



BRAHMS

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Johannes Brahms, born on May 7, 1833 in Hamburg was a German composer and pianist and one of the leading musicians of the Romantic period. Brahms spent much of his professional life in Vienna, Austria, where he was a leader of the musical scene. In his lifetime, Brahms's popularity and influence were considerable; following a comment by the nineteenth-century conductor Hans von Bülow, he is sometimes grouped with Bach and Beethoven as one of the Three Bs. Brahms is often considered both a traditionalist and an innovator. His music is firmly rooted in the structures and compositional techniques of the Baroque and Classical masters. He was a master of counterpoint, the complex and highly disciplined method of composition for which Bach is famous, and also of development, a compositional ethos pioneered by Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Brahms aimed to honor the "purity" of these venerable "German" structures and advance them into a Romantic idiom, in the process creating new approaches to harmony, melody and, especially, rhythm. While many contemporaries found his music too academic, his craftsmanship have been admired by subsequent figures as diverse as the progressive Arnold Schoenberg and the conservative Edward Elgar. The diligent, highly constructed nature of Brahms's works was a starting point and an inspiration for a generation of composers.

Brahms wrote the ***Hungarian Dances*** (German: *Ungarische Tänze*) as a set of 21 lively dance tunes based mostly on Hungarian themes, completed in 1869. They vary from about a minute to four minutes in length, and are among Brahms's most popular works, and were certainly the most profitable for him. Brahms originally wrote the dances as a piano four-hands configuration, and later arranged the first 10 dances for solo piano. He also wrote orchestral arrangements for No. 1, No. 3 and No. 10; other composers have since arranged many of the other dances. Only numbers 11, 14 and 16 are entirely original compositions. The most famous Hungarian Dance is No. 5 in F# minor, which was based on the csárdás by Béla Kéler titled "Bártfai emlék" which Brahms mistakenly thought was a traditional folksong. Branching beyond Western art music, the dances were influential in Scott Joplin's development of ragtime, through the role of German-American piano teacher Julius Weiss.