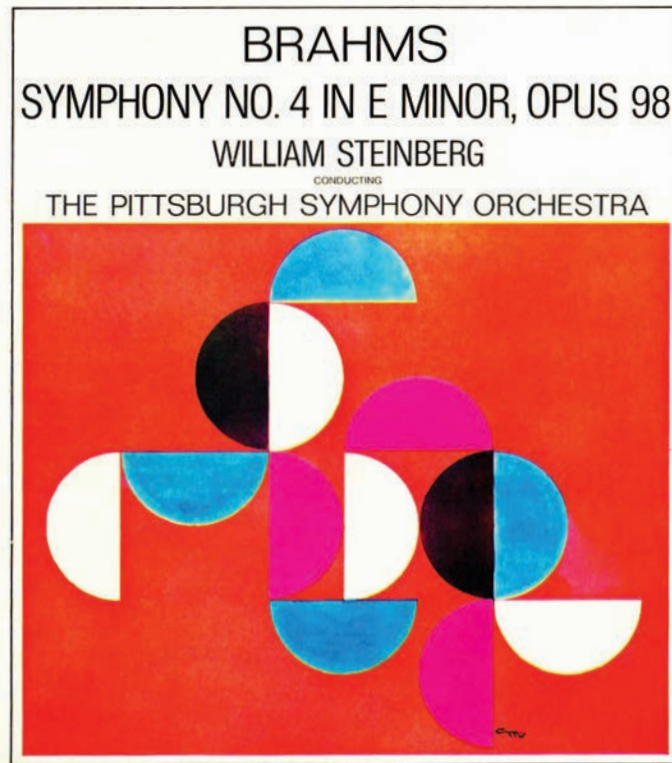




**William Steinberg** (originally Hans Wilhelm Steinberg) (August 1, 1899 – May 16, 1978) was a German conductor. He was born in Cologne, but left Germany for (what is now) Israel in 1936. He decided to leave Germany because the Nazis had removed him from the Frankfurt Opera in 1933 and had limited him to conducting all-Jewish orchestras. Eventually, together with Bronislaw Huberman he founded and conducted the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. Steinberg left for the United States in 1938. He conducted the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra from 1945 to 1952. From 1958 to 1960 he conducted the London Philharmonic Orchestra. From 1969 to 1972 he conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He was also principal guest conductor of the New York Philharmonic from 1966 to 1968. He is best known for directing the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra from 1952 to 1976. William Steinberg was given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. He died in New York City.



It is very interesting to examine Brahms's progress as a symphonist. He appeared in the time of so-called romanticism in music, when considerations of form were largely subordinated to subjective expression. Liszt was then creating his symphonic poems and Wagner his tremendous music-dramas—all works strongly colored by literary and poetic ideas, and by a very personal attitude on the part of the composer. Brahms, in his First symphony, if not an outright romanticist, is yet "romantic" in his attitude, just as Beethoven in his Fifth. Later on we are witness to Brahms's progression backward—or forward—from the "romantic" to the "classic" persuasion. The Fourth symphony is a pure classic masterpiece. From this, however, it is not to be assumed that the symphony is only a work of design, without subjective undercurrent. Quite the contrary! While Brahms has long since parted company with the storm and stress of the First symphony, the accents of the Fourth are in the highest degree charged with the resignation and the profound understanding that his own earnest nature and the passage of the years had brought him, and the nobility that existed under his crusty exterior. The romanticist has been purged of his passion. The fury and strife are gone. With them has gone the quality of action and drama which inspired earlier pages. But in the Fourth symphony something has re-placed these things, something even more precious, and wiser.

It is perhaps significant that Brahms, ordinarily certain of himself and his work, had misgivings and questionings about this symphony. Did it touch more distant horizons than any to which he yet had raised his eyes? Or was he merely suffering from failing strength and ill-health? Or was he, as some might claim, affected by the spirit of a period which had seeds of decadence? Some find the symphony an expression of rank pessimism. They say that it is bitter, that it drips melancholy like the yew tree, that its thoughts are of death. But pessimism is not despair, nor need it be in any sense ignoble. If Brahms's thoughts at the time he wrote this symphony were turning toward his own end which was near, death must have appeared as it should appear to all of us, as a tender friend and a supreme consoler. It is a far cry from such a spirit and art as that of Brahms to the art of a Whitman. And yet there is something in this Fourth symphony which may well turn the memory to the words of the great American poet in "Out of the Cradle Gently Rocking," when he writes of the secret word that the waves kept whispering to the boy who watched the lonely nightbird from among the reeds on the shore. Here, in this symphony, are perhaps premonitions of the other side of life, vistas of a beauty linked with eternity, beauty as mysterious and inexplicable as the design of a pine tree against a flaming autumn sky.

The first movement begins with the lovely theme with which the orchestra is soon weaving arabesques. It continues with motives that supply the necessary energy and masculinity to balance the more delicate traceries; and all this is murmurous of some legendary land, autumnal and infinitely beautiful. The second movement is an exquisite play of ancient and modern tonalities, hauntingly poetical and suggestive of distance. The motive of the solo horn is cast in the so-called "Phrygian" mode (when the F-sharp and D-sharp of E minor become F and D natural). Later on this "modal" treatment gives place to a version of the theme in the major key, with enchanting effect. But in the third movement Brahms is again old bear's-paws, with his feet on the good earth, rapping out his rhythm in music that tingles with force, laughter and joy.

The final movement is the great Passacaglia, cap-stone to the whole edifice. Some may find in it the same esthetic significance as in the finale of Beethoven's "Eroica." On a theme eight measures long are built masterly variations and a coda. The pervading motive is always present, in one or another form, and with different orchestrations. It is variously altered and disguised, but if examined shows how closely Brahms is sticking to his text. After each one of the variants it would be fair, to applaud, save that some of them go too deep for applause and can only be rendered silent homage. One of these is the twelfth variation for the solo flute, over soft chords of horns and violins; others are the fourteenth, with its chorale for the trombones; the passionate seventeenth and eighteenth; the song of the wind instruments in variation 28. But it is inadvisable and superfluous to con-fuse the listener by reference to details in this movement. Indeed, nothing is more striking than the manner in which the variations are put together. Thus the movement is not a series of episodes, but rather of linked evolutions of a single thought, with a final great sweep from the sixteenth variation, when the theme is uttered with such magnificent energy by the brass choir, to the end. It could be said that Brahms had been unconsciously preparing himself for the composition of this Passacaglia through many years of gradually acquired mastery of the variation form. The movement is his last symphonic will and testament. Some consider that the Fourth Symphony represents the end of a long musical epoch, and they explain its pervading spirit as the farewell of a master whose thoughts turned away from the present and back to the faith of his great forbears--Bach, Handel, Beethoven, Schubert. But this noble and reflective work appears more secure, and more rather than less in touch with living musical thought as the years pass. If this be resignation it is the resignation of strength, faith, awareness of the indestructibility of thought and beauty.

# Brahms Symphony No. 4

## William Steinberg conducting

### The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

**I. Allegro non troppo 11:51**

**II. Andante moderato 11:56**

**III. Allegro giocoso 6:07**

**IV. Allegro energico e passionato 10:10**

Recorded 1961 by Command  
Engineer Recording Chief: Robert Fine  
Producer: Enoch Light

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