“It is more vibrant”

<? echo $this->teaser; ?>

by Eric Marinitsch

Philippe Jordan

Why did you decide to play “Chamber Symphony No.1” with the orchestration from 1914?

Jordan: Basically, I have always looked for a version that retains the sound of the original Chamber Symphony, but enables a larger orchestra to perform the work without additional doubling or adding brass. There is naturally a risk that principal or secondary voices might be lost. Schönberg made it very easy for himself at first – he told the conductor to decide as he considered appropriate. But he noticed very quickly that this was not going to work. And when I learned about this version from 1914, which Schönberg himself had orchestrated, I was unbelievably thankful that I had at last found a version which delivered exactly what I had been looking for.

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Philippe Jordan

Orchestrating the "Chamber Symphony" is not an easy task. What do you think is the challenge?

Jordan: The big question is always how an orchestral version can be made of such a contrapuntally complex work. There are 2 possibilities. Either you do what was very common at the time – you double or triple certain audible motifs; you give them to specific instruments, to the brass, so that they come through even more clearly, even more sharply. The sheer mass makes them effective, as it were. But this can naturally also be approached in a different way, without adding even more instruments and increasing the emphasis, but instead cutting back to enable the sound to be heard much more clearly as a result of the transparency.

What do you think is the difference between the two large versions from 1914 and 1934/35?

Jordan: The main difference between the two large versions is that the orchestration of the 1935 version is particularly massive. It is for a really large orchestra, a bit like Mahler's orchestras, and has nothing to do with chamber music in that sense. And naturally, the most radical difference is the use of brass instruments – trumpets and trombones – which makes this version extremely symphonic and extremely massive. To ensure that it is not as massive throughout the entire work, Schönberg often allows – and this is what is exciting about the late version – the solo string quartet to play the more intimate and somewhat more delicate passages, which produces contrasts of true chamber music. He didn't need to do this in the 1914 version because although it is basically still a very orchestral sound, it is a less aggressive sound; it is more vibrant, clearer; it is less obtrusive and so the parts can be heard more clearly. And so it is not absolutely essential to include greater contrasts or suddenly have passages played by soloists, as in the chamber version.

SCHÖNBERG ARNOLD

Chamber Symphony No.1 (1906, 1914)
Version for Orchestra | 22’
3 3 4 3 - 4 0 0 0, str
prem. 01.11.2012 Munich, Munich Philharmonic Orchestra,
cond. Philippe Jordan