

Brahms

From Königgrätz to My Lai:
Brahms in tempore belli

"Little Johannes loved best to play with lead soldiers, never tiring of setting them up in new formations. It is curious to find the quiet, sensitive boy, who commonly avoided the noisy games of his contemporaries, occupied with so martial a hobby." Instead, suggests Karl Geiringer, this pastime reflected Brahms's proclivities for reworking given materials imaginatively. While Brahms the composer may have been occupied with arcane musical procedures, the man—the German—was an inveterate newspaper reader, deeply interested in political and military matters. Although his political views did not often find direct expression, it is clear that he identified himself first and foremost as a German—a loyal Hamburger and a proud "Son of the Republic." He firmly upheld the idea of a united German Empire under Prussia, and would brook no criticism of the German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, or Kaiser Wilhelm I. He exulted in German military victories. His friend, the Swiss author Josef Viktor Widmann, observed, "It is hard to imagine vividly enough how deeply a really passionate patriotism took hold of this earnest man's soul." In his recent book, *Brahms and the German Spirit*, Daniel Beller-McKenna has argued that Brahms was a more ardent German nationalist than recognized by many critics, who have tended to split the composer off from his culture by focusing on Brahms the *classicist*, who composed "absolute music" as antipode to the Wagnerian and Lisztian camp, and Brahms the *historicalist*, reanimating archaic genres. The result, according to Beller-McKenna, has been to "distance Brahms's music from the context of Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century. [...] In light of the tragic political history of Germany in the twentieth century, we prefer to see Brahms as a representative of the good and noble in German musical art in distinction to Wagner, whose ideology dovetails too neatly with—and was so eagerly embraced along with his music—by the National Socialists."

Brahms's interest in political and military matters was apparent even in his youth. The sympathies of the young Brahms lay with the bourgeois-democratic revolutionaries of 1848. While Hamburg was far from the unrest, the sixteen-year-old "devoured" reports of the insurrections.



Prince Otto von Bismarck in 1874
(Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz)

Using the pseudonym "G.W. Marks," he arranged a suite for piano four-hands, the Op. 151 *Souvenir de la Russie*, which makes use of—among other national airs—the 'Rákóczy March,' the hymn of the Hungarian revolution. One of his early notebooks cites the German revolutionary poet Ferdinand Freiligrath declaring that peace lies not in "the folds of one's apron" and that war is necessary to birth a new republic. Somewhat later, Brahms romanticized the soldier's life in his robust settings of Karl Lemcke's poems, published as *Five Partsongs for Male Voices*, Op. 41 (1860).

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(Brahms *in tempore belli*, continued)

Op. 41, No. 2, *Freiwillige her!*, is full of tub-thumping *Vaterland* veneration and chauvinistic “Deutsches Volk! Sieg oder Tod!” sentiment. Op. 41, No. 4, *Marschieren*, features onomatopoeic vocal effects reminiscent of Jannequin’s *Labataille* and other early battle pieces.

A closer encounter with national conflict took place in 1866, when Austria and Prussia engaged in the bloody “Seven Weeks War,” which Bismarck provoked in an attempt to end Austrian influence over German territories. The Prussians routed the Austrians at Königgrätz on 3 July, and marched on Vienna. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Prague, a new North German Confederation under Bismarck annexed Frankfurt, Hessen-Nassau, and Schleswig-Holstein, advancing the cause of German unification. Many writers have remarked on the “scant attention” that Brahms paid to this event. However, as Styra Avins notes, Brahms was antipathetic to the politics behind the war. His sentiments spilled out in a letter to Julius Allgeyer: “Unfortunately, whether they now fight for 30 or for 7 years, the fight is as little on behalf of mankind as in those days when they fought for 30 or for 7 years.” At the time, Brahms was at work on the *German Requiem*, which clearly mines his grief over the deaths of his mother and Robert Schumann. One could surmise, however, that Brahms’s political disillusionment might also have seeped into the work. At any rate, the *Requiem* was soon seized upon to commemorate those fallen in war. (The tradition persists, with the *Requiem* being performed recently in New York to mourn the dead of 9/11.)

Brahms’s reaction to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was quite different. He traveled widely in the spring and summer of that year, visiting Joseph Joachim in Salzburg and taking in Wagnerian music dramas with Artur Faber in Munich. War erupted on 19 July. Ostensibly, Napoleon III of France had initiated the hostilities, but Bismarck, confident of victory and hoping that the common cause of war would finally forge a new German republic, was the true author of the conflict. Brahms wrote to his father on 5 August from Salzburg, where he waited “eagerly for the French to get a good thrashing,” rejoicing in “the first news of victory.” He enquired about the billeting of troops in Hamburg and whether the Elbe had been fortified against French ships. After a series of bloody engagements, French forces were routed on 2 September at the Battle of Sedan. Shortly thereafter, Bismarck united Prussia with the four southern German states in a new federation and laid siege to Paris. Wilhelm I was named German emperor in a ceremony at Versailles on 18 January 1871, ensuring Germany’s emergence as the dominant continental power. These events appealed strongly to Brahms’s latent nationalism, and quite overrode his previous misgivings about war. Seized by fervent patriotism, Brahms considered enlisting. He imagined meeting “his old father” on the battlefield and fighting “side by side” with him.

Instead, Brahms returned to Vienna and began composing a boisterous ode to Prussian victory, the *Triumphlied*, Op. 55, for eight-part choir, baritone solo, and orchestra (organ *ad libitum*). Handel’s Dettingen *Te Deum* (1743), a

work Brahms studied and later conducted, clearly served as a model. The apocalyptic text is excerpted from Revelations 19:1–16. The opening “Hallelujah” chorus was finished in time to celebrate the Prussian victory in Bremen on 22 January 1871 at a concert during which Brahms’s *Requiem* was also performed to honor the German war dead. Later performances of the completed *Triumphlied* were everywhere received, as Walter Niemann reports, with “wild enthusiasm.”

The massive victory ode is cast in three movements. The first, a boisterous, tripartite “Hallelujah” chorus in D major, praises the righteous judgments of the Lord (Rev. 19:1–2). Conspicuous by its absence is the portion of the text revealing the judgments to be those God levied upon the “great harlot” Babylon, who “corrupted the earth with her fornication.” Those familiar with scripture would no doubt infer, as did Max Kalbeck, that the “great harlot” was, for Brahms, none other than Paris. This is corroborated by Brahms’s interpolation in pencil of the missing text, “Daß er die große Hure verurteilt hat,” in his personal copy of the score beneath the wind theme in mm. 7–74. The second, slower movement, in G major, is a song of rejoicing and praise in three parts. The meditative mood of the first, triple-meter section is shattered by a three-trumpet fanfare in D, and a flurry of “Hallelujahs” in the middle, duple-meter section, accompanied by pounding timpani. This militant, polyphonic outburst strongly implies God’s support of the nascent German Reich. The final movement, for baritone and chorus, sets St. John’s apocalyptic vision of the god of war astride a white horse (Rev. 19:11–16), who “treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” and celebrates *Ein König aller Könige*—in one sense, God: in another, Kaiser Wilhelm I. As Peter Peterson notes, the biblical passages Brahms chose “were general enough in their wording to be taken out of context, while encouraging anyone who felt so inclined to relate them—in a broad sense—to recent events.” Brahms’s original title, however, removes all ambiguity: *Triumphlied auf den Sieg der deutschen Waffen*, as clear a statement of “Gott mit uns” as has ever been made.

During Brahms’s lifetime and up until the end of the first World War, the *Triumphlied* was as esteemed as the *Requiem*, to which it was often considered a companion piece. If, as Niemann wrote in 1920, we hear “a whole nation exulting and giving thanks to the Lord of Battles in grand, mighty choruses...,” how may we receive the *Triumphlied* today? Is it the case, as Malcolm MacDonald suggests, that the work “magnificently transcends” its chauvinistic origin, that the “*Triumphlied* speaks of no temporal Germany, but a rejoicing that (like the *Requiem*’s mourning) takes place in the universe of metaphysical realities”? Granted, the musical craft is impeccable, but is it really possible—or advisable—to split this work off from its political context? A. Craig Bell describes the text as “nauseatingly despotic,” with its “belief in divine-granted support for [...] expansionist aims.” From our vantage point, it is also difficult to avoid the premonitions of a virulent German nationalism and the conflagrations it provoked. Indeed, this was one of the few works by Brahms to find favor with the Nazis. One may not simply wish away the Prussian militarism front-loaded into the piece for the sake of preserving Brahms’s image as a “good

German.” In the end, it has proven easier to allow the *Triumphlied* to fall by the historical wayside than to deal squarely with its implications. Performances of the work outside of Germany after the first World War became rare; after World War II, the piece virtually disappeared from the repertory. (For many years, the single available recording was that by Giuseppe Sinopoli, the Prague Philharmonic Choir, and the Czech Philharmonic [Polydor 435 066–2].) Although Brahms later expressed reservations about the *Triumphlied*, he gave us no reason to believe that he ever reconsidered his patriotism and esteem of German arms. A number of volumes in Brahms’s library attest to his continuing interest in the wars of unification, and he reportedly took a volume of Bismarck’s letters and speeches with him on his travels.

A final musical manifestation of Brahms’s patriotism came in September 1889, when he journeyed to his native city to receive “The Honorary Freedom of Hamburg.” He offered the premiere of the *Fest- und Gedenksprüche*, Op. 109, to the Hamburg Cecilia Society for the occasion. This work was inspired by the tumultuous events of the so-called “Drei-Kaiser-Jahr” of 1888, during which the elderly Kaiser Wilhelm I died and was succeeded by his son Frederick III, a conciliatory liberal, who himself died shortly thereafter. Frederick’s son Wilhelm II took the throne at the age of twenty-nine. The highly intelligent, conservative, militaristic, arrogant, neurotic, and probably homosexual leader would eventually steer Germany to catastrophe. Brahms and Widmann imperiled their friendship over a bellicose speech by Wilhelm II in which he avowed that he would retain the disputed territory of Alsace if it required the slaughter of “eighteen army corps and 42 million Germans laid out in a row ‘like animals killed in the hunt.’” Brahms chastised his liberal friend for commenting harshly—and, in hindsight, presciently—on the young Kaiser, whom he himself apparently supported, as did “the whole nation.” Widmann’s apparent lack of respect rankled him deeply.

The Op. 109 motets, reflecting the influence of Heinrich Schütz, utilize polychoral effects, intricate polyphony, canonic imitation, *stretto*, and word painting. Writing to Hans von Bülow in May 1889, Brahms related that these “three short, hymn-like epigrams [...] are intended for days of national celebration and commemoration, and in connection with which those days of Leipzig, Sedan, and the Kaiser’s coronation could even be mentioned expressly, as far as I am concerned (But better not!).” The biblical verses Brahms chose for the first motet (Psalms 22:4, 6 and 29:11) reaffirm heavenly intervention on behalf of the German Reich. The second motet sets Luke 11:21: “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his palace, his goods are in peace.” This biblical statement of “deterrence theory” is followed by the admonition that “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls” (Luke 11:17; Matthew, 12:25). The third motet sets Deuteronomy 4:7–8: “What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him?” and “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen [...]” Brahms’s German listeners

would have had little difficulty interpreting these allegories. The texts reveal his concern for the stability of the Reich, already cleaving along liberal/conservative fault-lines, and his plea for national unity based on the concept of a *Volk* defined by their shared past.

Over time, a work may acquire new and sometimes contradictory meanings that its composer could not have foreseen. The startling appropriation and reworking of material from Brahms’s *German Requiem* by the American composer Richard Wernick (b. 1934) in his *Kaddish-Requiem* of 1971, “A Secular Service for the Victims of Indo-China” for chamber ensemble, soprano, and tape, transforms the comforting solace intended by Brahms into a harrowing indictment of the American War in Vietnam. (The *Kaddish-Requiem* is published upon request by Theodore Presser. An excellent recording featuring Jan DeGaetani and the Contemporary Chamber Ensemble under Arthur Weisberg is available on Elektra Nonesuch 9 79222–2.) This work expresses Wernick’s “frustration, dismay, and anger at the United States’ military involvement in Indochina.” The composer remarked, “The war was wrong and immoral; it still is even with 20/20 hindsight, and it is the only way I have of protesting.”

Nineteen minutes long, the *Kaddish-Requiem* consists of three movements of roughly equal length played without pause. The first movement is entitled “...alles Fleisch,” after the second movement of Brahms’s *Requiem*. The second movement is a collage created by layering several recorded Aramaic recitations of the Kaddish, the traditional Jewish prayer for the dead, with interludes for sitar based on themes by Orlando Mei. The final movement, in which a plucked piano evokes the sound of a Vietnamese lute, sets the *Requiem aeternam*—the Latin rite for the dead—for mezzo-soprano and chamber ensemble.

The first movement throws the solace offered by Brahms into a contentious dialectic with the horrific realities of the war in Vietnam. Brahms’s *Requiem* suggests that although death is terrible, there is comfort and hope for the living, for there will ultimately be redemption; death has “lost its sting.” Wernick’s *Kaddish-Requiem* flatly repudiates this notion, and refuses to avert its gaze from the atrocities of the combat zone, implying that for *these* victims there is no consolation available. In this context, says Wernick, scripture acquires new meaning: “In a time when flesh and grass can be recklessly devastated by napalm and defoliants, the simplicity and beauty of the Biblical image becomes tinged with a cruel and bizarre cynicism. This is reflected musically by the use of the Brahms as an ironic and nagging commentary throughout the first movement.”

The ringing of crotales opens up a ritual space, followed by a dissonant canon at the octave for violin and violoncello. The players are directed to violate meter and utilize harmonics, tremolos, *spiccato*, and “brutal” thrown bows to achieve a disquieting, anxious texture. The tam-tam and chime situate us in Asia. The most obvious quotation of Brahms here is that of the main motive of “Denn alles Fleisch...” in both its B-flat minor and F major key manifestations. The motive is first essayed by the piano in a

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Competition for Seventeenth Annual Geiringer Scholarship

The American Brahms Society is seeking applicants for its Karl Geiringer Scholarship in Brahms Studies, which is awarded annually, as meritorious candidates present themselves. The competition is open to students in the final stages of preparing a doctoral dissertation at a university in North America. Work relating to Brahms should form a significant thread within the dissertation, but it need not be the only one. The Selection Committee welcomes applications from students whose research might be concentrated instead on music by members of the Brahms circle, questions concerning musical life in later 19th-century Vienna, and so forth. Only projects that demonstrate significant original thought and research will be deemed competitive. The decision to award the scholarship rests with the Board of Directors; the winner will be announced in November 2006, following the regular annual meeting of the Board.

Completed applications will consist of 1) a cover letter, including the applicant's address, phone number, e-mail 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 Karl Geiringer Scholarship, including travel plans, if appropriate. These materials should be submitted, in triplicate, to Walter Frisch, Chair, Geiringer Scholarship Committee, Department of Music, Columbia University, MC 1820, 2960 Broadway, New York, NY 10027, and must be postmarked no later than 1 May 2006. The application must be supported by two confidential letters of recommendation, including one from the dissertation advisor; these should be sent directly to the Chair of the Geiringer Scholarship Committee and must also be postmarked by 1 May. Finalists in the competition will be notified by 15 May and asked to submit a sample chapter from their dissertation.

A New *Brahmszimmer* in Thuringia

Word has reached the ABS from Honorary Members Kurt and Renate Hofmann that a new *Brahmszimmer* is being planned at Schloß Altenstein in Thuringia. Schloss Altenstein was the summer residence of Duke Georg II of Sachsen-Meiningen and his wife, Helene Freifrau von Heldburg. Brahms met the ducal couple through the initiative of Hans von Bülow, who conducted the Meiningen Hofkapelle from 1880 until 1885. That Brahms quickly developed an intensive artistic affinity with his new, aristocratic friends can be seen from his many musical and social visits to the ducal residence in Meiningen and from his dedication of the *Gesang der Parzen* to Georg II in 1882. The most celebrated musical event that grew from this friendship was the first performance of the Fourth Symphony on 25 October 1885 at Meiningen, but its most important fruit was Brahms's acquaintance with the clarinetist of the Meiningen Hofkapelle, Richard Muhlfield, to which we owe the exist-

ence of the four late chamber works for clarinet.

Constructed between 1888 and 1890, Schloß Altenstein was the last great building project of Georg II. Located about two kilometers from Bad Liebenstein, the manor is surrounded by a 400-acre estate, including extensive natural gardens. Brahms and Muhlfield visited the ducal couple there in November of 1894, playing Brahms's newly composed clarinet sonatas, Op. 120, for their hosts from manuscript. Although it sustained considerable damage by fire in 1982, the manor remains an architectural treasure. In 1995, responsibility for the estate was turned over to a non-profit trust, the Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten, which has undertaken the restoration and refurbishment of the manor, its large Hofmarschallamt, dating from 1803, and the extensive, surrounding gardens and buildings. Work on the marshal's building is proceeding on schedule, with completion expected by 2006. The next step would be the restoration of the manor itself.

In order to commemorate the close relationship between Brahms and his Meiningen circle, plans for the restoration of Schloß Altenstein include a Brahms room. Kurt and Renate Hofmann have generously presented the foundation with several important items of Brahmsiana that will be housed there, including a bronze sculpture of the sitting Brahms designed by Reinhold Felderhoff, photographs of Duke Georg II, Freifrau Helene von Heldburg, and Joseph Joachim, and multiple photos of Brahms. While the Stiftung Thüringer Schlösser und Gärten receives some government funding, it must also garner support from private sponsors. For anyone who may wish to contribute to the *Brahmszimmer* project, the cost of which is expected to reach about 73,000 euros, Dr. Helmut-Eberhard Paulus, director of the foundation, has provided a special website: www.thueringen.de/schloesser/englisch/index_en1.htm.

Brahms on the Net

Among the many websites dedicated to Brahms and his music, one of the most important is posted by the Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe e.V. Forschungstelle Kiel:

Here one finds a rich source of information about the guiding principles and organization of the new complete edition of Brahms's works appearing from G. Henle Verlag. The progress of the edition to date, a list of the musicological literature and professional presentations engendered by the project, and contact information for the reknowned Brahms scholars who are leading the project are all available here. Of particular interest is a direct link to Dr. Michael Struck's article "Die neue Johannes Brahms Gesamtausgabe," in *Die Tonkunst online. Das monatliche Online-Magazin für klassische Musik*, Jg. 1, Nr. 1 (1 January 2003): 1-5, which demonstrates the great importance of the new complete edition for performers and scholars alike and lays out with exceptional clarity the many sources and complex philological issues that editors must take into account as they work to establish authentic readings of Brahms's works. Links are also provided to G. Henle Verlag as a convenience for those who may wish to purchase volumes for libraries or for personal use.

Once Again Johannes Brahms—Max Reger: Brahms Among the Organists

Between Brahms's last years and the outbreak of the first World War, the music of Max Reger represents one of the two most concentrated attempts (the other is Schoenberg's, of course) to build upon Brahms's style for the sake of the future of German art. As a pupil of Hugo Riemann during the early 1890s, Reger had learned to venerate Brahms as the lone prophet of contemporary music—an unjustly one-sided view, as he would later realize. Although recent scholarship has begun to profile a new position for Brahms in Reger's mind and music—one that is considerably more nuanced and ambiguous than the assumed image of Reger as an undiluted Brahms *Nachfolger*—demonstrable illustrations of Reger's Brahmsian orientation are legion: the preoccupation with historical forms and procedures, the concretely Brahmsian manner of the early chamber works, the Brahms-like approach to keyboard texture, even the dedication of two piano character pieces (Op. 24, No. 6 and Op. 26, No. 5, both from 1898) to Brahms's memory. During his time as Kapellmeister at Meiningen, Reger would come into daily contact with the Brahms orchestral tradition established by Hans von Bülow and continued by Fritz Steinbach. Moreover, because Reger and early writers on him had much to say about the significance the older composer held for the younger, the nature of the Reger-Brahms connection remains a lynchpin of the Reger literature.

There is no need to rehearse the long history of the Brahms-Regel relationship, but it is useful to revisit the topic here from an unjustly neglected vantage point: namely, the initial reception of Brahms's organ works—principally the *Elf Choralvorspiele*, Op. post. 122—in the influential Leipzig organ circle of Karl Straube, the earliest and most consistent advocate of Reger's music. The use of organ music as *Ausgangspunkt* proves more relevant than it might first appear. When the young Reger chose in the mid-1890s to send Brahms an example of his work, it was the organ *Suite e-moll*, Op. 16, and—fortuitously or not—when Reger's first organ chorale appeared in the pages of the *Allgemeine Musikzeitung* in 1894, it was a setting of "O Traurigkeit, o Herzeleid," the same tune on which Brahms had published (likewise without opus number, now WoO 7) a prelude and fugue in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* of 1882.

On Reger's part, of course, the organ and its repertory take on great relevance due to the lively relationship that developed between the young composer and his exact contemporary, Straube. Reger had gotten his start as a chamber music composer during the 1890s, but it was his organ music that first attracted significant positive attention, due in large measure to the young Straube's interest in his works (again, the E-minor *Orgelsuite* played a central role) from 1898 onwards. Straube's advocacy prompted an impressive series of large-scale organ works—many of them fantasies on Protestant chorales—composed around the turn of the century, which handed Reger his breakthrough as a serious composer.

Unlike Reger, who issued from a provincial upbringing in small-town Catholic Bavaria, Straube had matured in the cosmopolitan environment of Wilhelmine Berlin. His mother was the product of a well-to-do and intellectually inclined English family and his father, himself a church musician, had come from a line of Lutheran clergymen. Straube's background predisposed him to a broad-based interest in philosophy, theology, literature, history, and historical theory, all of which would play counterpoint to the musical career he chose by the time he formed a close association with Reger in the late 1890s. Straube tended to think beyond Reger's music *per se* to what he believed to be its place in an historical continuum of art, and his advocacy of Reger stemmed first from the fact that he regarded that place as extremely significant—more significant, in fact, than the position of the post-Enlightenment composers. All of this proves important on two counts: first, because of the prominent cultural position in Germany that Straube eventually came to occupy (director of the Leipzig *Bachverein* and organist of the Bach church of St. Thomas in 1903, organ instructor at the Leipzig Conservatory in 1907, Gewandhaus organist in 1908, Cantor of St. Thomas in 1918, founder of the Lutheran Church Music Institute in 1919), through which he became the paragon of German organ virtuosity and instructed several hundred organ students over about a half century's activity; and second, because Straube's particular view of music history caused him to invert the usual model, whereby later composers are seen in light of earlier ones, so that Brahms's historical position was clarified more nearly in terms of Reger's own.

These attitudes prompted a telling comparison between Brahms and Reger in 1902, when Brahms's Op. post. 122 and Reger's first collection of chorale preludes, *52 leicht ausführbare Choralvorspiele zu den gebräuchlichsten evangelischen Chorälen*, Op. 67, appeared in print nearly simultaneously, the former with Simrock under Mandyczewski's editorship, and the latter with Lauterbach und Kuhn. Earlier the same year, Straube had published an extended article on Reger in Dresden's *Die Gesellschaft*, in which he argued that Reger, although proceeding from Brahms in his earliest works, actually manifested an entirely distinct aesthetic. Brahms, though "perhaps the greatest talent" among the Romantics, possessed nevertheless a "one-sided musical ability" that led him to compose mere "musical philology writ large." For Straube, Brahms's interest in and admirable command of historical forms represented—albeit in a particularly skilled way—the historicizing tendencies of Romanticism generally, and such an aesthetic degenerated into mere epigonism if divested of the pre-Enlightenment modes of thinking that lent those forms meaning in the first place. Furthermore, in Brahms sounded "the last tones of that great musical epoch that found its most powerful inner expression in Beethoven's titanic struggles." Such a composer could not properly lay claim to the essence of a distant past, nor could he point the way to an immediate future. Reger, on the other hand, had found a thoroughly original path through his study of J.S. Bach. In his seven fantasies on Protestant chorales, the younger composer had found a way to harness the old Lutheran tunes "undogmatically," to "give artistic form to

Example 1: Johannes Brahms, "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen," Op. 120, No. 11, mm. 1-4

Example 2: Max Reger, "O Welt, ich muss dich lassen," Op. 67, No. 34, mm. 1-3

the unecclasiastical-religious subjectivity of our time." Moreover, by "using the chorale in its totality, melody and text," Reger created an original form out of respect for the essence of the old.

Straube furthered his argument in a 1903 review of Reger's Op. 67 chorales published in *Die Musik*. Here, in an explicit comparison of the chorale prelude collections of Brahms and Reger, we read that Reger's historicism (presumably opposed to that of Brahms) lies in the employment of "the most difficult forms as a means for expression, not as ends in themselves." From Reger's particular "psychic feeling" [*psychisches Empfindung*] proceeds the heavy, serious nature of his tonal language, according to Straube "for our day as out-of-date as possible." He continues:

Again and again, and according to his ability, the artist's own inner life has led him to pay homage to the religious thought, to the Church, the bearer of such a world view. From this mindset came the "52 Chorale Preludes" (op.67)!—With this collection, Reger gives German organists a chorale volume such as has not been composed since the century of Johann Pachelbel, since the day of Joh. Seb. Bach. Despite Brahms!—All due respect to the "Eleven Chorale Preludes"—yet these are religious studies of a secular mind, very significant attempts by the great master in an area foreign to the general orientation of his development. Reger's preludes, on the other hand, proceeding from a feeling for the Church, belong in the Sunday services. Only in that place, employed in that way, will their emotional charm [*Stimmungsreiz*] come to full fruition....As always in the organ works, he employs the forms of the older masters. Only in one instance might one suspect a copy of Brahms's "*O Welt, ich muß dich lassen*." It is therefore necessary to establish conclusively that Reger's prelude on the same chorale was conceived and notated before the appearance in print of Brahms's work. Every single prelude in the collection is new proof of the fact that Max Reger stands undisputed at the head of modern organ composers.

As in the 1902 essay, Straube attempts to identify ground on which Reger's originality and historial significance might

be founded. Here, he locates that significance not in the fact that Reger builds on the Brahms legacy, but rather quite the opposite: Reger's "inner life," his "psychic feeling," is bound to a world view of much earlier times, and his music puts art in the service of a higher ideal. Brahms's inadequacy in this regard is highlighted by the emergence of the younger master.

Straube is probably right to point out that Reger composed his Op. 67 without having known Brahms's Op. 122. The phrase-echo technique used by Brahms in his eleventh prelude and Reger in his thirty-fourth manifests itself differently in the two works. Brahms calls for a double echo effect requiring three manuals, whereas Reger composes a single echo using two manuals. Given that such an effect was a common improvisational device among organists, it seems a superficial similarity, in both cases reflective of the leave-taking suggested by Johannes Hesse's text:

O Welt, ich muß dich lassen, / ich fahr dahin mein' Strassen ins ewig Vaterland, / mein' Geist will ich aufgeben, / dazu mein Leib und Leben setzen gnädig in Gottes Hand.

(O world, I must leave you, / I go my way into the eternal fatherland, / I will surrender my spirit, / and put my body and life mercifully in God's hand.)

The only other striking point of contact between the two works is the five-voice texture (see Examples 1 and 2 above). Brahms's pursues a conventional harmonic strategy that allows a tonic cadence in m. 2 and, with the first echo, again in m. 3. The second echo turns the music easily toward the relative minor, where the second principal phrase commences. Because the harmony itself offers nothing out of the ordinary, the ear is drawn to the contrapuntal event of the phrase, an ascending chromatic line spanning a fourth, at first imbedded, but then rising to the top of the texture by its third statement in the second echo. Eventually inverted,

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