audite

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Complete Symphonic Works

VOL. I

HEINZ HOLLIGER

WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln

WDR THE COLOGNE BROADCASTS

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WDR THE COLOGNE BROADCASTS

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Symphony No. 1 in B-flat major, Op. 38 'Spring'		**31:29**
I.	*Andante un poco maestoso – Allegro molto vivace*	*11:17*
II.	*Larghetto*	*5:16*
III.	*Scherzo. Molto vivace*	*5:37*
IV.	*Allegro animato e grazioso*	*9:19*
Overture, Scherzo and Finale in E major, Op. 52		**16:46**
I.	**Overture**	*6:26*
II.	**Scherzo**	*4:21*
III.	**Finale**	*5:59*
Symphony in D minor *original version (1841)*		**23:33**
I.	*Andante con moto – Allegro di molto*	*8:08*
II.	*Romanza. Andante*	*3:45*
III.	*Scherzo. Presto*	*6:01*
IV.	*Largo – Finale. Allegro vivace*	*5:39*

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Robert Schumann's Orchestral Works

To record and release all of Robert Schumann's works for orchestra is more than just an encyclopaedic venture. Only some of them are heard in today's concert halls, mainly the symphonies, the Piano Concerto, and more rarely the Cello Concerto, though in recent years the Violin Concerto too has been making headway. Other pieces – *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*, the concert pieces for piano, for horn, and for four horns, the overtures – are ignored or offered occasionally as rarities, and thus lack a continuous performance tradition. However, if we are to grasp the relation between Schumann's awareness of tradition and his spirit of rebellion, between his ties to history and his discovery of new pathways, it is essential to know the works he wrote in what were, for their day, experimental forms. After all, the musical thought that took shape within them also impinged on his symphonies. This is apparent in the literary motivation of form in the D-minor Symphony and the narrative underpinnings of the cathedral scene in the 'Rhenish'. These two works alone show that Schumann, when it came to confronting and conflating genres and art forms, sought solutions fundamentally different from the Lisztian symphonic poem and Wagnerian music drama. The paths he chose did not become mired in the irreconcilable gap between the 'New German School' of Liszt and Wagner and the conservative traditionalists. Yet these paths found few followers – Brahms at first, and later such younger composers as Mahler, Pfitzner and Berg.

A Symphonic Trilogy

This recording, with which the WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne is launching its Schumann series, contains the first three symphonic works that he allowed to stand and certified with opus numbers: the Symphony in B-flat major ('Spring Symphony'), *Overture, Scherzo and Finale* and the first version of the D-minor Symphony, which he reworked ten years later and issued as his Fourth although it was chronologically his second. These works were preceded by several symphonic sketches and drafts, including a 'G-minor Symphony' that was partly fleshed out and performed but never reached completion.

At roughly the same time that Schumann's dream of marrying Clara Wieck became a firm plan, he began to develop a systematic method for exploring the major genres of music. His 'year of song' (1840) was followed by a 'year of symphony' (1841) and a 'year of chamber music' (1842); it is even safe to speak of a phase devoted to opera, which, owing in part to the nature of the genre, lasted more than a year. This systematic focus did not preclude crucial influences from the outside. His discovery, study and preparation of Schubert's 'Great' C-major Symphony (the performance was entrusted to Mendelssohn) showed him how to approach and pursue this leading genre of instrumental music. Its traces – sometimes clearly manifest, sometimes subtly stitched into the fabric – are plain to hear in the sound of his works and meticulously concealed in their workmanship. The fanfare at the beginning of the First Symphony deliberately takes up the opening motto of Schubert's final work in the genre, proclaiming continuity and 'progress' with an obvious borrowing. That Schumann's motto also happens to fit a line from a poem by Adolf Böttger that he printed in his *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* points to another quality that he shared with the recently deceased Schubert: a receptiveness toward literature and its various

alliances with music, from opera to the lied. By opening up the symphonic idea to literature in a manner that differed from Beethoven's solution in the Ninth, Schumann could draw on his unique pair of creative talents. It would affect both the conception and the 'tone' of at least two of his later symphonies.

The years of song, symphony and chamber music were followed, after a mental crisis, by a year of fugue (1844). The term does not mean that Schumann concentrated exclusively on these genres during the years in question only to abandon them thereafter. True, they stood at the centre of his creativity for a certain period of time; but his sharp focus on them opened up the broad spectrum that each genre had to offer and showed him paths he would later pursue. Moreover, he did so after a long period of incubation. In the case of the symphonies, it began with juvenile essays and passed through such related genres as the piano sonata (the term 'symphonies in disguise' that he applied to Brahms's sonatas was, in retrospect, a reference to his own). It then continued in what might be called 'quiet labour' only to burst onto the scene when the right moment arrived. 'Schumann worked very precisely', Heinz Holliger explains in an interview with Michael Struck-Schloen.[1] 'He often entered an incredible state of rapture when he composed and could draft the longest of works in the shortest of time spans. But they were always preceded by long and meticulous mental effort.'

1 All further quotations are likewise taken from the interview that Michael Struck-Schloen conducted with Heinz Holliger on 23 March 2013 regarding the WDR SO's Schumann project and kindly placed at our disposal for this booklet. We are most grateful for their cooperation.

The First Symphony

Schumann launched his symphonic output with a compositional triptych: the B-flat major and D-minor Symphonies and, in the middle, a three-movement 'symphonette' or chamber symphony entitled *Overture, Scherzo and Finale*. The immediate impetus for his First Symphony was, besides his Schubert discovery, a 'not very good poem by Adolf Böttger'. Though he was unwilling to set it as a lied, it 'in fact triggered this "symphonic explosion". That's why the First comes so close to resembling songs without words. It has poetic correlations at every turn, beginning with the speech-rhythm of the opening motto ("*Im Tale blüht der Frühling auf*"), the primal germ-cell of the entire symphony. There are also such symbols as the "fluttering" butterfly motif in the introduction to the first movement, and the little flute cadenza that answers the horn call in the middle of the finale.' Into the main thematic complex of this finale Schumann weaves, like an interpolated memory, a dual reminiscence: his Heine lied *Lieb Liebchen, legs Händchen aufs Herze mein* and the final number of *Kreisleriana* (op. 16). The implicit atmosphere of endangered love had already suffused the melancholy dialogues of the second movement, where they are heard against a strangely tremulous backdrop. 'Another reason why the First Symphony is completely new is that it's laid out in the middle like a set of character pieces. No piece leads directly to the next, though they are all tightly related in their musical material. But each projects a different state of mind. One example where the combination and contrast is glaringly evident occurs in the transition from the second movement to the third. At the end of the Larghetto Schumann introduces the three trombones, which haven't been heard in the movement until now. They sound very soft, as if behind a veil. It's a magical moment. For Schumann, these three trombones have connotations that remained unchanged even in his final works. His diary tells us

that when he returned to Zwickau from Vienna in 1839, knowing that his brother was on his death-bed, he heard the sound of three trombones in Prague while asleep at three o'clock in the morning. Later he learned that this was the very hour at which his brother died. When three trombones stand out like this, it's always in connection with this funereal character. They bring the second movement to a meditative and desperately sad conclusion. Then the Scherzo lunges out in a completely different and propulsive vein. But it's fashioned from the same motif.'

The variety of outward associations is matched by the wealth and concentration of the piece's internal connections. The First Symphony is held together inwardly by its motto, in essence a motivic rhythm. Schumann accelerates it to create the fast principal theme of the opening movement; it also forms the nucleus of the Larghetto theme, reappears like a shadow in the first trio of the Scherzo and crops up as a straightforward reminiscence in the finale, revealing that the movement's light, buoyant idea liberates the kinetic energy held fast in the motto. Developing a symphony from a primal germ-cell calls for a different mode of thought than a conception that draws its material and dynamism from diametrical contrast. 'That's what distinguishes Schumann from Beethoven. Beethoven goes from A to B in a linear progression, sometimes passing through gigantic development sections. In Schumann there's no linear development. Time and time again he returns to little cells and circles them, creating something new in the process. One might say that Schumann has everything emerge from a single monad. This places him in close proximity to Novalis and the writer-physicist Georg Lichtenberg. His spiritual wellsprings are completely different from Beethoven's.'

The D-minor Symphony

This same conception comes still more clearly to the fore in the D-minor Symphony. Here everything is constructed from four notes and their mirror reflection. They appear at the opening of the quiet introduction and form the thematic nucleus of the fast main section; they are lightly adorned for the melody of the Romance and reappear verbatim as its reprise; they are festooned by the solo violin and adopted in this form as a trio in the third movement, the Scherzo. Though the main section of the Scherzo was directly inspired by a minuet from an F-minor Symphony by Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda (a composer Schumann held in high esteem), its melodic turn of phrase exactly inverts the primal motif from the symphony's opening bars. At the beginning of the finale the motif is turned into a fanfare, as if Schumann wanted it to recall his First Symphony and the ideas the two works have in common. Two motifs – a tranquil, lilting theme in the violins and an interjection from the trombones – are especially striking because they stand out from the motion of their surroundings. They belong together like two sides of a single perception. On the one hand, they are the result of a spiralling motion that releases fresh material with centrifugal force; on the other, the violin theme is clearly obtained from the basic substance, though with a character not heard before.

Schumann develops his musical ideas so as to make them undergo a story. This is what constitutes the novelistic or narrative strain in his music. 'Narrativity', writes Martin Geck, 'does not mean that a story is recounted: Schumann had a low opinion of symphonic poems in the Lisztian vein. Rather, it means that the current of the music resembles the flow of a narrative. This has nothing to do with evenness and proportion: a real river is unthinkable without an alternation of weak and strong currents, mighty waves and tiny eddies, peaceful and agitated passages, not to mention changes of

scenery along the shoreline. But it does explain his procedure of using an initial idea like a topic of conversation to sustain an entire movement'[2] – or, we should add, an entire work, as in the D-minor Symphony. Schumann adapts the form to suit this flow. Rather than having his opening movements come to an end, he merely hints at their concluding sections and opens them up, creating transitions to the next piece. The four movements elide like chapters in a novel, changing characters and setting while sustaining the musical 'plot'. In other words, it is not only the Romance, with its borrowings from Spanish narrative song, that reveals a literary bent, but the entire symphony. Its form is imbued by literature, yet the music loses nothing of its intrinsic logic.

2 Martin Geck, Robert Schumann: Mensch und Musiker der Romantik (Munich, 2010), p. 180.

Overture, Scherzo and Finale

In the first complete edition of Schumann's works, Clara Schumann placed the *Overture, Scherzo and Finale* not among the symphonies, but among the overtures, which usually consist of a single movement. She thereby suggested that this three-movement piece fails to reach the heights of his other multi-movement compositions, and that its internal cohesion is less compelling. Schumann himself encouraged this view by declaring that the three movements could be played separately. However, analysis reveals that they harbour a fine-knit skein of musical relations. Nor is this the only way that musical relations are created. Schumann also produces them through correspondences: the introduction outlines a dark backdrop from which the brighter hues stand out, especially in the outside movements. The work's hymnic conclusion – a 'chorus without words' – forms a definitive response to the introduction. It is prepared by a movement in which Schumann once again transforms vocal forms of expression into instrumental ones. The finale opens with the beginnings of a fugue – a form often chosen for the final choruses of oratorios – but its progress is cut short by a new idea. This rupture spares both the composer and the listener from having to endure a fugue whose subject is, perhaps, incapable of sustaining it. The interplay of simplicity (the fugue subject) and sublimity (the loftiness of an oratorio fugue) recalls Jean Paul's definition of humour, which, he claimed, resides in a game of deception between both levels. (Jean Paul was one of Schumann's favourite writers.) In op. 52 Schumann obviously explored a different species of composition than in the B-major and D-minor Symphonies: it is a *sinfonia serena*, a cheerful, ingratiating symphony in the classical sense of the term. Here he goes farther than in his First by integrating two vocal genres – lied and chorus – into the symphonic nexus.

The Scherzo is closely related to the ending of *Kreisleriana*. Here Schumann creates a counterpart to the corresponding movement in his First Symphony. The Trio, rather than being bipartite, is a brief song-like interpolation with strong motivic ties to the main section but a completely different character. As was customary for the genre, the Overture dispenses with a development section in the middle of the movement. However, the manipulation of the themes is spread across the entire piece. This might be viewed as an attempt to exploit the more concise form of the overture for the equally taught shape of the 'symphonette'. In each of his three symphonies of 1841 Schumann probed and explored different aspects of the genre. They bear witness to a multi-faceted wealth of musical thought that threatened to perish in the quarrels between the 'New German School' and its allegedly conservative adversaries.

Habakuk Traber
Translation *Dr. J. B. Robinson*

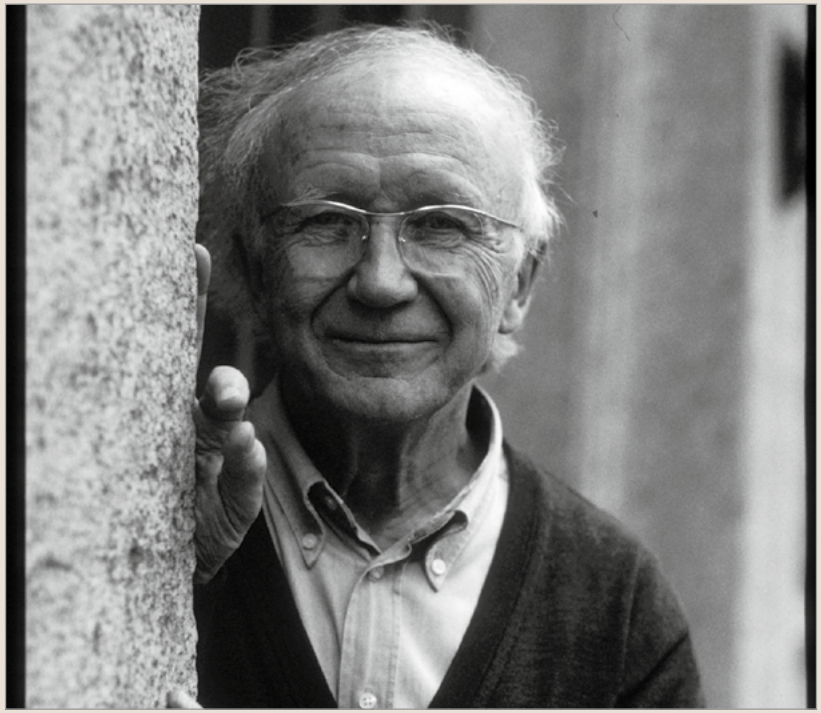
HEINZ HOLLIGER

Heinz Holliger is one of the most versatile and extraordinary musical personalities of our time. He was born in Langenthal, Switzerland, and studied in Bern, Paris and Basel (oboe with Emile Cassagnaud and Pierre Pierlot, piano with Sava Savoff and Yvonne Lefébure and composition with Sándor Veress and Pierre Boulez).

After taking first prizes in the international competitions in Geneva and Munich, Mr. Holliger began an incomparable international career that has taken him to the great musical centres on five continents. Exploring both composition and performance, he has extended the technical possibilities of his instrument while deeply committing himself to contemporary music. Some of the most important composers of the present day have dedicated works to Mr. Holliger.

As a conductor, Heinz Holliger has worked for many years with leading orchestras and ensembles worldwide. The artist's many honours and prizes include the Composer's Prize of the Swiss Musician's Association, the City of Copenhagen's Léonie Sonning Prize for Music, the Art Prize of the City of Basel, the Ernst von Siemens Music Prize, the City of Frankfurt's Music Prize, the Abbiati Prize at the Venice Biennale, an honorary doctorate from the University of Zürich, a Zürich Festival Prize and the Rheingau Music Prize, as well as awards for recordings; the Diapason d'Or, the Midem Classical Award, the Edison Award, the Grand Prix du Disque, among others.

Heinz Holliger is in high demand as a composer. His opera on Robert Walser's "Schneewittchen" at the Zürich Opera House received great international acclaim. Other major works are the Scardanelli Cycle and the Violin Concerto.



WDR SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA COLOGNE

The WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne was formed in 1947 as part of the then North West German Radio (NWDR) and nowadays belongs to the West German Radio (WDR). Principal conductors were Christoph von Dohnányi, Zdenek Macal, Hiroshi Wakasugi, Gary Bertini, Hans Vonk and Semyon Bychkov. Celebrated guest conductors such as Fritz Busch, Erich Kleiber, Otto Klemperer, Karl Böhm, Herbert von Karajan, Günter Wand, Sir Georg Solti, Sir André Previn, Lorin Maazel, Claudio Abbado and Zubin Mehta have performed with the orchestra. The WDR Symphony Orchestra tours regularly in all European countries, in North and South America and in Asia. Since the season 2010/2011 Jukka-Pekka Saraste is the Chief Conductor of the orchestra.