

Salisbury Choral Society

NEWSLETTER

THURSDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2020

Welcome to another edition of ramblings from the conductor!

I hope this newsletter finds you well.

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

What's On Listings

The stay at home choir are inviting you to register for their festive winter project... 
<https://new.stayathomechoir.com/projects/christmas>



... and there are loads of singing opportunities still available on the self-isolation choir website: <https://www.theseisolationchoir.com/>

Ben England's excellent videos on the Homechoir YouTube channel are well worth joining in with. My recommendations this week are two videos, one on music theory using "The Silver Swan" by Orlando Gibbons (see last week for the link to the video where you learn the madrigal)... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtNBCGIRf6A&t=71s> 
...and the "Sacred Sunday" video which also uses "The Silver Swan" alongside other sacred choral miniatures, including a couple of gospel songs: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mc-QQzP1x_Q



A final reminder 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>

And another plug for the opportunity from "Run by Singers" who organise singing trips abroad for singers. This is an opportunity to sing Mozart's

RunbySingers

Requiem online. Not only can you rehearse and perform it, you can record yourself singing all or part of the work for inclusion on the CD with full Baroque Orchestra and soloists, with the proceeds of the CD going to a UK cancer charity set up by singers called "Requiem to Cancer" <https://www.requiemtocancer.org/>. This opportunity also includes recipes for Viennese punch and cookies. Sounds good to me! <https://www.runbysingers.org/virtual-vienna>

Singing during lockdown

I thought you might find it helpful to have some vocal warm up videos to try out. These exercises are designed to get your minds bodies and voices in shape for doing some singing with others or just to keep your voice ticking over. Don't forget that our voices are musical instruments which need regular practice!

In the future, I hope to add some resources of mine on the choir website, but at the moment, I need to be careful not to be doing too much work as I am being paid through a Government grant for my self-employed work until Christmas, which I'm only entitled to if I am unable to work!! I hope that makes some sense!

So here are four warm up videos for you to have a look at, courtesy of the Royal School of Church Music. Each video takes about 10 - 15 minutes of your busy lives:

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nq8gyLDN4qI>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLBIM4srnDk>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBLFrsoErPO>
4. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jRWGIvspY4Q>

Brahms Requiem (part six)



In the last exciting episode, we had a look at some earlier choral works by Brahms which predate the Requiem. This week, I'm having a look at some secular choral music that Brahms composed.

Nearly everything that I've written so far about Ein Deutsches Requiem relates back to the text and this week is no exception! All of the text used in the Requiem is taken from the Bible and used in a "sacred" context. It is interesting to note what Brahms chooses to omit as well as what he includes. Brahms focuses on comfort, hope and reassurance and avoids judgment and vengeance (no traces of Dies Irae here). In fact, Brahms could have expressed comfort, hope and reassurance through German classical or Romantic poetry, as he does in the works that I'm focusing on this week.

Firstly, the **Schicksalslied** (Song of Destiny), Op. 54, composed for choir and orchestra, which uses a poem written by the German poet and philosopher Friedrich Hölderlin (1770 - 1843) pictured right. Brahms began the work in the summer of 1868 while visiting his friend, the German composer and conductor Albert Dietrich (1829 - 1908) at the coastal town of Wilhelmshaven, situated on a bay of the North Sea. It is perhaps slightly hard on Albert Dietrich that he is best known today for his friendship with Brahms, rather than his own achievements! Albert Dietrich recalls in his writings that Brahms was first inspired to compose the Song of Destiny by watching the sea:



"One morning we went together to Wilhelmshaven, for Brahms was interested in seeing the magnificent naval port. On the way there, our friend, who was usually so lively, was quiet and grave. He described how early that morning (he was always an early riser), he had found Hölderlin's poems in the bookcase and had been deeply impressed by the Schicksalslied. Later on, after spending a long time walking round and visiting all the points of interest, we were sitting resting by the sea, when we discovered Brahms a long way off sitting by himself on the

shore writing. It was the first sketch for the *Schicksalslied*, which appeared fairly soon afterwards. A lovely excursion which we had arranged to the *Urwald* was never carried out. He hurried back to Hamburg, in order to give himself up to his work."

Here is a recording from The Monteverdi Choir and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, conducted by John Eliot Gardiner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZiKpcEhSj0>



Next, a brief look at **Nänie** (meaning "a funeral song") Op. 82, composed for choir and orchestra. This piece sets to music the poem "Nänie" by the German poet, philosopher, physician, historian, and playwright Friedrich Schiller (1759 - 1805), pictured left.

Brahms began his composition in spring 1880 as a response to the death of his friend, the German painter Anselm Feuerbach (1829 - 1880), pictured right. He chose the text referring to the frequent motifs from Greek mythology in the painter's work.



Brahms completed the composition in the summer of 1881 and dedicated it to the painter's stepmother, the German author and patron of the arts, Henriette Feuerbach (1812 - 1892), pictured left. Composed about a decade after *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, it shows a similar approach of consolation of those who mourn a death.



Here is John Eliot Gardiner again: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06_XcWz5F58

Finally, for this week, I'll point you in the direction of the **Gesang der Parzen** (Song of the Fates), Op. 89 for choir and orchestra. On this occasion, the choir writing is in six parts (SAATBB). The work uses a text from act four of a reworking of a Greek Tragedy called *Iphigenie auf Tauris* by the German writer and statesman Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 - 1832), pictured right. Like the other two works, this piece is composed



in one movement. The work was composed in 1882 and dedicated to Duke Georg von Sachsen-Meiningen (pictured left). The Duke and his wife were great admirers of Brahms' music and offered him their hospitality on numerous occasions. The piece was premiered in Basel on 10 December of the same year, and published in 1883.



Here's John Eliot Gardiner once more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4s33hCV1nmg>

Next week I'll be back to sacred music and having a look at some of the choral and vocal works dating from the end of Brahms' life.

Talking of Brahms...

As the Winchester City Festival Choirs forthcoming performance of the Brahms Requiem is cancelled, why not take the opportunity to join with them and rehearse it anyway?

Here is the fifth 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 sixth 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=HIYv82YefEQ>



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

Stay safe and keep singing!

Graham