The Symphonies of Johannes Brahms: An Exploration of Performance Considerations for the Orchestral Trombonist

Wesley Louis-Neil Thompson

University of Miami, wesley.l.thompson@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations

Recommended Citation
https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/2411

This Open access is brought to you for free and open access by the Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open Access Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact repository.library@miami.edu.
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

THE SYMPHONIES OF JOHANNES BRAHMS: AN EXPLORATION OF PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ORCHESTRAL TROMBONIST

By

Wesley Louis-Neil Thompson

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

December 2019
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

THE SYMPHONIES OF JOHANNES BRAHMS: AN EXPLORATION OF
PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ORCHESTRAL TROMBONIST

Wesley Louis-Neil Thompson

Approved:

________________________  _______________________
Aaron Tindall, D.M.A        Charles Mason, D.M.A.
Associate Professor Tuba and Euphonium     Professor and Chair of Theory
                                              and Composition

________________________  _______________________
Timothy Conner, B.M.        Guillermo Prado, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Practice  Dean of the Graduate School
Instrumental Performance, Trombone

________________________  _______________________
John Daversa, D.M.A         _________________
Associate Professor and Chair of
Studio Music and Jazz
Before its entrance into the instrumental genre of “The Symphony”, the trombone had held a long history of doubling vocal lines in sacred vocal music, oratorios, and operatic traditions. Ludwig van Beethoven is often credited as the first major composer to include the trombones in a symphony in his *Symphony No. 5*, however there were several composers that had written for trombones in their symphonies before Beethoven. Since the time of Beethoven, the trombone has become a permanent member of the symphony orchestra. Johannes Brahms was greatly influenced by Beethoven and the other Classical and Baroque masters including their use of the trombone. Brahms’s utilization of the trombones in his Four Symphonies is rooted in the vocal traditions yet he provides the trombone a new-found independence and importance and is divorced from only doubling vocal lines. This document will examine the orchestral scores of the Four Symphonies of Johannes Brahms and discuss the context in which the trombones are utilized. A deeper understanding of the specific ways in which Brahms wrote for the trombones, both individually and as a section, will serve the aspiring orchestral
trombonist and teachers alike towards a more well-informed and musically rewarding experience with the symphonies of Johannes Brahms.
Acknowledgements

This document would not have been possible without the love, help, and support of numerous people. I would like to thank the members of my doctoral committee for their guidance, generous support, and critical commentary. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge Professor Timothy Conner for his countless hours of support, understanding, and encouragement during my time at the University of Miami. I would also like to thank Professor Charles Mason for his attention to many details I surely would have missed. I would like to thank Mark L. Lusk for his daily reminder to always “put the music first.” Without his insistent and unwavering belief in me I never would have made it this far. I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge the many years of encouragement, support, and never-ending love from my parents. And finally, to my loving wife, Kylla, and son, Owen, for encouraging me to stay committed to this topic and its completion and for understanding the many late nights completing this document.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES</th>
<th>vi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

## Chapter

1. **INTRODUCTION**
   - Background .............................................................. 1
   - Johannes Brahms: His Life ........................................... 2
   - Need for Study .......................................................... 5
   - Purpose ................................................................. 5
   - Research Questions .................................................... 6
   - Delimitations ................................................................ 6

2. **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE** ................................ 8
   - Scores ........................................................................... 8
   - Books ............................................................................ 9
   - Method Books ............................................................. 11
   - Professional Journals .................................................. 12
   - Recordings ..................................................................... 13
   - Websites ......................................................................... 14

3. **METHOD** .................................................................... 16
   - Overview ........................................................................ 16
   - Symphonies .................................................................... 17
   - Equipment ....................................................................... 17
   - Closing Thoughts ....................................................... 18

4. **SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MINOR, OP. 68** .......................... 19
   - Context .......................................................................... 19
   - Fourth Movement: Adagio .............................................. 22

5. **SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MAJOR, OP. 73** .......................... 34
   - Context .......................................................................... 34
   - First Movement: Allegro non troppo ............................... 36
   - Second Movement: Adagio non troppo ............................. 47
   - Fourth Movement: Allegro con spirito ............................ 50

6. **SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN F MINOR, OP. 90** .......................... 58
   - Context .......................................................................... 58
   - First Movement: Allegro con brio ................................... 60
   - Second Movement: Andante ........................................... 65
   - Fourth Movement: Poco Allegretto ................................. 67
List of Musical Examples

Example 4.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 30-33 ................. 23
Example 4.2: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 47-51 .................. 24
Example 4.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 52-61 .................. 26
Example 4.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 176-179 ............. 26
Example 4.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 279-280 ............. 27
Example 4.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 285-288 ............. 27
Example 4.7: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 371-380 ............. 28
Example 4.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 389-391 ............. 29
Example 4.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 39-396 ............... 30
Example 4.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 407-416 ............. 31
Example 4.11: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 439-447 ............. 32
Example 4.12: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 450-457 ............. 33
Example 5.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 1-9 .................... 37
Example 5.2: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 33-46 ................. 39
Example 5.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 224-234 ............... 40
Example 5.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 246-254 ............... 41
Example 5.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 254-257 ............... 42
Example 5.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 258-273 ............... 43
Example 5.7: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 274-281 ............... 43
Example 5.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 282-302 ............... 45
Example 5.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 347-349 ............... 45
Example 5.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 447-455 ............... 46
Example 5.11: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 1-3 .................... 47
Example 5.12: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 27-30 .................. 48
Example 5.13: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 55-57 ................. 49
Example 5.14: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 60-62 ................. 49
Example 5.15: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 86-89 ................. 50
Example 5.16: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 202-205 ............... 50
Example 5.17: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 234-240 ............... 52
Example 5.18: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 275-279 ............... 52
Example 5.19: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 355-372 ............... 54
Example 5.20: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 388-406 ............... 55
Example 5.21: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 417-429 ............... 57
Example 6.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 1-6 ..................... 62
Example 6.2: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 120-127 ................. 63
Example 6.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 183-187 ................. 64
Example 6.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 217-225 ................. 65
Example 6.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 2, mm. 80-87 ................... 66
Example 6.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 2, mm. 128-134 ................. 67
Example 6.7: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 18-30 .................. 68
Example 6.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 64-71 .................. 69
Example 6.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 149-172 ............... 70
Example 6.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 277-309 ............... 72
Example 7.1: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Cantata No. 50- Nach dir Gott*, Chaconne Theme ................................................................. 77
Example 7.2: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, Chaconne Theme ................................................................. 77
Example 7.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 1-8 ........................................ 78
Example 7.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 9-16........................................ 79
Example 7.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 25-33 .................. 80
Example 7.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 113-120 .................. 82
Example 7.7: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 121-128 .................. 83
Example 7.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 129-136 .................. 84
Example 7.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 145-152 .......... 84
Example 7.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 153-158 .............. 85
Example 7.11: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 161-166 .............. 86
Example 7.12: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 169-177 .............. 87
Example 7.13: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 193-200 .............. 88
Example 7.14: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 201-209 .............. 90
Example 7.15: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 253-260 .............. 91
Example 7.16: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 265-272 .......... 91
Example 7.17: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 273-280 .......... 92
Example 7.18: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 291-311 .......... 94
Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1853 Robert Schumann published the article “Neue Bahnen” (meaning New Paths) in which he praised Johannes Brahms in extravagant language saying Brahms had “sprung like Minerva fully armed from the head of the son of Cronus.”¹ Brahms found himself thrust into the limelight with the heavy burden of Robert Schumann’s predictions and the expectations of his future success; burdens which may have intensified his propensity for self-scrutiny.² Brahms would not complete his First Symphony until 1876, over twenty years since he began his first sketches.³ In the era after Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, regarded at that time as “perhaps the single most influential work of the century”⁴ it was impossible to write a symphony without it being compared to Beethoven. Hans von Bülow, a contemporary of Brahms, German conductor, virtuoso pianist, and composer coined the term ‘the tenth symphony’ to declare Brahms’s Symphony No. 1 as a “worthy successor to Beethoven’s nine[th].”⁵

The symphonies of Johannes Brahms hold a special place in the heart of many orchestral trombonists. The beautiful chorales and energetic finales provide the orchestral trombonist some of the most sensitive and sublime performance moments in the orchestral literature. These Four Symphonies may not present the same technical

⁴ Raymond Knapp, Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony (Stuyvesant: Pendragon Press, 1997), 5.
⁵ Otto E. Albrecht, “Johannes Brahms and Hans on Beulow,” University of Pennsylvania Library Chronicle 1, no. 3 (1933): 43.
demands as a Rossini opera, a Strauss tone poem, or the later works of Hector Berlioz and Gustav Mahler, however they possess an abundance of challenges for the orchestral trombonist.

**Johannes Brahms: His Life**

Johannes Brahms was born on May 7, 1833 in Hamburg, Germany as the second child to Henrika Christiane Nissen and Johann Jakob Brahms. Brahms began studying piano, cello, and horn, likely, with his father, a “resourceful musician of modest talent.” At age seven, Brahms began studying piano with Otto Friedrich Willibald Cossel. Within a few years he was studying with one of Hamburg’s most prominent teachers, pianist and composer Eduard Marxsen. In addition to his skills on piano Marxsen also recognized Brahms’s potential as a composer and began instructing him in harmony, counterpoint, and theory as well as introducing him to the works of the great classical composers like Bach and Beethoven. Brahms continued to develop and eventually left his academic studies at fifteen and continued to supplement his family’s income by teaching and performing at local entertainment establishments.

By the age of nineteen, Brahms had played a few piano recitals in Hamburg and had met the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi with whom he toured in northern Germany. Although his pairing with Reményi was unsuccessful, Brahms met several important musicians who would have an important influence on the rest of his life.

---

6 Bozarth and Frisch, “Brahms, Johannes,” 2.
8 Ibid., 10.
including Joseph Joachim, Franz Liszt, Albert Dietrich, Julius Otto Grimm, and most of all Robert and Clara Schumann.\(^9\) Brahms stayed very close with the Schumanns until Robert’s death in 1856 and maintained a very close relationship with Clara and her children. Just one year later, Brahms acquired a position at the Detmold court through the influence of Clara. The position paid well and allowed him much time to travel and compose.\(^10\) Brahms experienced somewhat of a professional setback in the early 1860s when he joined with Joachim, Grimm, and Bernard Scholz in writing a Manifesto, which was published prematurely, which criticized members of the New German School, chiefly among them Wagner, Liszt, and Berlioz.\(^11\)

Brahms had been hoping for a position in his hometown of Hamburg with the Hamburg Philharmonic, however his friend Julius Stockhausen was chosen. Brahms took this as an insult and subsequently moved back to Vienna taking a position as conductor with the Singakademie, a position he held for only one year. He toured throughout Germany, Austria, Hungary, Denmark, and the Netherlands and appeared in concerts with Joachim, Clara Schumann, and Stockhausen all while developing new personal and professional relationships. Although he was finding considerable success as a composer, Brahms still needed to support himself with an active performance schedule.\(^12\)

Brahms’s *Ein Deutsches Requiem, Op. 45* was premiered in 1868 and met with critical acclaim, a work finally living up to the expectations of Robert Schumann and

\(^{11}\) Ibid., xv.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., xvi.
establishing him as a “composer of the first rank.”13 By the mid 1870s Brahms no longer needed an official position and had assured himself financial security from publishing arrangements. With the prophesy of “Neue Bahnen” lingering, Brahms committed himself to mastering large scale works and developing his orchestration skills. Finally, in 1876 he completed his Symphony No. 1. Within the next decade Brahms would complete his other three symphonies, including the majority of his large-scale orchestral works such as the Violin Concerto in D major, Double Concerto in A minor (for violin and cello), Piano Concerto No. 2 in Bb major, and his two overtures Academic Festival Overture and Tragic Overture.14

In 1890 Brahms had decided to retire from composing, however Richard Mühlfeld, a clarinetist of the Meiningen Orchestra of which Brahms was particularly fond of, inspired him to compose several chamber works for clarinet as well as other works for piano.15 Brahms’s later life, although successful, was an increasingly depressive time for him as many of his close friends had died including Clara Schumann. Affected by her death, Brahms composed his famous “Four Serious Songs” and performed them after her funeral. Less than one year after her death Brahms succumbed to and died of liver cancer in 1897.16

13 Ibid., xvi.
15 Ibid., xvii.
16 Ibid., xvii-xviii.
Need for Study

The symphonies of Johannes Brahms are performed frequently by professional orchestras and are often programmed by the orchestras of colleges, universities, and conservatories. Understanding the piece as a whole as well as the role and function of one’s individual part is paramount for a successful performance of any orchestral work. The symphonies of Brahms present no exceptional or unique challenge for the trombonist, yet a clear understanding of the context of their inception and the role which they will occupy is very important. For the trombonist, there are few sources that provide the orchestral trombonist context and how Johannes Brahms utilizes the trombone section.

Purpose

This study is intended to provide context which will aid aspiring orchestral trombone students and teachers alike. As a result of this study, the reader will have a more comprehensive understanding of the works as a whole through study of the scores and the possible musical implications it may have. The reader will better understand the role and function of the trombones. Ultimately, the goal is to provide the tools and understanding with which a trombonist can make informed decisions about the many aspects of performing a Brahms symphony.
Research Questions

This study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What information can be found in the orchestral scores about how the trombone and the trombone section functions within the symphonies of Johannes Brahms?
2. How does Brahms utilize the sound of the trombone section in his Four Symphonies?
3. What are the considerations to be taken regarding the choice of equipment when performing the symphonies of Johannes Brahms?

Delimitations

Although this paper is intended to serve as an aid in the preparation of the Brahms symphonies, it is not intended to serve as a definitive guide of the right and wrong ways to perform Brahms. The biographic and context information presented about Brahms and his symphonies is intended as a point of reference and context for the reader, and not to be interpreted as an exhaustive recounting. The information presented in the equipment section is a brief discussion of the possible choices one can make regarding the choice of equipment. There are books that address questions about the equipment Brahms may have intended and the sonorous qualities he imagined when composing his Four Symphonies. Additionally, discussion on the mechanics of proper brass playing is not in the scope of this paper. Discussion about technique has been relegated to the non-technical and focuses on general style and not the mechanics of brass playing. The enduring nature of the symphonies of Brahms is a testament to their greatness. It is my
hope that this essay adds additional value and a deeper understanding for those orchestral trombonists who are fortunate to continue to bring this music to life.
Chapter Two

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There is an abundance of resources on the life and music of Johannes Brahms. The resources were of tremendous help in the research of Johannes Brahms’s life, his works, and the trombone’s role in Brahms’s symphonies. Although any of the method books, recordings, and websites were not explicitly cited in this document, they are invaluable resources for the aspiring orchestral trombonist.

Scores

Of all the material available for study, the orchestral scores of Brahms may contain the most readily useful and relevant information. A study of the score can provide the trombonist with a practical and holistic understanding of the work as well as any specific intentions Brahms may have had for the trombone section. An understanding of the roles of each instrument (harmonic, melodic, rhythmic, etc) can have a profound impact on musical and stylistic decisions. When trombonists understand their role in the score they can make informed decisions which will enhance their level of performance. This knowledge has the potential to engage each performer and create a more cohesive, musical performance. Furthermore, a better understanding of the larger structure of each symphony will add value to one’s performance. The scores consulted for this paper come from a Dover Publications collection of the Four Symphonies and is the Vienna Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde Edition edited by Hans Gál.
The publishers of this collection consulted the original scores published by Simrock (publication numbers 7957, 8028, 8454, and 8686 respectively) as well as Brahms’s personal copies and original manuscripts.

**Books**

Of the numerous volumes written one text is especially useful. Heather Platt’s text *Johannes Brahms: A Guide to Research* is an excellent text that includes over 1,300 entries of books, texts, dissertations, and articles devoted to many topics such as Brahms’s life, relationships, works, analysis, and performance considerations. Many of the entries contain brief abstracts in addition to the bibliographic information. The text itself does contain a brief biography of Brahms, but the remainder of the text is devoted to providing bibliographic entries.

*Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony* is a text that, on numerous occasions, discusses the use and function of the trombones. Knapp states that Brahms’s training in orchestration was largely “self-directed” and conjectures that Brahms may have been the first important composer to have learned orchestration from Berlioz’s *Grand traité d’instrumentation et d’orchestration modernes* (Treatise on Instrumentation), an exceptionally important book on the subject. Later on in the book, Knapp delves deeply into the structure of the symphonies, explaining Brahms’s propensity to connect or unify the themes and structures of his symphonies. Knapp

---

17 Platt, *Johannes Brahms: A Guide to Research*
18 Raymond Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*
19 Ibid., 63.
discusses the use of the trombones in the finale of the first symphony as “logical extensions of their symbolic and dramatic role[s], patterned after Beethoven’s treatment of the trombones in the finale of the Fifth and the pastoral/religious trio in the Ninth…they number three, whereas all other instrumental divisions of the symphony are duple” recognizing Brahms continuing the long held tradition of the trombones carrying religious symbolism. Throughout Knapp’s systematic analysis of each symphony, the trombone and its role are frequently referenced.

Walter Frisch, professor of music at Columbia University in New York, is a specialist in the composers in the Austro-German sphere of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and has written much about Johannes Brahms including the book *Brahms: The Four Symphonies.* This text addresses many of the topics in this paper including the social and musical context of a post Beethoven era and Brahms’s own path to writing his first symphony. Frisch discusses an article in which Robert Schumann had reviewed the works of three young symphonists, summarizing that “contemporary composers rarely rise above imitation of Beethoven” and quoted Schumann who said “When the German speaks of the symphonies, he means Beethoven.” In addition to the “Neue Bahnen” article that Schumann published heralding Brahms as a great new talent, Brahms must have felt such immense pressure not only to carve his own place into the musical landscape, but also to live up to the expectations thrust upon him from Schumann. In addition to the social and historical context, Frisch systematically analyzes each

---

21 Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies*  
22 Ibid., 3.
symphony on its structure, thematic material and its relationships, harmony, and to some extent some orchestration techniques.

Trevor Herbert’s *The Trombone*\(^{23}\) provides thorough commentary on the history, development, and implementation of the trombone in all areas of music. His book traces the origin of the trombone to its immediate predecessor, the renaissance slide trumpet, and follows its history through current day innovations.\(^{24}\) In a chapter about the trombone in the modern orchestra, Herbert states that the Vienna Philharmonic between 1862 and 1883 had likely been using the valve trombone and hence would very likely have been used on the first performance of Brahms’s *Symphony No. 2*.\(^{25}\) Herbert’s book is a valuable resource regarding considerations of a trombone section’s choice of equipment as it relates to performance of a Brahms symphony.

**Method Books**

There are countless method books available addressing nearly every facet of trombone playing from the most basic fundamentals to the most advanced technical and lyrical etudes. Additionally, there have recently been several method books focused on learning to play and preparing orchestral excerpts for performance and auditions. Encore Music Publishers has released a series of three method books each for tenor trombone, bass trombone, and tuba entitled *The One Hundred Essential Works for the Symphonic...*

---

\(^{23}\) Trevor Herbert, *The Trombone* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2006)

\(^{24}\) Herbert, *The Trombone*, 45.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 167.
Tenor Trombonist, Bass Trombonist, and Tubist. The books contain excerpts from over 100 symphonic works, including a brief biographical text introduction to each composer and expert advice on audition repertoire and performance preparation by experts on each instrument: Megumi Kandi, Douglas Yeo, and Wesley Jacobs respectively. Errors present in the original parts have been carefully corrected and discussed. The edition for bass trombone also contains essays by Douglas Yeo including an essay on the symphonic audition process.

Professional Journals

One such journal to be referenced is the International Trombone Association Journal. The ITA Journal is produced quarterly and is published by the International Trombone Association. It occasionally contains an orchestral excerpts column with commentary on common orchestral works by working professional orchestral trombonists. Several articles have been published on the symphonies of Brahms with an in depth commentary by professional trombonists such as Blair Bollinger and John Kitzman, Debra Taylor and Darren McHenry, Jay Friedman, and Toby Oft and

26 Megumi Kandi, The One Hundred Essential Works for the Symphonic Tenor Trombonist (Maple City: Encore Music Publishers, 2016)
Matthew Guilford. Each of these articles contains detailed perspectives from each of these trombonists on the many aspects, musical and technical, with which the symphonies present challenges. Discussion ranges from types of articulation used, what kind of equipment should be used, how best to shape a particular phrase, and even how best to study the score to know how each part interacts with the rest of the orchestra. These articles, though not expressly scholarly, provide a window into the thoughts and experiences of successful, working, orchestral trombonists and the aspects they each feel should be addressed for a successful performance of Brahms’s masterpieces.

**Recordings**

Audio recordings are invaluable resources and provide an aural context for much of the discussion contained within this essay. Recordings of symphony orchestras are an invaluable resource as it can highlight, in conjunction with the score, the orchestration of the differing sections of the piece and inform certain choices one could make in relation to what other instruments are playing at that time.

In addition to recordings of symphony orchestras there are several “orchestral excerpt” CDs specific to the trombone and low brass sections available. Many of the CDs available contain commentary by the performer before each excerpt is played. Often this commentary may be about certain technical challenges inherent to the excerpt, stylistic considerations, or the context of that particular excerpt. There are several CDs specific to the tenor and bass trombones which have tracks on the Brahms symphonies by

---

Ralph Sauer (volumes 1\textsuperscript{33} and 2\textsuperscript{34}), Jay Friedman,\textsuperscript{35} Jeffrey Reynolds,\textsuperscript{36} and James Markey.\textsuperscript{37} There is also a CD of the low brass section (trombones and tuba) entitled \textit{Eruptions: Orchestral Excerpts for Low Brass}\textsuperscript{38} which contains select excerpts from Brahms’s first, second, and fourth symphonies. Although this low brass CD does not have commentary before each track it is a valuable resource for the student trombonist to hear the low brass section performing each excerpt isolated from the orchestra.

\textbf{Websites}

Many professional trombonists maintain active websites that contain pedagogical sections. Joe Alessi, Principal Trombone of the New York Philharmonic, has one such website: \texttt{www.alesimusicstudios.com}.\textsuperscript{39} Alessi is one of the world’s leading trombone soloists and clinicians having performed and taught in the United States, France, Switzerland, Austria, Japan, and Italy. He is currently on faculty at The Juilliard School. The website includes a comprehensive warm up routine developed by Alessi, recordings of Alessi performing orchestral excerpts, and video tutorials and lessons on topics such as buzzing, slide technique, upper register, equipment, and auditions. One of the most useful parts of this subscription is what he calls the orchestra “machine.” It is a library

\textsuperscript{33} Ralph Sauer (Trombone), \textit{Orchestral Excerpts for Trombone}, Summit Records, 1994, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{34} Ralph Sauer (Trombone), \textit{Orchestral Excerpts for Trombone Volume 2}, Summit Records, 1997, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{35} Jay Friedman (Trombone), \textit{The Singing Trombone}, 2000, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{36} Jeffrey Reynolds (Bass Trombone), \textit{Orchestral Excerpts for Bass Trombone, Tenor Tuba, and Bass Trumpet}, Summit Records, 1995, compact disc.
\textsuperscript{37} James Markey (Bass Trombone), \textit{The Bass Trombonists Listening Guide to Excerpts from the Opera and the Orchestra}, CD Baby, 2011, compact disc.
full of sound samples of the orchestra with or without a complete trombone section allowing students to play along “with the orchestra” for an immersive symphonic practice experience.

Seth T. Vatt operates a website, www.tromboneexcerpts.org40 which contains both audio samples as well as excerpts from the orchestral parts from numerous symphonic works including the symphonies of Brahms. Each excerpt has a list of audio recordings from different conductors and different orchestras. For example, there are nearly 100 audio samples for Brahms’s Symphony No. 1. Although this website does not contain any pedagogical material, it is a useful resource for listening to different conductors (often at different points throughout their career) and orchestras for the many variations of style and interpretation.

Chapter Three

METHOD

Overview

The trombone’s introduction to the symphonic idiom begins with the Italian oratorio. Handel included the trombones in two of his oratorios: *Israel in Egypt* and *Saul*. It is possible that Gluck was inspired by Handel and included the trombones into his famous opera *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Possibly the most prominent example of the inclusion of trombones in the early symphonic tradition is Mozart’s *Requiem* and the famous “Tuba Mirum” duet of the second trombonist and the bass soloist. It is generally believed that Beethoven was the first to introduce the trombones into the symphony orchestra, however Joseph Krottendorfer, an Austrian composer, composed a symphony in 1768 with trombones which predates Beethoven’s first introduction of the trombones. Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*, composed in 1809, is perhaps the earliest use of trombones in the symphony which is still performed today, although the Third Symphony (1807) of Swedish composer Joachim Eggert may be worth reviving.

In the symphonic and operatic tradition the trombones were often relegated to instrumental overtures or the doubling of vocal lines. Brahms’s use of the trombones in his symphonies is sparse, being relegated to the final movement of the first and fourth symphonies. In his second and third symphonies, the trombones play in three of the four movements. He makes a sharp departure from many of his predecessors by

---


43 Guilon, “A Short History of The Trombone...”
writing more prominent roles for the trombones as can be seen in the soft, exposed chorale in the fourth movement of his *Symphony No. 1*. Although the trombones have relatively little written music in the symphonies of Brahms, what is written is very rewarding to perform. Since the trombones have such a relatively small, but important, role in the symphonies this paper plans to address every excerpt in which trombones play throughout all Four Symphonies.

**Symphonies**

Each symphony will have its own chapter. A brief history and context will be provided about each symphony often in relation to Brahms’s professional development. Discussion will include when and where the piece was written, the structure and form, the key, any overarching compositional and thematic devices, and general information relevant to the orchestral trombonist. Afterwards a discussion of the specific nature of Brahms’s utilization of the trombones will take place. Score examples will be included which often highlight Brahms’s writing for the trombones and its interaction with the other members of the orchestra.

**Equipment**

There is no definitive source which clarifies what equipment should be used in the performance of a Brahms symphony. The orchestral scores indicate the use of alto, tenor, and bass trombones, however it is impossible to know exactly what instruments Brahms
had intended when composing his symphonies or were used during their premiers. One can make assumptions based on historical documents such as with the Vienna Philharmonic’s employment of valve trombones between 1862 and 1883, meaning that valve trombones may have been used in the premier of his *Symphony No. 2*.\(^{44}\) This chapter will discuss considerations regarding the choice of equipment, the size of the orchestra, the size of concert halls, the blending of sounds in the section, and the wishes of the conductor.

---

**Closing Thoughts**

The symphonies of Johannes Brahms were written over one hundred and thirty years ago yet they have stood the test of time. New recordings of the Brahms symphonies are being released every year and the fact that these symphonies have not only survived but have become some of the most beloved in the orchestral repertoire is a testament to the genius of Johannes Brahms. The very first piece that I played after joining my college symphony orchestra was Brahms’s *Symphony No. 1 in C minor*. I have found that the soft, beautiful chorales, so prevalent in the symphonies of Brahms, have been some of the most rewarding orchestral playing that I have done. My wish is for this paper to serve as a resource for the aspiring orchestral trombonist to not only make informed decisions as a member of the low brass section but also become an enthusiast of Johannes Brahms the composer.

---

\(^{44}\) Herbert, *The Trombone*, 167.
Chapter Four

SYMPHONY NO. 1 IN C MINOR, OP. 68

Context

In 1854 Brahms worked in vain on a Symphony in D minor. Although there are references in correspondences and memoirs from those in Brahms’s circle, no manuscripts or sketches of any kind survive so there is no way of knowing the overall shape of the projected symphony. Instead of coming to fruition as a complete symphony, he reworked the first movement into the opening of the Allegro movement in his Piano Concerto No. 1 in d minor and parts also survive in his Ein Deutsches Requiem.\footnote{Frisch, Brahms: The Four Symphonies, 31.} Brahms made several other attempts to complete a symphony but instead turned his attention to other symphonic works including Serenade No. 1 in D major, Serenade No. 2 in A major, Variations on a Theme by Haydn (also called Saint Anthony Variations), and one of his best known works Ein Deutsches Requiem. In an attempt to rework his Serenade No. 1 in D major into a symphony he re-orchestrated the work, expanding the size of the orchestra and gave it the title of “Symphony-Serenade,” however later removed “Symphony” from the title and published the work for large orchestra in 1860.\footnote{Ibid.}

The exact reasons of Brahms’s insecurity in composing a symphony are not certain. Contributing factors could be the high level of criticism in symphony reviews of the time, Brahms’s own intense self-scrutiny, his preoccupation with works for chorus and orchestra during the years 1863-1871 including Rinaldo, Ein Deutsches Requiem, the Alto Rhapsody, the Schicksalslied, and the Triumphlied,\footnote{David Brodbeck, Brahms Symphony No. 1, 11.} and most certainly the high
expectations of Robert Schumann’s “Neue Bahnen” article created.\textsuperscript{48} Brahms had once said “You don’t know what it is like to be dogged by his footsteps” and by “his” Brahms, meant Beethoven.\textsuperscript{49} The earliest evidence of the First Symphony is a draft of it that Brahms sent to Clara Schumann in 1862.\textsuperscript{50} Brahms finished the \textit{Symphony No. 1 in C minor} in the fall of 1876 which was premiered by his friend Felix Otto Dessoff and the Grand Ducal Court Orchestra in Karlsruhe on November 4th.\textsuperscript{51} After nearly twenty-one years Brahms “eventually harnessed the thoughts to their proper expression, and so gave to the world the first of those masterpieces that combine so unerringly symmetry of design, beauty of intellectual thought and romantic feeling of the right kind.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textit{Symphony No. 1} is composed in the traditional four movement structure. The symphony key structure is characterized by the motion of upward major thirds between movements. This motion divides the octave symmetrically: motion of C minor to E major for the first two movements and Ab major to C minor/C major for the final two movements. According to Frisch, Brahms follows a “quasi-narrative scheme” of “darkness to light, pain to joy, struggle to victory”. Frisch concludes that these prevailing themes, present in both Beethoven’s Fifth and Ninth Symphonies, are evidence that Beethoven’s symphonies were models not only for musical inspiration but also for Brahms’s own symphonic “plot archetypes.”\textsuperscript{53}

The structure of Brahms’s symphonies each have a distinct interrelationship, and the First is no exception. Leon Botstein asserts that the symphony’s “train of thoughts” is

\textsuperscript{48} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 31-32.
\textsuperscript{49} Michael Musgrave, \textit{The Music of Brahms}, 130.
\textsuperscript{50} Malcolm MacDonald, \textit{Brahms}, 245.
\textsuperscript{51} Brodbeck, \textit{Brahms Symphony No. 1}, 21.
\textsuperscript{52} Julius Harrison, \textit{Brahms and his Four Symphonies}, 19.
\textsuperscript{53} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 45.
heard exclusively in the outer two movements while the inner two movements are much shorter and “do not participate in, but also do not interrupt, the course of ideas” which permeate the work.\textsuperscript{54} The two outer movements are monumental in character and structure, both preceded by large-scale slow introductions, and set the overall trajectory of the symphony. The first movement opens with a dramatic, extended introduction. It follows the conventional divisions of sonata form though Frisch suggests Brahms’s treatment of harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic elements pushes the bounds of the traditional Classic-Romantic techniques.\textsuperscript{55} The second movement was originally structured in a rondo-like form (ABACADA), however before publication Brahms compressed the movement into a ternary structure by eliminating the original B and C sections into a single middle section, and adding a coda.\textsuperscript{56} The third movement is built from balanced pairs of themes (ABA’B’CDC’D’A” which themselves suggest a ternary structure) formed within the broader ternary structure of Allegretto-Trio-Allegretto.\textsuperscript{57} The composing of the momentous finale may have been what had held up the completion of the symphony for so many years.\textsuperscript{58} Tovey calls the introduction “the most dramatic introduction that has been heard since that to the finale of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony.”\textsuperscript{59} The symphony proceeds in a modified sonata form in which there is no separate development, but with a developmental expansion within the recapitulation’s transition, followed by a coda.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{54} Leon Botstein, \textit{The Compleat Brahms}, 61.
\textsuperscript{55} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 46.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 56.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 58.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 61.
The trombones are tacet for the first three movements and are relegated to the fourth movement. In a typical performance of Brahms’s *Symphony No. 1* the trombones may not play for upwards of 30-35 minutes until their first entrance in measure thirty in the finale. Brahms’s treatment of the trombones, though employed quite sparingly, is nearly always reserved for moments of musical and structural importance. Brahms’s use of the trombones are “logical extensions of their symbolic and dramatic role, patterned after Beethoven’s treatment of the trombones in the finale of the Fifth and the pastoral/religious trio of the Ninth, and partaking of a much longer tradition, in which trombones have conveyed a strong religious feeling, both symbolically and materially (note, thus, that they number three, whereas all other instrumental divisions in the symphony are duple).”\(^{61}\)

### 4th Movement: Adagio

After having been tacet for the first three movements the trombones, at long last, make their very first appearance at measure thirty. The *Più andante* section of the introduction opens with the Alphorn melody heard first in the horn then passed to the flute in the ninth bar. Muted violins and violas play “veiled undulations”\(^{62}\) and a *tremolo* while the trombones, contributing to the underlying harmonic backdrop, play *pianissimo* tonic and dominant accompanying chords (Example 4.1).

---

\(^{61}\) Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*, 218.

\(^{62}\) Harrison, *Brahms and His Four Symphonies*, 84.
Example 4.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 30-33

The flute concludes its phrase of the Alphorn theme and the trombones take center stage in what may constitute as the most iconic measures played by the trombones in all of Brahms’s symphonies. The trombones lead a “solemn hymn of faith” which in the coda will become the “culminating point of the whole symphony.”\(^{63}\) The trombone chorale, set in A major, is a striking and unexpected shift in harmony from the C major cadence of the Alphorn theme (played by the flute) just preceding the trombone chorale. Although the trombones are assisted by two bassoons and the contrabassoon’s “booming foundation-deep notes”\(^{64}\) (an octave below the bass trombone) the timbre of the trombone section is prominent. The lead voice of the chorale is scored for only the first trombone and is richly harmonized in the other trombones and bassoons (Example 4.2).

Although discussion of technique and style is not in the scope of this paper, the articulations of this particular excerpt (as well as the chorale from the finale of *Symphony No. 4*) are worth noting. The *staccato* dot under a slur, or *portato*, is an articulation

\(^{63}\) Harrison, *Brahms and His Four Symphonies*, 84.
\(^{64}\) Ibid.
commonly found in string parts and is generally understood to be a “clearly defined slurred articulation, to the degree that the bow may actually stop momentarily”\textsuperscript{65} or a “re-articulation or pulsing of notes joined in a single bowstroke”\textsuperscript{66} However there is a wide range of interpretations particularly for how this articulation is applied to wind players. For the trombonist the articulations in this excerpt can range from a smooth legato to somewhat detached.\textsuperscript{67} Because of the importance of this excerpt and the many ways in which it can be interpreted, special attention should be afforded this excerpt when preparing for a performance or audition (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2: Johannes Brahms, \textit{Symphony No. 1}, mvt. 4, mm. 47-51

Following the five-measure chorale, the trombones rejoin the harmonic backdrop playing sustained chords behind the Alphorn theme in the horns, flute, and oboe, this

\textsuperscript{65} Bubert, \textit{Brahms Symphony No. 4 in e minor}, 22.
\textsuperscript{67} Bubert, \textit{Waiting for Brahms- The Section Playing of Brahms Symphony No. 1}, 26.
time intensified by overlapping entries. Although the first trombone has the lead voice of the low brass, the second and third trombones have interesting moving lines. In measures 53 and 55 the second trombone, which moves from a D dotted half note to an F quarter note on beat four, is one of the only instruments moving, save for the overlapping Alphorn theme. In measure 55 and 56 both the second and third trombones have homophonic descending lines underneath the melody. A measure later the bass trombone and basses descend from an E to a D with an Eb passing-tone. The introduction comes to a close on a G major seventh chord played only by trombones and horns (Example 4.3).

Until the transition to the coda, the trombones have only a few entrances, most of which bolster a full orchestra forte or a structural transition. One such example is the cadential figures at measure 176 (towards the end of the exposition) where the trombones and strings have several syncopated, large leaps supported by a rising triplet figures in the winds and timpani. The first and bass trombone play the half note to quarter note rhythm with the first trombone descending a half step while the bass trombone plays an octave leap. The second trombone plays a descending, chromatic line in contrary motion (joined by the first trombone on the third iteration) (Example 4.4).
Example 4.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 52-61

Example 4.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 176-179
The trombones are not heard again until measure 279 in a tremendous climax in which they harmonize descending, syncopated figures that are derived from the Alphorn melody (Example 4.5).

Example 4.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 279-280

A few measures later in measure 285, trombones reinforce an ensemble *fortissimo* diminished seventh chord while the violins play a strong statement of the Alphorn melody (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 285-288
Until the transition to the coda the trombones have had widely interspersed and relatively short sections of playing. The next entrance of the trombones in measure 371 (the transition to the coda), marks a more sustained, continuous contribution of the trombones until the final fermata. The first and second trombones make a subdued entrance in measure 371. In measure 375, and a rare moment for Brahms, he bequeaths the primary melodic material (based on the iconic, primary theme of the exposition) to the bass trombone, contrabassoon, cellos, and basses with soft echoes by the winds and rising arpeggios by the strings. Bollinger warns that the bass trombonist should play the sforzandos in measures 376 and 378 within a piano level and in a marcato character. The third melodic statement by the bass trombone and low woodwinds/strings modulates up by a half step at which point the bass trombone joins the harmonic function of the other two trombones (Example 4.7).

Example 4.7: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 1, mvt. 4, mm. 371-380

---

68 Bubert, Orchestral Excerpt Class: Waiting for Brahms-The Section Playing of Brahms Symphony No. 1, 26.
Measure 383 marks an ensemble *stringendo*; everything becomes abbreviated and there is a large buildup in volume from the ensemble. In the third bar of the *stringendo*, the bass trombone ceases its ascending line while the upper two trombones sustain a chord. The ensemble figures become faster, shorter, and syncopated culminating in seven rapidly hammered chords, finally arriving in the long-awaited C major in measure 391. While the whole orchestra plays the seven repeated notes before the arrival, the trombones are the only instruments in the entire orchestra (save for the horns who are resting) not playing the *staccatissimo* quarter notes. The bass trombone on beat three of measure 390 changes from a D to a G half note accentuating the V-I cadence signifying the glorious return to and arrival of C major (Example 4.8).

Example 4.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 389-391

Upon the arrival to C major, the tempo is marked *Più Allegro* and the meter is changed to cut time to reflect this acceleration. The strings and bassoons play a motor-like three note figure while the trombones play powerful diminished chords reinforcing...
the woodwinds and brass. The bass trombone and contrabassoon (the only winds) along with cellos and basses move on beat three of 395 (Example 4.9).

Example 4.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 391-396

![Example music notation]

This gives way to the symphony’s highly dramatic moment of triumph in measure 407. The chorale is played with the strength and triumph indicative of being the “culminating point of the whole symphony” unlike the solemn reverence of its first appearance in measure 47. Interestingly, in bar 410, the first and second trombones drop out leaving the bass trombone, contrabassoon, cellos, and basses to punctuate the bass line of the chorale. The first and second trombone rejoin in measure 413 playing two long chords with the full forces of winds punctuated by the timpani and strings (Example 4.10).

---

69 Harrison, *Brahms and His Four Symphonies*, 84.
Example 4.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 407-416

In measure 431 the orchestra plays two unison descending lines reminiscent of the Alphorn theme and a theme from the first movement. In measure 439 instead of a third statement the line the brass and winds play a version with stretto descending entrances. The bass trombone enters first with a compliment of winds, horns, and strings in measure 439 followed by the second trombone in 440 and the first trombone in 441. While the first and second trombone do not change their notes, the bass trombone continues to descend adding depth and articulating the line with winds, horns and strings. The overlapping, descending line concludes on three full orchestra, *staccatissimo* hits on the dominant harmony. The *staccatissimo* markings here are one of the few times in which Brahms writes such pointed, sharp articulations for the low brass (Example 4.11).
Example 4.11: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 439-447

In the final measures of the coda, the strings pick up the lower neighbor tone motive supported by *sforzando* whole notes by the full forces of the winds and brass. Eight bars before the final measure the bass trombone along with bassoons, contrabassoon, cellos, and basses play a powerful arpeggiated, ascending line. The arpeggio is the only melodic content at the moment giving the bass trombonist the latitude to play big and full yet not overly aggressive. The full orchestra concludes the symphony with three strong C major chords hits followed by the final C major chord (Example 4.12).
Example 4.12: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 1*, mvt. 4, mm. 450-457
Chapter 5

SYMPHONY NO. 2 IN D MAJOR, OP. 73

Context

“The genesis of the Second Symphony seems to have been as uncomplicated and swift as the First’s was tortured and protracted.”\textsuperscript{70} However, it seems that the completion and relative success of the First Symphony opened the floodgates for the completion of his other Three Symphonies. Brahms composed his \textit{Symphony No. 2 in D major} in the span of just four months, between June and October of 1877 while staying in the country towns of Pörtschach and Lichtental.\textsuperscript{71} Brinkman suggests that it “is not completely misguided to speculate” that Brahms had begun conceptualizing the second symphony before 1877, however Brahms “the great remover of traces,” was often in the habit of destroying sketches, drafts, and even original fair copies of his work so there are little to no primary source material directly from Brahms.\textsuperscript{72}

With the completion of the First Symphony, Brahms was “liberated” and finally able to achieve “self-detachment from his overly powerful symphonic inheritance, the Beethoven tradition.”\textsuperscript{73} This close proximity of the Second Symphony to the First “could be a pointer to a double conception and hence to the at least partly parallel drafting of the two symphonies.”\textsuperscript{74} Early listeners have commented on the symphony’s particularly sunny character, especially in contrast to the First Symphony, and interpreted the music as portraying pastoral themes, possibly influenced by the rural setting in which Brahms

\textsuperscript{70} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 67.
\textsuperscript{71} Reinhold Brinkman, \textit{Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms}, 16-17.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{73} Botstein, \textit{The Compleat Brahms}, 65.
\textsuperscript{74} Reinhold Brinkman, \textit{Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms}, 18.
composed that summer.\textsuperscript{75} The premier performance of the Second took place on December 9, 1877 by the Vienna Philharmonic under the baton of Hanz Richter.\textsuperscript{77}

Unlike Symphony No. 1, with its heavily weighted outer movements, Symphony No. 2 is divided into two “polar halves” with melancholic first two movements followed by two much lighter, serene movements.\textsuperscript{78} The first movement of the Second Symphony is composed in a large-scale sonata form similar to the First Symphony, however without a slow introduction and with a repeat of the exposition. The \textit{Adagio} second movement is also in sonata form that is followed by a back-to-front scherzo and trio. The fourth movement contains elements of both rondo and sonata form and could adequately be labeled as a rondo-sonata.\textsuperscript{79}

It seems that Brahms had originally conceived the low brass of his Second Symphony consisting of only three trombones. However, at some point after the initial conception of the symphony, Brahms added the tuba as the fourth, and lowest member of the low brass and amended the score accordingly.\textsuperscript{80} Although there are numerous indications in the source material that the inclusion of the tuba may have happened after the initial conception of the symphony, the conditions under which he decided to add the tuba are unknown.

In the summer of 1879 Brahms had received a letter from Vincenz Lachner, one-time court kapellmeister at Mannheim, about the Second Symphony in which Lachner criticized certain aspects of the symphony including his concern with Brahms’s use of the

\textsuperscript{75} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 67.
\textsuperscript{76} Botstein, \textit{The Compleat Brahms}, 65.
\textsuperscript{77} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 68.
\textsuperscript{78} Botstein, \textit{The Compleat Brahms}, 66.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 68-69.
\textsuperscript{80} Reinhold Brinkman, \textit{Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms}, 22.
low brass, particularly in the first movement saying “they don’t seem to me to be
necessary to the basic atmosphere and they add nothing essential to the abundance of
strength displayed in the concentration of all the orchestral resources.”

Brahms, in response to Lachner, staunchly defends his use of the trombones:

I will also say briefly that I very much wanted to manage in that first movement
without using trombones, and tried to. (The E minor passage I would gladly have
sacrificed, and so I now sacrifice it to you.) But their first entrance, that’s mine,
and I can’t get along without it and thus the trombones. Were I to defend the
passage, I would have to be long-winded.

Brahms conceded that the stretto treatment of motive \( x \) (the “E minor passage” at
measure 224) by the trombones was not essential however, he firmly defended their first
entrance in measure 34, something that Brinkman suggests was profoundly personal to
Brahms. Brahms’s use of the trombones at such an early point in the symphony as
well as their relatively frequent use, playing nearly twice as much in Symphony No. 2 as
they did in Symphony No. 1, seems to indicate that he viewed the low brass as integral to
the orchestra rather than as supplementary.

First Movement- Allegro non troppo

Nearly all of the motivic material of the movement (and much of the symphony)
grows out of three contrasting motives that are found in the first several of measures of
the movement. Walter Frisch labels the motives as \( x \), \( y \), and \( z \) which will be used here in

---

82 Ibid., 128.
83 Ibid., *Brahms*, 130.
this document. The first motive is a neighbor-tone alternation of D-C#-D falling to A (\(x\)) (although the A is not always part of the motive) and is found in the very first measure of the movement played by cellos and basses. The second motive first heard by the horns is a triadic motion of F#-A-A-C# (\(y\)). And the final of the three motives is the small stepwise scale segment, first heard in the woodwinds, A-B-C#-D (\(z\)).\(^{85}\) (Example 5.1)

Example 5.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 1-9

Unlike his first symphony the low brass appear quite early in the symphony and are employed often. Preceded by a solo roll on D by the timpani the low brass first enter in measure 33 playing the first of three chord progressions that assume the role of melody. The entrance here is significant, as it is the very first notes heard from the low brass who are playing alone with the cellos doubling the tuba. The low brass chords are answered by flute and oboe playing D-C#-D, echoing motive x. Once again the timpani plays a solo roll on D followed by the second progression by the low brass. This time the cellos double the bass trombone in a three-part texture without the tuba. The low brass chords are again answered by an echo of motive x by clarinet and bassoon. Before the third chord progression of the low brass the timpani, instead of rolling, strikes a single A in conjunction with a pizzicato A in the basses. The first and second trombone along with cellos enter first in measure 42 followed by the bass trombone a measure later. When the bass trombone joins the texture, the cello breaks from the low brass and functions independently. The trombones yield to the double reeds which take over the primary melodic content before arriving at the end of the exposition (Example 5.2).

It is of interest that the tuba is removed from the texture so early, having played only for three measures. Brinkman suggests that the inclusion of tuba in the first entrance helps to conceal the cellos’ deep string color. In measure 37 the tuba is omitted and the cello timbre is more prominent in the three-part writing. In measure 41 the cello functions as the bass voice of the first and second trombones in the three-part texture. A measure later the bass trombone joins, taking over the bass voice function and the cello breaks off to function independent of the three trombones.86 The low brass make just one

---

86 Reinhold Brinkman, Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms, 80.
more appearance in the exposition in measure 134, where they add force to the arrival on the fortissimo passage (Example 5.2).

Example 5.2: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. 1, mm. 33-46

Later in the development, the trombones without the tuba make a bold entrance in measure 224, quite in contrast to their first, pastoral entrance. The trombones play a hemeolic stretto version of \(x\) producing harsh clashes of seconds and resulting in a
moment of enormous tension. A few measures later the trombones imitate their previous statement though with much less harmonic tension and angst (Example 5.3).

Example 5.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 224-234

Brahms is quite brilliant with his development of the primary themes and his use of meter, which itself becomes a subject of development. Beginning in measure 246 the winds play a heavy and aggressive variation of the first pastoral horn theme, motive \( y \). A fragmented version of motive \( y \) is passed from the upper winds and brass (flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, and first and second trombones) to the low winds and brass (bassoons, horns, bass trombone, and tuba). The fragmented version of motive \( y \) is compressed from a half-quarter rhythm which implies a 3/2 meter. While the winds alternate motive \( y \), the upper strings play descending eighth-note lower neighbor-tone figures and the lower strings play ascending dotted quarter-notes, implying an additional

---

meter of 6/8. Example 5.4 shows the complex overlapping metric developments of 3/4 meter with implied 3/2 and 6/8 meters. In measure 250 the low brass (minus bass trombone) strike a \(fp\) chord to allow for the flute, clarinet, and bassoons to play a melody based on the theme first heard in measure 44 (Example 5.4).

Example 5.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 246-254

In measure 254 the trombones and tuba end their sustained chord making way for a solo bass trombone melody. Clarinets, bassoons, and horns sustain quiet chords, upper
winds and strings play ascending arpeggiation, and the oboe further develops motive $y$.
The bass trombone plays an ascending line which is undoubled in the orchestral texture,
one of the few moments in which the primary melodic material is played by a single trombone (Example 5.5).

The powerful developmental $y$ motive is heard for the second time at 258, this time in G major and followed by a sustained chord by the three trombones without tuba. Instead of playing the chord $fp$ (as in measure 250) the chord is sustained at $forte$. The ascending solo bass trombone line is heard at measure 266 for a second time, with the additional foundation of the tuba playing a sustained pedal A. Instead of the bass trombone melody leading into a third developmental statement of motive $y$, Brahms delays this moment, having the clarinet and bassoon play a version of theme I while the trombones sustain $pianissimo$ chords (Example 5.6).
Example 5.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 258-273

The bass trombone for a third time plays the ascending melody with tuba pedal.

For a fourth time the bass trombone plays the rising melodic line this time doubled by the second trombone and containing a dramatic crescendo (Example 5.7).

Example 5.7: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 274-281
The bass and tenor trombone rising melody leads into the final climax of the development. The ensemble plays the developed motive $x$ progression in the key of F which suddenly shifts up to F# intensifying the harmonic ambiguity. In an unexpected shift to $p/pp$ in measure 290 the horns restate motive $y$ in a more pastoral tone. Half way through the four-measure phrase the bass trombone and low strings play a syncopated motive $x$ with a dramatic crescendo at which point the upper two trombones join in providing the harmonic background. The trombones play a four-bar progression underneath a descending line from the flute and clarinet which leads into the recapitulation. The trombone progression is a harmonized and metrically augmented version of motive $x$. The bass trombone plays an ascending line finally arriving at the recapitulation and back to D major (Example 5.8).

The low brass’ next entrance is in measures 347-349 which corresponds to the first low brass entrance in measure 33. In this entrance the horns are scored with the low brass while the cellos are omitted (Example 5.9).
Example 5.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 282-302

Example 5.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 347-349
Measure 447 marks the beginning of the coda and one of the final entrances of the low brass in the movement. The trombones sustain a chord which begins a crescendo in measure 448 and is passed to the tuba in measure 451. A bar later, the trombones mimic their entrance from measure 224. This time it is harmonically stable and the character is much less aggressive (Example 5.10).

Example 5.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 1, mm. 447-455

The final entrance in the first movement for the trombones is in measure 521 as they join the winds and brass in sustaining a piano D major chord with a subtle hairpin to close the movement.
Second Movement - Adagio non troppo

The second movement begins with an expressive, descending cello melody countered by the ascending bassoon countermelody. Brinkman writes: “As though from a distance, this counterpoint of the cellos and bassoons seems to recall and elaborate on the voice-leading, in contrary motion, of the trombone chords in mm. 33ff. of the first movement.”

From the outset the harmonic stability is established in offbeat chords from the horns, violas, basses, and tuba. Brahms’s scoring in the middle movements of his symphonies is much thinner allowing the trombone timbre to be much more present in their countermelody line in measures 2-3 (Example 5.11).

Example 5.11: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. 2, mm. 1-3

---

88 Reinhold Brinkman, Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms, 149
Several times in this movement the low brass play very similar passages as the previous phrase: once in measures 14-15 (an almost exact replication) and an extended version in measures 27-30 (Example 5.12).

Example 5.12: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 2, mm. 27-30

Of the few remaining low brass entrances in the second movement, the entrance at measure 55 warrants mention as it once again draws reference to motive *x* and the trombone derivative in measures 224-226 in the first movement. The texture is significantly more transparent here, and the timbre of the second trombone and tuba are much more apparent. The second trombone plays an inverted version of motive *x* answered by the tuba playing the lower neighbor note version of motive *x*. This trombone/tuba alternation returns in measures 60-62 (Example 5.13 and 5.14).
Measures 69-70 are scored nearly identically to measures 3-4 for the low brass with the exception of the octave displacement in the tuba part. The final passage the low brass plays comes in measures 86-89 which again is similar to the other low brass chorale parts heard in this movement. However, it is extended by a measure and undergoes a more dramatic harmonic shift (Example 5.15).
Fourth Movement- Allegro con spirito

The trombones are tacet for the third movement and rejoin the orchestra during the fourth movement. The low brass does not make its first appearance until measure 202, well into the development of the finale. The trombones and horn are marked $f$ while the rest of the winds and strings are marked $ff$. The tuba joins a bar later as the entire orchestra aligns, playing the syncopated figure followed by a sudden drop in dynamics and a highly varied version of theme I passed between the woodwinds and the strings (Example 5.16)
In measure 234 the music becomes suddenly hushed and mysterious and begins the transition to the recapitulation. The trombones and upper winds play a series of descending fourths. The first statement is made by the second trombone, clarinet, and flute and is answered by the first trombone, third trombone (doubled at the octave) and oboe. The third statement of the chorale is, again, the second trombone, clarinet, and flute with the addition of the tuba (Example 5.17).

Trombones again join the full ensemble to usher in the return of theme II by playing a syncopated, five-measure figure in measures 275–279. The trombones with most of the winds play a homophonic, rhythmically syncopated passage while the strings (with addition of bassoons) play running eighth notes (Example 5.18).
Example 5.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 234-240

Example 5.18: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 275-279
The coda (measure 353) begins dramatically in D minor and undergoes a dramatic shift in tonality reaching a glorious climax in D major. For the first time in this movement, the dominant timbre is that of the low brass playing a tightly harmonized version of theme II that exploits the opening syncopation. As discussed earlier, the first entrance of the trombones in the first movement which evoked a sense of somber, melancholy is again invoked here which Brinkman says “might also be already aiming ahead of the trombones’ transformed use in the work’s conclusion.”

The first trombone plays the melody and the second trombone plays the accompanying harmony while the bass trombone and tuba, paired, play octaves or fifths. The upper woodwinds answer the low brass in imitation. The music makes a brief swell before dropping back down to piano for another statement of the theme by the low brass, but this time it is in C major, again answered in imitation by the upper woodwinds. As before, the music begins to swell, but instead of receding, breaks forth into a full orchestra statement of the syncopated version of theme II, again modulated down a step, this time to Bb Major. In two moments between 363 and 372 the trombones drop out while the tuba continues with its ascending octaves and fourths bass line. The low brass joins the orchestra in strong syncopated attacks in measures 371 and 372 before the strings suddenly break off in a descending arpeggio that brings on a brief moment of tranquility before the whole orchestra builds again to the close (Example 5.19).

---

Measure 387 breaks forth in a noble version of theme I in D minor by the horns and trumpets, interrupted twice by low brass playing strong supporting chords followed by a series of continually rising and building sequences of “turning” gestures, minor gradually gives way to D major in a thrilling sequence of descending scales propelling the orchestra into its final measures. The descending scales are passed from the
trombone and tuba to the second trombone, then to the first trombone, and finally to the woodwinds (Example 5.20).

Example 5.20: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 2*, mvt. 4, mm. 388-406

The final buildup consists of a series of arching scales in the strings with powerful, repeated notes in the trumpets and horns over thundering timpani. This final build is interrupted by two sudden silences before reaching the final fanfare. The final
arrival is marked by a boisterous return of theme II by the horns and trumpet answered by the low brass, horns, and upper woodwinds. The “turning” figure returns building without abandon until “the most surprising effect of all in the coda”90 the trombones (without tuba) burst forth in a triumphal D major sustained chord in the upper register. The trombone timbre here dominates as they are the only instruments sustaining. The orchestra plays four short D major chords underneath the trombone sustain. The symphony ends with a final sustained D major chord by the full orchestra (Example 5.21).

90 Reinhold Brinkman, Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms, 194.
Example 5.21: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 2, mvt. 4, mm. 417-429
Chapter 6

SYMPHONY NO. 3 IN F MAJOR, OP. 90

Context

In contrast to the other three symphonies there is a comparatively small amount known about the genesis of his Third Symphony. In May of 1883 Brahms traveled to Cologne to oversee performances of his Symphony No. 2 and Piano Concerto No. 2, after which he visited with friends Laura and Rudolf von Beckerath in Wiesbaden. There, in the weeks following, overlooking the Rhine River and the valley below, Brahms composed his *Symphony No.3 in F major*. The completion of the Third Symphony in the summer of 1883 comes roughly six years after the completion of his Second Symphony, however the interim years were not devoid of orchestral activity and saw the completion of several orchestral works: *Violin Concerto in D major* (1878), the *Academic Festival Overture* and the *Tragic Overture* (both in 1880); and the *Second Piano Concerto in Bb major* (1881). His relative high output of large-scale orchestral works between 1880 and 1885 (including the Third Symphony) could be a result of his having access for private performances to the orchestra at the ducal court of Saxe-Meiningen, directed by his friend Hans von Bulow. The premier took place on December 2, 1883 by the Vienna Philharmonic under the direction of Hans Richter.

Of his Four Symphonies, *Symphony No. 3* is the briefest with most performances lasting about thirty minutes. Unlike his previous two symphonies, the relative durations

---

91 Frisch and Karnes, *Brahms and His World*, 110-111.
94 Frisch and Karnes, *Brahms and His World*, 111.
of the individual movements are closer to being equal in length. The more compact dimensions and balanced proportions seem to highlight the overarching unity of the symphony as opposed to the individual elements of each movement.\textsuperscript{96} From the very first notes of the first movement, Brahms employs a three-note, musical motto that is appears throughout all four movements (Example 6.1). The three-note motto, F-A(\textsuperscript{flat})-F, stands for the German words “frei aber Froh” (“free but happy”), a more optimistic version of Joachim’s F-A-E motto “frei aber einsam” (“free but lonely”), which apparently held quite nostalgic associations for Brahms.\textsuperscript{97} Unlike many musical mottos or motifs, Brahms’s motto in Symphony No. 3 generally functions as the sonic background and not the primary focus.

The tonal center of the entire symphony is oriented around F: the outer two movements are in F while the two inner movements are both in C, major and minor respectively. Frisch suggests that Brahms creates a “dominant “plateau” that creates a tonal tension somewhat analogous to that of sonata form.”\textsuperscript{98} This tonic-dominant-tonic relationship across the symphony is strengthened by avoiding the dominant at the expected points in the outer movements (the second theme in the first movement and the beginning of the coda in the finale), further reiterating the overall dominant relationship between the inner and outer movements.\textsuperscript{99} Additionally, the symphony involves a “pitch conflict” between A natural and A flat, (the major and minor third degrees of F) which is worked out harmonically through the juxtapositions of the key areas of F major, F minor,

\textsuperscript{96} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 92.
\textsuperscript{97} Geiringer, \textit{On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies}, 94.
\textsuperscript{98} Frisch, \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, 92.
\textsuperscript{99} Botstein, \textit{The Compleat Brahms}, 70.
A major, and Ab major; and thematically, in that the two pitches are incorporated greatly into the themes of each of the four movements.\textsuperscript{100}

The first movement is in sonata form. The second movement is essentially in a sonata form with a full exposition and no separate development section. Instead there is an extension of the development which then leads into the recapitulation, which is modified slightly to include an extension in place of the second theme and a coda. The third movement is a three-part \textit{Allegretto} containing elements of ternary, trio, and binary form. The finale is in sonata form with its exposition and development structured as expected. The recapitulation however, does not begin with the customary return to theme I material but with the material first heard at rehearsal letter B (measure 30). The finale concludes with a coda which contains a reappearance of the F-A-F motto.\textsuperscript{101}

\textit{Symphony No. 3} is the shortest and most compact of Brahms’s symphonies. Although the trombones play for about thirty measures less than in \textit{Symphony No. 2}, about the same number of measures as in \textit{Symphony No. 4}, and nearly twice as many measures as in \textit{Symphony No. 1}, the trombones take on a mostly supportive role throughout the symphony with relatively few passages of notable importance.

\textbf{First Movement- Allegro con brio}

The movement begins with a two-measure \textit{forte} introduction by the trumpets, horns, and woodwinds. In measure three the contrabassoon, bass trombone, and basses play the first statement of the F-Ab-F motto; however, it functions as the harmonic

\textsuperscript{100} Frisch, Brahms: The Four Symphonies, 92.
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 92-107.
backdrop to the statement of theme I played by the violins. The first and second trombone harmonize the motto by playing tied dotted half notes while the violas and cellos provide a syncopated rhythmic harmonization. The F-Ab-F motto is heard no less than nine times in the first thirty bars, spread out across the winds and brass instruments except for the first and second trombones (Example 6.1).

The trombones are next heard in measures 19-21 playing $fp$ chords underneath a syncopated rhythmic figure in the second violins and violas. As in the opening bars, while the upper trombones are providing harmonic support, the bass trombone plays the motto though here transposed to A-C-A. Somewhat later in measures 68-69 the trombones play two strong “ejaculatory”102 staccato chords just before end of the exposition. The trombones are not heard again until measures 116 where the trombones play supporting chords while the woodwinds and low strings play a descending line transitioning from the development to the recapitulation.

At the arrival of the recapitulation (measure 120), as in the opening measures of the movement, the wind section, with reinforcement gestures in the strings, proclaim the opening theme. The strings and upper woodwinds drop out in measure 122, giving way to the sonorous sounds of bassoons, contrabassoon, and full brass. The contrabassoon, horns, and the bass trombone powerfully punctuate beat three of measure 123 leading into the recapitulation. The F-Ab-F motto is played by the bass trombone, contrabassoon, and basses and is harmonized by the upper two trombones and woodwinds while the strings play theme I as was first heard back in measure three (Example 6.2).

---

102 Harrison, *Brahms and His Four Symphonies*, 100.
Example 6.1: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 1-6
Example 6.2: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 3, mvt. 1, mm. 120-127
The remainder of the recapitulation closely mirrors the exposition including two strong *forte, staccato* chords by the trombones in measure 177-178 (mirroring measures 68-69). Measure 183 marks the beginning of the coda and the return of theme I back in F major, however the F-Ab-F motto is now heard on the dominant (C-Eb-C) again in the bass trombone (Example 6.3).

Example 6.3: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 183-187

![Example 6.3](image-url)

Forceful, descending figures from the violins and upper woodwinds and violins which start in measure 195 are supported by *sf* held chords by the horns and trumpets. The trombones answer with supporting chords in 196. The descending figures in measure 198 are now condensed into two per bar and are supported by two strong chords from the trumpets and trombones. The orchestra arrives with strong held chords across most of the orchestra in measure 201, after which the trombones rest.

The trombones join the orchestra in finally reaching the key of F major in measure 217 and *crescendo* until the trombones (with a single quarter note) punctuate a full orchestra *fp*. The woodwinds, horns, and trumpets sustain quiet chords while fragments of theme I are passed down through the strings. The penultimate bar is
punctuated by two *pizzicato* notes in the strings under sustained winds. In the final measure the entire orchestra plays an F major chord which gently swells (Example 6.4).

Example 6.4: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 1, mm. 217-224

---

**Second Movement- Andante**

As is typical of Brahms’s writing, he employs a small orchestra in the middle movements of his symphonies, exemplified here in the second movement. He retains the trombones for “chord effects of great yet simple beauty”\(^\text{103}\). The trombones have only a

---

\(^{103}\) Harrison, *Brahms and His four Symphonies*, 102.
few brief, but beautiful and satisfying, entrances in the second movement. Their first entrance is at measure 80, entering on an ensemble *sfp* and then playing sustained quiet chords as the clarinet and flute pass fragments of theme I and the strings pass off ascending fragments of the second theme (Example 6.5).

Example 6.5: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 2, mm. 80-87

The climax of the movement is reached in measure 112, at which point the trombones join. Until measure 122 the trombones play sustained chords, sometimes doubled by the woodwinds as other instruments play the melodic material.

The timbre of the final bars is driven by the winds. The trombones and horns play the familiar alternating chords heard throughout the movement, first C major-F major-C major-F major and again a few bars later C major-Ab major-C major-Ab major. The supporting harmony, trombones included, move to F minor as the oboe and flute play F minor arpeggios and finally resolve to C as a plagal cadence. The upper winds sustain
the C major chord in the penultimate bar while the lower instruments, including trombones, gently outline the chord on beat three and join in the final held note in the last measure (Example 6.6).

Example 6.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 2, mm. 128-134

---

**Fourth Movement- Allegro**

As is usual with Brahms, the trombones are tacet for the 3rd movement and rejoin the orchestra in the finale. The trombones make their first appearance at measure 18 as they “strike a solemn note of warning”[^104]. The trombone entrance here is one of the only moments in this symphony in which the trombones are scored alone. The trombones play their “note of warning” two more times, in measure 22 and 28 (Example 6.7).

[^104]: Harrison, *Brahms and his Four Symphonies*, 104.
The trombones are kept in reserve until measure 64 where they enter with a veiled “frei aber froh” motto and again in 68. Harrison writes, in admiration of Brahms’s self-control, that he is never “is in danger of yielding to the temptation of maltreating his Trombones, however urgent the mood of the music. Hence the great effectiveness of the writing when these instruments enter.”105 (Example 6.8).

105 Harrison, Brahms and His Four Symphonies, 105.
The trombones rest for over 60 measures until their dramatic entrance in measure 150 during the development. After a series of intensifying and shortening sequences the orchestra comes to a sudden halt in measure 149. The upper woodwinds and upper brass begin a grand chorale statement answered by the low brass, low woodwinds, and horns split between both groups. This theme was originally the second theme of the second movement but is presented here quite dramatically. The trombones and bassoons continue to answer the statements until measure 159 when the roles are suddenly reversed. Underneath this, the strings are playing feverish triplet ascending and descending lines. The orchestra reaches a tremendous climax in measure 167 and securely arrives in F major. It seems here that the tension of A flat and A natural, heard from the very start of the symphony, is won out here by A natural (F major) (Example 6.9).
Example 6.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 149-172
During the recapitulation the trombone writing very closely mirrors the exposition as is the case with measures 206-233. The trombones play solemn chords in measure 277 and the strings begin playing continuous runs over the trombone chords. In measure 280 an F major statement of the chorale theme is made by the bassoons, horns, trumpets and trombones. The strings break their running lines when the winds enter and resume after they sustain their chords. The chorale grows into measure 287 and falls back but quickly grows again and reaches its climax in measure 292. The trombones begin a *diminuendo* in measure 295 and by 299 have faded out. The trombones’ last notes are an F major chord in the final measures of the symphony (Example 6.10).
Example 6.10: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 3*, mvt. 4, mm. 277-309
Chapter 7

SYMPHONY NO. 4 IN E MINOR, OP. 98

Context

*Symphony No. 4 in E minor* was composed during the summers of 1884 and 1885 in the resort town of Müzzuschlag, at the foot of the Semmering Mountains and about seventy miles southwest of Vienna.\(^\text{106}\) With the exception of the *Double Concerto in A minor* (composed for his dear friend Joachim and great cellist Robert Hausmann) this symphony was his last orchestral work.\(^\text{107}\) Just as the first two symphonies “must be regarded as a pair that sprung from the self-same, deeply hidden root”\(^\text{108}\) so are the last two symphonies of Johannes Brahms.

Brahms expressed concern that the work “would appear too stern for the general public” in letters to Hans Bülow: “it tastes of the climate hereabouts…the cherries are hardly sweet here, you wouldn’t eat them!” During a gathering of his friends and a play through of a two-hand arrangement of the symphony, Eduard Hanslick (prominent music critic of the time and page turner for this “preview”) commented after hearing the first movement “For the whole movement I had the feeling that I was being given a beating by two incredibly intelligent people.”\(^\text{109}\) Others even suggested that he scrap the last two movements and publish the Finale as a separate work.\(^\text{110}\) On the other hand, during rehearsals of the Fourth in Meiningen the young Richard Strauss, assistant to Bülow at the time, wrote to his father that the Fourth was “beyond all question a gigantic work,


with a grandeur in its conception and invention, genius in its treatment of forms, periodic structure, of outstanding vigour and strength, new and original and yet authentic Brahms from A to Z.”

Brahms stuck to his convictions and kept the symphony intact. It was premiered on October 25, 1885 with Brahms himself conducting the court orchestra of Meiningen (under the direction of Bülow). There is no doubt of the current success and popularity of the symphony, however its initial reception is up for debate. On one hand Frisch writes that the premier “was a great success, as were most of its subsequent performances around Austria, Germany, Holland, and England in the winter of 1885-86.” On the other hand, Brahms’s belief that Symphony No. 4 would be too serious for listeners proved true, especially in Vienna, where not until 1897 did it receive substantial acclaim. Malcolm MacDonald additionally writes that on March 7th, 1897 Brahms attended a concert in Vienna of his Symphony No. 4 (as well as Antonín Dvořák’s Cello Concerto in Bb minor) conducted by Hans Richter, which upon conclusion “Brahms, standing in the box with tears running down his cheeks, received a tremendous ovation from the entire audience: there was a palpable sense of farewell.” Brahms made only one other public appearance, attending the premier of Johann Strauss’s operetta Die Göttin der Vernunft, but felt so unwell that he left before the performance’s conclusion. On April 3rd, 1897 Brahms succumbed to liver cancer.

111 Frisch, Brahms: The Four Symphonies, 116.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 MacDonald, Brahms, 300.
115 Botstein, The Compleat Brahms, 72-73.
116 MacDonald, Brahms, 300.
The first three movements of the *Symphony No. 4* are fundamentally sonata designs. The first movement sonata form is distinctive for Brahms because it is the only of his symphonies to open straight away without some kind of introductory or preliminary gesture: the First has a full-fledged introduction; the Second opens with a thematic complex; and the Third begins with the bold three-note motto. This first movement is the only first movement in Brahms’s symphonies which lacks a repeated exposition. The second movement, like the slow movements of the Second and Third Symphonies, is an altered sonata form for which the development section is “either greatly truncated or displaced into the recapitulation.”\(^{118}\) The third movement’s particularly sunny character is somewhat anomalous for Brahms in general as well as within the Fourth Symphony. It is also the only third movement of the symphonies that does not adhere to the traditional large-scale ternary format. Of note, the third movement contains the use of triangle, the only time in his symphonies which Brahms included a percussion instrument other than the timpani.\(^{119}\)

The fourth movement presents a seemingly, striking departure from the typical sonata and rondo form and instead, is composed as a theme with thirty variations and a coda. The variation structure with which Brahms chose to use draws on the Baroque tradition of the passacaglia or chaconne, a form he used in the finale of his *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*.\(^{120}\) In the 18\(^{th}\) century the chaconne was generally a set of ground-bass or ostinato variations, in triple meter (though not always), formed of brief units of typically four or eight bars, and usually of a serious mood.\(^{121}\) Malcolm MacDonald

\(^{119}\) Ibid., 117-127.
\(^{120}\) Ibid., 130.
\(^{121}\) Silbiger, Alexander. “Chaconne.” *Grove Music Online*
Interestingly points out how Brahms’s use of variation in the finale of the Symphony No. 4 is not merely a series of “deliberately contrasted character-variations” but a “tightly interwoven sequence of eight-bar units, each of which contributes to the discourse of a subordinate clause rather than a complete sentence; and from these Brahms is able to fashion large paragraphs which suggest a semblance of sonata shape.” One could ask why Brahms, a master of form, would so confine himself to the limits presented in the forms of a chaconne to which Geiringer would reply “It is the very restriction of this form that inspired Brahms’s genius to a supreme achievement.”

Sometime before the completion of the Fourth Symphony (although a precise date is not known) Brahms had taken a serious interest in the chaconne bass of the finale of J.S. Bach’s Cantata No. 50, Nach dir Gott. Brahms apparently demonstrated the theme for his colleagues asking “What would you say to a symphonic movement written on this theme one day? But it is too lumpish, too straightforward. It would have to be chromatically altered in some way.” Brahms did just that by using the four-measure theme as the chaconne in the finale. He substituted equal dotted half notes for its half-quarter pattern and added chromatic A# appearing as the leading note to the dominant, B (Examples 7.1 and 7.2).

---

122 MacDonald, Brahms, 318.
123 Geiringer, Karl. On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies, 98.
Example 7.1: Ludwig van Beethoven, *Cantata No. 50- Nach dir Gott*, Chaconne Theme

Example 7.2: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, Chaconne Theme

Brahms was likely to have been influenced by works such as Georg Muffat’s *Passacaglia in G minor*, the chaconne from Bach’s *Partita No. 2 in D minor* (apparently a piece with which Brahms had a particular affinity)\(^{125}\) Dietrich Buxtehude’s *Chaconne in E minor* (a likely source of inspiration for Brahms’s chromatic A#)\(^{126}\) and Bach’s *Passacaglia and Fugue in C minor*\(^{127}\).

---


\(^{126}\) Botstein, *The Compleat Brahms*, 73.

Fourth Movement- Allegro energico e passionate

The movement begins with the 8-bar chaconne theme stated by the winds and brass. The bass trombone plays the ground bass part while trombones one and two play the orchestrated altered harmonies Brahms used (Example 7.3).

Example 7.3: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. 4, mm. 1-8

Variation 1 (measures 9-16) begins right away with timpani and horns playing on the down beat of each bar. Pizzicato strings, accented by trombones, answer the timpani and horns with staccato quarter notes on beat two. The trombones drop out after four bars while the strings continue to diminuendo (Example 7.4).
The trombones join back in in variation 3 (measures 25-32). The first and second trombone outline the new three-note (or three-chord) lower neighbor-tone motion while the third trombone alternates outlining this motion with the other two trombones and the ascending/descending line with the contrabassoon (Example 7.5).
Example 7.5: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. 4, mm. 25-33

The trombones sit out for several variations until their renowned chorale at rehearsal letter E, measure 113 and the 14th variation. The solemn chorale is led by the first trombone with the harmonic support from the bassoons. Each melodic gesture is
answered by a *dolce* ascending arpeggio figure in the violas and cellos. The horns join
the trombones and bassoons in the pickup to measure 116 though the first trombone
retains the melody notes. In measure 117 the first trombone yields its melody to the first
horn who, in measure 120, plays a line, similar to the preceding oboe line in variation 13,
that serves as a bridge to the next variation. This chorale and the chorale from Brahms’s
Symphony No. 1 have some striking similarities. The timbre of the trombones for both is
the prominent sound. The first trombone in both chorales plays the melody. The
articulation is even similar: slurs with *staccato* marking underneath. They both seem to
embody the religious, vocal quality so connected with the trombone’s history (Example
7.6).
Example 7.6: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 113-120
Variation 15 (measures 121-128) continues in much the same manner as variation 14 with the addition of woodwinds to the low brass chorale and the inclusion of the violins outlining the downward eighth notes in the violas. Just as the horn played its descending line in variation 14 so does the flute in variation 15. However, instead of acting as a transition into the following variation, the flute *diminuendos* to silence (Example 7.7).

**Example 7.7: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. 4, mm. 121-128**

Variation 16 is scored very similarly to the opening bars however with a somewhat different harmonization. The upper strings play a descending line beginning on beat three of measure 132 with the trumpets and timpani joining in measure 133 (as in the opening chaconne statement) (Example 7.8).
Example 7.8: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 129-136

The trombones are absent in variation 17 (measures 137-144) as the strings play *tremolo* swells answered by upper woodwinds. Variation 18 (measures 145-152) continues with *tremolo* in the strings, neighbor-tone swells in the winds and horns, and (for the first half of the variation) *sf decrescendo* figures from trombones (Example 7.8).

Example 7.9: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 145-152
In variation 19 (measures 153-160) the strings and horns play a detached, arching line answered by the woodwinds in a similarly detached but more angular line. The trombones, cellos, and basses provide a foundation for the first three string alternations, playing strong, detached quarter notes (Example 7.10).

Example 7.10: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvt. 4, mm. 153-158

Variation 20 (measures 161-168) begins with feverish triplet motion in the strings and horn (in the first, third, and fifth bars) which is answered by syncopated blasts on beat two (also in the first, third, and fifth bars) by trombones. The woodwinds (minus the contrabassoon) play a composite of the alternating strings/horn triplets and the trombone blasts (Example 7.11).
In variation 21 (measures 169-176) the violins and flutes play sweeping upward scales against swelling wind lines, viola *tremolo*, and timpani rolls in the first and third bars. The trombones once again play arresting *sforzando* blasts on beat two in the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth bars interrupting punctuating chords by the winds and strings. The sixth bar is suddenly quiet and the sweeping scales are passed between the strings over a timpani roll. The ensemble *crescendos* to a piano dynamic arrival of variation 22, at which point the trombones rest until rejoining the orchestra for variation 24 (Example 7.12).
The structure of variation 24 (measures 193-200) is quite similar to variation 1 however the character is different. The horns, trumpets, and timpani (playing a roll) play the strong downbeats which are answered by a rhythmically layered response on beat two by the rest of the orchestra. The trombones play staccato quarter notes, the entire
woodwind section plays two *staccato* eighth notes, and the strings play a *marcato* triplet figure. Here the trombones are the only section marked *f* while the rest of the orchestra is marked *ff* (Example 7.13).

Example 7.13: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 193-200
Variation 25 (measures 201-208) further incorporates rhythmic layering and mimics variation 2. As with variation 2, the oboe (with bassoon in support) plays the slurred, quarter-note melodic line but this time is eclipsed by the forceful violins playing tremolo. The rhythmic complexity carries over from the previous variation as the beat two triplets are transferred to the flutes, clarinets, horns, trumpets, and timpani and the contrabassoon, trombones, cellos, and basses play straight eighths. The trombones rest at the conclusion of this variation until their next dramatic entrance at the coda. The orchestra plays five more variations until a dramatic four-bar extension to variation 30. This extension acts as a transition to the coda and is the first time that the eight-bar units are broken (Example 7.14).
Measure 253 (Più Allegro) speeds up slightly and signifies the beginning of the coda. Four “pseudo variations” are heard in the coda though they do not always adhere to the eight measure units. “Variation 31” (measures 253-260) begins with a harmonized version of the primary theme played full-force by the winds and brass. Cascading *tremolo* string arpeggios are played against the primary theme. The fifth and seventh bars of this variation come to stalling points before moving ahead (Example 7.15).
“Variation 32” (measures 261-272) begins a series of chromatic upwards modulations of increasing intensity. The violins continue with their tremolo arpeggiations against sustained chords in the winds and low strings. The trombones enter playing a series of ascending chromatic V-I relationships (Example 7.16).

“Variation 33” (measures 273-280) could be considered an extension and expansion of the first four bars of the theme. The trombones play a powerful ascending line of marcato quarter-notes in octaves clearly reminiscent of the primary theme. The strings and winds play punctuated quarter notes separated by rests creating a hemiola by re-arranging eight 3/4 bars into four implied 3/2 bars (Example 7.17).
Measures 281-288 mark the last of Brahms’s “psuedo variations” in the coda and his 34th variation overall. It begins with a sudden drop to piano but steadily and quite dramatically builds. Brahms employs a metric modulation in which he implies a 3/2 meter until measure 299. The woodwinds play an ascending line supported by second violins and violas resembling the primary theme which is answered by the full orchestra in a strong resolution to E minor. This sequence is repeated once at which time (measure 298) the bassoons, contrabassoon, bass trombone, cellos, and basses play a descending line continuing to outline the implied 3/2 meter while the upper woodwinds and strings play a syncopated version of the theme. In measure 299 the implied 3/2 meter returns to the written 3/4 meter and the orchestra makes a strong, even tragic, cadential arrival in E minor in measure 301.
The final bars of the symphony consist of a series of five cadential gestures led by the first violins and violas playing three-note upbeats outlined by the rest of the orchestra playing beat three and one with the bassoons, contrabassoon, cellos, and basses playing full-measure arpeggations. The fifth of these cadential gestures is extended by two bars. The entire orchestra plays one final cadence (Example 7.18).
Example 7.18: Johannes Brahms, *Symphony No. 4*, mvt. 4, mm. 291-311

```
:\nc| 291 |
\| Trbs. 1&2  |
\| Btrb.  |
\| Strings  |
\| 298 |
\| Trbs. 1&2  |
\| Btrb.  |
\| Strings  |
\| 305 |
\| Trbs. 1&2  |
\| Btrb.  |
\| Strings  |
```
Chapter 8

EQUIPMENT

Beethoven normally receives credit for introducing the trombones into the symphony orchestra. However, according to David Guion, the earliest symphony to be composed with trombones was by Joseph Krottendorfer in 1768 (nearly 40 years before Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony in 1809). There were very few symphonies with trombone parts composed before Beethoven’s Fifth that have survived however Swedish composer Joachim Eggert’s Third Symphony (1807) seems to be worth revisiting. The trombone’s entrance into the symphonic tradition is a complicated one that is often based on regional proclivities. Beethoven’s Fifth however does signify a change in the orchestration of future composers and the beginning of the trombone’s permanence in the symphony orchestra.

Before Beethoven, the trombones had been included in the symphonic tradition with some regularity in operas, oratorios, and sacred works. The function of the trombone in this setting was primarily to double vocal lines. Herbert states that it was this function that “contributed emphatically to one of the most enduring perceptions of the instrument’s idiom. The suitability of the trombones (and cornets) for doubling voices derived from the instruments’ dynamic and expressive versatility, and their capacity to adapt to different intonations.” Herbert goes on to write that by the mid seventeenth century the association of the trombone sonority paired with voices and the symbolic meaning of the trombone’s instrumental timbre was a sonority that would

---

131 Ibid.
“appear more than a century later in Austrian opera, and subsequently large-scale Romantic and post-Romantic orchestral works.”\textsuperscript{132} It is not difficult to connect these influences to the low brass writing in the symphonies of Brahms.

History of the development of the trombone itself is a complicated matter, one which would be impossible to cover in the short time devoted here. One’s choice of instrument when performing a symphony of Brahms can have considerable implications and is worth a brief discussion. There is no single narrative of the technical developments of the trombone because of the many regional traditions that often developed into national distinctions. Numerous books such as Trevor Herbert’s \textit{The Trombone} and David Guion’s \textit{A History of the Trombone} (among others) have devoted numerous pages dedicated to documenting the many areas of development of the trombone. The majority of the discussion below will center around the considerations for and implications of the types of trombones used while performing a Brahms symphony.

By the early nineteenth century standard format in the symphony orchestra was three trombones, usually labeled alto, tenor, and bass; a tradition derived from the trombones doubling vocal lines. Publishers frequently used alto, tenor, and bass clefs for respective parts.\textsuperscript{133} Composers, like Franz Schubert, also used clefs for “entirely pragmatic and economical” reasons, sometimes writing all of the trombone parts on a single staff in tenor clef.\textsuperscript{134} Howard Weiner has suggested that during the first half of the nineteenth century, the higher part in the trombone section, regardless of the labeled clef, was typically played on a tenor instrument.\textsuperscript{135} However, it seems that the Vienna

\textsuperscript{132} Herbert, \textit{The Trombone}, 107.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., 167.
Philharmonic’s adoption of the alto trombone (to replace its valve trombones in 1883) is linked the popularity of the alto trombone. Between 1862 and 1883 the Vienna Philharmonic had adopted the practice of exclusively using valve trombones. The premier of Symphony No. 2 took place in 1877, making it very possible that it was premiered using valve trombones.\textsuperscript{136}

Reinhold Brinkman in his book *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms* devotes considerable attention to conditions under which Brahms chose to include the tuba in the Second Symphony. Upon consulting the original manuscript of the score and the multitude of possible order of events, Brinkman sums up that the tuba’s inclusion as a member of the low brass in the Second Symphony was “by way of complementing the original pure trombone “choir,” which was genuinely connected with the sonorous and expressive character of the first movement in particular.”\textsuperscript{137} Although there are numerous possibilities as to the exact time and order in which Brahms chose to include the tuba (of which Brinkman explores thoroughly), Brahms had very likely conceived of the first movement with only trombones and the addition of the tuba seems to have been during the revision stage.\textsuperscript{138}

Brinkman also explores the possibility that there were technical reasons for adding the tuba. First: during the coda of the fourth movement (beginning at measure 353) Brinkman writes that the tuba was called for instead of the bass trombone “so as to produce all of the low notes on one instrument, without alternating between bass trombones of different pitch.”\textsuperscript{139} Brinkman is likely referring to the syncopated line in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{136} Herbert, *The Trombone*, 167, 343.
\item \textsuperscript{137} Reinhold Brinkman, *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*, 26.
\item \textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 23.
\end{itemize}
measures 363-372 which ranges from pedal Ab (Ab1) to Bb1. This range may very well have been possible on the bass trombones of the time. It is likely that the bass trombones of the time (lacking the refinement of modern instruments) were not the sound Brahms wanted. The general ability of players back then may not have made that line possible. Brinkman suggests that although a hocketed version of this line may have been possible by the existing trombone players, Brahms would have preferred a single instrument to play the line to avoid the timbral changes of changing instruments. Second: the second movement begins with tuba playing a low B (B2). The exact instruments with which Brahms was familiar is impossible to know. However, it is likely that the orchestras and players Brahms was familiar with were using Bb/F tenor trombones and most likely a bass trombone pitched in F.\textsuperscript{140} Although a bass trombone in F would have been able to play the low B, it may have been much more practical for a tubist to play this part.

Brahms’s use of the trombones in the first movement of the Second Symphony was critiqued by his colleagues yet his inclusion of the tuba received outright disdain. Julius Harrison is particularly critical of Brahms’s use of the tuba in his discussion of Brahms’s orchestration. He says that it is a “matter of regret” that the tuba appears in the Second Symphony.\textsuperscript{141} Harrison praises Brahms’s use of the contrabassoon in his other symphonies: “although there are a few indispensable notes here and there…there is not an effect in the music that could not have been obtained by the retention of the Contra Bassoon.”\textsuperscript{142} He continues to express disdain for the tuba writing: “for the tone-colour dominates an orchestra most alarmingly owing to its lack of combinative quality.”\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{140} Guion, \textit{A History of the Trombone}, 52. \\
\textsuperscript{141} Harrison, \textit{Brahms and His Four Symphonies}, 71. \\
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Even in his discussion of the Third Symphony, when the contrabassoon enters at letter G, “No tuba could have made such an effect, and so it is most gratifying to find Brahms’s old and trusted friend restored to the symphonies, never to be ousted again.”

Today, there are numerous possibilities of variation from the common orchestral low brass section consisting of two large-bore tenor trombones, a double-valve bass trombone, and a contrabass tuba. Some possible combinations include: 1\textsuperscript{st} on alto trombone, 2\textsuperscript{nd} on a small-bore tenor, 3\textsuperscript{rd} on a large-bore tenor, and F tuba; 1\textsuperscript{st} on alto trombone, 2\textsuperscript{nd} on a large-bore tenor, 3\textsuperscript{rd} on a single-valve bass trombone, and F tuba; and 1\textsuperscript{st} on a small-bore tenor, 2\textsuperscript{nd} on a large-bore tenor, 3\textsuperscript{rd} on bass trombone, and F tuba.

When choosing equipment, players should keep in mind the instruments the other members of the section may be using. Some orchestral low brass sections use similar period-style trombones when performing late Classical and or early Romantic works such as the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony Orchestra (in Washington, D.C.) which both use Kruspe style trombones.

Whether choosing to use period-style instruments or modern instruments, alto or tenor trombone, small-bore or large-bore, each player and section should be aware of the inherent qualities of the instruments they choose and how those qualities will affect the sound of the section within the orchestra. Conventional wisdom might suggest that the low brass section should play similar equipment in an effort to blend their sounds to produce a homogenous, section sound. If the first trombone uses alto trombone, then the rest of the section should use smaller equipment. However, in an interview published in the *International Trombone Journal*, Ken Shifrin (Principal Trombone of Great Britain’s

---

\(^{144}\) Harrison, *Brahms and His Four Symphonies*, 101.

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra) and Jay Friedman (Principal Trombone of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra) both express agreement that the use of varying sizes of equipment provides the trombone section a greater variation in tone color and distinct timbres, a trait that many composers may have been looking for.\textsuperscript{146} A trombone section using smaller equipment might provide a more transparent \textit{forte}, allowing the trombone section to achieve a more brilliant color without needing to play particularly loud. In contrast, when using modern, large-bore instruments the volume necessary to achieve a brilliant color could dismantle the subtleties of balance in the orchestra.\textsuperscript{147}

Additional considerations should be taken into account when choosing equipment to perform Brahms’s symphonies, including the size of the orchestra and the size of the performance space. A modern symphony orchestra typically consists of more than eighty players, while chamber orchestras or period ensembles may be much smaller. Since the wind sections of the orchestra are normally one on a part, it is the string section which typically varies the most in numbers. Additionally, the size of the concert hall can have an impact on the way in which the trombone section is heard.

When it comes to choosing the “right” equipment to perform a Brahms symphony the choices are abundant and could be the topic of a whole other paper. Each player must decide what they feel comfortable playing and take into consideration the other members of the low brass section, the size and make-up of the orchestra, and quite significantly, the wishes of the conductor. Ultimately, there is not a single “right” choice. The correct choice is a combination of what works best for the player, the section, and the orchestra.

\textsuperscript{146} Bubert, \textit{Orchestral Sectional: Thoughts on the History of the Orchestral Trombone}, 38.
\textsuperscript{147} Bubert, \textit{Orchestral Sectional: Johannes Brahms Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73}, 11.
Chapter 9

CONCLUSION

Upon completion on his *Symphony No. 1* Johannes Brahms was no longer paralyzed by the prophesy of Robert Schumann and the intense scrutiny and pressure of composing a symphony in the post-Beethoven era. Within ten years of completing his *Symphony No. 1* Brahms composed his remaining three symphonies and the majority of his orchestral works. Considered a traditionalist and an innovator, Brahms combined his mastery of Classical structure and form with the adoption of the Romantic era aesthetics.

His writing for trombones demonstrates an understanding of the historical and symbolic traditions of the trombone and an ability to write idiomatically for the instrument. Although Brahms’s orchestral scoring and aesthetics are rooted in the Classical tradition, he was creative in his implementation of those traditions. Even as the trombones entered the instrumental genre of “The Symphony” with Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5* and *Symphony No. 9*, they seemed to be unable to shake their association with and use of doubling vocal lines. Brahms, however, utilized the trombone more frequently, more independently, and in more moments of importance than many of his predecessors.

Upon study of the orchestral scores it is clear to see that Johannes Brahms used the trombone in several prominent ways. Possibly most associated with his orchestral writing for trombones is the beautiful, soft chorales. The chorales in both the First and Fourth Symphonies are sublime moments in which the trombones are the featured timbre. It would seem that Brahms specifically had the trombone in mind for these exact moments. Although according the trombones an increased prominence and independence
than many of his predecessors, Brahms primarily held the trombones in reserve for moments of musical and structural importance like their first dark and somber entrance in the first movement and subsequent dramatic transformation from D minor to D major in the finale of his Symphony No. 2, the seldom bequeathed solo melodic lines for the bass trombone in the finale of Symphony No. 1 and in the development of the first movement of Symphony No. 2, and the celebrated chorales of his Symphony No. 1 and Symphony No. 4. When not the featured instruments the trombones adopt a supportive role adding their timbre to the harmonic backdrop or adding punctuation to articulated figures. The trombones are most often scored with the cellos, bassoons, and other low instruments at quiet dynamics and reinforcing the brass, woodwinds, and full orchestra *forte* passages and transitions in the formal structure. When choosing equipment there are many considerations to be taken including the size and make-up of the orchestra, the size of the concert hall, the equipment of the other trombonists, and the wishes of the conductor. 

Understanding a symphonic work as a whole, as well as the role and function of one’s individual part, is crucial in order to deliver a musically successful performance. While the symphonies of Johannes Brahms present no exceptional or unique challenges for the trombonist, a clear understanding of how Brahms utilized the instrument in his writing is important. It is my hope that this exploration will direct the orchestral trombonist towards a more well-informed and musically rewarding experience with the symphonies of Johannes Brahms.
Bibliography

Albrecht, Otto E.. “Johannes Brahms and Hans Von Buelow.” *University of Pennsylvania Library Chronicle.* 1, no. 3 (1933). https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&amp;article=1016&amp;context=librarychronicle


Friedman, Jay. The Singing Trombone. 2000, compact disc.


Harrison, Julius. *Brahms and His Four Symphonies.* New York: Da Capo Press


