



## J. Brahms: Symphony No. 1 & H. Vieuxtemps: Violin Concerto No. 5

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### Audiophile Audition (Gary Lemco - 2007.11.04)

Karl Boehm (1894-1981) still looms large in the annals of German music-making, a literalist who often achieved strong yet diaphanous textures in the scores he admired, his repertory concentrated mainly in the symphonic-operatic tradition he had absorbed while positioned in Graz, Munich, and Dresden. The Brahms C Minor Symphony and Vieuxtemps Concerto originate from the 5 April 1963 Koeln concert; and the latter, with Roumanian virtuoso Lola Bobesco (1920-2003), is their only surviving inscription of this lyrical work, so long a Heifetz staple.

The Brahms moves quickly, the first movement repeat omitted, but with muscular gestures. What moves me is the strength of the *Andante sostenuto*, with oboe and French horn in lovely tandem, a haunted string line pursuant. Really autumnal Brahms, melancholy and expansive. The violin solo at the end of the movement achieves a valediction that does not necessarily forbid mourning. Tender song in the third movement *Allegretto*, its five-bar phrases graciously symmetrical in the manner of a hearty, Classical cassation. No sonic decay permitted before we are in the throes of the last movement, whose mysteries and dark hues extend from Beethoven's Ninth. The deliberate *Adagio* yields to passionate, sudden shades to evocations of the Black Forest. The French horn and flute duet nods affectionately to the tympanic under girding of the tension until we have our familiar hymn-tune. The development grants us sweep and passion, confused alarms mollified by the coda's heroic impulse.

To hear a Teutonic sensibility like Boehm in Gallic, particularly Belgian, repertory is indeed a rarity. The fifth of the Vieuxtemps concertos (1859) has a curious structure, its long first movement followed by a small jewel of an *Adagio* and then a whiplash finale that rivals the end of Chopin's Funeral March Sonata for brevity. Fiery, rhetorical, wistfully introspective, the music takes on a burnished, throbbing tone from Bobesco, her cadenza a blue demon. The *Adagio's* segue to the last movement rises into a paean to romance and to violin artistry. Sonics are quite good.