

**GUSTAV JENNER'S *CLARINET SONATA IN G MAJOR, OPUS 5*: AN ANALYSIS AND
PERFORMANCE GUIDE WITH STYLISTIC COMPARISON TO THE *CLARINET
SONATAS, OPUS 120* OF HIS TEACHER, JOHANNES BRAHMS**

by

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Gustav Jenner's Clarinet Sonata in G Major, opus 5: An Analysis and Performance Guide
with Stylistic Comparison to the Clarinet Sonatas, opus 120 of his Teacher, Johannes Brahms

BY

Elizabeth R. Aleksander

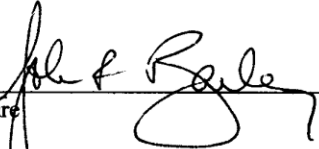
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**GUSTAV JENNER'S *CLARINET SONATA IN G MAJOR, OPUS 5*: AN ANALYSIS AND
PERFORMANCE GUIDE WITH STYLISTIC COMPARISON TO THE *CLARINET
SONATAS, OPUS 120* OF HIS TEACHER, JOHANNES BRAHMS**

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University of Nebraska, 2008

Advisor: Diane Barger

Gustav Jenner was Johannes Brahms' only composition student, but his works have not received the same attention that Brahms' have. Jenner's output includes chamber music, piano compositions, choral works, and over 200 Lieder. He wrote two pieces for clarinet, the *Sonata in G Major, op. 5* for clarinet and piano and the *Trio in E-flat Major* for clarinet, horn, and piano. Relatively little has been written about Jenner, especially in English, and this document begins by detailing Jenner's life and musical training, emphasizing his studies with Brahms, who was widely known as a demanding teacher. The first chapter continues with a discussion of the genesis of his clarinet works, including the influence of Richard Mühlfeld, to whom the *Sonata* was dedicated. Understanding Jenner's unique musical education and career is an important first step in interpreting his *Sonata*.

While Jenner's *Sonata* retains some elements of Brahms' style, and many authors have commented on the similarities between Jenner's *Sonata* and Brahms' *Sonatas, op. 120*, the connections are not as prominent as one might expect. Of particular interest is Jenner's

modification of traditional forms to suit his own compositional needs, which is explored in the second chapter. Also discussed is Jenner's harmonic language, which frequently includes both Classical fifth-related keys and Romantic third-related tonalities. The third chapter explores Jenner's melodies by examining their motivic construction and including references to similar melodies from Brahms' *Sonatas*. Jenner's use of developing variation in the first and fourth movements is also discussed, as well as its interpretive implications. Based on this analysis, suggestions for a meaningful interpretation of Jenner's *Sonata* are offered throughout the second and third chapters.

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PREVIEW

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CHAPTER 1: THE CLARINET MUSIC OF GUSTAV JENNER

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Cornelius Uwe Gustav Jenner, born 3 December 1865 in Keitum, Germany, was the third and final child of Anna and Andreas Ludwig Otto Jenner. Neither parent was musically inclined: his father – a doctor – descended from Scottish physicians, and his mother’s ancestors were seamen and merchants. The family moved several times in Jenner’s childhood, beginning with a relocation to Kettwig an der Ruhr in 1870. It was here that he first took piano lessons. His teacher’s last name was Möllenkamp, but no other details are known about his early piano studies.

Jenner’s family moved again in 1874, this time to Mülheim an der Ruhr. During this time, his father became worried that Jenner wouldn’t continue studying to be a doctor, as was expected in the family. Instead, he was growing more interested in music, even though he wasn’t taking formal lessons. Several years later, the family moved again, settling in Gleschendorf in 1879. Jenner was enrolled in the *Gymnasium* in nearby Kiel so that he could continue studying to become a doctor. Sometime during 1880, Jenner made his first attempts at composition, even though he initially had to hide this endeavor from his family since they still believed that he would pursue a career in medicine. These early compositions, including songs, choral works, and short piano pieces, were sometimes performed at his school, but he later destroyed them.

Jenner's father committed suicide in 1884,¹ leaving the family with no means of financial support. However, after this tragedy, several important figures emerged to assist in Jenner's musical education. That same year, Theodor Gänge, the choral director at Jenner's school, began giving him piano lessons, the first formal lessons he had received in ten years. In addition, Hermann Stange, a local organist, instructed Jenner on the organ; he made quick progress and soon equaled his teacher's abilities. In 1886, Jenner asked both of his teachers to recommend a composition instructor. Their suggestion was Arnold Krug (1849-1904), a composer, conductor, and pianist who taught in Hamburg, and Jenner soon began driving there for his weekly composition and instrumentation lessons.

Perhaps the most important figure to emerge in Jenner's musical training, however, was Klaus Groth (1819-1899), whose two eldest sons also attended Jenner's school. Groth, a poet and amateur musician, had been central in establishing Low German as a legitimate literary language with his book of poetry, *Quickborn*. Himself a pianist, Groth had many friends in the musical world, including Robert and Clara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, and Julius Stockhausen. In addition, Groth and his wife were active in the local musical community, hosting musical gatherings at their home with performers including Hans von Bülow, Clara Schumann, Julius Stockhausen, and Johannes Brahms. Groth had met Brahms (1833-1897) on 2 May 1856, and the

¹ On 10 February 1888, Groth wrote to Brahms of Jenner's father: "In the years of his practice [of medicine] he raped a whole number of women and girls; finally a legal action was brought and he was put on trial in Lübeck. When, after long, shocking hearings, cross-examinations, etc., the jury returned to the courtroom and gave a verdict of 'guilty,' which meant he would have been sentenced to a number of years in prison, he boldly and dexterously sliced his large neck artery and was within a minute a corpse." Trans. in Peter Russell, "Gustav Jenner," in *Johannes Brahms and Klaus Groth: The Biography of a Friendship* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 138-9.

two men quickly became friends. United by a love of rural Germany and its language, the two men's relationship deepened until Groth became one of Brahms' closest companions.²

Groth, whose sons had heard Jenner playing piano at school, took interest in him because of his musical talent and ambition. To further Jenner's studies, Groth sent several of his songs to Brahms' publisher, advisor, and close friend, Fritz Simrock (1837-1901), who in turn showed them to Brahms. After examining Jenner's compositions, Brahms replied that Jenner had talent but needed an education in music in order to be successful. Simrock suggested to Groth that Jenner meet with Brahms, for "he always supports with the greatest readiness a *serious* endeavour."³ This meeting, funded by a group of Groth's friends, took place in Leipzig in late 1887, and with the help of the same benefactors, Jenner moved to Vienna to study composition with Brahms from 1888-1895.⁴ On Brahms' recommendation, Jenner also commenced counterpoint lessons with Eusebius Mandyczewski (1857-1929), a prominent Viennese musicologist,⁵ conductor, and teacher of counterpoint and composition.

While studying with both Brahms and Mandyczewski, Jenner also served as the editor-in-chief of the Vienna *Tonkünstlerverein*, the conductor of two women's choirs, a piano teacher, and the director of the Society of Catholic Music Church in Baden. In addition, Jenner was active as a composer,⁶ and his music was performed at gatherings of Brahms' circle of friends, which

² Brahms also used Groth's poetry as the basis for twelve of his songs. For more information on Groth and his friendship with Brahms, consult Peter Russell, *Johannes Brahms and Klaus Groth: The Biography of a Friendship* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).

³ Trans. in Russell, "Gustav Jenner," 135.

⁴ Jenner's experiences with Brahms will be discussed in more detail in the following section.

⁵ Mandyczewski edited the first edition of Franz Schubert's complete works and assisted George Grove in writing *Beethoven and his Nine Symphonies*.

⁶ Jenner's oeuvre included sonatas, trios, quartets, piano compositions, choral works, transcriptions of German songs, and over 200 lieder. For a complete list of his compositions, see Werner Kohleick, *Gustav Jenner: 1865-1920. Ein Beitrag zur Brahmsfolge*, Musik und Schrifttum: Schriftenreihe des Musikwissenschaftlichen Seminars der Universität Marburg, ed. Hermann Stephani (Würzburg: Konrad Triltsch, 1843), 81-92.

included prominent Viennese musicians.⁷ Finally, several of Jenner's works received public performances, including two lieder sung by Gustav Walter, one of Brahms' favorite singers.

In spite of his achievements in Vienna, Jenner aspired to a permanent post. He realized this goal in 1895 when Brahms and Groth helped him secure the position of Music Director at the University of Marburg. Shortly thereafter, he expressed his relief at finding stable employment to Groth: "Above all, I can now not be thankful enough to have received at all regular employment and a field in which I can engage myself practically."⁸ His duties at the University included conducting music at academic ceremonies, teaching musicology, and conducting for the Academic Concert Society, which included chamber, choral, and symphonic performances. The University of Marburg honored Jenner with the title of professor on 26 April 1900 and presented him with an honorary doctorate on 13 November 1904.

While in Marburg, Jenner also maintained a satisfying personal life and a rewarding career outside the University. He had married Julie Hochstetter shortly before moving to Marburg, and the couple had two children there. In addition, he was active as a pianist, conductor, and composer, especially of chamber music. His high expectations for the ensembles he conducted, including those not affiliated with the University, helped establish Marburg as an important musical city.⁹ Finally, Jenner's scholarly ambitions emerged while in Marburg: he

⁷ Jenner specifically mentioned that Ignaz Brüll, Anton Door, Max Kalbeck, and Ludwig Rottenberg joined Brahms for his daily dinner at the Red Hedgehog. Brüll (1846-1907) was a virtuoso pianist and composer who had studied with Julius Epstein, one of Brahms' earliest supporters. Door (1833-1919) was also a pianist, and he taught piano at the conservatory in Vienna. Kalbeck (1850-1921) was an influential Viennese writer, poet, and music journalist who wrote a four-volume biography of Brahms. Rottenberg (1864-1932), like Jenner, was a student of Mandyczewski; he went on to conduct the Frankfurt Opera and accompany prominent singers, including Alice Barbi, Hermine Spies, and Gustav Walter.

⁸ Trans. Susan Marie Praeder in Stefanie Rauch, "Gustav Jenner (1865-1920): Life and Work," pub. in liner notes from Martin Litschgi (clarinet), Iryna Krasnovska (piano), and Nadja Helble (horn), *Jenner: Chamber Music* (MDG 6031343, 2005), 5.

⁹ Horst Heussner, "Der Brahms-Schüler Gustav Jenner," in *Brahms-Kongress, Wien 1983: Kongressbericht*, by the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien und Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Musikwissenschaft, ed. Susanne Antonicek and Otto Biba (Hans Schneider: 1988), 256.

wrote articles on Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Handel.¹⁰ Prominently featured in his literary output of this period is his work *Johannes Brahms als Mensch, Lehrer, und Künstler: Studien und Erlebnisse*, an account of his studies with Brahms.¹¹ Gustav Jenner died on 29 August 1920 in Marburg.

RELATIONSHIP WITH JOHANNES BRAHMS

Groth and Simrock had laid the foundation for Brahms to see Jenner in Leipzig in 1887, but Brahms required further persuasion before he agreed to the meeting. Hermine Spies, one of his favorite singers, happened to see Jenner around that time, and in a letter to Groth dated 6 September 1887, she mentioned that “he seems to be so modest and nice, and has such pretty eyes.”¹² Brahms wrote to Groth in November or December, seemingly receptive to a visit with Jenner: “I would be glad to see your protégé, and after a few more congenial meetings, I might also have hopes of being useful to him.”¹³ However, in the same letter, Brahms provided a justification for why this would probably not happen:

However – whenever I come to your neighborhood it is for a few hectic days, and it’s a long way to Vienna! Young North German artists live here all the time; whether your friend is in a mood and position to do so, I don’t know. I also don’t

¹⁰ Jenner’s published articles include “Beethovens Testament vom Jahre 1802 und seine Eroica-Symphonie” (1904, *Dürrs Deutsche Bibliothek*), “Georg Friedrich Händel und Johann Sebastian Bach. Eine Antithese” (1904, *Dürrs Deutsche Bibliothek*), “Unvollendeter Kanon von Johannes Brahms” (1908, Kalbech’s *Johannes Brahms*, vol. 2), “Johann Sebastian Bachs Weihnachtsoratorium. Ein Vortrag vor der Aufführung des Werkes in Marburg am 17 Dezember 1911” (pub. 1912, *Christlichen Welt*), “War Marxsen der rechte Lehrer für Brahms?” (1912, *Die Musik*), “Zur Entstehung des D-Moll Klavierkonzertes op. 15 von Johannes Brahms” (1912, *Die Musik*), “Horatii carmen saeculare ad Apollinem et Dianam” (1916, *Berliner Philologischen Wochenschrift*; written with C. Loewe), and “Betrachtungen über Programmmusik” (1917, *Hannoversche Schulzeitung*).

¹¹ This work was first printed in *Die Musik* in 1903 and subsequently published as a separate book in 1905, 1930, and 1989. Portions of it were translated into English by Susan Gillespie and appear in *Brahms and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 185-204.

¹² Trans. in Russell, “Gustav Jenner,” 137.

¹³ Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, trans. Josef Eisinger and Styra Avins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 651.

know with whom he has studied or is studying still? etc. In short, there is easily more to ask than to answer!¹⁴

Groth responded on 23 December 1887 to tell Brahms that Jenner would be in Leipzig on 1 January for a performance of Brahms' *Double Concerto, op. 102* and that he sought Brahms' advice on this occasion.

With this final encouragement, Brahms agreed to meet Jenner in Leipzig in late December. At that time, Jenner presented Brahms with several choral works, lieder, and a trio for piano, violin, and cello. According to Jenner, when Brahms evaluated the first movement of the trio, he made

some preliminary remarks to the effect that he had received a generally positive impression of my compositions.... [Then] with devastating precision Brahms demonstrated to me the lack of logic in the structure.... I realized that the bond that was supposed to hold [it] together was less an internal than an external one; it was nothing more than the device of sonata form. The essence of form began to reveal itself to me.... Sonata form must emerge of necessity from the idea.¹⁵

Brahms' appraisal of Jenner's other works was similar to this; however, despite this harsh criticism, Brahms was never unkind. Jenner recalled that

everything seemed softened by a good will that won my confidence: he showed me without leniency or any possibility of objection that I didn't know how to do anything.... Before my eyes a new world was dawning. I saw the correct road to the land of true art clear and palpable in front of me, even if that realm itself was still lost in fog.¹⁶

Upon his return from Leipzig, Jenner wrote to Brahms on 13 January 1888 requesting composition lessons: "You yourself, dear doctor sir, said to me that there was something in my works that gave you joy."¹⁷ Brahms responded later that month, "I have no other advice for you than to come here and study with Mr. Eusebius Mandyczewski.... Whatever you might wish to

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Gustav Jenner, "Johannes Brahms as Man, Teacher, and Artist," trans. Susan Gillespie, in *Brahms and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 187.

¹⁶ Ibid., 189.

¹⁷ Trans. Praeder in Rauch, "Gustav Jenner," 4.

have from me is at your service in full measure.”¹⁸ However, Jenner did not have the financial means to move to Vienna, so Groth and his friends provided enough money for Jenner to study with Brahms for at least two years. As such, Groth wrote a letter on 10 February asking Brahms to “warn him against frivolous spending: he is good, but inexperienced,”¹⁹ but Brahms reminded Groth on 8 March that Jenner “is here not because of me but because of Mandyczewski, [and] simply has to do some learning.”²⁰ In his reply, Groth stated that Brahms’ advice and support – not his compositional knowledge – were all he had been requesting.²¹

Jenner arrived in Vienna on 13 February 1888 and went straight from the train station Brahms’ home. Brahms proceeded to give Jenner a tour of Vienna wherein he introduced Jenner to Mandyczewski and took him to lunch at the Red Hedgehog. Jenner recounted the events of that afternoon and the following days in a letter to Groth dated 17 February:

I will gain a lot from Brahms. I see him every day and he is always very friendly towards me. Even in non-musical matters he troubles himself about my well-being. For example he inspected accommodation with me, and also rented a room with me. Since money-purses can’t be used at all here, as the currency is almost exclusively paper-money, he presented me with a wallet. Similarly I am using a coffee-machine, tea-spoons, plate and cup from him.... On Monday evening I went with Brahms to the Composers’ Association. Met some musical celebrities of Vienna: Hellmesberger, Door, Epstein, Rottenberg etc.²²

In Jenner’s first few weeks in Vienna, the two men often went on walks and ate meals together at the Red Hedgehog. Jenner soon began his lessons with both Mandyczewski and Brahms, and both seminars proved frustrating. He did not progress quickly in his counterpoint studies with Mandyczewski, and Brahms’ criticisms were even more harsh than they had been in Leipzig. As Jenner stated, “Not until a whole year later did Brahms remark on some occasion:

¹⁸ Jenner, “Johannes Brahms,” trans. Gillespie, 190.

¹⁹ Trans. in Russell, “Gustav Jenner,” 139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 140.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, 139.