THE BRASS INSTRUMENTS AS USED BY BRAHMS IN
HIS FOUR SYMPHONIES

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Brahms had a dislike of everything meretricious and artificial. Bright glittering colours in music made little appeal to him. He preferred the simple dark shades that helped the listener to concentrate on the substance of the music itself."¹ Instead of putting the emphasis on color in his orchestration, Brahms felt that the music was more important; not the orchestration. However, it would be a mistake to feel that he was deaf to orchestral color.²

As far as Brahms' compositions for orchestra are concerned, they constitute but a small portion when compared to the total output of his other works.³ The orchestral works were written mostly in the mature period of his art. Before attempting to write a symphony, Brahms schooled himself by composing a concerto, two serenades, and variations for orchestra.⁴

³Ibid., p. 447.
When discussing color in regard to Brahms' orchestration it is necessary to realize that his use of color is much different than that of his contemporaries. While composers such as Wagner were experimenting with and expanding the instrumentation of the orchestra to produce new color effects, Brahms was content to confine himself within the limits of the classical orchestra.

He used his instruments with great care and employed them at only the proper moment in order to enhance his musical ideas. The reason that some have for coming to the conclusion that Brahms' compositions are lacking in music color can be based on the fact that he affixed so much attention to the art of design in his music.\(^5\) There are several instances in which he changed the total plan of coloring in a composition without altering the structure.\(^6\) A good example of this change is the variations on a theme by Haydn of which there is a piano version as well as an orchestral version.\(^7\) When discussing color in regard to Brahms' orchestration, it is necessary to remember that his coloring effects are entirely his own and that they are not related to the general use of coloring in his time.


\(^{6}\) Ibid.

\(^{7}\) Ibid.
Piano Concerto In D Minor, Op. 15

Brahms' earliest orchestral composition, written during the years 1854-9, was the Piano Concerto in D Minor, Op. 15.\(^8\)

This composition was written during his *Sturm und Drang* period, and shows the influence of Schumann in its fullness of orchestral color.\(^9\)

In this work the orchestra and piano are treated as equals, and even in spite of the fact that the piano part is hard the listener still never has the feeling that it is one of virtuosity.\(^10\)

This work is scored for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, strings, and piano solo. The first and second horns are in D, and the third and fourth horns are in B flat basso. The two trumpets are also scored in D.\(^11\)

Brahms presented this concerto on January 27, 1859, in Leipzig, but the work was badly received because of its independence of structure and because of its lack of the usual characteristics of concertos.\(^12\) The performance itself was also a failure.\(^13\)

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\(^8\) Geiringer, *op. cit.*, p. 247.  
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 248.  
\(^10\) Ibid.  
\(^12\) Maitland, *op. cit.*, p. 445.  
\(^13\) Ibid.
The Two Serenades

From the age of twenty-one to that of twenty-five Brahms was the director of the orchestra and choir at the court of the Prince of Lippe-Detmold. During his stay here his duties were not many, and he found sufficient time to study the orchestral works of the classical masters. It was during this time that he wrote his two serenades. The influence of his studies is apparent in these two works; especially the first serenade.

When treating the two serenades it is necessary to realize that these compositions are those that are known as "Divertimenti," which is a class that is somewhere between chamber music and orchestral music. This form was freely cultivated in the eighteenth century; especially by Mozart. This is probably one of the reasons that Brahms selected this type of composition for his first essays in orchestral writing.

Serenade in D Major, Op. 11

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16 Lee, op. cit., p. 5.
17 Ibid., p. 6.
19 Ibid.
This serenade was originally written as a nonett for strings and winds (flute, 2 clarinets, horn, and bassoon), and was sent to Joachim in this form.\textsuperscript{20}

In December, 1858, Brahms decided to score this work for full orchestra.\textsuperscript{21} The score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, and strings.

This serenade has six movements, and uses the brass in five of these movements. In the first, second, fifth, and sixth the score calls for the first and second horns in D, third and fourth horns in E, and two trumpets in D. In the third movement the trumpets are left out, and the fourth movement excludes the brass entirely.\textsuperscript{22} So we find that the orchestral complement of this work, with the exception of the four horns, does not exceed the classical limits.\textsuperscript{23}

The instrumentation of this serenade is quite transparent, and there is frequent use of the wind instruments for solo passages which prohibits a heavy string ensemble; this in turn emphasizes the serenade-like character of this work.\textsuperscript{24} This is quite a contrast to the massive scoring of the Piano Concerto in D minor.\textsuperscript{25}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{20}Brahms, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{21}Brahms, \textit{Serenade in D major}, p. I.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23}Geiringer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 250.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
Serenade in A Major, Op. 16

This work, even more than the first serenade, is a true divertimento. The score calls for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, violas, cellos, and double basses. For the final movement Brahms adds the piccolo. In this composition Brahms uses only two horns instead of four, and not only are the trumpets and drums omitted, but also the violins are not used. Brahms also favors the bassoons and the lower register of the clarinets which give the work a deep, warm sound. The use of the violas for the highest strings seems to foretell the general kind of sounds that were beginning to interest Brahms.

The German Requiem, Op. 45

The German Requiem, even if it is a choral work, can not be left out as a composition leading up to the symphonies. The score has a larger complement of instruments than any of the other orchestral works discussed so far. Along with the normal classical instrumentation, the score calls for three trombones, tuba, and harp. The second and sixth movements use the piccolo, but as we have already seen, Brahms is not

\[26\] Ibid.
\[27\] Geiringer, op. cit., p. 250.
\[28\] Harrison, op. cit., p. 24.
unfamiliar with the use of this instrument. The first movement, following the pattern of the Serenade in A major, does not use the violins. The violas are the highest strings used, and the score employs three separate 'cello parts.\textsuperscript{30}

Again in this work Brahms shows his preference for the horn pitched in F, B flat, C, D, and E. For the most part he utilizes the trombones in their lower and middle registers adding to the overall dark quality of this composition.\textsuperscript{31}

\textbf{Variations On A Theme by Joseph Haydn, Op. 56a}

This work was written during the summer of 1873, and differs greatly in its technique of orchestration from the two serenades which were written fourteen years earlier.\textsuperscript{32}

In this composition it is apparent that Brahms had acquired the technique of his maturer years.\textsuperscript{33}

In this composition Brahms calls for a large orchestra which includes a double bassoon, piccolo, and triangle.\textsuperscript{34} The full instrumentation is for piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 2 trumpets, timpani, triangle, and strings. Brahms probably used the contrabassoon here to take the place of the obsolete serpent which is called for in Haydn's score.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{30}Brahms, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 1. \textsuperscript{31}Ibid.\textsuperscript{32}Geiringer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 251-2. \textsuperscript{33}Ibid.\textsuperscript{34}Lee, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9. \textsuperscript{35}Ibid.
In his use of the brass, Brahms wrote for four horns and two trumpets. The first and second horns are in B flat basso and the third and fourth horns are in E flat; later on in the work the third horn switches to F. The trumpets are in B flat, and he does not employ the trombones.

The theme itself is orchestrated very much as Haydn himself had scored it. The violins and violas are not employed at all, and the wind instruments, reinforced by the cellos and basses, present the theme. "The omission of the horns in the third bar calls to mind that these instruments in Haydn's time were incapable of anything much except open notes, and this feature has been faithfully reproduced in Brahms."

In his work leading up to the symphonies, Brahms has followed the patterns of orchestration set up by the classical masters. He seems to prefer the dark register of the brasses, and his love of the dark shadings of the orchestra is quite apparent. In these compositions Brahms is very much the traditionalist.

\[36\text{Ibid.}\] \[37\text{Ibid.}\] \[38\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 10.}\]
CHAPTER II

BRAHMS' USE OF THE BRASS INSTRUMENTS IN HIS
FOUR SYMPHONIES

The Symphonies

Brahms put off writing a symphony until his style had reached its full maturity, and some of the early sketches that were shown to friends, including Clara Schumann, prove that it took him up to twenty years to write the first symphony.\(^1\) Because of this long delay, there is no such thing as an immature symphony as far as Brahms is concerned, and his symphonies are the result of careful planning leading up to them.

Brahms' earliest ideas for the first movement of his first symphony were already formed in his Strum und Drang period, but even as late as 1862 the movement had not taken its final form.\(^2\) By September, 1876, his First Symphony in C minor, Op. 68, was completed.\(^3\) The likeness of this work with the ninth symphony of Beethoven is quite apparent.\(^4\) This sameness is not so much in the finale theme of the two

\(^1\)Julius Harrison, Brahms and His Four Symphonies (London, 1939), pp. 17-18.


\(^3\)Ibid.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 256.
symphonies, but in the . . . "similarity of the poetic content." The fundamental theme of human strife and creative impulse . . . has inspired alike Brahms' First and Beethoven's Fifth and Ninth Symphonies.

The instrumentation of this work is in all respects in the manner of Beethoven, but in his later symphonies Brahms begins to expand the instrumentation to a small degree.

The Second Symphony in D major, Op. 73, was written much more quickly than the first, and is different in character from the profound first. In the second symphony the mood is set by the woodwinds. The woodwinds, especially the flutes, oboes, and clarinets play a much more important role in the orchestration of this symphony than they did in the first. The whole mood of the symphony is brighter, and it has an "outdoor" quality about it. This feeling is somewhat reminiscent of the two serenades. As with most composers, Brahms' symphonies come in pairs, and the first two could quite easily be compared with Beethoven's fifth and sixth symphonies.

Between his first and second symphonies Brahms' compositions for orchestra include the Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in D major, Op. 77, the Academic Festival Overture.

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5 Ibid. 6 Ibid.


8 Geiringer, op. cit., p. 257. 9 Ibid.

Brahms' *Symphony No. 3 in F major*, Op. 90, was completed in 1883, and is a good example of the extreme care that he took in the orchestration of his music. The original manuscript which is in the possession of Jerome Stonborough in Vienna shows pencilled changes in the orchestration that Brahms more than likely made at rehearsals.¹⁰ Many consider this symphony to be the height of Brahms' orchestral writing.¹¹

In his *Fourth Symphony in E minor*, Op. 89, it is apparent that Brahms was more than ever tied with the past.¹² The orchestration of this work is more intended to stabilize massive effects, and is supplemented with the addition of a piccolo, contra-bassoon, and a third kettledrum.¹³ The first two movements were completed in the summer of 1884, and the third and fourth a year later. The interesting aspect of this symphony is Brahms choice of the chaconne for the form of the final movement and his last orchestral writing. This form, which was used in the eighteenth century, had never before been used in a symphony.¹⁴

¹⁰Ibid., p. 263.


¹³Ibid., p. 265.

Brahms' orchestration has often been criticized, and such terms as "muddy," "thick," and "heavy" have been used in describing his use of the orchestra. While other composers around him were exploring the color possibilities and the sonorities that were possible with additional instruments, Brahms was content with using the ordinary classical orchestra. The following table will illustrate the difference between the classical and romantic composer in his choice of instruments.

**TABLE I**

**PLAN OF ORCHESTRA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments Used</th>
<th>Brahms' Symphonies</th>
<th>Wagner's Ring of the Nibelung</th>
<th>Elgar's Second Symphony</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flutes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piccolos</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oboes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Horn</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarinets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Clarinet</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassoons</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contra Bassoon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horns</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumpets</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trombones</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tubas</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timpani</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percussion (extra)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harps</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strings</td>
<td>(No specified number)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(No specified number)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
instruments.\textsuperscript{15} This comparison with Wagner illustrates how Brahms remained true to the classical tradition as far as expansion of the orchestra is concerned. The comparison with Elgar shows the expansion of the orchestra to meet the demands in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{16}

In his orchestration, Brahms usually has a tendency to avoid the upper register of the violins, and very rarely does he divide them.\textsuperscript{17} He treats the violas with more importance than most composers, and quite often separates them into two parts.\textsuperscript{18} He does not seem to care to mix the different sections of the orchestra, and in general prefers the use of the lower register of the instruments. Brahms also uses the woodwinds in thirds and sixths.\textsuperscript{19}

If we were to answer the critics who feel that Brahms' orchestration is lacking in originality, it might be done in this manner: "he had a sense of orchestral colour which was as personal as Wagner's was, but at first sight it was not clear, and the reading of one of his symphonies was in his day a test of a conductor's insight more severe than that of any contemporary work."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15}Harrison, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 72. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 73.
\textsuperscript{17}P. A. Browne, \textit{Brahms: The Symphonies} (London, 1933), p. 10.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{19}Ibid.
Use of the French Horn

Although valves had been in general use for some time, Brahms still preferred the natural horn. The natural horn was limited to the notes of the harmonic series which are indicated below. The "C" series is given because composers transposed the differently pitched horns to this series, the horn player putting his instrument in the indicated pitch and reading from the "C" series.

![Fig. 1--"C" Harmonic Series](image)

In his symphonies, Brahms used four horns instead of the usual two that are associated with the classical orchestra. Actually the reason for this was not so much that it increases the amount of horn sound in the orchestra, but that it gives the composer a wider choice of open notes. The symphonies call for two pairs of horns pitched in two different keys by means of "crooks." Each player would supply himself with a

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set of these crooks, and would change according to the demands of the music. As mentioned before, Brahms transposed all his horn parts to the "C" series. Table II indicates what pitch the horn sounds when crooked in the various keys.

**TABLE II**

**TABLE SHOWING WHAT PITCH THE HORN SOUNDS WHEN CROOKED IN VARIOUS KEYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horn In</th>
<th>Sounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B flat-alto</td>
<td>a major 2nd lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a minor 3rd lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>a perfect 4th lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>a perfect 5th lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>a minor 6th lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E flat</td>
<td>a major 6th lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>a minor 7th lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>an octave lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B flat-basso</td>
<td>a major 9th lower than written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the most part Brahms uses the horns pitched in C, D, E flat, E, F, and B flat. The use of two pairs of horns gives a composer a wide spread of notes in the natural harmonics; thus by using four horns, Brahms was able to exploit the natural horn. If a composer was to write for two pairs of natural horns, he would have the following notes at his disposal.

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Fig. 2--Notes Possible with Two Pairs of Horns

In the above example the notes with the stems up indicate the notes of the natural harmonic series which are possible on a horn pitched in C, and the notes with the stems down indicate the notes of the natural harmonic series which are possible on a horn pitched in F. Horns pitched in C and F are used in this example because this combination is quite common with Brahms.

In reading Brahms' scores, a characteristic applied to his writing for horns that must be taken into account is his method of scoring for the horns in bass clef. The part is written a perfect fourth lower (horns in F) than the sound wanted, instead of a perfect fifth higher. This also applies to the horns in other keys according to their individual transposition. This practice is no longer used today, but

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\[23\] Ibid., p. 119.
was quite common with Brahms and his contemporaries. The following example will show how this is done.

Fig. 3—Method of writing for horns in bass clef.  

Around the middle of the eighteenth century a horn player named Anton Joseph Hampel discovered that by inserting his right hand into the bell of his instrument it was possible for him to lower the pitch by a half step, and if he inserted his hand in as far as possible he could raise the pitch a half step. This method, which is known as "stopping" the horn, actually has three degrees known as half-stopping, three-quarter stopping, and whole stopping. "The difference between half and three-quarter stopping is so vague that the methods of producing certain notes vary greatly."  

The soft sound that results from this "stopping" of the horn is the tone quality that is generally associated with the horn today. This is somewhat different than the bright

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24 Ibid.  
26 Ibid.
sound of the open horn in the first half of the eighteenth century. The following example will show how it is possible to play the C major scale on the F horn by use of the right hand in the stopping technique. (The plus mark is used to indicate full stop.) The notes which are performed full stop

![Horn in F](image)

Fig. 4--Use of the right hand in stopping technique

definitely have a muffled quality to them and were generally avoided by Brahms. The following example will serve to illustrate the use of the right hand in Brahms' music. In

![Horn in F](image)

Fig. 5--Brahms, Symphony No. 3, third movement, measures 120-122.

27 Ibid., p. 424.
the preceding example the E flat according to the "C" series is impossible to perform without an adjustment of the lips and the use of the right hand technique. The horn player by using this technique is able to lower the tenth harmonic E to E flat.

Brahms used the horn quite often for solo passages, and he fully exploited the lyric quality of the horn in these passages. It is interesting to contrast this use of the horn with composers that preceded him. This contrast can be seen when Brahms' passages are compared to Beethoven's use of the horns in the third movement of his *Eroica Symphony.*

Fig. 6--Beethoven, Symphony No. 3, third movement, measures 166-181.
Beethoven's use of the horn in this passage is in keeping with the Haydn and Mozart tradition of using the horn in the style of the old hunting horn. Very rarely does Brahms exploit the horn in this manner. The following passage is characteristic of Brahms use of the horn as a solo instrument.

Fig. 7--Brahms, Symphonie No. 1, fourth movement, measures 30-33.

Up to this point the horns have been held in reserve, and the effect produced by this passage proves that Brahms was not unaware of tone color. The passage is preceded by the full orchestra sounding at full volume; after the timpani roll the horn enters with one of the most effective solo passages for the horn in all music. The effect is even more amazing when one realizes the simplicity of the theme. It uses only notes that are part of the harmonic series, and "if ever Brahms needed justification, on musical grounds, for his devotion to the principle of the old-fashioned hand-horn, here it is." 28

Later in the same movement Brahms uses the first horn again on the same theme, but with a canonic answer supplied by the second horn.

28 Harrison, op. cit., p. 83.
In his second symphony the horns are used to introduce the first theme. Here again the theme is as simple as it is beautiful. This theme has often been compared to the first theme of Beethoven's third symphony.\textsuperscript{29}

The use of the horns on this theme helps to produce the "outdoor" sound that is characteristic of this symphony. The

\textsuperscript{29}George Grove, \textit{Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies}, (London, 1903), p. 59.
low B in the second horn part is difficult to produce, but it is quite possible on the hand-horn. Later on in the development section he again uses the horn to present this theme. This time the theme is in a new key and the horn part is extremely high. The use of the horn in the upper register is unusual in that Brahms generally seems to prefer to write for the horn in a more comfortable register.

Fig. 10—Brahms, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 183-186

In the second movement of the Fourth Symphony, the horns are again used to introduce the first theme.

Fig. 11—Brahms, Symphony No. 4, second movement, measures 1-5
The flutes, oboes, and bassoons reinforce the horns in the second measure, but without a doubt the passage belongs to the horns. In fact, Brahms again presents this theme in the horns near the end of the movement as though to make sure that it is understood that it actually belongs to the horns. As with two previous examples the theme uses only the notes that are part of the natural harmonic series.

Another characteristic of his use of the horns is to combine them with the woodwinds. Here is found his love of writing for the woodwinds in thirds and sixths.

Fig. 12—Brahms, Symphony No. 1, first movement, measures 1-3

In the above example the third and fourth horns are used to add body to the woodwind sound. The first and second horns reinforce the famous pedal C of this passage. Brahms employs
the horns quite often on pedal points, and usually this use is in conjunction with the timpani or the basses. The dark almost mysterious quality of the horn in this register lends itself to this type of passage, and Beethoven used it quite often in his symphonies.

In the third movement of the first symphony the first horn is used on a counter-melody to the clarinet and bassoons.

\[\text{Fig. 13}--\text{Brahms, Symphony No. 1, third movement, measures 1-5.}\]

The use of the horn in this passage is interesting in that at first glance the clarinet seems to be the prominent instrument, but the horn theme must be performed with the same emphasis as the clarinet theme. Without this emphasis the beauty of this passage is lost.
The following illustration is a good example of Brahms' use of the horns to reinforce the woodwind sound and also his writing for the woodwinds in thirds and sixths.

Fig. 14—Brahms, Symphony No. 3, second movement, measures 76 and 77.

Quite often Brahms uses the horns in unison with the woodwinds or strings. This use would seem to contradict the statement made earlier that Brahms did not like to mix the
different sections of the orchestra. However, he seems to use the horns as a very flexible section of the orchestra and mixes them without restraint throughout his symphonies. The following example will illustrate his use of the horns with strings. Since the horns are common to both the woodwinds and brasses and blend well with all sections of the orchestra, it would be reasonable to assume that their reinforcing of the strings is quite natural.

![Fig. 15--Brahms, Symphony No. 4, first movement, measures 301-304.](image)

A question which should be answered is whether or not Brahms used the valved horn or the **Waldhorn** (natural horn) in his symphonies. The first point that would seem to be in favor of the Waldhorn is that most of the important horn passages in his symphonies are written in such a way that just the notes which are part of the natural harmonic series are needed to perform them. Brahms' preoccupation with the past would help one to come to the conclusion that this aspect of his music would carry over in the type of
instrument which he would prefer to play the horn parts in his symphonies.

In his Trio for Piano, Violin, and Horn in E flat, Op. 40, Brahms specifies that the horn part must be played on the wald-horn. On examining the score, it is apparent that the horn part is as difficult, as far as its use of notes that are not part of the natural harmonic series, as any of the horn parts in the four symphonies. The following example will help to point this out.

Fig. 16--Brahms, Trio in E flat, first movement, measures 49-55.

Evidence that he wanted the horn part played on the wald-horn can be found in the corrected proof of the copy that Brahms sent back to the publisher. On this proof, Brahms stated that the wald-horn, not the valve-horn, should be printed on the title page.30

Further proof of his preference for the wald-horn can be found in a letter he wrote to his friend Dietrich who was the director of the orchestra at Oldenburg. In this letter which was concerned with the Trio, Brahms stated that "... your horn player would do me a great favor if he would do like the Carlsruhe man and practice the French (natural) horn for some weeks beforehand, so as to be able to play it on that."\textsuperscript{31} The fact that he also wrote his horn parts, as far as differently pitched horns are concerned, in the out-dated style of the classical masters helps us to draw the conclusion that he preferred the wald-horn in his symphonies.

Whether or not his symphonies were always performed on this instrument is another question. Since valves were already in general use, many horn players who had become accustomed to them were probably reluctant to take the time necessary to develop the technique of the wald-horn just to play Brahms' music.\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{32}In a letter to Brahms, Clara Schumann states that "we had studied your trio ... very well, and the horn player was excellent. I do not think he spluttered once, and that says a great deal; though it is true that he played on a ventil horn. He would not be induced to try the wald-horn;" Drinker, op. cit., p. 113.
Use of the Trumpet

In 1830 a leading trumpet player in Berlin, Karl Bargans, wrote an article dealing with the trumpet which was in general use at this time. He stated in this article that the trumpet used was the natural trumpet which had been reduced in length by being doubled up four times. This enabled the performer to stop the instrument and thus play some of the notes that were not part of the natural harmonics. He offered the following scale for the instrument.

\[ \text{Fig. 17--Scale for natural trumpet} \]

The circles in the above figure indicate the open notes, the half-circles indicate the stopped notes, and the cross indicates the fully stopped notes. The fully stopped notes were extremely difficult to produce, and because of the change it had on the trumpet tone, were not often used. It is felt that this is the type of trumpet for which Brahms scored his

\[ ^{33} \text{Carse, op. cit., p. 412.} \]
\[ ^{34} \text{Ibid.} \]
\[ ^{35} \text{Ibid.} \]
symphonies, and examination of these works will point this out. The following example will illustrate his use of this trumpet. The E-flats in the first and second trumpet parts

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 18--Brahms, Symphony No. 4, third movement, measures 106-113

must be performed with the use of the hand and by "lipping" the notes down from the E which is the natural harmonic. Brahms very rarely employed these notes, and most of the notes written in his trumpet parts use only the notes that are part of the natural harmonics. Although he did not use these stopped notes often, he did use them more than did Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven. This was due to the fact that Brahms' harmony is more complex and in his symphonies he strays to more remote keys than did these classical masters. Also the development of the hand technique was not in use during the classical period. To illustrate the point that Brahms more often employed the notes that were not natural to the harmonic series than did Beethoven, a comparison with Beethoven's ninth
symphony can be made. In this symphony there is but one single instance in which Beethoven used a note that was not part of the natural harmonics of the natural horn.

![Trumpet in D](image)

Fig. 19--Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, first movement, measure 267

Like the horns, the trumpets must use various crooks. The following is a table which indicates the notes that the trumpet sounds when crooked in the various keys.

**TABLE III**

**TABLE SHOWING WHAT PITCH THE TRUMPET SOUNDS WHEN CROOKED IN VARIOUS KEYS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trumpet In</th>
<th>Sounding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>a perfect 4th higher than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>a major 3rd higher than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E flat</td>
<td>a minor 3rd higher than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>a major 2nd higher than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>as written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B flat</td>
<td>a major 2nd lower than written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>a minor 3rd lower than written</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

36 Kennan, *op. cit.*, p. 131.
Brahms uses two trumpets throughout his symphonies, and they generally serve a tonic-dominant function, as was in keeping with the classical tradition. The following are examples of this use.

Fig. 20--Brahms, Symphony No. 1, second movement, measures 112-115.

Fig. 21--Brahms, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 390-395

Fig. 22--Brahms, Symphony No. 3, fourth movement, measures 40-43

In the preceding examples the two trumpets are written in octaves and thirds as is common with Brahms. He also scores them in fifths. A comparison with an example of
Beethoven's method of scoring for the trumpets will show his influence on Brahms. The trumpets also primarily serve a tonic-dominant function in Beethoven's music.

Fig. 23--Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, first movement, measures 415-420.

There are a few cases where the trumpet plays a more important part in the orchestration. Usually they are employed with the horns in a fanfare-like passage and serve to increase the brilliance of the sound. Because of the difficulty of this passage, Brahms employs only the notes which are part of the natural harmonics.

It would be difficult to say whether the trumpet parts were played on the old natural trumpet or the valved instrument. As with the horns, it would be safe to assume that there were probably trumpet players who did not want to take the time necessary to develop the hand technique which was needed to play the notes which were not part of the natural series on the natural trumpet, and thus they quite probably played these parts on the valved trumpet.
The following statement will help to clarify why Brahms preferred the old natural trumpet even when the valved instrument was in general use.

The transition from the old natural trumpet to the valve trumpet was not simply a matter of the addition of valves. Changes in the length and bore of the instrument took place, with the result that the modern trumpet is a great deal smaller than its ancestor, has a brighter and lighter tone quality and is more flexible.37

37 Sachs, op. cit., p. 434.
Use of the Trombones

Brahms utilizes the trombones sparingly in his symphonies, and with the exception of the second movement of the second symphony, he employs them only in the outer movements. Since "trombones have not changed appreciably since 1600," it would be reasonable to assume that Brahms scored for the instrument which was in general use.

Brahms used the trombones much like Beethoven, but he utilized them much more effectively. In general, both composers employed the trombones as supporting instruments. Beethoven, for example, uses the trombones to support the vocal parts in his ninth symphony.

Fig. 25--Beethoven, Symphony No. 9, fourth movement, measures 13-16

Harrison, _op. cit._, p. 87.
Brahms quite often uses the trombones to support another section of the orchestra. In the following illustration he employs the trombones in such a way as to add sonority to the string section on an important motive.

Fig. 26--Brahms, Symphony No. 2, first movement, measures 282-285
In his first symphony, the trombones play for only 83 bars out of a total of 1,262.\textsuperscript{39} Brahms holds the trombones in reserve throughout the symphony and does not call on them until the fourth movement. When he does utilize them the effect that he produces is one of the greatest moments in music.

![Musical notation image]

\textit{Fig. 27--Brahms, Symphony No. 1, fourth movement, measures}

This beautiful effect is even more striking when the simplicity of the passage is realized. Beethoven used three-part chorale writing for trombones in his symphonies but

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}
never with this result. This use of the trombones bears witness to the fact that "Brahms used his instruments with great judgment, aided by a far-seeing vision that realized the supreme virtue of holding in reserve certain tone-colours until the moment they could make their full effect." This would certainly answer the critics who say his orchestration is monotonous and dull. Another example of this use of the trombones can be found in the third symphony.

Fig. 28--Brahms, Symphony No. 3, fourth movement, measures 64 and 65

Here again the trombones have been held in reserve until they are needed to sound the Frei aber Froh motto, which introduces the symphony and keeps reappearing throughout. In this case Brahms adds to the effect by using the trombones along with the flutes, oboes, and horns.

\[40\] Ibid.
Another characteristic use of the trombones by Brahms is to utilize them to enhance the harmony of a few climaxes by adding their noble tone and weight to the mass sonority.

Fig. 29—Brahms, Symphony No. 4, fourth movement, measures 129-131
"Dark and threatening in the deepest register, brilliant and triumphant in the high compass. The piano is full but somewhat heavy, the forte powerful and sonorous."\textsuperscript{41} This statement by Rimsky-Korsakov concerning the trombone can very readily be applied to Brahms' use of this noble instrument in his four symphonies.

Use of the Tuba

Brahms makes use of the tuba in only the second of his four symphonies. It is interesting that he should wait till this symphony to employ this instrument and then reject it in the last two. There are many who feel that it was a mistake to use the tuba in this instance, and that the contra-bassoon would have been a better instrument to use.

It is almost a matter for regret that the Bass Tuba appears in the Second Symphony. Brahms' thickening of the bass line of his harmony by the use of the Contra Bassoon is a remarkable piece of insight . . . . Why was the Tuba substituted in No. 2? The work hardly gains by the change, for, although there are a few indispensable notes here and there . . . there is not an effect in the music that could not have been obtained by the retention of the Contra Bassoon; not an effect that would have suffered had we never known in the Second Symphony the sound of that strange and uncompanionable instrument. In the opinion of many, a single Tuba is hardly worth-while, for the tone-colour dominates an orchestra most alarmingly owing to its lack of combinative quality.\textsuperscript{42}


\textsuperscript{42}Harrison, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 71.
Whether the tuba is a strange and uncompanionable instrument is a matter of opinion. The fact that it is a brass instrument would certainly be an argument in its favor for employing it with the trombones, and it would be difficult to say that the timbre of the tuba does not enhance the sound of the trombone section.

Usually when Brahms employs the tuba with the trombones it supplies the bass line for the typical three-part writing employed in his scoring for the trombones.

Fig. 30—Brahms, Symphony No. 2, second movement, measures 87 and 88

However, he does not always confine the tuba to the above function, and sometimes it is used to double the brass line with the string basses. The following illustration shows the tuba utilized to reinforce the string basses.

Brahms employs the tuba in his Academic Festival Overture, Op. 80, and his Tragic Overture, Op. 81. Since both of these works were written after the second symphony it would be safe
to assume that he was not entirely dissatisfied with the effect the tuba had on his orchestration in the second symphony. Mention should also be made of the fact that he employed the tuba in his *German Requiem* which was written before the second symphony. The fact that he used both the tuba and contrabassoon in the *Academic Festival Overture* would indicate that he had definite reasons for using only the tuba in this symphony. This becomes even more clear when examination of the score of this overture reveals that there are times when the tuba is employed in its characteristic way with the trombones without the help of the contra-bassoon. The following example will serve to illustrate this use of the tuba with the trombones which is quite common in the second symphony. Many composers have used the tuba with the trombones in their symphonies with eminent success as Brahms has done in his second symphony.
Rimsky-Korsakov says of the tuba that it is "thick and rough in quality, less characteristic than the trombone, but valuable for the strength and beauty of its low tones. Like the double bass and double bassoon, the tuba is eminently useful for doubling, an octave lower, the bass group to which it belongs."^3

Brahms scores for the tuba in this manner, and usually utilizes them as the bass voice of the brass section.

Conclusions

Brahms did not write a symphony until his art had reached its full maturity. His early works definitely show the influence of the classical masters, especially the two serenades. This influence was carried over in his symphonies and is quite

apparent in his orchestration. With the exception of the tuba in the second symphony, his orchestration is of the classical tradition. Those that criticize his orchestration should give closer attention to such passages as the famous horn passage in the fourth movement of the first symphony. He never overloads his orchestration and uses just enough instruments to fit the contrapuntal texture of his music. However, in the more homophonic sections of his compositions we find that he is prone to the doubling of parts.

It is true that he uses four horns instead of the usual two that are associated with the classical orchestra, but this was necessary in order for him to utilize the old natural horn. The use of two pairs of horns pitched in different keys allotted more notes of the natural harmonics to him.

In his use of the horns he preferred the wald-horn. All of the beautiful solo passages for horn in his symphonies utilize only the notes that are part of the natural harmonics of the instrument. Brahms exploited the lyric quality of the horn instead of the hunting-horn quality which is common to the classical period. Also he rejected the high brilliant use of the horn which was so characteristic of his contemporaries. This is not to say that these other composers did not use the horns in the same way that Brahms did, but when one thinks of the horn in association with Brahms, the first thing that comes to mind is the beautiful lyric passages.
that he wrote for the instrument. His preference for the old wald-horn was due to the fact that he felt that the natural notes on this instrument had more of the true characteristic sound of the horn. Although it is true that he did not always employ notes that were part of the natural harmonics of the instrument in his horn parts, it must be remembered that these notes were quite easily performed with the right hand technique of the wald-horn.

As far as his use of the trumpet is concerned, it would be safe to assume that he was preoccupied with the old natural instrument. His trumpet parts like his horn parts do not always use the notes which are part of the natural harmonics, but it was not a difficult matter to perform these notes with the stopping technique. Like the classical masters his trumpets primarily serve a tonic-dominant function in his music.

Although he utilized the trombones sparingly, he still used them in such a way as to produce some of the most beautiful effects in all music. Like Beethoven he is fond of writing for the trombones in a three-part chorale style. However, it is difficult to find anything in Beethoven's works which can compare to Brahms' use of this method of scoring for the trombones. The most striking example of this can be found in the fourth movement of the first symphony. The way he holds the trombones in reserve throughout this symphony
until just the right moment would certainly prove that he was not unaware of tone-color.

His use of the tuba in the second symphony is interesting in that it makes one wonder why he deviated from the classical orchestra by employing this instrument instead of the contra-bassoon. Certainly the fact that he used both the tuba and the contra-bassoon in the Academic Festival Overture would lead one to the conclusion that he was cognizant to the differences in the timbre of the two instruments and their blending characteristics. Usually when he utilized the tuba it was in conjunction with the three trombones, the tuba supplying the bass line for the characteristic chorale writing of these instruments.

It is apparent that he used considerable care in writing for the brasses as well as the other instruments and had complete command of the use of their individual colors.

His meticulous attention to detail in both the art of design and the orchestration of his music is obvious in his symphonies. Brahms was not a prolific composer, and he took much time in working out his ideas. The following statement by Brahms to his friend, George Henschel, will serve to illustrate Brahms' creed in regard to his composing.

There is no real creating without hard work. That which you would call invention, that is to say a thought, is simply an inspiration from above, for which I am not responsible, which is no merit of mine. Yes, it is at present, a gift, which I ought even to despise until I have made
it my own by right of hard work. And there need be no hurry about that either. It is as with the seed corn: it germinates unconsciously and in spite of ourselves. When I, for instance, have found the first phrase of a song, I might shut the book there and then, go for a walk, do some other work, and perhaps not think of it again for months. Nothing, however, is lost. If afterward I approach the subject again, it is sure to have taken shape; I can now really begin to work at it.44

44Harrison, op. cit., p. 18.
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