

Johannes Brahms (1833-97), Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98 (1884)

(1)

“It is possible that Brahms’s creations are the true type of music of the future. No doubt Beethoven shocked the ears of the great majority of his listeners with equal facility; and as for Schumann, even the present generation is not yet wholly reconciled to his dissonances. But it is hard to believe that Brahms is the true prophet.”

Boston *Courier*, November 29, 1891

(2)

“To me it seems quite obvious that the real Brahms is nothing more than a sentimental voluptuary... He is the most wanton of composers... Only his wantonness is not vicious; it is that of a great baby... rather tiresomely addicted to dressing himself up as Handel or Beethoven and making a prolonged and intolerable noise.”

George Bernard Shaw, *The World*, June 21, 1893

(3)

“After the weary, dreary hours spent in listening to the works of Brahms I am lost in wonder at the amount of devotion accorded him and the floods of enthusiasm with which he is overwhelmed. I endeavor to comfort myself with the thought that even though Brahms gives us nothing in the way of beautiful themes, lovely harmonies or refreshing modulations, his example in preserving those musical forms, which Wagner sought to destroy, might stimulate other composers to enliven the old symphonic molds with melodies of beauty and grace. But, no. What do we see instead? Mistaking Brahms’s un-beauty for a new line of thought, his followers amuse themselves with seeking in what a variety of means they, too, can twist and torture a series of commonplace tones and chords.”

Edgar Stillman Kelley, San Francisco *Examiner*, May 9, 1894

(4)

“Owing to the misfortune of being a musician, I cannot appreciate Brahms, and least of all Brahms in E minor... There is no more intolerably dull symphony in the world than the E minor.”

J. F. Runciman, *Saturday Review*, London, November 6, 1897

(5)

“Art is long and life is short: here evidently the explanation of a Brahms symphony.”

Edward Lorne, *Fanfare*, London, January 1922