

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BRAHMS AS  
REFLECTED IN SELECTED SOLO  
VOCAL WORKS: SUPPLEMENTARY  
TO A FULL RECITAL OF  
HIS SONGS

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## FORWARD

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## CHAPTER I

### POLITICAL, HISTORICAL, AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE TIMES OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

#### Political and Historical Setting

The nineteenth century into which Johannes Brahms was born was ushered into existence by a sweeping political and social revolution, namely, the French Revolution. Virtually every country in Europe was changed in one way or another by the events of this political upheaval. The French Revolution overturned a society that had been growing up for centuries. Cut loose from the past, it started France, with all the world, upon new lines of growth.

The fundamental cause of the Revolution was the unjust privileges of the wealthy class and the exploitation of the poverty-stricken masses. This situation had existed many times throughout the history of the world, yet, at this time, the underprivileged masses had reached a new consciousness of their inferior position.

Authority was being questioned in areas other than politics. New advances in science and mechanics (electromagnetic induction, photography, the railway and steamboat, food canning, electric light, steel production, telephone,



telegraph, and others) had reversed some of the earlier ideas about the world outside man. The telescope and microscope revealed undreamed-of worlds. The basic elements of earth, fire, and water were proved resolvable into components showing that they were not "elements" at all, as the ancients had theorized. Charles Darwin's Origin of the Species appeared in 1859 setting forth the hypothesis of evolution. The Industrial Revolution, which began in England, brought on many social and economic problems and the rise of capitalism and socialism. French literary men, such as Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, and Montesquieu were revolting against the authority of the past. Throughout Europe factions espousing "the cause of the kings" and those lauding "the cause of the masses" were gathering momentum. The cultural, political, economic, and social order was greatly affected by these momentous advances (12).

The eventual victory of Napoleon and his subsequent dominance as Emperor of France for the next fourteen years (1799-1815) clearly brought about the breakdown of the old system of monarchy. Even though Napoleon, himself, later proved to be a tyrant, he was not able to quell the elements of freedom of thought and action which had been awakened in the minds of the mass of humanity.

After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, there was a period of restoration in which the princes who had been restored to their thrones sought to ignore the progress made from 1789 to 1815. The dominating figure of the Restoration Period (1815-1848) was Clemens Metternick (1773-1859) who endeavored to maintain the status-quo by suppressing liberalism in Austria and throughout Europe (15). The free spirit of the subjugated masses attempted to assert itself once again in the revolutions of 1820 (which began in Spain), 1830, and 1848 (both of which began in France).

In Germany and Italy there were complex movements working (1) for constitutional liberty and social reform within the several states (2) for the union of the fragments of the German race into a nation; and (3) for the independence of Italians, Slavs, and Hungarians held in subjection in Austria . . . Sardinia, and Prussia, and the minor German States kept their new constitutions. Switzerland had become a true federal republic . . . (9, p. 291).

Less progress was seen in Germany which was still under the rule of Austria.

The next thirty years from 1850 to 1880 saw ". . . the advance toward democracy in England, abolition of slavery in the United States of America, a new federal German Empire, a united constitutional Italy, a stable French republic, constitutional Spain, and a constitutional, federal Austria-Hungary" (9, p. 291). During these years, Brahms was in the prime of his life (17-47 years old).

Bismark entered upon his group of wars, driving Austria out of Germany in 1866. The North German Federation then formed was expanded into the German Empire by the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71). By 1880, most of the monarchies of Europe had become constitutional. New combination of alliances appeared. In 1882, Germany, Austria, and Italy, who were all old enemies, now formed the Triple Alliance. A little later, France and Russia formally adopted a dual alliance. "The Continent was thrown into two hostile camps and rested for the next twenty-five years (until 1907) under a crushingly burdensome armed peace"(9, p. 292).

The historical and political events of the nineteenth century set the stage for vast changes in the social structure during the Romantic era. The musician was no less affected by these changes than were those in other fields. The opportunity for independence which was created by the new identity of the masses also became a part of the new identity of the musician. He no longer was subservient to either the church or the courts. The creative musician, that is, the composer, further separated himself from obligations by supporting himself primarily from his compositions and not by filling utilitarian positions as choir director, choir singer, organist and so on. These composers did not, for the most part, write music for specific events as composers of earlier

times had been accustomed to doing. Romantic composers, instead, were interested in writing a piece of music for the sake of composing and with an eye toward posterity (3).

Beethoven was the first composer who through the strong force of his personality established the artistic independence of the composer. He effectively established a precedent which the composers who succeeded him during the Romantic period had the option of following. Throughout his lifetime, Brahms maintained the social independence which is characteristic of the pattern set by Beethoven. Brahms did teach and conduct in order to support himself, however, these were positions of his own choosing. When he felt that the positions interfered with his work as a composer, or required artistic compromise, he simply resigned from the position.

Through his lifetime, Brahms was well aware of the political changes which were taking place in his country. Among his vocal works there are several which indicate this awareness. The Truimphlied, Opus 55, a work for eight-part chorus, baritone solo, and orchestra, was inspired by enthusiasm over the Prussian Victory of 1870. Truimphlied was Fest-und Gedenkspruche Opus 109, which was written for eight-part chorus to be sung acapella. This piece contains

three movements commemorating the battles of Leipzig and Sedan and the year 1888 which was marked by two imperial deaths and coronations. The subject matter of the biblical text constitutes a plea to Germans to ". . . shun internal dissension and live worthy of her glorious past" (15, p. 342).

### Cultural Setting of the Times

Having reviewed the political and historical background of the nineteenth century into which Johannes Brahms was born, it is necessary to investigate the cultural climate which was a result of those eventful times. From this review we can see what place Brahms holds in the scheme of musical life in his own era and how his musical posture relates to his solo vocal works.

The revolutions which brought the eighteenth century to a close aroused feelings of man's individuality and independence. There developed an awareness of man's need to express his individuality and his reaction to the world in which he lived. This need combined with other elements developed into the Romantic movement which dominated the social, political, and cultural thought of the nineteenth century.

The groundwork for the philosophical thought in support of the Romantic movement was laid in the eighteenth century by the French literary figure, Jean-Jacques Rousseau

(1712-1778). Rousseau, who is regarded as the father of Romanticism, set forth in his works almost all the ingredients of Romanticism. In his writings he:

. . .repudiated the ideal of the elegant upper class leisure and preached modern bourgeois family life as we know it today. He defined the principles of a democratic society and those of representative government. He also reformed the prose style, anticipated the theory of music drama, revolutionized the aims and methods of education, delved into the recesses of the self and made Nature an ideal norm. . . toward which all our exploration of heart and mind should tend (2, p. 163).

Although the Frenchman, Rousseau, had pointed the way toward Romanticism early in the eighteenth century, the Romantic movement in French literature did not develop as rapidly as it did in Germany and England. The failure of France to continue to be the forerunner of Romanticism in literature is probably due to their preoccupation with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. In addition to this preoccupation, the French were entrenched in the tradition of Classicism. However, Victor Hugo (1802-1885) soon became the leader of the new cause of Romanticism and in France influenced other writers in this mode.

Although the Romantic movement began early in England, it was not as far-reaching as it was in Germany where it penetrated deeply into the spiritual life and all areas of

the intellectual life. In England, Romanticism appeared primarily as a literary movement (4, p. 656).

In Germany, the literary movement known as Romanticism was begun by Gohhtold Lessing (1729-1781), a dramatist and critic who challenged the canons of classic art and literature. Nowhere did Romantic self-expression attain the boldness and intensity that it did in Germany. There literary Romanticism developed as a reaction to the period of restoration following the Napoleonic Wars. A new interest was developed in folklore, Tuetic mythology, legends, fairy tales, popular ballads and folksongs. These folk elements were collected and valued as a basis for the development of an art expression. Emphasis on emotional interpretations of nature and sentimentality concerning the history of the German people, gave rise to renewed interest in medieval legends with magic superstitions and knights and chivalric worship of women (3, p. 1568).

In the area of the fine arts, the early nineteenth century reflects two principal trends: that of Neo-Classicism and that of Romanticism. These two trends represent the varied reactions to the upheaval of political and social life caused by the American and French revolutions (14, p. 121). The early nineteenth century painters who represent these

opposing reactions are David (1748-1825) and Goya (1746-1828). David strove to establish order out of chaos and strife. His paintings are analytical, photographic and rather cold and harsh. For his adherence to form and detail he is referred to as a Neo-Classicalist. Ingres (1780-1867), his assistant, emphasized formal order and a linear-like style. The opposite reaction to the political and social upheaval of the times is expressed in the vivid, colorful and expressive paintings of Goya. Goya's paintings and those of Gericault (1701-1824) and Delacroix (1798-1863), sought to convey more immediate and direct emotional values. They relied more on color than on line to convey a feeling of drama and excitement. A new interest and feeling for nature becomes apparent in the works of the Englishmen, Constable (1776-1837) and Turner (1775-1851), who painted realistic landscapes typical of the Romantic movement.

The German nation did not create the Romantic movement in literature nor in the fine arts. However, it was in Germany that the Romantic movement in the fine arts reached its fullest consequence and significance. "Romanticism was the very domain of German painting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (6, p. 571). In Germany as in France, however, the Neo-Classic element also was functioning but



its influence was not as wide-spread as the influence exerted by the Romantic self-expressive German painters. Some of the more well-known German Romantic painters were: Koch (1769-1839), Friedrich (1774-1840), Kobell (1766-1855), Kersting (1783-1847), Richter (1803-1840), and many others.

### Musical Background

The Romantic spirit of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not appear as a one-time occurrence but rather as a series of occurrences in varying countries and in the various arts. As mentioned above, among the nations, it appeared first in France, and England and then in Germany. Among the arts it occurred first in literature, then in the fine arts, and last in music. Even though the discipline of music was the last to receive the Romantic influence, music represents the strongest expression of European Romanticism (7, p. 4).

In music, Romanticism is characterized by "...subjective emotion and imaginative vigor and was a movement of revolt from the pedantry and artificiality into which the Classic Era had degenerated" (3, p. 1568). In Germany, as in England and France, musical romanticism followed the

literary and fine arts movements almost a generation later. The Romantic elements in music were inspired by Romantic elements in poetry.

During the nineteenth century, there developed two primary factions in the musical scene of Germany just as there had been primarily two contrasting styles in the fine arts. The first to be discussed was a group of composers of the Romantic school who called themselves the New Germans. This group was supported and inspired by Liszt, Berlioz, Wagner, and, later, Hugo Wolf (1860-1903). These men in their efforts to establish a basis for the "Music of the Future," tried to achieve a closer union of the arts of instrumental music and poetry (11, p. 286).

Berlioz (1803-1869), who is regarded as the champion of program music, was extremely explicit in tying the poetry or narrative he wished to express to his music. Often he prefaced his works with verbal explanations, minutely describing the scenes and emotions which he wished to represent.

Wagner, although grouped with Berlioz, was not an adherent of programatic music as such. He predicted for both music and poetry ". . . a future as co-ordinate elements with action and scenic effect of a larger art, the drama, the object of which he explained to be dramatic truth" (11, p. 288).

Wagner felt that music had no future as a separate art and that poetry could not exist as a separate art form.

The primary role which Franz Liszt played was one of support and enthusiasm for Berlioz and Wagner. In Weimar, where Liszt held the position of Chapelmaster, many of the compositions of Berlioz and Wagner were played by the Weimar orchestra. However, Liszt earned his place as a member of the New Germans through his symphonic poems and his innovative use of expressive dissonances.

The exponents of the preservation of the independence of music were variously called "Romantic Classicists" (7, p. 349) or "Neo-Classists" (8, p. 490). This group which was opposed to the intimate fusion of the arts, was made up of poets, writers, and musicians, (Brahms, Schumann, Mendelssohn) with Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904), the critic, as their spokesman. Hanslick was an extremist in that he favored a clear separation of the arts as is found in pure instrumental music (7).

It fell to Brahms to be the musical leader of the Romantic Classicists. "Brahms' belief in the fundamental value of absolute music based on his understanding of the principles of Beethoven, and his admiration for Schumann made him less and less sympathetic to Liszt and Wagner" (8, p. 488).

Brahms held no personal animosity for Wagner and it is said that he was set entirely against his will as the chief opposer of the music of the New School (10, p. 39).

Another important characteristic of musical Romanticism of the nineteenth century as it relates to Brahms's vocal works is the new importance given to instrumental music. In the solo song and in opera, this new emphasis on instrumental music manifests itself in the more varied and expressive "accompaniment" of the songs and of operatic literature. With Schubert the melody and accompaniment of the songs were of equal importance. As the century progressed the Romanticists continued to give increasing importance to the accompaniment until, by the end of the century, many songs were instrumentally conceived with a ". . .commenting, declamatory voice-part" (7, p. 36). In opera the end result of this trend was operatic scenes in which the scenes were ". . .symphonically created with vocal parts superimposed" (7, p. 36). Brahms in his German Lieder lies somewhere between these extremes.

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## CHAPTER II

### BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL

#### Parentage

Johannes Brahms was born into a family that was poor and rather undistinguished. His ancestors had come from the North Sea country (Ditmarsch) and had taken their name from a characteristic yellow-flowering bloom or Bram. His grandfather had been an innkeeper at Heide in Holstein, Germany and Johannes' own father, who has been described as a ". . . droll, likeable, happy-go-lucky vagabond . . ." (11, p. 33), was a double-bass player at the Hamburg Theater.

Johannes' father, Johann Jacob, had longed to be a musician during his childhood. Brahms's biographers are not in agreement upon the nature or extent of the musical training of the elder Brahms. Schauffler states that he prodded his parents into allowing him to be bound as an apprentice to the town piper who was the ". . . sole repository of musical science in the village. . ." (11, p. 34). Niemann writes that the elder Brahms ran away from home three times, each time to various nearby towns where he could be given lessons on the stringed instruments, horns

and flute by various town musicians (10). Another biographer, Murdoch, reports that Joahnn Jakob was a student at the Stadt Pfeiferei for five years where he studied ". . .violin, viola, cello, flute and horn. . ." and from which he ". . .received a certificate of character and prowess on leaving . . ." (9, p. 19). In any case, Johannes' father was an energetic man who wanted to be a musician and who stubbornly refused any other vocation.

As a young man of twenty, Johann Jakob set off for Hamburg and for many years eeked out a living as a double bass player. At first he worked as bass-fiddler in a small itinerate "string band" (11, p. 34). It was not until many years later that he secured his position as bass-player at the municipal theater. In the interim, he fell in love with and married Johanna Nissen who was small, homely, crippled in one foot, ailing and seventeen years his senior. Johanna Nissen Brahms is said to have been a very sensitive person who possessed a sure instinct for spiritual values (11).

A closer look at the ancestral background of Johanna Nissen provides a better appreciation of her attractive qualities. Her mother was of noble birth, and the geneology of her father could be traced as far back as the fourteenth century. These forebearers were clergyman, ecclesiastical administrators, councilors and burgomasters. Gradually



the family line lost its prominent position in society. Johanna's more immediate ancestors were school masters and her own father was a tailor (6).

Although Johanna's education was limited, she was able to express herself very vividly in correspondence. Her letters exhibit her clear common sense and demonstrate her kindheartedness. She found a great deal of happiness in helping others. "After all, what can give me greater joy than to help and serve my fellow creatures as far as lies in my power? People who live only for themselves and not for others are only half alive" (6, p. 24).

It is said that Johanna Nissen had an instinctive liking for the best in music and poetry and that later on in life she learned all of Schiller's works by memory (9). She had the spiritual and intellectual qualities necessary to engender creative talent: "There is reason to believe that just those spiritual and mental qualities which transform a reproductive into a creative talent came from the mother . . ." (6, p. 28).

From both parents Johannes inherited a love of nature and an appreciation of the small joys of life.

### Childhood and Adolescence

Johannes Brahms was born in a tenement in the red-light district of Hamburg on May 7, 1833. He was the second child in a family of three children. Of the three, the two boys, Fritz and Johannes, were destined to become musicians.

As a child, Johannes liked the singing and dancing games which are a specialty of Hamburg children. He possessed absolute pitch and had built for himself an ". . . infantile but practicable system of notation without suspicion that such a thing was already in existence. . ." (11, p. 36).

By the time that Brahms was seven years old, he had begun formal instruction in music. His first teacher was Cossol, a local pianist. A few years later, at the age of ten, Brahms appeared in a public concert playing an etude by Herz and the piano part of a Beethoven wind quintet. An impresario who was in the audience was so impressed that he offered to take Johannes and his family on a concert tour of the United States of America. Cossol, however, discouraged this exploitation and persuaded his own teacher, Marxsen, one of Hamburg's finest, to take Brahms as a student (5). It is Marxsen who is credited with having instilled a reverence for the works of Johann Sebastian Bach in the young Brahms (2).

Between these two teachers, Cossol and Marxsen, Brahms received his musical education. This education included piano, harmony, sight transposition, counterpoint (in which Brahms became proficient), and theory of composition.

The schools which Brahms attended were generally described in most of his biographies as being very mediocre. However, Geiringer, a later biographer, states that Brahms's parents sacrificed to send him to a private school at the age of six. He stayed there until his eleventh year at which time he was sent to another private school. "Both schools were good, and the boy learned as much as possible under the standards of education then obtaining. Herr Hoffman's school (the second one Brahms attended) was even known for its advanced methods" (6, p. 31). However, another authoritative source asserts that Brahms never attended beyond primary school (5).

During these early years, from the age of nine until his late teens, Brahms was often to be found playing the piano for dances late in the evening and sometimes all during the night. The dances took place in some of the most infamous dives of the harbour of Hamburg. This practice was, of course, very hard on him both physically and emotionally. It may be due to these circumstances that Brahms was anemic

as a youth and suffered from nervous headaches. Schaufller feels that these early experiences may in part account for Brahms's rather curious attitudes towards women (11).

### Young Adulthood

The musical education which Brahms received provided him with enough technique and knowledge to enable him to reach an extra-ordinarily high level of artistry with his first published compositions. These compositions were written somewhere between his eighteenth and twentieth years (5). Brahms had two pseudonyms, G. W. Mark, and Karl Wurth, under which names he published compositions before Opus 1 was published under Brahms's own name (11).

In 1853 at the age of twenty, Brahms met Edward Remenyi, a gifted and warmhearted Hungarian violinist, with whom Brahms toured North Germany in the capacity of piano accompanist. During this tour Remenyi introduced Brahms to the successful violinist, Josef Joachim, who was Royal Concertmaster in Hanover and with whom Brahms was to develop a lasting friendship (5). Joachim was deeply moved by the musical genius of young Brahms upon hearing some of his compositions. Among these was one of Brahms earliest songs, Liebestreu, Opus 3, No. 1. Many years later Joachim recalled that the song, Liebestreu " . . . burst upon him as a revelation" (11, p. 40).

Armed with a letter of introduction from Joachim and Remenyi, Brahms visited Franz Liszt in Weimar. Liszt was an adherent of the modernist school of program music known as the "New Germans" and tried unsuccessfully to encourage Brahms toward their mode of composition. Brahms left Remenyi in the courtly atmosphere surrounding Liszt at the Altenburg and returned to Göttingen at Joachim's invitation.

Brahms happily stayed with Joachim until August of that year (1853), at which time, wanting to see some of his music in print, and to make more contacts in the musical world, he set out to visit the west of Germany.

In Bonn, Brahms made the acquaintance of musicians and music lovers who persuaded him to study Robert Schumann's compositions in detail. Feeling that he had found a kindred spirit, Brahms undertook a visit to the Schumann home in September: a visit which was to greatly influence his entire life history (6).

Robert Schumann, as editor and founder of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, had for more than a decade been one of the leaders of public opinion in the musical life of Germany. No longer the editor, he became so enthusiastic about the young Brahms that he published an article in the journal in which he heralded Brahms as ". . .the one who would be chosen to express the most exalted spirit of the

times in an ideal manner" (5, p. 7). Having thus been thrust into the musical eye of Germany, Brahms felt that it was incumbent upon him to fulfill the prophesy of future greatness which Schumann had envisioned.

One of Brahms's more recent biographers points out an interesting point regarding the character of Brahms as exemplified in his reaction to Schumann's patronage:

All the prerequisites of a rapid and brilliant rise to fame seemed at hand. That things turned out differently was not only due to external circumstances; it was a peculiarity of Brahms's personality that he was unable to forge ahead except by force of character, perseverance, and driving energy in the face of obstacles (5, p. 9).

The attention which Robert Schumann brought to Brahms, which would seem to have been the turning point in his life, turned out to be only a sparkler. The events which followed in the next three years were emotionally trying for Brahms and seemed to disturb a straight path to success.

On February 27, in 1854, Robert Schumann, who had developed a severe nervous disorder, attempted suicide by throwing himself into the Rhine River. He was saved from drowning and on March 4, 1854 was confined to an institution at Endenich, near Bonn (6). When Brahms heard the news of Robert Schumann's illness and confinement, he immediately went to Düsseldorf to help Clara Schumann and her children.

During this time the feeling of reverent friendship which Brahms held for Clara gradually changed to one of ardent love. Brahms stayed at the Schumann home in Düsseldorf with Clara until the death of Robert Schumann in 1856.

For the duration of his stay with Clara, Brahms was preoccupied with the Schumann family and their problems and therefore accomplished little musically. The love which developed between Clara Schumann and Brahms during these years gradually changed from passion to one of platonic friendship. Other than a quarrel in 1891 over the publication of the original version of her husband's D Minor Symphony, Clara and Brahms remained intimate friends throughout their entire lives (11).

Shortly after Robert Schumann's death, Brahms left Clara and returned to his parents' home in Hamburg. With the exception of the time spent travelling to Detmold to conduct and teach, he spent the next several years composing works in rapid succession. These compositions included chamber music, piano compositions, vocal music, and his first orchestral attempts (5).

Through the efforts of Clara Schumann, Joachim, and Julius Stockhausen, all of whom played Brahms's music on concert tours, the works of Brahms were becoming more familiar

to the general public. Brahms, however, was considered by many to be out of the mainstream of the musical scene of the day. In 1860 an article published in Neue Zeitschrift für Musik declared that ". . . there was in Germany scarcely a musician of importance who did not subscribe to the tenets of the New Germans. . ." (11, p. 50). Brahms was not one of this group.

Brahms, becoming restless at home in Hamburg, ventured on a trip to Vienna in the fall of 1862. This was Brahms's first trip to Vienna and was a highly successful one, both musically and socially. However, he still longed for a position of honor in his own home town of Hamburg. He was very bitter when his friend, the singer, Julius Stockhausen, was appointed conductor of the Philharmonic Concerts, a position which Brahms had heavily counted on obtaining. The extent of the disappointment which Brahms felt was expressed by him later when he was heard to remark:

. . . on two occasions the conductorship of the Philharmonic Concerts was filled by strangers while I was passed over! If I had been chosen at the right time, I would have become an orderly citizen; I would have married and lived like others. As it is, I am a vagabond (5, pp. 15-16).

Brahms's disappointment over the loss of the Hamburg position was somewhat assuaged by the offer on his thirtieth



birthday to be the conductor of the choir at the Singakademie, an oratorio society in Vienna. Although Brahms was pleased with the offer, it was not without some hesitation that he wrote his letter of acceptance on May 30, 1863. "It is a grave decision, to give up one's liberty for the first time" (10, p. 89). Another biographer, Gall, translates the same passage: "It is a peculiar sensation to give up one's freedom for the first time" (5, p. 16).

Brahms stayed in Baden-Baden near to Clara Schumann through the summer and until the end of September at which time he moved to Vienna to become a permanent resident.

#### Mature Years

In the fall of 1863, Brahms began his service as musical director of the Singakademie in Vienna. He began this service with much enthusiasm. However, as some of the customary problems of such a position arose, Brahms began to lose interest. At the end of one year he resigned this post.

In 1865, two years after Brahms moved to Vienna, his mother died in Hamburg. At the news of his mother's death, he was found alone at the piano ". . . weeping while he played Bach's Goldberg Variations" (11, p. 55).

Brahms was very attached to his mother. Schauffler stated as follows:

We are sure . . . that Brahms adored his mother with a most ardent tenderness. Louisa Japha, his boyhood playmate, bears witness that it went to one's heart when he spoke of his old mother, he was so utterly devoted to her (11, p. 255).

It has been speculated that Brahms had an inordinate attachment to his mother and that his attachment may have been one of the reasons which prevented or made marriage unnecessary to Brahms (11). However, other biographers feel that Brahms's involvement in his own work and his need for freedom of movement and for freedom from pressing responsibility were more likely the cause of his bachelorhood.

"Dimly he felt that he would be acting in defiance of his aim in life if he, who had dedicated himself wholly to his art, were to belong to another" (6, p. 330).

Several years later, in 1868, Brahms was beginning to write the fifth number of the German Requiem. Although the larger part of the Requiem was written to be a tribute to his benefactor, Robert Schumann, the fifth piece of the Requiem was written as a memorial to his mother.

During the years from 1867 to 1872, with the exception of two studies for piano and the first two books of the Hungarian Dances, Brahms published nothing but vocal music. The year 1868, in particular, is cited as a year of

extensive vocal writing for Brahms. To this year may be attributed some of his best songs: Von ewiger Liebe, Die Mainacht, An die Nachtigal, Botschaft, An ein Veilchen, and Wiegenlied (9).

By the time of this period of vocal writing, Brahms's life had settled into a routine which involved concert tours as pianist and conductor in the early part of the year, generally from January to April. These trips took him throughout Germany and often to Holland and Switzerland. Summers were spent for several years at Baden-Baden near Clara Schumann and later in the Austrian and Swiss Alps. These summers were devoted entirely to composition. In later years, Brahms took an occasional trip in the spring to Italy for pure enjoyment. The fall months and first half of winter were devoted to completing and overseeing the printing of the compositions which had been written during the summer.

In 1872 Brahms once again accepted a permanent position, this time as a musical director of the Society of Friends of Music in Vienna. He managed to stay with his directorship for three years before giving it up in anger and disillusionment:

The artistically uncompromising nature of his programs had given rise to opposition. Writing about a concert in which, after [J. S.] Bach's Cantata No. 8 ("Dearest God, When Shall I Die?"),

Cherubini's Requiem in C Minor was performed, Eduard Hanslich, the leading music critic of Vienna and a warm friend of Brahms wrote: 'Vienna does not lack a public which reveres and seeks out the serious beauty of music. But here, as elsewhere, one does not go to concerts for the express purpose of attending his own funeral-first Protestant and then Catholic' (5, pp. 16-17).

Brahms's father died in 1872. The elder Brahms who had remarried several years before, was survived by his widow and a crippled son. Johannes Brahms took it upon himself to provide continual financial support for his stepmother and her son, whom he set up in business. Brahms maintained this arrangement and continued the bond of friendship with his stepmother throughout his lifetime.

For a decade, now, Brahms had been a famous and successful man, honored and sought by much of the Western world. Several universities conferred honorary degrees upon him (2, p. 14). His chief competitors in the field of composition were Wagner and Wolf. Brahms was extremely critical of his own compositions and was very reticent about his creative work as indicated in the following:

He was constantly refusing offers from publishers and managers which, but for his unyielding artistic rectitude and the unique severity of his self-criticism, would have brought him substantial wealth (11, p. 65).

The period from his middle forties to his sixtieth year were the most fruitful years of his life. It was during this

time that he wrote most of his best and most well-known vocal literature. However, after his sixtieth year the demise of his life set in rapidly. Most of his old friends had passed on and in the spring of 1896, Clara Schumann lay near death. She died on May 20, 1896 and Brahms hurried from his summer stay in Ischl to attend the funeral. It is said that the agitation caused from missing a train connection, a cold contracted on the trip, and the emotional shock at Clara's death caused an attack of jaundice which was the beginning of Brahms's fatal illness (9, p. 166).

Brahms's illness was later diagnosed as cancer of the liver. Although he was not told, the doctors considered Brahms a terminal case. He declined steadily and died on April 3, 1897. He was buried in the Zentralfriedhof, in Vienna near the tombs of Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert.

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## CHAPTER III

### MUSICAL STYLE OF BRAHMS REFLECTING HIS LIFE AND TIMES

#### General Characteristics of Brahms's Musical Style

The musical style of Brahms reflects his individual personality traits. He was by nature an introverted person. "He disliked to have his true thoughts and emotions inferred from his demeanor" (13, p. 145). He was fiercely independent and never allowed himself to be in cliques, coteries or "schools."

Brahms was content to be like the great Johann Sebastian [Bach] and live within himself, untrammelled by outside influences, and write music that was in him (11, p. 199).

Brahms was self-disciplined, self-effacing (particularly in regard to his compositions), and a consummate perfectionist. "To do one's level best is never in vain [he wrote Kalbeck]. The benefits of his need not necessarily show in the place you intended" (13, p. 172).

He refused to allow anything to be printed until it had passed the most punctilious scrutiny (11, p. 201).

Perfection of detail is the first sign of the artist, and no one realized this better than Brahms (11, p. 199).

It is well-known that Brahms spent years working and reworking his compositions. One outstanding instance of his persistence may be seen in the re-writing of his Trio in B Major. Thirty-seven years after its publication, Brahms completely rewrote this work:

You wouldn't guess [he wrote to Clara Schumann in September, 1889], on what a childishness I have squandered beautiful summer days. I have written my B Major Trio once more, and can call it Opus 108 instead of Opus 8. It will not be so muddled up as it was--but will it be better (13, p. 169)?

After he had received his first creative idea for a piece, he deliberately allowed it to lie dormant for months or years at a time. Brahms's own description of his process of creation is of interest here:

What is properly called invention, or a really musical idea, is, so to say, a gift, an inspiration which I cannot further or encourage in any way. At the time I must disregard this 'gift' as completely as possible, but ultimately I have to make it my own inalienable property by incessant labor. And that will not be quickly accomplished. The idea is like the seed-corn; it grows imperceptibly in secret. When I have invented or discovered the beginning of a song such as 'Wann der silberne Mond', . . . I shut up the book and go for a walk or take up something else; I think no more of it for perhaps half a year. Nothing is lost, though. When I come back to it again, it has unconsciously taken a new shape, and is ready for me to begin working at it (5, p. 69).

The economy of style which characterizes Brahms's works may have been a result of his humble upbringing.



Few artists have ever shown a more peasant-like economy of material, or achieved thereby a more unpeasant-like opulence and a more, artistic unity (13, p. 301).

We are reminded of his peasant streak by their [Brahms's compositions] terseness, conservatism and simplicity . . . nearly everything he wrote is out-of-door music based on the folk songs (13, p. 315).

Brahms possessed a lively sense of humor and was fond of practical jokes and hoaxes. Later on in life his humor sometimes turned to sarcasm. On one occasion he remarked upon leaving a party: "If there is anybody here whom I have forgotten to insult, I beg him to forgive me" (7, p. 332). In the letters of Brahms one finds many instances of his wit and humor but these qualities are less obvious in his music. His music is not always somber but it seldom calls forth a response close to laughter. His naturally serious bent dominated his more playful moments. Several compositions which he wrote as farces or parodies, he himself, destroyed before they could be published (13).

Many writers agree that it is in the art of thematic development in which Brahms excelled. The art of developing the original idea requires:

. . . not merely a complete mastery of every harmonic and contrapuntal resource, and the instinct to detect in the germ of a theme its latent possibilities, but a strongly poetic invention to control the different phases of the theme and to present them in such a succession as will enhance

their beauty or eloquence. This, too, is an art that is as applicable to vocal music as to instrumental (5, p. 72).

. . . very early he [Brahms] seized upon Beethoven's inventions, the germ-motive and source motive, and carried them even further than his predecessor had (13, p. 301).

Never, since music was a conscious art, have the ideals of its structure been so continually fulfilled as they were with Brahms. His power of handling his materials so as to bring out every beautiful aspect of every theme, is surpassed by none of the old masters, not even Beethoven (5, p. 70).

One of the most obvious of the characteristics of Brahms's style is his affinity for the folk song. Besides the musical factors which point to the influence of folk song on Brahms there is much evidence from his activities that he was interested in this simple form. Some of these activities were: (1) arranging folk songs for a male choir as early as 1847, (2) using a folk song as the slow movement of his first composition (Sonata in C Major for Piano, Opus 1), (3) winning success outside his native land through his arrangements of Hungarian Dances, (4) arranging a set of folk songs of Germany in the Volkskinder Lieder, published in 1858, (5) collecting forty-nine actual folk songs which were published in 1894, and (6) publishing as his last composition, a set of organ preludes on the chorales that ". . . are the rich heritage of the Teutonic race. . ." (5, p. 66).

Specific musical factors dealing with melody, harmony, rhythm and form reflect Brahms's individual musical style. The outstanding characteristic of his melodies is that they are most often built on the degrees of the common triad. The relationship between the bass part and the melodic line was of particular importance to Brahms. He was careful to weave these outer parts together in the best contrapuntal fashion. It was Brahms's feeling that: "In writing songs you must endeavor to invent, simultaneously with the melody, a healthy, powerful bass. . ." (2, p. 21). In this mode of construction Brahms contrasts very sharply to his contemporary, Hugo Wolf, who in his songs, ". . . gives absolute lead to the pianoforte, and emphasizes not so much the melodic line as the most careful declamation in the voice part" (7, p. 270).

The harmonies which Brahms used are described by some writers as being somewhat conservative for his day: "Brahms was a far more assured master of design than he was of tone-coloring" (5, p. 75). However, other writers credit him with great harmonic inventiveness:

Brahms's harmonic idiom . . . is characterized by exuberant invention, a fullness almost too rich to compress within four parts, and unexpectedness which keeps the listener on the alert for surprises, [compare Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D Major with the Violin Concerto in D Major by Brahms], and sometimes a flavor of preBachian influence and archaic modes [Andante moderato of E Minor Symphony] (13, p. 313).

Brahms was fond of dissonance but was very careful in the way in which he used them. Regarding dissonances, Brahms suggested:

. . . and no heavy dissonances on the unaccented parts of the bar. This is weak. I am very fond of dissonances, you'll agree, but on the heavy, accentuated parts of the bar, and then let them be resolved easily and gently (2, p. 21).

Brahms's works are characterized by rhythmic variety. He had a superb command of metrical resources and was accustomed to the use of cross-rhythms, particularly two's against three's (11). It has been said that his use of rhythm was one of his most outstanding contributions:

Mr. C. F. Abdy Williams has well said, in speaking of the pianoforte Rhapsodie, Opus 119, No. 4, ' . . . we believe that in no direction was his work more important than in the impetus he gave to the cultivation of a high, artistic, and intellectual sense of rhythm' (5, pp. 73-74).

Brahms did not introduce any new forms but preferred to work within the framework of the existing classical forms.

Brahms, being in no straits for new ideas, has not the need which Liszt and other "advanced" composers had of altering the classical forms or experimenting in new ones, for as long as he lived the old forms, so far from hampering his genius or confining his inspiration, seemed to suggest fresh outlets for development . . . less conspicuous because the usual types of musical form, those which are called classical, have been employed (5, p. 70).

However, he did enlarge and extend the existing forms. Of particular interest is the new emphasis which he gave to the

coda sections of his compositions. This is a point of great importance in his works particularly in the symphonies (5).

### Specific Characteristics of Brahms's Musical Style Relating to His songs

It is in his songs that Brahms may be recognized as a great master of melody (12, p. 353).

Having related the outstanding characteristics of Brahms's musical style in general it is necessary to observe what particular characteristics give the songs of Brahms his own individual stamp. These characteristics will be discussed as they relate to the basic musical elements of melody, harmony, rhythm, and form.

The folk-like quality of Brahms's songs which was referred to in the beginning of this chapter resulted primarily from the two types of interval structures which he used in his song melodies. One type has already been mentioned: the tune based on degrees of the common triad. Schauffler refers to the other as a "trapeze tune." These tunes revolve around a particular note or "axis" like "an athlete's body about the bar of his trapeze. . ." (13, p. 308). Schauffler's theory is that this tendency developed from a folk chant which is very familiar to the children of most countries:



Variations of this "trapeze tune" occurs in each of the fourteen children's folk songs which Brahms arranged for the children of Clara and Robert Schumann.

Another technique of Brahms was to begin a piece with the interval of a rising fourth:

Of 63 folksongs for adults and children which he arranged for solo voice and piano, 36 begin thus. Here the folk songs may be imitating the inflections of common speech, to which it is close, for it is natural to begin many sorts of sentences with the rise of a fourth (13, p. 312).

As has been pointed out in Chapter I of this paper, instrumental music took on more importance in the Romantic era than it had attained during the Classic era. This emphasis on instrumental music becomes apparent in the well developed piano accompaniment of the songs of Brahms. Brahms was careful, however, to maintain a delicate balance between the voice part and the piano accompaniment. He accomplished this through an interplay (of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic materials) between the piano accompaniment and the voice part.

A further feature of Brahms' songs is their splendid organic unity and completeness. He links the different parts of a composition, as well as the voice part and the piano accompaniment, by the use of similar motives (7, p. 270).

Particular rhythmic features of Brahms's songs are:

- (1) the dactylic ♩ and anapaestic ♩ motion used,

(2) the slurring of unaccented notes over to accented ones, (3) the use of syncopation, (4) ". . . making music with one time signature sound as though it had another. . . ." (13, p. 305), and (5) uniformity of rhythm between words and music (12).

Brahms preferred the strophic form in a song:

. . . but this did not exclude a somewhat free handling of his favorite strophic form in the accompaniment, and a varied or modified setting of the different stanzas of the poem (12, p. 354).

Brahms once said to Jenner: "I am fonder of my little songs than of my big ones" (12, p. 354). By "little ones," it is taken to mean that he felt a successful song in strophic form was more to his liking than any other.

During the Romantic period the relationship between the music and the poetic text became very important. Since the Romantic elements in music were inspired by the poetic texts, the Romantic composers tended to allow the text to become the predominate factor in their musical compositions. In Brahms's songs one finds that he pays very close attention to the text but this interest does not override his concern for a beautiful melody.

The composer values before all else a fluent, rhythmical and expressive melodic line, carefully adapted to the text (7, p. 269).



The main thing in his (Brahms's) eyes was always a clear-cut beautifully conceived melody, and a decided handling of the bass on good contrapuntal lines (12, p. 355).

Having established the nature of the relationship of Brahms's music to his poetic text, it is necessary to investigate the type of texts which Brahms preferred. The quality of these texts, the sources which he used for these texts, and the subjects which Brahms most frequently chose will be cited.

Authors differ in their evaluations of the quality of the texts which Brahms chose for his songs. Brahms, who, as a child, collected books, was extremely well-read and had fine literary taste. As an adult, he had a particularly fine collection of the works of the German poets. The Romantic poets of the early and middle part of the period predominated in his collection (12). As Fuller-Maitland says:

It was not by mere accident that the literary standard of the words set by Brahms was always so remarkably high. He paid the closest attention to this matter, and was accustomed to write out poems which took his fancy in note-books carried about in his pockets (5, p. 161).

However, there are those who feel that the quality of his chosen poems was not consistently as high as it should have been:



Brahms' choice of words was often far too much prompted by purely musical considerations and points of view, and too little by purely human considerations, to be always worthy of his uncommonly wide reading and good literary taste. . . (12, p. 359).

A study of Brahms' songs cannot help but show that the literary value of the poems which he set to music is uneven and often disappointing (6, p. 184).

In choosing the words for his songs, Brahms was guided far less by the poet than by the atmosphere or mood which he discovered in the poem (12).

. . . it was the lyrical feeling of the poetry that was the really inspiring element . . . As long as a poem appealed to his live imagination and was sufficiently well conceived in wording and phrase . . . everything else could be left to his own inventiveness (6, p. 185).

This method of choosing his texts has been called ". . . a thoroughly Romantic proceeding" (12, p. 358), and this approach may account for the suggested unevenness of the poetry which he set to music.

Brahms, unlike Schubert, Schumann, Franz, and Hugo Wolf, had no particular favorite poets whose entire series of poems he set to music. He did show a preference for Goëthe, Schenkendorf, Eichendorff, Uhland, Holty, Platen, Ruckert, Holderlen, Halm, Hoffmann von Fallersleben, Tieck, Daumer, Heine, and Heyse among others. Of these poets he ". . . prefers the simple natures, full of homely sentiment

and the elegiac love-poets, such as Holty, Platen, and Daumer" (12, p. 357). The poems of Tieck were used in a song cycle which tells the story of Magelone, Opus 33.

A set of eight of Daumer's moody elegiac love-poems can be found in Acht Lieder und Gesänge, Opus 57. Among his contemporaries Brahms favored Freytag, Heyse, Keller, Count von Schack, Hermann Lingg of Munich, Bordenstedt, the Balt, Hans Schmidt, and the Swiss, Adolf Frey (12).

In respect to the subject matter which Brahms chose for his songs, it is interesting to note that he primarily chose poems which expressed sentiments of love.

In glancing over Brahms' songs, however, one is struck by the narrow range of his subjects. While Schubert's interest coursed wide over the whole expanse of human thought and feeling, his successor's interest seems to have been chiefly focussed on the single theme of love with which most of his Lieder are concerned (13, p. 323).

Brahms' love songs assume a governing importance (2, p. 19).

The subjects and moods of the songs of Brahms include songs of happy and unhappy love, songs expressing wistfulness and sadness, songs about nature, death, and a few songs expressing humor. The more well-known songs of wistfulness and sadness were nearly all composed after Brahms reached middle age (13).

In general Brahms's songs do not show a great deal of development from his first song to his last. With his first

published song, Liebestreu, Opus 3, No. 1, he set his pace and continued at this high level throughout his lifetime of song writing.

. . . his style development kept within remarkably narrow limits. This is above all due to the unusual precocity of his talents, very much in contrast to Wagner's. Brahms started as a fully mature artist. Schumann judged quite correctly when he saw in Brahms 'one who would not bring us mastery in gradual developmental stages but who, like Minerva, would spring fully armed from the head of Jove' (6, p. 202).

The elements of Brahms's musical style which have been discussed in this chapter demonstrate that throughout his song writing career Brahms maintained a preference for melody over the poetic text, and continued his close ties with the classical forms. Because of these basic preferences he is regarded as a Neo-Classist. However, his innovative use of harmony and rhythm, his mastery of thematic development, and the mood painting which he accomplished in his songs, also allow him to be comfortably placed within the century of his Romantic contemporaries.

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## CHAPTER IV

### SELECTED COMPOSITIONS FOR SOLO VOICE REFLECTING THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BRAHMS

Brahms wrote approximately two hundred original songs for the solo voice. This does not include his collections and arrangements of folk songs in the volumes titled Volkskinderlieder and Deutsche Volkslieder. For the sake of convenience his song writing career will be divided into four basic periods. These periods, which have been outlined by one of Brahms foremost biographers, Karl Geiringer, follow the chronology of Brahms's life. Each division is one in which Brahms's song writing flourished and each has a character of its own. These divisions are: the first period from 1851 to 1853, the second period from 1858 to 1863, the third period from 1866 to 1888, and the fourth and last period, from 1888 to 1891 (11).

#### First Creative Period: 1851-1853

During this first creative period there were eighteen songs for solo voice written. These songs appear as Opera 3, 6, and 7 in addition to Mondnacht, which was published without an opus number. The songs included in this period are:

Six Songs for Tenor or Soprano, Opus 3 (published in 1854)

1. Liebestreu
2. Liebe und Frühling, I
3. Liebe und Frühling, II
4. Lied aus dem Gedicht: 'Ivan'
5. In der Fremde
6. Lindes Rauschen

Six Songs for Soprano or Tenor, Opus 6 (published 1853)

1. Spanisches Lied
2. Der Frühling
3. Nachwirkung
4. Juchhe!
5. Wie die Wolkle nach der Sonne
6. Nachtigallen Schwingen

Six Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 7 (unpublished in 1854)

1. Treue Liebe
2. Parole
3. Anklänge
4. Volkslied (Die Schwälble Zieht Fort)
5. Die Trauernde
6. Heimkehr

Of these early songs, Liebestreu, Opus 3, No. 1, is considered to be the most outstanding. According to

Fuller-Maitland Liebestreu is:

. . . of matchless eloquence among strophic songs, the emotion of the passion illustrated rising with irresistible power to the climax, though the means used are of the simplest, merely a gradual acceleration of the speed, and a change to the tonic in the third verse. . . Liebestreu is the song that stands first of all Brahms' vocal works (8, p. 161).

Among other authors, Max Friedlaender, has this to say about

Liebestreu:

With the very first of his published vocal compositions, Brahms takes his place in the front rank of the masters of song. Here the full promise is shown of the gravity and intrinsic soundness which characterized the work of his maturity (7, p. 1).

Second Creative Period: 1858-1863

It is in the second period that Brahms's deep love for the folk song is particularly emphasized. It was during this period that he began to study music from the past with great interest and became very preoccupied with the folk song. In this period belongs Opera 14, 19, 32, Regenlied, the fourteen Volkskinderlieder, and twenty-eight Folk Songs. The twenty-eight Folk Songs were written in the year 1858, but were published posthumously in 1926. The songs included in these opus numbers are:

Songs and Romances for Solo Voice, Opus 14 (published in 1861)

1. Vor dem Fenster
2. Vom Verwundeten Knaben
3. Murrays Ermordung
4. Ein Sonett
5. Trennung
6. Gang sur Liebsten
7. Ständchen
8. Sehnsucht

Five Lyrics for Solo Voice, Opus 19 (published 1862)

1. Der Kuss
2. Scheiden und Meiden
3. In der Ferne
4. Der Schmied
5. An eine Weissharfe

Songs and Melodies from the Verses of Aug. v. Platen and G. F. Daumer for Solo Voice, Opus 32 (published 1864)

1. Wie rafft' ich mich auf in der Nacht
2. Nicht mehr zu dir zu gehen, beschloss ich
3. Ich schleich umher
4. Der Strom, der neben mir verdrauschte
5. Wehe, so willst du mich wieder, hemmende Fessel
6. Du sprichst, dass ich mich Täuschte
7. Bitteres zu sagen denkst du
8. So stehn wir, ich und meine Weide
9. Wie bist du, meine Königin

Third Creative Period: Part I, 1866-1875

The third creative period covers a span of approximately twenty-two years and was the most productive in Brahms's song writing career. Since this span of time includes a great many songs, the period will be subdivided into two sections, the first ending with 1875. Solo vocal works which fall into these years are: Opera 33, 43, 46, 47, 48, 49, 57, 58, 59, 63 and the Ophelia Lieder. Songs included in these opus numbers are:

Romances from L. Tieck's Magelone for Solo Voice, Opus 33 (published in 1865 and 1869)

1. Keinen hat es noch gereut
2. Traun! Bogen und Pfeil sing gut für den Feind
3. Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden
4. Liebe kam aus fernen Landen
5. So willst du des Armen dich gnädig erbarmen
6. Wie soll ich die Freude, die Wonne denn tragen
7. War es dir, dem diese Lippen bebten
8. Wir müssen uns trennen, geliebtes Saitenspiel
9. Ruhe, Süßliebchen
10. So tönet denn, schäumende Wellen
11. Wie schnell verschwindet so Licht als Glanz



12. Muss es eine Trennung geben
13. Geliebter, wo zaudert dein irrender Fuss
14. Wie froh und frisch mein Sinn sich hebt
15. Treue Liebe dauert lange

Four Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 43 (published 1868)

1. Von ewiger Liebe
2. Die Mainacht
3. Ich schell mein Horn ins Jammertal
4. Das Lied vom Herrn von Falkenstein

Four Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 46 (published 1868)

1. Die Kränze
2. Magyarisch
3. Die Schale der Vergessenheit
4. An die Nachtigall

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 47 (published in 1868)

1. Botschaft
2. Liebesglut
3. Sonntag
4. O liebliche Wangen
5. Die Liebende schreibt

Seven Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 48 (published in 1868)

1. Der Gang zur Liebsten
2. Der Überläufer
3. Liebesklage des Mädchens
4. Gold überwiegt die Liebe
5. Trost in Tränen
6. Vergangen ist mir Glück und Heil
7. Herbstgefühl

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 49 (published 1868)

1. Am Sonntag Morgen
2. An ein Veilchen
3. Sehnsucht
4. Wiegenlied
5. Abenddämmerung

Songs and Ballads by G. F. Daumer for Solo Voice, Opus 57  
(published in 1871)

1. Von waldbekränzter Höhe
2. Wenn du nur zuweilen Lachelst
3. Es traunte mir, ich sei dir teuer
4. Ach wende diesen Blick
5. In meiner Nächte Sehnen
6. Strahlt zuweilen auch ein mildes Licht
7. Die Schnur, die Perl and Perle
8. Unbewegte laue Luft

Songs and Melodies for Solo Voice, Opus 58 (published 1871)

1. Blinde Kuh
2. Während des Regens
3. Die Spröde
4. O komm, holde Sommernacht
5. Schwermut
6. In der Gasse
7. Vorüber
8. Serenade

Songs and Ballads for Solo Voice, Opus 59 (published 1873)

1. Dämmerung senkte sich von oben
2. Auf dem See
3. Regenlied
4. Nachklang
5. Agnes
6. Eine gute, gute Nacht
7. Mein wundes Herz verlangt nach milder Ruh
8. Dein blaues Auge

Songs and Ballads for Solo Voice, Opus 63 (published 1874)

1. Frühlingstrost
2. Erinnerung
3. An ein Bild
4. An die Tauben
5. Junge Lieder I (Meine Liebe ist grün)
6. Junge Lieder II (Wenn um den Hollunder)
7. Wie traulich war das Fleckchen
8. O wüsst ich doch den Weg zurück
9. Ich sah als Knabe Blumen blühn

The Five Songs of Ophelia were composed in 1873 to a German translation of Shakespeare's words by Schlegel and Tieck. Brahms was living in Vienna at this time and counted among his friends and acquaintances many persons prominent in circles of art and science. Among these was Josef Lewinsky who was a member of the Burgtheater in Vienna and his fiancée, actress Olga Precheisen. Brahms composed these songs for Fraulein Precheisen who was to play Ophelia in Hamlet. These songs were intended to be sung in the fifth scene of the fourth act when Ophelia is approaching madness. Brahms usually had an aversion to writing any sort of occasional composition. Lewinsky wrote to his fiancée on November 29, 1873:

Brahms is a dear fellow. He has kept his word and has composed the Ophelia songs. . . He is not sure whether you'll like the songs. He is of the opinion that on the stage, something simple often makes a greater effect. But you will surely be able to feel yourself into the spirit of folk-song in which they are conceived (1, p. 4).

The songs were first performed in 1873 with Lewinsky as Hamlet and Olga as Ophelia. The songs have a sombre quality, the only song brighter is the third selection, St. Valentine. The Ophelia Lieder was sung without accompaniment in the play and the fourth song was divided by spoken dialogue into three parts. They were first published by Karl Geiringer in 1935.

During these years, 1866 to 1875, Brahms maintained his interest in the folk songs, not only of the North German flavor, but also of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Spain. This national folk interest is shown in Sonntag, Opus 47, No. 3 (Germany), Wiegenlied, Opus 49, No. 4 (Upper Austria), Von ewiger Liebe, Opus 43, No. 1 (Slavic), and Serenade, Opus 58, No. 8 (Spain) (11).

During this period also, Brahms found an interest in poems which were influenced by ancient Greek and Roman lyrics. Die Mainacht, Opus 43, No. 2 and Der Kuss, Opus 19, No. 1, reflect in mood and meter this interest.

Many of Brahms's best love songs were written during this period. The Botschaft, Opus 47, No. 1, Meine Liebe ist grün, Opus 63, No. 5, and Liebesglut, Opus 47, No. 2 are frequently cited examples (11).

Although tone-painting was not emphasized in Brahms's songs there are several which do reflect this technique: Die Kränze (describing the dropping of tears), Regenlied, Opus 59, No. 3, and Nachklang, Opus 59, No. 4 (describing the monotonous downpour of rain), and Auf dem See, Opus 59, No. 2 (the undulating waves of the sea). The coloristic detailing which is present in these songs is included by Brahms with the intention of creating a mood expressing a human emotion:

Brahms never loses him-self [sic] in detail . . . he represents the sound of the rain and the quiet rise and fall of waves . . . in order to relate these portrayals of Nature to the emotions which fill the human heart (11, p. 278).

Third Creative Period: Part II, 1875-1888

The songs in the second part of Brahms's third creative period include: Opera 69, 70, 71, 72, 84, 85, 86, 91, 94, 95, 96, 97, 105, 106, and 107. The songs included in these opus numbers are as follows:

Nine Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 69 (published 1877)

1. Klage
2. Klage
3. Abschied
4. Des Liebsten Schwur!
5. Tambourliedchen
6. Vom Strande
7. Über die See
8. Salome
9. Mädchenfluch

Four Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 70 (published 1877)

1. Im Garten am Seegestade
2. Lerchengesang
3. Serenade
4. Abendregen

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 71 (published 1877)

1. 'Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze'
2. An den Mond
3. Geheimnis
4. Willst du, dass ich geh?
5. Minnelied

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 72 (published 1877)

1. Alte Liebe
2. Sommerfäden

3. O kühler Wald
4. Verzagen
5. Unüberwindlich

Romances and Songs for One or Two Voices, Opus 84 (published in 1882)

1. Sommerabend
2. Der Kranz
3. In den Beeren
4. Vergebliches Ständchen
5. Spannung

Six Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 85 (published 1882)

1. Sommerabend
2. Mondenschein
3. Mädchenlied
4. Ade!
5. Frühlingslied
6. In Waldeseinsamkeit

Six Songs for a Lower Voice, Opus 86 (published 1882)

1. Therese
2. Feldeinsamkeit
3. Nachtwandler
4. Über die Haide
5. Versunken
6. Todesehnen

Two Songs for Alto Voice with Viola, Opus 91 (published 1884)

1. Gestillte Sehnsucht
2. Geistliches Wiegenlied

Five Songs for a Low Voice, Opus 94 (published 1884)

1. Mit vierzig Jahren
2. Steig auf, geliebter Schatten
3. Mein Herz ist schwer
4. Sapphische Ode
5. Kein Haus, keine Heimat

Seven Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 95 (published 1884)

1. Das Mädchen
2. Bei dir sind meine Gedanken
3. Beim Abschied
4. Der Jäger
5. Vorschneller Schwur
6. Mädchenlied
7. Schön war, das ich dir weihte

Four Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 96 (published 1886)

1. Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht
2. Wir wandelten
3. Es schauen die Blumen
4. Meerfahrt

Six Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 97 (published 1886)

1. Nachtigall
2. Auf dem Schiffe
3. Entführung
4. Dort in den Weiden
5. Komm Bald
6. Trennung

Eleven Gypsy Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 103 (published 1889)

1. Hei Zigeuner
2. Hochgetürmte
3. Wisst ihr wann mein Kindchen
4. Lieber Gott du weisst
5. Brauner Bursche
6. Röslein dreie
7. Kommt dir manchmal in den Sinn
8. Horch der Wind
9. Weit und breit
10. Mond verhüllt sein Angesicht
11. Rothe Abendwolken

Five Songs for a Lower Voice, Opus 105 (published 1889)

1. Wie Melodien zieht es
2. Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer
3. Klage
4. Auf dem Kirchhofe
5. Verrat

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 106 (published 1889)

1. Ständchen
2. Auf dem See
3. Es hing der Reif
4. Meine Lieder
5. Ein Wanderer

Five Songs for Solo Voice, Opus 107 (published 1889)

1. An die Stolze
2. Salamander
3. Das Mädchen spricht
4. Maienkätzchen
5. Mädchenlied

The songs in the second half of Brahms's third creative period retain many of the features of his earlier songs but there are certain changes. As a whole the folk song does not seem to play as big a part as it did in the earlier compositions. However, a folk-like quality is still retained with certain elaborations. The Romanzen und Lieder, Opus 84, No. 1-5, songs in dialogue form for one or two voices, Verrat, Opus 105, No. 5, Trennung, Opus 19, No. 4, and Therese, Opus 86, No. 1, retain folk-like qualities. Even the songs which are based on non-German folk music of this period begin to be more free in its conception. Songs of this category are: Mädchenlied, Opus 85, No. 3, Das Mädchen, Opus 95, No. 1, and the Zigeunerlieder (Gypsy Songs), Opus 103, No. 1-11 (11).

During this period Brahms wrote fewer songs using poems with settings of classical form and content. The only one



which he wrote in that style was the Sapphische Ode,  
Opus 94, No. 4.

The increased variety of mood which Brahms developed in his more mature years may be seen in: Salome, Opus 69, No. 3, Das Mädchen spricht, Opus 106, No. 3, Bei dir sind meine Gedanken, Opus 95, No. 2 and Lerchengesang, Opus 70, No. 2. Some songs have a ballad-like character:

Entführung, Opus 97, No. 3, and the ballads in Opus 75.

Other songs have characteristics of dramatic scenes as in opera. Examples of songs having this quality are: Auf dem Kirchhofe, Opus 105, No. 4, Kein Haus, Keine Heimat, Opus 94, No. 5. Unüberwindlich, Opus 72, No. 5 depicts the gentleman who is suffering from an overdose of wine.

The Two Songs for Alto and Viola, Opus 91 were written by Brahms for a life-long friend, Joseph Joachim, the violinist. At this time Joseph Joachim and his wife, Amalie, a singer, were contemplating a dissolution of their marriage. Brahms hoped that these songs would smooth over the antagonism if Amalie would sing the songs while her husband played the viola accompaniment. As it happened, Frau Joachim sang the songs for the first time at a concert in Vienna on January 7, 1886, to the viola accompaniment played by Joseph Hellmesberger (7).

Frau Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, a life-long friend of Brahms's wrote to him concerning the first of the Two Songs for Alto and Viola, Gestillte Sehnsucht, saying:

About the alto song I would rather not say anything until I have heard it properly rendered with the viola. In the meantime I am studying both parts, and am already in love with the wonderful cadenzes, particularly the Wann schlaft ihr, wann schlaft ihr ein . . . with the beautiful G minor, E major and the melody so beautifully taken up by the viola from the alto. But the Lispeln der Winde is very difficult, even for a talented singer. Why are you so cruel, turning women into oboes or violins? Is this why you begin with B like another cruel man [Beethoven]? How thankfully the throat relaxes for the softer Sie lispeln die Welt in Schlummer (7, p. 154).

The second of the Two Songs, Geistliches Wiegenlied, was first written in 1863 and was sent by Brahms to Joseph Joachim and his wife who had been married earlier in that same year. However, later on Brahms withdrew his gift because he was not satisfied with it. The version which is now printed is the second version published in 1908. The familiar song which appears in Geistliches Wiegenlied, is the beautiful old melody, Joseph, lieber Joseph mein which appeared in writing as early as the fifteenth century. This melody has often been used by composers including Liszt, Smetana, Humperdinck and Max Reger (7). Hugo Wolf set this same poem to music in his Spanisches Liederbuch (7).

The Two Songs for Alto and Viola reflect again Brahms's interest in nature as well as the folk song influence. The love which Brahms had for nature can be further illustrated in the songs Feldeinsamkeit, Opus 86, No. 2 and Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht, Opus 96, No. 1.

Outstanding songs of this period which have not yet been mentioned are: Minnelied, Opus 71, No. 5, inspired by Austrian dance music, Alte Liebe, Opus 72, No. 1, describing the dreamy mood of a spring day, the moody Immer leise wird mein Schlummer, Opus 105, No. 2, Ständchen, Opus 106, No. 1, and the last song of this period, Mädchenlied, Opus 106, No. 5. This last song contains a bit of realistic writing describing the regular rhythm of a spinning-wheel.

#### Last Creative Period: 1888-1891

Brahms's last creative period includes only two solo vocal works: the forty-nine Deutsche Volkslieder begun in the first period but not completed until 1894, and the Vier ernste Gesänge, Opus 121. The latter was completed on Brahms's sixty-third birthday, May 7, 1896 and published a year before his death. This work was originally composed for solo bass voice (7).

It has been said that the Four Serious Songs were inspired by the death of Clara Schumann. However, they had already been completed before her death (13). In a letter

to Clara Schumann's daughters Brahms referred to these songs later, saying:

If a book of Serious Songs arrives shortly, do not misinterpret the gift. Quite apart from the dear old habit of writing your name first, the songs also concern you most seriously. I wrote them in the first week of May [that is, in 1896, the year of Clara Schumann's death]; I am often occupied with words of that kind, but I did not expect to hear worse news of your mother--but there is often something that speaks and works deep down in one, almost unconsciously, and at times it may well clothe itself in sound, as poetry or music. You cannot try the songs over, for the words would be too moving for you at present. But I ask you to regard them as really a funeral offering for your dear mother and to lay them aside (13, p. 368).

Fuller-Maitland describes the content of the Four Serious

Songs in this manner:

. . . we begin with a reflection that as death is common to man and beast alike, so there is no assurance of a difference in the future state between one and the other . . . The next song seems to say, 'Even if there be no future life, the dead in their perfect unconsciousness are to be envied, rather than the living who must see around them trouble and sorrow they cannot relieve.' The same idea leads, in the third song, to the praise of death when it comes to the poor and afflicted; and this is in some ways the most beautiful of the four . . . With the last of the four songs we change from the gloom and uncertainty of the hope of immortality held out in the Old Testament and Apocrypha to the Christian conviction, and to the love that spreads abroad to all mankind as the result of that conviction. . . it is difficult to imagine a happier ending to a glorious creative career than this song [the last of the Four Serious Songs]. . . (8, p. 187-188).

It was with the Vier ernste Gesänge (Four Serious Songs) that Brahms closed not only his career in song composition, but also his composition in the other areas in which he had been active throughout his lifetime. The only other writing which he accomplished before his death was the arrangement of a set of eleven chorale preludes for the organ. These were not published until 1902 (8).

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## CHAPTER V

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON BRAHMS

The purpose of this chapter is threefold: (1) to explore the attitudes of the contemporaries of Brahms, that is, the general public, music critics and fellow musicians, toward Brahms's compositions; (2) to discuss the nature and extent of the contribution of Brahms to the development of German Lieder; and (3) to present concluding remarks regarding the relationship of the life, times, and personality of Brahms to his solo vocal works.

The works of Brahms were not well accepted at first by the majority of his contemporaries. Primarily, Brahms's music stood in great contrast to the majority of the composers of his time. When compared to the music of Wagner, Liszt, Berlioz, and Wolf, the music of Brahms seemed cold and sparse to the general public. From Schauffler we read:

The public looked upon Brahms as a simon-pure classicist, and concluded that he must therefore be cold and formal. People felt that he had 'no melody,' that he was dry, abstruse, philosophical, and that if the music was occasionally tinged with emotion, it was sorrowful, bitter, pessimistic emotion (9, p. 452).

To further illustrate the tenor of public feeling in regard to Brahms's music the following excerpt describing an incident which occurred in Boston has been included:

Those were the days when Boston, then the most musical city in America, approvingly echoed Philip Hale's mauvais mot: 'Exit in case of Brahms.' And the concert manager actually announced that a pause would occur before the Brahms number in order to allow hostile listeners to leave (9, p. 451).

In addition to the general public, many musicians of the day were hesitant to espouse Brahms's music. Whether this was a genuine feeling on the part of each individual or an outgrowth of the apparent necessity of choosing between the "New Germans" on the one hand and Brahms on the other cannot accurately be established. Various authors have conjectured upon this subject:

The feeling against Brahms' music seems often to have stemmed not so much from an evaluation of his music itself but, rather is an outgrowth of the 'political' feelings in which one must either swear an alligiance to either Brahms or Wagner (9, p. 451).

From Gal we read:

For Wagnerians everywhere--and in the 1870's they were increasingly in the ascendancy--disparagement of Brahms was a basic principle of musical politics (5, p. 233).

In addition, various critics who were very influential followed the neo-German line in their evaluation of Brahms's music:

Jean F. Schuck, Leipzig's most respected critic, expressed his regret in a discussion of the German Requiem that Brahms lacked the courage of rising to the freedom of form, especially as far as rhythm and declamation are concerned, which Wagner, Berlioz, and above all Liszt had pioneered in such an epochal manner. Louis Ehlert, an important critical voice in Berlin, declared:



'Brahms's music has no profile; it only has an enface [flat face].' A French critic quoted by Weingartner said: 'He works exceedingly well with ideas which he does not have.' And George Bernard Shaw, who was a music critic in his younger days and a staunch Wagnerian, called the German Requiem an advertisement for an undertaking establishment . . . (5, pp. 233-234).

Schauffler states that:

Finck in New York, Runciman in London, and Romain Rolland in Paris saw eye to eye with Boston's anti-Brahmin, and were fully as influential as he. The old-fashioned partisan feeling still ran high. It was felt that one must swear allegiance to either Wagner or Brahms, but could not care for both. It was not done (9, p. 451) !

Brahms's songs constituted the form of composition which most befriended the public although even these works suffered some censure. His songs were, for the most part, considered very difficult for singers of his own day. This was particularly true in countries other than Germany. Fuller-Maitland tells us:

It is within full memory of man that the average English singer would not attempt to sing anything by him . . . (3, p. 17).

Those songs which more closely resembled folk songs were the most often performed:

Formerly even at a time when the Liebeslieder were received with delight, there were very few among the professional singers of London who ever ventured to perform one of the songs, unless it were the Wiegenlied, Sonntag, or Die Mainacht (4, p. 157).

Perhaps the reason the songs of Brahms were attacked as being unvocal was that the average singer used this accusation as a cover for his own lack of technique. Sir Hubert Parry suggests this in the following quotation:

The charge against his songs of being unvocal was a mere 'facon de parler.' . . . Even his simpler songs are so original as to present considerable difficulties both to singer and player. . . (3, p. 17).

Brahms seemed not to care a great deal about the adverse opinions of others, particularly the opinions of those who were counted as part of the neo-German school. He relied a great deal on his own intuition and the opinions of those who were very close friends of long-standing. Among those whose opinions he valued highly were: Clara Schumann, Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, and Joseph Joachim. Most of all, however, Brahms relied on his own critical instincts.

. . . he {Brahms} did not lag far behind his most critical opponents when it came to skepticism about his own work (5, p. 233).

It was through Brahms's continuing re-evaluation of his own works and his diligence in seeking what he considered perfection, that he finally earned for himself a place among the great composers:

. . . the average quality of his works as compared to that of his natural creative ability was thereby raised [by his self-criticism] than that of any other composer (9, p. 168).

. . . few song-writers have maintained so consistent a standard [as Brahms] (11, p. 253).

Gradually the tide of opinion began to change regarding the value of Brahms's music. Even some of the members of the neo-German party began to realize worth in his compositions:

Weingartner who was an excellent musician and well-known conductor and a member, although described as objective and moderate, of the neo-German party, wrote in a disapproving manner about Brahms but later radically changed his opinion. At that time, however, at the turn of the century, it seems to have been impossible to belong to one party without unreservedly condemning the other. Such cases show that no objective criteria exists when the essence of a judgment of artistic value is at stake (5, p. 235).

From Murdoch we read:

The symphonies of Brahms may have been difficult for the Viennese and the Leipzigers to digest at a first hearing; but the musicians could understand them, and asked for repeat performances, while even the 'antis' could not dismiss them as bad music (8, p. 189).

As the music of Brahms became gradually more accepted by his contemporaries in his native Germany, this acceptance spread to other countries where German is spoken, to the English speaking countries, and finally throughout the entire world.

If audiences are to be any criterion, the Lisztian influence has waned considerably of late; the classical form has won, and a Brahms symphony can now hold its own as a 'drawingcard' all the world over (8, p. 189).

. . . so much has happened in the last few years to render these [misgivings about Brahms's music] less and less, that, at the present time, the Brahms-cult may be said to have acquired new vigor. People begin to see that qualities formerly regarded as deserving of reproach are really of quite another kind: and that the term 'musician's music,' which has been frequently applied in a sinister sense to the works of Brahms, is, in truth, the very highest compliment which could be paid to them (3, pp. 5-6).

. . . by the beginning of our century, Brahms had taken root, . . . in the German and English-speaking countries only. Since then his stature has grown immeasurably, and his music has conquered the whole world, very gradually and without any discernible external reasons. Today it stays where Bülow had envisaged it: on a level with the works of the greatest masters of all time (5, p. 236).

There are several characteristics which are mentioned over and over again by those who have written regarding Brahms's contribution to German Lieder. These are characteristics which Brahms contributed through his own individual qualities to the body of Lieder literature. His songs are characterized by expressive but not dominant piano accompaniments, carefully interwoven bass lines, inventive melodic lines, perfection of formal structures and a high consistency of quality of all musical elements (7, 11, 12, 13).

Brahms was influenced by both Schumann and Schubert, but he was influenced primarily by Schubert. "In his songs, Brahms took Schubert as a model" (12, p. 488).

It {Brahms's composing idiom} shows traces of Schumann's influence, especially in some of the earlier works, but it was far more deeply affected by Schubert (11, p. 250).

In his compositions Schubert was the first to elevate the song from chiefly a diversion to a form capable of expressing profound ideas and emotions (7). In addition, Schubert was the first to use poetic texts of his contemporaries, for his songs (7). Although Schubert instigated a reliance on the poetic text, his primary interest was the musical setting for which he would sacrifice his poetic interest (11).

Schumann, Brahms's early mentor, further extended the dependency of the Lied upon the poetic text through his emphasis on retaining correct word declamation in song. In addition, Schumann introduced new pianistic and harmonic techniques into the song repertoire (7).

Brahms continued the development of Lieder but along lines closer to the songs of Schubert than of Schumann. That is, Brahms approached his song-writing from a predominantly musical standpoint rather than a literary one. "Brahms had less regard for the words of a poem than did some of his predecessors or contemporaries" (7, p. 1761). Yet, it is not correct to say that Brahms's songs constitute a retrogression of the Lieder. The level of perfection which Brahms brought to this art form constitutes an elevation and solidification

of the most significant features of German Lieder. "All of the best tendencies of the nineteenth century were summed up in the songs of Johannes Brahms" (13, p. 614).

Certain conclusions may be drawn from the information in this paper regarding the relationship of the life, times, and the personality of Brahms to his solo vocal works. In Chapter I it was stated that Brahms was aware of the political events taking place in Germany during his lifetime. Certain compositions which he wrote attest to this fact. However, very little of this awareness is expressed in his vocal works. It seems that he considered the song form to be a form in which the intimate emotions could most appropriately be expressed. His songs often deal with situations which are either domestic (conversations between mother and daughter), personal (expressions of passionate or unrequited love, sorrow, depression, sympathy), or are expressions of the beauty of nature. The folk song stands as the medium through which Brahms expressed his nationalistic feelings. His use of the folk song idiom both in musical and poetic style is his more subtle way of declaring his political allegiances and concerns. Yet Brahms was not an extreme nationalist. His cosmopolitan view is expressed in his interest and use of the folk song style of other countries.

The sweeping social changes which were brought about by the political events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries enabled the composer to become an independent artist. Composers were no longer bound by either the church or by the courts to write in a particular musical style, a specific form, using a specified subject matter for a particular occasion. Romantic composers considered the most noble music that which was written with no particular purpose in mind. The composer could follow the dictates of his own artistic inclinations. Being socially independent, he could choose the musical style in which he wished to compose, the form in which he would express his ideas, and the subjects about which he would write. The impetus for his composition could come from many sources: he could write music for a particular occasion, he could write music as an expression of his emotion, as an act of friendship, or for the sake of writing music (that is, art for art's sake).

In his life style, Brahms was just such an artist as has been described above. He was independent, bound by neither church nor courtly favor, financially independent, and pursued a musical style which was uniquely his own. He disliked writing occasional pieces, although he did several times during his song writing career. Many of the songs which he wrote were inspired by friendship. Other songs

took their inspiration directly from the poetry of his contemporaries, another Romantic procedure. In any case, the musical style, form, and subject matter of his solo vocal works reflect his own individual characteristics determined through his own choice.

The arts were stimulated by, and in turn stimulated, political changes of the day. The development of the revolution in the arts resulted in Romanticism. Romanticism encompassed many trends and ideas which represent varied reactions to these social and political changes. In both the fine arts and in music, two distinct reactions are apparent: one in which the artist tried to establish order out of chaos and one in which the artist was caught up in the excitement of change and perpetuated change. For the most part, Brahms belongs to the group which endeavored to establish order from chaos. His songs reflect this tendency through his continued use of the established classical forms (in song, particularly the strophic form), and dominant position which he gave to musical considerations above consideration of poetic texts, his interest in poetry of the past as song texts, the balance which he maintained between vocal line and piano accompaniment, and the interplay of the bass and melody lines.



The above characteristics point to a particular bent toward restraint on the part of the composer. This restraint which is present in Brahms's songs further manifested itself in limited variety of mood, somewhat conservative harmonic style, and somewhat limited subject matter. These characteristics are consistent with his individual personality traits as they are manifested in his musical taste. Brahms was a person who was hesitant to expose his innermost feelings. He was known to be careful, precise, self-disciplined and self-effacing regarding his compositions. In short, Brahms was a perfectionist. Because of these qualities, his songs attained a consistently high level of artistic achievement. Yet, because of these same qualities, Brahms may not have reached the heights of a more expressive Romantic creation.

As mentioned earlier, Brahms's life style was much in keeping with his own times just as there is also much to be found in these songs which reflect his Romantic tendencies. Brahms does attain many innovative uses of harmony and rhythm. His other Romantic tendencies are reflected in his mastery of thematic development, the mood painting which he accomplished in his songs, his emphasis on love songs, his use of nature imagery, his interest in Germanic song heritage, his occasional tone painting, his enlargement of existing forms and his reliance upon the poetic expressions of his contemporaries.

Vocal composition and particularly the solo song was a favorite form of expression for Brahms throughout his entire lifetime. It is interesting to note that some of his earliest compositions were written in song form and that the last totally original creative effort of his life was a set of songs for solo voice.

Through a careful study of the songs, which is essentially an intimate form, one receives a uniquely personal glimpse of Brahms, the man. His songs are particularly effective in reflecting the most subtle aspects of this man's personality, his character, his background and the times in which he lived. A thorough study of these songs is not only musically satisfying, but also extremely helpful in enabling one to gain a complete picture of the total personality of this great composer.

Brahms made a great contribution to the song literature of the Romantic era. He not only enhanced the Lieder with his own particular musical qualities, but he also preserved its original form and character. Thus, in solidifying the Lied and making it durable, he imbued it with a lasting quality so that one does not easily tire of either performing or listening to these marvelous songs.

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## APPENDIX

### A RECITAL OF SONGS OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

The following songs were presented in recital. The songs were selected in order to show characteristic qualities of the songs of Brahms and to reflect his total musical style.

#### Early Love Songs

##### Liebestreu, Opus 3, No. 1 (Faithfulness)

Of all the songs which Brahms wrote, his love songs are the most numerous. Liebestreu and Spanisches Lied were both written when Brahms was between the ages of eighteen and twenty. Liebestreu was the first song that he published under his own name, and shows what mastery of composition Brahms attained at an early age.

Let thy grief sink, my child,  
Into the deep sea!  
A stone will lie on the ocean's bed,  
But my grief comes back to me.

The love you bear in your heart,  
Pluck it out, my child.  
A flower will die when plucked away,  
But true love does not die so soon.

And the pledge you've given, it was nothing but words,  
Throw it to the winds!  
O Mother, though the rocks may be shattered by the wind  
My pledge shall last forever!

Spanisches Lied, Opus 6, No. 1 (Spanish Song: In the Shadow of my Tresses)

The words to this song were taken from the Spanisches Liederbuch. Brahms founded the model for the melodic line of this song on the Spanisches Liederspiel, Opus 74 and Spanische Liebeslieder, Opus 138 by Robert Schumann. He founded the structure of his song after the style of Spanish rhythms characterized by punctuated rhythms and by displacements of the main accents.

In the shadow of my tresses, my love is sleeping,  
Shall I wake him! Ah, no!  
Every day I carefully comb my hair early in the morning,  
But my effort is in vain for the wind tangles it.  
The shadowy curls and the rustle of the wind  
Have lulled my beloved to sleep.  
Shall I wake him? Ah, no!

I must hear how he longs for me  
And how my brown cheeks give him pleasure,  
He calls me his little snake,  
Yet, he sleeps by my side.  
Shall I wake him! Ah, no!

Songs Showing Folk Influence

Romanzen und Lieder, Opus 84, No. 1-5

These songs were selected to demonstrate how greatly Brahms's songs were affected by the German folk song. Most of the songs use the strophic form associated with the folk song. Those which touch on being through-composed still maintain a folk song quality. The songs were written in dialogue form which was a favorite of Brahms. The poems

of the first three songs, written by the Baltic poet-musician, Hans Schmidt, are conversations between a mother and her daughter. The poetry for the fourth and most well-known song, Vergebliches Ständchen, is from the collection, Deutsche Volkslieder, and the fifth song uses poetry from Deutsche Volkslieder mit ihren Originalweisen.

Sommerabend (Summer Evening)

Go to sleep, my daughter,  
Already the dew is on the grass,  
And eyes on which the dew falls  
Will soon be wet with tears,

Let me cry, Mother.  
The moon will soon rise  
And will quickly dry my tears.

Go to sleep, my daughter,  
The screech-owl is calling in the woods,  
Whoever hears his sound will soon be lamenting.

Let me lament, Mother.  
Soon the nightingale will sing loud and clear,  
And when I hear his song my grief will soon be over.

Der Kranz (The Wreath)

Mother, help your poor daughter!  
See what a young boy has given me,  
A wreath of roses to wear for his sake.

This should really not upset you,  
This is easily settled,  
Throw away the wreath and forget the young man!

But the wreath has thorns, Mother,  
And it holds fast in my hair,  
He spoke words too, Mother,  
Words which will cling forever in my heart!

In den Beeren (Amongst the Berries)

Sing, my daughter, loud and clear.  
Sing so that you will frighten the hungry sparrows  
Away from our berry bushes!

Mother, I know my singing would frighten away the  
Sparrows, but my singing may also bring my sweetheart!  
Yes, I see. I should not leave a loving pair so.  
Wait a minute and I'll be your scarecrow.

Mother, no, that will never do!  
I know that berries are dear and few,  
But kisses are much more precious!

Vergebliches Ständchen (The Vain Suit)

Good evening, my dear,  
I come out of love for you,  
Open your door and let me in.

My door is closed,  
I will not let you in.  
My Mother has said to let you in would not be wise.

The night is so cold and the wind is icy,  
Soon my heart will be frozen.  
My love is growing cold.  
Open the door, my child!

If your love grows cold so easily,  
Let it freeze then,  
Go home to bed,  
Goodnight, my dear!

Spannung (Strained Greetings)

Good evening, good evening, my pet,  
I come for you, so you come with me,  
Have you no answer for me, my angel?

You come for me, and I go with you?  
That is not much of an honor.  
You go from me to other young girls,  
You see, I know all about it!

O, no, my sweet, do not believe what gossips say,  
Our neighbors are gossipy busybodies,  
Who never mind their own business!

And what are these gossiping neighbors to you,  
Or whether they mind their own business?  
'Tis all the more reason that you should be true,  
To silence their talk forever.

Indeed, my love, I plainly see  
That you have another sweetheart,  
So I will go on my way,  
God bless and protect you, my angel.

O no, I do not have another lover,  
And I do not believe what gossips say,  
So come to me; I'll come to you,  
And we will be true to each other, my angel!

#### Two Songs for Alto and Viola, Opus 91, No. 1 and 2

These two songs are the only ones which Brahms wrote for solo voice, piano, and an accompanying instrument. Both songs reflect Brahms's interest in the folk song and his love of nature. The first song, Gestillte Sehnsucht, uses many poetic images from nature and is based on a poem by Friedrich Rückert. The second song, Geistliches Wiegenlied, has a folk-like quality due in part to the inclusion of the beautiful old melody, Joseph, lieber Joseph mein, and is based on words by Emanuel Geibel.

#### Gestillte Sehnsucht (When I Long No More)

In the golden twilight of the evening,  
How solemn the forest stands.  
The birds are gently singing,  
Winds are gently blowing,  
What do they whisper?  
They whisper the world to slumber.



When will the longing and desire deep in my heart,  
 When will they be satisfied?  
 When will the birds and winds whisper me to rest?

Ah, when I no longer dream,  
 When I no longer reach for the farthest star,  
 Then, oh, birds and winds,  
 Whisper my life away!

Geistliches Wiegenlied (Cradle Song of the Virgin)

You angels who hover over the palm trees of Bethlehem,  
 Calm the thrashing branches,  
 My child is sleeping.

This heavenly boy, so tired and weary  
 With the earth's sorrows,  
 Now he must rest, his grief is over.  
 Quiet the wind, calm your thrashing,  
 My child is sleeping.

Fünf Ophelia-Lieder (Five Songs of Ophelia)

Brahms composed these songs to be sung by Ophelia in the play, Hamlet, by William Shakespeare. They were conceived in a simple folk-like style which Brahms felt would be fitting for the Elizabethan drama. The songs are, for the most part, somber in nature and convey the desolation which Ophelia experiences as she approaches madness. Brahms wrote these songs to a German translation of the words of Shakespeare which appear as follows:

How should I your true love know from another one?  
 By his cockle hat and staff, and his sandal shoon.  
 He is dead and gone, lady, He is dead and gone;  
 At his head a grassgreen turf, at his heels a stone.

White his shroud as the mountain snow,  
 Larded with sweet flowers;  
 Which bewept to the grave did go  
 With true love showers.

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's Day, all in the morning  
 All in the morning betime,  
 And I a maid at your window, to be your Valentine.  
 Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,  
 And dupp'd the chamber door;  
 Let in the maid, that out a maid,  
 Never departed more.

They bore him barefac'd on the bier; hey nonny, nonny,  
 And in his grave rain'd many a tear.  
 You must sing, adown adown, and you call him adowna.  
 For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

And will he not come again?  
 No, no, he is dead; go to thy death-bed,  
 He never, he never, will come again.  
 His beard was white as snow, all flaxen was his poll;  
 He is gone, he is gone, And we cast away moan;  
 God have mercy on his soul!

Songs Showing Tone Painting, Humor,  
and Reverance for Nature

O kühler Wald, Opus 72, No. 3 (O Shady Wood)

O kühler Wald is one of the loviest of Brahms's songs which uses nature imagery. It was a favorite of Julius Stockhausen, a well-known singer of the songs of Brahms in Brahms's own day. The song was composed in 1877 to a poem by Clemens Brentano.

O cool, forest in which my beloved walks,  
Where do you rustle?  
O echo, where do you listen?  
Where do you understand my songs?

Deep in my heart dwells the forest  
Where my love walks.  
The echo sleeps in sorrow,  
The songs have all blown away.

Tambourliedchen, Opus 69, No. 5 (Little Drummer's Song)

Brahms did not often use specific tone painting in his songs; he usually chose instead to create a total mood picture. In this song, however, he chose to be more specific and one hears the continuous rhythmic pattern which is an imitation of the playing of a drum. The picture painted here is of a young maiden who disguises herself as a drummer-boy singing about his sweetheart.

I beat my drum such sturdy tones  
That it shakes your very marrow bones,  
Then I think of my sweetheart,  
Blue-grey, blue, are her clear, bright eyes.

When I think on those blue eyes,  
My drum, itself, beats more gently,  
Its angry tones ring bright and clear,  
Blue-grey, blue, are her beautiful eyes.

Unüberwindlich, Opus 72, No. 5 (Irresistible)

This song catches Brahms in one of his more gay moods. The poem describes the hero, who despite all of his vow, can resist neither wine nor his sweetheart, whose fidelity

is not above suspicion. The introduction to the song includes part of a cheerful theme taken from Domenico Scarlatti.

Though I have sworn a thousand times  
Not to confide in the bottle,  
When I see my tavern in the distance,  
I am as helpless as a new-born baby!

All praise to wine, raise the song on high,  
When the cork pops from the bottle,  
The wine is gone and so am I!

As Delilah did to Samson,  
Wine does the same to me.  
Come Delilah, bring your clippers,  
Quickly come and cut my hair!

#### Later Love Songs

Von ewiger Liebe, Opus 43, No. 1 (Eternal Love)

Brahms set to music many of the translations of the poet, Joseph Wenzig. Wenzig was a Czech patriot and one of the founders of the national movement in Bohemia. Von ewiger Liebe is based upon a translation by Wenzig. Brahms's setting of the poem achieves a Slavonic quality through his use of an accentuation of the second beat in the measure, rising chromaticism, and the use of open fifths in the bass line. The poem is divided into three sections for each of which Brahms composed specific melodies. The first section is a narration which sets the mood for the conversation between the young lovers which follow in the second and third sections.

Darkness has fallen on forest and field,  
It is evening and the world is still,  
The houses are dark, and smoke comes from their chimneys,  
And the lark is silent.

From out of the village,  
A young boy and his sweetheart are walking home,  
He guides her past hedges and pastures  
While speaking earnestly:

If you are ashamed and sadden because of me,  
Then let us break off our love,  
As quickly as we fell in love!

But the girl replies: our love will never be weakened,  
Steel is firm and iron, also,  
But our love is stronger still.  
Men can mold iron and steel,  
But who can change our love?  
Our love will last forever!

Das Mädchen spricht, Opus 107, No. 3 (The Maiden Speaks)

This song is the only song which Brahms set to music based on a poem by Gruppe. Gruppe was professor of aesthetics at Berlin University and secretary to the Academy of Arts. The accompaniment to this song is particularly charming with very light and graceful rhythmic and melodic figures supporting the voice part in a cheerful style.

Swallow, tell me, have you been a bride long?  
Who shares the nest with you,  
A new lover or an old one?

Say, why do you whisper and twitter so?  
Come swallow, tell me,  
Have you been a bride long?

Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer, Opus 105, No. 2 (Ever  
Gentler Grows My Slumber)

The first bars of Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer are written in the style of a Gypsy melody and resemble the main theme of the cello in the Andante movement of the Piano Concerto in B Flat Major (1882) by Brahms. The mood created in the song is one of tenderness, longing, and passion.

Ever lighter and more restless is my sleep,  
And a veil-like sorrow hovers over me.

Often in my dreams I hear you  
Calling softly as my door  
No one wakes to open the door,  
I awake from my dream, and weep bitterly.

Yes, I know I must die  
And that you will kiss another  
When I am pale and cold.  
But before the May breezes blow,  
And before the thrush sings in the forest,  
Will you come and see me once more?  
Come, O come soon!

Meine Liebe ist grün, Opus 63, No. 5 (My Love is Green)

Meine Liebe ist grün was inspired by the poem of the eighteen-year-old godchild of Brahms, Felix Schumann, the son of Robert and Clara Schumann. Felix Schumann never had his poems published but Brahms set another of his poems to music in the song, Versunken, Opus 86, No. 5. Meine liebe ist grün is an exciting, passionate, love song which is

characterized by the use of syncopation, a heavy, pounding bass, and a soaring melody.

My love is as green as the lilac-bush!  
And as beautiful as the sun that shines on the bush  
And fills it with perfume and beauty!

When I think of my love  
My soul has the wings of a nightingale,  
That cradles itself in the lilac-bush,  
Rejoicing and singing many love-drunk songs!

# Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

Department of Music  
College of Fine Arts

Presents

PAULA BOLTZ, Mezzo-Soprano

in

Graduate Recital

DELIA BENTON, Accompanist



Redbud Auditorium

Friday, May 15, 1970

8:00 p.m.



# Program

## SELECTED SOLO WORKS OF JOHANNES BRAHMS

Liebsteu Op. 3 No. 1 (Faithfulness)

Spanisches Lied Op. 6 No. 1 (Spanish Song—In the Shadow  
of My tresses)

### Romanzen und Lieder Op. 84

Sommerabend (Summer Evening)

Der Kranz (The Garland)

In den Beeren (In the Berry Patch)

Vergebliches Standchen (The Vain Suit)

Spannung (Strained Relations)

### Two Songs for Alto and Viola Op. 91

Gestillte Sehnsucht (When I Long no more)

Geistliches Wiegenlied (Cradle Song of the Virgin)

Mrs. Margaret Eberly — Viola

## Intermission

## Fünf Ophelia — Lieder (Five Songs of Ophelia)

O kühler Wald Op. 72, No. 3 (O Shady Wood)

Tambourliedchen Op. 69 No. 5 (Little Drummer's Song)

Unüberwindlich Op. 72 No. 5 (Irresistible)

Von ewiger Leibe Op. 43, No. 1 (Eternal Love)

Das Mädchen spricht Op. 107, No. 3 (The Maiden speaks)

Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer Op. 105, No. 2 (Ever  
gentler grows my slumber)

Meine Liebe ist grün Op. 63, No. 5 (My Love is Green)

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