Brahms in Nineteenth-Century America

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On September 7, 1866, Johannes's younger brother Fritz ("the wrong Brahms") wrote their sister from Caracas, suggesting that Johannes locate in Venezuela, where the tropics would profit his compositions.[1] However, unlike Anton Rubinstein, Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, and Saint-Saëns, Johannes was never to set foot in the Western Hemisphere; and one hundred years after his death it is the reception history of his repertoire on the American stage that now concerns us.

CHAMBER MUSIC

Brahms first met the American public with his chamber music, and it was his chamber repertoire that began stimulating a divergence of critical opinon that continued almost to the end of the century.

The Mason-Bergmann Quintette[2] gave the world premiere of Brahms's Trio, No. 1, in B major, Op. 8, at Dodworth's Rooms in New York, November 27, 1855. Significantly, this sole world premiere to have taken place in America is the earliest reference to Brahms's music in the United States. William Mason (*b* Boston, 1829; *d* New York, 1908) had studied music extensively in Europe, first in Leipzig and Prague, and later in Weimar as a pupil of Franz Liszt. Himself present on the infamous occasion when the young Brahms had dozed through Liszt's performance, Mason recalls:

> Partly on account of the untoward Weimar incident, and partly for the sake of his own individuality, I took a peculiar interest in Brahms. His work is wonderfully condensed, his constructive power, masterly. . . . But there are differences of opinion as regards his emotional susceptibilities, and it is just this fact that prevents many from fully accepting him. The emotional and intellectual should be in equipoise in order to attain the highest results, but in the music of Brahms the latter seems to predominate.[3]

Returning to Boston in 1854, Mason asked his friend Carl Bergmann (*b* Ebersbach, Germany, 1821; *d* New York, 1876), cellist and conductor, to help him form a group for chamber performances. Mason "wished especially to introduce to the public the 'Grand Trio in B Major, Op. 8,'[4] by Johannes Brahms, and to play other concerted works, both

[1] *Johannes Brahms in seiner Familie*, edited Kurt Stephenson (Hamburg: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1973), p. 122:

FRITZ AN ELISE, Caracas, 7. September 1866
. . . Johannes könnte übrigens mal einige Zeit (hier) leben; ich glaube, hier in den Urwäldern könnten ihm herrliche musikalische Gedanken kommen . . .

[2] According to Theodore Thomas's *A Musical Autobiography* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1905, *R*/1964), pp. 38–39, this group was not known as the Mason-Thomas Quintette until 1857, when Bergmann left temporarily. H. Earle Johnson's assertion in *First Performances in America to 1900–Works with orchestra* (Detroit: College Music Society, 1979), p. 90, should preferably read "Members of the Mason-Bergmann Quintette," not the "Mason-Thomas Quintette."

[3] William Mason: *Memories of a Musical Life* (New York: The Century Co., 1901), p. 139.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 193.

classical and modern, for this kind of work interested [him] more than mere piano playing." The other members of the Mason-Bergmann Quintette were Theodore Thomas[5] and Joseph Mosenthal, violins, and George Matzka, viola. This premiere at New York City was followed a month later by two more performances, both in Boston at the piano manufacturer Chickering's Saloon, the first by Mason and members of the Mendelssohn Quintette (December 26), and the second three days later (December 29) by the so-called German Trio—Messrs. Gartner, Hause, and Jungnickel.[6]

Critical reaction did not bode well for the young composer. There was some confusion as to Brahms's age (the Trio, No. 1 was composed 1853–1854; therefore Brahms could have been no younger than twenty when it was completed—not fifteen as was suggested by *Dwight's Journal of Music*, nor eighteen as believed by the critic of the *New York Times*). The reviewer for the *New York Dispatch* (December 1, 1855) was baffled—"The Brahms composition is of the ultra new school, of which we may say briefly that we do not yet understand it," while the *New York Times* critic (November 28, 1855) damned the work with faint praise: "With many good points, and much sound musicianship, it possesses also the usual defects of a young writer, among which may be enumerated length and solidarity." Both the New York premiere and the first of the Boston performances received notice in *Dwight's Journal of Music*. Each review makes unfavorable comparisons with Beethoven. The New York Correspondent (December 1, 1855) complained: "I will only remark that the Trio is not novel in its form or constructions, and reminds me, especially in the Adagio, of Beethoven," and the Boston reviewer notes (December 29, 1855) that:

> The Scherzo is more after the type of the great writers, and the Trio moves in swelling chords, as if to remind one of Beethoven's B flat Trio. But we found nothing new or very beautiful in it. . . . We felt as if we had been pointed and pulled first this way and then that way, where something great was to be seen, until we actually saw nothing.

William Keyser[7] provided the sole published note of approbation: In a letter to the editor that appeared in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, January 5, 1856, he says:

> MR. EDITOR:—Your notice of the Piano-Forte Trio by BRAHMS . . . ends thus: "Brahms is still 'future' to our humble comprehension." I heard this composition at the Soirée of the "German Trio," and make bold to say that to *my* humble comprehension that "future" promises another BEETHOVEN.

With this predmoninantly negative reception from the press, it is hardly surprising that Brahms's chamber works did not frequently enter concert programs during the next twenty years. Eighteen years after the premiere of the Trio, Op. 8, the Mendelssohn Quintette Club, one of the first professional chamber groups in America, did include two movements of the Sextet, Op. 36 (composed 1864–1865, published 1866), on a March 1873 program at the Meionaon, Boston. This concert belonged to a series designed to bring new music to the public; and now (seven years after the work's publication) the reviewer in *Dwight's Journal of Music* (March 22, 1873) was at last enthusiastic—agreeing that the two movements "were among the most fresh and vigorous of the new works presented in this series."

No record of a performance of the earlier Op. 18 Sextet (composed 1858–1860, published 1861) surfaces until a Boston concert on February 12, 1879, by Euterpe, billed as a "first performance." True, Thomas Ryan, a founding member of the Mendelssohn Quintette wrote to *Dwight's Journal of Music* (March 29, 1879) stating that his group had performed Op. 18 possibly "six or seven years ago in the series of concerts given in the Meionaon." Although not documenting his assertion, Ryan says:

> Allow me to add here that whenever an opportunity presents itself, where we think we have an audience who will

[5] The son of a German musician (*b* Esens, Germany, 1835; *d* Chicago 1905), Thomas was a child prodigy on the violin. The family emigrated to America in 1845 and within nine years Thomas had joined the first violin section of the New York Philharmonic Society; but it was to be as a conductor, not a violinist, that Thomas would eventually be remembered.

[6] *Dwight's Journal of Music*, January 5, 1856, p. 109.

[7] William Keyser = Keyzer (*b* Amsterdam, July 12, 1790; *d* Roxbury, USA, July 12, 1870), a merchant and amateur violinist, had, according to his obituary in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, July 16, 1870, p. 279, "been a pupil of Spohr, Rode, Lafont, and others." He took over conductorship of the Boston Academy Concerts from Henry Schmidt (1842?) and was responsible for introducing Beethoven's Seventh Symphony to America. The obituary also credits him with having contributed to *Dwight's Journal of Music*.

enjoy the best, we always play some of it, although it may not be on the programme. . . . Now regarding the Brahms Sextets, we were so much pleased with the music that throughout one entire Western tour, when we wished to give a treat of new music, we played the Andante with variations from one of these works, or the Scherzo from the other. That is what we thought of Brahms.

It is also true that Theodore Thomas performed the Theme and Variations movement from the Sextet, Op. 18, with the strings of his orchestra before both of these events, first on November 20, 1874, at the Philadelphia Academy of Music, and a month later (December 19, 1874) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

Brahms's Cello Sonata, No. 1, Op. 38 (composed 1862–1865, published 1866), entered a recital given on January 14, 1876, by the German-American pianist, Johann Ernst Perabo (*b* Wiesbaden 1845; *d* Boston, MA, 1920) and the cellist J. Hartdegen, which also included the American premiere of Friedrich Kiel's Piano and Cello Sonata in A minor, Op. 52. This concert was the fifth of a series of matinees given by Perabo, former student of the Leipzig Conservatory and renowned teacher,[8] at the fourth of which (January 7) had been premiered Anton Rubinstein's Sonata, No. 1, for violin and piano, Op. 13, in G major, played by Perabo and the violinist J. Mullaly.[9] Dwight did not attend the January 14 concert (merely stating the program) and his journal had ceased publication before the first performance of Brahms's Sonata, No. 3, for violin and piano, Op. 108 (composed 1886–1888, published 1889)—a premiere that was realized from a "proof copy" by Michael Banner and Ferdinand Dulcken in the club rooms of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, New York, March 24, 1889.[10]

The Kneisel Quartet (Franz Kneisel and Otto Roth, violins, Louis Svecenski, viola, Alwin Schroeder, cello) performed one of Brahms's string quartets at Carnegie Chamber Hall on November 9, 1893.[11]

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC: OVERTURES AND MISCELLANEOUS COMPOSITIONS

Carl Bergmann, the German-born cellist and conductor who introduced Brahms's orchestral music to America, included the *Serenade for Small Orchestra, No. 2*, Op. 16, on the New York Philharmonic Society's program at Irving Hall, February 1, 1862, only two years after its Hamburg premiere. Even at this early stage, the *New York Times* critic (February 3, 1862) dug his heels in and declared:

> One can hardly imagine a sufficient provocation for a work so night-disturbing and dismal. It is of inordinate length, having no fewer than five movements, and the treatment, whilst it is frequently ingenious, displays but little novelty. The emotions of the victim subjected to the honor of a performance of such a lugubrious serenade, may be feebly described in the word idiotcy [sic], but his wrath, if he lived in an age of revolvers, would certainly be fatal to some of the performers.

The *New York Musical Review and World* (February 15, 1862) was more charitable, but still emphasized how ultra-modern was this work:

> It contains all the resources of modern technique, fine traits of harmony, inspirations very interesting to the musicians, but we can imagine it sounded in many instances rather *queer* to the uninitiated.

Twenty-four years later the *Boston Traveller* would thus assess the work (November 8, 1886):

> Owing to its length, its general homogeneity of color, and its abounding correctness, it is more marked for the lecture room than the concert hall.

In the 1870s Theodore Thomas began conducting Brahms's orchestral works with some regularity. He programmed the *Serenade for Small Orchestra, No. 1*, Op. 11, at Steinway Hall, May 29, 1873, during the New York Symphony Orchestra's summer season. However, it was received as "a rather elab-

[8] Mrs. H. H. A. Beach, the composer and pianist, was one of his pupils; she herself performed Brahms's *Intermezzo*, Op. 76, No. 3 at Boston's Association Hall, March 31, 1886.

[9] *Dwight's Journal of Music*, February 5, 1876, p. 175, states that this was a sonata for viola and piano, Mullaly having just played the *Three Morceaux de Salon*, Op. 11, for piano and viola.

[10] *Dwight's Journal of Music* (February 28, 1880), pp. 37–38, carried a report of Brahms's Sonata, Op. 78, for violin and piano, performed in London by von Bülow and Mme. Norman-Néruda, that noted with pleasure the comparative brevity of the composition, "but its structure is for the most part simple, and it obviously seeks rather to please by its beauty than to astonish by its intricacy."

[11] George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, Volume xv (1891–1894) (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 761.

orate work for recital to a summer audience" (*New York Times*, May 30, 1873) and during the next nine years seemingly went unrepeated. George Henschel, baritone, composer, and conductor of the newly founded Boston Symphony Orchestra (1881–1884), revived it at the Music Hall, Boston, October 28, 1882. Even this late in the century, the critic for the *Boston Advertiser* (October 29, 1882) was bewildered by a work rated by him as "generally unintelligible and not enjoyable," and that meandered "through doors of modulation, round corners of accidentals, and through mazes of chromatics that lead nowhere."

Thomas introduced the *Variations on a Theme by J. Haydn*, Op. 56a, to Boston, Brooklyn, and New York in the year of its publication, 1874. The *Boston Traveller* (February 2, 1874) thought it was "abstruse and irrelevant," while the *Boston Transcript* of the same date suggested quite forcefully that:

> If this composer must juggle with musical themes he should take those of his own composition rather than meddle with the beautiful ideas of a master mind like Haydn.[12]

During 1874, Thomas on two occasions also programmed with string orchestra the *Theme and Variations* movement from the *Sextet*, Op. 18 (November 20, Philadelphia; December 19, Brooklyn).

Throughout the first half of 1875, again just one year after publication, Thomas's orchestra performed Joachim's arrangement of Brahms's *Three Hungarian Dances* (Nos. 1, 2, 3) from the original piano four-hands version.[13] For once the *New York Times* was generous in its fleeting comment that these were "decidedly characteristic in rhythm and instrumentation with a richness of coloring well-nigh insurpassable." It is of course ironic that the compliment belongs really to Joachim's orchestration rather than to the composition as a whole. Staunch musical conservatism raises its head in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, which declared (February 6, 1875):

> The dances by Brahms did not give us half the pleasure which a good old set of the Strauss waltzes would on any fit occasion.

Brahms composed the two overtures, the *Academic Festival*, Op. 80, and the *Tragic*, Op. 81, in 1880 and published them during the following year. By August 18, 1881, Thomas had scheduled the *Academic Festival Overture* on his Summer Garden Concert in Chicago. Surprisingly, the *Chicago Tribune* in an anticipatory article, August 16, 1881, came near to expressing approbation for this "novel and curious work":

> The work is a musical curiosity, and unlike any other of Brahms's works, "local color" takes the place of classical form. It is in reality a sort of potpourri of students' songs woven together in a contrapuntal web. It is a fresh and cheerful work and apparently intended to be gay in its tone, though it has many serious passages, for he never forgets his musical tendencies.

George Henschel premiered the *Tragic Overture* at the Boston Music Hall with the Boston Symphony Orchestra on October 28, 1881. Not only was he an ardent admirer of the composer's music, but he also knew him personally, having sung the Christus part in J. S. Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Vienna *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* under Brahms's direction. The press were not enamored of Brahms's music and on February 28, 1882, the Boston correspondent of the Chicago magazine *Music* declared Henschel a "veritable Brahmin in his passion for Brahms."[14]

The *Tragic Overture* was performed by Thomas a month after Henschel's premiere, and the split in critical reaction is striking. On the one hand the *Boston Daily Advertiser* (October 31, 1881) announced:

> Written throughout with great clearness and beauty, it might well have been a prelude to a grave and noble tragedy,

while on the other hand the *New York Times* (November 31, 1881) characteristically thought the work "has more for students than for an audience of music lovers." Throughout the 1880s and 1890s this cleavage in critical opinion begins to be more evenly

[12] Brahms's theme, the *Chorale St. Antoni*, is listed in Anthony van Hoboken, *Joseph Haydn . . . Werkverzeichnis*, I (1957), p. 330, but according to H. C. Robbins Landon, *Haydn: the early years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), p. 271, "there is no satisfactory evidence whatever of Haydn's authorship."

[13] On July 2, 1889, Thomas performed these dances at Chicago in a version orchestrated by Dvořák.

[14] M. A. DeWolfe Howe: *The Boston Symphony Orchestra 1881–1931* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), p. 38.

balanced than in previous decades, when the weight of criticism remained predominantly adverse.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC: THE CONCERTOS

Eleven years elapsed after its publication in 1860 before Brahms's Piano Concerto, No. 1, in D minor, Op. 15, was brought before the American public—and these first exposures (Boston Music Hall, December 9, 1871; New York, Steinway Hall, January 12, 1872) by the Thomas Orchestra with Marie Krebs as soloist comprised only the first movement. Not until November 13, 1875, did the Concerto receive a complete performance—given by the New York Philharmonic Society under Carl Bergmann with Bostonian Marietta Falk-Auerbach as soloist. The composition was assessed thus (*New York Times*, November 14, 1875):

> a scholarly work, written under the influence of Schumann as to its themes, and wholly modern in its form, but it requires an artist of uncommon imagination and power to throw light upon its excellencies.

Imagination and power Falk-Auerbach seems not to have possessed. Just as the reviews of the *Trio*, Op. 8, had recalled Beethoven, so here one notes comparison with a more "established" composer, Schumann. However, the work is not dismissed; in fact it even possesses "excellencies."

More than any other genre, the concerto demands suitably talented virtuoso performers. Without a champion, the first concerto fell by the wayside. On the other hand, the Piano Concerto, No. 2, in B flat, Op. 83, taken up by Rafael Joseffy and premiered at the New York Academy of Music with Thomas and the New York Philharmonic December 8, 1882, in the year of its publication, told a different tale. Joseffy (*b* Junfalu, Hungary, 1853; *d* New York, 1915) studied in Budapest, at the Leipzig Conservatory, and at Weimar with Liszt, before emigrating to the United States in 1879. His New York premiere of the second concerto met with enthusiastic praise of his performance (*New York Times*, December 9, 1882), and even cautious endorsement of the work itself, which:

> might be called by many people of good musical acquirements too heavy for immediate appreciation on a first hearing, but possesses so much intrinsic merit that every one after this performance will wish to hear it at least a second time, and its serious character and grand style will always commend it to the thoughtful listener.

Another proponent of the second concerto was Carl Baermann (1839–1913), the German-born grandson of the clarinetist for whom Weber wrote his *Concertino* and Concertos[15] (and a pupil of Liszt before emigrating to the United States in 1881).

The American champion of Brahms's violin concerto was Franz Kneisel (*b* Bucharest, Romania, 1865; *d* New York, 1926). Before age twenty Kneisel had been concertmaster of the Vienna Hoftheater and of the Berlin Bilsesche Kapelle. In 1885 the then conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Wilhelm Gericke, engaged him as concertmaster for the orchestra. It was under Gericke's successor, the Hungarian-born Arthur Nikisch, that he performed the Brahms Violin Concerto December 6, 1889—thereafter frequently repeating it through 1893.

At the premiere Kneisel's execution was praised extensively, but the critic's final verdict had it that the concerto was "upon the whole a long and dull proposition" (*Boston Transcript*, December 9, 1889). In direct contrast, the *New York Times* ten days later proclaimed it "a magnificent composition, worthy to be placed by the side of the concertos of Beethoven and Mendelssohn."

The Concerto for Violin and Violoncello, Op. 102, received far fewer performances than either the second piano concerto or the violin concerto. Franz Kneisel joined in a performance at least once, but it was the Thomas orchestra with Max Bendix and Victor Herbert as soloists that premiered it a year after its publication, at Chickering Hall, New York, January 5, 1889.

The *New York Times* review (January 6, 1889) typified the changing attitude to Brahms's music in the late 1880s and 1890s. Generally speaking, his new works are no longer condemned outright. Criticisms become more selective, and good points are highlighted. Although the reviewer found that:

> The treatment . . . is involved and far from easy to follow. The solo parts bustle with formidable difficulties, particularly the 'cello part, and they result in small effect,

he is quick to point out that:

[15] He was the son of Carl Baermann II (1811–1885), also a renowned clarinetist and a pedagogue, whose Clarinet Method is still the basis of much modern clarinet teaching.

The andante . . . is one of Brahms's happy inspirations and is a really lovely movement.

CHORAL MUSIC

But the whole is morbid, with a studied strangeness of harmony, giving a hopeless sort of feeling which the return of the slow, tranquil opening movement in the orchestra at the close can scarcely be said to relieve. As for the voices, the work hardly gives them opportunity to do their best, it being essentially an orchestral and not a vocal work.[16]

Just as with his chamber music, Brahms's choral works got off to an inauspicious start in America. The above was a comment on the first performance of the *Schicksalslied* (Song of Destiny), Op. 54 (composed 1869–1871), given by the Theodore Thomas Orchestra and a mixed choir (consisting mostly of the Highland Choral Society directed by J. B. Sharland) at the Music Hall in Boston, November 11, 1874.

More than any other conductor, Thomas was responsible for introducing new works to his American audiences, many within a few years of their composition.[17] His philosophy was:

to endeavor always to form a refined musical taste among the people by intelligent selection of music; to give, in order to achieve this result, only standard works, both of the new and old masters.[18]

On November 28, 1884, he conducted a concert of the Brooklyn Philharmonic that included the *Four Songs for Three Female voices, horns and harp*, Op. 17[19] (composed 1859–1860). Although the third of these met with approval, "the remaining numbers of the series would never have found a publisher or a conductor to produce them had they been fathered by a musician of less celebrity. They impressed us yesterday as pretentious and dry achievements, without significance or charm." So complained the *New York Times* (November 29, 1884). Similarly disparaging remarks met early performances of both the *Rhapsody for Contralto, Male Voices and Orchestra*, Op. 53 (composed 1869) —one of those modern works "which 'swim in a sea of tone' from which the unfortunate singer has sometimes to be fished out,"[20] and the *Festival and Commemorative Sentences*, Op. 109 (composed 1886–1888), which:

may stir the patriotic German heart by mere force of suggestion; but there does not seem to be any reason why Americans should become enthusiastic about them. They are written in the solid, scholarly style which is familiar to us in Brahms's works: but they do not appear to be effervescent with inspiration.[21]

On January 22, 1876, *Dwight's Journal of Music* published under the title "Some Living Composers," extracts from the 64-page program booklet for "Carl Retter's Six Performances of Pianoforte music in strictly Chronological Order," given at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The composers represented were Adolf Henselt, Joachim Raff, Carl Reinecke, Anton Rubinstein, and Johannes Brahms. The portrait of Brahms concluded with the following:

His most celebrated work is the *Triumphlied*, a German national requiem, having for its subject the state of mind of the German nation during and after the Franco-German war.

This work (composed 1868–1871, published 1871) for baritone soloist, double choir and orchestra, takes part of its text from Revelation XIX; a passage foretelling the fall of Babylon. According to one biographer:

To Brahms, who hated and despised the French deeply

[16] *Dwight's Journal of Music*, November 28, 1874, p. 342.

[17] He conducted the Brooklyn Philharmonic Society, and sponsored his own orchestral series at Irving Hall, as well as lighter summer programs beginning in 1865 at Central Park Gardens in New York. His orchestra toured the length and breadth of the United States from 1869 until they were disbanded in 1888. Thomas also directed the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, the Cincinnati May Festival, and from 1877–1891 (with a short break) he conducted the New York Philharmonic. Tempted away from New York in 1891 to launch the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, he remained in that city until his death in 1905.

[18] From an 1882 interview, cited in *Theodore Thomas: A Musical Biography*, ed. George Upton, Introduction by Leon Stein (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), p. 152.

[19] These were not the *13 Canons for Female Voices*, Op. 113, as stated in H. Earle Johnson, *First Performances in America*, p. 90. The *New York Times* review quite clearly states the part songs were accompanied by horns and harp.

[20] *Boston Sunday Courier*, February 13, 1882 referring to a performance by the Boston Symphony Orchestra, George Henschel, conductor; Mary How, soloist. Boston Music Hall, February 11, 1882.

[21] *New York Times*, November 30, 1890—Walter Damrosch conducting the New York Symphony Society at the Metropolitan Opera House, November 29, 1890.

and cordially, the Babylon of the Apocalypse meant Paris, and the modern Babylon on the Seine.[22]

Introduced to America by Theodore Thomas as the opening work of the 1875 Cincinnati Musical Festival, May 11, the *Triumphlied* was praised by the *Baltimore Bulletin*[23] as being "a work of great genius, and written on the highest key of exultation and triumph." The reviewer spends the remainder of his critique praising the chorus's execution of such a difficult work, for "a chorus that can sing this need fear nothing."

The Festival's eclectic mixture of works of the "masters" side-by-side with those of living composers proved problematic for at least one writer. The same issue of *Dwight's Journal of Music* (May 29, 1875) carried a word of warning from a wary critic concerned that the press coverage of this festival treated Bach and Beethoven in the same category as Liszt, Brahms, and Wagner.

> And one of the influences of such a festival, among a population rather new to music, will be, we fear, to fill them with this false impression that the gods of the new worship have really and finally taken their places in the same third heaven, and sit on equal star thrones with the great before them. For observe, this scheme of programmes, while it includes great works of Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, opens with the imposing *Triumphlied* by Brahms, and ends with Liszt's *Prometheus*. Its Alpha and Omega, we might say its keynote, is furnished by the New School. But have the Titans won Olympus yet?

It was to be still many years before Brahms would be permitted his place on Mount Olympus by the American press.

The *Alto Rhapsody*, Op. 53, now so popular, enjoyed only a very few performances in nineteenth-century America; so also the cantata *Rinaldo*, Op. 50, and the setting of Schiller's text in *Nänie*, Op. 82. None of Brahms's choral works, however, was to prove eventually as popular as his *Ein deutsches Requiem*, Op. 45 (composed 1857–1868). Parts were sung in two performances given by choral societies in 1875 (The New York Liederkranz Society, conducted by Agrior Paur on January 24, and the Milwaukee Musical Society, conducted by William Mickler on October 8); a complete performance awaited March 15, 1877, when Leopold Damrosch conducted the New York Oratorio Society at Steinway Hall. Despite the *New York Times*'s contention (March 16, 1877) that "It is exceedingly scholarly, but its length and its monotonousness are such that it is scarcely likely to impress any but students," the review in *Dwight's Journal of Music* (March 14, 1877) was enthusiastic.

> The Requiem by Brahms begins in an exceedingly simple, though noble and elevated style with the words "Blessed are they that go mourning" for full chorus, and is set off by many beautiful passages, which arise from the use of pleasing harmonic changes and the introduction of old hymns.

Several parts of the work were singled out for praise, including:

> No. 5, "Ye now are sorrowful," for soprano solo, with chorus, holds us spellbound with its charming development of the touching theme, principally where it is taken up in an idealized and comforting form by the tenors. The solo is beautifully interwoven and very effective.

On the other hand, after the grandeur of the penultimate movement the reviewer finds that the final movement:

> must be regarded as an anti-climax; still the happy peaceful sentiment pervading its tone cannot be considered inconsistent with the state of mind inspired by the hearing of a work at once so elevating and sympathetic.

SOLO PIANO MUSIC

Brahms's *New York Times* obituary (April 4, 1897) was subtitled "The Famous Pianist and Composer Dead in Vienna After a Long and Serious Illness." That Brahms was remembered as a pianist, and only secondly as a composer is surprising—especially considering William Mason's assessment of his pianistic abilities:

> The pianoforte-playing of Brahms was far from being finished or even musical. His tone was dry and devoid of sentiment, his interpretation inadequate, lacking style and contour. It was the playing of a composer, and not that of a virtuoso.[24]

[22] Walter Niemann, *Brahms*, translated Catherine Alison Philips (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), p. 441.

[23] Reprinted in *Dwight's Journal of Music*, May 29, 1875, p. 25.

[24] William Mason, *op. cit.*, p. 137. However, to be fair, one should also take into account another assessment. Florence May, in her *The Life of Brahms* (London: E. Arnold, 1905,

and the following letter from Cologne, originally published in the London periodical, *Orchestra*, and reprinted in *Dwight's Journal of Music* January 20, 1866, which had it that:

> His touch is hard, his execution inaccurate, he has very little expression, but affects the greatest assurance and excitement *à la* Liszt, without being Liszt.

America was introduced to Brahms's piano works by Hans von Bülow, who toured the United States at the invitiation of the Chickering piano firm and who inaugurated Chickering Hall in New York with a series of concerts. However, the only Brahms work that he played in New York was the *Variations and Fugue on a theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24, given on December 3, 1875. Throughout his visit, the press had waxed lyrical over von Bülow's talents. On this occasion the *New York Times* reviewer (December 4, 1875) contrasted his technical prowess with the dryness of Brahms's composition:

> Finer playing than that of Brahms's work can scarcely be imagined, the wonderful clearness of the pianist's execution being apparent in the most intricate passages, and numberless opportunities being offered to admire the beauty and evenness of his tone and the nice effects of light and shade, thanks to which even the dryest writing became attractive.

The following month von Bülow gave a series of six concerts in Boston, the performance on January 12, 1876, included the *Variations and Fugue on a theme by G. F. Handel*, which the reviewer felt to be "ingenious, skilful [sic], tedious, and uninteresting. Beethoven, to be sure, wrote *thirty-three* upon one theme, but then he was Beethoven." (*Dwight's Journal of Music*, February 5, 1876.)

On later concert tours, von Bülow introduced the Sonata, Op. 1, in C (New York, Broadway Theatre, April 5, 1887 and April 9, 1889; Boston, Music Hall, May 1, 1889). The reaction was still equivocal; according to the *New York Times*, April 10, 1889

> The Brahms sonata is difficult music, not only to play, but to receive. In Dr. von Bülow's hands it becomes almost lucid, and it is certainly full of vitality and of latent warmth, which the doctor brings out magnificently.

The *Variations on a Theme of R. Schumann*, Op. 9—eventually to become a favorite recital piece—may have been performed in Chicago as early as 1877 or 1878, before the Berlin premiere in December of 1879.[25] On June 2, 1877 the director of the Chicago Beethoven Society, Carl Wolfsohn (*b* 1834; *d* 1907), played Brahms's *Variations on a Theme of R. Schumann*, an Adagio from an unidentified Brahms Sonata, and various Ballades.

Carlyle Petersilea (1844–1903) gave a series of "Five Analytical Concerts" at Steinert Hall, Boston in 1888, "Analytical remarks" being interspersed by "Mr. Louis C. Elson." The fifth of these concerts (February 1) contained the *Variations on a Theme by Paganini*, Op. 35, played by Milo Benedict.[26] Ignace Jan Paderewski performed them at the Hyperion Theatre, New Haven, Connecticut (December 3, 1895), and at Carnegie Hall, Pittsburgh (December 16, 1895). Paderewski also helped popularize the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by G. F. Handel*, Op. 24, performing them at Carnegie Hall, New York December 16, 1894, Carnegie Hall, Pittsburgh December 18, 1895, and the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences December 28, 1895.

Critical reaction to the piano works begins being more favorable as the century draws to a close. One review (*New York Times* April 21, 1892) describes the *Variations on a Theme of R. Schumann* as "extremely beautiful." However, four years later (November 18, 1896) the *New York Times* impugns Moriz Rosenthal's playing for want of sensibility, saying "His best successes were won yesterday in the pieces which have no emotional significance, like the Brahms 'Variations.'"

Von Bülow introduced the Sonata, Op. 5, in F minor to American audiences in March of 1890. Two years later Franz Rummel (1853–1901) included it in his Madison Square Garden Concert Hall reci-

R/Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1981, pp. 5–6) recalls her disappointment when she heard Brahms play before guests. But next day she heard him perform "a wild piece by Scarlatti as I never heard anyone play before. He really did give it as though he were inspired; it was so mad and wild and so beautiful."

[25] The date of the Berlin premiere is given by Heinz Becker in "Brahms," *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, III, p. 175. George Kehler, *The Piano in Concert*, II (Metuchen, NJ, and London: Scarecrow Press, 1982), p. 1407, lists this concert as occurring on June 2, 1877, but *Dwight's Journal of Music*'s Chicago correspondent stated in the June 9, 1877 issue, p. 37, that the recital on June 2 was devoted to Beethoven.

[26] Moriz Rosenthal performed them at Carnegie Hall, New York, November 17, 1896, and at the Tabernacle, Nashville, Tennessee, January 16, 1899.

tal, April 20, 1892 (the *New York Times* critic referred to is as "broad and complex"). This sonata was thereafter taken up by Emil Sauer and Rafael Joseffy, both of whom performed it frequently. Emil Sauer's performance at New York, Carnegie Hall, February 2, 1899, was especially praised in the *New York Times*, the review emphasizing in a more gentle fashion the now familiar idea of the music's lack of overt emotional content:

> the sonata is laid out on large lines. Its polyphony is broad yet complex and full of subtle detail. Its melodic character is wholly out of the conventional mold, and its emotional content is of the profound introspective nature common to all Brahms's music.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC: SYMPHONIES

The race to give the American premiere of Brahms's Symphony, No. 1, in C minor, Op. 68, climaxed the rivalry between New York's two great conductors of the late 1870s. In the Spring of 1871 the violinist and conductor Leopold Damrosch[27] arrived in New York to become the director of the Arion Society—one of the several choirs formed by the large population of German immigrants.

Damrosch was offered the conductorship of the New York Philharmonic in 1876, after the resignation of the ailing Bergmann. The 1876–1877 season was musically adventurous and included many premieres, but was financially a disaster, with the orchestral receipts slipping lower than they had done under the last years of Bergmann's tenure. The public had opted for Thomas's competing and more conservative programming. Thus in April 1877 Thomas was elected conductor of the Philharmonic Society to replace Damrosch, whose reaction was to form his own orchestra for the 1877–1878 season.

At the beginning of December 1877 the music dealer Gustav Schirmer received from the publisher Simrock the first set of orchestral parts to Brahms's Symphony, No. 1. These parts were, Schirmer informed Damrosch, promised to Thomas, so could not be sold to Damrosch. Frustrated by this rebuff, Damrosch mentioned the situation to Mrs. James Nielson, an orchestration student of his, and a woman of some fortune. Soon after this conversation Damrosch received a package from Mrs. Nielson containing the orchestral score, which she had somehow obtained. (The most likely explanation is that she probably had a standing order with Schirmer for a copy of any new score, and thus gave Damrosch her copy.)[28] Damrosch immediately divided the score into three sections, and with copyists working round the clock had parts ready for the Monday rehearsal preceding the Saturday premiere, December 15, 1877. Thomas gave the symphony six nights later with the Brooklyn Philharmonic at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and again the following evening with the Philharmonic Society at the New York Academy of Music.

More than any other genre, Brahms's symphonies, and the first symphony in particular, stimulated comparison with the established master composers, and debates as to the work's rights (if any) to stand beside the symphonies of Beethoven.[29] The reviews also highlighted the concept of artistic inspiration as diametrically opposed to the "scholarly" working out of an idea. This is well illustrated by the *New York Times* review that appeared December 16, 1877, containing the following appraisal:

> The grand scale upon which this symphony is planned, its broad effects and the scholarly and powerful manner in which the composer handles his material are plain after a single hearing. On the other hand its vast proportions defeat any attempt at expressing a definite opinion, were the place to be assigned it among the great compositions of the age. . . . It can safely be said that Herr Brahms' symphony recalls as little any of the immortal nine as Raff's symphonic writings do Schumann's. . . . [Brahms's symphony] did not strike us yesterday as possessed of the brightness and tunefulness which commend Mozart's symphonies to the modern auditor, nor does it enthrall the ear by Schumann-like themes or satisfy every longing as do Beethoven's thoughts as he expressed them.

[27] Leopold Damrosch (*b* Posen 1832; *d* New York 1885), who at his father's behest had studied law and medicine at the University of Berlin, gave up an assured position in the clinic of the world's leading ophthalmologist to practice music. A friend of Liszt, Damrosch had toured with Carl Tausig and Hans von Bülow prior to his marriage to the singer Helene von Heinburg (after which he settled in Breslau).

[28] For accounts of this event see Walter Damrosch, *My Musical Life* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), pp. 25–26, and George Martin, *The Damrosch Dynasty* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1983), pp. 45–46.

[29] Nicolas Slonimsky, *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers since Beethoven's Time* (New York: Coleman-Ross Co., Inc., 1953), pp. 68–79, includes negative reviews of American critics on all four of Brahms's symphonies, as well as the *Serenade*, Op. 11, and the Piano Quartet, Op. 26.

The Boston premiere on January 3, 1878, was reviewed in *Dwight's Journal of Music* (January 19, 1878). According to *Dwight's* critic, Boston audiences clamored for new works but "of those eager crowds, a large proportion coolly left the hall before the Symphony was half over. . . . The truth is, new music is *not* popular." The comments on the Symphony itself suggest a wide range of views; "sweeping judgments have been uttered both in praise and condemnation, some wildly shouting: 'The Tenth Symphony!' others pronouncing it dry, pedantic, depressing, and intolerable." This critic (of course) is not ready to side with either camp. He notes the masterly orchestration, but says it does not contain "any fresh bits of original effect or contrast such as we get in Gade, or in Liszt, or Raff, or Wagner." He is impressed by the finale and praises it extensively, but concludes:

> We cannot escape a total impression of the Symphony as something depressing and unedifying, a work coldly elaborated, artificial; earnest to be sure, in some sense great, and far more satisfactory than any symphony by Raff, or any others of the day which we have heard; but not to be mentioned in the same day with any Symphony by Schumann, Mendelssohn, or the great one by Schubert, not to speak of Beethoven."

Nevertheless, Brahms has progressed in critical stature even if he still cannot hold a candle to the listed "masters."

The second Boston performance on January 16 by the Thomas orchestra was received in much the same vein. *Dwight's Journal of Music* noted (February 2, 1878) that "Interest us it did surely, but uplift and inspire us it did not," and similarly in the same journal, February 16, the critic poetically notes "it did not spring from the clear heaven of invention; it shows more of painstaking calculation than of the imaginative faculty or quality."

A comparison of Thomas's and Damrosch's interpretations of this symphony reprinted in *Dwight's Journal of Music* of January 5, 1878, appeared in *The World* December 23, 1877. One notices the distinction made between "talent" and "genius."

> As a general opinion of this symphony it must be acknowledged to be a great work. If Brahms has more talent than genius, then the talent is nearer to genius than anything we have had since Schumann.

In the autumn of 1878 Theodore Thomas left New York for Cincinnati where he was appointed director of the new College of Music (he would return to New York a year and a half later). His farewell concert was given at Steinway Hall on November 3, 1878, and it included the American premiere of Brahms's Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73. Embarrassingly, the house was two-thirds empty according to the *New York Times* critic (November 4, 1878)—who mysteriously alludes to the community's dissatisfaction at "the position that he has lately assumed" toward them (by moving to Cincinnati). The review, not surprisingly, considering the circumstances, focuses on the excellencies of the orchestra, but does note:

> This composition is of large proportions and noble spirit, combining lofty and original harmony with delicate and melodious expression.

Boston had to wait until the New Year to hear the symphony, programmed alongside Schumann's *Overture to "Genoveva"*—which according to the critic for *Dwight's Journal of Music* (January 18, 1879) was "one of the greatest overtures since Beethoven" and "can more properly be called the more striking feature of the concert than the new Brahms Symphony." The *Boston Traveller* review (February 27, 1879) focuses on the now familiar idea that Brahms's music is "too serious and complex."

> Brahms may be said to live, move, and have his being in so overcharged, turgid, and artificial a harmonic atmosphere that it seems impossible for him to be clear and natural so soon as he attempts to be profound or even serious.

Despite this assessment, the Second Symphony was to remain in the East Coast symphonic repertoire and, by the time of Brahms's death, would be cited along with the Third Symphony as one of his best known works.

When Leopold Damrosch left the Arion Society in 1884 he was succeeded as conductor by Frank Van der Stucken (*b* Fredericksburg, TX, 1858; *d* Hamburg, Germany, 1929). Although during the final years of the nineteenth century, Van der Stucken would establish a reputation as an advocate of American composers' music, in the fall of 1884 he conducted a series of four Novelty Concerts at New York's Steinway Hall, the first of which concluded

with the American premiere of Brahms's Symphony, No. 3, in F, Op. 90. Adverse reaction still prevailed —although even Brahms's detractors had to admit him at least a modicum of success. The *New York Times* (November 25, 1884) avows that the work:

> bears the signature of a musician who holds a very exalted rank as a composer but can scarcely lay claim to credit for creativeness. . . . [It] has none of the qualities that endow music with vitality . . . [and lacks] inspiration of thought.

In marked contrast to the Symphony, No. 1, Brahms's Symphony, No. 4, in E minor, Op. 98, crept its way slowly into the repertory. It was rehearsed for a Boston Symphony Orchestra concert to take place November 26, 1885, but was withdrawn and not performed until January 22, 1886. The review that appeared in the *Boston Transcript* (January 25, 1886) illustrates a shift in emphasis. Brahms is no longer the ultra-modern composer, but something of a conservative out of touch with the needs of tomorrow's composers. The third movement is criticized for its "lapse into science" compared to the unusual serenity of the first two movements, and:

> The fourth movement is in variation form, and though an evidence of consummate skill, is wearying and not likely to be imitated by youths of a period which is seeking new models upon which to model their style.[30]

New York had to wait until December 10, 1886, to hear the work, introduced to them by the Symphony Society, conducted by Walter Damrosch (Leopold's son). Here, perhaps for the first time, we see a distinct watershed in critical reaction to the symphonies. The review in the *New York Tribune* (December 12, 1886) was completely positive:

> It was a beautiful composition, a symphony which will help to keep Herr Brahms in the position he long ago conquered as the foremost living musician of the time. . . . it is the creation of a master mind whose source of inspiration is lofty, whose taste is refined, and who handles the elements of musical composition with free and potent power directed to a definite and dignified end.

At last Brahms is awarded the "master mind" status that was so unceremoniously denied him when the *Variations on a Theme by J. Haydn* were premiered in the United States. Not that all critical reaction changed overnight, nor were all the reviews of even this concert positive. Indeed the *New York Times* painted the familiar picture, concluding:

> [The Fourth Symphony] possesses neither the tuneful nor the tonal loveliness which might commend it to the composer's foes, nor does it show the science and ingenuity which in our judgment constitute his strongest claim to a high rank among modern musicians.

And yet it is acknowledged here that Brahms has at least "some" claim to a high rank among musicians of the day.

By the time of Brahms's death, April 3, 1897, critical assessment had not only mellowed, but so far as emotional content is concerned was in the process of a complete about face. The extensive obituary published in the *New York Times* gives a detailed summary of the composer's life and an assessment of his music which includes the following:

> In profound mastership of musical structure, in assimilation of the vital organism of the art, no masters save Bach and Beethoven have excelled Brahms.

Here, possibly for the first time in America, Brahms joins the great Germanic triumvirate.

As to the emotional content, the obituary contends that:

> The musical public has come to appreciate the austerity and restraint of his musical style and to realize that behind it lies a depth of feeling that is not always found in a more passionate utterance.

This sentiment is also found in two articles in the Sunday magazine of the *New York Times*, written by W. J. Henderson. In the first of the two (April 11, 1897) he asks:

> Why deny to the late Viennese master depth of feeling because he fashioned the expression of that feeling with all the force of a gigantic musical intellect? Brahms'

[30] For an illuminating discussion of this movement see Raymond Knapp, "The Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony: The Tale of the Subject," *19th Century Music*, vol. 13, no. 1 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-17. Here Knapp shows "that Brahms conceived the finale of his Fourth Symphony long before beginning work on the composition itself, a circumstance apparently unique in his experience with the genre," and in discussing the sources for Brahms's ostinato subject posits that "Once we affirm that Buxtehude's [E minor] ciacona is, in musical terms, more relevant than Bach's cantata [No. 150], we may also consider other possible models as part of a general background."

music grows slowly in popular favor because it is not easy for the careless hearer to grasp its inner spirit.

The obituary concludes with the rather cautious but prophetic assertion that:

When contemporaneous misapprehensions have died out and the world gets far enough away from Brahms to view him with a fair perspective, critical historians will probably award him a seat of honor among the Titans of music.

Two years provided enough distance for W. J. Henderson to be sure of Brahms's place among those "Titans of music." He thus concluded his article of April 16, 1899,

If we call Brahms obscure, we are imputing our own weakness as the fault of a man who is too great for us. It is not for nothing that we love best those of his writings which we have most carefully studied. It is not for nothing that every decade adds to the number of those who see in him the highest expression of our present ideal. When music attains to fuller knowledge and nobler practice, it will grant him a due place among its foremost leaders, and to us who honor him as a monarch will succeed a generation which reverences him as a hero.[31]

[31] I am grateful to Dr. R. Knapp for pointing out the similarities between this passage and Robert Schumann's article, "Neue Bahnen," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, October 28, 1853, p. 187.

BRAHMS'S WORKS PERFORMED IN THE USA (1855–1899)

Chamber Music

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Nov. 27, 1855	Trio for violin, cello, and piano, Op. 8	New York, Dodworth's Room	Members of the Mason-Bergmann Quintette	
Dec. 26, 1855	Same	Boston, Chickering's Saloon	W. Mason and members of the Mendelssohn Quintette Club	
Dec. 29, 1855	Same	Same	German Trio	
March 1873	Sextet, Op. 36	Boston, Meionaon	Mendelssohn Quintette Club	
Nov. 20, 1874	Theme and Variations for string orchestra [from the Sextet, Op. 18]	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	
Dec. 19, 1874	Same	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Same	
Jan. 14, 1876	Cello Sonata, No. 1, Op. 38	Boston	J. Hartdegen, J. E. Perabo	
Feb. 12, 1879	Sextet Op. 18	Same	Euterpe	
Jan. 12, 1889	Theme and Variations for string orchestra [from the Sextet, Op. 18]	New York, Metropolitan Opera House	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	
Mar. 24, 1889	Violin Sonata, No. 3, Op. 108	New York, Mendelssohn Glee Club	Michael Banner, Ferdinand Dulcken	
Nov. 9, 1893	String quartet	New York, Carnegie Chamber Music Hall	Kneisel Quartet	

Overtures and Miscellaneous Orchestral Works

Feb. 1, 1862	Serenade, No. 2, in A, Op. 16	New York, Irving Hall	Philharmonic Society/Carl Bergmann	
May 29, 1873	Serenade, No. 1, in D, Op. 11	New York, Steinway Hall	New York Symphony/Thomas	"first time entire"
Jan. 31, 1874	Variations on a theme by J. Haydn, Op. 56a	Boston, Music Hall	Thomas Orchestra	"new"
April 11, 1874	Same	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Thomas	"new"
April 25, 1874	Same	New York, Steinway Hall	Thomas Orchestra	"new"
Nov. 20, 1874	Theme and Variations for string orchestra [from the Sextet, Op. 18]	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Same	
Dec. 19, 1874	Same	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Same	
Jan. 8, 1875	Hungarian Dances (arr. Joachim)	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Same	Nos. 1, 2, 3
Jan. 16, 1875	Same	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Same	"new" Nos. 1, 2, 3
Jan. 18, 1875	Same	New York, Steinway Hall	Same	Nos. 1, 2, 3
Jan. 20, 1875	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Same	"new" Nos. 1, 2, 3
Feb. 13, 1875	Same	Baltimore, Conservatory	Same	"first time"
March 3, 1875	Same	St. Louis, Mercantile Library Hall	Same	
April 23, 1875	Same	Cleveland, Case Hall	Same	
May 12, 1875	Same	Cincinnati, Exposition Hall	May Festival/Thomas	Nos. 1, 2, 3
May 3, 1877	Variations on a theme by J. Haydn, Op. 56a	Cincinnati, Pike's Opera House	Thomas Orchestra	

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Aug. 18, 1881	Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80	Chicago, Exposition Building	Thomas Summer Gardens Concerts	"first time in this country"
Oct. 14, 1881	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Thomas Orchestra	"new"
Oct. 28, 1881	Tragic Overture, Op. 81	Same	Boston Symphony/Henschel	
Oct. 31, 1881	Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80	New York, Steinway Hall	Musical Club/Thomas	
Nov. 3, 1881	Same	Same	Symphony Society/Damrosch	
Nov. 5, 1881	Same	Same	Same	rehearsal Nov. 3
Nov. 11 (12), 1881	Tragic Overture, Op. 81	New York, Academy of Music	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	
Nov. 21, 1881	Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Thomas	85 players
Mar. 23, 1882	Same	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	
May 19, 1882	Tragic Overture, Op. 81	Cincinnati, Music Hall	May Festival/Thomas	
May 26, 1882	Same	Chicago, Exposition Building	Same	
Oct. 28, 1882	Serenade, No. 1, in D, Op. 11	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Henschel	
Jan. 24, 1884	Hungarian Dances (arr. Joachim)	St. Louis, Natatorium	St. Louis Musical Union/ Waldauer	
Feb. 9, 1884	Variations on a theme by J. Haydn, Op. 56a	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	
Feb. 29/Mar. 1, 1884	Same	Brooklyn	Brooklyn Philharmonic	
Nov. 6, 1886	Serenade, No. 2, in A, Op. 16	Boston Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Gericke	"first time"
May 2, 1888	Tragic Overture, Op. 81	New York, Metropolitan Opera House	von Bülow & an orchestra of 75	
Jan. 12, 1889	Theme and Variations for string orchestra (from the sextet, Op. 18)	Same	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	
Jan. 15, 1889	Hungarian Dances	New York, Steinway Hall	Boston Symphony/Gericke	
Mar. 12, 1889	Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80	Same	Same	
July 2, 1889	Hungarian Dances (orchestrated by Dvořák)	Chicago, Exposition Building	Thomas Summer Garden Concerts	"first time"
Feb. 6/7, 1890	Variations on a theme by J. Haydn, Op. 56a	Brooklyn	Brooklyn Philharmonic?/ Thomas	
March 7, 1890	Same	New York	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	Rehearsal March 6

Concertos

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Dec. 9, 1871	Piano Concerto, No. 1, Op. 15	Boston, Music Hall	Thomas Orchestra/Marie Krebs, piano	[1st movt. only]
Jan. 12, 1872	Same	New York, Steinway Hall	Same	[1st movt. only]
Nov. 13, 1875	Same	New York, Academy of Music	Philharmonic Society/Carl Bergmann/Falk-Auerbach, piano	
Dec. 8, 1882	Piano Concerto, No. 2, Op. 83	New York, Academy of Music	Philharmonic Society/Thomas/Rafael Joseffy, piano	
Feb. 24, 1883	Same	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra/Rafael Joseffy, piano	"new"
Mar. 15, 1884	Piano	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Henschel/Benjamin J. Lang, piano	"first time"
Dec. 11, 1888	Same	New York, Steinway Hall	Boston Symphony/Carl Baermann, piano	
Jan. 5, 1889	Violin and Cello Concerto, Op. 102	New York, Chickering Hall	Thomas Orchestra/Max Bendix, Victor Herbert, soloists	
Dec. 6, 1889	Violin Concerto, in D, Op. 77	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Nikisch/Franz Kneisel, violin	"first time in Boston"
Dec. 17, 1889	Same	New York, Steinway Hall	Same	[cadenza by Kneisel]
Jan. 16, 1890	Same	Baltimore	Same	
May 7, 1890	Same	Cincinnati	Same	
May 10, 1890	Same	St. Louis	Same	
May 12, 1890	Same	Indianapolis	Same	
May 15, 1890	Same	Philadelphia	Same	
May 7, 1891	Same	Chicago, Central Music Hall	Same	[1st movt. only]
Nov. 13, 1891	Same	New York, Carnegie Hall	Symphony Society/Adolph Brodsky, violin	
Nov. 11, 1893	Violin and Cello Concerto, Op. 102	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/E. Paur/F. Kneisel, A. Schroeder, soloists	
Dec. 14, 1893	Violin Concerto, in D, Op. 77	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Seidl Society/Henri Marteau, violin	
Dec. 15 (16), 1893	Same	New York	Philharmonic Society/Seidl/Henri Marteau, violin	
Jan. 20, 1894	Same	Chicago	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas/Henri Marteau, violin	"first time in Chicago"
Jan. 19, 1895	Violin and Cello Concerto, Op. 102	Chicago Auditorium	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas/E. Boegner, B. Steindel, soloists	
Jan. 22, 1896	Piano Concerto, No. 2, Op. 83	Baltimore, Academy of Music	Boston Symphony/E. Paur/R. Joseffy, piano	
Feb. 7, 1896	Same	Cincinnati, Pike's Opera House	Cincinnati Symphony/Van der Stucken/R. Joseffy, piano	
Sep. 21, 1897	Same	Worcester, Mechanics Hall	Worcester County Music Festival/Zerrahn/R. Joseffy, piano	

Choral Works

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Nov. 11 (20), 1874	Schicksalslied, Op. 54	Boston, Music Hall	Thomas Orchestra/Sharland Chorus	
Jan. 24, 1875	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	New York, Clubhouse	Liederkranz Society/Agrior Paur	[only in part]
May 11, 1875	Triumphlied, Op. 55	Cincinnati, Exposition Building	May Festival/Thomas	"first performance outside Germany"
Oct. 8, 1875	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Milwaukee, Music Hall	Musical Society/W. Mickler	
Dec. 16, 1875	Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 52	Same	Same	
Dec. 16, 1875	Schicksalslied, Op. 54	Cleveland, Case Hall	Vocal Society/Alfred Arthur	
Jan. 23, 1876	Same	New York, 4th St. Hall	Liederkranz & Thomas Orchestra/Paur	
Mar. 15, 1877	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	New York, Steinway Hall	Oratorio Society/Damrosch	
Nov. 3, 1878	Same	Cincinnati, Vereins-Halle	Männerchor/Otto Singer	
Feb. 11, 1882	Alto Rhapsody, Op. 53	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/G. Henschel/ Mary How, soloist	
Jan. 5, 1883	Same	New York, Academy of Music	German Liederkranz/Antonia Henne, soloist	
April 27, 1883	Nänie, Op. 82	Milwaukee, Academy of Music	Musical Society/E. Leuning	
Dec. 15, 1883	Rinaldo, Op. 50	Boston, Music Hall	Apollo Club/B. Lang	"first time in Boston"
May 24, 1884	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Cincinnati, Music Hall	May Festival/Thomas	
Nov. 28, 1884	Four Songs, Op. 17	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Philharmonic Chorus, Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra/Thomas	
Jan. 26, 1888	Schicksalslied, Op. 54	Boston	Cecilia Society/B. Lang	
Nov. 7, 1888	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Chicago, Auditorium	Cecilia Society	
Dec. 3, 1888	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Cecilia Society/B. Lang	
April 26, 1889	Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 52	Same	Boston Symphony/W. Gericke	
Jan. 31, 1890	Same	New York, Metropolitan Opera House	Symphony Society/Damrosch	[arr. Hermann]
March 3, 1890	Nänie, Op. 82	New York, Carnegie Hall	Musical Art Society/F. Damrosch	
July 2, 1890	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Oberlin (OH), First Congregational Church	Musical Union/G. W. Andrews	
Nov. 29, 1890	Fest- und Gedenksprüche, Op. 109	New York, Metropolitan Opera House	Symphony Society/ W. Damrosch	"first time in America"
Nov. 28, 1891	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	New York, Carnegie Hall	Oratorio Society	
March 3, 1893	Schicksalslied, Op. 54	Milwaukee, Academy of Music	Musical Society/Thomas Orchestra	
May 25, 1894	Same	Cincinnati, Music Hall	May Festival/Thomas	
Mar. 30, 1895	3 Motets for 4- and 8-part chorus, Op. 110	New York, Carnegie Hall	Musical Art Society/ F. Damrosch	
April 14, 1898	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Chicago	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas	
Jan. 24, 1899	Schicksalslied, Op. 54	Worcester, Pilgrim Church	Oratorio Society/J. Vernon Butler	
May 11, 1899	Ein deutsches Requiem, Op. 45	Ann Arbor	Music Festival, Choral Union, Boston Philharmonic/H. Zeitz	

Solo Piano Music

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performer*	*Notes*
Dec. 3, 1875	Variations and Fugue on a theme of G. F. Handel, Op. 24	New York, Chickering Hall	Hans von Bülow	
? June 2, 1877	Variations on a theme by R. Schumann, Op. 9	Chicago	Carl Wolfsohn	
	Adagio from an unnamed Sonata			
	Ballades			
Mar. 24, 1881	Gluck-Brahms Gavotte	New York, Steinway Hall	Franz Rummel	
Jan. 3, 1884	Hungarian Dance	Same	Helen Hopkirk	
April 7, 1885	Ballade, Op. 10, No. 1	Same	Same	
Mar. 31, 1886	Intermezzo, Op. 76, No. 3	Boston, Association Hall	Mrs. H. H. A. Beach	
April 5, 1887	Sonata, Op. 1	New York, Broadway Theatre	Hans von Bülow	
April 18, 1887	2 Ballades from Op. 10	Same	Same	
	Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op. 21			
	Scherzo, Op. 4			
June 6, 1887	Capriccio, Op. 76, No. 1	New York, Forrest Hills	Carl Baermann, Jr.	
Feb. 1, 1888	Variations on a theme by Paganini, Op. 35	Boston, Steinert Hall	Milo Benedict	
April 9, 1889	Sonata, Op. 1, in C	New York, Broadway Theatre	Hans von Bülow	
May 1, 1889	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Same	
Jan. 3, 1890	Ballade, Op. 10, No. 2	New York, Steinway Hall	Eugene D'Albert	
	Rhapsodie, Op. 79, No. 1 or 2			
	Variations and Fugue on a theme by G. F. Handel, Op. 24			
March 1890	Sonata, Op. 5, in f	Boston, Music Hall	Hans von Bülow	
March 1890	Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79	Same	Same	
Jan. 14, 1892	Rhapsody, Op. 79, No. 2	New York, Chickering Hall	Leopold Godowsky	
	Variations on a theme of R. Schumann, Op. 9			
	Capriccio, Op. 76, No. 2			
	Intermezzi, Op. 76, Nos. 3 & 4			
Aug. 17, 1894	Hungarian Dances (2)	Farragut Casino	Richard Hoffman	
Dec. 16, 1894	Variations and Fugue on a theme of G. F. Handel, Op. 24	New York, Carnegie Hall	Ignace Jan Paderewski	
Dec. 3, 1895	Variations on a theme by Paganini, Op. 35	New Haven, Connecticut, Hyperion Theatre	Same	
Dec. 16, 1895	Same	Pittsburg, Carnegie Hall	Same	
Dec. 18, 1895	Variations and Fugue on a theme of G. F. Handel, Op. 24	Same	Same	
Dec. 28, 1895	Same	Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences	Same	
Nov. 17, 1896	Variations on a theme of Paganini, Op. 35	New York, Carnegie Hall	Moriz Rosenthal	
Dec. 9, 1898	Same	Chicago Conservatory	Leopold Godowsky	
Jan. 16, 1899	Same	Nashville, TN, Tabernacle	Moriz Rosenthal	

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Feb. 2, 1899	Same	Chicago, Central Music Hall	Same	
Feb. 2, 1899	Sonata, Op. 5, in f	New York, Carnegie Hall	Emil Sauer	
Feb. 9, 1899	Same	Chicago, Central Music Hall	Same	
Feb. 28, 1899	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Same	
Mar. 8, 1899	Variations and Fugue on a theme of G. F. Handel, Op. 24	Boston, Steinert Hall	Leopold Godowsky	
April 29, 1899	Sonata, Op 5, in f 2 Intermezzi, Op. 117 & 118	Same	Rafael Joseffy	
Dec. 1, 1899	Sonata, Op. 5, in f	?, Art Galleries	Same	
Dec. 2, 1899	Variations on a theme by Paganini, Op. 35	Boston, Steinert Hall	Mark Hambourg	
Dec. 18, 1899	Andante and Scherzo, from Sonata, Op. 5, in f	Toronto, Massey Music Hall	Rafael Joseffy	
date unknown	Hungarian Dances, No. 3 & 7	New York, Steinway Hall	Annette Essipoff	
Feb. 12, year unknown	Hungarian Dances (4 hands)	Boston, Hall of the Apollo Club	Frederick Boscovitz and Mary Underwood	

Symphonies

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performer*	*Notes*
Dec. 15, 1877	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	New York, Steinway Hall	Damrosch Orchestra/Damrosch	"first time in America"
Dec. 21, 1877	Same	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Thomas	
Dec. 22, 1877	Same	New York, Academy of Music	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	
Jan. ?, 1878	Same	New York	Damrosch Orchestra?/ Damrosch	
Jan. 3, 1878	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Harvard Musical Association/ Zerrahn	"first time in Boston"
Jan. 16, 1878	Same	Boston	Thomas Orchestra	
Feb. 2, 1878	Same	Hartford, Robert's Opera House	Unknown	[Andante only]
Feb. 17, 1878	Unnamed Symphony (arr. piano 4 hands)	Cincinnati, Musical Club	Mr. Schneider, Mr. Mees	
March 3, 1878	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	Milwaukee, Music Hall	Musical Society/William Mickler	
Nov. 3, 1878	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	New York, Steinway Hall	Thomas	"first time" Farewell to Thomas
Nov. 28, 1878	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	Cincinnati, College Hall	College of Music/ Theodore Thomas	
Dec. 10, 1878	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	New York, Steinway Hall	Philharmonic Society/Neuendorff	
Dec. 10, 1878	Same	Milwaukee, Academy of Music	Musical Society/William Mickler	
Jan. 9, 1879	Same	Boston, Music Hall	Harvard Musical Association/ Carl Zerrahn	"first time in Boston"
Feb. 27, 1879	Same	Same	Same	
May 14, 1879	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	Cincinnati	Cincinnati Orchestra?	
Jan. 8, 1880	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Cincinnati, College Hall	College of Music/Thomas	
Nov. 16, 1880	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	New York	Damrosch Symphony Society	rehearsal Nov. 4
April 8 (9), 1881	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Same	Philharmonic Society	
Oct. 24, 1884	Symphony, No. 3, in F, Op. 90	New York, Steinway Hall	Novelty Concerts/Frank Van de Stucken	"new"
Nov. 11, 1884	Same	Boston Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Gericke	"first time"
Nov. 14 (15), 1884	Same	New York, Steinway Hall (Academy of Music ?Odell)	Philharmonic Society/Thomas	(first performance)
Dec. 8, 1884	Same	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	"new"
July 16, 1885	Same	Chicago, Armory Buildings	Thomas Summer Garden Concerts	"new"
Jan. 22, 1886	Symphony, No. 4, in e, Op. 98	Boston, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Gericke	"first time"
Feb. 13, 1886	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	Baltimore, Conservatory	Peabody Institute/Asger Hamerik	
Sept. 22, 1886	Same	Worcester, Mechanics Hall	Worcester County Musical Association/Carl Zerrahn	
Nov. 29, 1886	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Brooklyn, Academy of Music	Brooklyn Philharmonic/ Thomas	"first time in Brooklyn"
Dec. 10 (11), 1886	Symphony, No. 4, in e, Op. 98	New York, Metropolitan Opera House	Symphony Society/ W. Damrosch	"first time"
Dec. 29, 1886	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	"first time"

Date	*Work*	*Location*	*Performers*	*Notes*
Jan. 14, 1887	Symphony, No. 4, in e, Op. 98	New York	New York Philharmonic/ Thomas	
Feb. 17, 1888	Same	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Thomas Orchestra	"new"
Feb. 9, 1889	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	New York	Philharmonic Society	
Jan. 31, 1890	Same	Same	New York Symphony/ W. Damrosch	
Feb. 24, 1891	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Same	Boston Symphony	
May 14, 1891	Same	Louisville, Auditorium	Boston Symphony/ Arthur Nikisch	"never before given here"
May 4, 1892	Same	Cleveland, Music Hall	Same	
Dec. 8, 1892	Symphony, No. 3, in F, Op. 90	New York, Chickering Hall	Boston Symphony/ ?Nikisch	
Feb. 3 (4), 1893	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	New York	Symphony Orchestra/Damrosch	
Feb. 17, 1893	Symphony, No. 4, in e, Op. 98	Chicago, Auditorium	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas	
Jan. 11, 1894	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	New York	Boston Symphony/Paur	
Jan. 18, 1894	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	St. Louis, Music Hall	Symphony Society/ Joseph Otten	
Feb. 7, 1894	Symphony, No. 1, in c, Op. 68	Philadelphia, Academy of Music	Boston Symphony/Emil Paur	
Feb. 9, 1894	Same	Chicago, Auditorium	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas	
May 24, 1894	Symphony, No. 4, in e, Op. 98	Cincinnati, Music Hall	May Festival/Thomas	
Nov. 23, 1894	Symphony, No. 2, in D, Op. 73	Chicago, Auditorium	Chicago Orchestra/Thomas	
Nov. 10, 1897	Symphony, No. 3, in F, Op. 90	Baltimore, Music Hall	Boston Symphony/Gericke	