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SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents its 82nd program of the 1991-92 season:

S99
1992
3-13

THE UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY
and
COMBINED CHORUSES

Abraham Kaplan, conductor

Rossini, OVERTURE TO LA GAZZA LADRA

Brahms, EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM

MARCH 13, 1992

8:00 PM

MEANY THEATER



School
of
Music
University
of
Washington

DAT 11,961

CASS 1 - 11,962
2 - 11,963

PROGRAM

101 OVERTURE TO LA GAZZA LADRA (10 min) Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)
CASS 1/SIDE A

spoken INTRO - (3'35")
102 EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM, Op. 45 Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
CASS 2/SIDE A

- I. *Selig sind, die da Leid tragen*
(Blessed are they who mourn)
- II. *Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras*
(For all flesh is as grass) (37')
- III. *Herr, lehre doch mich*
(Lord, make me to know mine end) (45')
- IV. *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen*
(How lovely are your dwellings) CASS 2/SIDE B

INTERMISSION

- 103 V. *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit*
(Now you are sorrowful)
- VI. *Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt*
(For we have here no lasting city) (35')
- VII. *Selig sind die Toten*
(Blessed are the dead)

June Lee, soprano
Marvin Regier, baritone

La gazza ladra

Arguably the most famous and popular composer, some would say person, of his age, Gioacchino Rossini wrote the opera *La gazza ladra* (The Thieving Magpie) in 1817, at the age of 55. Premiered in Milan, it was successful for some years, but is known now most entirely through the continued popularity of its overture. Based on the apparently true story of a French servant girl mistakenly condemned for a theft actually committed by a mischievous magpie, the tragi-comic opera includes picturesque rustic episodes and stirring martial scenes. From its opening antiphonal snoring snare drum rolls and its rousing military march, to the dance-like theme of its main section, the overture colorfully sets the stage for this "melodrama" in Rossini's typically appealing style.

Ein deutsches Requiem

In 1853, composer and critic Robert Schumann wrote of the then unknown twenty-year old pianist and composer from Hamburg, Johannes Brahms: "When he lowers his magic wand on the masses of choir and orchestra.... we shall await wondrous glimpses into the world of the spirit." Fifteen years later, Brahms finally fulfilled the prediction of his supporter and friend with the production of *Ein deutsches Requiem* (A German Requiem), his first major work for chorus and orchestra.

The piece actually took shape over a ten-year period. Brahms' idea for a requiem based on German biblical texts, rather than the traditional Latin liturgical texts, may have come from Schumann's own intention to compose such a work, never realized. He may also have been influenced by earlier funeral cantatas of Schütz and Bach. Possibly as early as 1857, not long after Schumann's death, Brahms began transforming a portion of a two-piano sonata into what we now know as the funeral march theme of the Requiem's second movement. By 1861 he had selected portions of Luther's translation of the Bible for at least four of the movements. The real impetus to compose seems to have come after the death of Brahms' mother in 1865, for by August of the following year all but the present fifth movement were complete.

Late in 1867, the first three movements of the Requiem were premiered in Vienna, a performance marred by the over-zealous thundering of the timpanist during the long fugue that closes the third movement. The first "complete" production, still without movement five, occurred on Good Friday of 1868 in the Cathedral of Bremen. With Brahms conducting, the performance was a tremendous success and brought him widespread public acclaim as a major composer for the first time.

More than twenty additional performances took place throughout Germany during the following year. One of those, in Leipzig in February of 1869, saw the première of the fifth movement for soprano solo and chorus, which Brahms had completed in May of 1868, and which most clearly shows the influence of his mother's recent death. Successful performances in London, St. Petersburg,

and Paris over the next three years continued to confirm the validity of Schumann's early insight into the potential of one whose "destiny should be to express the spirit of the age in the highest and most ideal fashion."

Musically, the Requiem shows evidence of Brahms' thorough study of the compositional techniques of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. He was particularly fond of the rhythmic vitality, expressive use of dissonance, and contrapuntal textures (multiple independent melodic lines) which characterized this earlier music. It has been stated that "Handel was [Brahms'] model in choral style...Bach, his tutor in counterpoint and fugue...and Schütz his spiritual ancestor." Yet, Brahms' mastery of these techniques was so thoroughly combined with his immersion in the harmonic and melodic idioms of the Romantic period, that the Requiem speaks in a musical language that is uniquely his own.

Brahms' choice of texts from Luther's German Bible gives this work a very different perspective than the Latin texts of the Roman Catholic funeral mass. While the latter essentially constitutes a prayer for the souls of the dead, the biblical words of *Ein deutsches Requiem* are directed to the living, providing comfort by reflecting on the frailty of human existence and the hope of life in the world to come. At the same time, Brahms avoids strict Christian orthodoxy by omitting any direct mention of Christ. (Such an omission led to the inclusion of the aria "I know that my redeemer liveth," from Handel's *Messiah*, in the middle of the Requiem's Bremen premiere, at the strong suggestion of the church authorities.) Thus, Brahms' Requiem is deeply religious, while also being universal in its expression of human hope in the face of death.

Program notes by Fredrick Lokken

UPCOMING CONCERTS:

- OPERA WORKSHOP; March 16, 8:00 PM, Meany Studio Theater
- BRECHEMIN SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS; March 31, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
- UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY; April 21, 8:00 PM, Meany Theater
- UW OPERA: *The Turn of the Screw*; May 13 & 15 at 8:00 PM, May 17 at 3:00 PM, Meany Theater
- UNIVERSITY SINGERS; May 18, 8:00 PM, Brechemin Auditorium

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- | | | |
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