

# Concert Program for January 21 and 22, 2011

David Robertson, conductor  
Akiko Suwanai, violin  
Twyla Robinson, soprano  
Stephen Powell, baritone  
St. Louis Symphony Chorus  
Amy Kaiser, director

**PETER EÖTVÖS** *Seven (Memorial for the *Columbia* Astronauts)*  
(b. 1944) **for Violin and Orchestra** (2007)

Part I: Cadenza with Accompaniment  
first cadenza (for Husband and McCool)—  
second cadenza (for Anderson)—  
third cadenza (for Clark and Brown)—  
fourth cadenza (for Chawla and Ramon)—  
Part II

Akiko Suwanai, violin

## Intermission

**BRAHMS** *Ein deutsches Requiem, op. 45* (1865-68)  
(1833-1897) Selig sind, die da Leid tragen

    ("Blessed are they that mourn")  
Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras  
    ("For all flesh is as grass")  
Herr, lehre doch mich ("Lord, make me to know")  
Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen  
    ("How lovely are Thy tabernacles")  
Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit  
    ("And ye now therefore have sorrow")  
Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt  
    ("For here have we no continuing city")  
Selig sind die Toten ("Blessed are the dead")

Twyla Robinson, soprano  
Stephen Powell, baritone  
St. Louis Symphony Chorus  
Amy Kaiser, director

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David Robertson is the Beofor Music Director and Conductor.

Akiko Suwanai is the Mr. and Mrs. Whitney R. Harris Guest Artist.

Amy Kaiser is the AT&T Foundation Chair.

The concert of Friday, January 21, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from

Mr. and Mrs. Robert H. Duesenberg.

The concert of Saturday, January 22, is underwritten in part by a generous gift from

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Michael Tammasio

**David Robertson** Beofor Music Director and Conductor

A consummate musician, masterful programmer, and dynamic presence, David Robertson has established himself as one of today's most sought-after American conductors. A passionate and compelling communicator with an extensive knowledge of orchestral and operatic repertoire, he has forged close relationships with major orchestras around the world through his exhilarating music-making and stimulating ideas. In fall 2010,

Robertson began his sixth season as Music Director of the 131-year-old St. Louis Symphony, while continuing as Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a post he has held since 2005.

Highlights of Robertson's 2010-11 season with the St. Louis Symphony included a gala concert with soprano Renée Fleming, and the orchestra's forthcoming seventh consecutive appearance at New York's Carnegie Hall. Guest engagements in the U.S. include performances with the Boston, San Francisco, New World, and San Diego symphony orchestras, and the New York Philharmonic. In March 2011 he conducts the Ensemble ACJW, the performing arm of the Academy, a professional training program for young musicians developed by Carnegie Hall, the Juilliard School, and the Weill Institute, in a program combining Mozart's unfinished opera *Zaide* (*Das Serail*) and the New York premiere of Luciano Berio's reconstruction of the same piece. Internationally, guest engagements include the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, where Robertson appears regularly, the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin as part of Musikfest Berlin, and several concerts with the BBC Symphony. In addition to his fresh interpretations of traditional repertoire, this season Robertson conducts world premieres of works by Stephen McNeff, Avner Dorman, Joey Roukens, and Christopher Rouse.

Born in Santa Monica, California, Robertson was educated at London's Royal Academy of Music, where he studied French horn and composition before turning to orchestral conducting. Robertson received Columbia University's 2006 Ditson Conductor's Award, and he and the St. Louis Symphony are recipients of three major awards from ASCAP and the League of American Orchestras, including the 2009-10 and 2008-09 Award for Programming of Contemporary Music, and the 2005-06 Morton Gould Award for Innovative Programming. *Musical America* named Robertson Conductor of the Year for 2000. In 1997, he received the Seaver/National Endowment for the Arts Conductors Award, the premier prize of its kind, given to exceptionally gifted American conductors. He is the recipient of honorary doctorates from Westminster Choir College, Webster University, and Maryville University, as well as the 2010 Excellence in the Arts award from the St. Louis Arts and Education Council. In 2010 he was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. David Robertson and his wife, pianist Orli Shaham, are parents of twin boys. Robertson also has two older sons.



**Akiko Suwanai** Mr. and Mrs. Whitney R. Harris Guest Artist  
The youngest-ever winner of the International Tchaikovsky Competition, Akiko Suwanai enjoys a prestigious international career performing in concert and recital in the major cities of Europe, North America and Asia.

Recent and upcoming highlights include tours with the London Symphony Orchestra (under Valery Gergiev), Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra (under Sakari Oramo), and the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse (under Tugan Sokhiev). She also performs with the Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestre National de Belgique, Orquesta Sinfonica de RTVE, Gürzenich Orchester, Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, and Sapporo and Melbourne symphony orchestras. Suwanai regularly tours with Orchestre de Paris (under Christoph Eschenbach), NDR Sinfonieorchester (under Christoph von Dohnányi) and Die Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen (under Paavo Järvi).

In spring 2009 Suwanai was invited to open the Shanghai Spring International Music Festival—the first Japanese violinist to do so. The event was televised nationally and resulted in a subsequent invitation to perform at the Expo 2010 Shanghai. She recently gave the world premiere of Peter Eötvös' composition *Seven* at the Lucerne Festival with the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra under the baton of Pierre Boulez. Further performances with Eötvös himself conducting included concerts in Gothenburg, Budapest, Berlin, Tokyo, and at the 2008 BBC Proms. Suwanai also collaborates with renowned conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Zubin Mehta, and Seiji Ozawa.

Suwanai's extensive discography with Universal Music has garnered much critical acclaim. Her releases to date include CDs with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields under Neville Marriner, the Philharmonia Orchestra under Charles Dutoit, a Slavonic album with the Budapest Festival Orchestra under Iván Fischer, a CD of Bach Concertos with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, as well as a recital disc of Beethoven Sonatas with Nicholas Angelich.

Suwanai has won numerous prizes and awards such as the International Paganini Competition in Italy, the International Japan Competition, and the Queen Elisabeth International Competition in Belgium. She studied at the Toho Gakuen School of Music with Toshiya Eto, at Columbia University and the Juilliard School of Music with Dorothy DeLay and Cho-Liang Lin, and also at the Hochschule der Künste in Berlin with Uwe-Martin Haiberg. She now lives in Paris.

Suwanai performs on the Antonio Stradivarius 1714 violin "Dolphin," one of the most famous violins known today and previously owned by the celebrated violinist Jascha Heifetz. This is kindly loaned by the Nippon Music Foundation.

Akiko Suwanai debuts with the St. Louis Symphony this week.



## Twyla Robinson

Twyla Robinson has consistently earned tremendous praise for her consummate musicianship, dramatic sensibility, and ravishing vocal beauty. She has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, Berlin Staatskapelle, Cleveland Orchestra, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, singing under such conductors as Bernard Haitink, Pierre Boulez, Franz Welser-Möst, Esa-Pekka Salonen and Michael Tilson Thomas. Regarding her performances of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Pierre Ruhe of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* said: "Soprano Twyla Robinson is a major catch. With perfect diction, crisply articulated consonants and a warm, wide vibrato, she purred and comforted... Bliss."

In the 2010-11 season, Robinson made her debut with the New York Philharmonic in performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with Alan Gilbert. She was heard with the Atlanta Symphony and Robert Spano in performances of Janacek's *Glagolitic Mass* in Atlanta and at Carnegie Hall, and returns to the National Symphony for performances of Zemlinsky's Lyric Symphony. Robinson opened the season with New Jersey Symphony Orchestra in performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. She debuts with the Gewandhaus Orchestra Leipzig in Mahler's Symphony No. 2 and joins Edo de Waart and the Milwaukee Symphony in the same piece.

In high demand for concert performances, Robinson regularly performs with top orchestras in the United States and Europe. She made her debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic under the baton of Esa-Pekka Salonen in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, which she has also sung with the San Francisco Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and the London Symphony Orchestra at New York's Avery Fisher Hall and the Barbican Centre in London. A frequent soloist with the Cleveland Orchestra, her performances include Strauss' *Four Last Songs*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, Verdi's Requiem, and Alice Ford in Verdi's *Falstaff*. She debuted with the National Symphony in performances of Grieg's *Peer Gynt*.

As an opera singer, Robinson has won particular acclaim for her portrayal of Mozart heroines. She has sung Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* for New York City Opera and Florida Grand Opera, and during the 2006-07 season sang Donna Elvira for San Francisco Opera, which was later broadcast in movie theaters throughout the United States. She has also been heard at Florida Grand Opera as Arminda in *La finta giardiniera* and as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*, a role she repeated at New Orleans Opera and in concert for San Francisco Opera.

Twyla Robinson most recently performed with the St. Louis Symphony in February 2008.



## Stephen Powell

Stephen Powell's 2010-11 season currently includes Germont in *La traviata* with Minnesota Opera; De Guiche in Alfano's *Cyrano de Bergerac* with San Francisco Opera; Scarpia in *Tosca* with Palm Beach Opera, and the title role in *Rigoletto* with Cincinnati Opera. He also appears as soloist in *Messiah* with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra under Christopher Seaman; Fauré's Requiem with the Cincinnati Symphony,

Paavo Järvi conducting; in Schoenberg's *Gurrelieder* with Fondation de Septembre Musical, David Zinman conducting; Rachmaninoff's *Spring Cantata* with Robert Spano conducting the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra; and Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast* with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

Powell's reputation was solidified, and a major career was launched when, on opening night of New York City Opera's 1995-96 season, he created a sensation, substituting on short notice to sing the title role in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*. His subsequent roles with that company have included Ford in *Falstaff*, the title role in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Sharpless in *Madame Butterfly*, Enrico in a new production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and Zurga in a new production of Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers*. His roles with the Metropolitan Opera have included Ping in *Turandot* and Schelkalov in *Boris Godunov*. Powell has spent three seasons with Glimmerglass Opera, singing the roles of Ford, Malatesta, and Jack Point in *The Yeomen of the Guard*.

On the concert stage, he has performed as soloist in *Carmina burana* with the San Francisco Symphony, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony, Nashville Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra (Charles Dutoit conducting), Brooklyn Philharmonic, and at the Kennedy Center (Leonard Slatkin conducting). He has sung Handel's *Messiah* with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal; Milwaukee and Detroit symphony orchestras; Les Violons du Roy; Handel and Haydn Society; and the Minnesota and Boston Baroque orchestras. Powell has toured North America with Edo de Waart and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in performances of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, which he has also sung with the Philadelphia, Ottawa, Cincinnati, Baltimore, and Phoenix symphony orchestras.

Powell now performs frequently with his wife, soprano Barbara Shirvis, in three recital programs they created together: *Hearts Afire*, love songs through the ages; *Bellissimo Broadway!*; and *An American Celebration*. They also give master classes at universities across the United States. Powell is an alumnus of the Lyric Opera of Chicago Center for American Artists.

Stephen Powell debuts with the St. Louis Symphony this week.



**Amy Kaiser** AT&T Foundation Chair

One of the country's leading choral directors, Amy Kaiser has conducted the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra in Handel's *Messiah*, Schubert's Mass in E flat, Vivaldi's *Gloria*, and sacred works by Haydn and Mozart as well as Young People's Concerts. She has made eight appearances as guest conductor for the Berkshire Choral Festival in Sheffield, Massachusetts, Santa Fe, and at Canterbury Cathedral. As Music

Director of the Dessoff Choirs in New York for 12 seasons, she conducted many performances of major works at Lincoln Center. Other conducting engagements include concerts at Chicago's Grant Park Music Festival and more than fifty performances with the Metropolitan Opera Guild. Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Symphony's School Concert Series for seven seasons, Kaiser also led many programs for the 92nd Street Y's acclaimed *Schubertiade*. She has conducted over twenty-five operas, including eight contemporary premieres.

A frequent collaborator with Professor Peter Schickele on his annual PDQ Bach concerts at Carnegie Hall, Kaiser made her Carnegie Hall debut conducting PDQ's Consort of Choral Christmas Carols. She also led the Professor in PDQ Bach's Canine Cantata "Wachet Arf" with the New Jersey Symphony.

Kaiser recently led master classes in choral conducting at Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, served as faculty for a conducting workshop with Chorus America and as a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts. An active guest speaker, Kaiser teaches monthly classes for adults in symphonic and operatic repertoire and presents PreConcert Perspectives at Powell Hall. In April she presents a series of talks, "Illuminating Opera," at Opera Theater of St. Louis.

Kaiser has prepared choruses for the New York Philharmonic, the Ravinia Festival, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and Opera Orchestra of New York. She also served as faculty conductor and vocal coach at the Manhattan School of Music and the Mannes College of Music. An alumna of Smith College, she was awarded the Smith College Medal for outstanding professional achievement.

## St. Louis Symphony Chorus 2010-2011

Amy Kaiser

*Director*

Leon Burke III

*Assistant Director*

Gail Hintz

*Accompanist*

Richard Ashburner

*Manager*

Matt Adams-Wenger

Richard Ashburner

Rev. Fr. Stephan Baljian

Elizabeth M. Belle

Rudi J. Bertrand

Annemarie Bethel

Paula N. Bittle

Michael Bouman

Richard F. Boyd

Keith Boyer

Pamela A. Branson

Bonnie Brayshaw

Marella Briones

Daniel Brodsky

Buron F. Buffkin, Jr.

Leon Burke, III

Cherstin Byers

Tamara Miller Campbell

Alissa Carlson

Victoria Carmichael

Christopher Catlin

Mark P. Cereghino

Rhonda Collins Coates

Daniel Cook

Samuel Cotten

Drew Cowell

Derek Dahlke

Laurel Ellison Dantas

Elizabeth Davlantes

Deborah Dawson

Mary Donald

Stephanie Engelmeyer

Ladd Faszold

Jasmine Fazzari

Robin Fish

Mark Freiman

Amy Telford Garces

Andrew Ging

Susan Goris

Susan Greene

Susan H. Hagen

Paul Hahn

Nancy Helmich

Ellen Henschen

Gretchen Hewitt

Jeffrey E. Heyl

Brad Hofeditz

Matthew S. Holt

Mary Huebner

Gregory Inman

Kerry Jenkins

Janice Simmons Johnson

Warren Keller

Ryan Kirk

Elena Korpalski

Brett Kostrzewski

Paul Kunnath

Kyrstan Langer

Alexander J. Laurie

Debby Lennon

Lawrence E. Lewis

Sharon Lightfoot

Gregory Lucas

Gregory C. Lundberg

Gina Malone

Jan Marra

Lee Martin

Alicia Matkovich

Scott Matkovich

Matthew D. Mayfield

Carolyn McCauley

Andrew McDermott

Scott Meidroth

Jamie Meyerholz

Elsa Toby Newburger

Michael B. Oelkers

Lolita K. Nero

Duane L. Olson

Nicole Orr

Heather McKenzie

Patterson

Susan D. Patterson

Brian Pezza

Shelly Ragan Pickard

James Ranson

Robert Reed

Valerie Christy Reichert

Kate Reimann

Samuel Reinhardt

Dave Ressler

Greg J. Riddle

Patti Ruff Riggie

Stephanie Robertson

John Michael M. Rotello

Terree Rowbottom

Marushka Royse

Jennifer Ryrie

Susan Sampson

Patricia Scanlon

Mark V. Scharff

Paula K. Schweitzer

Holley Sherwood

Lisa Sienkiewicz

John William Simon

Steven Slusher

Rachel Smith

Shirley Bynum Smith

David Stephens

Jennifer Stewart

Benna D. Stokes

Denise M. Stookesberry

Maureen Taylor

Justin Thomas

Natanja Tomich

Pamela M. Triplett

David R. Truman

Greg Upchurch

Samantha Wagner

Nancy Maxwell Walther

Keith Wehmeier

Donna R. Westervelt

Sarah Wiesner

Nicole C. Weiss

Paul A. Williams

Christopher Wise

Mary Murphy Wissinger

Young Ok Woo

Young Ran Woo

Pamela Wright

Susan Donahue Yates

Carl Scott Zimmerman

# Sorrow and Solace

BY PAUL SCHIAVO

## *Ideas at Play*

One of the oldest functions of music, and surely one of the most valuable, is to give voice to grief and provide comfort in times of loss. Music played a part in the burial rites of ancient Greece and Egypt, and the singing of laments or special chants for the dead has been observed among many tribal peoples, suggesting that this practice stems from our pre-historical past. In more recent times, of course, music has abetted mourning in many parts of the world, and among many religions.

Although the original motivation for funeral music may have been fear (anthropologists speculate that such music was initially used to ward off evil spirits associated with the dead), it serves a more subtle, and arguably more exalted, purpose today. Because music has, at its best, a remarkable ability to express sorrow, it can both communicate the desolation of bereavement and provide a degree of cathartic relief from it. And for those receptive to its powers, music offers a solace to the grieving mind and heart that few other experiences can provide.

The two works we hear this evening fulfill this primal function of music. One is a requiem composed in response to a specific recent tragedy. The other, although connected to a personal loss, is universal in its perspective, a “human requiem,” as its author described it.

## **Peter Eötvös** *Seven* (Memorial for the *Columbia* Astronauts) for Violin and Orchestra

**Born:** Székelyudvarhely, Hungary (now part of Romania), January 2, 1944 **First performance:** September 6, 2007, in Lucerne; Akiko Suwanai was the violin soloist, and Pierre Boulez conducted the Lucerne Festival Academy Orchestra **STL Symphony premiere:** This week **Scoring:** Solo violin and an orchestra of three flutes, alto flute and two piccolos; three oboes; three clarinets and bass clarinet; alto and baritone saxophone; three bassoons; two horns, two trumpets, two trombones, and tuba; a large percussion contingent; harp, electric guitar, and keyboard sampler; and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 21 minutes



Peter Eötvös

**In Context** 2007 British Prime Minister Tony Blair announces a draw-down of forces in Afghanistan and Iraq; Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton announces campaign for presidency; Clint Eastwood awarded France's *Légion d'honneur* from President Jacques Chirac

On February 1, 2003, the Space Shuttle *Columbia* disintegrated while re-entering the earth's atmosphere on a return flight from the International Space Station. The fiery disaster, which scattered debris over parts of



Texas, Arkansas, and Louisiana, claimed the lives of the seven astronauts on board. They were Rick Husband, the mission's commanding officer; William McCool, who piloted the craft; Michael Anderson, head of the science mission; Kalpana Chawla, an Indian-born aerospace engineer, who was on her second space flight; Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut; and two Navy captains, David M. Brown and Laurel Clark.

With images of the catastrophe captured in numerous videos and photographs, the *Columbia* disaster riveted public attention around the world. Among those moved was composer Peter Eötvös. In particular, Eötvös recalls being deeply affected by the image of an empty astronaut's helmet, which had been found intact in a field among other pieces of debris, and which seemed a poignant symbol of the tragedy.

Eötvös is a Hungarian musician who left his homeland to pursue a career mostly in western Europe. Having studied at the famed Academy of Music in Budapest, he worked in the Hungarian capital during the early 1960s as a composer and conductor, mostly of film and theater music. In 1966 he relocated to Germany and became associated with Karlheinz Stockhausen at a time when that influential composer was moving from the intricate formalism of advanced serial composition to a phase of experimentation with directed improvisation, musical theater, electronically generated sounds, and other compositional notions much in the air during the late 1960s and early '70s. Eötvös performed often with Stockhausen's ensemble, playing a Hungarian zither connected to a synthesizer. Later he founded his own group of composer-performers and worked in the West German Radio's electronic music studio.

Eötvös also remained active as a conductor, especially of new works and classic 20th-century compositions. From 1979 to 1991 he was Music Director of the Ensemble InterContemporain, the stellar new-music performing group founded by Pierre Boulez in Paris. (He was succeeded in that position by David Robertson.) Later he was named Principal Guest Conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London. He has appeared as guest conductor with many other of the world's major orchestras, including the Royal Concertgebouw, Berlin Philharmonic, Munich Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, and NHK Orchestra in Tokyo.

But it is as a creative musician that Eötvös is most widely known. Having emerged from his experimental period of the 1960s and '70s, he has matured into one of the most respected composers in Europe. As Eötvös considered a musical response to the *Columbia* disaster, his thoughts turned to a venerable compositional genre that might be used in a new way. "For a long time," the composer explains, "I had thought of writing a violin concerto. Against the background of the tragic events concerning the 28th Space Shuttle Mission, I took up this idea again; the violin concerto as a musical dialogue between soloist and orchestra seemed to me particularly suited to lend musical shape to the memory of the killed astronauts."

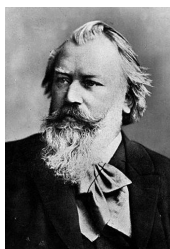
**The Music:** Certain compositional procedures associated with the recent avant-garde help shape the work. One is a novel placement of instruments.

Eötvös specifies an unusual spatial arrangement of the performers, including stationing six violinists in the auditorium. Electronically produced sounds are also part of the work. And formal schemes based on the number seven determine various aspects of the composition. The score calls for a total of 49 players, and the orchestra is divided into seven groups on stage. Seven violins are featured (the soloist plus the six players stationed around the hall), which Eötvös likens to “seven satellites or souls sounding and hovering in space.” Moreover, the number seven dictates rhythmic and other details of the music itself.

Such conceptual elements notwithstanding, *Seven* is fundamentally a humanistic and heartfelt memorial. Each of the seven astronauts receives a personal tribute in the course of four cadenza solos that comprise the opening section of the work. The fourth cadenza includes evocations of the musical cultures of India, the native country of Kalpana Chawla, and Israel, the homeland of Ilan Ramon. Apart from such specific references, a somber tone—sometimes elegiac, sometimes anguished—prevails. Eötvös states that “*Seven* is a very personal monologue and the musical expression of my sympathy towards the seven astronauts who lost their lives while exploring space in fulfillment of a fundamental dream of mankind.”

## Johannes Brahms *Ein deutsches Requiem* (*A German Requiem*), op. 45

**Born:** Hamburg, May 7, 1833 **Died:** Vienna, April 3, 1897 **First performance:** April 10, 1868, in Bremen, under the composer’s direction **STL Symphony premiere:** December 10, 1960, with soprano Phyllis Curtin, baritone Gerard Souzay, University of Missouri Chorus under director Thomas Mills, Edouard Van Remoortel conducting **Most recent STL Symphony performance:** April 1, 2006, with soprano Camilla Tilling, baritone Russell Braun, St. Louis Symphony Chorus under director Amy Kaiser, David Robertson conducting at Carnegie Hall **Scoring:** Solo soprano and baritone, mixed chorus, and an orchestra of two flutes and piccolo, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons and contrabassoon, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, organ, and strings **Performance time:** Approximately 68 minutes



Brahms

**In Context** 1865-68 *Alfred Nobel invents dynamite, Dostoevsky writes Crime and Punishment, Marx’s Das Kapital published* Brahms’ *Ein deutsches Requiem*, and particularly its first performance, in April 1868, marked a turning point in the career of a composer who would go on to become one of the pre-eminent musical figures of the late 19th century. Prior to the unveiling of this work, Brahms had been a promising young musician whose potential remained unrealized. In its wake, he stood in the front rank of contemporary composers.

Although most of the composition of *Ein deutsches Requiem* dates from the mid-1860s, the genesis of the piece can be traced back more than a decade prior to its premiere. Shortly after the death of his mentor and early champion, Robert Schumann, in 1856, Brahms had reworked a discarded slow movement of his D minor Piano Concerto into a choral setting of the verses “Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras” (“For all flesh is as grass”), from the First Epistle of Peter. Although this eventually became the second movement of the *Requiem*, Brahms did not initially think of it as part of a larger work. But with the passing of his mother, in February 1865, Brahms began to seek out other scriptural texts appropriate to mourning, drawing on German-language versions of the Gospels, Psalms, and a few other passages from both the Old and New Testaments. The loss of his parent, the closest member of his family, affected the composer deeply, and it may well be that he could assuage his grief only by throwing himself into a work concerned with facing death and, ultimately, overcoming it.

*Ein deutsches Requiem* occupied Brahms through much of 1865 and 1866. As the composition began to take shape, he occasionally showed the score to other musicians. One was Karl Reinthaler, director of music at the Bremen cathedral, who in October 1867 wrote to Brahms, offering his ensemble and church for a performance on Good Friday the following year. Reinthaler wanted Brahms to expand the composition and give it a more conventionally theological slant. “From a Christian perspective,” Reinthaler argued, “it lacks the point around which everything rotates, namely the saving death of the Lord.” Brahms politely declined this suggestion but accepted Reinthaler’s offer for a performance in Bremen.

Friends and acquaintances of the composer from all over Germany and Austria came to the Bremen cathedral to hear the nominal premiere of *Ein deutsches Requiem* on Good Friday, 1868. Brahms’s father traveled from Hamburg, old and valued musical colleagues such as Clara Schumann and the violinist Joseph Joachim also attended, and the women’s choir that Brahms had conducted years earlier in Hamburg arrived to assist in the performance. Accordingly, a certain sense of intimacy attended the event. Members of the audience, moved by the music and by their familiarity with the composer, wept openly at various points, and the work’s conclusion prompted an outpouring of enthusiasm that reflected personal affection as much as artistic admiration. The success of the piece established Brahms almost overnight as one of the most important composers in Europe.

Despite its name, *Ein deutsches Requiem* is not a Requiem Mass in the proper sense of that term, since its words are taken from scripture rather than the liturgy of the Mass for the Dead. Brahms felt little sympathy for organized religion, and he answered Reinthaler’s plea that he give the work a more specifically Christian character by declaring that he considered the composition a “human requiem.”

**The Music:** Brahms carefully arranged the Biblical passages he had selected so that the emotional character of each movement contributed to the overall dramatic shape of his work. This shape can be compared to a Gothic arch:

the first and final movements resemble each other in tone, as do the second and sixth, and the third and fifth movements. The fourth movement acts as a keystone, crowning the arch and unifying the entire structure.

In the opening, “Selig sind, die da Leid tragen” (“Blessed are they that mourn”), Brahms achieves a remarkably dark tone color by emphasizing the sound of the low strings, the violin section remaining silent. The tempo indication of the second movement reads “Slow, in the manner of a march,” and the music of the opening section does indeed suggest a funeral procession. Its tone matches perfectly the fragment from *1 Peter* (1:24): “Thus all flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass.” This music frames a more hopeful middle section based on Psalm 126, and the movement closes with a triumphant vision of salvation.

An anguished plea for guidance, voiced alternately by baritone soloist and chorus, begins the third movement, “Herr, lehre doch mich” (“Lord, make me to know”). The mood turns to hope on the line “Ich hoffe auf dich” (“My hope is in Thee”), leading to a spirited double fugue at the conclusion.

The centerpiece of the composition, *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* (“How lovely are Thy tabernacles”), is a serene song for the chorus. In the ensuing fifth movement, Brahms seems to speak of the loss of his mother, whose death, early in 1865, apparently motivated the composition of *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

Visions of the Last Judgment form a crucial part of the traditional Mass for the Dead, and Brahms upholds this tradition in the sixth movement. Following a brief choral introduction, the baritone soloist introduces the passage from *Corinthians* relating St. Paul’s vision of the final day, “Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnes” (“Behold, I show you a mystery”). At the words “zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune” (“At the last trumpet”), hell vividly breaks loose, as swirling figures in the violins and demonic outbursts from the brass accompany Paul’s vision. Many listeners will recall that Handel set this same text in his *Messiah*, but the propulsive rhythms Brahms employs here create a more visceral effect than that composer’s stylized representation. Brahms concludes this sixth movement, as he had the third, with a magnificent fugal passage, this time to the comforting verses that begin “Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?” (“O death, where is thy sting?”).

The final movement of *Ein deutsches Requiem* commences with the same sort of subdued harmonies and instrumentation that began the opening chorus. The words, too, are similar, and the melody introduced by the sopranos closely resembles one heard in the first movement. As if to confirm this sense of coming full circle, Brahms concludes his final movement as he did the first, with harp figures accompanying the reassuring music of the chorus.