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Orchestration as a Means of the Synthesis of Classical and Romantic Approaches in Brahms' Second Piano Concerto

Vadim Rakochi

Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy

ABSTRACT

The synthesis of 'Classical' and 'Romantic' concepts in the orchestration of Brahms' Second Piano Concerto is discussed. The composer rethinks ways of presenting musical material in the orchestra by conceptualising both the 'Classical' orchestral structure (the size, the approach to the brass section) and the Romantic-like treatment of solos, alternations, etc. as unified domains.

Keywords: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, orchestration, synthesis of Classical and Romantic approaches

IZVLEČEK

Obravnavana je sinteza 'klasicističnih' in 'romantičnih' konceptov v orkestraciji Brahmsovega Drugega klavirskega koncerta. Skladatelj na novo misli načine predstavitve glasbenega materiala v orkestru tako, da konceptualizira tako 'klasicistično' orkestralno strukturo (velikost zasedbe, uporaba trobil) in romanticistično obravnavo solov, alternacij itd. kot poenotenih domen.

Ključne besede: Brahms, Drugi klavirski koncert, orkestracija, sinteza klasicističnih in romantičnih pristopov

Introduction

Despite the ongoing critical and performative interests in his symphonic works, Brahms' approach to the orchestra (and in particular, the traits of his presentation of musical material in the orchestra) has rarely been given the attention it deserves.* This could be because negative opinions of Brahms' orchestrations still lurk.¹ Or because "the art of orchestration is the realization and undercutting of cultural expectations."² Or because *our* expectations of the 'ideal' orchestra of Brahms do not take his real intentions fully into account. Brahms' work with the orchestra is especially distinctive due to its relatively modest size (where every instrument may play a significant role), unlike the scoring of Liszt, Wagner or Bruckner where the orchestra is often much larger, the textures are thicker, and the effect is often provided by distinctive and self-sufficient groups or solos.

One can easily find a number of studies of Brahms' symphonic oeuvre with a focus on musical forms and harmonic language. The composer's tendency towards dualism through the lens of harmony (minor–major or plagal–authentic contrasts),³ texture (a combination of contrapuntal and homophonic strategies)⁴ or genre (old and new genres juxtaposed)⁵ has been considered by scholars in some depth. However, an examination of these traits in Brahms' instrumental concertos – focusing on the role of orchestration, special orchestral techniques, and characteristic features of the material presentation – is a major gap in Brahms scholarship. In his Second Piano Concerto (op. 83), Brahms offered an unprecedented synthesis by combining 'Classical' orchestral structures (the size,⁶ the approach to the brass section, and the sound of the orchestra as

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- 1 See, for example, Moore Hilarie Clark, "The Structural Role of Orchestration in Brahms' Music: A Study of the Third Symphony" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 1991).
- 2 Kathryn E. Steetle, "Orchestrational Markedness and Its Effect on Form" (PhD dissertation, Florida State University, 2007), 18.
- 3 Margaret Notley, "Plagal Harmony as Other: Asymmetrical Dualism and Instrumental Music by Brahms," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (2005): 90–130, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jm.2005.22.1.90>.
- 4 Hans Gál, *Johannes Brahms: His Work and Personality*, translated by Josef Stein (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963); or Ronald Knox, "Brahms and His Religion," *Il Saggiatore musicale* 22, no. 2 (2015): 215–249.
- 5 Bruno Marc Plantard, "Johannes Brahms: Finale de la Quatrième Symphonie: Vers une cinétique de la trajectoire," *Musurgia* 4, no. 1 (1997): 25–41; or Rosen Charles, "Brahms: Influence, Plagiarism, and Inspiration," in *Critical Entertainments: Music Old and New* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- 6 Brahms's orchestra in the Second Piano Concerto is moderate and comprises doubled woodwinds, four horns, a pair of trumpets and trombones, the timpani (recall that three latter instruments were used in the first and second movements only) and strings. Unlike Wagner and Bruckner,

a whole and its instrumental sections, the colour of orchestration, expressive functions of different instruments, the role of counterpoint in an orchestral composition, etc.) with Romantic⁷ approaches to orchestration (the role of the in-the-orchestra solo, types of doublings, approach to alternations, different timbral effects, etc.) as integrated domains.⁸ This resulted in what became a particular (and easily recognisable) character of Brahmsian orchestral sound. All the above points to the necessity of paying special attention to Brahms' 'concerto orchestra'.

In this paper, I focus on the synthesis of different origins in orchestration as a certain form of dualism in Brahms' Second Piano Concerto. My first objective is to examine how the composer utilises and develops what I will refer to as a 'Romantic' approach to doublings, alternations, and other features of orchestration. Hence comes the necessity to examine the methods he uses to present a musical idea in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (with 'Romantic' approach to solo, ensemble or section) in a 'Classical' orchestra (by structure and mode of use of the brass and percussion instruments). Moreover, this essay posits the stylistic synthesis in this concerto's orchestration as an inspiration for twentieth-century approaches to the orchestra.

To accomplish these goals, I first use score analysis to determine the ways in which the composer combines different influences in his orchestration and moulds them into one unified whole. I then use 'solo analysis'⁹ as my specific and original methodology for researching the 'concerto orchestra'. I apply solo analysis to examine the shift in the relationships between out-of-the-orchestra

Mahler, and Richard Strauss, Brahms deals with relatively small orchestra. Walter Frisch emphasises that Brahms was quite content with his Fourth Symphony presentation at Meiningen by only forty-eight musicians: "he [Brahms] argued against supplementing the strings for a richer sonority." Walter Frisch, *Brahms* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 164.

- 7 One should take into account different approaches to the term Romanticism in general. The discussion regarding its beginning and end is in process. For example, Michael Vaillancourt estimates that evoking the Romantic, for a composer writing in 1881, is yet another kind of historicism. On this notion of evoking past styles and mixing them in an entirely new configuration, see: Vaillancourt Michael, "Brahms and the Historical Sublime," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 46, no. 1 (2015): 73–94, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24327328>.
- 8 In this context I define 'integrated domains' as a fusion of different origins in one whole. Each 'domain' represents a set of certain morphological characteristics, figurative systems, means of expression, and creative techniques (in particular, in orchestration), which determine typical traits of Classical and Romantic musical styles.
- 9 I consider the function and role of soloistic writing in the concerto by employing my own classification of solos' types and thus applying 'solo analysis' as a particular methodology of the concerto orchestra's research. Unaccompanied play I call 'absolute solo', accompanied play is 'soloing timbre', play on neutral background of an instrument (or an instrumental section) is 'quasi solo', the union of two (three, four, etc.) instruments is 'double (triple, quadruple, etc.) solo'. To achieve greater precision in the analysis of orchestration, facilitate the clarity of formulations, and make each case and each term semantically strong, I combine qualitative (to classify the types of solo, possible purposes to use this or that type) and quantitative (a number of each type of solo, their juxtapositions) aspects.

and in-the-orchestra¹⁰ soloists and the orchestra in order to determine dramatic, structural, and expressive functions of the instrumental solos in the Brahmsian orchestra.¹¹ A retrospective point of view and stylistic method will be applied to study the changes of the ‘solo technique’.

Dualism in the Brahmsian Orchestra

Despite widespread use of particular musical dualisms (major–minor, diatonic–chromatic, Beethovenian–Wagnerian, tonal–modal), Brahms’ instrumental compositions manifest this principle in such diverse ways that many researchers mention it as a particular feature of Brahms’ style. Discussing his Violin Concerto, Karen Leistra-Jones considers the work to be a combination of strict logic and spontaneous improvisation.¹² As such, it should be noted that each of the two constituent parts (the violin solo and the orchestra) relies mostly on one or another of these two elements. The part of the violin soloist is characterised by a significantly freer presentation of the material and a sense of unexpectedness (for example, in the timing and the content of the introduction of the soloist in the first movement after the orchestral exposition) thanks to the lack of conventional corresponding harmonic support from the orchestra. The orchestral writing mostly relies on a well-structured and balanced logic to embody a sense of stability (based on the dominance of vertical constructions) or (in many places) the unity of both elements (logic and improvisation), achieved through contrapuntal techniques. Such an approach arguably enhances complexity whilst also reducing spontaneity in the deployment of musical material.

Although the Second Piano Concerto allocates its material in a similar fashion, the dualism is generally less noticeable, at least at first glance. Obviously, the explanation should be founded not only on Brahms’ maturity in the concerto genre, but also on the choice of the piano as a solo instrument with a different approach to breadth and dimension than that in the Violin Concerto. The piano has more potential to combine improvisation and logic as a whole,

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- 10 To avoid confusion, I distinguish between the ‘out-of-the-orchestra solo’ – an instrument playing outside the orchestra, as in the instrumental concerto (e.g., the pianist in a piano concerto) – and the ‘in-the-orchestra’ solo – an instrument that is part of the orchestra (e.g., the horn is the in-the-orchestra soloist at the beginning of Brahms’s Second Piano Concerto). This distinction may be used in different musical genres, regardless of the presence or absence of a soloist out-of-orchestra.
- 11 Such solo analysis might be applied not only to Brahms’ concerto orchestra (in his Violin or Double Concertos) but can be useful for the broader concept of Brahms’ orchestral concept beyond the ‘concerto orchestra’ and used for all Brahms’ symphonic works. However, it is more distinctive in the concerto orchestra in which in-the-orchestra and out-of-the-orchestra soloists are in the opposition not only with the orchestra but in relation to each other.
- 12 Karen Leistra-Jones, “Improvisational Idyll: Joachim’s “Presence” and Brahms’ Violin Concerto, Op. 77,” *19th-Century Music* 38, no. 3 (2015): 243–271, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ncm.2015.38.3.243>.

both in the solo sections and in places where it appears in ensemble with another soloist (for example, in the dialogue between the piano and the French horn: mm. 1–6 of the first movement). The horn part is emphatically linear because of the narrow range of the instrument (just an octave) and absence of any accompaniment to provide vertical support, and because it's primarily stepwise. The piano's chordal texture covers five and a half octaves, and the pedal adds reverberation with a particular dimensional effect. Thus, the horn acts like a carrier of strict logic (just an initial motive, a germ for the whole Concerto). This motive is a bit restrained evoking nostalgia, distance, absence. The piano develops this germinal motive within a significantly wider range and with particular warmth (due to the specific harmonic resonances). The musical image is transformed due to the interaction between the two elements: the "strict logic" and almost "spontaneous improvisation" are overlapping.

The image shows a page of a musical score for the first six measures of the first movement of Brahms' Second Piano Concerto. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. From top to bottom, the staves are: 2 Hörner in B basso (French Horns in B-flat), 2 Hörner in F (French Horns in F), 2 Trompeten in B (Trumpets in B-flat), Pauken in B, F (Timpani in B-flat and F), Violino I (Violin I), Violino II (Violin II), Bratsche (Violoncello), and Pianoforte (Piano). The tempo is marked 'Allegro non troppo.' The piano part (Pianoforte) is particularly detailed, showing a complex chordal texture with a prominent pedal point in the left hand. The horn parts are relatively simple, with the French Horn in B-flat playing a melodic line. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature (C).

Example 1: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 1–6.

There are a large number of examples in different concertos when a soloist (followed by an orchestra or vice versa) repeats the same or varied musical material. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between many of those cases and this concerto where in fact the role of each soloist and the force of the instruments is equal. One can easily compare the piano's and the horn's pure timbres within a perfectly balanced 'chamber ensemble'. They are relatively similar in 'force' and 'mode of touch' to each note, and they are equal in

function because each instrument in a chamber ensemble is treated as a soloist. In cases when the orchestra repeats the material of the pianist (or vice versa), there is a juxtaposition of the tone of a soloist with the timbral mixture of the orchestra. Their forces are not equal, obviously, and the functions of each instrument in the score are distinct.

Major–minor and subdominant–dominant oppositions serve as further examples of dualism in Brahms, as mentioned.¹³ In this concerto, Brahms used the contrast between the two modes as a means to emphasize the climax of the first movement (the end of the development section, from m. 232). The piano's major chords and high register reinforce the brightness of its solo passages; the orchestra, on the other hand, is given minor chords in a middle register. There is an intensive piano–orchestra dialogue, although it seems as if the orchestra becomes the echo of the piano. Brahms utilised the orchestra–soloist alternations to make these oppositions of modes and pitch significantly more profound due to unchangeable chords in the orchestra, on one hand, and the contrast between light triplets in the high register and massive, full-sound piano's chords in the low register, on the other hand (see mm. 232–236 of the first movement). I would say that this episode is the perfect example of what Joseph Kerman calls a “concerto conversation”.¹⁴

Although a number of composers before Brahms, including Beethoven, Schubert and Schumann, had routinely used major–minor juxtapositions, Brahms' individuality in this regard should be emphasised as it appears through the lens of stylistic integration. The second movement (*Allegro appassionato*) is a highly Romantic Scherzo in D minor featuring sophisticated harmonic language with quick transitions to multiple foreign keys and a constant use of alternations and clashes between the pianist and the orchestra. The D–major episode (from m. 188) reveals a new context with its diatonic, simpler harmonies based on tonic and dominant relationships, as well as more transparent orchestration. It is first performed solely by the orchestra (mm. 188–215) before the orchestral instruments are rejoined by the piano; throughout, balance reigns between all performers (mm. 271–280). This evokes an earlier ‘Classical’ (if not Handel-like) sound-world.

13 Margaret Notley highlights that “the expressive power of plagal idioms comes about through their lesser position within the framework” in comparison to authentic cadences involving the dominant (see Notley Margaret, “Plagal Harmony as Other: Asymmetrical Dualism and Instrumental Music by Brahms,” *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (2005): 93). In his Second Piano Concerto, Brahms is usually prone to balanced use of plagal and authentic harmonies, mostly unaltered. However, he likes altered dominants during the process of the deployment of lyrical music in order to emphasise the upward vector of motion (the dominants with raised fifth tone in the F# major episode from the third movement). The subdominant mostly is not altered with rare exceptions for the most dramatical episodes, for example, in Scherzo.

14 Joseph Kerman, *Concerto Conversations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 1.

The image displays a musical score for three systems. The first system consists of four staves: three treble clefs and one bass clef. Each staff begins with a dynamic marking of *fp* (fortissimo piano) and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system is a grand staff with two treble clefs and two bass clefs, all of which are empty. The third system is a grand staff with two treble clefs and two bass clefs. It contains musical notation for piano and bass. The piano part features complex rhythmic patterns with triplets and sixteenth notes, marked with dynamics *f* and *ff*. The bass part has simpler rhythmic patterns, marked with *f* and *fp*. The key signature remains one sharp throughout.

Example 2: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 232–234.

Example 3: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 270–279.

Brahms takes major–minor juxtapositions to a new level in this movement, by employing transitions between close or remote tonalities and altered or diatonic harmonies, and by means of different orchestral palettes in order to reinforce oppositions of the musical styles. The composer does not merely confront D-minor and D-major ‘styles’ in the aforementioned scherzo but rather interweaves one into another, thus synthesising them through harmonic (and orchestral) means of expression. It is as if a sudden appearance of C major after A major (m. 204), rapid changes of tonalities (C–G–H–E–A–d–a–A), and frequent comparisons of major and minor (mm. 204–215) offer Romanticism to the listener who might understand the tonal structure as Romantic and the pattern of the orchestration Classical. This ‘Romantic-style’ harmony with its succession of distant tonal centres, with sudden key shifts and mode changes is embodied by ‘Classical-style’ orchestration: a perfectly balanced sound in all octaves, the distinct dominance of string instruments, clarity of texture, and a feeling of complete ‘harmony’ between all these elements. Thus, Brahms

achieves the convergence of the two origins into one whole by combining a 'new' (Romantic) harmony and an 'old' (Classical) approach, resulting in a unique way of presentation of the material in the orchestra.

The image shows a page of musical notation for Example 4, Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, movement 2, measures 207-215. The score is arranged in a system with multiple staves. At the top, there are four staves for the piano (treble and bass clefs). Below these are several staves for the orchestra, including woodwinds, brass, and strings. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings. A prominent 'ff' (fortissimo) marking is visible in the lower right section of the score, followed by a 'p' (piano) marking. There are also performance instructions like 'solo voce' and 'pp/rigato' written in a smaller font.

Example 4: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 207–215.

Bruno Marc Plantard examines a different example of dualism in Brahms: the paradox of breaking the ostinato in the chaconne of the Fourth Symphony. It appears thus because the chaconne undergoes transfigurations within the symphony (the 'old' and the 'new' through genre synthesis). Therefore, according to Plantard, the composer seems to have challenged himself,¹⁵ overcoming

15 "The choice to write the chaconne as the finale of a symphony is both a challenge and a necessity." Plantard, "Johannes Brahms: Finale de la Quatrième Symphonie," 27.

the principle of repetition by using ‘symphonism’ as a mindset to embody in-depth transformation of the musical material.¹⁶ In fact, the fusion of tradition and innovation reveals a new level of dualism.¹⁷ Brahms creates a new quality of orchestral sound¹⁸ and establishes another approach to the orchestra also in the concerto genre through the combination of elements of different origins.¹⁹

The synergy of genres is particularly distinctive in the Second Piano Concerto, a work whose four-movement structure, the size of its movements, the depth of the transformation of melodies, and inclusion of a scherzo²⁰ call to mind the features of a symphony.²¹ One should always remember that “the projection of genre can be seen in part as a rhetorical technique, as a means of persuasion that enhances the composer’s ability to communicate greater specificity of meaning through what have often been perceived as mere abstract patterns.”²² If one applies this approach to this concerto, it becomes clear that the composer projected a ‘symphony’ concept onto a ‘concerto’ principle, thus creating his own concept of the instrumental concerto. Building upon (1) Schumann’s approach to the concerto²³ and (2) Beethoven’s symphonic

16 “Thanks to the multiplicity of motivational emergences that this [the frequency of the chaconne’s bass] could catalyze,” *ibid.*

17 The Finale of Brahms’s Fourth symphony is the focus of Plantard’s analysis. However, the author does not consider the synergy of the two origins in Brahms’s approach to the orchestra. I believe that Brahmsian orchestration plays particular role in creating a characteristic sound in general and a unique artistic expression in such a case.

18 As Jacobson notes: “The sound of Brahms is heavier and thicker than the sound of most other music.” Jacobson Bernard, *The Music of Johannes Brahms* (London: Tantivy Press; Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1977), 143. While such a tone dominates Brahms’s symphonic compositions, it is also important to emphasise a particular feature of Brahmsian orchestra that Sevsay Ertugrul calls the “half-tutti” to decrease the dense of the texture by using pauses in different parts. Sevsay Ertugrul, *The Cambridge Guide to Orchestration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

19 “For a creator like Brahms, it is a question of determining the role that tradition delegates to it, accepted as a nourishing sap, at a given moment of a temporal trajectory from which he has acquired an acute conscience.” Plantard, “Johannes Brahms: Finale de la Quatrième Symphonie,” 25.

20 According to Joan Chissell, scherzo is “a movement traditionally conspicuous by its absence in concertos.” Chissell Joan, “The Symphonic Concerto: Schumann, Brahms and Dvořák,” in *A Companion to the Concerto*, ed. Robert Layton (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 165.

21 The fact that the Concerto is close to the symphony at the level of its structure is considered in the literature. “It is the custom to allude to Brahms’s instrumental concertos as symphonies with obligato solo instrument and to dispute their title to academic of solo concertos with orchestra.” Walter Nieman, *Brahms* (New York, NY: Cooper Square, 1969), 311. Chissell recalls that the German public condemned Brahms’s First Piano Concerto “as too symphonic.” Chissell, “The Symphonic Concerto,” 160. The fact that the First Piano Concerto was originally conceived as a symphony, and the Violin Concerto had initially a four-movements structure (Tsariova Ekaterina, *Brahms* (Moskva: Muzika, 1986), 295), provides a ground for suggesting a juxtaposition of the two genres in Brahms’s consciousness.

22 Vaillancourt Michael, “Brahms’s ‘Sinfonie-Serenade’ and the Politics of Genre,” *The Journal of Musicology* 26 no. 3 (2009): 380–381.

23 “And so, we must confidently await the genius who shows us in a brilliant new way how to unite orchestra and piano, so that whoever reigns at the piano can unfold the richness of his instrument

concept (the symphony as an expression of monumental intellect and personal feeling), Brahms establishes a concerto in which the two origins appear clearly. The two origins reveal their distinctiveness while being interlaced into one amalgam as if at a conceptual level.²⁴

These dualisms appear in Brahms' instrumental compositions through his attitude toward his predecessors (particularly, Haydn and Beethoven).²⁵ However, Brahms does not separate or even alienate a 'new' and an 'old' world; rather, he combines them to achieve a fusion in which the past is embedded in the present, or (according to Giselher Schubert), he "individualises historical references."²⁶ In other words, the composer situates features of an 'old' genre within specific thematic elements, particular diatonic sequences, and his approach to an orchestral instrument²⁷ within a late-Romantic approach to the genre (including relevant thematic, rhythmic, and timbral contexts). Hence, while Brahms' First Piano Sonata (op. 1) evokes certain Beethoven piano sonatas in its treatment of rhythm, tonality, and thematic material,²⁸ the composer integrates these Beethovenian features and enriches them with new harmonic and expressive resources. The same approach is evident in Brahms' Second Piano Concerto: the Haydn-esque orchestration of the D-major episode (from

and his art, while the orchestra is more than a simple spectator and, by its multiple characters, interweaves the scene in a more artistic way." Robert Schumann, "Das Clavier-Concert," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 10, no. 2 (1839): 5.

- 24 Walter Niemann names three main principles of Brahms's concerto style strongly connected with a symphony: "The suppression of all display of technical virtuosity by the soloist as an end in itself; next, the equal footing maintained by the soloist and orchestra; and, lastly, the approximation of the concerto to the symphony in intellectual context." Niemann Walter, *Brahms*, trans. Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Cooper Square Publisher, Inc., 1969), 312. The third of these principles seems to be the most important because symphonism as a principle of thinking (especially in Beethoven's understanding) allows the composer to achieve the appropriate depth of transformation of musical material in the genre of instrumental concertos as well as in the genre of symphony. It is such an approach to the concerto that makes it symphonic on a conceptual level. The particular number of movements, and a typical use of minuetto or scherzo become an important, but still, additional feature. "Thus, Brahms's manner of writing a piano concerto is the Brahmsian pianistic idiom raised to its highest power." *Ibid*, 313.
- 25 Jeffrey J. Faux and David C. Rayl believe that Brahms was "[the] most tradition-conscious of nineteenth-century composers." Jeffrey J. Faux and David C. Rayl, "Giving Patient Hope to the Exile: Rethinking Brahms' Requiem," *The Choral Journal* 54, no. 11 (2014): 21.
- 26 Schubert Giselher, "Themes and Double Themes: The Problem of the Symphonic in Brahms," *19th-Century Music* 18, no. 1 (1994): 10.
- 27 Georgy Blagodatov emphasises an ambiguity in Brahms's technique of the use of horns, although in a slightly exaggerated way: "Brahms did not use the kind of passages for horns typical of the 'Classical' composers, but nevertheless, in writing for horn he tends to favour notes of the natural overtone series." Blagodatov Georgiy, *Istoriya simfonicheskogo orkestru* (Leningrad: Muzyka, 1969), 196. It was definitely Brahms's way to combine Classical and Romantic approaches to the horn (and, in fact, to the orchestra in general).
- 28 Schubert, "Themes and Double Themes," 10. On this subject, Charles Rosen notes, with a touch of irony: "That, in fact, is why it is opus 1 – Brahms's career starts from this quotation." Rosen, "Brahms: Influence, Plagiarism, and Inspiration," 135.

m. 188 of the Scherzo, see Example 3) is complicated by the appearance of an unexpected syncopation. A 'foreign' element (an unexpected syncopation) decreases its effectiveness by being assimilated into quite different circumstances (equal crochets, with a touch of archaism melody), and becomes the very essence of the 'new' style. Certainly, the latter also transforms throughout this process. Thus, the placing of 'old' techniques into 'new' stylistic, historical, and aesthetic conditions becomes one of the important elements of Brahms' conceptualisation of the orchestra.

One hears a number of similar syncopations in the orchestral exposition of the first theme of the first movement with the sudden stops in the violins (mm. 30–31), then in different parts (mm. 33–34), as if trying to disrupt a distinctive and potent forward motion of the orchestral majority (without these stops), but to no avail and, so far, with much perseverance. It seems like the two different elements compare forces.

The image shows a page of musical notation for Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, first movement, measures 29 to 35. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, and Double Basses. The second system includes staves for Flutes, Clarinets, Bassoons, and Horns. The music is characterized by complex rhythmic patterns, including syncopations and sudden stops, with dynamic markings such as *f ben marc.* and *ff*. The score is numbered 42683 at the bottom.

Example 5: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 29–35.

Michael Vaillancourt notes that Brahms' references to his predecessors acquire the form of allusions that are meant to be heard:²⁹ "He was a master of allusion, and he generally intended his references to be heard."³⁰ Vaillancourt analyses the Serenade op. 11, emphasising its hybrid character due to an unusual juxtaposition of movement types³¹ which, he believes, appears through the mixture of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century models. He presents a compelling argument regarding Brahms' inclination toward allusions³² and his tendency to project an old genre's features into a new context (which should be considered one of the most unusual defining characteristics of his musical thinking). Such an approach may explain the following statement: "Brahms' music played a pivotal role in the change of perspective."³³ I think that it means that the future development of orchestral music is perennially indebted to Brahms' approach to the orchestra. One can find similar allusions in Prokofiev's "Classical" Symphony in which the composer combines twentieth-century harmonic language utilising unexpected tonal transition and Classical-style orchestration.

The Brahmsian Orchestra

The Brahmsian orchestra has been analysed from different points of view but, in the context of this paper, it is necessary to emphasise the impact of Brahms' predecessors on his orchestration, and the influence of the piano's texture on the composer's orchestral thinking. Regarding the former, Alain Louvier and Pierre Albert Castanet wrote: "The most surprising thing about Brahms is that he perfectly succeeded in a bet with himself: to imitate Beethoven with the same orchestra in an era when Berlioz had long ago broken all the limits in the

29 See, for example, Heather Platt, "Probing the Meaning of Brahms' Allusions To Haydn," *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 42, no. 1 (2011): 33–58. Platt examines Haydn's impact on Brahms's clear orchestration style. A detailed analysis of predecessors' impact, though mostly in structural aspects, appears in Julian Horton's recent monograph. Horton Julian, *Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies*, Analysis in Context: Leuven Studies in Musicology (Leuven: Peters, 2017), vol. 4.

30 Rosen, "Brahms: Influence, Plagiarism, and Inspiration," 134. It is necessary to point out that, despite providing a deep and detailed analysis of references in Brahms's compositions (including both piano concertos) and studying in detail their rhythmic, thematic, and formal aspects, Rosen's book, unfortunately, leaves the influence of Brahms's predecessors on his orchestra out of his discussion.

31 Vaillancourt, "Brahms's 'Sinfonie-Serenade' and the Politics of Genre," 389.

32 A monograph by Jacquelyn Scholes pays special attention to allusion in a few of Brahms's instrumental compositions, including the First Piano Concerto. Scholes examines the resonance of historical references with material in the first movement and then studies its further impact on the other movements within the cycle. However, since Brahms's orchestration is not in the scope of this research, it is addressed only briefly. Jacquelyn Scholes, *Allusion as Narrative Premise in Brahms' Instrumental Music* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018).

33 Vaillancourt, "Brahms's 'Sinfonie-Serenade' and the Politics of Genre," 397.

orchestra.”³⁴ The importance of this observation rests on the fact that Brahms ‘imitated’ Beethoven not only with regard to structure but with (1) specific orchestral forces (including limited brass and percussion instruments); (2) sonata form (using a double exposition at the end of the nineteenth century); and (3) the concerto’s large-scale form (where a four-movement layout produces a symphony-like concerto). All these elements give us a ‘Brahmsian orchestra’.

Hans Gál characterised Brahms’ style of orchestration as the “deeply rooted imagination of a pianist for whom sound is projected on a plane.”³⁵ Thus, Gál highlights the linear nature of sound in the Brahmsian orchestra. This idea seems exaggerated, and although one can find some references to piano textures in Brahms’s orchestral works, this should not be treated as anything unusual. This feature can be treated as a new kind of dualism when Brahms’ inclination to the piano textures in an orchestral composition was combined with typical orchestral features to expose music material. These piano-like passages, in turn, were transformed by the composer over the course of time to form a very individual orchestral style.³⁶ A number of researchers note these ‘pianistic’ traits in Brahmsian orchestra³⁷ as well as often thick textures and absence of bright colours.³⁸

34 Alain Louvier and Pierre Albert Castanet, *L'orchestre* (Paris : Combre, 1997), 28.

35 Gál, *Johannes Brahms*, 214.

36 The scholars often mention the unique individuality of Brahms’s orchestra. See, for example, Yuri Fortunatov’s exclamation: “Try to recreate the Brahmsian orchestration! It is just incomparable.” Fortunatov Yuriy, *Lektsii po istorii orkestrrovkh stiley*, ed. Yelena Gordina and Olga Loseva (Moskva: MGK im. P. I. Tchaikovskogo, 2004), 127. If considering ‘individuality’ more broadly and beyond the orchestra, one can recall Hanslick’s 1862 comment. Michael Haas writes, “It is fascinating that the first thing Hanslick praises in the young Brahms is his individuality and his finely organized musical nature.” Michael Haas, *Forbidden Music: The Jewish Composers Banned by the Nazis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 51.

37 “Brahms brings his diverse and rich piano sound to the orchestra.” Louvier and Catanet, *L'orchestre*, 28. Charles Rosen wrote that “his [Brahms’s] music for other [than the piano] instruments constantly betrays the thinking of pianist.” Rosen, “Brahms: Influence, Plagiarism, and Inspiration,” 167. Rene Leibowitz and Jan Maguire emphasise that, although Brahms’s orchestral thinking derives from the piano, it is “adequate” to the orchestral texture. Rene Leibowitz and Jan Maguire, *Thinking for Orchestra* (New York: Schirmer, 1960), 30. Leonid Gourevitch has the same opinion as well. Gurevich Leonid, *Istoriya orkestrovykh stiley* (Moskva: Kompozitor, 1997), 108.

38 Alexandre Anisimov concurs, also suggesting that colours in the orchestra are not important for Brahms’s orchestra. Anisimov Aleksandr, “Vzaimodeystviye solista i orkestru v zapadnoyevropeyskom skripichnom kontserte XVII–XIX vekov” (PhD diss. abstract, Magnitogorsk State Conservatory, 2011), <http://cheloveknauka.com/vzaimodeystvie-solista-i-orkestra-v-zapadnoyevropeyskom-skripichnom-kontserte-xvii-xix-vekov>. Regarding Brahms’s orchestra, Edward Woodhouse remarks: “many of his earlier and middle periods works exhibit a rather acerbic tone.” Woodhouse Edward L. A., “The Music of Johannes Brahms in Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century England and an Assessment of His Reception and Influence on the Chamber and Orchestral Works of Charles Hubert Hastings Parry and Charles Villiers Stanford” (PhD dissertation, Durham University, 2012), 253, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/7336/>. It seems, such a characteristic is polemical and even contradictory, because the predominance of strings, typical for the Brahmsian orchestra in his earliest work, by default excludes sharp sounds. The tone can be heavy, massive, or

Example 6: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 262–268.

Such a judgement seems too strong. While the criticism of the orchestra of Schumann³⁹ is still largely warranted (with the exception of Schumann's Piano

mixed, but not acerbic. At the same time, John Fuller-Maitland recalls the *Second Serenade* op. 16 and emphasises that this work resists to "the opportunity of using the word 'muddy' whenever Brahms's orchestral music is referred to." Fuller-Maitland John A., "Brahms' Orchestral Music," *The Musical Times* 74, no. 1083 (1933): 401.

39 Carse Adam, *The History of orchestration* (London: Kegan, Trench, Trubner and Co LTD, 1925), 263; Leibowitz René, *Le Compositeur et son double* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 73.

Concerto orchestration⁴⁰ and probably his choral works), a similar assessment of the orchestra in Brahms' Second Piano Concerto is completely unfair.⁴¹ The Concerto's score is full of constant textural transformations and different presentations of musical material (solos and ensembles-in-orchestra, tutti and solo oppositions). All these features demonstrate Brahms' ability to masterfully modify piano-like textures by placing them into an 'orchestral environment' to create an unexpected type of the concerto orchestra. If one opens the score of this concerto at random one finds a number of alternations between the orchestral sections or between the soloist and an orchestra section (or the whole orchestra) with different dramaturgical purposes and with dissimilar level of contrast.

The alternations between the piano and the strings are different earlier in the first movement (mm. 232–234, see Example 2) where they initiate the forward motion and reinforce the dynamics of movement achieving striking minor–major and dynamic (*ff–ppp–ff*) comparisons. The two counterparts complement each other and act as one whole.

Example 7: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 43–56.

40 Rakochi Vadim, "‘L’orchestration mouvante’ du Concerto pour piano de Schumann: genèse et perspectives," *Acta Musicologica* 92, no. 2 (2020): 141–142.

41 "His [Brahms's] orchestration is often judged massive, opaque or faded, Nordic in short." Goulbault Christian, *Histoire de l'instrumentation et de l'orchestration: Du baroque à l'électronique* (Paris: Minerve, 2017), 137. Brahms's orchestral thinking lacks original ideas. Leibowitz and Maguire, *Thinking for orchestra*, 30.

The piano–orchestra ‘timbral conflict’ in mm. 315–362 of the scherzo plays a completely different role. Here Brahms effectively embodies tension between the two elements of the first theme by means of orchestration: the piano and the orchestra ‘provoke’ each other, intercept the motive, and seemingly stutter in the flow of sounds. There are two main collisions between the piano and the orchestra in the scherzo. They are quite similar (although the second stage of the recapitulation sounds more relentless due to the use of the whole orchestra for the first time instead of its reduced form); however, the result is different. In the first instance, starting from m. 167, Brahms withdraws the piano itself and assigns a process of transformation of the second theme to the orchestra. It engenders an irrepressible forward motion and creates energy of such power that the radical transformation in the D-major episode of an initially ‘cold’ and ‘restrained’ second theme is perceived as organic and even expected: initially the *lamento* is performed by the horns, the violas and the cellos as a secondary line (mm. 188–193). Then the violins and high woodwind instruments play strongly and distinctively (mm. 196–202). After all, a recurring D–C# descending motive of a minor second is highlighted rhythmically through syncopation and emphasised by the dynamics (*f*). However, this is not new material but a modification of an ascending minor second E–F melodic cell heard in the violins and violas in unison (mm. 43–54).

The mood, the emotion, the circumstances, and the orchestration have changed. Thus, a continuous increase of emotional intensity during the process of development was necessary to accumulate enough energy to transform the initial theme. Nevertheless, for the second time, the force of collisions between the piano and the orchestra was so great that (to use a sporting analogy) both participants have come to the finish line completely exhausted; only the horn’s absolute solo⁴² (mm. 362–365) along with only an alienated octave unison of three woodwind instruments remain. The exhausted forces of the two parts, in fact, become a portent of the upcoming finale of this drama.

The different roles undertaken by these alternations (as analysed above) can be explained by their appearance in dissimilar moments of the concerto’s development. The first example (mm. 264–268 of the first movement) does not contain any conflict because it is an exposition of the material.

The same situation presents itself at the very beginning of the first movement and in the A-minor theme in the finale (*Allegretto grazioso* — *un poco più presto*) where the wind and strings alternate. The second example (mm. 232–234 of the first movement) represents the alternation as an impetus for the timbral and modal development of the music material. There are no conflicts here, and different parts act in complete harmony. One can find a

42 I remind that I call ‘absolute solo’ an unaccompanied sound of a single instrument that fills all the musical space.

The image displays a musical score for Brahms's Second Piano Concerto, movement 2, measures 351-363. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes the piano part (treble and bass clefs) and the first three staves of the orchestra. The second system continues the piano part and the orchestra. The piano part features a prominent octava without accompaniment, marked with dynamics like *p* and *f*. The orchestral parts are also marked with dynamics, including *p*, *f*, and *mf*. The score is written in a complex texture with multiple staves for the piano and several staves for the orchestra.

Example 8: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 351–363.

similar example in the finale (mm. 39–51). This passage is notable because, at first glance, the piano interrupts the orchestra with its distinct texture (octaves without accompaniment and with an unusual distance between these octaves). However, taking into consideration (1) a dynamic upward sequence in the orchestra; (2) more and more persistent syncopated rhythmic patterns; and (3) the general dramatic emotions (due to upward sequence, crescendo, and more

The image displays a musical score for Example 9, Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, movement 2, measures 260-269. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the woodwinds (flutes, oboes, bassoons, and clarinets) with dynamics like 'f marc.' and 'f'. The second system shows the piano with dynamics like 'cresc.', 'p', and 'f'. The key signature is D major and the time signature is 3/4.

Example 9: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 260–269.

and more intense tone of flutes and horns in the high pitch range), the piano's 'sudden' inclusion does not contradict the character of music but effectively stimulates the orchestra.

In the third case (mm. 315–362 of the scherzo), there is a dramatic conflict between the two performing elements, where each effectively tries to break down the development in its favour.

Example 10: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 4, mm. 45–53.

The first time, it was the orchestra which would not cease playing; the second time, both came to a finish powerless and ruined (mm. 361–362). The absolute (unaccompanied) horn solo (mm. 362–363), as a reminiscence of a motive from the second theme, is the only result of this drama (see Example 8, last measures).

Example 11: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 2, mm. 330–340.

The Synthesis in the Second Concerto Orchestra

The combination of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ in the Brahmsian orchestra has appeared at the level of rethinking musical forms, certain orchestral techniques, relationships between the harmony and orchestration and the use of a *chacónne* in a symphony. In such a context, it is worth treating all these examples

of Brahms' approach to the past as an embodiment of a classical style, and to his present as an embodiment of late Romanticism of the 1880s. Each of the two includes a wide spectrum of historic-aesthetic and technical approaches to the role of the orchestra in a concerto.

I believe that it is in the Brahmsian orchestra that these two origins-elements are fully realised. They condition the originality of the composer's style. The particularities of Brahms' approach to the orchestra produced several followers in the next generations of composers. The synthesis of the two element-origins appears at different levels in the Second Piano Concerto. First, it is expressed in the orchestra itself: a paired structure without 'heavy' brass instruments, with the trumpets and the timpani being used in the first and second movements only. One can recall Beethoven's Fourth Piano Concerto with its different orchestration of the first and second movements and the finale, or Beethoven's Fifth Symphony with the trombones only in the finale. Thus, the first example of the synthesis is an allusion to the 'Classical' orchestral structure in this Romantic concerto.

Brahms' approach to the brass section is almost identical to Beethoven's (except for the fact that Brahms used the horn much more regularly than Beethoven) despite the fact that Berlioz's symphonies and oratorios, Liszt's symphonic poems and the majority of Wagner's operas had already been performed. However, Brahms' writing for brass is very modest: the horn is the only brass instrument the composer cannot do without.⁴³ Compared to Wagner, Brahms' horn writing is not as dramatic or powerful, but rather lyrical and soft. Brahms seems to combine 'Classical' structure with 'Romantic' spirit through numerous solos with the transformations of tone resulting from the context in which this timbre is used (for instance, in dialogue with the piano).⁴⁴ Thus, the use of the horn is the second example of the synthesis.

The third aspect of the synthesis is the 'in-the-orchestra solo' that serves expressive, structural, dramaturgical, and textural functions in the Concerto. The absolute solo of the horn that opens the Concerto with a quiet and gentle timbre⁴⁵ puts the listener in a mood receptive to lyricism and creates a particular atmosphere. In the 1880s, Brahms treats this already chromatic instrument exclusively as a 'natural horn',⁴⁶ similar to the classical composers' mode of use (the key of B major with total diatonicism, a natural scale). This 'natural-like

43 I am tempted to think that Brahms admired Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*, where the brass – even horns – are silent most of the time.

44 By rephrasing in other words Grime's expression, the horn is "as concerned with Brahms's music as it is with the intellectual tradition upon which the composer drew." Grimes Nicole, *The Poetics of Loss in Nineteenth-Century German Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 10.

45 Or, by applying Grimes's expression (although used in a different context of Brahms music analysis), a "rich poetic resonance." Ibid, 3.

46 Although one can note that, with the high Bb in m. 4, Brahms inverts the 'natural' higher-as-more-dense distribution of the overtone series.

horn' introduces us to a completely Romantic world (recall the horn's absolute solo in the overture to Weber's *Oberon*). The emergence of the 'romantic mood' is strengthened by the piano's lowest notes which produce a spatial effect. In the context of such close musical interaction between the horn and the piano, Musgrave's somewhat controversial idea about this moment as "representing the summit of orchestral pianism"⁴⁷ does not sound quite so paradoxical. Jacobson points out that "Brahms' use of a single instrument places all the emphasis on the intensely personal poetry of unsupported horn tone."⁴⁸ As a result, a poetised 'Romantic' image is embodied by an instrument that has been interpreted in a completely 'Classical' way.

The horn solo becomes the essence of the whole structure because it marks the end of each section of the sonata form: introduction (mm. 1–4, see Example 1), exposition (mm. 65–67),⁴⁹ development (m. 188), recapitulation (from m. 259), and coda (mm. 333–338). The horn solo before the recapitulation is one of the most interesting solos in the entire Concerto. The first phrase is played by the horn (with an octave doubling by the first violins) with a barely audible accompaniment of clarinets, second violins, and violas. The last notes of the melody are repeated by the flute and oboe like an echo, and the piano enters with the same theme and at the same moment. The second phrase is played by the flute, oboe, and bassoon with a new entry from the piano. The strings' *pizzicato* adds lightness to the tone.⁵⁰ The beginning of the recapitulation is orchestrated elegantly, making the event almost imperceptible; only the very recognisable horn solo marks the start of a new section. I take Joan Chissell's remark regarding Brahms' "hypnotic magic"⁵¹ to be a perfect description of the listener's impression.

The horn's initial solo invokes a concerto principle and extrapolates it into the very midst of the orchestra. This adds individualisation to the sound of the orchestra and extends dialogues to all levels. The duet of the horns and piano is a prototype for future dialogues between the out-of-the-orchestra soloist (the piano) and the orchestra. Thus, the horn acts as a representative of the

47 Musgrave Michael, *The Music of Brahms* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 232.

48 Jacobson, *The Music of Johannes Brahms*, 118.

49 The theme is exposed by the wind instruments with the horns in D minor and its character is quite different than in the beginning.

50 This episode brings to memory Kerman's term 'coplay'. Kerman, *Concerto Conversations*, 43. "A single melody can be shared between, coplayed by, the two agents so that one completes the thoughts of the other." The term seems a precise description of the depth of the engagement between the two counterparts, when a dialogue is being transformed into an inseparable unity and co-dependency. Although Kerman refers to the Finale of the *Concerto* (for example, mm. 287–294), it seems obvious that the term can be applied to the recapitulation in the first movement as well.

51 Chissell, "The Symphonic Concerto," 166.

Example 12: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 1, mm. 259–263.

orchestra at the very beginning of the composition. I wonder about the possible purpose of this initial solo. I think that it could be a *temporal* allusion: Beethoven opened his Fourth Piano Concerto with the out-of-the-orchestra soloist's exposition (piano solo). It is plausible to suggest that Brahms' (with the subconscious or conscious?) tendency – natural to him – to reproduce 'Classical' techniques had the intention to 'rethink' this particular Beethoven concerto. Both solos have a very similar lyrical mood. It is worth noting that Beethoven used the out-of-the-orchestra soloist while Brahms preferred the in-the-orchestra one. For Brahms, this was not merely personal preference. His use of the horn solo is especially designed to signify the Romantic timbre (recall the beginning of Webern's *Oberon* or Schumann's *Konzertstück for Four Horns and Orchestra* op. 86), thus immersing listeners into the Romantic context from the very beginning. When one listens to the solo horn in Brahms' Concerto, allusions to different horn solos immediately come to mind. Two

Example 13: Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto, mvt. 3, mm. 241–244.

examples: the double horn solo in the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Concerto (the first movement, mm. 48–56) and the absolute horn solo in its finale (mm. 242–243).

Unlike Brahms, Beethoven used the horn in transitional points to switch between the two keys.⁵² Brahms used the solo horn to juxtapose its timbre with the piano and thus to reinforce the 'concerto essence' as though it were from the very inside of the orchestra. Brahms' approach to the form of the first movement, and the Concerto in general, including the role of each instrumental

52 The same approach to the horns 'double solo' is seen in the first movement of Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony during the transition from B minor of the first theme to G major of the second one, as if a pure timbre of the horns masks the keys difference. I call the unison of two (three, four, etc.) identical instruments a 'double' ('triple', 'quadruple', etc.) solo.

section in the orchestra and the structure of the orchestra is indicative of Beethoven's concept of the concerto because at each level, Brahms adapts these traditions and adapts them to the new historical, cultural and aesthetic norms of the end of the nineteenth century.

In summarising Brahms' approach to brass instruments and to the horn in particular, it should be emphasised that this approach determines the peculiarity of the sound of the Brahmsian orchestra in general. On the one hand, it is passionate: the upper stringed instruments' syncopated notes oppose the harmonious and clear pulsation of the woodwind instruments (mm. 30–31 of the first movement); the multi-timbral alternations hint on each tone colour as an absolute value (for example, in mm. 219–220 of the first movement the piano responds to the flute and to the clarinet, then only the clarinet is heard, and then the piano returns). The rapidity of these transformations (constant attention to unmixed colours, frequency of these alternations between different timbres, and changes in texture) reveal the world of strong emotions. On the other hand, the orchestra is classically rigorous and well-structured. A good example is the second subject in the orchestral exposition, where the unison of the first and second violins presents the melody against the background of the broken crotchets' triplets in the violas and cellos (mm. 48–55), alluding to the thematic climax in Allegretto from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony (from m. 75). Unlike Beethoven, who preferred chromatic sequences and did not demonstrate a particular inclination to diatonic sequences, Brahms used this feature to develop the music material quite often. He preferred to rely on seventh chords (V–I, IV–VII, mm. 53–54), probably to create an allusion to Baroque music. One can easily find evidence of Brahms' taste for this type of sequence in other works (e.g. the *Intermezzo* op. 117, No. 2).

I will now move on to another characteristic of the Brahmsian orchestra. The second theme in mvt. 2 sounds 'reserved' and 'cold' because of the use of exact doubling between the first and the second violins and the violas, covering a three-octave range without any 'accompaniment' (see Example 7). The *pianissimo* dynamic adds a touch of mystery. Clear vertical and unbroken precision are mitigated by the seemingly endless lamentations of the minor second (F–E). Thus, a specific orchestral sound is formed. Externally harmonious and controlled, it is very similar to the sound of Beethoven's orchestra in the Trio of his symphonic Scherzos, for example, the Trio from the third movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony (mm. 169–172). However, in fact, as Yurii Fortunatov noted referring to Brahms' principles of orchestration,⁵³ instrumental introductions are not on the beat (indeed, there are constant changes in rhythmic pulse). It is the internal modification of the score that makes it fundamentally different from a classical concept, creating a unique synthesis

53 Fortunatov, *Lektsii po istorii orkestrrovkh stiley*, 126.

of the two stylistic elements—origins. Thus, the ‘Romantic’ essence transforms the ‘Classical’ orchestra from the inside of the orchestra and gives birth to an inimitable Brahmsian orchestra, precipitating a *reconceptualisation* of the orchestra in the twentieth century.

The fourth example of this synthesis of Classical and Romantic approaches to the orchestra is the ensemble-in-orchestra,⁵⁴ the appearance of which is intimately connected with the new quality of solos. Ensembles-in-orchestra (when only two performers play and the rest of the orchestra pauses) have been used in classical music, for instance, at the end of Beethoven’s Fifth Piano Concerto (from m. 184). Perhaps for the first time in the history of the piano concerto, the timpani were interpreted as equal instruments to the piano. Here the timpani function as the orchestra’s voice and an antithesis of the high piano chords. It is plausible that these seventeen measures (I mean the principle of interaction between the in-the-orchestra and out-of-the-orchestra soloists) could have been Brahms’ source of inspiration for the first or the third movements of the Concerto.

Romantic composers were interested in creating dialogues between soloists and orchestra by placing an accent on timbral colour juxtapositions within the orchestra (e.g. the flute, the clarinet, and the oboe in Liszt’s First Piano Concerto (mm. 55–174), and the flute and the horn in Grieg’s Piano Concerto, at the beginning of the development in the mvt. 1). Or between the out-of-the-orchestra soloist and the orchestra: the oboe and the piano in Schuman’s Piano Concerto (mm. 102–106), the clarinet and the piano in Liszt’s First Piano Concerto (mm. 25–36); the piano, the triangle, and the horn in the same concerto (mm. 184–189); and the piano, the violin and the cello in the mvt. 2 of Tchaikovsky’s Second Piano Concerto (mm. 46–64). Brahms started favouring these colour comparisons in his Violin Concerto, in which the oboe’s solo timbre at the beginning of the second movement is no less significant than that of the violin as a designated out-of-the-orchestra soloist. In the Second Piano Concerto, the composer went much further by using different soloists to create different ensembles-in-the-orchestra, which reinforces a concept of a concerto within the concerto and emphasises the Romantic essence of his orchestral thinking within the limits of the classical structure of the orchestra.

Both the in-the-orchestra soloists (the horn in the first movement) and the ensembles-in-the-orchestra are clearly related to musical form as well. The third movement opens with an expressive cello solo. This long and intense passage suggests a possible deviation into a cello concerto. Could this be a kind of compensation for the cello concerto never written by Brahms? The timbral contrasts in this movement are even stronger than those in the recapitulation

54 I call the ‘ensemble-in-orchestra’ a unit of two or more of internal as well as external soloists (in the genres with an out-of-the-orchestra soloist). They can form duets, trios, quartets, etc., either without other instruments or accompanied by the rest of the orchestra.

of the second movement of the Violin Concerto, where Brahms uses the oboe on behalf of the orchestra and the violin solo in the double exposition, while in the recapitulation there is a dialogue between the oboe as an internal soloist and the violin as an external one.⁵⁵ The start of the recapitulation (m. 71) is marked by a new cello solo (this time in B major instead of Bb major). This is a unique example of synthesis of different stylistic origins due to the different means of expressions. The composer assigns the first theme (initially in Bb major) to the same (and thus recognisable) timbre of the cello in a foreign key. However, B major is tonally close to the lyrical episode in F# major and thus Brahms unites the first theme and the episode through the cello's timbre, the mode of presentation (the soloistic timbre on the background of the strings) and the key.

Example 14: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 3, mm. 67–71.

In order to discover the role of ensembles-in-the-orchestra in synthesizing different elements in the movement, it is necessary to consider the F# major episode of the third movement which is marked by an unusual trio (two clarinets and the piano on the orchestral pedal of the cellos). The clarinets enter, as if to announce the piano's first beat (mm. 59–64). The sound of the altered last

55 Claude Rostand indicates that Pablo de Sarasate refused playing the Concerto because he found it offensive to just hold a violin in the hand while the oboe played the full melody at the beginning of the second movement. Rostand Claude, *Brahms* (Paris: Fayard, 1978), 574.

pitch is dissipated in the next pause of the piano part. The clarinets originate the next level of expressiveness that will eventually become even more sensual. A moment of silence in the piano part allows us to enjoy the clarinet's singing line and to identify the soloist in the orchestra, responding two octaves higher. The music sounds nervous, despite the lyricism of the third movement. Such an intensive use of the soloists, both technically and expressively, makes the third movement a focal point of the Concerto.

The image displays a musical score for Brahms' Second Piano Concerto, movement 3, measures 57-64. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Clarinet (Clar.), Flute (Flac.), and Piano (Pian.). The second system includes parts for Clarinet (Clar.), Piano (Pian.), and Cello/Double Bass (Cello/Bass). The score features various dynamics such as 'rit. molto', 'ppp', 'ppp dolcissimo', 'pp dim.', 'pp dolce', 'molto espress.', 'pp scappato', and 'dim.'. Performance instructions include 'Piu Adagio.' and 'arco'.

Example 15: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 3, mm. 57–64.

Let's return to the recapitulation of the third movement. The principal key of Bb major returns quickly with further development of the musical material through orchestration which provides the impetus to its transformation. At the end of the movement, the composer uses seemingly endless combinations of ensembles-in-the-orchestra (piano and cello – mm. 76–79; oboe, cello, and winds – mm. 86–87; flute, cello, and piano – mm. 88–89), both with accompaniment and without. These ensembles create (taking into account periodical inclusions of the orchestra from m. 76) a genuinely three-dimensional effect which recalls the F# major episode as well. I call the effect 'three-dimensional' because there are the flute, the piano, and the cello solos which create the ensemble-in-the-orchestra. Each instrument belongs to a different orchestral section, has a specific colour of timbre, and the rhythmic pattern. In fact, each exists in its proper world. However, they form a harmonic and well-balanced ensemble due to similar mood and the unique softness of the sounds' pronunciation.

Example 16: Brahms, Second Piano Concerto, mvt. 3, mm. 88–89.

All the performing forces find themselves in total harmony and neither conflicts nor disagreements can break the synthesis of all parts of the musical form due to Brahms' orchestration: the first theme, initially pronounced by the cello with a light accompaniment of the strings, is heard in different ensembles-in-the-orchestra in recapitulation. Therefore, Brahms unites the thematic material of the beginning with the mode of presentation of the middle part.

The Brahmsian Orchestra and the Twentieth Century

There is one more aspect of the orchestration of Brahms' Second Piano Concerto that should be examined: its impact on twentieth-century symphonic music.⁵⁶ Walter Frisch explored the problem of Brahms and the *fin de siècle* in certain aspects.⁵⁷ Schoenberg's 1947 essay⁵⁸ considers the 'progressiveness' of Brahms' musical language and his reversion to rigorous contrapuntal writing. In her examination of Brahms' innovative role in developing a musical idea (especially his ability to work with the motive as a germ for the whole composition), Nicole Grimes accepts Schoenberg's approach to Brahms. However, she emphasises that Schoenberg was not the first to see Brahms as "Progressive", referring to a few works of nineteenth-century researchers.⁵⁹ Musgrave suggests that "Brahms could be called a Progressive [...] in the study and performance of music that lay before the conventional repertory of the musical world in which he lived."⁶⁰ John Borstlap discusses Brahms' compositional technique as a rigorous intellectual exercise that prepared Schoenberg's twelve-tone system.⁶¹ This literature offers a wide range of approaches to the question of Brahms' influence on twentieth-century composition but – very surprisingly indeed – does not pay much attention to Brahms' impact on the orchestra in the twentieth century. Peter Burkholder suggests that Brahms can be characterized as "the composer whose approach to music has become most typical of later generations of composers."⁶² It would therefore be constructive to extrapolate Burkholder's title *Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music* to *Brahms and the Twentieth-Century Orchestra* in order to specifically discuss Brahms' influence on the twentieth-century symphonic thinking.

56 There are opinions to the contrary which, in fact, deny Brahms's impact on the twentieth-century orchestra. See, for example, Adam Carse's passage on Brahms's orchestration: "Looking backwards rather than forward..." Carse, *The History of Orchestration*, 295.

57 Walter Frisch, "The 'Brahms Fog': On Analysing Brahmsian Influence at Fin de Siècle," in *Brahms and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1990), 117–136, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400833627.117>. Frisch considers Brahmsian metrical ambiguity, a broad triadic melody, quotation of Brahms's themes and general impact on Zemlinsky, Schoenberg, and Reger.

58 "Brahms, without renouncing beauty and emotion, proved to be a progressive in a field which had not been cultivated for half a century." Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1950), 99.

59 Grimes Nicole, "The Schoenberg/Brahms Critical Tradition Reconsidered," *Music Analysis* 31, no. 2 (2012): 127–175, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2249.2012.00342.x>.

60 Musgrave Michael, "Brahms the Progressive: Another View," *The Musical Times* 124, no. 1683 (1983): 291, <https://doi.org/10.2307/962911>.

61 Borstlap John, "Brahms the progressive?" *John Borstlap* (blog), May 30, 2014, accessed November 29, 2020, <http://johnborstlap.com/brahms-the-progressive/>.

62 Burkholder J. Peter, "Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music," *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 1 (1984): 75, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746255>.

In this regard, Botstein's polemical thesis – that “although the cliché has been linking Brahms with the conservative, and Wagner (and his admirers, Wolf and Bruckner) with ‘the music of the future,’ the social mirror of the aesthetic division presents the reverse” – does not sound too paradoxical.⁶³ This assumption is much more defensible than it may seem at first glance. Wagner's name is the first that comes to mind in the context of brilliance of the in-the-orchestra solo, masterful technique of orchestration and numerous changes in the orchestra that occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century. His influence on the orchestra was direct and obvious; it was expressed in the size of the orchestra, new techniques of orchestration, dynamic and timbre palette, a new approach to the brass, etc. All this immediately found a following and supporters who wished to emulate this orchestral construct.

The reflection of Brahms' art of orchestration in the next generation of composers was not so obvious. However, from a historical perspective, this impact was certainly not less and perhaps would be considered even more important if one acknowledged the importance of the synthesis of Classical and Romantic elements for twentieth-century music. The roots of this synthesis should be sought in an earlier period. Chopin introduced the mazurka into French art music. Liszt took on the challenge of combining ancient and specifically Hungarian musical idioms with nineteenth-century forms and styles. These composers established firmly transcultural perspectives by using rhythmic pulsation and characteristic scales and melodic intonation. However, it was Brahms who offered a strong synthesis of the two styles' origins by unifying the 'Classical' orchestral structure with the 'Romantic' practice of different traits of orchestration as integrated domains in the orchestra of his Second Piano Concerto. And while Burkholder asserts that “Brahms is the single most important influence on twentieth-century classical music”⁶⁴ – not least since [the] “synthesis of elements from past and present is certainly what Brahms was after in his music,”⁶⁵ – traditionally, he does not mention either ‘orchestra’ or ‘orchestration’. However, one should think about novel sonic effects by employing new sound worlds that drew upon ‘Classical’ and ‘Jazzy’ idioms: the orchestra of George Gershwin's Concerto in F, Sergey Rachmaninoff's Fourth Piano Concerto and his *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, Aaron Copland's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Darius Milhaud's Concerto for Percussion and Small Orchestra, and Maurice Ravel's First Piano Concerto. Or one should think about the synthesis of material of different origins which became a fundamental factor in the emergence of neo-classicism, neo-romanticism,

63 Botstein Leon, “Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting,” *19th-Century Music* 14, no. 2. (1990): 158, <https://doi.org/10.2307/746200>.

64 Burkholder, “Brahms and Twentieth-Century Classical Music,” 75.

65 Ibid, 76.

and other 'neo' trends in contemporary music. Busoni's open letter to Becker (1920) with the call to combine the principles of development and the logic of early music with the latest techniques of composition, and Stravinsky's slogan "Back to Bach" (1924) – one should recall his Concerto for Piano and Winds, inspired by Bach's music – effectively demonstrate this tendency in twentieth-century music.

Conclusions

The synthesis of Classical and Romantic features in the Second Piano Concerto explains the peculiarity of the Brahmsian orchestra's sound. It is formed by a combination of a Baroque-like harmonic development, 'Classical' orchestral structure, and Romantic rhythmic irregularity almost in all instrumental parts including the piano. Brahms' unique orchestral style has been created by a paradoxical combination of uncombined approaches...

Brahms' Classical approach to the orchestra in the Concerto is expressed in its structure, a particular approach to the brass and percussion instruments, and absence of 'new' timbral effects such as the use of *sourdines* for the brass or *col legno* for the strings. Romantic tendencies are reflected in his 'poetic' approach to the horn, endless transformations of the colours in the orchestra, a number of solos, timbral blends, alternations, and doublings. A combination of these two approaches in one inseparable whole represents the first category of synthesis in Brahms' orchestra.

'Classically-natural' horn has acquired typical 'romantic-chromatic' features and portraits new artistic images. An active use of the cello led to the genre deviation crossing over to the realm of a cello concerto or of a double concerto. These factors signified Brahms' sensitivity regarding tone colour and revealed a Romantic essence of Brahms' orchestral thinking. He played with the nuances and barely perceptible timbral transformations in an almost impressionistic manner, thus opening the door to the twentieth-century orchestra. This poetic and Romantic approach to the in-the-orchestra soloist in the context of the Classical structure of the orchestra constitutes the second category of synthesis in Brahms' *concept of the orchestra*.

Brahms builds up a three-level system of relationships between the soloists and the totality of the orchestra. There are only two soloists at the first level (the horn and the piano) which functions as a germinal source for different ways of dealing with musical material. The ensembles of soloists and the rest of the orchestra form the second level of Brahms' orchestral concept (the piano, the cello, and the orchestra). A juxtaposition of the soloist (the piano) and the whole orchestra produce the third level of the concept. Each case differs not only due to the number of participants and the degree of 'purity' of their timbres' juxtapositions, but also through textural contrasts. Here are some more

examples: soaring *pianissimo* octaves in the second movement⁶⁶ or the entrance of the piano (that covers more than six octaves) at the beginning of the third movement. The same can be said of the orchestral passages: for instance, the transition to the middle part of the Scherzo (mm. 167–188) when the frantic and seemingly limitless emotional effusion of the strings' tremolo combines with the implacable logic of the recurring repetitions of second subject, as if the two themes are in a 'love–hate' relationship.

Regular use of ensembles-in-orchestra combines the Classical orchestra and typical Romantic techniques of music presentation. The ensembles mark the borders between sections and thus have a form-defining function. They announce the subtlest and the most inspired moments of the narrative, create the lyrical climax of the Concerto and thus express their dramaturgical function. Internal orchestral soloists create instrumental associations within the orchestra, expanding the scope of a single timbre's significance. So not only a soloist, but a chamber ensemble within the orchestra can embody, separately and together, a Romantic sound and move forward thematic and expressive discourse. This Brahmsian phenomenon is not even a step away from Mahler's ensembles-in-orchestra (such as in the Third, Fifth, and Sixth symphonies) or flexible texture-dynamic-timbre variations in Richard Strauss's symphonic poems (woodwind ensembles in *Till Eulenspiegel* or string ensembles in *Don Quixote*), or Shostakovich's concertos (a pair of woodwind instruments and the violin solo in the Scherzo from the First Violin Concerto).

Within the further discussion on perspectives for Brahms' approaches in the twentieth century, it is necessary to mention major–minor juxtaposition in Mahler's works. One can find mode contrast in Mahler's Sixth Symphony to present a fate motive and to become a foreboding symbol. Or, there is a different approach to major–minor switches in his Seventh Symphony, where the same feature was used in a much quieter atmosphere. I suggest that Mahler's major and minor changes are rooted in Brahms' minor dominant key of the third theme in the exposition of the first movement (F minor instead of 'normal' F major) or the piano's cadenza (m. 11) which begins with "furious" Bb minor instead of 'scheduled' Bb major. Such unexpected changes of the moods create a complex play of the light and shadow and expose the dualism in its new form, with a touch of ambiguity residing in joy.⁶⁷

Despite a strong anti-Brahms reaction (Stravinsky, Vaughan Williams and many others) and an opposition against Brahmsian type of orchestration (Tchaikovsky, Ravel, etc.), his approach to the orchestra inspired different

66 Charles Rosen believed that this passage "borders on the unplayable." Rosen, "Brahms: Influence, Plagiarism, and Inspiration," 167.

67 The second movement of the Second Concerto, a demonic and extremely dramatic Scherzo, clearly evidences this ambiguity of joy on the conceptual level of the Concerto due to its presence in the cycle.

composers (such as Max Reger or Edward Elgar) and – most importantly – had a profound impact on the twentieth-century music in general. The conflation of classical and romantic origins in Brahms' orchestra was, in fact, the first example in the history of music of convergence on such a profound level. The artistic credibility of Brahms' approach to the orchestra created, in the historical sense, a perspective for the twentieth-century tendency to combine different styles and approaches in music composition (or, more wider, in the twentieth-century art in general). I think that the significance of Brahms' orchestral intertextuality from the aesthetic and technical points of view was so important, and that inter-stylistic (Classicism–Romanticism) and inter-temporal (the end of the eighteenth – the end of the nineteenth centuries) fusions were so promising that Brahms' approach to the orchestra could be called a 'quiet revolution.' I consider this factor a pivotal in the emergence of Neoclassicism, Neoromanticism, and other 'neo' trends of the twentieth-century music.

Both Stravinsky, with his slogan of 1924, "Back to Bach"⁶⁸ and Busoni's open letter to Becker call to combine the principles of development and the logic of older music with the latest techniques of composition. I maintain that Brahms had already achieved this objective with his Classical–Romantic orchestra forty-three years earlier. Or, one should recall the future synthesis of jazz and classical music in Gershwin's Piano Concerto orchestra; Brahms had unified the two distinct styles in his orchestra forty-four years earlier. Juxtaposition of styles is another recognisable feature of contemporary art, and it also comes from the unification of the 'old' and the 'new' in Brahmsian orchestra. This orchestra became an important source for the twentieth-century mainstream and it could be considered a true prototype of 'orchestration of the future'.

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68 However controversial his interpretations would be. See, for example, Arthur Berger, *Reflections on an American Composer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 51–52; Chris Walton, "Neo-Classical Opera," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 105, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521780094>.

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POVZETEK

Orkestracija kot sredstvo sinteze klasicističnih in romantičnih pristopov v Brahmovem Drugem klavirskem koncertu

Različne oblike durovih/molovih, plagalnih/avtentičnih in klasicističnih ter romantičnih jukstapozicij v Brahmovih kompozicijah so že bile podrobno obravnavane. Vendar pa pomen orkestracije v teh razmislekih ni bil temeljiteje raziskan. Prispevek razpravlja o sintezi 'klasicističnih' in 'romantičnih' konceptov v orkestraciji Brahmovskega drugega klavirskega koncerta. Sinergija teh konceptov je tista, ki pogojuje edinstveno lastnost brahmsovskega klasicistično obvladanega in romantično izraznega zvoka, ki združuje in poudarja poseben orkestralni slog: različne orkestralne tehnike (še posebej inštrumentalni solo v orkestru in skupine inštrumentov znotraj orkestra) so dobile nove funkcije in pomen. Rog in klavirski dueti (z orkestrom v ozadju ali brez njega) so denimo v prvem stavku s svojo strogo logiko in prostimi improviziranimi kontrasti postali izrazni, dramaturški in oblikovni dejavnik. Klavir in klarinetski trio v tretjem stavku so postali lirično središče koncerta. Posebnosti Brahmovskega pristopa k orkestru se kažejo še drugače. Najprej se odražajo v orkestru samem: podvojena struktura srednje velikega orkestra je brez 'težkih' trobil, pri čemer trobente in pavke nastopajo le v prvem in drugem stavku. Drugič, Brahmov pristop k trobilom bi morali obravnavati kot skoraj identičnega Beethovnovemu, čeprav so bile Berliozove simfonije, Lisztove simfonične pesnitve in Wagnerjeve opere že izvedene. Brahmovsko komponiranje za trobila namreč izkazuje 'klasicističen' pristop. Tretji vidik sinteze predstavlja *solo znotraj orkestra*, ki služi izraznim, strukturnim, dramaturškim in teksturnim funkcijam v koncertu. Četrty primer sinteze klasicističnih in romantičnih pristopov k orkestru je *ansambel znotraj orkestra*, nastop katerega je tesno povezan z novimi značilnostmi solov. Tako 'romantično' bistvo 'klasicistični' orkester preobraža od znotraj in rodi se neponovljivi brahmsovski orkester. Brahmovsko razumevanje preteklosti kot utelešenja klasicističnega sloga in sedanjosti kot utelešenja romantike vključuje široko paleto zgodovinsko-estetskih in tehničnih pristopov k vlogi orkestra v obliki koncerta. Skladatelj je na novo premislil načine predstavljanja glasbenega materiala v orkestru s konceptualizacijo tako klasicistične orkestrske strukture in romantičnega pristopa k solom, alternacijam, podvojitvam itd. kot poenotenim domenam. Ti elementi iz dveh obdobj pogojujejo izvornost skladateljevega sloga. Poleg tega se Brahmov sintetični pristop k orkestraciji odraža v številnih poznejših strategijah orkestracije, ki so jih uporabljali skladatelji v 20. stoletju, denimo zaradi novih zvočnih učinkov z uporabo novih zvočnih svetov, ki so črpali iz klasicističnih in džezovsko nadahnjenih idiomov v Gershwinovem, Coplandovem in celo Rahmaninovem pristopu h koncertnemu orkestru.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

VADIM RAKOCHI (vadim.rakochi@gmail.com) is a Ukrainian musicologist. He is a post-doctoral fellow at the Lysenko Lviv National Music Academy where he is working on the first volume (17th–beginning of the 19th centuries) of his forthcoming monograph *The History of the Instrumental Concerto Genre through the Prism of the Evolution of the Orchestra*. This research links the development of the concerto and the orchestra and reveals their mutual influence in different historical, political, and social circumstances. Numerous publications of Vadim Rakochi (the monograph on the history of the orchestra, journal articles and book chapters) range over the history of orchestra, instrumental concerto, and orchestral styles.

O AVTORJU

VADIM RAKOCHI (vadim.rakochi@gmail.com) je ukrajinski muzikolog in podoktorski raziskovalec na Nacionalni glasbeni akademiji Mikole Lisenka v Lvovu, kjer pripravlja prvi del (17. do začetek 19. stoletja) monografije *The History of the Instrumental Concerto Genre through the Prism of the Evolution of the Orchestra* (*Zgodovina žanra instrumentalnega koncerta skozi prizmo razvoja orkestra*). Njegovo raziskovanje povezuje razvoj koncerta in orkestra ter razkriva njun skupni vpliv v različnih zgodovinskih, političnih in družbenih okoliščinah. Številne publikacije Vadima Rakochija (monografija o zgodovini orkestra, strokovni članki in poglavja v monografijah) obravnavajo zgodovino orkestrskih koncertov in orkestrskih slogov.