Title
An Orchestral Transcription of Johannes Brahms's Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108 with an Analysis of Performance Considerations

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An Orchestral Transcription of Johannes Brahms’s
Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108
with an Analysis of Performance Considerations

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

by

John Murray Carter

2012
ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

An Orchestral Transcription of Johannes Brahms’s
Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108
with an Analysis of Performance Considerations

by

John Murray Carter
Doctor of Musical Arts
University of California, Los Angeles, 2012
Professor Neal Stulberg, Chair

The objective of this dissertation is to examine the orchestration methods of Johannes Brahms, apply these methods to an orchestral transcription of his Sonata for Violin and Piano No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108, and provide a conductor’s analysis of the transcription. Chapter 1 gives a brief historical background, and discusses reasons for and methods of the project. Chapter 2 examines general aspects of Brahms’s orchestral style. Chapter 3 addresses the transcription process and its application to the Third Violin Sonata. Chapter 4 explores areas in which a thorough understanding of a work’s compositional and orchestral structure informs performance practice. Chapter 5 discusses differences in chamber and orchestral music observed during the project. The full score of the transcription is included at the end.
The dissertation of John Murray Carter is approved.

Mark Carlson

Gary Gray

Elizabeth Upton

Neal Stulberg, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012
Dedicated to my wife Bonnie, who never stopped believing in me.
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PART I
PREFACE

In the spring of 1999, shortly after I had completed an orchestration project as an undergraduate music major at La Sierra University, I heard a performance of Brahms's Sonata for Violin No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108 on the radio. I was not familiar with this piece, and was only passively listening. Then, about a minute into the work—at measure 24 of the first movement—the music arrived at the explosive *forte* passage. I was immediately struck by the orchestral qualities implied by the music, and knew then that I had found my next project. At the time I had aspirations of composing a symphony, but was frustrated by my lack of experience and training. The idea of orchestrating a chamber work by a great composer, thereby attempting to unlock and decode the inner workings of the piece, was a very appealing way to better understand how large-scale forms are structured and orchestrated.

Soon after, I began work on the orchestral transcription, tackling the most demonstrably orchestral passages first. I decided early on to adhere as closely as possible to Brahms’s orchestrational style. While this was initially successful, I began to encounter increasingly difficult passages with less apparent transcription solutions. After completing about a third of the piece, I abandoned the project.

A few years later, I conducted Brahms’s Symphony No. 1 for my Master’s recital at UCLA. While studying the score, I came across a number of passages that were uncannily reminiscent of the Third Violin Sonata. I began to develop an understanding of how Brahms worked elements of chamber-like intimacy into his orchestral works, and symphonic qualities into his chamber works. This understanding informed my interpretation, and I also realized that
the deeper understanding of a composer’s style that results from orchestrating a score is a study tool not employed by every conductor.

After the success of this performance, I was inspired to take another look at the orchestral transcription, this time as a project for my DMA dissertation. And so this project began. I first completed the orchestral transcription, then performed the work on my DMA recital December 8, 2005 with UCLA Philharmonia. The project culminates in this dissertation, wherein I explore the context and three main goals of this project: 1) to explain my rationale for remaining as close as possible to Brahms’s orchestrational style, 2) to examine his orchestrational style in detail, and 3) to determine what a thorough study of his orchestrational style might reveal about the performance practice of his chamber and orchestral music in general.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“This D Minor sonata [is] of almost symphonic scope—a work clearly intended for the open spaces of the concert hall and not the intimacy of the music room.”

~ Donald Manildi

Orchestrating Brahms

Adhering to Brahms’s orchestrational style

The orchestration of another composer’s work has traditionally followed one of two paths: adhering to the style and Affekt of the original composer, or more freely adapting the original composition to the orchestrator’s own style. Numerous composers and conductors have orchestrated Brahms’s shorter works, most notably his Hungarian Dances. Several of these orchestrations have gained wide acceptance in concert halls today. However, only two major composers—Arnold Schoenberg and Luciano Berio—have orchestrated one of Brahms’s multi-movement chamber music sonatas. Schoenberg orchestrated Brahms’s Piano Quartet No. 1 in G Minor, op. 25, and Berio orchestrated the Sonata for Clarinet and Piano No. 1 in F Minor, op. 120. In both cases, the composer freely added modern orchestration techniques either not available or of little interest to Brahms, creating works that blend the original compositions with the distinct orchestrational preferences of the transcribers.

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2 This discussion is limited to major composers. Nicolas Walvogel, conductor of the Fresno State University Symphony, orchestrated Brahms’s F-Minor Piano Quintet. Details of the orchestration, along with audio and score samples, are available on his website. Nicolas Waldvogel, “For Clara Schumann: Orchestration of Brahms’s Piano Quintet in F Minor, op. 34,” accessed June 5, 2012, http://www.brahmsquintet.com.
Unlike those of Schoenberg and Berio, the transcription presented in this dissertation was orchestrated in a manner to match as closely as possible techniques Brahms himself used in his own orchestral works, with a purposeful limiting of methods outside those that Brahms would have considered. Although it is impossible to create a work exactly as Brahms might have, there are nevertheless significant reasons to remain as faithful to Brahms’s style as possible.

More than any other major composer of his time, Brahms sought to consciously limit his orchestral techniques to those which would serve the structural elements of his music, especially with regard to motivic development. This conservative approach would earn him a great deal of criticism from his contemporaries, but he would staunchly hold fast to this practice throughout his career. To break from this aesthetic and create a modern, more colorful orchestration seems inappropriate when dealing with a composer with such disdain for extra-musical flourishes.

A number of musicologists and conductors have written thoroughly about Brahms’s orchestral restraint. Here is a sampling of their observations:

[Brahms’s] orchestration relates color to structure, to embody and articulate a dramatic but intricately developing musical argument with the directness and clarity . . . of the smaller, ‘purer’ ensembles of his chamber and instrumental works.

[Brahms’s] orchestral thinking was concerned more with the interaction among the instruments and choirs of the orchestra than with the celebration of tone color for its own sake.

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3 Paul Lang writes: “[Brahms] knew the other camp well, and he also knew and greatly admired the piquant orchestra of Bizet, but he could not be deflected from his own way.” Paul Henry Lang, *The Symphony, 1800–1900: A Norton Music Anthology* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), xxi.


[Brahms] was more interested in musical construction and line than in color, and his profound distrust and dislike of the use of color for mere display led him to take a rather severe attitude towards the art of orchestration.⁶

Schoenberg’s orchestration of Brahms’s G-Minor Piano Quartet, though structurally faithful, departs dramatically from Brahms’s orchestral restraint. This is ironic, considering that Schoenberg wrote he wanted “‘to remain strictly in the style of Brahms and not go any farther than he himself would have gone if he lived today.’”⁷ He also dubbed the piece “‘Brahms’s Fifth Symphony.’”⁸

But Schoenberg’s score includes instruments Brahms never used, including bass clarinet, English horn, snare drum and xylophone.⁹ The opening phrase of the first movement is played by clarinet in a very high register (a range that Brahms never wrote in), accompanied by a bass clarinet. The clarinets open the ‘symphony’ with a three-octave solo, an orchestration Brahms never used.

Schoenberg also scored his work for chromatic horns and trumpets, instruments Brahms resisted writing for throughout his career. Brahms usually reserves trumpets and timpani for reinforcing cadences, whereas Schoenberg gives the trumpets large sections of thematic material, including chromatic passagework. Most incongruous are the brass trills and flutter-tongue

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⁸ Ibid, 14.

playing in the fourth movement that epitomize the style of “fireworks composing”\textsuperscript{10} that Brahms purposefully avoided in his own works. Finally, Brahms rarely wrote for percussion, and never for xylophone. Schoenberg’s virtuosic use of xylophone in the fourth movement creates a jarring, almost comical sound that never would have made its way into any of Brahms’s orchestral works.

The end result is a transcription that sounds like neither Brahms nor Schoenberg, but rather an awkward amalgam of composer and orchestrator; a hybridization of styles that plays on the strengths of neither composer.\textsuperscript{11} Harrison writes: “had Brahms explored the possibilities of a richer type of orchestration, such as is found in all Wagner’s works, there is little doubt but that the worth of the music, \textit{qua} music, would have suffered in the process.”\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the orchestrational liberties taken by Schoenberg in his transcription of op. 25, the fact that he did orchestrate the work is testament to the orchestral nature of Brahms’s chamber music forms. Walter Frisch, in his book \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, writes:

In the act of scoring the piano quartet, Schoenberg acknowledges an intimate relation in Brahms between chamber and symphonic music. His orchestration reveals, and in some cases creates, the motivically significant inner parts and the rich textures that are latent in Brahms’s piano quartet and are characteristic of Brahms’s real symphonies.\textsuperscript{13}

Frisch notes that Brahms’s chamber music is often highly suggestive of orchestral timbres, and that the richness of texture, intensity of thematic working, and large scale approach to form that


\textsuperscript{12} Julius Harrison, \textit{Brahms and His Four Symphonies} (London: Chapman & Hall, 1939), 78.

exist in Brahms’s chamber sonatas are well suited to orchestral treatment.\textsuperscript{14} In theory, then, a transcription that remains true to Brahms’s style could take full advantage of the close relationship between chamber and orchestral genres already inherent in Brahms’s works.

**Brahms’s chamber music: “veiled symphonies”?**

This close relationship was noted by Brahms’s contemporaries and can be seen in many of his chamber pieces. Robert Schumann recognized this when he wrote in *Neue Bahnen* that the twenty-year-old Brahms had played for him “‘sonatas, or rather veiled symphonies.’”\textsuperscript{15} Schumann also famously declared Brahms to be the next great symphonist, which—considering Brahms had yet to compose anything for orchestra—testifies to the strength of orchestral thinking contained within these early sonatas. Indeed, an examination of the opening bars of Brahms’s Piano Sonata No. 1 reveals a highly contrapuntal layering of the opening motive, each one seemingly yearning for its own unique timbre:

**Example 1-1.** Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 1, first movement, mm. 17–22\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{center}
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\end{center}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 29.

\textsuperscript{15} MacDonald, “Veiled Symphonies” in Musgrave, *Cambridge Companion*, 156.

\textsuperscript{16} All musical scores by Brahms are taken from Johannes Brahms, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hans Gál, 26 vols. (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27) unless otherwise noted.
Clara Schumann likewise noted Brahms’s early chamber works to be symphonic in scope. On July 22, 1864, Clara wrote the following in a letter to Brahms about his F-Minor Piano Quintet:

The work is splendid, but it cannot be called a sonata. Rather it is a work so full of ideas that it requires an orchestra for its interpretation. These ideas are for the most part lost on the piano. The first time I tried the work I had a feeling that it was an arrangement. So please remodel it once more!17

Another early work of Brahms, his Serenade No. 1, op. 11, began as an unpublished octet in the fall of 1857. But it contained sufficient orchestral material that he was able to expand it a few months later into a work for small orchestra. Still not content, he further reworked the piece for full orchestra in late 1859.18 Ulrich Mahlert writes in the preface to Breitkopf & Härtel’s study score of Serenade No. 1:

While working on the revision, Brahms had come to the conclusion that the piece, originally conceived in a more intimate, chamber style, tended to take on an increasingly symphonic scope.”19

Brahms had even considered turning this into his first symphony, giving it the title “Symphony = Serenade,” but in the end he crossed out the word “Symphony” from the title.20

Brahms’s Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 15 also began as a chamber work. Brahms started a draft for two pianos in early 1854. Soon after, he wrote to Joseph Joachim that “‘two pianos just aren’t really sufficient for me.’”21 Richard Wilson, in “Essays on Piano Concertos in D Minor

17 Waldvogel, par. 1.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., par. 2.
and B-flat Major” from *The Compleat Brahms*, describes what happened to the composition next:

By the summer of that year, he had recast it as a symphony. Three movements are known to have been drafted. . . . [The second movement] became the funeral march of *Ein deutsches Requiem*. The third was destroyed by the composer. Brahms continued to rework the first movement and added two new ones: an Adagio and a Rondo Finale.²²

A similar process occurred with the aforementioned F-Minor Piano Quintet. This composition initially began as a string quintet. Brahms then rewrote it for two pianos, destroying the quartet version. Finally, he settled on a hybrid of piano and strings in the form of the published version for piano quintet.²³

This reworking of material in his early output was partially the result of Brahms’s trepidation toward composing his first symphony.²⁴ Nevertheless, it is clear that Brahms saw in his own chamber music elements of orchestral material.

### The Third Violin Sonata

**Historical background**

Brahms composed his Third Violin Sonata relatively late in his career, when he was already well established as a masterful composer of both chamber and orchestral forms. Between 1886 and 1888, Brahms spent his summers at the Swiss resort of Hofstetten near Thun, where he composed several works that feature solo violin. During the first summer Brahms composed his Second Violin Sonata in A Major and began sketching a draft of the Third in D Minor. The next

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²³ Waldvogel, par. 2.

²⁴ For a more detailed analysis of Brahms’s orchestral trepidation, see Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*. 
summer he completed his Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, which would become his last composition for orchestra.\textsuperscript{25} It was during his final summer in Thun (1888) that Brahms completed the Third Violin Sonata.

The first performance of the Third Violin Sonata took place on February 13, 1889 in Vienna, with Brahms himself at the piano and Joseph Joachim on violin. It was published that spring, and dedicated to “his friend Hans von Bülow.\textsuperscript{26} The dedication was most likely the result of the conductor’s commitment to giving Brahms’s compositions properly executed performances.\textsuperscript{27}

Malcolm MacDonald surmises in his biography about Brahms that the Third Violin Sonata may have been conceived as a contrasting companion to the Second Violin Sonata, since it is entirely different from that work in character and structure.\textsuperscript{28} Considering that the completion of the Second Violin Sonata and the drafting of the Third occurred over the same summer, this is quite plausible.

Despite his superior craft as a composer, Brahms still had trepidations about the critical reception of his works. In a November 2, 1888 letter to Clara Schumann, he wrote:

Forgive me for not sending you the sonata first. But you won’t believe my main reason!\? I never consider a new piece capable of appealing to someone. So also this time. . . . If you do not like the sonata when you play it through, don’t bother trying it with Joachim, but send it back to me.\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{25} Florence May, \textit{The Life of Johannes Brahms}, vol. 2 (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 230.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 238.
\textsuperscript{28} Malcolm MacDonald, \textit{Brahms} (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 336.
\end{flushright}
Unique qualities

Unusual elements in the Third Violin Sonata include a four-movement layout instead of the traditional three, the lack of any introductory material before the opening theme of the first movement, and a particularly long pedal drone that persists through the entirety of the first movement development. Kelly Dean Hansen, a musicologist at the University of Colorado, describes additional elements of this sonata that set it apart from his other works:

A work of extreme concision and drama, it contrasts starkly with the other two sonatas. The structures are so lean and direct that, despite the “extra” movement, the sonata is no longer than the others. Although in many ways recalling the passionate exuberance of some of Brahms’s youthful works, its economy of means and direct argument create a work that is a fine example of the latest style. The structure is somewhat similar to that of the third piano trio, Op. 101, which also has brief middle movements, a dramatic, tightly constructed first movement, and an intense scherzo-like finale.\textsuperscript{30}

Choice of symphonic over concerto form

Because this is a violin sonata, it might at first seem natural to orchestrate it as a concerto for violin and orchestra. However, the more suitable genre for this orchestration is a purely symphonic work. To begin with, the sonata contains no cadenzas in any of the movements, an element of music that is expected of concertos. It also lacks overtly virtuosic material, and instead focuses on structural content more akin to symphonic writing.\textsuperscript{31}

Additionally, in all three of his sonatas for violin and piano Brahms distributes the musical material equally between the two instruments. Many phrases played by one are then


\textsuperscript{31} For further comparisons of Brahms’s violin sonatas and concertos, see I-chun Hsieh, “Performance of the Violin Concerto and Sonatas of Johannes Brahms With an Analysis of Joseph Joachim’s Influence on His Violin Concerto” (DMA diss., University of Maryland, 1997).
repeated by the other, so that an egalitarian dialogue is established.\footnote{32 “Throughout all three [violin] sonatas Brahms holds the instrumental relationship in superb balance.” Manildi, par. 1.} This exchange of material is well-suited for a symphonic treatment, where the frequent passing of phrases between violin and piano can instead be transcribed as passing between the string and wind families, or between various mixes of strings and winds.

Brahms rarely sticks with one instrument or group of instruments for any given melody, and the Third Violin Sonata is no exception. Julius Harrison notes in his book Brahms and His Four Symphonies that “Brahms was far too great a craftsman to allow one type of tone to dominate his Symphony.”\footnote{33 Harrison, 81.} Nowhere is this more apparent than in the opening fortissimo of the first movement. Here is the original version for piano and violin:

**Example 1-2. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 24–29**

At the first forte in the above example, the piano presents the melody in octaves. Two measures later the melody is passed off to the violin, whose double and triple stops give equal weight to the motive just heard in the piano. It was hearing this passage—with its suggestions of orchestral
grandeur, equal treatment of the instruments, frequent exchange of melodic material, and the rich contrapuntal material—that first inspired this project.

**Suitability for an orchestral transcription**

Several aspects of Brahms’s Third Violin Sonata make it suitable for orchestration. As noted above, it is the only one of his three violin sonatas composed in four movements—a format that more closely resembles the formal structure of a symphony. It is also more turbulent in character than the previous two sonatas, providing an emotional landscape that could be more powerfully conveyed with the use of full orchestra. As part of the series *Building a Classical Library*, Andrew Clements writes about the three violin sonatas, and notes of the Third in D that “it is much more a work designed for public consumption than the intimacies of the works in G and A.”

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CHAPTER 2: BRAHMS’S ORCHESTRATIONAL STYLE

“[Brahms was] a musician fully in control of his orchestral conception.”

~ Raymond Knapp

An understanding of Brahms’s own orchestrational preferences is necessary before undertaking a transcription that adheres to his own style. This chapter explores several aspects of his style, organized into two broad categories: instrumentation and texture.

Instrumentation Considerations

Orchestra size and composition

Throughout his career, Brahms composed orchestral works that were scored for a fairly standard-sized orchestra of the early Romantic era: pairs of woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones (except in his concertos, the Haydn Variations, and the early orchestral serenades as listed in the table below), timpani, and strings. Though additional instruments were occasionally used, they were not part of Brahms’s standard instrumentation. To determine the most appropriate instrumentation choices for this orchestral transcription, the following table was created to summarize Brahms’s use of “non-standard” instruments. The table lists Brahms’s common orchestral works, along with a grid of the additional instruments included in each piece. These instruments are: piccolo, contrabassoon, a third trumpet, three trombones, tuba, non-timpani percussion, and harp.

---

### Table 2-1. Common Brahms orchestral works with non-standard instrumentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composition Title, by Opus</th>
<th>Picc.</th>
<th>C.Bsn.</th>
<th>Tpt. 3</th>
<th>3 Trb.</th>
<th>Tuba</th>
<th>Perc.</th>
<th>Harp</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Op. 11, Serenade No. 1 (1857)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 15, Piano Concerto No. 1 (1859)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 16, Serenade No. 2 (1859)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 50, <em>Rinaldo</em> (1869)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opp. 52 &amp; 65, <em>Liebeslieder Waltzes</em> (1870)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 54, <em>Schicksalslied</em> (1871)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 56, <em>Variations on a Theme by Haydn</em> (1873)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 68, Symphony No. 1 (1876)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op. 73, Symphony No. 2 (1877)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 77, Violin Concerto (1878)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op. 80, <em>Academic Festival Overture</em> (1880)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 81, <em>Tragic Overture</em> (1880)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 82, <em>Nänie</em> (1881)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 83, Piano Concerto No. 2 (1881)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 90, Symphony No. 3 (1883)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 98, Symphony No. 4 (1885)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Op. 102, Double Concerto (1887)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WwO 1, <em>Hungarian Dances</em> Nos. 1, 3, 10 (1874)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table highlights certain consistencies in Brahms’s auxiliary instrument choices. He frequently included either the contrabassoon or tuba, but rarely both.\(^{37}\)

\(^{37}\) The exceptions are his *Academic Festival Overture* and *Ein deutsches Requiem*. However, Donald McCorkle believes Brahms thought the contrabassoon and tuba could be used interchangeably due to a footnote Brahms added to his autographed score of the *Haydn Variations*: “‘the contrabassoon can be replaced if necessary by a tuba (however only in the theme and in the finale), utilizing the accompanying [separate] part.’” McCorkle also notes that the contrabassoon underwent a large transformation in Brahms’s lifetime, which may have contributed to Brahms considering either instrument acceptable. Donald M. McCorkle, *Variations on a Theme of Haydn for Orchestra, Op. 56A and for Two Pianos, Op. 56B* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 59.
are absent in his Serenade No. 1 and concertos, but present in all other orchestral works. Piccolo was occasionally used; the English horn never. Percussion instruments (other than timpani) were almost never used. Of his symphonies, only the third movement of the Third Symphony uses triangle; the others use only timpani. His concertos follow his standard orchestra instrumentation, using no auxiliary instruments. A few additional noteworthy points: harp is only used in *Ein deutsches Requiem*; the *Academic Festival Overture* is the only composition with three trumpets; *Ein deutsches Requiem* and Symphony No. 4 are the only compositions that use both contrabassoon and tuba; and a section of percussion instruments is employed only twice.

Because the Third Violin Sonata follows a formal structure similar to his symphonies, this orchestral transcription was scored for a similar instrumentation: woodwinds in pairs, contrabassoon, fours horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, and strings. Since non-timpani percussion and third trumpet were avoided in all symphonies (with the exception of one movement of one symphony which uses triangle), they were therefore avoided in this orchestral transcription. Piccolo was unnecessary and thus also omitted.

**Scoring for natural horns**

Brahms, with his well known tendency to look backwards for musical inspiration, continued to write exclusively for natural horns even though valved horns came into wide use during his lifetime. The valved horn was invented in 1814 and, by the time Brahms was composing his masterworks, the natural horn had largely fallen out of use.\(^\text{38}\) Even when Brahms knew that his works would be performed on valved instruments, he continued to write for the

instrument in a way that could be playable on the natural horn.\textsuperscript{39} This continued preference for natural horns has implications for any orchestral transcription which attempts to adhere to Brahms’s style.

In Classical-era orchestras, the first two horns were scored for in the key of the movement, and were limited to notes of the harmonic series. A few additional notes were achievable through the use of hand stopping, though this had a noticeable effect on volume and tone.\textsuperscript{40} But whenever the key area within the movement changed, scoring for trumpets and horns became severely limited, since only notes common to both key areas could be used. This is one reason that Classical-era trumpets and horns were used predominantly for reinforcing cadences along with the timpani, and why their use is often absent or restricted in secondary themes and development sections.

To address this problem, composers would often score for an additional pair of horns in a different key than the tonic. This allowed the use of horns in more remote keys, where the third and fourth horn would predominate. Thus, for several decades of orchestral writing, the four horns of the orchestra were not written for as a whole, but rather as two pairs of horns with separate functions.

Brahms also frequently treats the horns more like woodwind instruments than brass. In his article “Conducting Brahms,” conductor Roger Norrington observes:

Brahms’s intimate knowledge enables him to score very effectively for the horn and find the best parts of the range. He treats it like an extension of the woodwind instruments,

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Brahms actually preferred these changes in tone, and is one of the primary reasons he used the natural instrument over valves. Joshua Garrett, in chapter 3 of his dissertation on Brahms’s Horn Trio, provides an excellent look into Brahms’s preference for the natural horn sound. Joshua Garrett, “Brahms’s Horn Trio: Background and Analysis for Performers” (DMA diss., The Juilliard School, 1998), accessed January 4, 2010, http://www.osmun.com/reference/brahms/Title_Page.html.
using it to blend with them in contrapuntal writing and to provide a bridge between purely solo and ‘harmonic’ tutti writing. The heavy brass chorus in Bruckner or Wagner (or even Schumann in the fourth movement of the *Rhenish* Symphony) is rare in Brahms. He wanted a particular sonority and used a full range of registers in his writing.\(^{41}\)

The following two passages from Brahms’s Symphony No. 1 demonstrate these points:

**EXAMPLE 2-1. Brahms, Symphony No. 1, fourth movement, mm. 86–95**

In the passage above, the first two horns (as well as the two trumpets) are written in C major, the tonic key of the movement. The third and fourth horns are in the remote key of E. This allows the first two horns to double the melody in the winds for the first eight measures. In the final two

---

measures they switch to doubling the trumpets, joining them in their fanfare-like passage. The third and fourth horns, meanwhile, are relegated to filling out less prominent passagework, entering and exiting the score when the harmony lines up with notes available to horns in E.

In the first movement of this symphony, the third and fourth horns are keyed to E-flat major—the same key used in the movement’s second theme. Because the third and fourth horns are now in the tonic of this theme, the solo in this passage is performed by the third instead of the first horn. After the solo, it is the third and fourth horns that finish off the phrase while the first two horns rest. Note also that the third horn is treated here as part of the woodwind section:

Example 2-2. Brahms, Symphony No. 1, first movement, mm. 149–60

Brahms frequently wrote passages for his tonic-keyed horns that alternated between wind and brass material such as that illustrated in Ex. 2-1, providing timbral continuity between the two instrument families.
This pairing of two horns in two key areas contributed to the style of the Classical symphony and its sound, and had a strong impact on scoring decisions within the other instrumental families, most notably in the woodwinds. Without valveless horn restrictions in place, composers and orchestrators became free to write for these instruments in whatever way suited the stylistic interests of the composer or orchestrator. Schoenberg and Berio both orchestrated Brahms utilizing the full chromatic range of the modern valved horn. This significant difference makes it apparent that the resulting orchestration is an amalgam of the underlying music by Brahms and the style of the orchestrator. To avoid an orchestral transcription which brings attention to the preferences of the orchestrator in terms of horn writing, it is imperative that the orchestrator restrict the pitches of the horns to those of the natural instrument, scored in two pairs and in two keys.

To determine the most appropriate keys for the horns, a close examination of those used by Brahms was helpful. The following table lists Brahms’s orchestral works that are in the same key as the Third Violin Sonata, with the key area of the first and second themes in each movement, and the key area of the two pairs of natural horns and trumpets, and pitches of the timpani. At the bottom of the table, the Third Violin Sonata is listed along with the key areas that were assigned to each movement for this project:
TABLE 2-2. List of key areas in the Third Violin Sonata and related orchestral works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSITION</th>
<th>KEY AREA</th>
<th>INSTRUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PRIMARY THEME</td>
<td>SECONDARY THEME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ein deutsches Requiem,</em> movt. III</td>
<td>D Minor</td>
<td>B♭ Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 2, movt. I</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>F♯ Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symphony No. 2, movt. IV</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 1, movt. I</td>
<td>D Minor</td>
<td>B♭ Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 1, movt. II</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>F♯ Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 1, movt. III</td>
<td>D Minor</td>
<td>F Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piano Concerto No. 2, movt. II</td>
<td>D Minor</td>
<td>D Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin Concerto, movt. I</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violin Concerto, movt. III</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>A Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Double Concerto, movt. II</td>
<td>D Major</td>
<td>F Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tragic Overture</em></td>
<td>D Minor</td>
<td>A♭ Major, F Major</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Violin Sonata No. 3 (Orchestral Transcription):

| Movt. I     | D Minor | F Major, F♯ Minor | D | F | D | D, A, G |
| Movt. II    | D Major | A Major          | D | E | D | D, A   |
| Movt. III   | F♯ Minor, A Major | F Major | F | D | F | F, C, E |
| Movt. IV    | D Minor | C Major          | D | F | D | D, A, F |
Orchestration Considerations

Textural blending among instrument families

When orchestrating a contrapuntal passage, one of the major considerations is whether to score the counterpoint in a way that blends the various instrument families or to retain the colors of individual instruments. For example, if a melody and countermelody are presented in a loud tutti passage, one must decide whether to give the melody to strings and countermelody to winds, or to use a bit of both instrument families for each line. The latter case will produce a more homogeneous textural blend, whereas in the former, the sound of strings and winds will be heard distinct from each other.

A good example of homogeneous blend comes from the overture to Richard Wagner’s Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg:

In the third measure of the above example, the orchestra begins a highly contrapuntal passage with three distinct melodies. Wagner scored the three melodies for a mix of instruments from each family. The first melody is given to the first violins, cellos, first clarinet and first horn. The second melody is played by the double basses, bassoons, and tuba. Finally, the ascending staccato melody is played by the second violins, violas, flutes, oboes, second clarinet, second, third and fourth horns and trumpets. Because each melody contains instruments from each family, the overall acoustical effect is that of a blended *tutti*, de-emphasizing individual colors in favor of a blended whole.

Brahms generally avoided this type of orchestration. When he did blend groups, he often kept the melody distinct by placing it in octaves within the same family. The conductor Felix Weingartner, in his article “Brahms, a Master of Instrumentation,” observes that:

> In general [Brahms] scorns the so-called “mixed colors” and treats the instruments throughout individually. He doubles them, as a rule, only when he sets whole groups strongly against each other. Then their effect has the appropriate power, and he attains . . . a fullness of tone that others cannot gain with all their heaping up of mass effects.44

Harrison also notes that:

> By avoiding the rich sonority that characterized the Wagner school, Brahms was able to throw into bold relief not only each section of the orchestra but also each individual instrument. In this respect he relied on Beethoven’s method of giving to each instrument a definite message in the music.45

One notable exception to this is in Brahms’s treatment of the violas, which often perform material otherwise given to the woodwinds or horns. Examples of this abound in his orchestral works, but the most striking passage comes from the opening measures of his Symphony No. 1:

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44 Weingartner, 8.
45 Harrison, 79.
EXAMPLE 2-4. Brahms, Symphony No. 1, first movement, mm. 1–7

The above passage demonstrates both the pitting of families against each other in octaves and the use of violas to double parts in the woodwinds and horns. Both of these techniques are
frequently used by Brahms, and as such appear often in this orchestral transcription. The following example comes from the third movement. Here, the violins and woodwinds perform distinct musical ideas, except for the violas who join the woodwinds:

EXAMPLE 2-5. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 for Orchestra, third movement, mm. 75–84
Low *divisi* in strings

Brahms is well known for his part-writing in relatively low registers. This is frequently cited as the source of the perceived muddiness that can occur in his orchestral works. Brahms sometimes couples this with *divisi* writing in the strings to create deep, rich sonorities in his slow movements. A clear example of this occurs in the second movement of his Fourth Symphony:

**EXAMPLE 2-6.** Brahms, Symphony No. 4, second movement, mm. 87–93

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The slow movement of the Third Violin Sonata contains a similar passage in the piano part, and was therefore orchestrated similarly, particularly in mm. 13–16:

**EXAMPLE 2-7.** Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 for Orchestra, second movement, mm. 10–18

**Scoring of chords at movement endings**

Brahms had a preference for composing quiet endings to the movements of his symphonies. His four symphonies contain sixteen movements, and twelve of them end either
piano or pianissimo. Despite the soft nature of these endings, Brahms scored all twelve of them for full orchestra—including trumpets and timpani in most of them.

Brahms also preferred quiet endings in his Third Violin Sonata, giving three of the four movements this treatment. The natural inclination is to score these for strings alone, but because of Brahms’s predilection for tutti endings, all four movements of the orchestral transcription likewise end with full orchestra. Furthermore, the orchestration of these chords closely paralleled those from Brahms’s symphonies that match the mood and key.
CHAPTER 3: THE TRANSCRIPTION PROCESS

“Brahms’s orchestral scores . . . reflect his development of a genuine and original orchestral style.”

~ Malcolm MacDonald

An understanding of Brahms’s orchestrational style is necessary background for a project such as this, but undertaking the transcription itself presented a host of challenges unique to the Third Violin Sonata. These include challenges related to certain passages idiomatic to the piano, the appropriate handling of broken chords, and difficulties inherent in adhering to Brahms’s own transcription style.

Available resources for the study of Brahms’ orchestrational craft

The best resource for the study of a composer’s orchestrational craft is any set of works that the composer wrote for piano and subsequently orchestrated. These orchestrations offer direct insights into the techniques the composer used in order to adapt and expand the musical material for larger ensemble. Brahms orchestrated three sets of his piano works:

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47 MacDonald, “Veiled Symphonies” in Musgrave, Cambridge Companion, 156.

48 The materials presented here discuss published compositions only. For more in-depth research using primary source material, the reader is encouraged to visit The American Brahms Society Archive and Research Center, which is located at the University of Washington (Seattle) and “houses on microfilm and in photographic copy many of the extant primary musical and documentary sources on Brahms, especially early editions, as well as a nearly complete collection of the published correspondence and a significant amount of the secondary literature.” Daniel Beller-McKenna, ed., “American Brahms Society Archive,” American Brahms Society, accessed June 6, 2012, http://brahms.unh.edu/scholarship.html, par. 1.
1. Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn. This was published separately for two pianos, four hands (op. 65b) and full orchestra (op. 56a) and offers perhaps the best insight into Brahms’s orchestral craft due to its length and relative complexity.

2. Liebeslieder Waltzes. Brahms’s orchestration consists of eight dances from op. 52 and a ninth from op. 65, which were performed in 1870. Ernst Rudorff of the Berlin Hochschule pressured Brahms into orchestrating the entire set of dances, but Brahms lost interest in the orchestral version before completing them. 49

3. Hungarian Dances. Brahms completed a set of twenty-one dances for piano four-hands, and later arranged the first ten for solo piano. He then orchestrated Nos. 1, 3, and 10. These were subsequently collected as his WoO 1.

In addition, several other published works by Brahms provide indirect observations:

1. Brahms’s reductions of his symphonies for two pianos, four hands. Because these are reductions of orchestral material, rather than expansions of piano material, they do not offer the same kind of comparison that the Haydn Variations provides. Nevertheless, they link every symphonic passage to a piano part, allowing for comparison between the versions. 50

2. Brahms’s two piano concertos. These do not afford measure-by-measure analysis the way the Haydn Variations and symphonic reductions do, but they do offer a comparison of the musical material as it is passed back and forth between piano and orchestra.


50 “Brahms lavished great care upon these [four-hand piano] arrangements and evidently considered them of great importance in his dealings with his publishers.” Robert Komaiko, “The Four Hand Piano Arrangements of Brahms and Their Role in the Nineteenth Century,” 2 vol., (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1975), 1.
3. Brahms’s Piano Quintet in F Minor, op. 34. This piece was first composed for two pianos, four hands and later reworked for piano and string quartet. The original two-piano version was burned, so direct comparisons are not possible. But as with the piano concertos, similarities may be observed in his treatment of passages common to piano and strings.

In the overwhelming majority of passages from these examples, Brahms makes very few changes between the piano and orchestral medium. In the orchestrated *Haydn Variations*, for example, the arpeggiation in the piano version are, for the most part, faithfully retained in the strings.\(^{51}\) Knapp observes the following:

> Despite the skill with which it is accomplished, the orchestral version [of the *Haydn Variations*] remains much more a transcription than a recomposition of the [piano] duet; Brahms’s characteristic procedure (followed, for example, in the fourth and fifth variations) was simply to reproduce in the orchestra the contrapuntal oppositions already established in the keyboard version.\(^{52}\)

In Brahms’s piano reductions of his symphonies, the same holds true. Hilarie Moore, in her dissertation on the structural role of orchestration in Brahms’s Third Symphony, notes that Brahms took care to literally translate the content of the orchestration into the piano reductions. He even preserves the orchestral voicing, such that phrases passed off between instruments in the orchestra are likewise passed off between the two pianists.\(^{53}\) In the two piano concertos and the F Minor Piano Quintet, the differences are likewise relatively insignificant.

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\(^{51}\) "[Brahms] evidently decided it was unnecessary to make more than a few obligatory alterations in the melodic elements to accommodate the orchestral idiom and texture." McCorkle, 56.

\(^{52}\) Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*, 72.

\(^{53}\) For further analysis on Brahms’s treatment of voicing, see Hilarie Moore, “The Structural Role of Orchestration in Brahms’s Music: A Study of the Third Symphony” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1991).
Literal transcription defined

The challenge this presents to the orchestrator is that a literal transcription of a piano part typically produces an ineffective orchestral work with less power than the original. One important reason for this is that compositions for piano can take advantage of the sustaining pedal to create sustained chords out of arpeggiated accompaniment. When transcribed for full orchestra, this effect is more difficult to reproduce, frequently requiring a complete reworking of material to recreate the intent of the effect in the new orchestral medium.

In his undergraduate orchestration textbook *Professional Orchestration: A Practical Handbook – From Piano to Strings*, Peter Alexander illustrates common solutions to this problem. The following example is a string transcription of Mozart’s Piano Sonata No. 3 from this book (the original piano part is included beneath the strings for comparison and is not meant to be performed simultaneously):
Further application of the principles used in the two previous examples can be applied to this progression by Brahms shown in Example 3-1. This configuration, broken into two parts, has the thirds continuously in the violas, while the cellos and bass combine to clarify the bass part.

3. Broken Chords Spaced for Two Hands

Example 3-14

In the above example, the effect of sustained arpeggios in the piano is effectively reproduced in the orchestral strings by significantly altering their notes. The arpeggiated sixteenth-note gesture is preserved in a way that better suits string bowing and fingering, and the sustained pedal effect is applied by adding dotted-quarter notes to the outer string parts.

In another example from Peter Alexander’s textbook, the arpeggiated triplets in the piano part are even further adapted for strings. When the pianist uses the sustaining pedal, the arpeggiated notes are held throughout the beat, thus creating smooth horizontal part-writing and a linear phrase. Peter Alexander handles this by reducing the triplet rhythm down to just a single repeated note in the violas, and adding legato quarter notes to the violin parts. In this manner the violas preserve the rhythmic pattern, while the violins create a sustained effect that enhances the phrasing:

Example 3-2. Mozart/Alexander, Piano Sonata No. 5, original and orchestrated versions

Brahms generally avoids the more loosely adapted style of arranging outlined above, instead remaining quite faithful to the pianistic elements that exist in his accompanimental passages. As a result, his orchestral music quite often retains an “audible pianistic element.”

Many of Brahms’s contemporary composers and critics faulted Brahms for his literal transcription style. One of the most scathing critiques came from composer Eduard Lalo, who wrote the following in a letter to Pablo Sarasate on August 28, 1878:

As for Brahms’s orchestration, that is to me the most stupefying thing of all. He understands nothing about choice of timbre, he orchestrates like a pianist; if one of us were to perpetrate anything so mediocre as professional orchestrators, we would say: My dear friend, you have talent—but hurry back to school.

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55 Ibid, 22.

56 Knapp, Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony, 72.

57 Pablo Sarasate, quoted in Weingartner, 9.
Brahms admitted he felt more comfortable with his piano writing skills than with string writing, even late in his career. In August of 1887, a year before the Third Violin Sonata was published, Brahms wrote a letter to Clara Schumann expressing his concern over his string writing in the recently completed Double Concerto. Here is a revealing excerpt from that letter:

I really should have passed the idea onto someone who knows strings better than I (Joachim, unfortunately, has given up writing, of course). After all, it is quite different to write for instruments whose character and sound is only approximately in one’s ear, which one hears only in the mind—instead of writing for an instrument one knows through and through as I know the piano, where I know precisely what I write and why I write this way or that.\(^{58}\)

Though Brahms was most comfortable at the piano, and his orchestral thought clearly stems from his familiarity with that instrument, it is important to consider that this was also an inseparable component of his compositional thought. His musical ideas are directly influenced by familiarity with his own instrument, and therefore the basic structural elements of his compositions were conceived in terms of that medium. Furthermore, the pianistic elements often form the very structure of the music.\(^{59}\) His accompanimental figures are generally full of important structural material that cannot be easily altered without diminishing the composition itself. Arnold Schoenberg observed that “‘there is nothing in a piece of music [by Brahms] but what comes from the theme, springs from it and can be traced back to it.’”\(^{60}\) This is why an

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\(^{58}\) This letter was written a year before the Third Violin Sonata was published, and after the first sketches were made. Brahms, *Life and Letters*, 649.

\(^{59}\) “[Brahms] likes the full accompaniment with broken chord figures, often in different rhythms. And most of these figures cannot easily be changed, because generally they have a structural meaning in his style.” Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in “Pinchas Zukerman, Christoph Eschenbach & Brahms,” par. 1.

orchestral transcription of Brahms’s music that attempts to remain faithful to his style requires a more literal adherence to pianistic figures than with other composers. Moore observes:

Many denigrate [Brahms’s] use of the orchestral medium as being either too conservative or too traditional. Some have even gone so far as to state that his orchestral style is pianistic and not orchestral at all. Critics of Brahms’s orchestration tend to dwell upon his early failures with orchestral compositions in particular . . . and upon his apparent personal anxiety and insecurity about composing in the orchestral medium. . . . Although analysts disagree about its merits, many agree that the composer formed his own style of orchestration.\footnote{Moore, 2–3.}

It is worth noting that the broken chords Brahms writes aren’t necessarily easy to perform on the piano either. Brahms is difficult for string players \textit{and} pianists. This brings up a fundamental question: what does it mean to compose difficult but idiomatic music, as opposed to difficult music that is poorly written? Knapp proposes the following:

Even acknowledging the sophistication of Brahms’s orchestral thought and its intimate relationship to his more general musical thought, we must nevertheless contend with his habitual dependence on the piano and its idioms. While we may understand his occasionally thick scoring in terms of his larger musical aims, how do we explain or excuse his non-idiomatic part writing, particularly with regard to the strings?

Here we must define our terms more precisely. If by “idiomatic” writing we mean writing that feels “natural” to the players—in other words, seems “familiar” and conforms well with current performing practices—then Brahms most definitely did \textit{not} write idiomatically for strings. But neither, according to this definition, did he write idiomatically for the piano. If we are to ascribe his non-idiomatic string writing to a style based on idiomatic piano writing, then we must first forget who Brahms was, and how he wrote for the piano.

If, however, we define “idiomatic” writing to mean writing that uses an instrument \textit{effectively}, independent of difficulty or idiomatic familiarity, then neither Brahms’s string writing nor his piano writing should be found wanting; in both, he achieves often spectacular results using a difficult idiom that was largely of his own devising. We should not, therefore, expect his string writing to sound or feel like that of other composers. In extension, we should be equally reluctant to use the music of other composers as a direct standard for judging other aspects of Brahms’s orchestration.\footnote{Knapp, \textit{Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony}, 78.}
Literal transcription applied

Arpeggiations scored in thirds

Brahms frequently scores his accompanimental passages as broken chords rather than scales. Such chords are not particularly idiomatic for string playing. But because these arpeggitations often contain structural material, they need to be retained in the orchestra rather than adapted more loosely. Schoenberg observed that Brahms “likes the full accompaniment with broken chord figures, often in different rhythms. And most of these figures cannot easily be changed, because generally they have a structural meaning in his style.”\(^{63}\) One of the most common ways Brahms handled these broken chords was to thicken the texture by doubling the arpeggiation in thirds. By doing this, Brahms was able to retain the structure of the arpeggiation while reinforcing the harmony. This reinforcement is necessary to compensate for the decrease in overall resonance that occurs when transcribing from piano to strings.\(^{64}\)

An example of doubling the arpeggiation comes from the opening of his Symphony No. 4. The following two excerpts compare Brahms’s piano reduction to the original symphony:

\(^{63}\)Arnold Schoenberg, quoted in “Pinchas Zukerman, Christoph Eschenbach & Brahms,” par. 1.

\(^{64}\)This issue of resonance is discussed further in chap. 4.
EXAMPLE 3-3. Brahms, Symphony No. 4 for Two Pianos, first movement, mm. 1–4

In the piano reduction above, the left hand plays an ascending arpeggiated chord on the first half of each measure. Compare that to the symphony excerpt, where violas are added to the second
half of each measure. The function of the violas is to carry forward the chords that would be sustained in the piano part. Notice that the violas perform the arpeggiation in thirds rather than as single notes, which increases harmonic resonance.

The next two excerpts come from the third movement of Symphony No. 1. Piano 2 from Brahms’s piano reduction is presented first, followed by the string section form the full score:

EXAMPLE 3-5. Brahms, Symphony No. 1 for Two Pianos (second piano part), third movement, mm. 130–35

EXAMPLE 3-6. Brahms, Symphony No. 1 (strings only), third movement, mm. 130–37

In the piano reduction above, Brahms wrote an ascending two-octave arpeggiated chord. In the symphony, the left hand is scored in the cellos and violas, and the right hand scored in the first
and second violins. However, the violas and first violins double the arpeggiation in thirds above what is presented in the piano.

This type of arpeggiation is found throughout Brahms’s orchestral oeuvre, and as such was used liberally in this orchestral transcription. In the following example from the introduction of the first movement, Brahms wrote a series of descending arpeggiations in the right hand of the piano part:

EXAMPLE 3-7. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 146–50

These descending arpeggiations were written for the second violins and violas, where the violas perform the original piano notes, and second violins double this a third above:
Transcribing jumpy legato arpeggiation

The first movement contains numerous legato eighth notes that are relatively jumpy in the piano part. These do not translate well to orchestra, which challenges the effort to orchestrate
more literally. At the same time they carry a considerable amount of motivic material, making them difficult to transcribe without diminishing the counterpoint.

In this example from the recapitulation of movement 1, Brahms wrote jumpy legato arpeggiations that are easily produced on a piano, creating a delicate sostenuto that is both lyric and un-syncopated:

Example 3-9. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 130–37

This passage is highly idiomatic to piano writing, however, and does not easily translate well to the orchestra. There are a few passages like this in Brahms’s orchestral works, such as the final six measures from the end of the third movement of <em>Ein deutsches Requiem</em>, yet in these examples the figure is relatively straightforward. The only passage that really comes close to the
examples in the Third Violin Sonata is from Brahms’s *Haydn Variations*. In the version for two pianos, Brahms writes the following at the end of Variation 8:

**Example 3-10.** Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn* for Two Pianos, mm. 354–60

Brahms handles the idiomatic piano passage by creating syncopated repeating notes that sustain the sound while outlining the arpeggiation. He also adds a melody in the oboe and horn that further emphasizes the horizontal line:
EXAMPLE 3-11. Brahms, *Variations on a Theme by Joseph Haydn* for Orchestra, mm. 354–60
Although the above passage effectively reproduces the sustained quality of the piano part, Brahms chose to keep the harmonization minimal. A similarly literal application of this approach to the recapitulation in movement 1 of the Third Violin Sonata would result in a thin sound that does not fill in the chords. A possible example might look like this:

EXAMPLE 3-12. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 (alternate), first movement, mm. 130–33

The problem with the above passage is that it over-emphasizes the syncopation, which destroys the *sotto voce molto legato sempre* character notated in the score. It also does not create any sustained chords, resulting in a thin sound. Finally, the melody is rather uninteresting, and would clash with the true melody in the solo violin part.

Because of these challenges, a freer adaption was chosen for this passage in the orchestral transcription. The idea of syncopation was borrowed from Brahms’s orchestrated version of the *Haydn Variations*, and the addition of harmony helps to flesh out the sound. The oboes and

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65 “As much as the transcriber tries to preserve the original, there will always be sacrifices made in order to obtain the best possible adaptation into the new medium.” Gustavo Lovato, “A Wind Orchestra Transcription of *Par les rues et par les chemins* (The First Movement of Debussy’s Orchestral Work *Iberia* (With Commentary))” (DMA diss., The University of Alabama, 2001), 1.
bassoons provide a non-syncopated arpeggio that further de-emphasizes the syncopation, and the horns bring out the important B-flat minor chord by sustaining their pitches:

EXAMPLE 3-13. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 130–37

This is closer orchestrationally to what Brahms does at the end of the third movement of *Ein deutsches Requiem*, where the winds are syncopated to create a sustained effect:
Similar passages between Brahms’s Violin Sonata No. 3 and orchestral works

As discussed in chapter 1, it was a goal of this dissertation to adhere as close as possible to the style of Brahms. To accomplish this, a detailed review of Brahms’s orchestral works was undertaken with an eye for passages similar to those found in the Third Violin Sonata. Where common elements were identified, these ideas were incorporated into the orchestral transcription. The following table summarizes relevant findings from this research. Specific measures in the Third Violin Sonata are listed alongside the corresponding measures from his orchestral works. Also included are summaries of the orchestrational elements common to both.

| TABLE 3-1. Similar passages found in Brahms’s Third Violin Sonata and his orchestral works |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| **VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3**                    | **ORCHESTRAL WORKS**                | **COMMON ELEMENTS**                  |
| Movement I:                               |                                        |                                        |
| mm. 1–10, 13–15                         | Symphony No. 3, mm. 3–10             | Violas offset from cellos by half-beat syncopation |
| mm. 11–12, 16–20, 228–32                | *Ein deutsches Requiem*, movt. I, mm. 131–32; movt. III, mm. 39–40 | Repeated triplets against duplets over sustained half-notes; triplet quarter notes *divisi* in low strings |
| mm. 24-25, 153–54                       | Symphony No. 3, movt. IV, mm. 70, 212 | Explosive half-note chord on second half of measure |
| mm. 34–37, 172–75                       | Symphony No. 3, movt. III, mm. 98–101, 240–45; *Haydn Variations* mm. 391–95 | Eight-note brass rhythm on first and third beats; jumpy syncopated sixteenth-notes in inner-voice strings |
| mm. 42–44, 178–80                       | *Academic Festival Overture*, mm. 332–37 | Woodwinds alternate horn and oboe octaves with flute, clarinet, and bassoon octaves |
| mm. 38–39, 176–77                       | Symphony No. 1, movt. III, mm. 73–102; movt. IV, mm. 146–47, 330–31 | Violins and violas in two-octave sixteenth-notes, with cellos on the third octave as eighth notes. Basses join toward the end at the bottom of the descending phrase |
| mm. 44–46, 182–84                       | Symphony No. 1, movt. I, mm. 125–29, 398–402 | Strings in octaves, woodwinds fill out the chords in between |
| mm. 48–53, 186–91                       | Symphony No. 3, movt. I, mm. 55–56 | Descending woodwinds that taper from first to second part |

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<table>
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<th>VIOLIN SONATA NO. 3</th>
<th>ORCHESTRAL WORKS</th>
<th>COMMON ELEMENTS</th>
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<td>mm. 54, 67–69, 192</td>
<td>Academic Festival Overture, mm. 314–23; Tragic Overture mm. 300–307</td>
<td>Pianistically arpeggiated cello, no woodwind sustaining chords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 62–66</td>
<td>Symphony No. 4, movt IV, mm. 421–27</td>
<td>Arpeggated strings in opposing directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 70–71, 108–11, 116–19, 140–41, 145–49</td>
<td>Symphony No. 4, movt I, mm. 17, 31–32, 48–52; Symphony No. 4, movt. II, m. 97</td>
<td>Violin II and viola arpeggiation in thirds to thicken the harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 84–87</td>
<td>Tragic Overture, mm. 68–105</td>
<td>Similar mood; quarter note drone in cello and bass with syncopated upper strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 96–99</td>
<td>Tragic Overture, mm. 404–17; Symphony No. 4, movt. 4, mm. 69–72, 77–80</td>
<td>Descending string arpeggiation with open A string; similar passage on open E string</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 104–7</td>
<td>Ein deutsches Requiem, movt. IV, mm. 49–57</td>
<td>Triad inversions that begin in strings and end in winds accompanied by syncopated rhythm</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 116–19</td>
<td>Tragic Overture, mm. 312–19</td>
<td>Pianistic arpeggiation that is awkward to play in strings</td>
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<td>mm. 124–27</td>
<td>Ein deutsches Requiem, movt. II, mm. 93–101</td>
<td>Dotted triplet quarter notes against a duple rhythm melody during a decrescendo</td>
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<td>mm. 157–58, 162–63, 214–17</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, movt. I, mm. 97–100, 370–73; movt. IV, mm. 228–31, 257–59</td>
<td>Descending dotted-quarter note rhythm (with eighth-note rests) in strings</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 218–27</td>
<td>Haydn Variations, mm. 391–95</td>
<td>Violin II and viola perform jumpy arpeggiated sixteenth notes</td>
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<td>mm. 236–48, 250–54</td>
<td>Ein deutsches Requiem, movt. III, mm. 173–208</td>
<td>Pedal D quarter notes split between cello and basses, trombones and tuba to create sustained pulse with the timpani</td>
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<td>mm. 262–63</td>
<td>Dvořák: Symphony No. 9, movt. II, m. 21</td>
<td>Identical D major arpeggiation, scored in cello and flute</td>
</tr>
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<td>m. 264</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, movt. I, mm. 509–11</td>
<td>Chord scored identically. Extra measure and string pizzicato added to match Symphony</td>
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<td>Movement II:</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 1–8</td>
<td>Symphony No. 4, movt. II, mm. 88–96</td>
<td>Strings alone, low divisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 25–26</td>
<td>Symphony No. 2, movt. III, mm. 1–2, 23–24</td>
<td>Similar mood. First oboe and clarinet play unison melody for two beats of each measure, split apart for the third beat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 27–28</td>
<td>Symphony No. 2, movt. III, mm. 14–16, 26–29</td>
<td>Similar mood. Flutes join woodwinds mid-phrase to finish off the phrase</td>
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<td><strong>Violin Sonata No. 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Orchestral Works</strong></td>
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<td>mm. 37–40</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, movt. II, mm. 90–96; movt. IV, mm. 30–35; Symphony No. 4, movt. II, mm. 5–14, 22–25; mm. 30–35</td>
<td>Melody in horn and violin solo octaves, triplet eighth-note <em>pizzicato</em> arpeggios in cellos; horn solo reinforced by second horn; string <em>pizzicato</em> outline of woodwind chords; triplets in the cello and bass</td>
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<td>Movement III:</td>
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<td>mm. 54–62</td>
<td><em>Academic Festival Overture</em>, mm. 222–30, 358–66</td>
<td>Sustained woodwind octaves with string unison melody during <em>crescendo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 77–82</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, movt. I, mm. 1–10</td>
<td>Violas play the same passage as the woodwinds</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 63–64</td>
<td><em>Ein deutsches Requiem</em>, movt. VII, mm. 140–41</td>
<td>Ascending triplet eight-notes in strings and woodwinds, <em>crescendo to forte</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 86–91</td>
<td><em>Academic Festival Overture</em>, mm. 230–40, 366–78</td>
<td>Off-beat “oom-pah” in strings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mm. 99–110</td>
<td>Symphony No. 2, movt. I, mm. 454–76</td>
<td>Slow horn solo with string accompaniment</td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 163–78</td>
<td><em>Haydn Variations</em> mm. 98–107, 135–38</td>
<td>Pianistic arpeggiation divided between first and second flutes and clarinets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement IV:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>mm. 19–20, 29–32, 196–97, 200–201</td>
<td>Symphony No. 1, movt. I, mm. 63–68, 364–70</td>
<td>Triplet repeated viola parts that change pitches every dotted half-note</td>
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<td>mm. 73–76, 107–13</td>
<td>Symphony No. 4, movt. I, mm. 188–91, 297–99</td>
<td>Three octave solo in woodwinds</td>
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<td>mm. 313–14, 319–24</td>
<td><em>Haydn Variations</em>, mm. 224–25, 237–44</td>
<td>Syncopated accompaniment in strings and then woodwinds</td>
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PART II
“It will once again be lamely underplayed. . . . And then we’d here again: it is poorly orchestrated, etc., in short, Brahms is at fault!”

~ Johannes Brahms

A goal of this dissertation was to determine to what extent a detailed study of Brahms’s orchestrational style might inform performance practice. The resulting deeper understanding of the composer’s preferences for instrumentation and voicing can inform the interpreter’s choice of tempo, and cues from musical material itself can guide the conductor toward appropriate options for handling the acoustic differences between the various instrumentations.

Too often conductors study scores with little consideration for how the orchestrational decisions necessarily impact the interpretation. A conductor’s role is to interpret the composer’s musical intent, and by placing oneself in the role of orchestrator, one cannot help but be better informed about why the composer made specific orchestrational choices. Seen through the lens of an orchestrator, score study becomes a critical review of why passages are structured, voiced, and colored as they are. This necessarily informs the conductor’s approach to key decisions: Is this foreground or background? Is material being doubled? If so, why? Will it balance properly? If not, do changes in dynamics need to be made? Should a certain section be played more forcefully to bring it out due to being under-orchestrated, or should the section be held back because it was thickly scored? All of these decisions can be aided by an understanding of the orchestrational decisions that went into the making of the score.

66 Brahms’s remark in 1892, when told that Hans Richter was going to conduct his Fourth Symphony with the Vienna Philharmonic. Richard Heuberger, Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1971), quoted in Frisch, 168.
Tempo considerations in the original and orchestrated versions of the first movement

A performance of the orchestral transcription of the first movement requires a slower tempo, sometimes dramatically slower, than the original version. This is for three main reasons. First, the orchestrated version is performed by a much larger group of instrumentalists in a larger performing space. Second, orchestral instruments do not ‘speak’ as instantaneously as the piano, and therefore require a bit more time for the production of sound. The orchestrated version places greater focus on changes of timbre between instruments, and there is consequently a greater weight to the sound which requires additional time to be heard. And finally, there is a level of complexity added to the orchestral score that can get drowned out at faster tempos. In Brahms’s orchestral music, everything has to have time to be heard. The orchestra requires more time to do this than the piano, due to the orchestra’s larger size and number of performers, lack of percussive attack relative to the piano, and greater difficulty in coordinating tempo nuances in technical passages.

The first movement in particular is very difficult to perform with orchestra at tempos commonly taken in the original violin-piano version. Itzhak Perlman and Daniel Barenboim, for example, performed this movement at a half-note = 96 on their EMI recording. At the opening of the movement, the pianist plays a simple descending line in syncopated octaves, and so faster tempos are not an issue:

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Example 4-1. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 1–5

But when orchestrated in a way that preserves the syncopation and fleshes out the implied harmony, mass is added to the production of sound. At faster tempos, the additional weight of these notes become unwieldy. If the passage in the orchestrated version below was taken at Perlman and Barenboim’s tempo, the viola part would be nearly unplayable and gruff:
EXAMPLE 4-2. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 1–8
Thus, slower tempos in general, and in the first movement in particular, are necessary for an adequate performance of the orchestral transcription.

In addition to tempo considerations caused by the change in instrumentation, the Third Violin Sonata contains extremes of mood that also impact interpretive tempo decisions. Once again, this is particularly true of the first movement. At each recurrence of the main theme, the first movement is presented in a completely different character. The opening measures introduce the main theme in a *sotto voce* style—calm, legato, and subdued:

EXAMPLE 4-3. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 1–5

Shortly after, the motive from theme one is repeated, but this time as an aggressive, driving *fortissimo* with strong staccato octaves in the piano part that suggest a quicker tempo:
The development presents the opening motive in a most unusual manner for Brahms. It is accompanied by a pedal-tone drone that permeates the entire section. The darker quality and more dissonant harmonies imply a tempo that is slower than in the exposition:

The recapitulation repeats the theme in largely the same mood as the opening of the movement, and as such the tempo needs to pick up after the development.

In the coda, the opening motive appears one last time. Towards the end of the coda, Brahms dramatically sets up the change from D Minor to D Major over the course of a single measure, using a series of cadences during a marked crescendo:
The climax of this passage is the change to D Major in the second measure of the above example. The syncopation in the right hand causes a slight delay of the F-sharp, which is much more dramatic at a significantly slower tempo. The final five measures are in the same key as the second movement, and taking a slower tempo here helps to set up the mood of the next movement.\textsuperscript{68}

The flexibility of tempo required in this piece, though extreme even for Brahms, has been well established as an acceptable performance practice of his music. Fanny Davies, one of Clara Schumann’s pupils (who performed the Third Violin Sonata shortly after its premiere),\textsuperscript{69} observed the following:

Brahms’s manner of interpretation was free, very elastic and expansive; but the balance was always there—one felt the fundamental rhythms underlying the surface rhythms. His phrasing was notable in lyric passages. In these a strictly metronomic Brahms is as unthinkable as a fussy or hurried Brahms in passages which must be presented with adamantine rhythm. . . .

\textsuperscript{68}Brahms treats the end of the first movement of his First Symphony in a similar manner. Conductors traditionally slow this down as well.

\textsuperscript{69}May, 238.
All Brahms’s passages, if one can call them passages, are strings of gems, and that tempo which can best reveal these gems and help to characterize the detail at the same time as the outlines of a great work must be considered to be the right tempo.  

Joseph Joachim, who performed the premieres of Brahms’s violin sonatas, made recordings of other works by Brahms in 1904 that likewise feature very flexible tempos, suggesting that this was an appropriate practice approved by the composer. And Bernard D. Sherman, in his article “Metronome Marks, Timings, and Other Period Evidence,” notes the following:

It is evident that Brahms and his contemporaries took varying tempos from performance to performance. Brahms clearly did not believe that there is one ideal tempo for a work. He wrote that any ‘normal person’ would take a different tempo ‘every week.’ And more than once he told musicians who disagreed about a tempo in his music that both were right. This permissiveness may reflect Brahms’s savvy about real-world performance. Thus it is well within established performance practice to allow each presentation of the theme to bear its own unique tempo, as determined by the musical mood at each recurrence.

Acoustic differences between the versions inform interpretive choices

One of the characteristic features of the piano is its ability to create a solid and nearly instantaneous production of sound due to the percussive nature of the hammer striking the strings. Most orchestral instruments, and the strings in particular, lack such immediate presence of sound. While it is possible for the strings to mimic this by playing in a heavier marcato style

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71 The recordings also display a general lack of vibrato, faster tempos in general, greater use of portamento than today, and relatively sloppy playing by modern standards (though he was 73, so age may have been a factor). “Romance in C Major,” program notes for the La Jolla Music Society, accessed June 6, 2012, http://www.ljms.org/Performances-and-Tickets/Program-Notes/JOSEPH-JOACHIM-Romance-in-C-Major.html, par. 4.

or with a fast marcaté bow stroke at the beginning of each note, it is much more difficult to reproduce this effect in softer, sustained arpeggio passages.

One common solution is to have the double basses play pizzicato, while having the cellos play the same notes arco an octave higher. The pizzicato in the double basses provides the immediacy of sound that mimics the more percussive attack of the piano, while the cellos provide the sustaining element. The opening of the first movement was orchestrated this way in order to punctuate and clarify the melodic line:

Example 4-7. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 (strings only), first movement, mm. 1–8

Without pizzicato, the above passage can suffer from muddiness due to the less distinct note changes that can occur with slurred string bowing. The syncopated rhythm in the viola part causes similar problems, since it obscures the primary beats that the cellos must establish at the opening.
But orchestrational craft alone cannot sufficiently solve this problem. An understanding of the interplay between the orchestration and conducting technique enables the interpreter to help the ensemble function as a cohesive whole to the desired effect. The opening of the second movement is such a place where the change in instrumental medium calls for particular attention by the conductor of the ensemble:

**Example 4-8.** Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, second movement, mm. 1–7

Despite the pianist’s best efforts to produce a legato articulation, the above passage will—by nature of the instrument—create an immediacy of sound at the beginning of each chord, followed by a decay in volume between chords. The challenge to the pianist is to minimize this effect by connecting the music horizontally, thus emphasizing the legato phrase.

Strings have the opposite problem. Slurred phrasing comes more naturally, since the movement of the bow over the string produces continuous volume throughout each note. The greater difficulty lies in lining up the vertical harmony in such a way that the chords are not simply glossed over. This is compounded by the fact that the pianist’s fingers are guided by a single individual, whereas an entire section of string players must be coordinated. A slight
increase in bow speed and pressure at the beginning of each note will help to clarify the vertical placement of each chord, although the strings must be careful not to make this too audible.

Because so many more musicians are involved, rubato and phrasing nuances are harder to achieve, so the conductor must be careful to clarify these subtle changes. Orchestrating a piano passage for strings already risks muddiness, and lack of clarity from the podium with regard to rubato would only worsen the problem:

EXAMPLE 4-9. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 (strings only), second movement, mm. 1–9

Another example of acoustical differences and how they inform interpretive decisions can be found in the passage immediately following the above example. As shown below, a crescendo begins in the second measure. This crescendo draws out the tenor line as it leads to the A-sharp at the beginning of the third measure. There are many stylistic techniques available to enable the pianist to achieve a graduated crescendo, such as voicing this towards the outer notes in order to bring out the line:
The orchestrator has the option of selecting an instrument family best suited to bring out the line and effect. In the third measure of the orchestrated version below, the tenor line has been assigned to the cellos. The cellos perform the passage on the A-string, their highest and brightest string. This helps the phrase to stand out against the violins, who are playing higher notes but on their lowest string, the darker G-string. The continuous sound production afforded by the bow of the cello allows the crescendo to develop evenly, even after the initial attack of each note. Additional use of vibrato in the left hand can create a different type of emotional depth. The brilliant tone of cellos on their highest string, the continuous crescendo, and the vibrato all combine to allow for expressive possibilities distinct from the original instrumentation:
However, it will always be a greater challenge to produce nuanced rubato in the orchestrated version of this passage. This is especially true in measure four of the above passage. On beat two, the music suddenly switches from D Major to the dominant of E Minor. This change, along with hairpin crescendo-decrescendo, combine to suggest a slight tenuto in the last two beats of this measure. In the original version, the pianist more easily engages with the violinist and waits for visual clues in the bowing and breathing of the soloist. In the orchestrated
version, it is the conductor that guides the tenuto. The conductor must be sure to catch the attention of every string player, to ensure that everyone increases and decreases volume at just the same amount and at precisely the same time. Too much crescendo and the effect is forced; too little tenuto and the sentiment is glossed over.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

“You will find a wider range of forms and melodic archetypes in [Brahms’s] chamber music than in the symphonies.”
~ David Hurwitz

Chapter 1 established that certain of Brahms’s chamber music, including the Third Violin Sonata, features musical elements more often associated with symphonic works. The converse has also been noted. However, the experience of performing this orchestral transcription highlighted fundamental differences in the aesthetic approaches of the two genres, despite their similar formal structures. This chapter explores these differences. While a true “Fifth Symphony” cannot be produced by such a transcription of Brahms’s existing chamber music, the exercise nonetheless yielded beneficial insight into the composer’s craft and can help inform performance practice options.

Symphonic chamber pieces and chamber-like symphonies

Even after Brahms overcame his early trepidation toward symphonic writing and became well-established as a master composer, his orchestral music would retain an element of chamber music. Musicologist and conductor Leon Botstein summarizes this in his book The Compleat Brahms, in which he notes that “if Schumann recognized the symphonic character of Brahms’s early chamber music, others have perceived the chamber music-like quality of Brahms’s

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symphonic works.”\textsuperscript{74} Walter Frisch, in \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, likewise observes that “the relationship between the chamber music of the early 1860s and the symphonies of the late 1870s in Brahms is . . . compositionally very close.”\textsuperscript{75}

This close relationship was also noted by Brahms’s contemporaries, though not always favorably. Frisch summarizes an article Richard Wagner published in 1879, in which Wagner suggests that “Brahms fails to understand these distinctions: he simply moves his chamber to the concert hall and ‘serves up’ as symphonies what is really overblown chamber music.”\textsuperscript{76} And Gustav Mahler purportedly believed that “‘Brahms shunned so many useful techniques and innovations in orchestration merely out of obstinacy and opposition to Wagner.’”\textsuperscript{77}

Yet noting these important similarities does not lead inescapably to the conclusion that the two mediums were compositionally interchangeable for Brahms. Significant differences exist between Brahms’s chamber music and orchestral music—a fact that Brahms exploited in many of his works. The completion of this orchestral transcription revealed that, despite the close relationship between chamber and orchestral genres in Brahms’s music, there are important differences in style, character, and approach.

\textsuperscript{74} Botstein, 87.
\textsuperscript{75} Frisch, 34.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{77} Natalie Bauer-Lechner, in a letter written in December 1899, quoted in David Brodbeck, “Mahler’s Brahms,” \textit{The American Brahms Society Newsletter} 10, no. 2 (Fall 1992): 2. According to Brodbeck, Natalie was Gustav Mahler’s musical confidante.
Unique elements in Brahms’s chamber music

Brahms composed chamber music his entire life; in fact, it was the only form for which he composed consistently throughout his life. His symphonies, in contrast, were completed within the span of a single decade. The sheer volume of output, covering his entire career, necessarily allowed for greater explorations in form and Affekt. None of the following examples from his chamber pieces have exact parallels in his works for orchestra.

Greater contrast between formal sections

In the Third Violin Sonata, Brahms sets off several of the formal sections with a strong cadence followed by a break in the music. The following example from the first movement shows the ending of the exposition:

EXAMPLE 5-1. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, first movement, mm. 80–83

At the end of the above passage, the music completely stops before continuing to the development, where it abruptly changes mood. The same type of abrupt stop happens in the fourth movement, just before the development:

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78 The premieres of the four symphonies occurred between 1876–85.
Nowhere in Brahms’s symphonies does he allow the music to completely stop such as this. This break allowed Brahms to immediately transition into a contrasting mood.

Greater variety and contrast of musical archetypes

In the development section that immediately follows the above example, the music contrasts starkly in mood from that of the exposition. After the pause in music referenced above, the development section begins as follows:
The aggressive and energetic mood of the exposition is replaced by a subdued, mysterious and atmospheric contrapuntal passage. Most unusual here is the incessant use of the pedal A drone that permeates the entire development section. This drone continues unbroken for a full forty-six measures. By way of comparison, the longest drone in Brahms’s orchestral works comes from *Ein deutsche Requiem*, and lasts for thirty-six measures:

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79 The other notable drone effect from his orchestral works is the two pedal D passage in the fourth movement of his First Symphony, during the two horn calls (mm. 30–46 and mm. 289–99), but these only last for ten measures each.
It is interesting to note that several contemporary critics were not pleased with Brahms’s use of the sustained pedal D in the *Requiem*. Knapp writes that “among the reviews surveyed, his most often criticized orchestral passage is the long pedal on D that supports the closing fugue in the third movement of the *Requiem*.”\textsuperscript{80} Despite such criticism, Brahms had a particular fondness for this type of pedal passage, even as he acknowledged its weakness. Brahms wrote the following letter to Clara Schumann in November 1889, shortly after she had performed the Third Violin Sonata for this first time at a Museum concert in Vienna:

Dear Clara,

That my D minor Sonata is strolling tenderly and dreamily beneath your fingers is a most agreeable and friendly thought to me. I have actually placed it on the music stand and accompanied you very thoughtfully and tenderly through the pedal-point shrubbery. Always with you at my side, and I simply know of no greater pleasure than to sit at your side or, as in this case, to stroll with you. . . .

With all love,

your Johannes.\textsuperscript{81}

Incidentally, the coda of the first movement ends with a pedal D drone in a style similar to the passage in the *Requiem*. As such, it was orchestrated similarly. Note especially the similarities in the treatment of the contrabassoon, trombones, tuba, cellos, and double basses:

\textsuperscript{80} Knapp, *Brahms and the Challenge of the Symphony*, 307.

EXAMPLE 5-5. Brahms/Carter, Violin Sonata No. 3 for Orchestra, first movement, mm. 236–42
Another example of an *Affekt* not explored in his orchestral oeuvre is the third movement of the Third Violin Sonata. There are very few parallels between this movement and his orchestral works. The music is sparsely written, very quiet and light, chromatically descending, and of an ephemeral quality:

**Example 5-6.** Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, third movement, mm. 1–8

![Example 5-6](image)

In measure 29 Brahms restates this theme, but he adds a most unusual descending bass line on the natural minor scale, accompanied by a flittering sixteenth-note arpeggiation in the right hand. The bass line is more akin to the “walking bass” style found in jazz writing:

**Example 5-7.** Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, third movement, mm. 29–36

![Example 5-7](image)
There are no examples of this in Brahms’s orchestral works. This passage is, however, similar to the second movement of Dvořák’s Symphony No. 9. Note the walking bass and flittering violins:

**Example 5-8. Dvořák, Symphony No. 9, second movement, mm. 54–58**

The walking bass, finger *tremolo* in the violin, and sustained chords in the winds are all orchestrational ideas that were incorporated into the orchestral transcription:

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82 Antonín Dvořák, *Symphony No. 9 in E Minor, op. 95*, 1st ed. (Berlin: N. Simrock, 1894), 211.
The trio of this movement changes mood dramatically into a rustic “oom-pah”

reminiscent of his Hungarian Dances:
EXAMPLE 5-10. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, third movement, mm. 63–69

Brahms repeats this idea a second time before returning to the mood of the opening.

Further extremes of mood are found in the fourth movement of the Third Violin Sonata.

The third movement ends quietly and placidly with a light staccato and large gaps of silence:

EXAMPLE 5-11. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, third movement, mm. 176–81

This theme is dramatically interrupted by a sudden and bombastic statement of the fourth movement’s main theme:
EXAMPLE 5-12. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, fourth movement, mm. 1–5

The development section begins out of nowhere, when the melody in the piano is suddenly interrupted with a break, followed by soft, off-beat chords in G Minor:

EXAMPLE 5-13. Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3, fourth movement, mm. 126–33

With very few exceptions, Brahms’s symphonies are connected by less abrupt extremes of mood between formal sections than the variety encountered in the Third Violin Sonata.

**Exploration of more remote key areas**

When writing for orchestra, Brahms is somewhat limited in his ability to explore remote key areas due to his use of natural horns and trumpets. Though Brahms certainly does explore
remote key areas to some degree in his orchestral works, the brass and timpani are necessarily reduced in these passages, which limits the type of music that can be written. In his chamber music, he had no such restrictions to the choice of key area, and thus was free to explore keys more remote from the tonic than he undertook in his orchestral works.

This includes the Third Violin Sonata. In the first movement, the first theme is in the key of D minor, and the second theme is in F major. The horns are scored in D and F accordingly, as outlined in chapter 2, and the timpani is pitched to D, A, and F. But in the recapitulation, the movement enters the key area of F-sharp minor. This leaves very few notes available for the brass and percussion. This is particularly problematic for the orchestral transcription, since this is also a fortissimo passage scored for full brass and percussion in the exposition.

The same problem occurs in the third movement of the Third Violin Sonata, where the first theme is in F-sharp minor, but the second theme makes its way to F major in the middle of the piece. Such remote keys were not explored as readily in Brahms’s orchestral music, and pose a challenge when attempting to orchestrate them using natural horns.

**Brahms knew what he wanted**

Despite the blurring of lines between chamber and orchestral music, Brahms clearly understood the fundamental differences in genre, and took full advantage of them by writing for the strengths of each. Weingartner notes that:

A score of Brahms seems as if chiseled. Every note is written down with the greatest artistic consciousness, with strict self-control, and the most fastidious choice and knowledge of the material. Nothing is superfluous. Any addition, even the change of a

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83 With the exception of chamber music that uses the horn, such as his Horn Trio.
mark of expression, would be fully avenged. Everything is thought out in the subtlest way and presented with a ripeness of expression that must arouse the highest admiration.\textsuperscript{84}

Brahms knew that orchestral works were intended for a larger public audience, and his compositional thought was tailored to the genre from the beginning. Despite the many similarities in form, the \textit{function} is different. Composing for a small group of informed patrons is very different than the larger general public of the concert hall, and Brahms wrote his music accordingly.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{84} Weingartner, 8.

\textsuperscript{85} Walter Frisch, in his book \textit{Brahms: The Four Symphonies}, references an idea from Margaret Notley that the differences between chamber and orchestral music may have been influenced by “social and political overtones that were particularly resonant in late-nineteenth-century Vienna. The notions of a symphony-as-democratic and chamber-music-as-elitist, and the selections of Brahms as a target for criticism, reflect the powerful tug of values between the newer right-wing, populist, radical movement and the older bourgeois establishment of Austrian Liberalism, the so-called \textit{Bildungsbürgertum} (educated middle class). Brahms allied himself clearly with the latter group.” Frisch, 149.
When I set about orchestrating this sonata, I had ambitious plans to create a fully orchestral work that would push me to develop orchestrational skills and further my understanding of Brahms’s compositional craft. In the Third Violin Sonata I saw many passages that were full of rich counterpoint, dramatic mood, and symphonic-like dialogue between the instruments. I could easily see those aspects being more powerfully conveyed with the use of full orchestra.

My process of orchestration began with these demonstrably orchestral passages. Once the bulk of these were worked out, I began to realize just how much was left that was in fact quite pianistic, and I really had no idea how to handle the material. This is when I began to pour over Brahms’s orchestral scores, looking for clues and insight. What I discovered was that Brahms orchestrated the pianistic elements in his music quite literally. I knew Schoenberg felt this was due to the inherent structural quality of the music, and so I made very few changes to the arpeggiated and broken scale accompanimental passages. This was also to preserve the historicity of the music; because the music has stood the test of time, I found it very difficult to depart from Brahms’s musical ideas, pianistic as they might be. I also knew Brahms was very intentional with his music, and it felt inappropriate to diverge from the music when he went to such great lengths to carefully craft his ideas.

As the project progressed, I realized that significant gaps in the work remained—gaps where the best transcription solution was not obvious. Instead, I had to start making educated guesses to fill in the remaining blanks while still attempting to minimize the presence of my own
voice and style. Overall, I would estimate that about 30% of the piece sounds quite orchestral. In these passages, the music parallels his symphonic works and I feel that the orchestration is very strong. There is about 50% that I would consider adequate; it gets the compositional idea across and is well-balanced, but sounds more like the “overblown chamber music” that Wagner describes.\textsuperscript{86} The remaining 20% is purely idiomatic to the piano and simply did not work, no matter how many revisions I attempted. It was at this stage that I came to understand that there are, in fact, very important differences between Brahms’s chamber music and his orchestral music. Despite all that I had read about Brahms’s music being so orchestral, and having been personally inspired by Schumann’s charge that in Brahms’s chamber music there exists “veiled symphonies,”\textsuperscript{87} there was clearly something about the music that was not working on a symphonic level.

Obviously, my skill as an orchestrator is the first place to look for problems, and I have closely examined the orchestration for ways in which it might have been improved. But I still came back to the same conclusion: yes, I could make it more orchestral, but it would depart too greatly from Brahms’s musical intent. At some point, I would need to take the plunge and make it my own voice. I can see now why Schoenberg orchestrated it in his own style instead of continuing to wrestle with those passages idiomatic to the piano.

The process led me to examine in depth what it is about Brahms’s chamber music that is compositionally unique. I realized a project like this could never become “Brahms’s Fifth,” because Brahms himself conceived the music for a very different purpose. Just because it says “sonata” and is four movements doesn’t mean that it is interchangeable with a symphony. The

\textsuperscript{86} Frisch, 149 (see chap. 5, n. 76).

\textsuperscript{87} MacDonald, “Veiled Symphonies” in Musgrave, \textit{Cambridge Companion}, 156 (see chap. 1, n. 15).
musical ideas themselves were conceived for the chamber group, and thus are inevitably tied to the genre, no matter how extravagantly one orchestrates it. Therefore, while this was a tremendously valuable experience, I would not do it again. Even Brahms became frustrated with such attempts; he wrote the following comments about orchestration in 1881:

I should not like to be persuaded again to arrange Chamber-Music for the orchestra. A few times I have done it; but at once repent and put the thing aside. Were it not that nowadays everything possible is being arranged for everything possible I should be inclined to think we wrote only confusedly nowadays anyhow.

Mind, I do not mean to try and dissuade you from doing it yourself—the thing seems to be the general fashion.

I myself, however, prefer to retain my ears and know what is a pianoforte piece and what an orchestral piece; what a song and what an aria; what a solo-quartet and what a chorus.88

I can see now how Brahms himself became frustrated with his experience in reworking his compositions for different kinds of ensembles.

The preparations for the transcription’s performance were equally educational. The first rehearsal was a difficult mess, which was a real lesson. I thought I had put so much “Brahms” into the music that the orchestra would instantly recognize the sound and play idiomatically. But despite being familiar with his style, the musicians did not have the sound of this specific piece in their ears, and my rehearsal technique was of limited use until the musicians felt confident with the music. As I looked around at the concentrated faces before me, I realized that the musicians were sight-reading what I had spent years working on—a feeling composers must often have when their works are first read. This has given me a keen awareness of the challenges one faces when presenting orchestral premieres in general, where the orchestra doesn’t have the music in its collective ear. Having premiered dozens of works, I knew this, but at that first

rehearsal, I got to experience it first-hand, and now can empathize with composers in this regard even more.

By the dress rehearsal, a number of musicians started to grasp the piece, but I made the mistake of selecting tempos traditionally taken by performers of the sonata. I had always heard the music much slower in my head, but did not trust my instincts that it would be necessary to make dramatic reductions in tempo, especially in the first movement.

I conducted the premiere performance of this orchestral transcription on December 8, 2005 with the UCLA Philharmonia. The program began with a performance of the original sonata, followed immediately by the orchestral transcription. Because of this, I felt that dramatically slower tempos in the orchestral transcription—heard immediately after the original sonata—would cause the orchestrated version to sound brooding in comparison. So I kept the tempos fast. The overall experience, however, equipped me with a keen understanding of the differences between chamber music and orchestral music in general, and has caused me to evaluate in more critical detail the essence of what makes orchestral music \textit{orchestral}.

This project has taught me to look at musical scores with a greater emphasis on how orchestration choices can inform performance practice issues. I no longer simply take for granted that orchestral music works as is, and appreciate more both the role of the composer in making orchestrational choices and the role of conductor in balancing the forces to make the composition “work” for a given ensemble. The conductor and performers must constantly make interpretive decisions in order to truly bring the music to life—decisions which are enhanced by a thorough understanding of the work’s compositional and orchestrational underpinnings.
PART III
Johannes Brahms

Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108
Orchestrated by John Murray Carter

INSTRUMENTATION:

2 FLUTES
2 OBOES
2 CLARINETs
2 BASSOONS
CONTRABASSOON
4 HORNs
2 TRUMPETS
3 TROMBONES
TUBA
TIMPANI
STRINGS
Johannes Brahms

Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, op. 108

Orchestrated by John Murray Carter

Allegro

2 Flutes
2 Oboes
2 Clarinets in B♭
2 Bassoons
1-2 in D
2 Horns
3-4 in F
2 Trumpets in D
2 Trombones
Violoncello
Double Bass
Bass Trombone and Tuba
Timpani in G, A, D
Fl
Ob
Kle (B)
Fag
C-Bsn
Hn (D)
Hn (F)
Tpt (D)
Tbn
B-Tbn
Tuba
Timb
Vn. I
Vn. II
Va
Vc
D.B.
III.

Un poco presto e con sentimento

2 Flutes
2 Clarinets in A
2 Bassoons
3-4 in D
Violin I.
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello
Double Bass

Un poco presto e con sentimento

p dolce
p
p
pizz.
arco
pizz.
arco
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IV.

Presto agitato

2 Flutes

2 Oboes

2 Clarinets in B

Bass Trombone

Contrabassoon

1-2 in D

2 Flutes

Viola

Bass Trombone and Tubo

Timpani in D, A, F

Presto agitato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass
Bsn.

C-Bsn.

Trb.

B.Trb.

Tuba

Timp.

Vn. I

Vn. II

Va.

Vc.

D.B.

E mutis in F
Fl.
Cl.
(B)
Bus.
C-Bus.
Hn.
(D)
Vn. I
Vn. II
Va.
Vc.
D.B.

182
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. (Bb)
Bsn.
C-Bsn.
Hn. (D)
Hn. (F)
Vn. I
Vn. II
Va.
Vc.
D.B.

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