BRAHMS

SCHERZO OPUS 4 FOR THE PIANO

EDITED BY JOSEPH BANOWETZ

Foreword

About the Scherzo, Op. 4

Johannes Brahms's (1833–1897) *Scherzo*, Op. 4 (E-flat minor), is his earliest surviving original composition. It was composed in 1851 when he was 18 years of age, then published with a group of other works in 1854. This scherzo, with its two trios and coda, remains one of Brahms's larger solo piano works, and recalls the huge size of Chopin's four scherzos. Asked about this, Brahms in 1853 reportedly told the Liszt pupil William Mason (1829–1908) that he did not know the Chopin scherzos at the time. Brahms's *Scherzo*, Op. 4, is dedicated to Ernst Ferdinand Wenzel (1808–1880), a foundation teacher at the Leipzig Conservatory and close friend of Schumann's, whom Brahms had met in November of 1853.

Performance Suggestions

1. Measures 44–46: The performer must decide how high the crescendo goes before falling back to a ***p*** in measure 46. Perhaps ***mp*** would be appropriate.
2. Measures 70–80: Hold back the tempo slightly, then begin to regain it in measure 78. The editor suggests a full ***a tempo*** at the ***f*** in measure 80.
3. Measures 115–116: Take extra time with the fermata in measure 115, and strictly observe the pedal release at measure 116.
4. Measures 172–184: Strive to produce a clear ***pp*** contrast in Brahms's "echoes" that are found in measures 175–176 and 179–180 throughout this predominantly ***p*** passage.
5. Measure 189: Perhaps very slightly relax the tempo at the ***piacevole*** indication, and then clearly pick up the tempo at the upbeat to measure 202.
6. Measure 273 (beat 3)–285: Note the pedal release in measure 273. To keep from blurring the staccatos in the left hand, it is important not to use pedal again before measure 286.

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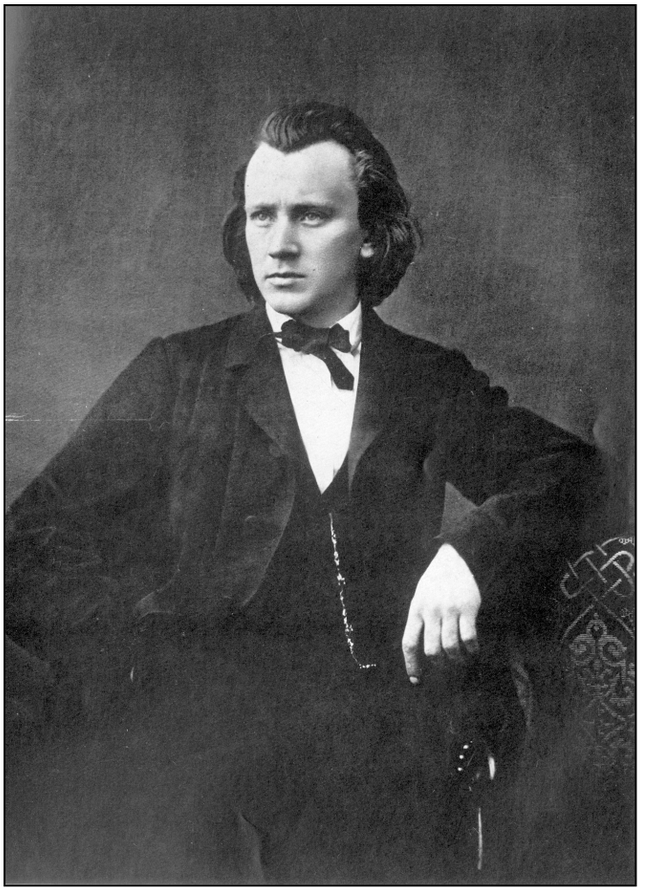

Brahms photo as a young man

This edition is dedicated to Murray and Katherine McLachlan.
Joseph Banowetz

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Scherzo

Johannes Brahms
(1833–1897)
Op. 4

(Quick and fiery)
Rasch und feurig (𝅗𝅥. = 92–96)

mf

6

marcato

12

più f

18

Trio II

Molto espressivo

302

f

RH

309

RH

316

f

322

ⓒ Brahms gives pedal markings in measures 307, 315, 343, 351, 415, 443, 473, and 476.
These have been incorporated in the pedaling indications given by the editor.

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ⓕ

(continued from page 1)

7. Measures 337–338: Use these two measures to get back to ***a tempo*** from the ***poco sostenuto*** in measure 332.

8. Measures 411–419: Beginning at measure 411, hold something in reserve, pacing the crescendos to reach slightly above ***ff***. Perhaps the ***ff*** in measure 426 can be thought of as ***fff***.

9. Measures 468–471: Be sure not to use pedal in this passage since the right hand must be played staccato. The left-hand tied notes must be held their full values by the thumb.

About This Edition

Brahms was generally very careful and thorough in his markings, with most of his compositions having been published during his lifetime. His own indications for dynamics, articulation, phrasing and the like have remained unaltered. In most cases, the present edition is based on both manuscript sources and the first printed editions, which were usually done under Brahms's direct supervision. Occasional indications have been added by this editor and are always enclosed within parentheses.

Brahms seems inconsistent in his placement of sudden outbursts of *fortes* and *fortissimos* (compare measure 285, where the *fortissimo* clearly includes the upbeat to the principal theme of this section of the *Scherzo*, with similar upbeats in measures 152, 156, 201, 205, and 240). This editor prefers making the upbeats relate to the louder dynamic levels that follow immediately. Here each interpreter must ultimately make his or her own decision.

Pedaling is the one area in which Brahms did not generally provide complete performance directions. His occasional indications have been noted; in a few instances they are incorporated into more complete schemes given by this editor.

Brahms did not add metronome indications, reportedly saying that they would be different each day. The parenthetical metronome indications given by this editor should be considered only as broad suggestions. All performers will, of course, wish to make their own final decisions in this important area.

Because of Brahms's meticulous attention to detail in his music notation, players are urged to adhere closely to the printed page. This will help to ensure that they are guided through the most stylistic performance by the master himself.