



OTTAWA CHORAL SOCIETY
SOCIÉTÉ CHORALE D'OTTAWA

ENGLISH PROGRAM

EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM
(A GERMAN REQUIEM)

Johannes Brahms

Suzanne Taffot soprano
Brett Polegato baritone

Ottawa Music Company

Ottawa Choral Society

Jean-Sébastien Vallée
Artistic Director and Conductor

Andrew Hon
Associate Director and Chorusmaster

Sunday, May 1, 2022 at 3:00 pm
Church of St. Francis of Assisi
Wellington @ Fairmont, Ottawa

www.ottawachoralsociety.com

613-725-2560

A GERMAN REQUIEM

- I. *Selig sind, die da Leid tragen* | Blessed are they that mourn
- II. *Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras* | Behold, all flesh is as the grass
- III. *Herr, lehre doch mich* | Lord, teach me to measure my days
- IV. *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* | How lovely are thy dwellings
- V. *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit* | Ye now have sorrow
- VI. *Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt* | For we have here no abiding city
- VII. *Selig sind die Toten* | Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord

The Ottawa Choral Society's performance of *Ein deutsches Requiem* follows an arrangement for chamber orchestra by German flautist Joachim Linckelmann, published in 2010. In it, the forces of a large symphony orchestra are replaced by an ensemble of string (two violins, viola, cello and contrabass) and woodwind (flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon) quintets. The timpani part remains unchanged from Brahms's original score.

While most presentations of the *Requiem* offer the sumptuous tones of a full orchestra, Linckelmann's chamber adaptation offers a more intimate interpretation that enhances the inner spirit of the work, while also preserving the power of a full choir. As Nathan Windt, Assistant Professor of Music at Tennessee Wesleyan College, notes in an exhaustive analysis of the Linckelmann arrangement, "more of the counterpoint [is] heard." That is exactly as advocated by conductors such as the renowned John Eliot Gardiner and Roger Norrington who want "to clearly articulate Brahms's contrapuntal textures."

This more transparent, even crystalline approach is true to Brahms's original ambitions for the work, which he wanted to be widely accessible in a variety of formats. Brahms doubled his own original composition of the *Requiem* in 1869 with an arrangement for piano four hands. Linckelmann has created a new, fresh interpretation of the masterwork, which the OCS, now mustering its full strength in the emerging post-COVID era, is delighted to bring to our audience.

PROGRAM NOTES

“If he will only point his magic wand to where the powers amassed in the orchestra and chorus lend him its might, yet more wonderful glimpses into the mysteries of the spirit world await us.”

Thus predicted Robert Schumann in 1853 about the then twenty-year-old Johannes Brahms. Johannes had impressed Robert and his wife Clara with his piano compositions, and they hoped this talented young man would contribute to the great Beethovenian symphonic tradition of the nineteenth century. Brahms set to work on a symphony around 1855, but it wasn't until 1876, more than twenty years later, that he managed to emerge completely from the shadow of Beethoven's Ninth and complete his own symphony. But it wasn't Brahms's first symphony that established him on the German musical scene; it was, instead, *Ein deutsches Requiem*, completed eight years earlier – the longest piece he would ever write.

Over the course of our lives, we will all suffer the loss of loved ones, and eventually we'll each face the end of our own life. Composers who have dared to respond to this grim reality have created compositions of immense power and, sometimes, conjured portals through which we might gain the “glimpses into the mysteries of the spirit world” that Schumann imagined. Each such piece reflects the circumstances under which it was written. . . . In 1854, Brahms's mentor and great champion Schumann entered an asylum following a suicide attempt and a long battle with mental illness. He died there two years later, in 1856, at just forty-six. Stricken with grief, Brahms outlined a piece that would become the basis of the second movement of the *Requiem*. In 1865, Brahms received a shocking telegram from his brother: “If you want to see our mother alive again, come immediately.” Brahms arrived to find that she had just died. He spent much of the winter of 1866 working on the *Requiem*. It is clear from the texts he chose that the work was written not just for his mother, to whom it is dedicated, but also for Brahms himself, and for all who remain and mourn the loss of their loved ones.

Brahms's text for the *Requiem* is itself a work of art. Rather than set the traditional Latin Requiem texts or even borrow their imagery, Brahms hand-picked and edited scripture from the well-worn pages of his cherished childhood copy of Luther's German Bible to create an original textual collage. Brahms's carefully edited selections give his work broad ecumenical reach. His choices highlight notions of comfort, joy, reassurance, and reward for patience and personal effort while eschewing others, such as judgement, vengeance, religious symbolism, and, notably, the sacrifice of Christ for human sin. Brahms's use of *deutsches* (“German”) in the title suggests his reverence for the German literary heritage of the Luther Bible, but as he told Carl Rheinthal, the chorus master for the premiere, he would have just as happily used *menschliches* (“human”). . . .

Formally, Brahms's selections comprise a focused, rounded arch. The first two movements address not the dead but living mourners. Where the traditional Latin Requiem opens with a plea for eternal rest for the souls of the departed, Brahms begins with one of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are they who carry sorrow, for they shall be comforted.” He continues with the assurance from Psalm 126 that “they who sow in tears will reap in joy.” The second movement expands these ideas. A passage from Peter reminds us that all flesh is like grass, and the glory of man is like a flower that withers. Brahms pairs this with a plea for patience, like the farmer who waits for the morning and evening rains to water the fruits of the earth. At the end of the second movement, sorrow again gives way to joy, now everlasting. In the third movement the perspective shifts to the individual, represented by the baritone, contemplating his own destiny. His question, “Now lord, how shall I find comfort?” beckons

a repetition from the chorus and the response: "I hope in you." Like the second movement, the third ends with a text of assurance. The fourth movement's text, from Psalm 84, paints a picture of "lovely dwellings" and a state of blessedness. In the fifth, the impact of the first-person, subjective point of view is striking, as it was in the third movement. But where the baritone there announced, "Behold my days are as a handbreadth before Thee, and my life is as nothing," here the soprano assures, "Behold me: I have had a little time for toil and torment and now have found great consolation." The sixth movement opens with a passage from Hebrews for the chorus, portraying a community wandering in search of its home. As the movement continues, the baritone returns, now as a voice of authority from on high, portending a changed state for our souls. The word *Tod* ("death") is presented for the first time, but only in the context of its defeat. The seventh and final movement recalls the assurances of the first, but now it is the dead who are blessed, for "they rest from their labors," and "their works follow after them." Brahms has thus created an arch: The first three movements deal with the struggle to accept death and the transience of life, the fourth depicts a state of blessedness, and the last three suggest reconciliation to and victory over death. Repetitions of *selig* ("blessed") bookend and bind the work together. . . .

A few weeks after his mother died, Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann: "Time changes everything for better or worse . . . It does not so much change as it builds up and develops, and thus when once this sad year is over I shall begin to miss my dear good mother ever more and more." The genius of Brahms's *Requiem*, for me, is the way it ends almost where it began, and in between offers music that can meet each of us wherever we happen to be. It gently resists frightening us with operatic depictions of medieval judgment or seducing us with ethereal, palliative visions of paradise. Just as each day has its ups and downs, each month its good days and its bad, and each year its high season and its off season, within each movement of the *Requiem*, sorrow dances with comfort, tears mingle with joy, and the transient withers while the everlasting abides.

Excerpted from Ryan Brandau, "On Brahms's Ein deutsches Requiem," with the author's kind permission. The complete essay may be found on Dr. Brandau's website: ryanbrandau.com.

EIN DEUTSCHES REQUIEM
nach Worten der heiligen Schrift, op. 45

- I. Selig sind, die da Leid tragen,
denn sie sollen getröstet werden.

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.

- 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.

So seid nun geduldig, liebe 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.
So seid geduldig.

Denn alles Fleisch, es ist wie Gras
und alle Herrlichkeit des Menschen
wie des Grases Blumen.
Das Gras ist verdorret
und die Blume abgefallen.

Aber des Herren Wort bleibet in Ewigkeit.

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

- 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?

A GERMAN REQUIEM
to Words of the Holy Scriptures, op. 45

- I. Blessed are they that mourn,
for they shall be comforted.

They that sow in tears
shall reap in joy.
He that goeth forth and weepeth,
bearing precious seed,
shall come again with rejoicing,
bringing his sheaves with him.

- II. Behold, all flesh is as the grass,
and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass.
The grass withereth,
and the flower thereof falleth away.

Be patient therefore, brethren,
unto the coming of the Lord.
Behold, the husbandman waiteth
for the precious fruit of the earth,
and hath long patience for it,
until he receive the early and latter rain.
So be ye patient.

Behold, all flesh is as the grass,
and all the glory of man
as the flower of grass.
The grass withereth,
and the flower thereof falleth away.

But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with songs;
joy, everlasting joy
shall be upon their heads:
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

- III. Lord, teach me
to measure my days,
to know that my life will end,
and I must leave it.
Behold, thou hast made my days
as an handbreadth;
and mine age is as nothing before thee.

Truly, mankind is as nothing
though this life may seem sure.
Every man walketh in a vain show
and is disquieted in vain:
he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not
who shall gather them.
Now, Lord, where shall I seek comfort?

Ich hoffe auf Dich.

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

IV. Wie lieblich sind Deine Wohnungen,
Herr Zebaoth!
Meine Seele verlanget 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.

V. Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit;
aber ich will euch wiedersehen,
und euer Herz soll sich freuen,
und eure Freude soll niemand von euch nehmen.

Ich will euch trösten,
wie einen seine Mutter tröstet.

Sehet mich an: Ich habe eine kleine Zeit
Mühe und Arbeit gehabt
und habe großen Trost gefunden.

VI. Denn wir haben hie keine bleibende Statt,
sondern die zukünftige suchen wir.

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?

Herr, Du bist würdig
zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft,
denn Du hast alle Dinge erschaffen,
und durch Deinen Willen haben sie das Wesen
und sind geschaffen.

VII. Selig sind die Toten,
die in dem Herrn sterben,
von nun an.
Ja, der Geist spricht,
daß sie ruhen von ihrer Arbeit;
denn ihre Werke folgen ihnen nach.

My hope is in thee.

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

IV. How lovely are thy dwellings,
O Lord of hosts!
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth
for the courts of the Lord:
my heart and my flesh rejoice
in the living God.
Blessed are they that dwell in thy house:
they will praise thee evermore.

V. Ye now have sorrow;
but I will see you again,
and your heart shall rejoice,
and your joy no man taketh from you.

As one whom his mother comforteth,
so will I comfort you.

Ye see how for a little while
I laboured and toiled,
yet have I found much comfort.

VI. For we have here no abiding city,
but we seek one to come.

Behold, I show 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 last trumpet.

For the trumpet shall sound,
and the dead shall be raised incorruptible,
and we shall be changed.
Then shall be brought to pass the saying
that is written.
Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is thy sting?
O grave, where is thy victory?

Thou art worthy, O Lord,
to receive glory and honour and power:
for thou hast created all things,
and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

VII. Blessed are the dead
which die in the Lord,
from henceforth.
Yea, saith the Spirit,
that they may rest from their labours;
and their works do follow them.

BIOGRAPHIES

JEAN-SÉBASTIEN VALLÉE

Artistic Director and Conductor, OCS

Jean-Sébastien Vallée is an internationally recognized conductor, scholar, and pedagogue. He is Artistic Director of the Toronto Mendelssohn Choir; and Associate Professor of Music, Director of Choral Studies, and Coordinator of the Ensembles and Conducting Area at the Schulich School of Music of McGill University. This is his final season as Artistic Director of the Ottawa Choral Society. Prior to his return to Canada, he was Director of Choral Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, and was on the choral faculty of the University of Redlands.

In addition to his interest in choral, operatic, and orchestral music, Dr. Vallée is an advocate for contemporary music; he regularly premieres and commissions works by young composers. As a scholar, he has been invited to present his research at national and international conferences in North America, Europe and Asia.

Maestro Vallée's work is broadcast internationally and can be heard on his albums *Lux* (ATMA, 2017), *Requiem* (ATMA, 2018 – requiems by Fauré and Duruflé), and *Distance* (ATMA, 2021).

Upcoming engagements include concerts at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, a tour with the National Youth Choir of Canada, concerts with the Orchestre symphonique de Québec, and workshops as part of the World Choral EXPO in Lisbon, Portugal.

jsvallee.com

SUZANNE TAFFOT

soprano

Acclaimed by critics as “a voice to follow,” the Canadian-Cameroonian Suzanne Taffot is distinguished by her rich and colourful timbre, her ease on stage and her convincing interpretations.

Suzanne created and recorded the main role of Mademoiselle in David Bontemps' opera *La Flambeau*, soon to be released on the ATMA label. She is a soloist on La Sinfonia de Lanaudière's 2021 CD *Gershwin!* and she recently recorded *Love Is the Only Force*, an album that celebrates music written by Black composers.

Three-time winner of the Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques competition, Suzanne Taffot's many awards include the Québec-Bavaria Lyric Scholarship, a Fondation Jeunesses Musicales Canada scholarship, and the Francis Poulenc L20 Award. She has performed with the Opéra de Limoges and the Slovak State Philharmonic Orchestra, and toured China with the Théâtre *Lyrichorégra 20*. In 2020 she made her debut with the Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal (OMM), under the direction of Yannick Nézet-Séguin; since then, she has performed with the OMM in Fauré's *Requiem* and Rachmaninoff's “Vocalise” (op. 34). In March 2022 she sang the role of Micaela in *Carmen* with the Orchestre classique de Montréal. Later this month she performs in Brahms's *German Requiem* with the OMM and with the New World Philharmonic Orchestra. In July she will appear as *Mimi* in *La Bohème* at the Festival Opéra de Saint-Eustache. In August she performs the role of “la chanteuse d'opéra” in the world premiere of Éric Champagne's *Yourcenar – Une île de passions*, a coproduction of the Opéra de Montréal and Le Festival d'opéra de Québec.

Suzanne Taffot holds an M.Mus. from the Université de Montréal. She is the founder of HERITT Attorneys, a firm committed to equity and diversity in the legal field.

suzytaffot.com

BRETT POLEGATO

baritone

One of today's most sought-after lyric baritones on the international stage, Canadian-Italian Brett Polegato has earned the highest praise from audiences and critics for his artistic sensibility: "his is a serious and seductive voice" says the *Globe and Mail*, while the *New York Times* has praised him for his "burnished, well-focused voice," which he uses with "considerable intelligence and nuance." He has performed at the world's most prestigious venues including La Scala, the Opéra national de Paris, the Glyndebourne Festival, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, the Teatro Real, the Concertgebouw Amsterdam and Carnegie Hall.

Recent operatic highlights include his debuts at the Metropolitan Opera (Brétigny in *Manon*) and Wexford Festival Opera (Dr Talbot in the European premiere of William Bolcom's *Dinner at Eight*); the title role in *Eugene Onegin*, and Marcello in *La bohème* (Grange Park Opera); his role debut as Amfortas in *Parsifal* (Festival de Lanaudière); Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* (Palm Beach Opera); Howie Albert in *Champion* (Opéra de Montréal); the title role in *Don Giovanni* (Vancouver Opera) and in *Wozzeck* (Bolshoi Theatre of Moscow); Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers*, Dandini in *La Cenerentola*, and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* (Seattle Opera). In March 2022 he sang Richard Brown in the world premiere concert of Kevin Puts's *The Hours* (Philadelphia Orchestra).

Equally at ease on the concert platform, his performances have included Zemlinsky's *Lyrische Symphonie* (Orchestre Métropolitain de Montréal), the world premiere of Jeffrey Ryan's *Afghanistan: Requiem for a Generation* (Vancouver Symphony Orchestra), Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* (City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra), and Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* (BBC Proms).

Brett Polegato's recordings include Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* (Grammy Award winner, Best Classical Recording), his acclaimed solo disc *To A Poet* (CBC Records), Bach's *Coffee Cantata* and *Peasant Cantata* (Analekta–Fleurs de lys), Emmerich Kálmán's *Die Herzogin von Chicago* (Decca), and Gluck's *Armide* (Deutsche Grammophon Archiv Produktion).

brettpolegato.com

ANDREW HON

Associate Director and Chorusmaster

Andrew Hon is in demand as a conductor and clinician for choirs in North America, England and Hong Kong. His recent conducting appearances include concerts at the Théâtre Maisonneuve (Montreal), Alice Tully Hall (New York), St. James's Church Piccadilly (London), Trinity College Chapel (Cambridge, U.K.), Harvard University, and the Hong Kong Cultural Centre. He has prepared choruses for Aik Khai Pung, William Weinert, Paul Phoenix, and Stephen Coker, and studied with world-renowned conductors including Helmuth Rilling, Rolf Beck, Masaaki Suzuki, David Hill, Markus Utz, Grete Pedersen, and Stefan Parkman.

Mr. Hon holds master's degrees in choral conducting from the University of Cincinnati and from the Yale School of Music, where he served as conductor of the Yale Glee Club Chamber Singers and Principal Assistant Conductor of the Yale Camerata. He was Director of the McGill University Chorus from 2019 to 2021. Currently, Mr. Hon is Viva Choir conductor of the Ottawa Children's Choir, Guest Conductor of the Choir of the Church of St. Andrew and St. Paul (Montreal), and a doctoral candidate in choral conducting and FRQSC research fellow at McGill University.

OTTAWA MUSIC COMPANY

The Ottawa Music Company was established in 2007 as a collective of some of the city's finest professionals. Since that time, it has appeared frequently with various choral ensembles, including the Ottawa Choral Society, the Ottawa Bach Choir, and the choirs of Christ Church Cathedral. The players are very pleased to have been invited to perform with the Ottawa Choral Society today.

Violin I: Marjolaine Lambert
Violin II: Manuela Milani
Viola: David Goldblatt
Cello: Timothy McCoy
Double bass: Vincent Gendron
Flute: Lindsay Bryden
Oboe: Celina Hawkins
Clarinet: Mike Dassios
Bassoon: Nadia Ingalls
Horn: Julie Fauteux
Timpani: Sean Donaldson

In memoriam

We dedicate this concert to the memory of members of the Ottawa Choral Society family listed below who passed away during the past two years, and all those in the wider community who lost their lives to COVID-19.

Andrew Aitkins
Maureen Carpenter
Sholto Cole
Ken Currie
Marc de la Durantaye
Iwan Edwards (former Music Director)
Susan Gibson
Paula Helmer
Michael Hicks
Deborah Lauzon (Baltic Tour)

OTTAWA CHORAL SOCIETY

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Heidi Sprung
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TENORS

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Charlie Donnelly
John Goldsmith
Toby Greenbaum
Iain MacPherson*
Aditi Magdalena*
Louis Majeau
John McBride
Simon McMillan
Kent Siebrasse

* Guest singers

BASSES

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Mike Beauchamp
Ben Claypool
Thierry Faure
Michael Hartney*
Andrew Hon
Gary King
Doug MacDonald
Ian MacMillan
Sean Robertson
Andrew Rodger
Mathieu Roussel-Lewis
Mark Silver
Francis Thompson
Tim Thompson
Geoff White
Chris Yordy*

Section Managers: Janet Doyle (S), Patricia Jackson (A), Kent Siebrasse (T), Doug MacDonald (B)

Scott Richardson rehearsal accompanist

The Choir is grateful for the support of our many volunteers.




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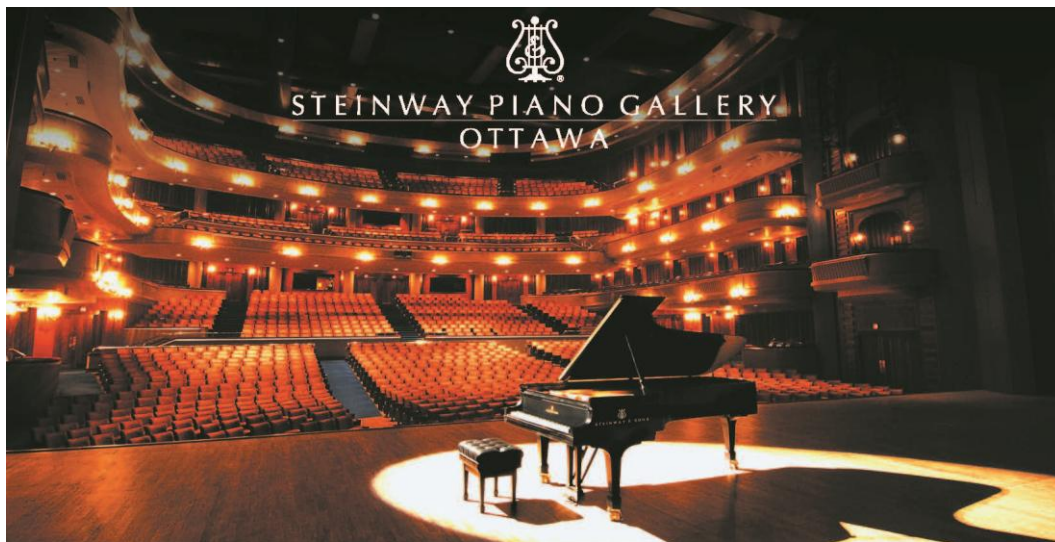
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