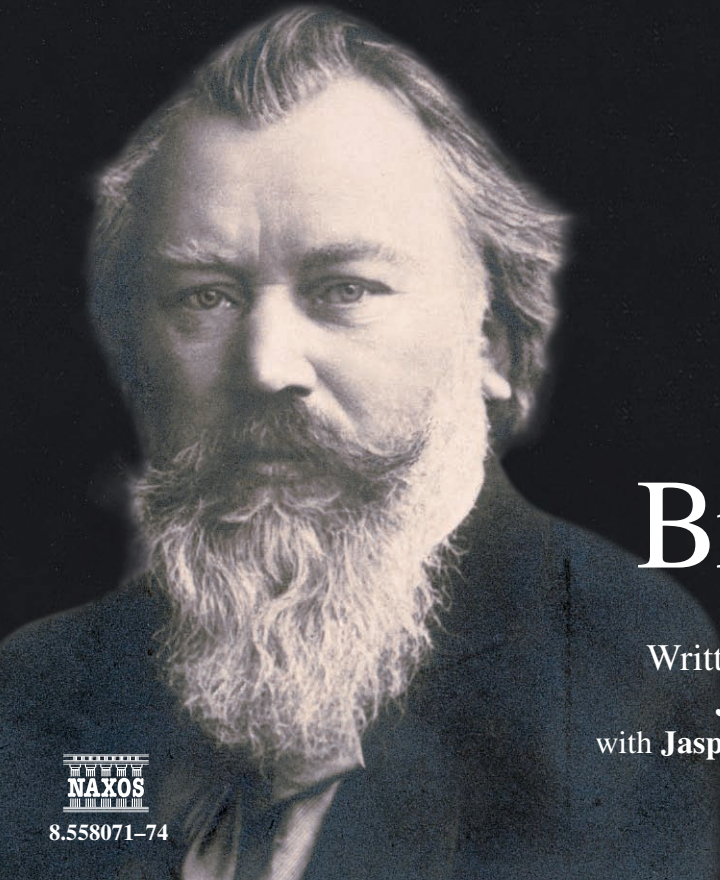


L I F E A N D W O R K S



Johannes
Brahms

Written and narrated by
Jeremy Siepmann
with **Jasper Britton** as Brahms



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Preface

If music is ‘about’ anything, it’s about life. No other medium can so quickly or more comprehensively lay bare the very soul of those who make or compose it. Biographies confined to the limitations of text are therefore at a serious disadvantage when it comes to the lives of composers. Only by combining verbal language with the music itself can one hope to achieve a fully rounded portrait. In the present series, the words of composers and their contemporaries are brought to life by distinguished actors in a narrative liberally spiced with musical illustrations.

The substantial booklet contains an assessment of the composer in relation to his era, an overview of his major works and their significance, a graded listening plan, a summary of recommended books, a gallery of biographical entries on the most significant figures in his life and times, and a calendar of his life showing parallel developments in the arts, politics, philosophies, sciences, and social developments of the day.

Jeremy Siepmann



Johannes Brahms: drawing, 1853, by Jean Joseph Bonaventura Laevens (1801–1890),
commissioned by Robert Schumann; courtesy AKG

Johannes
Brahms
(1833–1897)

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The full spoken text can be found at:
www.naxos.com/lifeandworks/brahms/spokentext

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Cast

Jasper Britton – Brahms

Karen Archer – Christiane Brahms, Clara Schumann

Elaine Claxton – Florence May, Hedwig Salomon, Fräulein Kalbeck

Ruth Sillers – Eugenie Schumann, Agathe von Siebold, Frau Friedländer,
Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, Mrs Partington

Neville Jason – Joseph Joachim, von Sahr, Specht, Hans von Bülow, Critics

Nicholas Boulton – Georg Henschel, Albert Dietrich, Max Kalbeck,
Antonín Dvořák, Robert Schauffler, Dr Breuer

Steve Hodson – Eduard Marxsen, Robert Schumann, Selmar Bagge, Edward Bernsdorf,
Karl Martin Reinthaler, Theodor Billroth, Eduard Hanslick, Bronisław Huberman

David Timson – Arnold Schlönbach, Julius Schmidt, Hermann Levi,
Joseph Widmann, Julius Wachsmann

Jasper Britton took the lead in the Regents Park Open Air Theatre production of *Richard III* and has also worked for the Royal National Theatre and the RSC. His television appearances include *The Bill* and *Peak Practice*.



Karen Archer has worked for the Royal Shakespeare Company in *Nicholas Nickleby* and as Mrs Erlynne in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as across the UK in plays such as *Ghosts*, *She Stoops to Conquer* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Her television appearances include *The Chief*, *Ruth Rendell Mysteries*, *Casualty*, and *Chancer* and she has been seen in the films *The Secret Garden* and *Forever Young*.



Elaine Claxton has worked extensively in the theatre, including London's Royal National Theatre where she appeared in *The Children's Hour*, *The Machine Wreckers*, and *Richard II*. She has twice been a member of the BBC Radio Drama Company, during which time she participated in over 200 broadcasts. She also appears in *Lady Windermere's Fan* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Ruth Sillers began her career with the National Youth Theatre. Her theatre work includes productions for the Royal National Theatre Studio and the Donmar Warehouse. She has performed in several plays for BBC Radio drama, including Noël Coward's *Easy Virtue* and *Medical Detectives*, and reads regularly for Radio 4 and the BBC World Service. Ruth has also read for Naxos AudioBooks' release of *Lady Susan*.



Neville Jason trained at RADA where he was awarded the Diction Prize by Sir John Gielgud. He has worked with the English Stage Co., the Old Vic Company, and the RSC as well as in films, television, and musicals. He is frequently heard on radio. As well as *Remembrance of Things Past*, he reads Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *The Castle of Otranto*, *Far From The Madding Crowd*, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* for Naxos AudioBooks, and plays Liszt in the *Life and Works of Liszt* for Naxos Multimedia.



Nicholas Boulton studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Since then he has been heard in numerous productions for BBC Radio 4 and the World Service. Theatre credits include *Platonov* for the Almeida and *Henry V* for the Royal Shakespeare Company, and he has appeared in the films *Shakespeare in Love* and *Topsy-Turvy*. Work for Naxos AudioBooks includes the part of Cecil in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and for Naxos Multimedia he has played Mozart in the *Life and Works of Mozart*. He is also a cutting-edge House Music DJ.



After training at the Central School of Speech and Drama, **Steve Hodson** joined Michael Elliot at the Exchange in Manchester for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Peer Gynt*, and *Catch My Soul*. The next stop was Yorkshire Television for a three-and-a-half year stint on *Follyfoot*. This was followed by television series such as *Angels*, *The Legend of King Arthur*, and *All Creatures Great and Small*, all interspersed with hundreds of radio plays. He has directed plays by John Crowen, Schiller, and Bulgakov. On stage he has appeared in *Death and the Maiden*, *The Railway Children*, and as George in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*



David Timson studied acting and singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has performed in modern and classic plays through the UK and abroad, including *Wild Honey* for Alan Ayckbourn, *Hamlet*, *The Man of Mode*, and *The Seagull*. Among his many television appearances have been roles in *Nelson's Column* and *Swallows and Amazons*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has recorded, to date, three volumes of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and directed *Twelfth Night* as well as playing Feste. On Naxos, he takes the part of the Narrator in Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*.



Though long resident in England, **Jeremy Siepmann** was born and formally educated in the United States. Having completed his studies at the Mannes College of Music in New York, he moved to London at the suggestion of Sir Malcolm Sargent in 1964. After several years as a freelance lecturer he was invited to join the staff of London University. For most of the last twenty years he has confined his teaching activity to the piano, his pupils including pianists of worldwide repute.

As a writer he has contributed articles, reviews, and interviews to numerous journals and reference works (including *New Statesman*, *The Musical Times*, *Gramophone*, *BBC Music Magazine*, and *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*), some of them being reprinted in book form (Oxford University Press, Robson Books). His books include a widely acclaimed biography of Chopin (*The Reluctant Romantic*, Gollancz/Northeastern University Press, 1995), two volumes on the history and literature of the piano, and a biography of Brahms (Everyman/EMI, 1997). In December 1997 he was appointed editor of *Piano* magazine.

His career as a broadcaster began in New York in 1963 with an East Coast radio series on the life and work of Mozart, described by Alistair Cooke as ‘the best music program on American radio’. On the strength of this, improbably, he was hired by the BBC as a humorist, in which capacity he furnished weekly satirical items on various aspects of American life.

After a long break he returned to broadcasting in 1977 and has by now devised, written, and presented more than 1,000 programmes, including the international award-winning series *The Elements of Music*. In 1988 he was appointed Head of Music at the BBC World Service, broadcasting to an estimated audience of 135 million. He left the Corporation in the spring of 1992 to form his own independent production company.

1 Historical Background: The Nineteenth Century

Overview

The nineteenth century, especially in Europe and North America, was an era of unprecedented change, peppered, inevitably, with wars and revolutions of almost every kind and at every level of society. The continuing advance of the Industrial Revolution, while far from abolishing poverty, brought new wealth to an ever-expanding middle class. Factories proliferated throughout Europe, soon exceeding the supply of indigenous raw materials and thereby intensifying the impulse towards colonisation. The British Empire increased its dominions dramatically, Africa was carved up by Britain and other European colonists, and, despite increasing unease, the slave trade continued, though its days were numbered. It was outlawed throughout the British Empire in 1807, but it was not until 1870 that the last slave was shipped to the Americas. Alarmed by European expansionism, China and Japan attempted to shut out the West altogether. But empire-building went on apace within Europe itself, never more dramatically than during the Napoleonic Wars (1799–1815), which had the incidental effect of igniting in countries from Italy to Russia a fervent nationalism that was to flourish throughout the century. In 1848, revolutions broke out all over Europe, and Marx and Engels published their epoch-making *Communist Manifesto*. Revolutions in Latin America resulted in a spate of new countries whose territorial disputes led to wars with each other. Of more lasting significance, in

world terms, were the Crimean War (1853–6), in which Russia, Turkey, France, Austria, Piedmont, and Sardinia scrambled for territory as the Ottoman empire began to collapse; the American Civil War (1861–5), which brought slavery to an end in the United States; the Austro-Prussian War (1866), which followed Bismarck's dissolution of the German Confederation and led to the creation of the modern German state and the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the series of conflicts that led to the establishment of modern Italy in 1871; the Franco-Prussian War over European leadership (1870–71); and the Russo-Turkish War for control of the Balkans in 1877. In 1837 Queen Victoria began her sixty-three-year reign in Britain, presiding over the most widely spread empire ever known, encompassing more than a quarter of the world's lands and people, while seeing the monarchy itself steadily reduced to a mere symbol as increasing numbers became educated and acquired the right to vote.

By the time of Victoria's death in 1901, the world had changed more dramatically than in any previous century: absolute monarchies had become the rare exception rather than the rule; workers in many countries had achieved conditions and rights beyond the dreams of their grandparents; literacy rates had quadrupled; trades unions were established and recognised in Germany, Britain, and France; the Civil Rights Act had made citizens of all American blacks; socialist parties had been formed and recognised in many countries; child labour had been largely eradicated; women's rights had become a front-line issue; and more than twenty-eight million people had cut their links with Europe and emigrated to America, contributing to the emergence of the United States as one of the world's greatest industrial and political powers.

Science and Technology. As in the previous century, human knowledge had expanded to an unprecedented degree. When Joseph Lalande published his catalogue of 47,390 stars in 1801, he heralded a century of astronomical discovery both literal and figurative, not least on the medical front. The single greatest advance in medicine was undoubtedly the discovery by Pasteur and Koch that bacteria and viruses lead to infection, resulting in mass immunisations against more

than twenty diseases, including such rapacious killers as smallpox, tuberculosis, and cholera (the last having claimed more than 16,000 people in London alone in 1849). Other landmarks include the discovery of quinine as a cure for malaria; the introduction in 1847 of ether as an anaesthetic, which with increased use of antiseptics resulted in unprecedented advances in surgery; and the invention of the X-ray in 1895, which revolutionised the diagnosis of illnesses and injuries, thereby saving and prolonging millions of lives.

Also belonging to the nineteenth century are the invention of steel; the birth and development of railways, both above and below ground, with incalculable effects on almost every branch of civilisation (and warfare); the discovery and widespread dissemination of electricity as a major power source; the advent of the telephone, the bicycle, the washing machine, and the typewriter; the gramophone, and the transmission of radio waves; and the oil drill. Indeed, towards the end of the century, electricity and oil were challenging the supremacy of coal and steam as the principal power sources of machines, leading to the internal combustion engine (hence also the motor car and the manufacture of plastics and artificial rubber).

Arms played a key part in most economies. By the middle of the century, the Krupp works at Essen, in Germany, had become the world's leading arms manufacturers, producing the first all-steel gun as early as 1850. In 1853 Samuel Colt, inventor of the single-barrelled pistol, revolutionised the small-arms business in the USA, working also on submarine mines and telegraphy; Richard Gatling, a trained physician, contributed to death and destruction in the American Civil War with his monstrous ten-barrelled gun, a precursor of the Maxim machine gun of 1882, firing 1,200 shots a minute.

Agriculture, easily sidelined by the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, experienced revolutions of its own, with breeding experiments leading to ever bigger crops and fatter animals. Cyrus McCormick invented his reaping machine in America in 1831, heralding a new

age of mechanised harvesting. Justus von Liebig's *Chemistry in its Application to Agriculture* inaugurated the age of scientific farming and the use of artificial fertilisers in 1855. Agricultural colleges began to proliferate around the middle of the century, and by the last quarter of the century refrigerated ships began plying the Atlantic, leading to worldwide food markets, long before the establishment of domestic refrigerators.

Trade. In the 1840s Britain's adoption of a free trade policy (no customs duties) helped to establish London as the centre of world trade, with the pound sterling as the dominant currency. By the 1870s many other countries introduced import levies as a means of protecting their own industries from economic imperialism. Regular steamship services were established between California and the Far East, and gun-running became a worldwide industry. On the domestic front, the invention of tinned foods and the advent of department stores in the second half of the century transformed the daily lives of countless housewives and domestics.

Ideas. As may be expected in a time of such ferment, the century was rich in philosophers, though the ideas which had, and continue to have, the most impact came from other quarters. Philosophically, the high ground was held by the Germans, much as the French had held it in the previous century. The great names are Hegel (1770–1831), Schopenhauer (1788–1860), and Nietzsche (1844–1900), all of whom were much concerned with music in one way or another. Nor should one forget the Danish Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855). Hegel argued that consciousness and the world of external objects were inseparable aspects of a single whole, and that truth is discoverable only through a dialectic process of contradiction and resolution – a thoroughly rationalist idea with clear parallels in the concept of sonata form. Schopenhauer took a more pessimistic view, one more in keeping with the preoccupations of the Romantics, in which the irrational will is seen as the governing principle of our perception, dominated by an endless cycle of desire and frustration, from which the only escape is aesthetic contemplation.

His thinking had a powerful effect on both Wagner and Nietzsche, who rejected established concepts of Christian morality. Nietzsche proclaimed that ‘God is dead’ and postulated the ideal of the *Übermensch* or ‘Superman’, who would impose his self-created will on the weak and the worthless – a view fully in keeping with the gargantuan nature of the Romantic ego, with its roots in the controlling powers of the industrial revolution and the spate of scientific discoveries which granted man an ever greater mastery of his environment.

Kierkegaard, the founder of existential philosophy, was fundamentally out of step with these ideas, taking what was in many ways a specifically Christian stance and arguing that no amount of rational thought could explain the uniqueness of individual experience or account for the existence of God, which could be understood only through a leap of faith. His suggestion that not only God but exceptional individuals stood outside the laws of morality, however, did not endear him to the established church.

The man who did more than anyone else, however, to undermine the basic tenets not only of Christianity but of all creationist religions was neither a philosopher nor a theologian, but a scientist. Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution, first set out in 1859 in *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, have never lost their explosive power. Less revolutionary, but also explosive, were the ideas of Sigmund Freud (1865–1939), widely known as the father of psychoanalysis. Although his greatest influence and fame belong to the twentieth century, the essence of his approach was defined in the nineteenth, when he first developed his theories of the unconscious and infantile sexuality. His basically anti-religious stance, treated in his book *The Future of an Illusion*, was a distinctly nineteenth-century product. Another far-reaching idea in nineteenth-century non-philosophical thought (non-philosophical in the strictly academic sense) arose from an increasingly widespread concern with natural justice. The Quakers were the first European community formally to espouse the notion of sexual equality, but it was such pioneering individuals as Mary Wollstonecraft, Emmeline Pankhurst, and Susan B. Anthony who really put the issue of women’s rights on the political agenda.

The Arts. In the realm of literature it was the century of the novel, in which such writers as Dickens, Zola, Hugo, Tolstoy, and Dostoyevsky managed both to absorb and entertain, and to lay bare the realities of life for the mass of society who suffered rather than benefited from the effects of the Industrial Revolution. Others, like Thackeray, Austen, Stendahl, George Eliot, and Flaubert, dealt in various ways with the lives, fantasies, and pretensions of the upwardly mobile middle class. Timeless issues of love, death, disappointment, and adventure were memorably explored by Sir Walter Scott, the fantastical E.T.A. Hoffmann, the three Brontë sisters, Joseph Conrad, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Hoffmann, Conrad, Chekhov, Andersen, and Maupassant proved themselves masters of the short story, and Wilkie Collins introduced a new genre, the detective novel. Meanwhile, dramatists like Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov, and Shaw brought a new realism to the theatre. It was also the century of the great Romantic poets: Goethe, Wordsworth, Heine, Byron, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Pushkin. Of these, Goethe, Byron, Heine, and Pushkin had the greatest impact on composers, prominent amongst them Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz, and Tchaikovsky. Later poets of importance include Baudelaire, Verlaine, Tennyson, and Gerard Manley Hopkins.

In the world of painting and sculpture, the greatest figures in the earlier part of the century included Goya; Constable, who heralded a new wave of landscape painters; Ingres, a natural classicist born into a century of Romanticism, who had much in common with Chopin, though not friendship; the arch-Romantics Géricault and Delacroix, whose obsession with the distant past arose from a characteristically Romantic distaste for the present; and the staggeringly original J.M.W. Turner, whose work foreshadowed the development of the French Impressionist school in the latter half of the century. The Impressionists Monet, Degas, Manet, Renoir, all of whom strove to represent nature and to capture the changing effects of light and movement, mixing their colours on the canvas rather than on the palette, were succeeded by the so-called post-Impressionists (Cézanne, van Gogh, Gauguin, and Seurat), who subscribed to no particular school or technique but sought a more objective, less spontaneous and evanescent style than the

Impressionists. Among sculptors, Auguste Rodin (1840–1917) stood in a class of his own – a Romantic, a realist, and a master of his craft with few rivals. (The largest sculpture in the world, however, was the Statue of Liberty, presented by France to the United States in 1884.)

At the end of the century came a new family of styles known as Art Nouveau, of which Aubrey Beardsley, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Gustav Klimt were prominent though very different exponents. Equally influential in the realm of architecture, it largely rejected traditional Western notions of symmetry, drawing much of its inspiration from the prints and buildings of Japan and reflecting a widespread hunger among Western artists for a fundamental regeneration of the creative impulse. This ranged from the highly decorative to the boldly simple.

In the realm of dance, ballet underwent some important transformations, including the introduction of tights, calf-length white dresses, and toe-shoes. The technique of female dancers was developed at the expense of the male, who was reduced to a largely supporting role. In the modern repertoire, the most typical examples of Romantic ballet at its best are *La Sylphide* (1832) and *Giselle* (1841).

Architecture. Nineteenth-century architecture in Europe and America reflected both the Romantic obsession with the past and the industrialists' concerns with practicality and economy. Public buildings tended for most of the century toward an ever more massive grandiosity, drawing on a wide variety of styles ranging from the distant to the recent past, often within a single building. A famous example, from 1835, are the neo-Gothic Houses of Parliament in London. Housing for the working class, however, bore many of the hallmarks of present-day factory-farming, consisting in the main of terraced brick houses – small, crowded, lacking in the facilities that today we take for granted, and of a soul-numbing sameness. With the advent of steel, property developers discovered that a high density of housing, office, and work space could be achieved by building upwards instead of outwards, thereby economising on land and cost to themselves. Thus the skyscraper began its dominance of the urban landscape. The most

famous of all, however, the Eiffel Tower in Paris (built for the great Paris Exhibition of 1889), had no practical function whatever, beyond being a tourist attraction and a demonstration of modern building technology.

Music. Never has an art known greater changes in so relatively short a time than music in the nineteenth century. When the century began, Beethoven was only thirty, Schubert only three. Haydn (sixty-eight) was still at the height of his powers. When the century ended, Debussy's revolutionary *Prélude à l'Après-midi d'un Faune*, often cited, even today, as 'the beginning of modern music', was already seven years old, and Schoenberg (twenty-six), Ives (also twenty-six), Bartók (nineteen), and Stravinsky (eighteen) were all fully active. In between, the end of the Classical era and the dawning of Romanticism could be seen in the maturest works of Beethoven and Schubert, whose symphonies, sonatas, and chamber music reached previously undreamt-of proportions and expanded classical forms to their outermost limits; harmony underwent unprecedented transformations, including the progressive dissolution of traditional tonality by Liszt, Wagner, Debussy, Mahler, and Ives; the piano attained its full maturity and became the world's most popular and commercially successful instrument; the art of orchestration became a front-line issue, thanks to the pioneering work of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner; and nationalism became a driving force, especially in Russia (Glinka, Mussorgsky, Borodin, and Balakirev), Bohemia (Dvořák and Smetana), Spain (Albéniz and Granados), Scandinavia (Grieg and Sibelius), Poland (Chopin), Hungary (Liszt), Italy (Verdi), and America (Gottschalk and Ives). There was a major shift from the relative objectivity of the Classical era to the intensely emotional and formally self-generating outpourings of the Romantics. Illustrative programme music achieved a popularity never approached before or since, and the cult of virtuosity became a dominant feature, thanks largely to Paganini and Liszt. The specialist (i.e., non-composing) performer became the rule rather than the exception – such figures were scarcely to be found in the previous century – and musical schools and conservatories became

commonplace. Despite this, the discipline of counterpoint, hitherto amongst the most highly prized of musical attributes, fell into widespread disuse, though it plays an important part in the music of Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, and Richard Strauss. In the works of Schubert, Lanner, Weber, and the Strauss family, the waltz became the most popular form of the century, closely followed by the Victorian after-dinner ballad. In general, forms polarised, from the millions of piano miniatures and character pieces, to the gargantuan music dramas of Wagner, the sprawling symphonies of Bruckner and Mahler, and the extravagantly coloured symphonic works of Richard Strauss. Quite apart from Wagner, it was the century of grand opera. Long (five acts), spectacularly staged, complete with ballet and special effects, its most prominent exponents were Meyerbeer, Auber, Halévy, Massenet, Spontini, and Verdi. It was also the century of comic operetta, exemplified by the entertainments of Gilbert and Sullivan, Offenbach, and Johann Strauss. Late in the century came the sometimes grimly realistic *verismo* school of opera, foreshadowed by Bizet's *Carmen* but most famously manifested in the works of Puccini, Mascagni, and Leoncavallo.

Brahms in His Time 2

German music of the mid-nineteenth century had become deeply politicised. At one extreme lay the pioneering subversives of Weimar and beyond, at the other, the intransigent conservatives of Leipzig (the city of Bach and Mendelssohn, which was just as hidebound in Bach's day as in Brahms's). Of these, the avant-garde, as ever, was the most stridently vocal. Its principle literary organ was the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, founded by Schumann in 1833 as the opening salvo in his self-styled 'battle of the Band of David against the Philistines'. In 1844 the journal had passed into the hands of Franz Brendel, under whose guidance it became, in effect, the official mouthpiece of the Neo-German movement. Brahms occupied a middle-ground between these two extremes, which gave him the privilege of being attacked by both camps at once. While the Neo-Germans regarded him as a relatively innocuous conservative, the upright Leipzigers saw him as an intolerable modernist. Their reception in 1859 of his great Piano Concerto in D minor was a classic of pig-headedness, and despite Brahms's extraordinarily philosophical response (CD 2, track 9) it dealt him a crushing blow. It is hard, today, for those of us who love Brahms's music to comprehend the vitriolic antipathy he aroused in many people, not only in Germany but in England (where he was repeatedly savaged by George Bernard Shaw, then a music critic), the United States, Russia (where Tchaikovsky hailed him as a 'giftless bastard' and a 'self-inflated mediocrity') and throughout continental Europe.

Brahms was one of the purest musicians who ever lived. He believed that the elements of music – pitch, duration, volume, tone colour, texture, and form – are entirely sufficient to its purposes, and that music can reflect and express the most profound spiritual and emotional experiences without recourse to external references. He also had the born classicist's belief in the expressive and aesthetic properties of form itself. Unlike many masters in, say, the French tradition, he valued craftsmanship, which he prized to an unsurpassed degree, primarily as a means to an end, specifically to an expressive end. We have only to remember his question to Joachim, 'but is it good *music*?'(CD 2, track 3), to be reassured on that point. He was constitutionally suspicious of any music that relied for its full effect on external references, with the important exception of word-settings: as one of the greatest and most prolific composers of songs and choral works, he was hardly in a position to be an unyielding absolutist here. Nor can he be entirely exonerated from the charge of writing illustrative music, especially in his songs.

What Brahms deeply abhorred, however, was the concept of representational, programmatic instrumental music, as exemplified by Liszt's invention of the so-called symphonic poem. As well as its programmatic and referential doctrines, this music posed a serious threat to the stable key structures that had underpinned all Western art music for centuries. Witness, among other things, Liszt's late *Bagatelle sans tonalité* and the chromatic menaces of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, which, as it turned out, did indeed lead to the music of the future – and at the same time to an unprecedented gap between composer and listener that yawned ever wider until the conservative backlash of the late twentieth century. He likewise deplored the quasi-improvisatory forms resulting from too literal an adherence to the dictates of whatever play, poem, statue, painting, or historical event was being represented. For Brahms, music succeeded on the basis of its own inner logic or not at all. His abiding mentors were Bach, Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert, and he was readier than most to recognise the true stature of Mendelssohn: 'a great master before whom we should take off our hats!... I would give all my compositions if I could have written such a piece as *The Hebrides Overture*!' Nothing so very

bad in that, but it was his response to the music of his own time that branded him as a true ‘young fogey’. The following letter sounds more like the hand-wringing of an old campaigner than the fire in the belly of a twenty-six-year-old messiah:

October 1859. Spohr is dead! He was probably the last of those who still belonged to an artistic period more satisfying than the one in which we now suffer. In those days one might well have looked about eagerly after each fair to see what new and beautiful things had arrived from one composer to another. Now things are different. For months and years now I have hardly seen a single collection of music that gave me pleasure, but a great many that almost caused me physical pain. At no time has any art been so mistreated as is our beloved music now. Let us hope that somewhere in obscurity something better may emerge, for otherwise our epoch will go down in the annals of art as a pit of trash.

In his search for other like-minded composers, especially in his later years, Brahms was constantly on the lookout for young talent that might help stem the tide of Neo-German ‘futurism’. As honorary president of the Wiener Tonkünstlerverein, he was a zealous promoter of competitions to bring promising young talents to the fore. Of the several composers whom he assisted, often anonymously, none brought him greater pleasure than Dvořák, who owed his international career to Brahms above all others.

After 1860, Brahms himself took no part in the factionalism that purportedly divided the musical world into warring camps of Brahmsians and Wagnerites. Nor did he rise to the bait of Wagner’s own contemptuous, malicious, and egregiously personal attacks on both him and his music. For some of Wagner’s works, indeed, Brahms felt a genuine enthusiasm, and he had a healthy respect even for that far greater body which he found boring, repellent, or both. In his later, Viennese years he was a regular visitor to the Opera on Wagner nights and could round with unexpected ferocity on those who disparaged the music. When a junior colleague opined in his presence that ‘Wagner must be held chiefly responsible for the confusion prevailing in the heads of us young people,’ Brahms roared, ‘Nonsense! The *misunderstood* Wagner has done

that. Those understand *nothing* of the real Wagner who are led astray by him. Wagner's is one of the clearest heads that ever existed in the world'. Brahms's claims that he himself understood Wagner's music better than anyone were exaggerated, but were aimed in part at distancing himself from his own supporters. In 1887 he wrote to Joachim from Vienna:

Wagner is here and I shall probably be called a Wagnerite, mainly of course out of the opposition to which any sensible person is driven by the haughty way in which the musicians here rail against him. Besides, I particularly like to be with Cornelius and Tausig, who claim not to be, nor ever to have been, followers of Liszt, and who can achieve more with their little finger than other musicians with the whole head and all their fingers.

Brahms's interest in the music of the past was not a hobby; it was almost an obsession. He burned with a passionate indignation at the way in which many of the greatest masters had been either forgotten or consciously swept aside as irrelevant to the needs and tastes of the present. This, however, was nothing new. Schubert's own knowledge of the past went little further back than Bach, if at all: of the earlier Baroque and Renaissance composers he was entirely ignorant. Mozart had only discovered the music of Bach and Handel at the age of thirty-two, three years before his death. And though one of the hallmarks of the Romantic movement was a new reverence for the past, that reverence was more literary than musical, and more generalised than specific. When Brahms came of age, most of Bach's works were still unknown and unpublished (a generation after Mendelssohn had ostensibly kick-started a Bach revival with his mounting of the *St Matthew Passion* in 1829), Haydn was known only by a small minority of pieces, and Schubert continued to be undiscovered and unexplored for generations still to come. (Astonishingly, in 1928, the centenary of his death, no less a figure than Rachmaninov was unaware of the very existence of Schubert's piano sonatas.) Brahms could fairly be said to have belonged to the first generation of great musicologists, and many of these were his friends and close associates. He was the first great composer to bring a scholar's methodology and

thoroughness to the study of earlier music, and he was also the first regularly to mount performances of it for the general public. His scores were meticulously marked by him in accordance with the fruits of his researches (undertaken at all the major libraries of Austria and Germany) and show a then unprecedented concern for the composer's original intentions. As a prolific and painstaking editor he prepared performing editions of a repertoire whose breadth is impressive even by today's musicologically saturated standards. His most important editions were those of Couperin, Handel, C.P.E. Bach, Chopin, and Schumann, but there were many others as well. Amongst the carefully annotated scores in his library at the time of his death were examples by Arbeau, Buxtehude, Banchieri, Bononcini, Byrd, Caldara, Carissimi, Campra, Cavalli, Clemens non Papa, Corelli, Dowland, Frescobaldi, Froberger, Gabrieli, Hassler, Lassus, Lully, Marenzio, Pachelbel, Rameau, Scheidt, Vivaldi, Willaert, Zarlino, and many more. No less exhaustive were his attentions to the realm of German folk music, a repertoire that he loved as much as any and which occupied his mind for almost half a century.

Brahms's historical proclivities were not, however, confined to music. He also took a lively interest in politics, strongly admired the historical works of Sybel and Treitschke, and had a passionate admiration for Bismarck, on whom, according to Hanslick, he had read virtually everything in print, and of whom he had a collection of portraits. Less surprising was his love of painting and architecture. On a visit with his friend Widmann to Italy in 1888, Widmann observed for the first time Brahms's profound kinship with the masters of the Italian Renaissance:

Their buildings, their statues, their pictures were his delight and when one witnessed the absorbed devotion with which he contemplated their works, or heard him admire in the old masters a trait conspicuous in himself, their conscientious perfection of detail, even where it could hardly be noticeable to the ordinary observer, one could not help instituting the comparison between himself and them.

By that time, Brahms had long since transcended the assaults of those critics who had bedevilled him in earlier days. Liszt and Wagner were dead, and he was now generally regarded, all over the world, as the greatest of living composers. Not that he was without his detractors. He was always, and remains, a controversial composer. It would be foolish to pretend that he was not gratified by the popularity he now enjoyed. What had he said to Billroth at the time of his Symphony No. 1? 'You cannot imagine how beautiful and heart-warming it is to sense a sympathy like yours. In such a moment one realises that this is the best part of composing and all that is connected with it.' Of course he was gratified, but at no time did it turn his head. When asked, three years before his death, to speculate on his likely treatment by posterity he remarked, 'I know very well the place I shall one day have in the history of music: the place that Cherubini once had and has today. That is my lot – my fate'. As a prophet, he turns out to have been wide of the mark.

The Major Works and Their Significance 3

Piano Works

With the single exception of opera, Brahms wrote significant works in every medium: songs, choral works, symphonies, concertos, chamber music, and organ works. However, his closest companion throughout his life was the piano – as both performer and composer. His greatest works may lie elsewhere (the Requiem, the concertos, the symphonies, most of the chamber music, and many of the songs), but the piano works effectively frame his entire career as a composer. The seldom-heard E flat minor Scherzo is the earliest of Brahms's compositions to have survived but, for all its precocity and phenomenal self-confidence, few would place it among his major works. Composed when he was eighteen, it deserves mention not only because it marks the beginning of the story, so to speak, but because it was the first of the pieces that Brahms chose to play to the Schumanns. It remains, however, perhaps the least evidently Brahmsian of all his works. Next came the three mighty and progressively more masterly sonatas. Written successively, though not in the published order, they were completed in 1853 when Brahms was twenty, and it was largely on these that Schumann based his celebrated prophecy. High among their many remarkable features are the extraordinary individuality and integrity of Brahms's musical personality. That they were the products of a youth who still looked and sounded in many ways more like a child than a man almost beggars belief. While all

three have much to recommend them, the third, in F minor, is the only one to have secured a place near the centre of the concert repertory. Cast unusually in five movements, it demonstrates better than either of its predecessors Brahms's characteristic combination of passion, virtuosity, and intellectual discipline. Its organic unity is remarkable, the first movement in particular deriving most of its material from the very opening idea, and the rapt, expansive coda of the second movement is among the most inspired and deeply touching passages ever conceived for the piano.

The earliest of Brahms's several sets of variations is based, unsurprisingly, on a theme of Schumann (a kind of musical token of his gratitude for Schumann's faith in him). Written in 1854, in the wake of Schumann's collapse, it shows most of the hallmarks of the other great sets that follow it: a remarkable mastery of contrapuntal devices and imitative procedures, a highly disciplined organic development through a wide range of moods and textures, a brilliant command of a truly pianistic idiom, and an unobtrusive but ruthless subordination of bravura to purely musical ends.

Characteristic also of these sets of variations is Brahms's unwillingness to repeat himself. His every essay in the form explores new challenges and different demands. The two sets that make up Op. 21 are as different from each other as from their Op. 9 predecessor, and it is only the first Op. 21 set, on a theme of his own, which can really be claimed as a major work. Less varied in tone, and with no hint of bravura (but by no means easy to play), it largely avoids the contrapuntal fixations of Op. 9 (although the fifth variation is a quietly taxing 'canon in contrary motion'), concentrating instead on harmonic and structural considerations. The theme alone is beautiful, moving, and unmistakably Brahmsian, conveying, like certain of the variations to follow, something of the elegiac mood of the slow movement of the D minor Piano Concerto. Its unusual use of nine-bar phrases is typical of Brahms's lifelong fascination with metrical and rhythmic ambiguity (five-, seven-, and nine-bar phrases crop up again and again). The relative neglect of this profound and very beautiful work is hard to understand, though its predominantly

slow-moving and contemplative nature may offer at least a partial explanation.

The four *Ballades*, Op. 10, were written in the summer of 1854 and mark the beginning of Brahms's love-affair with the self-contained lyrical piano piece, a genre to which many of his Romantic precursors had contributed such a mountain of dross that its viability as a vehicle for serious music had been almost forgotten. Here we find Brahms looking back, as so often, to Beethoven (especially his *Bagatelles*), Schubert (the *Impromptus* and *Moments musicaux*), Mendelssohn (the *Songs Without Words*, etc.), and to a lesser extent Chopin. Schumann's many short piano pieces were less influential here than one might expect, since most of them appear as part of his multi-movement 'piano cycles' and were never meant to be played independently.

When Schumann described Brahms's early, massive sonatas as 'veiled symphonies' he may have been even more perceptive than he realised. Interestingly, Brahms's long-awaited production of authentic symphonies in the middle 1870s signalled an end to his interest in the piano as a vehicle for large-scale designs. After the two-piano version of the so-called 'Haydn' Variations – this preceded the orchestral version – he confined his solo piano writing to shorter (though by no means always 'miniature') pieces, published in successive groups but generally without the organic cohesion of Schumann's piano suites. We get a foretaste of these in the delectable Waltzes, Op. 39 of 1865. Nowhere, not even in his popular *Liebeslieder*, is Brahms less Germanic or more deliciously Viennese. Not that Germanic touches are lacking. Some of the pieces have a wildness, even a fierceness, unknown to the truly Viennese waltz, and only Brahms would end a cycle of seductive waltzes with an exercise in double counterpoint (although there is nothing 'academic' about the way it sounds). It is a measure of their popularity that Brahms made three versions, two for piano solo of which the first is far more difficult, and one for piano duet, most of which can be managed rewardingly by amateurs of moderate attainment.

The same can hardly be said of any of Brahms's sets of variations. Indeed, the *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Op. 35 are among the most difficult virtuoso works in the whole of the

piano repertoire. They come in two books but are frequently played together, and their alternative title, ‘Studies for the Piano’, has been taken by that great majority of pianists, who play them as though they were little more than glorified exercises, as a wholly spurious justification for their approach. For all their fiendish difficulty, these are primarily studies in sonority and characterisation, as rich and sometimes sensuous as anything by Liszt or Debussy.

Less formidable but very taxing nevertheless, even for most professionals, are the earlier (and still very popular) *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, Op. 24 – written for Clara Schumann’s birthday and premiered by her in ‘an agony of nervousness’ (her words, not his). Given the extraordinary variety of invention, and the width and depth of emotional range, it seems scarcely credible that Brahms preserves the original proportions and even the original key of the theme throughout (albeit with the odd excursion into minor). Only in the huge concluding Fugue does he expand the scale, and here, from the very outset, we feel ourselves to be embarking on a great adventure. Such is the dramatic power and the unerring psychological pacing that it is easy to miss the contrapuntal ingenuity and masterly control that lie behind them.

For a long time, the Two Rhapsodies of 1879 were amongst the most popular and frequently performed of all Brahms’s piano works. If his early sonatas were ‘veiled symphonies’, these large-scale though highly sectional pieces might equally be seen as veiled overtures. As in the early sonatas, perhaps even more so, the piano writing here is notably orchestral in character. Despite the expressive abandon suggested by their title, both works are cast in a modified sonata form and are of the utmost seriousness (indeed the second, in G minor, is almost grim in its implacable, march-like gait). At the same time, particularly in the B minor Rhapsody, there is a sweetness and poignancy that is uniquely Brahmsian, almost painful in its wistful tenderness.

With only a few exceptions, Brahms entitled most of his shorter piano pieces either ‘Capriccio’ or ‘Intermezzo’, the latter being a confusing title since the term suggests a piece put between two others. To begin a group of pieces with an *intermezzo* is therefore a contradiction in

terms, yet Brahms's Op. 117 consists of nothing else: three gentle pieces of pure beauty and lyricism, each lending substance in its tone-colour and harmonic blending to Artur Schnabel's description of Brahms as 'the first Impressionist' (particularly noteworthy in this respect is the middle section of No. 3). The eighteen pieces to which he gave the name have much in common and stand at the opposite extreme to the heroic cast of the early sonatas and the virtuosic grandeur and panache of the 'Handel' and 'Paganini' Variations. They are generally intimate in character, indeed they contain some of the most tender and poignantly affecting music ever penned. For the most part, they fall into a simple A–B–A pattern, in which the opening music returns, usually with some subtle alteration, after a contrasting middle section. In their apparent simplicity of utterance they often reflect Brahms's lifelong love affair with folk music – but they also contain harmonic and rhythmic features of extraordinary sophistication and subtlety. With the sole exception of Op. 76, the first of his suites for piano (written in 1878, the year of the great Violin Concerto), they are late pieces, composed mainly between 1891 and 1893, and give us Brahms at his richest and most masterly.

While the *intermezzi* are serious (though rarely solemn) in tone, the *capricci* (caprices) give us the more outward-bound, unbuttoned Brahms, sometimes playful, even coquettish, sometimes brusque, sometimes, indeed, almost violent. More than in the *intermezzi*, we encounter here Brahms's fascination with rhythmic games, though there is nothing flippant about these procedures. In much great music, and much very serious music to boot, there is often a very considerable degree of game-playing. In this instance it involves such devices as writing 'against' the metre, making us feel two-beat groups in a prevailing context of three, or groups of one kind actually superimposed on groups of another, so that we hear both at once, in conflict as it were – the aural equivalent of optical illusions, except that in music it is the composer who controls our perceptions. There is a good example of this (and very much in the spirit of a game, too) in the second of the Four Pieces, Op. 119 and still better examples in the C sharp minor *Capriccio*, Op. 76 No. 5 and the opening D minor *Capriccio*, Op. 116. These so-called 'cross

rhythms' are in many ways the bread and butter of Brahms's overall style. Of these short pieces hardly a single one is as rhythmically straightforward as it may at first appear. No other piano composer of the nineteenth century used rhythm in such complex and teasing combinations as Brahms. It can be effortlessly light-hearted, as in Op. 119 No. 2, or used to highly dramatic and turbulent effect, as in Op. 76 No. 5.

In striking contrast with the piano works of Chopin and Liszt, Brahms's keyboard writing can be almost severe in its avoidance of decorative embellishment. This is possibly on the undeniable grounds that there is already so much for the ear to perceive in the way of rhythmic illusions, harmonic clashes resulting from the close overlapping of parts (try the opening *Intermezzo*,

Op. 119), colouristic devices nourished by very wide distances between the hands, pedalling of positively Debussyan subtlety, and the frequent intertwining of melodic strands whose contrapuntal ingenuity is worthy of Bach.

The big-boned, extroverted E flat Rhapsody that closes the Op. 119 set brings Brahms's output for solo piano to a triumphantly positive close, though there is perhaps an element of Beethovenian fist-shaking in the defiant coda, which ends, unexpectedly, in the minor. Its almost tub-thumping opening theme (if one chooses to hear it that way) was for a long time saddled by musical wags with the words 'I have been / saved by the / Salvation / army, damn! damn! damn!', and it too teases the interpreter with unusual rhythmic possibilities.

Orchestral Works. Brahms wrote thirteen orchestral works: four concertos, two serenades, two concert overtures, *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* and, most significantly, four symphonies. All are important in their way, but the first of these works, the D minor Piano Concerto, must surely be the most astonishing orchestral debut in history. Like Symphony No. 1, though not so extremely, it was a long time brewing – a fact that the seamless unity of the finished product manages artfully to conceal. Nor would one guess from its epic seriousness and grandeur (the

most strenuously sober of all great tone poems) that it is the work of a very young man. It was begun in 1854, when Brahms was still very much the beautiful, fair-haired, beardless youth who looked scarcely out of his teens. The stout, hirsute curmudgeon whose eyes, with their record of hurt and sorrow, stare out at us from so many portraits, was still a long way off. The hurt and sorrow, however, were already there. Like so many other works of Brahms, the piece is intimately bound up with the Schumanns. It was only a year after their first meeting that Robert lost his reason and threw himself into the Rhine. So much has been made of Clara's grief and of Brahms's lovesick attentions to her in her hour of greatest need that one easily forgets the enormity of the tragedy for Brahms himself.

The first musical fruit of Brahms's own acute distress was a sonata in D minor for two pianos, though with his famous reference to 'veiled symphonies' Schumann had predicted that the piano would soon seem to Brahms too limited a medium for the immensity of his musical conceptions. Ironically and appropriately it was in the making of this very work that Schumann's prophecy came true. Only a few weeks after beginning the sonata, Brahms voiced his growing frustration to Joachim, complaining that even two pianos were inadequate to the work's requirements. Shortly thereafter, the sonata was abandoned, but its first movement soon resurfaced, considerably amended, as the beginning of a D minor symphony (the key of Beethoven's Symphony No. 9). Unsurprisingly, in view of the fact that this marked Brahms's first foray into the realm of orchestration, this version too proved unsatisfactory, and within a year or so of its inception the work acquired a third lease of life as a concerto.

Though the work is formidably difficult to play, it scorns the bravura display that was fashionable at the time. In terms of both material and texture, piano and orchestra meet, for the most part, not as gladiatorial adversaries but as equal if contrasting partners in a drama of authentically symphonic proportions. Though its three movements were conceived at different times and were subjected to many revisions, the work is remarkably consistent in its spiritual integrity and thematic unity. For instance, the robust main theme of the finale – a movement of

tremendous excitement – is based directly on the warmly autumnal eloquence of the first movement's second subject, just as the first theme of the *Adagio* derives from the opening theme of the work as a whole. The themes of the first movement are similarly related. The slow movement is an early example of Brahms's ability to cast music of heart-clutching sadness in the major mode. It seems unlikely that anyone hearing the concerto for the first (or even the tenth) time could possibly guess that this mighty masterwork came from a very young man.

After the D minor Piano Concerto there was a lull, in which Brahms produced the two unassuming orchestral serenades that are in some respects more like chamber music than anything symphonic. Indeed, the first of them, in D, was originally conceived as a nonet. The second, in A, is unusually scored for an orchestra without violins. Having expanded the D major Serenade into orchestral form, Brahms obviously had qualms about it. As he wrote to Joachim: 'I think I need to change my first serenade, now and finally, into a symphony. I can see that it isn't right to have it in this mongrel state. But I had such a beautiful, big conception of my first symphony, and now!...' As it happened, he retained his beautiful, big conception, and the serenade remained a mongrel. Though the work's star has somewhat faded now, it achieved considerable popularity in its day. Between the serenades and Brahms's next orchestral outing (excepting the accompanied choral works) lie thirteen years. In the fourteen years between 1873 and 1887 came ten important works, and the rest is silence. In the last decade of his life Brahms turned his back on the orchestra, though there were rumours that he was contemplating a fifth symphony.

The great *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, which broke the fast, so to speak, were a hit from the start and have remained so ever since. In more than a purely orchestral sense they can be seen as a kind of dry run for the symphonies. The layout is distinctly symphonic, the first three variations, with their bustling energy and vigour, standing in for a first movement, the fourth (an *Andante* in the minor mode) suggesting a slow second movement, the next three standing (or dancing) as a kind of undercover scherzo, and the finale anticipating the passacaglia which

crowns Symphony No. 4 by turning the theme into a ground bass, building up a splendid head of steam before the triumphant return of the original material.

Brahms's first true symphony, almost twenty years in the making, was probably the most keenly awaited in musical history. Its protracted gestation was due to three main causes: one was the continuing weight of Schumann's prophecy, another was the onus put on him by his own misguided 'manifesto' against the Neo-German school of Liszt and Wagner, but far and away the most powerful was the inspiring but inhibiting example of Beethoven, whose natural heir Brahms was widely felt to be. In the event, his first symphony was certainly Beethovenian in the extraordinary mastery of its structure and its profound seriousness of tone, bordering even on the tragic from the very beginning. That any of it sounds as though it were written by Beethoven himself, which was claimed by some at the time, is perfect nonsense: the music is Brahms through and through. Its tragic, fate-laden opening is hardly surprising, since the work has its origins in the aftermath of Schumann's death – indeed the whole work could be seen as a kind of instrumental requiem for Schumann, and it fulfils his prophecy beyond any shadow of a doubt (see CD 1, track 10). In the alternation of hope and despair that dominates the main body of the first movement we find a powerful mirror of the normal patterns of grieving. In following an opening movement in C minor with a slow movement in E major, Brahms follows the example of Beethoven in his Piano Concerto No. 3. The juxtaposition has an almost other-worldly quality, and the uses of solo oboe and violin are particularly striking. In the following movement, whose key is higher by the same degree as the second movement was to the first, Brahms replaces the traditional scherzo, giving us instead a movement in duple rather than the expected triple metre. As the last word – 'graceful' – of the direction implies (*un poco allegretto e grazioso*), we are now a long way from the tragedy, struggle, and drama of the opening movement. But with a first movement like that, one can hardly doubt, even during the third movement, that the gravity, breadth, and epic character will return in the finale, setting the seal on a symphonic drama of quite exceptional mastery and power. This it indeed does, in a

movement of incredible dramatic pacing and ingenuity of construction. The movement's instrumentation is even more memorable, notably the riveting entry of the horn with the first main theme which is worthy of Wagner (a sworn foe of Brahms's music and himself one of the greatest orchestrators who ever lived). The second main theme, introduced with wonderful breadth and majesty by the lower strings of the violins and violas over a *pizzicato* (plucked) accompaniment in the bass, is widely said to resemble the 'Ode to Joy' in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 – indeed it became a standard stick with which Brahms's enemies liked to beat him. However, the point is entirely irrelevant in any case: the most important thing about any symphonic theme in the work of either composer is not so much what it is or resembles but what happens to it, how it develops. In many cases it may underpin not only a whole movement but an entire work. For all its seriousness and its tragic beginnings Brahms's Symphony No. 1 is not, on balance, a tragic work, and it ends in a spirit of pure exhilaration.

The premiere of Symphony No. 1 marked a watershed in Brahms's career, and Symphony No. 2 came as easily as the first had come hard. Like the Violin Concerto of the following year, it was written during the summer, while Brahms was staying at the lakeside Austrian town of Pörtlach. While it is not without its shadows, the Second Symphony breathes an air of serenity, contentment, and good humour seldom encountered in the more dramatic and intense works of Brahms's earliest manhood. Yet even here the public would not let him escape comparison with Beethoven. Just as Bülow had labelled Symphony No. 1 'Beethoven's Tenth', so now people called the new symphony 'Brahms's *Pastoral*'. While there are frequent echoes of the *spirit* of that enchanting work, the music itself is perhaps the most purely Brahmsian he had written to date. There are indeed Beethovenian features: Brahms uses a structural device, for instance, which was famously employed by Beethoven in his Symphony No. 5, namely deriving most of the thematic material from the opening notes of the first movement. In both the outer movements, he builds his principal themes round a simple three-note chord that serves as an anchor for the home key of the work as a whole, and as the unifying goal behind most of the

subsequent themes.

Because of its almost symphonic emphasis on the orchestra and the tremendous demands it makes on the soloist, the great D major Violin Concerto of 1878 was famously described by Hans von Bülow as a concerto not for but *against* the violin. The violinist Bronisław Huberman came closer to the truth, however, when commenting that ‘this concerto is neither *against* the violin, nor *for* violin *with* orchestra; it is a concerto *for* violin *against* orchestra – and the violin wins!’ Certainly the violin had never before been asked to combat the orchestra as it is here. For all the work’s beauty, there are moments in the first movement when the style of violin-writing is deliberately *unbeautiful*. Indeed this is perhaps the first violin concerto, and certainly the first great one, in which the composer demands downright violence from the soloist. When it came to the expression of human emotion, Brahms, like Beethoven before him, was an uncompromising realist. The rapturous, sometimes heartbreakingly poignant love music that permeates so much of Brahms’s output and so much of this concerto, is all the more affecting because of the pain and strife that are also there.

Brahms originally planned to give the work four movements, setting the seal on his conception of it as a kind of symphony with violin *obbligato*. In the end he scrapped that idea and inserted what he described as ‘a feeble *Adagio*’ – a typical Brahmsian joke – which ranks with the most expressive and beautifully crafted things he ever wrote. If it is true, as some claim, that concerto finales are generally disappointing, then this one is a dazzling exception, not only bringing the work to a glorious conclusion but qualifying on its own as one of the most jubilantly self-confident of all Brahms’s Hungarian dances.

Before embarking on his next epic work, the Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat, Brahms relaxed with the instantly popular *Academic Festival Overture*, which is highly festive but not in the least academic, except in its inclusion of university student songs. This, however was quickly followed by its designedly darker sibling the *Tragic Overture*, which was written almost as a corrective, to reassure his followers that he had not betrayed their trust and become a high-class

entertainer ('à la Suppé', as Brahms himself put it, referring to the *Academic Festival Overture* – 'Suppé' referring to Franz von Suppé (1819–1895)).

With the B flat Piano Concerto of 1881 Brahms moved even closer to the idea of the concerto as symphony-with-soloist than he had in the Violin Concerto. This time there are four movements – the extra one being the Scherzo, which very unusually comes second in the sequence, followed by the slow movement and finale. The work's difficulties are colossal, even by the standards of his first two concertos, but like them it steadfastly shuns bravura display. Its epic, organic integrity, too, is truly symphonic. From the very opening, leisurely horn call and its responsive pick-up by the piano, it's clear that we are in for a big, expansive work. In fact from the first bar of the piano's answer – even the first beat of it – we can hear the potential for a musical acorn to become a mighty oak. The little triplet figure in the horn call is immediately taken up and expanded by the piano, where it is extended to every beat. Two bars into the piece, and development is already taking place. That innocuous little group of three notes at the opening serves almost as a motto for the whole movement. The powerful, driving Scherzo is the most straightforward movement from an interpretative point of view, but its difficulties are fearsome. Here too Brahms engages in some of his most memorable rhythmic manipulations. Like the first movement, the love-drenched *Andante* begins with the distinctive tone of a solo instrument – not the piano, as one might have expected, but the cello. Indeed the cello seems for a long while to have supplanted the piano as the soloist. This whole opening section, in fact the whole movement, is one of Brahms's most inspired and lovely pieces of writing. If the element of tone colour plays a large part in the first movement, which it certainly does, there are parts of the slow movement where it seems almost to be the principal agent of expression. The finale finds Brahms at his sunniest and most carefree. Bar the odd exuberant outburst, everything is light and airy, even a little flirtatious at times. It is a movement that sounds (or should sound) effortless but which conceals some of the most formidable challenges in the pianist's repertoire.

Brahms's next real symphony, No. 3 in F major, was composed in 1883 and has struck some

critics, Brahmsians among them, as structurally the least convincing of the symphonies, though most musicians and music-lovers are not bothered. It is also the shortest, but repeatedly demonstrates that size is not to be measured only by duration. From the very beginning it is unmistakably clear that this is a big work, whatever its dimensions. After its opening, three-chord motto, which reappears in one form or another throughout the symphony, the work gets under way with a big, bold, serious, even rather dark theme, which closely resembles one of Schumann's favourite motto motifs and provides the basis for much of the movement. When it comes to the organic development of themes, Brahms, as in so many other ways, is a master without superior. One example among many is the wonderful and wholly unpredictable treatment of this epic theme as a doom-laden waltz – an apparent contradiction in terms that is typically Brahmsian. One of the criticisms sometimes levelled at this movement is the supposedly disproportionate brevity of the second main theme, introduced by the clarinet. This remains a subjective matter, of course; but length, as already mentioned, is not everything, and this theme is remarkable not only for its intrinsic quality but for the fact that it comes in a very surprising key, A major, and in a new metre, with nine beats to the bar – a highly unusual procedure. The lyrical second movement, with its folk-like feeling and beautiful scoring, especially for winds, pays possibly unconscious tribute to Mozart, one of Brahms's top three musical gods (the others being Bach and Beethoven). But this movement is more than merely lyrical. There is a darkness and (almost) hidden depth to it, conveyed largely through its harmonies and particular scoring, but also through its rhythm – particularly in those sections when the long melodic line gives way to a kind of ominous, fragmented conversation between winds and strings, with the repetition of a rhythmic figure which contains more than a little suggestion of a funeral march. The inclusion of trombones, with neither of their customary companions, trumpets and timpani, adds greatly to the depth of feeling conveyed. As in both the preceding symphonies, the traditional scherzo is replaced – in this case with a rather wistful, poignant, slightly limping dance, whose particular mixture of cloud and sunshine, of happiness

and melancholy calls to mind another of Brahms's gods (perhaps the one closest to his heart), Schubert. The finale follows suit, mixing darkness and light, drama and reflection, struggle and joy to ultimately exhilarating effect. The number and ingenuity of variants derived by Brahms from the opening theme is worthy both of Beethoven and possibly even of Liszt, whose most important music stands poles apart from Brahms's and is founded to a very large degree on his concept of 'the transformation of themes'. Since music is so subjective, it is always risky to talk about it in terms of painting or seasons or whatever, but it would not be too misleading to say that if Symphony No. 2 is distinctly a summery work, No. 3 is more autumnal, in both mood and instrumental colour.

There is no evidence that Brahms thought of Symphony No. 4 as his last symphony when he wrote it – he was only 52 when he completed the work, in 1855. However, there is general agreement that of his four symphonies, if not indeed of all his orchestral works, this is the greatest, the most masterly, deeply involving, exciting, and epic. The opening movement (whose very beginning, inevitably, some commentators have traced to a single brief phrase in the slow movement of Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata) brings to mind Brahms's youthful query to Joachim when they were jointly improving their skill at counterpoint, at Brahms's instigation: 'I send you the same lot of canons again. Apart from the scientific, the technical side, is it good *music*? Does the ingenuity lend it more beauty and value?' In the case of this movement – of the whole symphony, really – the answer is a resounding yes. No sonata-form movement is more closely, more impeccably argued than this one. Yet so engrossing, so magnetic is the purely musical side that one never – other than on purpose – stops for even a moment to consider the mastery of the structure or the staggering command and variety of contrapuntal devices. For most listeners, in any case, these are 'invisible to the ear' (as opposed to inaudible). One hears the melodic intertwining, the imitations, of course – they are there to be heard – but in terms of rapture and awe, not of intellectual admiration and clinical respect. The same, indeed, applies to all the movements. Not even Beethoven, whose looming shadow Brahms was never allowed

forget, ever achieved a more indissoluble union of intellect, emotion, and imagination.

The Double Concerto for violin and cello, the first concerto ever conceived for this combination, dates from 1887. It was Brahms's orchestral swansong, and it served, at least partially, to heal a rift with Joachim that six years earlier had seemed to put an end to their friendship (see CD 4, track 6). Even today, after more than a century of championing by many of the world's greatest musicians, this is the least popular of Brahms's concertos. Certainly it requires concentrated listening if it is to yield its richest treasures, but its occasional austerity and tightly knit structure are more than matched by its rapturous outpourings and the sometimes almost erotic intertwining and dialogues of the soloists. Considering the nature and range of the two instruments, their characterisation as male (cello) and female (violin) is perhaps inevitable, but they are none the worse for that, and Brahms's powers of transformational variation were never more naturally deployed than they are here. The middle movement, based on two of his loveliest and most expansive themes, is meltingly tender, and the high-spirited finale, like that of the Violin Concerto, is in the great tradition of his popular *Hungarian Dances*. The only orchestral pieces not yet mentioned are Brahms's own orchestrations of three of his *Hungarian Dances* (Nos 1, 3, and 10); the rest were all orchestrated by other hands.

Having now considered the major orchestral works individually, there is a special issue concerning their totality that needs to be addressed. No aspect of Brahms's craftsmanship has been more consistently criticised, even by some of his admirers, than his writing for the orchestra in general. Before tackling the reasons for this, however, there are two important points to be made. Firstly, every note of Brahms's orchestral music has held its place at the centre of the repertoire from his time to our own without exception, and in the face of many dramatic swings of criticism and fashion. To put this remarkable fact into context it should be noted that the same cannot be said of Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Liszt, Schumann, Bruckner, Mahler, or Richard Strauss. Secondly, those critics who have most persistently carped at Brahms's orchestration have never been remotely his equal in genius, skill, experience, or musical insight.

Is it likely that he himself was unable to detect in his own scores, on which he lavished so much unsparring self-criticism, the glaring ‘faults’ at which generations of pedantic nonentities have queued up to wag their reprimanding fingers? Could it be that the most notoriously self-critical great composer in history wrote down exactly what he intended, in the full knowledge of its likely or certain effects. Could it be that the blame may more justly be laid at the door of his interpreters? A quick trawl of the evidence:

The commonest charge against Brahms’s orchestration is that it is ‘thick’, ‘glutinous’, ‘stodgy’. According to one prominent conductor, no longer with us, ‘the sun never shines in it’. How anyone can maintain such an opinion after hearing Symphony No. 2, or the wonderful, buoyant finale of the B flat Concerto is difficult to understand. The matter should be put into the context of the time, and of Brahms’s own artistic personality. There is no denying that Brahms quite consciously turned his back on the brilliant instrumentation of such nineteenth-century orchestral virtuosi as Berlioz, Wagner, and Rimsky-Korsakov, presumably for the same reasons that he rejected the whole concept of programme music and other forms of artistic miscegenation: he deplored anything that distracted from the substance of music itself and was puritanically opposed to the use of any artistic resource for its own sake (including such fundamental disciplines as counterpoint and rhythm, of which he himself was a sovereign master). So much the worse if it was of a ‘sensuous’, superficial, or sensational character. Not that his own instrumentation is particularly austere. There are many instances of the greatest tonal beauty, but it is invariably used as a means to an end. The essence of Brahms’s music is melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, contrapuntal, structural. No composer of the period so rigorously applied the discipline of form to emotional expression. Consequently he often used a particular scoring not primarily for colouristic purposes but as a means of structural emphasis.

As may be seen from Brahms’s personal life, he had a marked distaste for extravagance, in an age fairly besotted by it. Not for him the ever-expanding orchestral forces of Wagner, Bruckner, Mahler, and Strauss. Brahms’s orchestra is not significantly different from that of Beethoven,

because it does not need to be. The evolution of his instrumentation through the years does not reflect, as some seem to suggest, a crawl from ineptitude to competence, but his own highly sophisticated aims. The changes in orchestration result precisely from the changes in the music. Interestingly, the darker, deeper, denser, lower-toned orchestration of the D minor Piano Concerto and the serenades coincides with that period when he was most embarrassed by the high pitch of his speaking voice. The lighter, more translucent scoring of the B flat Piano Concerto and much of Symphony No. 2 date from a time when, at considerable cost to his vocal cords, he had forced his voice downwards to the low, rather hoarse tones associated with his maturity.

Choral Music. Brahms came to choral music early. At the age of fourteen, on an extended trip to the country, he conducted a local choir and wrote partsongs for it. He was subsequently conductor of the Detmold Choral Society (1857), the Hamburg Ladies Choir (1859), which he founded, the Vienna *Singakademie* (1863), and the Vienna *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (1872), where he had a chorus of three hundred and an orchestra that was already sizeable, which he upped to a hundred players. For each of these he composed music, including many unaccompanied part-songs for female, male, and mixed voices, three important and predominantly austere groups of motets which demonstrate his formidable contrapuntal powers (almost certainly unparalleled since Bach), folksong arrangements for four-part choir, and thirteen canons for female voices. With the partial exception of the motets, most of these works are now very seldom performed.

As it happens, it was a choral work which may be said to have marked the biggest turning point in Brahms's career as a composer: *A German Requiem*, which many people, now as then, regard as his single greatest achievement. Certainly he wrote nothing else of comparable scope and breadth of conception. At roughly an hour and a quarter in performance it outdistances its closest competitor, the D minor Piano Concerto, by almost half an hour. Composed in a century

of rampant nationalism, nowhere more extravagantly demonstrated than in Wagner's *Ring* cycle, its title is misleading. The work is not remotely chauvinistic. Its name derives solely from the fact that the text, drawn from the Bible, is in German rather than the customary Latin, serving, additionally, to distinguish it from the traditional rites of the Roman Catholic Church. By the time of its completion in 1868, Brahms, brought up as a good North German protestant, had long since lost his Christian faith. Karl Martin Reinthaler, Kapellmeister of Bremen cathedral, where the work had its first complete performance, was clearly troubled by its lack of any clear doctrinal message.

Brahms had been toying with the idea of composing a requiem in German, based on texts from the Lutheran Bible, ever since 1857 – a year after the death of Schumann. Like many of his works, it was a long time in the making. It had its genesis in a funereal, march-like movement, jettisoned from the sonata for two pianos, which eventually grew into the D minor Piano Concerto and was ultimately reborn as the *Requiem's* second movement, 'Denn alles Fleisch es ist wie Gras' (For all flesh is as grass). By 1861 Brahms had found the texts for four additional sections of the *Requiem*, but it was not until 1865, following the death of his mother, that the work got underway in earnest. From the time of its first complete performance in 1869, when Brahms was thirty-six, it met with near-universal enthusiasm and set the seal on his stature as a composer of the front rank. It was neither the first nor the last of his choral endeavours, but it brought that branch of his output to a height that he was never to achieve again.

Of the accompanied choral works, apart from the *Requiem*, only the so-called 'Alto Rhapsody' (whose all-male choir has a very subordinate role) has secured a place anywhere near the centre of the permanent repertoire. Still little-known to any but the most committed enthusiasts are the extraordinarily powerful and affecting *Nänie*, Op. 82, whose relative neglect is hard to understand; the *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny), which is better known; and the fascinatingly scored Partsongs, Op. 17 for female voices, two horns, and harp. All of these have

been recorded and are well worth seeking out.

The Vocal Music. It is entirely appropriate that Brahms's most famous piece should be a song. His 'Wiegenlied' (best known simply as 'the Brahms Lullaby') is known and sung all over the world by mothers and others who may never even have heard of its composer. It provides a classic instance of the art song become folksong. Songs were among the opening clutch of his published works – the first song of the Op. 3 set, 'Liebestreu', became an overnight favourite – and but for the eleven Chorale Preludes for organ they would also have marked the end of his creative life: the *Vier ernste Gesänge* (Four Serious Songs) were his penultimate publication. They constitute, too, the only genre to which he regularly turned throughout his career, thus providing us with a kind of lifelong emotional and spiritual journal.

At every stage of his life Brahms preferred female singers to male, and lower voices to high (possibly a compensation for the unnaturally high pitch of his own voice, which caused him much embarrassment in early manhood). Most of his songs were conceived with either a contralto or a baritone in mind, rather than a soprano or tenor, and he had a lifelong preference for low-toned instruments, as in the beautiful Two Songs, Op. 91, which he composed in 1884 for alto, viola, and piano. He wrote some two hundred original solo songs, plus a wealth of vocal duets, quartets, and folksong settings. With the exception of a few whose long-spanned melodies look at first sight like requiring the lungs of a Wagnerian *Heldentenor*, his songs lie well for the voice, but even as an exceptional songwriter he still thought like an instrumental composer. While he was by no means insensitive to the texts he set, he was more responsive to their mood and meaning than to the musical or poetic properties of the words themselves. Far more than those of, say, Schumann or Wolf, one could entrust many of Brahms's songs to a violinist, clarinettist, or cellist with only minimal loss to the total artistic experience. Indeed one can put the proposition to the test by comparing the beautiful 'Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer' with the cello tune in the slow movement of the Second Piano Concerto, or 'Regenlied' and

‘Nachklang’ from Op. 59 with the G major Violin Sonata. In the former case, too, we can see the characteristically Brahmsian precedence of musical expression over fidelity to textual niceties. If accenting a weak syllable in the text gets the more telling musical result, Brahms will accent it, however little sense it may make in purely linguistic terms; neither Schumann nor Wolf would ever have countenanced such a thing. In some ways Brahms the songwriter is closer to Schubert than Schumann. Among the features they share is a marked preference for strophic forms, in which successive verses are set to the same tune. Of the exceptions in Brahms’s case, most are in simple ternary, A–B–A form, which means, among other things, that one stanza in every four has to be dropped in order to fit the musical scheme. Time and again, Brahms’s accompaniments are conceived for their purely musical and formal effect rather than as specific illustrations of the text. His fidelity to the mood and meaning of the verse, however, is often extraordinarily acute. It would be an exaggeration to say that one could almost reconstruct the verse on the basis of Brahms’s accompaniment alone, but there are times when his profound sympathy with the emotional or spiritual nature of the poem makes it seem that way. It is no accident, nor is it any indication of a lack of literary culture on his part, that Brahms drew predominantly on second- and third-rate poets for his texts. He was a musician, first, last, and always, and looked with suspicion on anything that might distract from the essence of the music itself. One of his principal objections to Lisztian programme music and the grand synthesis of the arts championed by Wagner (the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*) was the risk, as he saw it, of music’s being reduced to the status of handmaiden. This was also a factor in his avoidance of opera, the only major musical genre to which he contributed nothing.

Since opera is in purely musical terms song writ large, this may be an apt moment to consider Brahms’s attitudes towards it. Despite having written none of his own it was certainly not a subject in which he had no interest, or of which he was ignorant. As his friend Widmann remarked:

Brahms was always particularly animated when speaking of matters connected with the theatre, as for instance when he once very decidedly demonstrated to me the vaudeville character of the first act of

Fidelio, which generally passes for a very good text-book. He possessed a genuine dramatic perception, and it gave him real pleasure to analyse the merits and defects of a dramatic subject.

Brahms's junior colleague Heuberger recalled a similar occasion:

We sat together for one whole evening and I remember that Brahms spoke in the greatest detail of Mozart's *Figaro*, laying great stress on the unparalleled manner in which Mozart had overcome the enormous difficulties of his text: 'Mozart,' he remarked, 'has composed it, not as a mere ordinary text-book, but as a complete well-organised comedy.'

With Kalbeck, too, Brahms repeatedly discussed subjects for operas, as he did with other literary members of his circle. Although he would jokingly declare that he regarded opera as he did marriage and was no longer inclined to risk either, there seems little doubt that he would have liked to try his hand at it if he only he could have come up with a suitable libretto.

Chamber Music. Nothing of Brahms is more captivating, more exciting, more vivid, or more varied than his chamber music, in which the very essence and fullness of the man and artist are revealed. His six duo sonatas, seven trios, six quartets, five quintets, and two sextets have all enjoyed uninterrupted favour at the centre of the concert repertory from the moment they were published, as has the lone Scherzo for violin and piano – the so-called 'F-A-E' Scherzo – that was the twenty-year-old Brahms's contribution to a sonata written jointly by Schumann, Brahms, and their mutual friend Albert Dietrich in honour of Joachim. With very few gaps, the chamber works represent Brahms at every stage of his creative career.

Chamber music has aptly been called by one commentator 'the music of friends'. On those grounds alone the naturally convivial Brahms would have been attracted to it. His chamber works are all conversational, leavened with occasional argument but with the advantage that in music several voices can speak at once with no loss of clarity, cohesion, or responsiveness. With its definitive restriction of one instrument per part, it is also an ideal medium for a composer of

Brahms's contrapuntal leanings. The interweaving of self-contained melodic strands is perhaps the single most illuminating feature of his style, for player and listener alike. One has only to cultivate the ability to hear horizontally, as it were, to listen in terms of melody (or of concurrent melodies) rather than harmonic blocks, and all the stodginess so long and so wrongly attributed to Brahms's textures disappears in favour of a radiant, often ravishing sonority. Partly for this reason, the most popular of Brahms's chamber works have always been those which combine the greatest variety of instrumental colours: the piano trios (piano, violin, and cello), the Horn Trio (horn, violin, and piano), the Clarinet Trio (clarinet, cello, and piano), the three piano quartets (piano and string trio), and the great F minor Piano Quintet have all won greater favour with musicians and the public than the three quartets and two quintets for strings alone. The two meltingly beautiful string sextets (a medium invented by Brahms) have fared better, partly because of the sheer luminosity of sound, and partly because they contain, especially in the case of the first, some of his most sensuous and love-drenched music. His own piano arrangement of the variations from the first Sextet perfectly demonstrates the extent to which the substance of the music transcends the ancillary effects of instrumental colour.

In most of the works with piano Brahms's keyboard writing is of an immensity and richness approaching orchestral in effect and seldom if ever encountered in chamber music before. From the beginning Brahms thought on a grand scale. His first published chamber work, the B major Piano Trio of 1853/4, is symphonic in size and scope, which may be gauged by the fact that when he came to revise it almost forty years later he cut it by some 499 bars. It is this revised version that we normally hear today. Still bigger, in almost every sense, is the magnificent F minor Piano Quintet, Op. 34. Like the D minor Piano Concerto, it had an adventuresome genesis, starting life as a string quintet with two cellos (like Schubert's great C major Quintet), reappearing as a sonata for two pianos, in which form one still hears it occasionally today, before reaching its present form in 1864. In its rhapsodic sweep, its electrifying intensity and drive, and its epic dramatic pacing (just try and beat the cumulative momentum of the finale), it makes a

superb introduction to Brahms's chamber music, as does the shorter and less imposing Horn Trio, Op. 40. This brilliant exercise in unusual tone colours is equally unusual in design. Beginning with a ruminative *Andante* in rondo form, it continues with a tremendously exhilarating Scherzo, vividly reminding us in its style and spirit that the horn was originally an outdoor instrument, as Brahms was spiritually an outdoor composer. The sombre *Adagio* that follows is one of Brahms's darkest, most profoundly moving meditations, clearly reflecting the recent death of his mother. Very unusually for Brahms, the irresistibly exhilarating finale is the only movement cast in traditional sonata form.

The more conventional piano trios (piano, violin, and cello), three in number, are less brightly coloured by virtue of their instrumentation, but no less engrossing. To say that the first and last of them is the most interesting is neither ungrammatical nor nonsensical: one is a later transformation of the other, though both are catalogued as Op. 8. The first version, written when Brahms was twenty-one, is a work of such astonishing proportions that Schumann's famous reference to Brahms's piano sonatas as 'veiled symphonies' might well have been applied to this amazing work – amazing despite its imperfections. That its imperfections are neither few nor negligible is attested to by the very fact that Brahms, at the height of his maturity, chose to revise it so radically that it became in many ways a new work based on the same themes (though not even all of those). In both versions we get Brahms at his most entrancingly romantic, exciting, and ardent. The drama, the passion, the fantastic instrumental interplay and colouration, the boldness of rhapsodic utterance, the hushed moments, the shafts of heart-breaking poignancy, the alternation of featherlight filigree and orchestral grandeur: all these and more make the work a kind of litmus test of one's response to this still controversial but almost obsessively entrancing composer. Nothing in life is this simple, thank heavens, but one could almost get away with saying that if this work and its two magnificent siblings do not grab you, then Brahms in general is probably not your cup of tea. The sheer vitality of the man, his extraordinary capacity for uncontainable joy and vigour, can be both exhilarating and overwhelming to

Brahms lovers. Whatever the troubles of Brahms's personal life, his music is entirely unneurotic. Never mind Nietzsche's cheap jibes about 'the melancholy of impotence' and 'the music of the unfulfilled' – this music is the fulfilment. To those on Brahms's wavelength, the 'wan joys' cited by Nietzsche are rapturous almost to the point of physical exaltation, and not in any sexual sense. Another Brahmsian characteristic runs right through these magnificent trios: his fantastic physicality, his rhythmic energy, the kinetic power. Then there is the glory of his total liberation of the cello, traditionally subordinated to the bass line. No composer, not even Bach, not even Beethoven, ever had a greater insight into the very soul of the cello. The intertwinings and combinations of cello and violin, here as in the Double Concerto, are as close to musical lovemaking as anything in Wagner, but with nothing of the voluptuary. The two instruments' partnership in the C major Trio, Op. 87, particularly in the central section of the third movement, goes beyond lovemaking to the personification of love itself. Indeed their partnership is often so close that the work seems like a magnificent duo between the piano on the one hand and the violin-and-cello, playing as one, on the other.

Brahms's habit of requesting the severest criticism of his works from such close and esteemed friends as Joachim and Clara Schumann would seem to have had a double motive. He was genuinely interested in their comments and suggestions, of course, even if he seldom put them into practice; but in keeping with the rest of humanity he also, deeply, craved approval. In the case of the C minor Trio, he struck gold as far as Clara was concerned. As she wrote in her diary in June 1887:

I experienced my greatest pleasure on the 20th, as at last I felt strong enough to try the wonderfully touching Trio in C minor. What a composition it is! Ingenious throughout in its passion, its strength of thought, its charm, its expression. No other of Johannes's works has ever so completely overwhelmed me... I am happier tonight than I have been for a long time.

Charm, for most listeners, may not be one of its more obvious characteristics. Despite the

relative calm of the *Andante*, described by Donald Francis Tovey as ‘a child of the gods, free from terror’, the work belies the outward calm that characterised Brahms’s demeanour during the evidently happy summers he spent in Switzerland in the 1880s. It is at once the most concise, the most passionate, and the stormiest of his trios, recalling the *Sturm und Drang* of his early works. Again the key is significant. C minor denotes Brahms at his most concentrated and serious, even tragic, and the opening movement here is true to type. (Unusually, Brahms retains the tonality of C for all four movements, the third being cast in major). In the second movement, a scherzo in all but name, both stringed instruments play with mutes throughout, creating a unique and haunting sonority typical of Brahms’s often underestimated colouristic imagination. The third movement, tellingly headed *Andante grazioso*, was originally cast in the exotic time signature of 7/4 – and Brahms’s second thought was only slightly less unusual: repeated groupings of one bar in 4/4 plus two in 2/4. According to one friend we have here an exceptionally candid study in self-portraiture: ‘Better than any photograph, it is the most truthful picture of the master’.

If the cello is the absolute equal of its partners in the trios one would expect the same to apply in its partnership with the piano alone in Brahms’s two wonderful cello sonatas, but there are times, especially in the much later Sonata No. 2, in F major, when the cellist is in danger of being overwhelmed by the powerfully orchestral piano part. Legend has it that one cellist, on playing through the work with Brahms himself, complained, as the sweat dripped from his brow: ‘But Dr Brahms, I cannot even hear myself!’, to which Brahms is said to have roared, without dropping a note: ‘That’s lucky for you!’ Possible, but probably apocryphal. However, balance is a problem, and the pianist must be careful (but not too careful!). The earlier of the two sonatas, in E minor, was completed in the wake of the death of Brahms’s mother, when he was also much occupied in his mind with the *Requiem*, and its overall darkness thus comes as no surprise. Here he draws mostly on the cello’s lower register, but thanks to the luminously polyphonic textures that prevail (and are too often ignored by pianists) there is nothing glutinous or stodgy about the

work or its wonderfully lit sound-world. The F major Sonata is of a sonorous immensity probably unique in the entire repertory of cello sonatas, with massive writing for the piano (even at times reminiscent of the formidable Piano Concerto No. 2) and impassioned strivings and exultations from the cello.

Of the three piano quartets (piano, violin, viola, and cello), the one that has scored the biggest hit is the first, in G minor (later orchestrated by Schoenberg, partly by way of demonstrating its truly symphonic character). The almost extravagantly Gypsyish finale is perhaps the most colourful, exciting, and virtuosic of all Brahms's Hungarian dances, though in this case he does not give it that name. The Quartet No. 2 also has its gypsy elements, again in the finale, though on the whole this is a gentler, more autumnal work. The third and last of the piano quartets, in C minor, is an altogether different affair, sombre, sometimes almost sinister, terse, troubled, and sprung with nervous energy of a near-tragic kind. When sending the manuscript to his publisher Simrock, Brahms wrote: 'You may place a picture on the title-page, namely, a head with a pistol in front of it. This will give some idea of the music. I shall send you a photograph of myself for the purpose!' Such gloom and melodrama as this are rare in Brahms's music.

For all its quasi-orchestral piano writing, Brahms's chamber music is by no means always predominantly bold and gestural. Its moments of intimacy are many, and in the case of the G major Violin Sonata, which also exists in a version for cello (where it makes a radically different impression), Brahms remarked, only half jokingly, 'Here even one listener is too many'. Yet for all the unashamed immediacy and vulnerability of the emotion expressed, for all the wistful fragility of its indefinable nostalgia and the confessional nature of much of its lyricism, it is definitely a work to be performed, and not even figuratively overheard. It is also disciplined and meticulously structured, plotted even. Though masterly in every detail, nothing sounds remotely contrived, rather it has all the freshness of a spring dawn after nocturnal rainfall.

If the entrancing G major (Op. 78) is the most lyrical, the gentlest, the most intimately

eloquent, and in some ways the most melancholy of Brahms's three violin sonatas, and if the A major (Op. 100) is the most reserved and potentially elusive, the great D minor (Op. 108) is far and away the most dramatic. The key alone gives a clue to its character. Like his revered Mozart, Brahms seems from Piano Concerto No. 1 onwards to have associated D minor with tragedy, but as with Beethoven his tragedy is frequently accompanied by an element of defiance and a driving rhythmic momentum. There is perhaps no other violin sonata that conveys such a sense of sheer excitement. Among its several unusual characteristics is the extensive use of pedal-points in the first movement: the entire development section is played out over a continually repeated A (the dominant), a device that recurs in the coda, this time on the tonic D. The profoundly affecting slow movement is an interesting and relatively rare example of melancholy expressed in the major mode. The Scherzo is cast in the distant key of F sharp minor, and bears a distinct kinship with the equivalent movement of the C minor Trio, in many ways its spiritual sister. The finale is a *Presto agitato* in Brahms's most thrillingly virtuosic manner. Though one would hardly guess it, much of the Sonata (like the C minor Trio) was conceived and written during the idyllic summer months that Brahms spent by the shores of Lake Thun in Switzerland.

The role of the great performer in the history of great masterworks is often underrated. Yet virtually all of Brahms's violin music was written expressly for Joachim, and it was the playing of the remarkable clarinettist Richard Mühlfeld that caused Brahms to take up his pen again at a time when he had all but determined that his composing career was at an end. For Mühlfeld he wrote four works that have remained at the centre of the chamber music repertory ever since: two sonatas for clarinet and piano (sometimes played on the viola), the lovely, dark-toned Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano, Op. 114 (an unusual combination harking back to Beethoven's Clarinet Trio) and the superb Quintet for Clarinet and Strings, Op. 115, one of the most intensely lyrical and gently melancholic of all Brahms's chamber works, and the richest and most searching of the Mühlfeld pieces. Of all the Brahms works to which the term autumnal could be

applied, none deserves it more than this. The clarinet had been regarded even in the Classical era as the most romantic of the wind instruments, and Brahms here draws liberally on its mellow and nostalgic properties, as Mozart had done before him. The last movement demonstrates the variation technique of which Brahms had been a master since his youth and ends with the most poignant look back to the very opening of the work. Maturity is an elusive concept, and not always complimentary, but you recognise it when you meet it, and this is it. This is one work that Brahms could not possibly have written at twenty-one.

The issue of tone colour is central to Brahms's music, in whatever medium, and not, as so many seem to suggest, because he lacked a truly colouristic instinct – quite the reverse. Perhaps because he was the most stringently classical great composer of his time, and maybe the most formidably equipped in compositional techniques (harmony, counterpoint, structure, etc.), many musicians fail to see the wood for the trees. There is nothing haphazard in Brahms. To be sure, colour is never used for its own sake in his music, as it frequently is in the work of his contemporaries and successors – but this is not to say that it isn't there. Interestingly, however, the least popular, the least familiar branch of his chamber music, even to most musicians, is that for strings alone. Strings, by virtue of their close family resemblances, afford the least opportunity for contrasting tone colours, and it must be admitted that, as in the case of the symphony, so in the realm of the string quartet, the ghost of Beethoven stayed Brahms's hand for many years (no composer of his time knew the music of the past more intimately than Brahms, thus no-one else was quite so vulnerable to inhibition when it came to meeting the great masters on their own ground). In the case of the string quartet, there were also the examples of Haydn (who virtually invented the medium) and Mozart. In 1869 Brahms wrote to his publisher Simrock, 'Since Mozart took exceptional trouble to compose six great quartets [the set dedicated to Haydn], so we want to use our greatest labour to produce one or two passable ones'. It was to be expected, then, that when he ("we"!) did produce his first string quartets they would be works of the highest seriousness, density of argument, and intensity of expression. For all their mastery

and their often very considerable beauty, these are in no sense ‘fun’ works. Brahms was forty before he felt fully capable of achieving anything ‘passable’ in this line, and it’s interesting that the first of the two Op. 51 string quartets is in C minor, the same key as his First Symphony and a key famously associated with Beethoven (especially the Fifth Symphony, the ‘Pathétique’ Sonata, and the last, and greatest, sonata of them all, No. 32, Op. 111).

No composer was more generous than Brahms when it came to paying his artistic debts in public. There are a few allusions in these quartets to specific works of Beethoven, and it is unlikely, though possible, that these were subconscious. The music itself, however, is purely Brahmsian. Having taken the plunge with his first two quartets, Brahms turned to the medium again (and for the last time) three years later, in 1876. This time we find him in an altogether more relaxed and spacious mood, and we also find him importing a little colouristic variety, by association, in the imitation ‘horn calls’ of the first movement. These may too be a deliberate allusion, to Mozart’s famous ‘Hunt’ Quartet, and in all the movements there are little homages to Haydn. But there is a far subtler allusion to the horn in the third movement, where the warmth and roundness of its tone is emulated by the viola, while the other three instruments play with mutes – an extraordinary piece of scoring. Colour, again, is paramount.

Brahms’s love of the viola is still more evident in the two string quintets (in which the standard string quartet is augmented by a second viola). Both are late works, the First in F major (Op. 88) dating from 1882, the Second in G major (Op. 111) from 1890. No composer seems to have been quite so fond of the lower registers as Brahms was. The violas both have plenty to do here, and there’s a wonderfully ironic and inspired passage at the opening of the second movement where the cello shares the main tune with the first violin, playing not below but above the other instruments (yet another highly imaginative colouristic touch). The work as a whole has never caught on in a big way, but Brahms, that most unsparing of self-critics, spoke of it as ‘probably one of my finest works’, and it certainly repays the closest attention on repeated hearings. Again there are resemblances to Beethoven, as in the remarkable fugue,

which brings the work to its very impressive close and seems to pay a deliberate debt to the third of Beethoven's 'Rasumovsky' Quartets. Nor should one forget, here, that perhaps the most abiding and far-reaching of all the influences on Brahms's music was neither Beethoven nor Mozart but Bach. This is the only full-blown fugue in Brahms's music for strings alone but his astounding contrapuntal mastery is evident in one way or another through it all.

In the Second Quintet low registers are again prominent: the cello dominates the opening theme, just as the violas do in the almost Schubertianly lilting second theme. Canonic imitation runs like a thread more or less throughout the work, yielding especially beautiful results in the Trio section of the third movement, and the finale finds Brahms turning fugal again, but now in the context of a superbly wrought sonata form. The work as a whole, though, lacks the rhapsodic grab and ecstasy, and the sheer visceral excitement, of many of his other chamber works. It remains, perhaps, predominantly a musician's, or at least a connoisseur's, work. Brahms himself said it would be his last. Fortunately for posterity he was wrong.

Ironically, perhaps, the only works by Brahms for strings alone which have approached true popularity are also the earliest: the two wonderful sextets, both for two violins, two violas, and two cellos. The First, in B flat (Op. 18), was composed largely in Detmold, the scene of his abortive engagement to the young singer Agathe von Siebold, but it wasn't completed until after his departure in 1860, when he was twenty-seven. One needn't know anything about his life, however, in order to feel that this is love music: ardent, yearning, sensuous, rapturous, tender – yet somehow chaste. Again we find Brahms gravitating to the lower instruments. The very first theme of the opening movement is given to the first cello, as is much of the superb second movement, which is as richly and variously coloured as anything in the string repertoire (Brahms, incidentally, later arranged it for piano solo at the request of Clara Schumann, and this version still finds its way into recital programmes and recordings today). As usual, the work is entirely and inimitably Brahms's own, yet once again there is the benign presence of one of his greatest idols hovering over it like a kind of guardian angel, in this case Schubert, whom Brahms

probably loved more than any other composer. He's there again, too, hovering over the Second Sextet in G (Op. 18), a deeply touching work of great beauty, but of rather more introspective cast, written four years later, in 1864.

On hearing these two marvellous works, it would be easy to conclude that the string sextet as a medium must surely be the best possible all-string group, certainly the sweetest in sound. It is in these works that Brahms's kinship with his younger colleague and protégé Dvořák is most clearly and enchantingly evident. Here were two composers from different countries, different backgrounds, and of very different ages, yet how close their music brought them. The catalyst, one can hardly help feeling, must have been Schubert, whose universality neither could reach, but whose sweetness, tenderness, poignancy, and melodic inspiration both could share. Dvořák, though a wonderful composer, was no Brahms, and Brahms, as he very well knew, was no Bach, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, or Schubert. Yet more, perhaps, than any other single composer, he was their heir – and that he knew too. He was not, like each of them, a prophet; his prescience and example didn't underwrite the future history of music as theirs did. Rather he represented the culmination of what for want of any better term might be called the Classical tradition. No person, no work of art, is loved by everyone. But none, perhaps, is loved better than Brahms.



Johannes Brahms: reproduction of an undated photograph (1860s) by Jagemann; courtesy AKG

A Graded Listening Plan 4

In the case of Brahms this is trickier than usual, partly because there is less development in Brahms's style than in that of almost any other prominent composer. It's therefore more difficult to recognise the difference between early and late Brahms. Perhaps I could start by recounting the order of my own discovery of Brahms. As a child, I didn't take to him at all. I don't think he is a child's composer, in the way that, say, Mozart, Bach, Beethoven, Vivaldi, Handel, and many others are. His music speaks of emotions and experiences that are unknown to most children. His tragedy is not a child's tragedy; his joys are not a child's joys. Artistically speaking, I sometimes feel that he was born a man. I think this was part of what struck Schumann so.

I became a Brahmsian at the age of fourteen (it was around 8.30 p.m. and I can almost remember the date) when I first heard the mighty Piano Concerto No. 1. I thought I'd never heard anything quite so magisterially exciting, so huge, so thrillingly grand. When it came to the slow movement I wondered if it was possible for music to be more unbearably touching, or poignant. Perhaps poignancy is one of those experiences generally unknown in childhood – and poignancy and Brahms are seldom very far apart. Within a week of discovering the D minor Concerto I was played a record of the Piano Quintet in F minor. How, I wondered, could I possibly ever have resisted this man's music? The vitality, the overpowering energy, the wild joy, the intensity of the passion, the sheer gorgeouslyness of the melodies, the stupendous richness

and vigour of the piano writing – all this ganged up on me, and I put up no resistance. Next came *A German Requiem*, from which two movements were selected for me by a clearly besotted cousin: ‘For all flesh is as grass’ and ‘How lovely is thy dwelling place’. At once I became her partner in this infatuation. On reflection, however, I would recommend that the *Requiem* be put later in the list. Following this great work, I discovered the huge, magnificent Piano Concerto No. 2 in B flat – for the soloist, probably the most difficult major piano concerto ever written. Basically a full four-movement symphony for piano and orchestra, the work is a knock-out from start to finish. The slow movement, with its long cello solos, is an incredibly ravishing instrumental love song, and the finale gives us Brahms at his lightest and gayest – sparkling, brilliant, lilting, buoyant, irresistible.

All these are very big works, and thus may not make an ideal introduction for everyone – these things are hopelessly personal, in any case. However, after the Piano Concerto No. 2, I discovered the *Hungarian Dances* – neither in their original form as piano works, nor in any orchestration (Brahms himself only orchestrated three), but in the version for violin and piano, and this is the port of entry I would recommend to anyone else. Exotic, deeply gypsyish (hence unashamedly manipulative), high-spirited, romantic, marvellously entertaining, these mostly short pieces did much to make Brahms a household name in his lifetime, right across Europe and America. Incomparably greater, though, are the three violin sonatas, which I would recommend in the order 3, 1, 2. Next in my now near-obsessive voyage of discovery was the Horn Trio, for the then unique, and even now very unusual, combination of horn, violin, and piano. Poignant, exhilarating, tragic, and thrilling by turns, this remains one of my absolute favourites of Brahms’s works. The same goes for all the traditionally scored Piano Trios and Quartets (three of each). The finale of the Piano Quartet No. 1 in G minor is for my money one of the most completely involving and exciting of all Brahms’s Hungarian dances, though not given the name. If you can resist this, you can resist anything. For another batch of smaller pieces, the Waltzes, Op. 39 offer a treasure-trove of delightful, exciting, poignant, and unbelievably varied

pieces which manage to mine aspects of the waltz undreamt of by Johann Strauss (whom Brahms admired enormously, even enviously) or by Schubert before him. These exist in two versions for piano solo, one less difficult than the other, and as piano duets, which is how they became best-known. While we're on the subject, I can think of no better introduction to Brahms's very many wonderful songs than the *Liebeslieder* Waltzes, Op. 52 (Love-song Waltzes) for vocal quartet (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) and piano duet. If I had to pick one in particular to start with, it would be No. 6, 'Ein kleiner hübscher Vogel', but they are all entrancing. Love music without words comes no more ravishing than the String Sextet No. 1 in B flat, although it is the also beautiful Sextet No. 2 in G that actually derives from his love and subsequent jilting of Agathe von Siebold. With this work Brahms drew a line under the whole affair.

For an exploration of the orchestral works, apart from the piano concertos already mentioned, I recommend the following order: the *Academic Festival Overture* (pure fun, and masterful to boot), the almost equally popular *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* (often called 'Variations on the St Antony Chorale' because the theme is not actually Haydn's), Symphony No. 2 (the lightest, sunniest and most lyrical of all Brahms's symphonies), the magnificent, huge, tough, and overwhelmingly lyrical Violin Concerto in D (Brahms's only one), the autumnal, spiritually ambiguous Symphony No. 3, the *Tragic Overture*, Symphony No. 4 (for many people, his greatest work), the Double Concerto for violin and cello, Symphony No. 1, Serenade No. 1 in D, and Serenade No. 2 in A.

For the solo piano music I recommend starting with the Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79, moving on to the eight Piano Pieces, Op. 118, then back to the early Sonata in F minor, Op. 5, from there to the Piano Pieces, Op. 76, on to the magnificent *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*, then to the intensely lyrical *Three Intermezzi*, Op. 117, back to the early and extremely beautiful *Variations on an Original Theme*, Op. 21 No. 1, onwards to Brahms's last piano work, the four Piano Pieces, Op. 119, then to the *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*. Of course there's no need

to go about it all so systematically: wherever you dip, you're likely to come up with gold.

For the chamber music not already mentioned, my instinct is to recommend first the two wonderful cello sonatas, then the late Clarinet Trio, then the two clarinet sonatas, followed by the deeply beautiful but rather inward Clarinet Quintet. The two string quintets I would recommend approaching in reverse order, starting with No. 2 in G, and only then would I suggest the three string quartets – not because I regard them as the least valuable, but because they require a particular kind of investment and concentration on the part of the listener that makes them, for many people, rather more elusive and intellectual than the rest of Brahms's chamber music. By this stage the world of Brahms is your oyster, and you will no longer need guidance from me. Bon appétit!

Recommended Reading 5

General Works

As ever in this section, the rate and extent of deletions from the catalogue make life rather difficult. Certain books, however – necessarily few – are of such fundamental importance that they should be perennially in print. Chief among these is *Johannes Brahms – Life and Letters*, selected and annotated by Styra Avins and translated by the author and Josef Eisinger (Oxford University Press, 1997; ISBN 0 19 816234 0). Comprising the most extensive collection of Brahms's letters ever to appear in English and a highly informative but economic narrative commentary, the book is more exhaustively and authoritatively researched than any other of its size and scope and should be devoured and returned to frequently by all confirmed Brahmsians and anyone with more than a passing interest in his life and character. There is something fresh and illuminating on almost every one of its 857 pages.

Of the several excellent critical biographies available at the time of writing, Malcolm MacDonald's substantial, thoughtful, and wide-ranging study in the 'Master Musicians' series (Dent, London, 1990; ISBN 0 460 86102) can be very highly recommended. Engagingly but not ingratiatingly written, it combines a wealth of information from an impressive variety of sources, and while much of the musical commentary is more descriptive than truly analytical (no bad thing, in my view), it gives a valuable overview of Brahms's output and helps to deepen our

understanding of it in the context of its time, and beyond. It has to be said that readers without a working knowledge of musical terms, forms, and techniques may occasionally find the going rather heavy, but the book is so organised that one can easily skip over the strictly musical discussion and read it as straight biography.

Comparable in scope and substance, though nothing like so musicologically up-to-date, is Karl Geiringer's still excellent *Brahms: His Life and Work* (London, 1948), which pretty well led the field until MacDonald's book. The prose (translated from the German) is rather academic, but he writes feelingly of the man and authoritatively of the music, and the many quotations from letters, journals, etc. add a real sense of immediacy to the narrative.

Few of Brahms's biographers can claim to have performed virtually all his keyboard music, and to have conducted much of his choral and orchestral music into the bargain, but Professor Ivor Keys is just such a man. His superb and highly readable *Johannes Brahms* (Christopher Helm, London, 1989; ISBN 0 7470 1805 7) is both enjoyable and illuminating. Biography and musical commentary are neatly segregated, as in the standard life-and-works format, which gives you, in effect, two slightish books for the price of one. Sources and quotations are not as meticulously documented as in MacDonald's book (frustratingly for those of scholarly inclination), but the material is skillfully deployed and the story well told.

Because it has received glowing reviews from critics in such august journals as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *The Economist*, I include here *Johannes Brahms – a Biography* by Jan Swafford (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998; ISBN 0 333 59662 5), despite being unable to share in the general chorus of approval. I find the narrative style a positive deterrent to my enjoyment and appreciation of the book's admittedly considerable substance. Presumably in a laudable attempt to avoid academicism, the author combines a studiously vernacular tone ('He'd gotten fed up with women', 'Clara groused again') with American journalese, especially when it comes to the use of nouns as verbs ('She soloed', 'He debuted', 'She critiqued') and the relentless use of expressions such as 'Daughter Marie', 'Biographer Max Kalbeck', 'Editor Brendel', etc. Interpretative

opinion is too often presented as historical fact, when primary sources could usefully have been cited; contentious issues – like the twenty-year-old Brahms's supposed falling asleep while Liszt played – too often remain unexplored; and the immensely complicated matter of Brahms's sexual life is rather simplistically presented. Nor is the meaning always very clear, as when the D minor Concerto is described as being 'almost indifferent to musicality'. That said, the book, at 700 pages, is a compendium of information, enthusiasm, and original insights.

The Music

Most of the books and essays on Brahms's music are too technical for the lay reader, but one in particular is an outstanding exception: Eric Sams's BBC Guide *Brahms Songs* has inexplicably been out of print for many years now, but should be in the library of every true Brahms lover. Far slimmer and less detailed than his invaluable *The Songs of Robert Schumann*, it is nevertheless packed with shafts of insight and provocative observations, and leaves one thinking, as all good books should. It also leaves one panting to explore the songs at first hand, by whatever means. There are worthwhile and highly approachable observations to be found, too, in the late Denis Matthews's BBC Guide *Brahms's Piano Music*; at the time of writing, that work is in print.

Of scholarly symposiums, *Brahms and his World*, edited by Walter Frisch (Princeton University Press, 1990; ISBN 0 691 02713 7), can be highly recommended, especially for the readability and interest of its biographical essays, memoirs, etc. Bulkier and more recent is *The Complete Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, edited by Leon Botstein (W.W. Norton, 1999; ISBN 0 393 04708 3). An often absorbing and authoritative mosaic, combining the work of its distinguished editor with that of twenty-nine eminent colleagues, this is a book with often illuminating insights into both the musician and the man. While covering every surviving work, with details of its composition and discussion of its salient stylistic features, it also includes some highly interesting biographical and historical essays. What it

emphatically is not is a book for the musical novice, but, with a few perhaps inevitable exceptions, is it neither forbiddingly technical nor academic.

Biography and Reminiscence: Some Out-of-Print Gems

It is sad to say that most of the best books on Brahms have been out of print for many years, but most of the larger lending libraries should either have them in stock or be able to get one in. No biography gives us a more immediate and engaging portrait than Florence May's *The Life of Johannes Brahms* (London, 1905). His first English biographer, May knew and had even studied with Brahms (see CD 3, track 5), and though she has been accused of lacking sufficient detachment, she includes plenty of material on the more negative aspects of Brahms's personality. If he emerges finally as deeply loveable in spite of himself, the author is not entirely to blame: it was the experience of countless people who knew him. Though it lacks scholarly documentation, the book is a mine of information, quotation, and reminiscence, delightfully and stylishly presented, and May was an indefatigable researcher.

Less attractive in tone and presentation, sometimes annoyingly written, but no less illuminating in its way, is Robert Haven Schauffler's *The Unknown Brahms* (New York, 1933). Since it was the first book to deal openly with the question of Brahms's sexuality (hence the title) it inevitably falls prey to sensationalism and facile moralising, but the sheer wealth of anecdote and first-hand evidence makes it an invaluable source.

Of personal reminiscences, three demand special mention: *The Memoirs of Eugenie Schumann* (London, 1927), Sir George Henschel's *Personal Recollections of Johannes Brahms* (Boston, 1907), and Dame Ethel Smyth's unique and wonderful *Impressions That Remained* (London, 1919). (Eugenie and Sir George both figure in the spoken narrative on this disc.) Also valuable, and quite delightfully written, is Sir Charles Stanford's *Brahms* (London, 1927). Richard Specht (author of *Johannes Brahms*, London, 1930) had the benefit of knowing Brahms personally, though not quite as well as he would like us to think, and despite a curious feeling of coldness about his book its interest is undeniable.

Personalities 6

Albert, Eugène d' (1864–1932), German pianist and composer of French descent. Born in Glasgow and one of the greatest virtuosos of the nineteenth century, he was known as ‘the little giant’ owing to his diminutive physical stature and his repeatedly playing both Brahms concertos in a single concert, often with Brahms himself conducting.

Barbi, Alice (1862–1948), Italian singer (also violinist). She became one of Brahms’s favourite interpreters of his songs in the last years of his life. Rumours that he was in love with her are probably false, but he greatly enjoyed her company and they were often seen together.

Billroth, Theodor (1829–1894), prominent Austrian surgeon and an amateur musician of exceptional sophistication. He was the dedicatee of Brahms’s Op. 51 String Quartets and among the composer’s closest friends.

Brendel, Karl Franz (1811–1868), German critic and advocate of the Neo-German school. He edited the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* during the years of its greatest hostility to Brahms.

Brüll, Ignaz (1846–1907), Austrian pianist and composer. A friend of Brahms in his later Viennese days, he was also a friend of Georg Henschel (see below) and like him was one of the torchbearers at Brahms’s funeral.

Bülow, Hans von (1830–1894), brilliant German pianist and one of the most important and influential conductors of the century. After years of devotion to Wagner and the Neo-German School of Liszt (whose son-in-law he was before Wagner snatched his wife), von Bülow was later amongst the most impassioned advocates of Brahms. It was von Bülow who first used the phrase ‘the three Bs’, bracketing Brahms with Beethoven and Bach.

Cossel, Otto Friedrich (1813–?), German pianist. Brahms’s first piano teacher, who did much to influence the composer’s love of the Baroque and Classical masters.

Dietrich, Albert Hermann (1829–1908), German composer and conductor. A good friend of Brahms, Joachim, and Schumann, he collaborated with Brahms (when Brahms was twenty years old) and Schumann in the composition of the so-called ‘F-A-E’ Scherzo as a birthday salute to Joachim in 1853.

Eichendorff, Joseph von (1788–1857), German poet and novelist. Like Schumann and Hugo Wolf, Brahms was a great enthusiast for his works and set a number of his poems to music.

Feuerbach, Anselm (1829–1880), German painter of Classical leanings. He was among the friends whom Brahms particularly admired.

Friedländer, Max (1852–1934), German baritone and writer. A pupil of Stockhausen (see below) and a sometime associate of Brahms.

Groth, Klaus (1819–1899), German poet. Known for his literary cultivation of ‘low German’, he was a good friend of Brahms, and his verses formed the basis for a number of Brahms’s finest songs.

Hanslick, Eduard (1825–1904), Austrian music critic and writer on musical aesthetics. He was a passionate advocate of Brahms and an implacable opponent of Wagner, Tchaikovsky, and others.

Hausmann, Robert (1852–1909), German cellist of the Joachim Quartet. He also gave the first performance, with Joachim, of Brahms's Double Concerto.

Henschel, Georg (later *Sir George*) (1850–1934), German singer, composer, pianist, and conductor. He was a great friend of Brahms and has left some of the choicest reminiscences of their times together.

Herzogenberg, Elisabeth von (née *Stockhausen*) (1848–1892), a phenomenally gifted and accomplished amateur pianist. She was Brahms's pupil and one of his closest and most cherished friends. Her voluminous correspondence with him provides some of the most vivid portraits to come down to us. Her premature death at forty-four caused Brahms great anguish.

Herzogenberg, Heinrich von (1843–1900), Austrian composer and conductor. A friend of Brahms and husband of the above.

Hoffmann, Ernst Theodor Amadeus (1776–1822), German novelist, composer, music critic, and opera director. His fantastical tales, among the most grotesque and musically oriented of the Romantic movement in literature, had a formative influence on the literary and musical proclivities of both Schumann and Brahms.

Joachim, Joseph (1831–1907), Hungarian-born violinist, composer, conductor, and quartet-leader. One of the greatest violinists and all-round musicians of the nineteenth century, he enjoyed widespread celebrity from his teens onwards. After Clara Schumann, he was Brahms's closest lifelong friend and musical influence. All Brahms's music for violin (three sonatas and the Scherzo, the Concerto and the Double Concerto) was inspired by and written for him.

Kalbeck, Max (1850–1921), Austrian critic and writer on music. A good friend of Brahms from 1874 onwards, he was also his first biographer and the principal editor of his voluminous correspondence.

Levi, Hermann (1839–1900), German conductor. He was closely associated with both Brahms and Wagner, whose *Parsifal* he premiered in 1882.

Marxsen, Eduard (1806–1887), German pianist and composer. He was Brahms's most influential teacher and remained in contact with him long afterwards, becoming the dedicatee of Piano Concerto No. 2 in 1881.

May, Florence (1845–1915), English pianist. A pupil of both Clara Schumann and Brahms, she was Brahms's first English biographer. See also 'Recommended Reading'.

Menzel, Adolph von (1815–1905), German painter. A friend of Brahms in his last years, he was a much respected artist noted for his representations of historical scenes.

Mühlfeld, Richard (1856–1907), superlative German clarinetist. A veteran member of von Bülow's orchestra at Meiningen and Wagner's at Bayreuth, he inspired all of Brahms's great, late clarinet music (the Quintet, the Trio, and two sonatas).

Reinthal, Karl Martin (1822–1896), German conductor, composer, and theologian. It was he who organised and oversaw the premiere of Brahms's *A German Requiem* at Bremen cathedral.

Reményi, Eduard (1830–1898), Hungarian violinist. A former classmate of Joachim's in Vienna, his playing of Hungarian gypsy music made a strong impression on the twenty-year-old Brahms, whose uncompleted tour with him in 1853 led to Brahms's first meetings with Liszt, Joachim, and Schumann.

Richter, Hans (1843–1916), Hungarian-born German conductor. He premiered Wagner's *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth in 1876 and later became an ardent advocate of Brahms, whose Symphony No. 4 he conducted at the last concert Brahms ever attended.

Schumann, Clara (1819–1896), the finest female pianist of the nineteenth century. She was the daughter of the esteemed but overbearing piano teacher Friedrich Wieck, and the wife of Robert Schumann, another Wieck pupil. His marriage to Clara was bitterly opposed by her father, who did everything in his power to prevent it.

Schumann, Robert (1810–1856), German composer and critic. Now accepted as one of the greatest composers, his works were overshadowed in his lifetime by his selfless and impassioned advocacy of others whose music he prized highly, most notably Chopin and Brahms. When it came to self-promotion, Schumann was perhaps the most negligent great composer in history.

Simrock, Fritz (1837–1901), German music publisher. From 1870 he was Brahms's principal publisher, and, through Brahms's intercession, Dvořák's too. He was not only a friend but Brahms's most trusted financial advisor.

Spies, Hermine (1857–1893), German contralto. A specialist in *Lieder* (German song), she studied with Julius Stockhausen, and became a cherished friend of Brahms, many of whose late songs were directly inspired by her. Her death at thirty-six dealt Brahms a serious blow.

Stockhausen, Julius (1826–1906), German baritone and conductor. He was the first and one of the most significant champions of Brahms's *Lieder*, and their friendship survived the awarding to Stockhausen of the post Brahms himself most coveted: the conductorship of the Hamburg Philharmonic.

Widmann, Joseph Victor (1842–1911), Swiss poet, playwright, and critic. A close friend of Brahms, he was among his favourite companions on Brahms's several holidays in Italy.

7 A Calendar of Brahms's Life

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1833	0	Mendelssohn's 'Italian' Symphony performed in London; Heinrich Marschner's Romantic opera <i>Hans Heiling</i> staged in Berlin; Liszt transcribes Berlioz's <i>Symphonie fantastique</i> for the piano and makes his first Schubert song transcriptions; first Venetian pictures by Turner go on exhibition at the Royal Academy in London; Balzac publishes <i>Eugénie Grandet</i> ; completion of the great German translation of Shakespeare, begun in 1794.
1834	1	Schumann becomes editor of the <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> , creates the imaginary League of David to wage war against latterday Philistines, and composes much of <i>Carnaval</i> and the <i>Symphonic Etudes</i> ; Berlioz composes <i>Harold in Italy</i> , based on Byron's <i>Childe Harold</i> ; Mendelssohn starts work on his oratorio <i>St Paul</i> ; Liszt composes <i>Harmonies poétiques et religieuses</i> (a single piece) and writes his essay <i>On the Future of Church Music</i> ; Balzac publishes <i>Le Père Goriot</i> ; Victor Hugo's <i>Hunchback of Notre Dame</i> scores runaway success; Pushkin writes <i>The Queen of Spades</i> ; death of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Historical Events

William IV grants new liberal constitution to Hanover; slavery abolished throughout the British Empire; Whig party established in USA; General Trades Union formed in New York; growth of charity bazaars in Britain; the 'scientist' coined in England; first magnetic observatory built in Germany; major meteor showers in America.

Spanish Inquisition officially ended after 500 years; Palmerston effects alliance of Britain with France, Spain, and Portugal; Abraham Lincoln enters politics in USA; East India Company's monopoly of Chinese trade abolished; increasing discord between China and Britain; one-horse, two-wheeled Hansom cabs appear in London; fire devastates British houses of parliament; amalgam of mercury alloy first used as fillings for teeth; Herschel begins first major survey of the southern stars.

Brahms's Life

Birth of Johannes Brahms in Hamburg, 7 May, second child of Johann Jakob Brahms and Johanna Henrika Christiane Nissen; baptised 26 May at the Michaeliskirche.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1835	2	Schumann's <i>Carnaval</i> , Piano Concerto in A minor, and Sonata in F sharp minor completed; Chopin writes <i>Andante spianato</i> and <i>Grande Polonaise</i> ; Mendelssohn appointed conductor of Leipzig Gewandhaus concerts; Liszt writes <i>Album d'un voyageur</i> ; Donizetti's <i>Lucia di Lamermoor</i> staged; birth of Saint-Saëns; death of Bellini at thirty-four; Heine's poetry banned in Germany; first stories of Hans Christian Anderson.
1836	3	Mendelssohn completes <i>St Paul</i> ; Glinka writes trail-blazing nationalist opera <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> ; Meyerbeer composes <i>Les Huguenots</i> ; Dickens publishes <i>The Pickwick Papers</i> ; Gogol publishes <i>The Government Inspector</i> ; Alfred de Musset's autobiographical novel <i>Confession d'un enfant du siècle</i> completed.
1837	4	Birth of Balakirev; deaths of Hummel and John Field; Berlioz: <i>Grand Messe des Morts</i> ; Chopin: <i>Etudes</i> , Op. 25; Mendelssohn: Piano Concerto in D minor, String Quartet in E minor; Schumann: <i> Davidsbündlertänze</i> , Op. 6, <i>Fantasiestücke</i> , Op. 12; Liszt transcribes Schubert's songs and Beethoven's symphonies, composes first version of the twelve <i>Transcendental Studies</i> .

Historical Events

Sam Colt takes out patent for his single-barreled pistol and rifle in USA; Charles Chubb patents burglar-proof safe; first German railway opens; Melbourne (Australia) founded; first negative photograph taken; Halley's comet makes second predicted return; Texas asserts its right to secede from Mexico; Second Seminole War begins.

People's Charter initiates national working-class movement in Britain; Texas becomes a republic; Arkansas becomes one of the United States; Davy Crockett killed at Alamo; in South Africa, Boer farmers inaugurate 'The Great Trek'; Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State founded; pepsin discovered; first cricket match played in England.

Victoria becomes Queen; constitutional revolt in Canada; Ernst Augustus becomes King of Hanover; Morse Code invented; Michigan joins the USA; Martin van Buren elected eighth President of the United States; constitutional revolts in Canada; first Canadian railways opened.

Brahms's Life

Birth of Brahms's brother Friedrich (Fritz), 26 March.

The Brahms family moves to No. 38 Ulricusstraße.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1838	5	Schumann completes <i>Kinderszenen</i> and Fantasia in C, Op. 17, and <i>Kreisleriana</i> , which he writes in three days; discovers Schubert's Symphony No. 9, which he sends to Mendelssohn; Berlioz <i>Benvenuto Cellini</i> ; Liszt <i>Etudes d'après Paganini</i> ; births of Bizet and Bruch; Dickens publishes <i>Oliver Twist</i> and <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i> .
1839	6	Chopin <i>Twenty-four Preludes</i> , Op. 28, Second <i>Ballade</i> , and Third Scherzo composed; Schumann composes <i>Humoreske</i> , Op. 20, <i>Faschingsschwank aus Wien</i> , Op. 26; Mendelssohn conducts world premiere of Schubert's Symphony No. 9 and composes <i>Ruy Blas</i> Overture and D minor Piano Trio; births of Cézanne and Mussorgsky; Poe writes <i>The Fall of the House of Usher</i> ; Stendahl publishes <i>The Charterhouse of Parma</i> .
1840	7	Schumann's miraculous 'year of song'; he receives honorary doctorate from the University of Jena and marries Clara Wieck despite strong objections of her father; Mendelssohn composes and conducts his <i>Lobgesang</i> (Hymn of Praise); birth of Tchaikovsky in Russia; Donizetti's <i>La Fille du Régiment</i> staged in Paris; first harmonium constructed; births of Monet, Renoir, and Rodin in France; Lermontov writes <i>The Demon</i> and <i>A Hero of Our Time</i> .

Historical Events

Brahms's Life

Victoria crowned; Boers defeat Zulus in Natal; death of Talleyrand; Richard Cobden establishes Anti-Corn Law League in England; 1440-ton steamship 'Great Western' crosses Atlantic in 15 days; Audubon completes *The Birds of America*; the term 'sociology' coined in France.

First British-Chinese Opium War; Boers found Republic of Natal; first bicycle constructed; Uruguay declares war on Argentina; Prussia restricts child labour to 10 hours a day; baseball invented in USA; Cunard Line founded; Louis Blanc publishes *L'Organisation du travail*; Goodyear's discovery of vulcanisation inaugurates commercial use of rubber; Louis Daguerre reveals photographic invention named after him.

Queen Victoria and Prince Albert are married; Afghan War ends with surrender to British; Lower and Upper Canada united by Act of Parliament; end of transportation of English criminals to New South Wales; moves to limit hours of child labour in England and America; Darwin publishes his *Zoology of the Voyage of the Beagle-Birds*; invention of artificial agricultural fertilisers; first surviving photograph taken; Nelson's Column built in Trafalgar Square.

Brahms begins music lessons with his father.

Brahms continues his studies with his father, working towards a career as an orchestral player.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1841	8	Schumann completes his Symphony No. 1 'The Spring'; Chopin composes his Fantasia in F minor, Op. 49; Mendelssohn: <i>Variations sérieuses</i> ; Wagner: <i>The Flying Dutchman</i> ; Rossini's <i>Stabat Mater</i> premiered in Paris; Liszt transcribes Mozart's <i>Don Giovanni</i> , Bellini's <i>Norma</i> , and Meyerbeer's <i>Robert le diable</i> ; saxophone invented; births of Chabrier and Dvořák; Dickens publishes <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> ; first edition of the humorous periodical <i>Punch</i> published in London.
1842	9	Glinka follows success of <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> with second nationalist opera <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> ; Schumann writes his Piano Quintet and lesser-known Piano Quartet; Mendelssohn completes his 'Scottish' Symphony and founds Leipzig Conservatory; Wagner's <i>Rienzi</i> staged in Dresden; births of Boito and Massenet; New York Philharmonic founded.
1843	10	Donizetti's <i>Don Pasquale</i> produced in Paris; Mendelssohn writes incidental music for Shakespeare's <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> ; Schumann's secular oratorio <i>Das Paradies und die Peri</i> performed in Leipzig; Dickens writes <i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i> and <i>A Christmas Carol</i> ; William Wordsworth appointed Poet Laureate.
1844	11	Schumann: <i>Scenes from Goethe's Faust</i> ; Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto; Chopin: Sonata in B minor, Op. 58; Berlioz publishes his treatise on orchestration; Verdi <i>Ernani</i> ; births of Rimsky-Korsakov and Sarasate; Dumas (père): <i>The Count of Monte Cristo</i> .

Historical Events

British proclaim sovereignty over Hong Kong; New Zealand becomes British colony; Lajos Kossuth becomes nationalist leader in Hungary; American slaves revolt en route to Louisiana and sail to freedom in Nassau; founding of *The New York Tribune*; first university degrees granted to women in America; discovery of hypnosis; first popular book on astronomy for the layman published.

Riots and strikes in northern England; Boers establish Orange Free State; Opium War between Britain and China ends with Treaty of Nanking; rail link built between Boston and Albany in USA; Queen Victoria makes her first rail journey from Windsor to Paddington; first use of ether for surgical anesthesia; the term ‘dinosaur’ coined in England.

Military revolt in Spain; Maori revolt against Britain; Morse builds first telegraph system from Washington to Baltimore; first propeller-driven crossing of the Atlantic; world’s first nightclub ‘Le Bal des Anglais’ opened in Paris; advent of skiing as a sport; first tunnel under the Thames built.

Treaty of Tangier ends French war in Morocco; military revolts in Mexico; birth of Nietzsche; USA-China peace treaty; weavers revolt in Silesia; YMCA founded in England; James Knox Polk elected President of the USA.

Brahms’s Life

Brahms begins lessons with Otto Cossel, then aged twenty-eight.

The Brahms family moves to 29 Dammthorwall; fire destroys much of old Hamburg.

Brahms’s first appearance as pianist leads to offer of American tour; begins studies with Marxsen.

Brahms attends secondary school; he composes a sonata which he plays to Louise Japha.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1845	12	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> performed at Dresden; Mendelssohn composes C minor Piano Trio; Schumann completes Piano Concerto, Op. 54; first artistic photographic portraits taken; births of Gabriel Fauré and Charles Marie Widor; Prosper Mérimée writes <i>Carmen</i> (on which Bizet's opera was to be based); Balzac begins <i>Les Paysans</i> (completed in 1855); Poe: <i>The Raven</i> and other poems.
1846	13	Mendelssohn's <i>Elijah</i> premiered at Birmingham Festival in England; Berlioz composes his dramatic oratorio <i>La Damnation de Faust</i> ; Schumann completes his Symphony No. 2 in C; Lortzing's opera <i>Der Waffenschmied</i> produced in Vienna; Liszt <i>First Hungarian Rhapsody</i> ; electric arc lighting introduced at Paris Opéra; Balzac publishes <i>La Cousine Bette</i> ; Edward Lear produces his <i>Book of Nonsense</i> .
1847	14	Mendelssohn dies at thirty-eight; Verdi's <i>Macbeth</i> produced in Florence; Schumann begins opera <i>Genoveva</i> and composes his piano trios; Flotow's opera <i>Martha</i> opens in Vienna; Charlotte Brontë writes <i>Jane Eyre</i> , Emily Brontë <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; William Makepeace Thackeray's <i>Vanity Fair</i> published; Heinrich Hoffmann, a doctor from Frankfurt, publishes his classic cautionary tale <i>Struwwelpeter</i> .

Historical Events

Anglo-Sikh War; second Maori uprising against British rule in New Zealand; Swiss Sonderbund formed for the protection of Catholic cantons; new Spanish Constitution drafted; first transatlantic submarine cable; power loom invented in USA; first hydraulic crane constructed; rules of baseball codified; Engels publishes *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

First Sikh War ends with Treaty of Lahore; revolts in Poland; Austrian and Russian troops invade Krakow; USA declares war on Mexico; first sewing machine patented; Irish famine follows failure of potato crop; lock-stitch sewing machine patented; Evangelical Alliance formed in London; first laboratory of psychology founded in USA; Zeiss optical factory founded.

USA captures Mexico City; Sonderbund War breaks out in Switzerland as Catholic cantons defend their union; Swiss railway opened between Zurich and Baden; first Roman Catholic working man's club established in Germany; British Factory Act sets ten-hour maximum on working day of women and children; Mormons found Salt Lake City in USA; discovery of evaporated milk.

Brahms's Life

Marxsen becomes Brahms's sole music teacher.

Theory and composition studies; Brahms plays the piano in dockside Animierlokale.

In poor health, Brahms spends summer at Winsen, where he conducts a male-voice choir; his first public concert, 20 November.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1848	15	Schumann completes <i>Genoveva</i> , Op. 81, begins incidental music for Byron's <i>Manfred</i> and the <i>Album for the Young</i> ; Wagner composes <i>Lohengrin</i> ; Liszt <i>Consolations</i> ; Donizetti dies insane at 51; births of Duparc, Parry, and Gauguin; founding of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood; Grimm publishes his <i>History of the German Language</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (fils): <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i> .
1849	16	Chopin dies at thirty-nine; Meyerbeer's <i>Le Prophète</i> produced at Paris Opéra; Otto Nicolai's opera <i>The Merry Wives of Windsor</i> premiered in Vienna; Liszt: 'Book II', 'Italy' of his <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> ; Johann Strauss I dies at forty-five; Dickens publishes <i>David Copperfield</i> ; Edgar Allen Poe dies at forty.
1850	17	Foundation of Bach-Gesellschaft to publish the complete works of J.S. Bach in forty-six volumes (a project not completed until 1900); Schumann's <i>Genoveva</i> produced in Leipzig and poorly received; Schumann composes his Cello Concerto and many songs; Liszt Fantasia and Fugue, <i>Ad nos, ad salutarem undam</i> for organ, and symphonic poem <i>Heroïde funèbre</i> (first version); death of Wordsworth – Alfred, Lord Tennyson succeeds him as Poet Laureate; Turgenev writes <i>A Month in the Country</i> .

Historical Events

Revolts in Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Venice, Rome, Parma, and Prague; serfdom abolished in Austria; Marx and Engels write *The Communist Manifesto*; Switzerland becomes federal union; Wisconsin becomes a state; Gold Rush in California; first convention for women's rights held in New York; first successful appendectomy performed; safety matches invented.

British defeats Sikhs in India; Venice surrenders to Austria; Britain annexes Punjab; Livingstone crosses the Kalahari Desert; Fizeau measures the speed of light; Amelia Bloomer sets out to revolutionise women's dress.

Liberal constitution drafted in Prussia; Anglo-Kaffir War erupts; Taiping Rebellion in China; Austro-Hungarian customs union founded; insurance for the aged established in France; Royal Meteorological Society founded in London; University of Sydney established in Australia; invention of the Bunsen burner; first cast-iron railway bridge built in England.

Brahms's Life

Brahms hears Joachim, then seventeen, play Beethoven's Violin Concerto; he visits Winsen in the spring; first solo concert, 21 September.

Brahms gives second solo concert, at which he plays Beethoven's 'Waldstein' Sonata and his own *Fantasy on a Favourite Waltz*; begins teaching piano and writes pot-boilers for Cranz under the name of G.W. Marks.

Brahms meets Reményi; composes (and later destroys) *Souvenir de la Russie*; sends scores to Schumann, who returns them unopened.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1851	18	Schumann completes his Symphony No. 4 and many songs; Verdi's <i>Rigoletto</i> staged in Venice; Liszt completes first version of his symphonic poem <i>Mazeppa</i> ; Gounod's <i>Sappho</i> produced in Paris; death of J.M.W. Turner; Herman Melville publishes <i>Moby Dick</i> ; Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>House of the Seven Gables</i> ; John Ruskin: <i>The Stones of Venice</i> .
1852	19	Schumann's <i>Manfred</i> performed in Leipzig; Liszt: <i>Hungarian Fantasy</i> for piano and orchestra; Irish composer-conductor Charles Villiers Stanford born; Dickens publishes <i>Bleak House</i> ; Alexandre Dumas (fils) bases a play on his earlier <i>La Dame aux Camélias</i> ; Harriet Beecher Stowe writes American classic <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> ; Thackeray publishes <i>History of Henry Esmond</i> ; Paddington Station in London designed by Brunel and Wyatt.
1853	20	Wagner (forty) completes the text for his great tetralogy <i>The Ring of the Nibelung</i> ; Verdi's <i>Il Trovatore</i> and <i>La Traviata</i> staged in Venice; Liszt <i>Ballade</i> No. 2 and Piano Sonata in B minor; founding of Steinway's piano firm in New York; Matthew Arnold publishes <i>The Scholar Gypsy</i> , Charlotte Brontë <i>Villette</i> , and Nathaniel Hawthorne <i>Tanglewood Tales</i> .

Historical Events

German Confederation recognised by Prussia; Cuba declares independence; *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon; Great International Exhibition held in London; first double-decker bus; Singer patents his continuous-stitch sewing machine; first appearance of *The New York Times*; gold discovered in New South Wales, Australia.

Second Empire begins in France (to 1870); Louis Napoleon pronounces himself Emperor Napoleon III; Second Anglo-Burmese War breaks out; foundation of South African Republic; new constitution drafted for New Zealand; Duke of Wellington dies; Wells Fargo Company founded in USA; USA imports sparrows from Germany as defence against caterpillars; first salt water aquarium opened in London.

Crimean War begins; Anglo-Burmese War ends; Britain annexes Mahratta State of Nagpur in India; telegraph network established in India; first railroad through the Alps; invention of hypodermic syringe; German family magazine *Die Gartenlaube* founded in Leipzig; Samuel Colt revolutionises the small arms business; largest tree in the world discovered in California.

Brahms's Life

Brahms composes his Scherzo in E flat minor, Op. 4, songs, and some chamber music (later destroyed).

Brahms composes his Piano Sonata in F sharp minor, Op. 2 and more songs.

Brahms composes Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 1; concert tour with Rémenyi; meets Joachim; meets the Schumanns; Schumann hails him as messiah in *Neue Bahnen*; 'F-A-E' Scherzo; publishes Opp. 1, 3, and 6; Christmas in Hamburg.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1854	21	Berlioz's <i>L'Enfance du Christ</i> performed in Paris; Liszt: <i>A Faust Symphony</i> and symphonic poems <i>Orpheus</i> , <i>Festklänge</i> , <i>Les Préludes</i> , <i>Mazeppa</i> , <i>Tasso</i> , and <i>Hungaria</i> ; birth of German composer Engelbert Humperdinck; Tennyson writes <i>The Charge of the Light Brigade</i> ; Henry David Thoreau <i>Walden</i> .
1855	22	Berlioz's <i>Te Deum</i> and Verdi's <i>Sicilian Vespers</i> performed in Paris; Wagner makes his mark as conductor in a series of London concerts; Liszt <i>Missa Solennis</i> , <i>Psalm 13</i> , the <i>Prelude and Fugue on BACH</i> , and many songs, first book of <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> published, premieres First Piano Concerto with Berlioz conducting; Dickens publishes <i>Little Dorrit</i> , Dumas (fils) <i>Le Demi-monde</i> ; Tennyson: <i>Maud</i> and other poems; Anthony Trollope: <i>The Warden</i> ; Walt Whitman publishes <i>Leaves of Grass</i> , Henry Wadsworth Longfellow <i>The Song of Hiawatha</i> .

Historical Events

Siege of Sebastopol begins in Crimean War; first American-Japanese treaty; founding of Republican Party in USA; Pope Pius IX declares dogma of Immaculate Conception an article of faith; *Le Figaro* begins publication in Paris; Turin-Genoa railway opened; Heinrich Goebel invents first form of domestic electric light bulb.

Accession of Tsar Nicholas II in Russia; Russians surrender at Sebastopol; end of Taiping rebellion in China; cholera outbreak leads to modernisation of London sewers; bubonic plague breaks out in China; invention of printing telegraph; first iron steamer crosses Atlantic; tungsten steel developed; World Fair held in Paris; *Daily Telegraph* begins publication in London.

Brahms's Life

Brahms meets Hans von Bülow; Opp. 2, 4, and 5 published; composes the B major Trio, Op. 8, 'Schumann' Variations, and *Ballades*, Op. 10; begins work on a symphony in D minor; Schumann attempts suicide and is confined in Endenich Asylum – Brahms goes to Düsseldorf to help Clara, and visits Hamburg with her in December.

Brahms lives in Düsseldorf; concert tours with Clara and Joachim; B minor Trio premiered in New York.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1856	23	Schumann dies insane at forty-six; Alexander Dargomijsky's opera <i>Russalka</i> produced in St Petersburg; Liszt <i>Dante Symphony</i> ; Flaubert writes <i>Madame Bovary</i> ; births of George Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and Norwegian composer Christian Sinding; Carl Bechstein founds his piano factory; death of Heinrich Heine.
1857	24	Charles Hallé founds the Hallé Concerts in Manchester, England; Liszt: first performances, including the <i>Faust</i> and <i>Dante</i> symphonies, Piano Concerto No. 2, B minor Sonata (with von Bülow playing), the final version of <i>Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne</i> and two other symphonic poems; birth of Edward Elgar; Victoria & Albert Museum founded in London; death of Glinka at fifty-four; Trollope publishes <i>Barchester Towers</i> ; Charles Baudelaire: <i>Les Fleurs du mal</i> ; George Borrow: <i>Romany Rye</i> ; Joseph Conrad born.

Historical Events

Austrian amnesty for Hungarian rebels of 1848; Britain establishes Natal as a crown colony; Anglo-Chinese and Anglo-Persian wars begin; Britain grants self-government to Tasmania; invention of cocaine; Neanderthal skull found in cave near Düsseldorf; Big Ben cast in London; Black Forest railway opens with forty tunnels; longest bare-knuckle boxing match in history (6 hours, 15 minutes).

End of Anglo-Persian war; Indian mutiny against British rule; siege of Delhi; Garibaldi forms National Association for the unification of Italy; Tsar Alexander II begins emancipation of serfs in Russia; foundation of Irish Republican Brotherhood; transatlantic cable laid; speculation in American railroad shares triggers economic crisis in Europe; invention of the passenger lift.

Brahms's Life

Brahms gives more concerts; meets Rubinstein; begins counterpoint correspondence with Joachim; moves to Bonn to be near Schumann; works on Op. 21 *Variations* and organ pieces (later destroyed); unfinished D minor symphony becomes Piano Concerto No. 1; Brahms becomes subscriber to Bach-Gesellschaft Edition; on Schumann's death, moves to Düsseldorf to support Clara; holiday in Switzerland marks turning point in his relations with Clara; returns to Hamburg in October, then visits Detmold.

Brahms composes and teaches in Hamburg; second visit to Detmold leads to court appointment, conducting and playing the piano.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1858	25	Berlioz completes his epic opera <i>The Trojans</i> ; Offenbach's <i>Orpheus in the Underworld</i> produced in Paris; Liszt <i>Hamlet</i> ; Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, opened in London; New York Symphony Orchestra gives its first concert; Puccini born; Wilhelm Busch creates <i>Max und Moritz</i> .
1859	26	Verdi's <i>Un Ballo in Maschera</i> produced in Rome; Gounod's <i>Faust</i> staged in Paris; Liszt: <i>Psalms 23</i> and <i>137</i> , <i>Venezia e Napoli</i> (an appendix to the Italian book of the <i>Années de pèlerinage</i>), and three Verdi paraphrases (<i>Ernani</i> , <i>Il Trovatore</i> , and <i>Rigoletto</i>); Dickens publishes <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> ; Tennyson writes <i>The Idylls of the King</i> ; George Eliot: <i>Adam Bede</i> ; Edward Fitzgerald translates <i>The Rubáiyat of Omar Khayyám</i> ; births of Seurat and Arthur Conan Doyle (creator of Sherlock Holmes).

Historical Events

Prince William of Prussia becomes regent for insane Frederick William IV; Anglo-Chinese War ends; Britain declares peace in India; Ottawa becomes Canadian capital; Suez Canal Company formed; first electrical lighthouses built; Minnesota becomes American state.

Franco-Austrian War in Italy; German National Association formed, aimed at uniting Germany under Prussia; Bismarck becomes Prussian Ambassador to St Petersburg; Suez Canal begun; Charles Darwin publishes *The Origin of Species*; Anthropological Society founded in Paris; steamroller invented; Charles Blondin crosses Niagara Falls on a tightrope.

Brahms's Life

Brahms works on his First Piano Concerto and *Nonet* in Hamburg; makes many folksong settings and composes first *Hungarian Dances*; *Nonet* rescored as Serenade No. 1; Piano Concerto rehearsed at Hanover; Brahms falls in love with Agathe von Siebold.

Piano Concerto No. 1 premiered in Hanover, Hamburg, and (disastrously) Leipzig; Serenade No. 1 premiered in Hamburg; Brahms founds and conducts the Hamburg Ladies Choir, for which he writes *Marientlieder* and *Psalm 13*; breaks off secret engagement to Agathe von Siebold; composes Serenade No. 2 in last season at Detmold.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1860	27	Franz von Suppé writes first-ever Viennese operetta <i>Das Pensionat</i> ; Liszt: <i>Psalm 18</i> and Two Episodes from <i>Lenau's Faust</i> (including <i>Mephisto Waltz</i> No. 1); first modern Eisteddfod held in Wales; George Eliot writes <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> , Alexander Ostrovski <i>The Storm</i> , Wilkie Collins <i>The Woman in White</i> ; <i>Cornhill Magazine</i> founded in England under editorship of W.M. Thackeray; births of Mahler, Wolf, Paderewski, Chekhov, and James M. Barrie (author of <i>Peter Pan</i>).
1861	28	Wagner's <i>Tannhäuser</i> causes scandal in Paris; Liszt: <i>Christus</i> ; Royal Academy of Music founded in London; Dickens publishes <i>Great Expectations</i> , Dostoevsky <i>The House of the Dead</i> , George Eliot <i>Silas Marner</i> , Vladimir Dahl <i>Dictionary of the Living Russian Tongue</i> ; births of Nellie Melba and Indian philosopher-poet Rabindranath Tagore; death of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Historical Events

Garibaldi takes Palermo and Naples and proclaims Victor Emmanuel II King of Italy; Abraham Lincoln elected President of the United States; South Carolina secedes from Union; Second Maori War breaks out in New Zealand; Lenoir constructs first practical internal combustion engine; first horse-drawn trams; British Open Golf Championships founded; advent of skiing as competitive sport.

Frederick William of Prussia succeeded by William I; emancipation of Russian serfs; start of American Civil War; Garibaldi triumphs at Gaeta; Italy declared a kingdom, with Victor Emanuel II at its head; Polish demonstrators massacred by Russian forces in Warsaw; USA introduces passport system; Mrs Beeton publishes *Book of Household Management*; linoleum invented; daily weather forecasts established in Britain.

Brahms's Life

Brahms returns to Hamburg, where he conducts the Serenade No. 2; composes Partsongs, Op. 17, and Motets, Op. 27; with Joachim, publishes disastrous manifesto against the 'New German' school of composition; composes Sextet No. 1 in B flat; meets Simrock, who was to become his publisher.

Brahms lives, composes, and performs in Hamburg; works on Piano Quartet and the 'Handel' Variations, which are performed by both Brahms and Clara.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1862	29	Berlioz's <i>Béatrice et Bénédicte</i> staged in Baden-Baden; Verdi's <i>La Forza del destino</i> premiered in St Petersburg; Liszt: Variations for piano on Bach's 'Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen' and the <i>Cantico del sol di San Francesco d'Assisi</i> ; Ludwig Köchel begins his monumental catalogue of Mozart's Works; Turgenev: <i>Fathers and Sons</i> ; Flaubert publishes <i>Salammbô</i> .
1863	30	Berlioz's <i>The Trojans at Carthage</i> and Bizet's <i>The Pearl Fishers</i> staged in Paris; births of Pietro Mascagni (<i>Cavalleria Rusticana</i>) and the painter Lucien Pissarro; Manet paints <i>Déjeuner sur l'herbe</i> and <i>Olympia</i> ; deaths of Eugène Delacroix and W.M. Thackeray; University of Massachusetts founded in USA.
1864	31	Bruckner writes his Symphony No. 0; Offenbach's <i>La Belle Hélène</i> mounted in Paris; birth of Richard Strauss; Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft founded in Weimar; Dickens publishes <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> ; Tolstoy begins <i>War and Peace</i> .

Historical Events

Bismarck becomes Prime Minister of Prussia; Abraham Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing all American slaves; military revolt in Greece topples Otto I; Foucault measures speed of light; ten-barrel Gatling Gun invented.

French capture Mexico City and declare Archduke Maximilian of Austria emperor; Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address; civil war breaks out in Afghanistan; first railroad in New Zealand opens; roller-skating introduced in USA; Football Association established in London; construction of London Underground railway begun.

Ludwig II crowned King of Bavaria; Karl Marx founds First International Working Man's Association; Denmark cedes Schleswig, Holstein and Lauenberg in Peace of Vienna; Geneva Convention establishes neutrality of battlefield medical facilities; Lincoln re-elected; Nevada becomes a state; *Neue Freie Presse* founded in Vienna.

Brahms's Life

Brahms works on *Magelone Lieder*, String Quintet, and beginnings of a symphony in C minor; visits Vienna for the first time; remains there through the winter, giving concerts and making new friends, including Hanslick, Nottebohm, and Tausig; he is passed over for conductorship of the Hamburg Philharmonic.

Brahms returns to Hamburg in the spring; composes most of his cantata *Rinaldo*; appointed conductor of the Vienna *Singakademie*; the first concert features music of Bach, Schumann, Isaac, and Beethoven.

Meets Wagner and the conductor Hermann Levi; conducts Bach's 'Christmas' Oratorio in Vienna; resigns from *Singakademie* in Spring; spends summer at Lichtenthal; meets Turgenev.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1865	32	Wagner's <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> staged in Munich; Schubert's 'Unfinished' Symphony premiered forty-three years after it was written; Meyerbeer's <i>L'Africaine</i> produced in Paris; Suppé's <i>Die schöne Galatea</i> staged in Vienna; Liszt: <i>Missa Choralis</i> ; <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> published; births of Dukas, Glazunov, Sibelius, Kipling, and W.B. Yeats.
1866	33	Smetana's <i>The Bartered Bride</i> staged in Prague; Offenbach's <i>La Vie Parisienne</i> and Ambroise Thomas's <i>Mignon</i> produced in Paris; Tchaikovsky writes his Symphony No. 1; Dostoevsky publishes <i>Crime and Punishment</i> ; Degas begins painting his <i>Ballet Scenes</i> ; Pierre Larousse publishes <i>Grand dictionnaire universel</i> .
1867	34	Verdi's <i>Don Carlos</i> , Bizet's <i>La Jolie Fille de Perth</i> and Offenbach's <i>La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein</i> staged in Paris; Johann Strauss II writes 'Blue Danube' Waltz; World's Fair in Paris introduces Japanese art to the West; Reclams Universalbibliothek, first of all paperback book series, begins publication; Ibsen writes <i>Peer Gynt</i> ; Zola publishes <i>Thérèse Raquin</i> .

Historical Events

Lincoln assassinated; American Civil War ends; Bismarck and Napoleon III meet in Biarritz; first carpet sweeper comes into use; first railway sleeping cars; laying of transatlantic cable completed; founding of the Salvation Army; Mendel enunciates the law of heredity; Massachusetts Institute of Technology founded in USA.

Austro-Prussian War; Treaty of Vienna ends Austro-Italian War; Cretan rebellion against Turkish rule; 'Black Friday' on London stock exchange; dynamite and underwater torpedo invented; telegraph messages first sent over radio waves.

Karl Marx publishes Vol. 1 of *Das Kapital*; Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy; Garibaldi begins march on Rome; USA purchases Alaska from Russia; Nebraska becomes a state in the USA; gold discovered in Wyoming; diamond fields discovered in South Africa; first bicycles manufactured; completion of railroad through Brenner Pass; invention of clinical thermometer.

Brahms's Life

Brahms's mother dies; he works on *A German Requiem*; writes the Horn Trio; concert tours in autumn; premieres 'Paganini' Variations in Zürich.

Brahms festival at Oldenburg; Brahms visits Switzerland with Joachim; meets the famous surgeon Billroth who becomes one of his closest friends; more work on *A German Requiem*; completes the String Sextet No. 2.

Three movements of *A German Requiem* performed (unsuccessfully) in Vienna; summer walking tour with father in Austrian Alps; concert tours of Austria.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1868	35	Wagner's <i>Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg</i> ; Mussorgsky begins <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; Liszt completes his Requiem; death of Rossini; French Impressionism becomes a recognisable force in European art; Dostoevsky publishes <i>The Idiot</i> , Wilkie Collins <i>The Moonstone</i> , Louisa May Alcott <i>Little Women</i> ; birth of Maxim Gorky.
1869	36	Wagner's <i>Das Rheingold</i> performed in Munich; death of Berlioz; Tchaikovsky's first opera <i>Voyevoda</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner's Mass in E minor first performed; Flaubert publishes <i>L'Education sentimentale</i> , R.D. Blackmore <i>Lorna Doone</i> , Mark Twain <i>The Innocents Abroad</i> , Verlaine <i>Fêtes galantes</i> , Matthew Arnold <i>Culture and Anarchy</i> .
1870	37	Wagner writes <i>Siegfried Idyll</i> ; his <i>Die Walküre</i> produced in Munich; Tchaikovsky's Fantasy-Overture <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> performed in Moscow; Liszt: <i>Beethoven Cantata</i> , <i>Funeral Music for Mosonyi</i> ; Delibes' <i>Coppélia</i> produced in Paris; Société Nationale de Musique founded in France; Keble College, Oxford founded; death of Dickens.

Historical Events

Prussia confiscates territory of King of Hanover; Disraeli becomes Prime Minister of Britain, resigns, and is succeeded by Gladstone; Shogunate abolished in Japan; impeachment of President Andrew Johnson in USA; skeleton of Cro-Magnon man found in France; invention of air brakes for steam locomotives; badminton invented.

Ulysses S. Grant elected President of the USA; National Prohibition Party founded in Chicago; parliamentary system returns in France; Greece withdraws from Crete; Suez Canal opened; abolition of debtors' prisons in Britain; first postcards appear in Austria; Francis Galton publishes pioneering work on eugenics (the source of 'genetic engineering'); first nihilist convention organised in Switzerland.

Franco-Prussian War breaks out; revolt in Paris; proclamation there of Third Republic; Lenin born; Schliemann begins excavation of Troy; John D. Rockefeller founds Standard Oil Company in USA; Thomas Huxley publishes *Theory of Biogenesis*; doctrine of papal infallibility adopted at the First Vatican Council.

Brahms's Life

A German Requiem premiered in Bremen Cathedral; *Schicksalslied* begun; concert tours in Germany and Denmark; concerts in autumn with Clara.

Cantata *Rinaldo* premiered in Vienna; final version of *A German Requiem*; engagement of Julie Schumann; composes 'Alto Rhapsody' and *Liebeslieder Waltzes*; publishes *Hungarian Dances*; settles permanently in Vienna; tour to Budapest with Stockhausen.

'Alto Rhapsody' premiered; no new works completed; attends performances of Wagner's *Das Rheingold* and *Die Walküre* in Munich.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1871	38	Verdi's <i>Aida</i> staged in Cairo; Saint-Saëns publishes his symphonic poem <i>Le Rouet d'Omphale</i> ; Royal Albert Hall opened in London; George Eliot publishes <i>Middlemarch</i> , Lewis Carroll <i>Through the Looking Glass</i> .
1872	39	Bizet writes incidental music to Alphonse Daudet's play <i>L'Arlésienne</i> ; Franck publishes <i>Les Béatitudes</i> ; Nietzsche writes <i>The Birth of Tragedy</i> , Jules Verne <i>Around the World in 80 Days</i> .
1873	40	Bruckner's Symphony No. 2 performed in Vienna; Rimsky-Korsakov's opera <i>Ivan the Terrible</i> staged in St Petersburg; Liszt conducts premiere of <i>Christus</i> in Weimar and his <i>Five Hungarian Folksongs</i> are published; Carl Rosa Opera Company founded in England; births of Caruso, Chaliapin, Rachmaninov, and Reger; John Stuart Mill's autobiography published; Tolstoy begins <i>Anna Karenina</i> .

Historical Events

German Empire established under Wilhelm I; Paris Commune established; Jehovah's Witnesses founded; Pope granted possession of the Vatican by Italian Law of Guarantees; bank holidays established in Britain; Darwin publishes *The Descent of Man*; invention of the pneumatic drill; first large luxury liner launched; great fire of Chicago; Stanley meets Livingstone in Africa.

League of Three Emperors established in Berlin; civil war in Spain; Jesuits expelled from Germany; Three-Emperors' League forms alliance of Germany, Russia, and Hungary; former Confederates in American Civil War granted amnesty; Brooklyn Bridge opened in USA.

Death of Napoleon III; Germans evacuate France after Franco-Prussian War; Germany adopts mark as unit of currency; financial panic in Vienna and New York; World Exhibition mounted in Vienna; the cities of Buda and Pest are merged to form capital of Hungary; famine in Bengal; first typewriters manufactured; early form of colour photography invented.

Brahms's Life

Schicksalslied premiered in Karlsruhe; first part of *Triumphlied* performed in Bremen in memory of war dead; begins teaching Florence May.

Brahms's father dies; *Triumphlied* given complete; summer in Baden; Brahms meets Nietzsche; becomes Director of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, succeeding Anton Rubinstein.

Brahms completes first two string quartets and 'Haydn' Variations; attends Schumann Festival in Bonn; visits World Exhibition in Vienna.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1874	41	Verdi's Requiem performed in Milan; Mussorgsky's <i>Boris Godunov</i> produced in St Petersburg; Johann Strauss II writes <i>Die Fledermaus</i> ; Smetana completes his cycle of symphonic poems <i>Má Vlast</i> ; Liszt completes <i>The Legend of St Cecilia</i> , <i>Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil</i> , <i>Elegy No. 1</i> , and part of a new oratorio, <i>St Stanislaus</i> ; Paris Opéra completed; births of Schoenberg, Holst, Gertrude Stein, and Robert Frost.
1875	42	Birth of Ravel; death of Bizet at thirty-six, not long after disastrous premiere of <i>Carmen</i> ; Bruckner composes his Symphony No. 3; Gilbert and Sullivan's first operetta <i>Trial by Jury</i> produced in London; Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 receives world premiere in Boston, Massachusetts; Mark Twain publishes <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> ; births of Albert Schweitzer, Thomas Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, and John Buchan.
1876	43	Opening of the Festspielhaus at Bayreuth with first complete performance of Wagner's <i>Ring</i> cycle; Tchaikovsky <i>Francesca da Rimini</i> , 'Rococo' Variations; Liszt's <i>Hamlet</i> premiered in July; Liszt completes his <i>Christmas Tree Suite</i> and makes transcription of the <i>Danse macabre</i> by Saint-Saëns; births of Falla, Ruggles, Casals, and Bruno Walter; Mallarmé writes <i>L'Après-Midi d'un Faune</i> ; Henry James: <i>Roderick Hudson</i> .

Historical Events

Fiji Islands added to British Empire; first Postal Union established in Switzerland; pressure-cooking used for canning foods; first American zoo founded in Philadelphia; excavation of Olympia begun; civil marriage made compulsory in Germany; births of Churchill, Herbert Hoover, Weizmann, and Marconi.

Bosnia and Herzegovina rebel against Turkish rule; rebellion in Cuba; Prince of Wales visits India; Public Health Act passed in Britain; religious orders abolished in Prussia; first swimming of English Channel; first roller-skating rink opened in London; Kwang Hsu becomes Emperor of China; Japanese law courts reformed.

Serbia and Montenegro declare war on Turkey; new Ottoman constitution proclaimed; Korea becomes independent; invention of the telephone; World Exposition in Philadelphia, USA; founding of Deutsche Reichsbank in Germany; Schliemann excavates Mycenae; Johns Hopkins University established in Baltimore, USA; first Chinese railway completed.

Brahms's Life

Brahms completes the C minor Piano Quartet; meets Henschel and the Herzogenbergs; growing friendship with Widmann.

Brahms continues work on his Symphony No. 1; first championing of Dvořák; estrangement from Hermann Levi.

Brahms completes his Symphony No. 1 and String Quartet No. 3; visits Holland, Mannheim, and Koblenz; conducts his Symphony No. 1 in Mannheim and Munich; summer holiday with Henschel.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1877	44	First publication of Mozart's complete works begun; birth of Ernst von Dohnányi; Saint-Saëns composes <i>Samson et Dalila</i> ; Tchaikovsky's <i>Swan Lake</i> produced in Moscow; Liszt completes the third book of the <i>Années de pèlerinage</i> ; Rijksmuseum built in Amsterdam; Third Impressionist Exhibition mounted in Paris; birth of Raoul Dufy; Emile Zola publishes his <i>L'Assommoir</i> , Henry James <i>The American</i> .
1878	45	George Grove begins his mammoth <i>Dictionary of Music and Musicians</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>HMS Pinafore</i> ; Dvořák: <i>Slavonic Dances</i> ; Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 4, and the opera <i>Eugene Onegin</i> ; Liszt starts work on the <i>Via Crucis</i> ; William Morris publishes <i>The Decorative Arts</i> ; Thomas Hardy: <i>The Return of the Native</i> ; births of John Masefield, Carl Sandburg, and Upton Sinclair.
1879	46	Tchaikovsky's <i>Eugene Onegin</i> staged in Moscow; Bruckner composes his String Quintet, Franck his Piano Quintet; Liszt composes <i>Missa pro organo</i> and transcribes works by Handel and Tchaikovsky; Suppé <i>Boccaccio</i> ; births of Bridge, Ireland, Respighi, and Karg-Elert; Henry James publishes <i>Daisy Miller</i> , Robert Louis Stevenson <i>Travels with a Donkey</i> .

Historical Events

Russia declares war on Turkey, invades Romania, crosses Danube, and storms Kars; Bismarck refuses to intervene; Victoria proclaimed Empress of India; suppression of Satsuma rebellion in Japan; invention of the gramophone; first public telephones appear in USA; first All-England Tennis Championships held at Wimbledon; first observation of 'canals' on Mars.

Attempt to assassinate Emperor Wilhelm I of Germany; Anti-Socialist Law enacted in Germany; beginning of Irredentist agitation in Italy to obtain Trieste and South Tyrol from Austria; anti-Semitic movement formalised in Germany; invention of the microphone; first electric street lighting; World Exhibition mounted in Paris; repeater rifle invented.

British-Zulu War in South Africa; British forces occupy Khyber Pass; Alsace-Lorraine declared an integral part of Germany; Anti-Jesuit laws introduced in France; first telephone exchange opened in London; public allowed unrestricted entry to British Museum; births of Stalin, Trotsky, and Albert Einstein.

Brahms's Life

Brahms declines an honorary degree from Cambridge University; Symphony No. 2 completed and premiered to great acclaim; Symphony No. 1 revised.

Brahms begins work on Violin Concerto and the Op. 76 Piano Pieces; first Italian holiday, with Billroth; offered Bach's old post as Thomaskantor in Leipzig, but declines; Wolf (aged eighteen) seeks and rejects Brahms's advice, becoming his lifelong enemy.

Violin Concerto premiered; G major Violin Sonata and Op. 79 Rhapsodies for the piano composed; Brahms receives honorary doctorate from Breslau University; tours Hungary, Transylvania, and Poland with Joachim; Wagner attacks Brahms in *Über das Dichten und Komponieren*.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1880	47	Bruckner: Symphony No. 4; Tchaikovsky: <i>Capriccio italien</i> , 1812 <i>Overture</i> , and <i>Serenade for Strings</i> ; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>The Pirates of Penzance</i> ; Guildhall School of Music established in London; Philip Spitta publishes his monumental biography of Bach; Dostoevsky: <i>The Brother Karamazov</i> ; Zola: <i>Nana</i> .
1881	48	Bruckner: Symphony No. 6; Tchaikovsky: <i>The Maid of Orleans</i> ; Liszt: <i>Nuages gris</i> , <i>Csárdás macabre</i> , <i>Mephisto Waltz</i> No. 2 and <i>Valse oubliée</i> No. 1; Offenbach's <i>Tales of Hoffmann</i> produced in Paris; Fauré: <i>Ballade</i> ; birth of Bartók; death of Mussorgsky; Flaubert: <i>Bouard et Pécuchet</i> ; Henry James: <i>The Portrait of a Lady</i> ; D'Oyle Carte opera company builds the Savoy Theatre in London; birth of P.G. Wodehouse.
1882	49	Berlin Philharmonic founded; Debussy: <i>Le Printemps</i> ; Wagner: <i>Parsifal</i> ; Liszt composes his last symphonic poem <i>From the Cradle to the Grave</i> ; Rimsky-Korsakov's <i>The Snow Maiden</i> staged in St Petersburg; Gilbert and Sullivan: <i>Iolanthe</i> ; births of Stravinsky, Kodály, Szymanowski, and Grainger; Robert Louis Stevenson writes <i>Treasure Island</i> , Ibsen <i>An Enemy of the People</i> ; births of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

Historical Events

Cape Parliament blocks moves toward federation in South Africa; Transvaal declares independence of Britain; France annexes Tahiti; Pasteur discovers cholera vaccine; game of Bingo developed from Italian 'tombola'; electric lighting of New York's streets; advent of commercial tinned foods; World Exhibition in Melbourne, Australia.

Britain recognises independent Transvaal Republic; Austro-Serbian treaty of alliance; President James A. Garfield of the USA assassinated; political parties established in Japan; anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia; Canadian Pacific Railway Co. founded; flogging abolished in British armed forces; 'Chat noir', first of all cabarets, founded in Paris.

British occupy Cairo; Irish republicans carry out terrorist murders; hypnosis first used to treat hysteria; Edison designs first hydroelectric plant; triple alliance between Austria, Germany, and Italy; three-mile limit for territorial waters agreed at Hague Convention; Bank of Japan founded; invention of the recoil-operated machine gun; World

Brahms's Life

Brahms composes *Academic Festival Overture* and *Tragic Overture*; publishes books 3 and 4 of *Hungarian Dances*; serious rift with Joachim when Brahms sides with Joachim's wife in divorce case; attends unveiling of Schumann Memorial in Bonn.

Brahms completes his Piano Concerto No. 2 and the cantata *Nänie*; tours Holland and Hungary, renewing his acquaintance with Liszt; spring holiday in Italy and Sicily with Billroth; spends summer at Pressbaum.

Brahms completes his C major Piano Trio, F major String Quartet, and *Gesang der Parzen*; introduces Piano Concerto No. 2 in many German and Dutch cities; holiday in Italy with Billroth and Simrock.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1883	50	Death of Wagner; births of Webern, Varèse, and Bax; Bruckner completes his Symphony No. 7; Delibes' <i>Lakmé</i> produced in Paris; Liszt: <i>Am Grabe Richard Wagners</i> and <i>R.W. – Venezia</i> , also <i>Mephisto Polka</i> , <i>Mephisto Waltz</i> No. 3, and <i>Valse oubliée</i> No. 3; Chabrier composes <i>España</i> ; Metropolitan Opera House opened in New York; Royal College of Music founded in London; Nietzsche writes <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i> .
1884	51	Tchaikovsky's <i>Mazeppa</i> produced in Moscow and St Petersburg; Bruckner <i>Te Deum</i> ; Massenet's <i>Manon</i> staged in Paris; Mahler composes <i>Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen</i> ; first edition of Oxford English Dictionary; Mark Twain publishes <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> , Alphonse Daudet <i>Sappho</i> , Ibsen <i>The Wild Duck</i> ; birth of Sean O'Casey.
1885	52	Tchaikovsky's <i>Manfred</i> Symphony completed; Dvořák composes his Symphony in D minor, Op. 70; Liszt: <i>Hungarian Rhapsodies</i> Nos 18 & 19, <i>Mephisto Waltz</i> No. 4, <i>Valse oubliée</i> No. 4, <i>En rêve</i> , and <i>Bagatelle sans tonalité</i> ; Johann Strauss's <i>The Gypsy Baron</i> produced in Vienna; Gilbert and Sullivan write <i>The Mikado</i> ; Franck: <i>Symphonic Variations</i> ; Richard Burton translates <i>Arabian Nights</i> ; Maupassant writes <i>Bel Ami</i> , Zola <i>Germinal</i> ; births of D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, and Sinclair Lewis.

Historical Events

Exhibition held in Moscow.

French capture Tunis; Britain withdraws from Sudan; reform of Civil Service in USA; Bismarck introduces sickness benefit in Germany; 'Buffalo Bill' Cody founds his 'Wild West Show'; first skyscraper built in Chicago; World Exhibition in Amsterdam; maiden run of the Orient Express; death of Karl Marx.

Germans occupy South-West Africa; Berlin Conference of fourteen nations on African affairs; London Convention on Transvaal; Gordon reaches Khartoum; divorce re-established in France; first practical steam turbine engine invented; tetanus bacillus discovered in Germany; birth of Harry S. Truman.

The Mahdi captures Khartoum; General Gordon killed; Britain withdraws from Sudan; Germany annexes Tanganyika and Zanzibar; Congo becomes official possession of Belgian king; Britain establishes protectorate over North Bechuanaland, Niger River region, and New Guinea; Cape Railroad reaches Kimberley; Benz builds single-cylinder engine for motor car; individuality of finger-prints established; Eastman manufactures coated photographic paper.

Brahms's Life

Brahms completes his Symphony No. 3; forms close relationship with Hermine Spies during summer spent at Wiesbaden.

Brahms begins Symphony No. 4; winter tour with Hermine Spies; spring in Italy; summer in Müzzschlag; forms close friendship with Fellingner family.

Brahms completes his Symphony No. 4; conducts premiere at Meiningen, where he meets Richard Strauss; rift with von Bülow.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1886	53	Death of Liszt; Richard Strauss composes <i>Aus Italien</i> ; Dvořák completes his oratorio <i>St Ludmilla</i> for performance at Leeds Festival in England; invention of the celeste; Henry James writes <i>The Bostonians</i> , Rimbaud <i>Les Illuminations</i> , Stevenson <i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i> , Ibsen <i>Rosmersholm</i> , Frances Hodgson Burnett <i>Little Lord Fauntleroy</i> .
1887	54	Death of Borodin; birth of Villa-Lobos; Bruckner composes Symphony No. 8, Verdi <i>Otello</i> , Goldmark <i>Rustic Wedding</i> , Gilbert and Sullivan <i>Ruddigore</i> ; Conan Doyle writes first Sherlock Holmes story, Strindberg <i>The Father</i> .
1888	55	Death of Marxsen; birth of Irving Berlin; Tchaikovsky writes Symphony No. 5, Satie <i>Gymnopédies</i> , Rimsky-Korsakov <i>Sheherezade</i> , Franck Symphony in D minor.

Historical Events

Death of Ludwig II of Bavaria; Gladstone introduces Bill for Home Rule in Ireland; Bonaparte and Orléans families banished from France; First Indian National Congress held; British School of Archaeology founded in Athens; hydro-electric installations begun at Niagara Falls; American Federation of Labor formed; game of golf introduced in America.

Queen Victoria celebrates Golden Jubilee; birth of Chiang Kai-shek; Zamenhof devises Esperanto.

Accession of Kaiser Wilhelm in Germany; Aeronautical Exhibition in Vienna; Eastman perfects box camera; Dunlop invents pneumatic tyre.

Brahms's Life

Brahms spends summer near Thun in Switzerland, where he composes Cello Sonata No. 2 in F, Violin Sonata No. 2 in A, and Piano Trio No. 3 in C minor; elected Honorary President of the Vienna *Tonkünstlerverein*.

Brahms composes the Double Concerto and *Zigeunerlieder* at Thun in Switzerland; premiere of Double Concerto marks reconciliation with Joachim; holiday in Italy with Simrock and Kirchner.

Brahms composes Violin Sonata No. 3 at Thun; meets Grieg (whom he likes) and Tchaikovsky (whom he does not); meets Martucci in Bologna.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1889	56	Dvořák composes Symphony No. 8, Mahler Symphony No. 1, R. Strauss <i>Don Juan</i> , Gilbert and Sullivan <i>The Gondoliers</i> ; Gide begins his <i>Journal</i> ; Van Gogh: <i>Landscape with Cypress Tree</i> .
1890	57	Death of Franck; births of Ibert and Frank Martin; Borodin: <i>Prince Igor</i> ; R. Strauss: <i>Tod und Verklärung</i> ; Wolf: <i>Spanisches Liederbuch</i> .
1891	58	Birth of Prokofiev; death of Delibes; Fauré: <i>La Bonne Chanson</i> ; Wolf: <i>Italienisches Liederbuch</i> .
1892	59	Births of Honegger and Milhaud; Dvořák composes <i>Te Deum</i> , Sibelius <i>Kullervo</i> , Nielsen Symphony No. 1; Ibsen writes <i>The Master Builder</i> , Maeterlinck <i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> .

Historical Events

Austrian Crown Prince, Archduke Rudolf commits suicide at Mayerling; birth of Adolf Hitler; advent of punch card system.

Bismarck dismissed by Wilhelm II; Swiss introduce social insurance; global influenza epidemics; first entirely steel-framed building erected in Chicago.

Triple alliance of Germany, Austria, and Italy renewed for twelve years; Pan-German League founded; beginnings of wireless telegraphy.

Germany and Britain agree on the Cameroons; Diesel patents his internal-combustion engine; first automatic telephone switchboard.

Brahms's Life

Brahms composes *Fest- und Gedenksprüche* and Motets, Op. 110; radically revises B major Trio, Op. 8; Order of Leopold conferred on him by Emperor Franz Josef; awarded freedom of the city of Hamburg; summer at Ischl.

Brahms composes String Quintet No. 2; spring holiday in Italy with Widmann; summer at Ischl; meets Alice Barbi.

Brahms composes Clarinet Trio and Clarinet Quintet, inspired by the playing of Richard Mühlfeld; makes will ('Ischl Testament').

Brahms begins composing final sequence of piano pieces, Op. 116–119; deaths of Elisabeth von Herzogenberg and his sister Elise leave Brahms desolated; spends spring in Italy.

Year	Brahms's Age	Arts and Culture
1893	60	Deaths of Tchaikovsky and Gounod; birth of Cole Porter; Dvořák: 'New World' Symphony; Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6; Sibelius: <i>Karelia</i> Suite; Art Nouveau appears in Europe; death of Maupassant.
1894	61	Deaths of Chabrier and Rubinstein; Debussy <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i> (often cited as 'the beginning of modern music').
1895	62	Births of Hindemith and Orff; first Promenade Concerts at Queen's Hall in London; Dvořák: Cello Concerto; Mahler: Symphony No. 2; R. Strauss: <i>Till Eulenspiegel</i> .

Historical Events

Founding of Labour Party in Britain; birth of Hermann Goering;
Henry Ford builds his first car.

Accession of Tsar Nicholas II in Russia; Nikita Khrushchev born;
German-Russian commercial treaty signed; Berliner uses horizontal
gramophone disc instead of cylinder as a record of sound production.

Karl Marx *Das Kapital*, Vol. 3; first public film show; discovery of
X-rays; Marconi invents radio telegraphy; Isiolkovski formulates
principle of rocket reaction propulsion.

Brahms's Life

Brahms works on piano pieces,
Opp. 118–119; holiday in Italy
with Widmann, timed to avoid
sixtieth birthday celebrations;
death of Hermine Spies.

Further bereavement with deaths
of Billroth, von Bülow, and Spitta;
summer at Ischl; composes the
two clarinet sonatas; publishes the
49 Deutsche Volkslieder; declines
conductorship of Hamburg
Philharmonic; accompanies
Alice Barbi at farewell recital.

Brahms tours German cities with
Mühlfeld, performing the clarinet
sonatas; summer in Ischl;
festival of 'the three Bs'
(Bach, Beethoven, Brahms) at
Meiningen; visits Clara Schumann
(now seventy-six) in Frankfurt.

Year **Brahms's Age**

Arts and Culture

1896

63

Deaths of Bruckner and Clara Schumann; Bruckner composes Symphony No. 9 (unfinished); Elgar *King Olaf*, Mahler Symphony No. 3; first use of quarter-tones in European music (in a string quartet by Foulds); last Gilbert and Sullivan operetta *The Grand Duke*; Wolf's opera *Der Corregidor*; Puccini: *La Bohème*; R. Strauss: *Also sprach Zarathustra*; Giordano: *Andrea Chenier*; Chekhov *The Sea Gull*; death of Verlaine.

1897

64

Mahler becomes conductor of the Vienna Opera; births of Korngold and Henry Cowell; H.G. Wells: *The Invisible Man*; Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac*.

Historical Events

Nobel Prizes established; new evidence for the innocence of Dreyfuss suppressed in France; foundation of Zionism; first Alpine ski school opens in Austria; Klondike gold rush begins; discovery of helium and radioactivity.

Germany occupies Kiao-chow in northern China; Zionist conference held in Switzerland; World Exhibition held at Brussels; Queen Victoria celebrates her diamond jubilee; Havelock Ellis: *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*.

Brahms's Life

Brahms composes *Vier ernste Gesänge* (Four Serious Songs); begins work on Chorale Preludes for organ, Op. 122 (his last work); conducts both piano concertos in Berlin, with Eugène d'Albert as soloist; death of Clara Schumann – Brahms undertakes forty-hour journey to attend her funeral but arrives too late; spends summer at Ischl; rapid deterioration in health; travels to Karlsbad to take the waters; returns to Vienna but health steadily worsens; attends Bruckner's funeral.

Last appearance in public, at a performance of Symphony No. 4 under Hans Richter; Brahms revises his will; declines rapidly and dies in Vienna from cancer of the liver on 3 April; lavish public funeral on 6 April.

8 Glossary

<i>allegro</i>	fast, lively
alto	the second highest voice in a choir, also the name of a singer possessing such a voice
<i>andante</i>	at a moderate walking pace
<i>adagio</i>	slow
bar (US: measure)	the visual division of metre into successive units, marked off on the page by vertical lines
binary form	a simple two-part form (A–B), part 1 generally moving from the tonic (home key) to the dominant (secondary key), part 2 moving from the dominant back to the tonic
canon	an imitative piece on the same principle as the common round (e.g. <i>Frère Jacques</i> , <i>Three Blind Mice</i> , <i>London's Burning</i>) in which the same tune comes in at staggered intervals of time. A canon may be of several voices and may include such contrapuntal devices as inversion (giving the tune upside down), augmentation (expanding the length of each note to twice its original value), diminution (diminishing the length of each note to half its original value), etc. Unlike the round, the imitating voice can enter at

different intervals above the original starting-note, hence the phrase ‘canon at the fifth’, etc. Two canons combined form a double canon, and canons can also be accompanied by other voices not partaking of the canon itself. Its permutations are almost endless, and Brahms explored them with a thoroughness and ingenuity unknown since the death of Bach in 1750.

capriccio

literally, a piece of capricious character; the term was attached to many light and lively keyboard pieces in the seventeenth century. Bach and others wrote similarly entitled movements in the eighteenth, as Brahms did in the nineteenth.

character pieces

a term loosely applied to relatively short (mostly piano) pieces typical of nineteenth-century Romanticism but popular through much of the twentieth century in which mood may be said to predominate over form – though many such pieces adhere to a straightforward ternary (A–B–A) structure. Brahms stood apart from many if not most of his Romantic contemporaries and predecessors in his Classical obsession with formal procedures, but many of his shorter piano pieces fall within the present definition.

classical era

loosely, the period between the death of J.S. Bach in 1750 and that of Beethoven in 1827, in which the complex polyphony of the Baroque era gave way to the simpler textures of melody and accompaniment, and symmetry of form and proportion became a primary concern. The era was dominated by the concept of sonata form and is primarily distinguished from the succeeding Romantic era (c.1827–c.1914) by its relative objectivity of approach.

concerto

a work for solo instrument and orchestra, generally in three movements

(fast–slow–fast). All of Mozart’s and Beethoven’s are of this type, most of them among the greatest examples ever written. In his Piano Concerto No. 2, Brahms added a fourth movement, a Scherzo, which he placed second in the sequence, thus earning the work’s reputation as a ‘symphony with piano *obbligato*’ (symphonies, unlike concertos, generally having four movements).

counterpoint,
contrapuntal

the interweaving of separate horizontal melodic lines, as opposed to the accompaniment of a top-line (horizontal) melody by a series of (vertical) chords

finale
fugue, fugal

generic term for the last movement of an instrumental or operatic work
an imitative work with several overlapping parts or ‘voices’ (the term applies irrespective of whether the fugue is vocal or instrumental). Fugue derives from the same principle as the common round, though it can be immeasurably more complicated. More of a technique than a fixed form, it begins with a solo tune (known as the subject). On the completion of this tune (or melodic fragment – there are some fugues based on a mere four notes), the second voice enters with an answer (the same tune, but in a different, complementary key). While the second voice is presenting the theme (subject), the first continues with a new tune (known as the countersubject). In the overlapping scheme of things this is equivalent to the second phrase of a round or canon (‘Dormez vous’ in *Frère Jacques*, ‘See how they run’ in *Three Blind Mice*). When subject and countersubject complete their dovetailed counterpoint, another ‘voice’ enters with its own statement of the subject. Voice 2 now repeats Voice 1’s countersubject, while Voice 1 introduces a new countersubject. It

	continues in this manner, alternating with episodes in which the various voices combine in free counterpoint, but with no full statements of the subject in any voice. Although his contrapuntal skill was second to none, Brahms's only well-known fugue is the colossal example that crowns his <i>Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel</i> , Op. 24.
ground bass	a short bass pattern repeated throughout a section or entire piece. A famous example is Dido's 'Lament' from Purcell's <i>Dido and Aeneas</i> . Two formidable examples in Brahms's output are the finales of the <i>Variations on the St Antony Chorale</i> and Symphony No. 4.
harmony, harmonic	the simultaneous sounding of notes to make a chord. Harmonies (chords) often serve as expressive or atmospheric 'adjectives', describing or giving added meaning to the notes of a melody, which, in turn, may be likened to nouns and verbs.
<i>intermezzo</i>	Originally an instrumental interlude in an opera, the term also applies, fairly loosely, to self-contained piano pieces, generally following a ternary (A-B-A) pattern. Brahms gave the name to many of his short piano pieces, most notably the <i>Three Intermezzi</i> , Op. 117. Other examples occur in the collections Opp. 76, 116, 118, and 119.
key	see 'tonality'
mode	the name given to a particular arrangement of notes within a scale. Every key in Western classical music has two versions, the major and the minor mode. The decisive factor is the size of interval between the key note (the tonic, the foundation on which scales are built) and the third degree of the scale. If it is compounded of two whole tones (as in C-E (C-D / D-E)), the mode is major. If the third tone comprises one and a half tones (C-E flat), the mode is minor. In general, the minor mode is darker, more

	<p>‘serious’, more moody, more obviously dramatic than the major. The so-called Church Modes prevalent in the Middle Ages are consist of various combinations of major and minor and are less dynamically ‘directed’ in character. They appear only rarely in music since the Baroque period (c.1600–1750) and have generally been used by composers to create some kind of archaic effect.</p>
motif	<p>a musical acorn. A melodic or rhythmic figure too brief to constitute a proper theme, but one on which themes are built. The opening notes of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5 form a perfect example.</p>
orchestration	<p>the art of using instruments in the orchestra for specific expressive, dramatic, colouristic, structural, and textural purposes. Also, the arrangement for orchestra of works originally written for other media, e.g., keyboard, choir, etc.</p>
phrase	<p>a smallish group of notes that form a unit of melody, as in ‘God save our Gracious Queen...’ and ‘My Country, ’tis of thee...’</p>
phrasing	<p>the apportionment of the above</p>
<i>piano, pianissimo</i>	<p>soft, very soft</p>
<i>pizzicato</i>	<p>plucked (for stringed instruments)</p>
polyphony	<p>music with two or more interweaving melodic strands</p>
passacaglia	<p>see ‘variation forms’</p>
pedals, pedalling	<p>the modern grand piano is equipped with three pedals: 1) the sustaining pedal (often misguidedly referred to as the ‘loud’ pedal), which raises the felt dampers from all the strings, allowing them to vibrate freely, ‘sustaining’ played notes after the finger has released the key; 2) the so-called ‘soft’ pedal, which shifts the entire keyboard-and-hammer mechanism to the right, so that one less string than normal is struck by</p>

the hammer; 3) the central ‘sostenuto’ pedal, which leaves vibrating only those notes which are depressed at the same moment as the pedal. The role of the pedals in the creation and mixing of pianistic sonorities is theoretically infinite in its variety. ‘The art of pedalling,’ said Chopin, ‘is a study for life.’

presto, prestissimo
programme music

very fast, extremely fast
music specifically designed to illustrate a story, poem, etc. – that is, music that is dependent on extramusical sources. Brahms was implacably opposed to the very concept.

rhapsody

an often loosely constructed, sectional, and self-contained piece of a romantic, narrative character. Brahms’s four rhapsodies (three for piano, one for contralto and orchestra) are far from loosely constructed and are among his finest and most strikingly effective works.

Romantic era

loosely, the period from the death of Beethoven in 1827 to the outbreak of the First World War. Unlike the Classical era preceding it, Romanticism, as its name suggests, placed a premium on emotional content, prizing spontaneity of feeling and vividness of expression over the ‘academic’ disciplines of pre-ordained forms. The taste was for confectionery miniatures and lavish dramas, for sensuality of sound and monumental forces, for tone poems and extravagant feats of virtuosity.

scherzo

a fast dance-movement in triple metre, like the minuet and the waltz, in which the definitive unit of measurement is the bar rather than the beats within it. After Beethoven, it usurped the place of the minuet in the Classical symphony and sonata. Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms, among others, also wrote self-contained scherzos for piano, Brahms’s earliest surviving original work being the Scherzo in E flat minor, published as Op. 4.

serenade

Originally a nocturnal song sung by a suitor beneath the window of his beloved, it came in the eighteenth century to denote a multi-movement orchestral work, freer in construction than a symphony and generally light and agreeable in character, often designed for performance outdoors on summer evenings. The best known is probably Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Elgar, and many others wrote serenades of similar character in the nineteenth century.

sonata form

Also known as 'sonata-allegro' and 'first movement' form, this was the dominant form throughout the second half of the eighteenth century and the first third of the nineteenth, though later examples of it abound, notably in Brahms's three piano sonatas, three violin sonatas, two cello sonatas and two clarinet sonatas, as well as many large scale movements in his symphonies and chamber works. It is basically a ternary (three-part) design, in which the last part is a modified repeat of the first. The three sections of standard sonata form are called exposition, development, and recapitulation. The exposition, which may be prefaced by a slow introduction, is based on the complementary tensions of two 'opposing' keys. Each key-group generally has its own themes, but this thematic contrast is of secondary importance (many of Haydn's sonata movements are based on a single theme, which passes through various adventures on its voyages from key to key). In movements in the major mode, the secondary key is almost invariably the dominant. When the key of the movement is in the minor mode, the secondary key will almost always be the relative major. The exposition always ends in the secondary key, never in the tonic. In most sonata-form movements, the main themes of the two key-groups will also be of a contrasting character. If the first main

theme is blustery or military, the second, in the complementary key, is likely to be more serene and contemplative. The development is altogether more free and unpredictable. In most cases, true to its name, it takes themes or ideas from the exposition and develops them. It may ignore the themes of the exposition altogether, as do often those of Mozart. What it will have is a notably increased sense of harmonic instability, drifting, or in some cases struggling, through a number of different keys before delivering us back to the tonic for the recapitulation. Since the recapitulation lacks the tonal tensions of the exposition, the themes themselves take on a new relationship. In its prescribed resolution of family (tonal) conflicts, sonata form may be seen as the most Utopian of all musical structures.

sonata, string quartet,
string quintet, concerto,
symphony, etc.

Broadly speaking, these all have essentially the same form, although the concerto generally has three movements, the symphony four, and the string quartet (and all other forms of chamber music) a mixture of the two. The overall layout of the concerto and most sonatas consists of a fast (or fastish) opening movement (sometimes in sonata form), a central slow movement, and a quick finale (sometimes a rondo). In the case of the symphony and the four-movement sonata, the extra movement is almost always a minuet or a scherzo.

Sturm und Drang

literally, 'storm and stress'. The term denotes a literary and musical movement in the eighteenth century cultivating the expression of turbulent, intense, and dramatic emotions, and has come to be more loosely applied to any work of art of a comparable character.

symphony	see 'sonata'
ternary form	a three-section structure (A–B–A) in which the final part is an exact or nearly exact repetition of the first. The term applies also to those forms, such as sonata form, in which the first part is played twice (A–A–B–A).
tonality, key	There is probably no aspect of music harder to describe than tonality or key. Put at its broadest, it has to do with a kind of tonal solar system in which each note (or 'planet'), each rung of the scale (from <i>scala</i> , the Italian word for 'ladder'), exists in a fixed and specific relationship to one particular note (or 'sun'), which is known as the key note or tonic. When this planetary system is based on the note C, the music is said to be 'in the key of C'. Each note of the scale has a different state of tension, a different degree of unrest in relation to the key note, and each arouses a different degree and specificity of expectation in the listener, which the composer can either resolve or frustrate. Through the use of alien notes, not present in the prevailing scale, the composer can shift from one solar system, from one key, to another. On the way from one key to another, a sense of stability gives way to a sense of instability, of flux, which is not resolved until the arrival at the new key. This process of moving from one key to another is known as modulation.
variation forms	There are four basic types of variation: 1) those in which the original tune is clothed in a sequence of stylistic and textural dresses (ornamental turns, decorative scale passages, rhythmic, textural, and tempo alterations, and so on) while the chief outline of the melody, the original harmonies, and the overall form of the theme are preserved, though the mode (major or minor) may sometimes be altered. The same techniques of variation can be applied, within the given limits, even to those elements that are

retained from the original theme. The bass line, for instance, may be amplified by a trill, fast or slow, or be doubled in octaves, and the basic chords of the original harmonies may be seasoned with decorative notes adjacent to those of the original. This form is known generally as melodic variation. Almost all variation sets of the Classical period (loosely, 1750 to 1827) are of this kind – Mozart’s being perhaps the best known; 2) those in which the harmonic pattern of the theme is preserved while melody, tempo, rhythm, texture (chords or intertwining melodic lines), and mode (major/minor) may change beyond recognition; 3) those in which the theme is not a self-sufficient melody but either a constantly reiterated bass line, above which the upper parts may change, or a series of chords, whose harmonic sequence and unvarying rhythm is reiterated, unchanged, throughout the composition. This form of variation is called both *passacaglia* and *chaconne* (in the Baroque era the two names were used interchangeably); 4) those in which only a part of the original theme (a single melodic phrase, a motto rhythm, a structural form) is retained as a basis for variation, all other aspects and parts being subject to very considerable transformation. Mozart’s Variations on ‘Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman’ (Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star) provide an excellent introduction to these techniques, partly because the theme is so familiar and thus easy to follow. They also provide an excellent example of the stereotyped layout of late eighteenth-century keyboard variations in general. In the nineteenth century Brahms’s mastery of variation techniques was unsurpassed and rarely equalled.

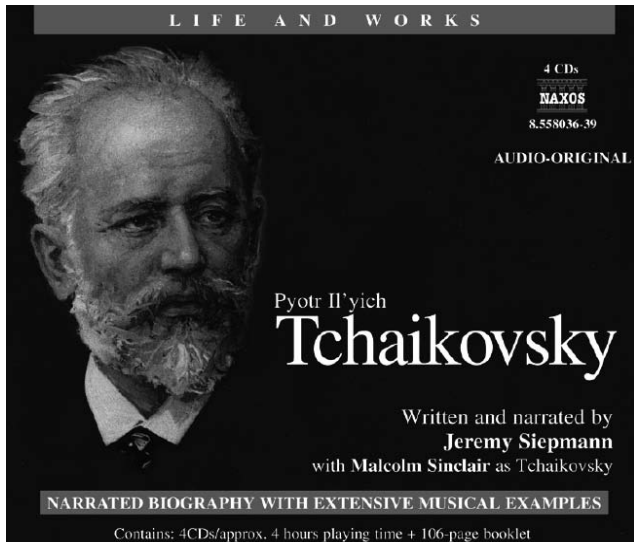
waltz

Originally a popular ballroom dance in triple metre, it is also used for many so-called ‘concert waltzes’, such as those by Chopin and Brahms, which were never intended for actual dancing.

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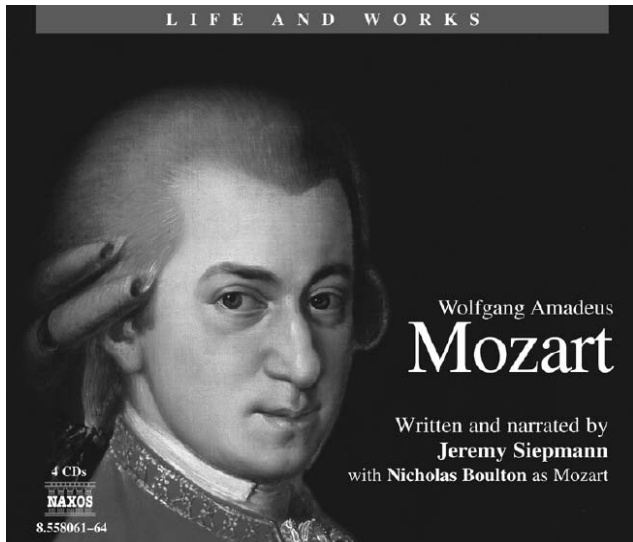
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