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CLASSICS

JOHANNES BRAHMS
SINFONIA IN B
(original 1853 version of Trio Op.8)

Orchestrated by **JOSEPH SWENSEN**

With other works by Clara and Robert Schumann and Brahms*
orchestrated by **JOSEPH SWENSEN**

MALMÖ OPERA ORCHESTRA
JOSEPH SWENSEN *conductor and violinist**

JOHANNES BRAHMS

SINFONIA IN B (ORCH. SWENSEN)

Sinfonia in B

(original 1854 version of Trio Op.8)

Johannes Brahms

Orchestrated by Joseph Swensen

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------|
| 1 | i. Allegro con moto | [20.48] |
| 2 | ii. Scherzo: Allegro molto | [7.09] |
| 3 | iii. Adagio non troppo | [9.03] |
| 4 | iv. Finale: Allegro molto agitato | [10.44] |

3 Romances Op.22 *

for violin and orchestra (1853)

Clara Schumann

Orchestrated by Joseph Swensen

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------|
| 5 | i. Andante molto | [2.52] |
| 6 | ii. Allegretto - mit zartem Vortage | [2.41] |
| 7 | iii. Leidenschaftlich schnell | [3.57] |

- | | | |
|---|---|--------|
| 8 | Intermezzo from 'F-A-E' Sonata * | [2.18] |
| | for violin and orchestra (1853) | |
| | Robert Schumann | |
| | Orchestrated by Joseph Swensen | |

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 9 | Scherzo from 'F-A-E' Sonata * | [5.55] |
| | for violin and orchestra (1853) | |
| | Johannes Brahms | |
| | Orchestrated by Joseph Swensen | |

Total timings:	[65.30]
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MALMÖ OPERA ORCHESTRA
JOSEPH SWENSEN *Conductor and Violinist **

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The work, which I have entitled *Sinfonia in B*, is my orchestration of the little-known original version of Brahms' *B major piano trio*. Completed in 1854, it is the largest and arguably the most important of Brahms' published early works, yet it remains nearly unknown to most musicians and music-lovers alike.

This phenomenon is the result of Brahms' apparent dissatisfaction with the work (hence his revision of it over three decades later), and his rather strange decision to list the revised work as Opus 8 (the opus of the original) in spite of the fact that it is nearly 75 percent newly composed music and should have a listing closer to Opus 110! Yet, in a letter to his publisher Fritz Simrock (dated 13 December 1890) Brahms seems to cite commercial and technical reasons for undertaking the revision rather than purely artistic ones: '...with regard to the refurbished trio...I simply want to say that the old one will continue to sell poorly not because so much of it is ugly, but because so much of it is unnecessarily difficult.'

The original Opus 8 is, for me, intriguing for many reasons. Not only is it a work of extraordinary quality and emotional depth, written by a composer just 21 years of age, but it is a

quintessential example of Brahms' ultra-romantic and forward looking early style; a style deeply influenced by his mentor Robert Schumann, whose bizarre and wonderful violin concerto was completed just the year before Brahms' Opus 8 was published. That very year saw the young Johannes Brahms in the company of even more radical voices than that of his mentor. In his letter to Joseph Joachim (dated 7 December 1853) Brahms writes: 'Berlioz praised me with such exceeding and heartfelt warmth that others meekly repeated his words ... Liszt is coming back on Monday.' (One can hardly avoid thinking of Liszt and Berlioz when one hears the crazed fugue in the first movement of Brahms' 1854 trio.)

This early period came to an abrupt ending when Schumann attempted suicide for the first time. The original Opus 8 trio was to be the last work Brahms wrote before a hiatus of six years in which he published not a single piece of music! When comparing the original Opus 8 with the revised version, one can clearly hear that nearly all of the fantasy-filled wandering and subjectively emotional 'Schumannesque' music of the original was replaced by typically late period Brahms: concise and intense, an economical pursuit of

the classical ideal. This is a perfect example not only of Brahms' conscious rejection of Schumann and of course Wagner, but also of his adversity to the whole German-Austrian romantic musical revolution which found its ultimate and inevitable end just over half a century later in Schoenberg's absolute annihilation of tonality!

My original impetus for writing this orchestration was to somehow resurrect this great work, and thereby share my love for it with those who may never have the opportunity to hear it otherwise. The greatest dilemma for me was how to treat Brahms' extraordinary virtuoso piano writing. This material, transcribed for the orchestra could never resemble Brahms' own very conservative orchestration style. My choice was between emulating Brahms' own orchestrations – all products of his later post-Schumann period – or being true to the material itself. I chose the latter, with great enthusiasm, to such a degree that every single note which exists in the original has found its way into the orchestral version. The result is an orchestration where the abilities of every player are stretched to the limit and where the orchestra as a virtuoso instrument is exploited to the same degree that Brahms

exploited the limits of the piano. More importantly, it results in a more 'forward-looking' orchestral sound world than one is accustomed to in his later orchestral works. My hope is that this orchestration acts as a mirror reflecting the mentality of this surprisingly radical, idiosyncratic and incredibly romantic, 21-year-old Johannes Brahms.

Certainly as friendships between musicians are concerned, the camaraderie shared by Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann, Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim was among the most fruitful in all of music history. Brahms had met the Schumanns only weeks before being approached by Robert Schumann with the idea of writing the scherzo to a four-movement sonata to be presented as a gift to their beloved mutual friend Joseph Joachim. Robert Schumann and his student Albert Dietrich would be the other composers taking part in the collaboration. Joachim had taken the phrase "Frei aber einsam" ("free but lonely") as his personal motto and the idea was for all the composers to make prominent usage of the musical notes F-A-E. I have chosen to orchestrate the piano parts of the two strongest

movements of the *F-A-E Sonata*: Schumann's *Intermezzo* and Brahms's *Scherzo*. It was just a few months later that same year that Clara Schumann completed her *3 Romances for violin and piano* also a gift for Joseph Joachim. Perhaps her obvious exclusion from her husband's project of the *F-A-E Sonata* inspired her to make her own even more personal gift to her dear friend. These are deeply touching, often intimate miniatures, each with its own very distinctive mood. Joseph Joachim and Clara Schumann performed these pieces many times during their lives together, most famously to King George V of Hannover, who was "completely ecstatic" about them. In my orchestrations, I have tried to celebrate the composers themselves by imagining how they might have played these pieces on the piano, the colors and timbres they might have evoked (the solo violin parts are unchanged from the originals). Translating this imagined sound world to that of an orchestra was not only my way of expressing my love for these works and these artists, but it is also my attempt to help them to become more widely known and appreciated.

© Joseph Swensen

MALMÖ OPERA ORCHESTRA

The Malmö Opera Orchestra was formed in 1991 and has made its mark on Scandinavian musical life over the last decade with hundreds of highly acclaimed concerts, CDs and opera performances under the direction of conductor Joseph Swensen. In particular, their performances of *Salome*, *La Traviata*, and Barber's *Vanessa*, along with a recently released and enthusiastically reviewed CD of works by Barber and Walton for Signum Records, have made the Malmö Opera Orchestra one of Scandinavia's most respected and exciting orchestras.

JOSEPH SWENSEN

Joseph Swensen currently holds the posts of Principal Guest Conductor & Artistic Adviser of the Orchestre de Chambre de Paris (formerly known as the Ensemble Orchestral de Paris), Conductor Emeritus of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and Founder and Artistic Director of Unity Hills Arts Centers International (U-HAC). He has also served as Principal Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (1996-2005) and the Malmö Opera (2005-2011).

Swensen has been working as a composer throughout his musical life and his works include *Mantram* (1998) for string orchestra, *Latif* (1999) for solo cello with chamber ensemble, and *Shizue* (2001) for solo shakuhachi and orchestra and the recently premiered *Sinfonia-Concertante for Horn and Orchestra (The Fire and the Rose)* (2008). Swensen's orchestration of the rarely performed 1854 version of Brahms' Trio Op. 8, a work he has entitled *Sinfonia in B*, has been performed by orchestras in Europe and the US since its premiere in 2007.

Joseph Swensen was principal conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra from 1996-2005 and has toured extensively with the SCO in the US, Far East and Europe. They have performed together at the Mostly Mozart Festival in New York, Tanglewood and Ravinia Festivals, the BBC Proms, the Barbican and the Concertgebouw. Swensen and the orchestra have also made a series of recordings for Linn records, including music by Mendelssohn, Sibelius, Brahms, Prokofiev and Dvorák.

Swensen has a number of regular guest conducting commitments including the London Mozart Players, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra,

Netherlands Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta de la Ciudad de Granada and Orquestra Nacional do Porto.

Before deciding to dedicate himself solely to his conducting career, Swensen enjoyed a highly successful career as a violin soloist and was an exclusive recording artist with BMG. Nowadays his occasional appearances as soloist are a natural extension of his work as a conductor, playing and directing concerti with the SCO and other orchestras with whom he enjoys a particularly close relationship. His love of chamber music results in occasional performances in that genre as well.

Joseph Swensen is also a passionate teacher and visionary activist. He is Founder and Artistic Director of Unity Hills Arts Centers International (otherwise known as U-HAC International). Based in Townshend Vermont USA, U-HAC not only serves as the focal point of Dr. Swensen's teaching activities, but it is also a charitable aid organisation whose primary aim is to bring the arts of all cultures to underprivileged and underserved rural communities across the world.

www.josephswensen.com
www.u-hac.com



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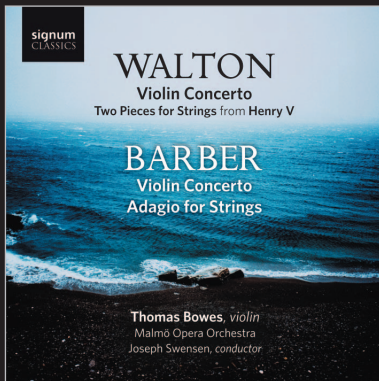
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