

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

in the City of Charleston presents

Johannes Brahms

Requiem

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN



FOR THEY SHALL HAVE COMFORT

All Saints Sunday, November 1

4:00 pm

Johannes Brahms

Ein Deutsches Requiem

† † † †

Dr Scott Bennett
Conductor

Esther Williams
Soprano

Art Bumgardner
Baritone

The St Gregory Choir
of Grace Episcopal Church

Edward Norman
Organ

Kathleen Wilson
Harp

Beth Albert
Timpani

Text

Chorus

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall have comfort.

(Matthew 5:4)

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Who goeth forth and weepeth, and beareth precious seed, shall doubtless return with rejoicing, and bring his sheaves with him.

(Psalm 126:5-6)

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall have comfort.

Chorus

Behold, all flesh is as the grass, and all the goodliness of man is as the flower of grass; for lo, the grass withereth, and the flower thereof decayeth.

(1 Peter 1:24)

Now, therefore, be patient, O my brethren, unto the coming of Christ. See how the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early rain and the latter rain. So be patient.

(James 5:7)

Behold, all flesh is as the grass, and all the goodliness of man is as the flower of grass; for lo, the grass withereth, and the flower thereof decayeth. But yet the Lord's word endureth for evermore. The redeemed of the Lord shall return again, and come rejoicing unto Zion; joy and gladness upon their heads shall be; joy and gladness, these shall be their portion, and tears and sighing shall flee from them.

(1 Peter 1:24-25)

Baritone Solo and Chorus

Lord, make me to know the measure of my days on earth,
to consider my frailty that I must perish. Surely, all my
days here are as an hand-breadth to Thee, and my lifetime
is as naught to Thee. Verily, mankind walketh in a vain show,
and their best state is vanity. Man passeth away like a shadow,
he is disquieted in vain, he heapeth up riches, and cannot
tell who shall gather them. Now, Lord, O, what do I wait for?
My hope is in thee.

(Psalm 39:4-7)

But the righteous souls are in the hand of God, nor pain nor grief shall nigh them come.

(Wisdom of Solomon 3:1)

Chorus

How lovely is Thy dwelling-place, O Lord of Hosts! For my soul, it
longeth, yea fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my soul and body
crieth out, yea, for the living God. O blest are they that dwell within
Thy house; they praise Thy name evermore.

(Psalm 84:1, 2, 4)

Soprano Solo and Chorus

Ye now are sorrowful, howbeit ye shall again behold me, and your
heart shall be joyful, and your joy no man taketh from you.

(John 16:22)

Yea, I will comfort you, as one whom his own mother comforteth.

(Isaiah 66:13)

Look upon me; ye know that for a little time labor and sorrow
were mine, but at the last I have found comfort.

(Ecclesiasticus 51:35)

Baritone Solo and Chorus

Here on earth have we no continuing place, howbeit, we seek
one to come.

(Hebrews 13:14)

Lo, I unfold unto you a mystery. We shall not all sleep when He
cometh, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the
twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the trumpet. For the trumpet
shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and
all we shall be changed. Then what of old was written, the same
shall be brought to pass. For death shall be swallowed in victory.
Grave, where is thy triumph? Death, O where is thy sting?

(1 Corinthians 15:31-35, 54-55)

Worthy art Thou to be praised, Lord of honour and might, for
thou hast earth and heaven created, and for Thy good pleasure
all things have their being, and were created.

(Revelation 4:11)

Chorus

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Saith
the Spirit, that they rest now from all their labours, and that their
works follow after them.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth.

(Revelation 14:13)

St. Gregory Choir and Friends

Scott Bennett, Conductor

SOPRANO

Inga Agrest*
Lynn Barber
Jodi Bennett
Marsha Callahan
Sarah Christian
Susan Gray
Jane Hill*
Mary Moser*
Kitty Rice
Karen Rider
Mary Rudisill
Laura Schroeder
Jean Wade
Esther Williams

ALTO

Mary Beth Berry
Karen Bostick
Mary Elizabeth Canaday
Barbara Christie
Christina Demos*
Julie Fenimore*
Ruth Goldsmith
Elsie Kohlenberg
Thu Leshner
Ansley Lucas
Camille Reynolds
Martha Rudisill
Terry Ritchen
Char Stricklin
Anna Lee Turner

TENOR

Graham Bridges
Wayne French
Chris Greene*
Bob Hill*
Aaron Leshner
Brian Scholtens
Alex Schroeder
Curtis Worthington*

BASS

Art Bumgardner*
Bill Christian
Barry Goldsmith
Lee Kohlenberg
Ed Ritchen
Jason Roberson
John Schroeder
Steve Skardon
Sam Stafford
Derek Wade

*Denotes guest singer

Edward Norman, Guest Organist

Kathleen Wilson, Harp

Beth Albert, Timpani

Johannes Brahms
Ein Deutsches Requiem
Program Notes


The word “requiem” traditionally refers to the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead, the opening introit of which begins with the Latin phrase “Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine” (“Grant them eternal rest, O Lord”), the first word of the service lending itself as a title to the whole. Many composers, of course, had written settings of the Requiem, but these were liturgical works, settings of the Latin text of the Catholic service, intended for actual use in a service as a prayer for the soul of the deceased. Brahms, however, conceived the extraordinary idea of creating his own text, carefully selecting Biblical passages that would not correspond to the funeral liturgy of any church, but would nonetheless represent a deeply felt response to the central problem of human existence. And to distinguish his work from the Catholic Mass for the Dead, he called it *Ein deutsches Requiem* (“A German Requiem”).

It is not clear where Brahms got the idea for an original, non-liturgical choral piece of this sort. His close friend and mentor Robert Schumann left a sketchbook in which he outlined works that he intended some day to compose; one of these contained the title “Ein deutsches Requiem,” and Brahms may well have encountered it when helping Clara Schu-


mann after her husband’s death in July 1856 (though years later he could not recall ever having seen it). Still, Schumann’s death had a powerful impact on the younger man, and he began working on a composition to relieve the melancholy that loomed over him at the loss of his friend. Already, about 1854, long before Brahms had any thought of writing a large choral piece, he had worked on music that he intended to make into a symphony in D minor; eventually it became his First Piano Concerto. One theme originally intended for the aborted symphony and finally rejected, ultimately resurfaced as the beginning of the second movement of the *German Requiem*, a movement composed between 1857 and 1859. It became part of a larger plan in the fall of 1861, when Brahms included it as part of a planned cantata in four movements for which he worked out the text. But there it remained, without further progress, for four years. Then, on 2 February 1865, Brahms received in Vienna an urgent telegram from his brother Fritz in Hamburg: “If you want to see our mother once again, come immediately.” He went north immediately, but his mother had suffered a stroke, and by the time Johannes arrived, she was no more. This event haunted and depressed him. Typically he turned to creative work to exorcise the thought of death. Within two months

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he had completed the first, second, and fourth movements of the Requiem. Then Brahms's heavy concert touring schedule – alone and with the violinist Joachim – intervened. It took until August 1866 to complete the remainder of the work, with the exception of the fifth movement.




By September Brahms had played the score for Clara Schumann, who was and remained his life-long confidante and sounding board. She wrote in her diary, "Johannes has been playing me some magnificent movements out of a Requiem of his own and a string quartet in C minor. The Requiem delighted me even more, however. It is full of tender and again daring thoughts. I cannot feel clear as to how it will sound, but in myself it sounds glorious."




The Requiem was originally intended to consist of six movements. The first three were performed in Vienna, with Johannes Herbeck conducting, on 1 December 1867, in a concert devoted to the memory of Schubert. The results were equivocal. Some of the audience heartily approved, but most of the Viennese found it too austere for their taste – especially the third movement, which was actually booed (though the fault was partly that of the timpanist, who played so loudly in the extended fugue that he drowned everyone else out!). Theodor Billroth, the medical man and chamber music player who was rapidly becoming one of Brahms's closest friends, noted that the austerity of Brahms's music,

his avoidance of sensuous audience-pleasing tricks, seemed to have almost an ethical point. "His Requiem is so nobly spiritual and so Protestant-Bachish that it was difficult to make it go down here. The hissing and clapping became really violent; it was a party conflict. In the end the applause conquered.



The entire six-movement work received its first performance under the composer's baton in Bremen Cathedral on Good Friday, 10 April 1868. Here Brahms achieved the first great triumph of his life – and for that reason no doubt the sweetest. But the score was still not finished. Soon after the premiere, he added the fifth movement, with soprano solo, which, as its text indicates, is clearly a tribute to his mother's memory. The Requiem thus stood finished as we know it today; that version was first heard in Leipzig on 18 February 1869, when Carl Reinecke conducted. In this final form the piece quickly attained the rank of a classic; it was heard in Germany twenty times within the first year.



Brahms himself brilliantly assembled the text of his *German Requiem* from Luther's translation of the Bible – from the Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha. He may have worked partly from memory, since he sometimes departed from details of Luther's words (the text printed here is the one that Brahms set". He was apparently determined to create a universal text, one that would not follow any

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particular liturgy, and he avoided even any reference to the words “Jesus” or “Christ” (though some English translations of the work undo him in that point). The composer’s intention is indicated by a letter he wrote to the director of music at the Bremen Cathedral, where the work had its premiere, in which he explained that “German” referred only to the language in which the work was sung; he would have gladly called it “A *Human* Requiem.” Brahms is concerned to capture a universal human experience rather than a narrow doctrinal one and to address the living, the bereaved, rather than the dead. The music achieves a symphonic breadth and strength that marks an important turning point in his work, while at the same time underlining the expressive significance of his text. 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.

Steven Ledbetter

(Robert Shaw’s recording of *Ein Deutsches Requiem* with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, 1984)

Today’s performance of *Ein Deutsches Requiem* will be sung in English, accompanied by organ, harp and timpani. Brahms’s choral masterpiece truly represents one of those rare poignant emotional experiences – not to mention the staggering stamina and technical prowess required of the singers – that only a musical expression of text could birth. A monumental masterpiece matched only by its depth of expression.

Scott Bennett

Music at Grace Church

Fall 2009

Thursday, November 26

THANKSGIVING DAY FESTIVAL EUCHARIST

ST. GREGORY CHOIR

10:00 a.m.

Sunday, November 29

ADVENT LESSONS AND CAROLS

ST. GREGORY CHOIR & ST. NICHOLAS CHOIR

7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 6

CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS AT BISHOP GADSDEN

ST. GREGORY CHOIR

4:00 p.m.

Wednesday, December 16

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

ST. NICHOLAS CHOIR & GRACE HANDBELL CHOIR

5:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 20

CHRISTMAS LESSONS AND CAROLS

ST. GREGORY CHOIR & ST. NICHOLAS CHOIR

7:00 p.m.

Thursday, December 24

CHRISTMAS EVE

Family Holy Eucharist, 5:00 p.m.

St. Cecilia Choir, & St. Gregory Chamber Choir

Holy Eucharist, 8:00 p.m.

St. Nicholas Choir, St. Augustine Choir & St. Gregory Chamber Choir

Choral Eucharist, 11:00 p.m.

St. Gregory Choir

Saving Grace

Your presence at today's concert is a gift to Grace Church,
as all proceeds from ticket sales will go to the
Saving Grace Campaign.

Saving Grace is our ongoing effort to secure the funds necessary to restore our historic church building. The project began after engineers identified structural problems in the clerestory walls and in the steeple tower, which was beginning to lean.

The scaffolding went up and work began in 2007. As is common with Charleston buildings that have weathered earthquakes and hurricanes, more structural issues were identified as studies and repairs progressed.

The work being completed now has been made possible by the many financial contributions and pledges made by parishioners. The restored tower will be unveiled when the current scaffolding comes down, scheduled for later this year.

Much remains to be done, including a new foundation beneath the tower and work to strengthen the clerestory walls. Thank you for supporting this ongoing mission. If you would like to learn more about how you can help with Saving Grace, please contact Barbara Christie, Grace's Vestry Liaison for Saving Grace, at bschristie@comcast.net or (843)762-9206.



Grace Episcopal Church

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