

# transcript.

We've spent the last two episodes learning about the famous Romantic Era composer, Johannes Brahms. In our first episode in this series, we learned a little bit about his life and training as a musician and composer. In the last episode, we talked about his famous set of Hungarian Dances, which was his diverse collection of songs inspired by Hungarian folk music. A lot of those tunes were composed for the purpose of entertaining friends at parties. But Brahms was also a very serious composer as well, and today we're going to learn about and listen to one of his most grand, serious pieces: A German Requiem. The German Requiem is made up of 7 movements, or sections, and when performed can last up to 80 minutes, which makes it the longest piece Brahms composed. It was written for a choir, orchestra and soprano and baritone soloist.

A requiem is a funeral mass. Many believe that this piece was begun when Brahms lost his dear composer-friend, Robert Schumann, and then later finished upon the death of Brahms beloved mother in 1865. When translated into English, the German words to the first movement, which you're listening to know, say, "Blessed are they who bear suffering, they that sow in tears shall reap in joy."

Brahms selected passages from the Bible that he believed would not only mourn the dead, but also comfort those still living. This was unusual for the times. Many previous requiems from famous composers focused on judgement, but Brahms instead chose to focus on the hope found in God and heaven. It was also unusual to have a requiem that used German words instead of Latin.

The most well-known of the movements is the fourth movement, based on Psalm 84 in the Bible, that comes about halfway through the requiem.

This 4th movement is well known because it is often performed separately from the entire requiem. The first and the last word of the requiem are the same -- almost like bookends: Blessed. The theme of the first movement seems to be, “Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall have comfort,” while the last movement is “Blessed are the dead, for they shall find rest.”

This work was an important one for Brahms career, partly because of the pressure he was under as a composer. While alive, Schumann had hailed Brahms as the next Beethoven. That was quite a name to live up to! However, Brahms’ first major orchestra work was a failure, and the audience actually hissed at the debut performance of this work. Brahms made a name for himself composing piano solos or chamber music, but this was his first large scale success.

Brahms, not yet thirty-five years old, led a chorus of more than 200 voices and the largest orchestral ensemble from his career up to that point to perform this piece. The audience loved it, and it was performed 20 times in Germany during its first year with performances soon to follow in England, Paris and Russia. It gave Brahms the confidence he needed to face up to the pressures he felt from the daunting legacy of Beethoven, and he eventually went on to compose more grand orchestra works throughout his career, including his first symphony in 1876.

If you head on over to this episode’s show notes at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/46](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/46), you’ll find a link to a playlist on YouTube that I’ve put together for you which features different performances from Brahms’s German Requiem. You’ll also find a transcript for this episode and links to the previous two episodes about Brahms. Again you’ll find all that at [busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/46](http://busykidsdopiano.com/podcast/46)

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I hope you've enjoyed learning more about Brahms in this 3-episode series. In 2 weeks, we're going to be kicking off a SUPER FUN series for the summer, where we'll be traveling around the world to learn all about different kinds of folk music. We'll have a special passport for our Busy Kids to print and stamps to add to your passport as you listen to each episode from the series. So I hope you'll join me for the kick-off of *Around the World with Busy Kids Love Music* right here in 2 weeks. Thanks for joining me today, and I look forward to connecting with you in 2 weeks. Bye for now!