

# Salisbury Choral Society

# NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor! I hope this newsletter finds you well and I hope you survived the emotional content of last week! This week's newsletter isn't as much of an emotional journey but, I hope, still of interest and still finding you opportunities to sing.

Here is this week's newsletter. As ever, comments, feedback, suggestions welcome!

## What's On Listings

The stay at home choirs are inviting you to register for their festive winter project (yes, it does mean the Chr\*stm\*s word):



<https://new.stayathomechoir.com/projects/christmas>

Plus, a quick reminder to have a look at how the Global Armed Man project turned out:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y357pB6\\_zCw&t=622s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y357pB6_zCw&t=622s)



The self-isolation choir are up and running with their "Elijah at Home" project:

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/elijah>

The Self-Isolation choir website continues to have a wealth of singing opportunities just waiting for you to participate in, including a Requiems at Home project:

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/requiems-at-home>

A quick reminder about the (possibly a once in a lifetime) chance to participate in a performance of Mahler's wonderful Resurrection Symphony. This project is receiving the support of the Mahler

Foundation and the composer's granddaughter, Marina Mahler:

<https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/symphony-no-2-mahler>

Ben England is up and running again on the Homechoir YouTube channel and has mixed it up a bit with some new episodes. Here are two videos, based on the setting of Ave verum by Elgar. The first one is the usual learning of the piece...



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmmIBHy-HiE>

... and the second one explores the history of the piece and some music theory (recommended!):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK3kT1aYHF8>



Here's a reminder of the very exciting online festival titled "Live from London" featuring some of the very best vocal ensembles. This Saturday (19<sup>th</sup>), is the turn of The Sixteen with a programme titled "Music for Reflection":

<https://voces8.foundation/the-sixteen>

The St. Martin's Music Festival continues this Thursday (17<sup>th</sup>) with an online concert

that features a live performance of Faure's Requiem, with soloists Carolyn Sampson and Roderick Williams:



<https://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/whatson-event/reconnect-a-requiem-for-our-time-online-concert/>



New for this week, is news of an online workshop for all ages, which will be led by members of Tenebrae and their

conductor and artistic director, Nigel Short:

<https://www.tenebrae-choir.com/events/2020/10/18/calling-all-singers>

Finally, for this week, here's a reminder to get involved with come and sing Handel's Messiah with the London Handel Orchestra conducted by Laurence Cummings:



<https://www.london-handel-festival.com/show/virtual-come-and-sing-messiah/?event=18001>

## Brahms Requiem (part two)



I'm continuing our "Brahms Requiem Tour" by having a look at Brahms' choice of text for the Requiem.

In choosing his text, Brahms decided not to use the familiar Latin text of the Requiem Mass, which was used in many other Requiem settings, but instead chose appropriate texts from the Bible.

So far, I've been referring to the work as "Brahms Requiem", but it is worth remembering the proper title of the work: "Ein Deutsches Requiem" (A German Requiem). In a letter dated 1867, Brahms writes: *I will admit that I could happily omit the "German" and simply say "Human"*. By referring to "human", Brahms suggests that the primary function of the text is on the comforting of the living, rather than the emphasis being on the departed, which we find in the Latin text.

Looking at the text, it is clear that Brahms knew his Bible very well, as the choice of text for the Requiem draws on material from the Old and New Testament and also the Apocrypha, which is a collection of books written sometime between 200 BC and 400 AD and are sometimes included within the Bible. The Apocrypha was first published as a separate section in Martin Luther's Bible of 1534 (pictured), which probably explains how Brahms knew of it, as he was baptised and confirmed in the Lutheran faith.



Here is a list of Biblical sources that Brahms drew from, in the order that they appear in the work:

Matthew 5 (New Testament)  
Psalm 126 (Old Testament)  
1 Peter 1 (New Testament)  
James 5 (New Testament)  
Isaiah 35 (Old Testament)  
Psalm 39 (Old Testament)  
Wisdom of Solomon 3 (Apocrypha)

Psalm 84 (Old Testament)  
John 16 (New Testament)  
Ecclesiasticus 51 (Apocrypha)  
Isaiah 66 (Old Testament)  
Hebrews 13 (New Testament)  
1 Corinthians 15 (New Testament)  
Revelation 4 & 14 (New Testament)

To compare these references with the full text, see here:

[http://www0.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Ein\\_deutsches\\_Requiem,\\_Op.\\_45\\_\(Johannes\\_Brahms\)  
#Original\\_text\\_and\\_translations](http://www0.cpd.org/wiki/index.php/Ein_deutsches_Requiem,_Op._45_(Johannes_Brahms)#Original_text_and_translations)

Within the text of the Requiem, we often find the theme that those who mourn move from feeling of anxiety to comfort, e.g.

"They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy" (1<sup>st</sup> movement.)

"The grass withers and the flower falls. So be patient dear brothers" (2<sup>nd</sup> movement)

"You now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice" (5<sup>th</sup> movement)

In a letter to the conductor Carl Martin Reinthaler (who conducted the second performance of the work), it was noted that Brahms hadn't referred to "the redeeming death of the Lord" meaning that Brahms didn't use Biblical passages such as "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" from St. John's Gospel. In fact, Brahms chose not to use any text that refers to Christ, although Christ's words are quoted at the very beginning of the first movement... "Blessed are they that have sorrow, they shall be comforted" ... and in the fifth movement: "You now have sorrow, but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice".

But the text must have continued to cause concern with the authorities at Bremen Cathedral (the venue of the first performance), which might explain the choice of the additional items in the programme from Handel's Messiah (see last week's newsletter for more information).

Next week, I'll be having a look at some of the composers and music that Brahms was influenced by in composing this setting of the Requiem mass.

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## Talking of Brahms...

As the Winchester City Festival Choirs forthcoming performance of the Brahms Requiem is cancelled, I'm giving them an opportunity to rehearse it anyway. Why not join in too?



Here is the first in a series of Brahms Requiem rehearsals which were put together earlier in lockdown by Simon Halsey who is chorus master of the London Symphony Chorus and the City of Birmingham Symphony Chorus, amongst other work with choirs here and in Europe.

In this video, Simon Halsey takes you through the first movement of the Brahms. I'll point you in the direction of the other videos over the next few weeks.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIqoog5T1VY>

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## And finally!

A little reminder to have a look (if you haven't already) at the recent full performance of Verdi's Requiem (yes really) by the Choir and Orchestra of La Scala Theatre conducted by Riccardo Chailly in Milan Cathedral. The concert is dedicated to those who have died in the Covid-19 pandemic.



<https://www.raiplay.it/video/2020/09/Messa-da-Requiem-di-Verdi-4be21178-8910-4a94-b189-cde40e4e332f.html>

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That's all for this week folks. I hope you're still enjoying the newsletters.

Stay safe and keep singing!

*Graham*