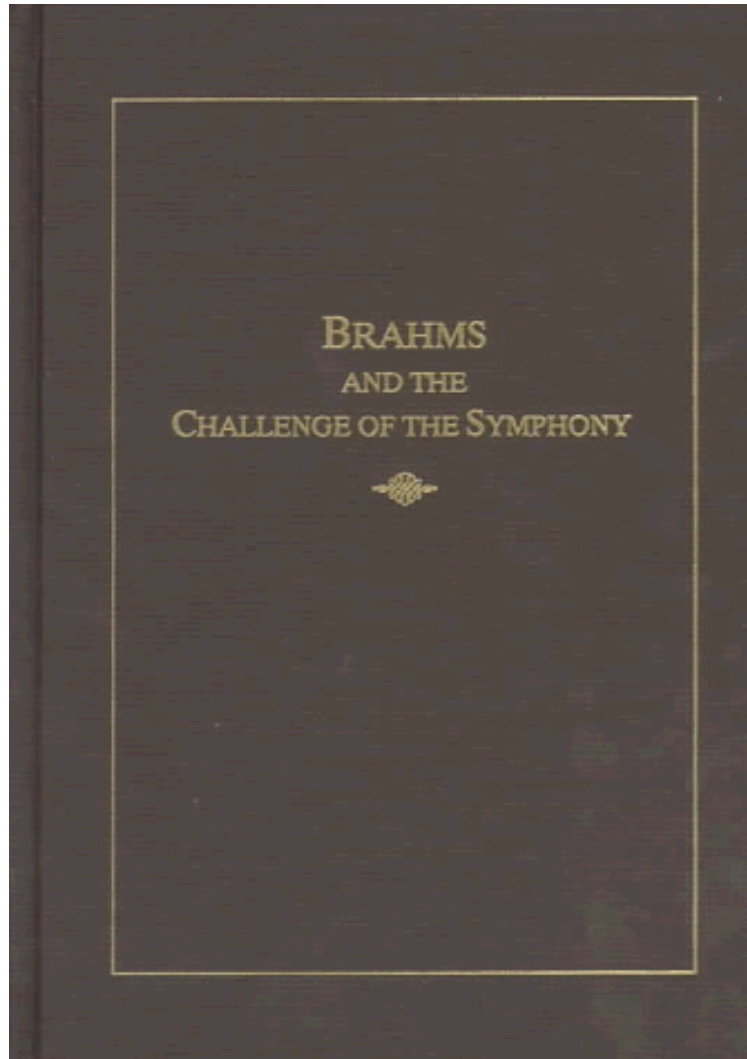


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Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony (Ex)

Raymond Knapp

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Raymond Knapp : Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony (Ex) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony (Ex):

Brahms's symphonies represent one of the most important bodies of work to come from the second half of the nineteenth century, when many of the difficult issues that have confronted composers and scholars in our own century were formulated. As the other arts at that time were turning away from romanticism, music was witnessing an extended confrontation between two attitudes that had been fundamental to musical romanticism in the preceding generations: that music was on the one hand profoundly expressive and, on the other, essentially self-sufficient. Wagner set the

terms for the conflict at mid-century, proclaiming the inaccuracy of "absolute" music and arguing that Beethoven's Ninth Symphony ended the symphonic tradition with its demonstration that musical expressivity ultimately stems from an innate dependency on "the word." Wagner's arguments were followed, in short order, by Liszt's appropriation of the symphonic genre to programmatic ends (with Wagner's eventual, if guarded, approval); Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch Schönen*, with its influential argument for the self-sufficiency of music; and the appearance of Schumann's article "Neue Bahnen," which vested the future of music solely in the person of the young, virtually unknown Johannes Brahms, who was heralded as the awaited savior of a valued but languishing tradition.