The limits of the lied: Brahms’s
Magelone-Romanzen Op. 33

NATASHA LOGES

Singing in private circles

What does the praise of crowds mean to me? I enjoy it more when I sing within my own four walls, and two or three dear friends take pleasure in it.¹

(Letter from Amalie Joachim to Bernhard Scholz, 20 April 1863)

Within Brahms’s circle, there are many accounts of performances of instrumental chamber works in private homes, and such memories were often captured because they involved exceptionally able, often professional, performers.² The banker and amateur pianist Rudolf von der Leyen (1851–1910) recalled with pride that when Brahms visited him in Krefeld during the 1880s, the players were of such a high standard that ‘the first time Brahms played in our home (I think he played his A-major Quartet), after the first movement, he said in astonishment: “Heavens, one really has to concentrate and play well here.”’³ Many such performances were also significant events in the hosts’ social calendars. In contrast, the private performance of song presented a more diverse picture and is less frequently accorded comparable significance. Singing was far less consistently professionalised and embraced an enormous variety of styles, technical demands and aesthetic meanings, within forms ranging from a single unaccompanied line to many pages. For a song composer as prolific as Brahms, this raises a number of questions: how did he negotiate this range? What technical and aesthetic expectations might he have held, both inside and outside his circle? And how might he

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¹ B. Scholz, Verklungene Weisen (Mainz: J. Scholz, 1911), p. 175. All quotations have been translated by the author unless otherwise indicated.
³ R. von der Leyen, Johannes Brahms als Mensch und Freund: Nach persönlichen Erinnerungen (Düsseldorf: Langewiesche, 1905), p. 24. Von der Leyen’s memoirs contain numerous accounts, particularly of Brahms’s visits to Krefeld in the 1880s, mentioning private performances of chamber works with Alwin von Beckerath on viola.
have attempted to reconcile those considerations with the transition of the lied from home to concert hall, as exemplified by the career of his friend and colleague, the baritone Julius Stockhausen?4 In this chapter, these issues are explored firstly in general terms, and then through the specific case of the Magelone-Romanzen Op. 33.5

It is well known that Brahms’s circle included some impressively able amateurs, most notably Elisabeth von Herzogenberg. Her pianistic skill is well documented, but Clara Schumann’s diary entry from May 1877 also testifies to her vocal capabilities:

This month brought us much beauty, first on 3rd–8th, the visit from the Herzogenbergs . . . It was a great pleasure for me to make music with this woman, what a gift, and what ability! . . . And how charmingly she sings too; how soulful her voice is, without exactly being beautiful; how she grasps everything!6

Another able amateur was Maria Fellinger (1849–1925).7 According to the recollections of her son Richard Fellinger, in 1885 she regularly met the pianist Anna Franz (née Wittgenstein) in order to go through Brahms songs. Franz is described as an ‘excellent pianist’ who ‘effortlessly mastered the difficult accompaniments of Brahms’s songs, soon leading to regular music-making between the two women’.8 Richard Fellinger’s account dating from spring 1886 includes many vocally demanding songs, such as ‘Das Mädchen’ Op. 95 no. 1 and ‘Der Tod, das ist die kühle Nacht’ Op. 96 no. 1.9 As a final example, Doris Groth (1830–78), wife of Brahms’s

4 Stockhausen (1826–1906) was regarded as one of the finest lieder singers and teachers of his generation. The standard biography remains the one by his daughter Julia Wirth, Julius Stockhausen, der Sänger des deutschen Liedes: Nach Dokumenten seiner Zeit dargestellt (Frankfurt: Engler & Schlosser, 1927).
5 These fifteen songs are sometimes referred to as the Romanzen: Magelone-Lieder and the Romanzen aus L. Tieck’s Magelone. Here, they are called the Magelone-Romanzen for concision.
7 Maria Fellinger was the wife of the industrialist Dr Richard Fellinger (1848–1903). Brahms met this musical and sociable family in the 1880s and they became close friends; some of the best-loved photographs of Brahms were taken by Maria.
friend the poet Klaus Groth (1819–99), recounted in a letter to Brahms of 2 April 1872 how she went through the two sets of Acht Lieder und Gesänge Op. 57 and Op. 58 at home accompanied by the lawyer and amateur musician Theodor Thomsen (1840–1927). Her letter expresses only admiration, mentioning neither the fearsome pianistic difficulties of songs like ‘Von waldbekr¨anzter Höhe’ Op. 57 no. 1 and ‘Blinde Kuh’ Op. 58 no. 1, nor the demands made on the voice by ‘Unbewegte laue Luft’ Op. 57 no. 8.10

Without mention of specific songs, however, it is difficult to gauge what was ‘normally’ sung in middle-class homes. Recollections such as Richard Fellinger’s, which name specific songs, are exceptional. Most accounts of singing, whether public or private, professional or amateur, mention no specific repertoire. Accounts might name composers: Clara Schumann recalled an informal visit of Amalie Joachim (1839–99; then Schneeweiss), at his family home in Hammelmühle in 1862:

During our trips in the area, wherever a piano was to be found, she was always ready to sing to the old man [Scholz’s father] Orpheus’s aria ‘Che farò senza Euridice’, the ‘Lindenbaum’ or other beautiful Schubert songs.12

It has been pointed out by Beatrix Borchard that in public concerts, which often took the form of a miscellaneous programme, information was given according to the following priorities: that something would be sung (usually indicated through the word Gesang); next, who the singer was; and finally, which items would be sung.13 A typical instance of this is Rudolf von der Leyen’s programme of a concert which took place in Krefeld on 26 January 1881. The items are described as follows: B♭ Sextet;

10 See her letter to Brahms in D. Lohmeier (ed.), Johannes Brahms – Klaus Groth: Briefe der Freundschaft, new edn (Heide: Boyens, 1997), p. 56. In a lengthy letter of 21 March 1872, Doris Groth implied that Thomsen was an excellent sight-reader. Of her own ability, Doris Groth wrote: ‘What we can do is very little, Dr Brahms, but we cannot live without music.’ Ibid., p. 55.
12 For a discussion of this, see B. Borchard, ‘Amalie Joachim und die gesungene Geschichte des deutschen Liedes’, Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 58/4 (2001), p. 269. Borchard argues that this situation changed towards the end of the century, although information that we would today consider essential such as opus number or the correct song title often remained scanty (one might find the first line of the song instead).
Schumann Fantasie (Brahms); Lieder (Jenny Hahn); and the Piano Quintet Op. 34.14

Some accounts imply that song was there to provide variety and diversion between more serious numbers, as in the letter below from Theodor Billroth to Ottilie Ebner regarding a house concert on 4 November 1877:

It would give us great pleasure if you would delight us with a few Brahms songs tomorrow evening... 'Blinde Kuh', 'Während des Regens', which I came to know through you, I have not yet forgotten. Or whatever else you want, if your mood permits, which I hope it does, – in major; we will hear wonderful works; a new piano quartet and a piano quintet by Brahms... but even the Scherzos in both superb works are far from cheerful; hence, between C minor and F minor, there should be major-key songs, or at least songs in a major-key mood!15

Given the absence of a consistent public or professional forum for lieder-singing during much of the century, it is unsurprising that an extremely wide range of conceptually as well as technically difficult songs is mentioned in connection with private performance. The Schubert songs which were performed at the home of Josef von Spaun (1788–1865), many of which crop up in other memoirs, included formally transparent, immediately appealing and perennially popular pieces like 'An Sylvia' D891 and 'An die Musik' D547. However, they also include 'Dithyrambe' D801, 'Das Zügenglöcklein' D871, 'Das Lied im Grünen' D917, 'Fragment aus dem Aeschylus' D450 and 'Der entsüßnte Orest' D699.16 Eduard von Bauernfeld’s (1802–90) memoirs of performances by Vogl and Schubert include the following songs: ‘Memnon’ D541, ‘Philoktet’ D540, ‘Der zürndenden Diana’ D707, ‘Der Wanderer’,17 ‘Ganymed’ D544, ‘An Schwager Kronos’ D369 and the Müllerlieder.18 But how representative are such accounts?

Are the specific songs listed by the memoirists precisely because they are

15 Letter of 3 November 1877, in O. von Balassa, Die Brahmsfreundin Ottilie Ebner und ihr Kreis (Vienna: Franz Bondy, 1933), p. 92. The works to which Billroth is referring are two of the three August Kopisch settings from Op. 58, the Piano Quartet in C minor Op. 60 and the Piano Quintet in F minor Op. 34.
17 Bauernfeld did not stipulate which song of this title he meant, although it is most likely to be the Schmidt von Lübeck setting (‘Ich komme vom Gebirge her’) D489, which was already extremely popular in Schubert’s lifetime.
18 Ibid., p. 226. Again, Bauernfeld did not define the Müllerlieder more closely, mentioning only that they suited the baritone Johann Michael Vogl (1768–1840) very well, so this might refer to either or both Die schöne Müllerin D795 or Winterreise D911.
exceptional and impressive? At the other end of the spectrum, many accounts testify to the enormous popularity of Brahms’s folk-song arrangements and lieder im Volkston. Richard Fellinger’s recollections suggest that such music evoked the profoundest and most personal response:

And to the same unforgettable memories belong the hours of communal music-making of the Schumann, Schubert, Mendelssohn and ‘Grandmother-songs’, which all resounded in our ears from our earliest youth and filled our young hearts. From Brahms, only ‘Guten Abend, gut’ Nacht’, ‘Sandmännchen’, and ‘So hab ich doch die ganze Woche’ and later, ‘In stiller Nacht’ were among them.19

The only named Brahms lieder in this account are two folk-song arrangements and two lieder im Volkston. In a letter to Brahms of 7 Oct 1871, Ottilie Ebner mentioned that she had sung to the philologist and folk-song collector Georg Scherer, who was staying nearby: ‘I sang to him “Das Veilchen”, a few folk-songs and a few other favourites of mine, – even he was completely converted, he was completely enraptured, particularly by the folk-songs.’20 An account by Eugenie Schumann (1851–1938) recalled that on an occasion when Antonia von Kufferath (1857–1939) sang at their home, she sang several of the Volkslieder, accompanied by Brahms, including ‘our favourite, “In stiller Nacht”’.21

There is some evidence to suggest a growing preference for folk-song models in solo song as the century progressed, but such inferences must be made with caution. Alice Hanson has commented that during the Biedermeier era, ‘salon recitals or Hauskonzerte often required the participation of all the guests, regardless of age or expertise’.22 After 1848, while ever more complex and demanding manifestations of the lied emerged, the practice of singing at home continued as a hangover of Biedermeier mentality. Hence technical accessibility remained an issue. In a footnote to an otherwise extremely positive review of Brahms’s Magelone-Romanzen, concern was expressed about the impact that the dense and exceptionally difficult accompaniments would have on the fate of these otherwise outstanding songs. In

19 Fellinger, Klange, p. 15. The songs to which he is referring are the ‘Wiegenlied’ Op. 49 no. 4, ‘Sandmännchen’ WoO 31 no. 4, ‘Sonntag’ Op. 47 no. 3 and ‘In stiller Nacht’ WoO 34 no. 8. The ‘Grandmother-songs’ refer to those of his own grandmother Josefine Lang (1815–80), who was a fine song composer. An excellent short biography and work catalogue are online at Musik und Gender im Internet: http://mugi.hfmt-hamburg.de/A_lexartikel/lexartikel.php?id=lang1815 (accessed on 5 March 2014).
20 Balassa, Ottilie Ebner, p. 65. It is not clear from her account which of the various settings of Goethe’s text ‘Das Veilchen’ is meant here.
The limits of the lied

a footnote to the review, the editor Selmar Bagge wrote: ‘How many friends of beautiful and expressive songs will be put off closer acquaintance with these songs by this?’

The question implies that amateur pianists would be trying the songs out, and we know that they did. Thus Doris Groth, a practised amateur, commented in a letter of 31 December 1873: ‘On Boxing Day, a few friends listened to several Magelone songs, and straight away were particularly struck by “Wie froh und frisch” [Op. 33 no. 14].’

The technical difficulty of the songs was also a reason why Breitkopf & Härtel initially rejected them, causing Brahms to turn to Rieter-Biedermann instead.

Outside Brahms’s circle of professionals and highly gifted amateurs, folk-song models dominated the market. The collector and arranger Friedrich Silcher rhapsodised about the ‘enthusiasm with which these songs have been received by the most educated people as well as those from the lower classes, each time I have had them sung.’

Silcher’s claim is borne out by the enduring popularity of anthologies such as the Musikalischer Hausschatz der Deutschen (The Musical Home-Treasure for Germans) which was reissued throughout the century in eleven editions between 1843 and 1901, by which time it contained 1,100 songs.

Such anthologies were published in their hundreds. A typical sample of their contents, a song by Christian Gottlob Neefe (1748–98) from the 1878 reprint of the Musikalischer Hausschatz, is reproduced in Example 12.1.

Although Brahms’s works may seem distant from this world, it is telling that the pianist Rudolf von der Leyen described Brahms’s folk-songs with the same language: ‘a real treasure for the German home’ (‘ein wahrer deutscher Hausschatz’). Several of Brahms’s original songs also share this style, notably ‘Die Trauernde’ Op. 7 no. 5, which is discussed in Chapter 10;

23 Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung 3/35 (30 August 1865), col. 577.
24 Letter from Doris Groth to Brahms in Lohmeier, Johannes Brahms – Klaus Groth, p. 71. In a letter of 10 December 1874 to Brahms, Groth also mentioned Betty Leo (b. 1823, no death date identified), Carl Reinecke’s sister and an excellent sightreader, accompanying Magelone songs in his home. Ibid., p. 79.
27 The first edition was edited by G. W. Fink (Leipzig: Mayer und Wigand, 1843).
28 The song was published as no. 2 of Musikalischer Hausschatz der Deutschen: eine Sammlung von über 1000 Liedern und Gesängen mit Singweisen und Klavierbegleitung, ed. H. Langer, 9th edn (Hamburg: Haendcke und Lehmkuhl, 1878).
29 Von der Leyen, Brahms, p. 30.
or they echo folk-like gestures such as the use of sixths and thirds in the accompaniment, as in ‘Vor dem Fenster’ Op. 14 no. 1 (subtitled ‘Volkslied’; Example 12.2).

If songs like Neefe’s setting or Brahms’s own ‘Die Trauernde’ can be considered a representation of what was expected from music aimed at amateurs, then the limitations placed on composers targeting the domestic market were clearly enormous. Given the contribution that song sales could make to a composer’s income, they could also not be ignored. Furthermore, composers might not expect much more competence from professionals. In a letter of 16 July 1878, Clara Schumann pointed out a place in the song ‘Todessehnen’ Op. 86 no. 6, in which a singer would have difficulty in placing the note correctly, and ‘since most singers are not that musical, it might be better to change it . . . Livia Frege sang it many times and managed it only with great effort, and she can actually sight-sing well.’

Ideological limitations were no less challenging; Laura von Beckerath’s description of her father’s reaction to Brahms’s Op. 6 *Sechs Gesänge* typifies the resistance that compositional innovation might encounter:

My father got hold of the Brahms songs Op. 6 as soon as they appeared, but it was indeed unsurprising that these songs, as somewhat outlandish Romantic ‘music of the future’, remained unappreciated in the music shelf of a home, which, in musical terms, only slowly and cautiously dared to transcend the borders set by works like Handel’s *Messiah*, Mozart’s *Figaro* and Weber’s *Euryanthe*.31

In short, composers who hoped to make an income from song composition often had to work within considerable restrictions.

**Amalie Joachim, Julius Stockhausen and the role of the concert hall**

Private and professional music-making had a complex reciprocal relationship which strengthened during the century following the expansion of the publishing industry. Professional singers played a significant role in the popularising of repertoire for the educated music-loving public to perform at home, thus the public’s tastes impacted upon what was sung on the stage. This was a development of practices from earlier in the century. Josef von Spaun, in his recollections of Schubert, captured the importance of Johann Michael Vogl’s private performances for the popularising of Schubert’s songs amongst ‘first-rate’ amateurs.32 Richard Fellinger articulated Gustav Walter’s similar popularising effect in the Brahms circle with the Lieder Op. 96, Op. 97 and Op. 106, which included four settings of texts by Fellinger’s grandfather Christian Reinhold.33 A comment in a letter from Simrock to Brahms from 1869 emphasises the need for frequent public performances to ensure the commercial success of a song, naturally of central importance to the publisher:

I would so appreciate it if Stockhausen would sing a great number of my songs – there is no other way to bring the things to the public than to sing them again and again.34

If the singer was to function as the locus between publishing house, concert hall and home, then his or her repertoire choices would necessarily be contingent upon the demands of the publisher as well as the market.

Beatrix Borchard has shown that the large number of lieder *im Volkston* sung in concert by Amalie Joachim reflected not only her personal preferences but the interests of publishers, particularly Simrock. Joachim played a central role in the dissemination of Brahms’s songs, introducing the audience to tempting new works not just for listening, but to try out themselves. She enjoyed excellent relationships with many contemporary composers; as such, half of her programmes (as far as can be traced) consisted of new works, most of which she sang only once or twice. Nevertheless, she enjoyed particular success with certain Brahms songs; out of a total of 139 songs, she sang ‘Feldeinsamkeit’ Op. 86 no. 2, ‘Wiegenlied’ Op. 49 no. 4, ‘Vergebliches Ständchen’ Op. 84 no. 4 and the Zigeunerlieder Op. 103 most often in public. Notably, she also sang some of the arrangements of the *Volks-Kinderlieder* WoO 31 (‘Dornröschen’ no. 1, which has many affinities with some of his early minor-key lieder *im Volkston*, and, more unusually, ‘Der Mann’ no. 5, which is hardly a typical concert item) as well as some of the *Deutsche Volkslieder* WoO 33. Lieder *im Volkston* also feature in her didactically conceived *historische Liederabende* (historical song-recitals) of the 1880s, including ‘Trennung’ Op. 97 no. 6 and the ‘Wiegenlied’ again. The balance was a difficult one, since not all reviewers felt that the folk-song had any place in the concert hall at all, despite popular tastes. A review of a concert of Amalie Joachim’s in the *Vossische Zeitung* of 1894 declared that ‘after all, the folk-song is made out of very fragile material; it resists transplantation into the concert hall with all its might’. A letter of 24 January 1874 from Klaus Groth to Brahms also suggests that not all listeners appreciated folk-song in the concert hall; he told Brahms that in a concert in Hamburg early that year, Amalie Joachim had ‘once again sung some of

37 Beatrix Borchard has compiled as comprehensive as possible a list from 1869 onwards of Joachim’s repertoire of Brahms songs, given the incompleteness of the sources. See Borchard, ‘Amalie Joachim und die gesungene Geschichte des deutschen Liedes’, pp. 272–7.
his little songs in folk style’, much to the annoyance of his (amateur) musical friend Theodor Thomsen.\textsuperscript{40}

Amalie Joachim cultivated a particular type of artistic profile. Her financial worries following her separation from Joseph Joachim in 1884 meant that she could not afford to alienate her audience. Her approach might be described as gently pedagogical. The baritone, conductor and pedagogue Julius Stockhausen presents a rather different picture. A formidable musician in his own right, he is comparable to Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in terms of his influence on the conception and performance of the lied. It is hard to overestimate his impact on the performance and reception of Brahms’s songs. Many accounts testify to his superb interpretative skills; nevertheless, his vocal technique seems to have been not without flaws. As early as 1854, a review of Eduard Hanslick’s, while praising Stockhausen’s Italian and French coloratura as well as his lieder-singing, noted that his voice, although beautiful, showed natural technical limitations and lacked power.\textsuperscript{41} In a letter to Simrock of 1869, Brahms complained that Stockhausen was vocally off form the entire winter, and had been unable to sing a single concert ‘con amore’.\textsuperscript{42} Bernhard Scholz also recalled that ‘Stockhausen’s voice was pleasant, but in no way large or compelling through its charm; but how he knew how to use it!’\textsuperscript{43} A review in the \textit{Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung} of a concert Stockhausen gave on 7 December 1867 declared that ‘Mr Stockhausen’s voice is no longer in full bloom in regard to its melting quality or power; but he understands how to make us entirely forget this through prudent moderation, proper economy, and brilliant interpretation.’\textsuperscript{44}

Stockhausen was also fiercely ambitious, and it is possible that promoting and developing the art of recital-singing afforded him a route to success not available through opera, where a reliable, powerful sound was indispensable. Thus he sought to professionalise the lied, most obviously through his performances of the complete song cycles of Schubert and Schumann, and notably through the first complete performance of \textit{Die schöne Müllerin} D795


\textsuperscript{42} Letter of 2 April 1869, in \textit{Briefe IX}, p. 70. \textsuperscript{43} Scholz, \textit{Verklungene Weisen}, pp. 125–6.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung} 2/51 (18 December 1867), p. 410.
in 1856 at the Musikverein, Vienna.\textsuperscript{45} It was also Stockhausen who requested Brahms’s orchestral arrangements of seven, possibly eight, Schubert songs in 1862, which remained unpublished during Brahms’s lifetime.\textsuperscript{46} We can contrast the composer’s attitude from a letter to Rudolf von der Leyen of 2 March 1890, Vienna, in which he declared that ‘a concert is a tedious thing, but the rehearsals for it, when good friends are present, are most delightful’.\textsuperscript{47} Elsewhere, concerning Alice Barbi, Brahms stated that ‘the concert hall is always a dubious pleasure . . . If Barbi and her singing appeal to you, you would have still more pleasure from it in a room alone with her.’\textsuperscript{48}

Furthermore, six years after the first \textit{Müllerin}, neither the public nor critics accepted performances of complete cycles as the norm; in a review of a complete \textit{Müllerin} by Stockhausen on 25 March 1862 in Leipzig, Eduard Bernsdorf commented that ‘only an artist like this can dare to attempt the experiment of singing twenty-three songs one after another.’\textsuperscript{49} In other words, such practices were not to be recommended to lesser singers, who would not have the artistry to sustain interest. Borchard also draws attention to an 1878 review of Schumann’s \textit{Frauenliebe und -leben} Op. 42 in which the critic writes that ‘one may compose series and sequences, but not present them in concert’.\textsuperscript{50} It was also not a practice of which Brahms always approved, particularly when the cycle was artificially held together, such as in the case of \textit{Schwanengesang} D957.\textsuperscript{51} Stockhausen’s vocal career and

\textsuperscript{45} He was accompanied by Benedikt Randhartinger. See \textit{Wiener Zeitung} no. 104, 6 May 1856, pp. 413–14. With thanks to Katy Hamilton for this reference.

\textsuperscript{46} For a discussion of these arrangements, see P. Jost, ‘Brahms’ Bearbeitungen von Schubert-Liedern’, \textit{Neues musikwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch} 7 (1998), 185–96.

\textsuperscript{47} Von der Leyen, \textit{Brahms}, p. 81.


\textsuperscript{49} Bernsdorf was quoted in \textit{Blätter für Musik, Theater und Kunst}, 8/27 (1 April 1862), p. 108. Bernsdorf most probably refers to twenty-three songs because the three Müller texts that Schubert did not set were also declaimed as part of the concert by a member of the Leipzig Stadthäuser. He continued that even Stockhausen could not dispel the tedium that must necessarily arise from such a uniformity of sound and form. This opinion was shared by Hanslick when he reviewed Stockhausen’s 1860 performance of \textit{Die schöne Müllerin}; having been very positive about Stockhausen’s earlier performances of Schubert cycles, he argued that attempting such an experiment too often was ‘hardly advisable’. See Hanslick, \textit{Aus dem Concert-Saal}, p. 237.

\textsuperscript{50} The concert took place in Hamburg on 6 January 1878. See \textit{Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung} 13/2 (9 January 1878), col. 29. The review is quoted in Borchard, \textit{Stimme und Geige}, p. 333.

\textsuperscript{51} For Brahms’s disapproval of the singing of \textit{Schwanengesang} as a cycle, see R. Heuberger, \textit{Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms: Tagebuchnotizen aus den Jahren 1875 bis 1897}, ed. K. Hofmann, 2nd edn (Tützing: Hans Schneider, 1976), p. 115. According to Heuberger, Brahms was irritated with the pianist Julius Roentgen because he had performed a number of songs from \textit{Schwanengesang}, and his justification was that Stockhausen had done the same.
The limits of the lied conception of lieder-singing was therefore highly unusual and evoked divided responses; although he sang folk-song arrangements like all other singers, he was hardly associated with them. This exceptional nature is reflected in the music which Brahms wrote with him in mind, and functions as a counterbalance to the more typical considerations which a song composer had to consider.

The conception and performance of the Magelone-Romanzen: Brahms’s attempt to retain domestic values in a concert work

The Magelone-Romanzen, composed in the 1860s and dedicated to Julius Stockhausen, reflect the complexity of the nineteenth-century lied genre, in terms of both conception and potential performance practices. This is a rare instance of Brahms publishing fifteen settings of a single poet almost all of one type, in a single opus – large, multi-sectional and linked by many musical connections, as well as by the underlying narrative alluded to in the title – albeit in five volumes and in two blocks separated by four years. Brahms’s treatment of his songs offers conflicting ways to understand his lied conception, and exemplifies the difficulty of reconciling the demands of the lied simultaneously as an unprofessionalised, domestic genre and an art form fit for the stage. The songs are listed in Table 12.1.

The texts for these songs were drawn from a novella by the Romantic poet, dramatist and translator Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853) called Die wundersame Liebesgeschichte der schönen Magelone und des Grafen Peters aus der Provence (‘The Wondrous Tale of the Beautiful Magelone and Count Peter from Provence’). The tale initially appeared in 1797 and was reissued in 1812 as part of a longer collection of stories, drama and poetry called Phantasus. It recounts the story of Count Peter and Magelone, who fall in love at a jousting tournament and flee together but then are separated by various fantasy-like twists of fate before, through a series of equally unlikely coincidences, they are finally united. A substantial proportion of the novella is taken up

Brahms remarked: ‘Well, I had little influence on Stockhausen and I was always against that sort of thing [derlei]. But if you know better, then that’s fine!’

52 See Hübbe, Brahms in Hamburg, pp. 14–15. On pp. 48–9 Hübbe also gives details of a concert on 11 March 1868 with Brahms at which Stockhausen sang folk-songs as encore items.

53 The songs were published by Rieter-Biedermann; the first six songs appeared in two volumes published in 1865, the remaining nine in 1869.

Table 12.1. Titles and date of composition of the Magelone-Romanzen Op. 33.

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<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Keinen hat es noch gereut’</td>
<td>July 1861</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Traun! Bogen und Pfeil’</td>
<td>July 1861</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Sind es Schmerzen’</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Liebe kam aus fernen Landen’</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘So willst du des armen’</td>
<td>May 1862</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Wie soll ich die Freude’</td>
<td>May 1862</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>‘War es dir’</td>
<td>By March 1864, rev. by May 1869</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Wir müssen uns trennen’</td>
<td>Between July 1861 and September 1865</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Ruhe, Süßliebchen’</td>
<td>July 1868</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Verzweiflung’</td>
<td>By 20 December 1866</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Wie schnell verschwindet’</td>
<td>? after 1859/60, publ. December 1869</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Muss es eine Trennung geben?’</td>
<td>? May 1862</td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Sulima’</td>
<td>May 1862</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Wie froh und frisch’</td>
<td>By May 1869</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>‘Treue Liebe dauert lange’</td>
<td>By May 1869</td>
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by the interspersed verses, which comment on each unfolding of the plot, mainly from the perspective of the hero, Peter, but also on occasion by the minstrel who opens the story, Sulima (the Oriental beauty who is infatuated with Peter), and Magelone herself.

The literary genre of the novella interspersed with verses, from which the Romances were drawn, had largely vanished in Brahms’s day, although it had enjoyed popularity earlier in the century. Examples include Eichendorff’s Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts (1826) and Viel Lärmen um Nichts (1833); another was Heyse’s 1850 collection of fairy tales, Der Jungbrunnen. Brahms knew and set texts from all these sources. Although Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister novels and Novalis’s Heinrich von Ofterdingen (which were inspired by Tieck) can hardly be described as novellas, they employ the same device. Such works were often printed with undemanding

55 There are also examples in some early novellas by other writers whom Brahms admired such as Gottfried Keller and Theodor Storm (e.g. the latter writer’s Immensee from 1849). The number of lyrics tends to be very small, and they disappear completely from the later works. For a detailed discussion of the generic questions raised by Tieck’s novella, see J. Daverio, ‘Brahms’s Magelone Romanzen and the “Romantic Imperative”’, The Journal of Musicology 7/3 (Summer 1989), pp. 343–65.

56 Brahms’s text ‘Lied’ (‘Lindes Rauschen in den Wipfeln’) Op. 3 no. 6 appears in Viel Lärmen um Nichts, for example. He set no fewer than eight texts from Heyse’s Jungbrunnen, four in the 12 Lieder und Romanzen für vierschalligen Frauenchor a cappella oder mit Klavier ad libitum Op. 44, and four in his Sieben Lieder für gemischten Chor Op. 62.
settings of the verses or Musikbeilagen, suggesting that the reader, while reading aloud, would go to the piano to sing the poems. The idealised location for such works is, therefore, a domestic one; the ideal context for the poems is the narrative into which they are set. However, in practice the poems frequently became independently famous, for example the songs of Mignon and the Harper from Wilhelm Meister and the two poems ‘Der Gärtner’ and ‘Wer in die Fremde will wandern’ from Eichendorff’s Taugenichts.  

Various authors including Eric Sams and John Daverio have interpreted Brahms’s ambitious multifaceted forms in Op. 33 as a reflection of Tieck’s own ambitious cross-genre work:

Just as Tieck’s Märchen lies midway between the lyric cycle and the Roman, or novel, so Brahms’s musical setting combines elements of the traditional song cycle (a group of musical lyrics), and the Romantische Oper (the musical equivalent of the Roman).  

In a letter of 6 October 1875 to his publisher Jakob Melchior Rieter-Biedermann, Brahms wrote that the ‘eleventh song’ (‘Wie schnell verschwindet’) might ‘naturally be transposed up for soprano’ while all the other songs would be in the low key. John Daverio, among others, has interpreted this statement as Brahms retaining the link to the original tale, since this text is ostensibly sung by Magelone. However, in an unpublished correspondence card which Brahms sent about a month later to the publishers in Leipzig, it is clear that the wish for a high transposition of the song stemmed from Rieter, not from Brahms himself, and concerned the transposed edition of the whole opus.

57 ‘Der Gärtner’ was set most famously by Mendelssohn, but a fine setting by Hans Pfitzner also exists (Op. 9 no. 1) as does a setting by Brahms for women’s chorus, horns and harp (Op. 17 no. 3) and various others. ‘Wer in die Fremde will wandern’ remains a popular poem in Germany today; Hugo Wolf set the text under the title ‘Heimweh’ (Eichendorff-Lieder no. 12).
59 See Briefe XIV, p. 253, where the sentence ends with a full stop; in the autograph correspondence it looks like a question mark.
60 Daverio, ‘Brahms and Romantic Imperative’, p. 345.
61 ‘Herr Rieter would like No. 11 in the Complete Edition for high voice. In this case, it is better to print it in G minor.’ Unpublished correspondence card, date-stamped 13 November 1875. Winterthurer Bibliotheken, Sondersammlungen, Ms Sch 156/2–13. The original song is in F minor. The existence of a copyist’s manuscript as engraver’s model in A minor in the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg suggests that Brahms at least temporarily agreed to Rieter’s desire for a higher transposition (see Werkverzeichnis, p. 119); it is possible that Rieter himself wished to retain a link to the original characterisation. This copy, however, contains a pencilled comment from Brahms that it should be in G minor for the ‘Gesamt-Ausgabe’.
Given that the songs are by no means unambiguously dramatic, as well as the performance issues they raise (discussed further below), there are neither any directly comparable musical models for the *Magelone-Romanzen* nor any obvious successors. Contemporary musical works cast in a similar mould usually involve larger forces, and tend to be described explicitly as cycles, such as Franz Abt’s (1819–85) *Rothkäppchen, ein Cyclus von neun durch Declamation verbundenen Gesängen* Op. 526, published shortly after the *Magelone-Romanzen* in 1876. This version of the tale of Little Red Riding Hood is for SSA solo, choir and piano, incorporates musical alternation between Rothkäppchen and the choir, solo numbers for the Wolf and Rothkäppchen’s mother, duets for a Nightingale and a Rose, as well as linking passages of declaimed verse. Also of this type is Carl Bohm’s (1844–1920) *Hänsel und Gretel: Ein Cyclus von Gesängen nebst Declamation als verbindendem Text* Op. 295 for soprano and alto solo, with SSA choir, piano and declaimed text, published in 1883. Another potential comparison is Edvard Grieg’s *Das Kind der Berge, Liedcyclus aus ‘Haugtussa’ Erzählung* Op. 67, published in 1898, which also loosely sketches a narrative. There is nevertheless a significant structural difference. The *Haugtussa* poems are drawn from an epic cycle of seventy-one poems, of which Grieg selected just eight. Hence there is no question of interspersing Grieg’s songs with any version of the tale. Brahms, on the other hand, set fifteen out of seventeen poems within a relatively compact story. In short, although there are other works which share individual features, the *Magelone-Romanzen* have neither direct precursors nor successors.

**Complete performance or individual songs?**

Within the critical tradition, the *Magelone-Romanzen* are usually regarded as a single unit because of the explicitly unifying title Brahms gave the opus, the single source of its texts, and the formal and thematic gestures which bind the songs together. But, as Dahlhaus has argued, ‘it is harder to demonstrate heterogeneity than to discover connections’. Certainly in

Ultimately, the song was printed in F minor for both the original and the low-voice versions.

My thanks to Katrin Eich for her generous assistance with this.

62 The poems selected by Grieg form a loose narrative in which the mountain maid Gislaug (she is not named in the song cycle) falls in love with a boy who then forsakes her.


Brahms’s day, Tieck’s *Magelone* poems were not treated as a unity but were quickly detached from the original narrative and set dozens of times between 1830 and 1900. The verses of ‘Ruhe, Süßliebchen’ (Brahms’s Op. 33 no. 9) were set at least thirty times in that period for forces ranging from voice and piano/zither/cello *ad lib.* to twelve-part male chorus, by figures as diverse as Franz Lachner (Op. 35, 1833) and A. B. Marx (Op. 15, 1846, for SATB and piano *ad lib.*).

Brahms’s own views, difficult though they are to glean, also suggest a preference for detachment rather than unification. A letter from 1894 to Simrock suggests that Brahms did not appreciate singers (even Amalie Joachim) performing more than two or three of his songs in a single recital.65 According to his biographer Max Kalbeck, the composer explicitly objected to clarifying the relationship between the Magelone narrative and the songs, thus making a complete performance somewhat impenetrable to an audience who was not intimately familiar with the tale.66 Brahms was adamant that the *Magelone-Romanzen* not be published with a connecting narrative, declaring that it had ‘nothing to do with my songs’, and that the publisher Rieter-Biedermann should certainly not print the opus thus.67 But perhaps the inclusion of the narrative would not have been necessary because it was familiar to the public. The original reviewer from the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* preceded his brief discussion of the narrative with the phrase ‘as is generally known’ (‘bekanntlich’), although given the decline in Tieck’s popularity during the century, this may be just a turn of phrase.68 Nor had the tale been set as an opera (which might be one way of popularising it, as had happened with Tieck’s *Melusine* and *Genoveva*, which had been drawn on respectively by Mendelssohn in the 1830s and Schumann in the 1840s).69

In any case, Brahms’s wishes were respected insofar as the songs were rarely performed all together. The baritone Georg Henschel (1850–1934) had a particularly strong affinity with two of the most demanding songs, no. 5 ‘So willst du des Armen’ and no. 6 ‘Wie soll ich die Freude’ – but as

65 ‘That Frau Joachim is even singing 20 of the songs and choral songs nowadays goes without saying. But I look forward to a time when once again, finally, a distinguished singer comes, who finds it more artistic and tasteful (and practical) to sing just two or three.’ See letter dated [28 August 1894] from Brahms to Simrock, in *Briefe* XII, p. 149. Hermine Spies was one such singer, who usually included just a small number of Brahms songs in her recitals.

66 See *Kalbeck* I, p. 428.

67 See the letter of [14 September 1875] to Melchior Rieter-Biedermann in *Briefe* XIV, pp. 249–50, 256. The connecting poem was by Otto Schlotke and was published by Rieter after Brahms’s death in 1899.


69 Kalbeck mentioned the popularity of the tales of *Melusine* and *Genoveva*. See *Kalbeck* I, p. 427.
far as has been established, he did not attempt to sing them in conjunction with the remaining thirteen. In a letter of 9 February 1875, Henschel wrote to Brahms from Berlin regarding a concert taking place two days later, in which ‘I am also singing “So wollst [sic] du des Armen” [Op. 33 no. 5]... I sang it last in Hamburg, unfortunately to the accompaniment levied upon me by Herr von Bernuth.’

Henschel’s diary entry of 28 February 1876 also recalled a private matinée musicale, albeit of a professional standard, at the home of the Princess of Hesse-Barchfeld, at which the Frankfurt String Quartet was present in order to play the Piano Quartet Op. 60:

Brahms... then accompanied me in the longest, and to me the finest, of his romances from Tieck’s beautiful Magelone, ’Wie soll ich die Freude, die Wonne denn tragen,’ Op. 33 no. 6.

They gave the song its public premiere nearly a year later on 18 January 1877 at the Gewandhaus, together with five other Brahms lieder (including further Magelone songs). Furthermore Henschel’s concert records from 1880 while in the USA tell us that he quite often performed this difficult song and ‘two other songs from the Magelone Romanzen’, accompanying himself.

Hermine Spies (1857–93) was already an established concert singer when she first met Brahms in 1883. Within her repertoire of Brahms songs there are two isolated numbers from Op. 33: ‘Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden’ no. 3 and, like Henschel, Op. 33 no. 6. She performed the former at a soirée with Joseph Joachim on 19 July 1883, at which she also sang ‘Dein blaues Auge’ Op. 59 no. 8, ‘Minnelied’ Op. 71 no. 5 and ‘Feldeinsamkeit’ Op. 86 no. 2. Op. 33 no. 6 was also performed by her on 26 March 1887 as part of a public concert given at the Bösendorfer Saal, accompanied by the pianist Eduard Schütz.

Helene Magnus (1840–1914), in a concert in Vienna organised by Julius Epstein in 1874, sang just three numbers from Op. 33. On 17 March 1887 in Leipzig, Amalie Joachim also sang three of the Magelone-Romanzen together with a number of other songs, in a concert which included the A major


71 Bozarth, Johannes Brahms & George Henschel, p. 28.

72 Ibid., p. 71. 73 Kalbeck III, p. 375.


76 See Ebert, ‘Hermine Spies’, p. 76. 77 Kalbeck III, p. 22.
Violin Sonata Op. 100, the C minor Piano Trio Op. 101 and the Rhapsodies Op. 79. She repeated the programme on 14 April 1887 in the Singakademie.\textsuperscript{78} Other singers less closely associated with Brahms also performed individual \textit{Magelone} songs: the tenor Heinrich Vogl (1845–1900), in a concert of 1874, sang ‘Das Lied vom Herrn von Falkenstein’ Op. 43 no. 4; ‘Die Kränze’ Op. 46 no. 1; the ninth \textit{Magelone} song, ‘Ruhe, Süßliebchen’; and ‘Auf dem See’ Op. 59 no. 2.\textsuperscript{79} Brahms himself accompanied the baritone Max Stägemann (1843–1905) in Op. 33 no. 5 in 1880.\textsuperscript{80}

Finally, the dedicatee of the set, Stockhausen himself, frequently sang the songs separately; just two instances are mentioned below. In Leipzig 1867, he sang nos. 3 and 4 accompanied by Clara Schumann.\textsuperscript{81} In Hamburg 1868 Stockhausen ‘sang “Die Mainacht” and “Von ewiger Liebe” . . . from the manuscript, in Berlin and Lübeck some Romances from \textit{Magelone}, and, accompanied by Brahms, alternated performances of a Schumann \textit{Liederkreis} and \textit{Dichterliebe} [Op. 48].\textsuperscript{82} The catalogue of arrangements of Brahms’s works shows that Theodor Kirchner also arranged only numbers 3, 5, 9, 12 and 14 for solo piano.\textsuperscript{83} More recently, a small number of singers have extracted individual songs from Op. 33: for instance, Elly Ameling and Rudolf Jansen recorded no. 12 ‘Muss es eine Trennung geben’ and no. 9 ‘Ruhe, Süßliebchen’ on a mixed Brahms CD (their own song bouquet, or \textit{Liederstrauß}, effectively).\textsuperscript{84} Håkan Hagegård and Thomas Schuback performed ‘So willst du des Armen’ Op. 33 no. 5 between ‘An den Mond’ Op. 71 no. 2 and ‘Wie bist du meine Königin’ Op. 32 no. 9 at London’s Wigmore Hall on 17 Oct 1978. Donald Miller sang five songs, Nos. 2, 3, 9, 11 and 14 on 23 May 1976, again at the Wigmore Hall.\textsuperscript{85}

The public premieres of the \textit{Magelone-Romanzen}, as far as has been established, took place separately between 1862 and 1877.\textsuperscript{86} While it is easy to dismiss this as a typical nineteenth-century miscellaneous approach to programming, the somewhat arbitrary approach taken by most singers was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} Borchard, ‘Amalie Joachim’, p. 283.
\item \textsuperscript{79} Kalbeck III, p. 22.
\item \textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 240. Stägemann was the nephew of the singer and actor Eduard Devrient (1801–77).
\item \textsuperscript{81} \textit{Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung} 2/51 (18 December 1867), p. 410. \textsuperscript{82} Kalbeck II, p. 217.
\item \textsuperscript{85} See concert programmes Wigmore Hall 23 May 1976 and 17 Oct 1978, GB-Lcm.
\item \textsuperscript{86} See \textit{Werkverzeichnis}, pp. 112–13. There is no record of the first performances of Nos. 7, 8, 10, 11 and 15. According to Max Friedlaender, Brahms told him of a complete performance with connecting text in Berlin in winter 1886, but this has not been verified. See M. Friedlaender, \textit{Brahms’ Lieder: Einführung in seine Gesänge für eine und zwei Stimmen} (Berlin and Leipzig: Simrock, 1922), p. 31.
\end{itemize}
advantageous to the fate of the Op. 33 songs, because a flexible approach increased the likelihood of them being performed. This stands in contrast to current practice, in which it takes musicians with unusual stamina and concentration to perform the whole work. Also, as has been shown, both male and female singers sang songs from the *Magelone-Romanzen* – a reflection of a century in which Julius Stockhausen sang *Frauenliebe und -leben* without raising eyebrows (unlike Matthias Goerne, who was largely vilified for his 2006/7 performances of this cycle).\(^{87}\)

Ultimately, it seems as though Brahms were trying to achieve two conflicting goals in this opus group at once: to create songs suitable for a superb lieder singer on the stage – but to make their performance as unrestricted as possible. The individual songs are not insurmountable in their difficulty, and their relationship to other technically simpler songs in his oeuvre also becomes more apparent when they are separated: for example, the textual relationship between ‘An den Mond’ Op. 71 no. 2 and ‘Muss es eine Trennung geben’ Op. 33 no. 12.

### Technical demands of individual songs

Within Brahms’s lifetime, commentators were not overtly concerned by the questions relating to genre which are raised by the ambitious scale and technical difficulty of the songs. In the review of the first two volumes of Op. 33 in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* of 30 August 1865, the emotional vicissitudes of the story were seen to provide sufficient justification for the choice of the multi-sectional song forms. The reviewer described the third song thus:

The entire song offers, in terms of melody and expression, substantial and significant wealth, and upon first hearing one will possibly be distracted by this and remain unsatisfied; but he who misses unity too much should remember that this poem is not concerned with a unified enduring sentiment, but rather with a story of a heart in turmoil, which constantly enters new phases.\(^{88}\)

Nevertheless, Brahms’s intellectually (and physically) demanding settings are almost shocking compared with other settings from the century. The

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87 ‘When a singer of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau’s standing has denounced the project as “ridiculous, stupid and wrong”, you have to take note . . . Schumann was not just writing songs from a woman’s point of view; he must have had a woman’s vocal quality and temperament in mind as well.’ G. Norris, ‘Crossing the Border between the Sexes’, *The Telegraph* 26 April 2006. Similar views were expressed in other leading papers.

88 *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 3/35 (30 August 1865), col. 575.
verses of ‘Ruhe, Süßliebchen’ provoked in most composers a rather generic response to the lullaby text. The 1837 setting by Friedrich Curschmann (1805–41) is typically charming – and well within the boundary of an amateur’s capabilities (Example 12.3).

By contrast, Brahms’s setting presents not a straightforward lullaby, but a distillation of the idea of rocking. This is expressed through different textures, harmonies and tempi, tied together by the $\frac{6}{8}$ rhythm, reflecting the changing fantasies of the protagonist Peter as he lulls the beloved Magelone to sleep. It opens with a hypnotic off-beat rhythm and an oscillating V7–Ic harmony over a dominant pedal. When it cadences in bar 10, it does so on the dominant (Example 12.4). Overall, the song has an ABA′CA″ form, in which the sections are progressively more technically demanding, culminating in the C section’s turbulent, forte semiquaver accompaniment (Example 12.5). This arpeggiated accompaniment gradually thins out into the opening texture before the song ends, creating an impression of a considerable mental journey rather than a simple lullaby.

**Bringing the Magelone-Romanzen nearer to home**

A letter of 1866 – when only the first six Magelone songs had been published – from Hermann Levi to Clara Schumann shows how differently the individual Magelone-Romanzen could be perceived. He wrote:

have you played the Cello Sonata [Op. 38] in public already? I think it must find approval – but I think this of every new work by Brahms and yet the Philistines will have none of it! Advise him instead to publish a volume of songs (‘Wiegenlied’, ‘Dunkel wie dunkel’, ‘Wann der silberne Mond’, ‘Verzweiflung’ and so forth). I play the latter (in C minor) to myself daily and bellow the text to it.89

Presumably the idea was that Brahms would be able to woo his audience with some charming and accessible songs – but the last of these is the highly virtuosic Magelone-Romanze ‘Verzweiflung’ Op. 33 no. 10, an extraordinary song to mention in this context, although seemingly not to Levi. It is only when the opus is approached as a group that it makes extraordinary demands. Brahms, with one eye on the market, was clearly aware of this. According to Kalbeck, Brahms expressed concern about this to the singer Ottilie Ebner:

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He brought . . . manuscripts of songs, which he went through with me. ‘Don’t you find’, he asked me once very anxiously, ‘that these songs are uncomfortable to sing?’ They were the Magelone songs, which he was composing at the time.90

Once the demands on stamina are alleviated, the songs become much more accessible to a wider range of singers and the folk-song-rooted conception of their multi-sectioned forms becomes more evident. There is not one consistently dramatic, recitative-based, declamatory or even genuinely through-composed song in the opus. Taken individually, the suitability of at least some of the songs (in particular Nos. 4, 8, 11 and 12) for performance by a wider range of singers is evident, and this perhaps provides the reason why Brahms so adamantly protested against complete performances of the set. At the time of writing, research being carried out by Laura Tunbridge

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90 Quoted in Kalbeck II, p. 107.
suggests that the practice of singing complete cycles (especially outside of Germany and Austria) did not become the norm until well into the twentieth century.\footnote{With thanks to Laura Tunbridge for this information.}

Even Julius Stockhausen's view of the status of the lied seems to have altered. In 1871, he wrote to Ferdinand Hiller that he no longer wished to sing lieder at the Lower Rhine Music Festival because 'these dear little party pieces [\textit{Cabinettstücke}]' had no place at a large music festival,\footnote{R. Sietz (ed.), \textit{Aus Ferdinand Hillers Briefwechsel: Beiträge zu einer Biographie Ferdinand Hillers}, vol. III: 1870–1875 (Cologne: Volk, 1964), p. 140, quoted in Borchard, 'Amalie Joachim', p. 281.} \textit{Dichterliebe}, which he sang many times in the 1860s, was thereafter only performed by him in 1871 and then again in 1888 to celebrate his fortieth anniversary as a singer.\footnote{See R. Hofmann, 'Julius Stockhausen als Interpret der Liederzyklen Robert Schumanns', in M. Wendt (ed.), \textit{Schumann Forschungen} 9 (Düsseldorf: Robert-Schumann-Gesellschaft, 2005), p. 40.} Attitudes to the lied changed only very gradually; as late as 1902, the critic Paul Marsop declared that it was ‘barbarous’ to sing songs in concerts, since they were ‘in the noblest sense of the word, \textit{Hausmusik}'.\footnote{P. Marsop, 'Der Musiksaal der Zukunft', \textit{Die Musik} V, 1902, pp. 3–4. Quoted in E. Kravitt, 'The Lied in 19th-Century Concert Life', \textit{Journal of the American Musicological Society} 28 (Summer 1965), p. 216.}

Brahms the composer was a stickler for detail – but as a practical musician he recognised the value of flexibility and compassion in the face of the considerable technical demands in many of his works. Henschel recounted an occasion at the Cäcilien-Fest in Münster in 1876, where he was to sing the solo from the \textit{Triumphlied}. He was, however, very hoarse from a cold. He recalled that Brahms did not mind him altering ‘some of the highest notes into more convenient ones on account of my cold’. Brahms said: ‘As far as I am concerned, a thinking, sensible singer may, without hesitation, change a note which for some reason or other is for the time being out of his compass, into one which he can reach with comfort, provided always the declamation remains correct and the accentuation does not suffer.'\footnote{Bozarth, \textit{Johannes Brahms & George Henschel}, p. 24. Diary entry of 3 February 1876, Münster.}

Furthermore, Brahms needed to work actively against a reputation for excessive complexity in comparison with Schubert and Schumann. Concerning Amalie Joachim’s ‘historical song-recitals’ mentioned above, at least one reviewer felt that Brahms could not achieve the simplicity of the earlier masters. This review is worth quoting at length:

\begin{quote}
[Brahms] could basically never reach the height of a Schubert or a Schumann because, in the realm of the lied, he does not possess the authenticity (\textit{Ursprünglichkeit}) and naturalness through which Schubert and Schumann
\end{quote}
ascended to such heights. Brahms’s lieder demand – with a few exceptions – not only a much more serious commitment from the listener than those of Schubert and Schumann in order at all to connect with the emotions, but worse still, they do not even offer sufficient reward. The sombre, bitter and rough, the introverted, the pessimistic, often overwhelm to such an extent that only those who perceive the highest artistic ideals in the expression of such moods (Stimmungen), can regard him in this genre as an equal to the great masters of the past.96

The Magelone-Romanzen remain too technically demanding to be brought literally into the home except by the most accomplished of amateurs; if the home is, however, thought of as a space where flexibility reigns over correctness, where a high note can be changed, where numbers that are less well-loved can simply be omitted or rearranged, then the evidence suggests that Brahms did indeed wish to keep his songs in the home as far as possible. Subsequent conceptions of what makes a good song and a good recital have narrowed, resulting in comments such as those made by the music critic A. H. Fox Strangways in 1940: ’Brahms’s first and last settings exceed, it is true, the natural limits of a song, which is two minutes of eternity.’97 As Carl Dahlhaus has argued, flexible approaches came to be seen as increasingly wrong:

The breaking-out of pieces from their context – a paradigmatic example is the transformation of Schubert’s ’Lindenbaum’ into a folk-song [volkstümliches Lied], interference with the musical text, and changes of instrumentation become suspect under the rule of aesthetics.98

For many of Brahms’s companions, music-making was an exalted activity. Thus Clara Schumann admonished Brahms: ‘that which pleases the public immediately is not the yardstick for you and your musical friends!’99 However true this was, and however professionalised lieder-singing grew, solo vocal music largely retained intimate associations for Brahms, bound up with music-loving friends, amateurs, cozy evenings in people’s homes, his own love of folk-song, and his middle-class values; a reminder of his belief, expressed as early as 1858, that the world of art was ultimately a republic, not an aristocracy.100

96 Vossische Zeitung, 4 February 1888, quoted in Borchard, ’Amalie Joachim’, p. 278.
98 Dahlhaus, Trivialmusik, p. 16.
100 Ibid., p. 40.