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The Evolution of Clarinet Music Through Johannes Brahms: A Study of His Trio, Quintet, and Sonatas

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An Annotated Bibliography

ABSTRACT

The relationship between Johannes Brahms and Richard Muhlfeld is one of the most important in the history of clarinet music. The reimagination of clarinet as a result of this connection led to the creation of pieces that cemented clarinet as a music force, leading to many more works being composed for clarinet in both chamber and solo fields. These pieces offer an incredible amount of information to us as pedagogues, teachers, and performers.

Tyndall, Emily. "Johannes Brahms & Richard Muhlfeld: Sonata in F Minor for Clarinet & Piano, Op. 120 No.1." Honors thesis, Columbus States University, 2010.

Tyndall's thesis is part biography on both Muhlfeld and Brahms and part broad analysis of the first of Brahms' sonatas. The essay gives extended background to both Brahms and Muhlfeld outside of the context of the sonata, including some of Brahms' relationship with Clara Schumann. Beside offering changes Muhlfeld offered, the essay also takes note of Brahms' adherence to traditional form structure. The advantage of Tyndall's work is the initial focus on the background and tendencies of both the composer and performer. The Sonata is not discussed in earnest until the second half of the thesis.

Lee, Kyungju. "An analysis and comparison of the clarinet and viola versions of the Two sonatas for clarinet (or Viola) And piano Op. 120 by Johannes Brahms." D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2004.

This paper is the only in the bibliography that compares the Op. 120 Sonatas to their viola counterparts. Lee directly compares key passages from the sonatas to their respective transcriptions, taking note of differences, then analyzes the differences. Though the author focuses on how Brahms wrote for the viola, she offers an opportunity to analyze Brahms' style in composition and his ability to write well for specific instruments, and study how he played to their various strengths, though

Osseck, William F. "Brahms' Clarinet Quintet." MM thesis, University of Rochester, 1942.

Osseck's study of the Clarinet Quintet shows an interesting interpretation of how the clarinet is used and written. Rather than written as a soloist and an accompanying quartet, Osseck posits that the clarinet is written to play not only with the quartet but also to add to the color of the sound. Osseck also notes the Quintet's expansion of conventional (for the time) range, as well as pushing the clarinet to explore new areas of tone, flexibility, and virtuosity. Osseck would later become both the clarinet professor at the Eastman School of Music but also the saxophone professor.

Hanslick, Eduard. "Hanslick on Brahms's Chamber Music with the Clarinet." Translated by John Daverio. *American Brahms Society Newsletter* 13 (Spring 1995): 5-7

This article, released by The American Brahms Society, was originally written by Eduard Hanslick, an ardent supporter of Brahms during his life. Unlike nearly all of the bibliographic data that exists on these topics, Hanslick's article comes from the time of composition, and puts Brahms' late clarinet works within the context of his work as a whole and within the time period as a whole. While Hanslick mentions potential 'disappointment' with the Quintet and some elements of Brahms' works that puts him at odds with many of the other articles, he describes the clarinet's use throughout and even mentions his expectations of 'growing success' for the sonatas in the future. Similar to Street's article, this puts Brahms in context of a classical music world that did not study Brahms as a deceased composer but rather saw his successes.

Lawson, Colin. *Brahms, Clarinet Quintet*. Cambridge Music Handbooks. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Lawson is a British clarinetist and scholar, whose work on the study of clarinet music has led to widespread praise from both musicians and scholars alike. Though many essays on the topic of Brahms and the clarinet offer some information about Brahms' relationship with Muhlfield, Lawson's study on the Clarinet Quintet offers a very close historical look at the pair. Lawson's insight into the exact nature of changes and alterations to the Quintet as a result of Muhlfield are critical to fully understanding the relationship between Brahms and Muhlfield.

Street, Oscar W. "The Clarinet and Its Music." *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 42 (1915): 89-115

Though the main subject of the article is the origin of the clarinet, the article also makes mention of particularly important pieces in the evolution of the clarinet, and make Brahms a key figure in that development. All four pieces Brahms wrote for Muhlfield made an appearance in the article and are written as a culmination of clarinet music. Though written over a hundred years ago, the article does take note that Brahms was able to use the clarinet in chamber before many other composers, but that he was able to do so very successfully. Credit is given to the composers who gave the clarinet interesting solos with the context of an orchestral symphony, but Brahms' step into clarinet chamber music certainly represented a step out of the norm. It also gives us the opportunity to see opinions on Brahms' work in the context of a music world not even through the first World War.

Smith, Peter H. "Brahms and the Neapolitan Complex: \flat II and \flat VII and Their Multiple Functions in the First Movement of the F-Minor Clarinet Sonata." *Brahms Studies* 2 (1988): 169-208

Smith's analysis of the first movement of the first Clarinet Sonata shows Brahms' continuing love for the use of Neapolitan chords. Smith also uses a blend of sources on Brahms' theory to show Brahms' use of ambiguity and tonal shifts to extend harmonies. Throughout this essay, Smith also shows Brahms' clever use of the clarinet, having

written well for the instrument to avoid placing it in tonal areas that may limit the clarinet or music overall, and highlighting the better registers to reinforce the harmonies.

Rasmussen, Audrey, "The Evolution of the Modern Clarinet: 1800-1850" Senior Thesis, Linfield University, 2011.

Rasmussen's thesis outlines the growth of the clarinet throughout the first half of the 1800s. Her work chiefly surrounds Heinrich Baermann, a composer and clarinetist of great success and notoriety. Baermann's relationship with both Meyerbeer and Weber make him a key figure in the evolution and popularization of the clarinet. Rasmussen argues that Baermann's success and virtuosic nature represents the beginning of the success of the clarinet as a whole and that Muhlfeld's and Brahms' influence is merely a continuation or adaptation of what had been started by Baermann. Rasmussen also takes note of the great changes that occurred to the mechanical aspects of the clarinet, with the various strains of clarinet coalescing into the beginnings of the modern clarinet. Much of this work is at odds with Street's article.

Harbaugh, Justin M. "The Clarinet B.C. program notes for a masters clarinet recital of works of Brahms' clarinet trio, Francaix's *Tema con Variazioni*, Muczynski's *Time Pieces*, and Carter's *Gra* and *Hiyoku*." MM thesis, Kansas State University, 2009.

Harbaugh's analysis and program notes offer the perspective of a study of a piece with the intent to perform it. The program notes offer a brief history on Brahms and Muhlfeld. The analysis of the Trio, not only examines the section changes and key changes, but discusses the piece at large, including each instrument's role in every given section. The essay also discusses performance practice for the clarinetist, offering insight into the writing for the clarinet, citing specific passages from the piece.

Hoyt, Andrea. "Brahms, Debussy and beyond a look at the clarinet repertoire and the influence Brahms had on modern composers." MM thesis, Ball State University, 2010.

Hoyt makes comparisons of Brahms and Muhlfeld to Baermann and Weber and Stadler to Mozart, but Hoyt posits that Weber and Mozart both wrote clarinet as a virtuosic performer, similar to that of a singer in an opera. Hoyt argues that the use of the clarinet in Brahms' clarinet works show a different use of the clarinet both in terms of utilizing dynamics range and tone range. This change offered a more Romantic style of clarinet playing, placing a premium on emotional expression rather than technical skill. Hoyt also pushes that these changes show a similarity to Debussy's writing for clarinet, and compares Brahms and Muhlfeld to Debussy and Mimart.

George Dyson. "Brahms's Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115." *The Musical Times* 76 no. 1106 (April 1935): 315-19.

Dyson's article on the Clarinet Quintet is quite positive about the piece. In part he advocates further use of the clarinet, citing its use by Mozart, Brahms, and Beethoven and praises its use in chamber music. Dyson cites chiefly the range, dynamic, and

virtuosic nature of the piece as its main features. The majority of the article is a close analysis of the piece for the reader to follow with at home. The article focuses mainly on the analytical aspect of the music with a focus on the clarinet's use throughout. Dyson's and Osseck's paper do not expressly disagree, but tend to focus on differing aspects of the piece.

Aoki, Kenneth T., "A Brief History of the Sonata with an Analysis and Comparison of a Brahms' and Hindemith's Clarinet Sonata." MEd thesis., Central Washington University, 1968.

Much like Hoyt's thesis, Aoki compares Brahms to a composer that succeeded him; Hindemith. In analyzing the clarinet sonatas of each composer, Aoki compares how each composer's style manifests itself and compares it to its counterpart. Though obvious differences between the two composers existed in terms of melody, harmony and meter, similarities also emerged. Both men wrote pieces requiring strong skill levels, though well-suited to the instrument, contrapuntal writing as well as meter, and similarity of form. The age of the thesis may leave out more modern interpretations but