Brahms in October 1895 as photographed by Maria Fellinger. Image courtesy of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien.

Vous souvenez-vous Brahms? 
Brahms and Memory in Françoise Sagan’s Aimez-vous Brahms . . .

Johannes Brahms’s place in music history has often been tied to memory in one way or another. In the ubiquitous formulation of Brahms as a classicist among romantics, his music is understood to recall formal and stylistic traits of the past. At a more specific level, scholars have focused increasingly on what they hear to be allusions in Brahms’s works to pieces from the past, thereby embodying memory. More significantly, reception history stretching back to the last years of Brahms’s life portrays his later music as a melancholy reminiscence of a time in history—and a time in life—that has passed by. This conception of Brahms’s music as nostalgic has been, perhaps, his most uncontested legacy. Whereas the past century has seen frequent debates over his role as a conservative or a progressive, a classicist or romantic, an ideal representative of absolute music or a closet programmaticist, the tendency to hear nostalgia in Brahms’s music seems more or less accepted and ever close at hand. Thus, when Susan McClary discusses the unexpected potential of a minimalist piece to evoke yearning (Philip Glass’s Glassworks), she can readily draw on this image of Brahms to suggest that one might be “tempted by the presentation of a phrase to clasp one’s hand to one’s bosom in a reflex of Brahmsian autumnal nostalgia.” McClary’s tongue-in-cheek language reflects the degree to which our understanding of Brahms’s music rests on his reputation as a backward looking nostalgic, as one forever late in life—“autumnal”—and past his prime.

The view of Brahms’s music as generally nostalgic is useful in explaining why Françoise Sagan included him in the title of her best-selling 1959 novella (also extremely popular in English and other translations), Aimez-vous Brahms . . ., a work much beloved by Brahmsians for its title—which is probably far better known than the book itself. Indeed, Brahms’s music hardly makes an appearance here. When it does, however, its strong connection to memory figures into Sagan’s story in a rich and complex fashion, shedding light on what sort of role Brahms and his music may play in modern Western culture. From the point of view of Aimez-vous Brahms . . ., it is no accident that this aspect of the composer’s legacy—the perceived nostalgic tone in his music—is featured by Sagan; her story hinges on the gulf between youth and middle age and on the futility of trying to bridge the gap. What is surprising is that Sagan, who is hardly known as a classical music enthusiast (rather, she famously frequented the jazz clubs in Paris’s Saint-Germain-des-Prés district around this time), would have tapped into this vein of Brahms reception at all. Most likely, the perception of Brahms’s music as nostalgic was so widespread that even someone who was otherwise peripheral to the tradition could make reference to that cliché. Moreover, Sagan’s specific historical context (as part of a rebellious generation in post-World War II France) may have shaped her take on Brahms and nostalgia.
In order to appreciate how Brahms fits into a French work of fiction in 1959, a very brief introduction to the author and a synopsis of the book is in order. Sagan was one of a number of enfants terribles among a young post-war generation in France that challenged a host of expectations about social mores, young people, and young women in particular. Typically Sagan’s heroes and heroines are unable to truly enjoy life, and her plots rarely reach a satisfying, much less happy conclusion. A biographical sketch written in 1960 (a year after Aimez-vous Brahms . . .) ascribes the emptiness in the lives of Sagan’s characters to the culture of young intellectuals in Paris around this time: “They faithfully reflect the nihilism of her contemporaries or, to be more exact, of that influential clique of left-wing intellectuals who succumbed in the early postwar years to the withering influence of Sartre. . . . They have exchanged altruism for skepticism and replaced idealism with cynicism.” Sagan was only eighteen when she published her first novel, the best-seller Bonjour Tristes in 1956, which, like most of her youthful works, featured a morally rebellious young woman in conflict with the older generation. That dynamic held sway in her next two (also successful) novels, but is reversed in her fourth book, Aimez-vous Brahms . . . whose heroine, Paule, is a thirty-nine-year-old Parisian dressmaker who is becoming increasingly uneasy with her lack of stability and security as mid-life descends. Her predicament is only exacerbated by her long-term affair with Roger, an unfaithful lover her own age. Enter Simon, a twenty-five-year-old American in search of a purpose in life, who falls in love with Paule and pursues her ceaselessly, initially to her amusement and annoyance, until she finally gives in after (yet another) one of Roger’s flings with a younger woman. In the end, Paule returns to Roger, realizing that she can never really take her relationship with Simon seriously. It is hard to escape a metaphorical reading in which Simon represents Paule’s own unrecoverable youth, whereas Roger represents her inevitable adulthood. In support of such a reading, Aimez-vous Brahms . . . is rife with references to Paule’s growing awareness that she has lost touch with her younger self. The first and last pages of the short book clearly map out the distinction between her present and past identities and make this facet of her character abundantly clear. Sagan opens the novella:

Paule gazed at her face in the mirror and studied the accumulated defeats of thirty-nine years, one by one, not with the panic, the acrimony usual at such times, but with a detached calm. As though the tepid skin, which her two fingers plucked now and then to accentuate a wrinkle or bring out a shadow, belonged to someone else, to another Paule passionately concerned with her beauty and battling with the transition from young to youngish woman: a woman she scarcely recognized. She had stationed herself at this mirror to kill time only to discover—that time was gradually killing her, aiming its blows at an appearance she knew had been loved (Aimez-vous Brahms . . ., 7).

This is only the first indication (and there are others within the first two pages) that the heroine senses that her current persona is distinct and separate from her younger self. At the opposite end of the book (and several months later in the story), as she bids farewell to Simon, her young lover, the separation is made final:

And he wavered, midway to the door, before turning his distraught face on her. Once again she was sustaining him in her arms, she was sustaining his grief as she had sustained his happiness. And she could not help envying him the violence of his grief: a noble grief, a noble pain, such as she would never feel again. He broke away abruptly and rushed out, abandoning his luggage. She followed him, leaned over the banister and called his name: “Simon! Simon!” And she added without knowing why: “Simon, I’m old now, old . . .” (Aimez-vous Brahms . . ., 128).

With this acknowledgement, it is as though Paule finally comes to accept the “other Paule” from the first page, the aging “Paule concerned with her beauty and battling with the transition from young to youngish woman.” There is also an uncanny sense in which she seems to be communicating not just to a young lover here, but to something or someone from her more distant past. Simon has not known her long enough to require the qualification “I am old now.” Her unconscious impulse ("without knowing why") has significance as well, and I will return to it later.

The unbridgeable distance to youth is signaled in the middle of the book and occasions its title. While still pursuing her, Simon leaves a note under Paule’s door that reads “There is a wonderful concert at the Salle Pleyel at six. Aimez-vous Brahms?” This evokes a fit of forgetfulness in Paule. “Come to think of it,” she asks herself, “did she care for Brahms?” Having located a recording of his music in her collection (on the back of, what else, a Wagner overture), listening to Brahms only seems to exacerbate Paule’s condition:

She put the concerto on, found the beginning romantic and forgot to listen to all of it. She awoke to the fact when the music stopped and was angry with herself. Nowadays she took six days to read a book, lost her place, and forgot music. She could not keep her mind on a thing, except fabric samples and a man who was never there. She was losing herself, losing track of herself. She would never be herself again. Aimez-vous Brahms? For a moment she stood by the open window; the sunlight hit her full in the eyes and dazzled her. And this little phrase, Aimez-vous Brahms? seemed suddenly to reveal an enormous forgetfulness; all that she had forgotten, all the questions that she had deliberately refrained from asking herself. Aimez-vous Brahms? Did she care for anything, now, except for herself and her own existence? . . . She felt an itch to talk to someone, as she had felt at twenty (Aimez-vous Brahms . . ., 46–47).

This eponymous query ties Brahms to memory through a negative equation. Forced to consider Brahms’s music, and able to remember neither it nor whether she cares for it, Paule is con-
fronted with the fact that she cannot remember what matters to her anymore, period.

Brahms is equated with loss: loss of memory in Paule’s forgetfulness and a loss of self (“She would never be herself again”). On the face of it, Sagan may appear to be turning the concept of Brahms and memory on its head: Brahms as forgetfulness. It is, I think, more complicated than that, and is strongly dependent on some specifics of time and place. I will try to unravel a few of the pertinent strands at work here to see how the Brahms-memory idea works for Sagan.

I begin by positing—as I have already suggested—that, as she begins to recognize her separation from her younger self, Paule’s relationship with Simon serves as a metaphor for her desire to reconnect with her youth (or, at the very least to take a better account of who she had been versus who she was now). Paule is confronted with such impulses in others throughout the book. Early on as Roger drives recklessly fast through Paris he asks, “I wonder what makes me drive so fast. I’m afraid it’s a case of acting young” (Aimez-vous Brahms . . . , 11). Later, while on a bench in the country with Simon, Paule watches a rower on the lake: “a hardy oarsmen—one of those strange men one daily sees trying to preserve a figure which no one could possibly care about, so characterless is their appearance—was making a lone effort to resurrect the summer” (Aimez-vous Brahms . . . , 66). The times of year are not coincidental, I think. Sagan’s story plays from autumn through spring, reflecting not so much a temporal reversal, as in a return to youth, but rather Paule’s fate—she is already in the metaphorical autumn of life and her return to Roger is ever renewing, like the inevitability of spring. When the book begins in autumn with Paule dispassionately observing her aging face, she herself shows no inclination to look backwards. Only the question “Aimez-vous Brahms?” triggers that impulse in her. And although she is rendered forgetful more than anything else by Simon’s query, she has “an itch to talk to someone, as she had felt at twenty,” a first step in looking backwards.

Looking backwards is, of course, at the heart of nostalgia, often as a sentimental remembrance of an earlier and happier place or time. That time is often symbolized by childhood. In Aimez-vous Brahms . . . , Simon is hardly a child. But if we accept Paule’s affair with him as symbolic of a desire to reconnect with her youth, that youth can easily be projected back to childhood, or at least somewhere before young adulthood that we could take for childhood. Paule and Simon have to remind each other frequently that he is not a child, usually when tempers flare. “I’m not a kid of twelve,” he fires back at her shortly after she upbraids him for insulting his own mother when they first meet. Later, she muses in the middle of a quarrel, “I’m too inclined to forget he is a man. . . . It’s true: he’s twenty-five not fifteen.” And near the end of their relationship she consoles him after threatening to leave him over his drinking, “Simon you’re crazy . . . you’re only a child.” Sagan goes on, “for a second she [Paule] thought she had finally reached the maternal stage.”

Equating Simon’s youth with childhood is necessary for understanding how Brahms may have served as a vehicle for nostalgia to Sagan. I have found no evidence that she was conversant in literature on Brahms’s music. In any case, what was known of Brahms in France from his day down to Sagan’s was not always favorable. There is a consistent thread in French criticism that finds Brahms heavy, turgid, and overly sentiment— in a word, romantic. Paule immediately categorizes him that way when she begins to listen to the unfamiliar concerto on the record she finds in her collection. And to label music romantic raises the possibility of hearing it as nostalgic. Historically, nostalgia took on much of its current meaning and cultural weight at the turn of the nineteenth century through the Romantics’ yearning for a return to an era of innocence and religious purity in Europe, and through their idealization of medieval Christianity and the folk. The yearning and striving of Romanticism persisted as a nostalgic vein through the nineteenth century. Thus, if Sagan is looking for a catalyst to send Paule into a quest to reconnect with her childhood (i.e., to act out a nostalgic impulse), then Brahms—an arch romantic to the French—is her man, and the phrase “Aimez-vous Brahms?” covers a lot of important bases.

There is still the paradox that, at the same time Paule is provoked into thinking of her youth (and her first response upon reading Simon’s note is, “It was one of these questions young men had asked her when she was seventeen”), she is overcome with forgetfulness. After all, her most notable reaction to Brahms is the fact that she does not remember whether she likes his music or not. Sagan might be reacting to a more negative view of nostalgia generally, as it had developed a suspect reputation by the end of the nineteenth century. In part this stems from the failure and disillusionment of Romanticism. When the idealism fueled by the French Revolution failed to usher in a new historical era and was instead succeeded by the restoration of monarchies in the 1810s, the Romantics’ nostalgic backward yearning devolved into a reactionary rejection of the present. In late Romanticism there is less a longing to return to some idealized age than a bitter dissatisfaction with the present, the melancholy remembrance of things past. Thus nostalgia after 1850 is widely recognized (and criticized) as a rejection of modernism and of the perceived disunity and social rootlessness of contemporary life, in Marshall Berman’s words, “something like a failure of our collective cultural confidence in the modernizing impulse.” From a modernist’s point of view, to hear Brahms’s music as nostalgic is an indictment. I’m not in a position to label Sagan a modernist or not (she has been tagged with nihilist, existentialist, and many other labels by her critics), but I do feel comfortable asserting that she is no romantic, and that she would share with the modernists this dimmer view of nostalgia.

Paule’s memory/forgetfulness paradox is resolved on the last page of the book with her unconscious impulse to announce: “I am old now.” As I asserted earlier, she seems to be communicating something to someone from her more distant past. She is, I think, talking to herself. The confusion and self-doubt she encounters at the question Aimez-vous Brahms? is partly solved in this moment. If, at the time she pondered the question in Simon’s note, she felt that she was losing herself and would never be herself again, she finds herself here. She knows who and what she is, and is saying it for herself to hear. Dramatically, of course, she is saying it to Simon. But Simon is only a stand-in for her own youth, as she overtly realizes on the evening she decides to end their affair (only two pages before the end of the book). There, as Paule gazes at Simon sleeping, “she stared at his head buried in the pillow and the small furrow between the bones at the back of his neck; she stared at her own youth sleeping” (Aimez-vous Brahms . . . , 126). Unfortunately, Sagan
does not use the occasion to redeem Brahms in some way; anyway, the brevity of the novella form probably wouldn’t allow for that. Perhaps the fact that Brahms is absent upon Paule’s acceptance of who she is merely confirms his emptiness for Sagan; Brahms is never really there at all. Musically, that is all too much the case in the book. Nevertheless, Sagan’s use of Brahms to connote the separation of the middle-aged Paule from her youthful self throws the composer’s nostalgic cachet into strong relief and reflects the ongoing strength of that reputation in the middle of the twentieth century.

Daniel Beller-McKenna


Joseph Joachim in Boston

In his time, Joseph Joachim was portrayed and eulogized as he portrayed himself: as the embodiment and custodian of the “German spirit” in music—the last of a Classic school. A Hungarian Jew, he rose to the pinnacle of the Prussian musical establishment and wielded enormous power as the founding director of Berlin’s Königlich Akademische Hochschule für ausübende Tonkunst (Royal Academic College for Musical Performance). As a performer who stressed the importance of interpretation over virtuosity, his influence was profound and lasting. Yet, despite his prominence, musicology has not kept up with Joachim, and much about his life and legacy remains to be explored. Until recently, the final German edition of Andrees Moser’s authorized biography, Joseph Joachim: Ein Lebensbild (1908), was still the standard reference on his life, and it remains the basis of all other biographies, including Beatrix Borchard’s Stimme und Geige: Amalie und Joseph Joachim. Biographie und Interpretationsgeschichte (2005).

Seen through the filter of twentieth-century German musicology, Joachim the Hungarian, Joachim the Jew, Joachim the Romantic or the English Victorian Sage—even many aspects of Joachim the performer—have been largely ignored. Due to his turn against Liszt, Wagner, and the “progressive” German school, Joachim the composer has also received scant attention. Joachim’s position in the musical pantheon has become that of the distinguished, musically conservative violinist, the graybeard gatekeeper of nineteenth-century Germany’s musical establishment, and especially as the eminent Friend of Brahms. Few remember Jussuf Joachim, the youthful Joseph who stood at the center of the greatest artistic disputes of his age—an age renowned for its partisan spirit. Few remember Joachim the Zukunftsmusiker, the member of the musical avant-garde who, at the dawn of Weimar’s second Golden Age, helped give birth to the tone poem and the Wagnerian music drama, and contributed some convincing works of his own in the new “psychological” style.

Recent scholarship has begun to probe the façade of Joachim’s carefully-crafted German image, to consider him as a significant composer in his own right, and to pose new and fascinating questions about his multi-faceted artistry and far-flung influence. From 16 to 18 June 2016, prominent scholars and performers from around the world will gather at the Goethe Institut Boston for three days of papers, performances, and festivities exploring Joachim’s life and legacy. The Joseph Joachim at 185 conference, organized by Robert W. Eshbach and Valerie Goertzen, aims to build on the growing interest in Joachim since the centennial of his death in 2007 and to encourage a broader appreciation and understanding of his life and artistry. The conference will present new research concerning Joachim’s compositions, his British career, his relationship to Liszt’s Weimar circle, his Jewish and Hungarian heritage, his performance practice and instruments, his interactions with contemporaries, and his influence as a teacher. On the evening of Friday, 17 June, a concert of music by Joachim, Bach, and Brahms will feature violinist James Buswell, cellist Carol Ou, pianists Victor Rosenbaum and Mana Tokuno, and mezzo-soprano Jaime Korkos. The conference will conclude with a festive dinner at the College Club of Boston.

The Joseph Joachim at 185 international conference is supported by the University of New Hampshire, the Goethe Institut Boston, the Federal Republic of Germany through the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and the American Brahms Society.

Information about the conference, including a registration form, can be found online at: http://joachimconference.com.

Robert W. Eshbach
Brahms on the Web

The Morgan Library in New York has made more than 600 music manuscripts from its collection available online in high-quality scans (http://www.themorgan.org/music#). One can search for images by composer and download items without charge. As the digital collection continues to grow, further enhancements are planned, including watermarks, as well as essays by leading scholars. An initial search turns up 15 items by Brahms, including autograph manuscripts of the Hungarian Dances Nos. 1–10 for piano, four hands, and the piano-vocal score of the Triumphlied, Op. 55, a copyist’s manuscript of the D-Minor Piano Concerto, Op. 15, and autographs of several songs. The editors thank Thomas Quigley for bringing this exciting resource to attention.

The Brahms-Institut an der Musikhochschule Lübeck has digitized items from the Nachlass of Theodor Kirchner (1823–1903) totaling over 9000 pages and including letters, music autographs, and first editions with the composer’s markings. The Institut acquired the collection from Kirchner’s last piano student, Conrad Hanns. Also new to the digital collection are 92 compositions (1853–1902) dedicated to Brahms, more than 500 concert programs featuring Brahms’s works, and Brahms’s address book. This last item was a gift to Brahms in 1869 from Bertha Faber, a member of the Hamburg Women’s Chorus, who wrote in the names and addresses of the composer’s young female friends. Brahms added many more entries, organized by last name, city of residence, or occupation (e.g., copyist, dentist). The website provides a transcription of the handwritten entries. The digital collections may be accessed at http://www.brahms-institut.de/web/bihl_digital/archiv_index.html.

Brahms News

Katharina Uhde (Valparaiso University) has received a Newberry Library Long-term Research Fellowship for 2016. During her six-month stay she will work with the Library’s extensive collection of materials relating to Joseph Joachim as part of research for her forthcoming book, The Music of Joseph Joachim (under contract with Boydell & Brewer). Of particular interest are the approximately 50 letters to Gisela von Arnim, who was Joachim’s confidant in the 1850s and with whom he engaged in lengthy written discussions of music, literature, aesthetics, and other topics. Dr. Uhde also plans to help complete the cataloguing and transcribing of Joachim’s correspondence with Gisela von Arnim, Amalie Joachim, Bernhard and Luise Scholz, and others, a project begun by Newberry librarian Robert Karrow but left unfinished when he retired in 2011.

David Brodbeck (University of California, Irvine) has received the ASCAP Foundation Deems Taylor Virgil Thomson Award for Outstanding Music Criticism in the Concert Music Field for his book, Defining Deutschtum: Political Ideology, German Identity and Music-Critical Discourse in Liberal Vienna (Oxford University Press, 2014).

On 22 April the Brahms-Institut Lübeck celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with a program in the Hansensaal of the beautiful Eschenburgvilla, home to the Institut since 2002. Professor Rico Gruber, President of the Musikhochschule, welcomed the many guests present in the hall as well as those watching via livestream or (later) by posted video, including members of the American Brahms Society. Kurt Hofmann, whose personal collection of materials relating to Johannes Brahms, Richard Barth, Joseph Joachim, Theodor Kirchner, and Julius Spengel form the nucleus of the Library’s holdings, spoke about the history of his collection since its beginning in 1957. With the help of his wife Renate Hofmann from 1981 onwards, this grew to be the most extensive private collection of materials relating to the life and work of Brahms. It was housed in the Hofmanns’ home in Hamburg until 1991, when the Brahms-Institut was founded on the top floor of the Institut für Medizin und Wissenschaftsgeschichte on the Königstrasse in Lübeck. (Some of us will remember the narrow spiral staircase leading up to the Archive.) The Hofmanns served as the Institut’s directors until 1999, followed by present director Wolfgang Sandberger. In 2002 the Brahms-Institut moved into the renovated villa at Jerusalemberg 4, just outside the old city walls, with concert hall, exhibit hall, library, and office spaces. In his keynote address, Otto Biba, Director of the Archive of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, emphasized the special nature of research in the humanities, where the work can never be finished, and the importance of the Institut’s connection with a vibrant conservatory. He praised the work of collectors such as the Hofmanns (and also Brahms!), who are motivated not by financial gain but by a love for the materials. Wolfgang Sandberger outlined new initiatives designed to raise the Institut’s profile even further and strengthen connections with regional, national, and international organizations. Students from the Musikhochschule performed several works by Brahms, including the first movement of the A-major Piano Quartet, Op. 26, the autograph of which is one of the Institut’s most prized possessions. Audience members then took part in a benefit auction of 25 donated items, including books and CDs, a private conversation about treasures of the collection with Kurt and Renate Hofmann, the opportunity to play chamber music with Lübeck’s Philos Quartet, a clarinet lesson with Sabine Meyer, and a tour of Brahms sites in Vienna guided by Otto Biba. Video of the proceedings is posted at www.brahms-institut.de/web/press-livestream.html.

This year also marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe (Brahms Collected Edition). Preparatory work began in 1985 under project director Friedhelm Krummacher, and the Editorial Office (Brahms-Forschungsstelle) was established in the Musicology Institute of the University of Kiel. At the beginning of 1991 the JBG was founded as long-term editorial project of the Union der Deutschen Akademien der Wissenschaften. Robert Pascall’s edition of the First Symphony, Op. 68, was the first published volume (1996). The 24 volumes published to date by G. Henle have involved the participation of no fewer than 14 editors from Germany, the U.K., and the United States. Two further volumes will be released this year. Four scholars devote their energies to the project full time in the Editorial Office in Kiel: Michael Struck, Katrin Eich, Johannes Behr, and Jakob Hauschildt. To the project full time in the Editorial Office in Kiel: Michael Struck, Katrin Eich, Johannes Behr, and Jakob Hauschildt. Vasiliki Papadopoulou works at a satellite office at the Akademie der Wissenschaften in Vienna. Prof. Dr. Siegfried Oechsle has served as project director since 2006. Further information may be found at http://www.brahmsausgabe.uni-kiel.de.

A conference entitled German Song Onstage 1770–1914, held at the Royal College of Music, London, 12–14 February 2014, took place. Talks were given on the influence of German and Viennese music, the role of the Viennese-London connection, and the role of the Viennese-London connection, and the role of German nationalist music in Western Europe. Further information may be found at http://www.brahmsausgabe.uni-kiel.de.

(Continued on page 9)
Brahms’s Albumblatt for Zug

We have received an intriguing communication from Thomas Quigley. He writes:

I have found an Albumblatt by Brahms that I believe has not been described previously in the Brahms literature. This Albumblatt, related to the Canon Op. 113, no. 9, appears in a book compiled by Brahms’s friend Josef Viktor Widmann and published in 1887 to raise money for victims of a Swiss town’s disaster: Für Zug: Bernische Beiträge in Wort und Bild. Zu Gunsten der Geschädigten der Katastrophe in Zug vom 5. Juli 1887 (Bern: Jent & Reinert, 1887; copy in the Swiss National Library, L 3370/32). The name of the town is Zug, and I found information about this Albumblatt while doing research for my work on Brahms and the train (published in this Newsletter 30, no. 1 (Spring 2012); the word “train” in the German language is also “Zug”).

The Albumblatt is not included in the sources for Op. 113 in the McCorkle Brahms Verzeichnis. It is dated in the lower left “Thun, Juli 87,” and its title is “Canon für 4 Männerstimmen” (see Figure 2). Brahms’s signature is in the lower right. The Albumblatt consists of six measures—that is, the entire canon. There are three major differences from the published version of Op. 113, No. 9 (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1891). The canon in the Albumblatt is written for male voices in the key of C major, whereas the published canon is part of a set of 13 canons for female voices and is in B-flat major. Also, the Albumblatt is notated in common time, whereas the published version of the canon is in cut time but also marked “Andante.” The Albumblatt is notated in abbreviated score, with bass and tenor clefs on each staff, with the result that the voices on a given staff sound a fifth apart. To realize the canon in performance, the two bass voices (one on each staff) begin a measure later than the tenor voices (see Figure 3). The Albumblatt uses the same text as Op. 113, no. 9, and Brahms identified its author at the end of the piece as “Fr. Rückert.”

The town of Zug, Switzerland, was founded in the thirteenth century. It is located on the eastern shores of the Zugersee, 23 kilometers south of Zurich. It is the capital of Zug Canton, and according to census records had around 28,600 inhabitants in 2014. Its name derives from the Old High German stem word zug as in Fischzug (= a haul of fish). According to German Wikipedia, the name Zug referred originally to this area of the lake and indicated the right to fish there. Eventually the settlement that developed on the shore became associated with the name. The town, which in 1887 had about 5000 inhabitants, was a popular summer destination for tourists.

The disaster that was the impetus for the fundraising book occurred on 5 July 1887. Construction work on a new quay weakened the stability of the lake’s sandy bank, and it collapsed and slid into the Zugersee in stages over the course of several hours (see Figure 1). Thirty-five buildings were destroyed, 11 people lost their lives, and 650 people were left homeless. The area was not rebuilt due to concerns of load stability. The magnitude of the disaster caused it to be reported all over Switzerland at the time. On the centenary in 1987 there was much note of the event in contemporary Swiss media, and a commemorative centennial volume was published (see http://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/wenn-eine-stadt-im-see-versinkt-1.17319484).

Widmann’s fundraising book contains literary articles by at least seven authors and illustrations by several artists. Brahms’s

Figure 3: Realization of the canon “An’s Auge des Liebsten” in Brahms’s Albumblatt for Zug modeled after the published canon Op. 113, No. 9 (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 1891)
Albumblatt seems to be the only musical work included. The other contributors were well-known figures of the day, and Widmann was a noted Swiss journalist and writer. The depth of the friendship between Widmann and Brahms can be seen in Brahms’s decision to send summers from 1886 to 1888 in Switzerland to Thun, near Widmann’s home base of Bern, and in Widmann’s decision to accompany Brahms on his last three journeys to Italy in 1888–1891.

It seems likely, then, that Widmann approached Brahms for a contribution to the book, which Brahms then provided. I cannot confirm this though, as my searches in Kalbeck’s biography Bd. IV/1 chapter 1, and in Widmann’s Erinnerungen did not turn up any references to the town, the disaster, this Albumblatt, or the creation of the fundraising book.

My thanks to the Swiss National Library for their assistance and in particular to Andreas Berz in Information Services, who provided detailed information on the book and the contents relating to Brahms. My original request can be viewed online as an example of the library’s information services at: https://www.nb.admin.ch/diensteleistungen/swissinfodesk/03034/03232/03920/index.html?lang=en.

The editors are grateful to Thomas Quigley for this communication, which has inspired us to investigate the Albumblatt and the canon it contains a bit further.

Brahms used several canons from his Op. 113 (Nos. 1, 3, 7, and 12) as Albumblätter,1 probably because they were short yet complete and clever pieces. By the time of the Zug catastrophe in July 1887, he had already noted No. 9 in at least four albums and books of friends. In the three whose whereabouts are known, the canon is notated for men’s voices in the key of C using bass and tenor clefs, like the Albumblatt for Zug.2 Brahms also notated “An’s Auge” as the first of a set of three studies on a single sheet (also containing the Canon WoO 25 and a study for Op. 36) that he enclosed in a letter to Franz Wüllner in August 1877.3 Brahms marked the canon à 4 and notated it on the first two staves of the page in a compressed score format similar to that found in the Albumblatt for Zug. Each of the two staves is outfitted with both bass and tenor clefs, indicating two voices that enter (consecutively) a fifth apart. At the end of the piece on both staves Brahms indicated an alternative version for women’s voices by writing the word “oder” (or) followed by an alto clef with key signature for B-flat then a soprano clef (the first line designated as middle C) with key signature for B-flat and custos on B-flat and F. The musical text of “An’s Auge” in this source is identical to that in the Albumblatt for Zug except that the version sent to Wüllner contains unnecessary slurs/ties in both the upper and lower parts in m. 1, beats 3–4, and is missing the phrase mark extending from m. 4 beat 3 to m. 5 beat 4. In this earlier source, Brahms wrote the text above the upper staff followed by an exclamation point; below the lower staff he wrote only the first two words.

In choosing a canon for the Zug book with the text “An’s Auge des Liebsten fest mit Blicken dich ansauge” (you draw nourishment from looking into the beloved’s eye), Brahms may have sought to reassure readers that recovery from disaster could be managed with the support of loved ones. Brahms clearly also enjoyed the wit inherent in Rückert’s text. In the Albumblatt, Brahms underlined the first words of the poem, “An’s Auge,” and the last word “ansauge” each time to show the connection of nourishment and the eye, and because both underlined components sound the same but have different meanings (see Figure 2). That is, Rückert’s text employs an exotic variant of a figure of classical rhetoric, epanaelepsis—repetition at the end of a clause or sentence of the word or phrase with which it began. Here epanaelepsis is combined with paronomasia—a play upon words that sound alike.4 Ira Braus contends that Brahms was familiar with the figures of classical rhetoric, most likely from his early education in Hamburg, and that he was sensitive to rhetorical figures in his settings of texts that include them.5 This point of view would tend to contextualize Brahms’s underlinings as a response to the text that is at once good-humored and learned. The play on words creates a striking moment of congruency when the canon is repeated, since the leading voices begin again with the first two words of the text as the trailing voices sing the final word. In the autograph page Brahms sent to Wüllner in 1877, he underlined these same words.

There is evidence to suggest that Brahms wrote down Rückert’s text, based on a text of Al-Hariri of Basra (1054–1121), during the period of his work with the Hamburger Frauenchor.6 Brahms seems to have composed the canon in 1868/1869: a sketch for it appears together with sketches for Opp. 52, 53, 65, and 81.7

Although no mention of the fundraising book has been found in Brahms’s correspondence, Widmann mentions Brahms’s contribution to it in a letter to Henriette Feuerbach, dated Bern, 5 August 1887. His letter makes clear that Brahms’s willingness to participate was unusual, and reveals that Widmann himself did not ask Brahms for the Albumblatt.

Brahms has contributed a small four-part canon on Rückert’s text: “An’s Auge des Liebsten dich fest ansauge” to an album that is being published in Bern for the benefit of the city of Zug, which has sunk partly into the lake. It is amusing how willingly he has done this, given how much such requests usually irritate him; even princes have vied for an autograph in vain. He takes secret pleasure in having offered this act of kindness and in justifying it to himself and others by claiming that he did so only for my sake, although I wasn’t the one who asked him for it.8

A facsimile of the Albumblatt for Zug is printed in Widmann’s published correspondence with Feuerbach.9


Brahms’s contribution to the volume for Zug is very much in keeping with his character. During the 1880s, at the zenith of his career, he could, when he wished to do so, move easily in
wealthy and powerful social circles, but he had great sympathy for the sufferings of ordinary people. He contributed generously not only to his immediate family but also to many charities, often making his gifts anonymously. He contributed Albumblätter to several volumes in support of persons suffering misfortune, including shipwrecked sailors in 1881 and victims of a cholera epidemic in Hamburg and Altona in 1892.

The project for Zug also would have appealed naturally to Widmann, not only because of his immediate sympathies as a Swiss citizen, but because of his political and philosophical orientation. Brahmsians know Widmann as the composer’s literary friend, his frequent travel companion on journeys to Italy, and the “Feuilleton” editor of the influential Swiss newspaper, Der Bund. However, Widmann was also well regarded as an author of novels, plays, poetry, and libretti. One of his recurrent literary themes was the senseless violence and slaughter of life, which he sometimes allegorized by describing the casual destruction of insect colonies or the thoughtless killing of animals. So the loss of life at Zug, inflicted without intent, in which the unfortunate victims were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time, must have struck a particular nerve with him. It is no wonder that he wished to aid the survivors, and no wonder that Brahms, who had special care and concern for ordinary people, should contribute to the cause.


**Brahms News, continued from page 5:**

2016, explored the roles of German song in public concerts. A collaboration between the Royal College of Music, Wigmore Hall, and the German Historical Institute London, the conference was organized by Natasha Loges, Laura Tunbridge, and Andreas Gestrich. Susan Youens of the University of Notre Dame was the keynote speaker. In addition to three days of paper presentations, the event featured a recital at Wigmore Hall by Stephan Loges and Imogen Cooper entitled “R. Schumann Dichterliebe Op. 48 as Clara Schumann Would Have Performed It,” a full-length concert reproducing a recital program Clara Schumann and Brahms gave in 1870, and a workshop on song programming for RCM singers and accompanists led by Graham Johnson and Christophr Prégardien. Papers relating directly to Brahms are listed in the “Recent Publications” section of this issue. The full program may be found at http://www.rcm.ac.uk/included/gsoschedulenew.pdf.
2016 Karl Geiringer Scholarship Competition

Applications for the Karl Geiringer Scholarship in Brahms Studies, an annual competition open to students in the final stages of preparing a doctoral dissertation written in English, are due 1 June. Work relating to Brahms should form a significant component of the dissertation, but it need not be the primary focus. The scholarship carries a stipend of $2,000. Results of the competition will be announced in late 2016, following the regular annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the ABS.

A completed application consists of 1) a cover letter, including the applicant’s address, phone number, email address, and institutional affiliation; 2) a concise description of the project (no more than 500 words), in which the applicant’s methods and conclusions are stated clearly; and 3) a brief account (no more than 250 words) detailing the aspect of the project to be completed with assistance from the Scholarship, including travel plans, if appropriate. These materials should be submitted electronically as pdf files to Richard Cohn at richard.cohn@yale.edu by 1 June 2016. A confidential letter from the dissertation adviser and one additional letter of recommendation should be emailed to Dr. Cohn by that deadline. Finalists in the competition will be asked to submit a sample chapter from the dissertation by 1 July.

Recent Publications

Books and Articles


Dissertations


Critical Editions

Editions of Brahms’s chamber music, published Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2015:

*Sonate in e für Violoncello und Klavier*, Op. 38. Edited by Clive Brown, Kate Bennett Wadsworth, and Neal Peres Da Costa.


(Continued on page 12)
To join the American Brahms Society, please fill out the form below and mail it with your check (payable to The American Brahms Society) to: The American Brahms Society, Department of Music, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

Name: ____________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Email: ____________________________________________
Institutional Affiliation: __________________________________
_________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________
Please send information on the ABS and a sample Newsletter to the following people: __________________________________

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

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

Annual Dues for 2016 (US dollars and checks only, please):

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

I would like to make a contribution of $_________ towards the Society’s operating expenses.

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

Contributions to the ABS are once again tax deductible!
The ABS has regained its tax-exempt status, retroactive to 27 January 2014. We thank our members for their patience as we have gone through the process of reinstatement.
Recent Publications, continued from page 10:

Sonaten in f und Es für Viola und Klavier, Op. 120. Edited by Clive Brown and Neal Peres Da Costa.


Papers Presented

Papers read at the conference, German Song Onstage, 1770–1914, Royal College of Music, London, 12–14 February 2016:

Paul Berry (Yale University), “Private Memory, Public Performance: Schubert’s Greisengesang on the Concert Stage, 1860–1900”

Raika Simone Maier (Hochschule für Musik und Theater Hamburg), “Johannes Brahms’ Lieder Sung by Lula Mysz-Gmeiner”

Natasha Loges (Royal College of Music), “Performing the German Song Cycle in Brahms’s Circle”

Nicola Montenz (Milan Catholic University), “Viennese Lieder Performances in Eduard Hanslick’s Critical Writings”

Editors’ Notes

The editors thank the contributors to this issue. Daniel Beller-McKenna is Associate Professor of Music at the University of New Hampshire. Author of Brahms and the German Spirit (Harvard, 2005), he is currently completing a book on Brahms and nostalgia. In addition to publications on Brahms in several musicological journals, he has published articles and read papers on diverse topics in popular music. Since 1997, Beller-McKenna has served on the Board of Directors of the American Brahms Society, of which he was President from 2001 to 2007, and for which he is currently Membership Chair and Webmaster.

Thomas Quigley is the compiler of two bibliographies of the literature on Johannes Brahms (1850s–1996, Scarecrow Press) and is currently dabbling on a followup work. He was Research Assistant on the McCorkle Brahms Thematic Catalogue project, where he got the “itch” to explore information on Brahms. His previous contributions to the Newsletter include writings on Brahms and railways, and Brahms and poetry. He is a retired public librarian living in Vancouver, Canada.

We are grateful to Prof. Dr. Otto Biba for supplying the photo on the cover, to Thomas Quigley for his communications, and to Dr. Johannes Behr of the Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe for information relating to the first 25 years of the Collected Edition and details about Brahms’s supplying of Albumblätter for charitable causes. Our thanks also to Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Sandberger and Ms. Carola Timmer for information relating to the anniversary celebration at the Brahms-Institut Lübeck and the digitalization of the Theodor Kirchner Nachlass. Ideas, correspondence, and submissions for the Newsletter are always welcome, and email communication is especially encouraged. Materials for the Fall 2016 issue should be sent by 1 September.