

THE ORCHESTRAL MENTALITY OF JOHANNES BRAHMS' PIANO SONATA NO. 3

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Although the current, exhaustive studies of Brahms' works have covered many aspects of the composer's art, it is still surprising that his large-scale, five-movement Piano Sonata No.3 has in many ways been insufficiently studied by scholars who have emphasized the genre of the piano sonata and the aspect of performance practice over the work's more diverse features.

Another reason that this early work has been understudied could in fact be that his later compositions in other genres, such as his symphonies, chamber music or choral music, have been perceived by scholars to represent best his most mature, comprehensive style. This dissertation will therefore examine the orchestral underpinnings of this monumental work which owes most often its already mature artistic essence to Brahms' multi-instrumental approach.

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Music is an endless spiritual journey but it continues to bring me the biggest joy in my life. I am thankful that the universe blessed me for having such supportive parents from the first day that I decided to study the piano. They only encourage me with unconditional love in every aspect, no matter which decision I had to make. Secondly, my major professor, Professor Vladimir Viardo, was the motivation for me to move to Texas after being in the master's program at the Royal College of Music in London for a year. His artistry, philosophy and inspiration for music will always live in my heart and continue to lead me through my musical journey. His generous giving of time to tutor me either before examinations or competitions will be a model for me as a teacher in the future. I also would like to thank Dr. Steven Harlos and Dr. Elvia Puccinelli for their invaluable advice on this thesis and their significant involvements in my degree as my collaborative piano professors. I would like also to thank Dr. Gene Cho and Dr. Gudrun Raschen for their vast knowledge and understanding of the context of my topic. Lastly, I sincerely appreciate Sheila Gunter's support in my writing. Without her, this study would not be so academically complete.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Brahms's Education Before 1853

Brahms was born into a humble, middle-class family. His father was a poorly-paid orchestra musician skilled in many instruments which destined Brahms to receive a music education. Brahms's father discovered that his son had the ability to repeat correctly all the melodies which he heard even before his father gave him music lessons.¹ In 1840-41, Brahms started piano lessons with Otto Cossel, focusing on the studies of Czerny, Clementi, Cramer and Hummel.² Cossel did have concern in 1842 that Brahms's strong desire to compose and arrange could be a distraction from his piano playing, but as a teacher, Cossel devoted himself to Brahms's training from the first lesson. Cossel soon felt he might have limited knowledge to fulfill Brahms's eagerness for music, therefore, he sent young Brahms to his own teacher, a leading Hamburg piano pedagogue, Eduard Marxsen.³

The musical education he received from Marxsen played an essential role in Brahms's musical development. Marxsen did not accept Brahms at the first request of Cossel, but agreed to teach the nine-year-old young man if Brahms would continue the lessons with Cossel. It should be noted that the years of 1843-45 were the pinnacle of Marxsen's career as a symphonist and it could have been that he was too busy to take responsibility for a student this young. It is not surprising that Marxsen recognized Brahms's potential as a composer, as well as a pianist. Marxsen advised him in harmony, counterpoint, and theory, inspired him to develop the skill of transposing at sight,

¹ Kurt Hofmann, "Brahms the Hamburg Musician 1833-1862," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9.

² Otto Friedrich Willibald Cossel (1813–1865).

³ Michael Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1942), 16-17.

introduced him to the repertoire of the Classical and earlier periods, and lent Brahms many books from his own collection which Brahms would not easily have had access to otherwise.⁴ Marxsen had inherited the spirit of Mozart from his composition teacher, Ignaz von Seyfried, who was a student of Mozart, and personally acquainted with Haydn and Beethoven.⁵ In addition, Marxsen studied piano with Carl Maria von Bocklet, who had been the close intimate of Schubert and premiered Schubert's two pianoforte trios.⁶ In Florence May's *The Life of Johannes Brahms*, May indicated:

He was a man of catholic tastes and liberal culture, and his influence over his pupils was not merely that of the instructor of a given subject, but was touched with the power of the philosopher who has a wider outlook on life. The central aims of his theoretical teaching were to guide his pupils to a mastery of the principles illustrated in the works of the great composers, and to encourage each student to develop his own creative individuality on the firm basis thus afforded.⁷

Thus, Marxsen was not just a piano teacher, as he welcomed all kinds of questions concerning literature, philosophy and art, which could stimulate the minds of young talents. It is not clearly recorded if Marxsen's teaching philosophy or his library led Brahms to E.T.A. Hoffmann's world and his writings. Brahms was very much acquainted with Hoffmann's literatures, the author being Robert Schumann's hero, before the age of twenty. He even stylized himself in letters and on manuscripts as "Johannes Kreisler, Jr.," in emulation of Hoffmann's character, Kapellmeister Kreisler.⁸ Thus "Johannes Kreisler, Jr." organized his thoughts and ideas from the arts in a series

⁴ Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 7-8.

⁵ Ignaz von Seyfried (1776-1841).

⁶ Carl Maria von Bocklet (1801-1881).

⁷ Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms* (London: Edward Arnold, 1905), 65.

⁸ The character of Kreisler appeared in the novel *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr and Fantasy Pieces in Callot's Manner: Pages from the Diary of a Traveling Romantic*. "Kreisleriana" is one of the groups of stories in the *Fantasy Pieces*.

of anthologies of literary quotations which he started in his teens and continued up to 1854 under the title, *Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein*.⁹

It can be difficult to summarize who and what has influenced Brahms the most in his early compositions. There are no direct traces of Marxsen's style in Brahms's early works though the generous Marxsen was his chief musical mentor who introduced him to Beethoven, Bach and Schubert, the classic models of musicianship for Brahms. Moreover, though E.T.A. Hoffmann's influence plays a significant role in Brahms's spiritual world, it is surprising that he did not draw an anthology from Hoffmann's collections. Mutual figures connecting him and Hoffmann were the poets Jean Paul and Novalis.¹⁰ From one of May's descriptions, Brahms had showed signs of creativity from infancy. Brahms told Widmann¹¹ that he had made a notation system himself by having large round dots for higher notes and lines for lower positions when he heard a melody. Brahms also "was fond of writing the separate parts of concerted works one under the other—of copying them into score, in fact. Nor was he to be kept from trying his hand at original composition."¹² The gesture of "writing the separate parts of concerted works" already can be seen to suggest that the young boy might have then had the intention for orchestral writing in his mind.

1.2 Compositional Background of the Piano Sonata No. 3

Brahms composed piano music throughout his lifetime, however, the three piano sonatas written between 1851-1853 in his early twenties were the first major genre he had written in and

⁹ George Bozarth, "Johannes Brahms's Collection of Deutsche Sprichworte (German Proverbs)," *Brahms Studies I*, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln, Neb., 1994), I: 1-29.

¹⁰ Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825). "Novalis" was a pen name for F.L. von Hardengerg (1772-1801).

¹¹ Joseph Viktor Widmann (1842-1911) was a scholar and theologian who became closer to Brahms.

¹² May, 67.

for which he had received much praise from Schumann, Liszt, Berlioz and Joachim.¹³ Brahms, surprisingly, would not write a piano sonata again although he composed sonatas for other instruments through his lifetime. The three early piano sonatas are large piano works in a traditional structure in which Brahms had emulated the model Beethoven established in his late piano sonatas. The sonatas seem to be Brahms's clear attempt to imitate the large orchestral ideas of the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ Considering Brahms's age, the sonata is remarkably mature. It shows his own path to respect both form and content. Brahms employed a large-scale structure and an impressive command of the kind of motivic development found in Bach and Beethoven, utilized Liszt's thematic transformation, and infused Chopin's coloristic harmony into the third sonata. The poetic-literary elements inherited from Hoffmann's novels cannot be ignored as well in this sonata.

Brahms began the third sonata around 1853 and had not completed it before his first meeting with the Schumanns. This is one of the largest single piano works in the repertoire, in five movements, rather than the traditional three or four movements. It presents what Brahms had learned from his earlier compositions. As the noted scholar Malcolm MacDonald, describes, "it re-engages the Romantic passion and fantasia-like construction of the F-sharp Minor, tempered by the formal grasp and power of thematic evolution achieved in the other works. The result stands with Liszt's B-Minor Sonata and the *Grande Sonata* of Alkan as one of the three greatest piano sonatas of the mid-nineteenth century."¹⁵

¹³ David Witten, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music: Essay in Performance and Analysis* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1997), 235.

¹⁴ Gordon Stewart, *A History of Keyboard Literature: Music for the Piano and Its Forerunners* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 331.

¹⁵ MacDonald, 66-67.

1.3 Meeting with Robert and Clara Schumann in 1853

The year of 1853 was a turning point for Brahms. The twenty-year-old Brahms, who had not yet achieved great success, was fortunate to have his first meeting with Robert and Clara Schumann because his lifetime friend, the renowned violinist Joseph Joachim, knew them. After Brahms's performance of a few minutes, Robert Schumann rushed to ask his wife Clara to listen to this young genius. Clara's diary shows that she was very impressed:

Here again is one of those who come as if sent straight from God. He played us sonatas, scherzos etc. of his own, all of them showing exuberant imagination, depth of feeling, and mastery of form.

Robert Schumann immediately recognized that this new young talent's piano compositions had already developed beyond the standard boundaries of traditional piano writing. He praised Brahms's performance in this meeting later in his article, "Neue Bahnen" which appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift*:

In addition, the playing was wholly that of a genius, making of the piano and orchestra of lamenting and rejoicing voices. There were sonatas, more like disguised symphonies...¹⁶

Moreover, at the end of the same article, Schumann also suggested Brahms should seek for even more powerful expression:

If he will lower his magic wand where the massed might of choir and Orchestra can lend its strength, then still more wonderful glimpses into the Mysteries of the spirit-world will be presented to us. May the highest genius support him in this ...¹⁷

It was in fact Schumann's convictions and hopes that would further stimulate Brahms's burgeoning symphonic compositional approach, leading the young composer toward actual orchestral writing, though his first symphony would only be completed twenty-three years later. This late accomplishment of his Symphony No. 1 was, as most scholars believe, due to Brahms's

¹⁶ "Neue Bahnen," *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 39 (28 October 1853): 185.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

self-training as a composer, his need to fulfill Schumann's high expectations, and, without a doubt, his task to follow in Beethoven's giant symphonic footsteps, while creating his own kind of symphony.

Though Robert Schumann's mental condition grew worse and worse during the period of Brahms's visits, the young composer did bring new energy to his older friend. Schumann had done all he could to introduce Brahms to the music world, including referring Brahms to his publisher Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, urging that they consider whatever Brahms could offer them.

1.4 State of Research

Though research on Brahms's music has been an essential part of the study of nineteenth-century music, these studies have most often excluded his early works. However, the idea that the third piano sonata is a symphonic sonata has been recognized by some scholars. In Malcolm MacDonald's book, *Brahms*, the author mentions the three piano sonatas in a short, descriptive view in which MacDonald states his perception that in his early works, Brahms "discovered how to make an orchestra speak through the medium of the keyboard."¹⁸ In addition, MacDonald suggests the possibility of Brahms's third piano sonata possessing the sound of 'veiled symphonies' as Schumann had described and that "Brahms' orchestral, chamber and instrumental music flow in unusually close proximity."¹⁹ John Rink's comments concerning Brahms's third sonata in "Opposition and Integration"²⁰ support the idea of what Denis Matthews calls 'a definite

¹⁸ MacDonald, 69.

¹⁹ Malcolm MacDonald, "'Veiled Symphonies?' The Concertos," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 156.

²⁰ John Rink, "Opposition and integration in the piano music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 81-85.

plurality in Brahms' musical makeup',²¹ including his (Rink's) perception of the second movement from the third piano sonata as being one of four examples to provide evidence of the principle of opposition, an idea also discussed in the book, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works* written by Dr. Jonathan Dunsby.²² Rink debates Schubring's argument of 1862 that critiques Brahms' third sonata as a 'failure' because of 'the padded counterpoint and the overloaded polyphony'.²³ Laurence Wallach's analysis in *The Complete Brahms* of the third piano sonata suggests that whole piece is in the submediant, a key appearing in every movement, which could be seen as the *Urmelodie*. Wallach also considers that thematic metamorphosis not only appears in the melody but also in the rhythm and tempo. Moreover, the 'fate motive' in the slow fourth movement has been connected with timpani rolls and with brass thirds as an evocation of a *marcia funèbre*.²⁴

Dr. Cha-Lin Liu's dissertation "Performance Practice Issues in Piano Sonata in f minor Op. 5 by Johannes Brahms"²⁵ is the only dissertation in English solely dedicated to the work in a performance practice aspect. Dr. Liu provides an overview of its compositional background, other composers' influences on this work and the influence of this work on other composers' works. Her focus concerns the difficulties performers can face in the third sonata. Liu's previous German educational background provided her with the authority to study from Brahms's original documents in Germany. The third piano sonata has also been illustrated as having orchestral

²¹ Denis Matthews, *Brahms Piano Music* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 1.

²² Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981).

²³ Adolf Schubring, "Five Works by Brahms," trans. Walter Frisch in Walter Frisch, *Brahms and his World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

²⁴ Laurence Wallach, "Sonata in F Minor, Opus 5," in *The Complete Brahms*, ed. Leon Botstein (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 161-16.

²⁵ Cha-Lin Liu, "Performance Practice Issues in Piano Sonata in f minor Op. 5 by Johannes Brahms" (DMA dissertation, University of California Los Angeles, 2007).

qualities in several other dissertations, including Melodie King's "Brahms and the Middle Voice".²⁶ King documents her discovery of the instrument Brahms mentally connected to his absent melodies in the middle voice in his early piano works. The impact of Lieder on the second movements of Brahms's three piano sonatas is examined in Dr. Yuen Reng Liu's "The Impact of the Lied on Selected Piano Works of Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms".²⁷ Furthermore, because Brahms was an active choral conductor himself, and was fond of Renaissance and Baroque music, Dr. Yu-Ting Chen relates the organ point and the choir section at the end of the second movement of the third sonata to Renaissance choral composition.²⁸ Dr. Walter Frisch,²⁹ specialist in Austro-German music of the 19th and 20th centuries, has claimed that Brahms's early compositions proceed as much from Lisztian thematic transformation as from strict classical techniques, an example of which is found in the first movement of the third sonata.

Thus, one can perceive that the idea of Brahms's third piano sonata being a symphonic sonata has been recognized in many scholarly works in which this sonata has been discussed. However, how the young Brahms generated this orchestral thinking has not yet been surveyed in detail. Malcolm MacDonald's point of view supporting his argument that "in Brahms the streams of orchestral, chamber and instrumental music flow in unusually close proximity" suggests that a significant similarity between genres of Brahms's *oeuvre* is the continual balance among

²⁶ Melodie King, "Brahms and the Middle Voice" (DMA dissertation, University of Alabama, 2008).

²⁷ Yuen-Reng Liu, "The Impact of the Lied on Selected Piano Works of Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms" (DMA dissertation, University of Cincinnati, 2004).

²⁸ Yu-Ting Chen, "Brahms, the Early Choral Music Heritage and His Piano Music" (DMA dissertation, University of Washington, 2001).

²⁹ Walter Miller Frisch, "Brahms's Sonata Structures and the Principle of Developing Variation" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1981).

emotional, spiritual or psychological intimacy (both confessional and secret) and grandeur (heroic, tragic or elegiac), all of which inspire the third sonata's far-reaching symphonic nature.³⁰

³⁰see footnote 19.

CHAPTER II

ORCHESTRAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 Symphonic Style after 1850

As a single large piano work, the Brahms Piano Sonata possesses several significant orchestral attributes which are examined in this chapter. Walter Frisch's *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* illustrates the characteristics of the symphonies of the nineteenth century and the historical changes of this period.³¹ There are three symphonic styles Frisch considers as main criteria for a work to be considered a symphony after 1850. These also can be applied to Brahms's third sonata, which can be perceived as orchestral music transmitted through the piano.

2.1.1 Dimensions of Works or a Movement

The structure of Beethoven's "Eroica" and Ninth symphonies was marked as a standard model in the mid-nineteenth century for its expanded structures. Commentators during the nineteenth century would often determine the success of a symphony by a work's dimensions. The two middle movements of Brahms's first symphony were criticized by contemporary conductors and critics as being "too slight for the settings."³² The leading nineteenth-century German writer A.B. Marx defined the symphony as:

an orchestral composition in the sonata-form, but, in accordance with the great powers of an orchestra...usually constructed upon large, massive and well-defined proportions. It mostly consists of an introduction, allegro, andante, scherzo, and finale; all of which movements are more fully developed.³³

Marx's description confirms that the dimensions of works were generally required in the

³¹ Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996)15-17

³² *ibid.*

³³ A.B. Marx, *General Musical Instruction*, trans. George Macirone (London: Novello, 1854; original German ed., 1839), 91.

nineteenth century to be “massive” and of “well-defined proportions.” It is noteworthy that Brahms’s *Piano Sonata* does not only qualify as a work that is “large” and of “well-defined proportions” but also contains a five-section design and has been “fully developed” through thematic transformation among movements.

Brahms composed his three main piano sonatas often following the structural design of Beethoven, though Brahms felt the need to move away sometimes from Beethoven’s examples or from standard practices. In the second movements of his (Brahms’s) first two sonatas, he moves away from a traditional ABA form. It becomes apparent that Brahms has not yet decided exactly how his piano sonatas should be formulated until the third sonata. The third sonata presents a solid compositional approach: a traditional four movements with a *Rückblick* (a looking back) between the scherzo and finale, resulting in a massive five-movement sonata, i.e., a thematic metamorphosis through five movements, with many dramatic effects. Table 2.1 will demonstrate how Brahms developed the proportion of the three sonatas:

Table 2.1. Length of each movement (includes all repeated measures)

	Sonata No. 1 Op. 1 (1852-1853)	Sonata No. 2 Op. 2 (1852)	Sonata No. 3 Op. 5 (1853)
1 st mov.	Allegro <i>357 measures</i>	Allegro non troppo ma energico <i>198 measures</i>	Allegro maestoso, <i>292 measures</i>
2 nd mov.	Andante <i>285 measures</i>	Andante con espressivo <i>87 measures</i>	Andante <i>201 measures</i>
3 rd mov.	Scherzo: Allegro molto e con fuoco <i>260 measures</i>	Scherzo: Allegro <i>109 measures</i>	Scherzo-Allegro energico. <i>344 measures</i>
4 th mov.	Allegro con fuoco <i>292 measures</i>	Sostenuto-animato. <i>366 measures</i>	Intermezzo: Andante molto <i>53 measures</i>
5 th mov.	—	—	Allegro moderato ma rubato <i>365 measures</i>

It is fascinating that Brahms, at the age of twenty, could write three extensive sonatas in two years. Comparing the length of the three sonatas, it is clear that Brahms expanded the length from the first written sonata (Sonata No. 2) to the Piano Sonata No. 3 significantly. Though the Piano Sonata No. 2, written first, has two shorter middle movements between two larger movements, Brahms tried to allot more even proportions for each movement when he composed the Sonata No. 1, written second. As a known experimentalist, Brahms did employ different schemes in these sonatas and while finally succeeding to adopt the traditional sonata form that Beethoven had established.

2.1.2 Monumental Style

If dimensions of works can refer to rigid structure, the monumental style then can apply to a more flexible and significant facet which the scholar Carl Dahlhaus indicates as being “where

the presentation of musical ideas is intimately bound up with the orchestral medium.” Dahlhaus also observes that “the medium that is drawn upon is made to appear as the function of an aesthetic idea.”³⁴ A musical idea being also an aesthetic idea which Dahlhaus implies here can be observed closely in Brahms’s third sonata. As an admirer of Beethoven, not only does Brahms preserve the traditional sonata form and add one additional “look-back” slow movement before the final, but he also follows elements of German idealism from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Symphony in the nineteenth century had been transformed into a genre where ‘artist autonomy and utopian ambition’ thrived, often as the result of “idealist philosophy” and frequently from the “sheer force of Beethoven’s symphonic achievement”.³⁵ In aesthetic terms, Julian Horton writes that “idealism takes the form of an ambition to embody literary, poetic or philosophical ideals in formal and material narratives”.³⁶ The “Ode to Joy” text of the Finale of Beethoven’s Ninth was taken mainly from the poem written by Friedrich Schiller in 1785, claiming the idea of universal brotherhood: “All men become brothers” and: “Joy, joy propels the wheels in the great clock of the worlds.” Thus, we affect the world. We are important. We can have a kind of humanist utopia. Mirroring the key scheme of Beethoven’s Ninth, i.e., D Minor to D Major, Brahms begins the third sonata in F minor and concludes twice in a F Major chord in the first movement and in the finale,

³⁴ Frisch, 16.

³⁵ Julian Horton, *The Cambridge Companion to the Symphony* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 4-5.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

respectively, representing struggle in a minor key (Figure 2.1) that then resolves to a major key of victory (Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3).



Figure 2.1. Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3, first movement, m. 1

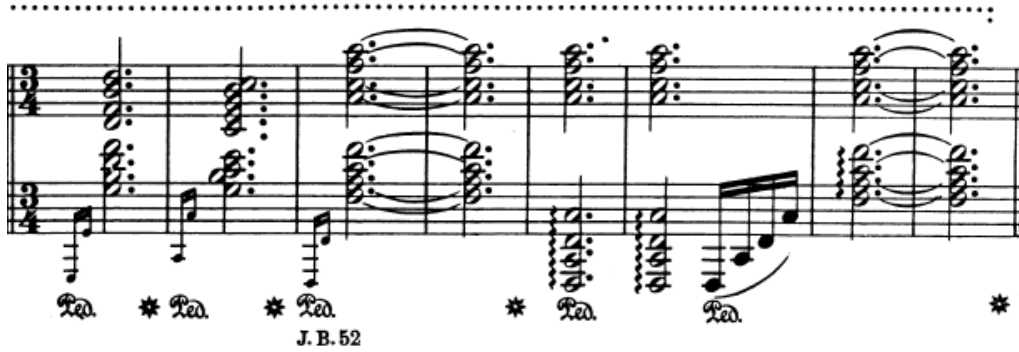


Figure 2.2. Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3, ending of first movement- F Major

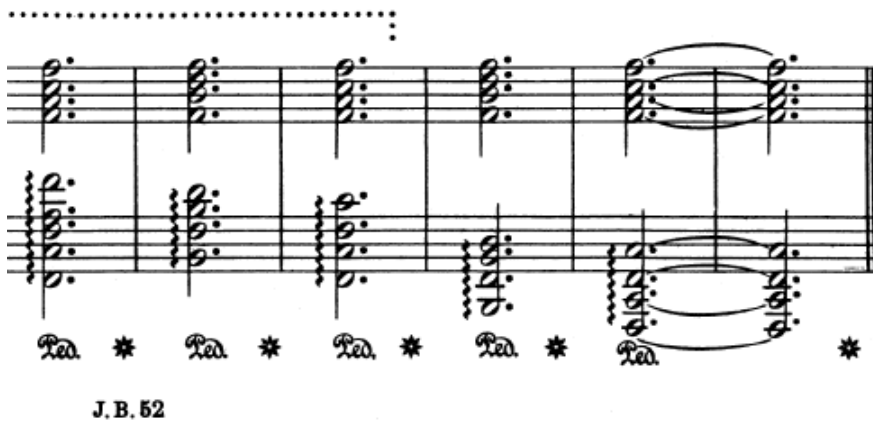


Figure 2.3. Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3, ending of finale

As Brahms was an avid reader and book collector, one can recognize his broad interests in history and politics, especially German politics. His political books collection includes Bismarck's³⁷ letters and speeches which he carried very frequently during traveling, books on the War of 1870, Treitschke's³⁸ *Historische und Politische Aufsätze*, Exner's³⁹ *Über Politische Bildung*, and other similar books which reflected Brahms's conservative stance. He lauded Bismarck's creation of the German Empire as embodying German unity. Brahms told his friend, Rudolf von der Leyen,⁴⁰ "What *he* says to me is enough; that is what I believe."⁴¹ It is not difficult then to trace how Brahms followed Beethoven's spirit, particularly of the Beethoven Ninth Symphony, in his (Brahms) last piano sonata, which intensively evokes the "monumental style" and the human spirit.

2.1.3 Thematic and Motivic Processes/Thematic Metamorphosis

Thematic and motivic processes had played an essential role in the Austro-German musical language from the Viennese Classical era. Critics did not only judge the success of a symphony relying on the quality and the development of individual themes within movements, but also examined the thematic unity as a strong connection for an entire work. E.T.A. Hoffmann's review of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony in 1810 was possibly one of the earliest examples of thematic criticism. Hoffmann analyzed the four-note basic motive which Beethoven used in the beginning of the first movement: "There is no simpler motive than that on which the master based the entire

³⁷ Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) was a nationalist, and he initiated several wars to create the German Empire.

³⁸ Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-1896) was a nationalist during the time of the German Empire.

³⁹ Adolf Exner (1841-1894) was an Austrian lawyer and a professor of Law in University of Zurich.

⁴⁰ Rudolf von der Leyen was the author of *Johannes Brahms: als Mensch und Freund*, a personal memoir, in German.

⁴¹ Michael Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 170-174.

Allegro. With great admiration, one becomes aware that Beethoven knew how to relate all secondary ideas and all transition passages through the rhythm of that simple motive.”⁴² Later, Hoffmann observed that the ‘intimate relationship’ of the individual themes to one another creates the unity which brings a single feeling to a listener’s heart.⁴³

Romantic sonata form is usually connected closely within movements through intensive thematic transformation while the Classical form is instead based on derivations of small motifs, though there are usually no connections between movements. How Brahms used these derivations and motivic condensations, i.e., creating links to connect each movement, can be clearly recognized in the third piano sonata. However, Walter Frisch states “Brahms is more concerned with exploring the potential moods of his themes than with manipulating their metrical and phrase structure.”⁴⁴ The example of thematic processes appears in the grandiose theme of the opening of the first movement in the third piano sonata (Figure 2.4). In the transition section (Figure 2.5) (m. 23) before the second theme appears, Brahms writes “*fest und bestimmt*” (solid and determined) to contrast the poetic second theme in m. 39 (Figure 2.6). The use of the opening motivic figure in these sections can be observed as a whole figure or fragments. In addition, Brahms did not forget to remind listeners again of the motif at the end of the first movement, though in augmented time (Figure 2.7).

⁴² E.T.A. Hoffmann, “Review of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, in Beethoven”, *Symphony No. 5 in C Minor*, ed. Elliot Forbes, Norton Critical Scores (New York: Norton, 1971), 156.

⁴³ Frisch, 16.

⁴⁴ Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 39.



Figure 2.4. Movement 1, m. 1



Figure 2.5. Movement 1, m. 23



Figure 2.6. Movement 1, m. 39-41



Figure 2.7. Movement 1, m. 215-217

The falling third figure as part of the principle theme of exposition (Ab-G-F) (Figure 2.8) appears in the transition (mm. 71-74) (Figure 2.9) before the development.



Figure 2.8. Movement 1, m. 1

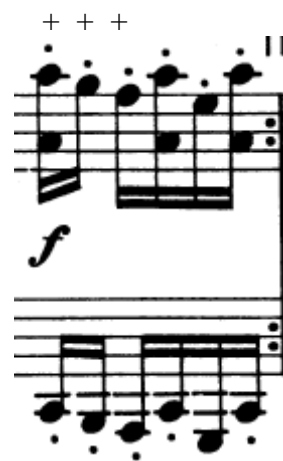


Figure 2.9. Movement 1, m. 71

The falling third figure continues to occur in different sections with varied characters, and, just as Frisch notes here, Brahms experiments with different moods of a theme, but not in a metric or structural sense. The many examples of this include, the ending of the grandiose opening theme (m. 5) (Figure 2.10), the sudden, dark atmosphere change in m. 7 accompanied by the fate motif in the left hand (Figure 2.11), the left-hand figure of the transition before the second theme of the exposition (m. 23) (Figure 2.12) and the left-hand melody in D-flat Major of the development, which can be seen to suggest a deep-singing cello solo section (Gb-F-Eb) (Figure 2.13).



Figure 2.10. Movement 1, m. 5-6



Figure 2.11. Movement 1, m. 7



Figure 2.12. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 1. m. 88-92

Moreover, Brahms's carefulness of placing a theme in varied movements as a connector can be found in the B section of the second movement. The inner voice of the opening theme of the first movement (Ab-G-F-G) now has been presented as the upbeat of sixteenth notes with added

notes between the motif, as a question-answer duo section (Figure 2.13). It could be coincidental, though it could be the fruit of Brahms's sophisticated mind, that the inner voice of the opening theme actually had appeared in the left-hand melody of the development section of the first movement (Figure 2.14) in the key of D-flat Major.



Figure 2.13. Brahms Piano Sonata Movement 2, m. 37-38



Figure 2.14. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 1, m. 90-93

Another example of thematic transformation as linkage among movements is in the sonata's third movement. The opening motif of the first movement (F-Ab-Db) (Figure 2.15) is hidden in the five measures of the Trio section (m. 101-171) (Figure 2.16). The character of the motif has been changed from a majestic tutti to a solemn choir section.



Figure 2.15. Movement. 1, m. 1



Figure 2.16. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 3, m. 101-108

In the third movement and the beginning of the Finale, Brahms applies the opening motif of the left hand of the first movement (Figure 2.17), a retrograde of the right hand motif altered to a $\frac{3}{4}$ dance rhythm in the third movement (Figure 2.18), and a woodwind-sounding answering section in the Finale after a lower register opening statement (Figure 2.19).



+ ++ +

Figure 2.17. Brahms, Movement 1, m. 1



Figure 2.18. Movement 3, m. 1-2



Figure 2.19. Brahms, Piano Sonata Finale, m. 1-4

The fate motif in the fourth movement Intermezzo has been recognized by many Brahms scholars, which derives from the left hand of m. 7 (Figure 2.20) in the first movement. Brahms

intensifies the motif in the slow movement (Figure 2.21) to resemble the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony while the left-hand rhythm is augmented in the Trio section of the third movement (m. 117) (Figure 2.22). It is interesting to spot that the fate motif only appears in the left hand at the same lower register.



Figure 2.20. Movement 1, m.7



Figure 2.21. Brahms, Piano Sonata No.3 Movement 4, m.1



Figure 2.22. Brahms, Piano Sonata No. 3 Movement 3, m. 117-120

Additionally, there could be a new motif, which appears in the key of D-flat Major as a possible choir section before the Coda in the Finale. The four-note motif (F-Eb-Db-Ab) (Figure 2.23) has been widely used in music history. Such a motif appeared as the opening melody part in the Lutheran hymn “*Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* (Awake, the voice is calling us)” written by Philipp Nicolai⁴⁵ in 1599 (Figure 2.24). It was also adopted by J.S. Bach in his Choral Prelude for Organ BWV 645 (Figure 2.25) as well as in the third movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 (G-C-D-Eb) (Figure 2.26) and the last movement of his Sonata No. 17 (A-F-E-D) (Figure 2.27).

⁴⁵ Philipp Nicolai (1556-1608) was a German poet as well as a hymnodist.



Figure 2.23. Brahms, Piano Sonata Finale, m. 140-141

412.

Ein anders von der Stim zu Mitter-
nacht/vnd von den klugen Jungfrauen/die
ihrem himmlischen Bräutigam bes-
gegen/Matth.25.

D. Philippus Nicolai.

Wachet auf / ruft uns die Stimme / Der Wächter sehe hoch
Mitternacht- heiße diese Stunde / Sie ruffen uns mit

Figure 2.24. Philipp Nicolai, “Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme (Awake, the voice is calling us)”

Manual.

Ch.(or Gt.)

Figure 2.25. J.S. Bach, Choral Prelude for Organ BWV 645



Figure 2.26. L.v. Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 8, Movement 3



Figure 2.27. L.v. Beethoven, Piano Sonata No. 17

Brahms transforms the four-note theme exhaustively in contrapuntal style in the Coda. The left hand begins as eighth notes (Figure 2.28) followed by the dotted quarter notes in the right hand in m. 255 (Figure 2.29) and the middle voice in the left hand in m. 263 (Figure 2.30).



Figure 2.28. Brahms, Piano Sonata

Finale, m. 249



Figure 2.29. Finale, m. 253-254



Figure 2.30. Brahms, Piano Sonata Finale, m. 263-264

This might suggest that this motif is a new motif which Brahms adopted from Nicolai's Hymn, as a religious Lutheran himself, for the proclaiming of victory in the Finale of his third sonata, or that it might derive as a variant of the falling third from the opening theme, with an added interval of a fourth down, an imitation from his models, J.S. Bach and Beethoven. It seems clear that Brahms did not write this piano sonata as an exercise of standard composition but utilized all the means he possessed and adopted all his accumulated knowledge to create a sonata not only in traditional sonata form, but also spiritually related to his own political and philosophical beliefs.

2.2 Other Orchestral Characteristics

There are several compositional ideas Brahms utilized in the third piano sonata that reflects the orchestral thinking that can be observed in his symphonies. The opening melody/main theme in the third movement of Brahms's Third Symphony (m. 1-12) (Figure 2.31) played by cellos is reminiscent of the left-hand melody in the development of the first movement of the third piano sonata. The twelve-bar melody that moves from cello (c) to violin (c2) (Figure 2.32) and ends with flute (c3) / oboe (c2) / horn (c1) (Figure 2.33) in c minor each time act as a complete phrase before the B Section. Brahms initiated a similar idea in the left-hand melody in the development of the first movement, however, instead of moving a complete phrase to different registers, the melodic

line is expanded to become a longer phrase as well as with bigger intervals (Figure 2.34). Although it is not an exact match in the melodic line, the right-hand syncopation chords reveal the same idea of traveling from lower registers to higher ones as the theme in the third symphony. The right-hand syncopation chords are not only an accompanying figure, but also the musical tension builder to bring out the climax from *pp* to *ff* of the first movement, starting from eb1 up to eb4 (Figure 2.35).

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Violoncell (Cello) and Kontrabaß (Double Bass). The Violoncell part is written in a bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings: *mezza voce*, *espress.*, *pizz.*, and *p*. The Kontrabaß part is also in a bass clef with the same key signature and time signature, providing a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and a dynamic marking of *p*. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system continuing the musical material.

Figure 2.31. Brahms, Third Symphony, Movement 3, m. 1-12, cello and double bass parts

The image shows a musical score for two violin parts, both labeled '1. Viol.' and written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The upper part features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings: *mezza voce*, *espress.*, *pizz.*, and *p*. The lower part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with slurs and a dynamic marking of *p*. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system continuing the musical material and ending with the marking *dolce*.

Figure 2.32. Brahms, Third Symphony, Movement 3, m. 12-23, violin part

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the flute, oboe, and horn parts of Brahms' Third Symphony, Movement 3. The first system covers measures 37 to 42, and the second system covers measures 43 to 48. The instruments are labeled on the left: Fl. (Flute), Ob. (Oboe), Klar. (B) (Clarinet in B-flat), Fag. (Bassoon), and Hr. (C) (Horn in C). The key signature is two flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The flute part begins at measure 37 with a rest, then enters at measure 40 with a melodic line marked *mp espress.* and a first ending bracket. The oboe part also begins with a rest, then enters at measure 40 with a melodic line marked *p* and *mp espress.*. The horn part (C) begins with a rest, then enters at measure 40 with a melodic line marked *p* and *mp espress.*. The clarinet and bassoon parts have rests until measure 40, where they enter with rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the melodic lines for the flute, oboe, and horn, and the rhythmic accompaniment for the clarinet and bassoon.

Figure 2.33. Brahms, Third Symphony, Movement 3, m. 40-52, flute/oboe/horn parts

This figure shows the left-hand melody for measures 90-105 of the first movement of Brahms' Piano Sonata. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat major/C minor). It begins with a *pp* dynamic and a *sempre* *rit.* marking. A star symbol (*) is placed above the first measure. The melody features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some measures containing triplets. The piece concludes with a *dim.* (diminuendo) marking.

Figure 2.34. Brahms, Piano Sonata, Movement 1, m. 90-105, left-hand melody

This figure shows the full musical score for measures 88-117 of the first movement of Brahms' Piano Sonata. The score is in G major/C minor (three flats) and 3/4 time. It features both right and left hands. The right hand includes markings for *pp*, *dolce*, *espressivo*, and *dim.*. The left hand includes markings for *pp*, *sempre rit.*, *pp e sostenuto*, and *pp dim.*. A star symbol (*) is placed above the first measure. The score includes a section marked with a 'S' and a dotted line, indicating a sostenuto section. The piece ends with a *pp* dynamic and a *dim.* marking. The publisher's mark 'Z.B. 52' is visible at the bottom.

Figure 2.35. Brahms, Piano Sonata, Movement 1, m. 88-117

In addition, it is worth noting the bassline under the left-hand melody in Figure 2.35, which is most often more than an octave away from the left-hand melody, for which Brahms sometimes indicates to roll the harmony when it is larger than octave. Considering that most pianists will be able to play octaves and some of them can reach the interval of a tenth, Brahms, however, even being a brilliant pianist at early age, could not know exactly the largest interval that any pianist's hand could reach. Moreover, the bassline does have its own direction as a chromatic line moving upwards before decidedly remaining in D Flat to confirm the tonality, while the right hand alternates between dominant seventh and diminished seventh chords. In Figure 2.31, the double bass line supports the cello melody and repeats the same patterns when the melody is performed by the violin and flute/oboe/horn later. This clear thread could suggest that the bassline of the left hand in the piano sonata could have formed a separate line for lower-register instruments if the music had been written for a symphony.

Another compositional undertaking in the opening theme of the second movement in the third sonata resembles the beginning of the fourth symphony. The opening's descending eighth note in thirds (m. 1) harkens to the first line of the poem he placed in the beginning of this movement, written by C.O. Sternau.⁴⁶ The eighth-note melody is accompanied by two other sets of sixteenth-note thirds in the left hand, displaying the gradual darkness of the evening vividly (Figure 2.36). The set of sixteenth-note thirds of the upbeats echoes the melody in eight-note thirds.

⁴⁶ C.O. Sternau (1823-1862), pseudonym of Otto Inkermann.

“Der Abend dämmt, das Mondlicht scheint,
 Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint
 Und halten sich selig umfangen.”

(Twilight falls, the moonlight shines,
 Two hearts are united in love
 And embrace each other in happiness.)

Andante espressivo

p *tr*
legato
 x y x y xy x y x y xy x y x y

Figure 2.36. Brahms, Piano Sonata movement 2, y set is the echo of right hand melody

The melody’s thirds, the harmony and the key relationship have drawn scholarly attention over the years in Brahms’ *oeuvre*. Brahms employs a combination of thirds and sixths, a sixth being the inversion of a third, for the opening of his fourth symphony. The melody is played by the violins, begun as an incomplete measure and the woodwinds (flute/clarinet/bassoon) repeat the melody line in the upbeat from m. 1 (Figure 2.37). Brahms does not line up the melodic line and echoing line one after another, but fills up the space while the main line has a long note, creating an echoing effect similar to that of the opening of the third piano sonata’s Andante second movement. Furthermore, in the B section “Poco Più Lento” of second movement (m. 37) in the third sonata (see Figure 2.13), the pattern of the opening theme is recalled, also offering another possible seed of Brahms’ compositional approach. Though the intervals in this Poco Più Lento section are not thirds, the intonation does resemble the opening of the fourth symphony in question-answer phrases.

Allegro non troppo

2 Flöten
2 Oboen
2 Klarinetten in A
2 Fagotte
4 Hörner
in E $\frac{1}{2}$
in C $\frac{3}{4}$
2 Trompeten in E
Pauken in E u. H
1. Violine
2. Violine

Figure 2.37. Brahms, Fourth Symphony Movement 1, m. 1-6

The orchestra can be seen as a large instrument created by many instruments to bring out the combination of the diapason of all instruments, while the piano itself sufficiently contains seven octaves. Brahms was born in 1833, during a period in which the piano was rapidly developed. The sound and sonority of the piano became much richer because of widening registers, thicker materials in hammers, as well as the second repetition mechanism and the use of wire strings. It might be possible to presume that Brahms, from the early age showed signs of having orchestral intentions by copying concerted works one line under another, and attempted his orchestral approach in the writing of his three piano sonatas to examine the ‘modern piano’ during this time. He made the grandiose opening of the third piano sonata by exploring the extreme sound range of the piano from F1 (m. 1) to f4 (m. 5), the distance of six octaves (Figure 2.38) within five measures. In addition, the motif group (second beat) is two octaves apart from the notes of the first beat in m. 1 in the top line and becomes wider within each measure, while the right hand and left hand travel in an opposite direction with a descending chromatic bass line. The *vorschlag* C1-C of m. 5

leads the opening from the C1 to f minor chord in the register of f4 as the climax of the five-bar statement.

The opening motif moving upwards one register higher each bar could be perceived to sound similar to the sound of different groups of orchestral instruments. One can approach the whole sonata in this way, though it is particularly evident in the first movement. Thus, this can be seen in the variation of the opening theme in m. 17-22, and in the left hand in mm. 131-137 (Figure 2.39), which travels from F to c2 (m. 137), with intensifying triplets of full chords in the right hand, which also gradually moves upwards from f2 to f4. With dynamic markings from *pp misterioso* through *cresc.* to *sempre più f pesante* this passage reaches its climax right before the recapitulation, and significantly concludes with the restatement of the opening theme (mm. 200-214) (Figure 2.40). It is interesting that Brahms may have designed this ‘register-traveling’ approach to take place at the beginning, before the recapitulation and at the ending of the first movement possibly to claim a victory for German unity, in the “monumental” style discussed earlier in this chapter.



Figure 2.38. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 1, m. 1-6

8
a tempo
pp 3 *misterioso* 3

8
cresc. *sempre più f pesante*

Figure 2.39. Movement 1, m. 131-137

ff *pesante*

Più animato
f *p.* *f* *p.* *più f* *ff*

Figure 2.40. Movement 1, m. 200-222

There are other attributes which can be found in the third piano sonata that imply Brahms' orchestral approaches. The pedal point note 'octave E flats' in m. 25-29 and later m. 130-135 over the opening theme in the right hand points out that Brahms' composition has been planned beyond the traditional boundaries of piano music. It is possible to use a sustained pedal to perform this section, however, the melody might not be so transparent because the underlying accompanying line contains several dissonant notes. Nevertheless, this idea can be presented to suggest the qualities of orchestral music very well: the octave could be played by double bass or cello or any lower register instrument while the melodic line could be performed by higher register instruments, which creates a sustaining dark sound that evokes the evening and how lovers are singing, suggested from the opening poem. This section could be performed much better on the modern piano, thanks to Albert Steinway who developed and patented the sostenuto pedal in 1874, twenty-one years after the third sonata was written.

The connection of this pedal point could be linked to the closing section of the third movement titled 'Die Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand' in Brahms' German Requiem. The natural 'D' note has sustained from m. 173-m. 207 (the end of the piece), played by double bass and timpani all the way through (Figure 2.41). The coda of the second movement in Brahms' third sonata may presage the pedal point in his German Requiem. Brahms wrote a dissonant minor second (G-Ab), with A flat as a pedal point from m. 132 to m. 143 (Figure 2.42) before the D Flat Major coda appears. The minor second creates muddy effects which reminds one of timpani rolls in an orchestra, the same idea as in the German Requiem. It is possible to perform this by the piano, however, due to the structure of pianos in Brahms time, the sonority would not be brought out so well as the modern piano we have nowadays. The A flat pedal point is the dominant of D Flat Major in the coda, which continues to sound from the bass line from m. 144-m. 150 and comes to

the upper voice in the left hand with the bass line added from m. 157. The pedal point from m. 157 moves through a passing tone scale down to D flat note in m. 164, which is the tonic of D flat major and it continues to the end of the movement. The density built up by the left hand in the coda section is enormous, which could be perfectly presented by a modern piano but not the one in Brahms' time. Brahms employs A flat as eighth-notes as a timpani-like pulsation to build tension from *ppp sempre les deux Pédales* in m.144 (Figure 2.43) to *ff molto pesante* in m. 164 with the left hand D flat in octaves as triplets (Figure 2.44). The right hand harmony and left hand octave keep driving the tension toward m. 174 in *ff* with five voices in both hands as the climax. The sonority created here in Brahms' mind confirms that his imagination concerning piano sound has gone beyond the traditional again.

Fl.

Ob.

Kl. in A.

Fg.

Hr. in D.

Trp. in D.

Pos. u. Tuba

Pk.

I. Vln.

II. Vln.

Vla.

Sopr.

Alt.

Ten.

Baß.

Vcll.

K. B.

Org. c. coro

sempre con tutta la forza

dich.

dich.

dich. Der Ge-rech-ten See-len sind in Got-tes Hand, und kei-ne dich.

Figure 2.41. Brahms, German Requiem, Movement 3: Die Gerechten Seelen sind in Gottes Hand

Andante molto

Figure 2.42. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 2, mm. 132-136

Figure 2.43. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 2, mm. 144-188

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano sonata movement. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system begins with the tempo marking *molto pesante* and the dynamic marking *ff*. The right hand features chords and melodic lines, while the left hand plays a dense, rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The second system continues this texture, with some chords marked with a 'Rea' symbol. The third system concludes with a final *ff* dynamic marking and a dense, rapid eighth-note passage in the left hand. Various performance markings such as accents, slurs, and fingerings (e.g., 3, 6, 8) are present throughout the score.

Figure 2.44. Brahms, Piano Sonata Movement 2, mm. 164-174

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

Brahms's third piano sonata stands in a special position in the keyboard literature. The sonata form that Beethoven established has been developed to the highest level either in its structure or spiritually in this sonata, by which it could be said that Brahms inherited the traditional sonata form of Beethoven and infused the Romantic passion with the idealism of German unity in his thinking, symphonic in scope. It may be too simple to reply on analysis of this sonata or to compare it with Brahms' orchestral music in order to demonstrate Brahms's intention of orchestral writing, because he, as a self-trained composer, had been looking for new approaches in each new work. There are many traces of symphonic ideas revealed in this sonata which could be found in his symphonic works, however, his imagining of bigger sonorities beyond the piano sound of his time plays a significant role in this composition. His intention in his piano compositions to follow the idea of universal brotherhood found in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and his (Brahms's) own belief concerning German unity can also be seen as two motivations for this work.

When Schumann praised Brahms's first performance in which Brahms made the piano sound like a symphony, it reveals that Brahms's orchestral qualities do not only exist in his compositions, but also in his playing in his early twenties. From the facts established above in this thesis, one can see how the idealism of German unity, Beethoven's influence brought to Brahms from his teacher, Marxsen, his own interests in literature, and most importantly, his imagining of producing sound beyond the standard piano compositions of his time, create the symphonic quality of the third piano sonata, a fact that performers might keep in mind when interpreting this work, and which could be a future orchestration project for composers.

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