

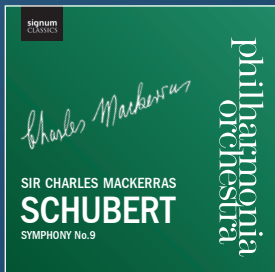
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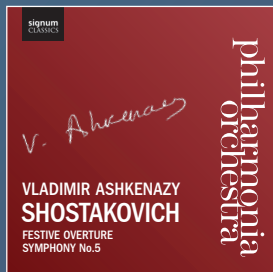
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BRAHMS

SYMPHONY No.2 • SYMPHONY No.4

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

CD 1

Symphony No.2

1	Andante - Allegro non troppo	21.22
2	Adagio	9.05
3	Scherzo	4.59
4	Finale: Allegro con spirito	9.55
	Total timings	45.24

CD 2

Symphony No.4

1	Allegro non troppo	12.43
2	Andante moderato	11.26
3	Scherzo	6.18
4	Finale: Passacaglia	9.45
	Total timings	40.15

PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI CONDUCTOR

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BRAHMS

SYMPHONY No.2
SYMPHONY No.4

Symphony No.2 in D major Op.73

It is little wonder that Brahms' Second Symphony is often described as a sunny counterpart to, or a rainbow following, the storm clouds of his First. The previous November he had seen generally favourable reviews of the initial performances of the First Symphony, but more importantly, he had finally submitted a complete symphony for public presentation after some 15 years of doubt, disappointment, prevarication and interrupted effort. The pressure was momentarily off and he revelled in it, producing a second symphony in just four months. The Symphony No.2 in D major came quickly to life whilst Brahms was summering in the beautiful and restful village of Pörtlach on the Wörthersee, Carinthia. Despite his oft-present moodiness, his letters, and indeed the symphony itself, show him to have been in generally good spirits.

Although Brahms was considered a rather snippy, often insensitive individual, he seems to have had a good deal of harmless, if mordant, fun teasing even his closest friends about the new, and as yet unheard, work. Writing to the publisher, Simrock, "The new symphony is so melancholy that you can't stand it. I have never written anything so sad, so minor-ish: the score must appear with a black border". To his close ally Elisabeth von Herzogenberg he mentioned that, "The orchestra will have to play with mourning bands on their arms". Even his ultimate confidante Clara Schumann was left with the impression that the symphony was "quite elegiac in quality".

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. When the composer's friend Theodore Billroth played through the score he wrote to Brahms, "It is all rippling streams, blue sky, sunshine and cool green shadows". And the Viennese audience at the first

performance, on 30 December 1877 agreed – its idyllic nature, sheer tunefulness and generally sunny disposition earned Brahms an unmitigated public triumph, conductor Hans Richter having to repeat the third movement. The success was replicated in Leipzig soon thereafter, now with Brahms on the podium. Most pleasingly for the composer, his own native city of Hamburg, of which he harboured mixed emotions, also received the work generously.

Just as Brahms' First Symphony was known as 'the Tenth', so the second quickly picked up another Beethovenian sobriquet, 'the Pastoral' – associations that seem to have been hated by the composer. Brahms, though, must have withheld a modicum of pride. After all, comparisons with a composer whose symphonic models had so intimidated him in the past, and of whom he had opined, "you have no idea how it feels to hear behind you the tramp of a giant", can rarely be seen as wholly negative.

The first movement, an *Allegro non troppo* opens with the cellos and double basses presenting a short motif that soon blossoms into broader themes

both affecting and luxurious. There is a lot of sunlight in this movement; bucolic horn calls and soaring strings speak of blue skies and a joyous love of the countryside. There are certainly passages that lie in the shade and occasionally the threat of storm clouds in the distance, but such moments only throw into relief the sonorous strings and infectious dancing tunes. The *Adagio* is the longest slow movement in Brahms' symphonic output and possibly the most beautiful, its romantic wistfulness touching rather than brooding. The *Scherzo* is a charming invention, an intermezzo crowned by its main theme which retains an awkwardly jolly, ländler-like feel. The *Finale* is a jubilant *Allegro con spirito*, contrasting the highest of spirits with a hymn-like tune in the strings. Its irresistible motion is capped by an extraordinary conclusion where the trombones lead us out in a blaze of glory.

Symphony No.4 in E minor Op.98

"I feel like I've just been beaten up by a pair of terribly intelligent people" was the critic Eduard Hanslick's comment upon first hearing

Brahms and a friend play the composer's fourth and final symphony on two pianos. Today such a comment would be considered a capital offence to most concert-goers the world over, such is the exalted position that the work continues to hold in the modern repertory. Many of Brahms' friends and confidantes, though, agreed with the critic at the time, urging him variously to hold back the symphony from public consumption, dispense with certain details or even completely drop the *Scherzo* and *Finale* movements. Brahms stuck to his guns, refusing to change, and snapping back at the doubters, "I don't give a damn about the shouters in the pit, and the rest of the public... You may be right. But first we have to hear how it works with orchestra".

The orchestra that Brahms used for his own first hearing of the piece, and indeed for its premiere, was the Meiningen Hofkapelle Orchestra. One of the finest ensembles of its day, its conductor, Hans von Bülow was close to many of the greatest composers of the age. He was a pupil of Clara Schumann's father, and the husband of Liszt's daughter, Cosima, who later ran off with Wagner. He was succeeded at Meiningen by one of his own protégés, Richard Strauss. The orchestra operated at the court, and behest, of Georg II,

Duke of Saxe-Meiningen, a remarkable intellectual whose theatrical productions so seriously influenced European theatre that he is often known as the first modern theatre director. The Duke not only kept Brahms in the lap of luxury when he visited, but allowed him to use the orchestra as a musical laboratory for his works, and thus it became, for a time, the arbiter of how Brahms' works might best be performed.

The symphony's premiere, on 25 October 1885 was avidly applauded after every movement and met with an ecstatic ovation at its end. Brahms was now happy for von Bülow to "travel around a bit with it", and so a tour of 14 cities was arranged. The important Vienna premiere didn't occur until the following January and the symphony was met with healthy respect rather than ecstasy. Brahms hadn't changed his symphony, but already Hanslick was changing his tune: from being 'beaten up' by the piece, he now found it to be, "like a dark well; the longer we look into it, the more brightly the stars shine back". The Viennese also came round, notably on on 7 March 1897. The last applause Brahms heard for a symphony was for his own fourth, one month before his death, at a concert in the Golden Hall of the Musikverein,

where he and his swansong symphony were greeted with tumultuous applause.

The opening *Allegro non troppo* dispenses with introductory niceties; a four note theme seeming to come out of nowhere, as if the symphony was already in mid-flow, sighing violins taking us straight to the heart of the matter. The ensuing orchestral argument is one of Brahms' most miraculous, marrying intense lyricism with a strong sense of purpose, an urgency to continue the musical discourse. The *Andante moderato* slow movement sees the opening horn call caressed throughout the orchestra, gently mutated, coloured and even

augmented on the cellos to produce what passes for a subsidiary theme. The *Scherzo* is full of the most unexpected comic turns, Brahms boasting that "kettledrum, triangle and piccolo will...make something of a show". In the magnificent, immense *Finale* Brahms uses a Baroque device, the *passacaglia*, essentially a set of continuous variations over a short, repeated bass line. This is allowed to pass throughout the orchestra, setting the composer free to provide a summation of his art and at the same time entertain with one of the most exhilarating movements in the entire orchestral repertoire.

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BIOGRAPHIES

CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI

Christoph von Dohnányi held the position of Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia from 1997 to 2008, prior to which he served for three years as their Principal Guest Conductor. His relationship with the orchestra continues from the 2008/09 season, when he will become Honorary Conductor for life.

Christoph von Dohnányi has also held the position of Chief Conductor of the NDR Symphony Orchestra since September 2004. As well as giving concerts in major venues throughout Europe (including Lucerne, Cologne, Frankfurt, Bonn, Warsaw and Luxembourg), Dohnányi and the orchestra toured South America in 2005,

and were subsequently voted Best Orchestra 2005 and Best Conductor 2005 by the Association of Critics of Buenos Aires.

Born in Berlin, Christoph von Dohnányi began to study law in Munich. After two years he chose to join the Munich Academy of Music to study composition, piano and conducting. At the end of his studies he was awarded the Richard Strauss Prize for conducting by the City of Munich and continued to study with his grandfather, Ernst von Dohnányi, at Florida State University.

In 1953 Christoph von Dohnányi was hired as répétiteur and conductor at the Frankfurt Opera by Sir Georg Solti. At the age of 27 he moved to Lübeck where he became Germany's youngest General Music Director, before becoming Chief Conductor first in Kassel and then of the Westdeutsche Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. From 1968 he served as General Music Director in Frankfurt and, from 1972, as Director of the Frankfurt Opera. From 1977 to 1984 he was Intendant and Chief Conductor of Hamburg Opera. In Frankfurt and Hamburg he aimed to balance traditional opera productions with innovative music theatre.

Christoph von Dohnányi made his debut with The Cleveland Orchestra in December 1981. He was Music Director Designate from 1982 to 1984 and served as its sixth Music Director from September 1984 to August 2002, becoming the orchestra's first Music Director Laureate in September 2002. During Dohnányi's tenure, they toured extensively around the USA, Asia and Europe, performing concerts for the Salzburg Festival, BBC Proms and Edinburgh Festival and were in residence at Carnegie Hall, New York a number of times. In 1998, they performed in China for the first time in the orchestra's history. His many recordings with the orchestra include the complete symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann, and Wagner's *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold*, as well as symphonies by Mahler, Bruckner, Dvořák, R. Strauss, Mozart and works by Adams, Ives and Webern. During his tenure, the Cleveland Orchestra's home, Severance Hall, was renovated and extended to bring back one of America's biggest organs into the musical life of Cleveland. Since 2002 he has been guest conducting the orchestras of Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

Christoph von Dohnányi's discography with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra includes *Fidelio*, *Wozzeck*, *Lulu*, *Erwartung*, *Salome*, *Der fliegende Holländer* and symphonic works by Mendelssohn, R. Strauss and Tchaikovsky. He has recorded the violin concertos of Glass and Schnittke with Gidon Kremer, the Dvořák Piano Concerto with Andrés Schiff and orchestral transcriptions of chamber music by Brahms and Mahler.

Christoph von Dohnányi has been a guest conductor with all the major orchestras and opera houses in the US as well as in Europe. As a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, Christoph von Dohnányi has led the Vienna Philharmonic in several new productions including *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Salome*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Erwartung*, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as well as the world premières of Henze's *Die Bassariden* and Cerha's *Baal*.

performs more than 200 concerts, as well as presenting chamber performances by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, and recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. Since 1995 the Orchestra's work has been underpinned by its much admired UK Residency Programme, which began with the launch of its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's Southbank Centre, and now also includes De Montfort Hall in Leicester, the Anvil in Basingstoke and a series of partnerships across Kent and the Thames Gateway, based in Canterbury. The Orchestra's international extensive touring schedule each season involves appearances at the finest concert halls across Europe, the USA and Asia.

well as Esa-Pekka Salonen, current titled conductors are Christoph von Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life), Sir Charles Mackerras (Principal Guest Conductor), Kurt Sanderling (Conductor Emeritus) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate).

The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to pride itself on its long-term collaborations with the finest musicians of our day, supporting new as well as established artists. This policy extends into the Orchestra itself, where many of the players have solo or chamber music careers as well as their work with the Orchestra. The Philharmonia's Martin Musical Scholarship Fund has for many years supported talented musicians at the start of their careers and a new Orchestral Award, inaugurated in 2005, allows two young players every year to gain performing experience within the Orchestra.

The Orchestra is also recognised for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new works by leading composers, among them the Artistic Director of its Music of Today series, Julian Anderson. Since 1945 the Philharmonia Orchestra has commissioned more than

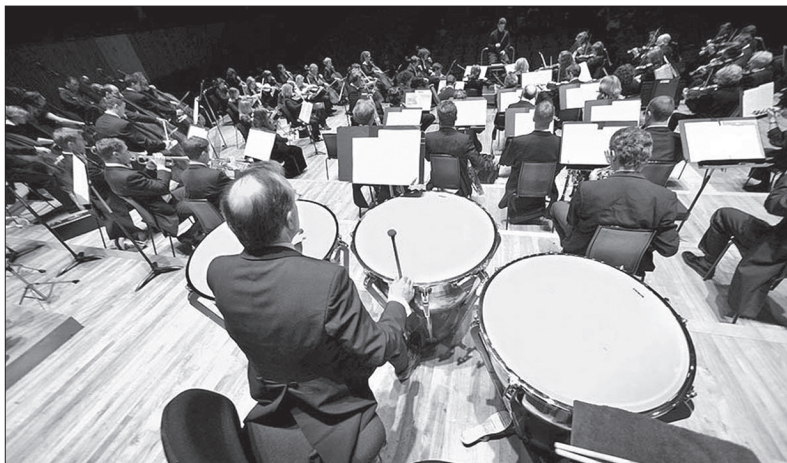
philharmonia orchestra

The Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. Acknowledged as the UK's foremost musical pioneer, with an extraordinary recording legacy, the Philharmonia leads the field for its quality of playing, and for its innovative approach to audience development, residencies, music education and the use of new technologies in reaching a global audience. Together with its relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, most importantly its

Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia Orchestra is at the heart of British musical life.

Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's National Orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music-making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. Every year the Orchestra

During its first six decades, the Philharmonia Orchestra has collaborated with most of the great classical artists of the 20th century. Conductors associated with the Orchestra include Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel (Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (Principal Conductor and Music Director) and Giuseppe Sinopoli (Music Director). As



100 new works from composers including Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Mark-Anthony Turnage and James MacMillan. The Philharmonia Orchestra's joint series with SBC, *Clocks and Clouds: The Music of György Ligeti*, won the Royal Philharmonic Society's Best Concert Series Award in 1997 and *Related Rocks: The Music of Magnus Lindberg*, was nominated for an RPS Award. Other recent awards for the Orchestra include the RPS Large Ensemble

Award and two *Evening Standard* Awards for Outstanding Artistic Achievement and Outstanding Ensemble. In May 2007 PLAY. orchestra, a 'virtual Philharmonia Orchestra' created in partnership with Southbank Centre and Central St Martin's College of Art, won the RPS Education Award.

Throughout its history, the Philharmonia Orchestra has been committed to finding new ways to bring its top quality live performance

to audiences worldwide, and to using new technologies to achieve this. Many millions of people since 1945 have enjoyed their first experience of classical music through a Philharmonia recording, and in 2007 audiences can engage with the Orchestra through webcasts, podcasts, downloads, computer games and film scores as well as through its unique interactive music education website launched in 2005, The Sound Exchange (www.philharmonia.co.uk/the-soundexchange), which is now visited by almost 2 million people a year. In 2005 the Philharmonia became the first ever classical music organisation to be shortlisted for a BT

Digital Music Award, and in the same year the Orchestra presented both the first ever fully interactive webcast and the first podcast by a UK orchestra. In September 2005 computer games with Philharmonia scores were at No.1 and No.2 in the national charts, while the Orchestra's scores for the last two Harry Potter computer games have both been nominated for BAFTA Awards. Recording and live broadcasting both also continue to play a significant part in the Orchestra's activities: since 2003 the Philharmonia has enjoyed a major partnership with Classic FM, as The Classic FM Orchestra on Tour, as well as continuing to broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

Brahms Symphony No.2 recorded live at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall Hall, London, 28 June 2007

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SignumClassics, Signum Records Ltd., Suite 14, 21 Wadsworth Road, Perivale, Middx UB6 7JD, UK. +44 (0) 20 8997 4000 E-mail: info@signalrecords.com