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KNOW YOUR CLASSICS

THIS is one of a further series of articles written for "The Listener" by BESSIE POLLARD. As with the preceding series, published some time ago, the aim is to help the student and the interested listener towards a more complete appreciation of good music.

(8) Double Concerto in A Minor, Op. 102 (Brahms)

THE Double Concerto in A Minor, Op. 102, for Violin, 'Cello and Orchestra, was Brahms's last great orchestral work, written for his friends Joseph Joachim, the violinist, and Robert Hausmann, the 'cellist. In the decade between the completion of this work in 1887, and his death in 1897, Brahms concentrated on part-songs, chamber music and lieder.

The first movement begins with a short orchestral prelude (based on material heard in full later in the movement), following which we hear the solo 'cello in a recitative-like unaccompanied passage. Later the solo violin and 'cello join together in an arpeggio passage which leads to a tutti section announcing the main themes of the movement. The principal subject is a forceful theme, full of character—



The subsidiary theme is rather more ingratiating—



Upon those two quoted melodies is built the whole of the movement. The slow movement is deeply emotional, richly coloured and intensely poetical. Listen for the four notes (A—D—E—A) scored for horns answered by wood-wind, which open the movement—not only do they form part of the main theme, but they appear again at the end re-grouped as E—A—A—D. The beautiful main subject played by the solo instruments in octaves ("A" below) accompanied by strings later augmented by wood-winds, follows immediately after the four-note "motto" motif; a change of key brings a new theme ("B" below), given to the wood-wind.



In the third movement Brahms introduces, as he does in the Finale of the Violin Concerto, a suggestion of gipsy music. The principal subject is given out by the 'cello, later passed to the bassoon, then to oboe and flute, and finally to the solo violin—



Soon a new theme is announced—note its syncopated rhythm,



This Finale has the most masterly writing for the soloists and the work is brought to a brilliant conclusion by a splendidly orchestrated Coda.

The Double Concerto in A Minor, Op. 102, by Brahms, will be heard from Station 2Y2 on Thursday, February 17, at 3.15 p.m.