

PROGRAMMESymphony No. 8 in B Minor - SCHUBERT
(The Unfinished)

Schubert completed his two movements of the "Unfinished" Symphony at the end of October 1822. Then, having worked with his usual haste, he put them aside to begin on his Wanderer Fantasy. During the following year, he gave the score away to his friend Josef Huttenbrenner. Nobody knows why he parted with an incomplete work, although for a century musicians have racked their brains to find an answer. He certainly worked on a third movement, a Scherzo.

The passionately intense first movement begins with eight very soft bars for cellos and basses, and lead to the first subject, a gentle, almost twilight tune for oboe and clarinet in unison over a rustling string accompaniment. The music builds to a climax, until, breaking the flow, it arrives at a long, sustained note on bassoons and horns. Then follows an enchanting melody played first by the cellos and then the violins. But after a mere 18 bars it suddenly stops and there is a moment of complete silence.

Then fierce chords crash in and change the mood. Following this the development theme moves in and creeps forward mysteriously, building to a violent climax. The wild music soon subsides towards the recapitulation section of the movement. The rustling strings and oboe-clarinet theme are restated.

Finally the closing section of the movement rises swiftly to a fortissimo climax, but drops at once as the oboe and clarinet mournfully intone the opening bars, which are then echoed by full orchestra and the music subsides once again briefly before four loud assertive chords bring the movement to a close.

The second movement, Andante con moto has all the lyrical beauty of the first movement, with perhaps added poetry and depth. A quiet repeated chord accompaniment on the strings supports the tune played by the clarinet, then taken over by the oboe. This is followed by a fortissimo second melody. Finally the exceptionally beautiful expressive coda and with the utmost serenity, the Symphony sinks into silence.

German Requiem - BRAHMS

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg on 7th May, 1833. His father was an orchestral double bass player who married a woman 17 years older than himself. But Christiane, although 41 when they married, soon gave him three children, of whom the composer Johannes was the second.

The German Requiem, the greatest vocal work and the central work of his career, was composed in 1868. It was not, of course, Brahms' first attempt to combine vocal and instrumental music, but the first work that combines a mixed chorus, solo voices and full orchestra.

In seven sections, the text, which Brahms himself chose from his constant reading of the Bible, is non-denominational, centering round faith in the Resurrection, rather than fear of the Day of Judgement.

The first, second, fourth and final movements are purely choral, the third and sixth for baritone solo and the fifth for soprano.

Each section has its own character, emphasized by Brahms' subtle instrumentation. For instance, there are no violins in the first movement, which sets a dark and heavy mood, while both movements for baritone end with a fugue.

The second movement begins with the heavy tread of a funeral march. Starting quietly, it builds up relentlessly to an overwhelming climax, before returning to the funeral march. The third movement introduces the baritone soloist, who alternates with the chorus in a sombre exchange. The fourth movement serves as a relief after the drama of the preceding sections and the pastoral tone is maintained in the fifth movement, where the soprano soloist sings words of consolation taken from St. John's Gospel. The sixth movement, the longest is also the dramatic core of the Requiem, with the soloist adopting the role of foretelling the future. The last movement returns to the spirit of the opening, the drama is spent and a mood of tranquility returns.