

George Szell (born June 7, 1897, Budapest, Hung., Austria-Hungary died July 30, 1970, Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.) Hungarian-born U.S. conductor. He made his debut as a pianist at age 11, and before his 20th birthday he had appeared with the Berlin Philharmonic as pianist, conductor, and composer. He established himself as an opera conductor in various German cities, including Berlin and Prague. When World War II broke out, he settled in the U.S., conducting at the Metropolitan Opera and then serving as musical director of the Cleveland Orchestra. There he imposed stern discipline but won his players' devotion by his own fierce dedication. Under his direction the orchestra became known for its precision in playing and was considered one of the world's finest.



Schumann Symphony No. 1 "Spring" & Manfred Overture George Szell Cleveland Orchestra



Robert Schumann: Symphony No. 1 (Spring), Bb, Op.38

Of Schumann's Symphonies, the first one, in Bb, Op.38, was written early in 1841, and it is said that he himself called it the Spring Symphony. Whether this is the case, or whether the name was suggested and applied to it by some poetical-minded admirer, is not positive. But it is certain that this title is singularly appropriate, for the whole work exhales the fresh, crisp, now exhilarating, and again balmy, breath of springtime. It is scored for large orchestra, including trombones. In point of structure it is the most nearly perfect of his Symphonies.

The first Movement has a fairly extended Introduction, devoted to more or less pointed allusions to the chief Theme of the Allegro. In its present form it opens with an intonation of the thematic phrase (by the trumpets and horns), but pitched a third higher than the original draft. Schumann was constrained to alter the pitch in this manner, because of the decidedly awkward effect of the original tones upon the "natural" brass instruments then in vogue---not yet supplied with the valves that equalized the entire scale. The change in pitch is generally regarded as deplorable, and nowadays can easily be rectified.

The form (sonata-allegro) is regular; the Recapitulation begins with a magnified version of the first thematic phrase, with thrilling effect. But the greater part of the Coda consists in a wholly new motive, in quieter rhythm, of fine harmonic and melodic character, distinctly Schumannesque in conception. There is no conceivable structure justification for this new factor; it is due to a purely romantic impulse; in a Beethoven Symphony it would be unthinkable. But in itself it is lovely enough to supply its own excuse.

The second Movement is an exceedingly beautiful lyric creation, serene but impressive. The design is concise, and resembles a miniature Second Rondo-form. Each of the two alternating subordinate Themes is scarcely more than a melodic fragment, though enough to indicate a Digression. Upon its first recurrence, the principal Theme is transposed. The first subordinate Motive extends from measure twenty-five to forty; the second subordinate Motive from measure fifty-five to seventy-four. To the Coda an extra Section is appended, which (in trombones and bassoons) anticipates the chief motive of the following Movement; thus, the second and third Movements are connected.

For the third Movement, Schumann follows Beethoven's lead and adopts the Scherzo type. It is an extremely broad Movement, and is further enlarged by the addition of a second Trio and another (this last time abbreviated) da capo. The first Trio provides an unusual degree of contrast, in its alternating meter and its buoyant swing, to the splendid vigor of the rest.

The Finale is one of the most exultant, irresistibly cheery, vivacious Movements in symphonic literature; and the design (sonata-allegro) is finely drawn. It opens with an introductory Phrase, apparently independent, but later interwoven with the rest in a most significant manner: it becomes the second Phrase of the subordinate Theme, and its rhythmic form gives birth to the first Codetta, besides dominating the Development and the entire Coda. There is a noteworthy parallelism between the two chief Themes, somewhat similar to the plan of the slow Movement in the Scotch Symphony of Mendelssohn; i.e. the Second Part of the subordinate Theme is derived almost literally from the First Part of the principal one.

The Manfred Overture is one of Schumann's finest orchestral creations; it conveys very effectively the urgent despair of Byron's work. Three remarkable chords precede the pained, chromatic tune in the oboe and second violins. A somber texture is provided by the orchestra, here Schumann's frequently ineffective and superfluous doublings seem most appropriate, until the passion can be restrained no longer and a wild rout ensues. A few brief fragments of lyric thought in the major mode occasionally poke through -- how effective are such outbursts of hope against so grim and indefatigable a background! The energy is momentarily spent as we near the midpoint of the piece; chorale-like fragments in the brass and isolated woodwind chords receive a terse commentary from the lower strings. As the anguished pursuit continues, it is easy to see the marked influence that Schumann's imitative orchestral procedures had on Tchaikovsky. The underlying E flat tonality is firmly re-established by a long succession of E flat minor chords in the winds, against which an agitated violin figure (with that piquant raised fourth, a prominent feature throughout the work) finally runs out of energy as the initial oboe melody returns.

Schumann Symphony No. 1 "Spring" Manfred Overture

George Szell conducts the Cleveland Orchestra

Symphony No. 1 In B-Flat Major, Op. 38 "Spring"

1. Andante Un Poco Maestoso; Allegro Molto Vivace 9:49
 2. Larghetto 5:53
 3. Scherzo: Molto Vivace 5:35
 4. Allegro Animato E Grazioso 9:02
 5. **Overture To Byron's "Manfred"** 11:15
- Total Time: 41:34

Recorded at Severance Hall, Cleveland 1959 by Epic records (Columbia)
Transferred from a 4 track tape



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