

Allegro

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet
Bassoon
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

string: poco
string: poco
string: poco
string: poco

[FOURTH MOVEMENT, MM. 1-9]

SCOTTISH SINFONIA Conductor NEIL MANTLE
 Leader Michael Rigg
 Associate Leader Alison Rushworth

SUNDAY 19 AUGUST 1990 5.15pm
 Cathedral Church of St Mary, Palmerston Place

JOHANNES BRAHMS
(1833-97)

SYMPHONY No.1 in C MINOR
Opus 68

Un poco sostenuto - Allegro
Andante sostenuto
Un poco allegretto e grazioso
Adagio - Piu andante - Allegro non troppo ma con brio

Brahms felt the weight of responsibility as the natural heir to Beethoven very keenly and treated the composition of his first symphony with extreme seriousness: in fact it had a gestation period of at least twenty years, during which time his friends and admirers maintained a barrage of questions as to when they could expect a symphony from the composer. The First Piano Concerto began life as sketches for a symphony, and the two orchestral serenades together with the Variations on the St Anthony Chorale can also be regarded as preparatory attempts. Brahms was an arch conservative and most anxious to prove that the symphony was not a dead form, as the followers of Liszt, Berlioz and Wagner, among others, were wont to assert. The symphony finally appeared in 1876 and was given its first performance in Karlsruhe in November; it was promptly hailed as 'Beethoven's Tenth' - a remark which caused Brahms enormous annoyance. He had previously played it on the piano to his lifelong friend Clara Schumann, whose initial reaction was one of painful disappointment: she found it lacked melody, although she later revised her opinion. The weighty introduction to the symphony was actually an afterthought - interestingly so, because it contains many of the ideas that later assume great importance in the first movement. At the start of the Allegro the two main themes are presented simultaneously, and the lower of these two themes also serves as the second subject. It is said that the first movement was an expression of grief at the death in 1856 of his friend and mentor Robert Schumann.

The slow movement initially brings relief from the struggles of the first movement, but this is not to deny that here too the emotions soon run deep. Brahms, who always enjoyed manipulating themes, more than once hints at material derived from the first movement. Towards the end of the Andante there is quite a lengthy violin solo, the only one in any of the four symphonies. The third movement is a charming lightweight intermezzo before the epic finale.

This finale incorporates two of Brahms' most famous themes, the so-called 'bell theme' played by the horns, and the C major string melody which was pounced upon joyously by an over-clever professor, who pointed out a similarity to the 'Ode to joy' theme of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. ('And what's more, any fool can see it,' was Brahms' terse retort.) The movement begins darkly with the aforementioned tune fragmentarily suggested in the minor key. After a tense climax the music changes to the major for the famous horn theme. It is said that Brahms heard this melody being played out of doors on an Alpine horn. It is here incidentally that Brahms uses the trombones for the first time in the symphony. After this the progress of the movement is easy to follow, and the symphony is rounded off 'piu allegro'.

- INTERVAL OF A FEW MINUTES: PLEASE REMAIN SEATED -

SYMPHONY No.2 in D MAJOR
Opus 73

Allegro non troppo
Adagio non troppo
Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino
Allegro con spirito

Brahms composed his Second Symphony during the summer of 1977 whilst on holiday at the Austrian resort of Pörlschach on the Würthersee. He was a very keen walker, writing to his lifelong friend Clara Schumann, 'One can surely not take more beautiful walks! In the Ampezzo Valley you would have been enchanted by everything - the mountains, the lakes, the flowers and the splendid road.' The inspiration of this setting is certainly present in the symphony. Work progressed rapidly and the symphony was ready for its first performance on 30 December of the same year, when it was performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Hans Richter.

Brahms liked to mislead his friends as to the character of his latest works. Thus he wrote to Elisabeth von Herzogenberg: 'I have never composed anything so sad. The score must come out in mourning. To get an idea of the piece, sit at the piano, depress both pedals and play the chord of F minor several times in succession in treble and bass - fortissimo and pianissimo.' Even the day before the premiere he wrote to her again: 'The orchestra here plays my new symphony with black armbands because of its dirge-like effect. It is to be printed with a black edge too.'

The figure D-C#-D heard at the outset forms a motto which recurs in every movement, and together with the first theme (given out by horns and bassoons) it generates much of the musical material of the work. The opening of the second movement is noteworthy for two reasons. Firstly and highly unusually, Brahms presents two themes simultaneously, the main one descending in the cellos and the other ascending in the bassoons. This beautiful cello theme is also noteworthy because Brahms adds to the feeling of an 'unending stream of melody' by the avoidance for many bars of a perfect cadence.

Although the pastoral third movement would appear to be of the most simple construction, the attentive listener will notice that the rapid section for strings heard after the opening oboe melody is in fact an exact diminution of that melody. The later quick section in 3:8 time is also closely related. This type of symphonic thinking is very characteristic of Brahms. The two main ideas of the finale once again employ the motto idea heard at the outset of the symphony. This movement is Brahms in highest of spirits.

NM

NEXT SUNDAY AT 5.15

BRAHMS SYMPHONIES NOS.3 & 4

S C O T T I S H S I N F O N I A

Leader Michael Rigg
Associate Leader Alison Rushworth
Conductor Neil Mantle

Violins I

Michael Rigg
Alison Rushworth
Edna Arthur
Elizabeth Coles
Carolyn Dyson
Julia Fowler
Anne Giles
Diana Gould
Richard Heathwood
Julian Marshall
June Nelson
Colin Saddington

Violins II

Annaliese Dagg
Kay Barton
Daniel Bell
Elizabeth Currie
Judith Dean
Melanie Dobson
Irene Horne
Caroline Johnston
Fiona Morison
Robert Saunders
Aline Watson

Violas

Ingrid Hooton
Anne Parker
Morvyth Davis
Sophie Hay
Diane Lawrie
Elizabeth Mathison
Shirley Neilson
Sandra Hollongdale
Mary Anne Alburger

Cellos

Sam Coe
George Reid
John Busbridge
Harriet Davidson
Deborah Forrest
Andrea McLaughlin
Deborah McCoy
Katherine Oliver
Suzanne Patterson
Dorothy Macmillan

Double Basses

Walter Carlton
Peter Craik
Eric Jeffrey
Philip Orr
Jennifer Sharp

Flutes

Barbara Richerby
Fiona Black

Oboes

Margot Cruft
Morven Bell

Clarinets

John Peacock
Mark Casson

Bassoons

Barbara Mooney
Julian Munro

Contra-Bassoon

Rainer Thünes

Horns

David Rimer
Steve Birch
Joanna Moody
Marian Kirton

Trumpets

Brian Connor
Andrew Kinnear

Trombones

Bill Giles
Barry Kempton
Jeremy Upton

Tuba

Andrew Wood

Timpani

Fiona Ewen

Secretary

Margot Cruft

Orchestral Manager

John Willmet

General Administrator

Inga Mantle

Librarians

Anne Giles
Fiona Morison
Bridget Blackmore
Suzanne Patterson

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