The music speaks for itself. Join the conversation.

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How lovely is this dwelling place?

Milwaukee. On a great lake, with plentiful green parks and handsome buildings. Bustling neighborhoods, each with its own unique feel. I think Milwaukeeans can all agree: we have a lovely dwelling place.

In celebration of our beautiful hometown, the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra invites you to enjoy Symphony360, a multi-week music listening initiative. This year’s event pairs Johannes Brahms’s classical romanticism with Jennifer Higdon’s wide-eyed neo-romanticism.

Join us around town for a listening party for inspired discussion and enjoyment. Discover the story behind Brahms’s *German Requiem (Ein Deutches Requiem)*, whose fourth movement “How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place” provides our theme, and Jennifer Higdon’s “river sings a song to trees,” the second movement from her metropolitan sound picture *City Scape*.

Hear four different Milwaukee Symphony conductors as their recordings of Brahms’s *German Requiem* stream online. Share your favorite Milwaukee places via Facebook and Twitter. Then, join us in Uihlein Hall October 10 –12 for a performance of Higdon’s “river sings a song to trees” and Brahms’s *German Requiem* or from the comfort of your home via live audio streaming on WMSE 91.7 fm.

We invite you to listen and to share this experience with your fair city, and as always, we hope you love the music!

Musically yours,

Karli Larsen
*Director of Education and Community Engagement*

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*Brahms’s *German Requiem* is a biblical work about death, but its message of hope and life, combined with the music’s warmth and radiance, transcends religion and despair.*
About the MSO and MSO Chorus

The Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, under the dynamic leadership of Music Director Edo de Waart, has embarked upon a new era of artistic excellence and critical acclaim. In his fifth year with the MSO, Maestro de Waart has led sold-out concerts, elicited rave reviews, and conducted a performance at Carnegie Hall on May 11, 2012, in the Spring for Music festival.

Since its inception in 1959, the MSO has become one of the finest orchestras in the nation. The MSO’s full-time professional musicians perform 140 classics, pops, family, and education concerts each season in venues throughout the state. A cornerstone of Milwaukee’s arts community, the MSO provides enrichment and education activities for audiences of every age, economic status and background. For 44 years, the symphony’s nationally-syndicated radio broadcasts have ranked among the nation’s largest collections and are heard on over 180 stations throughout the United States.

The Milwaukee Symphony Chorus was founded in 1976, filling the MSO’s need for a chorus of consistent quality. The indomitable Margaret Hawkins brought the strength of her personality and great skill to the challenge, laying the foundation on which chorus director Lee Erickson has built. Hawkins’s legacy is now honored through the naming of an endowed chair that secures the chorus’s future.

The chorus has grown in artistry and stature over three decades to establish itself as one of the finest symphony choruses in the country. International guest conductors concur: Nicholas McGeegan, frequent MSO guest conductor, called Milwaukee’s chorus “a real gem” and Tom Strini, arts journalist, has honored the chorus by calling it “the jewel in Milwaukee’s cultural crown.”
Listening Parties

Locations throughout metro Milwaukee. Seating is limited. Please call ahead.

Sunday, September 28
1 pm | Schlitz Audubon Center
1111 E. Brown Deer Rd., Fox Point
Please note: $6 admission is required.
Access to Nature Center is included.
414.352.2880

Monday, September 29
6:30 pm | Milwaukee Central Library
814 W. Wisconsin Ave, Milwaukee
414.286.3000

Wednesday, October 1
7 pm | Steinway Piano Gallery
11550 W. North Ave, Wauwatosa
Tim Benson
Assistant MSO Chorus Director
414.727.5995

Thursday, October 2
7 pm | Sugar Maple
441 E. Lincoln Ave, Bay View
414.481.2393

Sunday, October 5
1 pm | Brookfield Congregational Church
16350 Gebhardt Rd., Brookfield
Host: Brian Peckham
262.786.4155

Tuesday October 7
7 pm | WI Conservatory of Music
1584 N. Prospect Ave., Milwaukee
414.276.5760

Ticketed Performances

Marcus Center for Performing Arts
Meet the Music pre-concert talks are held in Anello Atrium. Performances are held in Uihlein Hall.

Jennifer Higdon “river sings a song to trees”

Brahms Ein deutsches Requiem, Opus 45, “A German Requiem”

Friday, October 10
7 PM | Meet the Music
8 PM | Performance

Saturday, October 11
7 PM | Meet the Music
8 PM | Performance

Sunday, October 12
1:30 PM | Meet the Music
2:30 PM | Performance

TICKETS

mso.org
414 291.7605
About the Music
“river sings a song to trees”

Away. We get away, run away and look away from things that overburden and stress us. But that place, that “away” is different for all of us. From a strolling in the backyard to gazing at a beautiful vista, hiking through the woods or a trekking up a mountain, “away” is that place where we go to calm the mind, soothe the soul, and find solace from the noise and clutter of daily life.

For American author Henry David Thoreau, “away” was a cabin deep in the woods, overlooking Walden Pond. Naturalist, author, and activist John Muir, known as the father of our national parks, found his solace in mountains. “Climb the mountains,” he advised. “Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.”

In 1872, the U.S. Congress created Yellowstone National Park, the first American National Park. The park’s founding began a worldwide movement to create national parks, simply to preserve grand, natural spaces for the enjoyment of the citizenry. This preservation of national parks was a clear outgrowth of the Romantic movement in music, art, and literature, which in turn was a response to the noise, dirt and harshness of Industrial Age city life.

Muir wrote, in his 1901 Our National Parks, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life. Awakening from the stupefying effects of the vice of over-industry and the deadly apathy of luxury, they are trying as best they can to mix and enrich their own little goings with those of nature, and to get rid of rust and disease.”

Jennifer Higdon
b. December 31, 1962, Brooklyn, New York

Composed
2002

Premiere
November 14, 2002
Atlanta Symphony Orchestra
Robert Spano, conductor

Last MSO Performance
MSO premiere

Instrumentation
2 flutes; piccolo; 2 oboes; English horn; 2 clarinets; bass clarinet; 2 bassoons; contrabassoon; 4 horns; 3 trumpets; 3 trombones; tuba; timpani; percussion (bass drum, Chinese cymbals, crotale, marimba, sizzle cymbal, suspended cymbals, tam tam, tom tom, triangle, vibraphone, water gong); harp; strings

Approximate Duration
18 minutes
The idea of preservation and appreciation of nature runs deep in Wisconsin history. A half century after Muir penned *Our National Parks*, Wisconsin naturalist and author Aldo Leopold wrote, “To those devoid of imagination a blank space on a map is a useless waste; to others the most valuable part.” In his rhapsodic *A Sand County Almanac with Other Essays on Conservation from Round River*, written about his home in Sauk County, he wrote, “There are some who can live without wild things and some who cannot.” A pioneer in the fields of environmental ethics and wildlife management, Leopold’s fascinating career included many years on the UW-Madison faculty.

Feeling the need to connect with nature is not reserved for the few who make preservation and conservation their life’s works. Muir wrote, “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”

Illinois native Carl Sandburg believed, “It is necessary…for a man to go away by himself… to sit on a rock…and ask, ‘Who am I, where have I been, and where am I going?’”

For those who write music, expressing the need and love for natural spaces is a particular challenge. Richard Strauss described a day of hiking the mountains in “Eine Alpensinfonie” (An Alpine Symphony) and Ferde Grofé described the passage of a day at the Grand Canyon in his “Grand Canyon Suite.” These pieces, which follow an extra-musical narrative, are called program
American composer Jennifer Higdon’s musical vocabulary is freer and more modern than those of Strauss and Grofé, but like them, she expressed her impressions and feelings about an extra-musical subject in her 2002 City Scape. Written about Atlanta, her hometown, the piece is divided into three movements, with the longest movement, “river sings a song to trees,” in the center. The movement is a musical expression of her fascination with the multitude of waterways that keep Atlanta green and lush. It is bracketed by movements entitled “Skyline” and “Peachtree Street.”

Higdon wrote program notes on “river sings a song to trees,” and to a degree about Atlanta itself, explaining, “In contrast to the metallic and concrete structures lay the parks…both large and small, filling acres or sometimes just a few square feet. Feeding this greenery and sometimes-lush carpet are tributaries, hidden streams, small creeks, and occasionally rivers. The waters represent constant change, under calm waters and over powerful currents, doing so with exquisite beauty.”

As you listen to the piece, pay attention to the range of shifting textures, colors, and effects she creates using instruments of the orchestra. The piece is a glimpse of her perception of special, natural spaces tucked into a city she knows quite well.
How many of the national and/or state parks and preserves have you visited? What kind of landscape is particularly compelling for you?

- **Think about the natural spaces in and around Milwaukee** and identify a few that either have meaning for you, or that you can imagine having meaning for others.

- **Think of a natural space that speaks to your heart**, someplace you go to refresh and restore your spirit or simply seek a sense of calm. Where is this place? Is it local? It is distant? What is it about the place that speaks so clearly to you? Is it a feeling of being small in a vast natural landscape, or a feeling of being embraced by the close confines of a small valley, tiny clearing, or a tight bend on a small creek? Is it the sound of the place, the smell, the light, or perhaps a combination of elements? Are you drawn to its beauty or to a memory attached it? No answer to these questions can be wrong, anymore than the answer to “What is your favorite color?” can be wrong.

- **Now think about expressing elements of your “away” place**, or elements of feelings about the place, using orchestral instruments. Start with broad ideas, such as volume or creating a palette of sounds. Next think more specifically. Would you use clearly defined melodies or choose to rely on waves of sound and shifting colors and orchestral textures, rather than distinct, tonal melodies, creating a sonic impression of the space?

Although you’re not actually going to write a piece, you’ve made some of the first, complex decisions a composer would face in writing such a piece. Why did you make the choices you made? Were they dictated by the place itself or by your own musical preferences? Again, no answer is wrong. Think about continuing and actually writing a piece of music about the place you identified and using the compositional approach you chose. What do you see as the difficulties of the compositional approach you chose?

- **Listen to “river sings a song to trees” again** and discuss the ways in which contemplating creating such a piece altered the way you heard it.
Looking back at history, it’s often difficult to imagine towering figures, the likes of a Shakespeare or Bach, as individuals who caught colds and were hungry for breakfast every morning. Yet they were just that. They were humans, who experienced the mundane and the exceptional moments in life, along with the comical and the heartbreaking. For Shakespeare to have written Romeo and Juliet, he had to have experienced the searing pain of a lost love. For Bach to have written his Kaffeekantate (Coffee Cantata), about a young woman addicted to coffee, he simply had to have had a wicked sense of humor. They, along with a handful of creative types from each generation, were set apart by their ability to express their experiences and emotions in a form that resonates with others across generations.

We, like every generation that came before us, experience the pain of loss and the fear of our own demise. But for the many generations of humanity that lived and died before the advent of modern medicine in the twentieth century, death was a constant companion that always lurked just outside the door. These were ages in which catching a common cold or a cut on one’s finger could lead quickly to something medicine had no means to control or cure. Across many centuries and cultures, humanity has created rituals, prayers, and sacrifices, along with elaborate tombs, markers, and statuary, to mark the passing of those we hold dear. We have taken great care to send our beloved departed on their way with respect and dignity, ensuring that they moved on to whatever awaited.

Some Native American cultures burned their dead on pyres, seeking to ensure that the spirit of the dead person was free from his or her body and able to move on to the next life. An old Scottish tradition required that after a person died, doors must be left open for a time so that the spirit
could make its exit. The Celts observed Samhain at the end of October each year, as a time in which the veil that separated this world from the Otherworld was at its thinnest. They believed spirits could return to this world and some, particularly poets, could visit the Otherworld during Samhain.

Understanding how easy and common it was for those living not that long ago to sicken and die suddenly, gives some context to some of the great works of literature and music that deal with death and/or the promise of resurrection. Shakespeare wrote of the deaths of *Romeo and Juliet* as one who saw too many young lives tragically cut short. The achingly beautiful lines of the “Lacrymosa” from Mozart’s *Requiem* were clearly written by someone who had lost loved ones.
Music, from a simple “O Danny Boy” to Handel’s jubilant “Hallelujah” chorus, expresses the emotions of the human heart in a manner that transcends culture and language. It was Mozart’s Requiem that was chosen as a worldwide expression of the sorrow and loss of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the United States, more than 200 years after its composition. On the one-year anniversary of the attacks, performances of Mozart’s Requiem literally wrapped around the world in a project known as the Rolling Requiem. Spearheaded by the Seattle Symphony Chorus, the project entailed performances in each of the world’s 24 time zones, each beginning at 8:46 am, the moment the first plane struck the World Trade Center. Even a small outpost at McMurdo Station, Antarctica participated, playing a recording of the Requiem, as they had no resources to perform it. In Milwaukee, the Bel Canto Chorus, singers from several other local choruses, and members of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra joined forces in a Rolling Requiem performance at the Basilica of St. Josaphat.

When Brahms, a pillar of the progressive Romantic era, began to write a requiem not long after the death of his mother, and several years after the death of his dear friend and mentor Robert Schumann, he wrote not for the souls of departed but for the aching hearts of those left behind – for the living. Referring to his requiem as “a requiem for humanity,” he abandoned both the traditional Catholic requiem mass, upon which Mozart’s Requiem is based, as well as the traditional Latin requiem texts, in favor of scriptural excerpts from Martin Luther’s German Bible.
Brahms’s departure from the liturgical text is apparent from the first words of the *Requiem*. Where Mozart’s *Requiem* opens with the traditional, “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine” (Grant them eternal rest, Lord), Brahms begins with “Selig sind, die da Lied tragen” (Blessed are they that mourn). The Romantic era roots of the Brahms can also be heard in the references to nature found in the 1 Peter verses he used: “All flesh is as grass and the glory of man like flowers. The grass withers and the flower fails.” There is perhaps no clearer indicator of Brahms’s Romantic era mindset as his comparisons of death with the fleeting essence of the natural world.

The two requiems were written from different religious perspectives, in very different times by remarkably different men. The language of music that has expanded since the two composers met their own deaths and the world has experienced tragedies on a scale neither of them could have imagined. Yet their pieces continue to express the inescapable human experiences of death and grief in a way that transcends time, culture, and language to touch the heart directly.
As you go through the following discussion points, remember that every one of them requires a subjective answer. No answer is right or wrong, but every answer has meaning.

- **Listen to the Brahms’s Requiem, playing each movement twice.** On the first listen, follow the translated text and pay attention to the way Brahms set the texts he chose for that movement. How did he support the text with the music? See if you can identify specific musical devices, such as the descending half steps with which Bach created sighing phrases whenever he dealt with the topic of death in his music. Does he use crescendos and decrescendos? Does he perhaps use the sonic qualities of certain instruments, chorus sections or solo voices to express certain emotions? Phrases that rise or fall in pitch? Long phrases or short phrases?

- **On the second listen, remember Romantic poet Heinrich Heine’s famous statement, “When words leave off, music begins.”** Does the music have more or less impact when you’re not following word for word? Are you more open to your own interpretation of the music without the words?

- **Listen to the opening section of the Mozart Requiem and then do the same with the opening section of the Brahms Requiem.** Does the musical language of one or the other speak more clearly to you? If so, what is it that makes a difference? Is it a matter of hearing the structure of the phrases and the piece more clearly in one than the other? Is it a matter of the phrasing and harmony of Brahms being freer than that of Mozart, or are the more predictable lines of the Mozart more comfortable for you?

- **Clearly not everyone who participated in the global Rolling Requiem in 2002 had a shared faith.** Just as a piece of program music is a very personal expression of an extra-musical idea for the composer, a requiem too is a very personal expression of grief and/or faith on the part of the composer. To return to Heine, “Human misery is too great to do without faith.” Does the Brahms Requiem express your own faith and/or your belief about what lies beyond this life? How much of your experience of the piece relies on shared beliefs?
Recommended Recordings

City Scapes
Atlanta Symphony Chorus & Orchestra
Robert Spano, conductor
Jennifer Higdon: City Scape and Concerto for Orchestra
Telarc

Ein deutsches Requiem, Opus 45
“A German Requiem”

Philharmonia Orchestra & Chorus
Otto Klemperer, conductor
Elizabeth Schwarzkopf, soprano
Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, baritone
EMI Classics

Chicago Symphony Orchestra & Chorus
James Levine, conductor
Kathleen Battle, soprano
Hakan Hagegard, baritone
RCA Red Seal

Atlanta Symphony Chorus & Orchestra
Robert Spano, conductor
Twyla Robinson, soprano
Mariusz Kwiecien, baritone
Telarc