Variations on a Theme by Haydn

Johannes Brahms
arranged by
Robert D. McCashin

1 Full Score
8 Violin 1
8 Violin 2
5 Viola
5 Cello
5 Bass

Extra Part - P3036241
Program Notes

Johannes Brahms was a pianist turned composer. He was born Hamburg, Germany, in 1833 and is a well-known composer of the Romantic period. His Variations on a Theme by Haydn are based on a theme not by Haydn at all. The theme was actually taken from the second movement of a “field-partita,” possibly written by his prized student Pleyel. It is now commonly known as the Saint Anthony Chorale.

The theme was brought to Brahms’ attention by his friend K.F. Pohl, a Haydn scholar and archivist at the famed Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. Brahms first composed the variations for two pianos, but almost immediately thereafter orchestrated it for full orchestra. Multiple sources point out that it was the first set of variations ever composed for the orchestral medium. The full orchestra work contains the St. Anthony theme in a form very close to the original field-partita, with only string pizzicato added, plus eight variations and a coda repeat of the theme. A most unique feature is that the theme has two five-bar segments, as opposed to the standard four-bar “classical” thematic model. The Variations were completed and first performed in 1873, premiered by the Vienna Philharmonic with Brahms himself conducting. The success of this work encouraged Brahms to write numerous major orchestral works, including his four symphonies.

The arranger has included the opening theme, a carefully selected set of the variations, and Brahms’ repetition of the full-blown coda. It is undoubtedly an unpretentious, cheerful, even joyful work, and would be a great addition to any concert program!

About the Arranger

Robert D. McCashin, DMA, is Professor Emeritus and former Director of Orchestras and Professor of Conducting at James Madison University. He recently retired from academe after a 43-year career of conducting and applied string teaching at the college/university level. He was awarded JMU’s Distinguished Teacher Award for the College of Visual and Performing Arts in 2015. For the past 24 years, Dr. McCashin has been Music Director for the JMU Symphony, Chamber Orchestra and Opera Orchestras, and taught all relevant orchestral conducting and academic courses within the MM and DMA curricular core, as well as applied studio strings.

Dr. McCashin, a violinist, has been a successful writer and arranger of educational publications, having now published nearly 80 works for the Grade I through V educational performance levels. His original works and arrangements are published through Winfred Jones, FJH Music and Tempo Press. He has been a regular guest conductor for a variety of orchestral ensembles, including Regional and All-State Orchestras across the US as well as Regional professional orchestras. He has been invited to present more than 30 conducting workshops and seminars for national and state level teacher conferences throughout the U.S.

Dr. McCashin is Founder, Past President and former National Board member for the College Orchestra Directors Association.
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Theme, I, III, VI, and Coda

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Duration ca. 6:45

Andante \( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \)
\( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \)
\( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \)
\( \frac{4}{4} \) \( \frac{4}{4} \)

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Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

37 38 39 40 41 42
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Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

76 77 78 79 80
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Vivace $\frac{\downarrow}{\downarrow} = 88 - 90$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass
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Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

1.

2.

poco rall.
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112 Broadly; Meno mosso $\frac{j}{\text{ff}} = 80 - 82$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

112 113 114 115 116 117

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molto rit.

[\textbf{132}] in full tempo $\frac{\text{d}}{\text{t}} = 92 - 96$

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

130 131 132 133 134 135
Variations on a Theme by Haydn

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Cello

Bass

136 137 138 139 140 141

6'46.3"