

# SYMPHONY No.2 IN C MAJOR Op.140

By Alan H. Krueck

This article formed part of Alan Krueck's projected book: "Joachim Raff: A biographical documentation and study of his works." The original is a draft and so minor changes have been made to the grammar to produce a finished piece. The text has been preserved in full, including its references to musical examples, which could not be included as they were not found in Dr Krueck's surviving papers. Other omissions have also been noted.

The *Vaterland* Symphony and first Suite for Orchestra close a period in Raff's career which may be called the first. They are the major works which close his years of apprenticeship in Weimar and show him as a complete master, though in other genres there are works of equal merit. In the years between the Symphony and Suite Raff produced a number of shorter orchestra works (five overtures) but it was in his chamber music efforts of this period that Raff showed his genius: in the incomparable Piano Quintet op.107, the C minor Piano Trio (both favorites of Hans von Bülow) the Third Violin Sonata in D major (with its peculiar anticipation of the first movement of Chausson's D major Concerto for Violin, Piano and String Quartet) and the marvelous A minor Quartet op.137. Six years had passed since the composition of *An das Vaterland*, three since the First Orchestral Suite. Off and on during the year 1866 Raff worked on his Second Symphony in C major, op.140. It was performed for the first time on March 1 1867 in Wiesbaden; Wilhelm Jahn led the Court Orchestra. After its first performance Raff evidently revised the score slightly and then, concurrent with its publication, conducted the second performance with the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. Both popular and critical receptions are recorded as being unanimously good.

Few symphonies of the post-Schumann era could, in 1866, be called repertoire. Volkmann's D minor certainly was, Ferdinand Hiller's Spring Symphony continued to do well and certainly Liszt's two efforts were to the fore among the progressive musicians of the time; only Raff's *Vaterland* Symphony can be counted to this elect group by 1866. There was a breathing space for public acceptance of the *Vaterland* symphony, a period of absorption into the repertoire which the Second Symphony was not permitted, for within a year after its publication Raff's *Im Walde* would have its sensational first performance and become the sought after novelty; in the wake of enthusiasm for both the *Vaterland* Symphony and the *Im Walde* the Second Symphony exerted little appeal either patriotically or poetically. Musically however it represents no lessening of invention and on those grounds it has indeed been unjustly neglected, a neglect often compounded of comment without knowledge, as is witnessed by Helene Raff's comments concerning the early response to the work; "This (the reaction) seems to have been more for the remarkable form and less for the melodic invention."

Although the Second Symphony doesn't have the excitingly grandiose musical gestures of the *Vaterland* Symphony or the immediate lyrical appeal of the *Im Walde* it is a work which can hold its own with both, but only if the listener is willing to give it more than a cursory hearing. The brilliance of orchestration shared by the *Vaterland* and *Im Walde* symphonies is not to be found in equal degree in Raff's C major Symphony and that may have been intentional, though the orchestration is certainly masterful. Raff's intentions in his Second Symphony seem altogether different from those of Symphonies Nos.1 and 3. The Second Symphony in C major is a completely classically oriented symphony. It is not based on thematic metamorphosis, thematic recall, *idée fixe*. It makes no attempt to characterize nature or nationality, musical motto or characteristic intervals, nor to endorse poet or dramatist. It consists of four contrasting movements, in the ordinary sequence fast, slow, moderate, fast and its orchestration eschews extra color devices such as the percussion found in both the *Vaterland* and *Im Walde* symphonies. It is the most classically orientated of all Raff's symphonies. This in itself makes the work somewhat atavistic for the period in

which it was written, but it also shows Raff (and this is born out in his subsequent symphonies) very consciously devising a work different in character to its predecessor, a practice he maintains up to the symphonic cycle *The Four Seasons* (and even within that cycle there are considerable differences in approach to symphonic thinking). Raff also never again used the classical model implicit in the C major Symphony.

The opening of the first movement (C major, 6/4, *Allegro*) is somewhat similar to that in the First symphony and certainly a close relative to the beginning of the *Im Walde*: Ex.1 [not extant]. The similarities between this opening and the openings of the *Vaterland* and *Im Walde* symphonies is further emphasized by the figuration which accompanies the repetition of the themes: Ex.2 [not extant]. At letter A Raff introduces a subsidiary idea, at first treated in sequence: Ex.3 [not extant], but later expanded in a lovely lyric inspiration: Ex.4 [not extant]. It is strange to think of this material as merely transitional, although it is, since it has such intrinsic beauty by itself. At letter B the main theme is presented once again in splendid fullness but with the important addition of this accompanimental pattern in the strings: Ex.5 [not extant] which, at the end of this full passage, becomes the accompaniment to yet another idea: Ex.6 [not extant] distributed primarily among the woodwinds with celli included. At letter C Raff introduces of extraordinary expansiveness: Ex.7 [not extant]. In its strange accentuation it is incredibly parallel to Elgar in his Second Symphony, although such rhythmic distentions are also part of the Schumann Rhenish, a heritage implied all the more at letter D with the appearance of this motive: Ex.8 [not extant]; this in turn is later given clearer outline in the brass and timpani against woodwinds and strings in this manner: Ex.9 [not extant], which leads to a cadential passage of considerable weight: Ex.10 [not extant].

The developmental section begins with a series of canons at the octave utilizing Ex.1 and a sequence of modulations which climax at letter F. The richness of Raff's invention almost lapses into the rhapsodic when, anticipating the working out of Ex.1, the listener is suddenly confronted with Ex.11 [not extant], intended only as a bit of transition but so lovely and effective as to be a theme in itself. It is of course nothing more than an extension of Ex.?, a realization reached aurally only at letter G at which point Raff also begins his working out of Ex.?, also the same canonic cum modulatory series of sequences to which Ex.1 was treated, and this climaxes also in a slightly altered version of material not thus far treated in the development, Ex.12 [not extant]. At letter I a recapitulatory section ensues. To be sure all that was exposed from the very beginning to letter F is repeated (with some important changes in the instrumentation). All of this is very welcome if slightly predictable. The surprise comes at M when, expecting some kind of quick coda the music dies out and an implied but never directly heard pulsation derived from the accompaniment to Ex.1 takes over. Via this the listener is confronted with an entirely new motive. It may be, as C.A. Barry mentions in his analysis for *Monthly Musical Record*, trite and unpromising, but this perplexing little interjection very quickly assumes a psychological role, increasing the momentum for a restatement of Ex.? and at the same time realizing the potential of the semiquaver figure attached to the exposition and recapitulation of Ex.1. The orchestration takes on a sudden sweeping brilliance heretofore absent and the music gains in intensity at the same time. The playing off of parts of Exs.1, 2, 5 and 8 (fewer and fewer parts are apparent) from letter N on brings the movement to an extraordinarily exciting conclusion. One remark concerning this coda has not been made: although it looks lengthy, in realization it isn't. This delightful detail adds to the overall beauty of the intellectual control exercised by Raff.

The second movement of the C major symphony (4/4 E flat major) begins (if one accepts Ex.8 of the first movement as indicative of the same) with a very Schumannesque melody: Ex.1 [not extant]. The relationship to the slow movement of Schumann's is further emphasized when the melody is repeated against the following syncopations: Ex.2 [not extant] and then expanded in beautiful counterpoint: Ex.3 [not extant] and closed with a flute descant echoed by clarinets. Letter A brings new material also somewhat Schumannesque and elaborated somewhat too lengthily by sequence (a maneuver which does however permit Raff a great deal of harmonic coloration. Letter B brings Ex.4 but now introduced

with an all important change; slight as it may seem it adds greatly to the weight of the melody. With increasing background activity this music is developed further until there is interjected this portentous material: Ex.5 [not extant]. The dotted rhythm is taken up and the motive is used for some stern Beethovenian writing which imparts fine contrast to the preceding lyrical section. The motive receives at once exposition and in its own development (letter C forward) introduces the development section of the movement with Raff bringing back his major themes in reverse order and developing the material to a magnificent sonorous climax on Ex.6 [not extant], some 9 measures before letter D. The *dénouement* to the movement is based on Ex.? for the most part, with variety by flickering coloration patterns (16th note sextuplets, 8th note triplets *pizzicati*, and 64th note *tremolandi*). Some 15 beats from the end of the movement Exs.1, 3 and 10 are repeated once more: a sudden crescendo throughout the orchestra brings a brass proclamation of Ex.? and there is a decidedly brief (3 measure) concluding gesture involving timpani against a sustained E flat triad in the strings, *pianissimo*.

If there is one movement in which Raff succeeds it is in his *scherzi*. In all of his symphonies there is not a poor one and, unfortunately, it is sometimes the only movement of genuine inspiration. It is safe to say that in his symphonies Raff successfully avoids duplication of any one type of *scherzo* in all his symphonies. The third movement of the C major symphony (G minor, 3/4 *Allegro vivace*) is the only *scherzo* of the Raff symphonies that follows the *scherzo-trio-scherzo da capo* rigidly. To be sure the *Scherzo* to the G minor Symphony (No.4) maintains a similar pattern but it also has a coda following the *da capo* which is not the case here (furthermore the entire character of these two *scherzi* are completely different: that for the C major is in the minor key, in triple time, that for the G minor is in a major key and duple time).

The opening of the *Scherzo* in Raff's C major symphony takes one by surprise in its cross-rhythm pulsation - the actual sound is startlingly similar to the beginning of the *Finale* in the Sibelius Violin Concerto - and it could very well be that the inspiration for such gesture is the *Scherzo* in the Spring symphony of Schumann. The shifting accents of the accompaniment stand in excellent contrast to the regularity of the *Scherzo's* main theme: Ex.1 [not extant], which is worked up vigorously assisted by sharp punctuations of brass and timpani on Ex.2 [not extant]. After a climax is reached a secondary theme is presented at letter A: Ex.3 [not extant] which suggests the *Scherzo* of Schumann's Spring symphony even more strongly, not so much in the actual theme but, once again in the accompaniment. This material is treated canonically and its momentum is added to by the isolation of this accent: Ex.? [not extant; a corresponding developmental motive to Ex.? which soon makes itself felt as well. There is an exceptionally exciting build up leading to letter B and the return of Ex.1 and the *melée* which follows is a wildly galumphing passage worthy of the Janacek Sinfonietta! A transition to Ex.3 introduces development of this music and with a subtle but important shift in the outline of Ex.4 [not extant] the accent moves to the last note - the music of the *Scherzo* proper moves to a swift conclusion. Without halt (or change in tempo) the trio opens with this phrase: Ex.? [not extant], which is the exclusive property of the woodwinds and it is twice repeated. Schumann again suggests himself but this time via the *Scherzo* in the D minor symphony of Robert Volkmann; Raff's theme is almost a quote of material found there. There follows a key change from D major to A flat and the strings take over the action for the most part with this lovely bit of lyrical writing: Ex.? [not extant]. The material is kept in fairly close part writing, suffusing the trio with a velvety sound which stands in contrast to the previous section for woodwinds alone. A short transitional passage brings this back augmented from a color standpoint by the addition of an 8th note *ostinato* patten for the first violins alone. At letter C there is a brief modulatory passage in which first the rhythmic pattern of Ex.1 and then a fragment of the theme itself is presented. Via this the *Scherzo* proper is repeated.

The *Finale* opens *Andante maestoso* (3/4) in the jolting key of A flat with the following pompous themes Ex.1 [not extant] which, with its dotted rhythm may remind one of Ex.? from the slow movement, but the contours are eventually too dissimilar. Ex.1 here seems

present, as suggested by C.A. Barry, to provide contrast with what precedes in the *Scherzo* and what follows in the main body of the *Finale*, its downward plunge of an octave allowing for easy modulation and Raff takes it through no less than 10 keys before the dominant of C major is reached. At this the music subsides into the home key and the major portion of the *Finale, Allegro con spirito (4/4)*. A conductor may be caught unawares by the change in proceedings and simply regard the opening theme of the *Allegro* as an extension of the introduction. Should this be the case the entire momentum will be lost for, considering the change in meter as well as time, the *Allegro* is mostly *doppio movimento*. It is necessary to make the passage from the change into the *Allegro* to letter A as brilliant as possible (which it is at fast tempo) because at letter A Raff introduces a theme which has great weight by itself and, in chordal proclamation throughout the orchestra produces an invigorating clash with the busyness of Ex.2: Ex.3 [not extant]. A transitional motive: Ex.4 [not extant] is of importance since it brings back the florid figuration of Ex.2. After a series of modulations a secondary theme is introduced at letter B: Ex.5 [not extant], in which the contrapuntal line is of considerable importance. The ensuing extension of this ingratiating bit of lyricism exhibits Raff at his best, particularly at the canonic play between first violins and violas some 10 measures later which, wedded to modulatory sequences, brings back Ex.5 in a beautiful statement in octaves. The succeeding passage is built at first on the rhythm [not extant] and later, during a general crescendo, forms the pattern [not extant] which erupts with the gloriously Brahmsian: Ex.6 [not extant] and subsides into the longingly Schumannesque: Ex.7 [not extant].

At letter D the development section begins, but it is not with Ex.2 but rather the *Andante maestoso* theme with its downward octave leap and ascending scale answer. A fugal idea emerges to be played against Ex.1: Ex.8 and there is some complicated writing (though always aurally clear) which is abandoned at letter E for an interplay of Ex.1 (*Kopfmotive*) and elements of Ex.2; towards the end Ex.3 is reintroduced and then, at letter F, the recapitulation is announced with a restatement of Ex.? in its original guise. Thereafter the materials from letters B to D are presented again, pretty much they were at first. Some 9 measures before letter I there is a clash between the intervals F#-C, which remains poised on the dotted rhythm of Ex.1 from the introduction. At letter I, via this rhythm, the tension dissolves through a series of modulations and fragments of preceding themes (Ex.?) are intertwined with the full version of Ex.5 alone emerging completely recognizable. A crescendo continues at the horns ring out with Ex.3 answered by high strings and woodwinds which leads to a *stretto (piu mosso)* on the *Kopfmotive* of Ex.1 and the Second Symphony in C major of Joachim Raff moves to a swift conclusion.