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A Report from the Editing Workshop of *Ein deutsches Requiem* [A German Requiem] by Brahms

Brahms fans, take note! As part of the new Johannes Brahms Complete Edition, Dr. Michael Struck (Kiel) and Professor Michael Musgrave (New York) are currently editing Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* op. 45 – one of the most famous of all requiems. In the process, they are not only clearing up a few legends, but also correcting errors in earlier editions. The Requiem's new performance material will be available from Breitkopf & Härtel by the middle of 2020.

What is new in this forthcoming edition?

Perhaps you are wondering about the need for yet another edition of the Brahms *German Requiem* when other editions are already available on the market? One reason for our new edition is that recent research has come to question certain decisions made time and again by various publishers over the course of the work's publication. Furthermore, there are several readings in cases where the composer made own subsequent corrections.

This was why Professor Michael Musgrave (New York) and Dr. Michael Struck (Kiel) completely re-edited this work as part of the new Brahms Complete Edition. The [Johannes Brahms Research Center](#), is located in the Musicological Institute of the Christian-Albrechts-University in Kiel which collaborates closely with the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* [Society of the Friends Music] in Vienna. The editors have now taken into account all the compositional changes made by Brahms and corrected the previous editions' errors in not only the music text, but also in the sung Biblical text. Additionally, during his intensive work on the music text Dr. Michael Struck was also able to find a previously unknown manuscript fragment for the first movement. Since our new edition corresponds overall as much as possible to what Brahms intended, it more than deserves the Urtext logo.

Work in progress

Our edition comprises the seven-movement version known today. The work was not present in this form from the outset, however, as can be seen from its lengthy genesis history: Brahms completed the six-movement version (lacking the present fifth movement) in 1866. Before all seven movements were performed for the first time on 18 February 1869 in the Leipzig Gewandhaus, the first three movements had already been heard in Vienna in 1867 and the entire six-movement version in Bremen in 1868. The Requiem's Leipzig premiere was conducted by the Gewandhaus kapellmeister Carl Reinicke, since Brahms was not available due to his preparations for the premiere of his cantata *Rinaldo*.

Legends

In addition to correcting errors in the music, the editors could also clear up many legends surrounding the work. The assumption has long been, for example, that the Requiem originated in several stages, based on a *funeral cantata* begun around 1859. The only information about the work's early roots concerns, though, the opening of the second movement, which, according to the trustworthy statement by Brahms's friend Albert Dietrich, comes from the "slow scherzo" of a sonata in D minor for two pianos written in 1854. The assumption that Brahms had based the Requiem on a composition plan of his late friend and patron Robert Schumann and to commemorate the death of his own mother (February 1865) could be partly refuted, partly put sharply into perspective.



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Reception and significance

Today, *Ein deutsches Requiem* is considered not only one of Brahms's major works, but even as "an epitome of his creativity" (Dr. Michael Struck). Though it is not the composer's first great work, it is his most extensive. And it was the work that, besides the first ten *Hungarian Dances* in the piano-duet version, was largely responsible for his national and international breakthrough in 1868/69. Accordingly, *Ein deutsches Requiem* always attracted particular attention and rapidly gained currency, especially in Germany, as well as abroad in German and English-speaking countries.

At the same time, however, his contemporaries' emerging criticism reveals the tension surrounding the reception of Brahms's works: his music was not sufficiently committed to tradition to suit the conservatives, though not advanced enough for the progressive New German School of Wagner and Liszt.

A totally "normal" requiem?

Contemporary reviewers emphasized that the *German Requiem* is an independent, versatile, and innovative work, nevertheless following in some aspects the sacred-music tradition. The work is also original in lacking a solid relationship with the Latin Catholic Mass for the dead, as the composer was not interested in spreading fear of the Last Judgment. Last but not least, his choice of text shows his intention of consoling the bereaved and those who fear death. By his own account, he himself would have preferred the title "A Human Requiem."

Publication of the new edition

[The volume of the complete edition](#) is to be published by the G. Henle Verlag, Munich. By the middle of 2020, the associated performance material, that is, the conductor's score, orchestral parts, and piano reduction, will be available from Breitkopf & Härtel, Wiesbaden. As is generally the case with our critical Urtext editions, practicality is of the essence here, in addition, of course, to scholarly accuracy. This has been validated in advance in a concert by the [Oratorio Society of New York](#) on 2 March 2020. The results of the trial performance will immediately be incorporated within the edition to ensure practical orchestral material.



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Dr. Michael Struck studied school music, piano and musicology in Hamburg. He received his doctorate in 1984 with a thesis on Schumann's late instrumental works. From 1985–2018 he worked full-time at the research center for the new Johannes Brahms Complete Edition (Musicological Institute of the University of Kiel), where he continues to work on a voluntary basis. He has editorially supervised or entirely edited numerous volumes of the new Brahms Complete Edition. He is currently engaged in the final work on the edition of the "German Requiem", which he prepared together with Michael Musgrave. His publications cover the music of the 18th–20th century; he is also active as a music journalist, music critic and pianist. In 2009 he was awarded the Schumann Prize of the city of Zwickau, and in 2010, as an employee of the Kiel Brahms Research Centre, he was a co-prizewinner of the Brahms Prize of the Brahms Society Schleswig-Holstein.

Prof. Michael Musgrave is Emeritus Professor of Music at Goldsmiths College in the University of London, Visiting Research Fellow at the Royal College of Music, and teaches in the graduate faculty of the Juilliard School, New York. His research field is 19th- and early 20th-century German and British music. He is author and editor of six books on Brahms including a study of the German Requiem [Cambridge University Press 1996]. Previous editions for the Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe include the two orchestral serenades and two orchestral overtures; his editions of Brahms's Liebeslieder Waltzes are published by Carus Verlag and, in the four-hand version, by Edition Peters. For Peters he has also edited the Schumann piano concerto. Musgrave's book, 'Life of Schumann', was published by Cambridge University Press in 2011.