

NAXOS

# BRAHMS

## Choral Music

Alto Rhapsody

Ave Maria • Nänie

Begräbnisgesang

Schicksalslied

Gesang der Parzen

Ewa Wolak, Contralto

Warsaw Philharmonic  
Choir and Orchestra

Antoni Wit



## Johannes Brahms (1833-1897): Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53 • Ave Maria, Op. 12

### Begräbnisgesang, Op. 13 • Schicksalslied, Op. 54 • Nanie, Op. 82 • Gesang der Parzen, Op. 89

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg in 1833, the son of a double-bass player and his much older wife, a seamstress. His childhood was spent in relative poverty, and his early studies in music, for which he showed a natural aptitude, developed his talent to such an extent that there was talk of touring as a prodigy at the age of eleven. It was Eduard Marxsen who gave him a grounding in the technical basis of composition, while the boy helped his family by playing the piano in places of entertainment.

In 1851 Brahms met the émigré Hungarian violinist Reményi, who introduced him to Hungarian dance music that had a later influence on his work. Two years later he set out in his company on his first concert tour, their journey taking them, on the recommendation of the Hungarian violinist Joachim, to Weimar, where Franz Liszt held court and might have been expected to show particular favour to a fellow-countryman. Reményi profited from the visit, but Brahms, with a lack of tact that was later accentuated, failed to impress the Master. Later in the year, however, he met the Schumanns, through Joachim's agency. The meeting was a fruitful one.

In 1850 Schumann had taken up the offer from the previous incumbent, Ferdinand Hiller, of the position of municipal director of music in Düsseldorf. Now in the music of Brahms he detected a promise of greatness and published his views in the journal he had once edited, the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, declaring Brahms the long-awaited successor to Beethoven. In the following year Schumann, who had long suffered from intermittent periods of intense depression, attempted suicide. His final years, until his death in 1856, were to be spent in an asylum, while Brahms rallied to the support of Schumann's wife, the gifted pianist Clara Schumann, and her young family, remaining a firm friend until her death in 1896, shortly before his own in the following year.

Brahms had always hoped that sooner or later he would be able to return in triumph to a position of distinction in the musical life of Hamburg. This ambition was never fulfilled. Instead he settled in Vienna,

intermittently from 1863 and definitively in 1869, establishing himself there and seeming to many to fulfil Schumann's early prophecy. In him his supporters, including, above all, the distinguished critic and writer Eduard Hanslick, saw a true successor to Beethoven and a champion of pure music untrammelled by extra-musical associations, as opposed to the Music of the Future promoted by Wagner and Liszt, a path to which Joachim and Brahms both later publicly expressed their opposition.

Brahms had a varied connection with choral singing. In short autumn seasons at the court of Detmold he had conducted a choir in 1857, 1858 and 1859 and in the last of these years he had established in Hamburg a women's choir, the Hamburg Frauenchor, formed by enthusiastic members of the Akademie choir directed by his friend Karl Grädener. In addition to the regular Monday morning meetings of the larger Frauenchor, Brahms also involved himself with a smaller group, who held evening meetings. His first appointment in Vienna, in 1863, was as conductor of the Singakademie, reviving the fortunes of the choir in a repertoire that ranged from unfashionable music of the Renaissance to that of Beethoven and Schumann and compositions by Brahms himself. He was offered a three-year extension of his agreement with the Singakademie, but resigned in 1864. Nevertheless, in 1872 he took up the position of director of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. This involved him in work with the most distinguished of the large choirs in Vienna. For three seasons he was able to offer a varied and innovative choral and orchestral repertoire, including some of his own major choral compositions, most notably his masterpiece, *A German Requiem*.

The setting made by Brahms of the *Ave Maria*, Op. 12, was composed in September 1858 at Göttingen, designed originally for women's choir with organ accompaniment. He made use of it the following year in Hamburg at the Michaeliskirche, its performance marking the start of the Hamburg Frauenchor. It is a work of gentle simplicity in a lilting 6/8 *Andante*, with the traditional text

abbreviated by the omission of the final phrase.

Brahms's *Begräbnisgesang* (Funeral Hymn) was written in the same year and scored for five-part choir, soprano, alto, tenor and two basses, the second partnered by the bassoon where it diverges from the first bass part. Brahms had originally used lower strings, but the final version is for pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons and horns, with three trombones, tuba and timpani, scoring that allows the work to be performed outdoors. The sixteenth-century text is by Michael Weißer, a former Franciscan, who joined the Moravian Brethren, for whom he compiled a hymn-book. It has recently been suggested by Jürgen Neubauer that the opening bars conceal the letters of Clara Schumann's name, in German letter notation C-[D]-Es-[D]-H (C-[D]-E flat-[D]-B). From a letter from Clara Schumann to Brahms it is clear that she took the work as a reference to her feelings at a time when she was mourning the death of her husband.

Clara Schumann was also deeply moved by Brahms's *Alto Rhapsody*, written in 1869, after the completion of the *German Requiem*, and scored for contralto, male chorus and orchestra. The text is taken from Goethe's *Harzeise im Winter* (Journey in the Harz Mountains in Winter) of 1777, setting the three stanzas that deal with a man's dejection, apparently intended to comfort a young man called Plessing, who, in common with a number of his contemporaries, had been profoundly affected by Goethe's *Werther*. The structure of the work follows the three stanzas, the first a form of recitative in C minor, the second, *Poco andante*, an aria, with use made of wide leaps in the vocal part, notably for the repeated word *Menschenhass* (hatred for men), and a C major conclusion, bringing a prayer for consolation, the soloist now joined by the four-part male chorus.

Hölderlin's *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny) was published in the second book of his novel *Hyperion, oder Der Eremit aus Griechenland* (Hyperion, or The Hermit from Greece), published in 1799. In the novel the patriotic Greek hero Hyperion addresses these words to the '*selige Genien*' ('blessed spirits'). Brahms started work on his setting in 1868 and the first performance was given in Karlsruhe in 1871. Underpinned by the throb of a drum-

beat, the E flat major orchestral opening, marked *Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll* (Slow and full of yearning) suggests the world of the blessed spirits. There is a change of mood for the opening of the third stanza, a tempestuous *Allegro* in C minor which reflects the feeling of the text, with humanity given no place to rest, and marking, in particular, in abrupt chords, the final comparison of life to water flung from cliff to cliff. The work ends with a return to the tranquillity of the opening, now in a final C major.

Brahms's last two works for chorus and orchestra, *Nänie* (Lament) and *Gesang der Parzen* (Song of the Fates), were completed in 1881 and 1882 respectively. The first, a setting of Schiller's classical lament for the passing of beauty, was written in memory of the classical painter Anselm Feuerbach, who had died in 1880 at the age of fifty, and dedicated to the latter's stepmother, Henriette Feuerbach. Comparisons have been made between Brahms's version of Schiller's hexameters and the setting by Hermann Goetz, who had died in 1876 at the age of 36, which had been performed in Vienna shortly after Feuerbach's death. Brahms's composition is in three sections, the third in a similar mood to the first, with its moving oboe melody and imitative entries of the voices, and a more passionate central section in F sharp major. The allusions in the text, which may nowadays need explanation, are to Pluto and the fate of Eurydice, at first freed from Hades and then called back, as Orpheus turned to see that she was following him. Other references are to Venus (Aphrodite) and Adonis, gored by a wild boar, and the death of Achilles at the gates of Troy, mourned by his mother, the sea-nymph Thetis. Orcus is synonymous with Dis (Pluto) and signifies the Underworld.

The text of *Gesang der Parzen* (Song of the Fates) is taken from the fourth act of Goethe's play *Iphigenie auf Tauris* (Iphigenia in Tauris), a performance of which Brahms had recently seen in Vienna. Iphigenia, saved mysteriously from sacrifice at the hands of her father Agamemnon and given shelter in the realm of Thoas, King of Tauris, serves as a priestess of Diana. Her brother Orestes has made his way there, to expiate the murder of

his mother, Clytemnestra, by bringing his sister back to her homeland. By the end of Act IV Iphigenia is in despair, confronted with a conflict between her duty to sacrifice Orestes and her desire to escape with him. At this point she expresses her predicament in the *Song of the Parcae*. Brahms set the text for six-part chorus and orchestra, using the structure of a rondo, its main theme, in the minor, framing two major key episodes. The opening section, marked *Maestoso*, sets the inexorable mood, to which the first major episode, *Sie aber, sie bleiben / in ewigen Festen* (But they, they remain / in

unending feasting) offers a contrast. The original key of D minor returns with the awed repetition of the first words, *Es fürchte die Götter / das Menschengeschlecht* (The gods should be feared / by the race of mankind). The second episode takes the penultimate stanza, and the modified first theme returns with the final stanza, *So sangen die Parzen* (So sang the Parcae). The work was dedicated to the Duke of Sachsen-Meiningen.

**Keith Anderson**

## Ewa Wolak



Ewa Wolak comes from Wadowice in Poland. She began her musical training at the age of six and at the age of fourteen embarked on her study of viola and singing at the Conservatory in Kraków, completing her vocal studies with distinction at the Kraków Music Academy. During her further study at the Karlsruhe Musikhochschule she held scholarships from the Stuttgart International Bach Academy and the Karlsruhe International Handel Academy. She has participated in various competitions, winning, among other awards, the Oratorio Prize at the s'Hertogenbosch Singing Competition and a silver medal in the Grand Prix Maria Callas. In her international concert career Ewa Wolak has collaborated with the Stuttgart Bach-Kollegium under Helmut Rilling, the Kraków Philharmonic, the Polish Radio Orchestra and the Czech National Philharmonic, among others. She has sung in a number of festivals in Europe, including, at the invitation of Krzysztof Penderecki, the European Chimey Foundation in Belgium and at the Karlsruhe Handel Festival.

## Warsaw Philharmonic Choir



The Warsaw Philharmonic Choir was founded in 1952 by Zbigniew Soja and gave its first concert in May 1953 under the then artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Witold Rowicki. The present choir master Henryk Wojnarowski has held this position since 1978. The choir's wide repertoire includes more than 150 oratorios and choral works, ranging from the Middle Ages to contemporary music. Each year the choir collaborates in some ten symphony and oratorio concerts with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. These concerts constitute the most important part of its artistic activity. The choir also performs regularly at the Warsaw Autumn Festival and in Wrocław at the Wratistavia Cantans Festival. Polish music, in particular works of Krzysztof Penderecki, Henryk Mikołaj Górecki and Wojciech Kilar, is a very important part of the choir's repertoire. The choir has performed all Penderecki's oratorios and *a cappella* works, the *Polish Requiem*, *Passio secundum Lucam*, *Te Deum*, *Utrenja*, *Psalms of David*, *Dies irae*, *Veni Creator*, *Cheruwimska Piesn*, *St Luke Passion*, *Seven Gates of Jerusalem*, and *Credo*, as well as his opera *Paradise Lost*. The choir performs not only in Warsaw but in other Polish cities, and is also very active internationally, with appearances throughout Europe, as well as in Israel and in Turkey. In addition to performances with leading orchestras, the choir has also participated in opera at La Scala, Milan, La Fenice in Venice, and elsewhere. In 1988 and 1990 the choir was invited to the Vatican to take part in the celebrations of the successive anniversaries of Pope John Paul II's pontificate, with concerts televised throughout Europe. In December 2001 the Choir, together with the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, performed for John Paul II once again, in a special concert commemorating the centenary of the Warsaw Philharmonic, this time presenting the *Missa pro pace* by Wojciech Kilar. In 2009 the choir recorded the only complete version of Moniuszko's *Seven Masses*, awarded the Polish Fryderyk and French Orphées d'Or.

## Henryk Wojnarowski



Henryk Wojnarowski has been director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir since 1978. He graduated in orchestral and operatic conducting after studies with Stanisław Wisocki at the State Higher School of Music in Warsaw. From 1960 to 1978 he was conductor and director of the Grand Theatre Choir in Warsaw (now University of Music). In the Grand Theatre, he prepared about eighty new productions, including several world premières. With the Warsaw Philharmonic Choir, he has for many years given highly successful performances with leading Polish and other European symphony orchestras in such prestigious musical centres as Milan's La Scala (1985, 1989, 1990), Berlin, Munich, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Brussels, and Jerusalem. In his career he has collaborated with many of the most distinguished conductors. He has received six GRAMMY® nominations for recordings of works by Penderecki and Szymanowski.

## Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra – The National Orchestra of Poland



The first performance of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra took place on 5th November 1901 in the newly opened Philharmonic Hall under the artistic director and principal conductor, Emil Młynarski, with the world-renowned pianist, composer and future statesman Ignacy Jan Paderewski as soloist in a programme that included Paderewski's *Piano Concerto in A minor* and works of other Polish composers, Chopin, Moniuszko, Noskowski, Stojowski and Żeleński. The orchestra achieved considerable success until the outbreak of war in 1939, with the destruction of the Philharmonic Hall and the loss of 39 of its 71 players. Resuming activity after the war, the orchestra was conducted by Straszyński and Panufnik, and in January 1950 Witold Rowicki was appointed director and principal

conductor, organizing a new ensemble under difficult conditions. In 1955 the rebuilt Philharmonic Hall was re-opened, with a large hall of over a thousand seats and a hall for chamber music, recognised as the National Philharmonic of Poland. Bohdan Wodiczko, an outstanding musician and modern music enthusiast, took over the post of Witold Rowicki, and in 1958 Rowicki was again appointed artistic director and principal conductor, a post he held until 1977, when he was succeeded by Kazimierz Kord, serving until the end of the centenary celebrations in 2001. In 2002 Antoni Wit became managing and artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic – The National Orchestra and Choir of Poland. The orchestra has toured widely abroad (Europe, both Americas, Japan), in addition to its busy schedule at home in symphony concerts, chamber concerts, educational work and other activities. It now has a complement of 110 players. Recordings include works by Polish composers, Paderewski, Wieniawski, Karłowicz, Szymanowski, Lutosławski, Penderecki and Kilar, and by foreign composers, with acclaimed interpretations of works by Mahler and Richard Strauss. These have won many prestigious awards, including six GRAMMY® nominations.

## Antoni Wit

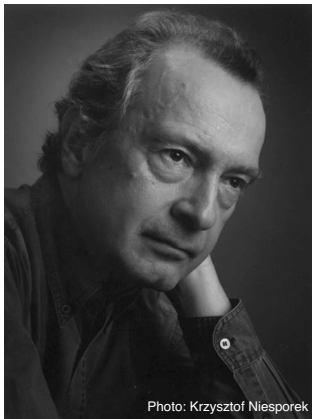


Photo: Krzysztof Niesporek

Antoni Wit, one of the most highly regarded Polish conductors, studied conducting with Henryk Czyż at the Academy of Music in Kraków. He then continued his musical studies with Nadia Boulanger in Paris. He also graduated in law at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Immediately after completing his studies he was engaged as an assistant at the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra by Witold Rowicki. After winning second prize in the International Herbert von Karajan Conducting Competition in Berlin (1971), he became an assistant conductor to the patron of that competition. Later he was appointed conductor of the Poznań Philharmonic, collaborated with the Warsaw Grand Theatre, and from 1974 to 1977 was artistic director of the Pomeranian Philharmonic, before his appointment as director of the Polish Radio and Television Orchestra and Chorus in Kraków, from 1977 to 1983. From 1983 to 2000 he was managing and artistic director of the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra in Katowice, and from 1987 to 1992 he was the chief conductor and then first guest conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Gran Canaria. In 2002 he became managing and artistic director of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir. Since the season 2010/11, he has been first guest conductor with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra in Pamplona. His international career has brought engagements with major orchestras throughout Europe, the Americas and the Near and Far East. He has made over 200 records, including an acclaimed release for Naxos

of the piano concertos of Prokofiev, awarded the Diapason d'Or and Grand Prix du Disque de la Nouvelle Académie du Disque. In January 2002 his recording of the *Turangalia Symphony* by Olivier Messiaen (8.554478-79) was awarded the Cannes Classical Award at MIDEM Classic 2002. In 2004 he received the Classical Internet Award. He has completed for Naxos a CD series of Szymanowski's symphonic and large-scale vocal-instrumental works, each rated among 'discs of the month' by CD magazines (*Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine*). He also received the Record Academy Award 2005 of Japanese music magazine *Record Geijutsu* for Penderecki's *Polish Requiem* (Naxos), and four Fryderyk Awards of the Polish Phonographic Academy. He has received six GRAMMY® nominations for Penderecki's *St Luke Passion* in 2004 (8.557149), *A Polish Requiem* in 2005 (8.557386-87), *Seven Gates of Jerusalem* in 2007 (8.557766), *Utrjenja* in 2009 (8.572031) and Karol Szymanowski's *Stabat Mater* in 2008 (8.570724) and *Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4* in 2009 (8.570722). In 2010 Antoni Wit won the annual award of the Karol Szymanowski Foundation for his promotion of the music of Szymanowski in his Naxos recordings. Antoni Wit is professor at the Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw.

## 1 Ave Maria op. 12

Ave Maria gratia plena  
Dominus tecum benedicta tu  
in mulieribus et benedictus  
fructus ventris tui Jesus.  
Sancta Maria  
Mater Dei ora pro nobis,  
nobis peccatoribus  
nunc et in hora mortis nostrae.

## 2 Begräbnisgesang op. 13

*Michael Weiße (1488-1534)*

Nun laßt uns den Leib begraben,  
bei dem wir kein'n Zweifel haben,  
er werd'am letzten Tag aufstehn,  
und unverrücklich herfür gehn.

Erd'ist er und von der Erden,  
wird auch wieder zu Erd' werden,  
und von Erden wieder aufstehn,  
wenn Gottes Posaun'wird angehn.

Seine Seel'lebt ewig in Gott,  
der sie allhier aus seiner Gnad'  
von aller Sünd und Missetat  
durch seinen Bund gefeget hat.

Sein'Arbeit, Trübsal und Elend  
ist kommen zu ein'm guten End,  
er hat getragen Christi Joch  
ist gestorben und lebet noch.

Die Seel', die lebt ohn'alle Klag',  
der Leib schläft bis am letzten Tag,  
an welchem ihn Gott verklären  
und der Freuden wird gewähren.

## Ave Maria, Op. 12

Hail Mary, full of grace,  
the Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed  
is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary,  
Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners  
now and in the hour of our death.

## Funeral Hymn, Op. 13

*Michael Weiße (1488-1534)*

Now let us bury the body,  
which we have no doubt  
will on the last day rise again,  
and resolutely go forth.

Earth he is and from the earth,  
to the earth will he return,  
and from earth rise again,  
when God's trumpet sounds.

His soul lives for ever in God,  
who in his mercy has purged it  
of all misdeeds and sins  
through his covenant.

His labour, sorrow and suffering  
have come to a good end,  
he has carried Christ's yoke,  
has died and yet still lives.

The soul lives without any sorrow,  
the body sleeps until the day of resurrection,  
when God will transfigure him  
and grant him joy.



Hier ist er in Angst gewesen,  
dort aber wird er genessen,  
in ewiger Freude und Wonne  
leuchten wie die schöne Sonne.

Nun lassen wir ihn hier schlafen,  
und gehn allsamt unser' Straßen,  
schicken uns auch mit allem Fleiß,  
denn der Tod kommt uns gleicher Weis'.

### 3 Alt-Rhapsodie op. 53

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

Aber abseits, wer ist's?  
Ins Gebüsch verliert sich der Pfad,  
hinter ihm schlagen  
die Sträucher zusammen,  
das Gras steht wieder auf,  
die Öde verschlingt ihn.

Ach, wer heilet die Schmerzen  
des, dem Balsam zu Gift ward?  
Der sich Menschenhaß  
aus der Fülle der Liebe trank?  
Erst verachtet, nun ein Verächter,  
zehrt er heimlich auf  
seinen eignen Wert  
in ungenügender Selbstsucht.

Ist auf deinem Psalter,  
Vater der Liebe, ein Ton  
seinem Ohre vernehmlich,  
so erquickte sein Herz!  
Öffne den umwölkten Blick  
über die tausend Quellen  
neben dem Durstenden  
in der Wüste.

Here he has been in anguish,  
but there he will be healed,  
in eternal joy and delight  
radiant as the brilliant sun.

Now let us leave him here to sleep,  
and go, all of us, our separate ways,  
prepare ourselves with all diligence  
since death likewise comes to us all.

### Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

But set apart, who is this man?  
In the bushes his track is lost,  
behind him the shrubs  
close up,  
the grass grows tall again,  
the wilderness devours him.

Ah, who heals the pains  
of him for whom the balsam became poison?  
Who drank hatred for men  
from the fulness of love?  
First scorned, now a scorner,  
he feeds in secret on  
his own importance  
in unsatisfying self-love.

If there be in your psalter,  
father of love, one sound  
pleasing to his ear,  
let it quicken his heart!  
Open his clouded gaze  
to the thousand springs  
next to the one that thirsts  
in the desert.

#### 4 Schicksalslied op. 54

*Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843)*

Ihr wandelt droben im Licht  
auf weichem Boden, selige Genien!  
Glänzende Götterlüfte  
rühren Euch leicht,  
wie die Finger der Künstlerin  
heilige Saiten.

Schicksallos, wie der schlafende Säugling  
atmen die Himmlischen;  
keusch bewahrt  
in bescheidener Knospe  
blühet ewig  
ihnen der Geist,  
und die seligen Augen  
blicken in stiller,  
ewiger Klarheit.

Doch uns ist gegeben,  
auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn;  
es schwinden, es fallen  
die leidenden Menschen  
blindlings von einer  
Stunde zur andern,  
wie Wasser von Klippe  
zu Klippe geworfen,  
jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.

#### Song of Destiny, Op. 54

*Friedrich Hölderlin (1770-1843)*

You walk above in the light  
on soft ground, blessed spirits!  
Brilliant divine breezes  
lightly brush against you,  
like the fingers of the musician  
on her holy strings.

Free of destiny the heavenly spirits,  
like sleeping infants, breathe;  
kept pure  
in modest buds  
the spirits  
bloom eternally,  
and their blessed eyes  
look on in still,  
eternal clarity.

Yet to us it is not given  
to rest in any place;  
there stumbles, there falls  
suffering mankind  
blindly from one  
hour to another,  
like water flung  
from cliff to cliff,  
over the years, down into the unknown.

## 5 Nänie op. 82

*Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805)*

Auch das Schöne muß sterben! Das Menschen und  
Götter bezwinget,  
nicht die ehorne Brust rührt es des stygischen Zeus.  
Einmal nur erweichte die Liebe den Schattenbeherrscher,  
und an der Schwelle noch, streng, rief er zurück sein  
Geschenk.  
Nicht stillt Aphrodite dem schönen Knaben die Wunde,  
die in den zierlichen Leib grausam der Eber geritzt.  
Nicht errettet den göttlichen Held die unsterbliche Mutter,  
wann er, am skäischen Tor fallend, sein Schicksal erfüllt.  
Aber sie steigt aus dem Meer mit allen Töchtern  
des Nereus,  
und die Klage hebt an um den verherrlichten Sohn.  
Siehe, da weinen die Götter, es weinen die Göttinnen alle,  
daß das Schöne vergeht, daß das Vollkommene stirbt.  
Auch ein Klagelied zu sein im Mund der Geliebten, ist herrlich,  
denn das Gemeine geht klanglos zum Orkus hinab.

## 6 Gesang der Parzen op. 89

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

Es fürchte die Götter  
das Menschengeschlecht!  
Sie halten die Herrschaft  
in ewigen Händen  
und können sie brauchen,  
wie's ihnen gefällt.

Der fürchte sie doppelt,  
den je sie erheben!  
Auf Klippen und Wolken  
sind Stühle bereitet  
um goldene Tische.

## Naenia, Op. 82

*Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805)*

Beauty too must die! What subdues men and gods  
does not move the iron breast of Stygian Zeus.  
Once only did love move the ruler of the Underworld,  
and then on the threshold, unrelenting, he called back  
his gift.  
Aphrodite does not soothe the wounds of the handsome boy  
in his graceful body cruelly torn by the boar.  
Nor does the immortal Mother save the divine hero  
when he, falling at the Scaean gate, meets his fate.  
But she ascends from the sea with all the daughters  
of Nereus,  
and a lament is raised for the son made glorious.  
See, the gods weep, all the goddesses weep  
that beauty perishes, that perfection dies.  
And to be a lament on the lips of the beloved is magnificent,  
for that which is base goes down unsung to Orcus.

## Song of the Fates, Op. 89

*Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)*

The gods should be feared  
by the race of mankind!  
They hold power  
in eternal hands  
and can use it  
as they will.

He whom they raise up  
should doubly fear them!  
On crags and clouds  
chairs are set  
about golden tables.

Erhebet ein Zwist sich,  
so stürzen die Gäste,  
geschmäht und geschändet,  
in nächtliche Tiefen  
und harren vergebens,  
im Finstern gebunden,  
gerechten Gerichtes.

Sie aber, sie bleiben  
in ewigen Festen  
an goldenen Tischen.  
Sie schreiten vom Berge  
zu Bergen hinüber.

Aus Schlünden der Tiefe  
dampft ihnen der Atem  
erstickter Titanen,  
gleich Opfergerüchen,  
ein leichtes Gewölke.

Es wenden die Herrscher  
ihr segnendes Auge  
von ganzen Geschlechtern  
und meiden im Enkel  
die ehemals geliebten,  
still redenden Züge  
des Ahnherrn zu sehn.

So sangen die Parzen;  
es horcht der Verbannte  
in nächtlichen Höhlen,  
der Alte, die Lieder,  
denkt Kinder und Enkel!  
und schüttelt das Haupt!

If a dispute arises,  
the guests are reviled,  
dishonoured and cast down,  
into nocturnal darkness  
and await in vain,  
bound in darkness,  
the judgement of the just.

But they, they remain  
in unending feasting  
at golden tables.  
They stride over and above  
from mountain to mountain.

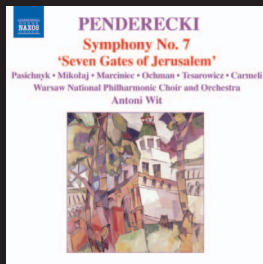
From abysses deep  
steams the breath  
of Titans suffocating,  
like the odours of sacrifice,  
a light cloud.

The lords turn  
their blessed eyes  
away from entire races  
and avoid seeing in their grandchildren  
the once-loved,  
quiet characteristics  
of their ancestors.

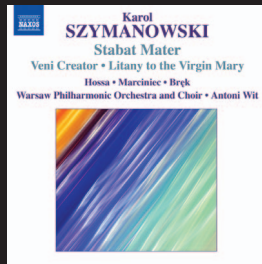
So sang the Parcae;  
the exiled one hears  
in nocturnal caves,  
the songs, the old man  
thinks of children and grandchildren  
and shakes his head!

*English versions by Keith Anderson*

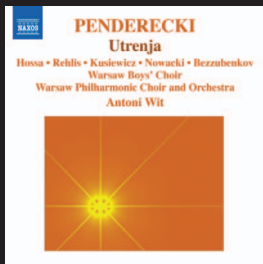
## Also available



8.557766



8.570724



8.572031



8.572639



DDD

8.572694

Playing Time  
69:54

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Booklet notes in English  
Made in the USA

Brahms's first connection with choral music came in 1857, and his first appointment in Vienna, in 1863, was to conduct the Singakademie. He premièred *A German Requiem* in the city and wrote widely for choral forces, taking a variety of poetic source material. *Begräbnisgesang* (Funeral Hymn) evinces a great feeling of solemnity, whilst *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny) is an urgent, volatile work. *Nänie* was written as a lament for the death of the painter Anselm Feuerbach, and the *Alto Rhapsody* has remained one of the greatest works for contralto in the repertoire.



Johannes  
**BRAHMS**  
(1833-97)

**Music for Chorus and Orchestra**

- |          |                                  |              |
|----------|----------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Ave Maria, Op. 12</b>         | <b>4:49</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Begräbnisgesang, Op. 13</b>   | <b>8:51</b>  |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53*</b>    | <b>14:51</b> |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Schicksalslied, Op. 54</b>    | <b>17:56</b> |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Nänie, Op. 82</b>             | <b>13:43</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Gesang der Parzen, Op. 89</b> | <b>9:44</b>  |

**Ewa Wolak, Contralto\***  
**Warsaw Philharmonic Choir**  
(Choirmaster: Henryk Wojnarowski)

**Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra • Antoni Wit**

The Latin and German sung texts and English translations can be found inside the booklet, and may also be accessed at [www.naxos.com/libretti/572694.htm](http://www.naxos.com/libretti/572694.htm)

Recorded at Warsaw Philharmonic Hall, Warsaw, Poland, on 9th January, 2010 (track 3), 11th January, 2010 (track 6), 6th February, 2010 (track 5), 17th February, 2010 (track 4), in April 2010 (track 2), and 23rd April, 2010 (track 1) • Produced, engineered and edited by Andrzej Sasin and Aleksandra Nagórko (CD Accord) • Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

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(Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria / The Bridgeman Art Library)