THE AMERICAN Brahms SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Volume XXXVIII, Number 2
Autumn 2020

Mapping Brahms Performance and Reception Across Victorian Northern England

The twilight years of Queen Victoria's reign witnessed the rise of two interrelated phenomena: on the one hand, Northern English towns which had prospered under the industrial revolution began to build grand municipal halls designed to foster arts and culture in these regional communities; and, on the other hand, concert societies began zealously to program the music of Brahms, often whether their audiences liked it or not.

I aim to sketch two vignettes in the performance and reception of Brahms's works in late-Victorian Northern England. This is a uniquely fruitful subject for a number of reasons. Firstly, Brahms was a particular favorite of Victorian audiences, held in almost ubiquitous high esteem; yet, the contexts in which the composer's works were performed were extremely varied, and the types of works that were performed and discussed differed from place to place. Brahms's vast chamber music output allowed his works to be routinely heard outside of England's major civic centers. Thus, Brahms's works were performed in a broader range of locations than the works of many of his contemporaries. Wagner's music, for example, was rarely performed outside of London. In Northern England, Brahms's works were performed at seaside pleasure palaces in Liverpool, at cathedrals in York, Durham, and Ripon, at gentlemen's clubs in Manchester, at village fetes in the Yorkshire Dales, and at the hugely popular Leeds Festival (following Charles Villiers Stanford's failed attempt to commission a new piece from Brahms for this esteemed cultural event). To focus on Brahms is to focus on a composer who pervaded many levels of Victorian English life, from smaller rural communities to densely populated urban centers.

Secondly, Northern England, as the epicenter for England's industrial revolution, entered something of an economic boom in the nineteenth century. The proceeds of this financial upswing were used to fund new cultural infrastructure in the North, including venues for musical performance.[1] This economic and infrastructural growth, coupled with the swelling population, resulted in the blossoming of musical culture in the North of England towards the end of the nineteenth century.[2] This paper aims to situate the reception of Brahms's work in the North of England within the cultural afterglow of the Industrial Revolution, looking beyond the London bubble, where the study of nineteenth-century British music so often resides.

Johannes Brahms, 1882. Engraving by Hermann Dröhmer, Berlin. Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg, http://resolver.sub.uni-hamburg.de/goobi/PPN663960975 (CC BY-SA 4.0).

The pair of vignettes outlined here represents two extremes in the performance and reception of Brahms's works in Victorian Northern England. One performance was a resounding success, the other, a complete failure. Yet, between these two extremes a picture emerges of a composer who came to define a pivotal cultural moment in British history, the musical emblem of a burgeoning bourgeois modernity.

Sunderland, 1898

On Thursday, 17 March 1898, a small article, barely a paragraph long, appeared in the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, proudly titled "Compliment to Sunderland."

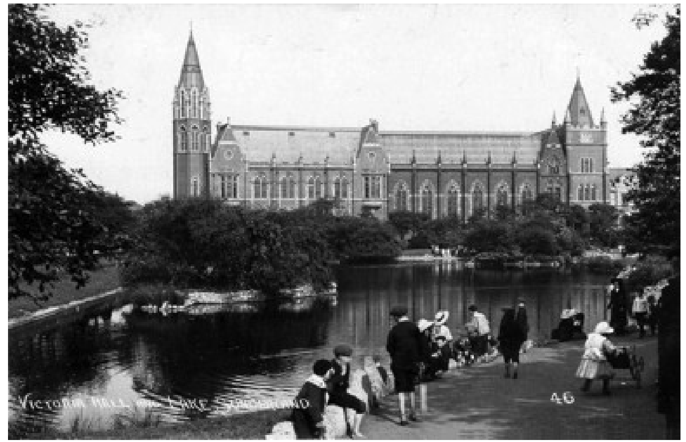
The article was a reprint of a section of *The Daily Telegraph*'s "Music of the Day" column:

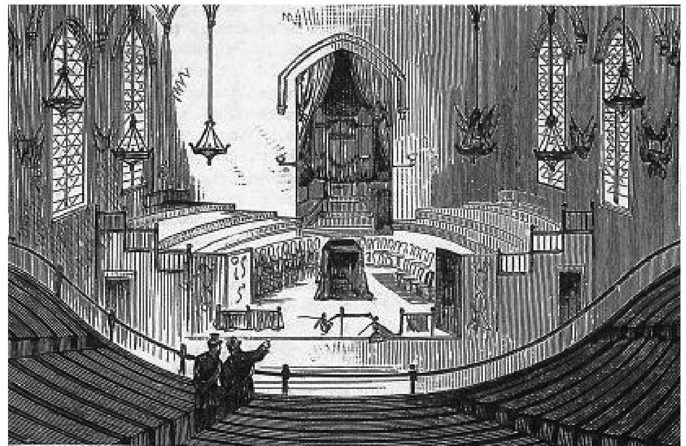
> There is no more progressive musical society in the Kingdom than the Sunderland Philharmonic, into which the energy of the conductor, Mr. Kilburn, infuses remarkable vitality. At the closing concert of the season, for example, the programme included Mr. Elgar's "King Olaf," and Brahms's "Song of the Fates," which, according to a note in the book of words, had not previously been heard out of London. Spirit of this kind cannot, of course, be indulged everywhere. In many places it would mean empty halls. But the public of Sunderland have, to all appearance, been brought up in the way they should go, and now they do not depart from it.[3]

This short quote provokes as many questions as it provides insights. It is highly unlikely that a critic from *The Daily Telegraph*, a London-based publication, traveled all the way to Sunderland (a long journey by rail that required at least one, if not two changes) to write such a short report. It seems more likely that a program of the season-closing concert was sent from someone in Sunderland (probably Mr. Kilburn himself) to the editor of the "Music of the Day" column. Indeed, the vagueness of the column suggests as much.

The Sunderland Philharmonic Society was founded in the 1860s, responding to a growing appetite for large-scale musical entertainment in the expanding port town.[4] By the 1890s, it was a sizeable operation, comprising, by various reports, between 200 and 220 musicians.[5] The performers were mainly passionate, middle-class amateurs, although professional soloists were often brought in, and the society frequently collaborated with Charles Hallé's touring ensemble. By all accounts, the performances were of a reasonably high quality, often rivaling performances in the capital; indeed, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, upon hearing the disastrous premiere of his cantata *Hiawatha's Departure* (1900) at the Royal Albert Hall, exclaimed, "how I long for Sunderland!"[6]

The society held its concerts in the Victoria Hall and Temperance Institute, a palatial structure just south of the city's train station. Built in the 1870s, the Victoria Hall was a monument to Victorian splendor, with its Gothic turrets, pointed-arch windows, and 2000-seat auditorium.[7] Towering over the adjacent Mowbray Park, it formed part of a growing cluster of civic buildings in the city, including the newly-built Winter Gardens and Sunderland Museum, and the Town Hall.[8] These large-scale municipal projects were funded by the city's lucrative shipbuilding industry, which had profited greatly from Britain's shipping boom. By the end of the nineteenth century, Sunderland had produced an aggregate 1.4 million tons of new ships, and, by 1911, Tyneside and Wearside shipbuilders were responsible for 52% of the UK's output.[9] In the 1850s, a move from small shipbuilding enterprises to large, amalgamated firms, combined with a growing demand from the local coal and tramp shipping industries and the expanding Japanese market, saw a sharp increase in production and in profits.[10] As wealth accrued, the population boomed, and, by the turn of the century, what was once a small port town had grown to a city of over 147,000 people.[11] This population growth brought with it a considerable amount of civic pride that fueled the city's public architectural projects, but also inequality, slums, immigration, and social non-conformism (including burgeoning Quaker and Methodist communities).[12] By the 1890s, Sunderland had become a city of





Top: Sunderland's Victoria Hall, as seen from Mowbray Park, 1913. Photographer unknown. Image courtesy of Sunderland Site. Below: The stage of the hall, as seen from the gallery. *Illustrated London News*, 23 June 1883, 3.

an increasingly public-minded bourgeoisie and an increasingly diverse working class. It was this bourgeois class that made up the audience and performers of the Sunderland Philharmonic Society; only they had the leisure time, the income, the education, and, crucially, the civic pride to engage in public musical pursuits.

The driving force behind this ensemble was Nicholas Kilburn (1843–1923), a pump manufacturer in the nearby town of Bishop Auckland (the "Mr. Kilburn" referenced in the *Telegraph* article). Kilburn, a cellist, pianist, organist, composer, musicologist, and conductor, had long taken an interest in musical affairs and became an influential figure in the amateur music scene in the North East of England. The earnings from Kilburn's industrial activities allowed him to travel to music festivals, both in the United Kingdom and abroad, to catch up on the latest musical trends. Kilburn zealously programmed new music across the various amateur societies under his direction. Indeed, through Kilburn's efforts, Sunderland became a budding center for new music. Kilburn was a close friend of Edward Elgar, programming many of his works and even inviting the composer to conduct the Philharmonic in 1910, and, in 1898, Kilburn became locked in a race with Charles Villiers Stanford to give the premiere of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's cantata, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast* (a race which Stanford eventually won).[13]

Kilburn's advocacy for modern music extended to the works of Brahms. In his 1904 monograph, *The Story of Chamber Music*, Kilburn wrote of Brahms:

> To the serious student and lover of good music, the works of Brahms are a lasting delight, expressing as they do the purest and best of our musical aspirations. What the great masters of the past did for their day and generation, Brahms has done for ours, and it is safe to say that the sympathetic attitude of any community towards him may be taken as a conclusive proof that its musical state and condition is sound and true.[14]

There are striking parallels between Kilburn's appraisal of Brahms and the *Telegraph*'s report on the Sunderland concert. In both accounts, an appreciation of Brahms is a kind of litmus test for musical taste. For the *Telegraph*, the sizeable audience at the Sunderland Philharmonic's performance of Brahms's *Gesang der Parzen* was an indicator of good upbringing; likewise, for Kilburn, a community's appetite for Brahms was a sign of a thriving musical culture. For Kilburn and the *Telegraph*, the onus is on the listener to appreciate modern music, not on modern music to appeal to the public. Moreover, the cultivation of such tastes stands as a form of cultural capital, as a sign of good education, of superior taste, of class.

The growing esteem afforded to concert attendance in Sunderland was undoubtedly linked to the dramatic changes the city was undergoing over the course of the nineteenth century. An aspirational bourgeois class, keen to marry their newfound wealth with a sense of cultural prestige and civic pride, were eager to fill Sunderland with signs of their cultural finesse. The Victoria Hall, the Town Hall, the Winter Gardens, the Museum, and, of course, performances of Brahms, were all ways of showing that Sunderland's industrial wealth was undergirded by proper cultural values. That Sunderland's growing bourgeois class chose to invest its money in large-scale public projects such as concert halls, and to invest its time in large-scale amateur performances of Brahms, was a sign of the Victorian "economy of mutual benefit," an ethics of religiously-motivated civic altruism within a *laissez-faire* economy.[15] This new-found focus on public-minded activities was, no doubt, spurred by growing inequality, immigration, and non-conformism in Sunderland, which increasingly threatened the city's liberal consensus. While Sunderland's growing bourgeoisie was aspiring towards cultural prestige and community spirit, the city was undergoing a radical process of technological and infrastructural modernization: first gas lighting in 1824, then a sewer system in the 1850s, horse-drawn trams in 1879, and, finally, electrification in 1895, along with a drastic remodeling of the docks to accommodate larger steam ships.[16] "Progress" was becoming the dominant scientific, technological, and political narrative, spurred by the considerable technological changes wrought in the city, and it is in these terms that the British press framed its discourse around Brahms.

Just as *The Musical Times* praised Kilburn's Brahms concert for "introducing new and important works for the first time to the Northern Counties," so the *Telegraph* branded the Sunderland Philharmonic as the most "progressive" musical society, and Kilburn himself praised Brahms for expressing "the purest and best of our musical aspirations."[17] In keeping with the Anglican overtones of Victorian altruism, those who advocated for musical progress as a form of public betterment often alluded to scripture in their writings.[18] Kilburn's report in the *Telegraph*, for example, mirrors Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."[19]

It is clear that, in 1890s Sunderland, the prestige afforded to Brahms was a symptom of the aftereffects of industrialization. Uniquely positioned at the nexus of bourgeois cultural aspiration, civic pride, technological modernity, and amateur music making, Brahms became an aesthetic antidote to the preoccupations and anxieties of a city propelled into an industrial-capitalist economy. That the *Sunderland Daily Echo* so proudly reproduced the *Telegraph*'s report on Kilburn's Brahms concert speaks to a community attempting to find aesthetic expression for its newfound economic identity. Sunderland was no longer a backwater village of cottage industries and smallholders, but an economic powerhouse with a new class of gentrified urban citizen. This new class projected their lofty aspirations on the music of Brahms, held up as a symbol of aesthetic, moral (and, implicitly, economic and technological) progress.[20] In the 1930s, Schoenberg would famously label Brahms "the progressive," reading into his music a latent modernity and propensity for formal and motivic innovation.[21] Nicole Grimes has argued that Schoenberg did not originate this critical tradition, but, rather, that his contribution formed part of a continuous lineage of German critics who viewed Brahms as a musical innovator.[22] Indeed, the mythology of Brahms the progressive was very much alive in 1890s Sunderland, shaped not only by international narratives around Brahms's music, but also by uniquely local concerns.

Huddersfield, 1894

If a full house for a performance of Brahms's *Gesang der Parzen* was a source of pride for the city of Sunderland, a near-empty auditorium for a performance of the *Schicksalslied* in Huddersfield was the cause of much consternation in 1894. An article in the *Huddersfield Chronicle* despaired:

> As usual, the whole of the space afforded by the Town Hall orchestra was taken up by the full vocal and instrumental strength of the society. Unfortunately, this remark does not apply to the auditorium, where the unoccupied seats, both in balcony and area, were much too numerous to afford food for anything like pleasant contemplation by members of the society, or those interested in its progress or welfare. Whether it is that the musical public of Huddersfield do not appreciate any deviation from the beaten track, or that choral music is losing its attractiveness in a center that has for years been noted for its love of this branch of the art, it is certain that the really interesting program presented to their patrons by the society did not attract anything like the support that its merit deserved. Brahms' work is new to a Huddersfield audience.[23]

The empty seats in the Huddersfield Town Hall prompted the critic from the *Huddersfield Chronicle* to draw conclusions about the musical tastes of his fellow townsfolk; the critic surmises that the people of Huddersfield are either afflicted by musical conservatism or they have grown tired of the large-scale choral works which had once been the highlight of the concert season in the growing town. Like the critic from the *Sunderland Daily Echo*, this critic lays the blame for these vacant seats on the public, and not on the program's failure to

attract a large audience—the onus is, once again, on the public to recognize and support good music, and not on the concert society to perform music the public wants to hear. The critic evocatively contrasts the size of the orchestra and choir with the emptiness of the hall, at once lamenting the commercial failure of the concert and aweing over the impressive forces of the society. In doing so, the critic presents a dual image of the Huddersfield concert scene: on the one hand, a thriving network of performers, and, on the other hand, an apathetic public, whose disinterest in new music threatens the financial and aesthetic advancement of these performers.

The portrait of presence and absence presented by the *Huddersfield Chronicle* seems to have been underpinned by concerns over the extensive demands placed on performers and listeners by Brahms's *Schicksalslied*. This critic is obviously an admirer of Brahms and his *oeuvre*, but seems acutely aware that the general public may be more apprehensive about Brahms's musical innovations. Indeed, the critic implies that Brahms's work is uncharted territory for the Huddersfield audience, that it might tax their listening capacities despite being in the choral genre much beloved by the town. However, it was not just the audience the critic was concerned for. The critic notes that the work posed significant challenges to the performers, challenges which, for the most part, were overcome: "the two themes descriptive of pleasure and sorrow are most dramatically worked out by the composer, and his ideas were interpreted with an intelligence, expressiveness, and finish by the chorus—whose path bristles with difficulties—that is worthy of the highest commendation." Yet, the critic notes that these difficulties took their toll on the amateur ensemble; the sopranos, he complains, exhibited "a little faultiness in intonation" and "an uncertainty in striking the notes in the higher register that was quite foreign to them."

He notes that all the performers "seemed to realize they were on safer ground" with the second piece on the program, George Alexander Macfarren's *St John the Baptist*. On first glance, it might seem strange to label Macfarren's oratorio "safer ground"; both *St John the Baptist* and Brahms's *Schicksalslied* had never been performed in Huddersfield before this concert, and, as the critic notes, Macfarren's work also posed "enormous" difficulties to the ensemble. Indeed, one could posit that *St John the Baptist* offers more challenges to an amateur ensemble than the *Schicksalslied*, with its long, complex choral fugues, extended *a cappella* passages, and larger musical and dramatic scale. Both pieces require the sopranos to sing an A5, yet Brahms's work only requires them to produce this note once, whereas Macfarren's requires multiple A5s throughout the course of the oratorio. Yet *St John the Baptist*, for all its technical demands, seems to emulate a Handelian musical idiom which would, no doubt, have been very familiar to the Huddersfield Choral Society. Macfarren's oratorio is structured into recitatives, arias, and choruses, and draws on various rhetorical and formal features of the eighteenth-century oratorio (such as the aforementioned choral fugues). Macfarren even quotes an eighteenth-century psalm setting by William Croft, "My Soul, Praise the Lord," gesturing at the Anglican choral tradition in which the singers of the Huddersfield Choral Society would have been well and truly encultured. Indeed, the entire work seems to be in dialogue with England's broader choral genealogy, designed for voices steeped in its conventions and practices.

"The Leader of the Luddites," 1812, artist unknown.

The textural language of Brahms's *Schicksalslied* avoids such well-worn musical tropes, and its harmonic language creates a number of obstacles for the performers. The *allegro*, in particular, poses considerable technical challenges to the choir. Set in a strident *Sturm und Drang* style and accompanied by a nearly unpredictable stream of eighth notes, the texture seems designed to disorientate both listeners and performers. This texture is combined with a harmonic language built around strings of diminished seventh chords and a rhythmic language rife with hemiolas, which only add to the musical turbulence. Angular leaps in the soprano line (often placed in unexpected rhythmic positions), along with the chromaticism (often in the most awkward register of the soprano voice), the restless harmonic language (which evades dissonance resolution), and an orchestral texture which often works against the voices (especially the eighth notes in the violins, which are organized into three-beat patterns over the two-beat hemiola in the voices) all conspire to make intonation all the more challenging for the singers. For an amateur ensemble accustomed to the kind of part writing exhibited in *St John the Baptist*, the *Schicksalslied* would, indeed, feel "quite foreign."

But what do these musical observations evince about Huddersfield's relationship to Brahms? Huddersfield audiences would have been most acquainted with Brahms's small-scale piano works, which were usually presented by touring European pianists as part of a potpourri of musical items from a range of composers. Charles Hallé, for example, performed three of the *Hungarian Dances* as a piano interlude in a concert given by his orchestra in Huddersfield in 1882.[24] The program (see top of next column) included the overtures to *Zauberflöte* and *Guillaume Tell*, excerpts from Delibes's *Coppélia*, arias by Sullivan, Weber, and Auber, and Beethoven's Fifth Symphony; only the Brahms piece was encored, although the reviewer attributes this to Hallé's "well-known excellence" as a performer—neither Brahms nor the *Hungarian Dances* was mentioned by name. Similarly, in 1884, Vladimir de Pachmann performed the "Capriccio" from Brahms's *Klavierstücke*, Op. 76, as part of a concert series designed to bring musical

GRAND CONCERT IN THE TOWN HALL, HUDDERSFIELD.

PROGRAMME :—

Overture, "Zauberflöte" .... *Mozart*
Air, Cavatina, "Und ob die Wolke" (*Freyschutz*) *Weber*
Mrs. Hutchinson.
Minuetto, Gavotte, and Musette from "Suite" in E flat, with Orchestral Accompaniment.........*Raff*
Pianoforte..........Mr. Charles Halle.
Air, "Or son solo" (*Fra Diavolo*) ....*Auber*
Mrs. Hutchinson.
Grand Symphony, in C minor..........*Beethoven*
Overture, Nocturne, and Wedding March, from the music to "A Midsummer Night's Dream"...*Mendelssohn*
Solo Pianoforte, "Three Hungarian Dances"...*Brahms*
Mr. Charles Halle.
"Air Slave" with Variations, for Orchestra; from "Copella"..........*Delibes*
Song, "Orpheus with his lute" ....*Sullivan*
Mrs. Hutchinson.
Overture, "Guillaume Tell"..........*Rossini*

Huddersfield Subscription Concerts program.
Huddersfield Chronicle, 18 November 1882, 6.

celebrities to Huddersfield.[25] The program comprised Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, a selection of piano pieces by Schumann, Chopin, and Bach, and various arias by Haydn, Handel, and others. The largest Brahms work to have been performed in Huddersfield prior to the *Schicksalslied* was the Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8, in an 1887 concert which featured Franz Rummel at the piano.[26] The Op. 8 Trio was an early work of Brahms, and its performance in Huddersfield predates the "modernizing" revisions made to the work in the summer of 1889.[27] That Huddersfield audiences had only been exposed to early works and small-scale piano works (on mixed programs of popular favorites) no doubt contributed to the poor turnout at the performance of the *Schicksalslied*. Indeed, the *Schicksalslied* was allegedly programmed as part of a scheme, trialed by the Huddersfield Choral Society, to introduce at least one new work per concert season.[28] The scheme was a financial disaster for the society, who greatly underestimated the conservatism of the Huddersfield public in their attempts to modernize their programming; the Brahms concert drew the smallest audience of all the society's town hall concerts to that date.

The critic's concern over the strain that Brahms's modernity imposed on performers and audiences seems to play into wider concerns about the social effects of modernity in Victorian England. Indeed, one of the prevailing political projects of Victorian liberalism was to preserve the economic and technological progress of the Industrial Revolution while also mitigating its impact on British society. Huddersfield felt the alienating effects of industrialization perhaps more acutely than many other English towns and became the site of considerable social unrest in the early nineteenth century. Huddersfield had long been the commercial hub of the Kirklees region; an important market town since the Middle Ages, it had become a center for the British wool trade, spurred by the growth of sheep farming in West Yorkshire.[29] The town played a leading role in the industrialization of the textile industry; large looming mills, capable of producing textiles more efficiently than ever before, replaced the artisan weavers which were formerly the lifeblood of the town.[30] Huddersfield underwent a dramatic process of urbanization; flooded with a new class of factory workers who found employment in the town's growing industrial circuit, Huddersfield's population grew from 7,268 in 1801 to 30,880 in 1851.[31]

These sudden changes were the cause of much dissatisfaction among Huddersfield's skilled textile craftsmen, who found their livelihoods threatened by the increasingly productive textile mills. Huddersfield became a hotbed of Luddism in the early nineteenth century, with radical Luddite militia staging violent attacks on industrialists and their machinery in the 1810s.[32] The brutal murder of the Huddersfield mill owner William Horsfall gave rise to a national security crisis in 1812, as hundreds of troops stormed the town in order to restore order.[33] The town once again became the center of fights over workers' rights in the 1830s and 1840s as protests over the Whig's 1834 New Poor Law plagued the city.[34] This law sought to create a new social security system administered entirely through workhouses; the poor would be put to work in such detestable conditions that it would deter any abuse of the system.[35] This social unrest peaked as Huddersfield was entering political maturity; the town gained its first seat in parliament in 1832—which was consistently won by Liberal MPs in the second half of the century—and became an incorporated borough in 1868.

Conclusion

The reverberations from early-century social conflicts were long felt by the Huddersfield ruling classes in the nineteenth century, and local politics often revolved around maintaining order, fostering community, and addressing social ills.[36] The critic's account of the poorly attended performance of Brahms's *Schicksalslied* might be seen as arising from a general awareness of (and even a paranoia over) the effects of modernity on social cohesion, which had gripped Huddersfield's ruling classes since the early Luddite rebellion. Just as the town's bourgeois leaders believed steadfastly in the industrialization of the town's textile trade but feared its alienating social effects, so the critic adored the modern qualities of Brahms's music but feared that it would turn audiences away and challenge the town's amateur performers. As the sopranos of the Huddersfield Choral Society struggled to execute Brahms's musical demands, the critic heard the strain of modernity etched onto the grain of their voices, a decidedly carnal expression of his own anxieties around the integration of Brahms's music into Huddersfield's relatively conservative musical landscape. Yet, more concerning to this critic was that this corporeal exertion was met with a marked absence of listeners, that it revealed cracks and divisions in Huddersfield's musical community. The strain of bodies and the absence of bodies—these twin concerns also dominated the political discourse of the newly urbanized, industrialized Huddersfield, from the straining bodies of workers in the mills and workhouses to the absence of the skilled artisans who were once the backbone of the local economy.

The performance of the *Gesang der Parzen* in Sunderland represents an inversion of the tensions which surrounded the performance of the *Schicksalslied* in Huddersfield; in Sunderland, the presence of bodies at a performance of such a modern work came to represent the growth and prosperity wrought by the Industrial Revolution for the bourgeois classes. Brahms's works became a kind of sonic architecture to furnish the industrialized city, acoustic companions to Sunderland's grand municipal buildings, paid for through the newly mechanized shipbuilding industry, and designed to foster a budding sense of civic pride. Yet the performances in Sunderland

and in Huddersfield were, in many ways, just two sides of the same coin: Huddersfield also used industrial profits to construct lavish new buildings, including the Huddersfield Town Hall in which Brahms's works came to be performed, and Sunderland also had its fair share of social unrest, stemming from radical fringe groups within the city's growing population. Both case studies demonstrate that Brahms's music became a kind of bourgeois acoustemology through which Northern industrial elites could contemplate modernity and its effects. Amateur performances of Brahms's choral works, in particular, became a means of thinking on and through the industrial modernity which saw the rise of the nineteenth-century Northern city.

Callum Blackmore

Notes. 1. Rachel E. Milestone, "'A Melodious Phenomenon': The Institutional Influence on Town-Hall Music-Making," in *Music and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, edited by Paul Rodmell (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), 55–77. **2.** Paul Rodmell, *Opera in the British Isles, 1875–1918* (New York: Routledge, 2016). **3.** "Compliment to Sunderland," *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 17 March 1898, 3. **4.** Jeffrey Green, *Samuel Coleridge-Taylor: A Musical Life* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 71. **5.** "Music in Northumberland and Durham," *The Musical Times* 38 (1 April 1897): 258; A.C.R. Carter, ed., *The Year's Music, 1898* (London: J. S. Virtue and Co., 1898), 184. **6.** Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, quoted in Catherine Carr, "The Music of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor (1875–1912): A Critical and Analytical Study" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2005), 114. **7.** "Victoria Hall Disaster," *Seagull City: Sunderland's Literary and Cultural Heritage*, https://wp.sunderland.ac.uk/seagullcity/victoria-hall-disaster/, accessed 4 October 2019; "The Victoria Hall Disaster, Sunderland," *Monthly Chronicle of North-Country Lore and Legend* 3, no. 25 (March 1889): 97–101. **8.** "Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens," *Seagull City: Sunderland's Literary and Cultural Heritage*, https://wp.sunderland.ac.uk/seagullcity/sunderland-museum-and-winter-gardens/, accessed 4 October 2019. **9.** Simon Ville, "Shipbuilding in the Northeast of England in the Nineteenth Century," in *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century: A Regional Approach*, edited by Simon Ville (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 1992), 1–44. **10.** Ville, "Shipbuilding in the Northeast of England." **11.** Marine Hospital Service, *Public Health Reports* 15, Issues 1–26 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900), 508. **12.** W. F. Matthews, "The Sunderland Election of 1852," *Northern History* 48, no. 2 (September 2011): 315–36; Michael J. Turner, "Reform Politics and the Sunderland By-Election of 1845," *Northern History* 38, no. 1 (March 2001): 83–106. **13.** Alison I. Shiel, "Charles Sanford Terry and Elgar's Violin Concerto," in *Elgar and His World*, edited by Byron Adams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 187. **14.** Nicholas Kilburn, *The Story of Chamber Music* (London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904), 123–24. **15.** Ilana M. Blumberg, *Victorian Sacrifice: Ethics and Economics in Mid-Century Novels* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013). **16.** Tim Lambert, "A Brief History of Sunderland, England," http://www.localhistories.org/sunderland.html, accessed 14 October 2019; Taylor Potts, *Sunderland: A History of the Town, Port, Trade and Commerce* (Sunderland: R. Williams and Co., 1892). **17.** "Music in Northumberland and Durham," *The Musical Times* 39 (1 April 1898): 261. **18.** For more on the role of religion in Victorian music education, see Rosemary Golding, "Music and Mass Education: Cultivation or Control," in *Music and Victorian Liberalism: Composing the Liberal Subject*, edited by Sarah Collins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 60–80. **19.** Proverbs 22:6 (King James Version). **20.** A number of recent studies have explored the role of music in shaping the Victorian bourgeois liberal identity, and their ideas inform my conclusions here. See, for example: Sarah Collins, ed., *Music and Victorian Liberalism: Composing the Liberal Subject* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Charles Edward McGuire, *Music and Victorian Philanthropy: The Tonic Sol-Fa Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). **21.** Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950); Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). **22.** Nicole Grimes, "The Schoenberg/Brahms Critical Tradition Reconsidered," *Music Analysis* 31, no. 2 (July 2012): 127–75. Grimes, in her monograph *Brahms's Elegies: The Poetics of Loss in Nineteenth-Century German Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), has further shown that Brahms came to represent a "poetics of loss" in late nineteenth-century Germany. It is clear, however, that in the North of England Brahms was more closely aligned with notions of modernity and prosperity. **23.** "Huddersfield Choral Society," *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 27 October 1894, 8. **24.** "Grand Concert in the Town Hall, Huddersfield," *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 18 November 1882, 6. **25**. "Grand Pianoforte Recital in the Town Hall," *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 1 March 1884, 6. **26.** "Huddersfield Subscription Concerts," *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 8 January 1887, 6. **27.** Margit L. McCorkle, *Johannes Brahms: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Munich: G. Henle, 1984), 25; see also Roger Moseley, "Reforming Johannes: Brahms, Kreisler Junior and the Piano Trio in B, Op. 8," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132, no. 2 (2007): 252–305. **28.** R. A. Edwards, *And the Glory: A History in Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Huddersfield Choral Society* (London: Maney, 1985), 77. **29.** Gordon Minter and Enid Minter, *Discovering Old Huddersfield* (Huddersfield: Huddersfield Local History Society, 2016). **30.** Vivien Teasdale, *Huddersfield Mills: A Textile Heritage* (Barnsley: Wharncliffe Books, 2004). **31.** David Griffiths, "Huddersfield in Turbulent Times 1815–1850," *Northern History* 52, no. 1 (March, 2015): 101–24, at 102. **32.** Katrina Navickas, "Luddism, Incendiarism and the Defence of Rural 'Task-Scapes' in 1812," *Northern History* 48, no. 1 (March 2011): 59–73. **33.** Katrina Navickas, "The Search for 'General Ludd': The Mythology of Luddism," *Social History* 30, no. 3 (August 2005): 281–95. **34.** John Wilson Barrett, "The Idle, Immoral and Profligate Poor: The Condition of the Poor and the 'Taint of Pauperism' in Huddersfield between 1834 and 1874, with Particular Reference to the 'Undeserving Poor'" (PhD diss., University of Huddersfield, 2012). **35.** Kathleen Jones, *The Making of Social Policy in Britain: From the Poor Law to New Labour* (London: Athlone, 2000). **36.** David Taylor, *Beerhouses, Brothels and Bobbies: Policing by Consent in Huddersfield and the Huddersfield District in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2016).

Geiringer Scholarship Awarded

At its annual meeting in November, the Board voted to award the 2020 Karl Geiringer Scholarship to Robert Anderson for his dissertation, "'Ideal *Hausmusik*': Brahms's Vocal Quartets (opp. 31, 52, 64, 65, 92, 103) and the Politics of Domestic Music ca. 1848–1900." Anderson is a Ph.D. candidate in musicology at the University of North Texas, working with Dr. Margaret Notley. About the project he writes:

My dissertation contextualizes Brahms's vocal quartets within a largely forgotten discourse about *Hausmusik* that flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century. Advocates of *Hausmusik* understood it as an aesthetically and politically conservative expression of German identity and connected its accessible style to an ideal of social cohesion in the pre-industrial age. Similar issues of national identity and musical style arise in the reception of Brahms's quartets, which, I argue, was informed by the works' generic status as *Hausmusik*. Critics either praised Brahms's works for their simple, folk-like style or disparaged their complexity, artifice, and foreignness. Ultimately, I argue, Brahms sought to elevate *Hausmusik* in his vocal quartets by integrating its aesthetic and cultural values with a more sophisticated musical style. The works' resulting stylistic and generic ambiguity and the disparity in critics' responses reveal competing aesthetic, political, and cultural world views immediately before and after German unification.

The Karl Geiringer Scholarship in Brahms Studies is awarded to students in the final stages of preparing a doctoral dissertation in English, as meritorious candidates present themselves. Work relating to Brahms should form a significant component, but it need not be the exclusive or even primary focus. Applications for the 2021 competition should be sent to committee chair Scott Murphy at smurphy@ku.edu by 1 June 2021. Further guidelines are posted on the Society's website.

Brahms News

The ABS Board of Directors met via Zoom on 12 November 2020. We welcomed and congratulated last year's Geiringer winner Dr. Laurence Willis, who completed his PhD in Theory at McGill University in 2019. The ABS is in good financial health and is benefitting from investments made in the past year. Styra Avins, Paul Berry, Scott Murphy, Peter Smith, and Marie Sumner Lott were elected to another term on the Board.

Members formed a working group to develop plans for a new website and social media content. We welcome your suggestions! Please send them to Nicole Grimes, chair of the working group, at nicole.e.grimes@gmail.com.

Another committee is exploring possibilities for a pre-conference in connection with an AMS/SMT meeting in the near future.

Call for subventions: The ABS provides subventions to authors completing books on Brahms-related topics. Guidelines are posted on our website. Applications should be submitted electronically to Peter Smith (Peter.H.Smith.80@nd.edu) by 15 February 2021. If no award is made in this competition, a second round of applications will be accepted with a due date of 15 August.

Recent Publications

Books and Articles

Altschuler, Eric L., and Edward D. Latham. "Mixolydian Tendencies in a 'Canzonetta' by Brahms." *Musical Times* 161, no. 1952 (Autumn 2020): 101–6.

Applegate, Celia. "The Musical Worlds of Brahms's Hamburg." Ch. 8 in *The Necessity of Music: Variations on a German Theme*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. ISBN 9781487500689

Benedict, Hans-Jürgen. *Musikbeschreibung in der deutschen Literatur*. Berlin: EB Verlag, 2018. ISBN 9783868932829

Biba, Otto. "Uraufführungen und frühe Aufführungen von Werken von Johannes Brahms in den Konzerten der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien." In *200 Jahre Uraufführungen in der Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*, edited by Hartmut Krones, 125–32. Wiener Schriften zur Stilkunde und Aufführungspraxis 8. Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 2018. ISBN 9783205207276

Burford, Mark. "Brahms's Sybel: The Politics and Practice of Prussian Nationalist History." *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 16, no. 3 (December 2019): 417–39.

Chernaik, Judith. "Brahms's Clara Themes Revisited." *The Musical Times* 160 (Winter 2019): 37–49.

Fröhlich, Sabine. *Margarete Dessoff (1874–1944): Chordirigentin auf dem Weg in die Moderne*. Hofheim am Taunus: Wolke Verlag, 2020. ISBN 978–3–95593–044–8

Kannenberg, Simon. *Joachim Raff und Hans von Bülow. Porträt einer Musikerfreundschaft. Briefedition*. 2 vols. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2020. ISBN 978–3–8260–7162–1

Langford, Jeffrey. *A History of the Symphony: The Grand Genre*. New York: Routledge, 2020. ISBN 9780815357049

Lester, Joel. *Brahms's Violin Sonatas: Style, Structure, Performance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020. ISBN 978–0–19–008707–4

Martin, Anna Llorens. "Creating Musical Structure Through Performance: A Re-interpretation of Brahms's Cello Sonatas." *Revista de musicologia* 42, no. 1 (2019): 335–42.

Mayer, Desiree. *Das Ostinato als Kompositionstechnik in der Symphonik des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Dissertationen der LMU 25. Munich: Universitätsbibliothek Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität; Munster: Readbox Unipress, 2019. ISBN 9783959250887

Nieden, Hans-Jörg, and Marcel Nieden. *Komponist und Religion: kulturhistorische Porträts*. Musik und Religion/ Religion und Musik 2. Munster: LIT-Verlag, 2019. ISBN 978–3–643–12986–4

Phillips, Reuben. "Exhumations, Honorary Graves, and the Fashioning of Vienna's Self-Image as the 'City of Music.'" *The Musical Quarterly* 102, nos. 2–3 (December 2019): 303–49.

Sandberger, Wolfgang. "Kompositorische Selbstpositionierung. 'Ein deutsches Requiem' von Johannes Brahms und die

Continued on page 12

Review

Lester, Joel. *Brahms's Violin Sonatas: Style, Structure, Performance.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. xviii, 371 pages. ISBN 978–0–19–008707–4

In a rapidly changing musicological climate, Brahms's instrumental music remains a popular subject for academic study. Several monographs, chapters, and Urtext editions dedicated to Brahms's chamber music have appeared in recent years, drawing our attention to these important compositions from new perspectives.

Joel Lester devotes his 2020 monograph to the style, structure, and performance of Brahms's three violin sonatas and the Scherzo from the *FAE Sonata* (*FAE Sonatensatz*).[1] The book includes an introduction, six chapters (separated into two parts, I: Brahms's Notes, and II: Brahms's Musical Narratives), around 160 score examples, over 25 tables, and many formal diagrams, reductions, and graphs to illustrate the main points and arguments, all exquisitely set and explained with great clarity and visual appeal.

Because the word "performance" is mentioned in the title, Lester's monograph can be viewed as joining a group of recent performance practice publications, including Clive Brown and Neal Peres Da Costa's 2015 Urtext edition of Brahms's three violin sonatas and the *FAE* Scherzo, published with a separate 70-page manual titled *Performing Practices in Johannes Brahms' Chamber Music* (edited by Brown, Da Costa, and Kate Bennett Wadsworth).

In another recent study of Brahms performance practice, Anna Scott's chapter "Changing Sounds, Changing Meanings: How Artistic Experimentation Opens Up the Field of Brahms Performance Practice" (in Darla Crispin and Bob Gilmore's 2015 volume, *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*), Scott writes about an intriguing abyss, which Robert Philip (1992) foreshadowed: namely, the gap between "sounding historical traces" of performance conventions of a composer's own time (such as recordings in the Brahms circle), and "modern reconstructions of 'authentic' [Brahms] performances" that do not connect with these traces. This abyss, she argues, opens up avenues for experimentation with some of the more provocative, "dangerous" performative features evident in recordings by the Brahms circle, features that "destabilize" the notion of how Brahms "should" sound, and afford performers more creative freedom. But whereas these works reconstruct Brahms's performance practice conventions on the basis of evidence from the extended Joseph Joachim–Johannes Brahms circle, from which today's musicians are essentially disconnected, Lester offers a score-based close reading, analysis, and interpretation of the three sonatas and Scherzo.

What characterizes Lester's approach to the three violin sonatas and the *FAE* Scherzo? Lester's volume is at once intellectually rigorous and filled with insights valuable for practitioners. The introduction and the description on the back cover clarify: "Notation in Johannes Brahms's sonata scores tells musicians far more than what pitches to play and for how long—if read carefully, they reveal musical and human expression" (xvi). Indeed, the curious (practicing) musician is the target audience of this book. Lester promises to illuminate "the gestures, moods, personalities, and emotions that make Brahms's music so compelling" (summary on back cover). The genre of Lester's book could be viewed as situated between an advanced, detailed analytical study appropriate for anyone with a general theoretical understanding, and an advanced chamber music coaching manual. In fact, any musician performing or studying Brahms, including professional musicians, will greatly benefit from Lester's volume because its insights can inform profound interpretations of individual phrases, sections, and movements. That Lester is an expert at bringing together a crystal-clear analytical perspective and a practical guide is not news. His 1999 monograph *Bach's Works for Solo Violin*, also for OUP, already demonstrated his talent for "practical guides," perhaps his signature genre. Lester's *Brahms's Violin Sonatas* illuminates the path toward an informed interpretation, not so much with regard to historical performance practice, but with regard to score-based analysis, structure, phrases, counterpoint, textures, and allusions to other works.

The following offers two snapshots of Lester's monograph, focusing, first, on Brahms's *Allegro amabile*, the first movement of the Sonata in A major, Op. 100, and second, on dynamics in the *FAE Sonata* Scherzo.

Brahms's Allegro amabile *Character*

Chapter 3 is the first chapter of Part II (Brahms's Musical Narratives) and is dedicated to the three first movements, allowing for an enriching side-by-side comparison. Lester begins with a provocative comparison of the similarities between the *Allegro amabile* from the A-major Sonata and the *Vivace ma non troppo* from the Sonata in G major, which share "a profusion of lyrical melodies"; a "dearth of cadences on the tonic"; "soft and lyrical music" at the beginning and end of the development while reserving the "most dramatic and longest *f*" passages for the middle of the development; shortened first key areas in the recapitulation; and a focus on exuberance in the end (124). Lester quickly establishes that each of the two movements, in fact, has its own individual narrative.

Among the main narrative threads of the A-major Sonata is a gradual change of balance between the instruments. In the *Allegro amabile* the piano initiates most dialogues while the violin initially tends to listen: "But during most of the first movement, the violinist is the persona being sung to more than the persona doing the singing" (125). However, in the process of the movement, the violin emerges, particularly in the recapitulation, "during which the violin shares the spotlight with the piano." In a climactic third movement, the violin's leadership is no longer contested, and the roles of initiator (piano) and follower (violin) effectively flip. In a multilayered argument, Lester goes into great depth to elaborate how the balance between the two instruments relates to features of dynamics, rhythm and meter, and articulation (129), and how the tipping point in favor of the violin comes about. Examples and tables, including a comparison of the exposition and recapitulation, elucidate this argument.

The *Allegro amabile* discussion continues by showcasing another strength of the author, namely, the capacity to evoke allusion and to consider "musical and extra-musical narratives" by bringing into the discussion several other composers, without, however, limiting the reader/performer to a single view. Lester describes the similarities between the A-major

Sonata's opening and Wagner's *Meistersinger* "Preislied" (Act III, Scene 5); he also points out the opening's similarities to Brahms's own G-major Sonata (mm. 36 and 49), as well as to Chopin's Etude Op. 10, No. 6 (mm. 48–51). Lester also pulls into the discussion "a Lied of Klaus Groth's that is connected to the A-major Sonata," "Wie Melodien zieht es" (134). These allusions are examined in detail. In the end, however, Lester decides to leave these connections, even the most historically legitimized connection to Klaus Groth, as just that: connections. He summarizes: "Personally, I do not find that the connections between 'Wie Melodien zieht es' and the *Allegro amabile* tell us much about either piece other than what we could learn from the pieces on their own. Barring the discovery of further historical evidence, I prefer to note their similarity and leave it at that" (140).

Toward the end of the section on the *Allegro amabile*, Lester offers an insightful analysis of a "four-note rising chromatic scale G#–A–A#–B," whereby yet another possible allusion is brought to the fore: "It [the four-note chromatic motive] replicates the pitches and register of what is surely the most famous progression composed in the mid-nineteenth century: the opening of the Prelude to Wagner's 1859 opera *Tristan und Isolde*." Lester argues: "Within Wagner's opera these four notes are often referred to as the 'longing' or 'desire' Leitmotiv (leading motive). Might Brahms have expected listeners to recognize these well-known notes? Or is this relationship just a coincidence?" (152). In his next move, Lester shows how this motive first appeared "during the first theme's four phrases" (Ex. 1) before materializing at the entrance to the piano's statement of the second theme (Ex. 2). In his conclusion, Lester again encourages readers/performers to decide for themselves how to understand this chromatic motive:

> Does this suggest that the movement is a (quasi-operatic) seduction scene? Does the pianist sing to the violin in the first phrase, inspiring the violinist to "raise an eyebrow" with the comment in measure 5? Does the violinist gradually become more and more engaged with the music laid out by the pianist, until the two instruments sing together in thirds and then in unison during the coda? Is this "The" narrative of the movement? Hardly. Instrumental music does not communicate via words. Whenever we use words to interpret a musical narrative, we specify a meaning in a manner that, as Karl Groth's poem "Wie Melodien zieht es" warns us, seems to make the essence waft away like a breath or a flower's fragrance. That said, narratives can give performers a conceptual framework through which they make their decisions on the infinite matters that they must project: tone colors, dynamic shadings, how to make phrases, how to adjust tempos, how the instruments should interact during the movement, and so on and so forth. Within an overarching, movement-long narrative, there are the more local dramas within individual phrases […] (154).

Reading the entire *Allegro amabile* interpretation—which spans more than thirty pages (124–54) —leaves the reader/performer breathless! Armed with knowledge and a deeper understanding of large- and small-scale issues of form, harmony, phrasing, texture, and counterpoint, the reader/performer is well equipped to apply this knowledge, whether in performance or in research. It takes patience and persistence to follow Lester's analytical journey. But those who persevere are rewarded with a multilayered understanding of a remarkable movement.

Navigating Dynamics in the FAE Sonatensatz

In the sixth and last chapter, titled "Brahms and the Violin" (end of Part II: Brahms's Musical Narratives), Lester discusses Brahms's "deep connection" with the violin; Brahms's early style; and the Scherzo (*Sonatensatz*) of the *FAE Sonata*, a joint composition of Brahms, Schumann, and Albert Dietrich, created in autumn 1853 in anticipation of their friend Joseph Joachim's arrival in Düsseldorf.

Lester begins with an overview of Brahms's pivotal year of 1853 and the "fortuitous series of events" that propelled

Example 1: Joel Lester's diagram and reading of mm. 47–52

Example 2: Lester's diagram and reading of the reappearance of the chromatic line G#–A–A#–B

the "talented teenager"—who had "never left the environs of his native Hamburg"—to fame. By the end of the year Robert Schumann had "proclaimed him to the world as a 'genius.'" Lester corrects past historians' oversights and gives due acknowledgment to the impact that Brahms's chamber music colleague of the spring of 1853, violinist Eduard Reményi, had on Brahms's musical development (330).[2]

The young Brahms's style, though addressed in several studies, is arguably tough to assess. Considering that Brahms destroyed "a number of early violin sonatas, perhaps as many as four" (333), we may consider ourselves lucky to have the *Sonatensatz* as one of few early pieces that throw light on his connection with the violin. Lester constructs a reading of dynamics in the *Sonatensatz* in conjunction with a broader view, namely, Joachim's assessment of Brahms's style in October 1854, which the former shared in an intimate letter to his beloved Gisela von Arnim (1827–89): "[…] ganz göttlich schön musicirt, ich habe nie ein Klavierspiel gehört das mich (mit Ausnahme Liszt's vielleicht) so befriedigt hätte—*so licht und klar, so seelig kalt und gleichgültig gegen die Leidenschaft.*" The part in italics is quoted in Lester as "so light and clear, so cold and indifferent to passion."[3]

Lester's line of reasoning is that there is a significant clash between the "light and clear" characteristics and "indifference to passion" and the tremendously passionate, energetic *FAE Sonatensatz*. Does this clash appear more nuanced when translating "so seelig kalt" as "so blissfully cold" or "so beatifically cold" instead of "so cold"? Perhaps. But the clash definitely shrinks when considering the *FAE Sonatensatz* in conjunction with an earlier assessment of Brahms's performance and compositional style, also from the pen of Joachim, that sounds rather fitting for the *FAE Sonatensatz*: "His playing shows the intense fire, and, I should like to say, 'fatalistic' energy and precision of rhythm which predicts the artist, and his compositions already betoken such power as I have seen in no other musician of his age."[4]

Lester notes that Brahms's dynamics in the movement are sometimes extreme and overall less "carefully applied" than "in his mature works." Among the elements that drive Lester's reading of the movement as "sophisticated" but also "over the top" are "accent marks" ("nine chords in a row marked with accents") and "more than a dozen passages […] [that] carry a *ff* marking." These dozens of *ff* markings do not yet include "the *sempre ff e grandioso* for the last twenty-two measures—a marking surely without any counterpart in any mature work by Brahms" (358). Lester compares and contrasts this more extreme use of *ff* with only two *ff* occasions in the three other sonatas, both of them in the last movement of the Sonata Op. 108. He argues that Brahms did not "need" to write so many *ff* markings in later sonatas in order for the interpreter to do justice to the dynamics, and quotes examples from the three sonatas where huge climaxes are, indeed, marked just *f*. Lester recommends that Brahms's later hesitance to write *ff* could be viewed as a hint to performers to vary their *f* usage, determining whether a climactic *f* is meant or a more moderate *f*: "But Brahms's relative reticence to use all-out *ff* markings should probably alert us not to play every *f* passage as if it were the most important climax in the piece: In movements or even entire pieces (such as the G-major and A-major Violin Sonatas) where the loudest dynamics never exceed *f*, Brahms's notations urge us to find ways of playing passionately without pushing the dynamics to their limits. Nuance and subtlety play a larger role than in the *Sonatensatz*" (359).

Today's musicologists and performance practitioners are at a great advantage because of the multiplicity of approaches that exist. Lester acknowledges precisely this plurality in his introduction: "[M]any approaches have virtue, there is no definitive approach." The same is true when it comes to interpreting and performing Brahms. It is crucial to learn how to read the score and the information it contains with the kind of focus Lester suggests, without distractions from "extra-musical" content. At the same time, it can also be enlightening for performers to stay in touch with recent scholarship and emerging methodologies, including from disciplines like Artistic Research (see Anna Scott's chapter, p. 1). These might complement Lester's approach and help a performer breathe fresh air into the music, in order to arrive at an interpretation that is individual, lively, spontaneous, passionate, and perhaps even provocative.

This reviewer recommends this book warmly and without reservation to all who wish to deepen their understanding of Brahms's violin sonatas and *Sonatensatz*, and particularly to violinists and pianists, who can derive truly thoughtful interpretations following Lester's guidance.

Katharina Uhde

Notes. 1. Over the years many discussions of the style and structure of the three sonatas have appeared in print. They are too numerous to be listed here in full, but include contributions by Jürgen Beythien (1970), Michael Musgrave (1985), Dillon Parmer (1995), and Klaus Körner (1997). Lester's monograph also complements a rich landscape of recent studies on Brahms's instrumental music, including Marie Sumner Lott's *The Social Worlds of Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music: Composers, Consumers, Communities* (2015), Jacquelyn E. C. Sholes's *Allusion as Narrative Premise in Brahms's Instrumental Music* (2018), Ryan McClelland's *Brahms and the Scherzo: Studies in Musical Narrative* (2016), and Karen Leistra-Jones's article "Improvisational Idyll: Joachim's 'Presence' and Brahms's Violin Concerto, op. 77" for *19th-Century Music* (2015), among others. For his background and context, Lester predominately engages with two sources: Styra Avins's *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (1997) and Malcolm MacDonald's *Brahms* (1990). **2.** See, also, my forthcoming chapter for Nicole Grimes and Reuben Phillips's volume *Rethinking Brahms* (to appear from Oxford University Press in 2021), "Joachim and Brahms: Formative Influences and Performative Identities Reconsidered, April to July 1853." **3.** Lester, 360, takes the translation from Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 41. The full quotation translates as: "He prefers not performing in public […] although his playing is so divinely beautiful, I have never heard piano playing (perhaps with the exception of Liszt's) that would have satisfied me so much—so blissfully cold and indifferent to passion." **4.** "In seinem Spiele ist ganz das intensive Feuer, jene, ich möchte sagen, fatalistische Energie und Präzision des Rhythmus, welche den Künstler prophezeien, und seine Kompositionen zeigen schon jetzt so viel fertig Bedeutendes, wie ich es bis jetzt noch bei keinem Kunstjünger seines Alters getroffen." Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 4 vols. (Vienna and Leipzig: Wiener Verlag, 1904), 1:74.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Valerie W. Goertzen (Loyola University New Orleans)
Vice President, Nicole Grimes (University of California, Irvine)
Secretary, Laurie McManus (Shenandoah Conservatory)
Treasurer, Marie Sumner Lott (Georgia State University)
Membership Chair, Daniel Beller-McKenna (University of New Hampshire)
Styra Avins (New York)
Paul Berry (Yale University)
George S. Bozarth (University of Washington)
William P. Horne (Loyola University New Orleans)
Karen Leistra-Jones (Franklin and Marshall College)
Ryan McClelland (University of Toronto)
Scott Murphy (University of Kansas)
Jacquelyn Sholes (University of Rochester)
Peter H. Smith (University of Notre Dame)
Loretta Terrigno (The Juilliard School)

Corresponding Directors

Otto Biba (Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien)
Ludwig Finscher (University of Heidelberg)
Cord Garben (*ex officio*; President, Johannes-Brahms-Gesellschaft Hamburg)
Kurt Hofmann (Lübeck)
Minoru Nishihara (*ex officio*; Japan Brahms Society)
Siegfried Oechsle (*ex officio*; *Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe*)
Wolfgang Sandberger (*ex officio*; Brahms-Institut an der Musikhochschule Lübeck)
Christof Maisch (*ex officio*; President, Brahmsgesellschaft Baden-Baden)

Advisory Board

David Brodbeck (University of California, Irvine), Camilla Cai (Kenyon College), Richard Cohn (Yale University), Walter Frisch (Columbia University), Virginia Hancock (Reed College), Margaret Notley (University of North Texas), Heather Platt (Ball State University), James Webster (Cornell University), Christoph Wolff (Harvard University)

Honorary Members

Bernice Geiringer † Renate and Kurt Hofmann Margit L. McCorkle Thomas Quigley

Officials of the Society

Daniel Beller-McKenna
Membership Chair and Webmaster
Department of Music
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH 03824
(dbmk@unh.edu)

Scott Murphy, Chair
Geiringer Scholarship Committee
Murphy Hall, 220
University of Kansas
1539 Naismith Dr.
Lawrence, KS 66045-3103
(smurphy@ku.edu)

William Horne and Valerie Goertzen
Newsletter Editors
College of Music and Media
Loyola University New Orleans
New Orleans, LA 70118
(504) 865–3037 (wphorne@loyno.edu)
(504) 865–2207 (goertzen@loyno.edu)

To join the American Brahms Society, please fill out the form below and mail it with your check (payable to The American Brahms Society) to: The American Brahms Society, Department of Music, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

I would like to become a member of the American Brahms Society

Name: ____________________

Address: ____________________

____

____

Email: ____________________

Institutional Affiliation: ____________________

____

Please send information on the ABS and a sample Newsletter to the following people: ____________________

____

Annual Dues for 2021 (US dollars and checks only, please):

☐ Regular Member ($25)
☐ Retired/ senior citizen member ($20)
☐ Student Member ($15)
☐ I would like to make a contribution of $_________ to the **Karl Geiringer Scholarship Fund**. My contribution is in honor/memory of ____________________.
☐ I would like to make a contribution of $_________ towards the Society's operating expenses.

Online payment: Dues and contributions may be submitted online, using PayPal or credit card, at http://brahms.unh.edu/membership-paypal.html.

Contributions to the ABS are tax deductible.

The American Brahms Society
Department of Music
University of New Hampshire
Durham, NH 03824

ISSN 8756-8357

Recent publications, continued from page 7

musikhistorische Konstellation von 1868." In *Das Jahr 1868: Musik zwischen Realismus und Gründerzeit. Zürcher Festspiel-Symposium 2018*, edited by Laurenz Lütteken, 89–108. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2019. ISBN 978–3–7618–2159–6

Seskir, Sesi. "Musical Topoi in Brahms's 7 Fantasien Op. 116." *Journal of Musicological Research* 39, nos. 2–3 (2020): 99–121.

Yust, Jason. *Organized Time: Rhythm, Tonality and Form*. Oxford Studies in Music Theory. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. ISBN 9780190696481

Dissertations

Buer, Karin. "Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann: Intertextual References and Private Meaning in Clara Schumann's Op. 20 and Johannes Brahms's Op. 9." DA diss., University of Northern Colorado, 2020.

Willis, Laurence. "When Materials Collide: Formal Interplay in Ternary Piano Works of the Late Nineteenth Century." PhD diss., McGill University, 2019.

Editors' Notes

The editors thank the contributors to this issue. Callum Blackmore is a graduate student in historical musicology at Columbia University studying French opera in the long eighteenth century and the impact of urban economies on musical performance. His dissertation, provisionally titled "Opera at the Dawn of Capitalism: Staging Economic Change in France and Its Colonies from Rameau to Cherubini," explores representations of economic life on the operatic stage in the lead-up to the French and Haitian Revolutions. His work has been published in *Current Musicology* and *Naxos Musicology International*, and his research has been supported by the Barker and Pettman DARE Fellowships.

Katharina Uhde, DMA, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Music at Valparaiso University. She is the author of *The Music of Joseph Joachim* (Boydell & Brewer, 2018) and has edited for Bärenreiter two compositions by Joseph Joachim (2018). She has written chapters, articles, and encyclopedia entries related to Joachim. As a violinist she has won prizes in competitions, released several CDs, and has recorded virtuoso violin works by Joseph Joachim with the Radio Orchestra Warsaw, to be released under the Soundset label in December 2020. She has received grants from the Fulbright Commission, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, and the American Brahms Society.

We welcome your ideas, correspondence, and submissions for the Newsletter. Please send materials for the Spring 2021 issue by 1 February.

Our warmest wishes to all for a happy, restful holiday season and hope and peace in the New Year!