



BRAHMS
EIN Deutsches
REQUIEM

ROBERT GEARY, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
CALIFORNIA CHAMBER SYMPHONY
AUGUST 16, 2025 | DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL

SAN FRANCISCO CHORAL SOCIETY

A premier symphonic chorus, inspiring and enriching people's lives through the joy and power of choral music

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... High summer holds the earth.

Hearts all whole. . .

These lines from American poet James Agee's *Sure On This Shining Night* help me in my effort to understand *A German Requiem* (*Ein Deutsches Requiem*) by Johannes Brahms. When we prepare a great masterpiece, we spend months developing our understanding of the piece and we do our best to discover what it is trying to express and what makes it unique and meaningful. In some ways it is an impossible task because great classical music reaches into a non-verbal part of our consciousness(the medium is the message).

But as I have reflected on the many possible intentions of the German Requiem, one that stands out for me is the idea that Brahms was conveying a message of compassion in the face of overwhelming loss, supporting the process of coming to terms and again making our hearts whole. In this spirit we dedicate our performance to our beloved Vicki Post.

Thank you for joining us here in "High summer". We have been preparing for this evening for months and we are honored and pleased to share it with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Geary" in a cursive, flowing script.

Artistic Director



PROGRAMME

ROBERT GEARY, Artistic Director

THIS EVENING'S PERFORMANCE IS DEDICATED
TO THE MEMORY OF VICKI POST.

JOHANNES BRAHMS

EIN *Deutsches*
REQUIEM

CARA GABRIELSON* – SOPRANO
ANDREW THOMAS PARDINI* – BARITONE

— NO INTERMISSION —

ROBERT GEARY, CONDUCTOR
CALIFORNIA CHAMBER SYMPHONY

*SF CHORAL SOCIETY DEBUT

ROBERT GEARY, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Robert Geary, Artistic Director of the San Francisco Choral Society since 1995, is also the founding Artistic Director of Volti, the Piedmont East Bay Children's Choir, and the Golden Gate International Choral Festival. He is the winner of the 2023 Chorus America Michael Korn Award. His multi-dimensional commitment to the choral arts over the past 49 years has led him and his choirs to national and international prominence. For the past 30 years he has led the San Francisco Choral Society to a robust position as keeper of the traditional repertoire and an innovative force in the commissioning and performance of new works for chorus and orchestra.



Geary has conducted first performances of over 200 new compositions. He has conducted in dozens of countries; he has served as a clinician and guest conductor in the U.S., Finland, Denmark, and Singapore; and his choirs have been recognized in the United States with invitations to perform for the national conferences of Chorus America, the American Choral Directors Association, the Organization of American Kodaly Educators, and the College Music Society. His choirs have performed for radio, television, opera, symphony, and music festivals, nationally and internationally. They can be heard on many recording labels, including Other Minds, Harmonia Mundi, Koch International, Swiss International, Ablaze, and Innova.

Recipient of awards for Outstanding Conductorial Achievement at the International Children's and Youth Choir Festival (Giessen, Germany) and Artistic Interpretation at the Międzyzdroje Choral Festival (Poland), Geary has also received the KDFC Music Educator of the Year award and the Lois B. Rawlings Educational Inspiration award. On behalf of his choirs, he has received ASCAP's national award for Adventurous Programming nine times, more than any conductor in the history of the award. Geary has degrees in Music Theory, Composition, and Political Science, and earned his graduate degree in Choral Conducting as a student of Howard Swan.

BRYAN BAKER, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Pianist and conductor Bryan Baker is in his twentieth season as Assistant Conductor and Accompanist for the San Francisco Choral Society. Baker has played solo concerts, chamber music, and accompanied vocal recitals across the United States, Europe and South America. Locally, he has performed in Davies Symphony Hall, Herbst Theater, at the Stern Grove Festival, and the Old First Concert Series. With many competition awards for contemporary music, he has also performed concertos by Beethoven, Mozart, Shostakovich, and Saint-Saëns.

Having earned bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in music, Baker served on the faculties of the San Francisco State University, Truman University in Missouri, Arizona State, Foothill College and the College of San Mateo. He maintains an active private studio, and his students have won competitions and appeared

in concerts and opera productions in the Bay Area and across the country.



An accomplished conductor, Baker is Artistic Director of Masterworks Chorale, and Director of Music at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, and founder and director of the chamber choir Serenade. A frequent guest conductor in the Bay Area, he often leads choral clinics, and judges choral competitions. As an actor he has appeared in *Driving Miss Daisy* (Boolie), *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown* (Charlie), and *Into the Woods* (The Baker).

Note from Jessica House Steward, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the San Francisco Choral Society's Summer Festival Chorus concert. We are honored to share this evening with you as we present Johannes Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*—a masterwork of extraordinary compassion and emotional depth. Unlike traditional requiems, Brahms' setting offers solace to the living, making it a uniquely human expression of grief, comfort, and hope.

As we look ahead to our 40th anniversary in 2029, SF Choral is guided by a bold strategic vision rooted in artistic excellence, accessibility, inclusion, and long-term financial sustainability. Our 2025 Strategic Plan lays out a path to deepen community engagement, invest in diverse voices, and ensure that our organization thrives artistically and fiscally for years to come. Tonight's concert is a reflection of that vision—bringing together more than 150 singers from across the Bay Area and beyond to share in this transformative musical experience.

This evening's performance is also dedicated to Vicki Post, our beloved friend, board member, and alto section leader. Vicki's warmth, leadership, and passion for music continue to inspire us all, and we honor her memory with deep love and gratitude.

Whether you're a longtime supporter or attending your first SF Choral performance, thank you for being here. Your presence makes this work possible. We hope you leave feeling moved, uplifted, and connected.

With gratitude,

Jessica House Steward



Jessica and Vicki
in 2023



The Summer Festival Chorus

Section Leaders * Guest Artist (G) Century Singer ^

SOPRANOS

Rhea Lee Arais	Kat Cunico	Julie Koo	Gitanjali Murthy*
Kathleen Auld	Maya Dearman	Irene Lam	Priyanka Patel
Ann Itakura Aversa	Rita Freimanis	Susan Lambert	Joanna Pearlstein
Sydney Barada	Sara Goldrath	Bonnie Landfield	Indu Maria Pereira
Yobo Bello-Asemota	April Grant	Pamela Ling	Allison Rosengard
Jennifer Benson	Marianne Grobbelaar (G)	Serena Liu	Katherine Bird Rothrum
Paula Birnbaum	Caitlin Haas	Michelle Logsdon	Jennifer Schwartz
Kenya Bonitto	Helen Halliwell	Tina Lu	Marianna Tong
Devi Brown	Jennifer Hansen	Suzy Maska	Jennifer Tsang
Jessica Buchsbaum	Elizabeth Hoover	Jessica May	Mary Vogt
Claire Byrnes	Oranuj Nui Janrathitikarn	Lise McCarthy	Morgen Warner
Kathleen Chaikin	Scout Katovich	Ally Miley	Xin (Cynthia) Wu
Rosalie Chi	Sharon Keeton	Abigail Millikan-States	Alice Zhang
Carlin Chi*	Amy Kelly	Frances Murphy (G)	

ALTOS

V. Emily Applegate	Rebecca Knoll	Betsy Morris	Karin Snowberg
Nisreen Bahrainwala	Esmé Krummel	Elizabeth Orbison	Veronica Soto
Julia Cotteleer	Yeban Lee	Susan Pace	Hannah Steinberg
Ruth Dummel	Jody Loeffler^	Hannah Prausnitz-Weinbaum	Larami Stephan (G)
Jenna Filardi	Mardi Louisell	Naveeno Rehm*	Margo Stern*
Sue Fleming	Genevieve Love	Kaitlyn Richards	Amy Stewart
Jane Goldsmith	Amy Markowitz (G)	Michelle Ríos	Marlena Tang
Judy Goldstein	Ratu Maulana	Nancy Roeser	Katie Wadley
Genevieve Graves (G)	Martha McGaw Daniel	Michele Rutherford	Cindy Weinbaum (G)
Gail Harriman	Kaye McKinzie	Lana Savchuk	Sarah Westmoreland (G)
Carole Hay	Kathy McMahon	Janet Scott^	Julie K. Williams (G)
Catherine Heagerty	Cassandra Mech	Sydney Sears	Amanda Williford
Amanda Johnson (G)	Jessica Meyers	Juliana Simons	Marion S. Wise
Elaine Katzenberger	Pilar Montero	Laura Smith	Peili Zhu
			Pazit Zohar

TENORS

Bryan Baker	Carlos Guillen	Nancy Lemon*	Don Richards
Bill Chiles	Don Hodge	Kent MacMaster	Connor Ridley
Arthur Colman	Sam Kagan	David McGaw	Reuben Schwartz
Roger Fong	Todd Lane	Andrew Northrop	Pierre Teplitzky
Rich Gross*^	Louis Lao		Ken Tipton

BASSES

Jim Blodgett	Jerry Godes*	Peter Moorhouse	James Stewart
Michael Carmody	Rob Gorlin	Matthew Nieder	Brandon Tavshanjan
Russell Carrington	David Hathwell	Paul Nocero	Jason Tiller
David Chase	Chesley Herbert	Matt Noneman	Garrett Turner
Jonathan Cohen*	Braxton Hicks	Marc Rossner	Norman VanSprosen
Keith Fowler	Roger King	Peter Shypertt	Bob Wainess (G)
Maxwell Gibbs	Kevin McCarthy	Kevin Slaughter	Steven Woods (G)
			Ben Wu

CHORUS REHEARSAL ACCOMPANIST

Mina Marie Jelinek

Meet our Soloists

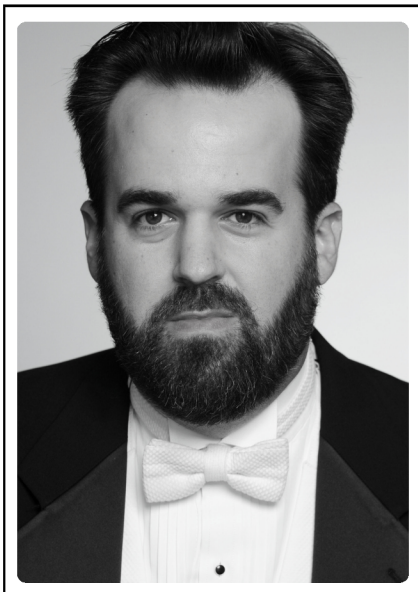
CARA GABRIELSON › SOPRANO

Soprano, Cara Gabrielson, was a 2020 National Semi-Finalist in The Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and made her San Francisco Symphony debut in 2018 as the Soprano I Soloist in Bach's *Magnificat*. Cara joined the roster of The Metropolitan Opera in *Idomeneo* and returned to the San Francisco Symphony as the Soprano Soloist in Orff's *Carmina Burana* and *Distant Worlds: Music from Final Fantasy*. Recently, Cara sang Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*) with Livermore Valley Opera, Lucy (*Fellow Travelers*) with Opera Parallèle and covered the title role in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Opera San José. On the concert stage, Cara sang Bach Cantatas with *Marin Oratorio* and premiered a new work by Paul Mortilla with Friction Quartet presented by the San Francisco Contemporary Music Players.



Cara's diverse repertoire includes the title role in *Acis & Galatea* (Opera Idaho), Elisena in *Ifigenia in Aulide* (Ars Minerva), Norina in *Don Pasquale* (Pocket Opera), The Lover in *The Fairy Queen* (Tafelmusik) and as a recitalist with the Oregon Bach Festival and Portland Opera Guild. She holds her Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and is an alumna of the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto and Tafelmusik Baroque Fellowship Program. Originally from Portland, Oregon, she now resides in the San Francisco Bay Area.

ANDREW THOMAS PARDINI › BARITONE



Pardini is a Tenured Member of the Regular Chorus with San Francisco Opera, where he made his company debut as part of its 2022-2023 Centennial Season. Past roles at San Francisco Opera include Flora's Servant in *La Traviata*, The Imperial Commissioner in *Madame Butterfly* and Reporter in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*. Upcoming engagements include company and role debuts with Cantare Oakland as Baritone Soloist in *Belshazzar's Feast*, as well as a return to San Francisco Opera for its 2024-2025 Season. Earlier this season, Pardini made his company and role debuts with Marin Symphony as Bass Soloist in the *Lord Nelson Mass*, company and role debuts with Lakeside Concert Series SF as Bass Soloist in the Mozart *Requiem*, special appearances with Opera Modesto as Baritone Soloist in *The Good, The Bad & The Lovely: A Valentine Concert* and Baritone Soloist in the 40th Anniversary Gala, company and role debuts with Livermore Valley Opera as Papageno in *The Magic Flute Outreach* and Sciarone in *Tosca*, and company debut with San Francisco Opera Guild's Opera Together as Marcello in *La Bohème*.

Pardini holds a Master of Music degree in Opera Performance from the University of Maryland – Maryland Opera Studio, under the tutelage of Dominic Cossa and François Loup, and a Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Southern California – Thornton School of Music, studying with Gary Glaze. Prior to university, Pardini spent his earliest years as the student of Erik "Buck" Townsend, who reared him from boy soprano to "baby baritone," imbuing him with a passion and reverence for singing and performing. Pardini dedicates his every artistic pursuit, with love and admiration, to his voice teacher and mentor. A native of Modesto, California, Pardini is based in San Francisco.

CALIFORNIA CHAMBER SYMPHONY

1st Violins

Tatiana Freedland CM
Eugene Chukhlov
Julie Kim
Anthony Chukhlov
Michelle Maruyama
Valery Breshears
Debbie Spangler
Oliver Spivey
Magali Pelletay

2nd Violins

Emanuela Nikiforova
Hande Erdem
Loretta Taylor
Maya Cox
Candy Sanderson
Maggie Cai
Dominic Glynn
Luke Spivey

Violas

Patrick Kroboth
Betsy London
Samuel Seetapun
Cynthia Ryan
Sarah Lee
Gordon Thrupp

Cellos

Monica Scott
Starla Breshears
Nancy Bien
Melissa Lam
Mary Artmann
Illarion Gershkovich

Bass

Michel Taddei
Dave Horn

Flutes

Leslie Chin
Gail Edwards
Denise Spivey

Oboes

Robin May
Max Hollander

Clarinets

Sarah Bonomo
Robert Weil

Bassoons

Carolyn Lockhart
Lynn Hileman
Kris King

Trumpets

Barbara Hull
Jonathan Knight

Horns

Suzanne Chasalow
Erin Vang
Scott Hartman
Beth Milne

Trombones

Katie Lambert
Hall Goff
Don Benham

Tuba

Forrest Byram

Harp

Molly Langr

ENJOYING THE CONCERT?

Please consider supporting the San Francisco Choral Society:

We would be grateful for your contribution, no matter how big or how small.
All donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent allowed by law.



SF CHORAL IS A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION.
OUR FEDERAL TAX IDENTIFICATION NUMBER
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IN MEMORIUM

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

VICKI POST

Tonight's performance is dedicated to Vicki Post, our beloved alto section leader, board member, and friend. Vicki brought passion, warmth, and generosity to every part of SF Choral. She led with a vibrant strength, always showing up with grace, humor, and a fierce dedication to the music and community she loved. In the face of obstacles, Vicki was persistent and resilient, consistently inspiring others with her creative paths forward. Her presence lifted those around her, and her impact continues to resonate in our music and our hearts. We sing tonight in her honor – carrying her spirit in every note and holding her memory close.



At the request of her family, donations in Vicki's name may be made to the San Francisco Choral Society, the organization for which she cared most deeply.



SAN FRANCISCO CHORAL SOCIETY

ABOUT US

Established in 1989, the San Francisco Choral Society is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the performance of beautiful, inspiring choral music. To date, we have shared our joy and enthusiasm for choral music with more than 60,000 concertgoers. Our year-round program offers singers the opportunity to perform major choral works with professional orchestras and soloists in front of live audiences. We provide low-cost music instruction to our singers in the form of classes and workshops. We have a student internship program, inviting outstanding local high school and college students to participate with us in the rehearsal and performance experience, at no cost to them. Our auditioned chorus has earned a reputation as one of the most accomplished choruses in the Bay Area.

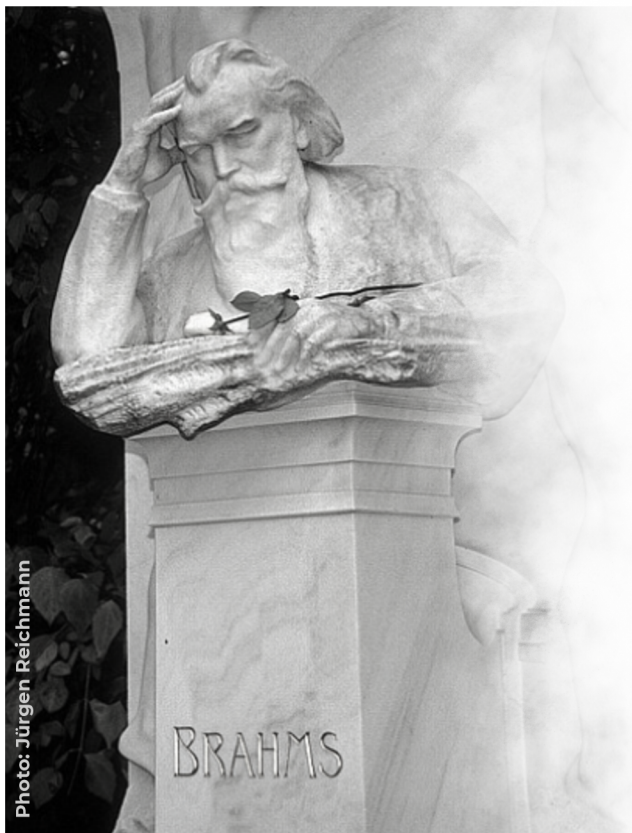
SF Choral has presented great choral classics to packed audiences at venues throughout San Francisco, including regular performances at Davies Symphony Hall. We have performed the Brahms, Mozart, Duruflé, and Verdi Requiems and Britten's War Requiem, the Bach B-minor, Mozart C-minor, Haydn Lord Nelson, Bruckner, and Stravinsky Masses, Handel's Messiah and Israel in Egypt, Mendelssohn's Elijah, Monteverdi's and Rachmaninoff's Vespers, Bernstein's Chichester Psalms, and Orff's Carmina Burana. We have commissioned and/or premiered new works by composers David Lang, Kirke Mechem, Olli Kortekangas, Miya Masaoka, Mark Winges, Donald McCullough, Stacy Garrop, Chiayu Hsu, Ola Gjeilo, Felicia Sandler, Kirstina Rasmussen, and Emma Lou Diemer. We take great joy — and pride — in bringing these great choral works to our Bay Area community.

SF Choral's educational programs, rehearsals, and performances are financed through registration fees, volunteer efforts, individual contributions, employer matching-fund programs, concert ticket sales, program advertising, and contributions from the community at large.

*We are deeply grateful for
the generous support of
these fine organizations:*



JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833–1897)



Brahms' choral masterpiece provides singers with a rare poignant emotional experience, notwithstanding the staggering stamina and technical prowess required of them. It is a personal spiritual document addressed to all humanity, and "Freude" (joy) appears more than any other word. Brahms meant "Freude" in the same sense Beethoven did in his "Ode to Joy." For him, joy was the summit of life, and its rebirth is what we hope for on the other side of mourning.

Johannes Brahms was born in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg on May 7, 1833 and died in Vienna after a long and successful career on April 3, 1897. During his youth, German nationalism and liberalism were on the rise as a reaction to Napoleon's northern campaigns. In Brahms' birth year, German-speaking Europe included more than 300 separate political entities: the formal unification of Germany into an integrated modern nation would not occur until 1871, two years after the premiere of his 'German' Requiem.

Brahms was an active conductor and composer who maintained one of the largest personal libraries of choral music in Europe. Handel's oratorios particularly inspired him, and the great fugues that cap the third and sixth movements of his Requiem show this influence. As a choral conductor, Brahms preferred Baroque works, especially those of Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672) and J. S. Bach (1685-1750). Scholar Michael Musgrave asserted in an influential 1972 article in *Music and Letters* that Brahms knew Schütz's setting of the six-part *Selig sind die Toten*, as it had been published at least twice earlier in the nineteenth-century. Brahms studied Bach's ability to set a wide variety of secular and sacred texts, often retexting previously-composed cantata movements for his own new compositions.



TEXTS & SUBTEXTS

Brought up Lutheran in Hamburg, Brahms was familiar with both Martin Luther's 1526 *Deutsche Messe* (one of the first plainchant settings of the mass to use German text) as well as Luther's translation of the Bible. Luther's achievement (especially his work on the Old Testament) was remarkable for two reasons: he did not

have direct access to a variety of primary sources in Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic (held mainly in the Vatican), and he created a workable form of what became Hochdeutsch from a variety of northeastern Germanic dialects, facilitating the emergence of the modern German language as we know it today.

Luther's New Testament was based on Erasmus' second critical edition of the Greek New Testament (1519), known as the Textus Receptus. Both Luther and Erasmus had learned Greek in Latin Schools led by the Brethren of the Common Life, who emphasized scholarly work and philology; the two scholars never met, but their correspondence was published. Luther made his translation while sequestered in the Wartburg Castle in Eisenach, Thuringia, the very town where J. S. Bach was born fifteen decades later.

Luther's Old Testament was the result of many years of discussions with scholars and religious professionals (including rabbis) who owned biblical texts in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and earlier German dialects. He printed the Apocrypha (found in the Greek Septuagint, but not in the Hebrew Masoretic text) between the Old and New Testaments, using a translation by his friends Philipp Melanchthon and Justus Jonas (professors of Greek and of Law at Wittenberg).



Title-page of the first complete edition of Luther's Bible (Wittenberg, 1534) 1.b.9.



Brahms (seated) with Karl Reinthaler

For A German Requiem, Brahms did not simply translate the familiar Latin of the standard Requiem Mass; he created his own compilation of texts in order to emphasize comfort for the living. The complete title of his op. 45, *Ein deutsches Requiem nach Worten der heiligen Schrift*, celebrates the work's biblical lineage and makes clear the importance of the text's German-Protestant origin, without striking an overtly nationalistic pose (for a more thorough discussion, consult Daniel Beller-McKenna's excellent *Brahms and the German Spirit*, Harvard, 2004).

While preparing for the first performance, Brahms remarked to Carl Reinthaler, the organist of Bremen Cathedral, "I will admit that I could happily omit the 'German' and say simply 'Human.'" Reinthaler pleaded with him to include more passages about "the redeeming death of Jesus," or at least to include the names "Jesus" or "Christ" a single time, but Brahms replied that he had knowingly passed over such verses as "for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16) and the famous vision of apocalypse ("Dies irae, dies illa") from the Book of Revelation. This aspect of Brahms' Requiem is an exception to

his choral music in general: he did mention the name of Jesus in his choral settings of Marian texts, and his large choral collection included dozens of hand-copied folksongs dealing with Christ's birth and infancy.

When creating *Ein deutsches Requiem* ("ein" meaning "a", rather than "der" meaning "the"), he was not trying to supplant the Lutheran Church with a new national German religion. His final choices were adapted (but not always copied) from the Apocrypha (Wisdom 3:1 and Ecclesiastus 51:27), from the Old Testament (ten verses from Psalms 39, 84, and 126 and two from Isaiah 35:10 and 66:13), and from the New Testament (twelve verses from Matthew 5:4; John 16:22; Peter 1:24-25; James 5:7; Hebrews 13:14; I Corinthians 15: 51-55; and Revelation 4:11 and 14:13).

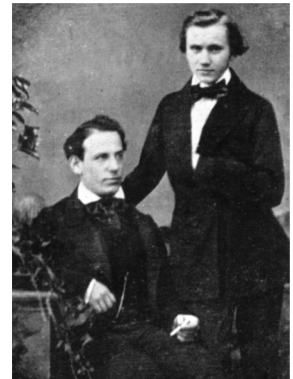
MUSICAL LIFE

Brahms' father was a double-bass player who took him along to Hamburg bar gigs as a child, where he learned to improvise. From the age of fifteen, he was a professional piano accompanist for the virtuoso violinist Ede (Eduard) Reményi; Reményi was five years older, and introduced him to both Hungarian gypsy

music and to the composer Franz Liszt (in Weimar). Liszt played Brahms' Scherzo at sight, but the teenager failed to make an impression on the powerful virtuoso because he fell asleep during Liszt's flashy performance of his own Sonata in B minor and was not able to compliment it to Liszt's satisfaction.

At age twenty, Brahms visited Robert Schumann and his wife Clara Wieck Schumann in Düsseldorf. Brahms played so well that Clara, one of the leading pianists of her time, heard him from another room and asked who could be playing duets. Robert introduced Brahms to the public in 1853 in a legendary article entitled "New Paths." It caused as much trouble for the young man as it helped, due to Schumann's enthusiasm:

I felt certain that from [recent musical] developments would suddenly emerge an individual ... springing fully armed from the head of Jove ... And finally it seemed as though he himself, a surging stream incarnate, swept his notes altogether into a single waterfall, sending aloft a peaceful rainbow among the turbulent waves, flanked on the shores by playful butterflies and the voices of nightingales. 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 met a Hungarian refugee and violinist Eduard Remenyi (left) in 1850, and was introduced to a whole range of folk and gypsy music that massively influenced his composing style.



Johannes Brahms Clara Schumann Robert Schumann

GENESIS



Clara Schumann

Brahms started composing music that became the Requiem in his teens and finished it when he was thirty-six. Its earliest music, the funeral march from the second movement, "Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras," was conceived as a middle movement for a projected symphony in the mid-1850s, when Brahms was helping Clara Schumann through the traumatic institutionalization of her husband, Brahms's friend and mentor.

After Robert Schumann's failed drowning attempt, Brahms visited him throughout the two years of his confinement in a sanatorium; Clara was not allowed to see her husband again until two days after his death. These experiences left an impression on all of Brahms' music from 1854–1856. Robert frequently requested that visitors read

to him from the Bible: Brahms' friend Rudolf von der Leyen reported that "this desire was understood by [Schumann's] doctors to be a new symptom of his mental illness and was, for the most part, denied." However, Brahms snuck in a copy, and he read to his mentor from Luther's translation.

The reworked first movement of his unfinished symphony eventually became the first movement of Brahms' D minor Piano Concerto, op. 15, a work that has always been associated with Schumann's memory. The constellation of these finished and unfinished compositions and their connection with the Schumanns strongly suggest an impulse to memorialize Robert Schumann in the writing of the Requiem. Twenty years later (1873), Brahms reminisced "how completely and inevitably such a work as the Requiem belonged to Schumann."

In the 1860s, Johannes Brahms became mildly hostile to the progressive “new German” school of composers (such as Liszt and Smetana). Although considered a “neo-Romantic” by his colleagues, Brahms was more influenced by Baroque and Classical models in his symphonic and chamber music. Most of the Requiem’s movements have three-part forms, and the whole work is in the structural shape of a giant arch, after Bach’s use of palindromic forms and arch forms in some of the motets (*Jesu meine Freude* is the best example). The opening movement begins with a warm, flowing instrumental figure derived from a Georg Neumark hymn that had been a favorite of Bach. Listen for the violas and cellos, sometimes divided into three parts each, and a darker orchestration marked by the omission of piccolo, clarinets, trumpet, and violins.



The choral movement “Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen” is the central keystone of the “arch” of seven movements. After completing this fourth movement in April 1865, Brahms sent Clara of draft of his Requiem-in-progress. He wrote, “it’s probably the least offensive part of some kind of German Requiem... at least have a look at the beautiful words it begins with (“Wie lieblich...”). Clara wrote in her diary, “The Requiem delighted me... it is full of tender and daring thoughts. I cannot feel clear as to how it will sound, but in myself it sounds glorious.”

PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Ein deutsches Requiem had three distinct premieres. Johannes Herbeck (1831-1877) led the premiere of the first three movements of the Deutsches Requiem on December 1, 1867 in a Viennese concert devoted to the memory of Schubert. The timpanist played so loudly in the third movement that the audience booed him, and the singers reported having to shout over the din. He later wrote in his memoirs that he had mistaken a handwritten *pp* for *ff*. The leading Viennese critic of the day, Eduard Hanslick, expressed his irritation: “the ending [of the third movement] “rattles through a tunnel on an express train... After long expanses of delicately lyrical, poetic music, the piece seemed to end by clubbing the audience about the head.” Theodor Billroth, who was rapidly becoming one of Brahms’ best friends, commented that the austerity of the work seemed “to almost have an ethical point... so nobly spiritual and so Protestant-Bachish that it was difficult to make go down here.” The hissing and clapping became violent, but in the end, the applause conquered.

Brahms himself conducted the premiere of the almost-complete work (without the fifth movement) on Good Friday, April 10, 1868 in Bremen Cathedral alongside music by Bach, Handel, Schumann, and with Julius Stockhausen (1826-1906) as baritone soloist. Stockhausen had trained at the Paris Conservatory was one of the main students of Manuel García (1805-1906) in Paris and London—He and Jenny Lind served as the main test subjects for García’s invention of the laryngoscope in 1854-56. This six-movement version of the Requiem was Brahms’ first public success as a composer/conductor, at age thirty-five. Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, and his father all attended the performance. On the advice of his old Hamburg teacher, Eduard Marxsen, he immediately added *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit*, with its beautiful soprano solo. Ida Suter-Weber premiered this fifth movement as a solo movement at a private concert in Zürich, Switzerland on September 17, 1868. Most scholars feel that the death of Christine Brahms was an inspiration for this fifth movement, even though the composer later stated, “I don’t like to hear that I wrote the Requiem for my mother.” Perhaps Brahms wasn’t so much denying that as trying to stop people from mentioning it in program notes.

The complete seven-movement work (as heard tonight) was premiered by the Gewandhaus zu Leipzig Orchestra and Chorus under Carl Reinecke on February 18, 1869, with soloists Emelie Bellingrath-Wagner (from the Dresden Opera) and Franz Krückl. Krückl had been a prominent lawyer in Vienna, but as a result of this invitation, as well as a successful regional debut the previous season as an operatic baritone (in what is now Brno, Czech Republic), Krückl gave up the law. He enjoyed more than a decade as a professional singer, contributing to over 130 performances of Wagner’s Ring cycle of operas. Finally, Brahms was lauded as a serious composer by major Viennese critics. Eduard Hanslick seemed to have forgotten his earlier review, gushing: “Since Bach Mass in B minor and Beethoven’s Missa Solemnis, nothing has been composed in this field that can compare to Brahms’ German Requiem!”



Carl Reinecke c. 1890
(1824–1910)



Johannes Brahms and Julius
Stockhausen (1869)



Jenny Lind c. 1850

In its final form, *Ein deutsches Requiem* quickly attained the rank of a classic; it was heard in German-speaking Europe twenty times within its first year. Choral societies in Germany, Scandinavia, and England began to program the work, causing the British press to retort, “the Philharmonic concert hall is not the place for a funeral service” (*The Musical Times*, 1873) and “fit for a funeral home” (George Bernard Shaw). In general, the choices of texts have made the work much more popular in Protestant countries; it is rarely performed in France and Italy. The work is unique for its avoidance of operatic drama (compare Mendelssohn’s writing for the role of Elijah with Brahms’ baritone solos) and its consistent, consoling mood and orchestration (I, V, and VII). Brahms includes both local Viennese dance rhythms (IV), and solemn Handelian fugues (III and VI). Movements II, III, and VI begin in despair and end in hopeful, measured triumph.

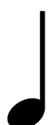
I	II	III	IV/V	VI	VII
simple	complex	complex	respite	complex	simple
contemplative	slow Ländler?	solo/fugue	Ländler (IV)	solo/fugue	contemplative



This motif that sets the overall tone & generates most other themes

Musicologist Steven Ledbetter has written, “The music achieves a symphonic breadth and strength that marks an important turning point in [Brahms’] work. At every point we encounter the classically minded composer, whose power comes not from theatrical display but rather from carefully balanced control of harmony and rhythm, melody, and tone color.”

Brahms’ choral masterpiece provides singers with a rare poignant emotional experience, notwithstanding the staggering stamina and technical prowess required of them. It is a personal spiritual document addressed to all humanity, and “Freude” (joy) appears more than any other word. Brahms meant “Freude” in the same sense Beethoven did in his “Ode to Joy.” For him, joy was the summit of life, and its rebirth is what we hope for on the other side of mourning.



Dr. Laura Stanfield Prichard, Harvard University
2025 revision of 2004 Berkshire Notes



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—John Chapman

John Chapman passed away in the summer of 2014, within days of having performed with the San Francisco Choral Society his favorite piece — Brahms' *A German Requiem*. He, and his passion for choral music, will be sorely missed.

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nach Worten der heiligen Schrift

Texts & Translations

The German text below was selected by Brahms from the Lutheran Bible.
The English is from the King James Bible.

I	GERMAN	ENGLISH
Matthew 5:4	Selig sind, die da Leid tragen, denn sie sollen getröstet werden.	Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.
Psalms 126:5,6	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.	They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.
II		
1 Peter 1:24	Denn alles Fleisch ist wie Gras und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie des Grases Blumen. Das Gras ist verdorret und die Blume abgefallen.	For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.
James 5:7	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.	Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandmen waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.
1 Peter 1:25	Aber des Herrn Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit.	But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.
Isaiah 35:10	Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wieder kommen, und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen; ewige Freude wird über ihrem Haupte sein; Freude und Wonne werden sie ergreifen und Schmerz und Seufzen wird weg müssen.	And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

(cont'd.)

III

Psalm 39:4-7	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 Hand breit 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, wess soll ich mich trösten? Ich hoffe auf dich.	Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is: that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope is in thee.
Wisdom of Solomon 3:1	Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand und keine Qual rühret sie an.	But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and there shall no torment touch them.

IV

Psalm 84:1,2,4	Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth! Meine seele verlangt 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 amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee.
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V

John 16:22	Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit; aber ich will euch wieder sehen und euer Herz soll sich freuen und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.	And ye now therefore have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.
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(cont'd.)

V (cont'd.)

Ecclesiasticus 51:27	Sehet mich an: Ich habe eine kleine Zeit Mühe und Arbeit gehabt und habe großen Trost funden.	Ye see how for a little while I labor and toil, yet have I found much rest.
Isaiah 66:13	Ich will euch trösten, wie Einen seine Mutter tröstet.	As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you.

VI

Hebrews 13:14	Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt, sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.	For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.
1 Corinthians 15:51,52,54,55	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 verwandelt werden. Dann wird erfüllet werden das Wort, das geschrieben steht: Der Tod is verschlungen in den Sieg. Tod, wo ist dein Stachel? Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?	Behold, I shew 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 trump: 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?
Revelation 4:11	Herr, du bist Würdig zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft, denn du hast alle Dinge geschaffen, und durch deinen Willen haben sie das Wesen und sind geschaffen.	Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

VII

Revelation 14:13	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 the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.
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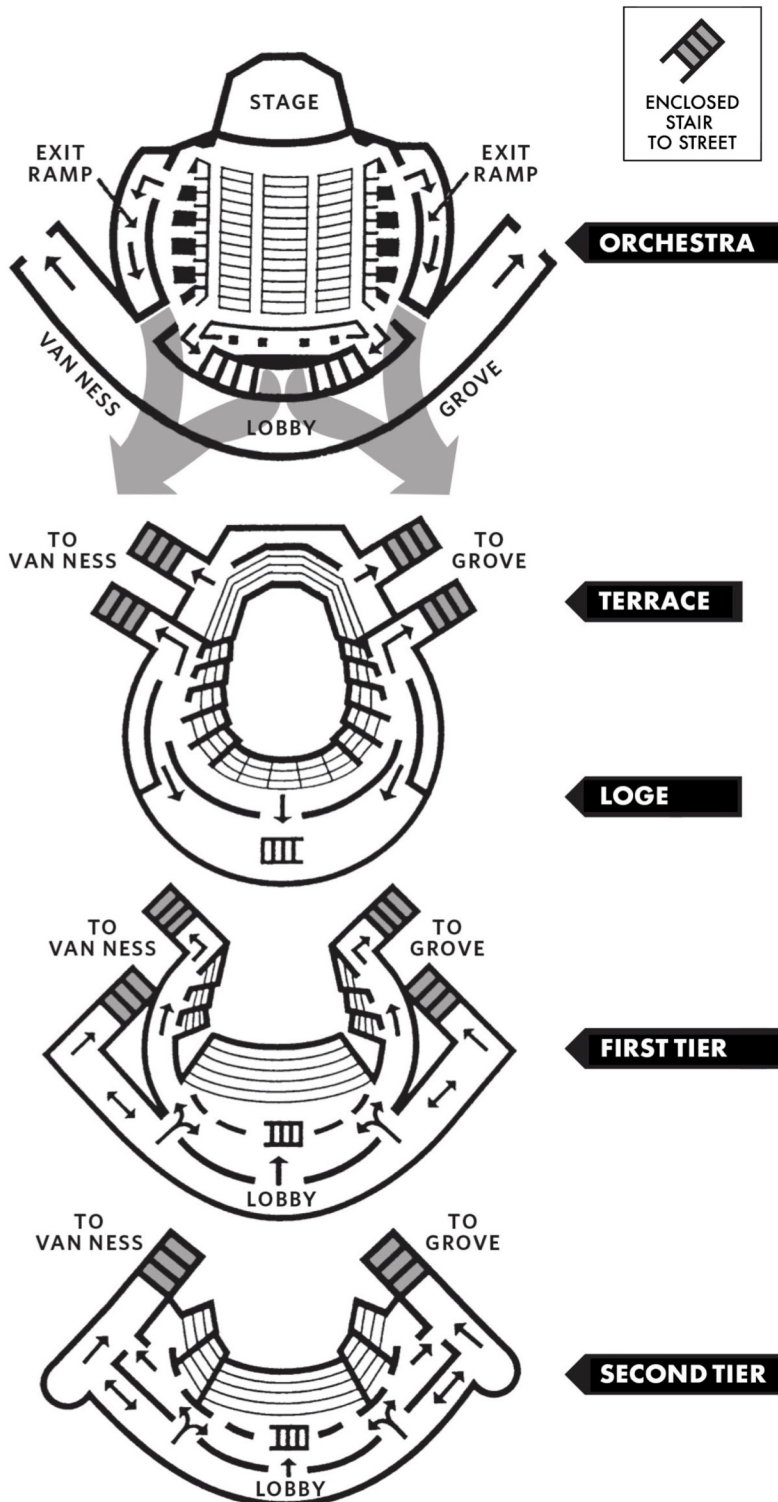
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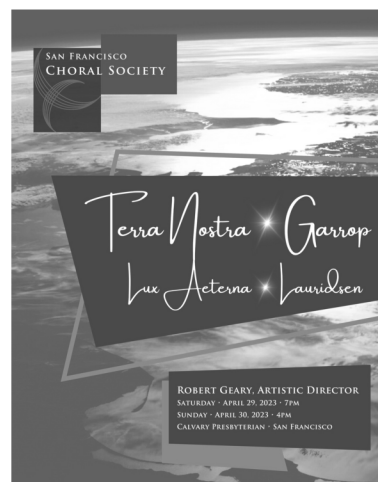
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