

Symphony No.7 in B Flat Major Op.201

In den Alpen

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.

Between the Sixth Symphony of 1873 and the Seventh Symphony of 1875 Raff produced his First Cello Concerto (D minor) the three string quartets Op. 192 which contains the most popular of Raff's quartets *Die schöne Müllerin*, the Hungarian Suite for Orchestra (No. 2 in F major) and the Suite in E flat major for Piano and Orchestra plus a number of songs and piano pieces. It is as if the Sixth Symphony introduced a period of disregard for quality of thematic material and an undisciplined application of disciplined forms. The result was a surfeit of material exhibiting highly variable musical results. The most arresting feature of this music is that between Op.189 and Op.201 Raff plays the classicist to the hilt: no less than five of the eleven works involved carry the title of Suite: *Suite in älterer Form* (String Quartet No. 6 in C minor, Op.192) *Suite in Canon Form* (Quartet No. 8 in C major, Op.192) Suite No. 2 *in ungarischer Weise* for Orchestra, Suite in E flat major for Piano and Orchestra Op.200, and these works abound in many an ill-considered gigue, gavotte, variations and minuets; some of the works appear to be intended for instructional purposes (the two string quartets); the Hungarian Suite could be successful as a pops concert entry and certainly had a champion in von Bülow, In the best of the works between the sixth and seventh symphonies - *Die schöne Müllerin* Quartet - there is also to be heard music so thematically trite as to be embarrassing (*Unruhe*) and indicative of almost amateur attempt.

The unexpected criticism attendant the Sixth Symphony, though aggravating, didn't dampen Raff's enthusiasm for symphonic form and in the spring and summer of 1876 worked on and completed his Symphony No. 7 in B flat major *In den Alpen*. If the First Symphony - *An das Vaterland* - is Raff's "German" symphony, the Seventh is his "Swiss" symphony: the irony about this Seventh Symphony is that, so far as research can uncover, the work (to date) has never been performed in Raff's mother country. Neither did it make its way across the Atlantic, for it has never been performed in any country on the North or South American continents. Of all Raff's symphonies the Seventh has suffered the most neglect. Fortunately the reasons are not to be found in the music for with the Alpine Symphony Raff regains a sense of proportion sadly absent in its predecessor, though it does not possess the highpoint which the scintillating *scherzo* of the D minor represents. In fact, to judge from the movemental designations, there is no *scherzo* (perhaps Raff's peevish answer to the critics who expressed preference for the *scherzo* of the Sixth above the remaining movements) and this makes it somewhat unique although, of course, neither does the Lenore inasmuch as a march is introduced in place of the usual *scherzo*. Another feature of the Seventh is that it actually uses folk music of Switzerland among the themes. One could say that this is the first time that Raff actually makes use of any themes not original with him, though of course one recalls the use of Reichardt's melody, *Was ist des Deutschen Vaterland?* in the *Vaterland* Symphony. Inasmuch as that melody was quasi-folk (it was the work of a professional that became a popular hit) one may maintain that the Seventh is indeed the first (and only) symphony of Raff to quote folk material. The poetic ideal in this characteristic symphony (the first since the *Im Walde*) seems based on a combination of nationalist sentiment (here Swiss) of the type found in the *Vaterland* Symphony and the type of nature description implicit in the *Im Walde*, with Raff's attention transferred from the forest to the mountains. In his orchestra Raff utilizes the same forces as those in the *Vaterland* and *Im Walde* symphonies, augmenting his percussion by the

same addition, triangle alone. Formally it is cast in four movements instead of the five encountered in the *Vaterland* Symphony) with no indication of a tripartite design as indicated in the *Im Walde*.

The first movement of the Seventh Symphony utilizes a gesture absent in all the numbered symphonies which precede: it begins with a slow introduction, a rather majestic and forceful one at that, thus making it the first symphony since the withdrawn E minor symphony to begin in such a manner. The movement opens (*Andante*, B flat, 4/4) with a forte which literally echoes through the orchestra in the first six measures when the strings (with 2nd bassoon) enter on the main theme: Ex.1 [not extant]. The first four notes are an Alhorn call which Raff may have retained from his childhood or simply have investigated via [unknown reference] published in 1858. Interestingly enough R. Strauss in his own *Alpensinfonie* uses the same motive this way: Ex.2 [not extant]. At letter A he repeats the opening twice and, as if to emphasize his indebtedness to the folk motive, leaves out his own appendage to the initial horn call. On paper this introduction is relatively unpromising; in piano realization it's a catastrophe and in no way conveys the majesty of the forty measures up to B (where a transition sets in). Raff in this opening is purely an orchestral thinker and orchestra color is the determining quality factor in the music, in the same way as in the *Scenes aux Champs* in the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz, [and] of the opening of Rimsky-Korsakoff's *Scheherazade*; playing the passage on the piano gives no idea of the majesty implicit in the music.

A short transition at letter B leads to another "echo" idea presented by the oboe Ex.3 [not extant] and echoed and completed by the flutes Ex.4 [not extant]. Transitional material similar to that introducing the materials of letter B now bring the listener to letter C and another echo theme divided between oboes and clarinets against a sustained string sonority: Ex.5 [not extant] and completed by this phrase for the strings: Ex.6 [not extant]. When Ex.5 is played by the horns (against even higher string sonorities) woodwinds join in the playing of Ex.6. A marcato diminished version of Ex.1 serves as transition and what ensues is pure Richard Strauss in terms of orchestration and a peroration featuring Ex.1 throughout the orchestra. The transition to the *Allegro* proper of the movement is brief but not without a surprise: when the music begins *Allegro (Doppio movimento)* we are not only confronted with more echo routine via this melody: Ex.7 [not extant] but are denied the home key of B flat in favor of its dominant F for some 24 measures. When B flat enters Ex.7 is passed throughout the orchestra with an important rhythmic addition: Ex.8 [not extant]. At letter G Ex.1 is given out once again in full orchestral dress; a short transitional passage brings the listener to letter H and yet another theme: Ex.9 [not extant] which has the strange echo of Grieg about it. After this theme has been utilized throughout the orchestra there is another transitional passage and at letter I comes another Swiss folk melody presented first on horn and (in keeping with mountain acoustic) echoed by the oboe: Ex.10 [not extant]. Letter J brings yet another theme of Swiss folk origin. At its first statement one is a bit surprised to realize encounter with no less than five major thematic elements: Ex.11 [not extant].

When this is repeated Raff treats us to one of his loveliest and most pathetic touches in all his symphonies, a counterpoint melody spun out of elements which figure prominently in Exs.[?] and given to the first violins alone, pp dolce: Ex.12 [not extant]. At letter L, via the scotch-snap rhythm of Ex. [?] the music proceeds in transition (on ever diminishing forms of this example) to letter M, at which point one may say the "development" section ensues. In this Exs.[?] etc. figure prominently with what seems to be a new theme (actually the result of several combinations from the preceding examples) [?] letter O, an idea which, at letter P is revealed in twofold manner and given its ultimate expansion in this form: Ex.14 [not extant].

Letter Q brings a furious outburst for the orchestra via Ex.[?]. A transitional passage from R to S leads back to the opening of the *Allegro* and what may be nominally regarded as a recapitulation with Ex.[?] returning. An ordinary recapitulation is out of the question for Raff evidently, for what ensues is based not on Ex. [?] (as one would expect in text book sonata

form) but on Ex.[?]. Soon the Grieg-like Ex.9 returns at letter U and at letter V we hear the folk melody of Ex.[?] with its lovely first violin counterpoint. At X the scotch-snap rhythm of Ex.[?] returns and with it, between letters X-Z and the end, a double recapitulation which includes, at a a *fuga* section based on the outlines of Ex.[?] and involving Ex.1 as well. From this point on Raff exposes his listener to some of the strangest harmonies he has ever presented, all of which are naturally explained by the contrapuntal progressions but which are nevertheless dizzying to the ear. At letter e one encounters (clearly) the outlines from Ex.1. Much scalar work brings us to letter f in which Ex.1 is treated in diminished form and then at letter g in augmentation. A reminiscence of Ex.[?] at letter h leads one into a series of modulations which add to the overall emotional response and at letter i the scotch snap is used against a version of Ex.[?] and the coda to the movement begins, brief, one must add, for all that has gone before. Ex.1 is allowed to ring out triumphantly in the home key against a highly rhythmic (and very exciting) accompaniment and the movement concludes.

The second movement *In der Herberge* (*Andante quasi allegro*, G minor, 3/4) is, for its relative brevity, a movement which contains a considerable *richesse* of thematic material. Although the movement takes the place of the usual scherzo it in no way fulfills the idea usually associated with the term. It is a dance movement to be sure, but rather complex. One might call it a *Ländler-Rondo*, *Ländler* because of the melodic contours associated with such rustic dances and a rondo because the outlines of the movement fall most successfully into that category. It is also some-what reminiscent of the great variations movement of the Fourth Symphony for there is a very steady accentuation of the first beat in the bass throughout most of the movement. The opening commences in the following manners Ex.1 [not extant] which is repeated at letter A with additional coloration of bassoons. Letter B brings both a new rhythmic idea in the accompaniment and a new melody here given out by the celli (and in part echoed by the first violins) which emphasizes the *Ländler* character of the materials: Ex.2 [not extant] and this is twice repeated leading to a repetition of Ex.1 at letter C. At letter D we encounter a most peculiar (but effective) bit of writing in which new material is introduced in triple combination: Ex.3 [not extant].

Although the ear senses the line of the violins and celli as the main melody it is a deception for what these instruments present is actually a variation-cum-diminution of the true melody being played on oboes, horns and 2nd violins against the accompaniment (inner voices) of a true cancrizans of itself! The whole passage is then repeated in fuller sonority at the conclusion of which Raff introduces a new element which, at letter E, becomes the major counterpoint to Ex.1 upon its return at letter E: Ex.4.

The *ostinato*-like emphasis on the first note of the measure disappears (it is actually present in an augmented forms: the pulsation still emphasizes a first note ideal) and Raff introduces this lovely melody in the violas: Ex.5 [not extant]. Towards the end of this section Ex.1 peeks through the music and hard on its presentation a figure is introduced which figures prominently somewhat later in the movement: Ex.6 [not extant]. When the music enters E flat major at letter G orchestral color becomes the major consideration: against a running pizzicato accompaniment in the celli the clarinets and flutes echo one another in playful 16th note roulades. In what seems to be nothing but background coloration horns, bassoons, violins and violas present a highly fragmented version of Ex.[?]. Soon oboes join the fray and the violins and violas take up the *pizzicato* action of the celli in a delightful passage which brings back Ex.6, the full importance of which is only realized at letter H when the music moves back to the home key of G minor and it is played off against Ex.1. With the return of Ex.1 and the first note emphasis of the basic *ostinato* the music acquires a somewhat sinister agitation as the movement reaches its climax at letter I and the establishment of G major. Raff's seemingly inexhaustible invention brings the listener this irresistible waltz-like theme: Ex.7 [not extant] which, needless to say, is garbed in rich orchestration. As Ex.7 passes from the scene, Ex.1 returns and with it the home key of G minor at letter J. The passage which ensues is the coda to the movement and the *Ländler* idea is emphasized by the strangely Mahlerian (Second Symphony, 2nd Movement) *piannissimo* flow to the violin line. A short crescendo for the orchestra on the G minor triad,

a last reference to example one and the movement closes with to sharp and unexpected *forte* chords.

The third movement *Am See (Larghetto, G major 4/4)* could very well be meant as a souvenir from his youth near Rapperswyl at the end of the lake of Zürich. Except for the *Ekloge* of the 9th Symphony *Im Sommer* this slow movement qualifies as the shortest such movement in Raff's series of symphonies. It is also the most richly chromatic from an harmonic standpoint. The orchestration of the main theme: Ex.1 [not extant] has about it a peculiarly lazy quality suggested by the coloration of violas and bassoons in their most characteristic registers. The opening motive itself comes dangerously close to the trivial; it is however saved by the richness of chromaticism already apparent in the fifth measure and via this chromaticism the opening is spun out into a beautiful "*unendlich Melodie*" at the conclusion of which there is a recall of Ex.[?] from the first movement: Ex.2 [not extant] which leads at letter A, to two little motives which are echoed back and forth, perhaps suggestive of a wave like motion. At the conclusion of this material fragments enter in the accompaniment suggestive of Exs.[?] and 1 from the preceding movement and there is further play on Ex.1 which is concluded by a florid 16th note figure which moves the music into G major at letter B and a restatement in a slightly higher voice of Ex.1 which is then expanded, with rich figuration. One interesting instrumental aspect in this passage is the somewhat syncopated accompaniment of clarinets in octaves - in itself ordinarily nothing remarkable. Here however the extreme lower register of the clarinets (the absolute lowest notes are sustained) contrast beautifully with the piercing oboe octaves which take up the sequence of the clarinets in ascending manner against thirds in the bassoons and two octaves higher the same thirds in the flutes. This color factor makes the measures between B and C one of the most remarkable not only in Raff but in 19th century music as well. Letter C, preceded by a general decrescendo, introduces a new theme: Ex.3 [not extant], garbed in counterpoint so rich as to suggest Bruckner. Upon careful examination one may notice the outlines of Ex.1 of the preceding movement being employed once again and in the second measure a vague reminder of Ex.[?] of the first movement may be sensed. In immediate contrast to this there ensues a strangely static passage completely modulatory in nature but of a hushed beauty so compelling that the ear does not mind the fact there is not one note of thematic importance (although the actual pulsation may be shown to be an augmented version of Ex.1 from the preceding movement). To be sure the sixteenth note figuration keeps a flicker of motion going, but it is the modulatory sequences which have the major aural interest. At letter D Ex.1 returns and there is a complete restatement of the opening now replete with extraordinary contrapuntal and harmonic richness. The seemingly trite materials of Ex.1 are now expanded to an almost Tristanesque outpouring of melodic extension which reaches a climax against the horn presentation of the basic rhythm of Ex.1 from the *Herberge* movement. At this point Raff indicates that violins and violas play *non-divisi* the double stops which follow when an even greater climax is reached on the outlines of Ex.[?]. At letter E a highly chromatic coda begins with the horns introducing a *seufzer* motive: [not extant] and soon the sixteenth note motion of the development returns, passed back and forth among the strings with reminiscences of Ex.1 prominent. Gradually the music dies away to a *ppp* conclusion, the chromatic coloration retained till the very end.

Beim Schwingfest; Abschied are the inscriptions to the *Finale (Allegro, B flat 4/4)*. The title of this movement makes it clear that the Seventh symphony was intended as a homage to Switzerland for a *Schwingfest* is the celebrated flag-waving exercise of the Swiss mountaineers and is unknown elsewhere in the Alpine regions. The *Finale* begins with a tune which seems to invoke - it had to come - a yodel. It is a distant relative to Ex.2 of the introduction to the first movement, especially in the second measure where it evinces the same complementary rhythmic components: Ex.1 [not extant]. The third measure interjection in the third measure is a seemingly gratuitous gesture which emerges as a major component to another theme in the movement. The beginning of this movement is at once the most unusual in all Raff's symphonies and the most treacherous; one might also add one of the least satisfying as well. Nevertheless the complex of tiny motives which are introduced allow Raff to deal the listener a number of combinations. One of these tiny

motives is the following: Ex.2 [not extant], interjected just before letter A. At letter A the third measure of Ex.1 introduces a *rondo*-like theme against a highly syncopated accompaniment: Ex.3 [not extant]. At letter B there is a reminiscence of Ex.2 from the slow movement wedded to Ex.[?] and a busy scale figure once again evoking Tchaikovsky , particularly in the cascades which follow. Letter C introduces a new color element against Ex.3 of this finale although otherwise the passage is simply repeated leading to a general crescendo which culminates in Ex.4 [not extant], perhaps the most satisfying material of the movement thus far. Implicit in the *Kopfmotiv* is the outline of Ex.1 of the *Herberge* movement although this could be coincidental; the fact that the rhythmic outline of this theme appears almost immediately in the woodwinds seems to indicate intentional thematic metamorphosis. Several measures before letter E the horns begin a syncopation in a modulatory passage to A major against which, at letter E, a new theme is introduced in the bass: Ex.5 [not extant] which is given much play. At letter F the key changes to F major, the syncopated accompaniment disappears and there emerges against Ex.1 this rich counterpoint in horns, second violins and violas: Ex.6 [not extant]. If the very introduction of the theme of Ex.5 (syncopations and to a certain extent the launching of the theme itself) is reminiscent of Ex.[?] of the *Finale* in the Fourth Symphony, this new statement dispels the similarity and the addition of the new counterpoint is one of the boldest and most satisfying strokes of inspiration in the movement. Letter G brings back Ex.4 which alternates with Ex.3. The 16th note figuration prominent in Ex.3 is taken up as a running counterpoint to a short canonic passage involving Ex.4 at the end of which a tiny rhythmic component becomes noticeable, evidently derived from the very opening of the movement (Ex.1) and, at letter H, when the music moves back to the home key of the movement it is expanded as an accompaniment to a combinatorial passage involving Ex.3 and Ex.5; at the conclusion of this passage (letter I) there is a full orchestra restatement of Ex.4 which is brought to an exciting climax. The fanfare gestures of the horns at this point as well as the orchestral chords on the tonic give on first encounter the impression the movement is going to end at this point. Raff however moves the listener unexpectedly (and swiftly) into G minor and a truly impetuous passage based almost exclusively on opposing rhythms. The syncopations between high woodwinds and trombones is another of those quasi-Tchaikovskian touches in Raff (Tchaikovsky F minor Symphony, finale) and the change in sonority from what has gone before is a most satisfying contrast: Ex.7 [not extant]. At letter K the woodwinds, now bolstered by the horns bring in this lyrical phrase and join it to the syncopation ideas: Ex.8 [not extant]. Letter L brings back the home key and Ex.5, the two component phrases of which are played off against each other and then just the first half is given modulatory-cum-sequential development. At letter M (E flat major) Ex.2 returns for similar treatment and there are reminiscences of Ex.1 from the *Herberge* movement as well as, midway between letters M and N, an aurally vaguely familiar contour is heard. In the gradual crescendo to letter N it is echoed with growing urgency among the various instruments and then at letter N horns and trombones charge in with the recognizable form of Ex.1 from the first movement against Exs.2 (fl. ob, 1st violins) and Ex. 5 (trumpets) and the syncopation motive from Ex. 6 (bassoons, lower strings, trombones 2 and 3 and tympani).

At this point Raff just misses establishing an important historical-cum-formal precedent. The beginning of this passage, combining as it does the main theme of the first movement with three elements from the *Finale*, points to a thematic summary. Unfortunately, as is revealed at letter O, such is not to be the case. Had Raff chosen to continue this combining of themes with inclusion of elements from the preceding movements he would have anticipated both Anton Bruckner (Symphony No.8) and Felix Draeseke (*Symphonia Tragica*) and provided the development of the symphony after Beethoven with the ultimate realization of the formal principle of unity-in-diversity, the apotheosis combination of themes from all the movements which is the mark of the *Finalsinfonie* and the pinnacle of nineteenth century Romantic symphonic form before the era of decadence begins (Tchaikovsky, Mahler). This is all the more regrettable since Raff has indulged himself with thematic metamorphosis - a point hammered home when Ex.4 of the *Finale* returns at letter O. At letter P Raff simply shows he has missed a golden opportunity for at that point both the musical and intellectual elements dissipate. The transitional passage from letter P to letter Q does establish a mood

of repose, but the repose itself - though necessary for what follows - interrupts the momentum. Although there is continued combination of Exs.2 and 5 of the finale with Ex.1 of the first movement, letter Q shows Raff abandoning the concept of thematic combination (and consequently thematic summary) for the idea of simple thematic restatement. That restatement itself concerns themes from the first movement which, frankly, were not given very much treatment there: Exs.[?]. Letter R is an even more perplexing moment for it opens with a melody: Ex.7 heretofore not encountered! Try as one may it fits no contours of any preceding materials in any of the movements though the chromaticism is remindful of the slow movement.

The *Kopfmotiv* to Ex.1 of the first movement is heard dissolving into echo patterns in the horns at the conclusion of which a general *crescendo* ensues. During the course of this final *stretto* - which indeed lasts long enough to re-establish the overall mood of the *Finale* - Raff brings back Ex.[?] of the first movement amidst the general melee. After a gesture of fanfares the symphony concludes with full orchestral statement of the *Kopfmotiv* of Ex.1 of the first movement.