

Brahms Symphonies Film Transcript

Gordon Hunt (Joint Principal Oboe):

Well I think as an oboist Brahms would have a special place in any players' heart really, but perhaps of all the symphonies, number one has the most delicious solos to play. It's the one I met first when I was a kid, really unexpectedly actually, playing first oboe having never seen it before in a summer school orchestra, and of course I was absolutely bowled over, and I haven't stopped being bowled over by it, I still love it, I still love playing it. I think it's so beautifully written for the instrument, for a start the solo in the slow introduction, with this sort of cross between six eight which it's written in and three four which it sounds like. It immediately is so clever at the same time as being beautiful.

David Corkhill (Principal Percussion):

Like Gordon, I first encountered my first Brahms symphony, which was the second symphony, when I was a student. I just love the way that Brahms structures his pieces. It's so lucidly clear what he's trying to say. The material itself is very compact. The very first three notes, this D, C sharp, D in the cellos and basses which comes back time and time again, and even at the beginning of the last movement it's the same three notes. His economy of material is extraordinary, which is typical of the Austro-German school of Beethoven of course, but I just love the way he just focuses everything on important, essential material and discards anything that's not important.

But at the same time as this kind of very structured way of working which could be boring I guess, he nevertheless has this fantastic sense of pace, and keeping you waiting. And it kind grinds on quite slowly to begin with: the horns and the horns again in different keys, and then there's kind of a descending thing in the strings and a little timpani roll, and this wonderfully creepy rather threatening trombone moment...

Christian (Principal Bass Trombone):

Yes, brilliant brass chorale.

David:

Extraordinary. I mean it really gives you the shivers. Totally out of nowhere. And then this hemiola and then this ravishing first violin melody which you've been waiting for ever since the piece began.

Maya Iwabuchi (Leader):

Well, as opposed to you two, the third symphony was the last Brahms symphony that came to me and I'm not quite sure why that it. I don't think we play it as often as the other symphonies because of the quiet ending – nothing more profound than that.

What's incredible about this work I find is the depth of emotion that comes out of the writing, and pain and pathos that comes out of the writing. Yet somehow there's redemption in the end; in the last movement at the very end. I think you travel

through a very, very deeply felt experience or journey and you end up in this place where you find peace at last. And I think that's something, as one gets older, which is an important experience to have and to attain.

Christian:

Coming full-circle now, from the four of us! The Brahms fourth symphony was the first of the Brahms symphonies that I came across in the National Youth Orchestra conducted by Christopher Seaman. And I had a fantastic time performing it with him.

The first movement especially for me; there's something in the very mellifluous writing of Brahms' music that really appeals to me. It feels completely natural. In fact, I'd go as far as to say that it feels like the most natural thing in the world. The first movement of Brahms' Fourth Symphony – this might be a bit controversial – but also the first movement of Shostakovich's Tenth Symphony I find to be one of the most organic, perfectly structured pieces of music ever. In the way that it climaxes at a certain point and it builds towards that in a very natural way and then dies away again.

And I feel that, not just with the first movement but if one were to take the symphony as a whole it's like a complete journey. Not that the other three symphonies aren't but there's something about the Fourth Symphony that leaves me personally with an enormous sense of satisfaction. It's wonderful and I absolutely adore it.

Now, of course, the fourth movement is the movement that we feature in on the trombones and out of all the chorale passages that Brahms gives us I would say that this is the best one.