

*Continued from P-5*

exotic folk like strains give it a special salience of its own. The opposition of violin and orchestra is almost unique in its brooding contrasts, and the rhapsodic note of remote minstrelsy is strong, especially in the first movement. But the technique, the mounting climaxes, the surging drama of tone and theme, the high-register flutterings all give it a kinship with other repertory of the later romantic period."

The first movement is in a free sonata form. The solo violin announces the principal theme over divided and muted strings, the somber character accentuated by an imitation of the opening motif by a clarinet. Two more important themes follow and, after a cadenza for the solo, the three subjects are recapitulated and developed at the same time.

The *Adagio di molto*, a *romanza*, opens with a brief prelude followed by a broad, singing melody from the solo instrument. The prelude woodwind motif returns to introduce a short contrasting section, which soon gives way to the return of the principal theme, now in the orchestra with elaborate figuration for the violin. There is a short coda.

The finale is a concentrated rondo on only two themes. The first is hurled forth from the solo violin over a relentless rhythm in the strings and timpani. Then, the violins and cellos chant the defiant second theme. Both themes are developed with startling ingenuity to a brilliant end.

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## Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

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*"There must suddenly appear one who should utter the highest ideal expression of his time...and he has come, this chosen youth over whose cradle the Graces and Heroes seem to have kept watch. His name is Johannes Brahms."*

*Robert Schumann -1853*

Brahms has often been called the last of the great classical composers. A fervent admirer of Beethoven, he was moved by a desire to be linked to the tradition of the symphony as set by the master. However, Brahms cannot so easily be regarded as a mere neo-classicist (as he was called in life and even after his death); it is only the most superficial listener who could deny that his music possesses qualities of the most intense romanticism. The richness and abundance of his musical genius poured forth in his symphonies, as it did in his chamber works, choral pieces and his long list of songs and works for the piano.

Like Beethoven before him, he provided a strong voice, dramatic content and perfection of structure to the symphony; this however, he complemented with the introduction of the German *lied* to the essence of symphonic form. Beethoven had not made use of this lyric, uncomplicated and somewhat rustic vein in his symphonies as it was later to be found in Brahms', but the practice was perpetuated into the turn of this century by Mahler, and to some small degree by Bruckner.

Having garnered a substantial reputation with his small scale works (particularly his chamber music), and with Schumann's pronouncement naming the then twenty-year-old composer as Beethoven's successor in the realm of the symphony, Brahms felt tremendous pressure and weight of responsibility in presenting his first symphonic essay to the world. "Writing a symphony is no laughing matter," he once remarked; "you have no idea how it feels to hear behind you the tramp of a giant like Beethoven." Although he had a number of successful, large-scale orchestral works to his credit, including the two Serenades (Op. 11 and 16) the First Piano Concerto (which was almost a symphony) and the *Variations on a Theme of Haydn*, the compositional process for the First Symphony took Brahms fifteen years between initial conception and the production of the completed score, when he was already forty-three years old. This achievement came comparatively late in his life for a composer of his stature; already at that age, Beethoven had written eight of his nine symphonies, and Mozart, who died at age thirty-five, had written a total of forty.

The difficult road to Brahms First Symphony was one of toil, plagued by self-doubts, and marked by trial and error. Brahms began his *Symphony No. 1 in C minor* in 1862 when he produced a sketch of the first movement. Of this initial sketch only the exposition made it to the completed work. In the years that intervened between this first sketch and the

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