

**"Machen Sie es wie sie wollen, machen Sie es nur schön": Johannes Brahms,  
his  
interpreters, and performance practice.**

Johannes Brahms is reported to have told the pianist Fanny Davies that she should play in the way she wants to as long she plays beautifully. This is both a fascinating and puzzling statement: The great Brahms, a canonic hero of classical music already during his lifetime, leaves it to the player to decide on interpretation within the range of a rather vague esthetical notion. Brahms's statement can be taken as a starting point of exemplarily investigating the relationship between the composer, the interpreter and the idea of a beautiful interpretation in the second half of the 19th century. To which extent was the composer seen as an authority regarding the interpretation of his works? What about role of the performer? And what about the idea of the liberty of performance? Thus, the central question of this year's Early Music Platform – "Is it enough to just be 'informed'?" – is taken as an occasion to stress the importance of reflecting on historical thoughts about performance practice. As there is enough and already well-known evidence, the case of Brahms seemed a worthwhile example to recall.



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