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Spring 2017

Advanced Conducting Project

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Recommended Citation

Gold, Dustin, "Advanced Conducting Project" (2017). *Conducting Student Scholarship*. 10.
https://mosaic.messiah.edu/conduct_st/10

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ACADEMIC FESTIVAL OVERTURE, OP. 80:
JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833-1897)

Dustin Gold
Advanced Conducting Project
May 6, 2017

Composer

Johannes Brahms was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1833.¹ He moved to Vienna in 1862, where he spent most of his remaining professional life.² Brahms composed music for symphony orchestra, chamber groups, piano, organ, and voice/chorus. Brahms was a master of counterpoint. “The most complicated forms of counterpoint were a natural means of expressing his emotions.”³ His handling of rhythm and meter was also masterful. Only Stravinsky rivals Brahms in the advanced nature of his rhythmic thinking.⁴ Brahms became acquainted with Robert and Clara Schumann in 1853.⁵ The three eventually became good friends. Brahms died in 1897 from liver cancer.⁶

Composition

The Academic Festival Overture, op. 80, along with the Tragic Overture, op. 81, was written in the summer of 1880, as a thank you to the University of Breslau, who planned to award Brahms with an honorary doctorate. Brahms himself conducted the premiere of the piece at a special convocation where he was presented with the honorary degree on January 4, 1881.

¹ Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1982), 3

² Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 242

³ Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1982), 296

⁴ Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms*. (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1996), 269

⁵ Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 75

⁶ Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1982), 203

The piece is made up of several student drinking songs, an ironic contrast to the solemnity of the event.⁷

Historical Perspective

After Brahms had been notified by the University of Breslau that he would be awarded an honorary doctorate, he sent a postcard of thanks to the university. However, a letter from his friend, Bernhard Scholz, the Director of Music in Breslau, made it clear that he was expected to express his thanks in musical form. Brahms wrote his musical “thank you” in the summer of 1880 while on vacation at Bad Ischl.⁸

Technical Considerations

This is an advanced level piece. There are a few key changes and simple time changes, but one of the most difficult aspects of this piece is the rhythm. Like many of Brahms’ pieces, syncopation plays a big role in the rhythm of this piece. In addition, there are several times where Brahms uses hocket melodies, such as in the opening melodic line shared between the violins and bassoons.

⁷ Los Angeles Philharmonic. “Academic Festival Overture.” *LA Phil Philpedia*. <http://http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/academic-festival-overture-johannes-brahms>. (Accessed April 15, 2017)

⁸ Ibid

Stylistic Considerations

Brahms uses a variety of stylistic markings, such as *marcato*, *legato*, and *staccato*. In addition, a wide range of dynamics are used throughout the piece, from *pp* to *ff*, as well as several *fp* and *sf* markings. There are also a number of solo and tutti sections.

Musical Elements

Melody

The melodies used in this piece consist of 4 student drinking songs: “Fuchslid,” “Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus,” “Hört, ich sing das Lied der Lieder,” and “Gaudeamus igitur.” The melody gets passed around between the strings, winds, and brass instruments, both as complete sections, and as solo passages for individual instruments.

Harmony

The piece moves through 5 keys as it transitions into the different melodies. Brahms uses chordal harmonies as well as contrapuntal techniques to add interest to the harmonic lines in the piece. The instrumentation is scored fairly thickly throughout a large portion of the piece.

Rhythm

As in many of his pieces, Brahms makes use of syncopation throughout the piece, such as in measure 96 in the violins and upper woodwind or in the following measure in the low woodwinds and low strings. He makes use of triplet quarter notes in measure 153 in the upper woodwinds. Most of the rhythms, however, are fairly straightforward, using simple eighth note

and quarter note rhythms much of the time. Off-beat eighth notes from time to time add additional rhythmic interest to accompaniment parts, such as the strings in measures 131-140.

Timbre

The strings, winds, and brass are treated as equals, and each have significant moments throughout the piece. Brahms also uses the percussion section to emphasize certain parts of the overture. Along with three timpani, he uses triangle, cymbals, and bass drum. Brahms combines the sections in different combinations, using solo instruments and soli sections. Of course, the full orchestra plays together as well, as Brahms makes use of the full range of instrumental colors at his disposal. This piece calls for one of the largest ensembles of any of Brahms' pieces.

Form & Structure

The piece is through-composed with 4 distinct sections utilizing tunes from four well-known student songs:

Allegro

This section is based on the song, "*Hört, ich sing das Lied der Lieder.*" Brahms begins the piece with strings, low winds, and horns. The opening is thinly orchestrated until measure 47 when the full orchestra comes crashing in for four measures.

Maestoso

The *Allegretto tempo, un poco maestoso* section is based on the song, “*Wir hatten gebauet ein stattliches Haus.*” This section of the piece is generally scored more thickly than the opening section, relying heavily on the full orchestral forces.

Animato

Beginning with the bassoons carrying the melody, this section is based on the song, “*Fuchslied.*” With only viola and cello as accompaniment, and oboe entering in the ninth measure of the bassoon melody, the section starts out scored quite sparsely. However, the full orchestra soon joins in, and the majority of the section utilizes the full orchestra, with few exceptions.

Allegro

The final section is based on the song, “*Gaudeamus igitur.*” It is scored for the full orchestra with a multitude of 32nd notes in the string parts throughout the section. The piece ends triumphantly with the winds and brass carrying the melody through to the end.

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SERENADE FOR STRINGS IN E MINOR, OP. 20
EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934)

Dustin Gold
Advanced Conducting Project
May 6, 2017

Composer

Edward Elgar was an English composer born in 1857.¹ He taught himself the art of composition through the study of books on harmony, theory, and orchestration, as well as through the study of the scores of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.² After his marriage to Caroline Alice Roberts in 1889,³ Elgar moved to London, where his only child was born in 1890.⁴ Elgar composed in a variety of genres, including orchestral works, cantatas and oratorios, songs and partsongs, and keyboard music. Some of his best-known and most influential compositions include the *Enigma Variations*, *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*, and *The Dream of Gerontius*. Elgar was appointed Master of the King's Music in 1924⁵ and he died in 1934.⁶

Composition

The Serenade for Strings, in e minor, Op. 20, is in three movements and is written for string orchestra. It is believed that the Serenade for Strings is a reworking of a suite that the composer had written years earlier, which makes it one of his earliest compositions to survive into the standard repertoire. The piece is dedicated to Edward W. Whinfield, an organ builder

¹ Michael Kennedy. *The Life of Elgar*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8

² Ibid, 13

³ Ibid, 70

⁴ Ibid, 37

⁵ Jerrold Northrop Moore. *Edward Elgar: A Creative Life*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1984), 770

⁶ Michael Kennedy. *The Life of Elgar*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 200

and amateur musician. The second movement, Larghetto, contains the finest and most mature writing of the piece.⁷

Historical Perspective

The piece was written in March of 1892, and was first performed in private by the Worcester Ladies' Orchestral Class while the composer conducted. The first public performance was in Antwerp in 1896, and the piece premiered in England in 1899.⁸

Technical Considerations

The Larghetto movement is at times scored fairly thin, leaving the various sections exposed. There are also numerous dynamic changes that happen quickly and must be played precisely in order for the piece to have its full effect as the composer intended. In addition, the first violins split into octaves at Letter L, so careful tuning is important through this section.

Stylistic Considerations

This movement is overall quite legato, although the composer uses *staccato* and *portato* markings several times throughout the movement, such as in measures 66 and 67. Accents and *martellato* markings are used throughout the piece as well, generally on the highest note of a phrase or at entrances. They are also used to emphasize the climax in measures 57 and 58.

⁷ The Elgar Society. "Serenade for Strings in E minor, op 20," Elgar - His Music. <http://www.elgar.org/3serenad.htm> (accessed May 5, 2017).

⁸ The Elgar Society. "Serenade for Strings in E minor, op 20," Elgar - His Music. <http://www.elgar.org/3serenad.htm> (accessed May 5, 2017).

Musical Elements

Melody

The melody generally moves by way of upward leaps followed by downward steps. For example, in the opening measure, Violin I begins alone, rising by step just for a moment before leaping up a 7th to an accented note and falling away. Violin II overlaps and plays a melody with a similar outline. Melodies tend to change directions frequently and often use Elgar's characteristic 7th leap. The melodies used in this movement encompass a wide range, using the lowest notes of the violins in places and moving up into the higher register of the instrument at other times. While the melody used in the opening and closing of the piece uses some chromatics, the main melody in the heart of the piece, first stated at Letter I and again at Letter L, is diatonic.

Harmony

The composer utilizes I, IV, and V7 chords more than any others, and also includes a number of secondary dominants and sevenths throughout the piece. There are many chord changes, sometimes as many as 5 per measure. The piece begins in the key of C Major, then transitions to e minor, the home key of the entire piece, at Letter K, then returns to C Major just before Letter L.

Rhythm

There are many dotted rhythms used throughout this piece, particularly in the melody. Eighth/sixteenth rhythms are also common in the melody. Accompaniment parts are generally

slower, using mostly quarter and eighth notes, though the accompaniment rhythm also reflects the rhythm of the melody from time to time. A new rhythm is introduced into the accompaniment at Letter L, where the second violins and violas begin a series of 16th-note triplets. This rhythm helps to create a sense of anticipation by providing more movement under the slower-moving melody line in the first violins. Rhythmically, the piece ends how it began, with a few dotted rhythms in the melody parts and quarter notes and eighth notes in the accompaniment.

Timbre

The piece begins in the low range of the violins, and generally stays in the mid-range for most of the opening. The first section of the piece consists of an section carrying the melodic line, while the rest of the orchestra emphasizes chord changes, giving a lush overall sound. The orchestration thins out at Letter K, and the violas move into their upper range, changing the timbre at that moment. Cellos also move up to a higher range, playing in tenor clef beginning in measure 42. The texture changes again at Letter L as the parts become more unified. First violins and cellos both split into two parts, creating a thicker sound. The piece ends in a similar mood to the opening, with the sections trading melodic material and the remaining parts emphasizing chord changes.

Form & Structure

This movement is in rounded binary form with an introduction and a coda. The introduction begins with melodic material being traded between the first violins, second violins,

and violas. Cellos help to emphasize chord changes. The introduction lasts until Letter I, where the first violins have a long held note before beginning the A section. The melody throughout this section is carried by the first violins, as the rest of the orchestra provides harmonic support. The B section begins at Letter K, where the first violins and violas alternate melodic material with the second violins, before the cello enters with a melody of its own. The return of the A section begins at Letter L, but the accompaniment parts are much different this time, with triplet sixteenth-notes in the second violins and violas. Cellos also split into two parts. The final coda is similar to the introduction, with the upper instruments trading melodic lines.

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SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MAJOR, OP. 21:
LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN (1770-1827)

Dustin Gold
Advanced Conducting Project
May 6, 2017

Composer

Ludwig van Beethoven was born in 1770 in Bonn, Germany.¹ He began his musical life at the piano. He had several private teachers during the early part of his life, including his father,² a singer in the chapel of the Archbishop of Cologne in Bonn.³ Beethoven also studied composition with Christian Gottlob Neefe while in Bonn.⁴ After his move to Vienna in 1792, Beethoven continued his composition studies with Franz Joseph Haydn.⁵ Beethoven began to lose his hearing in his late 20s, and by the end of his life, he was almost completely deaf.⁶ Beethoven became one of the most influential composers in history, and his music was central in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras.

Composition

While sketches from Beethoven's Symphony No. 1 have been found, it is not known for certain when the composer completed the work. Influences from Haydn and Mozart are evident throughout the piece. However Beethoven's unique voice is still heard, as the winds gain more independence in this symphony than is common at the time. The frequent use of *sforzandi* also foreshadow his later works.

¹ Jan Swafford, *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2014), 2

² Ibid, 22

³ Ibid, 13

⁴ Ibid, 43

⁵ Los Angeles Philharmonic. "Symphony No. 1 in C major, Op. 21." *LA Phil Philpedia*. <http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/symphony-no-1-c-major-op-21-ludwig-van-beethoven>. (Accessed April 23, 2017)

⁶ Jan Swafford, *Beethoven: Anguish and Triumph* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2014), 223-224

Historical Perspective

Hoffmeister & Kuhnel published this piece in 1801. Beethoven dedicated the symphony to Baron Gottfried van Swieten, who was one of his early patrons. Sketches from the finale have been found among counterpoint exercises that Beethoven wrote in the spring of 1797 during his time studying with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger. The piece premiered on April 2, 1800 in Vienna at the K.K. Hoftheater nächst der Burg.⁷ Included on the program were two other works by Beethoven, the Septet and his Piano Concerto No. 2.⁸

Technical Considerations

For an ensemble that typically plays standard repertoire, this piece doesn't pose many technical challenges. One of the biggest challenges of this piece is the timing of the transition from the Adagio into the Allegro in both the opening and final movements. In the first movement, there is no fermata, and there are two main ways to approach the transition. The first is to keep the 32nd notes in time with the Adagio and not start the Allegro until the downbeat, just as is written. However, the 32nd notes are a part of the Allegro melody, so starting the Allegro tempo on the final eighth beat of the measure before the change seems to be a more accurate interpretation. The final movement has several transitions with fermatas that must be given clearly for a successful performance. The opening fermata is fairly simple, as the cutoff for the fermata can be used as the preparation beat for the first violins. The fermata before the transition to the Allegro is a little more tricky, but can be approached in a similar way. The

⁷ George Grove, *Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies*. (London: Novello and Company, Limited, 1896), 2-3

⁸ Edmund Morris, *Beethoven: The Universal Composer*. (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2005), 77-78

cutoff of the fermata can be the preparation beat in the new tempo for the first violins to play their pickup notes. The final two fermatas can also be approached in the same way.

Stylistic Considerations

This symphony is very much in a classical style, with only hints of the romanticism that was to come later in Beethoven's life. As such, it should generally be played with a lighter character, similar to a late Haydn or Mozart symphony.

Musical Elements

Melody

Melody lines are often shared between the strings and the winds. Woodwind instruments around this time gained more melodic independence, and Beethoven took full advantage of the melodic capabilities of the instruments. In the first movement, Beethoven uses the two sections to echo each other, and gives several solos to the winds, particularly the oboe. He also passes short motives between the cellos, violas, violins, bassoon, oboe, and flute during the development section. The second violins begin the second movement alone, soon joined by the violas and cellos, and then the winds, in a quasi-fugue for the opening. Violins carry the melodic line for much of the movement, but flute and oboe are also given a significant amount of melodic material. Violins are given the melody through the minuet section of the third movement, while the winds take control through the trio, with the oboe leading the melodic line through the first part of the trio and the clarinet taking control during the second section. After the opening chord, violins take control of the melodic material in the fourth movement. The strings carry the

melody for the majority of the movement. Woodwinds add interest to the melodic lines, and the brass section adds flourishes throughout.

Harmony

Beethoven placed the symphony in the key of C Major, and the first, third, and fourth movements are all in that key. The second movement is written in F Major. Beethoven makes use of a variety of harmonic structures and contrapuntal techniques throughout the symphony. Low strings and winds often play the harmonic parts as the violins carry the melody. Beethoven will sometimes have the instruments hold the notes, but often, he breaks things up into quarter or eighth notes to give more rhythmic interest to the parts. The third movement is generally homophonic, while the other three movements are more contrapuntal, due in large part to the form of the movements.

Rhythm

The first movement begins in a subdivided 4, but quickly moves to cut time following the introduction. Beethoven generally uses dotted eighth-sixteenth note rhythms to give the bouncing feel to the melody of the movement. Quarter notes and eighth notes generally make up the accompaniment parts, and eighth notes and sixteenth notes are generously used in the parts of the countermelody. In the second movement, Beethoven uses a 3/8 time signature, and again makes use of dotted rhythms in the melody, this time in the form of dotted 16th-32nd notes. Triplet 16th notes are also used in the violin and flutes parts throughout the movement. The third movement is in 3/4, but is played in 1, and utilizes mainly quarter notes and half notes. There

are a few eighth-note runs to add rhythmic interest during the trio section. The final movement is in 2/4, and uses eighth notes and quarter notes throughout the melody, however the accompanying parts often have 16th notes. Sixteenth notes are also used in the melody, especially when leading into a phrase.

Timbre

Strings are given the most material, of course, but the winds play a significant role throughout the piece. Brass are used to add excitement through flourishes during tutti sections, but aren't really used to carry the melody. Typical of the time, the only percussion instrument used in the piece is the timpani. There is a significant amount of writing where strings and winds echo each other, however Beethoven also uses the two families separately from each other at times, to give a change of character.

Form & Structure

The piece is in the key of C major with 4 movements:

Adagio molto — Allegro con brio

The first movement is written in sonata form, and includes a unique introduction meant to gradually reveal the home key of the symphony by presenting a sequence of dominant-tonic chords. Dubbed, “a comedy of manners” by English musicologist Sir Donald Francis Tovey, this musical joke is another example of Beethoven's voice shining through the distinctly Classical style. Strings first present the opening theme of the exposition, with violins carrying the melody.

Winds interrupt as the violins continue the theme. The full orchestra enters soon after, with the melodic line alternating between the strings and winds. The second theme begins with the oboe and flute trading solo measures while the strings provide a staccato accompaniment line. Violins join the winds in the second phrase before the entire orchestra breaks in again. An oboe solo and some transition material lead into the development. The development has a thinner texture with the brass resting for a large portion of the section. Small, rhythmic motives are passed through the strings and winds, and Beethoven inverts pieces of the opening exposition melody just before the recapitulation. Following the recapitulation, Beethoven includes a coda that gives the ending a greater sense of finality.

Andante cantabile con moto

The second movement is also in sonata form. It is in the key of F major. While it is marked Andante, the tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 120$ seems to contradict that marking. This movement showcases all the colors available in the orchestra, with numerous solos throughout. Beethoven gives the winds a lot of independence through this movement, utilizing them as a separate section for carrying the melody and not just as an accompaniment for the strings.

Menuetto: Allegro molto e vivace

Though marked as a *Menuet*, the tempo marking is more indicative of *Scherzo*. Beethoven chose to mark *Scherzo* in 4 subsequent symphonies, and only uses *Menuet* once in his remaining 8 symphonies. Besides the tempo, it is a fairly straightforward minuet, and uses scale

patterns and triads from the opening movement as motivic material. The movement is in the key of C.

Adagio — Allegro molto e vivace

Beethoven provides another unique introduction to open the final movement. After the full orchestra holds a “G,” first violins haltingly play scale fragments beginning on the same note and leading into a fermata, before one more scale brings in the rest of the string section and the start of the Allegro section. Bassoon is the first wind instrument to enter, and horns, oboes, flutes, and clarinets soon follow, along with the remaining brass instruments and the timpani, shortly afterward. The movement is also in sonata form in the key of C, and again utilizes the wind and brass instruments as independent sections to introduce melodic material. The coda begins following two surprising fermatas. Sporadic scale patterns wind the orchestra back up for the conclusion. *Sforzandi* and other *subito* dynamics are used throughout the movement, and would remain a characteristic of Beethoven’s compositions for the rest of his life.

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