

## 降 B 大調第二鋼琴協奏曲，作品八十三

布拉姆斯 (1833–1897)

不太快的快板

熱情的快板

行板

優美的稍快板

鋼琴是布拉姆斯極擅長的樂器，不僅為其寫下精彩的獨奏與室內樂，多樣技巧在兩首鋼琴協奏曲中更有充分發揮。寫於二十五歲的第一號氣勢雄渾磅礴，情感豐厚飽滿，大開大闢又有綿長思緒。每聽一次，靈魂彷彿就被淘洗一次。不得不說，深度也是一種天分，而在布拉姆斯身上，我們看到這種天分最驚人的早慧。

然而奇妙的是「雄渾磅礴，情感豐厚飽滿，大開大闢又有綿長思緒」，如此字句也可挪來形容他的《第二鋼琴協奏曲》，曲境卻截然不同。此時已四十八歲的作曲家，遠比年輕時了解管弦配器，織體益發精緻不說，更寫出色彩全然服膺音樂本質的思考。如此態度也反映在對鋼琴家的技巧要求。此曲充滿各種刁鑽技法，卻偏偏不是傳統概念下「與樂團相抗」的協奏曲。演奏者必須內化所有招式，讓鋼琴與樂團氣韻合而為一。這是協奏曲，也是「附有鋼琴的交響曲」，更像大型室內樂。這是更高級的技巧，也是鋼琴家永恆的挑戰。

這部輝煌經典是布拉姆斯到意大利旅行時的產物。他在 1878 年春天構思，到 1881 年四月才於維也納近郊普萊斯巴完成。無論此曲真正的靈感來源為何，第一樂章一開始的圓號就讓人想起阿爾卑斯山的傳統號角，將人帶往風光明媚的壯麗自然，雖然音樂裡並非只有傳統，也隱藏了豐富且先進的和聲運用。身為古典形式的擁護者，布拉姆斯在此示範如何利用「奏鳴曲式」設計情境轉折。從呈現、發展到再現部，我們先聽到陽光燦爛下崇山峻嶺的靈秀之美，接著是登山之險與行者之憂，在幾經盤折後峰迴路轉，又得以回首細看所經歷的一切危疑與美好。號角聲與伴隨的長笛始終是最好的指引，作曲家寫自然也說人生。

第二樂章是布拉姆斯後來所加，但這段詠諧曲可一點都不輕鬆，以近十分鐘的篇幅和艱深八度技巧考驗演奏者的能耐。此段樂思憂愁沉鬱，宛如背光山谷與迴峰遮影，是此曲的陰暗面。但那音樂格局之雄奇，險象中亦有抒懷，仍然是大山大水才能有的氣度。第三樂章以深邃優美的大提琴詠嘆登場。這也是布拉姆斯年輕時曾認真學習的樂器，他還能掌握頗具難度的作品，日後果然也為它譜出迷人至極的歌唱。樂章在鋼琴加入後轉折出更深刻豐富的思緒，作曲家以室內樂的筆法吐露諸多秘密，極其內斂感人。第四樂章洋溢歡暢愉悅的樂想，也包括小調的匈牙利風情。布拉姆斯讓幾個重要主題反覆出現，又不斷加入新素材，持續帶來驚奇。至於驚奇中的驚奇，或許要屬突如其來的結尾——如此壯大恢宏之作，居然以輕盈巧妙，如同遊戲的方式收筆，讓千斤嚴肅結語於一兩莞爾。這是布拉姆斯大型作品中最特別的例子，總能讓聽眾品味再三，也期待多樣的詮釋解讀。

## 和聲教案

亞當斯 (1947年生)

第一樂章

第二樂章 — 安福塔斯之傷

第三樂章 — 艾哈克與小積

此次倫敦交響樂團訪港行的最後一首作品，帶來美國作曲名家亞當斯寫於 1985 年的《和聲教案》。這不只讓曲目從古典、浪漫、現代一路延伸到當代經典，也以此曲回看之前的音樂傳統。瞻前也顧後，實是令人滿足的絕佳安排，也是給香港愛樂者最好的獻禮。

就當代意義而言，亞當斯的作曲語彙參考美國七十年代的簡約主義音樂甚多。如此強調旋律性、和諧音與傳統和聲的寫作，最初可看成對複雜序列技法、無調性音樂的反動，而其不斷反覆的特色，也多少反映出當時聽眾追求精神性、冥想性音樂的渴求。相較於前輩，亞當斯更向浪漫派靠攏，又發展出簡短有勁、如脈搏般跳動的樂思，讓人一聽就能辨認其風格。以音樂傳承來說，此曲會以德文命名，作曲者指涉的即是荀伯格 1911 年鼎鼎大名的同名著作，也以此向華格納、布拉姆斯、馬勒以降的德奧後浪漫傳統致敬。

《和聲教案》第一樂章以連續 E 小調和弦重擊而出。那是布拉姆斯最後一首交響曲的調性，而亞當斯在重複中不斷變化聲響的處理，彷彿要向世人重述荀伯格的理論，證明同一和弦也能變化出極其豐富的色彩。樂章中段我們聽到深富浪漫派手法的情感抒發，尾段又接以宛如華格納歌劇《尼伯龍指環》的沉睡動機，繼而在亞當斯招牌的脈搏節奏中，開展出神似「諸神進入法哈拉宮」與「胡坦進入尼伯龍國度」兩段音樂的混合體，爆發懾人的管弦力量。

更明確的引用出現於第二樂章〈安福塔斯之傷〉。這是聖杯守護者「漁人王」與他永不癒合的傷口，直到「被選者」來到方能解除其苦。且不論亞當斯是否指涉華格納的同主題歌劇《帕西法爾》，此樂章開頭引了西貝流士《第四交響曲》的起始和弦，情緒高潮則是馬勒《第十交響曲》慢板樂章中哭嚎爆發樂段的改寫。它們皆反映作曲者病中心境，之所以成為亞當斯拼貼引用的素材，或許也和他個人境況有關：在《和聲教案》之前，他經歷了長達一年半的創作枯竭期，是某次夢見自己開車經過舊金山海灣大橋，看到海面油輪突然如火箭般垂直升起，才終於觸動其譜曲靈感。若說此景顯現於第一樂章極富衝擊力與爆發性的樂想，第二樂章的沉重悲嘆，或許正是回顧這段無法創作之苦。至於第三樂章〈艾哈克與小積〉，靈感來自另一個夢，暱稱小積的幼女在中世紀神學大師背上飛繞宇宙。如此超現實的畫面，或許成為樂章開始空靈又飄浮的意象，但之後逐漸壯闊的發展以及結尾宛如角力的調性拉扯衝撞，顯然又是另一番想像。但無論亞當斯想的是什麼，《和聲教案》都是訴諸情感，也邀請聽眾自由發揮想像的作品。或許，這部由夢境而生的創作，最後也將帶領你我前往唯有夢境方能抵達的地方。

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## Piano Concerto No. 2 in B-flat, Op. 83

Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897)

*Allegro non troppo*  
*Allegro appassionato*  
*Andante*  
*Allegretto grazioso*

Johannes Brahms was a virtuoso of the piano. Not only did he write wonderful solo pieces and chamber works for the instrument, but he also utilised diverse techniques in his two piano concertos as well. His *First Concerto*, completed when he was 25, is generally perceived as a grand, epic piece of sweeping dimensions and evokes both visceral and cerebral responses in the listener – so much so that each hearing also becomes a soul-purging experience. Here, we see Brahms' prodigious development at a young age.

What is fascinating is that Brahms' *Second Piano Concerto* can be described in much the same manner as the *First* – as a “grand, epic piece of sweeping dimensions” that “evokes both visceral and cerebral responses in the listener” – even though the respective moods of both concertos could hardly stand in greater contrast. When he completed the *Second Concerto* in 1881 at the age of 48, Brahms had a better understanding of instrumentation and musical texture than when he was younger. He had become more adept at shaping musical ideas that could be developed and elaborated on their own, strictly musical terms. This ethos is moreover reflected in the technical prowess required of any pianist who undertakes the *Second Concerto*. It is a demanding and difficult piece, but unlike a traditional Romantic concerto, which often suggests a scenario of the soloist “battling” with the orchestra, the performer must internalise every gesture and blend the tones of the piano with the orchestral sonorities. The *Second Concerto* is more akin to a large-scale chamber piece – as much a “symphony with a piano” as it is a concerto. This score therefore poses a perpetual challenge to the pianist in that it demands more than mere virtuosity.

Brahms found initial inspiration for this classic concerto during his trips to Italy, which he began visiting in the spring of 1878. He did not complete the score until July 1881, while staying in Pressbaum outside Vienna. Perhaps as a reminder of that original Italian inspiration, the horns that open the first movement are reminiscent of the horns traditionally associated with the Alps. They escort the audience into a place of natural scenic beauty. Brahms employs not only traditional compositional methods but richer and more complex harmonies as well. As an artist sympathetic with the Classical style, Brahms demonstrated how sonata form could be used for scene transitions. From the exposition to the development and recapitulation, we first hear music that for some listeners may evoke the beauty of the mountains under a shining sun, followed by references to the worries and dangers confronting mountaineers; the situation changes after some twists and turns, and the audience is finally asked to look back on the highs and lows of the journey they have experienced. The sounds of the horns and the accompanying flutes guide the listeners on as Brahms takes them along on this excursion through nature and shares his reflections on life.

In contrast with the Classical model of a three-movement concerto, Brahms added an “extra” movement right after the first, which functions as a passionate scherzo (*Allegro appassionato*). Lasting nearly ten minutes, this is particularly challenging to play and includes octave spacings that test the pianist’s skills. The main theme in D minor is sad and depressing, like a valley backlit by the sun and shadowed by mountain peaks, and represents the dark side of the *Second Concerto*. This movement calls to mind both the grandeur and the perils of the mountains. The *Andante* begins with a solo for the cello. Since Brahms had studied this instrument seriously as a child and mastered difficult pieces, it is not surprising that he composed captivating music for the cello. The addition of the piano in dialogue with the cello enhances the profound feelings engendered by this *Andante*. Writing in the style of chamber music, the composer confides many secrets in a restrained but moving manner. The final movement is filled with exuberant motifs and features an Eastern European-flavoured scale and the rhythmic flash of Hungarian music. Brahms repeats important themes but keeps on surprising his audience by adding on new musical ideas. The biggest surprise of all is probably the abrupt coda that brings this massive concerto to its close – light and clever, it is a playful finish that wraps up the solemnity with a smile. The *Second Piano Concerto* is amongst the most outstanding of Brahms’ large-scale works, drawing listeners again and again with a desire to uncover new interpretations of this unfathomably rich music.

## Harmonielehre

John Adams (b. 1947)

Part I.

Part II. *The Anfortas Wound*

Part III. *Meister Eckhardt and Quackie*

For the final work of their Hong Kong concerts, the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO) performs *Harmonielehre*, one of the best-known orchestral pieces by the American composer John Adams (completed in 1985). The three programmes by the LSO have encompassed a very wide spectrum – Classical, Romantic, modern, and, with this closing work, contemporary. But *Harmonielehre* is a contemporary composition that also looks back at musical traditions of the past. This well-designed and satisfying programme curation makes a perfect gift for music lovers in Hong Kong.

In terms of its contemporary context, Adams’ musical vocabulary uses many techniques from American Minimalism of the 1970s. The heavy emphasis on repeated patterns, melody, familiar harmony and powerful rhythmic pulsation can be seen as an opposition to the complexity of serialism and to the sound world of atonal music. Additionally, the repetitive features of *Harmonielehre* might be interpreted as reflecting the pursuit of spiritual and meditative music among audiences of the time. In comparison with his Minimalist predecessors, Adams is closer to the Romantics, developing short, pulsing motifs in an easily recognisable style. In terms of musical heritage, the German title *Harmonielehre* (which means “theory or treatise on harmony”) refers to the book of the same name that Arnold Schoenberg published in 1911. But along with the music of the young Schoenberg, which is late Romantic in style, Adams pays homage to the intensely expressive music of other composers from the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries, including Gustav Mahler and Jean Sibelius. And we may also detect allusions to Richard Wagner and even, perhaps, to Johannes Brahms.

*Harmonielehre* consists of three movements. The first (untitled) begins with a powerful repetition of E minor chords, which may also refer to the tonic of Schoenberg's Chamber symphony (a composition in E major). Adams seems to be restating Schoenberg's theory with the kaleidoscopic changes of sounds, a testimony to the rich variety of music that can be made using the same chord. A long middle section, romantic and lyrical in tone, is followed by a coda in which some listeners may hear echoes of the sleep motif from Wagner's *Ring* cycle, as well as such grandiose passages in the *Ring* as *The Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla* and Wotan's *Descent into Nibelheim*. But the music is clearly in the voice of John Adams and shows his signature rhythmic pulsation, all orchestrated with explosive power.

A more explicit reference to Wagnerian opera appears in the second movement, titled *The Anfortas Wound*. This phrase alludes to the unhealable wound of Anfortas (spelled Amfortas in Wagner's final opera, *Parsifal*), the keeper of the Holy Grail, also known as the Fisher King in Arthurian legend. His suffering can be relieved only by the arrival of "the chosen one". Regardless of whether Adams intended to refer to *Parsifal*, the opening of this movement explicitly alludes to the ominous chord with which Sibelius's *Fourth Symphony* starts (premiered in 1911, the year of Schoenberg's book, and considered the darkest of the Sibelius symphonies). The emotional climax of this movement is a variation of the overwhelmingly dissonant chord in the *Adagio* from Mahler's unfinished *Tenth Symphony* (from 1910; Mahler died in 1911). These musical allusions to Sibelius and Mahler also suggest images of illness: when he composed his *Fourth Symphony*, Sibelius had recovered from a cancer that made him fear he was dying, while Mahler was indeed soon to die and therefore could not complete his *Tenth*. Adams' decision to refer to both may also have a connection with his personal circumstances at the time. Before writing *Harmonielehre*, Adams had been suffering a creative block for a year and a half. He was finally inspired to compose this music after having a dream in which he was driving across the San Francisco – Oakland Bay Bridge and saw an oil tanker on the surface of the water abruptly turn upright and take off into space like a rocket. If this scene is evidenced in the impactful and explosively repeating chords that open the first movement, then the heaviness of *The Anfortas Wound* may reflect the composer looking back at the time when he suffered from writer's block. The third movement (*Meister Eckhardt and Quackie*) was inspired by another dream that Adams had, in which he saw his newborn baby daughter, nicknamed Quackie, riding perched on the shoulder of Meister Eckhardt, a medieval theologian. In the dream, as Adams describes it, both "hover among the heavenly bodies like figures painted on the high ceilings of old cathedrals". The ethereal and buoyant music that opens the movement may express such surreal imagery, but the gradual build-up of the grand development and the tug-of-war at the end, in which we hear different keys clashing for dominance, are clearly based on another mental image. No matter what Adams had in mind, *Harmonielehre* is an expressive work that invites audience members to use their own imaginations. Perhaps this piece, born from dreams, will eventually lead us to a destination that can be reached only in our own dreams.