



3 DISCS

JOHANNES BRAHMS

COMPLETE SYMPHONIES



ADAM FISCHER
DANISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

**Johannes
BRAHMS**
(1833–1897)

Complete Symphonies

DISC 1

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68	43:34
I. Un poco sostenuto – Allegro	14:53
II. Andante sostenuto	7:47
III. Un poco allegretto e grazioso	4:17
IV. Adagio – Allegro non troppo ma con brio	16:34

DISC 2

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73	39:50
I. Allegro non troppo	18:13
II. Adagio non troppo	8:16
III. Allegretto grazioso, quasi andantino	4:47
IV. Allegro con spirito	8:34
Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90	34:55
I. Allegro con brio	12:39
II. Andante	8:03
III. Poco Allegretto	5:39
IV. Allegro – Un poco sostenuto	8:02

DISC 3

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98	34:17
I. Allegro non troppo	10:41
II. Andante moderato	8:47
III. Allegro giocoso	5:39
IV. Allegro energico e passionato – più allegro	9:06

Total time: 2:32:11

Adam Fischer
Danish Chamber Orchestra

English text: pp. 4-10
Dansk tekst: s. 13-18



BEETHOVEN'S EQUAL

A number of music's greatest composers have lived on in posterity as mythical creatures or film idols, and these life-myths shed a special light on their music. Others, however, remain shadows, strangely blurred figures only known to us from the widespread standard portraits – Vivaldi, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Puccini, to name but a few.

The fact that this also applies to the last of the three great Bs, Johannes Brahms, is perhaps a bit of a surprise. Brahms is more popular than ever, yet only very few people have a clear impression of the man behind the music. His life-story has no riveting plot, with passionate love, vicissitudes of fate, life-threatening illnesses, mystique or political oppression. There are no stormy marriages, children and family. Instead, we find a bourgeois persistent working life typified by formidable craftsmanship, industry, self-criticism – and unflinching belief in Chancellor Bismarck. Was he perhaps the last of the Puritans?

Nor is Brahms' love-life the stuff of novels. His close relationship with Robert Schumann's widow, Clara, was an incredibly strong, life-long friendship, but hardly any more than that, despite the lively rumours circulating at the time that he was the father of Schumann's youngest daughter. While still a teenager, Clara was famous and became one of the most outstanding pianists of her age, with the 20-year-old Brahms only entering the lives of the famous Schumann couple at the point when Robert's latent mental affliction broke out explosively. In March 1854, he was consigned to a 'nursing home' in a Bonn suburb, and the young Brahms spent the next three years in Düsseldorf as a domestic help and a support for Clara, 14 years his senior, and her seven children. But there is nothing to indicate that Brahms' relationship with Clara was anything other than platonic when Schumann died after a couple of years' painful 'treatment' for obsessive-compulsive disorder.

However, the strength and seriousness of their artistic calling did signify a kind of pact between them, and their mutual admiration, tenderness and flirtation probably created the impression of a love relationship.

And before he attempted to drown himself in the Rhine and was confined to a mental establishment, Schumann had experienced the young Brahms' enormous talent. As early as October 1853, Johannes wrote an incredibly mature scherzo movement in a violin sonata (Schumann and a friend wrote the other movements). Fully-fledged Brahms, nothing less!

His relationship to Clara was seminal. He was often attracted by intelligent, musically gifted women, but none of them could match Clara's acumen or musicianship. It is impossible to know if that is why he remained single. His friends were well aware that later on in life he visited prostitutes – the names of well-known whores can be found scribbled in his manuscripts. It went no further than that, however. He chose the role of a bachelor, compensating of its aura of a lack of masculinity with swaggering male chauvinism.

But the man with the macho beard, beer belly, cigar stub and voracious appetite was neither a Renaissance figure nor a good-natured teddy bear. He was a shy, awkward, testy person. And feminine characteristics dominate both his nature and his music. His voice was high-pitched and light long after male voices had normally broken – "like that of a young girl" in Schumann's opinion. His beer belly was first attained by the age of around forty, and only even later, after years of struggle, did he manage to acquire the full beard which became a trade mark. The young Brahms was a slight Adonis with childlike features, long flaxen hair, pale blue eyes and a delicate silky skin which 'any girl could kiss without blushing'. The masculine touch came later, mostly in the form of a swaggering alpha male with bad manners. But in numerous songs, Brahms evinced the cliché "feminine" far more often than such contemporaries as Wagner, Berlioz or Liszt.

That Brahms could be egocentric, tactless and offensive can be testified by a great number of people. Invited by his friend Niels W. Gade, he gave a concert in Copenhagen a few years after the ignominious defeat of Bismarck's Prussia in 1864. Hans Christian Andersen was among those in the audience, the concert was sold

out, and two further concerts were announced. But at the ensuing banquet Brahms caused open-mouthed indignation by praising Bismarck loudly and suggesting the famous Thorvaldsen Museum be moved to Berlin! Many years were to pass before his music gained a foothold in the kingdom of Denmark – when the young Carl Nielsen visited Vienna in autumn 1894, Brahms met him at the door with the question: “Is the museum still where it was?”

The powerful, imposing man was actually often unsure of himself and full of an almost murderous self-criticism – he regarded his wastepaper basket and fireplace as being his most important tools. A number of works mentioned in correspondence, trial performances, etc., disappeared without trace, and his major works often involved endless revisions, with some of them nevertheless ending up by being discarded. He revised quite a few of his early works, always (unlike Anton Bruckner) producing clearly improved results. The B major piano trio from 1854, written when he was 21 years old, is a magnificent work, but when Brahms made a new version of it 35 years later (the one that is always played nowadays, though still listed as “Op. 8”) it resulted in the crown jewel of the genre. When he settled permanently in Vienna, he toiled away day after day on his First Symphony, but almost fifteen years were to pass before he published it in 1876. During the same period of time, Bruckner composed four hour-long symphonies...

That Brahms was 43 years old before he published the First Symphony was due neither to difficulties with the symphonic apparatus nor shadowboxing with Beethoven, but to problems with cohesion and formal logic. His natural talent comprised short, enclosed formal elements, not the dynamic ‘development’ that is Beethoven’s unique characteristic. Brahms’ symphonic material is without the innate conflict that guarantees drama; his method is a scrupulous technique of variation which reworks a narrower range of material over and over again. His colleague Hugo Wolf described his music as “the art of composing completely without ideas”. And this remark led to the witty practice among ordinary people of singing the main theme from the Fourth Symphony to the text

“Again his brain did strain in vain.” In actual fact however, Brahms got better and better throughout his life as a composer – in the two last symphonies rhythmical energy and dynamic drive put all his critics to shame.

One can listen to an astronomical number of recordings of Brahms’ symphonies, from velvet-smooth versions in which the rhythmic diction drowns in beauty to “modern” interpretations which sound like X-ray photographs. Unlike Beethoven, Brahms did not use metronome indications, so all sorts of musicians have carte blanche to freely interpret the ordinary, most often very elastic tempo designations – one can hear Brahms in practically all kinds of tempi, from the shuffling to the jabbering. Generally speaking, the faster tempi are to be preferred – Brahms’ calm presentation of his material does not need a pointer and suffers from being left to soak. And he does not need any hormonal additives, any extra suspense, or hot flushes. Such measures take something from him without giving anything in return. He should be played as he composed, with care and commitment, honestly, sensitively, and liltily. Always liltily.

Maestro Fischer, you have been associated with the Danish Chamber Orchestra for a quarter of a century. Something quite exceptional, in fact, as conductors and orchestras tend to tire from each other rather sooner than later. But not in this case. When I ask the musicians for reasons, you seem surrounded with nothing but respect and, yes, love. What are your personal reasons staying for so long?

I could say precisely the same! It is a bit like a marriage, although an “open marriage”, of course, as I work with many different orchestras. However, if I conduct, say, Brahms’ Fourth Symphony in Vienna, the orchestra may very well perform that work twice or three times a year, usually with different conductors. Our great advantage is that we can work concentratedly on a special concept, style or sound for a considerable time. Orchestral players usually have to change their playing,

their sound, vibrato, bowing, etc. over and over again, according to the wishes of different conductors. The fact that we can develop and maintain our own “style” is a gift. No, more than that – it’s a luxury.

It is a conductor’s job to work with different musicians everywhere and to get from them the maximum of what it is he or she wants and intends. I must be able to conduct differently in Hamburg and in Berlin. What I did and do here is very different from what I did touring the *Eroica* recently with the Vienna Philharmonic. It is not that they don’t want to do things differently in Vienna, but I don’t want to push for a specific idea, rather to search for the particular feeling of any group of players in front of me, their ideas, perceptions and differences. It is not only “my Brahms”, it is “our Brahms”! And “my Brahms” is just one of more than one Brahms of mine. I love to do very different performances, resulting from all kinds of different conditions.

Orchestras are different, much more different than, say, a Yamaha piano as opposed to a Steinway. Some woodwinds or strings may have a unique sound, a certain solo player might have some exceptional qualities that can be deployed. I often feel like a stage director attempting to evoke certain possibilities in the actors; it is my job to find and expose the inherent possibilities in any musical partner, and from there we develop ideas together, jointly.

Writing his “opera seria” *Mitridate* the 14-year-old Mozart discovered that the tenor supposed to sing the part of king Mitridate sounded great in the high and low registers but lacked a convincing middle register. So, Mozart deliberately used this knowledge to create the king’s musical personality. Making a virtue of conditions, you might say.

I know of conductors who have very specific ideas for literally every bar, almost like a pianist. And up to a point you can actually “play on an orchestra”, but it takes a lot of time, rehearsal, mutual respect and understanding. There is a piano roll of Gustav Mahler playing a movement from his Fourth Symphony, and he plays with enormous tempo fluctuations, with total freedom. Keeping

the tempo stable, however, makes it much easier for the players to stay rhythmically together! So freedom involves technical difficulty, something that should never limit intentions. And if carefully prepared, you can actually be free, “improvise” while giving the players a free rein. *Leben und leben lassen* – live and let live, as it were.

This is particularly true if you know an opera orchestra really well. You cannot prepare or predict everything, obviously, and in Vienna, supported by 200 years of tradition, I feel much more free than for example at the Hamburg Staatsoper. In Vienna there is no time for testing and experiment, musicians play every night, often with no rehearsal, a production may be old, or a singer is new. A seasoned Wiener Staatsoper concertmaster once told me that for his first ever *Rosenkavalier* he had no rehearsal at all. It was *prima vista*! But those are the terms, with teams shifting you may not even know who is playing next to you the following day. Everybody must listen to everybody else! And in general, a conductor must “keep the tempo”. Here, though, I don’t have to do that, I can be free, almost like Mahler...

You “show” a lot with your hands while conducting...?

Yes, it’s probably another habit from Vienna. In London I did a whole Mahler symphony with just one rehearsal – London players are incredibly quick. But you should not force them to use unexpected bowings, it makes them worry about not being precise. Again, I work like a stage director, exploiting existing possibilities to the utmost, but in close collaboration, not sticking to a preconceived idea or model.

With your work so often centred around the classics, does your view, your conception of the classics change over time?

Oh absolutely! We needed 15 years to record all Haydn’s 104 symphonies with the Austro-Hungarian Haydn Orchestra, but I realise now that we should rely much more on our imagination. In his own time, Haydn was a kind of “popstar”, his humour and jokes were

understood immediately, whereas now we must bring them to life anew. Maybe I was too frightened or cautious then, too concerned with the notes. I must work and think as a stage director, recreate life, not just interpret music.

We now plan to record Haydn's last 24 symphonies over a period of four years, basically from live concerts. Only Antal Doráti, yet another Hungarian, recorded all the Haydn symphonies (on Decca) before me, and now I am alone on the market with the complete symphonies. But that will change soon, 2032 is Haydn's 300th birthday, that will surely initiate a lot of new recordings!

For some time, though, you may well be the only conductor to have recorded all of Haydn's, Mozart's, Beethoven's, and Mahler's symphonies! And all of Brahms'!

But I am also very much an opera conductor. And I really consider it almost a musical tragedy that Brahms never wrote an opera. In Bayreuth you may still feel the tension from the historical Brahms-Wagner opposition, "absolute" music versus drama. But in fact, I experience a Brahms symphony very much as a narrative, as a drama, a tale, a story. The same way as you find a dream entirely comprehensible while dreaming but cannot really explain its logic when you wake up. Unfortunately, the amount of Brahms on the market is so immense that wanting to bring out or evoke something unique is a big challenge. I am amazed by the intensity of Carlos Kleiber's Brahms. And fascinated by conductors such as Gardiner and Harnoncourt – maybe coming from pre-classical music they bring a different perspective to the music. What I want more than anything to elicit with our orchestra is the chamber-music aspect of Brahms' symphonic style. You drive a big, heavy car differently from a light, resourceful car! A chamber orchestra provides a lot of unique possibilities, I see no reason whatsoever to copy the "big orchestra" attitude. And in fact, Brahms rarely had more musicians than we have here. This aspect opens up a lot of new possibilities. It will be a different Brahms – indeed it is a different Brahms!

In March 1896, when she was 75 years old, Clara Schumann had a stroke. She was dying, and in the first week of May Brahms wrote *Vier ernste Gesänge*. Clara died on 20 May, but a banal misunderstanding led to Brahms only getting to the funeral in Bonn at the very last minute. He only managed to scatter a handful of earth on the grave. "Now I can no longer lose anyone or anything", he whispered to those around him. In July, he sent the four songs to Clara's daughter, Marie: "I would just ask you to lay this aside, as an offering, a memory of your dear mother."

A doctor in the summer residence Bad Ischl diagnosed jaundice and prescribed taking the waters at Karlsbad's hot springs. Brahms wrote to a friend about "a banal case of jaundice, though with the exception that it refuses to go away". But on 3 September the doctor wrote "*hep.hyp.m*" in his medical records: *hepatitis hypertrophica maligna*, malignant cancer of the liver. Brahms had insisted that he did "not wish on any account to hear anything unpleasant". And the doctor kept it secret.

Five weeks later, Anton Bruckner died, and Karlskirche, just opposite Brahms' windows in Vienna, held a requiem for him. In the spring, Brahms' solid appetite began to desert him, and piles of old letters and manuscripts ended up in his hungry fireplace. He was present at the concert by the Philharmonic in March 1897 which featured Dvořák's two-year-old cello concerto (which he admired), and his own Fourth Symphony, which was met with rapturous applause. People waved their hats and scarves, and for a long time he seemed lost in this collective love-declaration. Then he nodded his thanks and disappeared.

On 3 April, at 9am, his housekeeper woke him. He sat up, tried to say something, but sank back in his bed and his breathing just ceased. Three days later, he was laid to rest in a grave of honour at Vienna's Zentralfriedhof, a few metres from the earthly remains of Beethoven and Schubert. When the funeral took place, all the vessels in Hamburg's huge harbour lowered their flags and pennants to half-mast.

Karl Aage Rasmussen, February 2022



The Danish Chamber Orchestra

The Danish Chamber Orchestra is unrivalled in Danish musical life. Its roots go back more than 80 years to its foundation in 1939, and in 2014 the orchestra changed from being part of DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) to an independent orchestra, fully owned by the musicians. The Danish Chamber Orchestra combines symphonic music at the highest international level with a broad popular appeal.

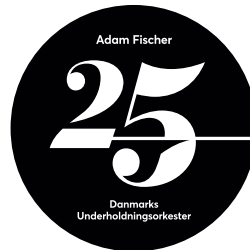
Its chief conductor, Adam Fischer, has worked closely with the orchestra since 1997. Together with him, the orchestra has developed a sophisticated, energetic style of playing – especially in music of the Classical period. The orchestra has a tradition for bridging various musical genres and traditions, which has resulted in exciting collaborations with major Danish and international artists.

The Danish Chamber Orchestra binds Denmark together through memorable musical experiences and its insistence on the social relevance of music. It is deeply committed to the development of talent, and the communicating and development of new concert formats.

25 years of cooperation

2022 marks 25 years of close, innovative cooperation between Adam Fischer and the Danish Chamber Orchestra. This has resulted in a number of releases, and gained international recognition.

“The many years together have created the foundation for a mutual understanding of music and a highly distinctive style of playing that has been recognised far beyond Denmark’s national borders.” – Adam Fischer



Previous releases:

- LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN – Complete Symphonies, 2019 – 8.505251
 - ◇ Opus Klassik *Best Symphonic Recording*, 2020
 - ◇ ICMA *Recording of the Year* and *Symphonic Music*, 2020
- W.A. MOZART – 45 Symphonies, 2013 – 8.201201
 - ◇ ICMA *Best Collection*, 2015

Adam Fischer



The Hungarian-born conductor Adam Fischer (b. 1949) qualified from the academy of music in Budapest, with further studies in Vienna. He is much in demand within both the opera and concert repertoire and has cooperated with a great number of leading international concert halls and opera houses, including the Vienna State Opera, La Scala, the Metropolitan Opera as well as orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.

Adam Fischer has been associated with the Danish Chamber Orchestra since 1997, from 1998 with the title of chief conductor, and remains a major driving force and initiator both in Denmark and internationally.

In 2019, he received the international Wolf Prize, was nominated Conductor of the Year by Presto Classical in the UK and received an Orchestral Award from *BBC Music Magazine* for the recording of Mahler's *First Symphony* with the Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra.

In 2022, he received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from International Classical Music Awards (ICMA).

When awarding the Lifetime Achievement Award 2022 ICMA, the jury stated the following motivation:

For decades Adam Fischer has enriched the discographic catalogues with mostly complete recordings of symphonists like Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven or Mahler as well as selected operas. His interpretations, always full of character, display tonal refinement and a broad spectrum of colour as well as striking tempos, drama and clarity. In particular, his many interpretations of 18th-century repertoire enable the listeners to experience new views. Adam Fischer always stands for artistic alternatives in the best sense.





BEETHOVENS LIGEMAND

Flere af musikkens største skabere har et efterliv som mytologiske fabelvæsner eller filmidoler, og disse livsmyter kaster et særligt lys over deres musik. Men nogle forbliver skygger; sært slørede skikkelser, vi kun kender som de gængse standardportrætter – Vivaldi, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Rossini, Puccini ... fortsæt selv.

At det også gælder den sidste af de tre store B'er, Johannes Brahms, er nok overraskende. Brahms er mere yndet end nogensinde, og dog har nok de færreste et tydeligt indtryk af manden bag musikken. Brahms' liv er ikke gjort af fængslende fortællestof – lidenskabelig kærlighed, skæbenedslag, truende sygdom, mystik eller politiske overgreb. Ingen stormfulde ægteskaber, børn og familie, men et borgerligt, påholdende arbejdsliv præget af formidabelt håndværk, flid, selvkritik og tillid til rigskansler Bismarck. – Den sidste puritaner?

Heller ikke Brahms' kærlighedsliv er romanstof. Det nære forhold til Robert Schumanns enke, Clara, var et uhyre stærkt, livslangt venskab, men næppe mere, trods de energiske rygter, der udpegede ham som far til Schumanns yngste datter. Allerede som teenager var Clara berømt, hun blev en af sin tids betydeligste pianister, og den 20-årige Johannes kom ind i det navnkundige pars liv, netop da Roberts lurende sindssyge brød ud i lys lue. I marts 1854 blev han anbragt på et "hvilehjem" i en forstad til Bonn, og de næste tre år tilbragte unge Brahms i Düsseldorf som hushjælp og støtte for den 14 år ældre Clara og parrets syv børn. Men intet tyder på, at Brahms' forhold til Clara bevægede sig ud over det platoniske, da Schumann døde efter et par års pinefuld "kur" mod tvangstanker.

Imidlertid betød styrken og alvoren i deres kunstneriske kald en slags pagt, og den indbyrdes beundring, ømhed og flirt har nok lignet et kærlighedsforhold. Og før han forsøgte at drukne sig i Rhinen og blev indlagt, havde Schumann oplevet unge Brahms' enorme talent. Allerede i oktober 1853 skrev Johannes en ubegribeligt moden scherzo-sats i en violinsonate (Schumann og en ven skrev de andre satser) – fuldt færdig Brahms, simpelthen!

Forholdet til Clara blev skelsættende. Han var ofte tiltrukket af intelligente, musikbegavede kvinder, men ingen havde hendes kløgt eller musikerskab. Om det er grunden til, at han forblev single, kan ingen vide. Hans venner vidste, at han som ældre opsøgte prostituerede, da navne på Wiens kendte skøger kan ses kradset ned i hans manuskripter. Men derved blev det. Han valgte rollen som ungarl og kompenserede for dens aura af svigtende maskulinitet med brovtende mandschauvinisme.

Men manden med det maskuline skæg, med ølmave, cigarstump og overdådig appetit var hverken et renæssancemenneske eller en godmodig bamse; han var en sky, akavet, pirrelig personlighed. Og feminine træk dominerer både hans væsen og hans musik. Hans stemme var høj og lys længe efter overgangsalderen – "som en ung piges", mente Schumann. Ølmave opnåede han som 40-årig, og først endnu senere, efter årelang kamp, præsterede han det fuldskæg, som blev et varemærke. Den unge Brahms var en spinkel Adonis med barnlige ansigtstræk, langt hørblondt hår, vandblå øjne og forfinet silkehud, som "enhver pige kan kysse uden at rødme". Det maskuline viste sig senere, mest som en brovtende alfahan med dårlige manerer. Mens komponisten Brahms i talløse sange fremkaldte klichéen "kvindelig" langt hyppigere end samtidige som Wagner, Berlioz eller Liszt.

At Brahms kunne være egocentrisk, taktløs og sårende er der et utal af vidnesbyrd om. Inviteret af venen Niels W. Gade gav han koncert i København få år efter det forsmædelige nederlag i 1864 til Bismarcks Preussen. H.C. Andersen var blandt tilhørerne, alt var udsolgt, og yderligere to koncerter blev annonceret. Men ved en påfølgende festbanket forårsagede Brahms måbende indignation ved at lovprise Bismarck og foreslå Thorvaldsens Museum flyttet til Berlin! Det varede længe, før hans musik fik fodfæste i kongeriget – da den unge Carl Nielsen i efteråret 1894 besøgte berømmheden i Wien, mødte Brahms ham i døren med spørgsmålet: "Ligger det der endnu, museet?"

Den kraftfulde, imponerende mand var faktisk ofte usikker, opfyldt af en næsten morderisk selvkritik;

han anså sin papirkurv og en kamin for de vigtigste arbejdsredskaber. En række værker nævnt i breve, prøvespillet et cetera forsvandt igen sporløst, og de større indebar ofte endeløse revisioner, nogle før til slut alligevel at blive kasseret. Han omarbejdede adskillige tidligere værker, og altid (i modsætning til Anton Bruckner) med klart forbedrede resultater. Den 21-årige H-dur-klavertrio fra 1854 er et pragtværk, men 35 år senere lavede Brahms en ny udgave (den, som nu altid høres, omend stadig som "opus otte"!), der er genrens kronjuvel. Da han bosatte sig permanent i Wien, sled han dag ud og dag ind med sin første symfoni, men der gik næsten 15 år, før han i 1876 offentliggjorde den. I samme tidsrum komponerede Anton Bruckner fire timelange symfonier ...

At Brahms blev 43 år gammel, før han publicerede værket, skyldtes imidlertid hverken besvær med det symfoniske apparat eller skyggeboksning med Beethoven, men vanskeligheder med sammenhængskraft og formlogik. Hans naturtalent var korte, sluttede formelemeter, ikke den dynamiske "gennemføring", der er Beethovens unikke kendetegn. Brahms' symfoniske stof er uden den iboende konflikt, der sikrer dramatik, hans metode er en nøjeregnende variationsteknik, der vender og drejer et snævert stof. Kollegaen Hugo Wolf beskrev hans musik som "kunsten at komponere helt uden idéer". Og det folkelige vid tog bemærkningen til sig ved at synge hovedtemaet fra Fjerde symfoni med teksten: "I-gen faldt in-gen-ting ham ind". Men faktisk blev Brahms bedre livet igennem; i de to sidste symfonier gør rytmisk energi og dynamisk fremdrift al kritik til skamme.

Man kan lytte til et astronomisk antal forskellige indspilninger af Brahms' symfonier, fra fløjlsbløde udgaver, hvor den rytmiske diktation drukner i skønhed, til "moderne" fortolkninger, der klinger som røntgenbilleder. I modsætning til Beethoven benyttede Brahms ikke metronomtallet, så alverdens fortolkere har frit slag med nogle uhyre elastiske tempobetegnelser – man kan høre Brahms i snart sagt alle tempoer, fra slæbende til jappet. I almindelighed er de hurtigere at foretrække, Brahms' rolige fremlæggelse af sit stof behøver ingen pegepind og tåler ikke at stå i blød. Og han har ikke brug for

hormontilskud, ekstra suspense eller hedeture. Den slags tager noget fra ham uden at give noget til gengæld. Han skal spilles, som han komponerede: med omhu og engagement, ærligt, indfølelse og syngende. Altid syngende.

Maestro Fischer, De har været tilknyttet, hvad der i dag hedder Danmarks Underholdningsorkester i et kvart århundrede. Og det er faktisk noget ret usædvanligt, da dirigenter og orkestre ofte – og nogle snarere før end senere – får nok af hinanden. Men ikke i tilfældet her. Når jeg taler med orkestrets musikere, oplever jeg kun respekt om Dem og Deres virke – ja, ligefrem kærlighed. Hvilke grunde har De selv haft til at fortsætte så længe?

Jeg er tilbøjelig til at sige: Præcis de samme. Det er næsten som et ægteskab, omend jo et "åbent ægteskab", for jeg samarbejder med mange forskellige orkestre. Men dirigerer jeg eksempelvis Brahms' Fjerde symfoni i Wien, vil et orkester i reglen have den symfoni på programmet to, tre gange om året, og oftest med forskellige dirigenter. Den vældige fordel, vi har her, er, at vi kan arbejde længe og koncentreret på en bestemt opfattelse, en særlig stil eller klang. Orkestermusikere må igen og igen ændre deres spil, deres klang, vibrato, buestrøg et cetera i henhold til en dirigents særlige ønsker. At vi kan udvikle og fastholde vores egen "stil" er en gave. Nej, endnu mere, det er en luksus!

Som dirigent må man arbejde med vidt forskellige musikere hvor som helst, og man må få dem til at yde det maksimale af, hvad man har til hensigt. Jeg må dirigere anderledes i Hamburg end i Wien. Hvad jeg har arbejdet med og arbejder med her, er meget forskelligt fra, hvad jeg for eksempel tilstræbte for nylig på en turné med Beethovens *Eroica* og Wiener Filharmonikerne. Ikke fordi musikere i Wien er imod at gøre ting anderledes, men fordi jeg ikke har noget ønske om at presse dem ind i en ganske bestemt opfattelse. Jeg lytter mig ind til den særlige følemåde, der kendetegner enhver gruppe af musikere, jeg står foran; jeg lytter til deres idéer, til deres opfattelser, til forskelle mellem dem. Det er ikke kun "min

Brahms”, det er “vores Brahms”. Og “min Brahms” er blot én af “mine” Brahms-opfattelser. Jeg sætter stor pris på, at meget forskellige opførelser opstår som et resultat af vidt forskellige vilkår.

Orkestre er forskellige, langt mere forskellige end for eksempel et Yamaha-flygel og et Steinway. Nogle træblæsere eller strygere kan have en unik klang, en bestemt solospiller har måske nogle helt særlige kvaliteter, der kan bringes i spil. Jeg føler mig ofte som en teaterinstruktør, der prøver at kalde bestemte karaktertræk frem i skuespillerne; det er mit job at opdage og sætte lys på de iboende muligheder i ethvert musikalsk partnerskab, for på det grundlag kan vi udvikle idéerne sammen.

Da den 14-årige Mozart komponerede en *opera seria*, en tragisk opera om kong Mitridate, blev han klar over, at den tenor, der skulle synge titelpartiet, klang storartet i det høje og dybe register, men savnede et klangfuldt midter-register. Og den indsigt blev afgørende for, hvordan han musikalsk skildrede kongens personlighed. Mozart gjorde så at sige en dyd af et vilkår.

Jeg kender dirigenter, der har meget præcise forestillinger om næsten hver eneste takt i et musikværk, næsten som en pianist. Og man kan til en vis grad næsten “spille” på et orkester, men forudsætningen er altid masser af prøvetid, gensidig respekt og en fælles forståelse. Gustav Mahler har indspillet en sats fra sin Fjerde symfoni (i form af perforeret papir, en såkaldt “klaverrulle”), og han spiller med enorme tempoudsving, med total tempomæssig frihed. Men et fast, konstant tempo gør det langt lettere for musikerne at være præcist sammen rent rytmisk, så den slags frihed er teknisk krævende. Men tekniske vanskeligheder må aldrig begrænse eller indsnævre hensigterne. Og med grundig forberedelse kan man faktisk føle sig fri, ja “improvisere” som dirigent, og derved også stille musikerne mere frit. *Leben und leben lassen* – lev og lad leve, som man siger ...

Det gælder især, hvis man er dybt fortrolig med et operaorkester. Man kan ikke forberede og forudsige alt, selvfølgelig ikke. Men i Wien, støttet af 200 års tradition, føler jeg mig langt mere fri end for eksempel

på Statsoperaen i Hamburg. I Wien er der ikke tid til forsøg eller eksperimenter, musikerne spiller aften efter aften, ofte uden prøve, en opsætning er måske af ældre dato, eller en sanger er ny. En mangeårig koncertmester i Wiener Staatsoper fortalte mig, at han spillede sit livs første opførelse af Richard Strauss' *Rosenkavaller* helt uden nogen forprøve. Sempelthen *prima vista!* Men sådan er vilkårene: Med skiftehold kan du end ikke være sikker på, hvem du spiller ved siden af i morgen! Alle må lytte til alle andre. Og i almindelighed må en dirigent simpelthen “holde tempoet”. Men her hos os behøver jeg ikke gøre det, her kan jeg dirigere frit, næsten som var jeg Mahler ved klaveret ...

Maestro Fischer, De “viser” usædvanlig meget med Deres hænder, når De dirigerer ... ?

Sandt nok, også det er nok en vane fra Wien. I London opførte jeg en hel Mahler-symfoni med kun en enkelt prøve – musikere i London er ufatteligt hurtige. Man skal blot ikke tvinge dem til at anvende usædvanlige buestrøg, det gør dem usikre på at kunne spille rytmisk præcist sammen. Men jeg arbejder virkelig som en teaterinstruktør, jeg udnytter de givne muligheder til det yderste. Og altid i et tæt samarbejde, aldrig efter en forudgivet model eller med en færdig tolkning i hovedet.

At så meget af Deres arbejde er centreret om de store klassikere, får mig til at spørge: Ændrer Deres syn på klassikerne, Deres grundopfattelse af deres musik, sig med tiden?

Så absolut. Vi brugte 15 år på at indspille alle Haydns 104 symfonier med det østrig-ungarske Haydn Orkester. Men i dag indser jeg, at vi i langt højere grad burde have brugt den frie fantasi. I sin egen tid var Haydn lidt af en popstjerne, dengang blev hans humor og hans vid spontant forstået af enhver i en koncertsal. Nu må vi nødvendigvis puste liv i disse karaktertræk igen. Måske var jeg for bekymret eller for forsigtig, for afhængig af noderne. Igen: Jeg må arbejde og tænke som en teaterinstruktør, genskabe liv, ikke blot fortolke musik og noder.

Med orkestret her planlægger vi nu at indspille Haydns sidste 24 symfonier i løbet af fire år, i alt væsentligt baseret på livekoncerter. Før mig har kun én anden dirigent, også en ungarer, Antal Dorati, indspillet alle Haydns symfonier (på Decca i 1970'erne), og i dag er min samlede indspilning alene på markedet. Men det vil snart ændre sig. I 2032 fylder Haydn 300 år, og det vil med sikkerhed betyde et væld af nye indspilninger.

Indtil videre vil De dog stadig være den eneste dirigent, der er på markedet med indspilninger af alle Haydns, Mozarts, Beethovens og Mahlers symfonier. Samt naturligvis også alle af Brahms!

Men jeg er skam også i høj grad operadirigent! Og jeg anser det for noget nær en musikalsk tragedie, at Brahms aldrig skrev en opera. I Bayreuth kan man stadig mærke det historiske modsætningsforhold mellem Brahms og Wagner, "absolut musik" overfor musikdrama. Men jeg oplever faktisk i høj grad en Brahms-symfoni som noget episk, et drama, et eventyr, en fortælling. Lidt som når man oplever, at en drøm er fuldkommen logisk sammenhængende, mens man drømmer, men at sammenhængen er væk, når man vågner. Desværre er mængden af Brahms på markedet så umådelig, at det er en kæmpe udfordring at fremvise eller fremkalde noget nyt og enestående. Men jeg er forbløffet over den intensitet, som Carlos Kleiber får frem i Brahms. Og også dirigenter som Eliot Gardiner og Nikolaus Harnoncourt fængsler mig, måske fordi de har deres baggrund i den præ-klassiske periode og bibringer Brahms andre perspektiver.

Hvad jeg mere end noget håber at kunne sætte lys på med vores orkester, er det kammermusikalske aspekt af Brahms' symfoniske udtryk. Man kører helt anderledes i en stor, tung bil end i en let, smidig bil! Et kammerorkester giver mange unikke muligheder, der er ingen som helst grund til at kopiere det "store orkesters" attitude. Faktisk havde Brahms kun sjældent flere musikere til rådighed, end vi har her. Og det aspekt åbner en hel række nye muligheder. Det vil blive en anderledes Brahms – det er en anden Brahms!

I marts 1896, 75 år gammel, ramte en hjerneblødning Clara Schumann. Hun var døende, og i den første uge af maj skrev Brahms "Fire alvorlige sange". Clara døde 20. maj, men en banal misforståelse førte til, at Brahms kun med nød og næppe nåede begravelsen i Bonn, han nåede blot at kaste en håndfuld jord i graven. "Nu kan jeg ikke længere miste nogen eller noget," hviskede han til de omkringstående. I juli sendte han *Vier ernste Gesänge* til Claras datter, Marie: "Jeg ber dig blot lægge det til side som et offer, et minde om din kære mor."

En læge i sommerresidensen Bad Ischl diagnosticerede gulsot og ordinerede kurophold i Karlsbads varme kilder. Til en ven skrev Brahms "en banal gulsot, blot med den særhed ikke at ville gå væk". Men 3. september noterede kuranstaltens læge "*hep. hyp.m*" i journalen. Få bogstaver, men en dødsdom: *hepatitis hypertrophica maligna*, ondartet leverkræft. Brahms havde krævet "ikke for nogen pris at ville høre noget ubehageligt". Og lægen holdt tæt.

Fem uger efter døde Anton Bruckner, og Karlskirche, lige overfor Brahms' vinduer i Wien, holdt dødsmesse for ham. I foråret begyndte Brahms' solide appetit at svingte, og bunker af gamle breve og manuskripter endte i hans sultne kamin. Han overværede Philharmonikernes koncert i marts 1897 med Dvořáks to år gamle cellokoncert (som han beundrede), og hans egen Fjerde symfoni udløste endeløs jubel. Folk svingede med hatte og tørklæder, og han var længe hensunken i den kollektive kærlighedserklæring. Så nikkede han tak og forsvandt.

Den 3. april klokken 9 morgen vækkede hans husbestyrerinde ham. Han satte sig op, forsøgte at sige noget, men sank tilbage i sengen, og uden videre hørte hans vejtrækning op. Tre dage efter blev han stød til hvile i en æresgrav på Wiens Zentralfriedhof få meter fra stedet med Beethovens og Schuberts jordiske rester. Da begravelsen fandt sted, sænkede alle fartøjer i Hamburgs kæmpehavn flag og faner til halv mast.

Karl Aage Rasmussen, februar 2022

Danmarks Underholdningsorkester



Danmarks Underholdningsorkester er et orkester, som er uden sidestykke i dansk musikliv. Rødderne strækker sig mere end otte årtier tilbage til grundlæggelsen i 1939, og i 2014 gik orkestret fra at være en del af DR til at blive et selvstændigt, musikerejet orkester. Dette har medført, at orkestret er blevet endnu skarpere på sin kernekompetence – nemlig at forene symfonisk musik på allerhøjeste internationale niveau med en bred, folkelig appel.

Chefdirigent Adam Fischer har været fast tilknyttet siden 1997. Sammen med ham har orkestret udviklet en raffineret og energisk spillestil, særligt omkring den wienerklassiske musik. Orkestret har tradition for at bygge bro mellem forskellige musikalske genrer og traditioner, hvilket har affødt spændende samarbejder med store danske og internationale navne.

Danmarks Underholdningsorkester binder Danmark sammen med store musikalske oplevelser, insisterer på musikkens sociale relevans og er dybt engageret i talentudvikling, formidling og udvikling af nye koncertformater.

25 års samarbejde

2022 markerer 25 års tæt og banebrydende samarbejde mellem Adam Fischer og Danmarks Underholdningsorkester. Samarbejdet har resulteret i flere udgivelser og har høstet internationale udmærkelser.

“De mange år har skabt fundamentet for en gensidig musikforståelse og en helt særlig spillestil, som er blevet bemærket langt ud over Danmarks grænser.” – Adam Fischer

Tidligere udgivelser:

- LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN – Complete Symphonies, 2019 – 8.505251
 - ◇ Opus Klassik for Årets Symfoniske Udgivelse, 2020
 - ◇ ICMA Recording of the Year og Symphonic Music, 2020
- W.A. MOZART – 45 Symphonies, 2013 – 8.201201
 - ◇ ICMA Best Collection, 2015



Adam Fischer



Ungarskfødte Adam Fischer (f. 1949) er uddannet på konservatoriet i Budapest med videre studier i Wien. Han er en særdeles efterspurgt dirigent inden for såvel opera som koncertrepertoire og har samarbejdet med en lang række førende internationale koncert- og operahuse; herunder Wiener Staatsoper, La Scala, Metropolitan Opera samt orkestre som Wiener Philharmonikerne, London Philharmonic Orchestra og Berliner Philharmonikerne.

Adam Fischer har været knyttet til orkesteret siden 1997, fra 1998 med titel af chefdirigent, hvor han fortsat er en stor drivkraft og initiativtager både i Danmark og internationalt.

I 2019 modtog han den internationale Wolf-pris, blev udnævnt som *Conductor of the Year* af britiske Presto Classical og modtog en *Orchestral Award* af BBC Music Magazine for indspilningen af Mahlers 1. symfoni med Düsseldorf Symfonikerne, for hvem han har været chefdirigent siden 2017.

I 2022 modtog han den prestigefyldte pris *Lifetime Achievement Award* ved International Classical Music Awards (ICMA).

ICMA juryens begrundelse for at hædre Adam Fischer med Lifetime Achievement Award 2022 lyder således:

I årtier har Adam Fischer beriget de diskografiske kataloger med for det meste komplette indspilninger af symfonister som Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven eller Mahler samt udvalgte operaer. Hans fortolkninger, der altid er karakterfulde, viser tonal raffinement og et bredt farvespektrum samt slående tempo, drama og klarhed. Især hans mange fortolkninger af 1700-tallets repertoire sætter lytterne i stand til at opleve nye synspunkter. Adam Fischer står altid for kunstneriske alternativer i bedste forstand.



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Danish Chamber Orchestra

Recorded: 10–18 May, 3–6 July, 23–25 September 2021 and 12–14 February 2022
at the Concert Hall, Royal Danish Academy of Music

Recording producer: John Frandsen

Recording, editing, mixing and mastering: Daniel Davidsen / 3C Sound

Managing director: Andreas Vetö

Executive producer: Anne Dueholm Jacobsen · Edit consultant: Ivar Bremer Hauge

Booklet notes: Karl Aage Rasmussen

Translator: John Irons · Layout: Manila Design

Cover: *Johannes Brahms* © HNH International Ltd; *Adam Fischer* © Toke Bjørneboe



JOHANNES BRAHMS

COMPLETE SYMPHONIES

ADAM FISCHER

DANISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

Brahms was 43 years old when, after a long period of maturation, his *First Symphony* was published. Felix Weingartner commented on it 'taking hold like the claw of a lion' and its urgency marked a new phase in Brahms' musical development. The *Second Symphony* is traditionally seen as the pastoral element in the cycle, while the *Third*, with its melodic beauty, has the courage to end quietly, an act of astonishing serenity. The compelling Passacaglia finale of the *Fourth Symphony* represents a fitting summation to one of the greatest symphonic cycles in the classical canon.

DISC 1

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Total: 43:34

DISC 2

Symphony No. 2 in D major, Op. 73

Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90

Total: 74:20

DISC 3

Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98

Total: 34:17

Total playing time: 2:32:11

A complete tracklist can be found in the booklet

RECORDED: 10–18 May, 3–6 July, 23–25 September 2021 and 12–14 February 2022 at the Concert Hall, Royal Danish Academy of Music · RECORDING PRODUCER: John Frandsen
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MANAGING DIRECTOR: Andreas Vetö · EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Anne Dueholm Jacobsen
EDIT CONSULTANT: Ivar Bremer Hauge · BOOKLET NOTES: Karl Aage Rasmussen
TRANSLATOR: John Irons · LAYOUT: Manila Design
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3 DISCS



Danish Chamber Orchestra