

More About RHAPSODY ON A THEME OF BRAHMS

I have always loved the opening horn tune in the **Serenade No 1, Op. 11** by Johannes Brahms and for several years it has been on my “to do list” to write something using it. Well, slowed down during much of 2022 by some medical issues, I finally got around to it.

I decided on a set of variations, but instead of calling it “variations,” I took a cue from Sergei Rachmaninoff and borrowed the title from his famous **Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini**. The 6-and-a-half-minute piece for concert band that I produced is on a much smaller scale, and except for the title and theme and variations form, is not otherwise modeled on Rachmaninoff’s 24-minute masterpiece for piano and orchestra.

Bookended by an introduction and coda built out of one of the motifs in the theme, the main body of the piece is made up the theme and five variations arranged in a quasi-arch form. Variation 3, the slow section, is the cornerstone of the arch. It is bracketed by Variations 2 and 4, which are closely related. They in turn are bracketed by Variations 1 and 5, which also have strong thematic echoes. All this is then bracketed by the nearly-identical introduction and coda, making for a very symmetrical overall form.