

*Ein deutsches Requiem, op. 45**A German Requiem*

## 1. Chorus

Matthew 5: 4; Psalm 126: 5-6

Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,  
**Blessed are, who — grief bear,**  
 denn sie sollen getröstet werden.  
**for they shall comforted be.**

Blessed are those who mourn,  
 for they shall be comforted.

Die mit Tränen säen,  
**Who with tears sow,**  
 werden mit Freuden ernten.  
**will with joys harvest.**  
 Sie gehen ihn und weinen,  
**They go forth and weep,**  
 und tragen edlen Samen,  
**and bear precious seeds,**  
 und kommen mit Freuden  
**and come with joys**  
 und bringen ihre Garben.  
**and bring their sheaves.**

Those who sow with tears  
 will reap with joy.  
 They go forth and weep,  
 bearing precious seeds,  
 and return rejoicing,  
 bringing their sheaves.

## 2. Chorus

I Peter 1: 24; James 5: 7, 8a; I Peter 1: 25; Isaiah 35: 10

Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras  
**For all flesh — is like grass**  
 und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen  
**and all magnificence of mortals**  
 wie des Grases Blumen.  
**like the grasses' flowers.**  
 Das Gras ist verdorret  
**The grass has dried up**  
 und die Blume abgefallen.  
**and the flower fallen off.**

For all flesh is like the grass,  
 and all the magnificence of mortals  
 is like the flowers of the grass.  
 The grass has withered,  
 and the flower has fallen away.

So seid nun geduldig, lieben Brüder,  
**So be now patient, dear brothers,**  
 bis auf die Zukunft des Herrn.  
**until the future of the Lord.**  
 Siehe, ein Ackermann wartet  
**Behold, a husbandman waits**  
 auf die köstliche Frucht der Erde  
**for the precious fruit of the earth**  
 und ist geduldig darüber, bis er empfahe  
**and is patient about it until he receives**  
 den Morgenregen und Abendregen.  
**the morning-rain and evening-rain.**

So now be patient, dear friends,  
 until the life hereafter.  
 Behold, a husbandman waits  
 for the precious fruit of the earth  
 and is patient  
 until he receives  
 the early and later rain.

Aber des Herrn Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit.  
**But the Lord's word remains in eternity.**

But the word of the Lord endures forever.

Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wieder kommen,  
**The redeemed of the Lord will again come**  
 und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen;  
**and to Zion come with shouts of joy;**  
 ewige Freude wird über ihrem Haupte sein;  
**eternal joy will upon their head be;**  
 Freude und Wonne werden sie ergreifen  
**joy and delight will them seize**  
 und Schmerz und Seufzen wird weg müssen.  
**and sorrow and sighing will [go] away have to.**

The redeemed of the Lord will return  
 and come to Zion with shouts of joy;  
 eternal joy will be upon their heads;  
 joy and delight will overcome them  
 and sorrow and sighing will have to depart.

## 3. Baritone Solo and Chorus

Psalm 39: 4-7; Wisdom of Solomon 3: 1

Herr, lehre doch mich,  
**Lord, teach — me,**  
 daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß,  
**that an end with me have must,**  
 und mein Leben ein Ziel hat,  
**and my life an end has,**  
 und ich davon muß.  
**and I away must.**

Siehe, meine Tage sind  
**Behold, my days are**  
 einer Hand breit vor dir,  
**a hand wide before you,**  
 und mein Leben ist wie nichts vor dir.  
**and my life is as nothing before you.**  
 Ach, wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen,  
**Ah, how —nothing at all— are all mortals,**  
 die doch so sicher leben.  
**who yet so confidently live.**

Sie gehen daher wie ein Schemen,  
**They go about like a phantom,**  
 und machen ihnen viel vergebliche Unruhe;  
**and create them much vain unrest;**  
 sie sammeln und wissen nicht  
**they gather and know not**  
 wer es kriegen wird.  
**who it receive will.**  
 Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?  
**Now Lord, in whom shall I myself comfort?**  
 Ich hoffe auf dich.  
**I trust in you.**

Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand,  
**The righteous' souls are in God's hand,**  
 und keine Qual rühret sie an.  
**and no torment touches them —.**

Lord, teach me  
 that I must have an end,  
 and that my life has an end,  
 and that I must pass away.

Behold, my days here  
 are but a handbreadth before you,  
 and my life is nothing before you.  
 Ah, how insignificant all mortals are,  
 and yet they live so confidently.

They go about like a phantom,  
 and create so much vain disquiet;  
 they gather things, and know not  
 who will receive them.  
 Now, Lord, in whom shall I find consolation?  
 I trust in you.

The souls of the righteous are in God's hands,  
 and no torment touches them.

## 4. Chorus

Psalm 84: 1, 2, 4

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen,  
**How lovely are your dwellings,**  
 Herr Zebaoth!  
**Lord Sabaoth!**  
 Meine Seele verlangt und sehnet sich  
**My soul yearns and longs —**  
 nach den Vorhöfen des Herrn;  
**for the courts of the Lord;**  
 mein Leib und Seele freuen sich  
**my body and soul rejoice —**  
 in dem lebendigen Gott.  
**in the living God.**

Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,  
**Well-being to those, who in your house dwell,**  
 die loben dich immerdar.  
**who praise you forever.**

How lovely are your dwellings,  
 O Lord of hosts!  
 My soul yearns and longs  
 for the courts of the Lord;  
 my body and soul rejoice  
 in the living God.

Blessed are those who dwell in your house,  
 those who praise you forever more.

## 5. Soprano Solo and Chorus

John 16: 22; Isaiah 66: 13; Ecclesiasticus 51: 35

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;  
**You have now sorrow;**  
 aber ich will euch wieder sehen  
**but I want to you again see**  
 und euer Herz soll sich freuen  
**and your heart shall — rejoice**  
 und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.  
**and your joy shall no one from you take.**

You now have sorrow;  
 but I want to see you again  
 and your heart shall rejoice  
 and no one shall take your joy from you.

Sehet mich an:  
**Look at me —:**

Ich habe eine kleine Zeit Mühe und Arbeit gehabt,  
**I have a brief time toil and labor had,**  
 und habe großen Trost funden.  
**and have great comfort found.**

Look upon me:  
 I have toiled and labored a brief time,  
 and now I have found great comfort.

Ich will euch trösten,  
**I want to you comfort,**  
 wie einen seine Mutter tröstet.  
**as one his mother comforts.**

I want to comfort you,  
 as one is comforted by his mother.

## 6. Chorus and Baritone Solo

Hebrews 13: 14; 1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52, 54, 55; Revelation 4: 11

Denn wir haben hie kleine bleibende' Statt,  
**For we have here no permanent place,**  
 sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.  
**but the one to come seek we.**

For here we have no permanent place,  
 but we seek the one to come.

Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis:  
**Behold, I tell you a mystery:**

Wir werden nicht alle entschlafen,  
**We will not all fall asleep,**  
 wir werden aber alle verwandelt werden;  
**we will, however, all transformed be;**  
 und dasselbige plötzlich in einem Augenblick  
**and the selfsame suddenly in an instant,**  
 zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune.  
**at the time of the last trombone.**

Behold, I tell you a mystery:  
 we will not all die,  
 but we will all be transformed,  
 and transformed suddenly, in an instant,  
 at the time of the last trumpet.  
 For the trumpet will sound,  
 and the dead will rise up incorruptible,  
 and we will be transformed.  
 Then will be fulfilled  
 the word that is written:  
 Death is swallowed up in victory.  
 Death, where is your sting?  
 Hell, where is your victory?

Denn es wird die Posaune schallen  
**For — will the trombone sound**  
 und die Toten werden auferstehen unverweslich,  
**and the dead will rise up incorruptible,**  
 und wir werden verwandelt werden.  
**and we will transformed be.**

Dann wird erfüllet werden  
**Then will fulfilled be**

das Wort, das geschrieben steht:  
**the word, that written stands:**

Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.  
**— death is swallowed up in — victory.**

Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?  
**Death, where is your sting?**

Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?  
**Hell, where is your victory?**

Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen  
**Lord, you are worthy to receive**  
 Preis und Ehre und Kraft,  
**praise and honor and might,**  
 denn du hast alle Dinge geschaffen,  
**for you have all things created,**  
 und durch deinen Willen haben sie  
**and by your will have they**  
 das Wesen und sind geschaffen.  
**— being and are created.**

Lord, you are worthy to receive  
 praise and honor and might,  
 for you have created all things,  
 and by your will they have  
 their being and are created.

### 7. Chorus

Revelation 14: 13

Selig sind die Toten,  
**Blessed are the dead,**  
 die in dem Herren sterben  
**who in the Lord die**  
 von nun an.  
**from now on.**  
 Ja, der Geist spricht,  
**Yes, the Spirit says**  
 daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit,  
**that they rest from their labor**  
 denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.  
**for their works follow them after.**

Blessed are the dead  
 who die in the Lord  
 from now on.  
 Yea, the Spirit says  
 that they may rest from their labor,  
 for their works follow after them.

**J**OHANNES Brahms was highly sensitive to his texts, both in his choice of them and how he set them to music. This skill was surely at its most acute in his choice and combination of verses from the Bible—a particular irony considering that he was not at all conventionally devout and was perhaps agnostic. Heinz Beckler, the author of the essay on Brahms in *The New Grove*, explains his spiritual orientation as follows:

Brahms was never "religious" in the strict sense of the word, but in the humane sense he was a Christian. The habits which outlasted his childhood included reading from the children's Bible he was given in the year of his birth and from which he compiled the texts for his sacred choral works. He read it constantly; to the end of his life it remained his book of books, and his correspondence is astonishing for its subtle grasp of problems in the scriptures. His personal religious viewpoint was logically thought out, as shown in his confessional *German Requiem*, which suppressed the eschatological objectives of the Christian faith in favor of a pious orientation to this world. "Life steals more from one than does death," he remarked once about himself. K.M. Reintaler tried to persuade him to add an appropriate movement to bring the *Requiem* nearer the spirit of Good Friday; Brahms politely but firmly refused, and the final passages of the work are dominated not by a vision of merciless death but by comfort for those who are left to mourn. (Beckler 1980: 162)

Brahms's choice of texts for the *Requiem* illustrates his intimate knowledge of the Bible. He assembled the libretto himself, taking verses from eleven different Biblical and Apochryphal books, with as many as five passages from four books in a single movement (no. 2). Nonetheless, the disparate verses fit together as if they had been so conceived.

Some of the sacred works of Brahms based on Biblical texts exhibit a particular structure in which a statement of misery, affliction, or sadness is followed by uplifting and comforting words, usually from elsewhere in the Bible. This organization characterizes four of the seven movements in the *Requiem*, nos. 2, 3, 5, and 6. The remaining three movements reflect happiness in the contemplation of heaven (no. 4), and hope and comfort for the living and the dead (nos. 1 and 7, respectively). The resultant structure is symmetrical, built around the fourth movement, the only one completely unburdened by any reference to death.

1	2	3
Selig sind die da Leid tragen.	Denn alles fleisch, es ist wie Gras . . . . <i>Aber des Herrn Wort bleibt in Ewigkeit.</i>	Herr, lehre doch mich, daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß . . . . <i>Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand und keine Qual rühret sie an.</i>
Blessed are those who mourn.	For all flesh is like the grass . . . . <i>But the word of the Lord endures forever.</i>	Lord, teach me that I must have an end . . . . <i>The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment touches them.</i>
	4	
	<b>Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth!</b>	
	<b>How lovely are your dwellings, O Lord of Hosts!</b>	
5	6	7
Ihr habet nun Traurigkeit . . . . <i>Ich will euch trösten.</i>	Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt . . . . <i>Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft.</i>	Selig sind die Toten.
You now have sorrow . . . . <i>I want to comfort you.</i>	For here we have no permanent place . . . . <i>Lord, you are worthy to receive praise and honor and might.</i>	Blessed are the dead.

It is unlikely that Brahms had this structure in mind when he started work on the *Requiem* in 1857. Over the next eleven years the work gestated slowly, first as a torso consisting of movements 1–4 and 6 and then in 1866 as the complete work less the fifth movement. The death of Brahms's mother inspired and motivated the composition of the fifth movement, which was added in 1868.

Only once did Brahms find it necessary to change the original text, at "der Gerechten Seelen . . ." in movement 3. Wisdom 3: 1 reads, "Aber der Gerechten Seelen" (*But the righteous souls*), the word "but" referring to the situation at the end of Wisdom, chapter 2. Brahms needed a different transition, however, in which the "but" would have been nonsensical. He therefore dropped it.