

RMA MONOGRAPHS

21

BRAHMS BEYOND
MASTERY: HIS SARABANDE
AND GAVOTTE, AND ITS
RECOMPOSITIONS

ROBERT PASCALL

Brahms Beyond Mastery

In 1853 Robert Schumann identified fully-formed compositional mastery in the young Brahms, who nevertheless in the years following embarked on a period of intensive further study, producing, among other works, the neo-baroque Sarabande and Gavotte. These dances have not been properly recognised as constituting a distinct Brahms work before, but manuscript evidence and their performance history indicate that Brahms and his friends thought of them as such in the mid-1850s, when they became the first music of his performed publicly in Gdansk, Vienna, Budapest and London. He later suppressed the dances, using them instead as a thematic quarry for three chamber music masterpieces, from different stages in his life and in distinctly different ways: the Second String Sextet, the First String Quintet and the Clarinet Quintet. This book gives an account of the compositional and performance history, stylistic features and re-uses of the dances, setting these in the wider context of Brahms's developing creative concerns and trajectory. It constitutes therefore a study of a 'lost' work, of how a fully-formed master opens himself to 'the in-flowing from afar' (in Martin Heidegger's terms), and of the transformative reach and concomitant expressive richness of Brahms's creative thought.

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Mitwoch, den 14. November 1855,
Abends 7 Uhr,
im
grossen Saale des Schützenhauses.

SOIRÉE

gegeben von
Frau Clara Schumann
und den Herren
Joseph Joachim und **Johannes Brahms.**

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6.

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The Programme-Handbill for the first public performance of the Sarabande and Gavotte, 14 November 1855 in Danzig

‘It remains therefore the exclusive privilege of the greatest thinkers to let themselves be influenced. The lesser thinkers on the other hand merely suffer in their restricted originality and shut themselves off thereby from the in-flowing from afar.’

Martin Heidegger*

* Martin Heidegger: *Was heißt Denken?* (Tübingen 41984): here from the Reclam edition (Stuttgart 1992), p. 59. “Es bleibt darum das ausschließliche Vorrecht der größten Denker, sich be-einflussen zu lassen. Die Kleinen dagegen leiden lediglich an ihrer verhinderten Originalität und verschließen sich deshalb dem weither kommenden Ein-Fluß.”

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