

Preface

It is fascinating how a piece of music can gain or reveal new qualities when transposed on to a different instrument. On the piano, the **Chopin Waltz Op. 34 No. 1** is normally played at a fast or very fast tempo, but on a sustaining instrument a much slower tempo is possible. This immediately opens up new dimensions of expression: emotional nuances which were there all the time but barely noticeable when played at speed – just as, when you walk more slowly through a garden, you discover more flowers to appreciate.

The same applies to **Rossini's Overture from *The Barber of Seville***. A solo arrangement such as this, with added virtuosic elements, would be impossible to play at the same tempo as the original orchestral version. The transcription may even be played at just half the speed of the fastest renditions of the original. The result is like putting the music under a magnifying glass. Inner musical tensions, colours and expressions, which are all lost at speed, are revealed, making it seem like a new piece altogether.

Johann Strauss II first wrote *Voices of Spring* for soprano and orchestra, before he rescored it for orchestra alone a few years later. So for this transcription, which is based on the original vocal version, it was a simple and natural step to go from the voice to the violin. Many episodes are so patently both Viennese and Kreisleresque that one may wonder why Kreisler himself did not make an arrangement of it. I can only suggest that he ran out of time, and that if he had been granted another few years, he might well have done something with it.

Just as it is generally easy to transfer a vocal line to the violin, it is often a simple matter to steal the melody from the right hand of a solo piano work and leave just the accompaniment behind. So it is in **Fanny Mendelssohn's Notturmo**: no notes have been added or changed.

When the melody in an orchestral work is given entirely to the first violins, as in the **Andante from Felix Mendelssohn's Reformation Symphony**, the idea of finding a solo piece in it is an obvious one. Rarely, though, do the violins have the melody throughout. I had the idea for this transcription during a performance of it in the Philharmonie in Berlin, conducted by Claudio Abbado, sometime in the 1980s when I was playing in the London Symphony Orchestra. One can even imagine the composer first visualizing or playing the piece on the piano, before orchestrating it.

Purcell's Chacony was originally written for four viols and became famous in the twentieth century in versions for string quartet (in the arrangement by Benjamin Britten) and for string orchestra. The only notes I have added are in one short joining-phrase of semiquavers. Every other note is exactly as Purcell wrote it, with nothing added and nothing taken away. With the exception of the octaves, the double stops are the notes of the first and second violin parts played together. In performing the piece, there is a wonderful sense of exploring the 'story' of the music, as much as in the Strauss and the Rossini, with a constant feeling of embarking on a new adventure as you arrive at the beginning of each new section.

The **Dowland *Lacrimae*** ('lachrymae' meaning 'tears' in Latin) was composed in 1596 as an instrumental piece with the title *Lacrimae pavane*. In 1600 it was published in a version for lute and voice, which is now generally known as *Flow my tears*, from the first line of text. Again, to go from the voice to the violin was an easy step. I have known the piece since my undergraduate days and am delighted that it can now be played on the violin in this arrangement.

The idea to arrange **Tchaikovsky's Waltz from *The Sleeping Beauty*** came from nothing more than hearing it by chance on the radio one day, when for some reason it suddenly sounded to me like a typical Tchaikovsky violin piece, but one that had been orchestrated. The main subject was one of the 'theme tunes' of my childhood, so it was a particular pleasure to make a transcription of it.

A measure of whether a transcription is successful or not lies surely in the extent to which players or listeners can forget that it is a transcription in the first place. In other words, whether it succeeds as a piece of music in its own right. I hope you will agree that all these arrangements lie naturally on the violin and offer a chance of playing some old masterworks in a new form.

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