



Great Conductors • Karajan

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ADD



BRAHMS

Ein deutsches Requiem

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf
Hans Hotter

Choral Society of the Friends
of Music, Vienna
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Herbert von Karajan

Historical Recording 1947

Great Conductors: Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989)

BRAHMS: Ein deutsches Requiem

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on 7th May 1833 and died in Vienna on 3rd April 1897. He was the most significant and important German composer of the mid to late nineteenth century, a figure who towered over the musical world in German-speaking countries. He had met and knew most of his leading contemporaries – Joachim, Cornelius, Raff, Hiller, Reinecke, Clara and Robert Schumann, Dvořák, Johann Strauss, Wagner – and was acquainted with their music. His compositions cover the whole spectrum excepting opera.

Brahms was 31 when his mother Christiane died in Hamburg, aged 76, on 2nd February 1865. The idea of a large scale choral work in her memory may possibly have been sparked by this event but he never said as much at any time. It was during the months of February to April the following year whilst in Karlsruhe that the work began to take shape. He had earlier selected suitable text passages from Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible. The original structure was to comprise six movements – No. 2, *Denn alles Fleisch est ist wie Gras* having its roots in an abandoned *Symphony in D minor* dating from 1854-55, was added after the 1868 première in Bremen. Brahms finished the work at Baden-Baden during August later that year. The first occasion any of the music was heard in public was when the first three numbers of the *Requiem* were performed in Vienna on 1st December 1867.

The first performance of the new work (without No. 5) took place under Karl Martin Reinthaler (1822-1896) in Bremen on 10th April 1868. The missing fifth movement was composed during that summer and the whole six movements were later published. Thus the first complete performance of *Ein deutsches Requiem* was given at the Gewandhaus in Leipzig on 18th February 1869, conducted by Carl Reinecke. The work is scored for soprano and baritone soloists, SATB chorus and orchestra.

It is important to point out that use of the word German in the title is to show it bears no relation to the Roman liturgy but to the language of the Lutheran

Bible, the cornerstone of so many German musical settings, so that the feelings and emotions are in no way simply of the dead but more in the manner of the bereaved. In selecting passages from both Old and New Testaments and the Apocrypha, Brahms displays more of a sense of meditation for the living and the dead, an embodiment of the Lutheran spirit.

In the dark, sombre but serene first movement *Selig sind, die da Leid tragen* (Blessed are they who mourn) Brahms omits violins, piccolo, clarinets, two horns, trumpets, tuba, and timpani entirely and subdivides the viola and cello part to create this sombre effect. The first three notes of the chorus introduce a motive that recurs in a number of forms throughout the movement. The second movement, *Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras* (For all flesh is as grass), opens in the manner of a slow march in triple time. The violins then enter in a high register, as if to emphasize the fact of their appearance at last. The timpani appear quietly, sounding ominous triplets. The mood then brightens with the words *So seid nun geduldig* (So now be patient), only for the march-like music to return. A triumphant outburst at the words *Die Erlösten des Herrn werden wiederkommen* (And the ransomed of the Lord shall return) is followed by a quiet ending. The baritone solo begins the third movement *Herr, lehre doch mich* (Lord, let me know mine end) with a darkly urgent recitative in dialogue with the chorus with words from *Psalms 39* which describe man's mortality. He is pleading for guidance. In reply the chorus asserts *Ich hoffe auf dich* (My hope is in thee), which Brahms sets in the form of a forceful fugue.

In the choral fourth movement *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* (How lovely are thy dwellings) Brahms moves in to a new world harmonically and expressively. It opens and closes with a sublime meditation, interspersed by a fugal interlude. The fifth movement *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit* (And ye now therefore have sorrow) features the soprano soloist, but the contrast could hardly be more striking. Here, in a bright key, the soprano sings of maternal consolation,

echoed by the equally reassuring words of the choral writing. The opening of the sixth movement *Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende Statt* (For here we have no abiding city) has the baritone soloist declaiming the prophecy of the coming Resurrection, followed in turn by a vast double fugue in which the chorus praise God with the words *Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen* (Thou art worthy, O Lord). The final movement *Selig sind die Toten* (Blessed are the dead) concludes on an exultant note, linked back to the opening chorus.

This recording was the first complete studio version to be made, suitable because of Brahms's association with the city, in Vienna in the second year following World War II. The city was then divided into four zones of occupation between the Allied powers. Electrical power could be erratic and the political situation made for considerable economic difficulties. The EMI producer Walter Legge (1906-1979) had negotiated contracts with the two soloists, the conductor and the orchestra the previous year when he came to the city searching for new artists to add to the EMI roster. Recording a work such as this Brahms piece entailed considerable planning so as to use the soloists in the day and chorus in the evening. Then again, the recording was made onto wax-based masters for eventual return to England for processing. Legge was particularly fortunate in having his favourite engineer Douglas Larter to balance the recording. The result was indeed a remarkable achievement, capturing the soloists, chorus and orchestra in the warm and mellow acoustic of the Grosser Saal of the Musikverein.

The German soprano **Elisabeth Schwarzkopf** (1915-2006) studied at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik and later with the soprano Maria Ivogün, making her début as one of the Flowermaidens in *Parsifal* with the Städtische Oper, Berlin, in 1938. Originally a lyrical soprano she undertook rôles such as Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Musetta in *La Bohème* and Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* when she joined the Vienna State Opera under Karl Böhm in 1943. Her first overseas appearance was with this company on their visit to London in 1947 when she sang Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and Marzelline in *Fidelio*. She then joined the fledgling Covent Garden Company, where for five

seasons she sang a variety of rôles, mostly in English. Alongside these appearances, Schwarzkopf sang at the Salzburg Festival (1946-1964), La Scala, Milan (1948-1963), San Francisco (1955-1964) and, finally, the Metropolitan in New York in 1964. She was greatly admired in the rôles of the Marschallin, Fiordiligi, the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Donna Elvira. Schwarzkopf also created the role of Anne Trulove in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* in September 1951. She also had a distinguished parallel career as a Lieder singer in the concert hall. After her retirement as a singer she continued to give master-classes and adjudication in major competitions. A fiercely self-critical artist, Schwarzkopf was extremely demanding of herself and her art. She was the wife of the impresario and recording producer Walter Legge whom she married in 1953, becoming a naturalised British subject. She was created a DBE in 1992.

The German bass-baritone **Hans Hotter** (1909-2003) studied in Munich with Matthäus Roemer and later worked as an organist and choirmaster before his operatic début in Troppau in 1930. He sang in the opera houses of Breslau (1931), Prague (1932-34) and Hamburg (1934-35) in addition to his base at Munich with which he was associated from 1937 until 1972. Hotter first appeared in London in 1947 with the visiting Vienna State Opera Company. His American début was in the title rôle of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* in New York in 1950. From 1952 until 1964 he sang at the Bayreuth Festival, where his incomparable interpretations of all the leading Wagnerian baritone parts were seen. He also directed a complete *Ring* cycle at Covent Garden between 1961 and 1964. Retiring from the stage in 1972, Hotter continued on occasion to appear in smaller rôles as late as 1991. He was a greatly admired Lieder singer.

The Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna, was formed in 1858. At its fullest it comprised 180 active members, often performing with the Vienna Philharmonic and Symphony Orchestras in concert and recording. The ensemble gave the first Viennese performances of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* and Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*. Its conductors have included Franz Schalk, who re-introduced the Bach *Passions*,

and Herbert von Karajan, who was associated with the choir from 1947 until his death in 1989, directing them in over 250 performances during that time.

The Austrian-born conductor **Herbert von Karajan** (1908-1989) was the most significant and influential artist of the second half of the twentieth century following the death of Wilhelm Furtwängler in 1954. He was conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic until shortly before his death in addition to having been very closely involved in the activities of the annual

Salzburg Festival from 1955 onwards. He conducted in Britain on many occasions from 1948 onwards, in Milan at the Teatro alla Scala, in addition to making a number of visits to Japan, he toured the United States and directed his own production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle in New York. His recorded legacy through the audio and visual medium was simply enormous so that future generations will be able to see how he performed.

Malcolm Walker

Producer's Note

The present transfer was made from the best portions of two sets of British shellac pressings. CEDAR declipping was able to deal with most of the crackle in the discs, but some of the grittiness in the loudest passages appears to be inherent in the masters, as it appears in EMI's transfers as well. In addition, the second side of "*Herr, lehre doch mich*" (Track 4, 4:32 to 7:52) is a dubbing in all editions.

Mark Obert-Thorn

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GREAT CONDUCTORS • KARAJAN

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45

- | | | |
|----------|---|-------|
| 1 | Selig sind, die da Leid tragen
Matrices: CHAX 290-1, 291-1 and 292-1 | 11:45 |
| 2 | Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras
Matrices: CHAX 302-2, 293-1, 294-1 and 295-1 | 15:05 |
| 3 | Herr, lehre doch mich
Matrices: CHAX 296-1, 297-4 and 298-1 | 11:26 |
| 4 | Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen
Matrices: CHAX 299-1 and 300-1 | 6:14 |
| 5 | Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit
Matrices: CHAX 301-1 and 303-1 | 7:22 |
| 6 | Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende Statt
Matrices: CHAX 304-1, 305-1 and 306-1 | 12:49 |
| 7 | Selig sind die Toten
Matrices: CHAX 307-1, 308-2 and 309-1 | 11:32 |

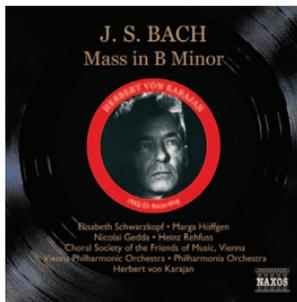
Hans Hotter, *baritone* (Tracks 3 and 6)
Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, *soprano* (Track 5)

Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
Herbert von Karajan

Recorded 20th-22nd and 27th-29th October, 1947
in the Musikvereinsaal, Vienna
First issued on Columbia LX 1055 through 1064

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn
Special thanks to Nathan Brown, R. Peter Munves and Charles Niss

Also available



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Johannes Brahms

(1833-1897)

Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra

Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989)

Playing
Time
76:13

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BRAHMS:**Ein deutsches Requiem Op. 45**

1	Selig sind, die da Leid tragen	11:45
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3	Herr, lehre doch mich	11:26
4	Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen	6:14
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Hans Hotter (baritone) (Tracks 3 and 6)

Elisabeth Schwarzkopf (soprano) (Track 5)

Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna
Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra
Herbert von KarajanRecorded 20th-22nd and 27th-29th October, 1947
in the Musikvereinsaal, Vienna

This radiant and justly famous 1947 recording of Brahms' *A German Requiem*, a tribute to the composer's mother who had died four years earlier, was the first complete studio version. It was made in Vienna two years after the end of World War II when the city was divided into four zones of occupation between the Allied powers, food was scarce and electrical power could be erratic. The result was a remarkable and poignant achievement by soloists, chorus and orchestra alike, working in extremely difficult circumstances and acutely aware of the meaning and relevance of the Lutheran sacred texts primarily intended to reconcile the living to their loss.



Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

Special thanks to Nathan Brown, R. Peter Munves and Charles Niss

www.naxos.comCover Photograph: Herbert von Karajan in Milan, 1954
(Private Collection)