine Seele verlanget und sehnet sich  
nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn;  
mein Leib und Seele freuen sich in dem lebendigen Gott.  
Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,  
die loben dich immerdar!

How lovely are your dwellings, O Lord of hosts!  
My soul desires, yes, even longs  
for the courts of the Lord:  
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.  
Blessed are they who dwell in your house:  
they will praise you forever.

*Psalm 84.1-2, 4*

#### V. Soprano and Chorus

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;  
aber ich will euch wieder sehen  
und euer Herz soll sich freuen,  
und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.

You therefore now are sorrowful;  
but I will see you again,  
and your heart shall rejoice,  
your joy will not be taken from you.

*John 16.22*

Ich will euch trösten, wie einen seine Mutter tröstet.

I will comfort you, as one whom a mother comforts.

*Isaiah 66.13*

Sehet mich an:  
ich habe eine kleine Zeit Mühe und Arbeit gehabt  
und habe großen Trost funden.

Look on me:  
I have for a little while had tribulation and labor,  
and have found great comfort.

*Ecclesiasticus 51.35*

#### VI. Baritone and Chorus

Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt,  
sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.

For here have we no enduring city,  
but we seek one to come.

*Hebrews 13.14*

Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis.  
Wir werden nicht alle entschlafen,  
wir werden aber alle verwandelt werden;  
und dasselbige plötzlich in einem Augenblick,  
zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune.  
Denn es wird die Posaune schallen  
und die Toten werden auferstehen unverweslich,  
und wir werden verwandelt werden.  
Dann wird erfüllet werden das Wort,  
das geschrieben steht:  
Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.  
Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?  
Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?

Behold, I show 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 last trumpet.  
For the trumpet shall sound,  
and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,  
and we shall be changed.  
Then shall be brought to pass the saying  
that is written:  
Death is swallowed up in victory.  
O death, where is thy sting?  
O grave, where is thy victory?

*I Corinthians 15.51-52, 54-55*

Herr, du bist würdig,  
zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft,  
denn du hast alle Dinge erschaffen  
und durch deinen Willen  
haben sie das Wesen und sind geschaffen.

You are worthy, O Lord,  
to receive glory and honor and power:  
for you have created all things,  
and for your pleasure  
they are and were created.

*Revelation 4.11*

#### VI. Chorus

Selig sind die Toten,  
die in dem Herrn sterben, von nun an.  
Ja, der Geist spricht,  
daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit;  
denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.

Blessed are they  
who die in the Lord from henceforth.  
Yea, says the Spirit,  
that they may rest from their labors;  
and their works will follow them.

*Revelation 14.13*

Three of the finished movements of *Ein deutsches Requiem* were premiered in Vienna in 1867 for an audience that hissed its disapproval! One can only speculate what provoked such an ugly response: perhaps it was because the choir and orchestra were ill-prepared for the performance (which was the case), or that (conservative) Catholic Vienna was not prepared for a requiem with Brahms' Protestant alternative text.

Its initial response notwithstanding, Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* is now widely considered one of the greatest of all major choral-orchestral compositions. This monumental work was composed over a period of fourteen years, between 1854 and 1868. During this time, Brahms experienced the deaths of his best friends and champions, Robert and Clara Schumann, and of his beloved mother.

The composer selected the texts from Luther's translation of the Bible. The first performance occurred on Good Friday, 10 April 1868, in Bremen, with Brahms conducting his work. After a number of revisions, the premier of the seven-movement work as it is now known took place in Zürich, 12 September 1868.

The origins of this work lie deep in German and Renaissance musical traditions, especially Bach and Handel. The overall structure of the work is in the shape of a symmetrical arch, much as Bach might have constructed, with musical material from the beginning occurring again at the ending. The second movement hides a German Lutheran chorale in its thick texture. The fourth movement, *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*, is a moment of complete serenity on words from Psalm 84, "How lovely is thy dwelling place." This chorus is the emotional axis on which the entire work turns.

Brahms, as an after-thought, commented to a conductor that he might well have called this "A Human Requiem." Program annotator David Schildkret wrote:

it deals with human concerns and emotions: sorrow, trouble, anxiety, the meaning of life and death, and the hope and promise of a better life to come. Yet, in spite of its transcendent universality, it remains the personal expression of a complex and powerfully creative spirit. The mighty forces of the Requiem speak to all humanity with a single voice – that of Brahms himself – and therein lies its power to touch us so deeply.

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