



Max BRUCH

In Memoriam

Max Christian Friedrich Bruch (6 January 1838 – 2 October 1920), also known as Max Karl August Bruch, was a German Romantic composer and conductor who wrote over 200 works, including three violin concertos, the first of which has become a staple of the violin repertoire.

Bruch was born in Cologne, the son of Wilhelmine, a singer, and August Carl Friedrich Bruch, a lawyer who became vice president of the Cologne police. He received his early musical training under the composer and pianist Ferdinand Hiller, to whom Robert Schumann dedicated his piano concerto in A minor. The Bohemian composer and piano virtuoso Ignaz Moscheles recognized his aptitude. At the age of nine he wrote his first composition, a song for his mother's birthday. From then on music was his passion, and his studies were enthusiastically supported by his parents. He wrote many minor early works including motets, psalm settings, piano pieces, violin sonatas, a string quartet and even orchestral works such as the prelude to a planned opera Joan of Arc. Few of these early works have survived, and the locations of most of his surviving compositions are unknown.

His complex and unfailingly well-structured works, in the German Romantic musical tradition, placed him in the camp of Romantic classicism exemplified by Johannes Brahms, rather than the opposing "New Music" of Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner. In his time he was known primarily as a choral composer, and to his chagrin was often overshadowed by his friend, the more popular and widely regarded Brahms.

In Memoriam is one of several pieces Max Bruch had written for violin and orchestra. He wrote several works for this instrumentation; his most successful and recognizable contribution to the genre comes from one of the earliest of these compositions, his *Violin Concerto No. 1 in G-Minor* (1867). While continuing to write for this instrumentation, none of his compositions would find their way into the standard repertoire like his G Minor concerto. Still, his contributions to the repertoire include several well-known works including two further concerti, plus other works such as his *Romance in A Minor* (1874), *Scottish Fantasy* (1880), and *In Memoriam* (1893), which is the longest single-movement work he wrote for Violin and Orchestra.

Writing to Joseph Joachim, the violinist whom the work was written, Bruch wrote "change everything in it that seems unidiomatic to the violin... Perhaps you'll think of some characteristic apposition in lieu of the rather nondescript title Adagio? The piece is actually a dirge... but I couldn't say that I wrote it in memory of any particular person or occurrence. If I were to say 'In memoriam 1888,' the title would kindle memories of the two dead German emperors; but they would have to be honored by vocal pieces for large forces – a violin piece seems to me unsuitable, and in any case the moment has passed."

Bruch's publisher demanded that two additional movements be written around the single slow movement. Bruch replied "In Memoriam is so well-rounded and self-contained that nothing can follow it. If it had been my original intention to write a small concerto consisting of an adagio and a finale, I would have designed the adagio with this in mind from the very beginning; but that wasn't my intention, and now I would most likely bowdlerize a piece born of the spirit if I were to add something for commercial reasons (which, incidentally, I understand quite well) for which I feel no inner compulsion. I myself considered all of this at length, of course, at first alone and later, in January of this year, with Joachim, and Joachim came exactly to my conclusion. Now both of us know of Joachim's failings, but whatever the case he remains a great musician, and in higher matters of art his powers of judgment are far superior to Sarasate's, despite the latter's prowess as a soloist."