



The Chorus Newsletter

Published for and about the NOVA Community Chorus
www.nvcc.edu/alexandria/visual/music

Volume 8 Issue 2

October 2009

A Reminder

We enjoy rehearsals so much that often we forget that we have a serious purpose. Dr. Whitmire's sense of humor is contagious. We need to revert to appropriate decorum during rehearsals. Too often, we chatter or make comments to our neighbor that would be proper to do most times, but not at rehearsals. Dr. Whitmire has only a few hours to spend with us, trying to shape our sound into what composers had hoped for.

Please refrain from vocalizing your thoughts; it makes it hard for the rest of the chorus to hear what Dr. Whitmire is saying, and it is rude.

NOVA Coffeehouse

If you were a member of the NOVA Community Chorus last year, you will recall how much fun we had at the first coffeehouse.

At odds with the formality of typical recitals when performers dress up and exude the very best of their art, be it vocal or instrumental, the coffeehouse was intimate, casual, and warm.

More or less imitating the coffeehouse atmosphere of past decades, this coffeehouse was one in which patrons were encouraged to partake of the refreshments that were available in the lobby whenever we felt we wanted to do so, and not to wait until an announced intermission. This led to a casual movement, back and forth, even during performances.

The mostly played instruments were the guitars which sounded some original melodies. Even the dean performed. Save November 7, 2009 for another fun evening, and pass the word to your friends. Admission: \$10.

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Bullock on
Brahms

A Unifying Motif in Brahms' *German Requiem*?

Brahms' *German Requiem* is a long, complex composition. Yet, it is remarkably unified throughout. Its unity of tone and style is achieved in many ways. One of these is Brahms' use of a recurring motif: a rising major third followed by a rising minor second, first heard sung by the sopranos at their first entrance (mm 15-17).



One commentator has estimated that the motif appears more than 600 times. Brahms sometimes uses its inversion (falling), retrograde (backwards), or inversion retrograde (falling and backwards). For example, in the great fugue at the end of the 6th movement, it appears

as an inversion retrograde: a falling minor second followed by a falling major third (alto m. 208). The rhythm is frequently modified, as at the beginning of the 4th movement in the sopranos part (soprano mm 5-6). Finally, the intervals are often altered while the



pattern remains the same as the motif appears in different keys. For example, the minor second sometimes appears as a major second and the major third becomes a minor third as in the 6th movement fugue (soprano m 271, bass mm 273, 275).



For example, the minor second sometimes appears as a major second and the major third becomes a minor third as in the 6th movement fugue (soprano m 271, bass mm 273, 275). mortality. The last time it appears in the 7th movement (soprano m 143) it bears the same text as at its first appearance. Thus, each iteration of the motif reminds performers and listeners of that message.

It is surely no accident that this motif is first heard with words that express the core message of the *Requiem*—comfort for the living facing the loss of a loved one and intimations of their own

Most of us hear this kind of compositional subtlety instinctively rather than consciously. A closer look only serves to deepen our appreciation of the way in which the composer's skill is used to achieve his art.

by Bill Brown

MUSICAL HUMOR

Bullock on Brahms

Cadence: When everybody hopes you're going to stop, but you don't.

Final Cadence: When they force you to stop.

Virtuoso: a musician with very high morals. (I know one.)

There were two people walking down the street. One was a musician. The other didn't have any money either.

What's the first thing a musician says at work?

"Would you like fries with that?"

MUSIC: a complex organization of sounds that is set down by the composer, incorrectly interpreted by the conductor, who is ignored by the musicians, the result of which is ignored by the audience

Accidentals- Wrong notes.

Agitato- One's state of mind after playing a wrong note.

Transposition: The act of moving the pitch of a piece of music that is too high for the sopranos to a point where it is too low for the basses.

Clef: What you try never to fall off of.

Bass Clef: Where you land if you do fall off.

Metronome: a city-dwelling dwarf

Cello: the proper way to answer the phone.

Melodic Minor: Loretta Lynn's singing dad.

Aeolian mode: how you like Mama's cherry pie.

Allegro: leg fertilizer

Audition: The act of putting oneself under extreme duress to satisfy the sadistic intentions of someone who has already made up his mind.

From the WEB, Music Humor

In response to my inquiry, Dr. Bullock replied:

"...I am no longer with Columbus State University. I retired as Professor Emeritus in 2000. Currently I am the associate director of RiverCenter for the Performing Arts (www.rivercenter.org).

As for your general question ("What prompted you to undertake your quest"), I must refer you to the edition's Preface, which addresses this question in great detail, discussing (1) "the disparity of syllabic articulation," (2) "the archaic language," and (3) "the awkward syntax" that is rampant in previous English editions. It also discusses the benefits of performing the work in the language of the audience.

The Preface points out that in 1995, when I began to consider a performance of the work for the centennial of the composer's death in 1996, I was forced to accept the fact that there was no adequate English edition available, for all the reasons I give in the Preface. So I set out on a labor of love to prepare my own English version.

Of course, the great challenge was to (1) as often as possible use the same number of syllables in each phrase that Brahms did, (2) to place stressed syllables in the correct place and important words in the correct place to match the composer's emphasis of such words with pitch, hemiola, harmonic weight, etc., all the time (3) avoiding awkward syntax--(one edition actually says in one place, "stay I in hope now on God", another says in another place "that they rest them from all their labors").

One of my best achievements was fashioning the phrase "I found the greatest of comforts" for the fifth movement, which allows the soprano to sing "greatest" on her high note melissa in mm. 32-33 & 43-44 (where Brahms has "grossen") instead of some innocuous words (like "last I have" in the G. Schirmer score). There are so, so many examples of these kinds of things explained in Appendix 1, that 17 legal-size pages are used for that appendix.

In the process of preparing my translation, I also corrected a few egregious errors of previous editions, the most notable of which was the interpolation of the word "Christ" into the second movement of some previous translations (including the G. Schirmer score). My edition addresses this matter on page 99. Brahms viewed his Requiem as one "for all people" not just for Christians. So, like it or not, the word "Christ" does not appear in the work.

I hope you enjoy your performance of one of the greatest achievements of the human mind. As I point out in my Preface, Brahms wrote the work in German so his people could understand it. I believe that, now that my translation is available, there is no good reason not to perform the work in English for English-speaking audiences. Before my edition, though, there were countless reasons not to do so.,.,,"

Source: email from Bill Bullock to R. Trexler

The Chorus Newsletter welcomes news, articles and photographic contributions. Are you planning a recital? Tell us when and where and we will get the word out. Call the editor, Bob Trexler at 703 978-9171 or e-mail at Rctrex@aol.com.

The Chorus Newsletter contains information about and for members of the NOVA Community Chorus. It is privately published monthly except during June and July. The College has no responsibility for its content. Members are encouraged to contribute articles and news about musical offerings and musical topics to Robert Trexler, editor and publisher, at Rctrex@aol.com