

Brandenburg Concerto No. 3, in G major, BWV 1048 (1721)**Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)**

What does a composer's job application sound like? It might sound like this concerto—or rather, the BRANDENBURG CONCERTOS, of which it is a part. These are among the most loved and respected works of the Baroque era, and they are certainly more than a job application, but it can be startling to realize how rooted in concrete, day-to-day issues classical music often is. For several years J. S. Bach was head of the court music establishment for Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Koethen. Prince Leopold loved music and was an appreciative patron, but friction developed later on between Bach and the Prince's new wife, Fredericka Henrietta. She reportedly didn't care much for music (or maybe just not for Bach), and the disgruntled composer decided to put out feelers for a new job. Pulling together a collection of various "concerti grossi" he had been working on over the years, Bach sent them off with a flowery letter to Christian Ludwig, the Margrave of Brandenburg, whom he had met a few years earlier in Berlin while shopping for a harpsichord. Bach may have hoped the compositions would lead to a job offer, but Christian Ludwig never even wrote back to thank him, let alone offer a position or a fee. Nor is there is any evidence that these works were performed at that time: Bach originally conceived of them for Prince Leopold's well-staffed orchestra, but the Margrave's music ensemble apparently lacked the musicians to handle them. Many years later the pieces—by then considered a set—were nicknamed the "Brandenburg Concertos" and the name stuck.

Each work in the set is a "concerto grosso," meaning each work features two musical groups: a small one (called the "concertino") made up of a soloist or group of soloists, and a large one (the "ripieno") made up of the rest of the orchestra and the smaller group playing together. The CONCERTO NO. 3 is for stringed instruments only (unlike some other pieces in the set), and the relationships between the instruments and groups change continually—musicians play alone as soloists, together in various small group combinations, or with the entire orchestra. Typical of the form, there are three movements: "Allegro moderato"—which is a moderately fast speed; "Adagio"—a slow tempo, and "Allegro"—a fast tempo again. However, in this concerto the second movement ("Adagio") barely exists: Bach indicated it by writing just one measure with two chords of the sort one would find at the end of a movement. No one knows exactly what he wanted here: just the two chords? a violin cadenza? Something improvised? another piece? Listen to learn what the CWSO decides to do.

Ein Deutsches Requiem [A German Requiem], Op. 45 (1868)**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

In 1865 Johannes Brahms' mother died, leaving him deeply shaken. In response to this great loss, and perhaps also to the earlier, sad death of his composer friend Robert Schumann, Brahms wrote A GERMAN REQUIEM. A "Requiem" normally refers to the Roman Catholic Mass for the Dead, in Latin. However Brahms, who was raised a Protestant, decided to write his own "Requiem" using texts with only a few explicit (though distinct) Christian references; these he himself chose from Martin Luther's German translation of the Bible. Unlike the Mass for the Dead, this Requiem is not for liturgical use in a church but is to be performed in concert—as you will experience tonight. The composer's intent was not to focus on the dead but to comfort the living who grieve the loss of a loved one; perhaps in writing it, he too was comforted.

The REQUIEM for chorus, soloists, and orchestra, was written gradually, over the course of several years, with performances taking place at various stages of composition. The complete work with all seven movements was first performed at the Leipzig Gewandhaus concert hall in the spring of 1869. This was Brahms' largest work up to that time, and it soon established him as one of the important composers of

his day. As you listen, keep in mind not only the meaning of the words--which are significant—but also some of the methods Brahms uses to hold listeners' attention in each movement. Most of the movements, for example, are composed as balanced pairs, and the order in which they occur helps listeners hear this. To illustrate: movements 1 and 7 begin and end the work with the word "Blessed"; movements 2 and 6 are particularly solemn in tone, while movements 3 and 5 both feature soloists. Movement 4 ("How lovely are thy dwellings") stands alone at the center of the work. It is the serene heart of the piece—Brahms wrote it last of all, and he specifically intended it as a memorial to his mother.

1. "Selig sind die da Lied tragen" [Blessed are they that mourn]. This movement, which opens with the word "blessed" [selig] sung by the chorus with orchestra, sets a Beatitude from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.
2. "Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras" [For all flesh is as the grass]. Featuring the chorus, the solemn atmosphere gives this movement the quality of a funeral march. The texts come from Isaiah and letters of the New Testament.
3. "Herr, lehre doch mich" [Lord, make me know mine end]. This movement, with a text taken mostly from the Psalms, features a baritone soloist, with chorus and orchestra.
4. "Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen" [How lovely are thy dwellings]. With a text from the Psalms set for the chorus, this is the heart of the work, the movement around which the others revolve.
5. "Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit" [Ye now have sorrow]. This movement features a soprano soloist (compare it with movement #3, which featured a baritone soloist). The text, which speaks of comfort, comes from Isaiah, Ecclesiasticus, and the Gospel of John.
6. "Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende statt" [For we have here no abiding city]. Sung by the chorus, the text is mostly from the letters of Paul. (Compare the atmosphere of this movement with the solemn tone of #2).
7. "Selig sind die Toten" [Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord]. This movement features the chorus singing a text from Revelation. It builds in intensity, and eventually comes to a gentle conclusion. (The text of movement #1 began with "blessed" [selig] and that reassuring word ends the work as well.)

--Linda K. Schubert