

Music at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church · 2024–25 Season

Johannes Brahms A GERMAN REQUIEM



Friday, April 11 · 7 pm

The Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir

The Shelest Piano Duo

Directed by Ryan Jackson

PRESENTED BY THE ARTS & OUR FAITH COMMITTEE



Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

Welcome to Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church and thank you for joining us.
This evening's program will be performed without an intermission.
Please refrain from taking flash photos.

Music at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church

We hope you enjoy this evening's concert, the fifth in the twelfth season of our annual concert series. Please read on for more information about upcoming music events at Fifth Avenue. Be sure to mark the dates in your calendar and join us again!

Tickets for choral concerts are available online at fapc.org/tickets.

Ryan Jackson Organ Recital
Sunday, May 25, 2024 • 1 pm, Sanctuary

PROGRAM

The Fifth Avenue Choir & The Shelest Piano Duo
Erinn Sensenig, soprano • Max Parsons, baritone
Ryan Jackson, director

Ein deutsches Requiem,
nach Worten der heiligen Schrift
“A German Requiem, To Words of the Holy Scriptures”
Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

I.

Selig sind, die da Leid tragen
“Blessed are they that mourn”

II.

Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras
“For all flesh is as grass”

III.

Herr, lehre doch mich
“Lord, teach me”

IV.

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen
“How lovely are thy dwelling places”

V.

Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit
“Ye now are sorrowful”

VI.

Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt
“For here have we no continuing city”

VII.

Selig sind die Toten
“Blessed are the dead”

In presenting this evening's concert, the Arts and Our Faith Committee acknowledges the generous support of the Dr. Reid and Marguerite Pitts Special Music Fund.

A NOTE ABOUT THIS EVENING'S PROGRAM

Dear Friends,

Tonight, we are privileged to present one of the greatest choral masterpieces of all time: Johannes Brahms's deeply moving *A German Requiem*. Many of you may be familiar with this work in its original form for full orchestra and symphonic chorus. However, several years ago, I was delighted to discover that Brahms himself arranged the orchestral accompaniment for piano duet—four hands on a single piano. As one of my all-time favorites, I knew this arrangement would be the perfect choice for our twelfth annual Lenten Concert, especially as we continue to gather in the Sanctuary while the Kirkland Chapel undergoes renovation. This performance also provides a wonderful opportunity to showcase the rich sound of our new Steinway C piano, acquired thanks to an incredibly generous gift from the William S. Perper Foundation.

In the 19th century, it was common for orchestral works to be arranged for piano four hands, as large ensembles were expensive to assemble. Publishers often commissioned these arrangements to allow potential performers to familiarize themselves with pieces before committing to a full orchestral performance. While many of these arrangements were quickly put together by publishers' staff, it is significant that a composer of Brahms's stature personally arranged the piano accompaniment for his *Requiem*, underscoring his deep affection for this work.

Composed between 1865 and 1868, *A German Requiem* is often thought to have been inspired by two major losses in Brahms's life: the death of his dear friend, the composer Robert Schumann, in 1856, and the passing of his beloved mother in 1865. Although Brahms was a private man who never confirmed or denied these speculations publicly, the deeply personal nature of this music speaks for itself.

The four-hand piano arrangement of the *Requiem* had its premiere in a private London residence in 1871, and has since become known as the "London" version. This version is not merely a reduction of the orchestral score, but an artful and idiomatic piano accompaniment that offers listeners a clarity that some even prefer to the original orchestral version. In this intimate chamber setting, the powerful texts and brilliant choral textures are presented with a directness that makes for a deeply personal and unforgettable experience—truly a heart-to-heart conversation with the composer of this profoundly human Requiem.

Thank you for joining us this evening to share in this conversation.

Warmly,

Ryan



Dr. Ryan Jackson
William S. Perper Director of Music & Fine Arts Ministries

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

I.

*Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,
denn sie sollen getröstet werden. Matthäus 5:4*

*Die mit Tränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten.
Sie gehen hin und weinen und tragen edlen
Samen,
und kommen mit Freuden, und bringen ihre
Garben. —Psalm 126:5–6*

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they shall be comforted. *Matthew 5:4*

They who sow with tears shall reap with joy.
They who go forth and weep, bearing precious
seeds,
will surely return rejoicing, bringing their sheaves.
—*Psalm 126:5–6*

II.

*Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen wie
des Grases Blumen.
Das Gras ist verdorret und die Blume abgefallen.
—1 Petrus 1:24*

*So seid nun geduldig, lieben Brüder,
bis auf die Zukunft des Herrn.
Siehe, ein Ackermann wartet auf die köstliche Frucht
der Erde
und ist geduldig darüber,
bis er empfahe den Morgenregen und Abendregen.
—Jakobus 5:7*

*Aber des Herrn Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit.
—1 Petrus 1:25*

*Die Erlöseten des Herrn werden wiederkommen
und gen Zion kommen mit Jauchzen;
ewige Freude wird über ihrem Haupte sein;
Freude und Wonne werden sie ergreifen,
und Schmerz und Seufzen wird weg müssen.
—Jesaja 35:10*

For all flesh is like grass,
and all the glory of humankind is like the
flower of grass.
The grass withers, and the flower falls away.
—*1 Peter 1:24*

Therefore be patient, beloved,
until the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of
the earth,
and is patient for it,
until it receives the morning rain and evening rain.
—*James 5:7*

But the word of the Lord endures forever.
—*1 Peter 1:25*

The ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with rejoicing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
—*Isaiah 35:10*

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

III.

*Herr, lehre doch mich,
daß ein Ende mit mir haben muß,
und mein Leben ein Ziel hat,
und ich davon muß.*

*Siehe, meine Tage sind
einer Hand breit vor dir,
und mein Leben ist wie nichts vor dir.*

*Ach wie gar nichts sind alle Menschen,
die doch so sicher leben.*

*Sie gehen daher wie ein Schemen,
und machen ihnen viel vergebliche Unruhe;
sie sammeln und wissen nicht wer
es kriegen wird.*

Nun Herr, wes soll ich mich trösten?

Ich hoffe auf dich. —Psalm 39:5–8

*Der Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand
und keine Qual rühret sie an.*

—Weisheit 3:1

Lord, teach me,
that I must have an end,
that my lifetime is limited,
and that I must one day depart.

Behold, my days are but
the width of a hand to you,
and my lifetime is as nothing before you.

Oh, how insignificant all people are,
even those who appear to live so confidently.

They pass by like a shadow,
and rush about in vain,
gathering riches, without knowing who will
inherit them.

Now, Lord, in whom shall I find consolation?

My hope is in you. —*Psalm 39:5–8*

The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God
and no torment shall touch them.

—*Wisdom of Solomon 3:1*

IV.

*Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth!
Meine Seele verlangt und sehnet sich nach den
Vorhöfen des Herrn;
mein Leib und Seele freuen sich in dem lebendigen
Gott.*

*Wohl denen, die in deinem Hause wohnen,
die loben dich immerdar. —Psalm 84:2, 3, 5*

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Hosts!
My soul longs and yearns for the
courts of the Lord;
My body and soul rejoice in the living
God.*

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house,
they praise you forever. —Psalm 84:1, 2, 4*

V.

*Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;
aber ich will euch wiedersehen
und euer Herz soll sich freuen,
und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.
—Johannes 16:22*

*Sehet mich an:
Ich habe eine kleine Zeit Mühe
und Arbeit gehabt
und habe großen Trost funden.
—Jesus Sirach 51:35*

*Ich will euch trösten, wie einen
seine Mutter tröstet. —Jesaja 66:13a*

You have sorrow now,
but I will see you again
and your heart will rejoice,
and no one will take your joy from you.
—*John 16:22*

Look at me:
I toiled for a little while,
and had my troubles to bear,
and now I have found great comfort.
—*Ecclesiasticus 51:27*

I shall comfort you
like a mother. —*Isaiah 66:13*

TEXTS & TRANSLATIONS

VI.

*Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt,
sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.
—Hebräer 13:14*

*Siehe, ich sage euch ein Geheimnis:
Wir werden nicht alle entschlafen,
wir werden aber alle verwandelt werden;
und dasselbige plötzlich, in einem Augenblick,
zu der Zeit der letzten Posaune.*

*Denn es wird die Posaune schallen,
und die Toten werden auferstehen unverweslich,
und wir werden verwandelt werden.*

*Dann wird erfüllet werden das Wort,
das geschrieben steht:*

*Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.
Tod, wo ist dein Stachel?
Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg?
—1 Korinther 15:51–52, 54b–55*

*Herr, du bist würdig zu nehmen
Preis und Ehre und Kraft,
denn du hast alle Dinge geschaffen,
und durch deinen Willen haben sie
das Wesen und sind geschaffen.
—Offenbarung 4:11*

*For here we have no lasting city,
but we seek the one to come.
—Hebrews 13:14*

*Behold, I tell you a mystery:
we shall not all sleep,
but we shall all be changed,
in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,
at the sound of the last trumpet.*

*For the trumpet shall sound,
and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,
and we shall be changed.*

*Then shall be fulfilled the word
that is written:*

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
“Death, where is thy sting?”
“Grave, where is thy victory?”
—1 Corinthians 15:51–52, 54–55*

*Lord, you are worthy to receive
praise and honor and glory,
for you have created all things,
and by your will they exist
and are created.
—Revelation 4:11*

VII.

*Selig sind die Toten,
die in dem Herren sterben von nun an.
Ja, der Geist spricht,
daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit;
denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.
—Offenbarung 14:13b*

*Blessed are the dead,
who die in the Lord, from now on.
“Yes,” says the Spirit,
“they may rest now from their labor,
and their works shall follow after them.”
—Revelation 14:13*

Translation adapted from the King James Version by Ryan Jackson

THE FIFTH AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CHAMBER CHOIR

SOPRANO

Adrienne Lotto
Rachel Mikol
Claire Myers-McCormick
Hannah Penzner
Erinn Sensenig
Rebecca Soelberg

ALTO

Donna Breitzer
Sharon Byrne
Mckenzie Kitchen
Francesca Lionetta
Devony Smith

TENOR

Sean Clark
Garrett Eucker
Nathan Fletcher
Alex McCoy
Wilson Nichols

BASS

Zachary Fletcher
Shafiq Hicks
Mark Hosseini
Emery Kerekes
Max Parsons
Christopher Seefeldt

Rachel Mikol, *Choir Administrator*

SPECIAL THANKS...

...to all the members of the Arts and Our Faith Committee (chaired by Nancy Moore) for their vision, leadership, and hands-on support of this series, and to our dedicated team of volunteer ushers and greeters. This series could not take place without you!

...to Fifth Avenue's wonderful Communications and Facilities teams for all the ways they support this series and make it possible.

...to our piano technician, Alex Appel for taking such good care of our Steinway pianos.

ABOUT THE SHELEST PIANO DUO

The Shelest Piano Duo, comprising husband-and-wife team Anna and Dmitri Shelest, is renowned for their stirring performances of rare repertory. Their 2018 Carnegie Hall debut and CD *Ukrainian Rhapsody* brought attention to Ukrainian music. The duo, who met in middle school, began performing together after their marriage and have played at various venues, with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praising their ability to “realize diplomacy through music.”

Dmitri Shelest began piano at six in Ukraine and won his first competition at 11. He received a full scholarship to Northern Kentucky University and has since won top prizes in international competitions. Dmitri is also a record producer and chamber musician, managing a piano retail showroom in New York.

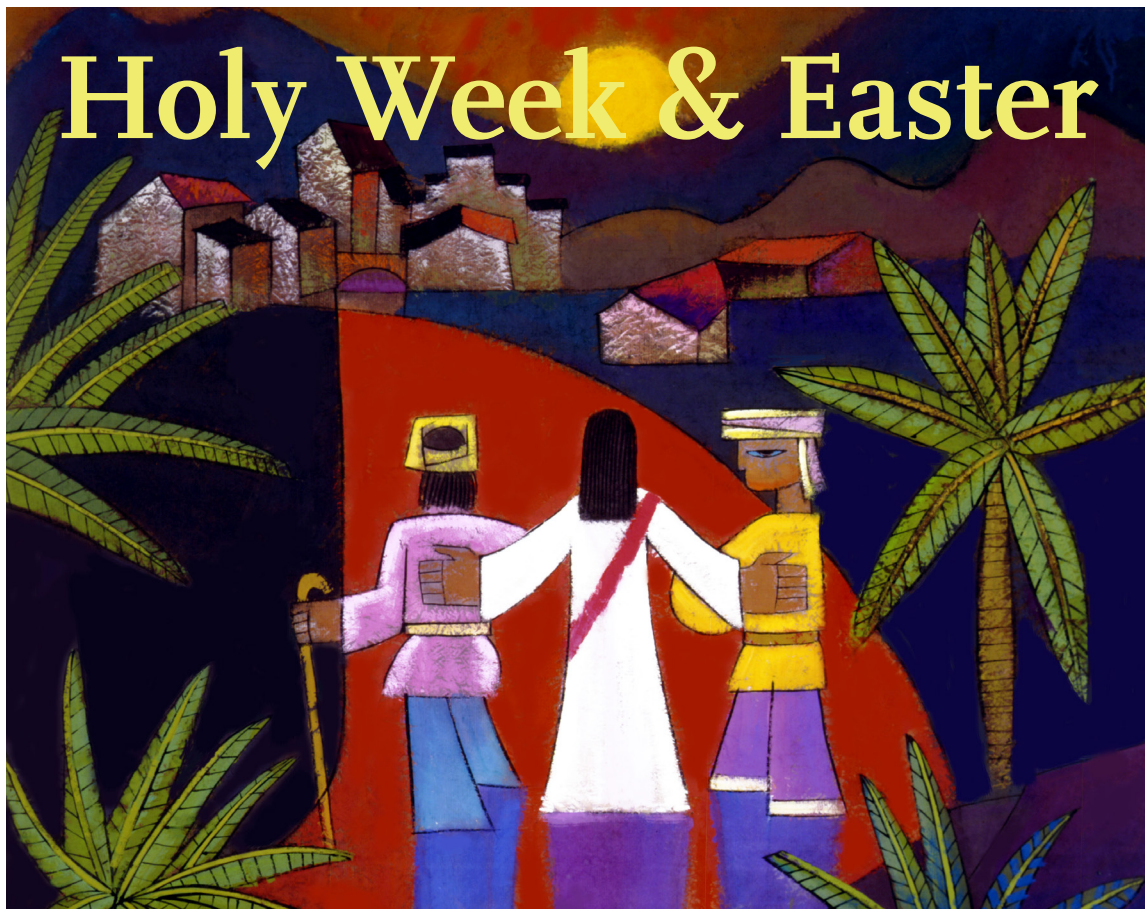
Anna Shelest, hailed by *The New York Times* for her “fiery sensibility,” is an award-winning musician and champion of esoteric repertoire. She has collaborated with legendary conductor Neeme Järvi and performed with orchestras like the Cincinnati Symphony and Montreal Symphony. Anna debuted as a soloist at 12 and has performed at prestigious venues such as Alice Tully Hall and The Kennedy Center. She holds degrees from Northern Kentucky University and The Juilliard School.

The couple resides in New York City with their two sons, Ivan and Alexey.

ABOUT THE FIFTH AVENUE CHAMBER CHOIR

Founded in 2013, the Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir is a vocal ensemble comprising some of New York's finest professional singers. With a diverse repertoire spanning Renaissance polyphony through contemporary American, the choir presents an exciting series of sacred music concerts each season at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Although the size of the choir varies between sixteen and twenty-six singers, the ensemble's primary goal never changes: to uplift and inspire all who hear us through passionate, engaging, and highly polished performances of sacred choral music.

Holy Week & Easter



We invite you to complete your Lenten journey with us and join our joyous celebration of Easter. Our services are listed below. **All services (except the early Easter service) are available on livestream.** You will find additional details at fapc.org/worship.

Palm Sunday | April 13

9:30 am • Jones Auditorium | 11 am • Sanctuary & livestream

Maundy Thursday: Communion & Tenebrae Service | April 17

6:30 pm • Sanctuary & livestream

Good Friday: Service of Sacred Music & Reflection | April 18

12–3 pm • Sanctuary & livestream

You are welcome to attend all or part of this three-hour service.

Easter: Resurrection of the Lord | April 20

9:30 am • Sanctuary

11:15 am • Sanctuary & livestream

We invite you to bring fresh-cut flowers on Easter morning to adorn the Cross on Fifth Avenue.



Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church is home to a versatile program of arts in worship that endeavors to uplift, inspire, challenge, and comfort all. It provides opportunities to share this church's wealth of artistic gifts. Music is at the heart of worship and, hand in hand with the Word, strives to create a genuine encounter with the holy.

The Fifth Avenue Chamber Choir is a select vocal ensemble of New York's finest professional singers. The choir presents several concerts each season, with a repertoire ranging from Renaissance polyphony through contemporary American music.

To learn more about our music ministries, or to find out how you can get involved, visit fapc.org/music-in-worship or write to music@fapc.org.

Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church
7 West 55th Street • New York, NY 10019