

The Works of Johannes Brahms

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Seed
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Text Audio

Who was Johannes Brahms?

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1833. He was a famous German composer and virtuoso pianist. His father, Johann Jakob Brahms, was a professional musician who played in the Hamburg city orchestra. Hoping to pass on his love of music, Johann Jakob gave his son his first music lessons and supported his music education.

↙ A young Brahms in 1853



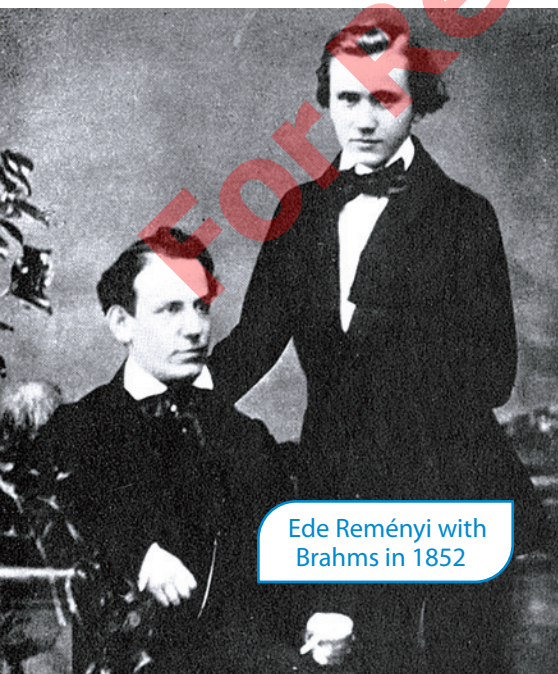
A view of the city of Hamburg



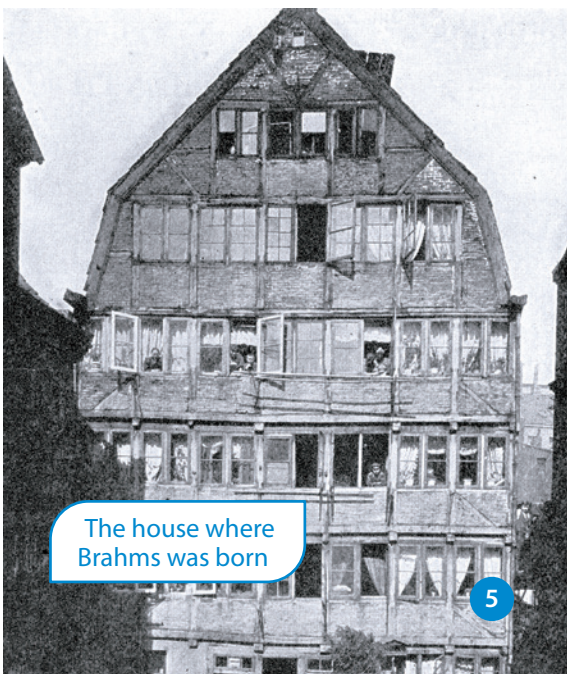
By the age of ten, Brahms was playing the violin, cello, and piano. At fifteen, he was performing in concerts. He also started to compose music. Brahms went on tour with the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi, where they met Joseph Joachim, a violinist and composer. Joachim introduced Brahms to the composer Robert Schumann and his wife Clara in Düsseldorf.



Robert Schumann was a composer who lived from 1810 to 1856.



Ede Reményi with Brahms in 1852



The house where Brahms was born

Schumann liked Brahms and could see that he was going to be great, so he wrote an article about him in his music journal. The article was titled “Neue Bahnen” (New Paths). Interestingly, the article did not make Brahms feel good. He worried that he was not as good as Schumann claimed. Brahms was always very self-critical.

↪ Brahms felt that he was not as good as people expected.



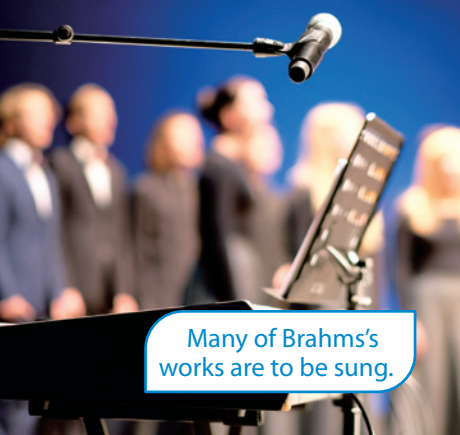
OLD WAY

NEW WAY



↑ Brahms's work took many new paths over time!

← The article Schumann wrote about Brahms, called “Neue Bahnen,” in 1853



Many of Brahms's works are to be sung.



Chamber music is written for a small group of musicians.



Singing in a choir can be a lot of fun!

However, Schumann was proved correct! Brahms did become a well-known composer and found “new paths” of composing. During his career, Brahms wrote a lot of vocal music. There were many works for choirs, and a large collection of vocal songs with piano. He also wrote a lot of piano music. His chamber music includes groups of strings, and also groups of pianos. He wrote four symphonies and four concertos.



Brahms spent summers in Bad Ischl to relax and compose.



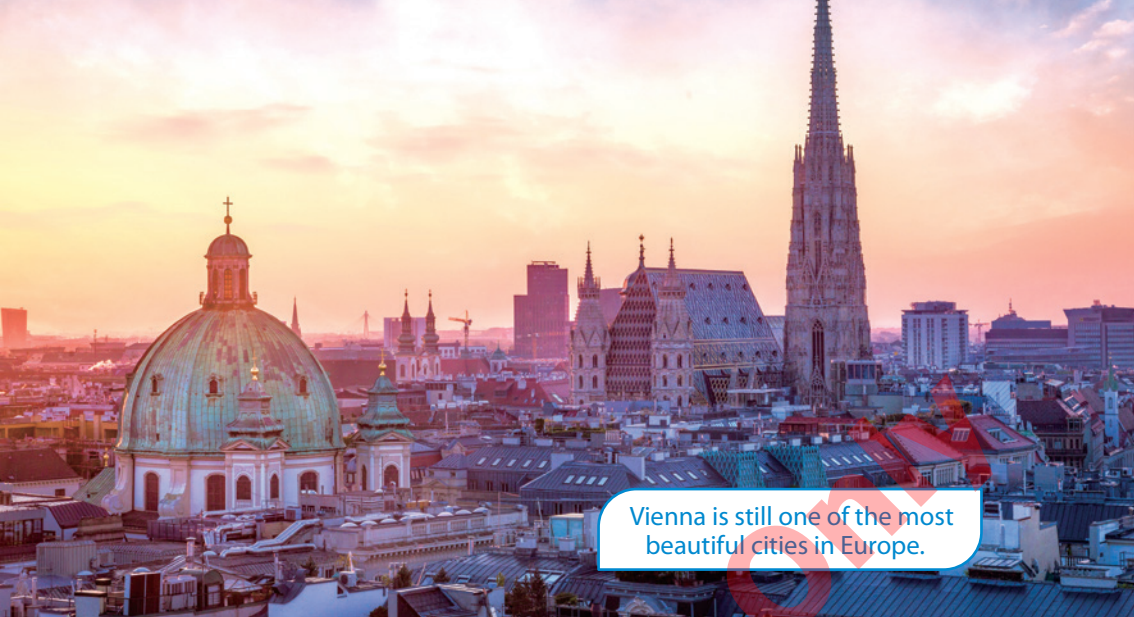
Brahms traveled from Hamburg to Düsseldorf.

Brahms remained a very close friend of Schumann. When Schumann suffered from mental health issues, Brahms went all the way to Düsseldorf to see him. Brahms soon fell in love with Clara Schumann, who was fourteen years older than himself.

The young man continued to be in love with Clara after Schumann's death, and they had a close relationship. Clara saw Brahms as more of a son and friend, though. He never married.

Clara Schumann, around 1840





Vienna is still one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

In 1859, Brahms found work as the conductor of a women's choir in Hamburg. This job left him plenty of time to write and arrange music.

But Vienna was the center of classical music in Europe at the time. In

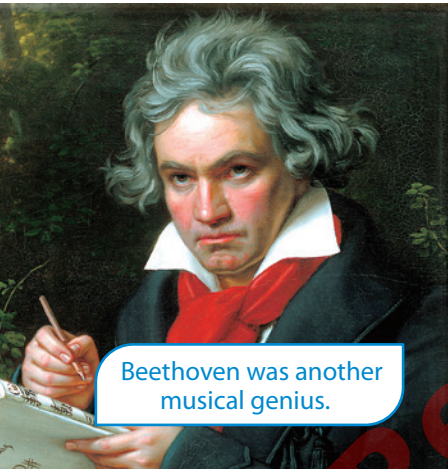
1862, Brahms moved to Vienna, where he soon made many friends who liked his work. Brahms composed many of his greatest works in Vienna.



Vienna is in Austria, to the south of Germany.



Brahms destroyed the compositions that he thought weren't good.



Beethoven was another musical genius.



A symphony is a long piece of music for an orchestra.

Brahms thought that people expected him to be the “next Beethoven,” and spent about twenty years on his first symphony. He finally allowed it to be performed in 1876. He worried that it was too long and difficult.

In fact, the symphony was a success although Brahms was disappointed that critics in Vienna compared it to Beethoven's work.