

The Cambridge Companion to Brahms

This companion gives a comprehensive view of the German composer Johannes Brahms (1833–97). Twelve chapters by leading scholars and musicians provide systematic coverage of the composer's life and works. Their essays represent the latest research and reflect changing attitudes towards a composer whose public image has long been out of date.

The first part of the book contains three chapters on Brahms's early life in Hamburg and on the middle and later years in Vienna. The central section considers the musical works in all genres, while the last part of the book offers personal accounts and responses from a conductor (Roger Norrington), a composer (Hugh Wood) and an editor of Brahms's original manuscripts (Robert Pascall).

The volume as a whole is an important addition to Brahms scholarship and provides indispensable information for all enthusiasts and students of Brahms's music.

Michael Musgrave is Emeritus Professor of Music at Goldsmiths College, University of London. He is author of *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace*, *The Music of Brahms*, and *Brahms: A German Requiem* in the series Cambridge Music Handbooks.

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The Cambridge Companion to
BRAHMS

EDITED BY
Michael Musgrave



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Contributors

Kurt Hofmann has assembled since the 1950s the largest private collection of Brahms material, which has formed the main part of the Brahms-Institut at Lübeck, of which he is Director with Renate Hofmann. His research has resulted in publications, many of them standard works of reference, including the editing of the reminiscences of Richard Heuberger and Richard Barth, a study of the first editions (*Die Erstdrucke der Werke von Johannes Brahms*, Tutzing, 1975), a detailed calendar of Brahms's life (*Johannes Brahms: Zeittafel zu Leben und Werk*, with Renate Hofmann, Tutzing, 1983), a revised listing of Brahms's library (*Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms*, Hamburg, 1974), and studies of Brahms's connections with Hamburg and Baden Baden. Professor Hofmann is an editor of the *Johannes Brahms Briefwechsel: Neue Folge*, which has continued the original, sixteen-volume, series of *Briefwechsel*.

Leon Botstein is editor of *The Musical Quarterly*, conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra and President of Bard College, New York, where he has pioneered annual festivals devoted to individual composers, including, in 1990, Brahms. His Brahms writings include articles on concert life, science and music in Brahms's Vienna, and on Brahms and nineteenth-century painting. He is editor of and contributor to *The Complete Brahms*, forthcoming from Schirmer in 1999. As a conductor he has performed little-known nineteenth- and twentieth-century orchestral and choral works. His recordings include performances of works by Joachim and Schubert, in orchestrations by Joachim, Mottl and Webern, and Brahms's Serenade in D, in both its published version and a reconstructed version as a nonet.

John Rink is Reader in Music at Royal Holloway, University of London. His fields of specialism are performance studies, theory and analysis, and nineteenth-century studies. He is the author of *Chopin: The Piano Concertos* (1997), joint editor, with Jim Samson, of *Chopin Studies 2* (1994) and editor of *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation* (1995), all published by Cambridge University Press. Dr Rink is Project Director and one of three series editors of *The Complete Chopin – A New Critical Edition* (Peters Edition).

David Brodbeck is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Music at the University of Pittsburgh. He is former President of the American Brahms Society and edits the series of *Brahms Studies* published by the University of Nebraska Press. He has contributed essays to *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Studies* (Oxford University Press, 1990), *Mendelssohn Studies* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), *Brahms and His World* and *Mendelssohn and His World* (both Princeton University Press) and *Schubert: Critical and Analytical Studies* (University of Nebraska Press), as well as to the periodicals *19th-Century Music* and *Journal of Musicology*. He is author of *Brahms: Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Kofi Agawu is Professor of Music at Princeton University, having previously taught at King's College London, Cornell University and Yale University. He is the author of *Playing with Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classical Music* (Princeton University Press, 1991) and of many analytical articles, including 'Theory and Practice in the Analysis of the Nineteenth-Century German Lied' in the journal *Music Analysis*, 1992. His study *African Rhythm: A Northern Ewe Perspective* was published by Cambridge University Press in 1995.

Malcolm MacDonald is the editor of *Tempo*, the quarterly magazine of modern music. He lives in Gloucestershire as a freelance writer on music. As 'Calum MacDonald' he has broadcast and contributed to many periodicals on a wide range of subjects, especially twentieth-century music. His books include the volume *Schoenberg* in the *Master Musicians* series, a three-volume study of the music of the English composer Havergal Brian and a major study of the life and works of Brahms in the expanded *Master Musicians* format in 1990. He is currently completing a book on the music of Varèse.

Daniel Beller-McKenna earned his Ph.D. from Harvard University in 1994 and has taught at the University of South Carolina and the University of New Hampshire, where he is Assistant Professor of Music History. His essays on Brahms's vocal and orchestral music have appeared in the *Journal of Musicology*, *19th Century Music*, *The New York Times*, and various anthologies of Brahms studies. He is currently writing a book on the intersection of religious music and nationalism in Brahms's music. He is also preparing a series of essays on John Lennon and the Beatles, the first of which will appear in *Music & Letters* (1999). Beller-McKenna is Vice President of the American Brahms Society and a member of the American Musicological Society Council.

Roger Norrington founded and conducted The Schütz Choir of London in 1962 and The London Classical Players in 1980. A leading pioneer in the performance of music using original instruments and playing styles, he has presented a number of extended weekend 'Experiences' on London's South Bank and abroad devoted to major composers; these have included, in 1992, 'The Brahms Experience', centring on a performance of *A German Requiem*. His wide catalogue of recordings includes – in addition to the symphonies of Brahms, the *German Requiem* and other choral and orchestral works – the complete symphonies of Beethoven, symphonies by Schubert, Schumann and Bruckner, overtures of the early romantic period, and operas of Mozart (*The Magic Flute* and *Don Giovanni*). Sir Roger received his knighthood in 1997.

Robert Pascall is Professor of Music and Head of the Music Department at the University of Wales, Bangor, and Professor Emeritus of the University of Nottingham. He is president of the Society for Music Analysis, Chair of the Editorial Board of the journal *Music Analysis*, Vice Chair of the new *Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe*, and Corresponding Director of the American Brahms Society. He has published on Brahms and his contemporaries, on nineteenth-century music history and on Franz Schmidt; his edition of Brahms's First Symphony for the *Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe* inaugurated the edition in 1996, and he will edit all four symphonies.

Hugh Wood is a composer who has worked at Cambridge for twenty years as

University Lecturer in Music and as Director of Studies in Music at Churchill College, of which he is a Fellow. He studied composition with Iain Hamilton and then with Mátyás Seiber. He has written much chamber music, including four string quartets; a vocal-orchestral piece *Scenes from Comus* (with which he made his *Prom* debut in 1965); concertos for cello, for violin and for piano, and a chamber concerto; a chamber-orchestral song cycle to poems of Pablo Neruda; a cantata; and a symphony. He has also written about fifty songs, including four sets to poems by Robert Graves.

Michael Musgrave is Emeritus Professor of Music at Goldsmiths College, University of London and lives and works in New York City. The focus of his research is German and English music of the nineteenth century, on which he has written and broadcast widely. His books include *The Music of Brahms* (1985, rev. edn Oxford University Press, 1994), *The Musical Life of the Crystal Palace* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), *Brahms: A German Requiem* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). He is editor of the Brahms Serenades Opp. 11 and 16 for the new *Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe* and a contributor to the forthcoming edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and the *New Dictionary of National Biography*. He is a member of the Advisory Board of *Music Analysis*.

Chronology

- | | | |
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| 1833 | Brahms born 7 May, in Hamburg, son of Johann Jacob Brahms and Christiane Nissen. | Mendelssohn: <i>Italian Symphony</i> ; Marschner: <i>Hans Heiling</i> . Borodin born. |
| 1834 | | Liszt: <i>Harmonies poétiques et religieuses</i> ; Berlioz: <i>Harold in Italy</i> . First issue of <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i> published in Leipzig. |
| 1835 | Birth of younger brother Fritz, 26 March. | Donizetti: <i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> , Naples; Schumann: <i>Carnaval</i> . Mendelssohn appointed conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Bellini dies, Saint-Saëns born. |
| 1836 | | Glinka: <i>A Life for the Tsar</i> , St Petersburg; Meyerbeer: <i>Les Huguenots</i> , Paris. |
| 1837 | | Berlioz: <i>Grande messe des morts</i> ; Liszt: <i>24 grandes Etudes</i> . Field and Hummel die. Balakirev born. |
| 1838 | Family moves to 38 Ulricusstrasse. | Schumann: <i>Kinderszenen</i> and <i>Kreisleriana</i> . Bizet and Bruch born. |
| 1839 | Begins lessons with his father. Attends the <i>Privatschule</i> of Heinrich Voss, Dammthorwall. | Berlioz: <i>Roméo et Juliette</i> Symphony. Musorgsky born. |
| 1840 | Begins piano lessons with Otto Cossel. | Schumann marries Clara Wieck and composes over a hundred songs. Paganini dies. |
| 1841 | The family moves to Dammthorwall 29. | Schumann's symphonic year. Chabrier and Dvořák born. |
| 1842 | A great fire destroys much of Hamburg (8 May) Attends <i>Bürgerschule</i> . | Wagner: <i>Rienzi</i> , Dresden; Verdi: <i>Nabucco</i> , Milan; Glinka: <i>Ruslan and Ludmilla</i> , St Petersburg. Schumann: Piano Quintet and other chamber works. Mendelssohn: <i>Scottish Symphony</i> . Boito, Massenet, Sullivan born; Cherubini dies. |
| 1843 | First appearance as pianist. Offer of an American tour. | Wagner: <i>Flying Dutchman</i> , Dresden; Berlioz: <i>Treatise on Orchestration</i> . Opening of the Leipzig Conservatoire. Grieg, Heinrich von Herzogenberg born. |
| 1844 | | Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto; Nietzsche, Rimsky-Korsakov born. Liszt at Weimar. |

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- 1845 Now entirely Marxsen's pupil. Wagner: *Tannhäuser*; Schumann: Piano Concerto. Fauré born.
- 1846 Berlioz: *The Damnation of Faust*, Paris; Schumann: Second Symphony in C. Mendelssohn: *Elijah*, Birmingham. Ignaz Brüll born.
- 1847 Summer at Winsen, near Hamburg. Mendelssohn dies.
- 1848 Hears Joachim play the Beethoven Violin Concerto in Hamburg. Donizetti dies. Duparc, Parry born.
- 1849 Second solo concert. Berlioz: *Te Deum*; Meyerbeer: *Le Prophète*. Chopin, Kalkbrenner, Nicolai, Johann Strauss I die.
- 1850 Fails to meet the Schumanns when they visit Hamburg. Composes songs and first chamber music. Schumann: *Rhenish Symphony*; Liszt's first symphonic poem. Fibich, Henschel born.
- 1851 Scherzo in E \flat minor, which he plays to Henry Litolff. Verdi: *Rigoletto*; Liszt begins issuing *Hungarian Rhapsodies*. Lortzing, Spontini die. D'Indy born. First volume of the Leipzig Bach Gesellschaft Edition published.
- 1852 Sonata in F \sharp minor [later Op. 2] and more songs.
- 1853 Sonata in C major [later op 1]. Concert tour with Reményi: meets Joachim in Hannover, Liszt and his circle at Weimar; Rhineland walking tour; meets Hiller and Reinecke at Cologne and the Schumanns at Düsseldorf. Schumann hails Brahms in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Meets Berlioz, David, Moscheles in Leipzig. Opp. 1, 2, 6 published. First public performance in Leipzig (Op. 1, Op. 4).
- 1854 Meets Bülow in Leipzig. Opp. 2, 4, 5 published. Travels to Düsseldorf to be with Clara after Schumann's attempted suicide. Works on a two-piano sonata in D minor, later orchestrated as a 'symphony'. Liszt: *Faust Symphony*, *Orpheus*; Wagner: *Das Rheingold*; Berlioz: *L'Enfance du Christ*, 1850–4; Humperdinck, Janáček born.
- 1855 Lives in Düsseldorf. Concert tours with Clara and Joachim. Trio Op. 8 given in Danzig. Chausson, Liadov, Röntgen born.
- 1856 Works on a Mass in canonic form; Sonata/Symphony in D minor converted into the D minor Piano Concerto (Op. 15); first version of the Piano Quartet in C minor (Op. 60) in C \sharp minor. Counterpoint exchange with Joachim. Liszt: *Dante Symphony*; Wagner: *Die Walküre*. Schumann dies; Martucci, Sinding, Taneiev born.

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- Lives in Hamburg until spring. Lives in Bonn to be near dying Schumann. Visits Detmold in Autumn. Subscribes to the Bach Gesellschaft edition. First Brahms performance in England (Clara plays 'Sarabande and Gavotte' at Hanover Square Rooms).
- 1857 Composition and teaching in Hamburg. Second visit to Detmold. Appointed to conduct and teach piano at the Detmold court, position obtained though Clara Schumann. Czerny and Glinka die; Elgar, Leoncavallo born.
- 1858 Works at Hamburg on Piano Concerto. Serenade (Op. 11) begun as octet or nonet. Folk-song arrangements. *Ave Maria* Op. 12 and *Begräbnisgesang* Op. 13 composed. Becomes greatly attached to Agathe von Siebold. Second autumn at Detmold. Wagner: *Wesendonck Lieder*; Joachim: *Concerto in the Hungarian Manner*; Berlioz: *Les Troyens*. Chrysander founds the Handel Gesellschaft Edition. Reubke dies; Puccini, Hans Rott, Ethel Smyth born.
- 1859 Secret engagement to Agathe von Siebold broken off. Piano Concerto Op. 15 premiered in Hannover; Serenade Op. 11, 'for small orchestra', premiered in Hamburg. Founds the Hamburg Frauenchor. Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde*; Verdi: *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Spohr dies, Forster born.
- 1860 Leaves Detmold for Hamburg. Serenade No. 2 in A premiered in Hamburg (Brahms); Serenade No. 1 in D 'for full orchestra' premiered in Hannover (Joachim). String Sextet Op. 18 premiered in Hannover. The 'Manifesto' against the New Germans published prematurely by the Berlin *Echo*. Albeniz, Charpentier, Mahler, Paderewski, Reznicek born.
- 1861 Mainly in Hamburg and in the summer at Hamm, on the outskirts. First performance of the Handel Variations Op. 24 and the Piano Quartet in G minor Op. 25 Marschner dies; Arensky, Chaminade, McDowell born.
- 1862 Spring in Hamburg. Works on the *Magelone*lieder, String Quintet in F minor and C minor Symphony begun. Travels to Vienna (8 September) and remains till spring, meeting many musicians. Successful performances, including the first performance of Op. 26. Julius Stockhausen appointed to conduct Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra. Verdi: *La Forza del Destino*; Otto von Bismarck made minister-president of Prussia; Halévy dies; Debussy, Delius born.
- 1863 Spring/summer in Hamburg. Appointed conductor of the Wiener Singakademie for 1863–4. Travels to Vienna in August, remains until Spring. First performance of the *Paganini Variations* and Horn Trio. Mascagni, Pierné born.

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| 1864 | Summer in Lichtenthal with Clara Schumann. Meets her circle. Returns to Vienna for the winter. | Offenbach: <i>La Belle Hélène</i> . Meyerbeer dies; Richard Strauss born. |
| 1865 | Death of his mother in Hamburg. Summer in Lichtenthal, concert tours during the autumn and winter. | Liszt: <i>Missa Choralis</i> . Dukas, Magnard, Glazunov, Nielsen, Sibelius born. |
| 1866 | Continuing tour includes Oldenburg and Switzerland, with Joachim; completes <i>Ein deutsches Requiem</i> at Karlsruhe, Winterthur, Zurich and Lichtenthal. Returns to Vienna in November. | Liszt: <i>Christus</i> ; Smetana: <i>The Bartered Bride</i> ; Bruckner: Symphony 1 and Mass in E minor. Busoni, Satie born. |
| 1867 | Concert tours of Austrian provinces in spring and autumn; summer walking tour with his father and Josef Gänsbacher; returns to Vienna in November. Partial performance of <i>Ein deutsches Requiem</i> in Vienna (mvts 1–3). | Verdi: <i>Don Carlos</i> ; Wagner: <i>Die Meistersinger</i> . Marx: <i>Das Kapital</i> . Sechter dies; Granados, Koehlin born. |
| 1868 | Tours of Germany and Denmark with Stockhausen; first important Brahms performance in France (Op. 34 in Paris); first performance of <i>Ein deutsches Requiem</i> in Bremen; June/July in Bonn; concerts in the Autumn with Clara and Stockhausen. | Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1. Berwald, Rossini die. |
| 1869 | First performance of <i>Rinaldo</i> Op. 50 in Vienna; final version of the <i>Requiem</i> in Leipzig; concerts in Vienna and Budapest with Stockhausen; summer in Lichtenthal. From now based on Vienna. | Joachim becomes first Director of the Berlin <i>Hochschule für Musik</i> . Berlioz, Dargomizhsky, Loewe die; Pfitzner, Roussel born. |
| 1870 | First performance of <i>Alto Rhapsody</i> ; attends <i>Das Rheingold</i> and <i>Die Walküre</i> in Munich. | Franco-Prussian War. Mercadante dies; Léhar, Novak born. |
| 1871 | First performance of first part of the <i>Triumphlied</i> ; summer at Lichtenthal; first performance of the <i>Schicksalslied</i> ; in December moves to Karlsgasse 4, thereafter his permanent home. | Verdi: <i>Aida</i> . Establishment of German Empire under Wilhelm I. Auber, Thalberg die. Zemlinsky born. |
| 1872 | Death of his father in Hamburg. First performance of the complete <i>Triumphlied</i> in Karlsruhe; summer in Lichtenthal; becomes artistic director of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde. | Bizet: <i>L'Arlésienne</i> . Skriabin, Vaughan Williams born. |
| 1873 | Summer in Tutzing. Attends Schumann Festival under Joachim at Bonn in August. | Bruckner: Symphony No. 3; Dvořák: Symphony 3. Rachmaninov, Reger born. |
| 1874 | Summer near Zurich. Meets J. V. Widmann. Awarded Order of Maximilian by King Ludwig of Bavaria. Visits Leipzig | Bruckner: Symphony No. 4; Musorgsky: <i>Boris Godunov</i> ; Smetana: <i>Vltava</i> ; Verdi: Requiem. Franz |

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- and Munich, meets the Herzogenbergs and Philipp Spitta.
- 1875 Resigns from the Gesellschaft. Works to complete the First Symphony at Heidelberg and near Zurich. Becomes a member of the music committee for the award of grants from the Austrian Government. Approves an award to Dvořák, whose music he is now coming to know and admire.
- 1876 Visits to Holland, Mannheim, Coblenz; summer at Sassnitz, Isle of Rügen where completes First Symphony. First performance of First Symphony at Karlsruhe (Dessoff). The beginning of his estrangement from Hermann Levi.
- 1877 Summer in Pörtschach and Lichtenthal. First performance of Second Symphony in Vienna (Richter).
- 1878 First Italian holiday in April with Billroth. Brahms finds a new supporter in Hans von Bülow.
- 1879 Awarded an honorary doctorate by Breslau University. Summer in Pörtschach. Concert tour of Hungary, Transylvania and Poland with Joachim. First performance of the Violin Concerto (Joachim).
- 1880 Attends the unveiling of the Schumann Monument in Bonn; concert tour of the Rhine. First summer residence at Ischl, where he meets Johann Strauss II. Serious rift with Joachim over his suit for divorce from his wife Amalie.
- 1881 Tours in Holland and Hungary where he meets Liszt again through Bülow. Spring holiday in Italy with Billroth and Nottebohm. Summer in Pressbaum near Vienna. Rehearses the Second Piano Concerto at Meiningen.
- 1882 Tours Germany and Holland with the Second Piano Concerto. Summer in Ischl. Late summer in Italy with Billroth, Brüll, Simrock. Graz in November with the dying Gustav Nottebohm.
- 1883 Summer in Wiesbaden, where he forms a close attachment to Hermine Spies.
- Schmidt born. Cornelius dies; Holst, Ives, Franz Schmidt, Schoenberg, Suk born.
- Bizet: *Carmen*; Goldmark, *Die Königin von Saba*; Tchaikovsky: Piano Concerto No. 1. Sterndale Bennett, Bizet die; Hahn, Ravel, Tovey born.
- Bruckner: Symphony No. 5; Tchaikovsky: *Swan Lake*; first complete *Ring* cycle at Bayreuth; Goetz dies; Falla, Wolf-Ferrari, Ruggles born.
- Saint-Saëns: *Samson et Dalila*; Dvořák: *Symphonic Variations*. Dohnányi, Karg Elert born.
- Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, Symphony No. 4; Dvořák: *Slavonic Dances*. Schreker born.
- Bruckner: String Quintet; Franck: Piano Quintet. Jensen dies; Bridge, Ireland, Respighi born.
- Mahler: *Das klagende Lied*; Dvořák: Symphony No. 6. Bloch, Medtner born; Offenbach dies.
- Bruckner: Symphony No. 6. Bartók, Enescu, Miaskovsky born; Musorgsky dies.
- Wagner: *Parsifal*. Kodaly, Malipiero, Grainger, Stravinsky, Szymanowski born; Raff dies.
- Dvořák: *Scherzo Capriccioso*, Casella, Hauer, Varèse, Webern born; Wagner dies.

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- 1884 Spring in Italy, summer in Mürzzuschlag. Winter tour as pianist and accompanist for Spies in Hamburg, Bremen and Oldenburg. Mahler: *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Debussy: *L'Enfant Prodigue*. Smetana dies.
- 1885 Summer at Mürzzuschlag. Premieres the Fourth Symphony at Meiningen, where he meets the young Richard Strauss. Subsequently tours with the work in Holland. Franck: *Variations Symphoniques*; Dvořák, Symphony No. 7; Berg born; Hiller dies.
- 1886 Summer in Hofstetten near Thun. Elected Honorary President of the Wiener Tonkünstler-Verein. Visits Meiningen in October. Goldmark, *Merlin*; Franck: Violin Sonata. Liszt dies.
- 1887 Spring holiday in Italy with Simrock and Theodor Kirchner, Summer at Thun. Goldmark: *Ländliche Hochzeit* Symphony; Verdi: *Otello*; Bruckner: Symphony No. 8. Borodin dies. C. F. Pohl, archivist of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, dies; succeeded by Eusebius Mandyczewski; Marxsen dies.
- 1888 Meets Tchaikovsky and Grieg in Leipzig. Spring in Italy with Widmann. Summer in Thun. Franck: Symphony in D minor; Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5. Alkan dies.
- 1889 Awarded the freedom of the city of Hamburg. Order of Leopold conferred by Franz Josef. Summer in Ischl. Dvořák: Symphony No. 8; Mahler: Symphony No. 1; R. Strauss: *Don Juan*; *Tod und Verklärung*; Henselt dies.
- 1890 Spring holiday in Italy with Widmann. Summer in Ischl. Meets Alice Barbi. Plans his will. Wolf: *Spanisches Liederbuch*; Fauré: Requiem. Franck, Gade die; Martin born.
- 1891 Hears Mühlfeld play at Meiningen. Visits Berlin in the Spring. Makes Will. Friendship with Adolf Menzel. Attends Mahler's performance of *Don Giovanni* in Prague. Wolf: *Italienisches Liederbuch*; Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 1.
- 1892 Spring in Italy. Summer in Ischl. Death of Elisabet von Herzogenberg and of his sister Elise. Nielsen: Symphony No. 1; Sibelius: *Kullervo* and *En Saga*; Dvořák: Te Deum. Lalo dies; Honegger, Milhaud born.
- 1893 Spring holiday in Italy and Sicily. Summer in Ischl. Work on the collected edition of Schumann's works. Hermine Spies dies. Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6; Dvořák: Symphony No. 9; Verdi: *Falstaff*. Gounod, Tchaikovsky die; Haba born. Strauss: *Guntram*
- 1894 Summer in Ischl. Publishes the *Deutsche Volkslieder* in seven volumes. Offered but refuses conductorship of the Hamburg Philharmonic. Accompanies Alice Barbi at her final concert. Billroth dies. Debussy: *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. Bülow, Chabrier, Rubinstein, Spitta die. Fauré: *La Bonne Chanson*. Mahler: Symphony No. 2;
- 1895 Tours German cities with Mühlfeld, performing the Clarinet Sonatas. Summer Rachmaninov: Symphony No. 1; Dvořák: Cello Concerto;

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| | in Ischl. Visits Clara in Frankfurt, conducts in Zurich. | Hindemith, Orff born. |
| 1896 | Last public appearance as conductor. Conducts both piano concertos with d'Albert in Berlin. Attends Clara Schumann's funeral in Bonn. Summer in Ischl. Deterioration of health. Goes to Karlsbad to take the waters. Attends Bruckner's funeral. | Mahler: <i>Symphony No. 3</i> ; Strauss: <i>Also sprach Zarathustra</i> ; Puccini: <i>La Bohème</i> . Bruckner, Clara Schumann, Ambroise Thomas die. |
| 1897 | Last public appearance at a concert. Revises his will. Rapid decline in health and appearance. Death on 3 April of cancer of the liver. Public funeral 6 April. | Cowell, Korngold born. |

Preface

Brahms in perspective

The last decades of the twentieth century have seen a striking increase in scholarly interest in the music of the nineteenth century. As this era moves yet further into the distance, it has been a fresh experience to find its repertory – long better known to concert audiences than that of any other period – viewed in a new setting, now that its social, political and creative backgrounds have been more fully revealed. In this new perspective, few images of composers have changed as much as that of Brahms. It has not been merely a matter of filling in the gaps of knowledge, or even of exploding certain myths. New examinations of his music have revealed just how much the received view of its significance was based on what it was *taken* to represent in the historical picture of the nineteenth century, rather than on its actual substance. With changing fashion after Brahms's death, an image full of stereotypes became even more firmly entrenched by neglect. For example, that of Brahms 'The Absolutist Composer', the implacable opponent of Wagner, whose own failure to write an opera indicated a lack of interest in drama and literature. And, growing from this, the all-encompassing view of Brahms 'The Conservative', in the light of his preference for instrumental forms in an age of increasing programmaticism. In few cases can the perception and evaluation of a composer's achievement have been so inadequate to the reality as with Brahms; in few cases can such oversimplified epithets – first the 'epigone' of Schumann; later, more durably, of Beethoven – have been so glibly applied.

There were of course good reasons for this failure to gain his measure. Brahms cultivated a classical profile in a romantic era, systematically mastering genre after genre in an age where specialism was the tendency. He commands an extraordinary historical position in the sheer range of the music he produced (though it does not extend to opera, it includes some highly dramatic vocal music). Few composers can be represented as typically in such accessible pieces as the 'Wiegenlied', the Hungarian Dances or the *Liebeslieder* waltzes, and yet also in complex fugues and variations, types of works which generally appeal to completely different audiences. And even to critics surveying the whole output, Brahms gives a different message – appearing to some as a sonorous Romantic, to others, a musical ascetic out of his historical time. Of course, Brahms sought to synthesise the many dimensions of his music and did so magnificently. But that very

integration, the richness arising from – for example – the fusion of lyricism and complex counterpoint, has remained a problem for many listeners. For all the revision in attitudes towards his contemporaries, Brahms has continued to be difficult to categorise – hence the convenience of the catch-all label ‘Conservative’, which avoids the issue. And as with the music, so with the life: inherited images of a deprived childhood have continued to colour our views of Brahms’s mature personality, to leave him as something of a mystery as a social being.

The sense of distance is perhaps the more remarkable in the light of Brahms’s actual closeness to us in historical time and personal circumstance. Had he lived just a few years longer into the twentieth century (he was only sixty-three at his death), we would surely view him differently. As it is, those who remember him personally were still broadcasting their memories in the early years of the LP record after the Second World War. As a self-made man in an age of bourgeois culture, with all his lack of sentimentality about music and his religious scepticism, he seems much closer to our world than to those (only twenty years or so older) to whom he is so often related: Wagner, Liszt, Schumann, Mendelssohn.

Of course, there was always a narrow line of professional knowledge and admiration on the part of younger composers in the Austro-German tradition that kept alive a respect for Brahms’s technical achievements as a composer. This manifested itself most openly in Schoenberg’s famous essay ‘Brahms the Progressive’ (first broadcast in the centenary year of 1933, then published in revised form in 1950), which did more than any other text to place Brahms in a position of historical continuity. But Schoenberg saw Brahms as a ‘progressive’ essentially because of the Brahmsian principles he made his own: he was legitimising his often problematic music in claiming Brahms as his mentor. From the technical standpoint, Schoenberg’s was always a one-sided view of Brahms, as was his view of the future. And Schoenberg’s successors would essentially grant Brahms’s greatness despite rather than because of the full character of his musical personality: acknowledging the technical dimension, whilst passing with reserve over the expressive substance.

The situation is very different now. It is Brahms’s place as a pioneer in reclaiming the past – a past much more distant than that explored by any other composer-contemporaries in this historicising era – that is now of interest. Of all composers of the nineteenth century, he seems central to modern outlooks in his lifelong concerns with the performance and editing of earlier music and its absorption into his own. Historical reference has become a new index of ‘meaning’ in modern composition, just as notions of abstract ‘unity’ and ‘structure’ were the shibboleths of Modernism. In tracing the continuity, Brahms now seems the most tangi-

ble link between the musical past and present. No longer an 'anti-Pope' (as he himself ruefully put it) to the great aesthetic innovator and 'progressive' of the century, Wagner, he now stands on an equal footing, relevant to late twentieth-century listeners as one of music's most powerful intelligences.

The aim of this book is to reflect changing attitudes in a range of essays written partly by established Brahms specialists and partly (especially in discussion of the music) by scholars coming to the music from different backgrounds. The book's three sections deal with his life, with his works and finally with the personal views offered by musicians with some special involvement with the music.

In Part I, Kurt Hofmann places Brahms's difficult early years in Hamburg in a completely fresh perspective with the help of new documentation. Here the familiar picture of the abused young prodigy forced to work in a low-life setting is significantly revised in the light of his family background and the life of the professional musician. Brahms's gradual estrangement from Hamburg and his earlier years of association with Vienna are the subject of my own essay, which sees this as a period of slow and difficult transition as he continued to attempt to establish himself as an independent composer from 1862 to 1875. Once established, however, Brahms became the most important musical figure in the city and released the major orchestral works by which he is best known to concert audiences. Viewing these compositions from a sociological rather than a purely musical standpoint, Leon Botstein offers new views of both Brahms's motivation for composing them and the political dimension of their performance and reception (so prominent a feature of Brahms's mature years in the city).

Part II covers the full range of Brahms's output. John Rink explores the three distinctive chronological and stylistic phases of Brahms's piano music in the light of the integrity of musical thought and technique which characterises his output, to reveal the brilliant resolution of striking tensions and dichotomies of style. Kofi Agawu shares an interest in the dynamic process which interacts with the larger form, pursuing the creative tensions between 'architectural' and 'logical' form at the heart of Brahms's style through identifying strategic moments in the symphonies. For all the familiarity of Brahms's orchestral work in the concert hall, his instrumental output was overwhelmingly devoted to chamber music, which exercised great influence on the younger generation. Its deep relationship with the past on the one hand and its profound originality on the other are explored in David Brodbeck's discussion of representative works from the entire output. A major additional theme, however, is their extra-musical dimension: reflecting recent emphases of scholarship, he

seeks to uncover unsuspected biographical connections that help to erode the absolutist view of Brahms the composer. Malcolm MacDonald's discussion of the four concertos also blends the structural dimension – here the symphonic element as feeding the complex individuality of the works – while also emphasising the poetic and extra-musical aspect more than tradition has generally allowed. With the discussion of texted works, the issue of meaning in relation to form can be seen from the opposite position: that of the role of structure in communicating expression. Brahms's large and varied output of choral music, of both small and large proportions, accompanied and unaccompanied, is the least known part of his oeuvre. Yet, as Daniel Beller-McKenna reveals, the works inter-relate closely with those of other genres and have the added dimension of a frequently overt link to musical history or social context. Form and expression interact at a more intimate level in the vast output of solo songs with piano; my own discussion of them argues for a higher esteem of Brahms's ambitions and achievements through formal and stylistic subtleties in a wide range of examples.

In Part III, the discourse of biography and analysis is set aside for more personal responses to Brahms today. Roger Norrington approaches the music from the standpoint of a conductor seeking to realise the score in an historically informed light, using instruments and performing styles of the period. Facing similar issues from another perspective, Robert Pascall draws on the experience of editing the scores themselves for the new *Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe*, with the fullest reference to all the now available evidence, to clarify how Brahms produced them and the kinds of problems which attend their realisation. Finally, Hugh Wood places Brahms in the ultimate perspective for the present day, in responding as a composer himself, providing a further context for many of the preceding themes in the book: Brahms's personality, the nature of his achievement, how we relate to him in historical time, the values he enshrines and what they mean today.