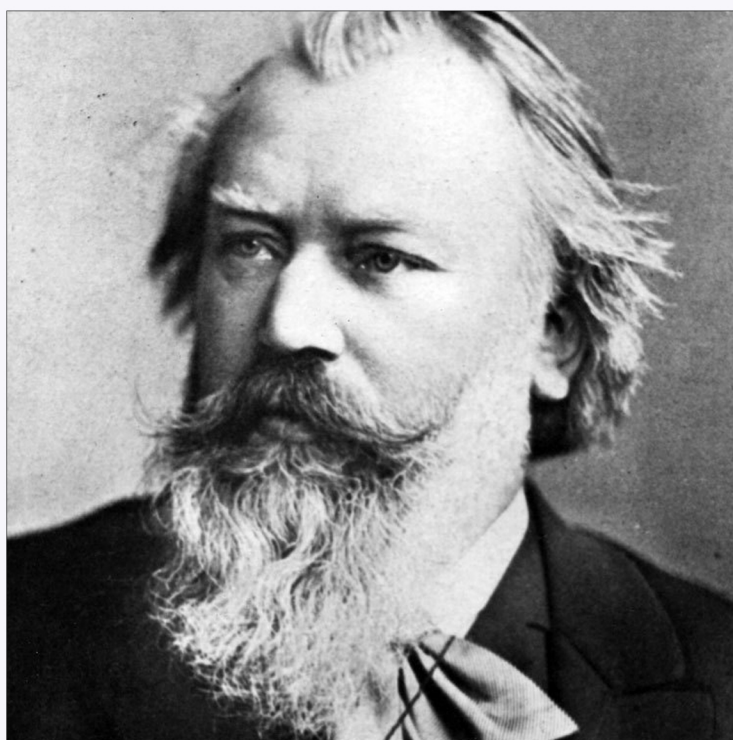




Classics Concert Insights Lecture

Moris Senegor, music aficionado

BRAHMS SYMPHONY #1 (1876)



JOHANNES BRAHMS SYMPHONY #1 (1876)

"I shall never write a symphony.... You have no idea how the likes of us feel when we hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us." Johannes Brahms

BRAHMS, EARLY BIOGRAPHY: (1833-1897)

- Born in Hamburg, Germany.
- As a teenager studied piano with Marxsen; played in dance halls and brothels.
- 1853: Age 20. Musical tour with Reményi. Met Joseph Joachim, violinist; became a lifelong friend.
- 1853: Joachim introduced Brahms to Robert and Clara Schumann in Düsseldorf. Impressed with Brahms, Schumann became a mentor and father figure.
- Schumann published a superlative article about the young Brahms in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*.
- 1854: Schumann attempted suicide; committed to an asylum in Endenich, near Bonn.
- Brahms came to Clara's aide. Lifelong relationship, love between the two.
- 1856: Robert Schumann died.
- 1859: Piano Concerto #1. It had begun as an attempt at a symphony.
- 1865: German Requiem.
- 1876: Symphony #1 (see "History of Symphony" below).
- 1897: Died in Vienna, age 63.

THE CURSE OF ROBERT SCHUMANN'S PRAISE:

- 1853: Schumann, an influential composer and music critic, declared the young, unknown Brahms to be the successor of Beethoven.
- *"As I followed the career of young talents with great interest, I thought that... there must and would suddenly appear one whose destiny should be to express the spirit of our age in the highest and most ideal fashion, one who should not reveal his mastery by a gradual development but, spring, like a Minerva, fully armed from the head of Jove. And now he has come, a young creature over whose cradle the Graces and heroes have kept watch. His name is Johannes Brahms."* Robert Schumann from *Neue Bahnen* (New Paths), October 28, 1853
- This set a high bar for the young, sensitive composer.
- *"Brahms waited a long time to fulfil Schumann's prophecy that he would become the age's leading symphonist... He well knew that anything he produced would immediately be judged by the highest standards, and found wanting on the slightest excuse."* (Malcolm MacDonald)

AGE AT FIRST SYMPHONY:

- Mozart: 9
- Prokofiev: 11
- Mendelssohn: 12
- Schubert, Glazunov: 15
- Schumann, Rachmaninoff, Dvořák, Ives, Copland, Stravinsky, Berlioz, Tchaikovsky, Haydn, Nielsen, Mahler, Beethoven: 20s
- Sessions, Sibelius, Bruckner, Vaughan Williams: 30s
- **Brahms: 43**
- Elgar, Martinů: 53
- *“When Beethoven was 43 years old he had already written 8 of his 9 symphonies. Mozart, at the same age had written all 41 of his, since he was already dead for 8 years.”*
(Gene De Lisa)

HISTORY OF SYMPHONY #1:

- Since Brahms did not leave any personal documents behind, the gestation of the work has been gleaned from letters by others.
- *“Brahms begun to write a symphony in 1854, but that work eventually turned into his First Piano Concerto.”* (Michael Steinberg)
- It took Brahms 14 years to complete his first symphony, 1862-1876. First sketches, the
- main theme of Movement I, date back to 1862. They were discovered second hand, in a letter from Clara Schumann to Joseph Joaquin.
- Another historic hint of Brahms’ progress is a now famous letter he sent to Clara Schumann in September 1868 containing a precursor of the *Alphorn* Call.
- Brahms began work in earnest in 1874, after promising his publisher a symphony.
- “Off Broadway” premiere, November 4, 1876 in Karlsruhe, Baden, conducted by Otto Dessoff.
- Brahms subsequently revised the symphony, especially Movements 2 and 3.
- Symphony published in 1877.
- It received positive reviews and was immediately linked to Beethoven’s legacy.
- Once over the hurdle, Brahms composed three more symphonies: #2 (1877), #3 (1883), #4 (1885).

BRAHMS COMPOSITIONAL STYLE:

- Classicist:
 - Adhered to the structures and compositional techniques of the Classical Era.
 - Brahms and Mendelssohn were the two main Classicists of the Romantic Era.
- Beethoven-like:
 - Tightly composed works with thematic unity. Rhythmic drama.
 - *“What engaged Brahms was the one quality in Beethoven which so marked him from his Romantic successors: the capacity for a structural view in which every detail contributed to the completeness and direction of the whole.”*
(Michael Musgrave)
 - *“There are three elements - they all play a great role in the most modern German music - for which Brahms has a conspicuous predilection: syncopation, retard and simultaneous employment of counter rhythms.”*
(Edouard Hanslick, 1876)
- Continuous variation: Literal repetition kept to a minimum; re-statements of previously presented material subjected to variation.
- Continuous development: Musical material developed in the moment, not just in development sections.
- Blurred lines: Little or no musical cues between sections. This is decidedly non-Classical.

SYMPHONY #1; OVERVIEW:

- Movements:
 - Movement 1: Un poco sostenuto – Allegro Sonata Form; C minor; 6/8 meter
 - Movement 2: Andante sostenuto; Ternary Form; E major; 3/4 time
 - Movement 3: Un poco Allegretto e grazioso; Ternary Form; A flat; 3/4 time
 - Movement 4: Adagio – Piu Andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio; Sonata Form; C minor to major; 4/4 time
- Narrative:
 - A catharsis symphony, C-minor to C-major, as in Beethoven’s 5th.
 - *“A journey from darkness to light, pain to joy, struggle to victory.”* (Walter Frisch)
 - The catharsis moment evokes the Ode to Joy from Beethoven’s 9th.
 - Movements 1 & 4 are grand pillars; the inner two movements short intermezzi.
 - Some scholars therefore consider the symphony to be of a three-part plan.

MOVEMENT 1:

INTRODUCTION:

“The listener enters a monumental building through a huge portal.” (Reinhold Brinkmann)

- PART I; OUTCRY: E-flat major
 - Begins with an anguished outcry, *forte* (loud), in *tutti* (full orchestra).
 - The outcry is a complex sound, thickly textured and polyphonic.
 - It contains chromatic melodies that move in contrary motion.
 - Violins and cellos present a rising 3-note idea (Motive A).
 - At the same time winds and violas play a descending, 4-note idea (Motive B).
 - A steady tympani beat adds to the tragic mood.
 - Another line of music, heard prominently, is a C pedal in horns.
 - The outcry becomes developmental and climaxes abruptly in a loud chord.
- NOTES:
 - Motives A & B are ur-motives that will give rise to many themes throughout the symphony.
 - This polyphonic opening harkens back to Bach rather than Beethoven.
 - Principle of continuous development is evident from the beginning.
 - *“If that sounds a wee bit complex, that’s because it is!”* (Tom Service)
- PART II; PAIRED NOTES:
 - Quieter & lightly textured. Presents a variety of 2-note ideas, Motive C.
 - NOTE: 2-note ideas will be extremely prevalent in the symphony.
 - Begins with C1-C2, antecedent-consequent phrases.
 - C1: 2-notes in winds, with a long-long rhythm. Clock like *pizz.* accompaniment in strings. Repeats, sequenced down.
 - C2: 2-notes in winds, with a long-short rhythm.
 - C1-C2 repeated in variation: C1 in winds sequenced, C2 in strings extended.
 - Transitional music: *Diminuendo* (quieting down) chromatic descent.
 - Transitional music: Continues with C3, another 2-note idea, short-long.
 - C3 is accompanied by the steady tympani beat of the outcry. It ends in an accelerating crescendo, in preparation for the return of the outcry.
- PART III; OUTCRY RETURNS:
 - Outcry returns in variation, truncated.
 - Motive A dominates, in winds, violins and cellos. Motive B in violas only.
 - Tympani plays continuous roll, not steady beats. C pedal, still in horns.

➤ NOTES:

- The variation hard to perceive. Outcry produces same emotional impact.
- If anything, the preceding interlude renders the variation more anguished.

➤ PART IV; PAIRED NOTES, LYRICAL:

- Motive C1 returns in a more lyrical, soothing passage.
- It is initially in oboe with horn accompaniment, then flute & cellos.
- Ends in a *diminuendo* chromatic descent. Music disintegrates.
- Music disintegrates and pauses, indicating end of Introduction.
- NOTE: This pause is one of the few clear demarcations in the symphony.
- “*The music reaches a point of high tension; then the oboe and the cellos, in a more lyrical mood, coax the music forward to a moment of expectant hush.*”
(Michael Steinberg)

➤ NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION:

- The most important purpose of the Introduction is to present the three ur-motives of the symphony: A, B, & C.
- In addition, the catharsis narrative is ushered with a decidedly anguished tone.
- Harkens back to the Intro of Beethoven’s 7th in its key area and meter.
- Composed as an afterthought. It was not in the first draft of the symphony he sent to Clara Schumann in 1862.
- Many scholars comment that without the Introduction, the beginning of the symphony would have been very abrupt.

EXPOSITION:

➤ Theme I Complex: (C minor)

- Begins with a C minor chord in orchestra.
- Theme I erupts as a stormy melody, *fortissimo*.
- The theme is not a tuneful melody. It is a jagged collection of motives.
- Its first phrase is derived from motives A & C (short-long).
- Its second phrase is a variation of the antecedent-consequent of Intro Part II.
- C2 (long-short) is the antecedent;
- The consequent, C4 is a new idea, an extension of C3 (short-long).
- C4 will also be prevalent in the movement.
- The C2-C4 pair is repeated in variation, C4 extended.
- The theme is repeated in variation marked *pesante* (heavy & ponderous).
- Theme I complex ends in a closed cadence.

➤ Modulating Bridge:

- Brief.
- 2-two-note motives in an assortment of different rhythmic profiles.
- Quiet transitional music, more 2-note motives, lead up to Theme II.

- Theme II Complex: (E flat major)
 - Slower & quieter. Pastoral. A respite from the *sturm-und-drang*.
 - In three phrases.
 - First phrase: Begins in winds, descending 3-notes, an inversion of motive A. Continues in horns, developing ascending 3-note motive A derivative.
 - Second phrase: Begins in winds, *dolce & espressivo*, derived from C1. Continues with Motive C5, long-short-short-long rhythm.
 - Third phrase: Transitional passage in winds based on C5; slows and quiets.
- Closing Section: (E-flat minor):
 - Troubled, stormy music returns *fortissimo* with incessant rhythmic drive.
 - Begins with an ominous prelude that interrupts the pleasant mood of Theme II: two motive A derived triplets.
 - Orchestra erupts with a new 4-note idea, an extension of motive A.
 - NOTE: This new idea has a short-short-short-long rhythm. It is a clear reference to the famous Fate Motive of Beethoven's 5th Symphony.
 - Music continues with momentum, earlier motives (A, C3, C4) recalled.
 - Loud Closing Theme in strings marked *agitato*; derived from motive C.
 - Closing Theme repeated in variation.
 - Concludes with loud, 2-note motives alternating between strings and winds.
 - Momentum continues, uninterrupted, into Development.

EXPOSITION REPEAT:

- In keeping with Classical tradition, Brahms calls for a repeat of the Exposition.
- “*The run back entails what may be the most startling harmonic progression in all of music. A few conductors revel in this coup de théâtre.*”(Michael Steinberg)
- Many conductors don't. They straight to development. Peter Jaffe is one of them.

DEVELOPMENT:

- PART I:
 - Transitional. Momentum of the Closing Section continues.
 - Music climaxes with a key change from E-flat minor to B major.
- PART II:
 - This is a calm section, with thin musical texture.
 - Presents variations of 2-note motives (short-long) in winds.
- PART III:
 - Music once again loud and stormy, initially repeating the Closing Section.
 - Continues with juxtapositions of Closing Section & Theme I motives.
 - Beethoven 5th Fate Motive rhythm is prominent and prevalent.

➤ PART IV:

- Music calms, with winds developing the motive A.
- Tympani accompanies, beating the Beethoven 5th Fate Motive rhythm.
- Ends with slowing tempo and diminishing music, as if it will end.

➤ PART V:

- A massive, stormy, tension filled end of Development.
- Monumental crescendo on motive A, in low strings with wind figurations.
- As the dynamics rise, the texture thickens.
- Loud horn fanfares blare out Beethoven's ta-ta-ta-taaa (Fate Motive).
- Music reaches a sustained climax.
- At the height of the climax there is a raging polyphonic storm!
- Beethoven's Fate Motive beats like a hammer, overlaid with Outcry motives.
- Tension rises to near impossible.
- Recapitulation is about to break out.
- Herbert Blomstedt, conductor emeritus of the San Francisco Symphony, asked his musicians to "*think of flowers straining to break through concrete,*" as they played this music. (Michael Steinberg)

RECAPITULATION:

- Theme I is succinctly restated, in a truncated version.
- The *pesante* passage does not reappear.
- Bridge music is also truncated.
- Theme II is restated verbatim, but in C minor.
- Closing Section is repeated verbatim, also in C minor.
- NOTE: Recap is less than half the length of Exposition, atypical for the Classical Era.

CODA:

- Momentum of Closing Section continues.
- 2-note ideas (short-short) are loudly tossed around the orchestra.
- The remainder of the Coda develops the A motive in two slow, lyrical sections.
- Music calmly fades away in strings in the key of C major.
- The brief, surprising appearance of C major foreshadows the finale.

SUMMARY OF BEETHOVEN REFERENCES, SO FAR:

- Overall C minor to C major narrative is the same as Beethoven's 5th.
- Movement 1 is an entirely motivic construct in C minor, same as Beethoven's 5th.
- Beethoven's Fate Motive rhythm is pervasive in the Closing Sections and Development.
- The slow E flat Introduction in 6/8 meter, is the same as Beethoven's 7th.

MOVEMENT 2:

A:

- Introductory gesture: E major
 - Antecedent (*a*) in strings & bassoon, derived from motive A.
 - Consequent is a falling melody, derived from motive B.
 - NOTE: Consequent (*b*) will serve as a cadential (concluding) gesture.
- Theme I:
 - After a brief crescendo, an expansive melody appears in strings.
 - The melody features both ascending and descending gestures.
 - It begins with a swell of descending gestures & continues lyrically, *espressivo*, with ascending gestures, toward a “*b*” cadence.
- Theme II:
 - A beautiful melody in oboe.
 - This is an ornamented variation of *a* & *b* from the beginning.
 - It has a sighing, syncopated string accompaniment, based on “*a*.”
- Codetta:
 - The section comes to a placid conclusion with “*b*.”

B: More impassioned.

- Introductory gesture:
 - Quiet transitional music introduces a 2-note idea in strings.
 - This will become an ostinato (recurring musical figure).
 - The idea is in most of Section B, either in the surface or in accompaniment.
- Theme III:
 - Violins begin a lyrical melody over the ostinato.
 - The melody rises, becomes loud & passionate & falls to a quiet conclusion.
- Theme IV:
 - Solo oboe plays a pretty melody over a pulsating, sighing ostinato.
 - Oboe melody is extended by clarinet.
- Theme V:
 - Quiet passage based on the “*b*” motive in winds.
- Theme VI:
 - Music swells and a tragic impassioned episode occurs in strings.
 - “*The emotional process of the movement has ‘modulated’ ...from despair to a more suppressed, persistent agitation.*” (Walter Frisch)
- Transition:
 - Music dies down in a quiet conversation between strings & winds.

A': Material presented in A returns in variation, ornamented and elaborated.

- Introductory gesture:
 - Motives *a* & *b* in slightly extended variation.
- Theme I:
 - The expansive string melody ornamented & extended. Concludes with "*b*."
- Theme II:
 - Returns in a duet between oboe & solo violin, both playing the same melody.
 - Re-stated in a gorgeous passage, as a duet between horn and solo violin. The theme is in horn; violin plays a counter melody.
- Codetta:
 - Falling gestures in strings. Concludes with "*b*."

CODA:

- A series 2-note gestures recall the ostinato of the middle section.
- Motive "*a*", from the beginning stated slowly in violins over tympani rolls.
- Violins hold a high E note over concluding chords in winds.
- It is a sublime, peaceful conclusion to a movement that has provided a respite.

NOTES:

- Unlike Movement I, this is not a motivic construct. Brahms presents tuneful melodies.
- E major is a distant key from C minor. It brightens the mood of the symphony.
- Beethoven used the same C minor to E major plan in his Piano Concerto #3.
- This movement was extensively reworked by Brahms after the premiere of the Symphony. He converted it from Rondo to Ternary form.

MOVEMENT 3:

Ternary structure, A-B-A with a brief Coda. The music does not sound like its Classical counterparts, Minuet (or Scherzo) & Trio. Scholars prefer calling the A section Allegretto.

ALLEGRETTO: (A-flat major, 2/4 time)

- The music features four phrases that run in somewhat symmetrical order.
- Phrases A & B in winds:
 - Phrase A (A-flat major), in clarinet, is a playful tune.
 - Phrase A is an antecedent. It is derived from motive A.
 - The second half of Phrase A is an exact inversion of the first.
 - Phrase B is a consequent in winds with a skipping-hopping rhythm.
 - Both phrases have a steady *pizzicato* accompaniment in strings.
- Phrases A' & B':
 - Variations of A & B, each extended.
 - Phrase A' is in violins, Phrase B' is in winds.
 - The steady string *pizz* continues to accompany.
- Phrases C & D: (F minor)
 - Phrase C is a sinuous clarinet melody that takes up only 4 measures.
 - Phrase D is louder in winds and strings; derived from motive A.
 - The accompaniments of C & D are more complex than those of A & B.
- Phrases C' & D':
 - C' is a variation of C using a motive from it, with strings in accompaniment.
 - D' is a broken up version of D, with a hesitant rhythm. It sounds transitional.
- Phrase A'': (A-flat major)
 - Begins in clarinet as if the melody will be fully repeated.
 - The melody breaks up after the main motive is stated and is slightly extended.
- NOTES:
 - The first Allegretto has its own internal ternary structure.
 - The inner C & D phrases act like a contrasting Trio between the outer phrases.
 - This is not a coincidence. Brahms has created a Russian doll-like arrangement within his greater plan.

TRIO: (B major, 6/8 time)

- Traditionally Trio sections are quieter and lightly textured.
- This one is not. Its texture is thick and it is louder than the Allegretto.
- The Trio theme is a fanfare repeated thrice, with a short-short-long rhythm.
- Strings accompany with descending 3-note idea with the same rhythm.

- The Trio section is largely developmental, based on these two ideas.
- “*It makes a considerable crescendo toward the end, where its theme is given to the trumpets with brilliant effect.*” (Donald Tovey)
- Ends with loud fanfares based on the Trio theme.
- Brief transitional music in *pizz* strings, 4-note stepwise descent.
- NOTE: This descent, derived from motive B, foreshadows Movement 4 Introduction.

ALLEGRETO DECAPO:

- Phrase A’’:
 - This is a variation of the original Phrase A.
 - The main melody is still in clarinet & *pizz* strings still accompany.
 - The second part of the melody is no longer an inversion of the first. It’s a new, more ornamented version of the original.
- Phrase B’’:
 - Begins as in the original version.
 - Continues developmentally, in a crescendo.

CODA:

- Music quiets and slows.
- Motives of phrases A, B & Trio theme are recalled in a passage marked *poco a poco piu tranquillo* (slower, calmer).
- Music fades away with final chords in winds & *pizz* stings.
- “*A short Coda, up in the clouds.*” (Donald Tovey)

NOTES:

- The movement is very short, around 4 to 5 minutes.
- Donald Tovey points out that it is important not to discount the brevity of the movement as “*small and fragmentary.*” He continues: “*We realize that five minutes, a small orchestra, and quiet climaxes may suffice for a very large movement indeed.*”
- There is almost no literal repetition in the movement. Everything returns in variation.
- “*If one uses the Beethovenian hallmarks of a Scherzo – ebullient fast triple rhythms, often irregular, and a clear-cut compartmented distinction between Scherzo materials and those of the ‘trio’ – then there are no scherzos in any of the Brahms symphonies.*” (Ivor Keys)
- Michael Steinberg points out that Beethoven’s Scherzos were faster than the Minuets from which they evolved. “*Brahms on the other hand – perhaps with Schumann’s Rhenish symphony as a model – slowed these movements down.*” This one is neither fast, nor slow. It resembles “*the gentle, lightly sentimental mood....we encounter in his intermezzi for piano.*”

MOVEMENT 4:

INTRODUCTION: (C-minor to C-major)

“A portentous, dramatic and almost fantastically diverse introduction.” (Ivor Keys)

In two parts: Adagio and Più Andante.

ADAGIO:

- Begins with an outcry in C-minor:
 - Quiet, chromatically descending 4-note melody in strings with tympani rolls sets a tragic mood.
 - This 4-note idea is derived from motive B of Movement 1 Intro.
 - Crescendo on a rising 3-note idea in strings and winds; it then descends. Tympani rolls continue.
 - Strings echo this tragic melody in a *diminuendo* passage.
 - The rising 3-note idea is derived from motive A of the Movement I Intro.
 - This section mirrors Movement I Intro, Part I.
- Quiet, mysterious passage in *pizzicato* strings:
 - Music entirely made of 2-note rising and falling ideas as eighth-note pairs.
 - The double notes increase in tempo in a crescendo that reaches a climax.
 - The 2-note ideas are derived from motive C of Movement I Intro.
 - This section mirrors Movement I Intro, Part II.
- C-minor outcry repeated in variation:
 - In strings and winds. Shorter, louder & with loud tympani rolls.
 - The music trails off tragically in strings.
 - This section mirrors Movement I Intro, Part III.
- *Pizzicato* passage repeated:
 - Another quiet *pizz* section with 2-note ideas in strings.
 - Tempo again quickens amid a crescendo.
 - This section mirrors Movement I Intro, Part IV.
- Agitated transitional passage:
 - The 3-note rising idea quietly developed by winds.
 - 2-note ideas developed, music rising in a crescendo.
 - Brief climax, followed by two agitated passages of strings playing scales.
 - Larger climax on 2-note ideas, initially in winds; horns join in, music loudest.
 - Another climax with huge tympani roll.
 - Music dies down in anticipation. Something important is about to happen.

➤ NOTES:

- The Adagio can be considered a variation of Movement I Introduction.
- Its expressive purpose is to recall the anguish that began the symphony.
- The final agitated passage provides transition toward the catharsis.

PIÙ ANDANTE:

“There’s a moment’s darkness and terror, and then day breaks.” (Donald Tovey)

ALPHORN CALL (C-major)

“A sudden parting of the storm clouds reveals, in major, a horn call that is luminously continued in the flute.” (Michael Steinberg)

➤ Version 1:

- Solo horn states a noble melody, marked *forte sempre e passionato* (always loud & passionate), that Brahms labelled his Alphorn call.
- The Alphorn call *“sounds resplendent in C-major”* (Tom Service)
- NOTE: This Alphorn call is one of the main themes of the movement.
- The Alphorn call is a smooth, four-square melody in two phrases, stated amid quiet tympani rolls.
- The horn call is derived from motives A & B of Movement I Introduction.
- ORCHESTRATION NOTE: The Alphorn call is assigned to the first horn. At certain points in the melody (2nd, 4th & 6th bars of the tune) the second horn is called in to help, so that the first horn player can catch a breath. This allows for the *“tune to emerge as a long, rich and continuous sound.”* (Ivor Keys)

➤ Version 2:

- Alphorn call is repeated by flute with tympani rolls.
- Pedal accompaniment in strings gives the music a hymn-like quality.
- This passage is also marked *forte sempre e passionato*.

➤ Version 3, Orchestral hymn:

- Trombones, horns and bassoons play a solemn chorale with dotted rhythms.
- NOTE: Pay attention to this hymn. It will reappear loud and glorious in the finale.

➤ Version 4:

- Alphorn call repeated in variation, loud and ceremonious.
- First phrase sequences the 3-note rising motive in solo horn amid quiet tympani rolls.
- Second phrase begins with a crescendo in winds and horns and trails off to an open cadence.
- Once again, something important is about to happen.

➤ NOTES ON THE PIÙ ANDANTE:

- The Più Andante section can be viewed as having a small scale binary structure: A – A – B – A'. The Alphorn calls being A, and the hymn, B.
- “*The horn theme has associations of the sphere of ideal nature, the chorale that of religiosity.*” (Giselher Schubert)
- The Alphorn call was an early idea in the birth of the symphony. Eight years earlier (1868) it was conceived by Brahms, inspired by the Alp horns of Switzerland, and sent to Clara Schumann.

NOTES ON THE INTRODUCTION:

- “*Brahms rarely wrote introductions...But here we are treated to another introduction – two in the same symphony!*” (Gene De Lisa).
- Expressive purpose of the Introduction:
 - Movement 4 aims for a catharsis, transitioning from C-minor to C-major.
 - In the Adagio, Brahms restates the gloomy C-minor mood of Movement 1, lost after the relatively peaceful intermezzi of Movements 2 & 3.
 - The Più Andante with its remarkable Alphorn call, initiates the catharsis.
- ORCHESTRATION; The use of the trombone:
 - As in Beethoven’s 5th, Brahms saves the trombone for the Fourth Movement.
 - “*To hold the trombones in reserve until the fourth movement of a symphony in C minor/major is another Beethovenism for every ass to notice.*” (Ivor Keys)

ALLEGRO NON TROPPO, MA CON BRIO:

EXPOSITION:

- “Ode to Joy”: (C major)
 - Version 1: Exposition begins with a new theme in violins with *pizz* string accompaniment. This melody is very similar to Beethoven’s Ode to Joy.
 - The melody is thinly textured, mainly in strings.
 - Version 2: The “Ode to Joy” melody repeated in winds, in a more richly textured passage with *pizz* strings, horns and tympani.
 - Toward the end, Version 2 rises in a crescendo.
 - NOTE: With the “Ode to Joy” the catharsis is fully realized.
- Modulating Bridge:
 - Begins *fortissimo* in tutti with the “Ode to Joy” motive and develops it in a passage marked *animato* (energetic).
 - Brief reprise of Alphorn call in flute introduces Theme II complex.
- Theme II complex: G major

- Quiet melody in strings derived from the 4-note descending motive that began the movement.
 - The melody is developed in a crescendo passage.
 - A similar melody in winds, also developed.
 - NOTE: Theme II adheres to the Classical Era formula: subdued & dainty; in “correct” key, G major.
- Closing Section: E minor
- This section features loud, energetic and agitated music.
 - Agitated scales in strings rise in a crescendo.
 - Closing theme: a syncopated melody full of dotted rhythms. Phrase structure: $a - b - a' - b'$.
 - a is made of short-long 2-note figures sequenced up and down.
 - b is a syncopated 3-note rising idea.
 - a & b form an antecedent-consequent pair.
 - The first version of the Closing Theme is mainly in strings, loud.
 - A second version presents a in solo oboe, with a *tutti* response, b'' .
 - It is followed by a passage that develops a in winds.
 - 2-note motives developed with multiple climaxes, including three massive orchestral chords.
 - Ends in a closed cadence.

DEVELOPMENT:

The Development is in four parts and exclusively concerned with the “Ode to Joy.”

- PART I: “Ode to Joy”
- Begins with a re-statement of the “Ode to Joy” in strings (C major). It is marked *largamente* (play with breadth) in the score.
 - The melody is the same but the texture is thicker, with enhanced orchestration.
 - “Ode to Joy” motives then developed in winds and horn.
- NOTES:
- This return of “Ode to Joy” gives a false impression that the Exposition will repeat. It will not.
 - This is the last time we will hear the full “Ode to Joy.” “*Enjoy the melody now; it will not return, at least whole.*” (Michael Steinberg)
 - In the remainder of the Development, Brahms utilizes various different fragments of the Ode theme and develops them.
- PART II: Modulating Bridge Recalled
- Mimics the *fortissimo* Modulating Bridge of the Exposition.
 - It is an animated, stormy passage developing “Ode to Joy” motives.

- PART III: Wind Interlude
 - A brief wind interlude quietly develops a fragment of the Ode theme.
 - The fragment is the 2nd-5th notes of the melody, rhythmically altered.
 - NOTE: This wind interlude is a preview. It will return in a massive *tutti* version at the end of the Development.
- PART IV: Tense, dramatic transition toward Recap
 - Begins with a loud, agitated, passage based on the first two notes of the Ode.
 - The 4-note motive of the wind interlude returns, *fortissimo* and agitated, with massive orchestral chords on the last note.
 - Tension builds up on loud statements of a 3-note motive from the Ode (2nd - 4th notes), with off-beat orchestral accents.
 - Huge repetitions of 2-note motives lead to a massive climax.
 - The music calms down on a preview of the Alphorn call as it transitions into Recap.
 - *“A tremendous climax is reached and we are surprised at(the) new figure which staggers as if under a falling sky.”* (Donald Tovey)
 - NOTE: The agitated passages of this section, along with the huge climax and subsequent unwinding, all parallel the end of the Introduction that led to the first Alphorn Call. Now, the same will happen.

RECAPITULATION:

“The recapitulation itself is fiercely compressed, the most notable point of the compression being the omission of the great “Beethoven Ninth” theme.” (Michael Steinberg)

- Alphorn Call: (C major)
 - The movement unexpectedly Recaps into the Alphorn call, loud in brass and strings with continuous tympani rolls.
 - It is a truncated version of the original, but more ceremonious and noble.
 - *“The passionate quality that was always latent in it is now fully realized.”* (Michael Steinberg)
 - The Alphorn Call slows and dies down in a concluding passage.
 - Brief transitional music.
 - NOTE: The massive tension generated in Part IV of the Development is released and calmed by the Alphorn Call recap.
- Theme II Complex:
 - Theme II complex returns as in the Exposition and, in keeping with the Classical prescription, in C major, the home key.
- Closing Section:
 - The entire Closing Section also returns as in Exposition, in C major.

CODA:

- PART I: Recollection of darkness:
 - Music harkens back to the movement's Introduction.
 - Quiet 2-note motives in cannon between winds and strings bring back an ominous mood.
 - This mood is emphasized with rising music, the 2-notes louder in winds, horns & low strings with tympani rolls.
 - Music rises to a climax.
- PART II: *Stringendo, Più Allegro*:
 - In a passage marked *stringendo* (press forward, accelerate) the ominous mood is wiped out, as music accelerates in a galloping rhythm.
 - This ushers in the *Più Allegro*; music based on the 3 note fragment of the Ode (2nd – 4th notes) rushes on, still galloping.
- PART III: Glorious Hymn:
 - The hymn like chorale heard amid the original Alphorn Calls returns, *fortissimo* in brass.
 - Music rushes on, loud and energetic.
- PART IV: Glorious version of the Introduction:
 - *Fortissimo* unison statement by full orchestra, amid loud tympani rolls, brings back the 4-note descending idea that started the movement in C minor.
 - The 4-note motive is rhythmically altered, resplendent in its C major glory and difficult to recognize for the morose melody it was when first heard.
 - The motive stated three times.
 - Huge orchestral chords follow, then a bit more rollicking, galloping music and final loud, triumphant concluding chords.
- NOTES:
 - The similarity of Brahms's theme to Beethoven's Ode to Joy was immediately noticed and drew much comment. The famously cantankerous Brahms wearily responded with an oft quoted comment: "*Every jackass notices that!*"
 - For Brahms, the Classicist, the fourth movement's Sonata Form structure differs from the Classical model in the way it treats the Alphorn Call and "Ode to Joy" melodies interchangeably as the main theme.
 - Some scholars have interpreted the omission of the "Ode to Joy" theme from the Recapitulation as "*a gesture of emphatic alienation from Beethoven.*" (Walter Frisch)

FINAL COMMENTS:

“Perhaps no other work was achieved so painfully, and with so oppressive a sense of responsibility to the history of its genre; but it was labor supremely well spent.” Malcolm MacDonald.

“To write a C-minor symphony with a triumphant C-major conclusion was anything other than a trivial decision, and Brahms knew just what he was about when, at the great arrival in C-major, he evoked the Ode to Joy.” (Michael Steinberg)

Brahms answers the question of, *“how to create a counterpart to the last sections of (Beethoven’s) Ninth Symphony.....without resorting to song.”* (Friedrich Chrysander)

Brahms’ obvious reference in his finale to the choral fourth movement of Beethoven’s Ninth has provoked the inevitable comment by some scholars that, *“Brahms reclaims the purely instrumental realm of the symphony that Beethoven had renounced.”* (Walter Fritsch)

Hans von Bülow, influential conductor in the late 19th century, called Brahms Symphony #1, *“Beethoven’s Tenth.”*

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