

# DT501: History of Music

## Classical/Romantic

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Brahms

We find many too close imitations, but very, very seldom, with few exceptions, any true maintenance or mastery of this sublime form in which, bound in a spiritual union, continually changing ideas succeed one another. The great number of recent symphonies drop into the overture style, especially in their first movements; the slow movements are there because slow movements are required; the scherzos have nothing of the scherzo about them save the name; the last movements completely forgot what the former ones contained.

Schumann: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1839)

There is no place for small decorations, suited to domestic paintings, nor for tiny, delicate figures, which in miniature paintings are exceedingly pleasing. Everything must be cast more grandly, as if it were making its effect from the stage down toward listeners who are always eager for a show and do not value, or even notice, that which lacks far-reaching impact.

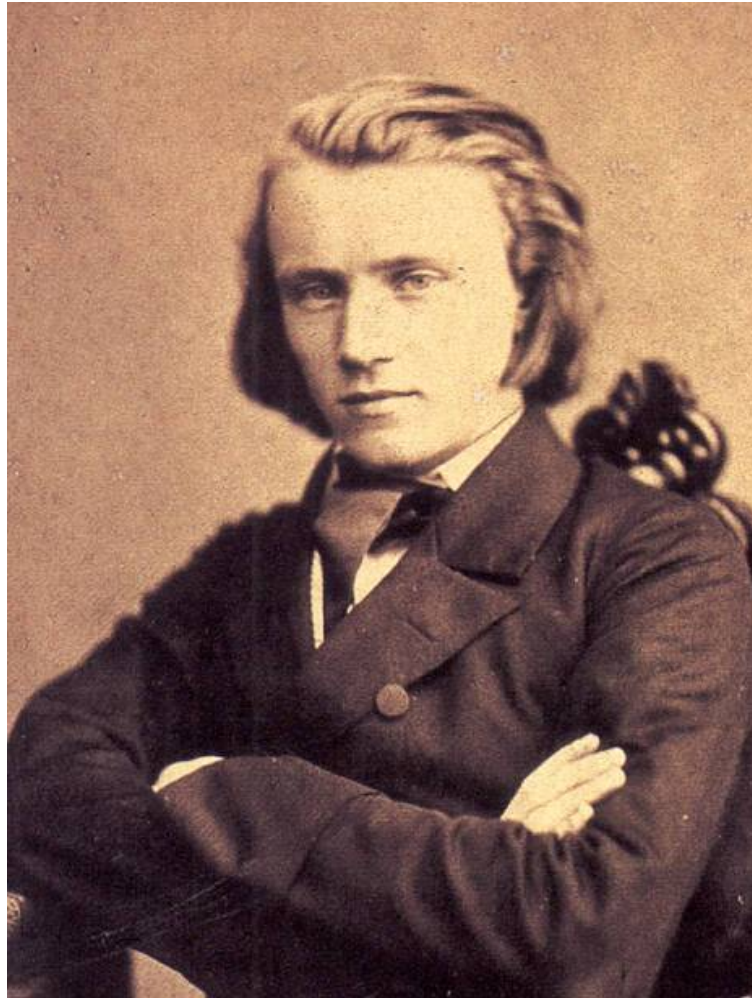
It is a tale, developed with psychological coherence and told in tones. It is a dramatically developed story that captures a particular state of mind shared by a large group. Stimulated by some main impulse, it expresses their common essential feeling individually – in all respects like a representative democracy – through an instrument absorbed into the whole

Gottfried Wilhelm Fink: 'Symphonie', encyclopaedia entry 1839

# War of the Romantics

- The late 1840s and 50s were a period of intense debate over fate of sonata form. There appeared to be two chief alternatives:
  - 1) either to perpetuate the forms handed down by the Viennese Classics;
  - 2) or to modify and develop them.
- Broadly speaking, Mendelssohn and Brahms chose the former; Liszt chose the latter. Liszt's work shows three distinct departures:
  - 1) following the example of Schubert he evolved a single-movement cyclic sonata structure which rolled the separate movements of a sonata into one large form.
  - 2) evolved the technique of thematic transformation.
  - 3) believed that the language of music could be enriched by other arts such as painting and poetry.
- Receives support from Karl Franz Brendel, the editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Liszt founds the Neu-Weimar-Verein, a progressive group of musicians later known as the New German School.

# Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)



It has seemed to me that there would and must suddenly appear some day one man who would be singled out to make articulate in an ideal way the highest expression of our time, one man who would bring us mastery, not as the result of gradual development, but as Minerva, springing fully armed from the head of Cronus. And he is come, a young creature over whose cradle glances and heroes stood guard. His name is Johannes Brahms, and he comes from Hamburg where he has been working in silent obscurity, trained in the most difficult theses of his art by an excellent teacher who sends me enthusiastic reports of him, recommended to me by a well-known and respected master.

Schumann 'Neue Bahnen' (New Paths) in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1953)

## Beethoven: Symphony No. 2, trio of scherzo



## Haydn: London Symphony, finale



## Brahms: Serenade in D major, fifth movement, scherzo

Allegro

Hn. in D

*f*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

# Brahms: Symphony No. 1

## Introduction

38

*ff*

c

d

*ff*

d

This musical score segment covers measures 38 to 41 of the Introduction. It is written for piano in E-flat major and 4/4 time. Measure 38 begins with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and features a complex chordal texture in the right hand, while the left hand has a simple bass line. A bracket labeled 'c' spans measures 39 and 40, indicating a continuation of the right-hand texture. Measure 41 starts with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand, with the left hand continuing its bass line. A bracket labeled 'd' spans measures 40 and 41, indicating a continuation of the right-hand texture.

## Main theme: statement

42

*f*

a

b

c

d

This musical score segment covers measures 42 to 45 of the Main theme statement. It is written for piano in E-flat major and 4/4 time. Measure 42 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand, with the left hand continuing its bass line. A bracket labeled 'a' spans measures 42 and 43, indicating a continuation of the right-hand texture. Measure 44 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic and features a descending eighth-note scale in the right hand, with the left hand continuing its bass line. A bracket labeled 'b' spans measures 44 and 45, indicating a continuation of the right-hand texture. A bracket labeled 'c' spans measures 43 and 44, indicating a continuation of the left-hand texture. A bracket labeled 'd' spans measures 44 and 45, indicating a continuation of the left-hand texture.



# Brahms: Motivic Development

Slow introduction



Transition: bars 121–127



Closing Section: bars 161–165



# Brahms: Symphony No. 1, finale, main theme



# Prescribed Listening

Brahms: Symphony No. 1 in C minor (first movement)

# Prescribed Reading

Chapter 29 in the Norton History of Western Music, pp. 717—730.

Taruskin: *Music in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 675—743.

For a discussion of Brahms path to composing his first symphony see, Walter Frisch: *Brahms – the four symphonies* (Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 1—65. See also

The various chapters in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* have more detailed information on various aspects of his music.