National Library of Canada
Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services Branch
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction des acquisitions et des services bibliographiques
395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

Canada

PATHS NOT TAKEN: STRUCTURAL-HARMONIC AMBIGUITIES IN SELECTED BRAHMS INTERMEZZI

Shireen Maluf

B. Mus. (McGill University), 1992

Faculty of Music

McGill University

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Thesis submitted to The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

July 1995

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services Branch

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Direction des acquisitions et
des services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa (Ontario)
K1A 0N4

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

ISBN 0-612-12053-8

Canada

Shortened version of the thesis title:

Structural-Harmonic Ambiguities in Selected Brahms Intermezzi.

Abstract

One of the remarkable features of Brahms' B-flat major Intermezzo for piano, Op. 76, no. 4 is the ambiguity of its tonal definition. The work discloses a contrapuntal tension between its fundamental structural-harmonic organization, which is based on an incomplete harmonic progression (V7–I), and its more remote intermediary tonal areas, which Brahms implies throughout the Intermezzo but to which he never wholly commits.

The aim of this investigation is to illustrate how tonal ambiguity is achieved though recurrent "incompletions" of the expected (or at least the more likely) harmonic progressions. The thesis undertakes a detailed study of Brahms' Intermezzo, Op. 76, no. 4, in B-flat major, with additional reference to the openings of Opp. 118, no. 1 (A minor); 118, no. 6 (E-flat minor); 119, no. 1 (B minor); 117, no. 2 (B-flat minor) and 76, no. 8 (C major). The study combines a Schenkerian linear-reductive approach with observations based on phenomenology—after Leonard Meyer and David Lewin—and narrative, after Edward T. Cone.

Résumé

L'ambiguïté du sentiment tonal est une des caractéristiques les plus marquantes de l'intermezzo op. 76, no. 4. Cette œuvre révèle une tension contrapuntique entre son organisation harmonique stucturelle fondée sur une progression d'accords incomplète (V7–I), et ses régions tonales plus éloignées du niveau intermédiaire, suggérées tout au long de l'intermezzo sans jamais se réaliser. Le but de ce travail est d'illustrer comment l'ambiguïté tonale résulte de "versions incomplètes" des progressions harmoniques anticipées, ou à tout le moins les plus probables.

Ce mémoire offre une étude détaillée de l'intermezzo de Brahms op. 76, no. 4, en si bémol majeur, ainsi que des mentions renvoyant aux débuts des opus 118, no. 1 (la mineur); 118, no. 6 (mi bémol mineur); 119, no. 1 (si mineur); 117, no. 2 (si bémol mineur) and 76, no. 8 (do majeur). L'approche adoptée combine la méthode d'analyse réductionnelle schenkérienne avec des observations fondées sur la phénoménologie, d'après Léonard Meyer et David Lewin, et la narrativité, d'après Edward T. Cone.

Acknowledgments

My admiration for Brahms' piano music began in 1986. As a conservatory student, I had been very fussy about the pieces I would agree to add to my repertoire. They had to fit very specific criteria. Needless to say, all these criteria evaporated as my fingers began exploring the depth and the richness of Brahms' Op. 118, no. 2 and no. 3 which my piano teacher had chosen as part of a recital I was to present that year. I became obsessed with this enchanting music. I remember once playing the chord in m. 34 of Op. 118, no. 2 over and over and over, mesmerized by the sonority. I knew I had discovered a very different composer and wanted to perform only his compositions.

During my studies at McGill University, I had the good fortune to study piano with Professor Luba Zuk. She was the first professor I met when I came to McGill and has patiently and lovingly guided me towards a more mature understanding of musical performance. I can never thank her enough for having welcomed me with such warmth and having always acted with concern for my best interests. I also wish to thank Professor Bengt Hambræus, and my thesis supervisor Professor Don McLean. Professor Hambræus is a walking encyclopedia and his knowledge of world musics is extensive. His constant effort was to nurture in his students creativity, open mindedness, and trustworthiness. I first met Professor Don McLean in a course entitled *Nineteenth-Century Music.* I was struck by his ability to render difficult material accessible to students of many different backgrounds. He always had

time for us—no matter how 'swamped' he was and genuinely respected and tried to understand his students' ideas and different ways of thinking. I am greatly indebted to him for all the time and support he gave to this thesis. Because of his helpful critiques the completion of this study was made much easier.

Many people have supported my graduate studies at McGill from friends, particularly Les Black and François De Medicis, to the staff of the Marvin Duchow Music Library. I am further grateful to Prof. Bo Alphonce, Chair, Department of Theory, and Prof. Bruce Pennycook, Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Theory, for their generosity in time and for their ongoing concern.

Six people I would like to thank more personally: my parents, Elias and Samira Maalouf, and my brothers, Nadim and Ameen, for their trust in me and in my abilities; their support and encouragement was unconditional; Prof. Bruce Minorgan for his invaluable advice; and Diane Kipling for her loving friendship.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

After Brahms had moved to Vienna in September 1862, his composing for the piano ceased for 15 years. He composed his Intermezzi at two different later times in his life: Opus 76, sets 1 and 2, was completed in 1878; and during 1892–93 Brahms composed Opp. 116–119, the last pieces that he composed for piano solo. The piano music comes in early, middle, and late chunks. As Heinz Becker pointed out in his study of Brahms life and works: "Brahms piano music, then, seems to encircle his life's work rather than permeate it."[1]

Brahms' piano music include Sonatas, Themes and Variations, Ballades, Rhapsodies, Fantasies, Capriccios, and Intermezzi. The term "Intermezzo" does not suggest any particular characteristic with regard to genre. It seems that Brahms chose to designate with the term "Intermezzo" all those pieces which were neither capricious (like the Capriccios) nor passionate (like the Rhapsodies and the Ballades). Their sub-titles are charmingly worded: *Allegro non assai, ma molto appasionato* (Op. 118, no. 1), *Grazioso: Anmutig, ausdrucksvoll* (Op. 76, no. 3), *Moderato Semplice* (Op. 76, no. 7), *Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento* (Op. 116, no. 5), *Andante non troppo e con molta espressione* (Op. 117, no. 2). If we were to make up a definition for a Brahms

---

[1] Heinz Becker, "Johannes Brahms," in *The New Grove: Late Romantic Masters*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1980), 111.

Intermezzo, it would probably be: a short piano composition which is simple, yet not too simple, passionate yet not that passionate, gracious yet not cloyingly gracious, expressive—yes, definitely expressive.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 On Brahms' Intermezzi

The existing analytical literature on Brahms' piano pieces is not particularly large. The Intermezzi are difficult pieces. They display intricate compositional designs and present numerous analytical challenges, particularly from a Schenkerian perspective. Much of Schenker's own work on Brahms remains unpublished.[1] He referred to only four of the Intermezzi in *Free Composition*: Op. 76, no. 7, Op. 117, no. 1, Op. 118, no. 1, and Op. 119, no. 1. Moreover, the "Schenkerian empire"—to use Rothstein's expression—was so widespread in the 1970s throughout the United States that Schenkerism became the dominant analytical approach to tonal music.[2] Under these circumstances it was considered impossible to undertake a thorough analytical investigation of any tonal work without recourse to Schenker's approach. For the music of Brahms, the formidable challenges of pursuing successfully a rigorous Schenkerian approach led to a "cul de sac." For there were few 'models' from Schenker himself nor from most of the

---

[1] Oster's collection NewYork; Jonas' collection Riverside, California.

[2] William Rothstein, "The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker," in *Schenker Studies*, ed. Heidi Siegel (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 193–203.

leading Schenkerians of the next generations (Jonas, Laufer, Oster, Rothgeb, Salzer, Schachter). An exception is the analysis (to which we will later refer) of the Intermezzo in B-flat major Op. 76, no. 4 by the intergenerational team of Salzer and Schachter.

Only scholars of the more recent generation, such as Allen Cadwallader and Jonathan Dunsby, have begun to produce detailed analyses of late Brahms, often in conjunction with other more recent analytical approaches such as phenomenology and semiotics, and in conjunction with the posthumous publication of, and commentary on, Schenker's work.

This recent literature on late Brahms focuses mainly on the Intermezzi of Opp. 118 and 119.[3] The existing literature on Op. 76 remains narrow—as I discovered when looking for such resources in conjunction with an opportunity I had to perform all of Op. 76 in a recent recital.

---

[3] David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327–92.

Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973).

Thomas Clifton, *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

Jonathan Dunsby, "Music and Semiotics: The Nattiez Phase," *Musical Quarterly* LXIX/1 (1993): 27–43.

Jean Jacques Nattiez, *De la sémiologie à la musique* (Montréal: Service des publications, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1988).

_____, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* (Paris: Union générale d'édition, 1976).

_____, *Musicologie générale et sémiologie* (Paris: C. Bourgois, 1987).

Ernst Oster's footnote in Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman Inc., 1979), 134–141.

2. 1. 1 General Literature

A large part of the available literature on Brahms' Intermezzi does not deal with specific compositional issues, it rather aims to cover a number of pieces in a "program-note"-like manner, to use Allen Cadwallader's expression. This form of descriptive writing is often found in histories of keyboard music, and in general studies of the composer's life and works. I would mention here William Murdoch's analytical study of the complete Brahms pianoforte works.[4] The author dedicates five pages to Op. 76. He describes Op. 76, no. 4 as follows: [it is] "artistically done and has a peculiar timid flavor, but it has not the popular appeal of its predecessors."[5] Not particularly helpful as analytical insight.

Other examples of this type of analysis are Denis Matthews' *Brahms' Piano Music*, and *Keyboard Music*, a collection of essays also edited by Matthews.[6] He describes Op. 76, no. 4 as "a miniature sonata-form movement. It has a well-defined cadence-theme in thirds and sixths, heard first in G minor but later in the tonic; and a development hovering over, though never actually settling in, the remote region of C-flat major."[7] This description is deeply embedded in a traditional approach to analysis and

---

[4] William Murdoch, *Brahms: With an Analytical Study of the Complete Pianoforte Works* (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1978).

[5] Ibid., 254.

[6] Denis Matthews, *Keyboard Music* (New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1972).

[7] Denis Matthews, *Brahms Piano Music* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 50.

illustrates a clear misunderstanding of both the sonata form and the complex structure of this Intermezzo.

More recent studies focus on particular analytical issues in selected Intermezzi. For example, Jonathan Dunsby's detailed study of structural ambiguity in Brahms analyzes four works.[8] One of these is the Intermezzo Op. 119, no. 1, which Dunsby examines in his chapter entitled "Brahms the Progressive and Intermezzo." He discusses Schoenberg's view of Brahms' musical language as found in the essay "Brahms the Progressive" and attempts to apply it to the Intermezzo.

There are several dissertations that deal with analytical issues in Brahms' Intermezzi. Mario Joseph Pelusi proposes a new method of analysis entitled *A Comprehensive Analytical Method* referred to as CAM.[9] The author acknowledges the influence of the following theorists and their works: Paul Hindemith, Ernst Kurth, Leonard Meyer and Eugene Narmour, Walter Piston, Rudolph Réti, Hugo Riemann, Heinrich Schenker and Donald Tovey. The terminology used was developed by Milton Babbitt and Allen Forte, and the author makes considerable use of set theory language and ideas. The dissertation consists of the enumeration and the explanation of a twelve-step analytical method using as an example Brahms' Intermezzo Op. 76, no. 7 in A minor. Pelusi's study elevates method over analysis at times obscuring analytical insights in the formulation of the approach.

---

[8] Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works* (UMI Research Press, 1981).

[9] Mario Joseph Pelusi, "Contemplating a Brahms Intermezzo: Toward a Comprehensive Analyical Method for the Explication and the Interpretation of Prescriptive Music Structures" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1982).

2. 1. 2 Allen Cadwallader's Studies

In his 1983 dissertation and subsequent related articles, Allen Cadwallader examines a number of Brahms' Intermezzi: Opp. 76, no. 7 (A minor); 116, no. 4 (E major); 117, no. 2 (B-flat minor); 117, no. 3 (C-sharp minor); 118, no. 2 (A major); 119, no. 1 (B minor) and 119, no. 2 (E minor).[10] The author investigates multileveled motivic repetition—mainly the upper neighbor idea—through Schenkerian reduction techniques and graphic analyses. He draws a very close link between the surface foreground motif and the actual background structure where the motif governs aspects of the background structure. His aim was to demonstrate that "small and large-scale harmonic progression and formal articulation reflect the multileveled repetition of the basic motive."[11]

The core of the study is the identification of what Cadwallader calls "the basic motive." According to Cadwallader, the "basic motive" prolongs the principal tone and can exhibit one of the two following types of configurations: thematic and contrapuntal. In the thematic-type motive,

---

[10] Allen Cadwallader, "Multileveled Motivic Repetition in Selected Intermezzi for Piano of Johannes Brahms" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1983).

_____, "Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in B Minor Intermezzo Op. 119, no. 1," *Theory and Practice* 7/2 (1983): 5–24.

_____, "Schenker's Unpublished Graphic Analysis of Brahms Intermezzo, Op. 117, no. 2: Tonal Structure and Concealed Motivic Repetition," *Music Theory Spectrum* 6 (1984): 1–13.

_____, "Prolegomena to a General Description of Motivic Relationships in Tonal Music," *Intégral* 2 (1988): 1–35.

_____, "Foreground Motivic Ambiguity: Its Clarification at the Middleground Levels in Selected Late Piano Pieces of Johannes Brahms," *Music Analysis* 7/1 (1988): 59–91.

_____ ed., *Trends in Schenkerian Research* (New York: Schirmer, 1990).

[11] Allen Cadwallader, "Multileveled Motivic Repetition in Selected Intermezzi for Piano of Johannes Brahms" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1983), 24.

"there is a leap out of the principal tone, followed by a stepwise descent back to it;" the contrapuntal-type motive features a stepwise contrapuntal motion. "The principal tone moves first to its upper neighbor, which may be incomplete or complete; often, a partial descent follows from the upper neighbor."[12] Both configurations proposed by Cadwallader are based on upper-neighbor note motions, an adjacency archetype commonly found throughout much of Western music. A clear distinction between these two types of configurations is somewhat lacking. Furthermore, Cadwallader does not always draw clear boundaries between the various levels, which can make the detection of "multileveled repetition" of the "basic motive" seem loose or arbitrary.

2. 2 On Brahms' Intermezzo Op. 76 no. 4

2. 2. 1 Salzer and Schachter's Sketch in *Counterpoint in Composition*

Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter analyzed Brahms' Op. 76, no. 4 in *Counterpoint in Composition.*[13] The graph covers the entire piece and is the most extensive analysis of Op. 76, no. 4 in the literature.[14] Since Op. 76, no. 4 has already

---

[12] Ibid., 24–25

[13] Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969).

[14] In *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* by Allen Forte and Steven Gilbert (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1990), Op. 76, no. 4 is used as an exercise in Overlapping. A sketch of m. 22 is provided.

been dealt with from a Schenkerian perspective, one might well ask what justification there is for the further inquiries proposed in this thesis.

The graph of Op. 76, no. 4 occurs in chapter 10 of *Counterpoint in Composition* as one of a number of analyses of tonal pieces. The chapter serves as the concluding part of a species counterpoint and chorale-writing textbook for undergraduates or for graduate review. Although it is true that graphs can speak for themselves to a certain extent, the limited analytical commentaries and the absence of supplementary foreground sketches give the analysis a static quality that leaves many questions unaddressed. In this case:

(1) The short verbal discussion (three paragraphs) deals only with the deeper middleground and background progressions. Salzer and Schachter discuss how, from a structural perspective, the piece is not based on a harmonic syntactical progression (other than the background progression V7–I) but rather on a voice-leading, or in other words, contrapuntal motion to IV6 as a means of prolonging the V7.[15] Their use of the word "counterpoint" is Schenkerian oriented and refers to voice-leading rather than sixteenth or eighteenth-century compositional textures or procedures.[16]

---

[15] There seems to be a slight labeling error on page 458, sketch "a," m. 11: the roman numeral analysis is given as I6, which refers of course to the foreground G minor tonality. At the beginning of the graph it is V7 (which is of course correct); but as a result one reads that the middleground progression in mm. 1–11 appears as V7–I6 which is misleading.

[16] Salzer and Schachter define the term in the introduction to their book *Counterpoint in Composition*. They write: "Species counterpoint or indeed any approach to counterpoint cannot serve as a method of composition in any style whatever ... To make counterpoint serve its true purpose, it must first be separated, so to speak from composition ..."

They further write: "The study of counterpoint is above all the study of voice leading. Wherever there is voice leading, wherever there exists motion and direction of voices, in any style or period whatever, there is counterpoint. The view that contrapuntal studies lead solely to the understanding and writing of sixteenth-century vocal polyphony, or of inventions, canons, and fugues, is narrow and misleading. It completely ignores the pervasive influence of the contrapuntal

(2) Salzer and Schachter do not investigate the invertible counterpoint which ingeniously takes place between the different voices and sections.

(3) None of the sketches illustrate the reorganization of the opening motives in the B section and their integration into the reaching over that takes place in mm. 21 through 27.

(4) This Intermezzo holds many "potential paths"—implicit motivic continuations and tonal goals. The ingenuity lies very much in how they are subsumed into the structural framework of the composition. The whole idea of the piece is the complexity surrounding the one path taken. One needs ancillary graphs to show this dynamic character and to illustrate the several paths that could have been taken and the respective "realities" that would have resulted. I will incorporate throughout the essay such ancillary graphs to illustrate these potential paths.

Chapter 3 of this thesis will discuss middleground and foreground events and their relation to the background progression in more detail. In addition, the aspects presented in (2) and (3) will be further discussed in Chapter 3 as well. In Chapter 4, I will investigate how these paths are subsumed into the path taken, which path is for the most part shown accurately in Salzer and Schachter's sketches.

In brief, although there is a Schenkerian sketch of Op. 76, no. 4, one done by leading scholars in the field, the piece has by no means been given extended analytical treatment. For the Intermezzo is of utmost beauty and holds an immense variety of intricate and extremely charming features. It

---

concept, so characteristic of Western tonal, as well as modal, music." Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), xvii.

seems ultimately perfunctory to treat the piece as an example of an extended dominant seventh with a middle section neighboring motion and to consider the analytical case closed.

2. 2. 2 Raphael Atlas' Discussion in "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille"

Though the literature on Op. 76, no. 4 is extremely narrow, the piece receives brief analytical treatment in the context of other studies. Raphael Atlas, for example examines this Intermezzo in his article "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille."[17] The article examines the functional, and particularly enharmonic revaluation of a sonority at the moment of reprise: specifically the chord (B, G-sharp, D) of m. 8 appears in m. 40 as C-flat, A-flat, D.

Atlas makes some interesting observations concerning the way the "acoustic divergence" does not become apparent until moments after the actual enharmonic reevaluation has taken place. But these observations are general and do not attempt to explore the relation of "grammatical divergence" (spelling) to "acoustic divergence" (function). A major part of the discussion is allocated to the study of the enharmonic play between G-sharp and A-flat. Atlas makes a few observations that are debatable:

(1) Atlas suggests: "The first three [alpha] chords [G-sharp, B, D] in the piece—those in the second halves of mm. 1, 2, and 5—link the dominant seventh harmonies that precedes and follow them."[18] What is the point of

---

[17] Raphael Atlas, "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille: Reprise and the Disguised Seam in Nineteenth-Century Music," *In Theory Only* 10/6 (1988): 15–36.

[18] Ibid., 30

linking the same harmony? By merely repeating the same chord, in the same or in different inversions, the harmony is automatically prolonged. In fact the B-natural and the G-sharp both serve to articulate and to destabilize the dominant harmony.[19]

(2) Furthermore the pitches B, G-sharp and D form a fairly typical common-tone diminished seventh embellishing motion which Atlas does not identify. Common-tone functions of diminished seventh and augmented sixth chords are regular features of much nineteenth-century music and are given extraordinarily imaginative treatment by Brahms.

(3) The Intermezzo contains many other enharmonicisms which Atlas does not account for, such as B-natural/C-flat and F-sharp/G-flat.

(4) It is unfortunate that the study remains focused on the surface details of the "alpha" chord without attempting to investigate its deeper functional roles nor its motivic and voice-leading character within the ambiguous tonal context of this Intermezzo.

2. 2. 3 Wallace Berry's Chapter in *Musical Structure and Performance*

Musical Structure and Performance is a performance guide in which Wallace Berry dedicates an entire chapter to the study of Op. 76, no. 4.[20] The author considers form and character, melody and harmony, as well as rhythm—and

---

[19] See Chapter 3 of the thesis, pp. 29–30.

[20] Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

their implications for performance. He suggests tempi adjustments and underlines the dynamic shape and phrasings of the melodic lines.

At the beginning of the chapter Berry states that "the piece's relatively fundamental material is distinct from that which is subsidiary and parenthetically elaborative."[21] This statement touches upon the "game" of this piece, the "game" between the unequivocal background structure and the elegantly blurred foreground. This issue will be discussed in further detail throughout my study. This line of thought deserved to be pursued but Berry preferred to tackle motivic and voice-leading issues which he does not entirely resolve with success.

The problem in Berry's study concerns an obvious but unavoidable disjunction between his analytical reading and a possible performance of the piece. For example, it is true that the B-flat of m. 4 naturally attracts the listener's attention and there is little the performer can do to soften its arrival, but the passage bounded by mm. 1–6 prolongs the dominant harmony and no argument can support the idea of perceiving the B-flat on a deeper level, which is what Berry seems to suggest.[22]

Berry illustrates his study with Schenkerian graphs but his unconventional use of beams and slurs is often misleading. In his discussion of the harmonic structure of the Intermezzo, Berry does not show the

---

[21] Ibid., 51

[22] Berry perceives the upper voice melody as a descending line starting with the opening E-flat and going down to the to the F in m. 5 (through the upper neighbor C in m. 2). The F then moves up chromatically to G via F-sharp. According to Berry's Example 3.5 on page 52, the B-flat of m. 4 functions as the symmetry point between E-flat and F.

See Chapter 3 of the thesis, pp. 29–30.

hierarchy of chords within the same stratum. He also does not examine how the various harmonic progressions fit or do not fit into traditional harmonic paradigms and how Brahms combined different paradigms which do not normally belong together.[23]

Berry does, however, cite some interesting and important features related to the Intermezzo, among them:

(1) The avoidance of establishing B-flat major. Berry notes the "evasion of the primary tonic harmony until the final close, resulting in extreme harmonic mobility through most of the structure."[24]

(2) The enharmonicisms: G-sharp/A-flat, B/C-flat, and especially F-sharp/G-flat.

(3) The double role of the deceptive cadence of m. 13: "The inflated deceptive cadence on the strongly tonicized VI, emphasized by the direct repeat of (A) [section A]. The VI (like the succeeding first inversion of IV) functions fundamentally as an upper neighbor to the structural V."

---

[23] Berry's analytical techniques demonstrate a lack of distinction between prolongational and motivic functions and a confusion of prolongational hierarchy. For example, Berry writes: "The encompassing prolongation of V and its ultimate resolution are beamed prominently," which literally means that the dominant harmony is extracted and beamed.

[24] Ibid., 61

2. 3 On the Potential of Extra-Schenkerian Analytical Approaches

2. 3. 1 Narrative Theory

In literature, the study of narrative structure was initiated by Russian Formalism. Vladimir Propp examined a large number of Russian folk stories and determined an ordered succession of the thirty-one "functions," found in all of them. These functions summarize general events such as "one member of a family absents himself from home" and so on. More studies as for example those of Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Tzvetan Torodov classify the "functions" on different levels and with various degrees of importance.[25]

This kind of "narrative" structure also exists in music. Scholars such as Fred Everett Maus, Anthony Newcomb, and Edward T. Cone have written extensively on the topic.[26] Maus and Newcomb present detailed and critical

---

[25] Roland Barthes, "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives," in *Semiotic Challenge*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1988), 93.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 428–44.

Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction to Poetics*, trans. Richard Howard (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981), 52.

[26] Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Narrative," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 1–35.

_____, "Music as Drama, *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988): 56–73.

Anthony Newcomb, "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies," *19th-Century Music* 11/2 (1987): 164–74.

Edward T. Cone, "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story," *Music: A View from Delft* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

reviews of the historical development of literary narrative and its application to music. Their articles demonstrate why narrative theory is so appealing for music analysis. Maus writes: "Musical events can be regarded as characters, or as gestures, assertions, responses, resolutions, goal-directed motions, references, and so on. Once they are so regarded, it is easy to regard successions of musical events as forming something like a story, in which these characters and actions go together to form something like a plot."[27] Similarly Newcomb writes: "a limited number of often-recurring successions governed the structure of music (...) at every level, from phrase to section to movement to cycle of movements."[28] Later in his article, when he comments on Paul Ricoeur's work on literary structures, Newcomb states: "the reader or listener shifts frequently back and forth between, on the one hand, the actions, incidents, or events that he perceives as he reckons with passing time and, on the other, a fund of patterns or configurations into which events could fit."[29]

It seems then that when a composition's level of intricacy goes beyond a certain point, it is easier for the mind to comprehend through a description as musical narrative rather than through systematic analysis of the musical structure.

However, using narrative in music presents one danger: one can get carried away by the story and end up adapting the piece to the story and not the story to the piece. Remember that the whole purpose of such para musical

---

[27] Fred Everett Maus, "Music as Narrative," *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991), 6.

[28] Anthony Newcomb, "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies," *19th-Century Music* 11/2 (1987), 165.

[29] Ibid., 166.

undertakings is to look for or to create an appropriate story and to relate that story as a means of explaining the succession of musical events and their integration within the piece.

2. 3. 2 Phenomenology

> Understanding music is simply a matter of attending to and comprehending tonal-temporal relationships, however subtle and complex they may prove to be ... Most analyses consist of an unilluminating amalgam of blatant description (the melody rises to a climactic F-sharp and descends to a cadence on B), of routine formal classification (the first phrase is an antecedent, the second a consequent), and of a naive account of motivic similarity (the motive of the first measure is repeated in the third and is inverted in the seventh measure).[30]

Phenomenology in music studies the listener's temporal awareness of the passage of a tone (or chord). Like the study of human reaction and interaction with the readings of novels and particularly detective stories, music phenomenology dwells in the "implication–realization" of events: an event—"the rumble of distant thunder and the piling-up of dark clouds" (as Meyer proposes)—suggests future possible events, as for example the "rain." The rain may or may not fall which means that the created "implications" may or may not be "realized" by the upcoming events. Human perception is constantly looking forward and back in order to be able to identify the relationship of the current event to previous "realized" or "non-realized" events and to future implied ones. In other terms, the identity of every single event, in every moment, is defined by the retrospective and prospective perception of past ("denied and realized") and potential future events. As Lewin writes: "retentions are retrospective contexts brought into present

---

[30] Leonard B. Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 109.

perception; protentions are prospective contexts brought into present perception."[31]

Phenomenology in music was greatly developed by scholars such as Leonard B. Meyer and David Lewin. In his article "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," Lewin presents a detailed preface on Phenomenology in which he relates the work of Husserl, Izchak Miller, Eugene Narmour, Leonard Meyer, and Jonathan Kramer. Part II of the article proposes Lewin's own model summarized in the following formula: p = (EV, CXT, P-R-LIST, ST-LIST). "The argument EV specifies a sonic *event* or family of *events* being "perceived." The argument CXT specifies *context* in which the perception occurs. The argument P-R-LIST is a list of pairs (p_i, r_i); each pair specifies a *perception* p_i and a *relation* r_i which p bears to p_i. The argument ST-LIST is a list of *statements* $s^1, (...), s^k$ made in some stipulated *language* L."[32] Lewin, using Schubert's song *Morgengruß* to illustrate his ideas, explores how a "cursor-time" within a harmonic progression implies a number of different perceptions, which may or may not be realized.

The distinguishing difference between the approaches of Meyer and Lewin—at least in the examples chosen—is that Meyer gives preference to linear-melodic events whereas Lewin is concerned principally with harmonic possibilities. Part two of Meyer's *Explaining Music* is entirely devoted to the exploration of the different aspects of the "implication-realization" phenomena in melodic structures: conjunct patterns, disjunct patterns,

---

[31] David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986), 330.

[32] Ibid., 335.

symmetrical patterns, contextual discrepancy, archetypal schemata and prolongations.

2. 4 The Plan of this Study

This thesis undertakes a detailed study of Brahms' Intermezzo, Op. 76, no. 4, in B-flat major, with additional reference to the openings of Opp. 118, no. 1 (A minor); 118, no. 6 (E-flat minor); 119, no. 1 (B minor); 117, no. 2 (B-flat minor) and 76, no. 8 (C major). One of the remarkable features of Brahms' Intermezzo Op. 76, no. 4 is the ambiguity of its tonal definition. The work discloses a contrapuntal tension between its structural-harmonic organization which is based on an incomplete harmonic progression (V7–I) and its more remote tonal areas. The latter are suggested throughout the Intermezzo but are seldom thoroughly confirmed. The aim of this investigation is to illustrate how tonal ambiguity is achieved through recurrent "incompletions" of the expected (or at least the more likely) harmonic progressions. Brahms, in Op. 76, no. 4, chose to "realize" only by implication many of the more expected harmonic possibilities. And the listener is left with the perception of potential paths not taken.

The study combines a Schenkerian linear-reductive approach, which illustrates the principles of structural voice-leading and motivic design that are operative in this Intermezzo, with observations based on the phenomenological approach suggested by David Lewin in "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception" and on the related implication-realization model of musical analysis developed by Leonard Meyer in *Explaining Music*. The thesis also employs narratological approach as

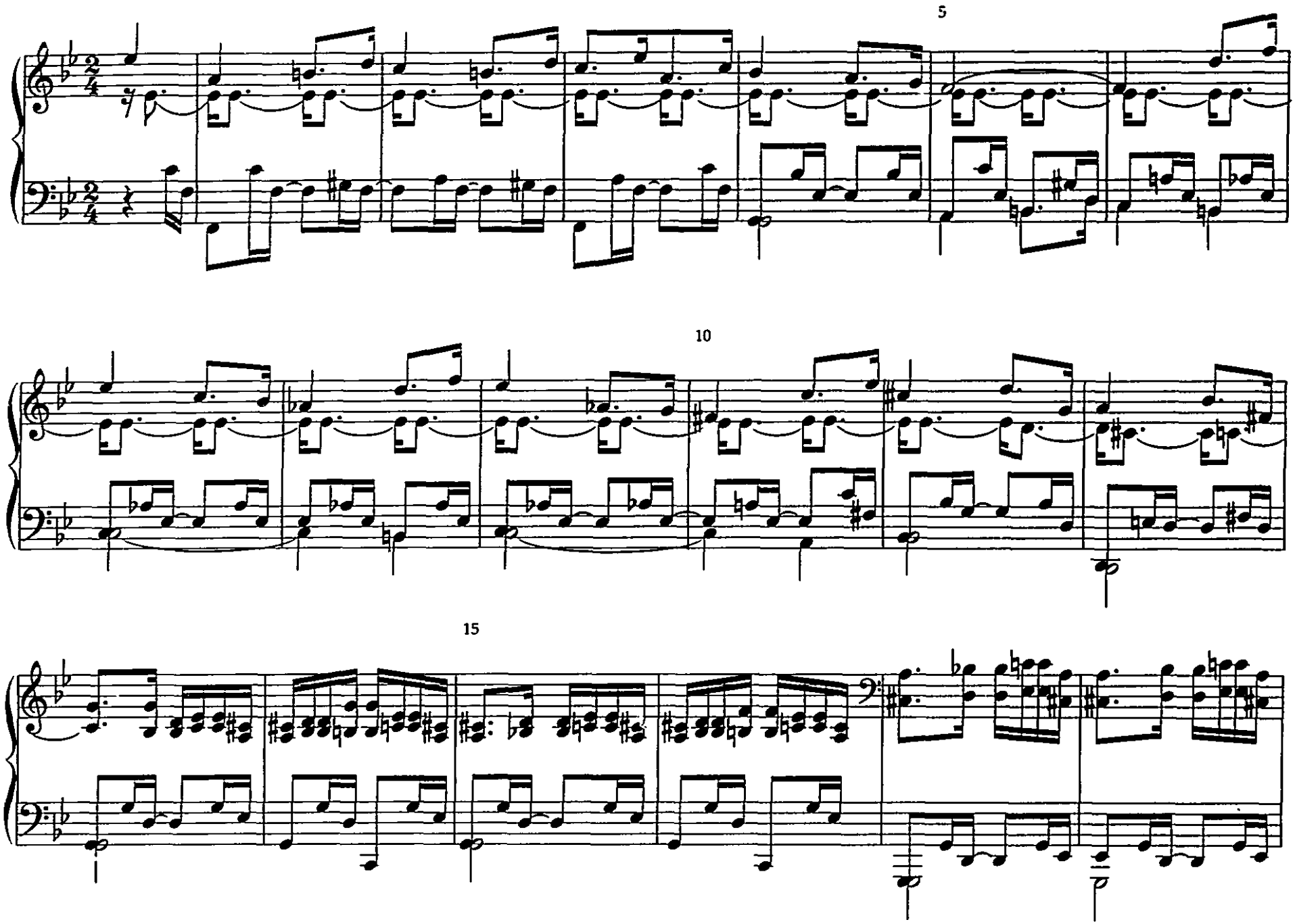
developed by Edward T. Cone in "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story."[33]

The analytical study of Op. 76, no. 4 comprises two parts. In the first part (Chapter 3 of the thesis), I undertake an analysis of the harmonic structure and its ambiguity, and of the contrapuntal complexes which characterize each of the three sections of the Intermezzo. In the second part (Chapter 4 of the thesis), I re-examine how the paths Brahms chose to follow are subsumed into deeper structural levels. This chapter employs phenomenological (after Lewin) and narratological (after Cone) approaches. In addition to Schenkerian graphs, the study throughout incorporates ancillary sketches, which illustrate the importance of the potential paths for a deeper understanding of the work.

Finally in the conclusion (Chapter 5 of the thesis), I make additional analytical observations on the Intermezzi Opp. 118, no. 1 (A minor); 118, no. 6 (E-flat minor); 119, no. 1 (B minor); 117, no. 2 (B-flat minor) and 76, no. 8 (C major) which share with Op. 76, no. 4 various types of tonal ambiguity in their openings.

---

[33] Edward Cone, "Three Ways of Reading a detective Story," *Music: A View from Delft* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).


5
10
15

20
25
30
35

40
45
50
55

Chapter 3

Analysis of the Sections of Op. 76, no. 4 (B-flat major)

> "In the art of music, as in life, motion toward the goal encounters obstacles, reverses, disappointments, and involves great distances, detours, expansions, interpolations, and, in short, retardations of all kinds. Therein lies the source of all artistic delaying, from which the creative mind can derive content that is ever new. Thus we hear in the middleground and foreground an almost dramatic course of events."
>
> —Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*

3. 1 Section A

3. 1. 1 Harmonic Structure and Intralevel Ambiguities

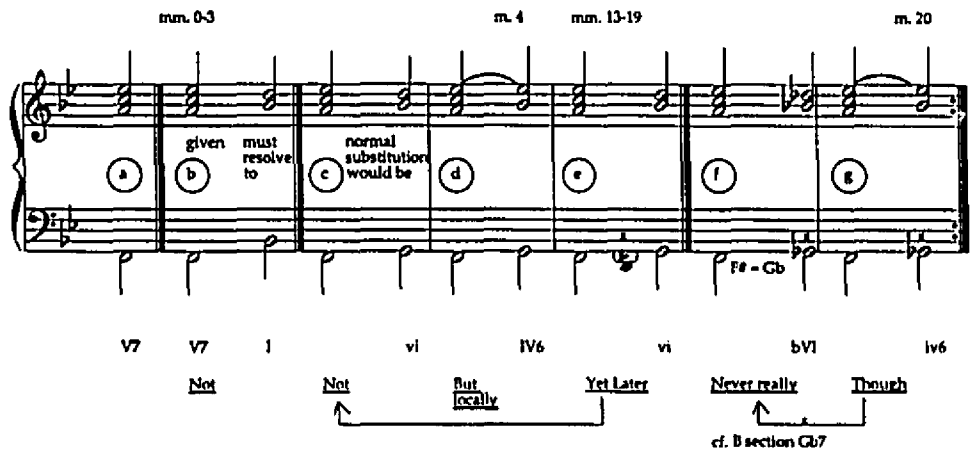
(a) Harmonic Structure

Op. 76, no. 4 opens with a dominant seventh chord on F which lasts for four measures (Example 3.1(a)). Naturally, this V7 must resolve to I as shown in Example 3.1(b), in order to establish the tonality of B-flat major. Or it might move up to vi, the normal substitution for I, as shown in Example 3.1(c), in order to create a deceptive resolution. But the V7 proceeds with neither of these alternatives and moves instead to IV6 in m. 4 as shown in Example 3.1(d).

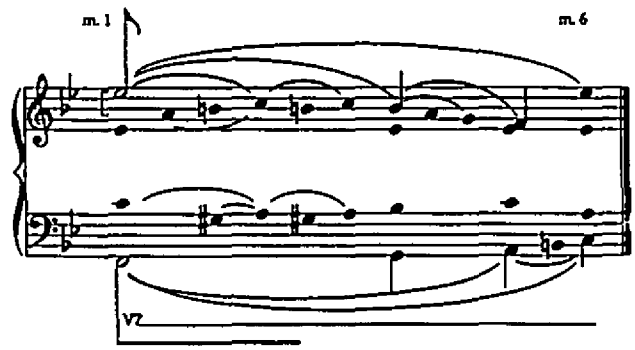
Although the IV6 sounds like a momentary resolution, it does not resolve the seventh of V7. The progression V7–IV6 produces the so-called

"stationary resolution of the seventh" which, in fact, is not a resolution at all but a deferral of resolution: the seventh is retained in the IV6. Normally, this results in a prolongation of the seventh through a broader dominant harmony as shown in Example 3.2: the IV6 functions locally as a pseudo-resolution of the opening dominant, but on a slightly larger scale (mm. 1–6), IV6 is a passing chord within a prolonged dominant harmony.

Example 3.1



Example 3.2



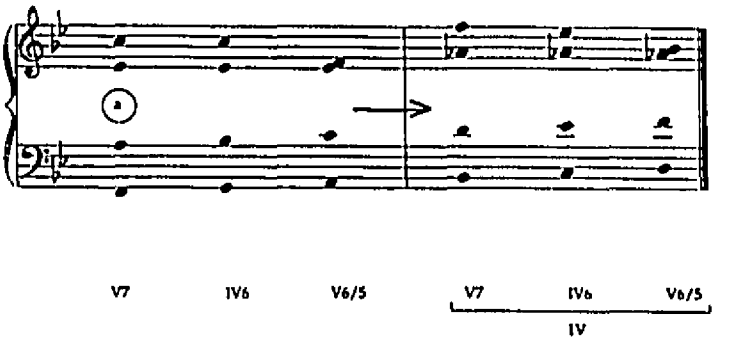
The opening dominant seventh establishes B-flat major as the prime candidate for a tonality. But as explained above, this tonality is not

immediately confirmed—in fact, B-flat major is not confirmed at all until the end of the piece. The A-flat harmony which is introduced at m. 6 could have been the beginning of a partial presentation of the sequential progression (V7)–IV6–V6/5 (mm. 1–6) now applied to the key of E-flat (see Example 3.3(a)). The melodic pattern in the second beat of m. 3 through m. 4 is repeated in the second beat of m. 6 through m. 8. The pattern is transposed up a fourth and introduces the A-flat. A mixture of the original and the transposed melodic patterns occurs in mm. 9–10, where the first half is derived from the original and the second half from the transposed. But the A is replaced by A-flat and the F is replaced by F-sharp (see Example 3.3(b)). The mixture of A-flat with F-sharp, the arrival of the dominant seventh on D (m. 10), and the perfect authentic cadence in G minor (m. 13) combine to confirm a Neapolitan (flat-II6) re-interpretation for the A-flat chord. The G minor goal itself represents at a middleground level the deceptive motion, which was in fact the alternative motion at the foreground level for the opening measures (Example 3.4 and Example 3.1(e)).

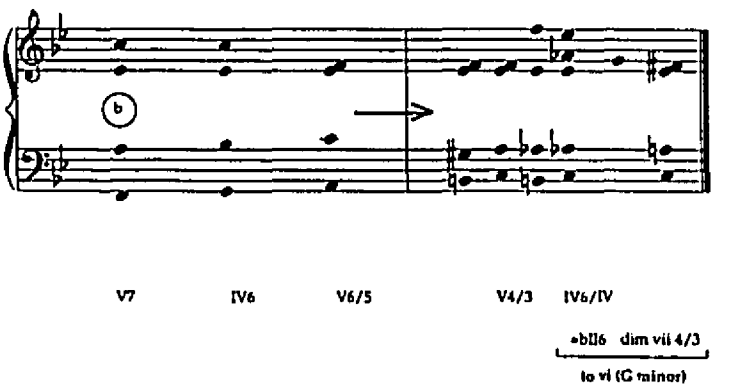
When section A is played the first time, the motion to vi stands independently as a goal and is followed by a return to V7 at the beginning of the repeat. But when the section is played the second time, the vi takes on a different role since it now belongs to a larger scale harmonic progression which comprises sections A and B, and ultimately section A′ as well. While the first playing emphasizes G as the goal with G-flat (iv6) as a brief passing tone (m. 20), linking back to V7, the repetition stays on the G-flat and this note becomes the main bass note of section B.

Example 3.3

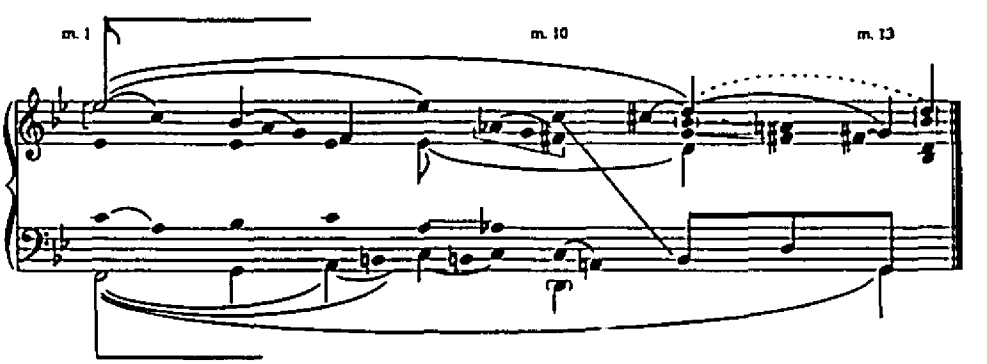
Not this



But this



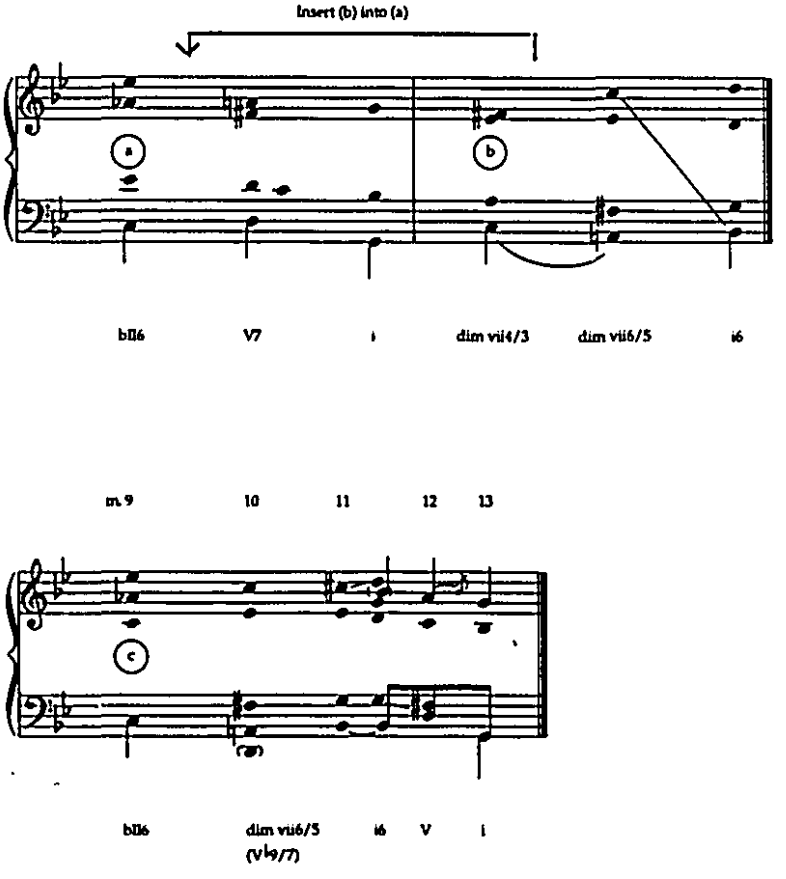
Example 3.4



(b) Ambiguity of Foreground Syntactical Direction

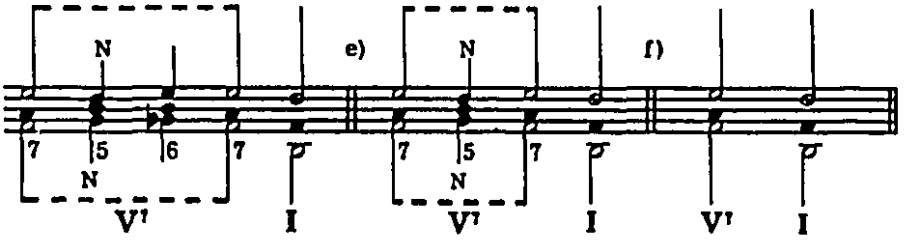
Although the progression V7–i in G minor is secured at the middleground level and the voice-leading is always smooth at the surface, the sense of syntactical direction is veiled. The foreground is blurred in the following way: Example 3.5(a) shows a typical voice-leading over the progression flat-II6–V7–i, and Example 3.5(b) shows the progression dim-vii4/3–i6, normally tonic prolongational. The insertion of Exa le 3.5(b) into Example 3.5(a) between flat-II6 and V7 results in an auxiliary cadential progression as shown in Example 3.5(c).

Example 3.5



The analytical sketches for this point in the piece given by Salzer and Schachter in *Counterpoint in Composition*,[1] feature the note D (an octave above the middle D) over the G minor chord (see Example 3.6(a)). Salzer and Schachter's middleground sketches show how the harmonic motion V7–vi provides the persistent high E-flat of the first section with a voice-leading goal. Yet the foreground auxiliary cadential progression to G minor (vi) that provides the means by which the D is introduced is not accounted for in their sketches.

Example 3.6(a): Salzer and Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition, p. 461*



(c) Absence of Foreground Confirmation of Background V7–I

Let us imagine for a moment a car driving for the first time towards a mountain peak within a chain of mountains. The driver does not really know how to get there and does not have a map either. But, the driver is confident and is willing to rely on the road signs. The journey begins on a highway. The pavement has few bumps here and there but the road is generally good and straightforward. After a substantially straight stretch, the road twists upwards and the driver thinks: "Ah, I have reached something," an expression which soon—a beat later, when the G moves up to A (m. 5)—

[1] Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), 461.

changes into: "But this is not the goal." The road soon becomes straight again and the driver realizes that the car had driven up and down a small passing hill.

A few miles ahead, the car encounters a winding stretch of road, which soon becomes ascending. The driver exclaims: "Ah ha! now I have reached something!" which again changes into: "but this is not it! It is another, but higher hill." The road becomes straight again and the highway continues. The same scenario happens again. The car encounters a small hill followed by a winding and ascending road leading to a bigger hill. But this time, the driver is able to sit back and watch, knowing that the goal must be further and higher.

Let us apply this analogy to Op. 76, no. 4. The driver represents the listener's perception, the highway represents the initial dominant seventh harmony, and the height of the hills is an analogy for the depth of structural-analytical levels.

The listener's perception is driving through this Intermezzo. The journey starts on the dominant seventh harmony, which is destabilized by the G-sharp and the B-natural (the bumps on the road). After a substantially prolonged stretch of the dominant harmony, the IV6 event happens and the listener's perception says: "Ah! I have reached something," an expression which soon changes into: "But this is not the tonic." The dominant harmony is picked up again and the listener realizes that the IV6 event was of a passing nature, prolonging the dominant harmony.

Let us go back to the driver. After having crossed the first hill, the driver understood that the goal must be of a greater height. When the driver encountered another small hill (as is the case in the repetition), it was clear

that this hill was "just passing." The driver realized that the goal must be a mountain. The same reorientation happens in the listener's perception. After having encountered the foreground "hill" (the IV6 of m. 4), the perception can no longer be fooled by, or remain content with, foreground events. The listener will now look for the goal in the middleground. But it will be a while before the listener's perception realizes that the goal does not reside in the middleground either. As a matter fact, only when the "real" V7 (the actual highway) comes back (m. 32, section A') does the listener understand that the highway never ended. Then the perception finally shifts to the background level, where of course the resolution ultimately lies.

Although the incomplete harmonic progression V7–I is finally confirmed at the background level at the end of the piece, there is actually no surface level V7–I motion at all. Normally, compositions which feature an incomplete harmonic progression at the deepest levels fulfill the surface motion V–I as well (e.g., Chopin, *Prelude in A minor Op. 28, no. 2*). A strong cadential progression would clarify the formal role of subsequent material as post-cadential. But in Op. 76, no. 4, there is continual deferral of the background progression V7–I due since the opening. The "failure" to confirm the progression V7–I at the foreground results in a disjunction between background and foreground realities. By avoiding the resolution of V7 to I on the surface, Brahms expands the time frame of the syntactical resolution as well as the structural depth field.

3. 1. 2 Resolution of the Diminished Fifth as Contrapuntal Complex

The right hand opens the Intermezzo with E-flat (the seventh of the dominant seventh chord on F) and A (the third of that dominant seventh chord). E-flat must resolve down to D; the A must resolve up to B-flat (see Example 3.7(a), p. 31). In other words the melodic interval, diminished fifth A–E-flat, must resolve to the major third B-flat–D, and ideally, the resolution must be over a tonic harmony (Example 3.1(a) and 3.1(b), p. 22). This tonic never happens in section A and the major third B-flat–D is delayed until the G minor codetta (m. 13). The two notes B-flat–D, which make up the resolution of the diminished fifth E-flat–A, are handled separately.[2]

Independently from the A, the E-flat resolves down to D (m. 11). While the E-flat was prolonged, the A went to A-flat (m. 6). When the E-flat resolves to D, the A-flat (having passed through G to F-sharp) resolves to G.[3] So when

---

[2] In his book *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), Wallace Berry analyses the upper voice melody as a descending line starting with the opening E-flat and going down to the to the F in m. 5. The F then moves up chromatically to G via F-sharp. According to Berry's example (see Example 3.6(b)), the B-flat of m. 4 functions as the symmetry point between E-flat and F.

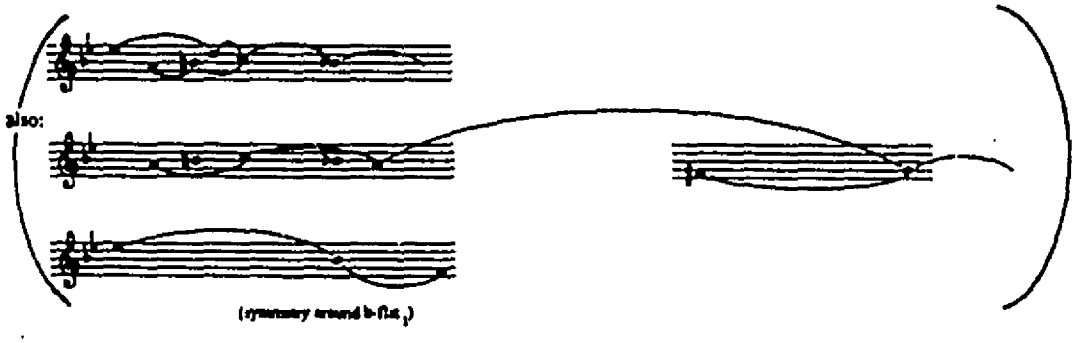
Berry's analysis suggests that the arrival of the B-flat is of greater importance than what has come so far. In Schenkerian terms, it means that the B-flat belongs to a deeper level. By attributing to the B-flat a pivotal role, Berry is implicitly ranking it on a higher level than the E-flat and the C of m. 1. This cannot be the case because on a deeper level, the V is prolonged throughout section A.

[3] Atlas's example in "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille: Reprise and the Disguised Seam in Nineteenth-Century Music," *In Theory Only* 10/6 (1988): 15–36 (see Example 3.6(c)) shows that the G-sharp (or at least the perception of the G-sharp) is prolonged throughout mm. 6–10 until it resolves up to A-natural at m. 10.

The A-natural of m. 10 is of a completely different nature than that in the opening 5 measures. Whereas the A of m. 10 belongs to V7 of G minor, the A in the opening—destabilized by the recurrent G-sharp—belongs to V7 of B-flat major. Furthermore, when V7 of G minor (m. 10) arrives, it becomes clear that the A-flat chord in first inversion functioned as the Neapolitan of G minor. Nonetheless, Atlas claims: "the G-sharp/A-flat, extended from [alpha] in m. 6 functions in some sense as a neighbour G-sharp all along." The A-flat goes down; it does not, would not—

the G minor chord arrives in m. 11, it resolves both the E-flat and the A-flat and it satisfies the voice-leading and harmonic requirements as shown in Example 3.7(b). But at the same time it violates the primordial resolution of A which is to go to B-flat and of V7 which is to go to I.[4]

Example 3.6(b): Wallace Berry, *Musical Structure and Performance*, p. 52



Example 3.6(c): Rapahel Atlas, "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille," p. 31

---

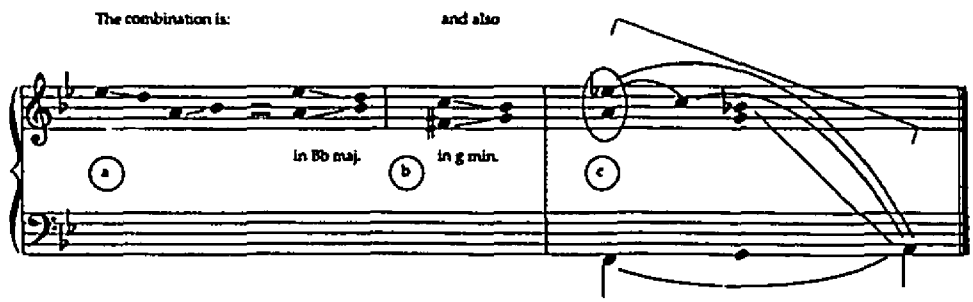
and should not really, even in a metaphorical sense—proceed upward to A-natural in the V7 of G.

[4] To be sure, the A-natural (as A2) does go to B-flat2 in the bass voice at the beginning of the auxiliary cadential progression in m. 11 (see Example 3.4, p. 24). But this transfer of the resolution to the wrong register is an instance of the registral play defined in my next paragraphs.

The background resolution of V7 to I is of course obvious. But the closer we get to the foreground(s), the more complicated things become; the enigma of resolving E-flat provides a foreground narrative of its own as does the enigma of resolving A, while the enigma of resolving both of them to the correct third provides yet another. The charm of this Intermezzo really lies in the richness of its multiple "plots" within the foreground.

The opening diminished fifth A–E-flat is not limited to the upper hand but is enriched by the registral play which goes on between the two hands. For instance, as shown in Example 3.7(c), the A in the bass (m. 5) comes from the upper voice B-flat in m. 4. What takes place across mm. 1–5 is not simply a descent from E-flat to F—as shown on Salzer and Schachter's sketch and as demonstrated by Berry (Examples 3.6(a) and 3.6(b) respectively)— but the diminished fifth itself, fanned out registrally. Furthermore, its correlative, the diminished fifth in m. 10 created by the F-sharp (coming from the A-flat) and the C, resolves naturally to the minor third G–B-flat. But the B-flat appears first in the bass as B-flat2 in m. 11 and instigates the auxiliary cadential progression into the G minor goal of section A, as shown in Example 3.5(c), p. 25. Note how the "correct" B-flat4 appears only at the last moment as an escape tone in the upper voice of the cadential progression (m. 12).

Example 3.7



3. 2 Section B

3. 2. 1 Harmonic Structure and Intralevel Ambiguities

(a) Harmonic Structure

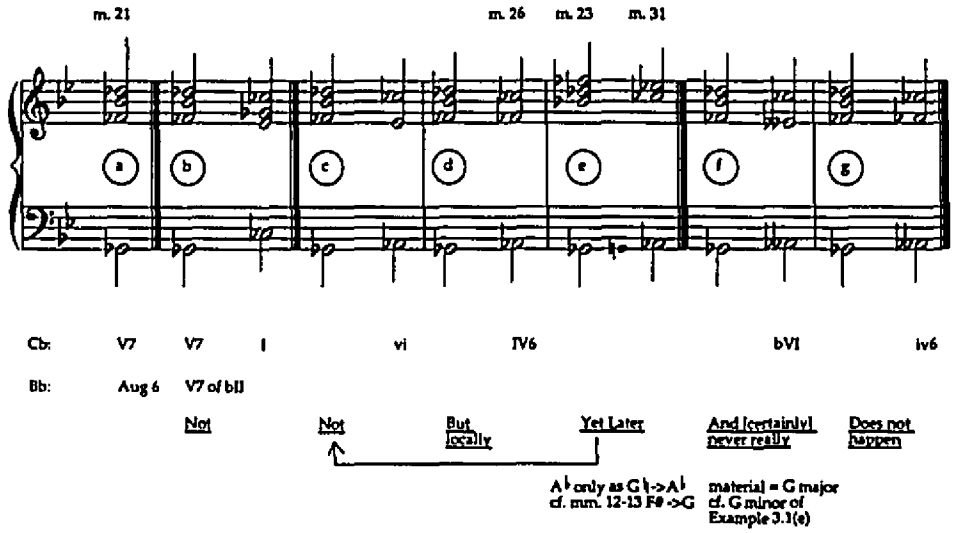
The iv6 chord opens section B at m. 21 and ends it at m. 32 with the G-flat in the bass. But the iv6 is not simply prolonged throughout the section: after the first beat of measure 21, E-flat does not show up again over G-flat in the bass until m. 31. The harmony in mm. 21–25 and over the B-flat in mm. 27–28 is a dominant seventh. To be more specific, it is the dominant seventh of C-flat major.[5]

So, section B, like section A opens with a dominant seventh sonority. The right hand features the opening figure of section A, transposed and inverted: ascending fourth–descending second–descending third instead of descending fifth–ascending second–ascending third. Naturally, as in section A, the dominant seventh (this time over G-flat) must resolve to the tonic as shown in Example 3.8(b) and Example 3.9(a), in order to establish the tonality of C-flat major (flat-II with respect to the B-flat major tonic). Or it might move up to vi, as shown in Example 3.8(c), in order to create a deceptive resolution on A-flat. But, as was the case on the V7 in section A, the V7 on G-flat in section B does not immediately proceed with either of these alternatives. It moves instead—once again as in section A—to IV6 in m. 26, as shown in Example 3.8(d). As in section A, the progression V7–IV6 produces the

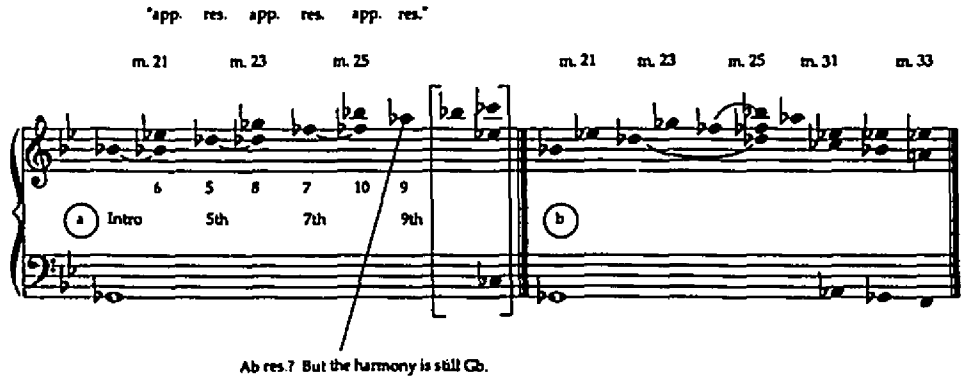
[5] Wallace Berry's Example 3.7 on p. 56 of *Musical Structure and Performance* is a sketch of section B of Op. 76, no. 4. The sketch illustrates an arppegiation of the E-flat minor triad in the upper voice and an arppegiation of the D-flat minor triad in the middle voice. The reading of his sketch is problematic and presents many analytical conflicts.

"stationary resolution" and the result is the prolongation of the dominant seventh sonority on G-flat. It is only later, in m. 31, that the motion to vi happens (see Example 3.8(e)). Yet, the submediant in section B is not a goal by itself, as it was in the first hearing of section A. This time the bass progresses down a third from A-flat to F and picks up the "original" dominant seventh sonority, which arrives in m. 32 (Example 3.9(b)).

Example 3.8

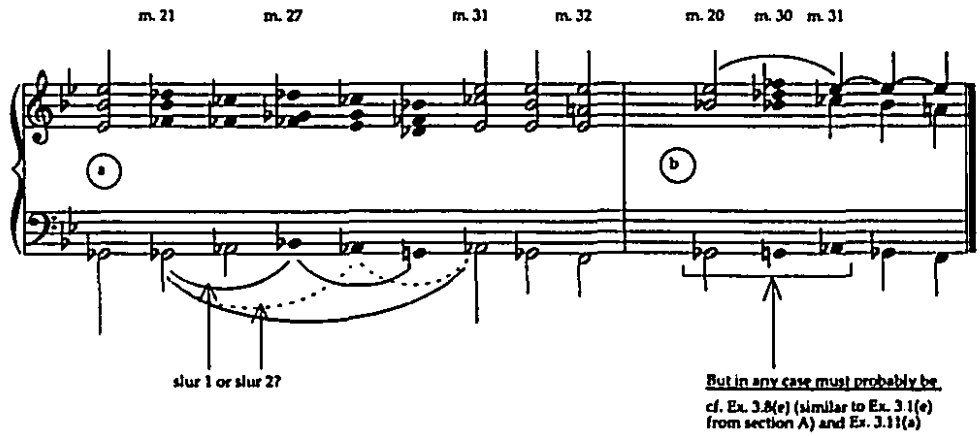


Example 3.9



In sketching the B section, two possibilities arise for analytical slurring of the bass voice (see Example 3.10(a)). The first possibility (shown as solid slurs) joins the G-flat of m. 21 to the B-flat of m. 27 and, at a deeper level links the same G-flat to the A-flat of m. 31. The first possibility is correct because the A-flat of m. 26 functions as passing between V7 and V6/5, prolonging the dominant harmony of C-flat major. The second possibility (shown as dotted slurs) is not correct because it assumes that vi arrives in m. 29 and is then prolonged. This is certainly not the case since the G-flat remains suspended at m. 29 in the alto voice. The overall idea is shown in Example 3.10(b). Comparing Example 3.10(a) and Example 3.10(b) shows that the initial bass note G-flat2 is embellished by a third motion up to B-flat2. When the G-flat2 is due to resolve, it has become chromaticized to G-natural and produces the motion to A-flat. The upper voice constitutes overall a neighboring motion E-flat—F-flat—E-flat with registral transfers.

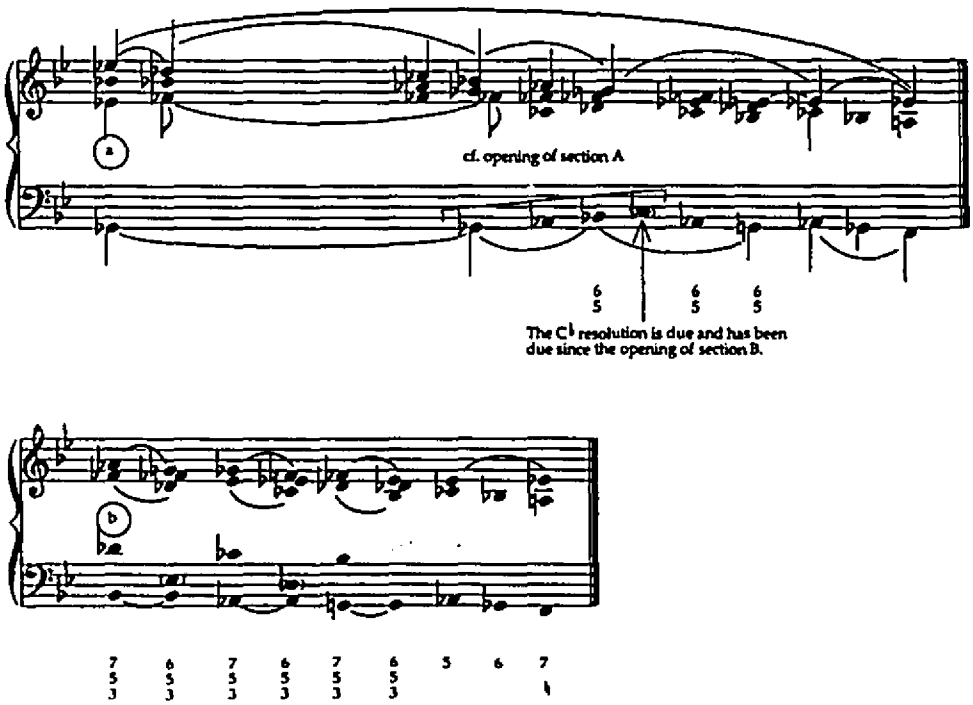
Example 3.10



(b) Ambiguity of Foreground Syntactical Direction

Although the return of section A in mm. 28–32 is clear at the middleground level, the syntactical direction is blurred at the surface. In fact, this passage is one of the most difficult in the Intermezzo and it is greatly embellished with ascending sixteenth notes and incomplete neighbors. The descent first seems like a series of three parallel 6/5 chords (Example 3.11(a)). But the surface voice-leading of this passage features a series of descending parallel sevenths as shown in Example 3.11(b). The 6/5 chords of mm. 28–30 can be analyzed as either an anticipation of and preparation for the next seventh chord or as a resolution of the previous seventh. (The bass note in parentheses in Example 3.11(b) show that the chain of seventh chords implies a variation of descending circle of fifths motion).

Example 3.11



(c) Absence of Foreground Confirmation of Background V7–I

Let us go back to the driver's analogy and see what actually happens to the trip once the car enters the B section. After having crossed the G minor "hill" in section A, the highway of the dominant seventh on F was closed and the traffic was directed to another route. Unfortunately for the driver there was no sign pertaining to the ultimate destination. So the driver is relatively lost and does not know where this route is leading. The first event on this route happens in m. 26 when the bass moves upward to the A–flat, accompanied in the upper voice by a leap of a minor third to a higher register C-flat (the highest register so far). I would refrain from referring to this event as another "hill," because it is not really of the same nature as the previously encountered events. This one holds a certain brief magic, like a "mirage" in the middle of the Sahara, an ephemeral enchanting moment which quickly dissipates.

The second important event happens in mm. 31–32. What the driver is looking for, at that particular point, is not the mountain itself, but an end or at least some explanatory signs pertaining to the detour the car is traversing. And this is exactly what happens in m. 31: the detour ends, as if it had no particular purpose.

In addition to the background progression V7–I in B-flat, the listener is faced now with the "section B background progression V7–I in C-flat," which of course never happens. Not only is the listener's perception left with an unresolved dominant seventh on F, but it is now, on a more local level, left with another unresolved dominant seventh on G-flat. Of course, on the surface level, since this seventh chord on G-flat enters from iv6 we might first expect the sonority to function as an augmented sixth chord. But on a deeper middleground level, the iv6 on G-flat itself functions as an upper neighbor to

the opening seventh. But this understanding will not be clear until the reappearance of the opening dominant seventh sonority in m. 32.

3. 2. 2 Resolution of the Diminished Fifth as Contrapuntal Complex

The right hand opens Section B with B-flat (the third of the dominant seventh chord on G-flat) and F-flat (the seventh of the dominant seventh chord). F-flat must resolve down to E-flat while B-flat must resolve up to C-flat. In other words the melodic interval, diminished fifth B-flat–F-flat, must resolve to the major third C-flat–E-flat, and ideally, the resolution must be over a tonic harmony (see Example 3.8(a) and 3.8(b), p. 33). This local tonic never happens in section B and the major third C-flat–E-flat is delayed until the end of the section. The two notes C-flat–E-flat, which make up the resolution of the diminished fifth B-flat–F-flat, are handled separately.

The diminished fifth B-flat–F-flat resolves to the major third C-flat–E-flat in m. 31 over the local submediant. This resolution over vi of C-flat major happens in the deeper middleground level. But the closer we get to the surface levels, the more complicated things become: the resolution of B-flat lies on one path and the resolution of F-flat lies on another. In a manner exactly analogous to section A, Brahms transforms the diminished fifth into a contrapuntal complex and deals separately with its components: C-flat occurs in m. 26 and E-flat in m. 29 (the two "hills" of section B).

The A-flat sonority plays a very subtle role in the B section. In m. 22 and m. 24, the A-flat and the C-flat respectively, are left hanging, without any harmonic support. They attract the listener's attention. The A-flat–C-flat pair returns in mm. 25–26. This time it is compressed (2 beats instead of 5) and is

an octave higher. The A-flat anticipates the ascending passing motion of m. 26 and then becomes suspended. The A-flat suspension is repeated and then gives rise to a model-sequence which descends to the A-flat flat chord in m. 31 (see Example 3.13, mm. 27–31, p. 46).

As previously noted, section A leads the listener from the foreground to the middleground. In section B, the progression V7 of C-flat (over the flat VI step in B-flat major, m. 21) to V7 in B-flat major (m. 32) happens in the deeper middleground: until this larger scale progression is perceived, the listener has to go through the same game undergone in section A, namely, to jump a layer of the middleground every time an event is encountered. These events are: mm. 26–27, m. 31 and finally m. 32, the retransition to section A'.

3. 3 Section A'

3. 3. 1 Harmonic Structure and Intralevel Ambiguities

(a) Harmonic Structure

Section A' opens in m. 33 with the return of V7 on F and reintroduces materials from section A until the second beat of m. 40, where the B-natural changes enharmonically into C-flat. The evolution of the B-natural throughout the Intermezzo is as follows: it first appears in m. 1, in the upper voice as a chromatic embellishment of C and part of a common-tone diminished seventh. On the second beat of m. 8, it is picked up by the bass. As a note, it is still a chromatic embellishment of C, but in addition, the chord above it changes to an applied diminished seventh to flat-II6 of G minor. The B-natural manifests itself for the last time in section A in m. 14 and m. 16. This time the B-natural does not come from C but from B-flat. The resulting

motion B-flat–B-natural–C which occurs in the alto voice in the codetta of the A section is transferred to the bass in section A′ and retrograded as C–C-flat (enharmonically B-natural)–B-flat. The applied diminished seventh (above the B-natural) in m. 8 which moves to flat-II6 of G minor, is now an applied diminished 4/2 (over the C-flat) in m. 40 and moves to an E-flat major chord (in 6/4 position). In this way Brahms adopted the right hand/left hand dialogue of section A and integrated it into the larger-scale tonal design. In other words, the right hand/left hand dialogue of enharmonic revaluation between m. 2 and m. 8 is now between m. 14 (or 16) and m. 40, and embraces sections A and B as well as section A′.

The first B-flat chord of the Intermezzo finally arrives (somewhat reluctantly) in m. 45: the actual B-flat sonority only happens on the last sixteenth note of the first beat when the bass has already moved to F. The B-flat in the bass in m. 45 is reached through a chromatically descending line from E-flat. In Brahmsian compositional texture it is perhaps not surprising—but certainly remarkable—to see that the bass line of mm. 42–45 is the contrapuntally inverted alto line from mm. 11–13 of section A (see Example 3.13, mm. 10–13 and 43–46). The resulting progression is: V4/3 (of flat-III)–I6–i6–half-diminished ii7–diminished vii6, not a particularly forceful cadential progression!

Brahms withholds a full B-flat major chord until the very last measures of the piece (mm. 54–55). Until that moment, he delays its arrival with double incomplete neighbor motions on the first beat of every measure.

(b) Ambiguity of Foreground Syntactical Direction

As is clear by now, the progression V7–I in B-flat major is ultimately secured at the background level. Nonetheless, the sense of syntactical arrival on the B-flat chord in m. 45 remains veiled at the surface. Up to m. 41, section A′, like a traditional recapitulation, has been an exact repetition of section A. The descent to I6 in m. 43 corresponds exactly to the i6 in G minor in section A. Naturally, the listener expects at that point an auxiliary cadential progression into B-flat major, to parallel the auxiliary cadential progression into G minor in section A (see Example 3.13, mm. 43–46, p. 46). But the root position V which would be due in such a progression never shows up; neither now, nor later. Instead, the D undertakes a chromatic descent to B-flat. This descent features ingenious compositional techniques which will be discussed shortly (see section 3. 3. 2 below).

As I have noted in section 3. 1. 1(b) (see Example 3.6(a), p. 26), Salzer and Schachter's sketches in *Counterpoint in Composition*,[6] feature the note D5 over the G minor chord. At the exact corresponding point in section A′, the note D is in the bass—while the B-flat, which was in the bass in section A, is now in the upper voice. Whereas in section A, the chord at m. 11 is i6 in G minor, in section A′, at the corresponding place (m. 43), the chord is I6 in B-flat major. Salzer and Schachter's sketches do not show how the bass note D in section A′ now holds the expectation of an auxiliary cadential progression into B-flat.

---

[6] Felix Salzer and Carl Schachter, *Counterpoint in Composition* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1969), 461.

(c) Absence of Foreground Confirmation of Background V–I

Let us go back to our driver and see where section A′ is going to lead. At m. 32, the traffic was directed back to the main highway. The driver feels again in relatively "familiar" surroundings. The landscape of the part to come of the highway is quite similar to the first stretch. Of course, by now, the driver knows pretty well the "grandeur" of the destination and is perhaps less disturbed by passing events. The landscape encountered in section B was indeed of such splendor that our driver's eye is no longer easily satiated.

Once the A-natural resonates in m. 32, the whole color instantly changes. The listener is at last able to take a deep breath after a pretty extended period of high altitude. This remarkable change of color is accompanied by a "putting together of the puzzle," for the listener's perception now understands: "Ah! The dominant is not finished yet. On a deeper level, the dominant harmony has been retained all the way through." Indeed the return of V7 in m. 32 boosts the listener's perception into the background level where it can see that sections A, B and A′ all contribute to the prolongation of the dominant.

3. 3. 2 Resolution of the Diminished Fifth as Contrapuntal Complex

The right hand opens section A′ with the melodic interval diminished fifth A–E-flat. The resolution of this diminished fifth to the major third B-flat–D over a tonic harmony is by now well overdue.

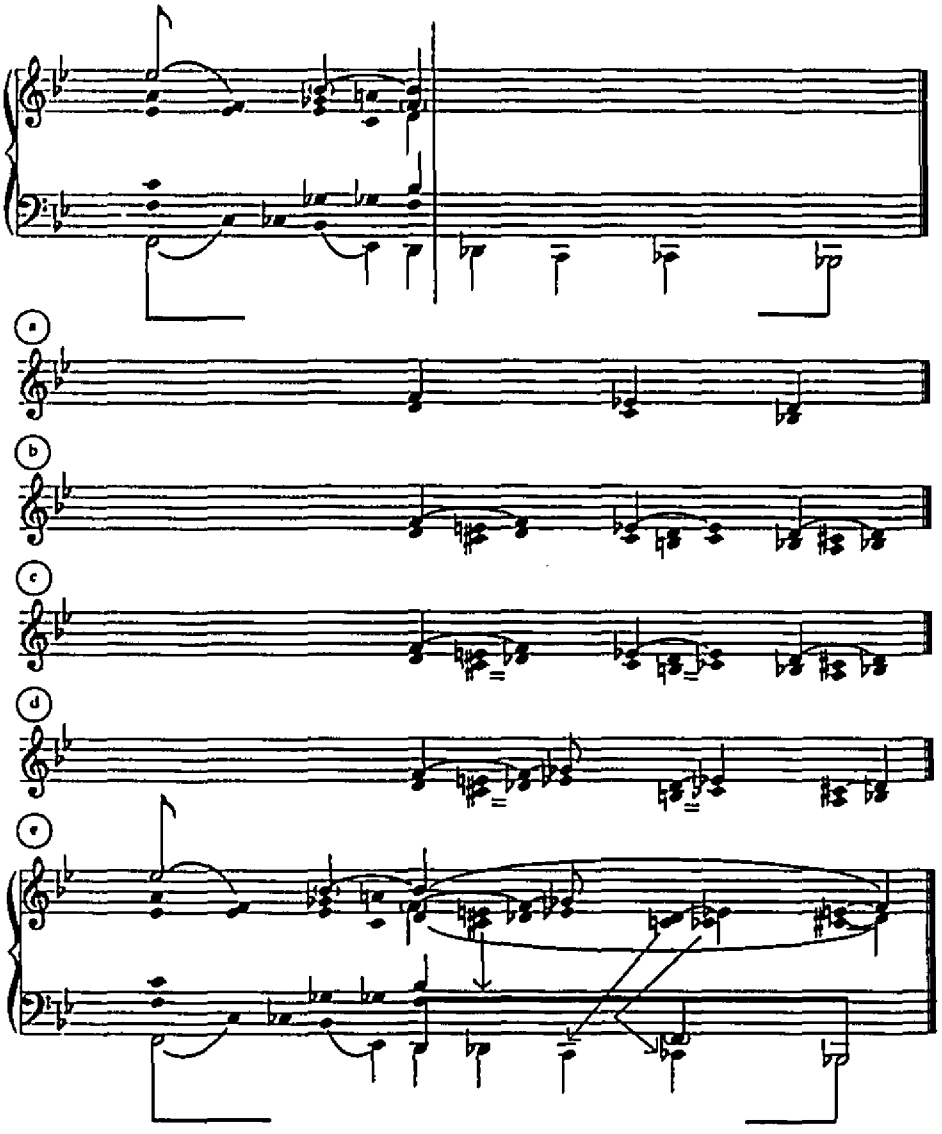
Up to m. 41, section A′ is an exact repetition of section A. So, the two notes B-flat–D, which make up the resolution of the diminished fifth E-flat–A, are handled separately until the arrival of the tonic chord in m. 45: as in

section A, while the E-flat was prolonged, the A went to A-flat (m. 40). From here on, things change: the E-flat does not move down to D but is retained, and the A-flat goes to G-flat (m. 42). As a consequence, the secondary diminished fifth which, created by the F-sharp (coming from the A-flat) and the C (m. 10) and led to G minor in section A is now eliminated in section A'.

As noted earlier, the chord at m. 43 is I6 in B-flat major. Although the F in the alto voice shows up only when D moves down to D–flat in m. 43, it is nonetheless an inherent part of this I6 chord. As Example 3.12(a) shows, mm. 43–45 are based on a descent in thirds from scale degree 5 to scale degree 3. This motion has been denied from the beginning. In fact the opening motion E-flat–D (scale degree 4 to scale degree 3) represents a contraction of the passing motion through a third F–E-flat–D, starting on E-flat rather than on F.

Example 3.12(b) shows these thirds; now embellished with chromatic double neighboring figures. Example 3.12(c) shows how mixture arises via enharmonic equivalence (C-sharp=D-flat, B=C-flat). In Example 3.12(d) the embellishing incomplete neighboring third E-flat–G-flat is added and the subsequent original thirds are removed, thus leaving incomplete neighbors into the goals E-flat and D. Example 3.12(e) shows how these inner-voice chromatic embellishing neighbors are shifted into the bass register. At the same time scale degree 5 is retained in the upper voice until the arrival of the tonic in m. 45, whereas the inner voice descends through a third from F through E-flat to D (stemmed downward in the alto voice in Example 3.12(e). The retained F in the upper voice is embellished by the incomplete neighbors G-flat and E. These notes then form the double neighboring motion frequently used in the coda.

Example 3.12



3. 4 The Coda

The arrival of the tonic in m. 45 is embellished by the common-tone diminished seventh (B-flat–G–C-sharp–E) which recalls the opening common-tone diminished seventh (F–G-sharp–B–D) that was used to destabilize the dominant seventh on F.

The coda starts on the second beat of m. 45 and lays out the compositional ingredients. It alludes to the problems which had to be solved, but does not really solve them directly. Some of these problems are:

(1) Resolutions:

The coda is based on a plagal extension. Under normal circumstances, this procedure is very conventional. But in the case of this Intermezzo, Brahms uses iv to stabilize the problematic opening E-flat and the G-flat (F-sharp) as well. The codetta of section A features a plagal extension introduced by V/iv (m. 14). In the parallel passage in the coda, the plagal extension is introduced by iv/iv when the bass moves down to E-flat on the second beat of m. 46. The result is "plagal on plagal," as if by now, the dominant seventh harmony has proven altogether insufficient for the support of the upper voice E-flat. The music finds a "proper" resolution of the E-flat, only in the plagal extension.

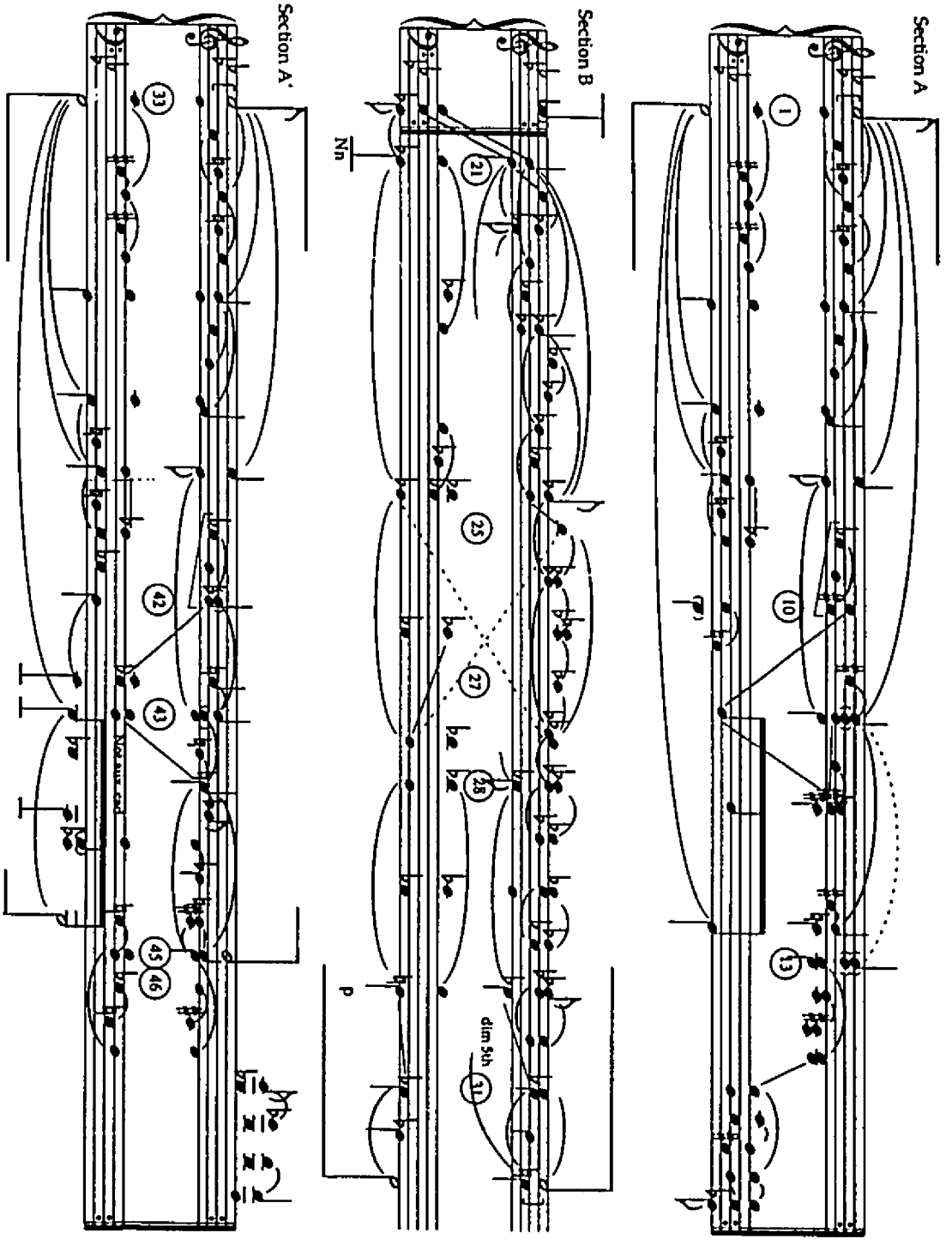
(2) Registers:

The tonic arrival in m. 45 brings back the note D as D4 rather than D5 (an octave lower than the opening E-flat). At the end of the coda, the D comes back as D6 (an octave higher than the opening E-flat). This registral play somehow avoids the clear resolution of the E-flat in the "correct" register, namely to D5 and recalls numerous other instances of registral play through the piece.

(3) Recollections:

Finally, Brahms brings back the opening common tone diminished seventh with a thorough enharmonic revaluation. It returns in the coda (m. 48, second half of beat one) and functions as an applied diminished seventh to the plagal iv. Furthermore, the presence of E-natural and C-sharp as neighbors to the tonic chord also recall the "idea" of a common-tone diminished seventh embellishment—now to the tonic rather than to the dominant seventh. However, the prominence of G-flat (rather than G-natural) effects a richer and more post-cadential or plagal common-tone augmented sixth sonority instead (see last sixteenth notes of mm. 45, 46, 47, 49, 50).

Example 3.13



Chapter 4

Review of the Intermezzo as a Whole: The Integration of the Paths Taken Into Deeper Structural Levels

"More from the whole."

—Johannes Brahms

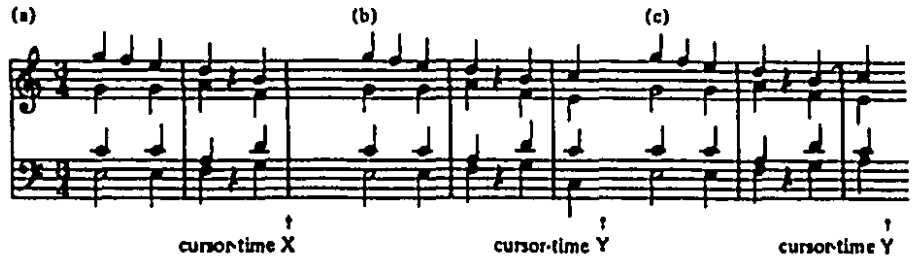
4. 1 Paths Taken and Paths Not Taken (Lewin's General Model and Op. 76, no. 4)

In Lewin's article "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," Figure 1 and its subsequent discussion illustrate isographically—quite a coincidence—our discussion on section A of Op. 76, no. 4.[1] I have reproduced Lewin's Figure 1 in Example 4.1. Lewin's Figure 1(a) and the opening three measures of the Intermezzo both depict a dominant harmony which produces a particular "acoustic signal" at "cursor-time X". Signal (a)—as we shall call it, to be consistent with Lewin's terminology—creates a number of "expected" events of which the strongest is an "expected" tonic arrival (see Lewin's Figure 1(b) as shown in Example 4.1). But how is this "I" actually perceived? According to Lewin, "in the traditional view, the Perception (b) [the

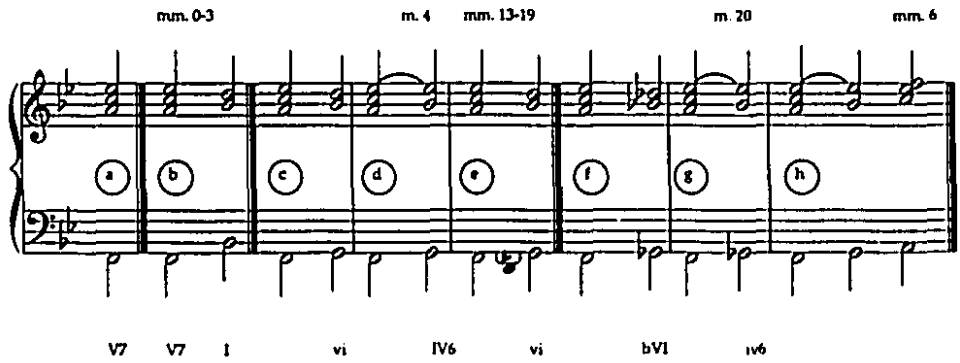
[1] David Lewin, "Music Theory, Phenomenology and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327–92.

perception of the tonic arrival] has not yet happened at cursor-time X, but we expect it, perhaps within a certain probability or entropy value. In the Husserlian view, Perception (b) *does actually happen at cursor-time* X: I perceive at time X the structure symbolized by the score of Figure 1 (b), and that perception—along with certain of its relationships—is one object of Perception (a) at *cursor-time* X."[2]

Example 4.1: David Lewin, *Music, Theory and Phenomenology and Modes of Perception*, p. 331



Example 4.2



[2] Ibid., 332.

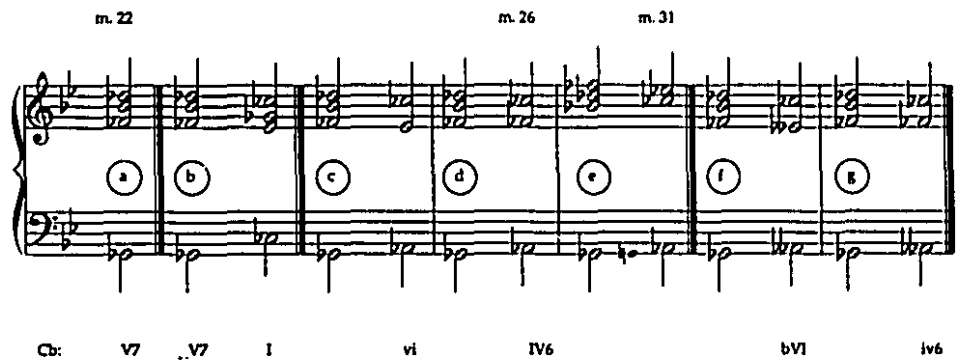
In the same way, Example 4.2(b) and Lewin's Figure 1(b)—are respectively "objects of Perception" to Example 4.2(a) and Lewin's Figure 1(a), Example 4.2(a) is an "object of Perception" to Example 4.2(b) in a "relation of implication-realized." This is what Lewin calls the "recursive aspect of musical perception structure."

But Example 4.2(b) does not exist in the Intermezzo. Instead, the opening dominant harmony moves to the IV6 in m.4 (Example 4.2(d)). Nonetheless, the relations between Perception (a) (the perception of the dominant harmony in Example 4.2(a) and Lewin's Figure 1(a)) and Perception (b) (the perception of the tonic arrival in Example 4.2(b) and Lewin's Figure 1(b)) at "cursor-time" X remain unchanged. The music has moved now to "cursor-time" Y, and the realities around "cursor-time" X are not canceled. They still exist in their own time. Now, Perception (b) acquires a new characteristic vis-à-vis Perception (c): once Perception (c) happens, Perception (b) is immediately in retrospect a non-confirmed event in cursor-time Y, but nonetheless remains a reality in cursor-time X.

Every new cursor-time will generate retrospective assessments of Perceptions at earlier cursor-times. And every new cursor-time assesses the sum of previous cursor-times. The larger the sum, the larger the picture, the deeper the level. Brahms' Intermezzo Op. 76, no. 4 is a game in climbing levels. Every time the listener's attention bumps into an event, the perception jumps up one level. Section A leads the listener from the foreground to the first level of the middleground. Section B will take care of clearing every level of the middleground until the A section returns with the necessity of confirmation at the background level.

Remarkably, though their surface details differ, the paths not taken in section B are of the same nature as those in section A. Section B opens with a dominant harmony which produces an "acoustic signal" at "cursor-time Q." This signal (s) creates a number of "expected" events. The strongest among these is the "expected" tonic arrival in C-flat major. Example 4.3(b) is the "object of Perception" of Example 4.3, which object is denied (not realized) since the progression V7–I in C-flat major never actually occurs. Instead, IV6 is the first path taken. It becomes the new Perception (t) at the new "cursor-time Z" and in turn generates new potential paths and "objects of Perception" as well as retrospective assessments of Perceptions at earlier cursor-times.

Example 4.3



The relations between Lewin's general model and section A of Op. 76, no. 4 are summarized in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: Lewin's General Model and Op. 76, no. 4

Section A

p	EV	CXT	Selected P-R Pairs	Selected STatements
p1	m. 3	m. 1–3		Example 4.2(a)
p2	m. 3	m. 1–3	p1, terminal inclusion p3, implication	Example 4.2(b)
p3	m. 3–4	m. 1–4	p2, denial =>ambiguity p3a, normal substitution p3b, possibility	Example 4.2(c) Example 4.2(f)
p4	m. 4–5	m. 1–5	p3a p3b, rejection p1, confirmation and prolongation	Example 4.2(h)

4. 2 Paths Plotted (Cone's Detective Story Model and Op. 76, no. 4)

Op. 76, no. 4 is a "detective story" to use Edward Cone's analogy.[3] The "plot" is as follows: a dominant seventh chord on F (i.e., Dr. Roylott's role in the Intermezzo's detective story plot) is prolonged for three measures, moves to IV6 in m. 4 and proceeds into a cadence in the submediant region. The process is repeated once. Then the G minor vi chord changes to iv6 (with the G-flat in the bass) which leads back to the dominant seventh on F (m. 20). The mystery is resolved only in the final measures when the V7 resolves to I.

---

[3] Edward Cone, "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story," *Music: A View from Delft* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

Like Cone's Version A of Conan Doyle's "The Speckled Band," this version of the Intermezzo—call it Version 1—displays a satisfying structure: a dominant seventh chord is prolonged through many progressions and is finally resolved. But, Version 1 does not depict how the Intermezzo sounds. The perception of the events is quite different. Brahms, after engaging us in the resolution of the opening dominant seventh, begins his "narrative" with the IV6, a foreground event—as in Cone's Version B, Helen Stoner's call upon Sherlock Holmes is a surface event. "She [Helen Stoner] recounts her family history, dwelling on the circumstances of her sister's death." This phrase describes how the narrative is slowly sinking into the middleground: the reader now knows about Helen's sister and about her death. The same process is happening to the listener who, by the end of section A, knows about the deceptive cadence on vi, a middleground event. At that point in Conan Doyle's story, the investigation begins. In section B of the Intermezzo, the listener's perception is drawn from one middleground level to another, uncovering new events and new mysteries. The backgound issue is of course the uncovering of the truth, which happens with the final resolution of V7 to I.

That is the Intermezzo as we hear it for the first time without prior knowledge. "As opposed to Version A [Version 1], which recounts the events in their natural chronological order, Version B [Version 2], as we may call it, arranges them artfully and purposefully. In the present case the purposes are to mystify and to create mounting suspense until a dénouement simultaneously relieves the suspense and convincingly explains the mystery."[4]

---

[4] Ibid., 79

Cone's notion of the "Third reading" is of utmost interest to us at this point. In the "First" hearing, the listener is like the ignorant driver mentioned in earlier parts, manipulated by the events (expected or unexpected) as deployed by the composer. In the "Second," the driver starts to differentiate the hills from the mountain. By the "Third," the driver/listener can now look back at the whole highway/Intermezzo with comprehension and appreciation.

It is true that the function of a chord is revealed by the progression which follows it and that to a certain extent "a single chord has no function."[5] But dominant seventh chords do not belong to that category. A dominant seventh chord—especially when prolonged with standing-on-the-dominant techniques—holds within itself the certainty that it *is* a dominant. In other words, its function is not dependent on what follows. The process is, rather, reverse: what follows can either resolve it, hence confirming its dominant nature, or it can deny this natural resolution. The result is of course an ambiguity of the tonal definition and a potential disorientation of the listener's perception. Even a "First Listener" already knows from the opening three measures of Op. 76, no. 4 that the major-minor seventh chord on F *is* the dominant—contrary to what Cone writes about the opening harmony of Beethoven's Ninth.[6] And this is the essence of the "plot" in this Intermezzo: literally, Brahms offers us a "crime," but we do not know if he will unveil the truth. It is not until the truth is known that the "function" of the crime is revealed. The mystery of the Intermezzo is how, where and when the truth is

---

[5] Ibid., 86.

[6] "Of course, from the omniscient point of view the opening harmony of the Ninth *is* the dominant, but even from this perspective it would be more accurate to say that it *becomes* the dominant." Ibid., 86.

revealed. As Cone writes: "The skillful author makes sure that we learn what has happened, what is happening, and what is going to happen, exactly when he wants us to know it, and not earlier or later ... But in the typical detective story, to allow the average reader to deduce or guess the solution too early—before the actual dénouement—would be a major flaw revealing gross technical deficiency."[7] As Op. 76, no. 4 demonstrates, there is no technical deficiency, gross or otherwise subtle, in Brahms' compositional equipment.

---

[7] Ibid., 77

Chapter 5

Conclusion

In this concluding section of my study, I summarize some of the features found in Op. 76, no. 4 and make brief observations on similar features found in other selected Intermezzi.

Chapter 3 of this thesis made use of Schenkerian linear-reductive approach to illustrate the principles of voice-leading and motivic design that are operative in Op. 76, no. 4. Ancillary sketches helped illustrating the harmonic ambiguity and the contrapuntal complexes. In Chapter 4—with observations based on the phenomenological approach after David Lewin and Leonard Meyer and on the narratological approach after Edward T. Cone—I re-examined how the paths Brahms chose to follow are subsumed into deeper structural levels.

In Op. 76, no. 4, the background position of the progression V7–I is certainly unusual, but it is quite clear. The opening does not feature any harmonic ambiguity *per se*, since it is in some way a "done deal": the Intermezzo opens with a dominant seventh, it is prolonged and we expect it to be followed by its tonic. We know where we are (dominant seventh of B-flat), and we know where we should be going (tonic in B-flat). The harmonic ambiguity results from a continuous deferral of the expected tonal goal which does not happen until the very end. In the meantime, the foreground features

an auxiliary cadential motion into G minor in section A, and the eventual resolution of the opening diminished fifth A–E-flat as a contrapuntal complex over the course of the Intermezzo. The surface also presents many interesting details such as the enharmonic revaluation of G-sharp/A-flat, F-sharp/G-flat, and B-natural/C-flat, and the double neighboring motions in the codettas of sections A and A'. Such enharmonic revaluations contribute to the articulation of alternative tonal goals in Op. 76, no. 4 and combine with other means of structural-harmonic ambiguities to determine a rich array of paths not taken.

Other Brahms Intermezzi also feature tonal ambiguity in their openings. For example, Op. 118, no. 1, in A minor features an off-tonic model-sequence progression which effects an "auxiliary cadential" progression with respect to the Intermezzo as a whole; Op. 118, no. 6, in E-flat minor features a non-tonic initial chord supporting the principal tone; Op. 119, no. 1, in B minor features chords in stacked thirds which obscure the prevailing harmonies. These pieces will be discussed briefly in the final sections of this thesis in order to demonstrate the applicability of my analytical procedures used in Op. 76, no. 4 to other Intermezzi. At the end of these examples, we will return to another piece from Op. 76.

5. 1 On Other Intermezzi With Ambiguous Openings

5. 1. 1 Intermezzo Op. 118, no. 1 (A minor)

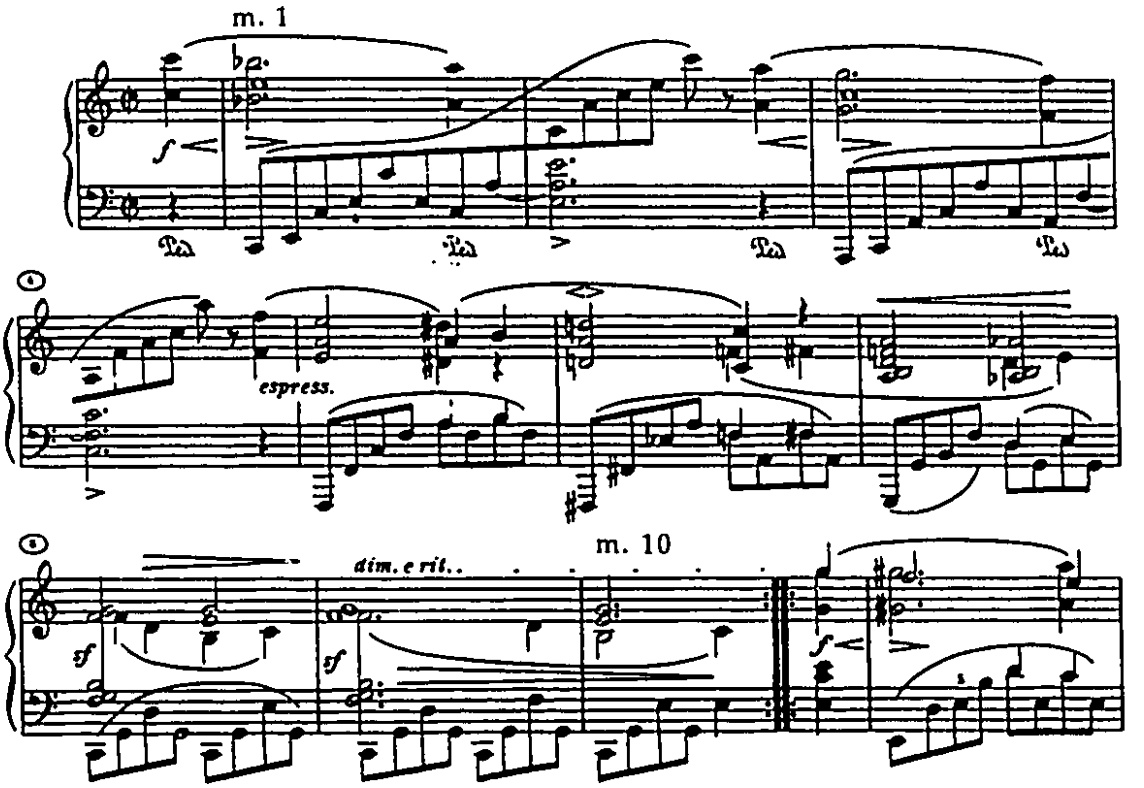
Op. 118, no. 1 starts with an incomplete harmonic progression. It opens with a flat-7–6 suspension over C (m. 1, see Example 5.1). These opening two measures form a model which is sequenced down a third on A (mm. 3–4), then again down a third on F (mm. 5–6). But in m. 5, the seventh (E) moves to D-sharp (scale degree sharp-6). At that expressive moment, the augmented sixth sonority hints at a move to A minor; but Brahms declines it, and when D-natural (scale degree 6) arrives, the bass has already moved up to a passing F-sharp (m. 6) on its way to G. The same process happens over G (m. 7): the ninth (A) passes through A-flat, creating a dominant minor ninth. The A-flat resolves to G (m. 8) over the cadential motion confirming C major, hence, as in Op. 76, no. 4, closing section A in the relative key.

The repetition of section A underlines this C major connotation of the opening and seems to confirm that the ultimate key will be C major. The arrival of the opening B-flat suggests the subdominant and further strengthens the tonality of C major. The entire A section, in the repetition, seems like a large scale cadential progression (starting on V of vi) in C major.

The bass progression is an arpeggiation: C(m. 1) – A(m. 3) – F(m. 5) – F-sharp(m. 6) – G(m. 7) – C(m. 8) (see Example 5.1). But the chords over this arpeggiation are not in root position; rather, they are in first inversion. If we put the harmonies in root position the result is: A minor–F major–D major. In order to cadence in A minor, the standard paradigm would expect a D minor chord on the iv step (a–F–d–E–a). By adding an F-sharp (m. 6), Brahms creates

a sense of a secondary dominant to V7 of C and makes use of that same paradigm in the key of C major. What a neat mixture!

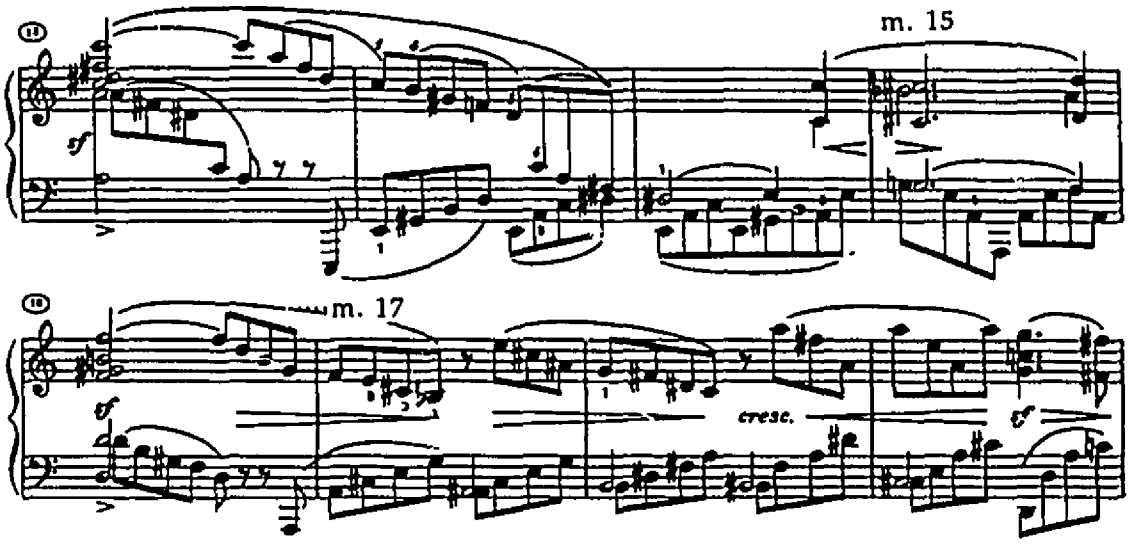
Example 5.1: Op. 118, no. 1, mm. 1–10



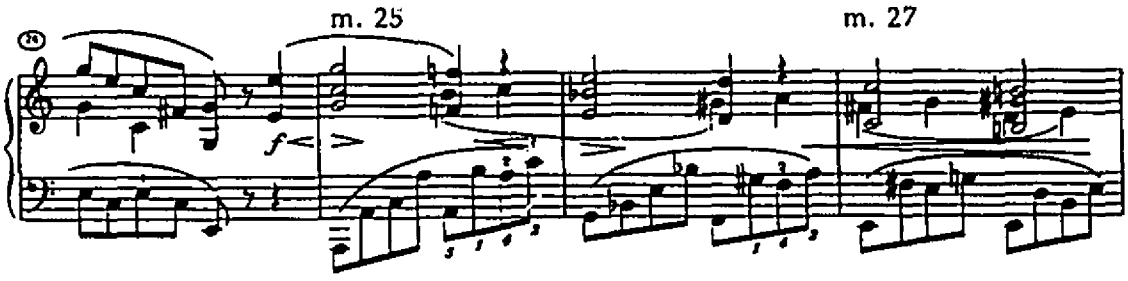
In addition to its opening surface ambiguities, Op. 118, no. 1 (like Op. 76, no. 4) also features a somewhat unusual background structure. The overall background structure is an auxiliary cadential progression into A minor (c–E–a); similar to the auxiliary cadential progression at the foreground level of Op. 76, no. 4 into its middleground goal G minor (vi).

In Op. 118, no. 1, the opening diminished fifth E–B-flat must resolve to the major third F–A. But the key of F major is not the tonal ambition of this piece. Moreover, the opening dominant seventh is "false" and its resolution to a first inversion chord creates a surface failure. Brahms handles the "false" opening diminished fifth as contrapuntal complex and deals with the E and B-flat separately. He gives the B-flat various roles. For example, in m. 15 (see Example 5.2(a)) he puts it in a D minor context and in m. 26 (see Example 5.2(b)) he reintroduces it as part of an applied chord to VI. (Note that this time, the chord is vii6 of VI—and not V7 or V4/3 of VI. As such it functions as a passing chord between VI6 and VI, thus prolonging the submediant harmony). Brahms states the B-flat for the last time over the A itself as a 9–8 suspension over the major tonic chord (I-sharp) (m. 35, see Example 5.2(c), p. 61). Op. 118, no. 1 has a very "major" character, which it preserves till the very last chords.

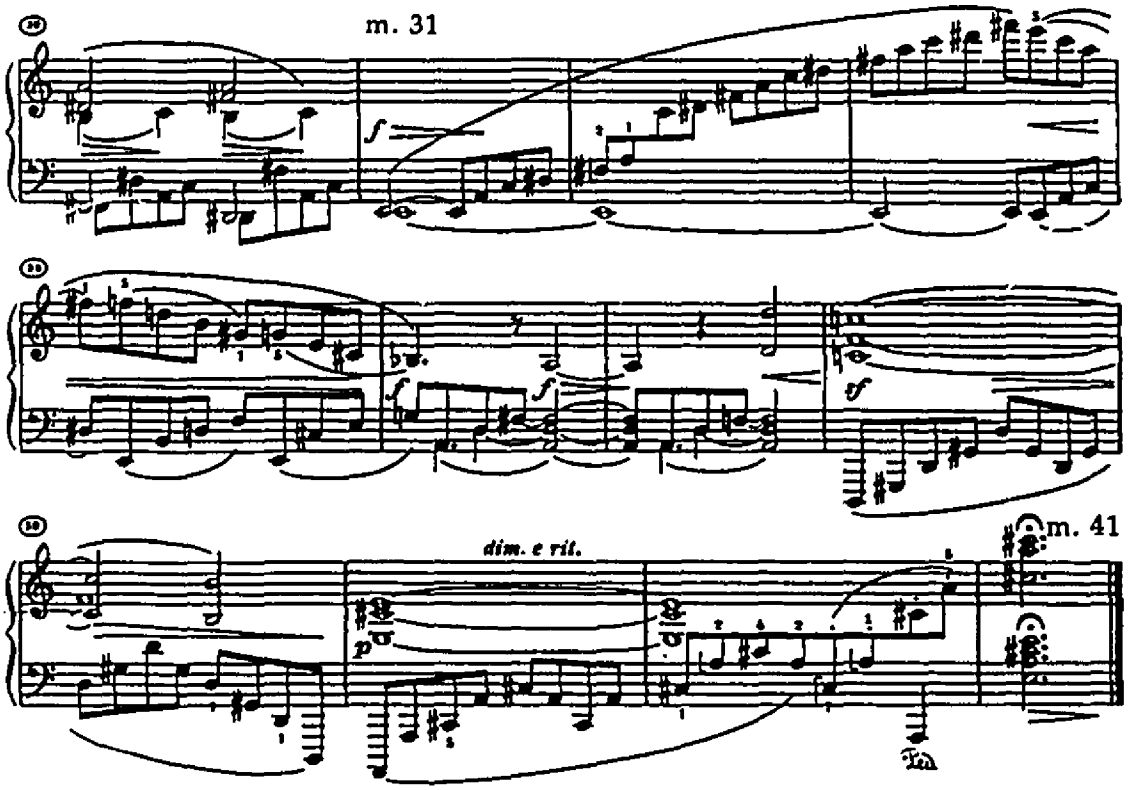
Example 5.2(a): Op. 118, no. 1, mm. 15–17



Example 5.2(b): Op. 118, no. 1, mm. 25–26



Example 5.2(c): Op. 118, no. 1, mm. 31–41



5. 1. 2 Intermezzo Op. 118, no. 6 (E-flat minor)

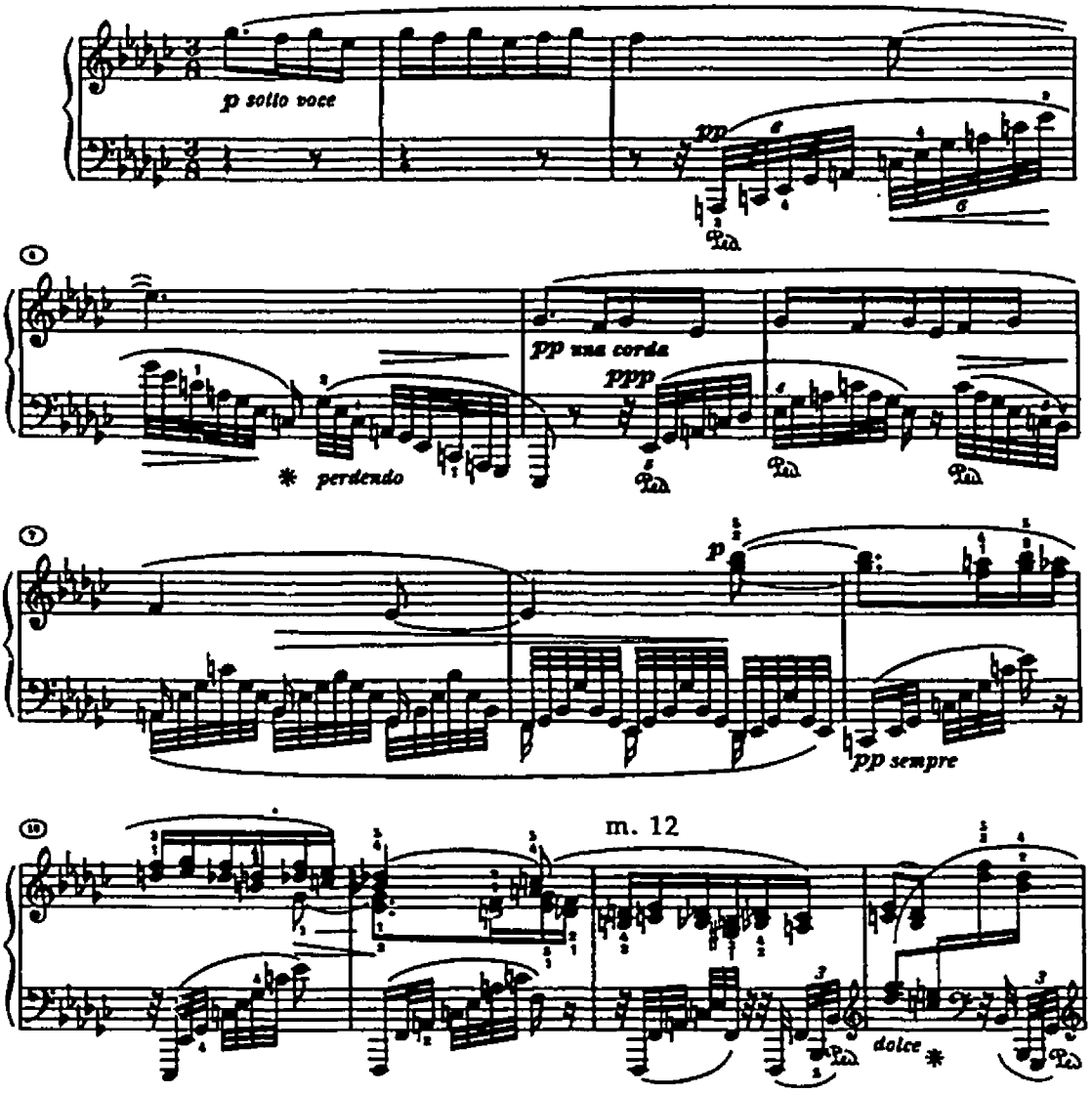
The tonal ambiguity in this Intermezzo results from the unharmonized opening melody (mm. 1–3, see Example 5.3(a), p. 63). There is no real confirmation of E-flat minor until the end of the piece. And, the only "moment of truth"—where the light comes out through the clouds—is in mm. 7–8 where for the first time the listener hears an E-flat minor chord. But it is very brief and like a day dream—a rather brooding one—it is quickly replaced by the diminished seventh sonority in m. 9.

The opening melody is answered in the bass (m. 3) by the diminished seventh broken chord, A–C–E-flat–G-flat, which is very prominent throughout the Intermezzo (see Example 5.3(a)). Like Op. 76, no. 4 and Op. 118, no. 1, the opening of Op. 118, no. 6 introduces a diminished fifth and resolves it as a contrapuntal complex. Actually this Intermezzo features two diminished fifths; namely A–E-flat and C–G-flat, the two diminished fifths found in the prominent diminished seventh chord. Here, then, we have the enigma of resolving each fifth separately, together, and over the "correct" harmony (particularly so, given the inherent multivalent qualities of the diminished seventh sonority.

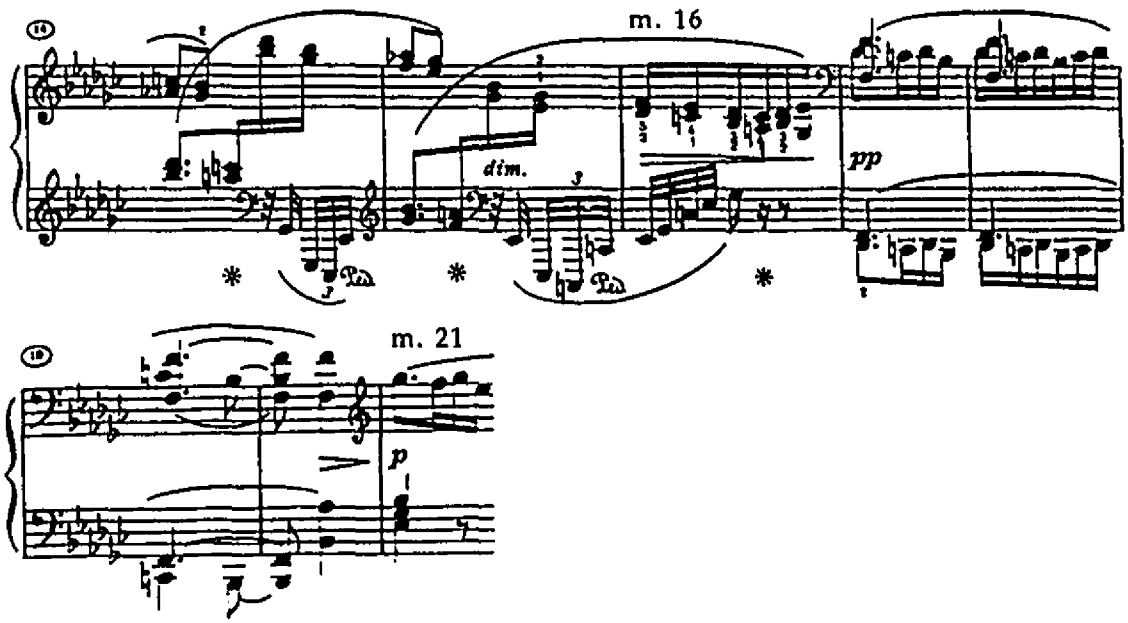
Furthermore, the recurrence of this diminished seventh sonority creates a fundamental ambivalence as to whether it functions as a common-tone diminished seventh to minor I or as an applied chord to V (which it later finally turns out to be). So, on one side, the right hand features an unharmonized melody, and on the other side, the left hand features this "unmelodized" harmony. The Intermezzo opens with this double mystery which needs to be clarified: the unharmonized melody needs a harmonic context, and the role of the harmony that is supplied to that melody needs to be clarified and the function(s) it performs be defined. For example, in the opening, the chord functions as diminished seventh of "v" (B-flat minor chord). In the return (m. 16–21) it moves once more to "v" (see Example 5.3(b), p. 64). But, in m. 20, "v" changes to V7 (the dominant seventh on B-flat, with an implied D-natural). Thus, on a deeper level, the diminished seventh is applied to V. Furthermore in m. 79, the chord comes again, but his time it functions as common-tone diminished seventh and is followed by a presentation of the opening melody.

Finally, we might also note the double neighboring motions which enliven the harmonic surfaces of both Op. 76, no. 4 and Op. 118, no. 6 (see for example m. 10 and m. 12).

Example 5.3(a): Op. 118, no. 6, mm. 1–12



Example 5.3(b): Op. 118, no. 6, mm. 16–21



5. 1. 3 Intermezzo Op. 119, no. 1 (B minor)

Op. 119, no. 1 opens with a chain of descending thirds which form triadic relationships and which create strong harmonic ambiguity (mm. 1–4, see Example 5.4, p. 66). But, independently from the accompaniment, the melody in the upper register in the right hand clearly indicates the tonality of B minor. Somehow (with the correct performance) the melody does stand out and it is very serene. It is like a swan on the water. Whenever it moves, it created waves and the clarity of the water is slightly distorted. But the swan itself appears unaffected. The opening sounds like a vague reminiscence; we remember, yet we don't really recall the details. We remember a certain mood, or a cachet, as in an impressionist painting.

This Intermezzo presents different compositional techniques than those of Op. 76, no. 4, Op. 118, no. 1 and Op. 118, no. 6. The ambiguity in Op. 119, no. 1 is not of a syntactical nature. It happens on the foreground level. In fact, this Intermezzo is not ambitious in terms of tonal goals or "paths not taken." Its richness lies in the density of its imitative texture. In Op. 76, no. 4 we "knew" which key we were supposed to be in, but it was confirmed only at the end. In Op. 118, no. 1, we were given something, although it turned out to be false information. Here in Op. 119, no. 1, we have pitches and rhythm, but they just do not make any obvious harmonic sense.

This Intermezzo share qualities with Brahms' final set of Chorale-Preludes Op. 122. In these works, since the Chorales do not wander too far in their tonal goals, the ambivalence in Brahms' settings thrives on the surface. Op. 119, no. 1 also shares with Op. 76, no. 4 certain decorative details at points of arrival (see for example m. 16). The part-writing details resemble those of Op. 76, no. 4 but are a lot richer. For example the middle section recalls the reaching over in section B of Op. 76, no. 4 but is enhanced with more chromatic passing and neighboring motions (see Example 5.4).

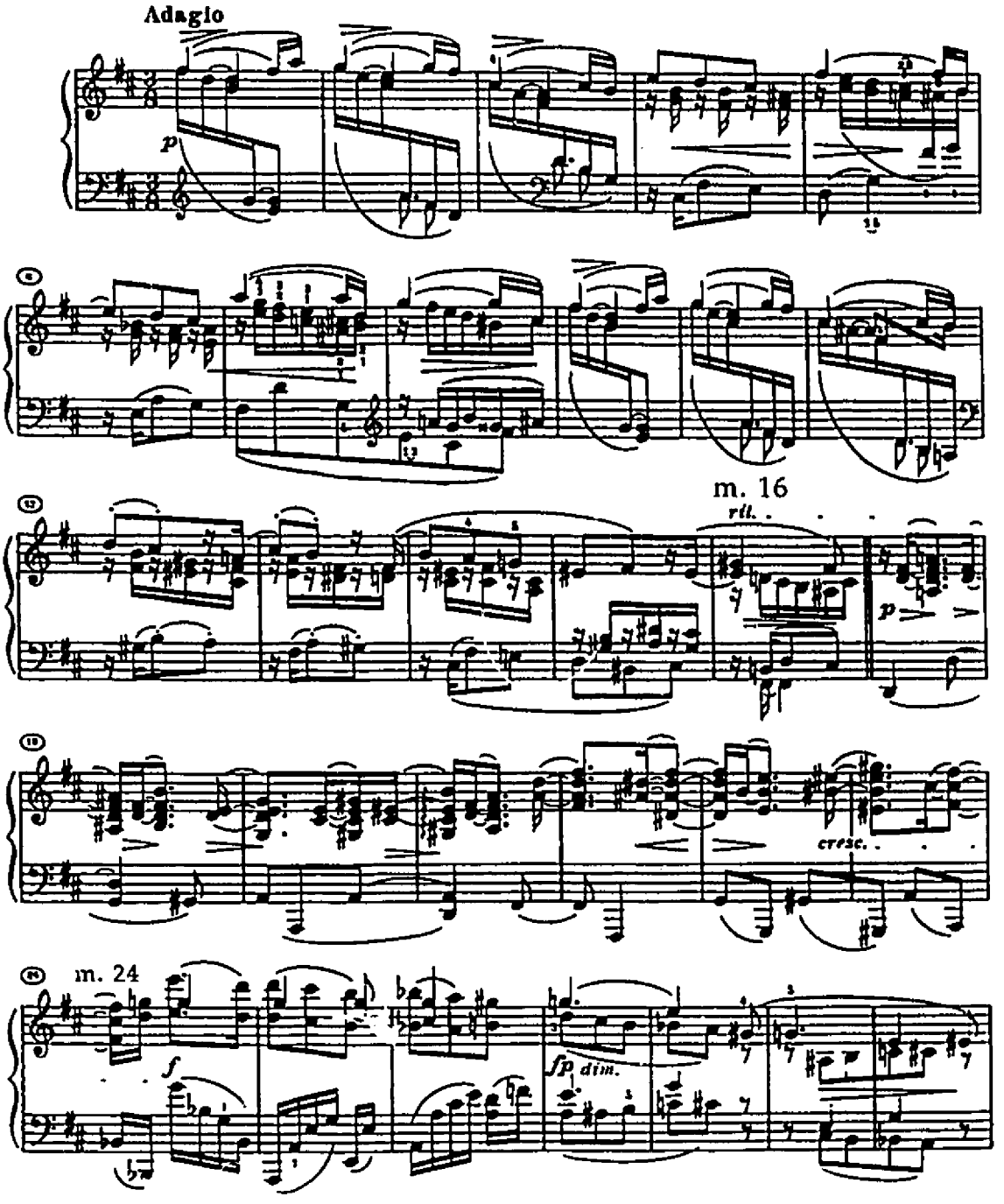
Allan Cadwallader analyses this passage as a sequence of root-position seventh chords descending by fifths. He writes that the "seeming ambiguity of this passage results from the arppeggiated interlocking of the chords whose roots lie a fifth apart."[1] There is also a certain truth in what Jonathan Dunsby writes: "the horizontal structure of each part is more comprehensible than the background succession of vertical relationships."[2]

---

[1] Allan Cadwallader, "Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in Brahms' B minor Intermezzo, Op. 119, no. 1," *Theory and Practice* VII/2 (1983), 8.

[2] Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Hearing in Brahms* (UMI Research Press, 1981), 89.

Example 5.4: Op. 119, no. 1, mm. 1–24



5. 1. 4 Intermezzo Op. 117, no. 2 (B-flat minor)

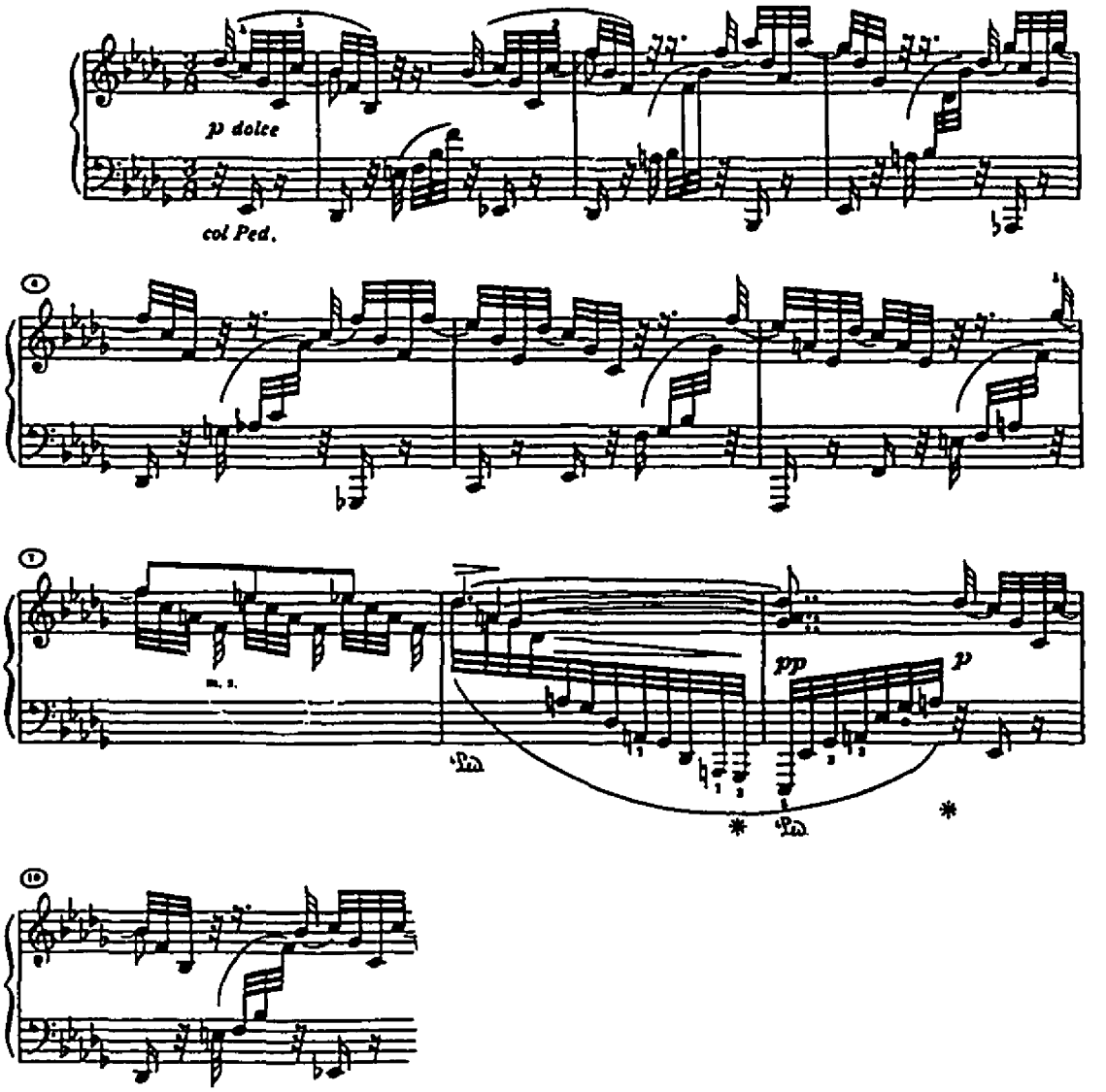
Like Op. 118, no. 1, Op. 117, no. 2 opens with an incomplete harmonic progression which is replaced in m. 3 by a descending chain of fifths (mm. 1–5, see Example 5.5). This descending fifths sequence leads to the arrival of the dominant in m. 6. The E-flat (seventh of the dominant seventh) resolves to D-flat in m. 8, but there is no tonic chord as expected. Indeed, Brahms declines the arrival of the tonic as well as its normal substitutions (i.e., vi or even iv6 as in Op. 76, no. 4). Instead, he replaces the tonic with its corresponding diminished seventh chord in 4/3 position (E-flat, G-flat, A-natural, C-natural), thus suspending the D-flat (the resolution of E-flat), which then itself becomes a dissonance. This process naturally denies the resolution of the E-flat. The return of the opening in mm. 9–10 resolves both the suspended D-flat and the diminished seventh sonority but, nonetheless, the listener is left with an unresolved E-flat; in other words the unresolved seventh.

In Op. 76, no. 4, although Brahms denied the tonic, he did provide, on the surface, supported resolutions for the seventh: as shown in Chapter 3, the auxiliary cadential motion into vi (G minor) provided harmonic support for the D. In Op. 117, no. 2, not only does Brahms deny the tonic, but he also denies foreground resolutions of the diminished fifth as contrapuntal complex. Thus, the seventh becomes a deeper level event and its resolution is expanded on a larger scale.

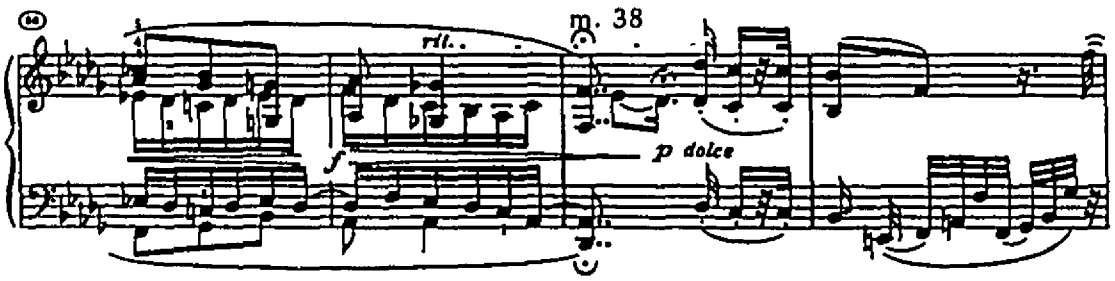
Like Op. 76, no. 4, Op. 117, no. 2 features a complete deferral of the tonic until the end of the piece. In m. 39, B-flat returns but it is not supported by any harmony; the only root position tonic chord that happens is found in

the second last measure of the Intermezzo (see Examples 5.6(a) and 5.6(b), p. 69).

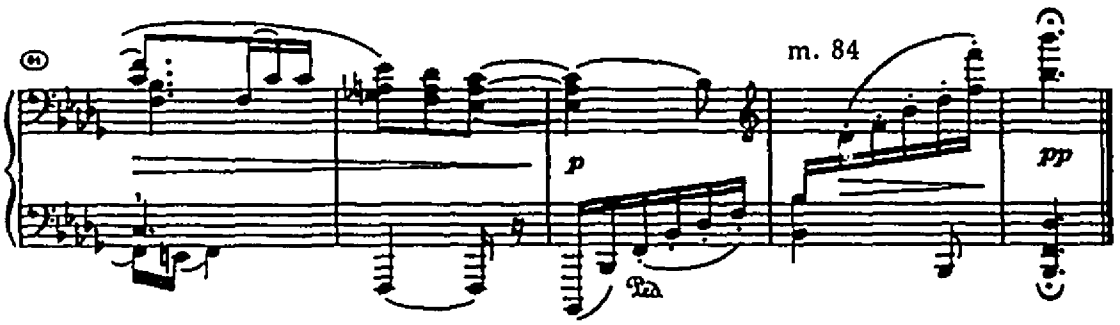
Example 5.5: Op. 117, no. 2, mm. 1–10



Example 5.6(a): Op. 117, no. 2, mm. 38–39



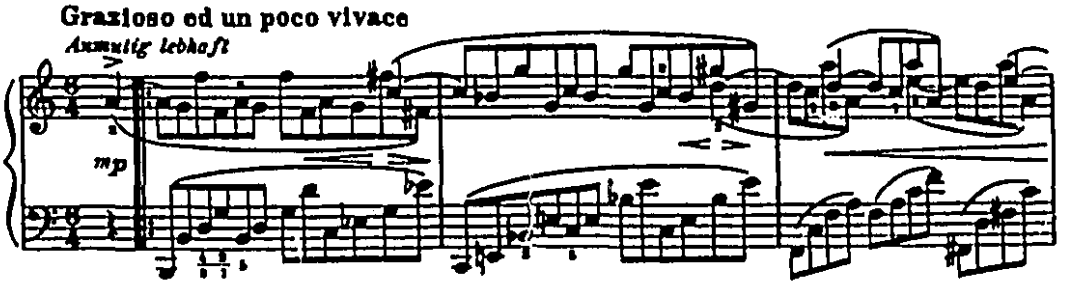
Example 5.6(b): Op. 117, no. 2, mm. 84–85



5. 1. 5 Capriccio Op. 76, no. 8 (C major)

Op. 76, no. 8 is the last piece of Op. 76. If Op. 76 were to be divided in two sub-cycles, Op. 76, no. 4 would be the last of the first cycle and no. 8 the last of the second cycle. In fact, Op. 76, no. 8 seems to balance Op. 76, no. 4. It features a "capricious" opening. It shares some of the characteristics encountered in Op. 76, no. 4, as for example the complete deferral of the tonic until the very end. Furthermore, Brahms opens this Capriccio with an unharmonized and accented A-natural (m. 1, see Example 5.7). Where does this A-natural belong? What is its role in this C-major piece?

Example 5.7: Op. 76, no. 8, mm. 1–3



Maybe the question should be: "where does it come from?" And maybe the answer is: "from Op. 76, no. 4." Remember that opening A-natural, which moved to A-flat in m. 8 and then to G in m. 13, thus violating its primordial tendency for resolution to B-flat? Here it is in Op. 76, no. 8, and this time, it once more moves to A-flat (m. 23). This A-flat remains present until the end where it returns right before the *piu Adagio*, over flat-II6, before resolving down to G over the dominant. In C major, the motion A-natural–A-flat–G-natural is perfectly legitimate and by no means violates any primordial resolution. As if the tonal ambiguities, the paths not taken in Op. 76, no. 4, resonate beyond the boundaries of the piece itself, as if Brahms recollected unpaid (unresolved) debts and took care of them in a fresh manner and in a completely different context.

Bibliography

Atlas, Raphael. "Enharmonic trompe-l'oreille: Reprise and the Disguised Seam in Nineteenth-Century Music." *In Theory Only* 10/6 (1988): 15–36.

Barthes, Roland. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." In *Semiotic Challenge*, translated by Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1988.

Berry, Wallace. *Musical Structure and Performance.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Bozarth, George S., ed., *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives.* Oxford: Clarendon, 1990.

Cadwallader, Allen. "Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in B Minor Intermezzo op. 119, no. 1." *Theory and Practice* 7/2 (1983): 5–24.

_____. "Multileveled Motivic Repetition in Selected Intermezzi for Piano of Johannes Brahms." Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1983.

_____. "Schenker's Unpublished Graphic Analysis of Brahms Intermezzo, Op. 117, no. 2. Tonal Structure and Concealed Motivic Repetition." *Music Theory Spectrum* 6 (1984): 1–13.

_____. "Prologomena to a General Description of Motivic Relationships in Tonal Music." *Intégral* 2 (1988): 1–35.

_____. "Foregrounds Motivic Ambiguity: Its Clarification at the Middleground Levels in Selected Late Piano Pieces of Johannes Brahms." *Music Analysis* 7/1 (1988): 59–91.

_____, ed., *Trends in Schenkerian Research.* New York: Schirmer, 1990.

Clifton, Thomas. *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.

Cone, Edward T. "Three Ways of Reading a Detective Story—Or a Brahms Intermezzo." In *Music: A View from Delft*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Dunsby, Jonathan. *Music Analysis in Theory and Practice.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.

_____. *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works.* UMI Research Press, 1981.

_____. "Music and Semiotics: The Nattiez Phase." *Musical Quarterly* LXIX/1 (1993): 27–43.

Forte, Allen and Steven E. Gilbert. *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis.* New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1982.

Frisch, Walter. *Brahms and His World.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.

_____. *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Katz, Adele T. *Challenge to Musical Tradition—A New Concept of Tonality.* London, 1947

Kivy, Peter. *The Corded Shell: Reflections on Musical Expression.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980.

_____. *Music Alone: Philosophical Reflections on the Purely Musical Experience.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Lewin, David. "Some Instances of Parallel Voice–Leading in Debussy." *19th–Century Music* 11 (1987): 59–72.

_____. "Music Theory, Phenomenology and Modes of Perception." *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327–92.

Lévi-Strauss, Claude. "The Structural Study of Myth." *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955): 428–44.

Matthews, Denis. *Brahms Pianc ic.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978.

_____. *Keyboard Music.* New York: Praeger Publishers Inc., 1972.

Maus, Fred Everett. "Music as Narrative." *Indiana Theory Review* 12 (1991): 1–35.

_____. "Music as Drama." *Music Theory Spectrum* 10 (1988): 56–73.

Meyer, Leonard B. *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Murdoch, William. *Brahms: With an Analytical Study of the Complete Pianoforte Works*. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1978.

Musgrave, Michael. *Brahms 2: Biographical, Documentary, Analytical Studies*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Narmour, Eugene. *Beyond Schenkerism: The Need for Alternatives in Music Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.

_____. *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures: The Implication–Realization Model*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

_____. *The Analysis and Cognition of Melodic Complexity: The Implication–Realization Model*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Nattiez, Jean Jacques. *De la sémiologie à la musique*. Montréal: Service des publications, Université du Québec à Montréal, 1988.

_____. *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique*. Paris: Union générale d'édition, 1976.

_____. *Musicologie générale et sémiologie*. Paris: C. Bourgois, 1987.

Neumeyer, David. "The Ascending Urlinie." *Journal of Music Theory* 31 (1987): 275–303.

Newcomb, Anthony. "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies." *19th-Century Music* 11/2 (1987): 164–74.

Orvis, Joan. "The Smaller Piano Works of Johannes Brahms." Master's thesis, University of Washington, 1954.

Pelusi, Mario Joseph. "Contemplating a Brahms Intermezzo: Toward a Comprehensive Analyical Method for the Explication and the Interpretation of Prescriptive Music Structures." Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1982.

Quigley, Thomas. *Johannes Brahms: An Annotated Bibliography of the Literature through 1982*. Metuchen, N. J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990.

Rothstein, William. "The Americanization of Heinrich Schenker." In *Schenker Studies*, edited by Heidi Siegel. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Sadie, Stanley, ed., *The New Grove: Late Romantic Masters*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1980.

Salzer, Felix and Carl Schachter. *Counterpoint in Composition*. New York: McGraw–Hill Book Co., 1969.

Schachter, Karl. "Either/Or." In *Schenker Studies*, edited by Heidi Siegel. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Schenker, Heinrich. "Brahms' Study Octaven u. Quinten u. A., With Schenker's Commentary Translated," translated and edited by Paul Mast. *Music Forum* 5 (1980): 1–196.

_____. *Das Meisterwerk in der Musik*. Hildesheim, New York: G. Olms, 1974.

_____. *Der Tonwille*. Hildesheim, New York: G. Olms, 1990.

_____. *Free Composition*. Translated and edited by Ernst Oster. New York London: Longman Inc., 1979.

_____. *Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks "Das Meisterwek in der Musik."* Translated and annotated by Sylvan Kalib. s.l.: s.n., 1973.

Schmalfeldt, Janet. "Cadential Processes: The Evaded Cadence and the 'One More Time' Technique." *Journal of Musicological Research* 12 (1992): 1–52.

Smith, Peter H. "Formal Ambiguity and Large Scale Tonal Structure in Brahms' Sonata–Form Recapitulations." Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1992.

Todorov, Tzvetan. *Introduction to Poetics*, translated by Richard Howard Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981.