

Sunday August 10 2014, 5:00 pm
Monday, August 11, 2014, 7:30 pm
Hillside Theater at Taliesin

Brahms: Ein Deutsches Requiem

Carl Leaf, baritone
Monica Dunn, soprano (8/10)
Madeline Ehlinger, soprano (8/11)
With the Taliesin Chorus and Orchestra
Effi Casey, Director

- I. Choir – Selig sind, die da Leid tragen
- II. Choir – Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras
- III. Baritone and Choir – Herr, lehre doch mich
- IV. Choir – Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen
- V. Soprano and Choir – Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit
- VI. Baritone and Choir – Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt
- VII. Choir – Selig sind die Toten

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Spring Green Area Arts Coalition.

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Program Notes

From its first performance in Vienna in 1867, Johannes Brahms' *German Requiem*, has been recognized as a deeply moving work of unusual significance and great mastery.

The motivations for Brahms' composition are unclear. Brahms' first biographer insisted that the idea for a requiem mass was inspired by the death of the composer's mother, in 1865. This does coincide with the letters written to Clara Schumann, and Brahms does in fact mention that his work was spurred on by the memory of his mother. In addition, the textual excerpts from the Luther Bible refer to a motherly comfort which consoles those whom the dead have left behind. Others, however, have also noted that Brahms was greatly affected by the death of his friend and benefactor Robert Schumann, and had considered, within months after Schumann's death in 1856, composing some sort of musical memorial to him. It seems likely that both his mother's and Schumann's death were for Brahms a stimulus to the completion of the work rather than its specific source. Indeed, on numerous later occasions Brahms was heard to insist that his requiem was intended for all humanity. Its innate themes of loss, melancholy and consolation are applicable to any number of life's occasions.

Early on, *German Requiem* prompted inquiries as to the composer's own religious beliefs and examinations of the spiritual message of the text. Brahms, however, seemed to care little for such questions: he considered the work to be a human requiem. His choice of texts can be ascribed less to religious inspiration and more to personal choice and a desire to address universal human experience. In choosing certain texts from Luther's translation of the Bible -- taking excerpts from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as the Apocrypha -- Brahms avoided any specific mention of Christ or even a final redemption at the hands of God. Instead, he focuses on the very human sentiments which surround the death of a loved one. The shadow of death and the seriousness of loss have scarcely been presented in music with such power. *German Requiem*, like many other vocal works of Brahms, deals with the transience of life, the need for comfort, the hope of a final resolution, and a reward for effort.

The scope and magnitude of Brahms' work are equal to, if not greater than, most traditional requiems; the structure of the movements has certain parallels in the Latin liturgy, using a framed structure with a common beginning and end ("selig sind ...") and progressing toward a center focused on blessedness (the Fourth Movement) and a type of "Dies Irae" (the Sixth).

The somber, funereal opening to the First Movement introduces a tiny musical cell, heard first with the choral sopranos "Selig sind" (Blessed are they...") and then in contrast and in reverse as sorrow turns to joy with a splash of bright sound from the harp.

The Second Movement begins with a cross between funeral march and dance of death, using the same thematic cell but now in descending form. Moving forward and back again, the music calls for patience and hope but yields to the march, turning at last into a vibrant chorus ("the ransomed of the Lord") and a magical, tranquil close.

A dark, urgent baritone solo opens the Third Movement in dialogue with the chorus, countering fears and doubts with a radiantly confident assertion "My hope is in thee." The Fourth Movement is of a different sort, a tranquil mid-point, by all measures the best known passage from the work: "How lovely is thy dwelling place."

In the Fifth Movement, the grief, doubt and despair of the Third Movement are set aside. The soprano sings of maternal consolation, echoed by the murmuring of the chorus and the gentle sighs of the upper strings and woodwinds. The Sixth Movement, for this concert presented in text alone, is a powerful fugue built on the same three-note thematic musical cell, asserting with enormous force the victory of life over death.

The final movement has much the shape of the first, using the basic thematic cell once again and beginning with the same word, "Selig" ("Blessed"). Here, however, the blessing is for the dead who have gone to their rest rather than for the living seeking comfort. The sopranos soar to a brilliant high with the harps rising to an ethereal conclusion over the final whispered "selig, selig."

Brahms' largest work in any medium, *German Requiem* is a deeply felt response to the central problem of human existence and the universal longings of men and women throughout time.

The Artists

Carl Leaf, baritone

The youngest of the seven children of a musically gifted Swedish Lutheran pastor, it was a religiously enforced expectation that Carl, too, would join the family and church choirs. More singing opportunities would come later with the Augustana College Choir where, most significantly, he met his wife, Jane. He worked as a physical therapist in the Chicago area and continued his singing avocation with the Chicago Symphony Chorus under Margaret Hillis. He also sang with the Chicago Master Singers and was a featured soloist on several European tours. And of course, many will remember his wonderful solos in past Rural Musicians Forum events.

Monica Dunn, soprano

Monica Dunn first sang with the Taliesin Chorus in 2012 of which she was a featured soloist in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. She is more than thrilled that the choir has returned in full force to perform Brahms *Requiem*. A native of Morris, Illinois, Monica attended Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN where she received her degree in vocal performance studying with Dr. Deborah Norin-Keuhn. Upon graduation Monica edited choral music and sang on demonstration recordings for hymnal publisher GIA Publications in Chicago. Here in Southwest Wisconsin, Monica is a member of americana string band Point Five singing lead vocals with her husband, Aaron. The band is currently awaiting the release of their new album, *Pecatonica*, available this month at www.pointfiveband.com.

Madeline Ehlinger, soprano

Madeline is thrilled to be singing with this fantastic choir in the Brahms *Requiem*. Not many eighteen year olds can say they've had the privilege to sing this beautiful music. Madeline was last seen with the Taliesin Choir in *Carmina Burana* as a soprano soloist. She recently graduated from River Valley High School where you may have seen her as Reno Sweeney in *Anything Goes* and Rosie in *Bye Bye Birdie*-both directed by her phenomenal father Nick Ehlinger. Madeline has been a member of school ensembles such as vocal jazz choir and madrigal ensemble as well as the Wisconsin State Honors Choir. Next fall she will be moving to Chicago to study vocal performance at DePaul University. Madeline is thankful to have been the recipient of the 2014 Rural Musician Forum's Scholarship. She is forever grateful for growing up in Spring Green surrounded by a community dedicated to the arts.

Effi Casey, Director

Born and raised in a family of artists and musicians in Germany, Effi Casey has been active as a violinist and artist all her life. Effi met and joined the Taliesin Fellowship in Europe in 1966. Effi and her husband, the late Taliesin architect Tom Casey, spent several years in Iran where Tom supervised architectural projects designed by Taliesin Architects. Together with their daughter Golnar, they rejoined the Taliesin Fellowship in Arizona and Wisconsin in 1978. Participating in all creative activities at Taliesin, in the mid-1980s, Effi took over the leadership of the Taliesin Chorus and Chamber Ensemble which continued to be an integral part of Fellowship life as it had since its inception in 1932. Known for choosing challenging choral repertoire, the Taliesin Chorus over the years included more and more singers from the surrounding communities. Effi's primary interest is to introduce audiences to exquisite musical works that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. Effi considers herself privileged to draw on the amazing talent in this community and to inspire singers and instrumentalists to explore together extraordinary works (in their original language!) as an enrichment of life. Effi is dedicating this performance of "Ein Deutsches Requiem" by Brahms to all people who act in unshakable conviction of spirit over death and destruction. In particular, she dedicates the requiem to Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Borthwick, her children, including all others present, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the tragedies at Taliesin in 1914.

Taliesin Chorus

Sopranos

Eliana Baccas
Jeannie Campbell
Nancy Cullen
Monica Dunn
Madeline Ehlinger
Sara Lomasz Flesch
Julie Kardatzke
Terry Kerr
Ayla Langer
Amy Leber
Missy Mack
Jessica Neils
Sandra Shane-DuBow
Sara Stellick

Altos

Margie Ferstl
Lilia Glubisz
Mary Gottschalk
Susan Greenwood
Jane Leaf
Jenafer Lloyd-Jones
Jo Anne Preston
Livija Renner
Spencer Schumann
Ruellene Seymour
Jan Swenson
Cheryl Wittman

Tenors

Chichi Armstrong
Allen DeSchepper
Harlan Ferstl
Terry Kiss Frank
Christopher Lock
Dundee McNair
Jonathan Schroerlucke
Roger Seymour
Doug Swenson

Basses

David Aitken
Earl Barnes
Erik Flesch
Tom Forseth
Bob Klassy
Ben Leaf
Sven Leaf
Carl Leaf
Dan Peterson
Victor Sidy
Jason Silverman
Mike Smith
Keith Symon
Mark Timmerman
Ron Towle

Orchestra

Violin I: Concertmaster: Dan Stachyra	Flute I: Dawn Lawler
Violin I: Maureen McCarthy	Flute II/ Piccolo: Diane Aitken
Violin II: Alexis Carreon	Oboe I: Andy Olson
Violin II: Caroline Hamblen	Oboe II: Lauren McNeel
Viola I: Katrin Talbot	Clarinet: Timothy Wright
Viola II: John Sagos	Horn I: Ricardo Almeida
Cello I: Perry Karp	Horn II: Rebecca Schroeder
Cello II: Anton TenWolde	Horn III: Mary Jo Wilson
Double Bass: August Jirovec	Trumpet I: Sheri McKinney
Piano: Bob Willoughby	Trumpet II: Rebecca Schinker
Chorus Pianist: Bob Willoughby	Timpani: Gaile Burchill