

Behind the Notes
Brahms Performed by
Colleagues & Pupils



ARBITER

Behind the Notes:

Brahms performed by Colleagues & Pupils

- Piano Conerto no. 1 in D minor, op. 15: 48'35"
1. Maestoso 23'34"
 2. Adagio 13'30"
 3. Rondo. Allegro non troppo 11'41"
Alfred Hoehn, piano
Max Fiedler • Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra
 4. Capriccio in F# minor, op. 76, no. 1 3'02"
 5. Intermezzo in A flat, op. 76, no.3 1'59"
Etelka Freund, piano
 6. Intermezzo in A flat, op. 76, no.3 1'44"
 7. Scherzo in E flat minor, op. 4 9'19"
Carl Friedberg, piano
 8. Ballade in B minor, op. 10, no.3 3'53"
 9. Intermezzo in B flat, op. 76, no.4 1'55"
 10. Intermezzo in B minor, op. 119, no.2 3'31"
 11. Intermezzo in C, op. 119, no.3 1'17"
Ilona Eibenschutz, piano
 12. Hungarian Dance no. 1 in G minor 3'10"
Joseph Joachim, violin; unidentified pianist
first publication for all except Joachim's recording
total time: 79'35" recorded: 1-3: 26 October 1936;
4-5: 5 August 1951; 6: c. 1949; 7: 25 July 1951;
8-11: c. 1952; 12: 17 August 1903.

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Now and then we run into Brahms, stopping him on the street of time, seemingly content in the company of Alice Barbi, a singer he adored and who adored him. It's not as if he had been gone for long, his works are ever-present, but like a mood captured in this paparazzo snapshot, an overlooked reality surfaces in lost sounds to carry us into a forgotten style. They impress with a novel approach quite remote from our familiar impressions of his music being offered to coddle, to remain an immutable European monument or a lullaby safety blanket, cherished and protected from harm, spared from any tendency to exaggerate. These recaptured sonic links fly in the face of current conventions, opening access to an illumination of elements often undetected in his scores.

There is an emphatic singing out of themes throughout, strophic accentuation, sonic poetry articulating tones in place of words. A young Brahms kept notebooks to copy out poems that mattered, his intimate brevity. Projecting Brahms' sound in a vocal manner is evident amongst the artists represented here as a priority in bringing his language to life. A unique and substantial case is a previously unknown performance of Brahms's *First Piano Concerto*, one that survived as a Second World War trophy. The Red Army vigorously sacked Berlin radio when the city's fall to the Soviet Union in 1945: an archivist described how "they took everything, even the furniture back to Russia." Nearly all remained in Moscow and over the years, local Melodya LPs a few unexpectedly divulged examples of these unknown performances. Many were returned to their origins during an agreement made between Gorbachov and the German government around 1988. Knowing Russian habits, one assumes that more discs are still in Moscow and elsewhere.

As large scale works occupy several discs, a few sets were often incomplete: the *First Piano Concerto* survived intact. Identification of its performers, verified by a Nazi announcer, set off culture alarms. Here was the first live recording cited of

the pianist Alfred Hoehn, no longer remembered, for he died at a modest age and only recorded four short works (Chopin's *Barcarolle*, two *Etudes*, Scarlatti-Tausig *Pastorale*) yet when mentioned, Hoehn is referred to as a poet. A wondrous performance has come to light, startling at once in Fiedler and Hoehn's approaching the piano's entrance. It casts aside any familiarity with its anticipated arrival as Fiedler moves along stealthily into the piano's initial tones that intimate the act of a secret becoming exposed, into an exploration of its inner life in a probing narrative.

Max Fiedler, a conductor who recorded several works of Brahms and knew the composer well, a link to one who approved of his artistry. His symphonic recordings are highly expressive, insightful, and bear playful tempo changes not specified in the music. Fiedler was influenced by his father Karl August a conductor and pianist based in Zittau, Saxony, where August Max was born on New Year's Eve in 1859. The boy was already giving concerts by age ten and gaining recognition as a pianist, soon to study organ and theory before heading to the Leipzig Conservatory from 1877-80, where he also began composing. In 1882 Fiedler joined the faculty of the Hamburg Conservatory and met Brahms and Grieg.

Fiedler's debut as a conductor occurred in the late 1890s. From the beginning he was drawn to new works, such as Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* in 1899, a piece barely five years old, coupled with Brahms' *Haydn Variations*. One Hamburg evening offered Elgar's *Cockaigne Overture*, Sibelius' *Second Symphony* and works by Émile Jacques-Dalcroze and Glazunov. Fiedler developed contacts with British luminaries like Elgar, Delius, Ralph Vaughan-Williams, and the conductor Adrian Boult. He championed Elgar's music, introducing the *Orchestral Variations, Op. 36* to Hamburg.

Soon after Fiedler took over the Hamburg Symphony he was invited to give concerts with the New York Philharmonic in 1905 which led to an extended engagement. An early impression of him by a New York critic observes how Fiedler had "none of the attributes of the 'virtuoso conductor' in the less desirable sense. But his per-

formance with the orchestra yesterday showed him to be a highly accomplished director, of remarkable skill, routine, overflowing vitality, and imperious authority. He is evidently something of a martinet, and the qualities of a martinet are what the Philharmonic Society needs at all times, in addition to all the others that go to make a conductor who can interpret great music in a way to hold the attention of such an audience as the Philharmonic's."

A 1906 evening dispels him as a mere Brahmsian due to his ephemera: Debussy's *Nuages et Fêtes* is given with Beethoven's *Second Symphony*, *Third Piano Concerto*, and Liszt's *Totentanz*. A critic found Debussy's music "too modern and bizarre in many parts, for instance in the continuous fifths, which other composers try to avoid." *Totentanz* was "a very unmusical piece and only composed to show the smartness of the player." (The avant-garde pianism of the soloist Ferruccio Busoni seemed too novel for some listeners.)

"Mr. Fiedler obtained, first of all, a performance of excellent ensemble, precision, and brilliancy such as few of the men who have preceded him with greater reputations have surpassed. He is not a poet, either in appearance or in manner, nor does he see visions of the unattainable things. He is not a revolutionary and is not bent on finding what none have found before him in the music he plays. Still less is he concerned with the exploitation of himself. Mr. Fiedler's demonstrations are all for the benefit of the orchestra, and not at all for the audience. They are unmistakable and decisive, and they have their results."

In 1907 a London critic accustomed to Brahms interpretations as being problematic noted with relief how the *First Symphony* as being "fresh and vigorous. He presented the music with unusual life and sympathy: in the first movement and again in the Finale there was no dragging, no false sentiment, faults which well-meaning but ordinary conductors cause some of the composer's best music to sound dull."

When he left New York for Boston. Fiedler was succeeded by Mahler. Karl Muck, a

classmate of Fiedler's, led the Bostonians until 1908. His appearance was first physically described: "a dark grey suit, a negligé shirt, a bright lavender tie, a gray soft felt hat" carrying a huge fur overcoat and canes. His wife, often described as American, was English. He mentioned his ties there through Hermann, a younger brother, professor of German at Oxford. Hermann would later deviously dip into politics using his brother's contacts and insiders in academia.

Through Fiedler, Rachmaninoff was introduced to Boston with the E minor symphony, and with the composer as soloist in the *Second Piano Concerto*. Fiedler offered Boston various premieres of Delius, Sibelius, works by colleague and friend Richard Strauss, a first American performance of Bruckner's *Eighth Symphony* and new works by Reger, all conducted from memory.

Fiedler left Boston in 1912 for the Berlin Philharmonic. His own compositions were presented with Rachmaninoff's *Second Symphony*, Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*, *Tod und Verklärung*, Brahms's *Third Symphony* and *Violin Concerto* with the teenage Mischa Elman, closing with Beethoven's *Ninth*. In 1919 he gave Trapp's *Prolog from a Lyrical Drama*, the Brahms *Violin Concerto* with Adolf Busch, and Schumann's *Piano Concerto* with Artur Schnabel. He was appointed permanent conductor in Essen, active there, Berlin, and Stockholm until his death in 1939.

In the Germany of 1935, Fiedler defied a ban on Jewish composers and artists by including Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* with by Georg Kulenkampff at a Berlin concert. Was it a political statement on Fiedler's part? Readers of the Philharmonic's reviews were probably surprised to note an atypically short program offered by their orchestra, with no mention of any soloist or the work, the last sounds of Mendelssohn heard by a Nazi Germany public and to our knowledge, Fiedler was not chastised. At this time, his brother Hermann was busy developing contacts following an earlier excursion he had organized for two brothers, entrusted by their parents Mary and George, to be chauffeured with their Oxford tutor Professor

Fiedler around Germany in a snazzy convertible. They boys delighted in meeting Count Zeppelin, seeing his factories, munitions, growing into sympathetic admirers. When one of the boys was later crowned as King Edward, the influence of this trip led to a strong sympathy for Hitler and his accomplishments, with credit to Fiedler's exposing him to an insider's Germany.

In 1937, Hermann Fiedler nominated the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams for the *Shakespeare Prize*, a new multi-national honor administered by German academics, funded by an arms manufacturer. Hans Grimm, one of Hitler's chief propagandists, guided Fiedler and Oxford's *Taylorian Institution* to lure prominent scholars and artists to Germany through privileges and honors. Fiedler was the contact who broke down the composer's initial reserve in accepting their prize, insisting it was academic, purely cultural, in no way political. He was honored and dined, pleased with the pampering, reflecting only upon returning home of having been duped into helping culturally white-wash Nazi Germany. Hermann served as the "Prince's German", drawing a naive youth linguistically and politically into his orb, his role at Oxford cloaked with distinction yet serving as a cover for his extra-curricular operations. One wonders how Max viewed the regime, as he was able to live part time in neutral Sweden with access to uncensored news.

Max Fiedler and Alfred Hoehn performed together several times in works by Beethoven and Brahms. Both knew Fritz Steinbach, Brahms's close associate in Frankfurt, where he regularly visited Clara Schumann and performed as pianist and conductor, leaving a local legacy. Her successor Lazzaro Uzielli was Hoehn's teacher in Frankfurt, having been a Florentine pupil of Buonamici who had studied with Bülow. Another prominent Uzielli pupil was pianist and composer Cyril Scott, who met Hoehn and dedicated to him his *Piano Sonata no. 1, Op. 66* from 1909. A roster of Uzielli's students finds conductors such as Fritz Busch, Knappertsbusch, and William Steinberg, continuing with Hoehn, who taught Hans Rosbaud.



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Alfred Hoehn came from Oberellen, near Eisenach, Bach's birthplace, (20 October 1887.) Music-making began at home, at first learning from his father. After Uzielli he went to Busoni and d'Albert. Piano competitions were relatively new when Hoehn arrived in Petersburg in 1910. Hoehn took first prize in the *Anton Rubinstein Competition*, with Beethoven's *Hammerklavier Sonata Op. 106*. Artur Rubinstein, a rival candidate. Still smarted over losing, he later in life gloated in an autobiography over his soaring career compared to Hoehn's modest presence. Judging them on a musical level, Hoehn was the deeper artist, capable of extreme delicacy and refinement, playing boldly at white heat, without limits.

An early Hoehn description comes from Walter Niemann, a Leipzig composer-critic who left a cosmology of pianists, his *Meister des Klaviers*, (Berlin 1919, 1921: 14 editions.) In Niemann's family, his father had been a pupil Beethoven's contemporary Moscheles. Hoehn appears in a section covering the Rhein tradition:

“The young Thuringian pianist, Alfred Hoehn, on the other hand, who has long ago made Frankfurt his home following his studies with Uzielli, is today considered a piano virtuoso of noteworthy and prominent standing. He is a romantic and a poet, gifted with a most subtle sense of rhythm, sensuous beauty and the flowing life of the tonal language. Everything about him sparkles with life and everything comes to life in impulsive and imaginative reworking. His piano sound is of exquisite delicacy and shading. He is tremendously talented, capable of the subtlest nuances. There is only one deficiency in his inherently magnificent and highly developed technique: the power, accomplishment and independence of the fingers of the right hand fall substantially short of the abilities of the left hand. Unfortunately his spiritual and intellectual development has been unable to keep pace with all this. The demon of virtuosity has this splendid young artist increasingly in its clutches and his massive paws can be sensed early on in the thunderous chords and octaves of the left hand. He likes to force the pace, sets garish accents and plays without noticeable

inner warmth. In his fervor he distorts the melodic line in favor of volume, plays unevenly, and has a tendency towards pomposity, flirtatiousness, and mushiness which blurs the contours in all the more melodious passages, threatening to dissolve the cantilena into poorly defined shades of chiaroscuro. Thus he is not always able to achieve balance between his robust but spiritually shallow aptitude and his tonal forcefulness. Hoehn's magnificent pianistic talent stands on the brink of becoming in danger by deteriorating to brilliant but superficial piano virtuosity."

Niemann may have brought up a valid point, as the otherwise perfectly proportioned recording by Hoehn of Chopin's *Barcarolle* (1929) has a rushed section that seems to have overtaken the pianist and he let it pass. Yet there is a sense that Niemann did not accept excessiveness unless it was in the art of Ignaz Friedman, his musical idol.

One visit to Warsaw coincided with an appearance of his former competitor, inviting comparison by Stanisław Niewiadomski, a veteran composer-critic:

"Two old rivals from the *Anton Rubinstein Competition*, Alfred Hoehn and Artur Rubinstein, both appeared this month on the stage of the *Warsaw Conservatory of Music* after many years. The winner of the 1st Prize – Hoehn, a very solid pianist, didn't make a huge impression this time.

"Hoehn, a pianist of a great skills but also of a great amplitude of emotions, seemed to us this time not level-headed enough: one can be more precise and say that he was even less balanced than ever before. The eruptions of sheer strength and outbursts of temperament, a somewhat aimless tenderness and affection, manifested in barely audible pianissimos, crossed paths so often that it created an effect of something bordering on the whimsical if not downright hysterical.

"These negative elements let themselves be felt most in Schumann's *Carnival, op. 9*: the spirit of the Davidsbündler was all but gone, and the Philistines with their Goliath dominated the proceedings."

[In a compendium of pre-War music criticism, its editor Roman Jasinski ironically remarks:] *This time, Artur Rubinstein, who lost to Hoehn in St. Petersburg in 1910, took revenge*: "A different world is being created by Rubinstein's fingers, in front of his audience who is expecting from him some pianistic miracles. This crowd holds a sacred belief that there is no reason to question or argue the validity of either any arpeggio, or a flourish "thrown from the stage" by this temperamental artist. After the crowd has heard a barrage of Spanish explosions by de Falla, it became boundlessly enthusiastic, thus creating a feeling of an undeniable triumph of the performer." (Stanisław Niewiadomski, *Dziennik Polski*, 9 March 1929.)

Four years later, Germany's musical life was transformed by the Nazis. With a ban on Jewish and anti-Fascist musicians, concert series were cancelled, performers banished from stages, orchestras, radio broadcasts, and print. A sudden influx of space needing to be filled in music journals caused writers and editors to seek national figures. The mixture of admiration and uncertainty in describing Hoehn now assumes a seamy context in an article on Hoehn, one of the few retrieved, in *Die Musik*, a once comprehensive journal covering the world's classical music activities. The journal's international outlook shrunk in 1933, digging in its heels to probe locally. Hoehn receives an assessment by an individual delegated to conform his observations along the lines of Fascism's cultural dictates, with obligatory references to the German Soul, spiritual purity, in an aggrandized jargon common to Hitler and Stalin, a damaged culture dissipating into propaganda:

Alfred Hoehn

Thinking back on the long succession of those who contributed to the fame and notoriety of the piano, one is tempted to exclaim: "The piano is dead! Long live the piano!" All those arid, soulless virtuosos, and those other masters who strayed into composing or conducting on the side: where are those who stayed true to the piano, because that was all they knew, and all they needed to know; because in their immer-

sion in it, and in their grappling with its endless possibilities, they had experienced the miracle of the piano, and thus were immunized to all heresies and perversions?

Long mired in the crisis besetting the entire “piano industry,” in the twin crises of piano-teaching and piano-learning, in the seemingly interminable crisis of piano-playing as an “accomplishment” for young ladies, (that remote vestige of a bygone age of drawing room music), and in the crisis of all those who sought – and thought they had – in the piano a more or less useful substitute for an orchestra, it has taken until our own time for a type of pianist to emerge who found in the piano’s basic sound a span of possibilities wide enough to fill a lifetime, who, dedicating himself to the great titans of German music Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, and Brahms – to name only their most prominent representatives – sees in the faithful performing of their works an ample purpose for his life.

Among their number one must name Alfred Hoehn. Simple and modest, without the overweening desire to want to be considered also as a conductor, as a composer – a rival to the greats – or as a musical impresario – how many musicians there are who confuse the business of music with the culture of music! – he takes his quiet way through life. With the obsessiveness of the true artist he sets to work on his most immediate and urgent task, to cast a spell over his listeners while he conveys to them the most difficult and sublime works of the literature. His gifts as a pianist are only one means to an end, his interpretative faculties another: for behind the work there must emerge the striving personality of the creator with its illimitable desire to enter into debate with Heaven and Earth, with Appearance and Reality, with Time and Eternity. Thus Beethoven appeared to his contemporaries, and thus he spoke in his works, which express and announce the glory and the arrival of the piano. It is with this spirit that Hoehn is deeply imbued, from here he expresses to us the work of Beethoven. It is not only the rigid notes that are awoken from their slumber on the page, and are made to sing and sound; nor just the chosen form, be it the

concerto, the sonata, or one of the delicious bagatelles, variations, and fantasies; it is the resumption of the fight with the inner daemon, which a man mocked and disregarded by his time, isolated and excluded and finally magnified by physical infirmity had to fight and suffer till the force and might of the notes won through.

It is Beethoven who is the measure of all great pianists, and so it is Beethoven who is the wellspring of Hoehn’s artistry, the composer to whom time and again he returns, as to the pinnacle of all pianistic strivings: and so the artist Hoehn necessarily set out to master all Beethoven’s compositions for piano. The thirty-year old undertakes to perform, arrange, and structure all the sonatas in cycles of concert programs. The bold undertaking is not only crowned by success, as witness triumphant recitals in cities like Berlin, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Copenhagen, Munich, and Vienna (and many more besides), but also by that incessant working on himself, that finally is its own reward. The technical, expressive, spiritual, and mental mastery of all of Beethoven’s sonatas marks a turning point in the artistic career of Alfred Hoehn.

What went before was admittedly no smooth, gradual ascent to a summit either: as a 23 year old he took the first prize in the Rubinstein competition in 1910 in Petersburg with a bold display of remarkable elan and singular self-confidence. In an international field of thirty-six competitors, it is the young German who prevails, having chosen as his demonstration piece with unshakeable confidence Beethoven’s *Hammerklavier* sonata. Naturally, some of his rivals, from other nationalities, also happened to have chosen Beethoven, but it was German mastery and German spirituality that won the day, with composer and interpreter together in national harness. The son of a schoolmaster and organist, who first saw the light of the world on 20 October 1887 in Oberellen near Eisenach (and thus on hallowed German musical soil), this son of the people, whose natural talent emerged early and precluded any other career than this, forced his way to the top, the victor and proclaimer of German character and German musical culture.

Beethoven is the font of all the music of the 19th century. Thus Hoehn soon gains access to the German Romantic composers, to Schubert and Schumann. Already as a young man, having recently passed through the hands of Uzielli (in Frankfurt) and Steinbach (Cologne), he has a firm favorite beside Beethoven: Robert Schumann. This was well understood by Ferdinand Pfohl, when he wrote (in 1910):

“Inspired technique, with everything that means – warmth of touch; finesse of expression; the release of poetic sensibility, pleasure of rhythm and refined mastery of sonority, the way an exquisite piano rises like an exquisite scent from the chalice of a flower, and an extraordinary, deep life blossoms forth – all this was to our astonishment displayed in the art of the young pianist Alfred Hoehn... Nourished by richly developed feeling in a sensitive soul, his playing swells with that persuasive force in which the fruitful and creative elements of the artistic personality effectively combine. Listen to the young man play Schumann, his F-sharp minor Sonata, or the symphonic etudes! The sonata gets all the charm of a romance, carried by a delicate, lightsome, shimmering tone in the subtlest colors of touch; he displays an intimate and magically inward way of singing the melody, shaping the motifs, moving them into a softly dimmed illumination. Occasionally, Hoehn will stay in a breathtaking pianissimo, a spectral, floating *sotto voce*, of the kind one rarely experiences in a concert hall.”

To his beloved Schumann, Hoehn has remained true to this day, untouched by modish and other misunderstandings of his noble master. Even in the very smallest – and often too the most delicate – of Schumann’s piano pieces, he is able to trace the least tonalities, to feel and dream his way through the enthusiasms, the teasings and chatterings, to erupt in exuberance, and powerfully to stamp out the march of the DAVIDSBÜNDLER against the Philistines. Never does miniaturism succeed in blurring the overall outline – it doesn’t in Schumann either – almost involuntarily, the two are blended together. The full array of sounds that burst forth in Schumann

and Schubert in all the colors of the rainbow, from the inwardness and depth of the German soul to the mighty stamp of the national character, whose true nature remains so strangely elusive to other peoples, is available to Hoehn from first to last. With what sureness and conviction he emerges from this grounding to encounter other phenomena. Schumann ties together three great epochs of music.

It is only a short step from Schumann to Chopin, at any rate for a German artist, raised on the variety of German being, and setting foot in a still splendid, but altogether more rudimentary world. Chopin’s world fits easily into Schumann’s: and so it is that Alfred Hoehn was and still is acclaimed in Poland as a performer of Chopin, and is everywhere called upon to play Chopin; that – abroad especially – in addition to Beethoven he is called upon to demonstrate “his” Chopin, and also some of the older and newer French, themselves deeply in Chopin’s debt.

Needless to say, Alfred Hoehn has never been untrue to himself for any external reason or desire: the line that goes from Schumann via Brahms to the present day, is illumined by the efforts of this indefatigable maestro; one must have heard his versions of the two piano concertos of Brahms and the concerto of Reger, to assess all three works in their purest form. All personal expression fuses with the work, and with the other instruments, to a union that affords the listener some of those rare musical moments that are only available in utter self-abnegation to the work; the modesty of the artist is evident in its very noblest form.

His public life also shows a Schumannesque plainness of daily personal and artistic life. The young musician, made Court Pianist as early as 1910 by his protector, Duke Georg II of Meiningen, was entrusted with the running of a master class in Strasburg in 1913, and, in addition is the director of a class at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt am Main. He declined an invitation from the Academy in Vienna in 1928. His numerous concert engagements at home and abroad have nothing in common with busy-ness or make-work, they remain the expression of

a spontaneous musical creativity and musical living that will have nothing to do with art-killing musical Americanism. With such an attitude, it stands to reason that it took the year 1934 to bring about his promotion to Professor, and a further invitation to the Hochschule für Musik in Weimar to take on another master class. Wherever life takes him, his strong character and firmly etched creative personality that has so much in common with Schumann's – even in external appearance – will remain decisive. His importance for the life of German music, in particular his representation of German artistry abroad, has long since been recognized and honored.

–Robert Pessenlehner, *Die Musik, IV 1935, Frankfurt am Main;*
tr. Michael Hofmann

Hoehn played in festivals and recitals until 1940, when, according to his pupil Gisela Sott, he suffered a major stroke on stage during the second movement of Brahms *Second Concerto* with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, becoming paralyzed. Sott recalled an earlier occasion:

“Hoehn was a first-class artist, he had it all, and knew it by heart. He came in 1933 with the Brahms *D minor Concerto* under Furtwängler in Hanover. We were then used to the way of Edwin Fischer, and by Elly Ney in concert, who had no technique at all. And Hoehn then came up with this reserved art that was naturally a shock. He could indeed do everything without practicing but he practiced like mad. He even practiced after the concert, into the night.”

The teaching of **Carl Friedberg** (1871-1955) survived into recent times through prominent pupils such as Bruce Hungerford, Malcolm Frager, and William Masselos. He reluctantly recorded when Lee Erwin, a pupil who became a noted theater organist, persuaded him to play in an ambient space which pleased him, breaking his ban in his early eighties. We encounter an imposing, subtly individual art in all remaining examples of his playing, especially in these two works of Brahms caught from radio broadcasts.



Friedberg reminisced about Brahms to Bruce Hungerford, who recorded several lessons and conversations from 1949-52. When Hungerford asked if Hanslick had been Brahms's friend, Friedberg replied:

“Ja. Brahms, one must say, associated only with great people, like Hugo Wolf. He had an instinct. He himself was not very . . . he had no school education. But he had an instinct for the right people with whom he should associate.

“I heard Brahms play eight times: all his concerti and I heard him play when he played all his piano compositions for me except the *Paganini Variations*. He said he had too gouty fingers, he couldn't do it. And then I turned pages for him, first when he played with Clara Schumann the *Schumann Variations* [when Friedberg was sixteen, in 1887]. And his own *Haydn Variations*.

“And I turned pages for him when he played the *G Minor Quartet* and was half drunk. Never were the two hands together, always apart. His tempi were very good, and I also turned the pages when he had the manuscript of Op. 99, 100, and 101. He played it in Clara Schumann's house and I had the good luck that she invited me.

“After the *C Minor Trio* was finished, Clara Schumann came in and a girl came in with a tray, with beer or cognac, something to drink before dinner. And Brahms turned, I was sitting still on his left side, he turned around and said to me 'Do you like that music?' I said 'If it is not too immodest, I might say I love it.' 'Do you understand it?' he said. 'I don't know. I only know that I love it.' 'Which do you like best,' he said 'of those three works?' I said 'They can't be compared with each other. They are so different. I like especially, if I may say so, the conciseness and the penetrating shortness of form in the C minor Trio.' And he was very pleased. He was very proud of that. 'You think. . . you have studied form? Can you compose?' I said 'Yes. A little bit.' He said, 'Now, the first movement I have formed according to the form of the *C Minor Symphony*. That is why it is so good in form.'”

A crucial turn of events followed Friedberg's Vienna debut in 1892, under Mahler's

baton with Bach's *D minor concerto* and Franck's *Variations symphoniques*. In 1893 during a Brahms festival he gave a solo recital.

“I saw him when I first came to Vienna. He came to my recital. I played the *F-sharp minor Sonata*, the two books of the *Paganini Variations*, four from opus 76, four of Opus 118, the two *Rhapsodies*, and some of the *Waltzes*. That was long enough. But not the *Handel Variations*. I never played them. He took me to the *Tonkünstlerverein* because they celebrated that night the birthday of Ignaz Brüll. Kalbeck wrote about him. And we sat there and celebrated him with drink and food. And then he took me to the Imperial Coffeehouse. He never wanted to go to bed early and he didn't say one word about my recital until about three o'clock in the morning. Instead, he stoked his beard and said. 'You know you played very wonderfully, young man, but you mustn't do that again. You mustn't play a whole evening of Brahms. People don't like that. They don't want me. I'm not yet popular enough. Play other things and play one work by me. You do me better service.' The humility of such a man. He said he was not popular enough. And I had a great applause. I said, 'The applause, Herr Brahms, was due to you, not to me.'

“A wonderful man. But he was not too interested in other things. No, he was too busy with his compositions. Whether he was politically interested, I never knew. But he had something else, a weakness many people didn't know. He was colorblind, and therefore that has to my mind a certain reflection on his orchestration. But he played with such gusto and freedom. He must have been a wonderful pianist in his younger years. [I heard] Brahms play the two concerti, with Nikisch in the Gewandhaus conducting. Then another occasion d'Albert played [both concertos] and Brahms conducted. After the concert we had the party and Brahms remarked to me and to my former teacher James Kwast that there is only one who can really play my concertos, that's Eugen d'Albert. That little d'Albert, he can play those [with] power.

“He conducted very well, a little but heavy. He had not really technique. I heard him

conduct the *Fourth Symphony*. Very good.”

One consequence of Friedberg's Vienna debut was Brahms installing himself as Friedberg's advisor: “Come home with me and I will show you what I mean concerning certain phrasings, tempi, and personal interpretations of my work.” Many visits to Brahms' home followed, with the composer sitting at the piano to illustrate:

“He paused only now and then to pick up a pencil to jot down new and more definitive marks of expression than the published editions indicated. He took pains to explain certain intricacies, to interpret different readings.” In an article published while Friedberg was alive, we learn that Brahms' scores “are the pianist's proudest possession today. Music publishers have sought in vain to get Friedberg to yield them for public release, but this he will not do, he says, until the public appreciation of Brahms is wider.”

Friedberg bequeathed his archive to Columbia University. The late pianist and critic Samuel Lipman checked for these scores in their shelves over a decade ago, and this writer returned to their library during a time in which the building's entrance was adorned with posters of well-preserved memorabilia pertaining to an exhibit on Patrice Lumumba, first statesman of the newly independent Congo Republic, murdered after one year in office. Their music shelves and catalog entries offered no trace of Friedberg's annotated Brahms scores on inspection, as Lipman accurately surmised that his scores had ended up lost, stolen, or simply misfiled with circulating music. Unlike Lumumba's graphics, they remained for very little time in their keep. Brahms's *Scherzo Op. 4* came from a private disc loaned to this writer by Jane Carlson, Friedberg's late pupil and a faculty member at Juilliard, where both taught; Carlson had assisted him at summer courses for five years. She recalled how would throw a fit if upbeats were accented, how he always emphasized legato playing, thinking and hearing orchestrally, stressing that one's attention be given to the line, and “breathing, to free you up.” Carlson's fondest memory of Friedberg was his Schumann's

Kinderszenen: “they sounded as though he had improvised them at the moment.”

One is immediately struck by Friedberg's rhythmic approach to the *Intermezzo, Op. 76 no. 3*, syncopated, activating a momentum that the sober score barely implies. Often it is reduced to an evenly paced lullaby, such as Myra Hess's recording, one taking a full minute more than Friedberg and **Etelka Freund** (1879-1977). Both Friedberg and Freund's hands demonstrate a shared rhythmic swing. Freund's accents give it a Hungarian touch, making it sound like proto-Bartók. One doesn't necessarily associate Bartók with Brahms, as they never met. With his wife, Bartók played the two piano version of his *Piano Quintet* and a recording also exists of the *Capriccio Op. 76, no.2*. Bartók (1881-1945) visited Freund who was two years older, a fellow pupil of Istvan Thoman, who had been a student of Liszt's.

Freund's older step-brother Robert was also coached by Liszt. In 1881 during a trip to Budapest, he met with Brahms, who was visiting for an eight days. He writes:

“Brahms gave the first performance of his *Second Piano Concerto* there, conducted his second symphony and appeared also one evening with the Ruhoff-Kraucsevics Quartet. I called for him daily at 2 p.m. at the Cafe Hungaria. We went on walks, ate dinner together, and wandered up and down the Danube until near midnight. I was completely taken with the piano concerto (the second, then still unpublished), especially its last movement, and even though I didn't say much, Brahms knew exactly how I felt. For hours we walked side by side without uttering a word. At times, however, he became talkative and reminisced, mostly of his younger years.”

Etelka Freund was influenced by her brother's pianism, his recollections, and by his judgement, which Bartók sought for his composing. At sixteen Freund went to Vienna where she was immediately accepted by Leschetizky. Perhaps on Brahms' advice she chose a musical thinker like Ignaz Brüll rather than end up being a virtuosa, and took theory lessons from Eusebius Mandyczewski. Under Brahms' colleague she completed four years of study in one. During her year in Vienna she called on

Brahms each week on Wednesdays at lunchtime. When a guest once asked if Freund played, Brahms answered "to the enjoyment of everyone!" Her performances of Brahms stem from her musicality and the composer's coaching. Brahms also insisted that the exclusive *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* elect her as a regular member, their youngest ever, although she was still a student. After Vienna, Freund joined her brother in Zurich for a year of lessons. He suggested she work with Busoni and in 1898, Busoni admitted her to his masterclasses in Weimar and Berlin.

When Robert Freund returned to Budapest, Bartók often visited, bringing along new compositions and once carrying field recording on cylinders of peasants singing. We can speculate about Bartók discussing Brahms with the Friends, although it is hard to imagine him not being curious, especially as Robert had been a friend of the composer's. Bartók once carried out a role in protecting Brahms' legacy: Robert Freund was presented the manuscript of the *Second Piano Concerto* after Brahms' death. Freund died in 1936 and when Bartók left for the United States in 1941, Etelka was hoping to protect the manuscript from confiscation by the Nazis so a plan was devised: the front title page was detached and the score placed inside Bartók's manuscripts, passing through Gestapo and customs controls as his own music, and given to Freund's son Nicholas Milroy on his arrival in New York. Freund survived the war in Budapest and reached the United States in 1946, a year after Bartók's passing, carrying its title page: the manuscript is now in the Hamburg Library. Milroy spoke of his mother's Brahms. Once when she asked Robert how to play a passage, he said, "Just make it sing."

Memories of a young **Ilona Eibenschutz** (1872–1967) are found in memoirs of Moriz Rosenthal and Robert Freund who concur that Brahms was quite taken by her personality, beauty, her playing, and also her mother's reputation as one of Budapest's best cooks. Michal Hambourg (1919-2005), daughter of Mark Hambourg, once hurriedly instructed this writer to meet an ailing cellist friend who briefly appeared

at her door and placed a packet into my hands, containing copies of letters from Clara Schumann to Eibenschutz, and recordings, as she had been a close friend of Eibenschutz's daughter. In them we learn how Eibenschutz was introduced to Brahms, and of Clara's role as her mentor and teacher:

"I was really rather disappointed yesterday, to note that none of the pieces which you played were perfect, and I think you should therefore, have another fortnight's quiet study here in Frankfurt, to prepare for Cologne and Berlin. I have told you so often of my fear that because of the ease with which you learn you are tempted not to practice CONSCIENTIOUSLY ENOUGH. I COULD PROVE THIS TO YOU IN EVERY PIECE WHICH YOU PLAYED YESTERDAY [upper case in the original] and would like to go through them all once more with you. I wish I could spare you the experiences which are inescapable if you do not learn to be STRICTER WITH YOURSELF. You will surely see in my cando only motherly concern and forethought." (September 6th, [18]90)

When Eibenschutz arrived in London for her January 1891 debut, Clara wrote:

"You must now heed very carefully: BE PRECISE AND METICULOUS about everything even to the smallest detail. The public expects this of you and must never be disappointing.

"For the Bach Concert I would advise the [Beethoven] C major concerto (the same one the two young men (M & W) played last winter.) I, for my part, prefer the C minor (I have played it in Leipzig with Mendelssohn in past years quite often), but the C major is more suitable for the big hall. It must however be studied and WORKED OUT very CONSCIENTIOUSLY and carefully between you both, especially in the PHRASING, because then only is it effective. Do not take it lightly because it does not present technical difficulties for you!"

On March 1, 1891, Schumann encourages: "May Heaven give you luck for tomorrow's performances of the Bach Fugue – a Fugue is always something of a risk. Let

me know on a postcard how it went.”

By July she seems to have already met Brahms. Schumann replies to the eighteen-year old Ilona: “. . .it gives me great pleasure that B. is so kind to you. He very much likes to have fun with pretty and interesting young girls. I wish however, for your sake, that he would talk about music seriously with you. Did you play to him at all? If he should play to you ask him to play something by Bach.”

The following year came a rite of passage: Frau Schumann decided that Eibenschutz was ready for a Vienna debut and chose her program, with Beethoven's *Sonata Op. 111* and Schumann's *Etudes Symphoniques* as the main works. Brahms did not attend the concert but soon afterwards substituted for an ailing cellist who cancelled out of fear of playing before Brahms at a Friends of Music concert. Eibenschutz played a few short works, after which, Brahms approached her: “Fraulein, unfortunately I should like to hear the *111*. As she recounted in later years, “His eyes were blue as the Baltic and seemed to read you through and through.” She asked if he meant that, and when he said “Yes”, she replied “Then I’ll do my best.” Afterwards Brahms had no comment to make other than “Come out to supper with me this evening, Fraulein.” “From that moment,” Ilona said, “he was my friend.”

Brahms went for a holiday in Ischl and called on the Eibenschutz family. When Frau Eibenschutz warned Brahms that he must expect only a plain lunch, he shot back: “When I come to you I am happy to eat goulash and drink water. But when I dine with millionaires who care nothing for music and only invite me because I am successful, I am very angry if they do not serve me caviar and champagne.” Once he arrived early and asked to see Ilona alone. He had a manuscript and played for her either the *Op. 118* or *119*, an act greatly surprising his friends who never knew him to share an unpublished work. Accompanying Brahms to the station, Ilona overheard him mentioning her: “She is the pianist I best like to hear playing my works.”

Eibenschutz ended her career with a marriage in 1902, yet she continued to playing

informally, even on the radio commemorating Brahms. Her 1903 discs were all that would be published, yet the existence of private recordings show how fifty and sixty years later she played similarly. The works bear a prominent singing line, a high-strung intensity that pushes relentlessly, played like the contemporary music that it was in her time, and how her way with the *Ballade* has a Jazz-like nonchalance.

Our exploration concludes with Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), a musician older than Brahms. He was Brahms's surrogate on the violin and in chamber music, as nearly all of these works were conceived for Joachim's art. They often played as a duo, recitals, collaborating in quartets. We hear Joachim in a new restoration that sheds its age, revealing gut string timbres and a primal melody through scant vibrato, phrases intensifying an urgent expression. Compared to later performers, Joachim plays his dance as contemporary music created for him by a younger composer.

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