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## **Technology, Artistic Collaboration, and Performance Practice in Bella Voce's 2019 Recording of Brahms' A German Requiem**

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# Technology, Artistic Collaboration, and Performance Practice in Bella Voce's 2019 Recording of Brahms' *A German Requiem*

## **Annotated Bibliography**

### **Abstract**

How do the recordist, conductor, and performers work together to create a unique recorded statement within the discourse between a 19<sup>th</sup> century composer and a 21<sup>st</sup> century listener in Bella Voce's 2019 recording of Brahms' *A German Requiem* (1871 London Version)?

The complexity of preparing a musical work and creating a recording of its performance encompasses many disciplines and the collaboration of many individuals. The process involves questions of performance practice, recording technique, applications of digital technology, and artistic choices on the part of all involved. The 2019 Bella Voce recording of Brahms' *A German Requiem* is an example of such a process with many historically informed, yet controversial choices made in its performance and production. A discussion of this complex, collaborative process in more detail will help to address questions of agency in recording and music making on the part of performers, conductors, and recordists.

### **Bibliography**

#### **Secondary or Tertiary Monographs**

1. Bartlett, Bruce and Jenny Bartlett. *Recording Music on Location: Capturing the Live Performance*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Focal Press, 2014. Proquest Ebook Central.

*Recording Music on Location* is a guide and reference book for creating recordings outside of a studio environment. It provides overviews of equipment needed, including microphone types, DAW software and audio interfaces, as well as pre-production and planning for a recording. The book discusses various microphone techniques and their applications for ensembles in different types of venues. Part 2 of the book is dedicated to classical music recording with a case study about orchestral recording. This work is instructional in nature, providing information for those wishing to explore on-location recording either as a hobby or in their career.

The information in this book relates to the Bella Voce recording, in that the Bella Voce album was recorded on-location at Saint Luke's Church in Evanston, IL. This source serves as a reference guide for understanding many of the recording techniques used for the Bella Voce recording.

Bruce Bartlett is an experienced recording engineer who has written numerous articles and books on audio topics. Jenny Bartlett is a technical writer. Focal Press is a publisher of media technology books. It is an imprint of Taylor Francis.

2. Friddle, David. *Sing Romantic Music Romantically: Nineteenth-Century Choral Performance Practices*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022.

Friddle's book discusses Historically Informed Performance (HIP) practice of 19<sup>th</sup> Century vocal music and works that combine chorus and orchestra. Friddle addresses "expressive devices" such as vibrato, articulation, and portamento, as well as pronunciation of various languages and dialects.

Friddle provides historical examples discussing vibrato, which indicate a preference for non-vibrato performance in both instrumental and vocal performance. Based on the sources cited, Friddle argues that vibrato should be used sparingly in a historically informed performance, especially in ensemble performance. This agrees with the performance practice employed on the *Bella Voce* recording, which makes use of straight tone singing and uses vibrato mostly as an expressive technique.

David Friddle received a DMA from Juilliard in organ performance in 1988 and a second DMA from University of Miami in 2006. His dissertations focused on the music of Franz Liszt, and his University of Miami dissertation on Liszt's *Christus* was published as an Urtext critical edition by Bärenreiter. Friddle has published books on singing in the Romantic era and has had articles published in refereed journals such as *Journal of Singing* and *American Choral Review*.

3. May, Florence. *The Life of Johannes Brahms*. London: E. Arnold, 1905.

This biography of Brahms is referenced in nearly all the sources directly related to Brahms and the *Requiem*. May's biography provides a history of Brahms' life, education, career, and personal relationships with many important musical figures in the Romantic era. This source is essential for background information regarding Brahms' life, and the reception of his music at the time of performance. Along with Brahms' correspondence with Clara Schumann, this biography helps to illuminate the context of Brahms' work and his opinions on the performances of his music. In addition to providing a history of Brahms' life, May gives a unique perspective of his personality from her own familiarity with the composer.

The biography is presented in two volumes. The first volume documents Brahms's family, his early education, the development of his early compositions, first performances, and introductions to other major Romantic composers and musicians such as Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, and Joseph Joachim. The second volume of the biography discusses Brahms' *Requiem* through his death.

Florence May was an English pianist who studied with Clara Schumann, and later became a piano student of Brahms. She met Clara Schumann in early 1871 in London, the year of the first performance of Brahms' *Requiem* in England. That same year, she traveled with Clara Schumann to Germany to study with her, and there became acquainted with Brahms.

4. Van Camp, Leonard. *A Practical Guide for Performing, Teaching, and Singing the Brahms Requiem*. Los Angeles: Lawson-Gould Music Publishers, Inc., 2002.

Van Camp presents a guidebook for preparing a performance of the *Requiem* aimed at assisting those taking on their first performance of the work. Van Camp discusses the history of the *Requiem* and analyzes its text and musical elements, providing performance and rehearsal advice for conductors, singers, and instrumentalists. Van Camp also provides a survey of many commonly used German and English editions of the work, highlighting their merits, faults, and shortcomings.

In the first section of the work, Van Camp discusses performances of the *Requiem* in English and accompanied by piano. Van Camp agrees with Hoggard, and the Bella Voce recording, advocating for performances in the native language of the singers and audience. Further, Van Camp advocates for presentation of the *Requiem* with piano accompaniment, noting the financial and logistical burden of an orchestral performance. This work is included here for its wealth of information about performing the *Requiem* in several different presentations.

Leonard Van Camp was a conductor, baritone soloist, and professor of music at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. He edited scores of works by Bach, Brahms, and Handel, with editions published by Schirmer, C.F. Peters, Carl Fischer, and others. Van Camp published books on performing the works of Handel, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Van Camp was also the editor of the Schirmer piano, four hands edition used for the Bella Voce recording. Lawson-Gould was established in 1953 with a focus on printing choral works, initially those of Alice Parker and Robert Shaw. It is now an imprint of Alfred Publishing.

### **Dissertations and Theses**

5. Miller, Alan Wayne. "Choral Recordings as History: A Study of the Recording Techniques of Five Choral Organizations." Ph.D. diss., The Florida State University, 1992. Proquest Dissertations and Theses Global.

Miller's dissertation provides a history and analysis of choral recordings by five different American choral organizations. Miller shows the development of recording techniques from Edison's phonograph through digital recording technologies, and the implementation of those technologies and techniques in choral recordings. Paralleling this, Miller documents the development of choral singing in the United States and shows how recordings played an important role in that development. His goal is not only to provide a history of choral recording, but also to provide information for directors who wish to record their own choirs.

Miller argues that the goal of a choral recording is to accurately represent the choral performance as it would be heard in the performance space. He supports this through interviews with engineers and conductors like Shaw. This assessment agrees with the idea of a "transparent" recording and performance discussed by Aguilar.

Along with Bartlett's *Recording Music on Location*, this dissertation provides technical information regarding sound recording. While this dissertation is older than Bartlett's work, both agree about commonly used microphone techniques in classical recordings. Additionally, the recordings described by Miller serve as comparison examples to the Bella Voce recording.

Alan Wayne Miller is Dean of Alabama School of Arts, Professor of Music and Choral Conducting at the University of Mobile.

### **Scholarly Journal Articles**

6. Aguilar, Ananay. "Negotiating Liveness: Technology, Economics, and the Artwork in LSO Live." *Music & Letters* 95, no. 2 (2014): 251–72. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24547136>.

Aguilar's article is a case study of the London Symphony Orchestra's in-house record label LSO Live during the 2007-08 season. She presents information about the development of the label, business, promotions, recording process, audience reception, and the participation of

the orchestra musicians in the planning of the label, performance, and recordings. Framing her discussion within Lydia Goehr's definition of "perfect musical performance," Aguilar addresses issues of agency within the studio and live recording process. Interviews with musicians lead to Aguilar's conclusion that the recording process is concerned with "transparently" representing the composer's work, and that the individual performer's sense of agency is reduced through this process.

Aguilar's case study sparked the idea for examining the Bella Voce recording to explore agency within the scope of a very specific recording project.

Aguilar earned her Ph.D. from the University of London. Aguilar has written journal articles on recent EU copyright reforms, compensation, and performers' rights. She was co-editor of *Remixing Music Studies: Essays in Honor of Nicholas Cook*. According to her website <http://www.ananayaguilar.com>, Aguilar is currently the head of TenU, "an international collaboration of ten leading technology transfer offices" based at the University of Cambridge. *Music & Letters* is a peer reviewed journal on musicology published by Oxford University Press.

7. Goehr, Lydia. "Being True to the Work." *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 47, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 55. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/431993>.

This article by Lydia Goehr discusses the idea of "werktreue," as it was developed by E.T.A. Hoffman and later adopted widely in Romantic conceptions of musical compositions as "works" independent of extra-musical constraints. Goehr claims that the "werktreue" or "work-concept" is a specifically Romantic idea, which emphasizes the primacy of classical music compositions as art works. She explains that the idea of the "work-concept" came about in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and coincided with the rise of Romanticism. According to Goehr, the "work-concept" has been widely adopted in music criticism, theory, and practice beyond the historical period in which the idea was generated. She gives examples of the music of Bach, Vivaldi, and Palestrina being treated similarly to that of Beethoven or other 19<sup>th</sup> century composers, though much of their music was written for use in the context of weekly religious ceremony and the composers themselves may have produced it for utilitarian purposes rather than artistic ones. Goehr also gives modern examples of the application or restriction of the use of the term "work" to describe non-classical music, such as avant-garde, jazz, blues, and Indian music. According to Goehr, though these examples are produced outside of the structures and timeframe of Romantic music, the "work-concept" is still widely applied to them.

Goehr's discussion is relevant to the case study of the Bella Voce recording because it calls into question the framework through which much music is typically viewed. It raises the questions not only of the primacy of the composer's score, but also leads to questions of the role of a recording in the musical commerce between composer, performer, and listener. Specifically, is a recording a transparent document of the composer's intentions, or is it, in itself a "work?"

Lydia Goehr is a professor of Philosophy at Columbia University. She has published numerous academic articles and books on music and aesthetic theory. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* is a peer reviewed journal published by Wiley for the American Society of Aesthetics.

## Music Scores

8. Brahms, Johannes. *A German Requiem, Op. 45*. Vocal score with piano accompaniment. Includes German text with English translation by Lara Hoggard. Chapel Hill, N.C.: Hinshaw Music, 1984.

This is a vocal score edition of *A German Requiem*, which includes an English translation by the editor, Lara Hoggard. This is a popularly used translation of the *Requiem* and is the one sung by the choir and soloists on Bella Voce's Naxos recording of the requiem. Hoggard's translation is an attempt to translate Brahms' text from German into English while maintaining the musical integrity of the phrases and rhythms, and the poetic integrity of the original German text. Hoggard consulted many editions of the *Requiem* in both German and English, various translations of the bible, and looked to theologians and linguists for guidance. Ultimately, he created a translation that draws on the King James bible as a contemporaneous source and makes use of Elizabethan English. Hoggard provides a lengthy afterword describing the process of the translation and edition, as well as advocating for English performances for English speaking audiences.

Hoggard agrees with Van Camp and the Bella Voce recording in that they all advocate for the performance of the work in the audience's and singers' native language. However, Van Camp takes issue with Hoggard's translation, saying it sounds "archaic" in its use of older English.

Lara Hoggard was professor of music and conductor of choirs at University of North Carolina. Hinshaw Music, a publisher of sacred choral music, is an imprint of Fred Bock Music, and is distributed globally by Hal Leonard.

9. ———. *Requiem: Version for Piano, Four Hands (or Two Pianos)*. Arranged by the composer. Edited by Leonard Van Camp. Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, Inc. 1968.

This is the score used for the accompaniment for the Bella Voce recording. Leonard Van Camp's edition of the Requiem in a Piano Four Hands arrangement is based on Brahms' original Piano, Four Hands manuscript held by the Library of Congress. This arrangement was used in the first complete performance of the work in London in 1871 to accompany a small choir singing in English. The preface includes a brief description of the first performance in London in 1871, suggestions for use of this score in performance and at home, notes on dynamics and articulations, as well as some performance notes when preparing this version for concert with chorus. This G. Schirmer score contains rehearsal letters to match the Schirmer vocal score of the Requiem. It includes the original German tempo indications as well as the Italian tempi from the Schirmer vocal score.

Van Camp's edition is targeted to English speaking musicians. The title of the work is listed simply as *Requiem*. Each movement is presented with the title in English and the original German names italicized in parentheses beneath. The text of the *Requiem* is only presented in English in this version to assist in rehearsal and performance. These choices are all deviations from Brahms' Piano Four Hands manuscript, which presents many of the tempi in German and the choral text in German where the composer included it.

As mentioned elsewhere in this bibliography, the editor agrees with Hoggard and the approach used in the Bella Voce recording, advocating that the English translation be presented for native English speakers. Van Camp also argues for use of the piano accompaniment as a valid way of performing the piece in lieu of an orchestra.

As mentioned above, Leonard Van Camp was a conductor, baritone soloist, and professor of music at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. He edited scores of major works for many prominent publishers and published books on performing works by Handel and Brahms. G. Schirmer is a prolific publisher of classical music and is the oldest active musical publisher in the United States. G. Schirmer is distributed by Hal Leonard.

10. ———. *A German Requiem in Full Score*. Prepared from the composer's autographs and first printed edition. Edited by Eusebius Mandyczewski. Rev. ed. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications. 1987.

This full orchestral score of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* is a reprint of the Breitkopf & Härtel publication of the score, with the publication date listed as "1926(?)" on the copyright page. The dating of the edition is based on the editor's commentary, which bears the location and date "Vienna, 1926."

This Dover edition adds an English translation of Mandyczewski's "Revisionsbericht." It includes English versions of the *Requiem* text as they appear in the King James Bible presented before the score. In the commentary, the editor notes the source material for the edition, including the composer's autograph, the first printed edition (Brahms' personal copy), and the "parts used for the first Viennese performances under the direction of the composer." There are descriptions of each of these sources as well as the discrepancies between them. The editor discusses Brahms' revisions and issues with the work, providing examples of places where Brahms introduced additional measures between revisions, and noting some of Brahms' frustrations with compositional choices he made.

As noted on p. 12 of Heather Platt's *Johannes Brahms: A Guide to Research*, the Breitkopf & Härtel edition's "[editor's] reports are not reliable since they fail to take into consideration all of the available sources for each composition."

This score serves as a point of comparison between the later scores by Hoggard and Van Camp, as well as the recording by Bella Voce. In process, this edition is partially in agreement with those of Hoggard and Van Camp. All three looked to the composers' autographs and the first editions as primary sources. However, Hoggard and Van Camp deviate from that method as they introduce English text and titles, Italian tempo indications, and extra articulation markings for the choir.

Eusebius Mandyczewski was a Romanian musicologist and editor of music by Schubert, Brahms, and Haydn. Breitkopf and Härtel is the world's oldest music publisher, founded in 1719.

### **Sound and Video Recordings (physical format)**

11. Bella Voce, choir. *Ein deutsches Requiem* ('*A German Requiem*'), Op. 45: (*1871 London Version Sung in English*), Recorded 2018. Naxos 8.573952, 2019 CD.

This recording of Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* by the Chicago based professional chamber choir Bella Voce serves as a case study for the exploration of the intersections of performance practice, recording techniques, and the agency of performers and recordists in the creation of a musical recording of a composed work. This album was recorded in 2018 at Saint Luke's Church in Evanston, IL. Some of the choices made in the planning and creation of this



album are unconventional for the *Requiem*, which is most often recorded in German with orchestral accompaniment and a large chorus. For this recording, the choir of 30 singers sings an English translation by Lara Hoggard, and the accompaniment is piano, four hands, played from the Schirmer edition edited by Leonard Van Camp. This approach is an attempt to emulate the first *Requiem* performance in England, which was in a private home in London in 1871, employing piano accompaniment and a small choir singing in English.

This recording agrees with the ideas expressed by Hoggard and Van Camp in the comments of their *Requiem* scores, as it presents the work in the native language of the performers and the choir's primary audience. The chorus makes use of vocal techniques often associated with the British Cathedral choir tradition, most importantly straight tone singing, as well as Romantic vibrato. This performance technique agrees with Friddle's discussion of vibrato but is contrary to what is heard in the Shaw documentary about the *Requiem*.

The album was released on Naxos records, and was produced by Brian Stroom, Paul Nicholson, and Grammy award winning engineer Hudson Fair. Bella Voce artistic director Andrew Lewis is also assistant conductor of Chicago Symphony Chorus, Director of the Elgin Master Chorale, director of music at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Evanston, IL, and a lecturer at the University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Theater and Music.

12. *Robert Shaw, Preparing a Masterpiece: A Choral Workshop on a German Requiem by Johannes Brahms*. Directed by Philip Byrd and Janet Shapiro. Carnegie Hall Corporation in association with Brandenburg Productions, Inc. 3 hr. 17 min. DVD.  
[https://youtu.be/42diMGHG\\_Z0](https://youtu.be/42diMGHG_Z0).

This is a documentary about the preparation of a performance of the *Requiem* at Carnegie Hall in November of 1990, consisting of a chorus of 145 singers and orchestra. Shaw's influence on American Choral music is wide reaching from performance and rehearsal practice, to recordings, and publishing. Shaw was considered by many to be an authority on choral conducting and performance, including Van Camp, whose *Guide* references Shaw's ideas often.

This video is included as a perspective on a larger ensemble performance of the *Requiem* in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Shaw's approach contrasts with the Bella Voce recording in many ways, obviously in the size of the chorus, language, and accompaniment, but importantly in the use of vibrato by the singers. In Shaw's chorus, the singers employ use of vibrato throughout. This is contrary to the performance technique employed on the Bella Voce recording. It is also contrary to the Historically Informed Performance practices illustrated in Friddle's book, which emphasizes restrained use of vibrato in Romantic choral music.

Robert Shaw was Music Director and conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, director of the Robert Shaw Chorale, and former associate Conductor of Choruses of the Cleveland Orchestra. Shaw was also a composer and arranger, and his approach to choral music performance was widely influential in the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century.