

The NAXOS logo is located in the top left corner, featuring the word "NAXOS" in white capital letters on a blue rectangular background with a decorative border.

SCHUMANN

(re-orchestrated by Mahler)

Symphony No. 3 'Rhenish' • Symphony No. 4



ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra
Marin Alsop

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Symphonies Nos. 3 ‘Rhenish’ and 4 (re-orchestrated by Gustav Mahler)

Musicians in Saxony during the late 1830s might have known of Robert Schumann more as a music critic and editor of the *Neue Leipziger Zeitschrift für Musik* than as a composer. With wide interests, Schumann energetically threw himself into composing and literature, finally producing a broad range of more than 150 compositions over his tragically short 46-year life.

From the 1840s Schumann’s profile as a composer was definitely established, with Lieder cycles such as *Liederkreis* and *Frauenliebe und -leben* acknowledged as works of genius. His piano music, too, was highly regarded, with famous compositions such as the *Fantasie in C*, *Carnaval* and the *Piano Concerto in A minor*.

After Schumann’s death, with Wagner’s influence prevailing, there was a shift in opinion concerning Schumann’s longer and larger works, including his four symphonies premiered in 1841, 1846, 1851 and 1853 respectively. Critics found limitations in Schumann’s ability to hold bigger canvasses together, in his orchestration and in a certain unevenness of creative content.

Undoubtedly health issues affected Schumann’s reliability in professional life and to some this mirrored an unevenness in his output. Nevertheless, most agree that Schumann’s mastery of the Lied is peerless, and his love affair and marriage to Clara Wieck constitutes one of music’s great romances. These twin themes have assured him a special place in many listeners’ hearts. And despite what the critics said the four symphonies always had eminent admirers, Brahms and Mahler among them.

Schumann’s third and fourth symphonies were both written in a relatively settled state of mind and favourable social surroundings. In 1841 Schumann’s *Symphony No. 1* had been well received and his marriage to Clara Wieck was proving a source of stability and comfort.

What was to become his *Symphony No. 4* was originally conceived shortly afterwards in June 1841. With works by Liszt, Chopin, Berlioz and others in circulation this was a time to step forward, and Schumann planned a revolutionary and dramatic single movement symphony in D minor with four sections and multiple connections. Unfortunately, its premiere by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra proved disappointing, with listeners confused at its continuous and elaborate structure. Schumann abandoned publication, only returning to the score ten years later in 1851. Following a substantial re-write involving re-orchestration and greater formal clarity the work had a successful premiere in 1853 with the Düsseldorf Orchestra under Schumann’s baton.

Schumann had obtained the salaried position of Düsseldorf municipal music director in 1850 and had celebrated moving from Leipzig to this Rhineland city, complete with his wife and five children, premiering his *Symphony No. 3 ‘Rhenish’* in 1851, with the Düsseldorf Orchestra under his direction. Nearby the immense Cologne Cathedral was taking shape and sufficiently advanced for him to add a fifth movement to the usual four reflecting its gothic majesty. Otherwise, this joyous effervescent work seems to draw upon the good humour of Rhinelanders and warm beauty of Schumann’s new surroundings, in similar vein to Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 6 ‘Pastoral’*.

Gustav Mahler’s editions of all four Schumann symphonies lovingly and gently modify some of Schumann’s orchestration to better suit modern symphony orchestras of 90 or more players, rather than the 40 to 50 of Schumann’s time. However, Mahler couldn’t resist restoring some features of the *Fourth Symphony’s* original (1841) version, including omitting exposition repeats in the first and fourth movements. Neither could Brahms resist publishing the complete original (1841) score in 1891 despite Clara’s protests.

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 97 'Rhenish'

I. Lebhaft

Few first movements of Schumann, or indeed any composer, maintain such a combination of sheer joy, energy and exhilaration. Avoiding structural innovation and cleverness, a clear straightforward sonata form is adhered to, a sole unusual feature being the complete predominance of the opening subject and its motto – a dropping perfect fourth – throughout, even permeating the second subject. The tempo, a fast 3/4, almost swings into a compound 6/4 at times as it strides along. Clearly this is Schumann, unbridled, at his most persuasive.

II. Scherzo: Sehr mäßig

Warmly rustic characteristics permeate the main Ländler theme in C major, and many repeat signs throughout emphasise Schuman's wish for 'popular elements' easily accessible to the layman. Variations follow the main theme with those in the middle moving to A minor as a sort of trio before the main Ländler theme returns in C major completing this charming Rhineland scene.

III. Nicht schnell

This gentle reminiscence paints an idyllic picture of contentment using a simple extended binary form with the main theme in A flat major characterised by a tripping four-semiquaver pattern. A more eloquent theme heralds the B section moving through E flat major to C minor before the principal theme returns in A flat. The whole structure is of the utmost simplicity and calm, much as country life was seen as enviable, contrasting with unpleasant city noise and bustle.

IV. Feierlich

Schumann's *Feierlich* ('Solemn') direction heads his impressions of the partially completed Cologne Cathedral with a contemplative E flat minor opening. A more intense, contrapuntally complex section follows, with brass fanfares heralding the closing bars. Not noted for his ingeniously polished orchestration, on this occasion Schumann's use throughout of the orchestra's brass section including trombones is magisterial and brilliantly atmospheric.

V. Lebhaft

This compact explosion of energy, unlike the expansive first movement, is designed to conclude the symphony with rustic merrymaking. The first subject group bustles along with rhythmic drive containing several memorable themes and gradually works towards B flat major to close the exposition section. The development section commences with quietly expectant contrapuntal writing which soon leads to a brass fanfare introducing a heroic new arpeggiated theme. This then merges into a triumphant return of the movement's initial thematic material in E flat major at the recapitulation. Shortly, a further fanfare heralds one of Schumann's effervescently energetic codas that ends the symphony with breathless excitement.

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Op. 120

I. Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft

With a monolithic single movement symphony in mind for the original (1841) version, Schumann builds his musical form on a grand scale. Following a brooding introduction, the D minor first subject in agitated semiquavers bursts on the scene and takes up the entire exposition and part of the development (the beginning of which is marked by a single E flat from strings and brass). A sudden *piano* part-way through the development heralds the more lyrical second subject, and the two subjects merge and mingle before a triumphant and more martial version of the lyrical theme in D major proclaims its predominance at the recapitulation. This short D major section rounds off the first movement with hope rather than resignation.

II. Romanze: Ziemlich langsam

This charming, slightly unsettled song-like movement contrasts a theme initially announced by cello and oboe duet with a return of the brooding introduction music from the first movement. The introduction music is further modified into a more settled mood with a violin solo on top. Schumann frequently reintroduces previous ideas throughout the symphony, much like characters from a book or play.

III. Scherzo: Lebhaft – Trio

This reflects Beethoven's often vigorous and energetic treatment of Classical minuet and trio movements as *scherzos* and trios. The 3/4 opening is heavily defined and boldly rhythmical, while Schumann re-introduces the violin solo material from the previous *Romanze* as a contrasting middle trio section.

IV. Langsam – Lebhaft – Presto

Following the slow *Langsam* transition where wisps of semiquavers draw on the first movement's main subject, the fourth movement proper briskly shifts to D major (*Lebhaft*). Here Schumann continues the evolution of that subject from the point where he had left it in the first movement and it had just morphed into a fanfare-like dotted rhythm. A single G from brass and strings (much like the first movement) announces the development and the recapitulation passes almost unnoticed until yet another single-note interruption – C this time – heralds the coda which almost literally races to the finish in a shower of musical sparks.

Rodney Smith

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra

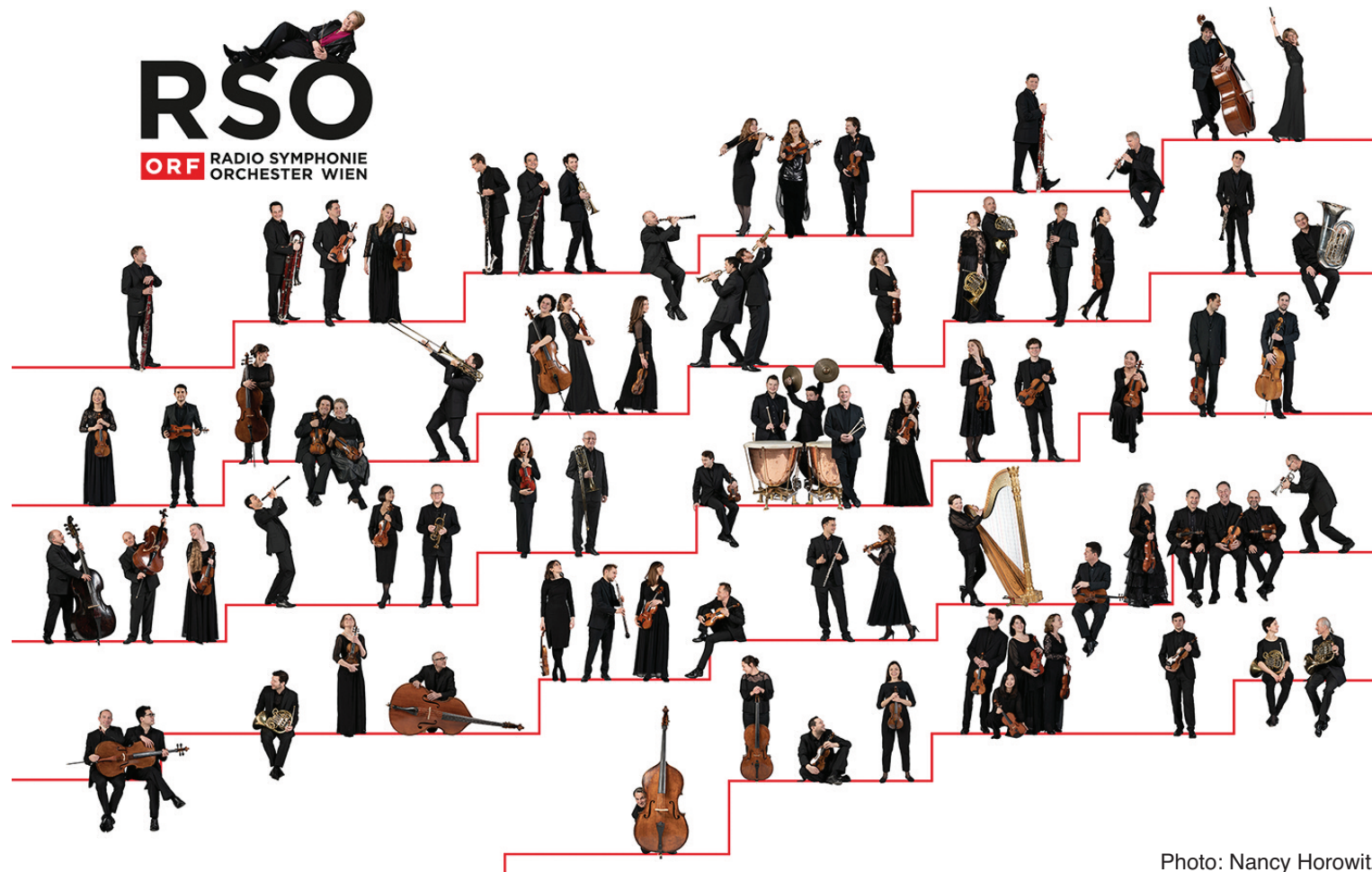


Photo: Nancy Horowitz

An ensemble of international renown, the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra (ORF Vienna RSO) is a paragon of Viennese orchestral tradition. Known for its exceptional programming, the Orchestra combines 19th-century repertoire with contemporary works and rarely performed pieces from other periods. All ORF Vienna RSO performances are broadcast on the radio, and the orchestra performs in two subscription series in Vienna, in the Musikverein Wien and the Wiener Konzerthaus. In addition, it regularly appears at major festivals in Austria and internationally such as the Salzburg Festival, musikprotokoll im steierischen herbst, and Wien Modern. The ORF Vienna RSO enjoys a successful collaboration with the MusikTheater an der Wien, has an excellent reputation as an opera orchestra, and is also equally at home in the film music genre. The Orchestra regularly tours internationally, and its discography spans a broad range of cross-genre recordings. Under the leadership of its former chief conductors, which include Milan Horvat, Leif Segerstam, Lothar Zagrosek, Pinchas Steinberg, Dennis Russell Davies, Bertrand de Billy and Cornelius Meister, the Orchestra has continuously expanded its repertoire and its international reputation. Marin Alsop has been serving as the Orchestra's chief conductor since 2019.

www.rso.orf.at

Marin Alsop



Photo: Nancy Horowitz

Marin Alsop is chief conductor of the ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra, which she leads at Vienna's Konzerthaus and Musikverein, and on recordings, broadcasts and tours. She is chief conductor and curator of Chicago's Ravinia Festival where she conducts the Chicago Symphony's summer residencies. She is music director laureate of the Baltimore Symphony and founded the orchestra's OrchKids education programme. In 2020 she was appointed music director of the National Orchestral Institute + Festival at the University of Maryland's Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. She is conductor of honour of Brazil's São Paulo Symphony Orchestra (OSESF). Alsop has longstanding relationships with the London Philharmonic and London Symphony orchestras, and guest conducts, among others, London's Philharmonia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra and Orchestre de Paris. Her discography includes acclaimed Naxos recordings of symphonies by Brahms with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Dvořák with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Prokofiev with the São Paulo Symphony Orchestras. The first and only conductor to receive a MacArthur Fellowship, Alsop also received the World Economic Forum's Crystal Award and was the first woman to conduct the BBC's Last Night of the Proms. She is director of graduate conducting at the Peabody Institute and holds honorary doctorates from Yale University and The Juilliard School. In 2002 she founded the Taki Concordia Conducting Fellowship, which was renamed in her honour as the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship in 2020.

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Robert Schumann's *Fourth Symphony* was initially conceived not long after the success of the *First*, but the dramatic original single-movement version confused audiences, and substantial revisions resulted in the eloquent masterpiece we hear today. This and the *Third Symphony* owe a great deal to Beethoven, with the '*Rhenish*' sharing much of the joy and effervescence of the '*Pastoral*' *Symphony*. Gustav Mahler's subtle re-orchestrations were made in the light of instrumental innovations and the increase in size of the symphony orchestra towards the beginning of the 20th century, making them ideal for performance today.



Robert
SCHUMANN
(1810–1856)

Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 97 'Rhenish' (1850) 29:57
re-orchestrated by Gustav Mahler (1860–1911)

- | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|------|
| 1 | I. Lebhaft | 8:56 |
| 2 | II. Scherzo: Sehr mäßig | 5:40 |
| 3 | III. Nicht schnell | 5:10 |
| 4 | IV. Feierlich | 4:33 |
| 5 | V. Lebhaft | 5:32 |

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Op. 120 (1851) 25:47
re-orchestrated by Gustav Mahler

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------|
| 6 | I. Ziemlich langsam – Lebhaft | 8:39 |
| 7 | II. Romanze: Ziemlich langsam | 3:58 |
| 8 | III. Scherzo: Lebhaft – Trio | 5:32 |
| 9 | IV. Langsam – Lebhaft – Presto | 7:38 |

ORF Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra
Marin Alsop

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