



Brahms Among Friends: Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion (AMS Studies in Music)

Paul Berry

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Brahms Among Friends identifies patterns of listening, performance, and composition among close friends of Johannes Brahms and explores how those patterns informed the creation and reception of his music in the intimate genres of song, sonata, trio, and piano miniature. Among the tangled threads of counterpoint and circumstance that bound Brahms to his acquaintances was the technique of allusive musical borrowing, whereby a brief passage from a familiar work was drawn into the fabric of a new composition. For the specific listeners whose habits of mind and musicianship he knew best, allusive borrowings could become rhetorically charged gestures, persuasively revising the meanings his music conveyed and the interpretive strategies it invited.

Primary documents, original manuscripts, music-analytic comparison, and kinesthetic parameters experienced in the act of performance all work in tandem to support ten case studies in the interplay between Brahms's small-scale works and the women and men who encountered them before publication. Central characters include violinist Joseph Joachim, singers Amalie Joachim, Julius Stockhausen, and Agathe von Siebold, composers Heinrich and Elisabeth von Herzogenberg, and pianists Emma Engelmann and Clara Schumann. For these musicians and for the composer himself, Brahms's allusive music served a broad variety of emotional needs and interpersonal ends. Yet across diverse repertoire and interdisciplinary correlates ranging from ethnography to psychoanalysis, each case study furthers a single, underlying aim: to reconstruct the mutually dependent perspectives of historically situated agents and restore forgotten features of their communicative landscapes as bases for both musical and historical scrutiny.

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