

The solo part

In my edition of the violin part, I have attempted to undertake as few alterations as possible to the musical text and phrasing of the autograph score. Fingerings are oriented towards the style adopted by Joseph Joachim as can be observed in his own editions of the Brahms Violin Concerto and his own *Concerto "à la hongroise"*. These fingerings are primarily intended to provide frequent opportunities for interlinking portamenti in cantabile.

I have only undertaken minimal alterations to an almost unplayable passage in the first movement (bar 117 and the parallel passage in bar 306). I adhere to Joachim's recommendation on the first beats of these bars and then immediately revert to Schumann's original version; in bar 306, I have also included a charming 'best playable' version with the open E string instead of g'' for the second and third beats. Even if the tonal result of the original initially appears unsatisfactory for the melodic line of these bars in the hands of many violinists, I would like to point out that even more uncomfortable fingerings can be encountered within a similar stylistic context, e.g. in Paganini's *Caprice No. 6*; the figure on the second beat in Schumann (octave d''/d''' plus the auxiliary note b flat'') to be played in third position can be found in identical form in the first bar of Paganini (g'/g'' –e flat'', i.e. also in third position one string lower)!. Within this context, it is illuminating that Schumann had already compiled piano accompaniments for the *Caprices Nos. 1 and 24* in October 1853 alongside composition of the Violin Concerto and subsequently completed the cycle in Endenich.

Schumann's markings in the solo part which are presumably based on Joachim's recommendations are provided in complete form as ossia at the bottom of the relevant pages and several expedient alterations in phrasing have been adopted and indicated as dotted lines in the body of the text. I have not made reference to the substantially more radical alterations in the editions by Gustav Lenzewski for the first edition in 1937 and the completely new version of the solo part undertaken by Paul Hindemith in the same year. These attempts (including Joachim's variants) all ultimately demonstrate that there are no technical improvements to Schumann's initially notated musical formulation which would be of advantage for the violinist.

I do however consider Schumann's tempo indications to be of essential importance in the interpretation. These markings initially appear to us as somewhat unorthodox until we realise that a "brio" or "con fuoco" as in the context of Beethoven or Mendelssohn is inadequate here; each note assumes individual significance. It is indeed for this reason that the outer movements are notated in extremely slow tempi and the slow second movement in contrast in a relatively flowing tempo. This is the only possible solution for the slow movement to do equal justice to both the expansive melodic structure and the ponderously dance-like character of the middle section. The reason for Schumann's relatively similar tempi for all three movements is the utilisation of the second theme of the first movement throughout the entire concerto which would not permit an extensive variation in tempo. The beginning of the second movement also recurs during the course of the final movement. The renunciation of 'high blood pressure' tempi is rewarded in this work with some of the most heartfelt and moving moments throughout the entire literature for violin.

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