

on two pianofortes by none other than Clara Schumann and Franz Liszt! Thus, what should have been a featured work came along as an afterthought on a program which also featured the Op. 52 work.

Whatever the reasons, Schumann withdrew the work, and it remained in the dark for a decade. Hearing it now in its original version is enlightening. It is immediately lighter and more compact and more economically scored than the composer's later works, placing it more squarely in his earlier output and shining a light on the revised version as being sort of a belt-plus-suspenders fleshed out afterthought designed to accommodate the tastes of a later generation.

The opening movement -- there are only four compared to five in the 1853 version -- is taut and nods again toward Mendelssohn. It pushes beyond this, however, and is more dramatic and aggressive in nature, if not as brilliant. Jumping, insistent stomps are heard throughout and Schumann's emerging style is more in evidence than in the earlier symphonic works.

A brief, touching Romanza leads to what is essentially the same scherzo found in the later version, and the finale contains a brief Largo and bridge to an Allegro vivace finale, which two parts become mysteriously separate movements in the revision. The finale itself is also -- to overuse the word -- taut compared to the revision and is extremely effective.

Overall, the listener may come away wondering why Schumann so distrusted his original instincts and constructs. The 1853 revision does not ruin the work, but in spite of its additions, does not add to it as music nor improve upon it as symphonic experience. This original version is more authentically representative of the brilliant composer in his formative years, already in command of his musical voice and pushing to emerge from the shadows of Beethoven and a fickle musical public.

# SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 1 in B Flat major (opus 38)

“SPRING”

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor (opus 120)

JOSEF KRIPS  
conducting  
THE LONDON  
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA



Schumann sketched this work between January 23 and 26, 1841, and finished scoring it February 20. Mendelssohn conducted the first performance in Leipzig five weeks later. The 24-year-old Schumann's wooing of 15-year-old Clara Wieck, the prodigy daughter of his piano teacher at Leipzig, has been as thoroughly and widely sentimentalized as Robert Browning's courtship of Elizabeth Barrett. What these contemporaneous Roberts had in common were fathers-in-law who tried but failed to block their marriages. In Papa Wieck's case, however, he was at least as worried about Schumann's neurasthenic heredity and drunkenness as he was about losing Clara's income. Over his objections, they married in September 1840, the day before her 21st birthday. Until that year Robert had composed mostly piano music, including all but two of his greatest solo works. In 1841, abruptly, he began writing reams of lieder, and, just as abruptly, switched to orchestral works. From this period come not only the "Spring" Symphony (sketched in a mere four days), but also a "symphonette" later reworked as the Overture, Scherzo, and Finale, the D minor Symphony revised a decade later as No. 4, and a Fantasie in A minor for piano and orchestra, later expanded into a concerto for Clara.

The Symphony No. 1 ("Spring") had its premiere on March 31, 1841, with Felix Mendelssohn conducting. Although the title "Spring" acquired parentheses later on, it was the fundamental inspiration behind Schumann's first completed orchestral work. In the beginning there were titles for the movements: "Spring's Awakening," "Evening," "Merry Playmates," and "Spring at its Peak." Even after their withdrawal, he asked a conductor to "instill in [his] orchestra the sense of longing for spring. This was what I felt most while writing this work. The initial trumpet passage should come...like a summons to waken. The rest of the introduction might suggest the appearance of green everywhere, and perhaps the flutter of a butterfly. In the Allegro molto vivace [that follows], everything associated with springtime gradually comes togeth-

er." From the trumpet call, the main theme of the movement develops; it returns twice later on, in the recapitulation and in the coda.

The Larghetto that follows in E flat major is Schumann's portrait of Clara, although Beethoven haunts his sonorities and rhythm. A magical pianissimo passage for trombones, at the end, is reworked as the main theme of a Molto vivace scherzo that follows in B minor, which has two trios in D major (the first one derived from the opening trumpet fanfare). An exhilarating uprush launches the Allegro animato e grazioso finale, although Schumann later called it "a farewell to spring, not to be taken too frivolously." After the skittish main theme, we hear a second one in G minor; but overall a rondo spirit inhabits his sonata structure, with a coda even more exhilarating than the initial uprush. Indeed, among the works of a composer who embodied the idea of the mercurial Romantic genius, the "Spring" Symphony ranks as one of the happiest and most genial of all.

Although the revised version, published in 1853, is now known as Schumann's fourth and final symphony, the D minor work was actually the composer's second and followed both the B flat First Symphony and the puzzling, three-movement Overture, Scherzo, and Finale, Op. 52, near-symphony in what has come to be known as his Symphonic Year -- 1841. It was coolly received initially. Schumann himself was not certain the musical public was ready for his work. It was large, although not particularly long, and leaned forward in its romanticism and scoring. Equally perplexing was the presentation of the work in a lengthy concert without the Gewandhaus' regular conductor -- Felix Mendelssohn -- but rather the orchestra's concertmaster, Ferdinand David. A pale imitation of Mendelssohn, David did not construct a convincing interpretation nor elicit an inspiring performance and the work languished. Finally -- another item on the program would seem to have stolen the thunder of the entire concert, this being a rendition of the Hexameron Duo, performed

# SCHUMANN

Symphony No. 1 in B Flat major (opus 38) "SPRING"

Symphony No. 4 in D Minor (opus 120)

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## Symphony No. 1

**1 Andante un poco maestoso - Allegro molto vivace 9:44**

**2 Larghetto 5:49**

**3 Scherzo. Molto vivace 5:46**

**4 Allegro animato e grazioso 7:10**

## Symphony No. 4

**61. Ziemlich langsam - Lebhaft 9:33**

**72. Romanze (Ziemlich langsam) 5:07**

**83. Scherzo 4:46**

**94. Langsam - Lebhaft - Schneller - Presto 7:37**

Symphony No.1 Producer: James Walker

Engineer Ken Cress

Recorded by Decca 23-24 May 1957 Kingsway Hall

Symphony No.4 Producer Christopher Whelan

Engineer Gordon Parry

Recorded by Decca 15&19 Oct 1956 Kingsway Hall



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