CHAPTER

'ICH BIN NUN GETRÖSTET': CHORAL COMMUNICATIONS IN *EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM*.

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Oh Freunde, nicht diese Töne![1]

In his work *Listening to Reason*, an exploration of the subjectivity of music as a cultural experience, Michael Steinberg rejects the idea that the Requiems of Brahms, Verdi and Dvorak express a national consciousness, on the grounds that they contain 'voice[s] of a people', which is 'crucially distinct from the voice of a nation'.[2] Steinberg finds that these works have an 'internal resistance to ideological posturing', and that the 'vocalization' of the people here remains too subjective and too indistinct to be considered to be representative of a national collective. The religious, or (to Steinberg) the 'sacred', community present in these works is not to be equated with a national group, as its main function is to 'enact the collectivity [it] refer[s] to'[3], not to evoke an external entity: '[n]othing external to the works themselves is being represented [...] nothing external to music is represented'.[4]

Yet Steinberg also believes musical textures can engage with cultural issues and differences, and tangible links between choral singing and ideologies surrounding a collective 'people', whether culturally and/or politically defined, can be found elsewhere.[5] In the introduction to a recent study which places choruses as an active, physical reality at the very focus of nineteenth century German musical life and issues around collectivity, nationalism and the people, Ryan Minor for example claims that by the 1840s, 'choral singing and choral institutions had become one of the markers of an emerging [German] nation'.[6] The increased popularity of collective singing – in the mid-nineteenth century, choral singing was one of the three most popular activities together with gymnastics and fencing[7] - were partially a result of a changing cultural arena. As the predominant musical scene moved out of its more restrictive ecclesiastical and court settings and into a wider, secularised sphere it became more accessible, and offered more opportunities for participating, for the growing and increasingly dominating middle classes. Music-making thus ceased to be an exclusively professional prerogative and resonated with a broader population base, with choral music a particularly relevant example.[8]

The participatory aspect of nineteenth century music-making is one of its most significant and defining features, and the physical experience of partaking in choral singing represents an activity in which the middle classes 'saw its collective aspirations embodied and envoiced in the music it itself sang'.[9] The Swiss proponent of choral singing, Hans Georg Nägeli, saw before him an age in which 'humanity itself is taken up in the element of music'[10] – not least since choral singing, in contrast to, for example, the theatre, was a participative activity, performed *by* the people themselves. Music would 'belong to the people only by their performance of it'[11], and musical performances involving the participation of many people must by its very nature, according to Nägeli, be understood as being democratic.[12] Already Rousseau had found the human voice particularly well suited to express the democratic ideals of the social contract. Three characteristics of singing underpin his argument: everyone has a voice, a voice has an infinite capacity for modulation, and a voice can 'elicit a moral response in the listener'.[13]

Choral music from this period cannot therefore be assumed to be ideologically – or even politically – neutral, and this nineteenth century German context is arguably relevant for Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Gundula Kreuzer (among others) asserts that

> the *Bildungsbürgertum* had since the eighteenth century increasingly defined their *Volk* as one that excelled in cultural virtues and products, among which music assumed a key position.[14]

Further, Ruth Solie establishes music as 'playing a central role in artistic and cultural life in the nineteenth century, particularly in German-dominated areas'.[15] This suggests that both the interrelationship between music and ideological creeds, as well as the political potential of various musical activities, was well understood at the time. According to *New Grove II*, nowhere was 'the urge to nationalism stronger than in the German male-voice choral movement'.[16] Deathridge goes so far as to suggest that it would probably not be an exaggeration to link the changing nature of the choral movement in Germany 'from a liberal into a decidedly reactionary force' in the latter part of nineteenth century at least partially to government and police interference.[17] Such political potential is perhaps arguably inherent in an activity which regularly saw local groups come together for regional mass gatherings, and which involved physical and embodied togetherness

as well as an opportunity to partake in a more spiritually ideological expression. On the opera stage, this 'acoustical power' of the chorus, in which the power of the people could 'make its presence felt by sheer dint of number'[18] was also visually portrayed by choruses which often divided into groups to 'embody conflicting political and social forces'[19] in the drama. And in the 'age of the Lied', choral music too was well suited to capture (and take advantage of) Romanticism's pre-occupation with the association of words and music, while benefitting from a general attitude which heard 'the chorus of human voices' as the 'noblest, purest medium of sound'.[20]

It is within this context that Brahms' *Requiem* is situated. Firstly, Brahms was very clearly engaged in contemporary choral activities not only as a composer, but also through conducting his own choral societies. Secondly, in the on-going development of German 'national' (or collective) identity, 'culture', or cultural traditions, were of defining importance: 'given the distant and disparate nature of shared political events, [culture] constituted the core of German national identity'.[21] Foremost of the cultural constituents were the German language and its literature, with the Lutheran Bible as a central text in the 'national' literate canon. The *Requiem*'s use of texts from this German Bible thus constitutes a significant anchoring in contemporary ideas around the perception of German identity on a textual basis. There is also a connection with another collective identifier, often referred to as 'Nationalreligiosität', a 'national' attitude to spiritual belief which had less to do with the religion itself and more with the tradition it represented and preserved: for German artists and intellectuals 'Lutheranism became as much a cultural tradition as a system of faith'.[22] In addition, Protestant and church music in Germany was also heavily influenced by a reverence for its musical past, and for historical reasons had been closely allied with nationalism.[23] In this context, 'Lutheran' music becomes conflated with a cultural heritage, and through both its text and musical inspirations the *Requiem* connects with, and relate to, these ideas and ideals.

It would therefore seem possible to suggest that there is a strong connection between the *Requiem* and its German context. Its 'Germanness' lies not solely in the language (as Steinberg suggests[24]), but is an essential aspect of how it relates to its own contemporary context and the concerns alive within and around it. It is further precisely by these links with its own community that Brahms' *Requiem* reveals the core of its expression and its relevance both for that community and for us. In order to hear this, however, we need to engage more closely with how the *Requiem* communicates its own beliefs, and in a seven-movement work of near-continuous choral narration, this must involve paying particular attention to the choral role and expression itself.

Such an extensive focus is rarely accorded any chorus in any music. For example, Beethoven's *Choral Symphony*, Symphony No. 9, from which the caption at the start of this section derives, is perhaps the most frequently discussed work in the entire Western classical repertoire, and one of its more controversial aspects is arguably the inclusion of the choral voices in the Finale. Yet these voices have traditionally received little attention: the choral *presence* is continuously being (re-)examined but the choral *actions* themselves are rarely noted, and while theories and analyses of Schiller's text and Beethovian intentions abound, the choral interpretations are at best assumed and often simply ignored. There seems to be a tendency to regard the chorus as a nameless, unified collective, led and instructed here first by the baritone solo that begins the section, and subsequently by all soloists. Such a hearing is supported by the baritone's opening address to his 'Friends', an initial choir entry (TB) which simply imitates the soloist's 'Freude', and a first full chorus section which speaks in first person plural and includes references to an ideal collective ('alle Menschen werden Brüder'). But tracing the choral expression and behaviour as they develop throughout the Finale reveals very little that could be regarded as passive responses to solo actions; rather one could point to numerous passages in which the chorus demonstrates both musical initiative and subjective interpretation of the text. Yet it is assumptions of a choral role which is *re*active rather than pro-active, led rather than leading, and collectively pre-defined rather than individually nuanced and responsive that tend to dominate our understanding of the role/s of the choral voices.

It is in such hearings that the perceived 'Germanness' of Brahms' *Requiem* can limit the way in which we might engage with it. Routinely equating the choral voice (and body) with a culturally (pre-)defined collective, risks locking it too tightly to a specific place and time, while trying to remove it from that context, in order to universalise its expressions and interpretations, runs the risk of devaluating some of its inherent relevance. Rather than relying on such external posturing, this analysis will try to hear the *Requiem* through the voices of those who articulate its meaning, and attempt to reach a conclusion on how such an approach can inform and perhaps expand the ways in which its expression is to be understood.

Selig sind die da Leid tragen[25]

Ein deutsches Requiem is scored for orchestra, a single four-part chorus and two soloists. The narration itself consists of a selection of texts from the Bible which may at first seem disjointed, but are in fact linked both thematically and by being primarily the perspectives of poets, psalmists and prophets.[26] As such, the main character of the texts could be understood to be that of messages, and it is this emphasis on communication that the chorus channels, creating a dialogue between us and God, but also between us and itself. The chorus sings throughout, while the solo involvement is limited to three of the seven movements (and only in one case for a full movement). There are no duets between the soloists, and neither of them appears without the chorus, thereby reinforcing the chorus's role as the dominant narrator.

The *Requiem* opens in orchestral F-major, and although it is a major tonality 'durchsetzt with moll'[27] (tinged with minor), the mood expressed seems both calm and secure. The introductory orchestral modulations over a pedal-f are answered by the opening choral phrase in *pp* on an upward rising figure in the leading voice (F/A/Bb) to the words 'Selig sind' (Blessed are), a motif which will recur at various points in the Requiem.[28] This opening phrase is sung *a capella*, the only time in the *Requiem* this occurs (apart from the responding section in movement 7). This seems to place the choral voices at the centre of the work from the very beginning, and to underline their authority. It also serves to emphasise the opening text: 'Selig sind die da Leid tragen, denn sie sollen getröstet werden' (Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted). What will eventually emerge as the *Requiem*'s central message and main concern is thus encased in the first vocal line and emphasised in its initial passage.

The 'Selig' intervals come back for the next section ('Die mit Tränen sähen' (They that sow in tears)) but now reversed in imitation of lamentations. There are further musical illustrations of the text in the sopranos' long, saddened two-bar melisma on 'weinen' (crying) (bb.72–74), and the flattened notes on the same word in tenors and basses four bars later, while the later expression of rejoicing, 'und kommen mit Freude', contain brief, canonical phrases of jollity. On the return to the opening words and a variation of the first passage, the top *Ab* the sopranos reached on their drawn-out contemplation of 'Tränen' (tears) is 'corrected' to a bright A as the penultimate phrase now promises comfort, and the movement closes with secure and repeated linear affirmations of 'getröstet werden' (sopranos and altos echoed two beats later by the tenors and basses in major third harmonies). Together with the mainly homophonic choral writing (with some imitative passages) and the lower, softer sonority of an orchestra with resting violins, trumpets and timpani, the musical expression thus effectively illustrates and emphasises the assurance the text seeks to impart.

The second movement opens as a slow and darkly coloured 'funeral march' in ATB unison, in a reminder of our mortality ('Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras' (For all flesh is as grass)).[29] This is followed by and contrasted with a light, sweet passage in which the choral voices seem to address us directly: 'So seid nun geduldig, liebe Brüder' (Be patient therefore, brethren). The first person address here underlines the communicative approach, enhanced by the chorus's musical evocations of the text. After a return to the initial march, the chorus turns to us again, and after a 'most decisive choral "Aber"',[30] seems to promise us in the words of Isaiah that those redeemed in God will return ('Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wiederkommen'). The first of what will be three 'fugal reassurances' include an initial choral bass announcement responded to by SAT in broad, homophonic writing; a luscious, long-lined 'Ewige Freude' (Everlasting joy) in the tenors accompanied by off-beat 'shouts' of 'Freude' in the other parts; and a return to the opening text where the entries from all four parts seem to bounce off each other, imitative of jubilant bell-like chimes (bb. 269–271). The chorus is here proclaiming an assured belief in a universal promise of deliverance. The address is no longer directed at a specific 'us', but the dramatization is still communicative. The choral 'Schmerz' und 'Seufzen' come with the same musical embodiment as the lightness of the rain earlier in the movement, and both concepts are almost graphically thrown out on the following repeated staccato phrases of 'wird weg [müssen]' (bb. 261–268). The concluding 'Ewige Freude' is delivered with broad choral textures moving steadily upwards on marcato crotchets, secured from underneath by a 30 bar long pedal-f, and the second movement thus closes 'sieghaft' (victorious)[31] – a message of, and encouragement to, faith and hope.

The first singular, personal voice comes with the baritone soloist in the opening of the third movement. His 'Herr, lehre doch mich' (Lord, teach me) is an intimate prayer, but through its public, declamatory character it also becomes a lecture. The chorus supports the baritone by repeating his phrases in harmony, but apart from some variations that serve to intensify and dramatise the mood, they add no further material in this first section. As the baritone turns again directly to God, however, asking: 'Nun, Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?' (Now, Lord, who will comfort me), and expressing 'doubt and anxiety',[32] the chorus 'interrupts' the contemplation. They take up the baritone's question, repeating it no less than 16 times, but although both Evans and Steinberg hear these choral repetitions as 'urgent' and 'agitated' respectively, the choral passage itself seems to be of a brighter expression.[33] The repeated phrases again chime in on steady, consecutive beats, and with elongated phrases repeatedly spanning large intervals (up to an octave plus a sixth), the passage has more in common with the assured fugue the chorus is building up to than the baritone's doubt-filled question. Just before the fugue, the chorus stops for 'a single sentence of transcendent radiance'[34] on 'Ich hoffe auf Dich' (My hope is in Thee), which on long, rising part-scales builds from a low bass point into a comprehensive, expansive and fully assured choral reply to the anxious baritone. A closing fugal development follows (with separate fugues in the chorus and orchestra), underpinned in the last part by an unusually extensive, oft noted, pedal-d, and again combining to sound forth a secure belief in the redemption and delivery of which the text speaks.

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen[35]

The first complete 7-movement performance of the *Requiem* took place in Leipzig 1869, preceded by a performance of the first three movements in Vienna 1867 and what was then regarded as the first 'full' performance in Bremen 1868. In 1868 the Requiem was still without what today is the fifth movement, however, and the uncertainty remains over why this was added so late, including speculations over whether Brahms originally intended to include it or not. But its text appears to be part of Brahms' original selection,[36] and there seems to be no reason to believe it did not form part of

Brahms' conception of the work from the outset. And with the fifth movement in place the preceding fourth movement becomes the symmetrical (and, I would argue, spiritual) centre of the *Requiem*.

'Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen' (How lovely are thy dwellings) is in the key of *Eb*-major, and as such rather distant from the tonality of the rest of the Requiem (F-major, Bb-minor/major, D-minor/major in preceding movements; G-major, C-minor/major, F-major following). It is however the same key Brahms would later use for his *Wiegenlied*, op.49, and in a ¾ measure, with a rocking, lulling lilt, the fourth movement might also be heard as seeking to imbue the lullaby's mood of reassurance.[37] 'The main function of a lullaby', in Karen Bottge's definition, 'is to delineate a safe, pleasurable interior in which to drop into sleep's oblivion',[38] and she further quotes Deleuze and Guattari on how to achieve such a place:

> A home must be created by drawing a protective circle around that uncertain and fragile centre of our lives.[39]

The 'closed circle' Bottge identifies as essential to *Wiegenlied* can also be found in the fourth movement in its harmonic stability, in musical phrases (including the thematically leading opening phrase) which continuously and repeatedly return 'home', and in an orchestral accompaniment which, scaled-down to almost chamber-like proportions, create a mood of intimacy, security and warmth. That the opening phrase further also employs the 'Selig'- motif as its starting point (first as a downward figure in the woodwind-led orchestra and then reversed in the chorus), creates a meta-textual link to ideas of (re-)assurance, as it relates the fourth movement to communications of spiritual and emotional safety throughout the *Requiem*.

There is a similar mood in the *Shepherds' farewell* in Berlioz' *L'enfance du Christ* (1850–54, published 1855). In the same lilting, lulling flow, and with a similarly reduced orchestral sound with strings mainly supporting the vocal lines, and character-defining woodwind introduction and insertions, it creates a very similar hushed calm to the one in the *Requiem*'s fourth movement. Here too, the address is to a form of divinity – the shepherds that sing to the infant Jesus in Berlioz are paralleled in the first person 'I' in communication with 'Herr Zebaoth' in Brahms. Both movements seem to express an attitude to the divine presence in which both awe and longing form part of the fundamental belief in the security and peace it represents. It is interesting to note that analyses of Berlioz' *L'enfance* hear it as a mixture of dramatic action and philosophical reflection, which the *Requiem* can be said to parallel, and that both Brahms and Berlioz can be understood to apply a strongly personal approach (rather than an 'orthodox Christian' one) in setting spiritual and sacred texts. The two lullabies therefore seem to share an understanding and expression of divine matters as both personal and sacred, and as a presence simultaneously intimately near yet existing in a separate, distant sphere (represented in Berlioz by the long and perilous flight into Egypt the holy family is about to undertake, and in Brahms by the divine dwellings).

The text to 'Wie lieblich' (from Psalm 84) had been set before, most relevantly perhaps by Schütz, in his *Symphoniae sacrae III*, and there are some musical parallels, for example the livelier, canonical section of 'Wir loben Dich' (We praise Thee). Schütz' setting, however, is preceded by the mother's and father's worry for their son when he has disappeared ('Sohn, warum hast du uns das getan?'; Luke 2:48–49). The response Jesus gives when they find him is to ask why they were worried: here, in his father's house, is where he needs to be, where he is at home. This passage with which Schütz contextualises his setting (a setting which Brahms would have known) may help to further understand Brahms' employment of the text as expressing a reverence and longing for a (spiritual) place not of simply utopian or idealised character, but one imbued with certainty and indelible sense of belonging.

Ich will euch trösten[40]

The following movement, the lately inserted fifth movement, is frequently, indeed routinely, referred to as Brahms' emotional response to the death of his own mother in 1865. This understanding seems to be derived primarily from three factors: an oft-repeated quote of Clara Schumann's that 'we all think he wrote it for her' (though there is nothing from Brahms himself to verify this),[41] the central text in the movement, which speaks of a first person 'I' who will comfort 'us, like a mother comforts you'; and lastly, perhaps, a predisposition to assume leading roles for soloists (here a soprano solo) when set against choral forces.

Daniel Beller-McKenna hears the fifth movement's 'supremely lyrical promise of comfort [as] in many ways the heart of op.45', and references discussions of the consolation it contains as too numerous to mention.[42] This consolation is often understood to come from the soprano, however. For Steinberg the soprano solo 'makes explicit the maternal aura, [and] emphasises the tone of intimacy', and Evans goes as far as to hear the choir as guilelessly interfering, describing the choral 're-entries' as occurring 'apparently without much concern as to the text'.[43]

The two narrative voices in this movement, when considered more closely, seem however to break down into an anguished, unsettled and lonely solo voice that sings of sorrow, labour and lament, and a choral voice that repeatedly and insistently, in warm, collective harmonies, with SA and TB often echoing each other in canonical two-part responses, replies with assurances of consolation. The text combines three separate passages, of which the soprano solo sings the first two (from John and the Apocrypha). Her opening 'Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit' (And ye now therefore have sorrow)

sets her overall mood of lament with a long, laboriously climbing phrase and several repetitions of 'Traurigkeit'. The following line, though promising a 'Wiedersehen' and gladness to come, is conditioned by two preceding 'Aber's. These partially echo the choral 'Aber' in movement 2, but whereas that communicated resounding conviction, these are executed on two tritone intervals which reverse each other's intervals (c-f#/f#-c) and thus create a tense, locked space.

For the next passage, the soprano abruptly pulls the tonality from G-major into a far removed Bb-flat major, only to change again after seven bars to B-major. Here she returns to her opening lines of text, but this time flattens the lead-notes on 'habe' and 'Traurigkeit' (bb.52 & 58), thus further intensifying the lamenting mood. As she reaches the end of the movement, after sounding increasingly agitated and unsettled, her last phrase lands on an uncertain D (the fifth of the tonic, G-major, bb.76–79). Her continuous attempts at 'leaving' this D on a repeated 'wiedersehen' is counteracted by the chorus which keeps the tonality stable underneath, but 'unfinished' as her repeated E-to-D figure seems, the orchestra takes it up as a coda, and it is in the end the flutes that in the last three bars will resolve it into the concluding tonic.

In contrast, the chorus remains harmonically secure throughout the movement, and repeatedly both steadies and directs the harmonic progression (e.g. in the last bars discussed above). It is also textually persistent – throughout the movement the only choral text are the lines from Isaiah: 'Ich will euch trösten, wie einen seine Mutter tröstet' (As one whom his mother comforteth, so I will comfort you). The chorus repeats the word 'trösten' in each phrase or part of a phrase they sing and with some choral entries staggered, 'trösten' sounds a total of twenty times. The emphasis here is very clearly on comfort and consolation, but the 'maternal aura' is harder to pin down, as the textual references are much less frequent, and never occur separately from the thematically leading 'trösten' (see fig.1).

Figure 1: choral text in movement 5	
Key A: *I will comfort you* a: *comfort* Aa: *will comfort you* B: *like a mother comforts one*	Execution A, B, B A, A A, A, a, a, A, A, B, B, A, A/A, A/A, Aa, Aa
Summary: **14** appearances of **line A** (key word 'comfort'), whole or fragmented **4** appearances of **line B** (key word 'mother')	

If there is anything from within this movement that expresses a maternal reassurance, however, it seems more likely to come from the chorus. As the choral voices insert their stabilising, assertive phrases underneath and between the solo lines, it is easily assumed they are 'filling the gaps'. In fact they regularly do not wait for the soloist to finish before they sing, and it is presumably this that Evans heard as 'interruptions'. This would be a skewed understanding of the relationship between chorus and soloist however, and one which again presumptively allocates the dominant character to the solo voice. The chorus' soft but insistent repetitions function instead to reassure and to provide a foil to the agitation, lament and uncertainty contained within the solo line. The individual voice is here soothed by the warm textures of the collective, and as the single voice struggles to imbue her longing for a 'Wiedersehen' with faith, it is the chorus that re-asserts the promise of comfort with unequivocal musical security and an unquestionable belief in the possibility of and power in consolation.

Ein Geheimnis[44]

The sixth movement opens with a 28-bar long 'trudging' section, in which the chorus considers the transience of earthly life ('Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende Statt' (For here we have no continuing abode)). The limited range of the melodic material, densely, linear harmony, and rhythmically repetitive in – almost weary – crotchet beats, all help to characterise a sense of despairing heaviness (underscored also in the orchestra). The chorus sings of longing for a release from this state into the 'zukünftige', that which is to come, the long modulating melisma on 'suchen' (seek) illustrating their search. This is the first time in the *Requiem* that the chorus sings as 'we', and when the baritone breaks in to interrupt their dispirited reflections with promises of a great secret, his direct address seems for a moment to separate chorus and soloist, just as it does in Beethoven's Ninth. But as he continues to announce his message (from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, the longest consecutive passage quoted in the *Requiem*), he also reveals himself to be of the same collective: '*wir* werden nicht alle entschlafen, *wir* werden aber alle verwandelt werden' (we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed). Further, his first two melodic phrases are both echoed by the orchestra rather than the chorus, which accompanies both with still, reflective chords. Despite the initial similarities with the vocal entry in the Ninth, the relationship between singers, orchestra and audience here is of a different kind. The solo voice emerging out of the texture serves to highlight a textual aspect, rather than a hierarchical division between the different voices, and both the choral and baritonal 'we' reach out beyond the performative space, and break down the boundaries between performers and the performed-for as they draw us into their narration.

The chorus and baritone jointly announce that the last trumpets shall sound, then alternate the subsequent narration between them, until the chorus takes it over for the last section, 'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg' (Death is swallowed up in victory; b.127 ff). Here the chorus finally addresses death directly through repeated challenges to its presumed power: the rhetorical questioning of death's sting and hell's victory ('Tod, wo ist dein Stachel? Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?') in repeated phrases which SA and TB alternately pass between them in closely interweaving, interlocking intervals, taunts death with their powerful musical assertion and domination. The unflinching conviction of the ultimate powerlessness of both death and hell end in a triumphant, blazing, bright C-major chord, out of which emerges the final thanks-giving: 'Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft' (Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power). The final fugal theme starts on the reversal of the initial 'Selig'-theme, then elongates into denser choral textures, and finishes with homophonic choral cadenzas very closely reminiscent of Bach's chorale writing.

The sixth movement is thus the most narrative in the entire Requiem, and that which has the greatest variation of expression and drama in the chorus. From the heavy, monotonous trudge in the opening section, to the hushed contemplation of the baritone's revelation, and from the triumphant banishment of the power of death to the jubilant, fugal thanks-giving, the choral voice both epitomises and narrates 'den Gipfelpunkt des ganzen Werkes'.[45] The sixth movement communicates its message more directly than any other part of the *Requiem*, and as it acts out a response to death in which the perceived finality loses its ultimate power, and as the triumphant final C-major fugue prepares to bring the tonality back to F-major, the seventh and last movement can finally turn to, and be for, the dead.

Selig sind die Toten[46]

The seventh movement, like the first, opens on the word 'Selig', but here the sopranos intone it first on their own, on a long, high, shimmering F, as if floating above us, and thus establishing a different perspective from the first movement. Beneath the warm, expansive soprano line (its first down-ward half-arch combining closely related elements from the opening of the fourth movement and the initial 'selig'-motif to a new thematic variation), the orchestra works steadily upwards in a gently rising scale. Such upward figures (in both orchestra and chorus), and long expansive single-part lines in the choral voices recur throughout and are central features for this movement. They underline that it is a more 'individualistic' chorus we find in this last movement than in the rest of the *Requiem*. There is overall less of the homophonic writing that dominated the parallel first movement, and the four choral 'voices' (SATB) are instead more frequently appearing with separate, soloistic lines, an entry of a new phrase often initiated by a single voice-part a beat or two ahead of – or behind – the others, or with various, different pairings of the voices (for example bb. 76–89: AB's first statement answered by SAT, then repeated by B only, subsequently responded to with a new theme first by SA and then echoed in TB). In the middle section the chorus creates an 'ungetheilte Andacht' (low, unison ATB, supported only by low brass and anticipated by the warm sonority of the introductory woodwinds) as they announce the message from the Spirit: 'dass sie ruhen' (that they may rest). The choral articulation of this final communication is accompanied by rocking, lulling strings, and the *Requiem*'s final movement thus speak both textually and musically of eternal rest and peace.

At the very end, the harps re-enter (b. 158). The chorus' final 'Selig' is tonally identical to the 'getröstet' that concluded the first movement, as the promise that that movement set out, that we will be comforted, has now been fulfilled.[47] But as the harps' arpeggios soar ever higher upwards over the chorus' last, descending phrase, rising with those we have lost, the chorus stays down with us. To the end, the *Requiem* remains a requiem not for the dead, but for the living.

Getröstet werden

> Ich bin nun getröstet! Ich habe das überwunden, was ich glaubte, nie überwinden zu können [...] Ich habe nun meine Trauer niedergelegt und sie ist mir genommen; ich habe meine Trauermusik vollendet als Seligpreisung der Leidtragenden. Ich habe nun Trost gefunden.[48]

The inspiration for the *Requiem* is often argued, to varying degrees, to be either or both the death of Schumann 1856 and Brahms' mother 1865. It is entirely logical to assume that personal experiences of loss, the concomitant emotions and the possible reflections over life and death they would bring, are part of the *Requiem*'s make up, expression and outlook. Yet we need to be careful not to make it relevant for only one or two people, or our experience of it conditioned by our perceptions of Brahms' relationship with either of them. 'Alles das ist denkbar, letzendlich belegbar ist es nicht',[49] writes Bolin about the recurrent attempts to link the *Requiem* to specific and limited events and people (including a break-up of a relationship and threatening war-fare), drawing attention to how perilous and partial an interpretation which takes as its starting point such assumptions would be.[50]

The choral narration of Brahms' careful selection of passages from the Lutheran Bible is a meeting point for a personal contemplation of sorrow, loss and hope on the one hand, and a universal and collective exploration of doubt, assurance and joy on the other. The deliberate (and later expressively defended) exclusion of Christ or John 3:16, which for Carl Reinthaler was the *Requiem*'s one significant short-coming,[51] points to Brahms' use of sacred texts not as absolute doctrine but as poetic sources with which to 'probe philosophical issues, and to question the nature of life and the human condition'.[52] But at the same time as the *Requie*m in this way then is a private reflection and search for understanding, it is also unavoidably and deliberately public, not least since it is in its very format intended for large-scale performances in communal, public places.

For Lutheranism however, the collective (or a collective experience) does not come with a conditional surrender of the individual (or the individual experience), nor does the individual reject completely the notion of the collective. It carries, rather, a heightened importance of, or focus on, the individual at the expense only of what might be termed 'organized religion' – for Lutheranism the need for a community, a group in which to be anchored and to which to belong is still relevant, but the shape and substance of that group is not directed by a collective body, only by the individual desire or need to belong to such a group.[53]

The *Requiem*'s communal function can therefore be understood not just by its use of text and language, but also by the connections its very format forges. It resists the traditional liturgical setting of the requiem mass, but is at home both in the concert hall or in a church venue (on both larger and smaller scales), and as such may be understood as being more accessible, and relevant, to a broader audience. Deathridge identifies '[its] sublime choral writing' as being 'not as distant from the vocal style of worthy local singing associations as it might seem today'[54], and although in no way an easy or undemanding piece in the choral repertoire, its four-part (only) harmonies within a standard register and ultimately very singable lines make it possible for a broad spectrum of singers, professional or amateur, to engage with.[55] The *Requiem* thus becomes simultaneously relevant to a specific, but also relatively broad, audience, and a musical experience in which partaking could be either from within or without, either as communally spiritual or individually contemplative, and in which individual levels of musical ability could be contained.

The 'well-known' chorale that Brahms claims to have hidden within the *Requiem* underlines this link to its local community further.[56] This musical inter-reference often tends to be regarded primarily in technical terms and as symbolic – a clever technique to pay tribute to a preceding generation of German traditions. But as such it also has a very practical function: it is representative of a local musical heritage, and one expressed through collective singing. It therefore points to the embeddedness of local culture within the *Requiem* and to its desire to be not just *for* its own people but also *of* them: inspired by its local audience and their own cultural heritage and practises, the *Requiem* also seeks to connect with that audience, to give them ways of recognising themselves in it, and to make it relevant for them.[57] The hidden chorale is therefore less significant as an intellectual link to a musical heritage, or an expression of some Brahmsian nostalgic recycling of past projects, imbued with heavy connotations, but emphasises rather the communal collectiveness rooted in a (spiritual) tradition of singing together, an emphasis on the chorus as collective experience, a joint tradition, and a short-hand for a shared emotional and spiritual depository.

This is how the *Requiem* in its situadedness becomes a requiem not primarily for the dead, but for the living. Its 'Begriffsgefüge' of 'Trost und Tröstung'[58] are expressed not only through its textual and musical material, and are not primarily or predominantly found in the fifth movement (which the quote by Floros refers to) – and is specifically *not* articulated by the soloists. It is instead embodied in a collective experience, sprung from its deeply rooted cultural connotations, and communicated through the choral voice. At the same time as the chorus channels for us the divine voice of Beatitudes, of promises, hope and comfort, the simultaneously individual and collective choral voices also explore our concomitant emotions of sorrow, fear and hope, and our longing for reassurance. Through them we too can face death, but with them – and by them – we can also find strength, solace and solidarity. They carry forth the power of the music itself to heal and to sooth, but also to express and explore emotions for which words alone are a limited resource.

The dichotomy surrounding Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* is often dominated by a polarisation of on the one hand its 'Germanness', and on the other its capacity for universal relevance, often seeming to necessitate hearings that achieve the latter only by excluding the former. Opening up the interpretative hearings of nineteenth-century choral music to include a range of possible communications and concerns might be a way of situating it closer to its historical context and at the same time allow it to speak with multifarious voices. The choral voice functions here not as a collective voice of a specific, historic and pre-defined conglomerate steeped in nineteenth-century German rhetoric, but as communicator of the *Requiem*'s main narrative: that of finding and imparting comfort and consolation in the face of loss and desolation, and perhaps to speak to us all of 'the ephemeral nature of earthly things and the hope for something beyond'[59]. It brings with it a myriad of voices and expressions, and through its context, it remains both culturally specific and of cosmic relevance. By allowing the choral voices to speak with all their multifaceted nuances, emphases and expressions we may be able to hear *Ein deutsches Requiem* as both German and human, both culturally anchored and universal, and as of both personal and collective relevance.

NOTES

[1] Oh friends, not these sounds!
[2] Steinberg, M.P. (2004). *Listening to Reason. Culture, Subjectivity and Nineteenth-Century Music*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 163.
[3] Steinberg (2004), 166.
[4] Steinberg (2004), 166–167.
[5] Steinberg (2004), xi.
[6] Minor, R. (2012). *Choral Fantasies: music, festivity and nationhood in nineteenth-century Germany*. Cambridge; New York : Cambridge University Press, 3.
[7] Mosse, G L. (1975). *The nationalization of the masses. Political symbolism and mass movement in Germany from the Napoleonic wars through the Third Reich*. New York: H. Fertig, 127.
[8] Smith & Young points for example to the symphonic choirs: as they grew larger, more amateur singers were increasingly needed to fill them. Smith, J.G & Young, P.M (2001). "Chorus (i), §4: From the mid-18th century to the later 19th". In: Sadie, S (Ed.). *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians. Vol.5*. London/New York: Macmillan Publishers, 777.
[9] Minor (2012), 1.
[10] Quoted in Minor (2012), 1.
[11] Minor (2012), 1.
[12] Smith & Young (2001), 77.
[13] See Simon, J. (2004). "Singing Democracy: Music and Politics in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Thought". *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65 (3), 447–450.
[14] Kreuzer. G. (2005). "'Oper im Kirchengewande'? Verdi's *Requiem* and the Anxieties of the Young German Empire". *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58 (2), 400–401. See also Applegate, C. (1998), "How German is it? Nationalism and the Idea of Serious Music in the Early Nineteenth Century" in *19th-Century Music* 21 (3), 274–296, and Applegate, C. & Potter, D. (Eds) (2002). *Music and German National Identity*. University of Chicago Press.
[15] Solie, R.A. (2004). *Music in other words*. Berkeley/London: University of California Press. (California studies in 19th century music; 12), 5.
[16] Smith & Young (2001), 777. For more on German "Männerchöre", see for example Brinkman, J.M. (1970). "The German Male Chorus of the Early Nineteenth Century". *Journal of Research in Music Education* 18 (1), and Brusniak, F. & Klenke, D. (Eds.) (1995). *"Heil deutschem Wort und Sang!" Nationalidentität und Gesangskultur in der deutschen Geschichte - Tagungsbericht Feuchtwangen 1994*. Augsburg: Wißner; see also Applegate & Potter (2002), in particular their chapter 'Germans as the "People of Music": Genealogy of an Identity', 1-35, especially 17-18.
[17] Deathridge, J. (1991). "Germany: the 'Special Path'". In: Samson, J. (Ed). *The Late Romantic Era: from the mid-nineteenth century to World War I*. London: Macmillan Press., in particular 59.
[18] Parakilas, J. (1992). "Political Representation and the Chorus in Nineteenth-Century Opera". *19th-Century Music* 16 (2), 197.
[19] Ibid. See also Engelhardt, M. (1997). "'Something's Been Done to Make Room for Choruses': Choral Conception and Choral Construction in *Luisa Miller*". In Chusid, M. (Ed.). *Verdi's Middle Period, 1849-1859. Source Studies, Analysis, and Performance Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
[20] Contemporary comment on Brahms' *Fest- und Gedänksprüche* (Op.109), quoted in Minor (2006), 284.
[21] Hewitson, M. (2000). "Nation and Nationalismus: representation and national identity in Imperial Germany". In Fulbrook M. & Swales, M (Eds.). *Representing the German Nation: history and identity in twentieth century Germany*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 114.
[22] Beller-Mackenna, D. (2004). *Brahms and the German Spirit*. Cambridge Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 32.
[23] Smith & Young (2001), 777.
[24] Steinberg, M.P. (2005). *Choral Masterworks: A listener's guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 70.
[25] 'Blessed are they that mourn'.
[26] For further discussion of the textual aspects, see for example Minear, 1987.
[27] Floros, C. (2004). "Vergänglichkeit, Tröstung und Hoffnung als semantische Felder bei Johannes Brahms". In: Bolin, N (Ed.). *Johannes Brahms, Ein deutsches Requiem*: *Vorträge, Europäisches Musikfest, Stuttgart 2003*. Kassel; London: Bärenreiter, 45.
[28] See for example Steinberg (2005), 71 ff.

[29] See Reynolds. C. (1985). "A Choral Symphony by Brahms?". *19th-Century Music* 9 (1), 8-12 for identification of material for this movement in earlier compositional attempts by Brahms and works by Schumann.
[30] Minor also discusses a homophonic "Aber" in Op.109 as an expression of a choir that 'ha[s] something more to add', and suggests a similarity with the "Aber" in movm.2 of Op.45; Minor (2006), 281.
[31] Floros (2004), 48.
[32] Beller-McKenna (2004), 66.
[33] Evans, E. (1912). *Historical, descriptive & analytical account of the entire works of Johannes Brahms. Vol.1 – The Vocal Works*. London: WM. Reeves; Steinberg, M.P. (2005). *Choral Masterworks: A listener's guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[34] Steinberg (2005), 73.
[35] 'How lovely are Thy dwellings'.
[36] The text-sheet is reproduced in Musgrave, M. (1996). *Brahms: A German Requiem*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 11, and a discussion around the creation of the fifth movement on 9-13.
[37] Although completed after the Requiem, the Wiegenlied seems to started life at an earlier tage. See Bottge, K.M. (2005). "Brahms's 'Wiegenlied' and the Maternal Voice". *19th-Century Music* 28 (3), 185-213.
[38] Bottge (2005), 205.
[39] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1837; quoted in Bottge (2005), 205.
[40] 'I will comfort you'.
[41] Musgrave also quotes Florence May, who claims Brahms told Hermann Deiters that he had thought of his mother when writing the movement; Musgrave (1996), 9. The uncertainty surrounding these claims is evident.
[42] Beller-Mackenna, D. (2005). "Distance and Disembodiment: Harps, Horns, and the Requiem Idea in Schumann and Brahms". *The Journal of Musicology* 22 (1), 87.
[43] Steinberg (2004), 174; Evans (1912), 178.
[44] 'A secret'.
[45] 'the pinnacle of the entire work', Adolph Schubring, 1869; quoted in Horstmann, A. (1986). *Untersuchungen zur Brahms-Rezeption der Jahre 1860-1880*. Hamburg: Wagner, 134.
[46] 'Blessed are the dead'.
[47] In the words of contemporary reviewer Maczewski: 'In den Worten "Selig sind die Todten" sei die Seligkeit zur "Wahrheit" geworden' (In the words "Blessed are the dead", the blessedness has become truth). From the 'most extensive and technically knowledgeable' of contemporary reviews, by A. Maczewski in 1870, quoted in Horstmann (1986), 152.
[48] 'I have now found consolation. I have overcome that which I believed never to overcome [...] I have now laid down my sorrows and they have been taken from me: I have completed my music of mourning as a beatitude of bereavment. I have now found comfort'. Brahms in a draft letter after completing the *Requiem* (dated as 1868 and 1869). Quoted in Bolin, N. (2004). "Das Problem: Ein deutsches Requiem Op.45". In: Bolin, N (Ed.). *Johannes Brahms, Ein deutsches Requiem*: *Vorträge, Europäisches Musikfest, Stuttgart 2003.* Kassel; London: Bärenreiter, 35.
[49] 'Everything is possible, but in the end impossible to prove'. Bolin (2004), 33.
[50] See for example Steinberg (2005), 69.
[51] Reinthaler was preparing the chorus for the 1868 performance in Bremen on Good Friday, and found the 'lack' of the 'point on which everything revolves, namely the redeeming death of the Lord' made it less 'suitable'. It is in the response to this letter that Brahms suggests the 'Deutsch' in the *Requiem*'s title could equally well have been 'Menschen'. As Beller-Mackenna points out, Brahms' response does not actually answer Reinthaler's question as put. Letter quoted in translation in Beller-Mackenna, D. (1998). "How *deutsch* a Requiem? Absolute Music, Universality, and the Reception of Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, op.45". *19th-Century Music* 22 (1), 3-19.
[52] Beller-Mackenna (2004), 34. Contemporary reviewers also generally heard Brahms' 'freeing himself from any specific Kultus [and] reflecting a modern form of faith'; see Beller-Mackenna (1998), 10.
[53] See Beller-Mackenna (1998), in particular 12-14.
[54] Deathridge (1991), 59.
[55] Brahms was however under no illusions about the standard, quality and musicianship needed for a choral force to perform the *Requiem* well. Nick Strimple quotes a letter (in translation) which Brahms sent in reply regarding a planned performance in Hamburg [year not given]. The suggested choir was in his view not up to the task and he urged reconsideration: 'The planned perf. makes sense only if it is an especially good one; heading the list for that is the choral group'. After stating his preference for which to chose, he also suggests as second choice the combined theatre choruses of Hamburg and Schwerin – but adds that it is really quite a lot to ask of them, to practise, in addition to their other tasks, 'so difficult a piece'. Quoted in Strimple, N. (2008). *Choral Music in the 19th century*. Milwaukee: Amadeus, 63–64.
[56] For discussions of both character and whereabouts of this chorale, see for example Reynolds (1985), 11ff.
[57] Minor writes similarly about *Fest- und Gedänksprüche*, which Brahms had initially also considered prefacing with "German", as this would, Minor suggests, have encouraged the audience to understand them as being 'not only about them, but of and from them as well'; Minor (2006), 271.

[58] [Its] 'conceptual structures are [built around] comfort and consolation'. Floros (2004), 52.

[59] E. Hanslick in 1867, reproduced in Frisch, W. & Karnes, K.C. (Eds.) (2009). *Brahms and his world*. Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 224.