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Hermann Deiters

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### **Johannes Brahms**

Hermann Deiters (1833–1907) first met Brahms in 1856, and became an enthusiastic supporter of his work. This 'biographical sketch' was published in English in 1888, edited by J.A. Fuller Maitland, the English musicologist whose Robert Schumann in the Novello 'Great Musicians' series and Masters of German Music are also reissued in this series. Brahms was still alive and composing at this time: the book consists of a short account of his life followed by a critical review of all his works up to 1887. The preface states: 'That Johannes Brahms is by far the greatest composer of our time ... will not be contested by any musician whose claim to an opinion is based on an exhaustive knowledge of his works. ... Brahms has a place in the line of supreme masters in the craft of music, that line which stretches down without interruption through Palestrina, from a far earlier time.'

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HERMANN DEITERS



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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,  
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108004794](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108004794)

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2009

This edition first published 1888

This digitally printed version 2009

ISBN 978-1-108-00479-4 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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# JOHANNES BRAHMS

*A Biographical Sketch.*

BY

DR. HERMANN DEITERS

*TRANSLATED, WITH ADDITIONS*

BY

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EDITED WITH A PREFACE

By J. A. FULLER MAITLAND

*London*

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26 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

MDCCCLXXXVIII



## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

CONTEMPORARY biography has its obvious disadvantages, more especially when its subject is still living, and in the possession of fullest vigour of work ; but it has its own advantages to compensate for these. That it should take the form of personal reminiscences is greatly to be desired, since the peculiar merit of a contemporary account is more likely to be brought out by this than by any other method. Dr. Deiters has adopted this style in the short account which he prefixes to his critical review of all the works of Brahms, and there is no doubt that when the time comes for writing the composer's life—long may it be before the materials for such a work are completed by the master's death!—his biographer will find one of his most valuable sources of information in the

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

book which is here presented in an English dress. The biographical part of the work is of necessity short, for not one of the giants of music has had so uneventful a career as has fallen to the lot of Brahms, if we except Sebastian Bach, with whom, in this and many other respects, our master may be fitly compared. Since there is no prospect of our seeing the greatest composer of our time in England, we might well have expected a little more information as to his actual outward appearance and manner; but we must thankfully accept what we can get, and not grumble because the author has chosen to emphasize the important features of his compositions rather than to dwell upon the colour of his hair or the cut of his clothes.

That Johannes Brahms is by far the greatest composer of our time—taking that term in a wide sense, as including all the period since the death of Schumann

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—will not be contested by any musician whose claim to an opinion is based on an exhaustive knowledge of his works. Musical fanatics of various schools have attempted to institute comparisons between Brahms and Wagner, ignoring the fact that there is no possible standard by which their relative magnitudes can be measured. In the art, or rather in the combination of arts, which he himself invented, Wagner stands without a rival, and it is scarcely possible that a legitimate successor to his vacant throne will ever arise; but he could no more have written the *Deutsches Requiem*, or the four symphonies, than Brahms could have created *Parsifal*. Brahms has a place in the line of supreme masters in the craft of music, that line which stretches down without interruption through Palestrina, from a far earlier time. To compare him with his predecessors in that illustrious cate-

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gory would be, as Dr. Deiters says, an idle task ; suffice it to say that the prophetic mantle handed on to him by Robert Schumann, has in him found no unworthy wearer.

The manner in which the book has been rendered into English needs no apology, but it may be premised that the translator has chosen rather to reproduce as faithfully as possible the style of the original, than to clothe the author's thoughts in words which might perhaps fall less strangely upon English ears. The additional matter, in which the compositions of Brahms' later years are reviewed, will, it is hoped, be especially welcome to those whose admiration for the master's work is of recent growth, and who have had few opportunities of becoming acquainted with his earlier compositions. The complete catalogue appended to the translation does not appear in the original.