to hear Mr T. A. Wallworth's lecture at Trinity College on Wagner's compositions and their influence on vocal art as compared with those of earlier composers; nor do I exactly know what I am expected to say about it. The lecture had already been delivered to the Guildhall students; so that the Trinity College authorities must have known precisely what it was going to be like. Besides, Dr Turpin took the chair in his academic gown, and wound up with a benediction on Mr Wallworth which was meant, I presume, as an official sanction of the lecture on behalf of the College.

Mr Wallworth informed us that the peculiarity which differentiates Wagnerian music-drama from opera as composed by the great masters consists in the fact that Wagner attempted to express all the incidents and emotions of the drama by means of the orchestra alone, reducing the singers to mere lay-figures. This method led him to so overwhelm the voice with unsuitable instrumentation that his singers speedily lost their voices in their attempts to shout down the band; and the real reason why the Bayreuth performances have been suspended this year is that all the singers are disabled permanently, and an interval is necessary in order that a new supply of artists may be grown, to pass in turn to their doom. (Continental papers, please copy.)

These deplorable results were brought about by Wagner's conceited contempt for all the great composers who preceded him. He was totally indifferent to the setting of words to music (like Beckmesser), and whenever in his works the musical accent follows the verbal accent, the agreement is to be regarded as a fortuitous coincidence, unintended by the composer. Mr Wallworth then sang, as an example of perfect setting of words to music, the recitative to The trumpet shall sound from the Messiah, and gave the phrase "in the twinkling of an eye" exactly as Handel wrote it: that

is, with the accent on the "of." Altogether it was a very remarkable lecture, well worthy the consideration of those who may have an interest in estimating the value of Trinity College as an educational institution.

A SENTIMENTAL VOLUPTUARY

The World, 21 June 1893

A concert of chamber music selected exclusively from the works of Johannes Brahms is not supposed to be the sort of entertainment to put me into the highest good humor. Herein, however, I am wronged. Such a reputation as that of Brahms is not to be won without great talent. Unfortunately, music is still so much of a mystery in this country that people get bewildered if they are told that the same man has produced an execrable requiem and an excellent sonata. There seems to them to be no sense in going on in this inconsistent way; for clearly a requiem is a musical composition, and if a man composes it badly he is a bad composer; and a bad composer cannot compose a good sonata, since that also is a musical composition. Yet these very people can often see plainly enough that in pictorial art the same man may be an admirable decorative designer, colorist, or landscape painter, and an atrocious figure draughtsman; or, in literature, that good stories and bad plays, charming poems and fatuous criticisms, may come from the same hand.

The departments of music are not less various than those of the other arts; and Brahms is no more disposed of by the condemnation as tedious, commonplace, and incoherent, of those works of his which profess an intellectual or poetic basis than—well, the comparisons which offer themselves are numerous and tempting; but

perhaps I had better leave them alone. Suffice it to say that whilst Brahms is successful neither as an intellectual nor a poetic composer, but only as a purely sensuous musician, his musical sense is so much more developed than that of the average audience that many of the harmonies and rhythms which are to him simply voluptuous and impetuous, sound puzzling and imposing to the public, and are therefore surmised to be profoundly intellectual.

To me it seems quite obvious that the real Brahms is nothing more than a sentimental voluptuary with a wonderful ear. For respectability's sake he adopts the forms academically supposed to be proper to great composers, since it gives him no trouble to pile up *points d'orgue*, as in the Requiem, or to call a childishly sensuous reverie on a few simple chords, arranged into the simplest of strains for chaconne purposes by Handel, a set of variations on a theme by that master, or to adapt a ramble in search of fresh delights more or less to sonata form; but you have only to compare his symphonies and quintets with those of Beethoven or Mozart to become conscious that he is the most wanton of composers, that he is only ingenious in his wantonness, and that when his ambition leads him to turn his industry in any other direction his charm does not turn with it, and he becomes the most superficial and irrelevant of formalists.

Only, his wantonness is not vicious: it is that of a great baby, gifted enough to play with harmonies that would baffle most grown-up men, but still a baby, never more happy than when he has a crooning song to play with, always ready for the rocking-horse and the sugar-stick, and rather tiresomely addicted to dressing himself up as Handel or Beethoven and making a prolonged and intolerable noise. That this masquerade of his has taken in a considerable number of persons in Berlin and London is easily explicable on the hypothesis that they

see no more in Handel or Beethoven than Brahms can imitate; but again you have only to compare the agonies of lassitude undergone by a Requiem audience with the general purring over his violin concerto, or the *encores* Miss Lehmann gets for his cradle songs, to see that Monsieur Tout-le-Monde is not in the least taken in, though he does not venture to say so in the teeth of eminent counsel's opinion to the effect that he ought to be.

These being my views, I accepted Mr Ernest Fowles's invitation to his Brahms recital without misgiving, especially as the program did not include any of Brahms's enormities. It is true that I did not arrive in time for the first piece, nor wait for the whole of the last, as I should certainly have done had they been by Mozart; but that was because, being a more farsighted voluptuary than Brahms, I know that the pleasures of sense should be tasted with a fresh palate, and not wallowed in. So I left the audience wallowing the moment the sweetness began to pall; and they may be there still for all I know.

What I heard was the twentyfive variations and fugue (save the mark!) on that theme which Handel has already furnished with quite enough variations to supply the world for some centuries to come. Brahms's variations might, however, just as well be called variations on the key of B flat as on Handel's air. Mr Ernest Fowles played with much devotion and enjoyment; and though his technique and style are not of the calibre by which huge assemblies can be seized and carried away, being distinctly a chamber technique rather than a concert-room technique, yet, on that very account, the concert being one of chamber music, he gave the right feeling to several passages which would certainly have been knocked on the head by a fully equipped Rubinsteiner or Leschetitzkeian, especially in the violin sonata in G, which he played with Joseph Ludwig, who handled the

violin part with discretion and sympathy, if not with a very ardent appetite for its luxuries.

There was a tremendous crush at the Philharmonic to hear, or possibly to see, Paderewski. Gangways were abolished and narrow benches substituted for wide ones to make the most of the available space. Paderewski took advantage of the occasion to bring forward for the second time his own concerto, which is a very bad one. No doubt it was "frightfully thrilling" to Paderewski himself to fly up and down the keyboard, playing the piccolo and the cymbals and the big drum and every instrument except the pianoforte on it, and driving the band along, in spite of Dr Mackenzie, as if it were a coach-and-seventy thundering down a steep mountain road; but to me it was simply a waste of the talent I wanted to hear applied to some true masterpiece of pianoforte music.

I could see that he felt like a Titan when he was threshing out those *fortissimos* with the full band; but he had the advantage of me, for he could hear what he was doing, wheras he might just as well have been addressing postcards for all that reached me through the din of the orchestra. I do not want ever to hear that concerto again. It is riotous, strenuous, bold, vigorous, abounding in ready-made themes and figures, scored without one touch of sympathetic feeling for any instrument—least of all for the pianoforte, pardonable on the plea of youth and stimulating wilfulness in the first movement, clever and pleasing in the *andante*, and vulgar and cheap in the *finale*, which repeatedly made me rub my eyes and ask myself whether I was not really in the Empire Music Hall listening to a rattling ballet scene.

Perhaps the most exasperating feature of the work is that, with all its obstreperousness, the form is timidly conventional. Besides, Paderewski did not play it at all as well as Sapellnikoff, for instance, would have done.

His almost insolent masterfulness of execution and his anxiety to get the last inch of effect out of the work destroyed his artistic integrity as pianist. At the end there came a contest of obstinacy between him and the audience. He, very naturally, only valued the torrent of applause as an acknowledgment of the merits of his concerto, wheras many of the applauders plainly meant "We have sat out your confounded concerto like angels; now give us a nice little solo."

Over and over again he came up the steps only to retire again after that curious bow of his which is so like the action of a critic who, falling asleep at a concert, nods forward until he overbalances himself and recovers himself just in time to avoid falling with a crash on his nose. At last he relented and gave us a commonplace of his own which at least shewed that his power of treating a melody is unimpaired—though this had already appeared in the slow movement of the concerto. His recital this week, however, must settle what America has done or undone for him in other respects. It will also enable us to turn from his immature and second-hand achievements as an orchestral composer to his really creative achievements as the greatest of living pianists.

As for the rest of the concert, it was, of course, most horribly long, a second concerto (Max Bruch in G minor, conducted by the composer and played by Górski) having been wantonly thrust into it in order that the audience might enjoy their Turkish bath as long over two hours as possible. I therefore take a malign pleasure in recording the fact that the extra concerto had very poor luck, Górski being bothered from the first by the high pitch. When he found that he was agonizingly out of tune in the first solo, he took advantage of every *tutti* to screw up; but as the wind got sharper and sharper in the heat, whilst he, standing amid the strings, could not quite realize how flat he was,

he never completely remedied matters; and the warm applause he received was a recognition that he was not to blame, and had heroically made the best of a bad job, rather than an expression of any very exquisite pleasure experienced during the performance. Bruch's Achilleus spectacle music was brilliantly fired off by the band; but it contained nothing fresh. The Haydn symphony (E flat, with the drum roll) was so mechanically and unaffectionately played that it was hardly possible to pay any attention to it. The strings lumbered over the *andante* like a traction engine; and the one moment of relief was when the flattened-out major subject breathed for just a moment in the hands of the oboe. Madame Melba did not appear: her place was taken by Miss Palliser, who sang *Divinités du Styx*, a great air, too little known here, like all Gluck's music; also Grétry's *Plus de dépits*, which ought to have been sung more neatly or else not at all.

The concert ended with Sir Arthur Sullivan's new Imperial March, which will undoubtedly have a considerable vogue in the suburbs as a pianoforte duet. This finished the Philharmonic season, which has been, on the whole, one of improvement in the value and prospects of the Society. All that is wanted to accelerate the improvement is a rigid restriction of the duration of the concerts to a hundred and ten minutes at the outside, and the compulsory retirement of all directors at the age of ninetyfive, into a lethal chamber if possible.

I remember wandering into a theatre one oppressively warm evening in Munich, and seeing a comic opera, which presented the novel feature of a chorus in ordinary evening dress. It was a rollicking, Bohemian, *naïve* affair enough, good fun for a willing audience admitted on a modest scale of charges, but hardly suited for a London house with half-guinea stalls and a half-crown pit. There was a comic man whose sallies were immensely laughed

at; and as I could not understand one of them I fell into a deep melancholy, and at last went out and sentimentally gazed on Iser rolling rapidly by moonlight for the rest of the evening. This coat-and-waistcoat comic opera has turned up again, much glorified, at the Prince of Wales' Theatre as Millöcker's Poor Jonathan, himself none other than the comic man, now become intelligible to me and very funny into the bargain, in the person of Mr Harry Monkhouse. The additions made by Señor Albéniz and Mr Brookfield have made the work more pretentious; but they have also, I am afraid, weakened it by making it far too long. It contains much talk about music halls and opera companies which might pass if it were satire, but which, being in fact nothing else than theatrical "shop," ought not to have survived the first rehearsal. Mr Monkhouse is a coster who obtains a place as *chef* to a millionaire by writing himself a flattering testimonial, having learnt the necessary accomplishment in a reformatory. The millionaire first discharges him for making an ice pudding with mottled soap, and then, finding him about to commit suicide rather than face destitution, hands him over all his property. What is wanted to give the piece a chance of success is a vigorous blue pencil, to be wielded with a frank recognition of two facts: first, that Millöcker wrote quite as much vocal music as the piece will bear; and, second, that the parts on which Messrs Denny and Kaye waste their ability are worthless, and should, with the contingent parts for their pupils and *prima donnas*, be cut down to the barest cues for Miss Schuberth's songs and for such of the dances as the public shew any interest in. It will be a pity if Señor Albéniz's enterprise should suffer for want of a little energetic revision; for his management is an example to London in point of artistic aim and liberal spirit.