

THE YOUNG BRAHMS



BY SYBIL DEUCHER

Illustrated by Edward and Stephani Godwin

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The Young Brahms

Written by Opal Wheeler

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CHAPTER ONE

A DISMAL SUN was struggling to break through the thick, murky fog hovering over the old harbor city of Hamburg as Fritz, the barrel organ grinder, sauntered along the crooked streets, the clinking tones of his rusty instrument ringing clearly in the chill air.

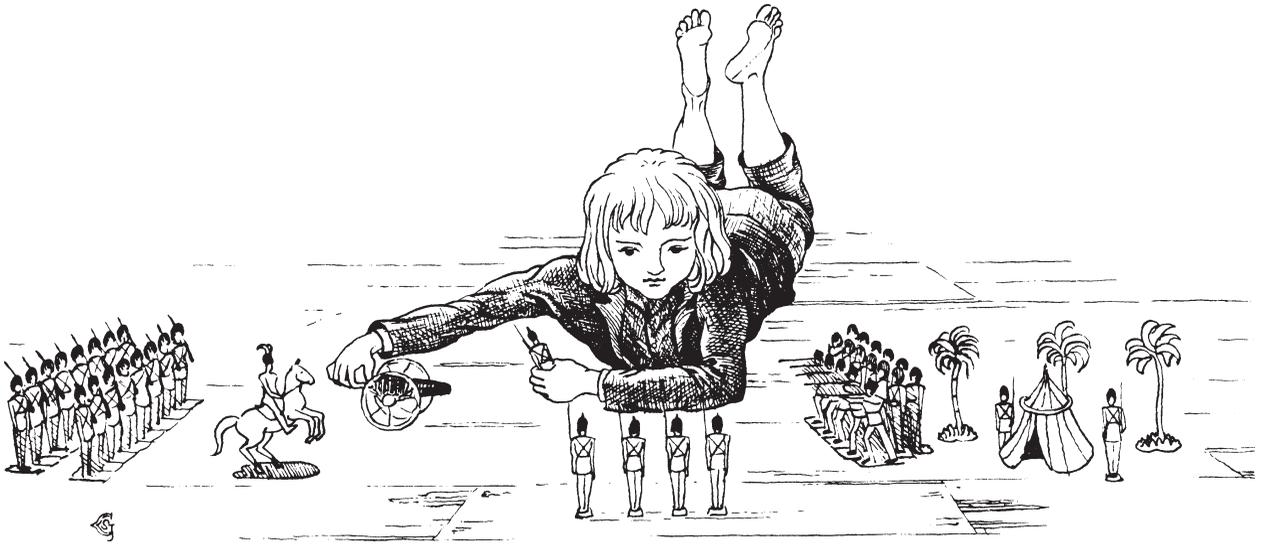
“Ah, Toni, my boy, what a day for us to be out of our snug little home!” said he to his lively monkey, as they gazed up at the windows of a shabby, tumble-down house just off of Bacon Alley.

To be sure, the families huddled together in the tall, timbered dwelling were very poor — yet kind-hearted, so a few coins were sure to be dropped on the cobblestones of the dingy courtyard.

One by one the windows of the crowded tenement house flew open; countless small heads peering out.

Quite likely it was Fritz’s frisky monkey in bright red coat, that the children wanted most to see.

But not so, little Hannes, son of Jakob Brahms. Sprawled on the kitchen floor with his beloved lead soldiers, he was the first to catch the sound of the tinkling tunes below.



“Music! Music, Mother! It’s the barrel organ!” he cried, his blue eyes shining.

In a flash the six-year-old boy stepped into his wooden shoes, and Mother Brahms smiled to hear him clattering down the creaky, outside stairway. My — how her young son loved music!

“Now, Toni, a dance for your breakfast,” said old Fritz turning the crank of his instrument to a catchy tune, as the children began swarming into the courtyard.

With shouts of delight they watched as the little monkey jumped down from his master’s shoulder and began to hop about, first on one foot, then the other, waving his tiny green cap in the air in almost perfect time to the music.

Reaching in his pocket, Hannes took the small coin his father had given him the night before. Longingly he looked at the beautiful shiny piece. What a fine new lead soldier it would buy! Oh, but he must hear more of the lovely tunes!

“Here, Toni,” he called gently, bending down to the little animal.

Quickly the perky monkey snatched the precious coin, and tipping his jaunty green cap, danced merrily on, over the cobblestones.

Joyously Hannes listened to the tinkling tunes until at last the old man went on his way, his lively monkey hopping beside him down the winding street.

“The tunes were beautiful, Mother! Now I will play them, too!” cried the small boy when he reached the landing to the three dark rooms where Mother and Father Brahms lived with their little family.

Running to the narrow alcove, that served as a bedroom, Hannes took the slender flute he kept under his pillow. Crouched on the narrow bed, he began to blow softly into the silver pipe and a sprightly tune suddenly went ringing through the low-ceilinged rooms.

“Just listen to the boy, Jakob! He hears a tune but once, and can play it straight off!” declared Mother Brahms as she



bent her tired back over the kitchen stove.

“Yes, good wife,” her tall husband answered, smiling, “Hannes’s ears are sharp. And so quickly he learns each new piece that I give him! Before long, Johanna, he may be able to play his flute and violin in the taverns with me.”

At once a troubled frown swept across Mother Brahm’s kindly face. “In the taverns, Jakob!” she exclaimed distressed.