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CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI  
**BRAHMS**  
THE FOUR SYMPHONIES



CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI

CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI  
**BRUCKNER**  
SYMPHONY No.4, ROMANTIC

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# BRUCKNER

## SYMPHONY NO.4, *ROMANTIC*

**Anton Bruckner** (1824-1896)

### **Symphony No.4, *Romantic***

①	Bewegt, nicht zu schnell	17.42
②	Andante quasi Allegretto	15.13
③	Scherzo (Bewegt)	10.58
④	Finale (Bewegt, doch nicht zu schnell)	20.24
	Total timings	64.19

**PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA**  
**CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI** conductor

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# BRUCKNER

## SYMPHONY NO.4, *ROMANTIC*

### **BRUCKNER** *Symphony No.4, Romantic*

For a composer whose symphonic output is adored by audiences the world over, and is secure in the repertory of every major orchestra, it is curious to learn that during his lifetime Bruckner was considered to have been something of a fool by a good many of his contemporaries. Sketches and anecdotes by his pupils, peers, friends and confidantes abound in descriptions of everything from his eccentric manner of dress and rustic accent to his idiosyncratic personal habits. These reminiscences range from the rather cruel, through the bewildered, to those of awed admiration. Brahms thought him a 'poor, deluded person' who wrote 'symphonic boa constrictors', which, no doubt to Brahms's mind, squeezed the life out of their audiences. The vitriolic and influential pro-Brahms, anti-Wagner critic, Eduard Hanslick was similarly visceral in his condemnation of Bruckner and his work, describing his Third Symphony as 'A vision of Beethoven's Ninth becoming friendly with Wagner's Valkyries, and finishing up

trampled under their hooves'. The conductor Felix Weingartner recalled being soured to Bruckner at Wagner's grave, shortly after the great composer's death, due to Bruckner relating the success of his latest symphony, in loud, seemingly disrespectful tones.

On a slightly brighter note, his sometime pupil, the violinist Fritz Kreisler found him to be 'a man without guile', who had two sets of co-ordinates in his life – 'music and religion'. Other contemporaneous figures and devoted acolytes recall Bruckner as having a 'great childlike soul', living 'in a world totally foreign to us' or in a florid passage from another pupil, Friedrich Klose, that the devout Roman Catholic Bruckner believed in 'the omnipotence, wisdom and benevolence of his god and the promise of a better life after death'. Larger personalities of the day add their weight to the issue, including Gustav Mahler, who had never been an actual pupil of Bruckner's:

[Bruckner] had an untainted happiness, which at times was youthful, almost childlike, as well as an inherently trusting nature. Thus, despite the large gap between us, we had a friendly relationship ... And so I may, with more right than most, call myself his 'pupil', and I will always do this in grateful admiration.

Perhaps Bruckner's social awkwardness and apparent worldly naivety was simply easier to anecdotalise than the more mundane facts of a hardworking, deeply religious and relatively unsophisticated individual, at odds with the cosmopolitan mores of the ultra-modern-thinking of the Vienna of the late 19th century. His many unsuccessful proposals of marriage and failure to even get close to tying the knot only strengthen the image of the childlike soul. He appears to have suffered from the obsessive-compulsive disorder associated with order and symmetry, numeromania – a compulsion for counting anything and everything. At one point this and other factors led to him being consigned to a sanatorium for three months in the summer of 1867. Reports that Bruckner had little interest in the art, philosophy and literature of the day would have seen him cut a fairly strange figure in Viennese intellectual circles of the day. On the other hand, he was more than

able to hold down two important appointments in the city, as an organist to the court chapel and as Professor of Harmony and Counterpoint at the Conservatory, hardly positions to be occupied by a dolt. He was also one of the great organ virtuosos of his time, most notably as a peerless improviser – evidenced not only in Vienna, but also in trips to Nancy and Paris in 1869 and London in 1871, where he performed in numerous concerts at the Albert Hall and to a reported 70,000 during an organ festival at Crystal Palace.

The son of a school teacher and parish organist from the village of Ansfelden, in Upper Austria, the young Anton Bruckner was taught piano and organ, before being sent to St Florian monastery on his father's death in 1837, when he was twelve years old. By 1845, he was already teaching at St Florian, where he held various posts for the next decade or so. A steady progress took him to Linz, as cathedral organist and more studies with the renowned Simon Sechter, a Professor at the Vienna Conservatory, whose postal course in harmony and counterpoint he completed in five years. Bruckner continued to have minor successes with his sacred works, but it was his discovery of the music of Liszt, and more especially Wagner, which changed the

course of his life as a composer. Thus, in his early 40s, in 1866, he was set on his path as a symphonic composer, encouraged by many, including Berlioz, Liszt, the eminent conductor Hans von Bülow and even Eduard Hanslick, who initially thought he had unearthed a great Austrian symphonist, that is, one that would follow the conservative line. In the 1870s, Hanslick and his coterie would turn rabidly against Bruckner as Wagner's influence became more manifest in his music. They considered the music of Wagner, Liszt and their followers, Bruckner now included, as a decadent aberration in music's development, lauding Brahms, their standard bearer (whether he liked it or not), as the prime musical conservative.

By the time Bruckner had completed the initial versions of his Fourth Symphony, Hanslick's patience had long run out, most notably after the composer dedicated his Third Symphony to Wagner. Bruckner had visited his idol in 1873 and presented his Second and Third Symphonies to Wagner in the fervent hope that the great music-dramatist would accept the dedication of one of them. After scrutinising the score of the Third Symphony Wagner seemed more than happy to accept the dedication – Bruckner described the scene to his pupil August Goellerich, thus:

[Wagner] just looked at me with such a kind gaze that I can still feel it today. Then he embraced me and kissed me again and again. Afterwards he pointed to a pile of music and said, 'Look – nothing but dedications. But your work is a masterpiece; I am pleased and honoured that it's intended for me.

The first performance of the Third Symphony, despite, or possibly in part because of the dedication, was a disaster, with the audience departing *en masse* during the final movement followed by a brutally scathing review from Hanslick. The Brahms versus Wagner debate was now at full tilt in Vienna with neither camp taking any prisoners. Fortunately, for the first performance of the Fourth Symphony, one of the great conductors of the age, Hans Richter, calmed the waters. A mighty musical figure, his broad intellectual outlook extended to both Brahms and Wagner, and his stature such that he was admired by both sides of the musical argument. This made him one of the few conductors who could withstand Hanslick's entrenched views.

A number of Bruckner's adherents were leading lights of the Wiener Akademische Wagner-Verein (Academic Wagner Society of Vienna) not long after its foundation in 1872. The society was

founded to further the music of Wagner, but also of those composers who surfaced in his wake. Josef Schalk, his brother Franz, and Ferdinand Löwe were the evangelists for Bruckner, not only spreading the musical good news, and arranging two- and four-handed piano run-throughs of the symphonies under the auspices of the society, but also getting rather too involved in the workings of the creator. Their many revisions, while well-intentioned and effected to make the composer's symphonies more palatable to the public, disrupted Bruckner's pace and orchestration in even the least invasive of their interventions. Bruckner himself was a willing collaborator in these exercises and happy to sanction many such 'normalisings' – a situation which has kept musicologists busy dealing with the so-called 'Bruckner Problem'.

Bruckner appended not only the title 'Romantic' but even included a programme for the Fourth Symphony, sometime after composition. The scenario is a mediaeval Romantic ideal, where knights awaken to the sound of horns, rejoice and repair to prayer, before the inevitable hunt and ensuing festivities. Though later withdrawn, there are certainly elements of the programme which add a great deal of fun, when listening to the work as well as supplying clues to the composer's initial inspiration. The

first movement opens indeed with romantically rousing horns over bucolic murmurs in the strings before woodwinds coax the full orchestra to a glorious awakening. Dance themes lead the movement further, Bruckner taking his lead from Schubert and foreshadowing Mahler. The second movement opens with the cellos speaking of what Bruckner called a 'rustic love scene', while the horns offer mystery and the violas mix lines of beauty with tragedy. The *Scherzo* doesn't take long to get under way as the horns exuberantly bring the hunting party together in a movement which is packed with vigour and verve, lightened by the Ländler *Trio* section. The *Finale* opens ominously, the horns again in evidence over an insistent pulse. Despite its pastoral interludes, the movement is a monumental struggle; even its most resplendent climaxes are troubled, before Bruckner's extraordinary coda, organ-like in its grandeur, brings the work to a transcendent and breath-taking end.

Bruckner began sketching the symphony in 1874 and continued revising it for around 15 years until its eventual publication in 1889. Many editions of the work have appeared since Bruckner's death, based on the numerous versions. The history of the symphony's composition, revisions and editions is lengthy and complex, but for the purposes of the

present recording, the version performed is that of 1878/80 in the edition by Robert Haas of 1936. This is the version that Richter premiered in Vienna, with the city's Philharmonic Orchestra on 20 February 1881. The Academic Wagner Society funded the concert and its members were certainly out in force to support their man, but the symphony was nonetheless a success with the general public and also a rare critical triumph for Bruckner. Even the mighty Hanslick and his colleagues at the *Neue Freie Presse* accorded it an 'unusual

success' while the partisan Vienna Evening Post was of the opinion that Bruckner must now be counted as one of Austria's greatest composers. Revisions, decisions and editions aside, a fact we know only too well today.

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\*Stephen Johnson's *Bruckner Remembered* (Faber and Faber, 1998) is an excellent compilation of Bruckner recollections and the source for some of the translations in this booklet note.

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## BIOGRAPHIES

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### CHRISTOPH VON DOHNÁNYI

Christoph von Dohnányi was Principal Conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra from 1997 to 2008 and became Honorary Conductor for Life in September 2008. The partnership began in 1994 when he served as Principal Guest Conductor. For several years they were in residence at the Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris. Their performances featured productions of Strauss's *Arabella*, *Die Frau ohne Schatten* and *Die schweigsame Frau*, Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex* and

Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, as well as a critically acclaimed cycle of Brahms symphonies.

Christoph von Dohnányi regularly led concerts at Southbank Centre and throughout the United Kingdom and Continental Europe. In his final season as Principal Conductor, Dohnányi and the orchestra were invited for three concerts in Vienna's prestigious Musikverein, they journeyed throughout Germany and made a coast-to-coast tour of the USA.

In December 1981 Christoph von Dohnányi first conducted The Cleveland Orchestra and was named Music Director Designate in 1982, serving as sixth Music Director from September 1984 to August 2002, becoming Music Director Laureate from then on. The orchestra and he frequently toured the US, Asia and Europe, performing concerts at the Salzburg Festival, BBC Proms and Edinburgh Festival, and they were in residence at Carnegie Hall, New York. In 1998 they performed in China for the first time in the orchestra's history. During Dohnányi's tenure Severance Hall, The Cleveland's Orchestra's home, was renovated and extended to bring back one of America's biggest organs into the musical life of Cleveland.

His recordings with Cleveland include the complete symphonies of Beethoven, Brahms and Schumann, works of Bruckner, Mahler, Dvořák and R. Strauss and Wagner's *Die Walküre* and *Das Rheingold*.

Dohnányi's discography with the Wiener Philharmoniker includes *Fidelio*, *Wozzeck*, *Lulu*, *Erwartung*, *Salome*, *Der fliegende Holländer* and symphonic works by Mendelssohn and Tchaikovsky, the violin concertos of Glass and Schnittke with Gidon Kremer, Dvořák's Piano Concerto with

András Schiff and orchestral transcriptions of chamber music by Brahms and Mahler.

As a regular guest at the Salzburg Festival, Christoph von Dohnányi has led the Wiener Philharmoniker in several new productions including *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Salome*, *Così fan tutte*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Erwartung*, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, as well as the world premières of Henze's *Die Bassariden* and *Cerha's Baal*.

From September 2004 to July 2010 Dohnányi was Chief Conductor of the NDR Symphony Orchestra conducting subscription season concerts in Hamburg, Lübeck, Bremen and Kiel. They also toured Europe, South America, the US and Japan.

As a guest conductor in the US he regularly leads such orchestras as those of Boston, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia and Los Angeles. In Europe, he has been a guest conductor with all the major orchestras including, most recently, the Berliner Philharmoniker, Orchestre de Paris, Royal Concertgebouw and Israel Philharmonic orchestras and Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich.

Born in Berlin, Christoph von Dohnányi began to study law in Munich but soon chose to join the

Hochschule für Musik und Theater München to study composition, piano and conducting. Upon graduating, he was awarded the Richard Strauss Prize by the City of Munich and continued to study with his grandfather, Ernst von Dohnányi, at Florida State University.

In 1953 Sir Georg Solti hired Christoph von Dohnányi as répétiteur and conductor at Oper Frankfurt. At the age of 27 he became Germany's

youngest General Music Director in Lübeck followed by the Chief Conductor position at first in Kassel and then of the WDR Sinfonieorchester, Cologne. From 1968 he served as General Music Director in Frankfurt and, from 1972, as Director of the Oper Frankfurt. From 1977 to 1984 he was Intendant and Chief Conductor of the Hamburgische Staatsoper. In Frankfurt and Hamburg he successfully aimed to balance traditional opera productions and innovative music theatre.

## philharmonia orchestra

The Philharmonia Orchestra is one of the world's great orchestras. Acknowledged as the UK's foremost musical pioneer, with an extraordinary recording legacy, the Philharmonia leads the field for its quality of playing, and for its innovative approach to audience development, residencies, music education and the use of new technologies in reaching a global audience. Together with its relationships with the world's most sought-after artists, most importantly its Principal Conductor and Artistic Advisor Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonia Orchestra is at the heart of British musical life.

Today, the Philharmonia has the greatest claim of any orchestra to be the UK's National Orchestra. It is committed to presenting the same quality, live music-making in venues throughout the country as it brings to London and the great concert halls of the world. In 2011/12 the Orchestra is performing more than 160 concerts, as well as presenting chamber performances by the Soloists of the Philharmonia Orchestra, and recording scores for films, CDs and computer games. For 16 years now the Orchestra's work has been underpinned by its much admired UK and International Residency

Programme, which began in 1995 with the launch of its residencies at the Bedford Corn Exchange and London's Southbank Centre. During 2011/12 the Orchestra not only performs more than 35 concerts at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, but also celebrates its 15th year as Resident Orchestra of De Montfort Hall in Leicester and its 11th year as Orchestra in Partnership at The Anvil in Basingstoke; and launches a new residency at the new Marlowe Theatre in Canterbury. The Orchestra's extensive touring schedule this season also includes performances in more than 30 of the finest international concert halls in Europe, China, Korea and the USA, with conductors including Esa-Pekka Salonen, Lorin Maazel and Kurt Masur.

During its first six decades, the Philharmonia Orchestra has collaborated with most of the great classical artists of the 20th century. Conductors associated with the Orchestra include Furtwängler, Richard Strauss, Toscanini, Cantelli, Karajan and Giulini. Otto Klemperer was the first of many outstanding Principal Conductors, and other great names have included Lorin Maazel (Associate Principal Conductor), Riccardo Muti (Principal Conductor and Music Director), Giuseppe Sinopoli (Music Director) and Sir Charles Mackerras (Principal Guest Conductor). As well as Esa-Pekka Salonen, current titled conductors are Christoph von

Dohnányi (Honorary Conductor for Life) and Vladimir Ashkenazy (Conductor Laureate).

The Philharmonia Orchestra continues to pride itself on its long-term collaborations with the finest musicians of our day, supporting new as well as established artists. This policy extends into the Orchestra itself, where many of the players have solo or chamber music careers alongside their work with the Orchestra. The Philharmonia's Martin Musical Scholarship Fund has for many years supported talented musicians at the start of their careers, including an Orchestral Award, which allows two young players every year to gain performing experience within the Orchestra. The Orchestra is also recognised for its innovative programming policy, at the heart of which is a commitment to performing and commissioning new works by leading composers, among them the Artistic Director of its *Music of Today* series, Unsuk Chin. Since 1945 the Philharmonia Orchestra has commissioned more than 100 new works from composers including Sir Harrison Birtwistle, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, Mark-Anthony Turnage and James MacMillan.

Throughout its history, the Philharmonia Orchestra has been committed to finding new ways to bring its top quality live performance to audiences worldwide, and to using new technologies to

achieve this. Many millions of people since 1945 have enjoyed their first experience of classical music through a Philharmonia recording, and in 2011/12 audiences can engage with the Orchestra through webcasts, podcasts, downloads, computer games and film scores as well as through its unique interactive music education website, The Sound Exchange ([www.philharmonia.co.uk/thesoundexchange](http://www.philharmonia.co.uk/thesoundexchange)). More than 3,500 people a month download free monthly Philharmonia video podcasts, which include artist interviews and features on repertoire and projects; these films are also watched by more than one million people on YouTube. In May 2010 the Orchestra's digital

"virtual Philharmonia Orchestra" project, RE-RITE, won both the RPS Audience Development and Creative Communication Awards, and after appearances in London, Leicester and Lisbon toured to Dortmund in November 2011.

Recording and broadcasting both continue to play a significant part in the Orchestra's activities, notably through its partnership with Signum Records, releasing new live recordings of Philharmonia performances with its key conductors. Since 2003 the Philharmonia has enjoyed a major partnership with Classic FM, as The Classic FM Orchestra on Tour, as well as continuing to broadcast on BBC Radio 3.

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Recorded live at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, London, 30 October 2008  
 Producer: Misha Donat  
 Engineer: Jonathan Stokes, Classic Sound Ltd  
 Design: Richard Slaney (for the Philharmonia Orchestra) and Andrew Giles

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