



OMAHA SYMPHONY

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CHORAL COLLABORATIVE BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

Brahms Requiem, Johannes Brahms

Best Practices for Students

1. Have pencils at every rehearsal.
2. Use tabs on your scores to find movements quickly for a more efficient rehearsal.
3. As this piece is in a foreign language (German), write in translations for every word.
4. Make use of all materials provided by the Omaha Symphony, including marked conductor and piano-vocal scores and diction guides. Familiarizing yourself with these documents will ensure you are ahead of the curve.
5. Listen to sample recordings, if not exclusively. Knowing the sound world that you are performing can make achieving those sounds much easier.
6. Revel in the experience by being properly prepared! Performing with professional musicians in a world-class venue can be thrilling, if your personal preparation is at a level that allows you to enjoy the journey.
7. For the dress rehearsals at the Holland Performing Arts Center:
 - a. Pencils are still required. Often changes or marks are needed even at these final rehearsals.
 - b. Be silent (especially during the tuning). It is respectful of the orchestra (and efficient).
 - c. Write down questions. There will be time with the chorus and Chorusmaster only to address any concerns.
 - d. Turn ahead to the next chorus entrance during solo movements. This will keep you ready for what is next, rather than following along with the soloist(s), which can lead to surprise entrances.

Best Practices for Directors

1. If possible, try to program selected movements from the larger masterwork on your fall concerts. This maximizes rehearsal time and ensures that some of the masterwork will be ready ahead of schedule.
2. Begin the rehearsal process with your favorite movement, or the most popular one (most likely Movement IV, "Wie lieblich," ☺). Rehearsing the most recognizable moment of a piece will immediately grab the students' interest. Or, if you decide to rehearse your favorite spot, your affection for the work as a whole will infect your singers as well.
3. Try to avoid rehearsing from the beginning of the masterwork to the end. While starting off on the best foot is a great idea, the end of the work should be equally compelling.
4. Rehearse movements at varieties of tempi. Though the marked tempi will be most likely to happen, often the hall dictates faster or slower tempi (not to mention the pedagogical benefits of rehearsing at slower and faster tempi).
5. The fugues always require more time than what is expected, as contrapuntal singing is not in the choristers' realm of familiarity.
6. Feel more than welcome to seek additional help from the Chorusmaster via email, text, or phone call, as they are there to offer any guidance you may require throughout the process.
7. If you are interested, what follows is a sample rehearsal process, considering which movements will need more work, earlier work, or detailed sectional work. This general path should keep you on track for Chorusmaster and Maestro visits.
8. As you begin rehearsing with notes and rhythms, there could be other tasks assigned (as homework, make-up, extra credit, etc.) that deal with the language: write in the translations of every word (7 assignments if done by movement), log journal entries of German practice with the provided practice links, submit audio recordings of German practice speaking the text of the movement (can be done easily on a cell phone), write pronunciation notes in music, and others. Be creative in introducing these unfamiliar sounds.

Sample Rehearsal Plan

(Flexible due to individual schools' other commitments and specific week for Chorusmaster/Maestro visits)

- Week 1 (Aug. 21): **Movement #4, Movement #3 (mm 173-208), Movement #6 (mm 208-349)**
- Week 2 (Aug. 28): **Movement #2 (mm 206-337), Movement #6 (mm 82-208)**
- Week 3 (Sep. 4): **Movement #7 (entirety)**
- Week 4 (Sep. 11): **Movement #1 (entirety) and review previously learned material**
- Week 5 (Sep. 18): **Movement #4 (entirety) and review previously learned material**
- Week 6 (Sep. 25): **Movement #3 (mm 1-173), Movement #6 (mm 1-81) and review previously learned material**
- Week 7 (Oct 2): **Movement #2 (mm 1-206), Movement #5 (entirety) and review previously learned material**
- Week 8 (Oct. 9): First Week of Maestro Visits
- Week 9 (Oct. 16): Review areas from Maestro Visits
- Week 10 -- Concert: Review as needed, and school-specific instructions from Chorusmaster/Maestro

Preparation Away from Rehearsal: Self-Help Tools

(With thanks to UM-Parkside Choir & Milwaukee Choristers)

PRONUNCIATION GUIDES (AUDIO – in no special order)

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxbvdwBwBhE>

COMMENT: Good diction generally but spoken a bit fast. Some words/lines might require multiple listens.

2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ilw_aW0ncz0

COMMENT: May be better for some; reader does it at conversational speed, then reads again at a somewhat slower pace -- not as slowly as one would sing it, but will mean less flipping back

PRONUNCIATION GUIDES (PRINTED)

1. <http://www.cliffamere.com/OctavoSingers/Brahms-EinDeutschesRequiem-Pronunciation-VK.htm>

COMMENT: This guide can be especially helpful for more visual learners, though it, like any other attempts at transliteration, is an approximation; this guide does not use IPA symbols.

AUDIO PART STUDY GUIDES (IN NO SPECIAL ORDER)

NOTE: All of the following are intended for individual sing-along self-practice and study. Each one can emphasize INDIVIDUAL voice parts enough for it to stand out as you sing with that version. This will allow one to review music covered in rehearsal, improve knowledge of the songs, isolate challenging passages, preview music that will be covered in the future rehearsals, and work ahead of the rehearsal schedule. As a result, one will almost certainly become more confident. But here is an essential disclaimer: Each one of these is different. All of them will differ in some ways from what happens in rehearsal -- most especially tempo. So, keep that in mind!

1. [http://www.rehearsalarts.com/Brahms Requiem 14.html](http://www.rehearsalarts.com/Brahms_Requiem_14.html)

COMMENT: "Single Parts with StudySpots" by Rehearsal Arts is available in CD or MP3 format for sale at about \$22 each. Sung by professional singers with the full work playing in the background. Difficult spots are slowed down.

2. [http://www.cyberbass.com/Major Works/Brahms J/brahms requiem.htm](http://www.cyberbass.com/Major_Works/Brahms_J/brahms_requiem.htm)

COMMENT: CyberBass can be downloaded as MP3s for free. All-synthesizer, playing both background and your voice part.

3. <http://www.learnchoralmusic.co.uk/Brahms/German-requiem/german-requiem.html>

COMMENT: You can choose between an all-synthesizer version, both background and voice part, and a version with synthesizer voice part and piano accompaniment. Also, free.

4. <http://www.choralia.net/br01mp3/>

COMMENT: Another "freebie." This gives you three choices: your voice part "sung" by a synthesized voice against a synthesized organ sound (the latter has some strange harmonics, but works), your voice emphasized against other synthesized voices, or four synthesized voices "singing." This might be off-putting for some. but others will be engaged by this unusual mix of digital technology and "personality."

5. <http://towerchorale.weebly.com/brahms-requiem-satb-midi-practice-tracks.html>

COMMENT: Free use of these tracks online if you first download the file, which is free. This is another tool that uses synthesizer.

SELECTIVE DISCOGRAPHY

POSSIBLE ALBUMS TO BUY/LISTEN TO (in alphabetical order)

- Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus; Robert Shaw, conducting; label: Telarc
- Berliner Philharmoniker & Schwedischer Rundfunkchor & Eric Ericson Kammerchor (Berlin Philharmonic & Swedish Radio Choir & Eric Ericson Chamber Choir), Claudio Abbado, conducting; label Deutches Grammophon
- Chicago Symphony Orchestra & Chorus, James Levine, conducting; label: RCA Gold Seal/BMG Classics
- Choir of King's College, Cambridge (accompanied by 4-hand piano), Stephen Cleobury, conducting; label: EMI Classics
- Philharmonia Orchestra & Chorus, Otto Klemperer, conducting; label Columbia.
- San Francisco Symphony & Chorus; Herbert Blomstedt, conducting; label: Music Heritage Society

POSSIBLE PERFORMANCES TO CHECK OUT ONLINE (in no special order)

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQGQG79xBFg>

[Philharmonia Orchestra & Chorus, Otto Kemperer, conductor]

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqwCYUbS2Y4>

[Swiss Youth Choir, Andres Felber, conducting]

3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHMXoLifPP4>

[Galicia (Spain) Symphony Orchestra, Lopez Cobos, conducting]

4. [http://imslp.org/wiki/Ein_deutsches Requiem, Op.45 \(Brahms, Johannes\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Ein_deutsches_Requiem,_Op.45_(Brahms,_Johannes))

[University of Chicago Orchestra & Choirs, James Kallembach, conducting]