

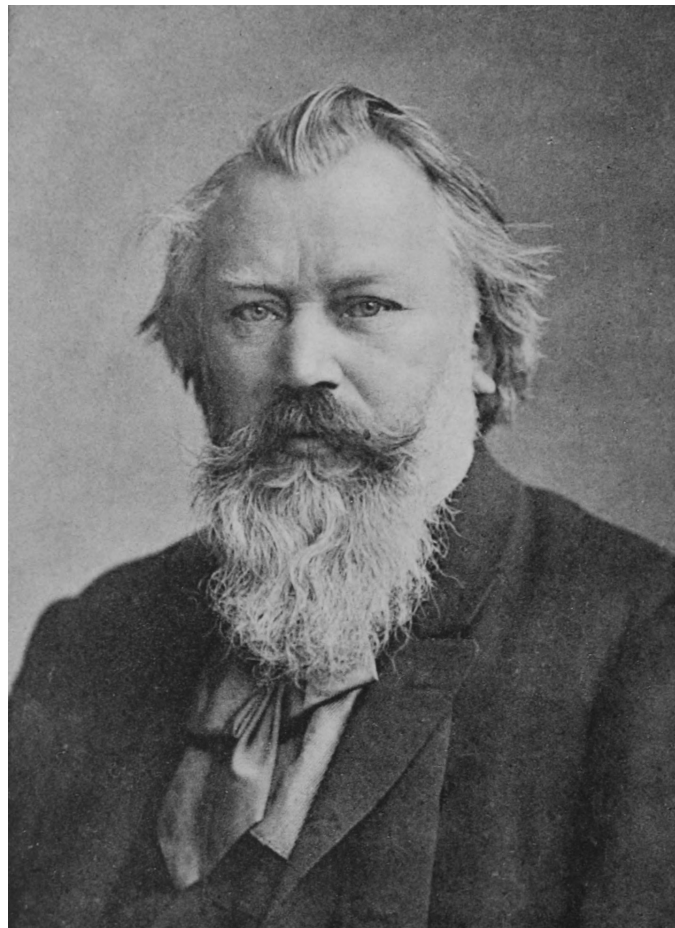
Brahms

Cross-Currents: Brahms in Twenty-First Century East Asian Film

On 26 March 1896, a year before Brahms's death, the Viennese public enjoyed Auguste and Louis Lumière's latest invention, the Cinématographe. The device was first viewed in the French capital three months earlier, before being touted across London, Bordeaux, and Brussels. In Vienna, fifty *Kreuzer* granted admission to Kärtnerstraße 45, where one could view "living pictures" including the local Opernring, St. Stephen's Cathedral, and the Stadtpark, among others. Brahms, living only a short walk from the daily screenings, may well have been aware of the technological contraption (which even captured the Kaiser's enthusiasm), but unfathomable then was the extent to which the advent of film would help to spread Brahms's music across the globe.

This article offers preliminary observations on Brahms's music within twenty-first century East Asian film. By no means comprehensive in scope, the selection of films represents prominent filmmakers of Japanese, South Korean, Hong Kong, and Chinese descent. Such films reflect the esteemed position of Western Classical music in East Asian society, a phenomenon occurring in tandem with increasing socioeconomic stability in the late twentieth century combined with traditional Confucian values that promote music's role in self-cultivation. Given the prevalence of conservatories, pre-college music schools, and concert halls dedicated to Classical music in East Asia, one might conclude that the works of Western Classical composers, including Brahms, have become enmeshed within the culture itself.¹ This article seeks to demonstrate how themes of birth, nostalgia, love, humor, and even virtuosity in Brahms's music are represented in East Asian film and television.

Brahms was aware that some of his melodies, such as the third movement of his Third Symphony, were perceived by critics to have extramusical associations. After the London premiere of the symphony in 1884, the *Musical World* remarked that the encoored *Poco Allegretto* was "beautiful from beginning to end ... lyrical, *inviting some title indicative of gentle and tender ideas connected with the ordinary experiences of life*" (italics mine).² Ten years later, even opera-loving Italian audiences, typically scornful of the erudition of such symphonies,



Brahms as photographed in 1889 by C. Brasch, Berlin.
From Heinrich Reimann, *Johannes Brahms*
(Berlin: Harmonie, 1903), frontispiece.

similarly demanded an encore of Brahms's *Poco Allegretto*. Across the Atlantic, one critic from Boston remarked: "Is not the third symphony, for example, a tone picture of the struggles between Ormuzd and Ahrimanes [Persian deities of light and darkness]?"³ These observations connecting Brahms's music with non-abstract images or experiences certainly foreshadowed the crossing of Brahms's music into the realm of moving pictures, a relation in which film directors even of the twenty-first century would rely on the composer to connect those "ordinary experiences of life."

***Okuribito* “Departures” (Japan, 2008)**

Brahms’s “Cradle Song,” gifted for the birth of Bertha Faber’s second son in 1868, eventually became associated with infants. The lullaby not only soothes a child to sleep but also celebrates new life as seen, over a century later, in Yojiro Takita’s *Okuribito* (2008). Tokyo-based cellist Daigo Kobayashi (Masahiro Motoki) loses his job in the orchestra and finds himself accepting a new (and unconventional) employment as a mortician. Notable among the themes of the Academy Award-winning film is the normalization of death, a taboo subject within East Asian culture. Kobayashi finds dignity in his work as he aids bereaved families in the ritualization and ceremonial process of death. While the film revolves around deaths of young and old, and even the death of Daigo’s parents, it celebrates birth as well. Cherry blossoms signal the arrival of spring as Kobayashi and his wife await the birth of their first child. At his cello, Kobayashi plucks the eight-bar melody of *Wiegenlied* and shares a knowing grin with Mika (Ryoko Hirose), who asks him: “Can you play every day for the unborn baby?” Brief as it is, the scene’s crowning invocation of Brahms’s *Wiegenlied* illustrates the film’s single allusion to the newness and creation of human life.

***Scandal Makers* (South Korea, 2008)**

Humor adopts different expressions across cultures, but Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances*, especially No. 5 in G minor, seem to share comedic associations across the globe from the Golden Age of Hollywood to the effervescent South Korean film industry. From the dance’s sweeping violins matching the exaggerated sweeps of the razor in Charlie Chaplin’s *The Great Dictator* (1940) to the festive rhythms of Nos. 5, 7, 6, and 17 accompanying Carl Stalling’s seven-minute short “Pigs in the Polka” for Warner Brothers’ *Merrie Melodies* (1943), Brahms’s music lands over a half century later in Kang Hyeong-cheol’s *Scandal Makers* (2008), the highest-grossing film in Korea that year.⁴ Single and carefree radio DJ Nam Hyeon-soo’s life is turned upside down when two mystery guests appear at Nam’s doorstep one evening—moments before the arrival of his date. Unbeknownst to Nam, one turns out to be his teenage daughter and the other, *her* own toddler. Realizing the life-changing predicament, Nam frantically rushes to hide their belongings, to the tune of Brahms’s *Hungarian Dance* No. 5 blasting away on his stereo, before the arrival of his date. The choice of “classical music” for the former idol singer-turned-radio-DJ conveys some sense of dignity as he realizes that what separates him from the fact that he might be a grandfather is a DNA test. Comedy aside, the fifth *Hungarian Dance* is later heard again, this time played at the piano by Nam’s grandson. A small crowd of teachers and classmates from preschool gather to hear the child prodigiously perform the fifth dance, transposed in the “black” key of F-sharp minor.

***Keys to the Heart* (South Korea, 2018)**

Ten years after *Scandal Makers*, Brahms’s *Hungarian Dance* No. 5 (now in the original four-hand version) appears on the soundtrack of Choi Sung-hyun’s heartfelt comedy, *Keys*

to the Heart (2018). Boxer Jo-ha (Lee Byung-hun) reconnects with his estranged younger brother Jin-tae (Park Jeong-min), whom he discovers to be a gifted pianist with Savant syndrome. While the plot centers on the bond that gradually builds between the two brothers, several Classical pieces are featured on the soundtrack, including the fifth of Brahms’s *Hungarian Dances*. Here, the comedic associations are removed and instead, the dance serves not only to showcase the brother’s talent but also enlivens Han Ga-yool’s interest in playing the piano again. In one scene, Jin-tae stuns the household as he sits down at the grand piano and breezes through a passage from the *Rondo Vivace* of Chopin’s First Piano Concerto. Astonished, Han Ga-yool (Han Ji-min) approaches him with the opening four bars of *Hungarian Dance* No. 5, which Jin-tae effortlessly repeats perfectly an octave higher. Ga-yool further tests him with another four bars. This time, Jin-tae responds with the entire eight-bar phrase. Intrigued, Ga-yool sits down and starts from the beginning, after which the pair perfectly execute the entire A section and four bars of the contrasting B section before returning to A'. The flawless executions of Brahms’s *Hungarian Dance* No. 5 underscore the prominence of this work within South Korean popular culture.⁵ As such, both *Keys to the Heart* and the earlier *Scandal Makers* suggest that the dance occupies an essential placement in an aspiring pianist’s repertoire, so much that a preschooler, an autistic brother, and a Classically trained pianist can effortlessly play the work at any given moment.

***Lust, Caution* (United States, China, Taiwan, 2007)**

Brahms also appears in conjunction with mature themes, particularly in Ang Lee’s erotic espionage thriller, *Lust, Caution* (2007). An adaptation of Chinese writer Eileen Chang’s eponymous novel (published in 1979), the story describes attempts by anti-Japanese resistance members to assassinate a high-ranking special agent of the Wang Jingwei puppet regime. French film composer Alexandre Desplat delicately orchestrates the soundtrack in a manner that highlights both the mysterious allure of the two cosmopolitan cities of Hong Kong and Shanghai in the late 1930s and early 40s alongside their tragic subjugation inflicted by Japanese colonizers. Desplat’s scoring favors the strings and solo piano, while an occasional harp and celesta magically recreate the ethereal bygone era so poignantly rendered in Chang’s literary style.

As the only pre-existing Classical work used in the film, Brahms’s *Intermezzo* in A major, Op. 118, No. 2, sets the backdrop for a key moment in an initial tryst between university student Wong Chia-Chi (Tang Wei) and Yee (Tony Leung Chiu-wai), a key governmental figure. In 1938, Wong had joined the student resistance movement in Hong Kong against the Japanese puppet government. Her talented performance at a school theater play convinces fellow student Kuang that she could join the mission to assassinate Yee by disguising herself as the wife of a wealthy merchant, Mr. Mak. Seducing Yee, however, proves a slow process, as he is intensely private and cautious, both professionally and emotionally. Wong initially befriends Mrs. Yee, newly arrived in Hong Kong from mainland China; they play mahjong regularly in the Yee home before Wong successfully catches the husband’s eye. Wong’s powers

of attraction are only partially successful: once she draws near to Yee, but before any assassination can occur, he and his wife are summoned back to mainland China.

Brahms's *Intermezzo* frames Wong's and Yee's initial tryst in Hong Kong. Wong's apprehension at being led by Yee to a secluded Western restaurant is underscored by Desplat's drawn-out pitches on the marimba above a string orchestra. Yee makes a call at a telephone booth while Wong remains composed at the table. When he returns, there is a pause—the camera glances at a Caucasian pianist dressed in an elegant suit and tie who begins to play Brahms's *Intermezzo*. Returning to the table, the camera focuses on Wong's and Yee's first conversation.

On one level, Brahms's *Intermezzo* accentuates the Western elements of the scene. The table setting composed of flowers beside a small table lamp over a white tablecloth exudes a soft, intimate glow coupled with the serene calmness of the window view overlooking water. Despite the handful of Westerners patronizing a nearby table, Wong pouts, "This restaurant doesn't have many guests!" As she wields a fork and knife over her plate, Yee answers, "They make the food poorly here. Apologies. Here is the perfect place to talk, no one disturbs you."

Without alteration to the score, Brahms's *Intermezzo* frames the conversation. Yee asks what Wong enjoys, to which she reveals that her loneliness is intensified because her (fictitious) husband, Mr. Mak, doesn't enjoy going to the movies. Yee admits he, too, does not enjoy the movies. Yee remarks that Mr. Mak must be very busy with work, Wong then coyishly responds that having a man is fine as long as he is away from home. She then counters that she should bring her husband next time since Yee's interest lies with him. Smiling, Yee tenderly states that having a conversation with her is a rare treat.

In the context of the larger narrative, the tenderness associated with Brahms's *Intermezzo* foreshadows a relationship that involves much more than physicality or anti-Japanese sentiments. The story gradually reveals a genuine and mutual love between Wong and Yee that is only fully realized in the film's final moments, when Wong discovers Yee has planned to buy a six-carat pink diamond for her. Overwhelmed, Wong saves Yee's life, urging him to flee the assassination plot awaiting him, and meanwhile sacrificing her own life. It is precisely at the initial dinner scene with Brahms's *Intermezzo* that we witness Yee's love for Wong begin. For the first time in the film, the tender and genuine side of Yee is revealed, sharply contrasting with the otherwise ruthless nature of his character. And while Desplat could well have composed a new score for the scene, the simplicity, intimacy, and tenderness associated with Brahms's *Intermezzo* draws both Wong and the viewer towards the enigmatic Yee. The A-major key, long characteristic of innocent love, exposes an uncharacteristically human side of Yee as he probes Wong out of genuine curiosity. Whereas previously he is portrayed as extremely private and reserved—even to his wife in his own home—Yee appears forthright and genuine to Wong. For the first time, Yee is truthful about his own life as he seeks to know and to be known. It is here at the dinner table that the soft lamp illuminates both Wong's and Yee's full faces, contrasting earlier scenes in the film that emphasized side profiles, cool tones, and shadows. For Desplat and Ang Lee, the selection of Brahms's *Intermezzo* marks a significant turning point from darkness to light.

Infernal Affairs 2 (Hong Kong, 2003)

Leaving historical drama, Brahms's *Poco Allegretto* (Third Symphony) situates itself in *Infernal Affairs 2*, the second of Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's smash-hit police trilogy.⁶ Here, the crime-action thriller explores the nefarious world of undercover cops within Hong Kong triads while setting the story against the backdrop of recent political events, namely, the Handover of 1997. In weaving two plotlines—one fictional, the other historical—filmmakers sensitively recreated Hong Kong in the 1990s, a decade filled with apprehension as hundreds of thousands of city-dwellers migrated abroad, fearing the unknown of a future under mainland Chinese sovereignty. Artistically, *Infernal Affairs 2* distinguishes itself within the trilogy for its rare and eclectic "global" soundtrack, one that finds Brahms in company with Indian instruments and Chinese opera. The rare inclusion of pre-existing Western Classical music within the trilogy—if not Hong Kong cinema as a whole—begs consideration.

Chan Wing-yan (Yue Man-lok) is the estranged and illegitimate son of the head triad boss, Ngai Kwun, who is brutally murdered at the start of the film. Although hired as a mole in the triad, Chan supports his half-brother, Ngai Wing-hau (Ng Chun-yu), who struggles to secure his position in the triad business after the death of his father while protecting his family. His main rival within the power vacuum is Hon Sam (Tsang Chi-wai), a triad associate whose wife had ordered the death of Ngai Kwun. Both Wing-hau and Hon Sam become embroiled in a *Godfather*-esque power struggle, and by the film's end in 1997, the Ngai family is ruthlessly murdered while Hon Sam celebrates his victory over the triad in the midst of welcoming a new chapter of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong.

Brahms's *Poco Allegretto* occurs in the opening half of the film in an intimate garden party. Ngai Wing-hau has established contact with his estranged younger brother, Chan Wing-yan, inviting him to help with family affairs following their father's death. The world of organized crime recedes as we enter into the joyous birthday celebration of Ngai's daughter. The C-minor *Poco Allegretto* of Brahms's Third Symphony, however, casts a clear shadow over the scene. The music begins as a suited bodyguard brushes past the green shrubs enclosing an expensive residential neighborhood of Hong Kong. The camera pans upward toward the hilltop family residence ensconced in lush greenery. Within the guarded perimeter of the garden, well-dressed children play at ease while Wing-hau engages in conversation with a small, intimate family gathering of aunts and uncles. Wing-yan stands on the sidelines, taking in the unfamiliarity of his estranged family.

As an expression of inner thoughts and emotions, the music provides a subtext to a wordless story across these images that is in no way less powerful for lack of dialogue. In the same way that bodyguards survey the garden's perimeter, Brahms's *Poco Allegretto* frames the scene's diegesis. There is a visual and aural disjunction that creates an emotional gap and at the very least, a heightened sense of unease and restlessness. The children at play communicate innocence and tranquility; the familial gathering of men, women, and children represents traditional sources of fulfillment and completion; and the physicality of the garden itself symbolically represents that primordial space of nature, perfection, and tranquility. Yet the power of these visual cues

is overturned by the music. Unresolved harmonic dissonances, appoggiaturas in the melody, starts and stops in its phrasing, and even the melody's placement on the high A string of the cello indicate a pronounced disorder in the incongruencies resulting from the conflicting visuals and audio. The music, solidly in C minor, conveys a sense of longing, sighing, and even nostalgia.⁷ The viewer is left searching for the source of this vulnerability on behalf of the characters of the diegesis.

For audiences in 2003, the scene nostalgically recalled the pre-1997 Handover years, a time where economic and societal freedoms reached their height within the colonized "Pearl of the East." In light of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 and increasing concerns over the future in the hands of the mainland Chinese government, city-dwellers in Hong Kong were at a loss as to the island's fate after 1997. The dark hues of *Infernal Affairs 2*, recurring visual motifs of clocks and watches, and years displayed across the screen captured city-dwellers anxiously marking the unfolding of time. The vulnerability felt on behalf of the unsuspecting party guests foreshadows the tragic fate of the story's characters. They enjoy peace and tranquility in the scene, but by the film's end they (including the young child) are brutally murdered. That the parallel historical retelling of Hong Kong's political events leading up to the 1997 Handover is by no means coincidental in *Infernal Affairs 2* is made clear in the final scene, where Hon Sam celebrates both his victory over the Ngai family as well as the stroke of midnight on 1 July 1997 when 156 years of British sovereignty transferred into Communist hands.

Furthermore, Brahms's *Poco Allegretto* for the garden party is not chamber or piano solo music, but the late Romantic symphony, a public and bourgeois genre. The orchestral apparatus exudes a totality, a grandeur and breadth, aggrandizing the scene's dimensions and making a bold and public statement out of what seems to be an intensely private affair. As the *Poco Allegretto* fades, the source of vulnerability is revealed through the ensuing dialogue where Wing-hau gathers his associates on the terrace. Smoking Cuban cigars, he reveals that two days ago his home had been appraised for 160 million HKD, a steep rise from the original nine million. "What has the world come to?" he contemplates. "It's 1997. Time to emigrate."

The instances in which Brahms's music is included on the soundtracks of twenty-first-century East Asian films are indeed few, but the pairing of such moving images and music reflects shared, emotional responses, namely those of love, nostalgia, tenderness, humor, and even hope for new life. Through this preliminary study, the author hopes that further investigation of Brahms's works in film soundtracks may highlight his continued relevance across borders and cultures in our modern world.

Joanna Chang

Notes. 1. See Mari Yoshihara, *Musicians from a Different Shore: Asians and Asian Americans in Classical Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008); Hao Huang, "Why Chinese People Play Western Classical Music: Transcultural Roots of Music Philosophy," *International Journal of Music Education* 30, no. 2 (May 2012): 161–76; Jindong Cai and Sheila Melvin, *Rhapsody in Red: How Western Classical Music Became Chinese* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004). See also Belgian

director Thierry Loreau's latest documentary, *K-Classics Generation* (2020). More recently, Ho-sang Ahn, CEO of Sejong Center for the Performing Arts, has unveiled plans for a new 1,800-seat concert hall exclusively devoted to classical music as a new home for the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra. The new hall will be in addition to the Seoul Arts Center Music Hall, which seats over 2500, and Lotte Concert Hall, which seats over 2000. 2. *Musical World* 62, no. 21 (24 May 1884): 319. 3. *Gazette* (24 March 1895). Reprinted in Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms*, vol. 2 (Neptune City, NJ: Paganiniana Publications, 1981), 575. 4. "2008," Korea Film, accessed 31 January 2024, <https://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm08.html>. 5. Two years after *Keys to the Heart*, Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), one of the country's largest television broadcasters, aired the 16-episode romance drama, *Do You Like Brahms?* While the title alludes to Françoise Sagan's novel from 1959, the story revolves around music students finding happiness and meaning within the rigorous demands of conservatory life. Brahms's music is especially prominent on the Classical soundtrack with selections from the *Waltzes*, Op. 39, the *Intermezzo* in A major, the *Scherzo* that Brahms contributed to the *F&E Sonata*, the first movement of the *First Symphony*, the *Poco Allegretto* of the *Third Symphony*, the *Finale* of the *Fourth*, the first movement of Brahms's *First Piano Concerto*, the *Andante* second movement of the *Double Concerto* for Violin, Cello, and Orchestra, and the *Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo* of the *Violin Concerto*. 6. Less than a month after the release of *Infernal Affairs*, Brad Pitt and Warner Bros. producer Brad Grey bought the rights to the film from Media Asia; Martin Scorsese directed its remake, *The Departed*, three years later. 7. Filmmakers may well have been aware of the first use of the *Poco Allegretto* in Anatole Litvak's *Goodbye Again* (1961), where Paula Tessler (Ingrid Bergman) struggles between her cheating partner and the immature but powerful advances of a much younger Philip Van der Besh (Anthony Perkins). Litvak's choice of Brahms's *Poco Allegretto* in Samuel A. Taylor's adaptation of Françoise Sagan's *Aimez-vous Brahms?* successfully captures Tessler's emotional turmoil as the music forces her to confront and reevaluate her relationship.

Kurt Hofmann, 1931–2024

As this issue goes to press, we have received the sad news that Kurt Hofmann, eminent Brahms researcher and collector, passed away on 5 February at the age of 92. Hofmann was a Corresponding Director of the ABS for over 30 years and, with his wife Renate Hofmann, an Honorary Member of the Society since 1999. His many publications, which include inventories of Brahms's library and the first editions of his music, and with Renate Hofmann a timeline of Brahms's life and works and a chronology of Brahms's performances, are indispensable to Brahms research. We will miss his friendship, his generous spirit, and his unbridled enthusiasm for Brahms, his music, and his world.

News from the Board of Directors

At the annual meeting of the Society's Board of Directors, held in Denver on 10 November 2023 in conjunction with the joint meeting of the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory, new officers were elected: Marie Sumner Lott, President; Laurie McManus, Vice President; Loretta Terrigno, Secretary and Membership Chair (elected to a second term); and Karen Leistra-Jones, Treasurer. Marie Sumner Lott, who in her role as ABS Treasurer since 2015 managed our investments and finances with tenacity and grace, and Valerie Goertzen, who served as President for four years, were warmly thanked. We look forward to new initiatives under the new leadership team. Please contact Board members with your ideas, and let us know how you might like to participate.

Loretta Terrigno, our web designer Hilary Caws-Elwitt, and past Membership Chair Dan Beller-McKenna developed a database that has been recording memberships since January 2022 and issuing automated renewal reminders. Numbers of individual and institutional memberships are holding steadily, and our treasury is strong. The ABS has invested funds conservatively, and these investments have grown over the long term despite the volatility of the markets in recent years. We are grateful to Breighan Boeskool for financial guidance, and to Hilary Caws-Elwitt for maintaining our website.

With this issue of the Newsletter, Laurie McManus joins William Horne and Valerie Goertzen as co-editor. Welcome, Laurie! Also with this issue, the printing and mailout of the Newsletter moves to Pixos Press in Rochester, NY, with Loretta Terrigno serving as local contact. We thank Express Press in South Bend, Indiana, for printing the Newsletter over the past decade, and we extend heartfelt thanks to Peter Smith and his associates at the University of Notre Dame for addressing, folding, and mailing the printed copies for those ten years.

We thank outgoing Geiringer Committee Chair Karen Leistra-Jones and committee members Loretta Terrigno and Marie Sumner Lott, and outgoing Publication Subventions Committee Chair Jacquelyn Sholes and committee members Nicole Grimes and Ryan McClelland for their service in 2023.

In the face of rising room rental and catering costs in the conference hotels and decreasing institutional funding for members' travel, the Board is exploring alternative options for its annual meetings. In addition to hosting future conferences, perhaps on the order of our New Orleans pre-conference in November 2022, we seek to develop new inclusive events that will be of interest and benefit to ABS members. We welcome your suggestions!

Brahms News

A concert and symposium devoted to Brahms's Violin Sonatas took place at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music on 10 September 2022. Paper presentations by Heather Platt, Ryan McClelland, and Frank Samarotto, and a keynote lecture by Joel Lester (titles listed on p. 10 of this Newsletter) were followed by a Roundtable Discussion involving schol-

ars and performers, chaired by Samarotto. An evening concert featured the three sonatas performed by violinist Mark Kaplan and pianists Émile Naoumoff (Op. 78), David Kaplan (Op. 100), and Norman Krieger (Op. 108). The events were live-streamed; full recordings may be viewed at <https://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/media/v83801wk2m> (symposium and panel), and <https://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/media/q87b791d9s> (concert).

The Archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna reports on its website that it has purchased the collection of autographs and first editions belonging to our esteemed colleague and friend Robert Pascall (1944–2018). In addition to numerous important materials relating to Brahms, his circle, and his reception, the collection contains items relating more generally to Austrian, German, French, and English music of the second half of the nineteenth century.

Karl Geiringer Scholarship Applications Due 31 March

The American Brahms Society is seeking applications for its Karl Geiringer Scholarship in Brahms Studies, from students in the final stages of preparing a doctoral dissertation written in English. Work relating to Brahms should form a significant component of the dissertation, but it need not be the exclusive or even primary focus. The Society gives equal consideration to research in historical musicology, analysis, performance practice, cultural history, and other related disciplines.

Guidelines for applications appear on our website, <http://americanbrahmsociety.org>. Materials should be submitted electronically as pdf files to Geiringer Committee Chair Loretta Terrigno at lterrigno@esm.rochester.edu by 31 March 2024. Finalists will be invited to submit a sample chapter, and the recipient(s) notified in November.

Publication Subvention Applications Due 15 February

The ABS awards publication subventions of up to \$1000 in support of English-language books exploring any aspect of Brahms's life or works and volumes about Brahms's contemporaries or epoch that substantially contribute to research on Brahms. The Society encourages the broadest range of approaches to studying the composer, including, but not limited to music history, theory, and performance. Both monographs and collections of essays by a number of authors will be considered. Subventions are awarded on a competitive basis to ABS members who have been in good standing for at least two years. Further details, including types of expenses that may be reimbursed, are given on the Society's website, <https://americanbrahmsociety.org>.

Application materials in pdf format should be emailed to the Chair of the Subvention Committee, Nicole Grimes, at nicole.e.grimes@gmail.com by 15 February 2024. If no award is made in that competition, there will be a second deadline of 15 August.

Review

Loges, Natasha. *Brahms and His Poets: A Handbook*. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-78327-236-5

The best thinking and writing about Brahms songs usually begins with an examination of their texts. Ideally, this should extend beyond metrical, rhetorical, and hermeneutic analysis to encompass the poet's geographical, intellectual, political, and cultural place in the world and the poet's relationship to Brahms, to people in Brahms's vast network of friends and colleagues, and to fellow poets and other literary figures. In *Brahms and His Poets*, Natasha Loges opens a window onto this rich universe by creating a wide-ranging reference work that is of extraordinary value to those with an interest in Brahms's vocal music.

Loges's introductory essay (pp. 1–19) does far more than preface the material to follow. It constitutes an extremely thorough short-format introduction to Brahms song research. After a review of survey studies related to Brahms's Lieder and his Lied poets, she continues with subsections entitled "Brahms the Reader," "Song Poetry in Society," and "Brahms the Friend." In each of these subject areas she lays out the essential primary sources for research, making this chapter a good first stop for young scholars who want to work on Brahms songs.

Loges organized this book as a dictionary with an entry for each of the forty-six poets who contributed at least one text to Brahms's solo Lieder published with opus numbers. At the head of each poet's entry, both Brahms's solo song(s) and his ensemble setting(s) of texts by the same poet (choral works, duets, and vocal quartets) are listed in opus number order. The solo songs appear in bold type, reminding the reader of the primacy of solo song in this volume, but the inclusion of ensemble works aims for a wider consideration of each poet's place in Brahms's compositional thinking.

Early on, the author presents two enormously helpful tables. The first, an "Index of Solo Song Opuses Published in Brahms's Lifetime," lists Brahms's 204 solo songs in the order of their publication by title, poet or other text source, and opus collection (pp. 20–28). A quick look at this table will remind readers that 21 of these songs are German *Volkslieder*, which are not attributable to identifiable poets.¹ Consequently, the collectors and editors of these texts, such as Johann Gottfried Herder, Georg Scherer, Andreas Kretzschmer, and Anton von Zuccalmaglio, do not receive entries here. On the other hand, the translators of non-German poetry, including folk songs, into German verse do receive entries, since, through the act of translation, they are functioning as poetic creators of text. The second table is a timeline that demonstrates the extraordinary extent to which the lifespans of Brahms's song poets intersected with his own.

Standing outside the scope of this volume are a few poets whose texts Brahms used in published ensemble settings, but never in solo songs. These poets are listed in Table 1. It is interesting to "filter" Brahms's poets in this way. Some of these "ensemble" poets appear prominently in the solo song literature of Robert Schumann (Adelbert von Chamisso, Justinus Kerner), or Franz Schubert (Ossian, Wilhelm Müller, Friedrich Schiller). The fact that Brahms confined the work of these

poets to ensemble compositions may suggest that he wanted to handle their poetry in a way that was distinct from the solo Lieder of his famous forerunners. While Loges makes the limits of her study clear, it does no harm to emphasize here, so that the casual reader will have no misunderstanding, that *Brahms and His Poets* does not mean all his poets, and the emphasis on solo song in this volume does not mean that the poetic sources of all the solo songs are addressed.²

The content of the entries is best described by the author: "The first part of each entry details Brahms's connections to the poet in question, including, where relevant, a discussion of [Brahms's] poetic sources, musical inspirations, biographical links, his friends' reactions where established, and a summary of other settings. The following section, 'Further Context,' provides additional information, generally including a sketch of the poet's life, connections to other poets in the volume and, where available, a summary of relevant social, political, and cultural factors" (p. 36).

The author provides a rich account of Brahms's connections with his poets. Some Brahms knew personally: Hugo Conrat, Klaus Groth, Georg Friedrich Daumer, Max Kalbeck, Christian Reinhold [Reinhold Köstlin], Hans Schmidt, or Felix Schumann, to name just a few. Many others came into his orbit through connections between widely intersecting circles of musicians, artists, and writers. For example, Adolf Frey and Gottfried Keller belonged to the circle around Brahms's Swiss friend Joseph Viktor Widmann; Max Kalbeck had connections both to Brahms and to the poet Paul Heyse; even the retiring Eduard Mörike had connections to Brahms's close friend Joseph Joachim through Joachim's relationship with Bettina and Gisela von Arnim. Other relationships were more distant. The "restless, over-prolific diplomat" (p. 345), Adolf von Schack, Brahms knew obliquely through the painter Anselm Feuerbach, the singer Julius Stockhausen, and the lithographer Julius Allgeyer. Brahms's connection to the greatly esteemed Friedrich Rückert seems to have run through the poet's daughter, Marie, with whom he had what could only be described as a prickly relationship. Brahms's relationships with his poets are fleshed out with numerous, judiciously chosen quotations from correspondence and diary entries. Loges even goes so far as to dig out from the archives of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna previously unpublished items of Brahms's correspondence, such as three letters from Karl Lemcke to Brahms (pp. 271–73), and two letters from Hans Schmidt to Brahms (pp. 365 and 372), providing a new perspective on their relationships. Altogether, Loges shows that Brahms either personally knew or had significant third-person connections to approximately half of his poets.

Loges's discussion of Brahms's poetic sources is extraordinarily detailed and developed through an intimate knowledge of a great number of primary and secondary sources. Some sources reveal information about the context of a poem. Several of Brahms's Eichendorff texts, for example, were originally embedded in prose works, revealing details of characterization and situation that arguably affected their musical settings. Her discussion of the context for Brahms's settings of Ludwig Tieck's "Magelone" poetry in the author's *Phantasia* is extraordinarily insightful. She is able to demonstrate that Brahms had closely read the material surrounding Tieck's presentation of the tale of Count Peter of

Table 1: Poets Whose Texts Brahms Used Exclusively in Ensemble Works When Published with Opus Numbers

<u>Poet</u>	<u>Title or First Line</u>	<u>Opus Number</u>
Ludwig Achim von Arnim	“O süßer Mai” (choral)	Op. 93a, No. 3
Adelbert von Chamisso	“Die Müllerin” (choral)	Op. 44, No. 5
Friedrich Hölderlin	<i>Schicksalslied</i> (choral with orchestra)	Op. 54
Justinus Kerner	“Klosterfräulein” (duet)	Op. 61, No. 2
Wilhelm Müller	“Die Meere” (duet)	Op. 20, No. 3
	“Vineta” (choral)	Op. 42, No. 2
	“Die Braut” (choral)	Op. 44, No. 11
Ossian (James McPherson, tr. E. Brinckmeier and Gottfried Herder)	“Gesang aus Fingal” (choral)	Op. 17, No. 4
	“Darthulas Grabgesang” (choral)	Op. 42, No. 3
Friedrich Ruperti	“Es tönt ein voller Harfenklang” (choral)	Op. 17, No. 1
Friedrich Schiller	“Der Abend” (quartet)	Op. 64, No. 2
	<i>Nänie</i> (choral with orchestra)	Op. 82
William Shakespeare (tr. A. W. Schlegel)	“Lied von Shakespeare” (choral)	Op. 17, No. 2
C. O. Sternau (Otto Inkermann)	“An die Heimat” (quartet)	Op. 64, No. 1
Johann Heinrich Voss	“Minnelied” (choral)	Op. 44, No. 1
Michael Weiße	<i>Begräbnisgesang</i> (choral with winds)	Op. 13

Provence and Magelone in this source. The characters in this framing narrative argue “about how much a story can be altered before its essential identity is lost, questions which Brahms, as a keen arranger (and therefore changer) of folk songs, would have found most relevant” (p. 394). The characters in the framing narrative also fantasize about how a literary work might combine elements of lyric poetry, dramatic narrative, and novelistic breadth, creating “a new kind of poetry,” staged in the imagination, that “evinces a boldness which behoves no other dramatic poem.” Loges observes that “this description seems to capture perfectly the scale of the *Magelone* songs” (p. 395). Here, and again and again elsewhere, Loges begins with careful observations of sources and draws from them thoughtful responses that reveal important elements of Brahms’s thinking about literature and music.

Loges’s close examination of Brahms’s library is everywhere evident, as in her observation that Brahms’s text source for Clemens Brentano’s “O kühler Wald” must lie not in his copy of Brentano’s *Gedichte* in the 1861 edition, which shows no obvious signs of use, but in his copy of Bettina von Arnim’s epistolary novel *Frühlingskranz*, which he read repeatedly. She does not neglect instances where Brahms’s text sources may be related to previously published musical works, such as Johann Friedrich Reichardt’s settings of texts by Goethe (pp. 141–42). The importance of anthologies and magazines as potential sources for poetic texts receives its due here, as in the case of the short-lived Eduard Ferrand (pp. 106–10) or the distinguished Emanuel Geibel (p. 127). Finally, she is always attentive to poems to which Brahms was attracted but which he did not ultimately set to music. These she identifies primarily by examining the poetry volumes in Brahms’s library and the contents of his handwritten poetry notebooks.

Although the analysis of music and poetry is not the primary focus of this volume, it does contain, almost as tiny, incorporated studies, trenchant and original technical observations about a considerable number of individual songs, such as Carl Candidus’s “Lerchengesang” (pp. 65–67), Georg Friedrich Daumer’s “Botschaft” (pp. 83–86), Klaus Groth’s “Dein blaues Auge” (pp. 154–57), or Friedrich Halms’s “Kein Haus, keine Heimat?” (pp. 168–70), among many others. Many of these observations come not so much from the application of particular analytical methodologies as they do from Loges’s long years of practical experience as a collaborative pianist specializing in the accompaniment of Lieder. Reflecting the close attention Brahms paid to scansion as he prepared to set a text, Loges sometimes detours into metrical analysis, as in, for example, her discussion of Hans Schmidt’s “Sapphische Ode” (pp. 366–68). She also delights in pointing out Brahms’s—and his poets’—sensitivity to assonance and alliteration, features of the poetry that, again, one senses she has observed through years of experience in rehearsal and on stage. Her discussion of Goethe’s “Dämmrung senkte sich von oben” (pp. 143–45) illustrates her application of this approach in the case of a surpassingly great poet, while her consideration of Brahms’s three Kopisch settings (pp. 250–54) shows what she has to say about a weaker one. Finally, the author’s sharp eye (and ear) for musical reminiscences and allusions in Brahms’s songs sometimes comes to the fore, as in her discussions of the *Zigeunerlieder* (pp. 74–76), Max Kalbeck’s “Nachtwandler” (p. 224), and Ludwig Uhland’s “Der Schmied” (pp. 401–2), among other works.

The “Further Context” sections provide a brief biographical sketch of each of Brahms’s song poets, often drawn from modern biographies or from older sources such as Franz Brümmer’s

Deutsches Dichterlexikon (1876), or the *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* (1875–1912). The biographical sketches generally run from two to six pages in length. In such a compressed format, it is inevitable that conflicts would arise between conveying who a poet was and what the poet had done. That conflict probably becomes most acute for major figures. How, after all, could anyone summarize Goethe's contributions to German literature and culture in the space of a few pages, let alone achieve some insight into his complex and constantly evolving personality? Unsurprisingly then, Loges's short biographical sketch of Goethe passes over even some of his most influential works, such as *Faust*, and her tracing of his eventful life only begins to convey the qualities of the man. By way of compensation, she provides perspective, observing that, in the midst of widespread and profound economic, technological, and political change, "Goethe ... offered Brahms's generation a model of being: striving for the widest and profoundest knowledge, maintaining professional and social relationships with care and embedding himself within a society of like-minded people" (p. 146).

In most other cases, though, Loges manages, even in a small space, to convey the most essential issues with which Brahms's poets struggled. For example, her handling of Eichendorff's thumbnail biography is sensitive to the ironic disparities between the idyllic, Romanticized world of his lyric poetry and the humdrum realities of his day-to-day life in the Prussian civil service. She conveys the sometimes mercurial shifts in popularity of the poet Paul Heyse; she leads us through the seemingly endless travels of the polyglot Friedrich Bodenstedt; she details the "notorious literary catfight" (p. 313) between August von Platen and Heinrich Heine that had such unfortunate repercussions for both men; she recounts the "glaring dysfunctionality" (p. 283) of Detlef von Liliencron's life with a sense of suppressed astonishment that the reader comes to share. Altogether, her descriptions of the vastly disparate, yet often intertwined lives of Brahms's poets are fast-paced, informative, and balanced, and they have the distinct advantage of leaving the reader wanting to know more.

A thread that runs through Loges's writing is an unpolemical attentiveness to the presence of women in the lives of Brahms's poets and in his own circle of trusted musical intimates. She relates in some detail, for example, the remarkable story of Friedrich Heibel's wife, the wealthy actress Christine Engehausen, who lifted out of poverty not only Heibel himself but also his previous consort, and the mother of two of his children, Elise Lensing. Lensing subsequently became godmother to Engehausen's second child by Heibel and the caretaker for Engehausen's illegitimate child from an earlier relationship. Depicted in less detail, but with no less sympathy, is Doris Groth, the wife of poet Klaus Groth; Maria Fellinger, a close friend of Brahms's later years, who was the daughter of Brahms-poet Christian Reinhold and the Lied composer Josephine Lang; the song composer Louise Reichardt, daughter of Johann Friedrich Reichardt, and a friend of the Brahms-poet Ludwig Tieck. Minor characters abound, such as Victoria von Szalay, the Hungarian nanny of Hugo Conrat's daughter, Erica, who paraphrased the texts of the *Zigeunerlieder* into German. Of course, the observations of Clara Schumann and Elizabeth von

Herzogenberg, the two women with whom Brahms most often shared his *Lieder* before publication, are invoked throughout.

Another connecting thread is politics, which affected a great number of Brahms's poets. To name only a few, there was Hoffmann von Fallersleben, whose active stance in favor of a politically unified Germany earned him the enmity of the Metternichean establishment, and whose *Unpolitische Lieder* of 1840 got him fired from his teaching position at the University of Breslau. There was Heine, who sympathized with the legal reforms instituted in Germany during the Napoleonic occupations, openly despised conservative Prussian governance, and had his works banned by the Frankfurt Parliament. And there were lesser-known figures, such as the Alsatian Carl Candidus, who led a largely unnoticed literary campaign to promote German culture in that French-leaning province. Loges observes that Brahms was usually more interested in the poetry, and its possibilities for musical expression, than the politics of its creators, writing, for example, that "he seems to have been uninterested in Heine as a political provocateur or philosopher" (p. 191), and positing that Brahms may have turned away from Hoffmann's poetry after his early Op. 3 and Op. 6 settings not because of Hoffmann's political extremism but because of his close association with Liszt.

Running through the whole of Loges's narrative is perhaps its most attractive feature: from every page springs an enthusiastic devotion to Brahms's songs, engendered by years of study and performance and honed by rigorous, and often original scholarship. Ironically, although she set out to shine a needed light on Brahms's poets, Loges wound up offering, in addition to that, a new perspective on Brahms himself. For to read the book straight through is to read an unchronological biography of Brahms seen through his lifelong literary attractions, his personal sociability, and his adventurous intellect. One discovers in his journey from a young, Romantic, Eichendorff enthusiast to an admirer of Realist poets such as Lingg, Keller, Frey, or Storm, how open Brahms was to the world around him, how seriously he engaged with the best thinkers and writers he discovered there, and how carefully he paid attention to what was essential in their art for the development of his own. Goethe would have been well pleased.

William P. Horne

Notes. 1. Virginia Hancock divides Brahms's songs into *Volkslieder*, *Kunstlieder*, and hybrid works. See her "Johannes Brahms: Volkslied/Kunstlied," in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, edited by Rufus Hallmark (New York: Schirmer, 1996): 119–52. 2. In the Introduction, Loges writes: "Poets whose works Brahms set exclusively in ensemble and choral settings have been excluded here because the considerations are different from the solo Lied" (p. 5). Later, in the main text, she reminds readers that "Brahms's folk poetry sources cannot be considered here" (p. 378).

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Includes interviews with scholars and excerpts from concerts of the Salonenensemble des Hessischen Staatsorchesters Wiesbaden.
Pt. 1 Introduction: Wiesbaden as Cure City, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQbNliu4RWQ>
Pt. 2 Louise Langhans-Japha, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B0LlrIB2uBI>
Pt. 3 Julie von Pfeilschifter, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xFM8ObINF6A>
Pt. 4 Luisa Adolpha Le Beau, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gW5BWFhCo0Q>
Pt. 5 Helen Buchholtz, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPLC2BXT024&t=34s>
Pt. 6 Epilogue and credits, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaKQ0pYzErA>

Papers Presented

Paper presented at the conference *Figured Bass Accompaniment in Europe*, Brescia, Italy, 9–12 September 2021:
Martin Ennis (University of Cambridge), “Quod licet Bacho non licet Francisco’: Reevaluating the Continuo Realisations of Johannes Brahms and Robert Franz”

Paper presented at the 17th International Congress of the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, Universität zu Bonn, Germany, 28 September – 1 October 2021:
Martin Ennis (University of Cambridge), “Relocating Brahms’s ‘Glorious Nation’: New Light on the Origins of the *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*, Op. 109”

Papers presented at the 58th Annual Conference of the Royal Musicological Association, University of Durham, UK, 8–10 September 2022:
Martin Ennis (University of Cambridge), “Brahms’s ‘zweite Diatonik’: the Legacy of Late Sixteenth- and Early Seventeenth-Century Harmonic Practices in the Later Motets of Brahms”
Angus Howie (Durham University), “Programming Symphonic Politics: Brahms, Bruckner, and Mahler in the Repertoires of the Vienna Philharmonic and Vienna Symphonic Orchestras, 1911–1945”
Reuben Phillips (University of Oxford), “The Afterlives of Brahms’s Library: From the Viennese Courts to UNESCO’s ‘Memory of the World’”

Papers presented at *The Violin Sonatas of Johannes Brahms: A Concert and Symposium*, Indiana University, Bloomington, 10 September 2022:
Joel Lester, “Thoughts about Brahms’s Violin Sonatas and a Lot More . . .” (keynote lecture)
Ryan McClelland, “Metric Dissonance and Flow in Brahms’s Violin Sonatas”
Heather Platt, “Brahms’s Op. 78 and the Op. 59 *Regenlieder*: A Fantasy in Context”
Frank Samarotto, “The Sonic Landscapes of Brahms’s Op. 108, i”

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory, Denver, 9–12 November 2023:
Loretta Terrigno, “Paths towards bII and Revelations of Loss in Brahms’s Songs”

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Editors' Notes

We welcome Laurie McManus to our editorial team! Dr. McManus is associate professor and area coordinator of music literature at Shenandoah Conservatory in Winchester, VA. Her book, *Brahms in the Priesthood of Art*, on gender and art-religion, was published by Oxford University Press in 2021, with a forthcoming Russian translation from Academic Studies Press (2025). Her current project investigates trauma and music in the contemporary horror film. She has presented at national and international conferences, and has published in *Nineteenth-Century Music*, *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*, *Jazz Perspectives*, *Studi Musicali*, and this *Newsletter*. Her research has been supported by a fellowship from the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, the George and Virginia Bozarth Travel Grant from the AMS, and the Karl Geiringer Scholarship in Brahms Studies from the American Brahms Society.

The Editors thank the contributors to this issue. Joanna Chang is a Visiting Professor of Music at The College of New Jersey. She received her PhD in musicology from Duke University. Her dissertation, "Probing the Brahmsnebel: 1875–

1910," investigates underrepresented composers under the influence of Brahms. Her more recent research interests have extended to East Asian popular genres, as well as the representation of symphonic works on the soundtracks of Hollywood and East Asian film. Dr. Chang's work has appeared in *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* (2022), and she has presented at national and international conferences. She is a solo and collaborative pianist and holds a DMA in piano performance.

William Horne is an Emeritus Professor at Loyola University New Orleans. His writings about Brahms have appeared in a number of journals and essay collections, including most recently *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* and *The Creative Worlds of Joseph Joachim* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2021). He is currently working on a study of Brahms's *Gesänge für Frauenchor mit Begleitung von zwei Hörner und Harfe*, Op. 17. Horne is also a composer whose music may be heard on the Centaur and Blue Griffin labels. His *Chamber Music of William Horne, Volume Three*, featuring music for winds and piano, will be released by Blue Griffin Recording in March (BGR 669, 2024).

Ideas, correspondence, and submissions for the Newsletter are always welcome. Please send materials for the Spring 2024 issue to the editors by 1 March.