



BRAHMS BY ARRANGEMENT

VOLUME TWO: ORCHESTRATIONS BY ROBIN HOLLOWAY

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF SCHUMANN, OP. 23

SYMPHONY IN F MINOR, OP. 34

SCHUMANN ORCH. HOLLOWAY

SIX CANONIC STUDIES, OP. 56

BBC Symphony Orchestra
Paul Mann

ROBIN HOLLOWAY: REIMAGINING THE PAST

by Lloyd Moore

Like many composers, Robin Holloway – born in Leamington Spa on 19 October 1943 – has divided his time between his writing desk and the lecture theatre, his teaching career spent entirely at the University of Cambridge, joining as an assistant lecturer in 1974 and retiring as a professor of composition in 2011. Over the course of those years he became an important influence on the ensuing generation of British composers while generating a large body of compositions of his own, as well as becoming a highly respected commentator on music through his contributions to *The Spectator* magazine (from 1988 to 2010) and other publications.¹

Holloway has articulated his attitude to the music of the past thus: ‘Nothing is new. Recycling its past by imitation, stealing, eating, transforming, is absolutely normative, and always has been. Pure originality is the unusual thing.’² It might be said that Holloway has practically forged an entire compositional career out of making this very observation explicit. Certainly, few other composers have been so apparently unconcerned to conceal or disguise their influences, enthusiasms and models, or so ready and willing to reveal the underlying borrowings in any given work. The earliest Holloway works on which he bestowed opus numbers, such as *Garden Music*, Op. 1 (1962), the two *Concertinos*, Opp. 2 (1964) and 10 (1967), and the *Concerto for organ and wind*, Op. 6 (1966), were written in a style which, broadly speaking, employed the austere and stringent post-serial *lingua franca* of the 1960s. Soon, though, Holloway began to feel dissatisfied with the aesthetic and expressive limitations of this style. Already in the *First Concerto for Orchestra*, Op. 8, completed

¹ Many of those essays have been published in two compilations: *On Music: Essays and Diversions 1963–2003*, Continuum Press, London, 2003, and *Essays & Diversions II*, Continuum Press, 2008.

² ‘Models of Invention: Old Music with a New Ear’, *Essays and Diversions*, Vol.1, p. 398.

in 1969, references to Brahms' Lieder appeared in the midst of its often rebarbative and unremitting modernist idiom. But it was his absorption in the music of Schumann that had a decisive effect and initiated a process of creative engagement with the music of the past from which he has hardly looked back. The first manifestation of this new approach (it was, to say the least, a bold move for the time, given the prevailing climate) was *Scenes from Schumann* of 1970, a sequence of orchestral glosses on Schumann songs, soon followed by the similarly Schumann-derived *Fantasy Pieces* for ensemble one year later, and the large-scale symphonic poem *Domination of Black* of 1974, in which the Schumannesque sources were transformed so thoroughly as to render them virtually undetectable to the innocent ear. It is somewhat ironic that it was in these key pieces, fashioned out of the music of an admired predecessor, in which Holloway's individual voice became most fully apparent.

In the decades following these breakthrough works, Holloway's involvement with the music of earlier eras has taken different forms and produced differing results. Some works, such as the *Second Concerto for Orchestra* (1979) and *Seascape and Harvest* (1984), present a dense and ambiguous network of quotations and allusions, somewhat akin to the collage-type pieces of Luciano Berio and Bernd Alois Zimmermann, though Holloway's intended references are generally more subtle and elusive; others form an affectionate and sometimes irreverent *hommage* to a particular composer or favourite work, as in *Wagner Nights* (1984), based on motifs from Wagner's *Parsifal*; still more, such as *Gilded Goldbergs* for two pianos (1992–97), take a pre-existing model (in this case Bach's 'Goldberg' Variations) and, in ways not dissimilar to Schoenberg's re-compositions of Handel and Monn, take the material in all kinds of unexpected and often wayward directions. In addition, Holloway has undertaken a number of largely faithful transcriptions of works by cherished composers (primarily from, though not restricted to, the Austro-Germanic canon), realised and refashioned for alternative forces, with occasional elaborations and extensions of the original material. The three items in this album fall into this latter category.

It is rare for composers with highly distinctive voices of their own not to leave any traces of their own artistic personality on whatever other music they may turn their

hand to arranging. Indeed, as Stravinsky demonstrated in his reworkings of eighteenth-century Italian music in *Pulcinella*, or of Tchaikovsky in *The Fairy's Kiss*, it is the perceived distance from the source that is the expressive heart of the matter. Thus the transcriptions recorded here owe much of their fascination to the manner in which Holloway brings his own creative involvement to bear. Naturally, this contribution is felt primarily in the instrumentation which, to take the Symphony in F minor as an example, remains more or less within the bounds of the forces Brahms might have used (who himself rarely employed much larger forces than Beethoven did, or indeed any instruments not used by him), but Holloway does not flinch from using instruments in registral extremes that Brahms would have no doubt found preposterous, or availing himself of playing techniques which every composer nowadays takes for granted (as Holloway himself explains below).

It is true that most composers of note have, at some time in their lives, occupied themselves with adapting and arranging the music of others. The motives are many and varied and the results can range from the dutiful and merely expedient to the truly inspired, almost to the point where they become independent creations (as well as the Stravinsky works already mentioned, one could add Ravel's orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, Schoenberg's version of Brahms' G minor piano quartet, Webern's of Bach's *Ricercare*). Holloway's stated rationale for essaying these orchestrations (principally that the originals are partially problematic in their initial incarnations), though no doubt in some measure correct, is surely only part of the story: as with the distinguished precedents noted above, they say as much about the arranger as what's being arranged and can thus be viewed as loving and grateful tributes to two composer forebears who provided, all those years back, the essential catalyst for the expansion and development of Holloway's own musical language and the means by which he became himself.

Lloyd Moore is a London-based composer whose works have been performed by several leading orchestras, ensembles and soloists as well as broadcast in the UK and elsewhere. His music has been praised for its craftsmanship, harmonic richness and feel for sonority. His website can be found at www.lloydmooremusic.co.uk.

BRAHMS AND SCHUMANN: REVERENT EXPANSIONS

by Robin Holloway

Alongside original compositions I have devoted much time, care, love, to orchestrations or arrangements of music by some great composers of the past. Bach above all (*Goldbergs*, *Musical Offering*, *Orgelbüchlein* and, in progress, *The Art of Fugue*); Haydn (transcriptions for piano duet of all those string quartets not done in the nineteenth century); Mozart (tentative completion of his keyboard suite in Baroque style); Schubert (an orchestration of *Lebensstürme*, a fantasia upon his *Fantasie* for violin and piano, as well as a bold attempt to round off his unfinished B minor symphony); Wagner's *Wesendonck-Lieder*; songs by Wolf, Ravel, Debussy, Britten's *Winter Words* and, most recently, Janáček's *Diary of a Young Man who Disappeared*; piano pieces by Chabrier, Fauré, Ravel, and Debussy's *En blanc et noir*. Maybe there'll be more....

Why? Some of these works 'have a problem'; mostly they are perfected as they stand, and yet there's a sense that they might be opened out, reverently enhanced, spread more widely, 'Stravinskified', even though it may take them – occasionally, sometimes, cheekily tweaked or teased – out of their original aims, idioms, terrains.

BRAHMS

Symphony in F minor after the Sonata for Two Pianos, Op. 34a (1862/1863–64; orch. 2008)

Op. 34 is one of a mighty handful of instrumental works by which Brahms emerged, sometimes audibly, out of youthful struggle, through emotional turmoil, into mature acquiescence and mastery, from the mid-1850s until well into the 1860s. Others are the First Piano Concerto and the C minor Piano Quartet, Opp. 15 and 60; and they culminate in the long-withheld First Symphony, Op. 68, finally completed in 1876.

But all are potentially symphonic, in size, scope, ambition, depth of feeling and breadth of technique.

Op. 34 was originally (1862) a string quintet. But its strenuous textures and density of thought required a stronger medium – hence the Sonata for Two Pianos (1863–64) which realises the full potential for sheer physical impact, but necessarily sacrifices *cantabile* and *sostenuto* in such places as the lyrical second-subject group in the first movement [19], the *pastorale* episodes in the finale [22], the long additive melody of the second-movement *Andante* [20], still more its central section, and, most of all, the passionate lines of the slow introduction of the finale, which the two-piano format can only, in desperation, suggest.

Hence Brahms' third version, a quintet for piano and string quartet (completed in 1864 and published as Op. 34b), which aims to get the best of both worlds – piano for weight, strings for *cantabile* and *sostenuto*. In this form the work undoubtedly remains a great masterpiece of music. But the medium can also be heard as a compromise. Pitting piano against strings makes a factitious concerto-like struggle from material that has no such nature, explicit or implicit: problems of balance are acute; performances are often disappointing, sometimes downright inadequate; even when clearly inspired, textural congestion remains. The reasons Schoenberg gave for his marvellous orchestration of Brahms' G minor Piano Quartet, Op. 25, apply still more justly to this piano-quintet version of Op. 34 – discrepancies between piano and strings that appear to increase the more accomplished the playing, and a sense of thwartment within the music itself, as here presented. (Schoenberg's further reason for his undertaking, that he loves the work so much, also applies!)

The two-piano version of Op. 34 is its most successful: the 'en blanc et noir' medium suits the granitic severity of the music; the forces are equal, not inimical – such places as the thunderous climaxes of the scherzo [21] and the turbulent episodes in the rondo-finale come over with unimpeded energy and power. Still more, the closing page of the work, prophetic of the Bartók Sonata for the two pianos plus percussion: Brahms gets the hard-cutting fury on the pianos alone! And in more delicate/lyrical passages the writing can be exquisite and detailed beyond the range of the Quintet – for instance,

the overlap of two-part melody doubled at the octave with the wide-spread chords of its accompaniment in the return of the melody in the *Andante*, the first ‘scoring’ of which in the Quintet version sounds apologetic even in the best performances (especially when the inner strings play *pizzicato*!)

I had long desired to orchestrate Brahms’ Op. 34a, and in fact ventured upon the introduction to the finale back in the 1970s for a course at Cambridge. Desire came to fruition in the summer/autumn of 2008 when for various reasons original composition took a ‘gap year’ but the restless hand and brain could not be stilled.

Like Schoenberg’s G minor piano Quartet, my version is faithful in spirit not letter. There is no attempt to remain within the confines of Brahms’ own practice, nor of the instruments, and their technique, of his day. It is neither what he himself would or could have done, though it eschews self-expression in the cause of enabling, I hope, this magnificent music to be more completely itself. Schoenberg’s Op. 25 is notoriously and wonderfully lavish with xylophone and glockenspiel (etc.) – as befits an original of exuberant coloration that culminates in the over-the-top excess of its Hungarian/Gipsy finale. By contrast, Op. 34a is rugged and monochrome. Percussion would be preposterous here. But there’s no curb, within a generally severe take upon Brahms’ standard orchestral sound (and a couple of extra instruments – cor anglais and double bassoon – made continuous rather than occasional) upon, say, multi-dividing the strings and employing their harmonics, or using ‘Bartók’ snap-*pizzicati* amongst many such post- or outside-Brahms techniques. The overall sonority remains dark, even grim, in this homage – in its own terms that yet goes beyond them – to one of this great composer’s greatest works.

Variations on a Theme of Schumann, Op. 23 (1861; orch. 2016)

Brahms composed two variation-sets upon Schumann themes: Op. 9 for solo piano in 1854, as solace for Clara in the wake of her husband’s failed suicide attempt; Op. 23 for piano duet, dedicated to the Schumann’s daughter Julie, in 1861, some five years after her father’s pathetic death. The theme for Op. 23 is Robert’s ‘last musical idea’, dictated in a delusion from the spirits of Schubert (who had died in 1828) and Mendelssohn (who

died in 1847). Schumann wrote variations on this theme for solo piano and used it again in his sad violin concerto; both works were suppressed by Clara and Brahms himself and not published until the late 1930s. Brahms' variations fulfilled an uncertain promise and a hint of disappointment and, for certain, a memory and homage.

Theme – *Leise und innig*: pale, gentle, chorale-like [1]. The ten variations adhere closely to the shape but vary widely in texture and mood: 1, delicate ornamentation [2]; 2 is choppy and vigorous without growing strenuous [3]; 3 sets suave sensuous melodic contours over accompanying ripples and surges [4]; 4 complements – gaunt, severe, stripped [5]; 5 again enhances contrast, its graceful deliciousness almost feline [6]; 6 is again choppy over heavy heaving bass motion, the second half gentle in the treble [7]; the first half of 7 is virtually themeless, the second a snatch of *bel canto* [8]; 8 is almost an extra *Hungarian Dance* (Brahms' two original collections, also for piano duet, date from 1858–68) [9]; 9 is a funeral march, energetic and fiery to begin and close, its middle more pensive [10]; the same march-figure persists into 10 [11], first as echoing remnant, then growing triumphant to wind down in an Epilogue [12], wherein Schumann's wistful original is superimposed on the martial vestiges – a mingled victory for *leise Innigkeit*.

This fine, touching piece is unjustly neglected, perhaps because of the medium itself, too often associated with pianistic splotching and crashing (admittedly, there *are* moments of thump-and-bash). My instrumentation aims to open out the full extent of the range of the work in texture and in expression. In pursuit of the latter, I have extended the Epilogue to bring closer to the surface the latent grief and bitterness that the original eschews.

SCHUMANN

Six Canonic Studies, Op. 56, for pedal piano (1845; arr. Debussy for two pianos, 1891; orch. 2011)

Schumann's *Six Canonic Studies*, Op. 56, for pedal-piano (a short-lived instrument invented, I suppose, mainly for the purpose of playing organ music in a domestic rather than a church milieu) date from 1845. In 1891 Debussy arranged these attractive and ingenious pieces for two pianos, opening out their sometimes congested textures with

characteristic sensitivity for sonority and spacing. It is this transcription rather than the original that I have used as the basis from which to score the work for chamber orchestra, in some places adding very brief interpolations and endings in the spirit of both composers.

- 13 I *Con moto egual'e dolce*
- 14 II Gently lilting, flowing
- 15 III *Andantino piacevole teneramente*
- 16 IV *Con moto amabile*: supple and airy
- 17 V *Vivace*
- 18 VI *Andante serioso*

Paul Mann is a regular guest-conductor with many orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and the Far East. His work as chief conductor of the Odense Symphony Orchestra in Denmark achieved considerable critical success, particularly in the symphonies of Beethoven, Elgar, Mahler, Schumann and Shostakovich; with it he made numerous recordings of a wide range of repertoire, for such labels as Bridge, DaCapo and EMI.

He first came to international attention as the winner of the first prize in the 1998 Donatella Flick Conducting Competition, as a result of which he was also appointed assistant conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. He made his LSO debut shortly afterwards, and subsequently collaborated regularly with the Orchestra, in both the concert-hall and the recording studio. Special projects with the LSO included the Duke Ellington Centenary Concert at the Barbican Hall with Wynton Marsalis, and a famous collaboration with the legendary rock group Deep Purple in two widely acclaimed performances of Jon Lord's *Concerto for Group and Orchestra* at the Royal Albert Hall, the live DVD and CD of which remain international bestsellers. Among his more recent recordings is the first-ever studio



account of Lord's Concerto, with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, in collaboration with Jon Lord himself and a star-studded cast of soloists, and the live recording of *Celebrating Jon Lord*, a special concert which took place at the Royal Albert Hall in April 2014 with an all-star cast paying tribute to the late composer.

This is his 28th recording for Toccata Classics. The first featured the orchestral music of Leif Solberg (rocc 0260) and the second, third and fifth (rocc 0262, 0263 and 0299) presented the complete orchestral music of the Scottish Romantic Charles O'Brien (1882–1968). His three-volume survey of the complete orchestral music of Henry Cotter Nixon appeared on rocc 0326, 0373 and 0374, an album of orchestral works by Josef Schelb was released on rocc 0426, the Symphony and two other orchestral works by Mischa Spoliansky came out on rocc 0626. He has recorded three of Richard Flury's four operas: *Eine florentinische Tragödie*, with the concert *scena Sapphos Tod*, appeared on rocc 0427, *Die helle Nacht* on rocc 0580 and *Der schlimm-heilige Vitalis* on rocc 0632; the ballet *Der magische Spiegel* and *Kleine Ballettmusik* were featured on rocc 0552, Flury's Third Violin Concerto and a number of orchestral works, some in Mann's own orchestrations, were released on rocc 0601 and the First and Fourth Symphonies followed on rocc 0643.

Paul Mann is curating, as well as conducting, a series of new works for string orchestra, *Music for My Love*, all written in memory of Yodit Tekle, the partner of Martin Anderson, founder of Toccata Classics. The first volume (rocc 0333) featured music by Brahms (arranged by Ragnar Söderlind), Maddalena Casulana (arr. Colin Matthews), Brett Dean, Steve Elcock, Andrew Ford, Robin Holloway, Mihkel Kerem, Jon Lord (arr. Paul Mann), John Pickard, Poul Ruders and Ragnar Söderlind himself. The second volume presented music by Nicolas Bacri, Ronald Corp, Wim Hautekiet, Sean Hickey, John Kinsella, David Matthews, Phillip Ramey, Gregory Rose, Gerard Schurmann, José Serebrier, Robin Walker and Richard Whilds (rocc 0370), and the third volume (rocc 0504) brought music by Michael Csányi-Wills, David Braid, Martin Georgiev, Adam Gorb, Raymond Head, Ian Hobson, David Hackbridge Johnson, Robert Matthew-Walker, Lloyd Moore, Rodney Newton and Dana Paul Perna.

He has also established himself as a champion of contemporary British symphonists, recording the Ninth (rocc 0393), Tenth and Thirteenth (rocc 0452) and Fifteenth (rocc 0456) Symphonies of David Hackbridge Johnson and the Third by Steve Elcock (rocc 0400), each accompanied by smaller works, as well as the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 4 and tone-poem *Distant Nebulae* by Rodney Newton (rocc 0459). His most recent Toccata Classics releases of living British composers feature orchestral music by Rob Keeley, including his Second Symphony

(TOCC 0462), by Arnold Griller – his Violin and Trumpet Concertos and *Dances under an Autumn Sky* (TOCC 0590) – and two volumes of music by Derek B. Scott, the first (TOCC 0589) presenting Scott's *Airs and Dances* (a bagpipe concerto) and other works and the second (TOCC 0646) the Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2 and the tone-poem *The Silver Sword*.

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The BBC SO has close relationships with its world-class roster of conductors and guest artists: Chief Conductor Sakari Oramo, Principal Guest Conductor Dalia Stasevksa, holder of the Günter Wand Conducting Chair Semyon Bychkov, Conductor Laureate Sir Andrew Davis and Creative Artist in Association Jules Buckley. It also makes regular appearances with the BBC Symphony Chorus.

The vast majority of performances are broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and a number of studio recordings each season, which are free to attend, often feature up-and-coming new talent, not least members of the 'New Generation Artists' scheme of BBC Radio 3. All broadcasts are available for 30 days on BBC Sounds, and the BBC SO can also be seen on BBC TV and BBC iPlayer and heard on the BBC's online archive, Experience Classical.

The BBC Symphony Orchestra and Chorus – alongside the BBC Concert Orchestra, BBC Singers and BBC Proms – also offer enjoyable and innovative education and community activities and take a leading role in the 'BBC Ten Pieces' and 'BBC Young Composer' programmes.
bbc.co.uk/symphonyorchestra



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BRAHMS and SCHUMANN: orchestrations by Robin HOLLOWAY

BRAHMS

	<i>Variations on a Theme of Schumann, Op. 23, for piano duet</i> (1861; orch. 2016)	21:38
1	Theme: <i>Andante, Leise und innig</i>	1:33
2	Variation 1: <i>Pochino più mosso, delicato</i>	1:21
3	Variation 2: <i>Più mosso</i> –	1:48
4	Variation 3: <i>A tempo, grazioso</i> –	1:54
5	Variation 4: <i>Misterioso</i>	1:55
6	Variation 5: <i>Grazioso con moto</i> –	1:29
7	Variation 6: <i>Alla marcia</i>	1:19
8	Variation 7: <i>Allegro leggiero</i>	1:42
9	Variation 8: <i>Andante con moto ardente</i>	1:12
10	Variation 9: <i>Maestoso</i> –	2:26
11	Variation 10: <i>Alla marcia, poco lento</i>	2:51
12	Epilogue	2:08

SCHUMANN

	<i>Six Canonic Studies, Op. 56</i> (1845; arr. for two pianos by Debussy, 1891; orch. 2011)	18:58
13	No. 1: <i>Con moto eguale dolce</i>	3:05
14	No. 2: Gently lilting, flowing	4:07
15	No. 3: <i>A tempo, andantino piacevole teneramente</i>	2:22
16	No. 4: <i>Con moto amabile</i> : supple and airy	3:47
17	No. 5: <i>Vivace</i>	2:14
18	No. 6: <i>Andante serio</i>	3:23

BRAHMS

	<i>Symphony in F minor, Op. 34</i> (1864; orch. 2008) (after the Sonata for Two Pianos, Op. 34a)	44:08
19	I <i>Allegro non troppo</i>	16:06
20	II <i>Andante</i>	8:16
21	III Scherzo: <i>Allegro</i> – Trio	8:27
22	IV Finale. <i>Poco sostenuto</i> – <i>Allegro comodo</i>	11:19

BBC Symphony Orchestra
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Paul Mann, conductor

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