



CHANDOS
SUPER AUDIO CD

FESTMUSIK

A LEGACY

ONYX BRASS
JOHN WILSON



Photograph by Süddeutsche Zeitung / Mary Evans Picture Library

Richard Strauss, with his father, Franz Strauss, 1901

Festmusik: A Legacy

A recording project of music for brass, inspired by a family's hidden collection of letters

premiere recordings (except track 1)

Richard Strauss (1864–1949)

1

Festmusik der Stadt Wien, TrV 286 (1942–43)*

10:48

(Festive Music for the City of Vienna)

for Brass and Timpani

Der Gemeinde Wien gewidmet

Allegro moderato – A tempo (feierlich bewegt) –

Tempo I – Etwas ruhig – Lebhaft – Poco tranquillo –

Etwas fließender – Wieder ruhiger – Wie vorher – Ruhiger –

Tempo I – Più mosso (allegro) – Poco tranquillo – Più allegro

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856)

Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck, Op. 5 (1833) 19:44

(Impromptus on a Theme by Clara Wieck)

in C major • in C-Dur • en ut majeur

for Solo Piano

First Version

Friedrich Wieck gewidmet

Arranged 2020 by Amos Miller and Tim Jackson

2	1	Un poco Adagio – Romanza –	1:37
3	2	[] –	0:32
4	3	Espressivo –	0:46
5	4	[] –	1:00
6	5	[] –	1:37
7	6	[] –	1:36
8	7	Presto –	1:06
9	8	[] –	0:54
10	9	[] –	1:36
11	10	[] –	1:10
12	11	Allegro con brio –	2:41
13	12	Vivace	5:05

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

- 14 **Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal,**
Op. 41 No. 1 (1861 – 62) 2:22
(I blow my horn in the vale of sorrow)
in B flat major • in B-Dur • en si bémol majeur
from *Fünf Lieder für vierstimmigen Männerchor*
(Five Songs for Four-part Male Chorus)
Arranged 2020 by David Gordon-Shute
Andante (Alla breve)

Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847)

- 15 **Die Frauen und die Sänger** (1845) 3:30
(The Women and the Singers)
in B flat major • in B-Dur • en si bémol majeur
for Six-part Mixed Chorus
Arranged 2020 by David Gordon-Shute
Paul Lambert bass trombone
Allegro con grazia

Anton Grigor'yevich Rubinstein (1829 – 1894)

- 16 **Nocturne, Op. 71 No. 1** (1867) 5:50
in A flat major • in As-Dur • en la bémol majeur
from *Trois Morceaux*
(Three Pieces)
for Solo Piano
Dédié à Mademoiselle Adèle de Danzas
Arranged 2020 by David Gordon-Shute
Andante

Robert Franz (1815 – 1892)

- 17 **Frühlingsblick, Op. 52 No. 6** (1884) 2:27
(First Glimpse of Spring)
from *Sechs Gesänge*
(Six Songs)
for Voice and Piano
Arranged 2020 by Niall Keatley
Andantino con moto

Richard Strauss

Zwei Gesänge, Op. 34, TrV 182 (1897)* 22:00

(Two Songs)

for Sixteen-part Mixed Choir

Arranged 2020 by David Gordon-Shute and Matt Smith

18 Der Abend (Evening). Meinem Freunde Julius Buth gewidmet.

Sehr ruhig – Etwas lebhafter –

Wieder ruhiger – Etwas beschleunigen –

Erstes Zeitmaß – Immer ruhiger

10:22

19 Hymne (Hymn). Meinem Freunde Philipp Wolfrum gewidmet.

Bewegt – Etwas gemäßigteres Zeitmaß – Noch etwas ruhiger –

Etwas bewegter – Etwas breiter werdend – Etwas ruhiger –

Etwas lebhafter – Ruhig gehendes Zeitmaß

11:37

TT 67:25

Onyx Brass

Niall Keatley trumpet

Alan Thomas trumpet

Andrew Sutton French horn

Amos Miller trombone

David Gordon-Shute tuba

John Wilson*

Performers in Strauss

	Der Abend	Hymne	Festmusik der Stadt Wien
<i>trumpet 1</i>	Alan Thomas*	Niall Keatley	Alan Thomas* / Niall Keatley
<i>trumpet 2</i>	Niall Keatley	Alan Thomas*	Niall Keatley
<i>trumpet 3</i>	Christian Barraclough	Christian Barraclough	Christian Barraclough
<i>trumpet 4</i>	Simon Cox*	Simon Cox*	Simon Cox*
<i>trumpet 5</i>	Philip Cobb (flugelhorn)*	Philip Cobb (flugelhorn)*	Richard Blake
<i>trumpet 6</i>	James Fountain (flugelhorn)*	James Fountain (flugelhorn)*	Philip Cobb*
<i>trumpet 7</i>			James Fountain*
<i>trumpet 8</i>			Matt Williams
<i>trumpet 9</i>			Ryan Linham
<i>trumpet 10</i>			Catherine Knight
<i>French horn 1</i>	David Pyatt	David Pyatt	
<i>French horn 2</i>	Andrew Sutton	Andrew Sutton	
<i>trombone 1</i>	Peter Moore*	Amos Miller	Peter Moore*
<i>trombone 2</i>	Matthew Gee*	Matthew Gee*	Amos Miller
<i>trombone 3</i>	Matthew Knight*	Matthew Knight*	Matthew Gee*
<i>trombone 4</i>	Amos Miller	Peter Moore*	Matthew Knight*
<i>trombone 5</i>			Richard Watkin
<i>bass trombone 1</i>	Dan West*	Paul Lambert	Paul Lambert
<i>bass trombone 2</i>	Paul Lambert	Dan West*	Dan West*
<i>tuba 1</i>	David Gordon-Shute	David Gordon-Shute	David Gordon-Shute
<i>tuba 2</i>	Sasha Koushk-Jalali*	Sasha Koushk-Jalali*	Sasha Koushk-Jalali*
<i>timpani</i>			Scott Bywater

*Member of Septura



Courtesy of David Gordon-Shute

This recording is dedicated to the memory of Hilde and Heinz –
hugely loved and always missed.



The combined musicians during the Strauss recording sessions

Festmusik: A Legacy

German romantic brass

It was during the classical and romantic eras – roughly from the mid-eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries – that music by German-speaking composers came to dominate on the concert stage. In orchestral and chamber music, stringed instruments, possessing a heightened, almost vocal expressivity and marvellous blend in ensemble, formed the core of the sound. But even before the crucial invention of valved horns and trumpets, many of the composers normally considered to be the German and Austrian masters showed a special feeling for the dramatic and lyrical power of brass instruments, either as soloists or as a kind of brass chorus. The horn concertos by Mozart set the scene, followed by the triumphal trombones in the Fifth Symphony by Beethoven and the gorgeous (if challenging) horn solo in the slow movement of the Ninth, continuing through the thrilling use by Schubert of trombones in his ‘Great’ C major Symphony, to the ripely expanded orchestral brass palette of Wagner in *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, and on to the glories of Bruckner, Mahler, and Strauss.

Though very little notable music specifically for brass ensemble emerged at this time, in later German and Austrian orchestral masterpieces one does find wonderful passages in which the brass alone are entrusted with something momentous. The lovely hushed polyphony for three trombones with which Schumann ends the slow movement of his ‘Spring’ Symphony is a prime example; and one of the most telling moments in Wagner’s *Ring* – Brünnhilde’s final, tender address to her father, Wotan, ‘Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!’ (Rest, rest, you god!) – is accompanied by a wonderfully noble-sounding choir of horns, Wagner tubas, and contrabass tuba; this in turn inspired Bruckner to the tremendous horn-tuba elegy in the *Adagio* of his Seventh Symphony. The point is that, although none of the above-mentioned composers (with one exception) seems to have given much serious thought to writing for brass ensemble as an entity in its own right, hearing these arrangements, they probably would not have been surprised by the results, and might even have approved warmly.

Strauss: Festmusik der Stadt Wien

The exception is Richard Strauss (1864–1949). He completed his *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* (Festive Music for the City of Vienna) in 1943, which he composed officially as an expression of gratitude for having been awarded the city's Beethoven Prize the year before. Today, the combination of date and place, coupled with what is generally known about Strauss's complicated relationship with the Nazi regime, might ring alarm bells. But, apart from the quality of the music, there are reasons to be positive about this 'Festive' offering. Strauss had begun his relationship with the Nazis on apparently friendly terms, accepting the post of President of the Reichsmusikkammer (Reich Music Institute) in 1933. But relations soon turned sour, especially after Strauss refused to distance himself from the Jewish novelist Stefan Zweig, with whom he collaborated on the opera *Die schweigsame Frau* (The Silent Woman), premièred in 1935. By the time he wrote the *Festmusik* for Vienna things had got much worse, and Strauss was growing anxious about the fate of his Jewish daughter-in-law and her two (officially Jewish) sons. Vienna felt relatively safe for Strauss, partly because it was less subject to allied air raids, but also because there Strauss could be protected

from the Gestapo by his long-time admirer Baldur von Schirach, the city's Gauleiter (District Governor). In exchange, Strauss was expected to participate in von Schirach's plans to restore Vienna to its former cultural glory, something which it seems he was able to contemplate with a relatively easy conscience. Strauss's wife, Pauline, clearly spoke for them both when she told von Schirach, with characteristic bluntness,

When the war has been lost, we will give
you refuge in Garmisch, but as for the
rest of that gang...

Strauss wrote a fair number of such 'occasional' pieces, for a variety of places and institutions, not always with any great enthusiasm. But *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* is different. Composed for the Viennese Corp of Trumpeters (players drawn from three of the city's orchestras), it revels in the aural splendour of its grand instrumental line-up: ten trumpets, seven trombones, two tubas, and timpani. There are no horns, but Strauss grew up in the house of an outstanding horn-player, his father, Franz Strauss, which clearly left its mark on his brass writing here, especially on his understanding of the melodic potential of the instruments. The introduction is suitably martial and rousing, but before long the writing turns warmly

lyrical – this is music that would not have been out of place in one of Strauss's more mellow later operas. There is also a stretch of tense chromatic writing before the energetic, virtuosic final section: for a moment, a premonitory shadow of the anguished post-war elegy *Metamorphosen* passes over the music. Opulent and brazen though the ending is, *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* certainly is not all civic pomp and circumstance.

Strauss: Zwei Gesänge, Op. 34

When Strauss had the opportunity to write for a large ensemble his imagination often blossomed: in his huge, colour-enhanced orchestral scores, naturally, but also in such works as *Metamorphosen* (effectively a chamber work for twenty-three solo strings) or in a *cappella* choral compositions such as the twenty-part *Deutsche Motette* (German Motets) or the exquisite sixteen-part *Zwei Gesänge* (Two Songs), composed in 1897 to words by the German romantic poets Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Rückert. Although he was only in his early thirties at the time when he wrote the *Zwei Gesänge*, Strauss already had long experience of directing choruses, and he knew well what risks he could take – given a first-class choir, of course. But even for the very finest

vocal ensembles there are testing moments, not least the opening *pianissimo* high G for sopranos and tenors in octaves. The gorgeously contrived harmonic progressions also need expert tuning, and this is one area in which brass players can score over all but the finest choirs. As for the night-scented sound poetry of 'Der Abend' (Evening), or the ardent expression of consolation in grief in 'Hymne' (Hymn), we have already heard, in *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*, something of what really good brass players can do, so perhaps by now the results achieved by Onyx Brass will not come as too great a surprise. Nor probably would the results have surprised Strauss himself. As an internationally celebrated conductor he was famous for his impish one-liners, for instance: 'Never look encouragingly at the brass.' But to hear the profoundly touching horn solo at the end of 'September' from the *Vier letzte Lieder* (Four Last Songs) is to realise that, for Strauss, brass instruments were capable of conveying heart and soul as effectively as any of the other orchestral sections, strings included.

Mendelssohn: Die Frauen und die Sänger

Schiller also inspired the six-part (SATTBB) choral *Die Frauen und die Sänger* (The Women and the Singers)

(1845) by Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847). Mendelssohn began to gain experience in choral singing in earnest at the age of nine, when he became a valued alto in the famous Berlin Sing-Akademie. There, thanks to the pioneering efforts of the director, Carl Friedrich Zelter, he got to know a fair amount of then rarely performed pre-classical choral music, especially the sophisticated polyphonic works of the great baroque composers. But *Die Frauen und die Sanger* is mostly set in a simple homophonic (chordal) style, Schiller’s words placed clearly in the forefront: a lot of it sounds rather like the kind of up-beat romantic ensemble writing for horn favoured by Schubert and Schumann, having strong associations with the communal excitement and jollity of the hunt, all much idealised in German romantic poetry.

Rubinstein: Nocturne, Op. 71 No. 1

Despite his German-sounding name, the pianist-composer Anton Rubinstein (1829 – 1894) was born in Russia, and went on to become a hugely influential figure in the development of his native country’s musical life, especially when it came to inspiring and educating the future generation of Russian composers. But he studied in Berlin during 1844 – 46, and he returned to Germany in

1854 to showcase his own compositions. Few of his large-scale efforts achieved any kind of hold on the repertoire, but miniatures such as the ‘Nocturne’, the first of his *Trois Morceaux* (Three Pieces), Op. 71, composed in 1867, did become drawing room favourites. The ‘Nocturne’ is deeply indebted to Chopin, but it is not so intimately and sophisticatedly pianistic that it cannot transcribe well for other forces. Whereas arranging a Chopin nocturne for brass risks being denounced as desecration, Rubinstein’s sweetly expressive melodic line and calmly liquid accompaniment prove surprisingly adaptable.

Schumann: Impromptu uber ein Thema von Clara Wieck, Op. 5

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) composed *Impromptu uber ein Thema von Clara Wieck* (Impromptu on a Theme by Clara Wieck), Op. 5 in 1833, when he was twenty-three. They are the first fruits of his passionate, adult-lifelong love for the brilliant young pianist-composer Clara Wieck, who in 1840 would become his wife, after a long and bitter struggle with her fiercely protective father. At this stage of his career, in his twenties, Schumann was composing virtually nothing but solo piano music but, while this is always beautifully conceived for the keyboard, his

orchestral ambitions are at times evident. With typical 'lateral' playfulness, Schumann contrives this sequence of 'impromptus' as a set of variations. Schumann adjusted the sequence in 1850, but it is the longer, original version that has been arranged here.

Brahms: Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal, Op. 41 No. 1

Unaccompanied choral music holds a significant place in the output of Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897). 'Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal' (I blow my horn in the vale of sorrow) is the first of the *Fünf Lieder* (Five Songs) composed in 1861 – 62 for four-part male chorus. The words of Ludwig Uhland's poem seem to have struck a special personal note with Brahms. He had been a horn-player in his youth, and his writing for solo horn is often one of the stand-out features in his orchestral works, to say nothing of the wonderful Trio for Violin, Horn, and Piano, Op. 40, composed three years later. The other four of the *Fünf Lieder* are in a blokey, militaristic manner that does not represent Brahms at anything like his lyrical best, but this first song, simply but eloquently hymn-like in style, shows him tapping that vein of almost luxurious melancholy that sounds through so many of his most personal utterances.

Franz: Frühlingsblick, Op. 52 No. 6

As well as being a prolific composer of songs and choral works, a teacher, and a choral conductor, the Halle-born Robert Franz (1815 – 1892) had some success as an arranger of the work of other composers, notably Schubert and Mozart – so one imagines that he would at the very least be interested to hear what an expert brass ensemble might make of his 'Frühlingsblick' (First Glimpse of Spring). The *Sechs Gesänge* (Six Songs), Op. 52 (1884) was the last collection of songs that Franz published, and the charming 'Frühlingsblick', a setting of a poem by Nikolaus Lenau, is the set's final offering. Nervous disorder and deafness had increasingly plagued his later years, but at nearly seventy Franz was clearly still capable of identifying with the hopefulness of the young season, as this song touchingly testifies.

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Legacy

This recording is not called 'Legacy' because of the desire of Onyx Brass to leave something behind for future generations. Of course, there is an element of that, but the picture is far bigger.

In the summer of 1991, Amos Miller and I travelled around Europe on an Interrail

pass. I had just completed my last National Youth Orchestra course. Amos had one year to go. We had got on well on the courses, but had been persuaded actually to holiday together by Linden Andrew, at the time the administrator of the Orchestra. The trip was both great fun and very funny. When two people decide on a railway holiday, one of whom has to be at least forty-five minutes early for each train and the other is happy rocking up with seconds to spare, and it is still a success, even after that crucial hurdle, then the two know that they are on solid ground.

About midway through the trip, we arrived in Prague. After we had recovered from the cost of beer (twenty whole pence per pint), we found ourselves in a CD shop in Wenceslas Square. We both left, each with his own copy of the Chandos recording of the Locke Brass Consort performing brass music by Richard Strauss (CHAN 8419). Throughout our NYO training and our continuing musical education, we had been learning about the British style of orchestral brass playing. In the Locke Brass Consort, so immaculately captured by the world-beating digital technology newly on offer at Chandos, you have a prime example: a pure, focussed sound; always with warmth and seldom harsh. The British sound, in those days at least, sat very

comfortably between the more direct Eastern European / Russian tradition and the broader American school.

Onyx Brass was founded, in 1993, with an idealised sound first and foremost in mind. Thanks to the legacy of Philip Jones, the Locke Brass, and countless others, we knew exactly what we wanted to do. Amos and I returned from Europe and asked three friends from the NYO if they fancied a quintet rehearsal at Amos's house, in Bristol. The rest, as they say, is history. On this recording, we are joined by some great friends of ours, all possessing huge talent. In asking Septura, the fabulous brass ensemble, as well as several other talented friends of Onyx to join us, we hope that, in some small way, a particular generation of brass playing can be immortalised, as others have been before us and, no doubt, others will be in the future.

This recording is not about a single legacy. Suffice to say that the handing-down process amongst generations has been a huge, guiding influence on this project, and it pays tribute to a particular figure in the Gordon-Shute family. The legacies of my ancestors, and of many others, who are sadly no longer with us, make this a recording to which, I hope, people will listen with both past and future in mind. At first glance, the repertoire may look

unrelated and disparate but each piece has been chosen for a very specific reason.

In the summer of 1996, I was in the middle of my postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music. My Great-uncle Heinz, who was a key, benevolent figure in my life, had recently been widowed. I asked if I could spend a week with him at his house and attempt to get some much-needed practice done in his rather large garden. He and his wife, Hilde, had left Germany in 1935, together with Hilde's sister Anne-Marie (my grandmother), just as things started to look grim for those with Jewish families and backgrounds. All three left behind nice, middle-class families in Berlin, but at this time the need to flee had become pressing. Whilst on holiday in Germany earlier that year, they had come down to breakfast in their hotel one morning and found themselves the only people not wearing a uniform with the markings of the Nazi SS. It was time to go. They arrived in England on 5 November, in the evening – and thought that war had started, owing to the cacophony of fireworks which greeted them as they disembarked. They set up a life in the UK and lived very happily as their families grew.

The marriage of Heinz and Hilde was a great example to everyone who knew them.

They were inseparable, and so, when Hilde died from complications following a stroke, Heinz was absolutely inconsolable. I hoped that a visit from me would offer a chance for us to connect in some way despite the age difference, and that it would, perhaps, distract him from his considerable grief. It was a hot week and I spent a lot of time practising in the garden whilst Heinz read *The Times* – something which he did in great detail every day. From time to time, I would hear him mumble something about how my 'low notes needed to improve, didn't they?' and I would smile because he was absolutely right. It was a memorable week and I was sad to say goodbye.

Only a few weeks later, in a very organised, Heinz-like fashion, he chose to take his own life. He had written a note to Hilde, saying how, in a previous love poem to her, from 1934, he had promised that they would end their lives together, and he had broken this promise. He now wanted to put that right. He had arranged a beautiful, humanist funeral (as Hilde had done) and family members were able to offer memories and anecdotes about this extraordinary man.

Barely a month had passed, when I went to see my grandmother Anne-Marie who had embarked on the perilous journey with Hilde and Heinz all those years ago. Mid-sentence

she stopped herself and suddenly remembered something: 'Oh!' she exclaimed. 'Heinz gave me something for you in the days before he died. Let me go and get it.' She produced an innocuous-looking brown envelope with some pieces of paper stuffed inside it. As I emptied it, old bits of paper appeared. Some even had staves and notes on them, which I found charming.

Then, suddenly, my stomach lurched as I recognised some autographs. These were letters from eminent composers of the late nineteenth century, all with a connection to Berlin. One or two were familiar names, such as Carl Loewe, Robert Franz, and Anton Rubinstein, but I broke into a sweat when I stumbled across a postcard from Richard Strauss, a business card from Johannes Brahms, and a letter each from Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann.

My heart was racing. I immediately put the letters down, not wanting to sully any further the old, decrepit notepaper. What should I do next? I sought out someone who was able to translate High German for me and found that most of the letters referred to specific events or, in some cases, pieces. My biggest shock came when I realised that the works to which Richard Strauss was referring were ones with which I was already familiar.

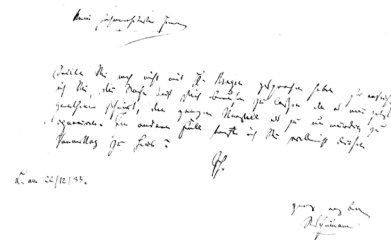
Only a short while before I spent my week with Heinz, in 1996, I had been in the library of the Royal Academy of Music, where I passed some time researching motets that would transcribe well for brass. Onyx Brass was in its infancy and we wanted to commission and arrange all our own new material. Richard Strauss has always been a hero for me (and for many others) and I stumbled across a fascinating pair of sixteen-part motets which had me salivating; I duly borrowed the score from the library in order to investigate its feasibility for brass. Was the tessitura OK? Would it need to be transposed? By an extraordinary coincidence, the postcard from Strauss which Heinz had left me was addressed to Herr Siegfried Ochs, the founder and pioneering musical director of the Berlin Philharmonic Choir. It was reassuring Ochs that (after some annoying interventions from Strauss's publisher, Spitzweg) the pieces for which he had asked were now on their way to him, and that Strauss looked forward to hearing them soon. These were exactly the same pieces as had raised my pulse in the library: the *Zwei Gesänge*, Op. 34, written in 1897. I was hooked.

This recording pairs the *Zwei Gesänge* with Strauss's great masterwork for brass, *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*. The disc is then

completed with smaller-scale chamber works, chosen either because they are referred to in the letters or because they were produced at the time the letters were written. Each piece appeared in a different context and it has been fascinating to work out the story behind the piece and its composer at the time when he wrote the letter.

Schumann: *Impromptu über ein Thema von Clara Wieck, Op. 5*

Robert Schumann must be our starting point as his letter was written before any of the others. Addressed to an unidentified gentleman, it is dated 22 December 1833 and refers to an incident of which he is clearly ashamed:



In the event that you have not yet talked with Herr Wagner, I would ask you to let the matter rest since it now seems to

me more advisable to ignore the whole incident as too undignified.

Schumann was a prolific letter-writer and so, even though he was a young man in 1833, we can tell that both his self-confidence and his self-esteem are incredibly delicate. He had only a few months before lost both his brother and his sister-in-law, and letters to his mother are full of darkness and depression. The one ray of light was his relationship with the Wieck family who fervently promoted and supported the young composer. Friedrich Wieck was his piano teacher and assured the young man that he would be the finest pianist in Europe. Sadly, a hand injury prevented this promise from being fulfilled. When Robert heard a twelve-year-old Clara Wieck play the piano, he was both dazzled and enchanted. Little did anyone know at this stage that she would go on to have a stellar career or that the two would fall in love and marry, much to the disgruntlement of Friedrich. The *Impromptus* were written for her, and utilised a theme which Clara herself had played to Robert. The year of composition is the same as that of the letter, which means that Clara was fourteen at the time. It would be seven more years before she and Robert, in 1840, were allowed to marry.

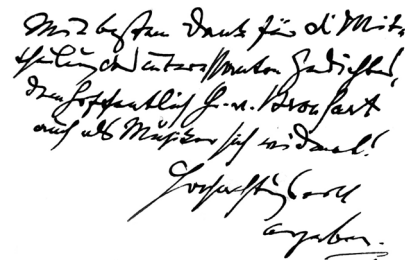
Brahms: Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal, Op. 41 No. 1

Johannes Brahms was born in 1833, the year of the composition of Schumann's *Impromptus*, Op. 5. Although his business card is not dated and the writing on the back of it is clearly from a much later period in his life, this document permits us to establish the connection between Johannes and Robert and Clara.

Without the encouragement and patronage of the Schumanns, Brahms might not have become the towering presence in the classical music world that we now recognise. It is also worth remembering that *only he* was allowed to visit Robert Schumann in the Psychiatric Hospital after Robert had attempted suicide; just two days before his death did Clara finally receive permission to see her husband. By the early 1860s, Brahms had broken off a love affair with Agathe von Siebold, which he later regretted even though his feelings for Clara had been continually growing since Robert's death.



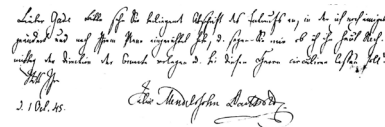
W. Harbousse 4.



'Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal' is taken from a set of five songs for four-part male chorus, written at this time. Being able to arrange and perform a song by Brahms about the horn was too irresistible an idea.

Mendelssohn: Die Frauen und die Sänger

The letter from Felix Mendelssohn, dated 1 October 1845, is to his friend and fellow Leipzig conductor the Danish musician Niels W. Gade. Felix asks:



Please look at the enclosed copy of the draft, in which I have changed a few more things and have arranged it according to your plan.

This almost certainly refers to the Violin Concerto in E minor, which had been premièred earlier in the year, but with which Mendelssohn wanted to tinker. Later in October, Gade conducted the Gewandhaus Orchestra, with Ferdinand David as violin soloist, in a slightly revised version of the Concerto. There are two links here which are interesting: one is that Clara Schumann was in Leipzig, playing chamber music with both David and Mendelssohn, just the week before this revised version of the Concerto was performed. With David she also, several years later, premièred the violin sonatas of her recently deceased husband. David was a renowned composer as well as a performer, and a second link, for the purposes of this project, is that he was one of the first (amongst a scarce few) romantic composers to write a concerto for trombone. Allegedly, this was a commission that Mendelssohn had passed on to his friend.

Just a few weeks after the performance of the revised Concerto, Mendelssohn wrote *Die Frau und die Sänger*, a motet for six-part chorus, which arranges easily for brass, our version using the elegant sound of the bass

trombone to boost the standard quintet formation. It is sad to note that Felix Mendelssohn, like Schumann, would meet an untimely death, in his case almost exactly two years after this piece had been composed.

Rubinstein: Nocturne, Op. 71 No. 1

Anton Rubinstein was an interesting figure, although far less well known than his later namesake Artur. Anton, too, was a virtuoso pianist, and a talented educator as well. Composition was more of a sideline for him, and his letter, dated February 1867, comes exactly at the time when his internal battles at the St Petersburg Conservatory were coming to a head. The letter, addressed to 'Madame', appears to be written to those who were running the large music library of Count Józef Wielhorski and asks for some large-scale music, presumably for the students at St Petersburg, 'which we want to perform in our next concert'.

There is some frustration on the part of Rubinstein over the fact that what he had initially asked for is no longer stocked, and he asks therefore if they could send the oratorio *Paulus* by Mendelssohn instead. Although not particularly noteworthy on a musical level, this information, as we see, does provide a direct link with one of the other letter-writers

celebrated in this collection. At the time he was writing his *Trois Morceaux* for piano, late in 1867, from which we have arranged the first, *Nocturne*, for brass quintet, Anton was cutting ties with the Conservatory and choosing instead once again to embark on European and American tours. The glitzy life of an itinerant musician won out at the expense of the frustrations of the administrative academic.

Monsieur
 J'ay vu le catalogue que vous avez bien voulu nous envoyer, ainsi que depuis les paroles de Mr. Tenebre, il manque a la bibliothèque de Saint Philadelphie tant le musique de l'ancien et les grande partitions — Si vous pouvez par vouloir déposer ce titre favorable de cette partie de la bibliothèque veuillez avoir l'extrême bonté de nous remettre les parties de celles de l'Opéra, Secular et Académique que nous voulons exécuter a notre prochain concert.
 En attendant a cette occasion vous espérez à nouveau voir et a la reconnaissance de la petite musique ainsi que celle de votre très humble serviteur
 F. Franck
 6. 12. 1867.

Franz: Frühlingsblick, Op. 52 No. 6

In the case of Robert Franz, the letter in our possession confirms and acknowledges the saddest aspect of his life story:

Sehr geehrter Herr!
 Ich bedaure mich sehr darüber, Ihnen nicht zu entsprechen. Der Zustand meiner Gehörkraft verbietet mir alles, was eine intensive Beschäftigung mit Musik erfordert. Ich kann nicht mehr als ein wenig Musik hören, und das nur, wenn ich sie in der Hand habe, und das nur, wenn ich sie in der Hand habe, und das nur, wenn ich sie in der Hand habe.
 P.S. Ich habe die Partitur von Ihrem Opus 52 No. 6 erhalten, und ich werde sie mir ansehen, wenn ich die Gelegenheit dazu finde.
 Robert Franz
 Berlin, den 28. Jan. 1871.

Dear Sir, I am sorry not to be able to comply with your wish. The state of my hearing forbids me any intensive involvement with music. I am hardly able to fulfil my most necessary commitments. In these circumstances, I hardly know whether I am allowed to accept your kind parcel, the contents of which interested me so greatly. Please allow me to express my greatest thanks.

As if going deaf had not been enough to suffer for the venerable composer of *Lieder*, a nervous disorder had compelled him in 1868 to give up work almost altogether – all this after having battled as a young man with his father to persuade him that a career in music was a serious and dignified profession. A hugely liked and respected figure, he need not have worried about his lifestyle. Incidentally, Franz enjoyed a long friendship with Robert Schumann, one marked by copious letter-writing. On receiving copies of some of Franz's songs, Schumann sent them straight to his publisher, Herr Whistling. It is largely thanks to Schumann's years of encouragement that Franz continued to write, despite all the obstacles thrown in his path. A group of musicians spearheaded by Franz Liszt and Joseph Joachim exerted themselves to guarantee Franz's income and kept sending him royalties. By 1871, the date of the letter, Franz had been stone-deaf for four years but, as a result of the kindness shown him and the encouragement he received, he continued to compose and also decided to republish some works from his early career, which he had kept hidden away. The *Sechs Gesänge*, Op. 52, composed in 1884, among his last completed works, is described as a final love offering to his

children, Lisbeth and Richard. It is the last of these, 'Frühlingsblick', that we have arranged for brass quintet.

Strauss: *Zwei Gesänge*, Op. 34

With Richard Strauss, we arrive at the reason this recording has happened at all. It did not take too much detective work to find out that the *Zwei Gesänge*, of 1897, were the pieces to which Strauss was referring in his postcard. Sometimes, his greedy publisher, Herr Spitzweg, got in the way of Strauss's grand plans. Addressed to Siegfried Ochs, this letter looks like an attempt at mediation between Spitzweg and Ochs, the conductor of the newly formed Berlin choir, who had been patiently waiting for the music after its successful first performance in Knoll. Strauss was also trying to soften the blow about the size of the bill.



Liebe Frau
 Freitag
 5-600 M.
 Katholik
 2000 M.
 1000 M.
 1000 M.
 15. 1. 99

That the motets were pieces that I had photocopied in 1996 in order to transcribe them for a young Onyx Brass, was a strange coincidence. Choral music suits brass so well. Perhaps it is down to the fact that both brass instruments and the human voice produce music from a human vibration (lips and voice-box, respectively) rather than an external vibration such as that of a reed or a string.

In this enlarged brass line-up only very occasional vibrato is used. Interestingly, vocal recordings of these pieces are mainly made by professional choirs who do use vibrato, but in the rich texture of a sixteen-part motet, my own personal feeling is that a cleaner sonority allows the (sometimes surprising) harmony to shine with greater clarity. Like our teachers and predecessors in the Philip Jones Brass

Ensemble and the Locke Brass Consort, Onyx Brass espouses the pure, warm sonorities which we think serve the music best.

Strauss: *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*

Nearly forty-five years later, Strauss composed the *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*, as an expression of thanks to the city of Vienna. It was completed in 1943, when Strauss was no longer seen by the Nazis as one of their cultured friends. Wagner had long before gained that dubious honour. (On a personal note, this particular tuba player was pleased to discover that he was born exactly thirty years to the day after the score was completed.) Strauss had written occasional and ceremonial music involving brass before this but the *Festmusik* is a different beast. The original forces involved constituted the combined corps of brass players from all-professional Viennese ensembles – the Wiener Philharmoniker, Wiener Symphoniker, and Volksoper Wien. Written just six years before Strauss's death, the music does have an epic quality but without the reflective, perhaps gloriously meditative aspect of, say, the *Vier letzte Lieder* (Four Last Songs), composed when Strauss knew that the end was nearing. In another curious twist of fate, owing to difficulties experienced after the war, Strauss and his wife relocated to a hotel

in Switzerland. It was around this time that a young Swiss lady named Ursula was told by her parents that the famous composer Strauss was coming for lunch. Unfortunately, she let the side down slightly by telling the guest how much she enjoyed his waltzes. A few years later, she would marry Philip Jones and she became a key figure in the promotion and success of his pioneering ensemble.

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Onyx Brass

Inspired by the pioneering early years of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, and having celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in the 2017 / 18 season, **Onyx Brass** remains the leading light for the brass quintet as a medium for serious chamber music. To this end, the group has commissioned and performed the world premières of more than 150 new works; many more are in the pipeline for performance and recording. The group has toured extensively, very few corners of the UK remaining unvisited! It has also performed regularly at festivals and concert halls in the USA, across continental Europe, and in Nigeria, Bermuda, and Borneo to unanimous critical acclaim. Acclaim has been similarly forthcoming for its many recordings, all

notable for their innovative and entertaining programming – for example, the pairing of fugues by Bach and Shostakovich, contemporary works coupled with the Renaissance pieces that inspired them, and a collaboration with the extraordinary baritone Mark Stone. The magazine *BBC Music* has described the group as ‘easily the classiest brass ensemble in Britain’, *Gramophone* hailed it for ‘some of the most thrilling chamber brass-playing of its kind’, and *The Observer* praised ‘an eclectic ear opener of a disc, virtuosically played’. The quintet and its recordings are regularly featured on BBC Radio 3.

Committed to education, Onyx Brass has led workshops and master-classes in an enormous variety of contexts, ranging from primary school reception classes to The Juilliard School in New York. The individual members of the group are also active orchestral musicians, holding permanent positions in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of English National Opera, Royal Ballet Sinfonia, and English Chamber Orchestra. The group released two new discs in the first half of 2018: *Fanfaires*, on Chandos, celebrating four dozen works by British composers, and *Onyx Noir*, twelve

new commissions representing the best of the British jazz scene. The discs were launched at some of the most prestigious London venues: Milton Court, Wigmore Hall, and the Vortex Jazz Club.

John Wilson is in demand at the highest level across the globe, working with some of the finest orchestras and opera houses. In the UK, he performs regularly at festivals such as the Aldeburgh Festival, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, and BBC Proms and with orchestras such as the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia Orchestra, BBC Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra with which he held the title of Associate Guest Conductor between 2016 and 2019. Elsewhere, his guest conducting takes him to the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin,

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, and Danish National Symphony Orchestra, among others, and he looks forward to making his debut with The Metropolitan Opera, New York, in the 2021 / 22 season.

He studied composition and conducting at the Royal College of Music, where in 2011 he was made a Fellow. John Wilson has assembled a large and varied discography which includes critically acclaimed recordings with the Sinfonia of London, numerous recordings with the John Wilson Orchestra (which he founded in 1994), and series of discs with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, exploring works by Sir Richard Rodney Bennett, and BBC Philharmonic, devoted to the symphonic works of Aaron Copland and orchestral works of Eric Coates.



John Wilson conducting the combined musicians in Strauss's
'Festmusik der Stadt Wien'

Festmusik: Ein Vermächtnis

Deutsche romantische Musik für Blechbläser

Es war im Laufe des klassischen und romantischen Zeitalters – also mehr oder weniger zwischen Mitte des achtzehnten und Ende des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts –, dass die Musik deutschsprachiger Komponisten auf dem Konzertpodium die Vorherrschaft übernehmen sollte. In der Orchester- und Kammermusik formten die Streichinstrumente mit ihrer gesteigerten, fast vokalen Ausdruckskraft und wunderbaren Mischung im Ensemble das Herzstück des Klangs. Doch bereits vor der bahnbrechenden Erfindung von mit Ventilen ausgestatteten Hörnern und Trompeten zeigten viele jener Komponisten, die normalerweise als Meister der deutschen und österreichischen Tradition gelten, ein besonderes Gefühl für die dramatische und lyrische Macht von Blechblasinstrumenten, sei es als Solisten oder als eine Art Blechbläserchor. Mozarts Hornkonzerte bereiteten den Weg, gefolgt von den triumphalen Posaunen in Beethovens Fünfter Sinfonie und dem hinreißenden (wenn auch anspruchsvollen) Hornsolo im langsamen

Satz der Neunten, sich fortsetzend in der packenden Art und Weise, in der Schubert in seiner „Großen“ C-Dur-Sinfonie Posaunen einsetzt, bis hin zu der reif erweiterten Palette des Orchesterblechs in Wagners *Der Ring des Nibelungen* und den Herrlichkeiten Bruckners, Mahlers und Strauss’.

Obwohl in dieser Zeit sehr wenig bemerkenswerte Musik entstand, die speziell für Blechbläserensemble konzipiert war, finden sich doch in späteren deutschen und österreichischen Meisterwerken wundervolle Passagen, in denen dem Blech allein eine bedeutsame Rolle zukommt. Ein gutes Beispiel hierfür ist die herrliche gedämpfte Polyphonie für drei Posaunen, welche den langsamen Satz von Schumanns „Frühlings“-Sinfonie beschließt; und einer der erhellendsten Momente in Wagners *Ring*, nämlich wenn Brünnhilde sich zum letzten Mal voller Zärtlichkeit an ihren Vater Wotan wendet, „Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!“, wird von einem wunderbar edel klingenden Chor von Hörnern, Wagnertuben und Kontrabasstuba begleitet. Dies wiederum inspirierte Bruckner zu der herrlichen Elegie für Horn und Tuba

im *Adagio* seiner Siebten Sinfonie. Hierbei ausschlaggebend ist, dass zwar keiner der oben genannten Komponisten (mit einer Ausnahme) ernsthaft darüber nachgedacht zu haben scheint, für Blechbläserensemble als eigenständiges Gebilde zu schreiben, und dennoch das Ergebnis für sie beim Hören dieser Bearbeitungen wahrscheinlich keine Überraschung gewesen wäre, sondern sie es vielleicht sogar wärmstens befürwortet hätten.

Strauss: Festmusik der Stadt Wien

Die zuvor erwähnte Ausnahme stellt Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949) dar. Er stellte seine *Festmusik der Stadt Wien*, die er offiziell als Ausdruck seiner Dankbarkeit für den Erhalt des Beethoven-Preises der Stadt im Jahr zuvor komponierte, 1943 fertig. Die Kombination von Datum und Ort mag zusammen mit dem, was allgemein über Strauss' kompliziertes Verhältnis zu den nationalsozialistischen Machthabern bekannt ist, heute Alarmglocken zum Klingen bringen. Doch neben der Qualität der Musik gibt es auch noch andere Gründe, diese "Festmusik" positiv zu betrachten. Strauss hatte seine Beziehung zu den Nationalsozialisten zunächst unter scheinbar freundlichen Bedingungen begonnen, indem er 1933 den Posten des Präsidenten der Reichsmusikkammer

annahm. Doch das Verhältnis schlug bald um, besonders nach der Weigerung Strauss' sich von dem jüdischen Schriftsteller Stefan Zweig, mit dem er für die 1935 uraufgeführte Oper *Die schweigsame Frau* zusammengearbeitet hatte, zu distanzieren. Als die *Festmusik* für Wien entstand, hatte sich die Beziehung noch wesentlich verschlechtert, und Strauss sorgte sich um das Schicksal seiner jüdischen Schwiegertochter und ihrer beiden (offiziell jüdischen) Söhne. Wien erschien Strauss relativ sicher, einerseits weil es weniger Luftangriffen der Alliierten ausgesetzt war und außerdem weil ihn hier der Gauleiter der Stadt, sein langjähriger Bewunderer Baldur von Schirach, schützen konnte. Im Gegenzug wurde von Strauss erwartet, dass er an von Schirachs Plänen, Wien zu seiner früheren kulturellen Glanzzeit zurückzuführen, teilhatte, was er wohl mit relativ gutem Gewissen in Betracht ziehen konnte. Strauss' Ehefrau, Pauline, sprach sicherlich für sie beide, als sie mit der für sie typischen Direktheit zu von Schirach gesagt haben soll, sie würde ihm – anders als den anderen nationalsozialistischen Schergen – in Garmisch Zuflucht gewähren, wenn der Krieg verloren sei.

Strauss schrieb eine beträchtliche Anzahl solcher "Gelegenheits"-Stücke und zwar für

eine Vielzahl von Orten und Institutionen und nicht immer mit besonders großem Enthusiasmus. Doch die *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* ist anders. Das Stück wurde für den Trompetencorps der Stadt Wien, bestehend aus Musikern dreier Wiener Orchester geschrieben, und schwelgt in der akustischen Pracht seines grandiosen Instrumentenaufgebots: zehn Trompeten, sieben Posaunen, zwei Tubas sowie Pauken. Es gibt keine Hörner, doch Strauss wuchs im Hause eines hervorragenden Hornisten, nämlich seines Vaters, Franz Strauss, auf, und dies prägte zweifellos seine Art, hier für Blech zu schreiben, besonders was sein Verständnis des melodischen Potentials der Instrumente angeht. Die Einleitung ist angemessen martialisch und mitreißend, doch schon bald wird die Komposition warm lyrisch – diese Musik hätte ebenso gut in eine von Strauss' reiferen späteren Opern gepasst. Vor dem energischen, virtuosen Schlussteil gibt es auch einen Abschnitt angespannter Chromatik: Für einen Moment fällt ein vorahnender Schatten der beklommenen, nach dem Krieg entstandenen Klage *Metamorphosen* über die Musik. Obwohl ihr Ende opulent und unverfroren daherkommt, besteht die *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* sicherlich nicht nur aus bürgerlichem Glanz und Gloria.

Strauss: Zwei Gesänge op. 34

Oft wenn Strauss die Möglichkeit hatte, für ein großes Ensemble zu schreiben, blühte seine Fantasie auf: natürlich in seinen großen, farbenprächtigen Orchesterpartituren, aber auch in Werken wie *Metamorphosen* (im Grunde ein Kammermusikstück für dreiundzwanzig Solo-Streicher) oder in *a-cappella* Chorkompositionen wie der zwanzig-stimmigen Deutschen Motette oder den exquisiten sechzehn-stimmigen Zwei Gesängen, die er 1897 nach Texten der deutschen Dichter Friedrich Schiller und Friedrich Rückert schrieb. Obwohl er erst Anfang dreißig war, als er Zwei Gesänge komponierte, konnte Strauss bereits auf lange Erfahrung als Chorleiter zurückblicken und wusste sehr gut, welche Risiken er eingehen konnte – selbstverständlich mit einem erstklassigen Chor. Doch selbst für die hervorragendsten Vokalensembles halten diese Werke Herausforderungen bereit, nicht zuletzt die eröffnenden *pianissimo* hohen Gs im Oktavabstand für Soprane und Tenöre. Auch die herrlich bewerkstelligten harmonischen Progressionen verlangen gekonnte Intonation, und dies ist ein Gebiet, auf dem Blechbläser höher punkten können, als alle anderen – mit Ausnahme der allerbesten Chöre. Was die nachtfarbene

Klangpoesie von "Der Abend" oder den leidenschaftlichen Ausdruck des Trosts im Angesicht der Trauer in "Hymne" angeht, so haben wir bereits in *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* gehört, wozu wirklich gute Blechbläser in der Lage sind, weshalb inzwischen die von Onyx Brass erreichten Resultate nicht mehr allzu sehr überraschen werden. Auch Strauss selbst wäre sicher nicht überrascht gewesen. Als international gefeierter Dirigent war er berühmt für seine schelmischen Bemerkungen, wie etwa: "Schau niemals aufmunternd das Blech an." Doch man muss nur das zutiefst berührende Horn-Solo am Ende von "September" in den *Vier letzten Liedern* hören, um zu erkennen, dass für Strauss Blechblasinstrumente in der Lage waren, Herz und Seele ebenso wirkungsvoll zu transportieren wie die anderen Orchestergruppen, auch die Streicher.

Mendelssohn: Die Frauen und die Sänger
Der sechsstimmige (SATTB) Choral *Die Frauen und die Sänger* (1845) von Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847) wurde ebenfalls von Schiller inspiriert. Mendelssohn begann im Alter von neun Jahren ernsthafte Erfahrungen im Chorsingen zu sammeln, als er geschätzter Altist der berühmten Singakademie Berlin wurde. Hier lernte er

dank der wegweisenden Bemühungen ihres Leiters Carl Friedrich Zelter eine große Anzahl zu jener Zeit selten aufgeführter vor-klassischer Chormusik kennen, insbesondere die komplexen polyphonen Werke der großen Barock-Komponisten. *Die Frauen und die Sänger* ist jedoch größtenteils in einfachem homophonen (akkordischen) Stil gehalten, und Schillers Text steht deutlich im Vordergrund: Vieles klingt hier wie jene Art fröhlicher romantischer Ensemblekomposition für Horn, die Schubert und Schumann bevorzugten und die stark an die gemeinschaftliche Begeisterung und Ausgelassenheit einer Jagd erinnert, ein Szenario, das in der Poesie der deutschen Romantik stark idealisiert wurde.

Rubinstein: Nocturne op. 71 Nr. 1
Trotz seines deutsch klingenden Namens stammt der Pianist und Komponist Anton Rubinstein (1829 – 1894) aus Russland und wurde zu einer enorm einflussreichen Persönlichkeit in der Entwicklung des musikalischen Lebens seines Landes, besonders wenn es darum ging, die zukünftige Generation russischer Komponisten zu inspirieren und auszubilden. Er studierte jedoch von 1844 bis 1846 in Berlin und kehrte 1854 nach Deutschland zurück, um

seine eigenen Kompositionen zu präsentieren. Wenige seiner groß angelegten Werke schafften es, sich im Repertoire zu etablieren, doch Miniaturen wie das "Nocturne", das erste seiner 1867 komponierten *Trois Morceaux* (Drei Stücke) op. 71 wurden zu Lieblingen der Salons. "Nocturne" ist zutiefst Chopin verpflichtet, aber nicht so intim und ausgefeilt pianistisch, dass es sich nicht gut für andere Instrumente umschreiben ließe. Während die Bearbeitung eines Nocturne von Chopin für Blechbläser Gefahr läuft, der Entheiligung beschuldigt zu werden, stellen sich Rubinsteins süß-ausdrucksvolle Melodielinie und die ruhig-flüssige Begleitung als überraschend anpassungsfähig heraus.

Schumann: Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck op. 5

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) schrieb die *Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck* op. 5 1833 im Alter von dreiundzwanzig Jahren. Es handelt sich dabei um die ersten Früchte seiner leidenschaftlichen, sein ganzes Erwachsenenleben andauernden Liebe zu der brillanten jungen Pianistin und Komponistin Clara Wieck, die 1840 nach langem und bitterem Kampf mit ihrem extrem beschützerischen Vater seine Frau

werden sollte. In diesem Stadium seiner Laufbahn, in seinen Zwanzigern, schrieb Schumann so gut wie ausschließlich Musik für Solo-Klavier, doch während diese immer wunderbar für das Tasteninstrument angelegt ist, sind seine Orchester-Ambitionen zeitweise deutlich erkennbar. Mit typischer "lateraler" Verspieltheit konzipiert Schumann diese Folge von "Impromptus" als Variationengruppe. Schumann passte die Abfolge 1850 an, doch bei dieser Bearbeitung handelt es sich um die längere Originalfassung.

Brahms: Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal op. 41 Nr. 1

Unbegleitete Chormusik nimmt im Werk Johannes Brahms' (1833 – 1897) einen wichtigen Platz ein. "Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal" ist das erste der 1861 / 62 komponierten Fünf Lieder für vierstimmigen Männerchor. Der Text von Ludwig Uhlands Gedicht scheint bei Brahms eine besondere persönliche Resonanz zum Klingen gebracht zu haben. Er hatte in seiner Jugend Horn gespielt, und bei seiner Musik für Solo-Horn handelt es sich oft um ein herausragendes Merkmal seiner Orchesterwerke, ganz zu schweigen von dem drei Jahre später entstandenen, wunderbaren Trio für Violine,

Horn und Klavier op. 40. Die restlichen vier der Fünf Lieder sind in ihrer Art kumpelhaft und militaristisch und zeigen nicht annähernd Brahms' lyrische Bestform, doch dieses erste Lied, in seiner Stilistik einfach doch beredt hymnenartig, ist beispielhaft für jene Quelle fast luxuriöser Melancholie, die so viele seiner persönlichsten Äußerungen durchklingt.

Franz: Frühlingsblick op. 52 Nr. 6

Der in Halle geborene Robert Franz (1815 – 1892) hatte nicht nur als Komponist vieler Lieder und Chorwerke, als Lehrer und Chordirigent, sondern auch als Arrangeur der Werke anderer Komponisten – besonders Schubert und Mozart – einige Erfolge zu verzeichnen, und so könnte man sich vorstellen, dass er zumindest sehr interessiert

daran gewesen wäre, zu hören, was ein meisterhaftes Blechbläserensemble aus seinem "Frühlingsblick" machen würde. Die Sechs Gesänge op. 52 (1884) waren die letzte Gruppe von Liedern, die Franz veröffentlichte, und bei dem bezaubernden "Frühlingsblick" nach einem Gedicht von Nikolaus Lenau handelt es sich um das letzte Lied der Gruppe. Nervenleiden und Taubheit hatten ihm in den letzten Jahren mehr und mehr zugesetzt, aber, wie sein Lied anrührend bezeugt, war Franz im Alter von fast siebenzig Jahren offensichtlich noch in der Lage, sich mit der hoffnungsfrohen Stimmung der jungen Jahreszeit zu identifizieren.

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Übersetzung: Bettina Reinke-Welsh

Festmusik: Un héritage

Musique romantique allemande pour cuivres

C'est pendant l'époque classique et romantique – à peu près du milieu du dix-huitième à la fin du dix-neuvième siècle – que la musique des compositeurs de langue allemande s'est mise à dominer la scène des concerts. Dans la musique orchestrale et de chambre, les instruments à cordes, dotés d'une expressivité plus intense presque vocale, et produisant un merveilleux mélange d'ensemble, constituaient le noyau du tissu sonore. Mais même avant l'invention cruciale des cors et des trompettes à pistons, un grand nombre des compositeurs habituellement considérés comme les maîtres de la musique allemande et autrichienne montrèrent une affinité particulière pour la puissance dramatique et lyrique des cuivres, soit en tant qu'instruments solistes, soit en tant qu'ensemble de cuivres. Les concertos pour cor de Mozart plantèrent le décor, suivis par les trombones triomphants de la Cinquième Symphonie de Beethoven et du magnifique solo de cor (bien que d'exécution difficile) du mouvement lent de sa Neuvième Symphonie,

se poursuivant par le traitement spectaculaire des trombones dans la "Grande" Symphonie en ut majeur de Schubert, jusqu'à la palette mûrement élargie de la section des cuivres de l'orchestration de Wagner dans *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, et les gloires sonores de Bruckner, Mahler et Strauss.

Si très peu de partitions notables spécifiquement conçues pour les ensembles de cuivres ont vu le jour pendant cette période, dans les chefs-d'œuvre orchestraux allemands et autrichiens ultérieurs, on rencontre de merveilleux passages dans lesquels les cuivres seuls se voient confier un rôle très important. La belle polyphonie feutrée pour trois trombones avec laquelle Schumann termine le mouvement lent de sa Symphonie "Le Printemps" est un exemple parfait; et l'un des moments les plus révélateurs du *Ring* de Wagner – les derniers et tendres mots de Brünnhilde à son père Wotan, "Ruhe, ruhe, du Gott!" (Repose-toi, Dieu!) – sont accompagnés par les sonorités merveilleusement nobles du chœur des cors, des tubas Wagner et du tuba contrebasse; ceci inspira à Bruckner

l'extraordinaire élégie pour cor et tuba de l'*Adagio* de sa Septième Symphonie. Le fait est que si aucun des compositeurs mentionnés ci-dessus (à une exception près) ne semble pas avoir songé sérieusement à écrire pour ensemble de cuivres en tant que formation à part entière, en écoutant ces arrangements, ils n'auraient probablement pas été surpris par les résultats, et auraient peut-être même approuvé chaleureusement.

Strauss: Festmusik der Stadt Wien

L'exception est Richard Strauss (1864 – 1949). Il termina sa *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* (Musique festive pour la ville de Vienne) en 1943, une œuvre qu'il composa officiellement en signe de gratitude pour avoir reçu le Prix Beethoven de la ville l'année précédente. Aujourd'hui, la combinaison de la date et du lieu, associée à ce que l'on sait généralement des rapports complexes entre Strauss et le régime nazi, pourrait sonner l'alarme. Cependant, mise à part la qualité de la musique, il y a des raisons d'être positifs quant à cette offrande "festive". Strauss avait commencé ses relations avec les nazis dans des conditions apparemment amicales, acceptant le poste de président de la Reichsmusikkammer (Chambre de la musique du Reich) en 1933. Mais ses rapports

se détériorèrent rapidement, en particulier après son refus de prendre ses distances vis-à-vis du romancier juif Stefan Zweig avec qui il avait collaboré à l'opéra *Die schweigsame Frau* (La Femme silencieuse), créé en 1935. À l'époque de la composition de la *Festmusik* pour Vienne, les choses avaient sérieusement empiré, et Strauss devint de plus en plus inquiet du sort de sa belle-fille juive et de ses deux fils (officiellement juifs). Vienne apparaissait comme un lieu relativement sûr pour Strauss, en partie parce qu'elle était moins sujette aux bombardements aériens des alliés, mais aussi parce que Strauss se sentait protégé de la Gestapo grâce au soutien de son admirateur de longue date Baldur von Schirach, le Gauleiter de Vienne (Gouverneur de district). En échange, on attendait de Strauss qu'il participe aux plans de von Schirach de redonner à Vienne son ancienne gloire culturelle, ce que le compositeur semble avoir pu envisager avec une relative bonne conscience. Pauline, l'épouse de Strauss, parla clairement pour eux deux lorsqu'elle déclara à von Schirach, avec sa franchise caractéristique:

Quand la guerre sera perdue, nous *vous* donnerons refuge à Garmisch, mais pour le reste de ce gang...

Strauss composa un bon nombre de pièces de "circonstance" pour divers

lieux et institutions, parfois sans grand enthousiasme. Mais la *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* est un cas différent. Composée pour le Corps des trompettes de Vienne (constitué de musiciens issus des trois orchestres de la ville), la partition se réjouit de la splendeur sonore de son impressionnante formation instrumentale: dix trompettes, sept trombones, deux tubas et timbales. Les cors sont absents, mais Strauss avait grandi dans la maison d'un corniste exceptionnel, son père Franz Strauss, et il laissa clairement ici sa marque sur son écriture pour cuivres, en particulier sur sa compréhension du potentiel mélodique des instruments. L'introduction possède un caractère martial et entraînant approprié, mais bien vite l'écriture se pare d'un lyrisme chaleureux – cette musique n'aurait pas été déplacée dans l'un des opéras ultérieurs plus tendres de Strauss. On y rencontre également un passage d'une écriture chromatique tendue avant la section finale énergique et virtuose: l'ombre prémonitoire de *Metamorphosen*, l'élégie angoissée composée après la guerre, plane pendant un instant au-dessus de la musique. Si opulente et sûre d'elle que soit la fin, la *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* n'est certainement pas uniquement la pompe et l'attirail d'une célébration civique.

Strauss: Zwei Gesänge, op. 34

Quand Strauss avait l'occasion d'écrire pour une grande formation instrumentale, son imagination prenait souvent son envol: dans ses immenses partitions hautes en couleurs, bien sûr, mais aussi dans des pages telles que *Metamorphosen* (en fait une œuvre de musique de chambre pour vingt-trois cordes solistes) ou dans ses compositions chorales *a cappella* tels que les *Deutsche Motette* (Motets Allemands) pour vingt voix ou les exquis *Zwei Gesänge* (Deux Chants) pour seize voix, composés en 1897 sur des paroles des poètes romantiques allemands Friedrich Schiller et Friedrich Rückert. Alors qu'il avait seulement trente-trois ans à l'époque de la composition des *Zwei Gesänge*, Strauss possédait déjà une longue expérience de chef de chœur, et il savait bien le genre de risques qu'il pouvait prendre – avec un chœur de première classe, bien entendu. Mais même pour les meilleurs ensembles vocaux, la partition présente des passages redoutables, notamment le sol aigu chanté *pianissimo* par les sopranos et les ténors en octaves. Les progressions harmoniques merveilleusement imaginées nécessitent également une grande maîtrise du contrôle des hauteurs, et c'est un domaine dans lequel les musiciens d'un ensemble de cuivres peuvent surpasser tous les

chœurs, à l'exception des meilleurs. Quant à la poésie sonore au parfum nocturne de "Der Abend" (Le Soir), ou l'ardente expression de consolation dans le chagrin de "Hymne", nous avons déjà entendu dans *Festmusik der Stadt Wien* ce que peut faire un ensemble de cuivres vraiment remarquable, alors les résultats obtenus par l'Onyx Brass ne seront sans doute pas une trop grande surprise – Strauss n'aurait probablement pas été surpris non plus. Comme chef d'orchestre de renommée internationale, il était célèbre pour ses bons mots malicieux, tel que, "Ne regardez jamais les cuivres de manière encourageante". Mais en entendant le solo de cor profondément émouvant à la fin de "September", le deuxième des *Vier letzte Lieder* (Quatre Derniers Lieder), c'est comprendre que pour Strauss, les cuivres étaient capables d'exprimer les sentiments du cœur et de l'âme aussi efficacement que n'importe quelle autre section de l'orchestre, les cordes comprises.

Mendelssohn: Die Frauen und die Sanger
Schiller inspira galement le choral  six voix (SATTB) *Die Frauen und die Sanger* (Les Femmes et les Chanteurs) de Felix Mendelssohn (1809 – 1847), compos en 1845. Mendelssohn commença  acqurir une srieuse exprience du chant choral ds

l'ge de neuf ans quand il devint un alto apprci de la clbre Sing-Akademie de Berlin. Grce aux efforts pionniers du chef de cheur Carl Friedrich Zelter, il dcouvrit avec cet ensemble une bonne partie de la musique chorale pr-classique alors rarement excute, en particulier les uvres polyphoniques sophistiques des grands compositeurs baroques. Mais l'criture de *Die Frauen und die Sanger* est essentiellement d'un style homophonique simple, les paroles de Schiller tant distinctement mises au premier plan: le plus souvent la pice sonne davantage  la manire des ensembles pour cors exubrants favoriss par Schubert et Schumann, ayant de fortes associations avec l'excitation communautaire et la git de la chasse, le tout fortement idalis dans la posie romantique allemande.

Rubinstein: Nocturne, op. 71 no 1
Malgr son nom  consonance allemande, le pianiste-compositeur Anton Rubinstein (1829 – 1894) vit le jour en Russie, et allait devenir une figure extrmement influente dans le dveloppement de la vie musicale de son pays natal, en particulier lorsqu'il s'agissait d'inspirer et d'duquer la future gnration de compositeurs russes. Mais il fit ses tudes  Berlin de 1844  1846, et

revint en Allemagne en 1854 pour mettre en valeur ses propres compositions. Rares sont ses grandes pages à s'être imposées au répertoire, mais une miniature telle que ce "Nocturne", le premier de ses Trois Morceaux, op. 71, composés en 1867, devint une musique favorite de salon. Le "Nocturne" est profondément redevable à Chopin, mais son écriture n'est cependant pas d'une intimité et d'une sophistication pianistique si grande qu'elle ne pourrait pas être transcrite de manière satisfaisante pour d'autres instruments. Alors que l'arrangement d'un nocturne de Chopin pour ensemble de cuivres risquerait d'être dénoncé comme une profanation, la ligne mélodique doucement expressive de Rubinstein et son accompagnement calmement limpide se révèlent étonnamment adaptables.

Schumann: Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck, op. 5

Robert Schumann (1810 – 1856) composa les *Impromptus über ein Thema von Clara Wieck* (Impromptus sur un thème de Clara Wieck), op. 5, en 1833, à l'âge de vingt-trois ans. Il représentent les premiers fruits de son amour passionné qui durera pendant toute sa vie adulte pour la jeune et brillante pianiste-compositeur Clara Wieck, qui

deviendra son épouse en 1840 après une lutte longue et amère contre son père farouchement protecteur. À ce stade de sa carrière, entre vingt et trente ans, Schumann composa presque exclusivement pour le piano, et bien que sa musique soit toujours admirablement conçue pour l'instrument, ses ambitions orchestrales sont parfois évidentes. Avec une allégresse "latérale" typique, Schumann organise cette suite d'"impromptus" comme une série de variations. Il corrigea la suite en 1850, mais c'est la version originale plus longue qui a été arrangée pour le présent enregistrement.

Brahms: Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal, op. 41 no 1

La musique chorale *a cappella* tient une place importante dans la production de Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897). "Ich schwing' mein Horn ins Jammertal" (Je joue du cor dans la vallée des larmes) est le premier des *Fünf Lieder* (Cinq Lieder) composés en 1861 – 1862 pour chœur d'hommes à quatre voix. Les paroles du poème de Ludwig Uhland semblent avoir touché un écho très personnel chez Brahms. Il avait joué du cor dans sa jeunesse, et son écriture pour cor solo est souvent l'un des aspects particulièrement marquants de ses œuvres pour orchestre, sans

parler du merveilleux Trio pour violon, cor et piano, op. 40, composé trois ans plus tard. Les quatre autres pièces des *Fünf Lieder* possèdent un caractère gaillard et militaire qui ne présente pas Brahms dans sa meilleure veine lyrique, mais ce premier lied, dans le style d'un hymne simple et éloquent, le montre en train d'exploiter cette atmosphère de mélancolie presque somptueuse qui résonne à travers tant de ses pages les plus personnelles.

Franz: Frühlingsblick, op. 52 no 6

En plus d'être compositeur prolifique de lieder et d'œuvres chorales, professeur et chef de chœur, Robert Franz (1815 – 1892), né à Halle, connut un certain succès comme arrangeur de partitions d'autres compositeurs, notamment Schubert et Mozart. On peut

donc imaginer qu'il serait à tout le moins intéressé d'entendre ce qu'un ensemble de cuivres de très haut niveau pourrait faire de son "Frühlingsblick" (Première Image du printemps). Les *Sechs Gesänge* (Six Chants), op. 52 (1884), est le dernier recueil de lieder que Franz publia, et le charmant "Frühlingsblick", sur un poème de Nikolaus Lenau, est le sixième. Des troubles nerveux et la surdité avaient de plus en plus tourmenté ses dernières années, mais à près de soixante-dix ans, Franz était encore clairement capable de s'identifier aux espoirs de la jeune saison, comme en témoigne ce lied de manière touchante.

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Acknowledgements

Onyx Brass would like to thank the incredible generosity of the following people without whom this recording would not have been possible (in alphabetical order):

Anonymous

Simon Blandford

Celia Dunstone

Alex Gordon Shute

Julia Head

Recording producer Jonathan Cooper

Sound engineer Jonathan Cooper

Assistant engineer Patrick Friend

Editor Patrick Friend

A & R administrator Sue Shortridge

Recording venue Church of S. Augustine, Kilburn, London; 3 and 4 October 2020

Front cover 'People playing trumpet', photograph © David De Lossy / Getty Images

Back cover Photograph of Onyx Brass by Thomas Bowles

Design and typesetting Cap & Anchor Design Co. (www.capandanchor.com)

Booklet editor Finn S. Gundersen

Publishers Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd (*Festmusik der Stadt Wien*), Onyx Brass

Publishing (all other works)

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Chandos Records Ltd, Colchester, Essex CO2 8HX, England

Country of origin UK



John Wilson conducting the combined musicians in Strauss's
'Festmusik der Stadt Wien'

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FESTMUSIK: A LEGACY

PREMIERE RECORDINGS (EXCEPT TRACK 1)

- | | | |
|-------|---|----------|
| | RICHARD STRAUSS (1864 - 1949) | |
| 1 | FESTMUSIK DER STADT WIEN, TRV 286 (1942 - 43)*
(FESTIVE MUSIC FOR THE CITY OF VIENNA) | 10:48 |
| | ROBERT SCHUMANN (1810 - 1856) | |
| 2-13 | IMPROMPTUS ÜBER EIN THEMA VON CLARA WIECK, OP. 5 (1833)
(IMPROMPTUS ON A THEME BY CLARA WIECK)
IN C MAJOR • IN C-DUR • EN UT MAJEUR | 19:44 |
| | JOHANNES BRAHMS (1833 - 1897) | |
| 14 | ICH SCHWING' MEIN HORN INS JAMMERTAL, OP. 41 NO. 1 (1861 - 62)
(I BLOW MY HORN IN THE VALE OF SORROW)
IN B FLAT MAJOR • IN B-DUR • EN SI BÉMOL MAJEUR | 2:22 |
| | FELIX MENDELSSOHN (1809 - 1847) | |
| 15 | DIE FRAUEN UND DIE SÄNGER (1845)
(THE WOMEN AND THE SINGERS)
IN B FLAT MAJOR • IN B-DUR • EN SI BÉMOL MAJEUR
PAUL LAMBERT BASS TROMBONE | 3:30 |
| | ANTON GRIGOR'YEVICH RUBINSTEIN (1829 - 1894) | |
| 16 | NOCTURNE, OP. 71 NO. 1 (1867)
IN A FLAT MAJOR • IN AS-DUR • EN LA BÉMOL MAJEUR | 5:50 |
| | ROBERT FRANZ (1815 - 1892) | |
| 17 | FRÜHLINGSBLICK, OP. 52 NO. 6 (1884)
(FIRST GLIMPSE OF SPRING) | 2:27 |
| | RICHARD STRAUSS | |
| 18-19 | ZWEI GESÄNGE, OP. 34, TRV 182 (1897)*
(TWO SONGS) | 22:00 |
| | | TT 67:25 |

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