This is to certify that the

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AN ANALYSIS OF JOHANNES BRAHMS'

"VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN"

presented by

ELAINE M. ROSS

has been accepted towards fulfillment
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Bruce B. Campbell.
Major professor

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AN ANALYSIS OF JOHANNES BRAHMS' "VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN"

By

Elaine M. Ross

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF JOHANNES BRAHMS' "VARIATIONS ON A THEME BY HAYDN"

By

Elaine M. Ross

This thesis is divided into six chapters: An introduction and concluding chapter, a chapter on variation form, and chapters providing a detailed analysis of the chorale theme, each variation, and the finale. The analysis deals with motivic development, the fixed and variable elements of variation form such as dynamics, tempo, form, length, melody, and how underlying thematic connections unify the entire composition. The orchestral texture is discussed with an emphasis on the changes between variations as well as those found within a variation. The usage of specific contrapuntal techniques is also addressed and discussed in detail. Several features related to Schenkerian analysis have been integrated throughout, especially the conclusion that the *ursatz*, or background material, of the theme and each variation is the same, but the foreground level, through the process of diminution, gives each variation its unique quality.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my thesis advisor, Dr. Bruce Campbell, and the members of my guidance committee, Dr. Theodore Johnson and Dr. Conrad Donakowski, for all of their insight and scholarly advice. I am very appreciative to many of my friends for their help, especially Herbert Suarez for his help with musical examples and graphics. My final acknowledgement is addressed to my husband, John. To him, I am grateful for many things, especially his patience and musical insight, which greatly contributed to the completion of this project.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Curiosity and a keen interest in the music of Brahms has resulted in the selection of this topic. Although Brahms scored a piano reduction of *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* for two pianos, the main portion of this thesis is based on the orchestral scoring, since this is the better known of the two scorings and the most frequently performed. The two-piano reduction, made popular in the concert room by Louis and Susanne Reè, was actually published before the orchestral version. However, Brahms did not wish the two-piano reduction to represent the conception of the original orchestration.

This analysis focuses on several areas. Each section deals with motivic development, the fixed and variable elements of variation form such as dynamics, tempo, form, length, and melody, and how the underlying thematic connections unify the entire composition. The orchestral texture is discussed with an emphasis on the changes between variations as well as those found within variations. The usage of specific contrapuntal techniques is also addressed and discussed in detail.

To comprehend several aspects of this thesis, one must possess some knowledge of Schenkerian techniques. Jonathan Dunsby states:

> It seems perfectly clear what we must study to understand Schenker's work: (1) strict (species) counterpoint, (2) harmony (including traditional thoroughbass), and finally (3) the music of the masters...but there is an important distinction between learning about Schenker–treating him as an historical figure–and learning his theories...The latter, which includes developing a skill for graphic notation of musical structure, requires years of diligent study and practice. The conflict, as I have called it, results from the

> difference between the time needed to develop these skills and the time pressures at institutions of higher education...[1]

Analysis lies at the heart of all musical studies, and with the addition of this method of analysis, it is hoped that this approach will help provide new musical insights.

Several features in the area of Schenkerian analysis have been integrated into this document. Heinrich Schenker's techniques are becoming more widely known and have gained wide acceptance in both Europe and the United States. Schenkerian principles provide musical insights that are difficult to grasp using other methods. The *ursatz*, or background material, of the theme and variations is the same, but the foreground level gives each variation its unique quality. The freer the relationship becomes between the theme and the variation, the greater the deeper structural levels are affected.[2] Variations usually expand upon motives presented in the theme. Charles Rosen states:

> When there is a correspondence between the detail and the structure, merely to uncover it in the score is insufficient: we must be able to claim that it has always been heard, without being put into words perhaps, but with an effect upon our experience of the musical work...Musical relationships cannot exist for the listener or the analyst, until they have been "heard" or have affected his "experience" in some way.[3]

Showing both detailed and overall movement of the work gives a varied approach, reflecting the varied perception that is stimulated by the music.

"The 'theme' of a theme and variations form is in most cases not a single

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[1]Jonathan Dunsby and Arnold Whittall, *Music Analysis in Theory and Practice*, p. 51.

[2]Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, p. 321.

[3]As quoted by Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms: Analytical Approaches to Four Works*, p. 19.

theme, but a self-contained musical form."[4] This is the case in the "Haydn Variations." Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert conclude:

> In sets of variations where the key of the main theme is preserved–as was the standard practice in the Baroque and Classic periods [and also occurs in this set of variations]–it is generally valid to let a background sketch of the theme stand for the entire piece or movement, and to presume that those factors that change from variation to variation will be at the middleground and foreground levels...The foreground level, through the process of diminution, is where the preponderance of variation activity takes place...A correct background reading of the theme will be reinforced by the variations, while an incorrect reading will be refuted.[5]

The chorale theme is a complete formal unit in itself, but at the same time, it is part of a larger musical form, and it is this role that is approached throughout.

According to Jonathan Dunsby and Arnold Whittall, Schenker uncovered certain issues about tonal music and how to express an understanding of certain aspects of tonal structure: 1) the distinction and interaction between form and contrapuntal-harmonic structure needs to be examined; 2) most pieces reveal, structurally, three phases (ascent, structure, and peroration); 3) the way the bass moves from tonic to structural dominant will reveal the most important harmonic character of the music; and 4) the workings of the outer structural voices are central to a full picture of the voice-leading.[6]

[4]Forte and Gilbert, p. 320.

[5]*Ibid.*, p. 320 - 21.

[6]Dunsby and Whittall, p. 50.

CHAPTER TWO

BRAHMS AND THE VARIATION FORM

Brahms' Use of the Variation Form

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897) favored the variation form, along with sonata form, over all of the classic forms. According to John Gillespie, the variation form was a favorite medium for expressing his musical thoughts, because it allowed him great freedom within a limited harmonic and melodic framework. Several moods and wide varieties of emotions are expressed within one self-contained composition. For Brahms, the variation was essential within his symphonic works.[1] This shows his close ties with the past, going back to Bach and Handel.

Brahms composed two orchestral serenades prior to the "Haydn" Variations, but his substantial symphonic output begins with this work. *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* is a work in which expert craftsmanship and ingenuity are matched with beauty and imagination. There are many passages in thirds, sixths, and octaves, plus doublings of these intervals that convey a feeling of density, yet stability. The work possesses a superior rhythmic sense: syncopations, polyrhythms, and other similar devices of rhythmic transformations.[2] Leon Stein observes:

> It may be pointed out that many works exhibit a kind of close workmanship, and, too often, that is all. However, attention to detail is what ultimately distinguishes the master from the dilettante or from the merely talented. What is frequently

[1]John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, pp. 257-258.

[2]Gillespie, pp. 257-258.

> overlooked is that preoccupation with detail results from a kind of inner compulsion which the uninspired has rarely sensed, and which the master cannot deny. For, in what we recognize as an inspired work, preoccupation with detail is the result of a compulsion which stems from imagination and feeling, from the necessity for having a passage conform to a pattern, a design, or an inflection which is felt rather than thought out. In a pedantic work, on the other hand, detail is often derived from a purely reasoning process, which may be external to the work itself; this process is *applied* to a work or a passage rather than *demanded by* it.[3]

Stein goes on to say that these variations may seem to be rationalized and deliberate, but one soon realizes that the technique is only the medium for the emotion that characterizes and distinguishes this composition and all truly felt works.[4] Added understanding and insight from analysis will only enhance the appreciation and enjoyment of this brilliantly crafted composition. The understanding of a composer's intentions is helpful in the comprehension of a particular work.

To prepare for an account of Brahms' rich harmonic style, complex proportional relationships and sophisticated motivic organization, one might quote Arnold Schoenberg, who suggests that a development away from the simplest musical relationships is appropriate for a certain kind of listener:[5]

> Repeatedly hearing things which one likes is pleasant and need not be ridiculed. There is a subconscious desire to understand better and realize more details of the beauty. But an alert and well-trained mind will demand to be told the more remote matters, the more remote consequences of the simple matters that he has already comprehended.[6]

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[3]Leon Stein, *An Analytic Study of Brahms' "Variations On a Theme by Haydn,"* p. 3.

[4]*Ibid.*

[5]Jonathan Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms*, p. 86.

[6]As quoted by Dunsby, p. 99.

Brahms, the classicist and academician, was a great innovator in the realm of musical language, and, in fact, he was a great progressive. The development of more complex music is a natural process. Schoenberg states:

> Evenness, regularity, symmetry, subdivision, repetition, unity, relationship in rhythm and harmony, and even logic--none of these elements produces or even contributes to beauty...one finds numerous slightly varied repetitions.[7]

Music has both aesthetic pleasure and beauty, just as language has rhyme, rhythm, metre, and so on, as well as feelings and thoughts.[8]

Composers of absolute music are not as dependent on extra-musical ideas as composers of programmatic music, and they seem to find all the potential in a musical idea itself. A musical idea always has possibilities for its own development even if it is part of an extra-musical idea. Examples are found in the music of Schubert or Schumann, who according to Karl Geiringer, were masters of "pure" musical instincts, yet often had an underlying intention.[9] The composer with the sensitivity of internal emotions and the ability to project this intricate expression within the framework provided, is the kind of composer who will greatly demand the mode of expression given by the variation form. The complexities often cover the basic simplicities of the theme itself. Arnold Schoenberg notes:

> (...the alert mind of an educated listener)...enables a musician to write for upperclass minds, not only doing what grammar and idiom require, but, in other respects lending to every sentence the full pregnancy of meaning of a maxim, of a proverb, or an aphorism. This is what musical prose should be–a direct and

[7]As quoted by Dunsby, p. 87.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 87.

[9]Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, 2d. ed., p. 247.

straight-forward presentation of ideas, without any patchwork, without mere padding and empty repetitions.[10]

In other words: "no space should be devoted to mere formal purposes."[11]

Brahms did not often record his views about composition; yet on two occasions, he wrote about the need for some kind of strict technique in variations. Brahms expressed several points about the variation form:

> Variations should surely be kept stricter and purer. Composers used to keep strictly to the bass of the theme, to their real theme. In Beethoven the melody, harmony, and rhythm are so beautifully varied. But I do often find that more recent composers wallow more in the theme. We all stick anxiously to the melody, but don't treat it freely, really create nothing new out of it, but just weigh it down...With a theme and variations it is nearly almost only the bass that really means something for me. If I vary the melody, I can't easily be more than ingenious or attractive...Through the given bass I discover new melodies in it, I create...[12]

An emphasis on the melodic elements is just what Brahms himself tried to avoid, so when analysts examine Brahms' sets of variations, more sophisticated methods are needed.[13] Perhaps the most recent source would be Heinrich Schenker, who based his analysis on prolonged tonal relationships. The variation form was handed down to the "classical" masters from C.P.E. Bach's art of variation, and from a Schenkerian perspective, the variation technique is completely unthinkable without the concept of a fundamental structure and diminution.[14] However, in his brief reference to variations in *Free Composition*,

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[10]Dunsby, p. 99.

[11]*Ibid.*

[12]As quoted by Dunsby, p. 18.

[13]*Ibid.*, p. 3.

[14]Oswald Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, p. 146.

Schenker does not even mention the *ursatz* or "fundamental structure."[15] The author Leonard B. Meyer states:

> ...analytical methods such as those developed by Schenker, Lorenz, and Kurth, as well as more traditional ones, all essentially aim at exhibiting the hierarchic-functional structure of musical events. While emphasizing the importance of hierarchic structure, the systematic formulations and practical procedures of analytic theory have tended to neglect and underestimate the significance of differences among hierarchic levels within particular works. That is, theorists have...often assumed that the principles of hierarchic organization remain constant from level to level. But...the particular parameters of sound used to articulate process and structure will vary in kind as well as in emphasis from one level to another.[16]

In order to create a model, the analyst needs to examine each structural level. The variation technique lies at the heart of improvisation, and each variation, through diminution, is an ornamented version of the basic structural model. On the surface, the basic structure is not always recognizable, but through the process of eliminating ornamentation, the model will be uncovered. This combination of ingenuity and basic simplicity, without technical fussiness, enhances the variation form.[17]

Certain limitations have been set, which at first may appear to be somewhat restrictive. These limitations, however, turn out to increase the expressivity and character of the piece: there is a broad consistency of mood even within the wide ranges of expression; a consistency integrates each variation within the larger unit; and there is an overall dynamic plan allowing for a wide range of expressivity. The restrictions, however, are that each variation

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[15]Dunsby, p. 3.

[16]L.B. Meyer, *Music, the Arts and Ideas*, pp. 305-6.

[17]Stein, p. 4.

is melodically, harmonically, and structurally associated measure for measure with the corresponding parts of the theme.[18]

Brahms' use of the variation form is viewed by Jonathan Dunsby:

> If the articulation of the theme is retained, the "meaning" of any variation will be fundamentally the same, however ingenious or attractive, as Brahms says, the decorations may be. But by varying the model of the theme, while retaining its characteristic ambiguities, he can transform the meaning while maintaining a deep relationship between variations and between them and the theme: thus he can create something "new" while making his procedure stricter and purer.[19]

Dunsby goes on to say that it is unlikely Brahms would have thought in these terms, but the fact that the music can be analyzed this way suggests that Brahms was successful in his search for variety and unity.[20]

Categories of the Variation Form

According to Douglass Green, there are two categories of the theme and variations. Sectional variations are based on a theme that consists of one or more periods with usually a pause or clear caesura at the end of the theme and each variation. Continuous variations are based on a theme of only a phrase or two of 4 to 8 bars. The variations follow each other uninterruptedly and are usually represented by a ground bass, chaconne, or passacaglia. This work employs both types. The theme and its eight variations are sectional, but the finale has a set of continuous variations using a ground bass.[21]

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[18]*Ibid.*

[19]Dunsby, p. 17.

[20]*Ibid.*

[21]Douglass M. Green, *Form in Tonal Music*, p. 98.

Many sets of variations are much more general than the "Haydn Variations" in their relationship of the variations to the theme, particularly concerning the structure. The form of each variation in this composition is exact with that of the theme. Despite this, however, the variations are highly diversified through dynamics, tempo, texture, mode, and precise harmonic progressions.

The theme and variations appears frequently as an independent composition. It has been common practice for a composer to borrow the theme which he sets out to vary, either from a folk song or from the work of another composer.[22] The theme in this set of variations is taken from a Haydn Divertimento in B-flat Major, categorized by Anthony Van Hoboken, scholar who developed a system of categorizing Haydn's works, in Volume II as work #46. (HII:46).[23]

The "Haydn" Variations are "character pieces" in which the individual pieces or sections usually provoke a particular mood or scene. The elements of the theme are combined with new ideas creating an ingenious polyphonic style. In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, wide varieties of program music were considered character pieces. The music has the ability to imitate, describe, and express without the assistance of words. Character pieces frequently appear in sets and, most often, the individual pieces employ song form (ABA).

In his works, Beethoven makes use of a basic idea, but he is less concerned with its continuous transformation than with its outward expansion. Brahms' basic motive merely appears in a succession of different disguises,

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[22]*Ibid.*, p. 99.

[23]Feder, Georg, "Haydn, Joseph," *The New Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. VIII, p. 378.

thus producing a form much more static than Beethoven's. Brahms' transformation involves a change in mood or character while the theme's basic shape, pitch contour, or configuration is retained. Tempo, rhythm, meter, harmony, dynamics, and articulation are all altered at some point, but the theme still retains a recognizable *Gestalt*.[24] In Brahms' music, the treatment of rhythm, intervals, harmonies, and the shape are subject to various changes, but these changes never produce a motive-form too foreign from the original motive.[25] Summing up the mature Brahms' style, philosopher Theodore W. Adorno states:

> While still composing within the total framework of tonality, Brahms by and large reflects conventional formulae and fundamentals, producing a unity of the work which–out of freedom–is constantly renewed at every moment. He consequently became the advocate of universal economy, refuting all coincidental moments of music and yet developing the most extreme multiplicity–the result from thematic materials the identity of which has been preserved. This indeed is his greatest accomplishment.[26]

Motivic ideas give birth to newer ideas thus establishing relationships between the variations. Walter Frisch states: "All the motivic thematic shapes are part of a developmental chain that leads first away from the head motive and then back again. This developmental process, however, condenses into individually molded thematic shapes, which contrast with each other in character and affective content."[27] Brahms continuously develops melodic fragments and introduces new melodic ideas. Eventually, the melody is transformed back into its original form.

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[24]Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, pp. 41-42.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 11.

[26]Theodore W. Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*, p. 55.

[27]Frisch, p. 25.

CHAPTER THREE

THE MAIN THEME - CHORALE ST. ANTONI

Background

The "Haydn" Variations were written in the summer of 1873, before Brahms had completed his First Symphony.[1] Many orchestral pieces of the era were reduced to piano scores for the enjoyment of musicians in their homes. This was the case with this work, as Brahms scored these variations for two pianos (Op. 56b), which was published in November, 1873, and for orchestra (Op. 56a) published in January, 1974. Brahms first presented the two-piano reduction to his friends, but the first public performance of the variations was the orchestral scoring, which was performed on November 2nd, 1873 by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra with the composer conducting.[2]

It is not certain exactly when, but somewhere between the years 1782 and 1783, Joseph Haydn composed six divertimenti for the band of Prince Esterhazy's troops. The divertimenti were published in 1932 by the "Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde" at the request of Karl Geiringer.[3] Brahms came across the theme in November of 1870 when Karl Ferdinand Pohl, Haydn's biographer, showed him the manuscripts of the divertimenti. Brahms copied the second movement of the divertimento into a notebook. The title page of the manuscript had the inscription: "Divertimento mit dem Chorale St. Antoni." It is

[1]Leon Stein, *An Analysis of Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn,'* p. 4.

[2]Hansjurgen Schaefer, (Cassette Insert) *Johannes Brahms: Ouverturen/Haydn Variationen.*

[3]Stein, p. 4.

presumed that Haydn did not compose the chorale himself. It appears to have been used earlier in popular religious music and according to Geiringer, it is quite possibly based on an old Burgenland Pilgrim's chant. It seems likely, however, that Brahms assumed Haydn was the actual composer.[4]

Formal Structure

This analysis refers to the orchestral scoring (Op. 56a) but for ease in discussing motives and basic structures, a condensed form of the theme is illustrated in Example 1.

According to Douglass Green, there are several elements of the theme that may or may not be changed in each variation. These elements applied to *Variations on a Theme by Haydn* are as follows:

1. Key: B-flat Major (This element remains the same throughout)
2. Mode: Major
3. Form: Sectional Rounded Binary
4. Length: Part one - 10 bars (repeated); Part two - 19 bars (repeated)
5. Basic Tonal Structure: ||: I------ V-I :||: V---V I----- V-I :||
6. Precise Harmonic Progression
7. Tempo: Andante
8. Melody
9. Bass Line
10. Texture: Homophonic, mostly four-part choral style

There are many common procedures used by great composers in constructing different types of variations. Several procedures used by Brahms in this set of variations involve the following: 1) ornamental variation–the melody is disguised; 2) melodic variation–a new melody is provided while the

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[4]*Ibid.*

same bass and general harmonic scheme are retained; 3) figural variation–the variation is built from a particular figure or motive which may or may not be derived from a part of the theme; 4) contrapuntal variation (imitative)–motivic imitation plays an important role; and 5) characteristic variation–one which takes on a special character, such as a dance of some kind.[5] However, no variation is necessarily limited to only one category.

The theme employs sectional rounded binary form. Some analysts, writers, or commentators may refer to this as a three-part song form (ABA), a common form of character pieces.[6] The overall form of the theme is as follows:

PART ONE		PART TWO		
‖: A :‖:		B	A'	Codetta :‖
(m. 1-10)		(m. 11-18)	(m. 19-22)	(m. 23-29)
I ---------- I		V--------V	I --------- I	I --------- I

Figure 1: Diagram of the Chorale Theme's Overall Form

Section A of the theme is a parallel period of ten measures. It consists of two phrases having five measures each, and this five-bar phrase grouping brings about an unusual effect. The third bar of each phrase could be omitted, as bars two and four could be connected. The upper melodic line in the third measure is a prolongation of the melodic note d2 on beat two of measure 2. Although this measure is not supported by tonic harmony, the melodic line functions structurally as an extension of the tonic triad and brings about the five bar phrase structure.

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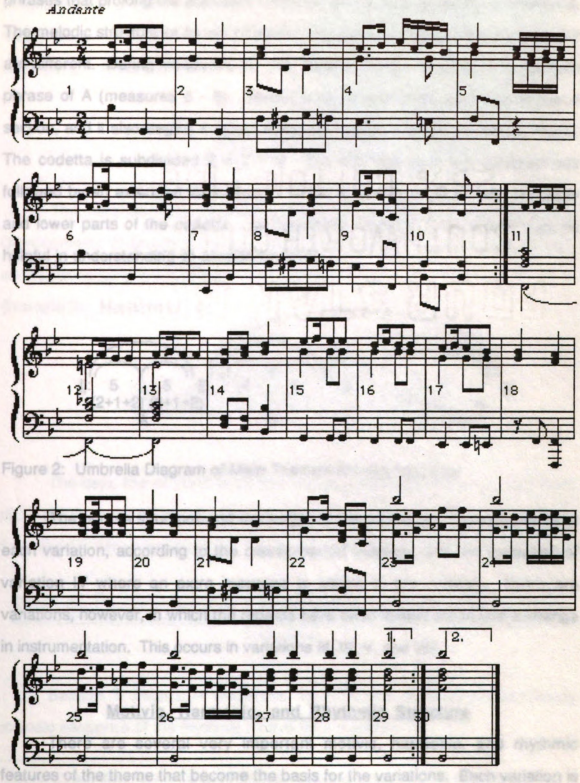
[5]Douglass M. Green, *Form in Tonal Music*, p. 118.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 93.

Example 1: Measures 1 - 29



Section B, the first passage of part two, consists of two four-measure phrases that prolong the dominant harmony, and lead to the return of section A. The melodic structure of its two phrases is similar, but the underlying harmonies are different. During measures 19 - 23, there is a return of most of the second phrase of A (measures 6 - 9). Measure 23 is part of the cadence of the A section, and it also begins a seven measure codetta, therefore creating elision. The codetta is subdivided 2 + 2 + 3. The first two bars are repeated and followed by an extended tonic chord. There is a tonic pedal in both the upper and lower parts of the codetta. An "umbrella" diagram of the theme may be helpful in understanding its phrase structure:

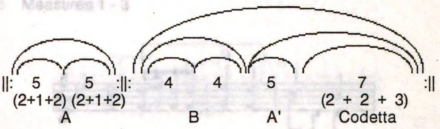


Figure 2: Umbrella Diagram of Main Theme's Phrase Structure

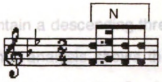
The phrase structure and the length of the theme are followed exactly in each variation, according to the classic-period tradition, with the exception of variation IV where an extra measure is added to the codetta. There are variations, however, in which the repeats have been written out due to a change in instrumentation. This occurs in variations III, IV, V, and VIII.

Motivic, Harmonic, and Rhythmic Structure

There are several very important motivic, harmonic, and rhythmic features of the theme that become the basis for the variations. Each variation is

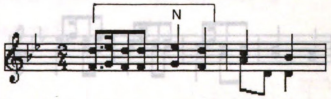
developed from one or two figures. The first of these motives initially occurs in measure 1. The rhythmic component of this motive is the basis for much of the theme itself.

Example 2: Measure 1



The neighbor-note e-flat2 becomes very important in the thematic development. Example 3 shows a metrical enlargement of this motive as well as the descending melodic line from measures 1 - 3.

Example 3: Measure 1 - 3



The bass line of the first phrase is used frequently throughout the work, often appearing in an ornamented fashion.

Example 4: Measures 1 - 5

Section B begins in measures 11 - 14 with a three-bar ascending melodic sequence of the rhythmic motive from measure 1.[7]

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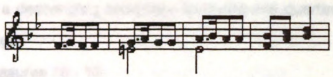
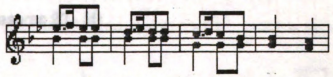
[7]The term "sequence" will refer to an immediate transposed restatement of a motive or thematic idea in the same instrumental part. It is important to maintain this distinction for the remainder of this thesis.

Example 5: Measures 11 - 14



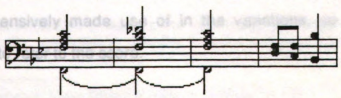
Measures 15 - 18 contain a descending three-stage melodic sequence of the same motive, and furthur analysis shows that it is an elaboration of the upper melodic line presented in measures 2 - 3: e-flat2, d2, c2, and b-flat1 begin on beat one of measures 15, 16, 17, and 18, respectively. The melodic note on the downbeat of each measure is prolonged by the use of the neighbor note motive.

Example 6: Measures 15 - 18



Example 8 illustrates the dominant pedal of measures 11 - 13 and the harmonies of measures 11 - 14 above the dominant pedal. These harmonies–V, vii^{o7}/V, V^{7}, and I–should be noted because in each of the variations, they are made use of extensively.[8]

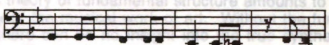
Example 7: Measures 11 - 14



[8]Stein, p. 9.

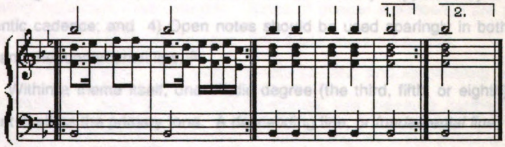
Another prominent motivic figure is found in the bass line of measures 15 - 18, which has a descending sequence involving one quarter and two eighth-notes in each stage.

Example 8: Measures 15 - 18



In the codetta (measures 23 - 29), the opening rhythmic motive is used as well as the rhythm from measure 4, occurring in measures 24 and 26. Also, the a-flat1 gives an emphasis of the subdominant. One should note the very important quarter-note rhythm of the extended cadence.

Example 9: Measures 23 - 29



The motives, harmonic structures, and rhythms discussed during this section are extensively made use of in the variations, so the reader will frequently need to refer to the score.

A Schenkerian View

The fundamental structure represents the background level of a work. It comprises both the fundamental line (descending melodic line in the top part) and the bass arpeggiation (I --- V-I). Oswald Jonas states:

> Schenker's theory of fundamental structure amounts to revelation of the unity of the musical work of art. Without the fundamental structure, there can be no insight into the true synthesis of the masterwork. The fundamental structure alone is the guardian of tonality, and only it can secure unity and coherence regardless of the dimensions involved or the complexity of diminution.[9]

Open notes represent the background level, while the remaining material is on the middle and foreground levels. According to Allen Forte, several generalities must be kept in mind when one is observing an entire work or movement: 1) The fundamental line descends to the tonic $\hat{1}$ only once; 2) The highest currently active scale degree determines the status of the fundamental line; 3) The final $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$ of the fundamental line is harmonically supported by a final authentic cadence; and 4) Open notes should be used sparingly in both the bass and the fundamental line.[10]

Within a theme itself, one triadic degree (the third, fifth, or eighth) will present itself as the primary tone. A descending line, or *fundamental line*, from the primary tone (third, fifth, or eighth scale degree) to the tonic is traceable within the theme.[11] Schenker defined the fundamental-line concept as follows:

> The fundamental line presents the unfolding (*Auswicklung*) of a basic sonority, expressing tonality in the horizontal plane. The

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[9]Oswald Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker*, p. 137.

[10]Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, p. 166.

[11]*Ibid.*, p. 132.

> tonal system, too, joins in expression of tonality. Its task is to bring a purposeful organization into the world of chords by selecting the scale degrees from amoung them. The liaison between the horizontal version of tonality through the fundamental line and the vertical through the scale degrees is voice leading.[12]

In this case, the scale degrees of the fundamental line are $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$. The primary tone is d2 proceeding to c2 in the first phrase and, after the fundamental line retraces itself, to b-flat1 concluding the second phrase. Once this line is recognized everything else becomes structurally subordinate. The first e-flat2 is eliminated, but the e-flat2's during measures 2 and 4 are not because they are both harmonized. However, these e-flat2's still function as neighbor-notes to d2.

Examples 10 - 12 are drawn from Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert's *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*. A reduction of section A is illustrated as Example 10. The vocabulary of symbols consists of the notehead, the stem, the slur, diagonal lines to indicate notes that are harmonically united, and a beam indicating significant linear motions. Notes of greater significance are given stems, and linear motions leading to or from these notes are slurred.

During measure 1 the neighbor-note (e-flat2) and its doubling at the lower sixth (g1) have been omitted because this measure harmonically prolongs d2 and f1. The crucial factor in determining this is that e-flat2 is not a structural member of the chord, but an upper neighbor to the chord tone d2. The prolonged note usually belongs to the prolonged chord.[13] Measure 2 needs no reduction, however, since the e-flat2 is still functioning structurally as an upper neighbor to d2. During measure 3, the passing tones f-sharp and f have been removed and, as noted earlier, the descending third (d2, c2, b-flat2)

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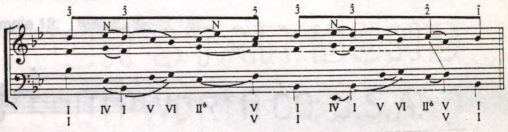
[12]As quoted by Jonas, p. 136.

[13]Forte and Gilbert, pp. 135-36.

during measures 2 and 3 is an important structural motive. Measure 4 has been reduced by omitting the passing note d2 and by collapsing the four sixteenth-notes into two eighth-notes. The $\frac{6}{4}$ chord of measure 5 is omitted because its upper two pitches function as a double appoggiatura. Even though much accent is given to it because of its rhythmic position, it only ornaments the resolution to the dominant. The surface detail has been set aside. These submetrical diminutions, functioning as neighbor-notes, passing tones, and appoggiaturas, are ornamental, belonging to a lower structural level, because they are of short duration and are unaccented (except for the double appoggiatura).[14]

Example 10: Measures 1 - 10



The first phrase of the B section has a top line that ascends from f1 to d2, accompanied by the progression V - I. The second phrase descends from e-flat2 to a1, harmonically supported by the progression back to and prolonging V. The filled-in ascending sixth , f1 to d2, prolongs the tonic harmony, while the filled-in descending diminished fifth prolongs e-flat2 and the dominant-seventh harmony. This is called linear *unfolding* or *Ausfaltung*. An interval unfolds to another interval. Schenker would read the top line as reaching all the way to e-flat2 and the entire section as a prolongation of V^7.[15]

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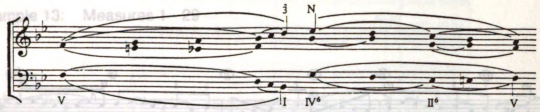
[14] *Ibid.*

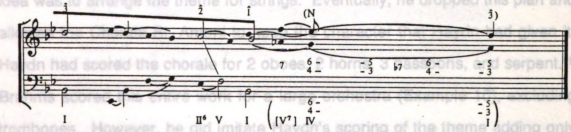
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Example 11: Measures 11 - 18



Returning to the opening material from section A during measures 19 - 23 gives clarity to the form and reinforces the fundamental line $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$. The codetta supplies a confirmation of the primary tone d2 preceded by its upper neighbor e-flat2. It is clear now that the goal of the fundamental line $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$ is reached in measure 23.[16]

Example 12: Measures 19 - 29

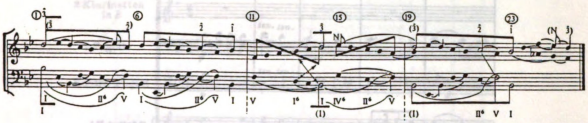


The example below illustrates a Schenkerian analysis of the entire chorale theme graphed by Forte and Gilbert. Several new notational devices are also employed. The doubly curved slur, applied to the bass line or the Roman numerals, is a Schenkerian symbol representing the progression to the dominant through dominant preparations, II or IV or possibly a secondary dominant. The crisscrossed diagonals with arrowheads at each end represent

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 162.

voice exchange, and the careted numbers in parentheses supply middle and foreground details without distorting the fundamental structure.[17]

Example 13: Measures 1 - 29



Orchestration

The Haydn divertimento was originally written for wind instruments, and Brahms scored the theme in the manner of Haydn.[18] However, Brahms' first idea was to arrange the theme for strings. Eventually, he dropped this plan and allowed the Chorale St. Antoni to keep the character that Haydn had given it. Haydn had scored the chorale for 2 oboes, 2 horns, 3 bassoons, and serpent.[19] Brahms scored this entire work for a large orchestra (Example 10), excluding trombones. However, he did imitate Haydn's scoring of the theme adding only the cellos and double-basses to reinforce the bass line. He scored the main theme for 2 oboes, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, and contra-bassoon, which replaced the obsolete serpent.

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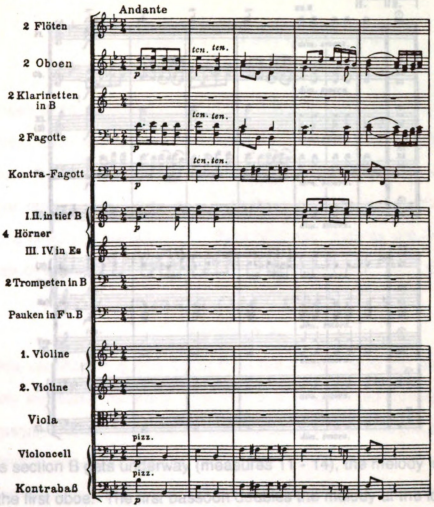
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

[18] Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, 2d. ed., p. 251.

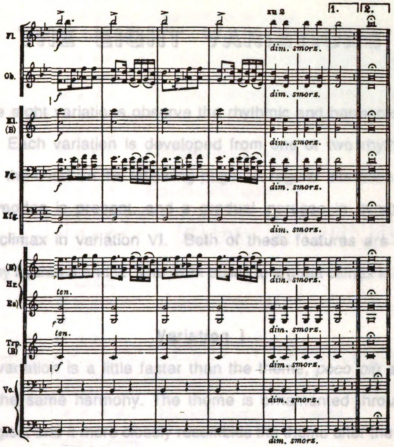
[19] "Serpent," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, p. 743. The serpent was a wide-bore, lip-vibrated wind instrument made of wood, covered with leather in an undulating serpentine shape. It was a relative of the cornett and produced a very gentle and mellow tone. The serpent first appeared in France in the late sixteenth century, but its usage became scarce by the end of the eighteenth century.

Example 14: Measures 1 - 5



The first phrase of section A (which is shown above) presents the theme partially doubled in parallel sixths in the oboes, doubled at the octave below by the bassoons and horns, the latter heterophonically. The five-bar phrase structure provides an unusual character. Measure 3 seems to be an added measure, which results from the melodic prolongation of measure 2 discussed earlier on p. 14. The horns are not scored during measure 3, reinforcing the conclusion that this measure is an insertion. The scoring of the second phrase is very similar to that of the first.

Example 15: Measures 23 - 29



As section B gets underway (measures 11 - 14), the melody is presented by only the first oboe. The first bassoon doubles the melody at the lower octave beginning in measure 15. This pianissimo segment provides contrast setting up the return of A. The A' section and the codetta are forte, having brass added for dynamic support, but the woodwinds still predominate melodically.

The final phrase, illustrated above, is very important because many of its characteristics occur quite often in the variations and the finale. This is a very expressive phrase because of its sudden outburst as well as the diminuendo in the last three measures. Its expressive effect is enhanced by the repetition of the same pitch (b-flat) in each instrument as the sound gradually fades away. The breve in the last measure seems to indicate that Brahms wanted a cessation of the rhythmic pulse before continuing with the first variation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EIGHT VARIATIONS

These eight variations observe the rhythmic and harmonic structure of the theme. Each variation is developed from one or two rhythmic motives illustrated in the chart on the following page. A regular alteration of the major and minor modes is present, and a gradual increase in dynamics occurs, reaching a climax in variation VI. Both of these features are illustrated in chapter six by figures 8 and 9. The work builds to a great climax in the Finale.

Variation I

This variation is a little faster than the theme, *poco più animato,* with essentially the same harmony. The theme is ornamented throughout in the string arpeggios, and it more closely resembles the theme after the double bar.

Binding variations together by motivic means benefits the unity of the work, and Brahms uses many linkage techniques to connect small pieces together into a larger entity.[1] A five quarter-note motive on b-flat underlies this variation and links it with the theme. At the beginning of variation I, this motive is presented by the bassoons and contra bassoon, horns, and timpani (measures 30 - 32). This motive is a repetition of the five quarter-note motive that concludes the theme. The piccolo has its share in the reiteration of this note when it is transferred to the upper winds. During the course of this variation all the winds and the double basses give this idea prominence.

[1]Oswald Jonas, *Introduction to the Theory of Heinrich Schenker,* p. 146.

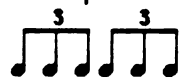
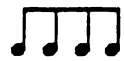
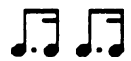
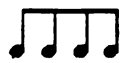
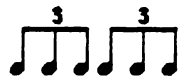
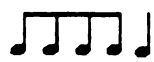
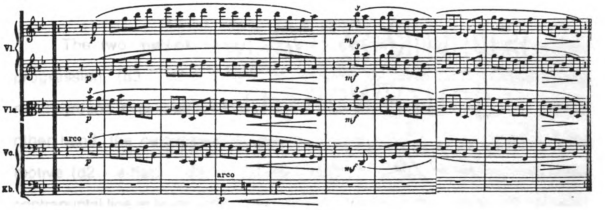
Variation	Rhythmic Motives
Var. I (2/4)	Five quarter-note motive on b-flat
	 - Arpeggiated triplet eighth-notes
	 - Figuration of original bass line in eighth-notes
Var. II (2/4)	 - Neighbor-note motive
	 - Eighth-note figuration
	 - Arpeggiated eighth-note triplet figuration
Var. III (2/4)	Figuration of theme
	 - Descending eighth-note pattern
	 - Neighbor-note figure
Var. IV (3/8)	Running sixteenth-notes
	 - Melodic contour of theme
Var. V (6/8)	 - Lower neighbor-note motive
	 - Eighth-notes creating polyrhythm (3/4)
Var. VI (2/4)	 - Lower neighbor-note figuration
	 - Rhythm used throughout
Var. VII (6/8)	 - Rhythmic adaption from neighbor-note motive
Var. VIII (3/4)	Melodic figuration of theme

Figure 3: Rhythmic Motives of Each Variation

In the A section (measures 30 - 39), the principal interest is supplied by new material in the violins, violas, and cellos. They develop two new motives

which arpeggiate the harmony, one in straight eighth-notes and the other in eighth-note triplets. The cellos and violas, in octaves, have a figuration of the original bass motive from measures 1 - 10, and the first and second violins employ a figuration of the melody in eighth-note triplets, also in octaves. A fragment of the bass motive appears in the double basses during measures 33-34, reinforcing the cadence.

Example 16: Measures 30 - 39



The technique of invertible counterpoint is employed during measures 35-39 with the cellos and violins exchanging parts. The violas repeat basically the same material they contain in phrase one, while the bassoons double the cellos with the eighth-note motive. Addition of the upper woodwinds playing the quarter-note figure results in the thickening of the texture which is reinforced by the dynamic marking of *mezzo-forte*.

Two important ideas from the theme, the upper neighbor-note and the descending-third progression, are extensively developed during this variation. This is evident from the very beginning. As graphed by Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, measures 30 - 39 are illustrated below .[2]

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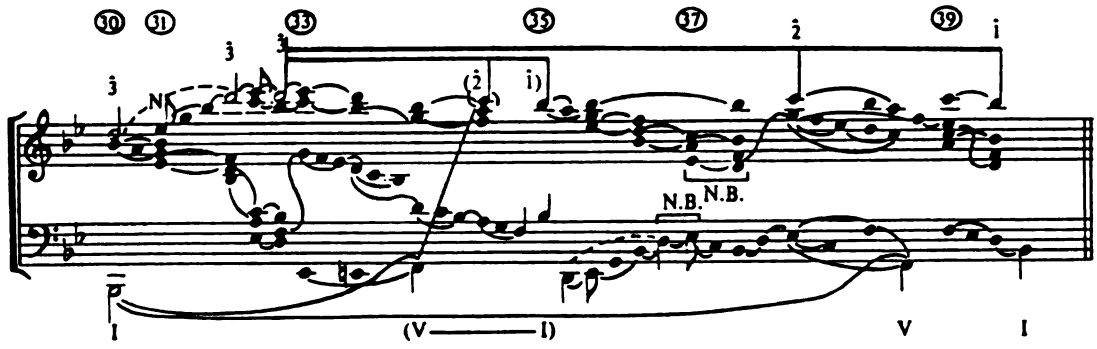
[2]Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis*, p. 321.

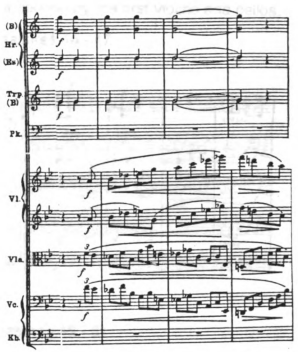
Example 17: Measures 30 - 39



The two melodic ideas appear differently. The descending third progression, (d3 - c2 - b-flat1) in different octaves, is traceable at the middleground level in different octaves, but is absent at the foreground. On the other hand, the neighbor-note idea is emphasized in the foreground. The motive (d2 - e-flat3 - d3) in different octaves, occurs in each of the three contrapuntal line at least once. The top voice presents d2 - e-flat2 - d3 - e-flat3 - d3 during measures 30 - 32. This motive is imitated during measures 35 - 36 in the bass and by the inner voice during measures 35 - 37. Except for octave displacement, the fundamental line parallels that of the theme, reinforcing the background reading.

The B section of variation I (measures 40 - 47) begins with the five quarter-note motive in the brass. Phrase one (measures 40 - 43) is a *forte* passage, and the string texture is similar to the opening of the variation. This phrase is built upon the harmonic unit of measures 11 - 14 from the theme. During measure 42, however, this harmonic unit is slightly different with the addition of the minor ninth (g-flat) in the strings. This phrase is louder than its corresponding phrase in the theme, and is reinforced by the quarter-note motive in the brass.

Example 18: Measures 40 - 43

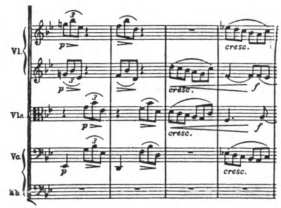


Phrase two is marked *piano*, and this effect is further intensified by a thicker texture with more rests. The winds now alternate the quarter-note figure and support the descending pattern (involving free sequence) in the strings. During measures 44 - 45 the violins have a triplet fragment in octaves that arpeggiates the harmonies on the first beat of each measure. This is presented in durchbrochene Arbeit down one octave by the violas and cellos, also sounding in octaves, on beat two of each measure.[3] The cellos also support the descending sequence with their quarter-notes on beat one, which create a line continued in the woodwinds in measures 46 - 47. This is derived from the theme's bass motive of measures 11 - 14. During measure 46, the second

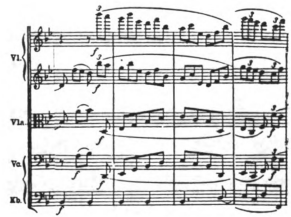
[3]"Durchbrochene Arbeit," *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, p. 247. Durchbrochene Arbeit is a technique of composition, often encountered in works of the classical period, in which melodic material is broken into fragments and distributed among two or more instruments or parts.

violins and violas employ, in octaves, a fragment of the triplet motive that is freely imitated up a second by the first violins and cellos.

Example 19: Measures 44 - 47



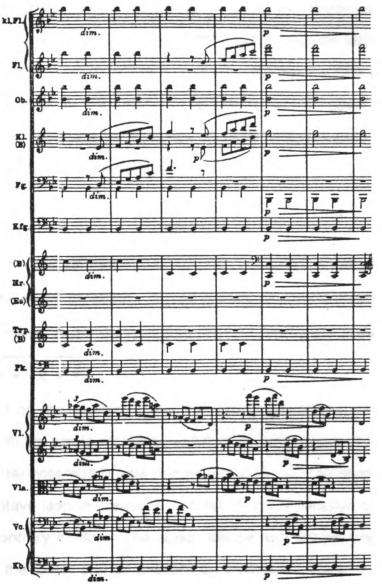
Example 20: Measures 48 - 51



The A' section's material (measures 48 - 52) is similar to the material in the second phrase of A (measures 35 - 39). The dynamic marking parallels that of the theme, and this *forte* reinforces the quarter-note motive in all of the winds and the double basses. Invertible counterpoint is again employed in the strings from measures 30 - 33. Still in octaves, the violins take over the triplet motive up two octaves from measures 30 - 33, and the violas and cellos, also in

octaves, employ the eighth-notes down two octaves. The upper strings also help increase the intensity of this phrase, playing in their high register.

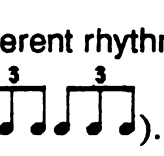
Example 21: Measures 52 - 58



Illustrated above, the codetta (measures 52 - 58) begins in elision with the end of the previous phrase as in the theme. It has a tonic pedal in both outside voices, and the 2 + 2 + 3 subdivision is maintained. The strings present the triplet motive in close imitation, and there is a continuous overlap of this five-

note fragment caused by the shifting of the beats, creating a stretto effect.[4] The secondary dominant V^7/IV is present in the strings during measures 51 - 54, and the ascending eighth-note violin motive of measure 31 recurs in the woodwinds in octaves during these same measures. Imitation predominates in the last three measures (measures 56 - 58) within the strings. Changes in register produce a shift in timbre. In each measure, the first violins and violas present a fragment of the triplet motive that is imitated down an octave in the second violins and cellos on beat two. A gradual diminuendo is employed in a manner similar to that of the theme.

Variation II

Variation II is still faster, with a tempo indication of *più vivace*. There is a change in mode to b-flat minor. The complexity of the orchestration is increased with three different rhythmical patterns often occurring simultaneously ().

Based on the rhythm of the first bar of the theme, this variation gets underway with the whole orchestra (except the second pair of horns) presenting either a quarter-note/eighth-note rhythm or the () rhythm of Example 2. The bass octave leap in measure 1 of the theme is recalled by the strings and piccolo in contrary motion. The upper strings and piccolo present the original form, while the lower strings present its inversion. *Forte* is indicated in this measure, and *piano* is indicated in the next measure, together creating a very striking effect.

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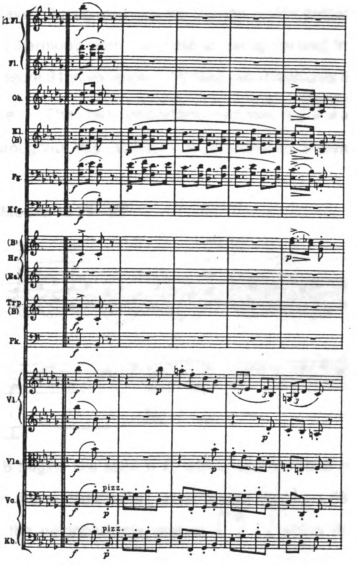
[4]E. Markham Lee, *Brahms' Orchestral Works*, p. 12.

Example 22: Measures 59 - 63

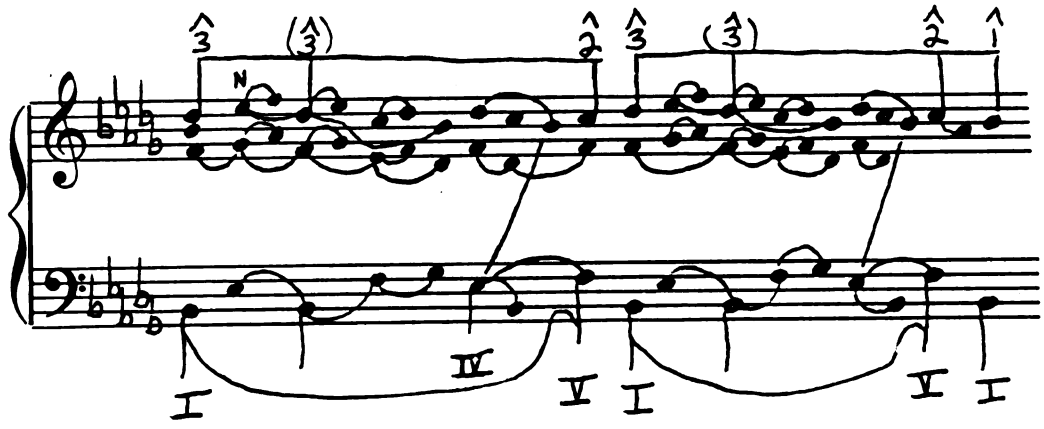


For the remainder of phrase 1 (measures 59 - 63), the clarinets and bassoons carry this ♩. ♩ ♩ motive in sixths, in a descending melodic line derived from the theme. The cellos' and double basses' pizzicato is a figuration of the opening bass line, illustrated in Example 4, without the chromatic passing tones.[5] The violins and violas recall material from variation I. The first violin figure of measure 31 is now presented in its inverted form in the

[5]Leon Stein, *An Analytic Study of Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn,"* p. 6.

first violins (measures 60 - 61) and is imitated by the viola (measures 61 - 62) at the lower octave. During measure 62, the first violins present an arpeggiated figuration of the harmony, with the material being derived from the viola and cello line of measure 31 in variation I. Phrase two (measures 64 - 68) is parallel to phrase one. The two important motives ()still predominate throughout this variation. A Schenkerian analysis of section A is as follows:

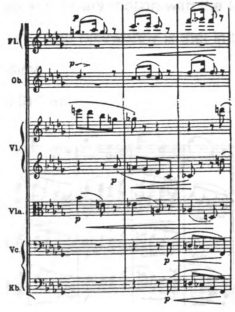
Example 23: Measures 59 - 68



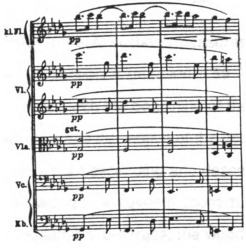
Section B begins like section A, with a one bar *forte* (measure 69) and octave leaps in the outside parts. Also during measure 69, the violins and violas present the neighbor-note motive  which first occurs in the woodwinds during this variation. Measures 70 - 76 find the neighbor-note motive  in the woodwinds. During measures 70 - 73, the flutes present a three-stage sequence of this motive, involving movement upward by fourth, that is reinforced by the violas, which present a sequence of descending fifths. The motive of the descending diminished-seventh chord in the remaining strings is derived from material found in measure 61 and begins with the first violins (measure 70), imitated down a fifth by the second violins (measure 71)

followed by the cellos and double basses, down a twelfth. This eighth-note figure is developed through the modified harmonies of measures 11 - 14.

Example 24: Measures 70 - 72



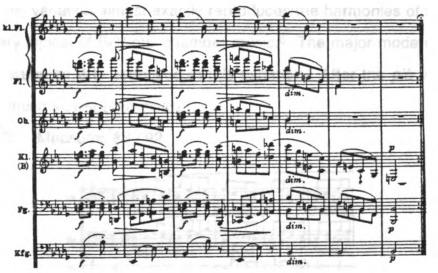
Example 25: Measures 73 - 76



Phrase two of section B is based on the descending pattern shown in Example 6. This is found in all of the strings and is reinforced by the second

clarinet and second bassoon. This phrase is taken directly from that of the theme. The first note of each measure serves as the thematic tone. The dotted-quarter-note/eighth-note pattern descends in a pattern of sixths. The upper strings' eighth-note moves in contrary motion with the lower strings; eliminating the effect of parallel motion. Also noteworthy is that in these four measures the piccolo is marked pianissimo.

Example 26: Measures 81 - 86



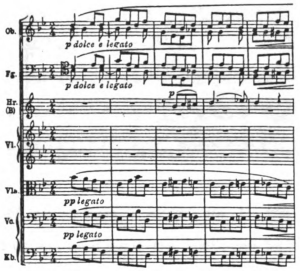
The material comprising the A' section (measures 77 - 81) is parallel to the material in phrase two of section A (measures 59 - 63) until measure 81, where again A's ending is elided with the beginning of the codetta. The codetta (measures 81 - 86) further develops the motive of the octave leap in the strings, piccolo and contra bassoon in both ascending and descending form, alternating from the major tonic to the leading tone seventh chord during measures 81 - 84. During this four-measure repeated sub-phrase, the woodwinds make use of the neighbor-note motive and the descending diminished seventh figure of measure 61 (except the bassoons, which simultaneously play the ascending form). This passage is accented by quarter notes on the tonic pitch by the

brass. The remaining three bars (measures 85 -87) unveil a gradual reduction of texture supporting an effective diminuendo marking. A cadential use of the German sixth chord occurs during measure 84, and this altered IV chord resolves to the *tièrce de Picardie* in preparation for the major mode which returns in variation III.

Variation III

This variation almost exactly reproduces the harmonies of the theme, which is very typical of Brahms' chamber music.[6] The major mode reached at the end of variation II is continued in this variation. After the *più vivace*, this variation is much slower (*con moto*).

Example 27: Measures 88 - 92

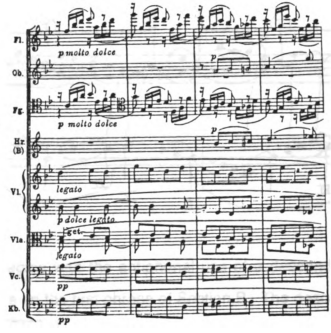


Measures 88 - 97 get underway with a figuration of the theme. This is presented by the first oboe and doubled by the first bassoons. This line presents a rhythmic variant of the neighbor-note motive during measure 88, and

[6]Lee, p. 13.

the figuration found during measure 90 is identical with the violins' figure in variation I (measure 32). The oboes and bassoons are accompanied by the lower strings in three octaves, which present an ornamented version of the bass line of the theme from measures 1 - 10. An augmented version of the theme, derived from what happens in measures 5 - 6, is presented by one horn during measures 90 - 92 and is circled in the Example above.[7]

Example 28: Measures 98 - 101



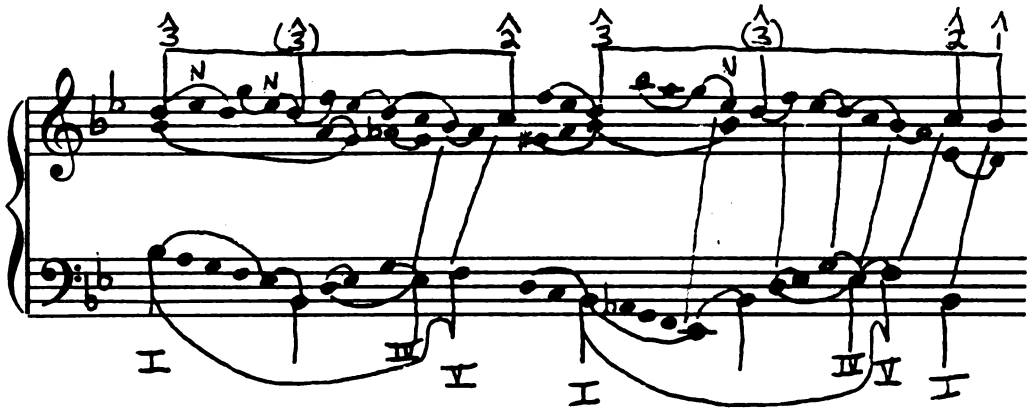
The repeat of the 10 bars is written out, for the sake of changes in orchestration. The double-reed parts are taken over by the violins and violas with the remaining strings repeating the same material. The flutes and bassoons add a broken-chord embellishment. These arpeggios are presented by the first flute and first bassoon on beat one and then freely imitated by their lower counterparts. The first oboe reinforces the third horn during measures 100 - 102 and measures 105 - 107. A noteworthy point concerning

[7] Stein, p. 7.

orchestration is the score indication for horns in no fewer than three different pitches.[8] This shows the influence of Haydn's scoring on Brahms, and the limited acceptance of the valved instrument.

Section A makes use of much more ornamentation than the previous variations. The repetition of A adds embellishing sixteenth-notes, but this does not alter the structure. A graph of section A is as follows:

Example 29: Measures 88 - 97



Section B begins with the antiphonal use of a descending figure and a neighbor-note figure in the first phrase of Section B. The descending pattern of eighth-notes (♩♩♩♩♩) is presented by the first bassoon (measure 108), then imitated freely, by the third horn (measure 109), then repeated in octaves by the bassoons (measure 110), followed by the violas (measure 111). The second figure (♩♩♩♩), derived from the neighbor-note motive is sounded in the first horn, then first clarinet , freely repeated by the horn, and then taken over by the first violins. This phrase, marked *piano*, is thinly orchestrated. The harmonies of this phrase are the same as in measures 11 -14 of the theme,

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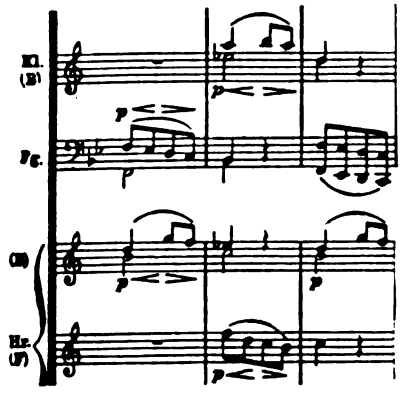
[8]Lee, p. 13.

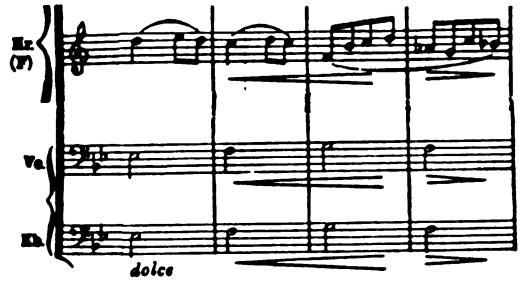
except for the addition of a minor seventh (a-flat) in measure 111. This measure functions harmonically as V^7/IV, which resolves as expected into IV to begin phrase two.

Example 30: Measures 108 - 110



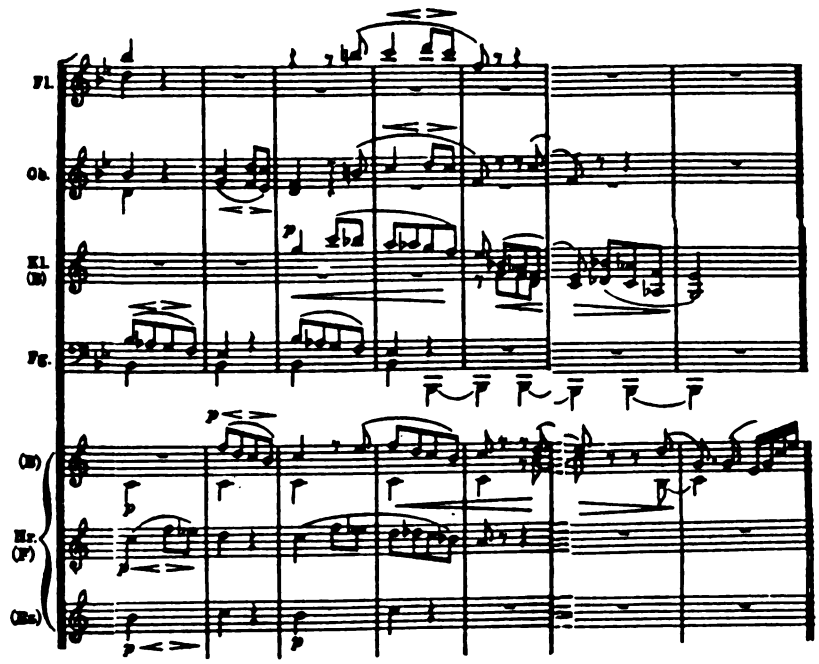
During phrase two of section B (measures 112 - 115), the bass line takes its material from measures 15 -18. It is the inversion of the descending movement on beat one of these measures. The horns present an embellished form of the neighbor-note motive from measure 88.

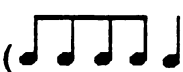
Example 31: Measures 112 - 115



The A' section (measures 116 - 120) is similar to measures 88 - 92 of section A with a slight change in instrumentation. The texture becomes more dense with the addition of higher octave doublings, yet the dynamic indication remains *pianissimo*, resulting in a very bright, light sound.

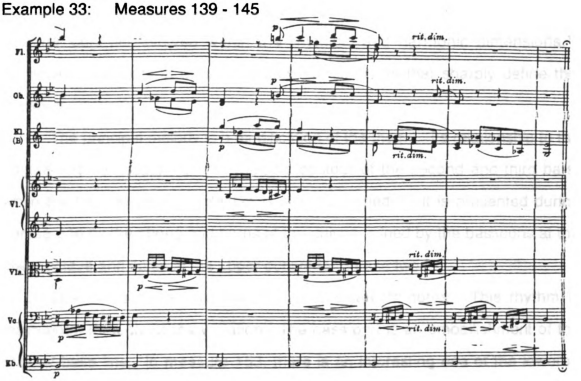
Example 32: Measures 120 - 126



Antiphonal use of the two figures () is again present in the codetta (measures 120 - 126). A tonic pedal is present in the second bassoon and second horn while the remaining horns and woodwinds present the two figures in free imitation. During measures 120 - 123, the subdominant tonicization, characteristic of the codetta, appears in the horn (a-flat1). During measures 124 - 125 a suggestion of the subdominant minor, which results from a passing tone, is present in the clarinets. In measure 124, g-flat1 produces a minor subdominant triad, and in measure 125, the alteration of c natural to c-flat1 produces a suggestion of the iv/iv in B-flat Major. The harmonic vocabulary starts to become much more expanded with the use of borrowed chords and chromaticism. The codetta in each variation seems to be a passage in which harmonies are experimented with and continuously altered.

Part two is written out and is comparable to part one. A figuration of sixteenth-notes is added in the strings and woodwinds which increase the activity and provide more motion than is found in the previous section. This figuration is characterized by a large upward leap followed by descending conjunct motion. During measures 127 - 130, the violas and cellos employ durchbrochene Arbeit using this sixteenth-note figuration at a one measure time interval. The same imitation that occurs in measures 98 - 107, is present in the woodwinds during measures 135 - 139. The codetta is embellished with the sixteenth-note figuration in the strings. Measures 139 - 145 again employ durchbrochene Arbeit with the interval of alternation at one measure decreasing to the half-bar during measures 143 - 145.

Example 33: Measures 139 - 145



Variation IV

Various changes are made during the course of this variation. The minor mode is again adopted, the time signature is no longer 2/4, but 3/8, and the

pace is rather slow, *Andante con moto*. The principle of rhythmic unity provides a connection among all the variations, but here comes a point where one begins to observe this on an unconscious level. Alan Walker states:

> The problem of rhythmic unity has been almost completely overlooked by those who accept a coup d'oeil view of musical creativity. Neither Réti nor Schenker paid it any heed. Réti was completely absorbed by the more spectacular aspects of thematic unity, while Schenker explained everything in terms of harmonic structure. Both failed to realize that the sort of total integration each envisaged is theoretically and practically impossible without complete unification in all the three dimensions of music. To this extent their outstandingly original contributions to musical analysis are incomplete. Rhythms which do not hang together are a impossible to find in a masterpiece as any other type of random contrast.[9]

Walker goes on to say that composers increase contrast to retain tension, and Brahms' contrast evolved within the rhythmic and harmonic dimensions.[10] Schematic simplicity is emphasized by the contrasts that sharply define this variation.

The principal melody is a modification of the theme. Its relationship to the original theme occurs with the melodic contour of the second and third bars, while the five-bar phrase's rhythm is still maintained.[11] It is presented during phrase one by the oboes and horns at the unison, joined by the bassoons at the lower octave and flutes at the upper octave for phrase two.

The violas have a running figure in sixteenth-notes. This rhythm is maintained throughout the variation. The bass part is an embellishment of the original bass line. In measure 153, there is an interesting use of the lowered

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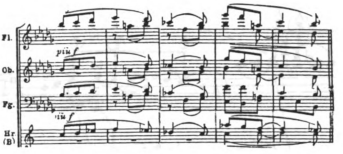
[9]Walker, p. 86.

[10]*Ibid.*, p. 119.

[11]Stein, p. 8.

second (c-flat), which gives the melody a momentary Phrygian inflection. The use of chromaticism, characteristic of Brahms' music, produces unusual sonorities.

Example 34: Measures 151 - 155



In the written-out repetition of section A (measures 156 - 165), there is an expected change of instrumentation. Invertible counterpoint, which is first used during variation I, is again employed, but during this variation the interval of inversion is the twelfth. The principal melody is given to the strings down an octave from the oboes and horns in phrase one, while the sixteenth-note figure is presented by the winds above the melody, creating double counterpoint. Leon Stein comments on the use of invertible counterpoint in this passage. He states:

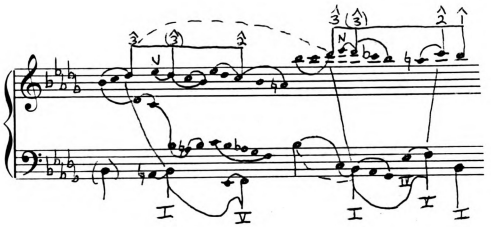
> In listening to this no one need be aware of the fact, for the music conveys its own message; but just as the musician enjoys the Finale of the "Jupiter" Symphony of Mozart all the more because he realizes that both brain and emotion go to its making, so there is satisfaction in perceiving the unobtrusive skill with which Brahms here introduces a rather complex contrapuntal device.[12]

A graph of section A shows several interesting features. Octave displacement occurs during phrase two. The root of the tonic chord does not

[12]As quoted by Lee, p. 15.

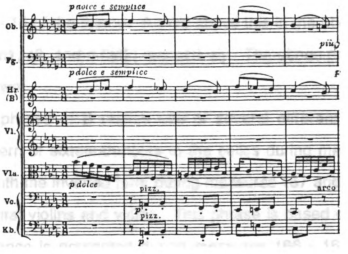
sound in the bass line until the end of measure 147, but it is implied from the beginning. Also, the two ideas from the theme, the neighbor-note motive and descending third progression, are again structurally important.

Example 35: Measures 146 - 155



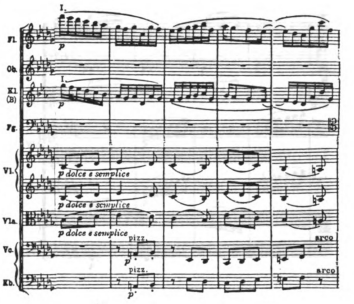
The theme with its sixteenth countersubject as it first appears is presented below:

Example 36: Measures 146 - 150



Illustrated below are the two parts when they occur inverted at the twelfth during the repeat:

Example 37: Measures 156 - 160

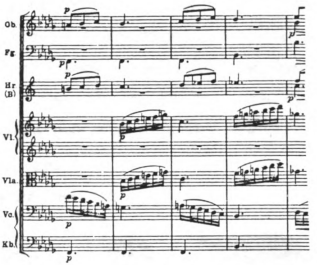


The B section is more closely related to that of the theme than it may first appear. During measures 166 - 169, the notes on beat one presented by the cellos are f1, g, a, and B-flat, respectively. These are the first notes on beat one in measures 11 - 14 of the theme. A third above this in the oboes and on beat one are a1, b-flat1, c2, and d-flat2, respectively. The oboes present this figure throughout part two.

The first phrase of B makes use of several different techniques. A descending pattern of sixteenth-notes in the cellos during measures 166 and 168 alternates with the inverted form during measures 167 and 169, doubled in octaves by the first violins and violas. This phrase is based on sequence. A two-stage sequence is presented during measures 166 - 169 by the cellos, oboes, and horns. This is complemented during measures 167 - 170 by the first

violins and viola's two-stage sequence. The harmonic progression is again that of measures 11 -14.

Example 38: Measures 166 - 169



Phrase two (measures 170 - 173) employs sequence at a one-bar time interval in the oboe and horn, downward by second. Durchbrochene Arbeit is present in the strings. The violins and violas (measure 172) take over the sixteenth-notes previously found in the cellos, which return to the cellos during measure 173, leading to the A' section.

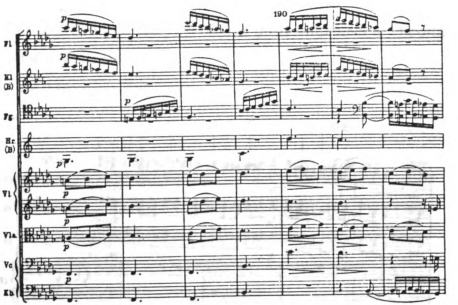
The phrase comprising A' (measures 174 - 178) parallels the earlier phrase at measures 151 - 155 with the addition of sixteenth-notes in the first violins. *Più forte* is the dynamic indication, which corresponds to that of the theme.

The codetta (measures 178 - 185) is lengthened by one measure at the end of this variation. This is the only instance of difference between the number of measures in the theme and the number in the variations. The two-bar repeated sub-phrase (measures 178 - 181) provides a wide dynamic range with *piano* (measures 178 and 180) followed by *sforzando* in measures 189 and

191. These two accented measures also make use of the German sixth (altered $IV\frac{6}{5}$), which this time resolves to the tonic minor as expected.[13]

The B section, A' section, and the codetta are repeated during measures 186 - 193, 194 - 198, and 198 - 205, with changes in instrumentation. Another instance of invertible counterpoint at the twelfth occurs during the repetition of section B. The principal melody appears in the same register as at measures 166 - 173, but the running sixteenth-note figure, now above the melody, is transposed a fifth higher than in measure 166. The parts remain exchanged throughout the entire repeat.

Example 39: Measures 186 - 192



Variation V

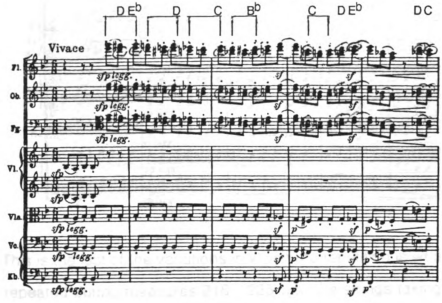
This variation is Scherzo-like in the major mode with a time signature of 6/8. Resemblance to the theme during part one lies mainly in the adherence to

[13]Stein, p. 8.

the five-bar phrase grouping, and the type of scoring is perhaps rather reminiscent of that in the Scherzo of Beethoven's "Eroica."[14]

There are several features in section A worth noting. First, the string figure in measure 206 is derived from the melodic neighbor-note motive, presented in contrary motion and rhythmically altered. This motive is prominent throughout the variation. The strings then continue with a repeated-note pattern occurring frequently throughout. During the first phrase (measures 206 - 210 illustrated below), the oboes, flutes, and bassoons play a melodic passage that is doubled in thirds at three different octave levels throughout. Circles and letters representing pitch classes indicate the thematic basis, and the figure within the brackets is the lower neighbor-note motive first presented by the strings during measure 206. This motive gives emphasis to important thematic notes on the downbeats.

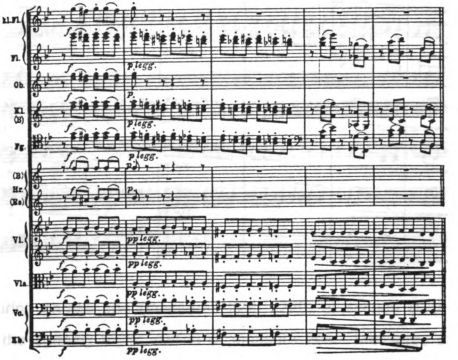
Example 40: Measures 206 - 210



[14]Lee, p. 17.

Phrase two (measures 211 - 215 illustrated below) is parallel to phrase one; however, it brings about a very prominent feature of this variation, the use of cross-rhythms in the accompaniment. During measures 212 - 213, the string rhythm employs eighth-notes (♫♫♫♫) against the woodwind rhythm of eighth-note triplets (♫♫♫♫), creating a polyrhythmic effect of simultaneous 3/4 and 6/8 meters. During these two measures (212 - 213) the double basses support the 3/4 cross rhythm and continue this rhythmical figure through measure 215.

Example 41: Measures 211 - 215

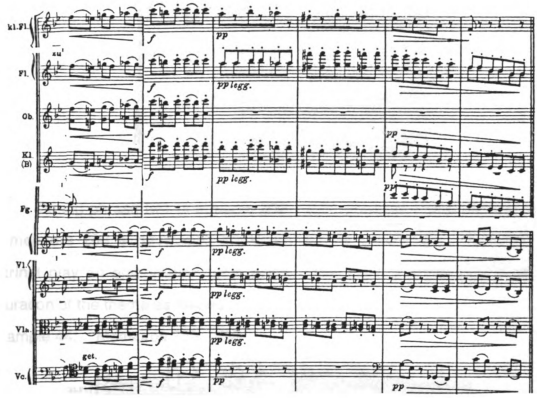


This is the last of the variations in which the repetition is written out. Part one is repeated during measures 216 - 225 with the strings taking the melodic lead and the winds playing the reiterated rhythm above the melody. The repetition of each phrase of part one is varied by changes in orchestration.

Throughout this repetition, several interesting effects occur. During

measures 220 - 221, the strings imitate the woodwinds by an eighth-note. Also, during measures 222 - 225, the polyrhythmic effect again occurs, exchanged according to the orchestration with compound meter in the strings and simple meter in the woodwinds.

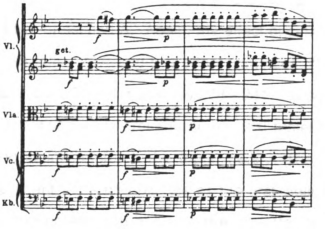
Example 42: Measures 220 - 225



During phrase one (measures 226 - 229) of section B, the strings develop the opening triplet motive of measure 206. Measures 226 - 227 present a one-bar, two-stage sequence involving movement down a second by the lower strings. This sequence makes use of the lower neighbor-note motive and repeated-note figure. Harmonies corresponding to those of the theme (Example 7) are used except during measure 228. Instead of the expected V^7 of B-flat Major, the sonority is a major-minor seventh chord spelled E-flat - G - B-flat - D-flat. However, this chord does not function as a dominant seventh in A-

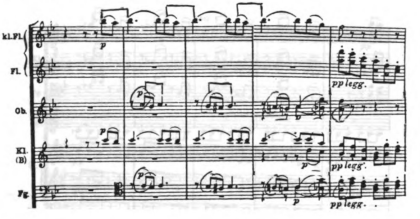
flat. It results from prolongation of the harmony during measure 227 (E - G - B-flat - D-flat). The E is lowered to E-flat, which functions as a passing tone.[15]

Example 43: Measures 226 - 229



During phrase two (measures 230 - 233), the lower neighbor-note figure of measure 206 is developed imitatively by the woodwinds. The flute and clarinet play an embellished tonic pedal. The oboe and bassoon present a figuration of the theme as follows:

Example 44: Measures 229 - 233



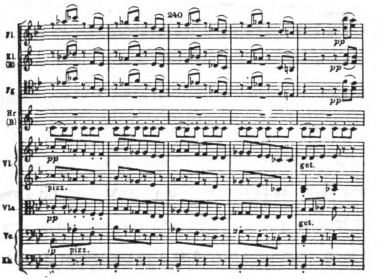
Circles indicate the melodic basis derived from measures 15 - 18 and brackets show the use of the lower neighbor-note motive from measure 206. Using this

[15]Stein, p. 9.

motive, the oboes also present a three-stage descending sequence that is supported by the lower strings. The violas and cellos develop material from measure 206, and the double basses present descending quarter-notes.

The material in the A' section (measures 234 - 237) is similar to the material in phrase two of section A. Again, the effect of simultaneous meters is felt during measures 235 - 237, and this effect continues through the first four measures of the codetta. During measures 238 - 241, the strings present triple meter (3/4) while the woodwinds present the off-beat triplet pattern (6/8). The second violins and cellos reinforce the triple meter. They play on only the strong beat and present the same pitches as the first violins' and violas' two-note repeated eighth-notes. Throughout the codetta, the horns play the repeated-note pattern in the manner of an ostinato. The harmonies of the codetta, through the use of chromatic alterations, give a minor subdominant of the subdominant inflection (iv/iv) with c-flat, a-flat, and g-flat sounding throughout.

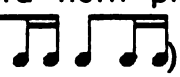
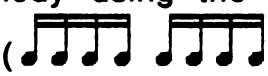
Example 45: Measures 238 - 242



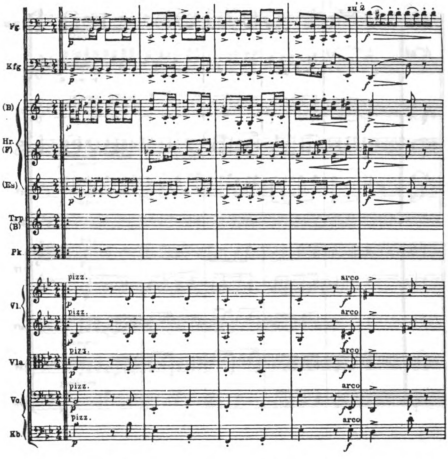
The codetta ends very quietly and makes use of syncopation, with the final note sounding on the second beat instead of the first. This syncopation anticipates the use of rhythmic displacement that occurs during variation VI and VII. Section B is repeated during measures 245 - 252, almost verbatim with measures 226 - 233, and with changes in instrumentation, A' is repeated during measures 253 - 257, and the codetta during measures 257 - 263. The latter two passages find the woodwinds and strings exchanging parts during this repetition.

Variation VI

This variation, a marked *vivace*, is the most brilliant of the eight. Its resemblance to the theme is much closer than any of the previous variations'.

Section A (measures 264 - 273) gets underway with an ornamented form of the theme in the horns (measure 264), a variant of the string figure from measure 206. Supporting this, the cellos and basses play a slight variant of the original bass line. Rhythmically during phrase one (measures 264 - 268), the third horn plays a figuration of the violin melody using the pattern (). This rhythm, together with the pattern (), forms the rhythmic basis of this variation. The four horns, reinforced by the bassoons and contra bassoon, present these two rhythmic patterns, animating this phrase. A condensed form of the main melody is found in the first violins, played *pizzicato* and supported rhythmically by the remaining strings. Instead of the usual half-cadence on the F-Major triad in the fifth bar, a half cadence on the D-Major triad concludes this phrase. The chromatic character of the motives used during this variation is reinforced by a shift in the harmonic goal of this phrase.

Example 46: Measures 264 - 28

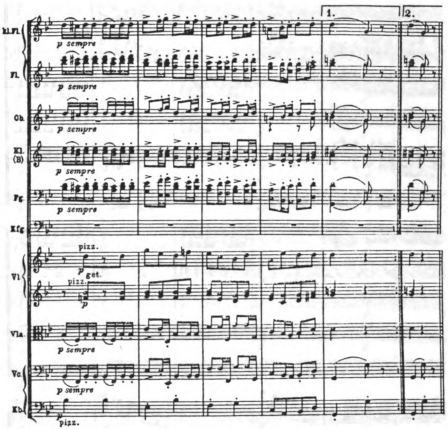


Phrase two (measures 269 - 273 illustrated on the following page) is parallel to phrase one; however, the rhythmic embellishment of the melody (), previously given to the horn's, is now found in the woodwinds. The first-violin melody during measures 270 - 271 is derived from the oboe variant of measures 89 - 90 from variation III, which in turn is derived from the first-violin figure presented during measure 32.[16] Part one comes to a close with an unexpected cadence in G Major.

If the repeated notes and ornamentation were omitted from part one of this variation, its melodic structure would show a remarkable resemblance to

[16]*Ibid.*, p. 10.

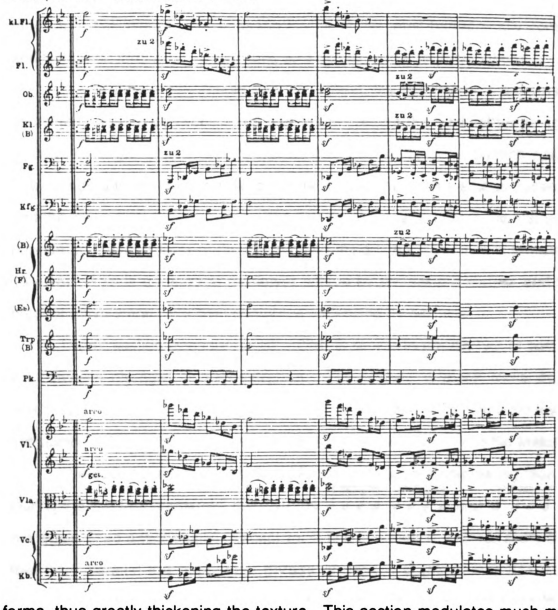
Example 47: Measures 269 - 273



that of the theme. The inverted neighbor-note motive is apparent only at the foreground level, but the upper neighbor is still present at the middle and background levels. Unlike its counterparts in the previous variations, the middleground level of this variation is very similar to that of the theme. Harmonically, however, section A of this variation is the farthest removed from the theme.

During phrase one (measures 274 - 277 illustrated below) of section B, the two rhythmic figures and are used antiphonally. The texture is very full with several instruments playing half-notes and the remaining playing one of these two patterns. During measures 275 and 277, the second pattern appears simultaneously in descending and ascending

Example 48: Measures 274 - 279

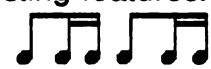


forms, thus greatly thickening the texture. This section modulates much more freely than any section encountered so far. The rhythmic motives that are treated antiphonally continue to extend the harmonies away from those of the theme, and this digression is reinforced by all of the subordinate parts. However, the harmonies of the theme (Example 8) are present, but are somewhat modified. Instead of the expected vii^{o7}/V during measure 275, a G-flat major chord is used (bVI - the borrowed submediant triad of B-flat Major).

Also, during measure 277, instead of B-flat Major, the use of D-flat changes the mode to b-flat minor. This passage is one of the most harmonically complex and is marked *fortissimo*. It functions as a climax in this set of variations.

During phrase two (measures 278 - 281), the two rhythmic patterns are combined. The upper woodwinds and horns present the sixteenth-note figure, while the strings, bassoons, and contra bassoon present the second pattern. The strings portray two forms in contrary motion, the upper strings ascending and the lower strings descending. The first notes on each beat in the first violins provide an inverted form of the descending melody from the theme (measures 15 - 18). This is doubled at the lower octave by the second violins, and both present a five-stage, one beat sequence ascending by second.

The A' section (measures 282 - 286) is similar to phrase two of part one with several changes in orchestration. The texture is much more dense, resulting from the addition of the brass and an increase in the dynamic level to *fortissimo*.[17] The cadence, however, is this time as expected, in B-flat Major.

The codetta (measures 286 - 292) presents several interesting features. During the first four measures, the rhythms  and  are again used antiphonally. Except for a few changes in orchestration, these four bars parallel the antiphonal phrase of section B (measures 274 - 277) transposed either up a fourth or down a fifth. The rate of change in the harmonic rhythm of this passage occurs at a one-bar interval: tonic harmony predominates during measure 286; the Neapolitan sixth during measure 287; tonic harmony during measure 288; and the borrowed subdominant during measure 289.

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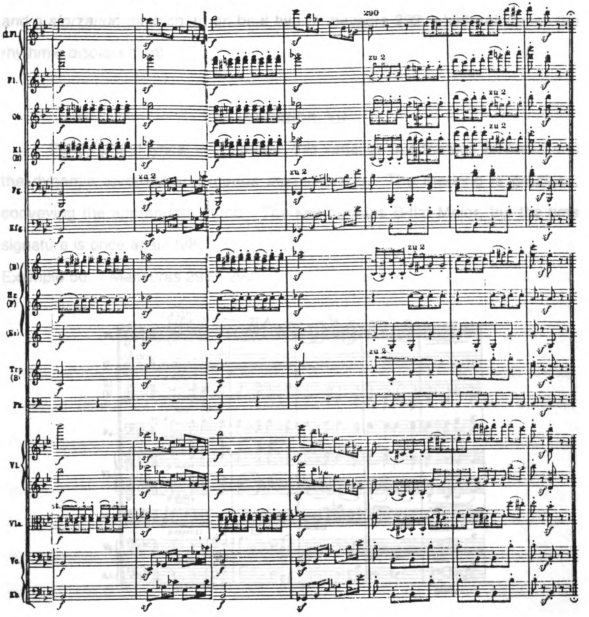
[17]Lee, p. 18.

Example 49: Measures 286 - 292



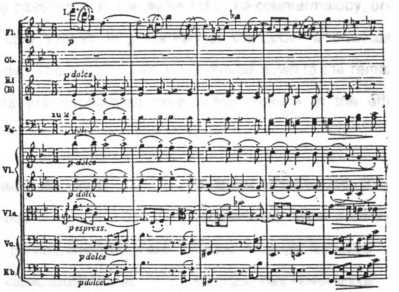
The final three measures of the codetta present the melodic idea involving sixteenth-notes ( ) in an overlapping fashion. The strings enter an eighth-note after the winds, displacing the beat. Those instruments not playing sixteenth-notes support this pattern in eighth-notes. This variation, like variation V, also ends on the second beat instead of beat

one. Unlike the previous variations, this variation ends with a full *forte* sound and a *sforzando* tonic chord on beat two of measure 292, which reinforces the rhythmic displacement.

Variation VII

Pastoral and lyrical in character, this variation is a tranquil Siciliano, and the dynamic level never exceeds *mezzo piano*. The marking is *grazioso*, conveying the appropriate mood. The key remains B-flat Major, but the time signature is once again 6/8.

Example 50: Measures 293 - 297



The figure  , an adaption of the rhythm from the neighbor-note motive in measure 1, is used throughout this variation. During phrase one (measures 293 - 297 illustrated above), the flutes and violas, in octaves, soar through the melody, while the cellos and double basses quietly imitate using melodic inversion. This bass part is an elaboration of the original bass line (measures 1 - 5), and it rhythmically complements the melody. The notes of the

original theme may be found in the flute and viola melody and are indicated in the Example above. It is a question, however, whether this melody is a literal representation of the theme or whether the notes of the theme are present only as a byproduct of the harmony or some of both, which seems to be the case.[18] The remaining woodwinds provide an enriching, syncopated accompaniment figure (). Using this rhythm, the first violins and first clarinet play a descending scale, which shows much resemblance to the descending structure of the theme (measures 1 - 5).

During phrase two (measures 298 - 302), the flute melody of the preceding phrase is lowered an octave and presented by the first violins, doubled by the bassoons. At the same time, the countermelody, originally in the cellos and double basses, is presented by the upper woodwinds, above the principal melody. The accompaniment is moved down to the remaining strings. All three parts are exchanged here, which results in the effect of triple counterpoint.[19]

Phrase one (measures 293 - 297)	Phrase two (measures 298 - 302)
Melody - flutes, violas	Countermelody - upper woodwinds
Accompaniment - clarinets, bassoons, violins	Melody - bassoons, first violins
Countermelody - cellos, double basses	Accompaniment - lower strings

Figure 4: Diagram of Part Exchange during Measures 293 - 302

During phrase one (measures 303 - 306) of section B, the melodic material of part one is developed, again through the corresponding harmonies

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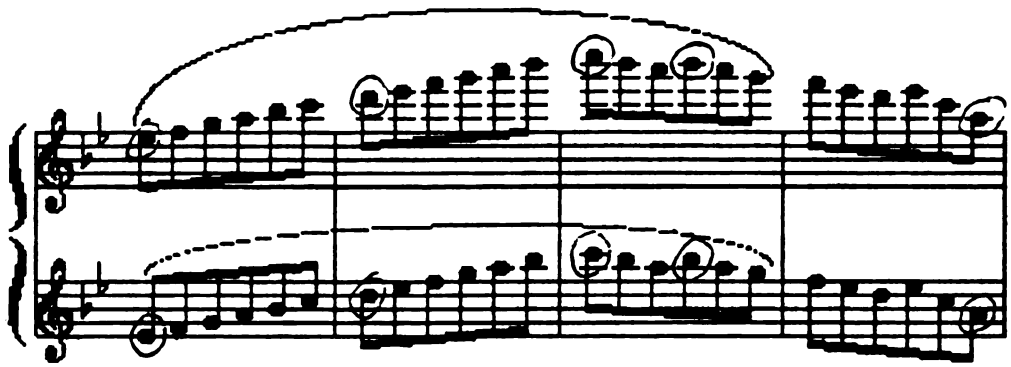
[18]Stein, p. 11.

[19]Lee, p. 18.

of the theme (Example 7). The soaring scale passage of the first and second violins in phrase two (measures 307 - 310) is derived from the descending melodic idea of measures 15 - 18. This idea, indicated by the circled notes, is ingeniously figured in the following scale pattern:

Example 51: Measures 307 - 310

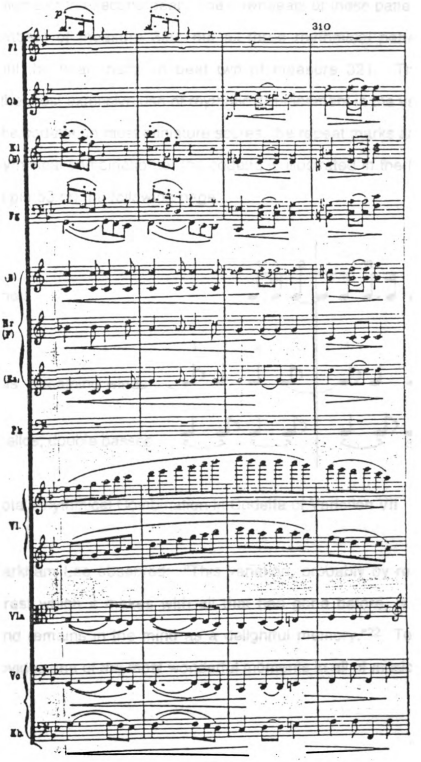


The bass part of this same phrase is a variant of the bass line also from measures 15 - 18. During measures 309 - 310, the winds combine the six eighth-notes into three quarters (♩ ♩ ♩), creating hemiola and giving the effect of simultaneous meters of two (6/8) and three (3/4).[20] This polyrhythmic effect is first presented during variation I.

Measures 311 - 315 (the A' section) are very similar to measures 293 - 297, phrase one of section A. The codetta (measures 315 - 321), however, is distinguished by a complex rhythmical combination. The lower instruments, bassoons, cellos, and double basses, keep the basic rhythm (♩ ♪ ♩ ♪) on a tonic pedal. Above this the violins, violas, and subsequently some of the winds, divide the 6/8 meter as follows: ♪ ♩ ♩ ♪. At the same time, the remaining winds divide the 6/8 time in this manner: ♬ ♬ ♬ ♬ ♪ etc. The

[20]Stein p. 11.

Example 52: Measures 307 - 310



melody in this rhythmic pattern gives the effect of 3/4 time, staggered by the bar line in the middle of the second beat. The downbeats of these patterns coincide on the downbeat of measure 320, but all three rhythmical patterns do not coincide until the final chord on beat two of measure 321. This passage represents the most extensive use of rhythmic displacement in the variations. At the end of the codetta, in most miniature scores, the repeat marks are omitted.[21] The total rhythmical combination of the codetta is illustrated in the figure below and in Example 53 on the following page.

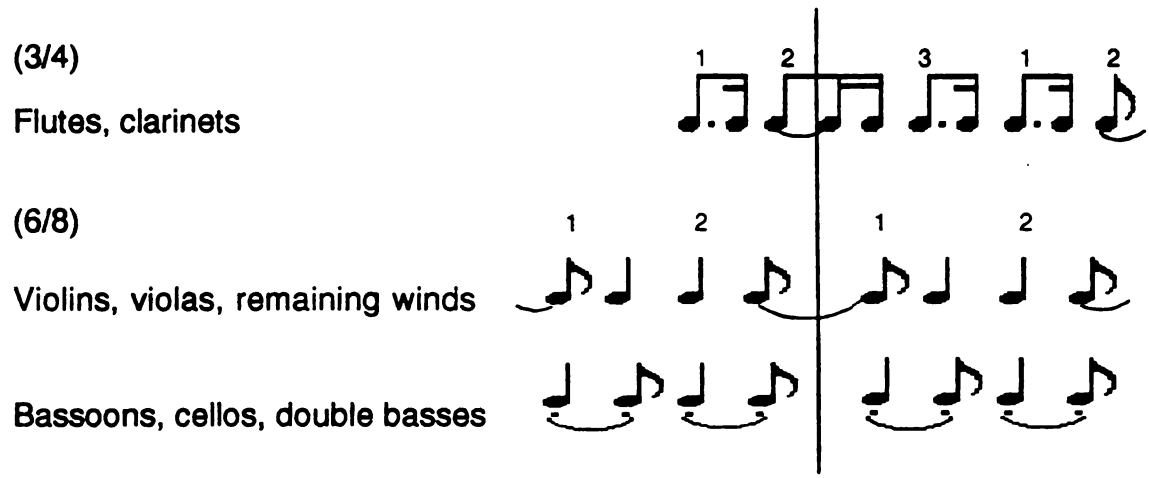


Figure 5: Total Rhythmical Combination in Codetta of Variation VII

E. Markham Lee observed: "This variation, probably by reason of the strong contrast which it makes with all that has gone before, is particularly arresting, and remains in the mind as a delightful memory."[22] To many, this variation provides one of the most wonderful moments in all of music literature.

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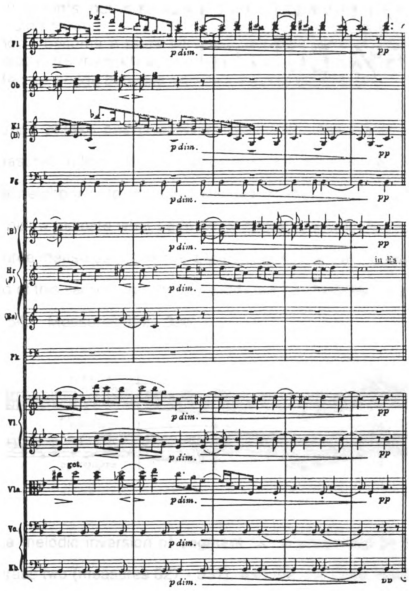
[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Lee, p. 19.

Example 53: Measures 317 - 321



Variation VIII

During this variation minor mode returns, the time signature is changed to (3/4), and the tempo marking is *Presto non troppo*. E. Markham Lee makes several observations about this variation:

> A mysterious, wraith-like affair...All the strings are muted, and the wind instruments slither about almost inaudibly...The contrast to variation VII is very marked; we are no longer in a dreamland of soft delights, but in some weird domain where hosts flit about in winding shrouds: even the shrill little piccolo has to subdue itself and to become a mere whisper, and the tiny fragments of horn melody are invertebrate and tentative. The variation makes an effective bridge between variation VII and the Finale.[23]

During phrase one (measures 322 - 326), the violas' and cellos' first three measures indicate the derivation from the theme. The first three notes invert the neighbor-note motive presented in measure 1. The circles in the example below indicate what Leon Stein refers to as the thematic basis during the first three measures of this five-bar figuration. For the purposes of the graph at the end of this section, this string melody will be identified as segment "X."

Example 54: Measures 322 - 326

The melodic inversion of segment "X" is presented by the woodwinds during phrase two (measures 327 - 331), with the first three measures strict and the last two much more free. Measures 330 - 331 employ durchbrochene Arbeit, as the flutes take over the piccolo melody. This melody is presented in its entirety by the clarinets. The violins present a syncopated accompaniment figure in eighth-notes that is supported by the violas.

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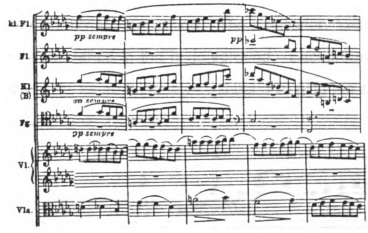
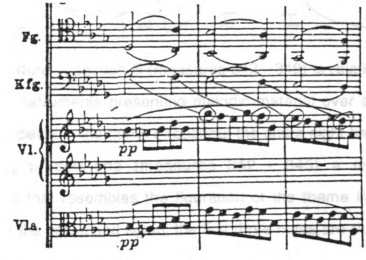
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

Example 55: Measures 327 - 331



Example 56: Measures 332 - 334

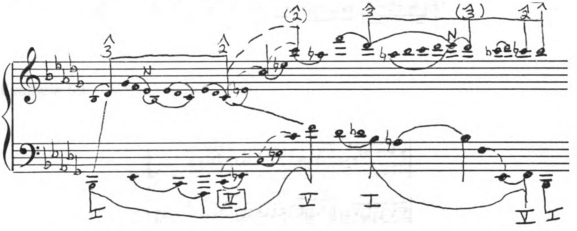


Part one is repeated during measures 332 - 341 with some changes in instrumentation and a melodic modification in the fourth and fifth measures of each of the two phrases. Measures 332 - 334 provide imitation of the thematic content between the bassoons and the violins and violas. This reinforces the thematic basis of the opening phrase.[24]

[24]Stein, p. 12.

A Schenkerian analysis of section A reinforces the background reading. Even though the foreground level is far removed from that of the theme, it is still possible to see a unifying connection. The unification exists because of the chorale theme's existence in the middleground. Backgrounds allow extreme contrasts to share the same framework without changing the structure.[25]

Example 57: Measures 322 - 331



The texture of section B (measures 342 - 349) is relatively thin with only two or three instruments presenting melodic material over a dominant pedal, which now appears in the horns throughout the entire eight bars.

During phrase one (measures 342 - 345) a melodic figuration predominates that resembles the figuration of the theme in Section A. It is presented by the cellos and again, the first three notes are rhythmically altered, but derived from measure 1. This melody is freely imitated by the violins after one beat, producing a stretto effect. Again, for the purpose of the chart, the cellos' melody is identified as segment "Y" and the first violins' imitation as segment "Z."[26]

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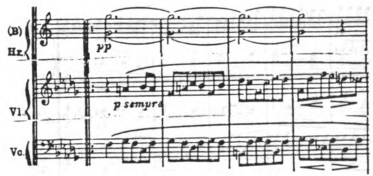
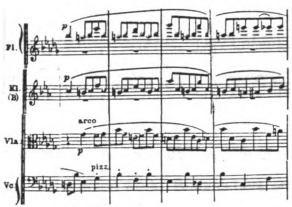
[25]Walker, p. 91.

[26]Stein, p. 12.

Example 58: Measures 342 - 345



Example 59: Measures 346 - 349



During phrase two (measures 346 - 349), the flutes and clarinets present the melodic inversion of the cellos' melody (segment "Y"). This is strict for three measures, becoming free during measure 349. The violas provide free canonic imitation after one beat, and this imitation is supported by a pizzicato passage in the cellos. Correspondingly, this viola melody is the melodic inversion of segment segment "Z."[27] The canonic leader (*dux*) now appears above the follower (*comes*) whereas, in phrase one the *dux* was below the imitative voice.

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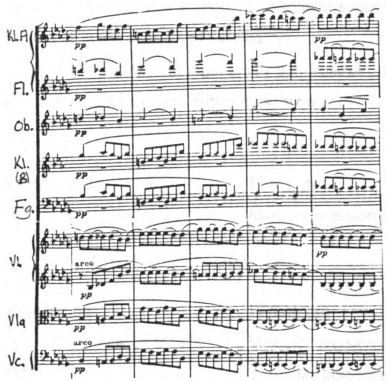
[27] *Ibid.*

Example 60: Measures 350 - 354



The A' section (measures 350 - 354) is one of the most contrapuntally fascinating passages of the entire work. Brahms here employs the two phrases of part one simultaneously. The lower strings play the opening cello and viola melody, segment "X", and at the same time, the piccolo, clarinets, and bassoons play the melodic inversion of segment "X", originally presented during phrase two (measures 327 - 331) of section A. In addition, the violins present the syncopated accompaniment figure found during measures 327 - 331. The dynamic indication remains pianissimo, but this phrase, illustrated above, is very dense and contrapuntally complex.

The codetta (measures 354 - 360) maintains the 2 + 2 + 3 division and is based on a tonic pedal presented by the piccolo, first and second horns, timpani, first violins, and double basses. The rhythm of the accompaniment,

along with the chromatic movement of those instruments not providing the tonic pedal, provides the rhythmic of this section. This motion supports the melodic quarter-note fragments in the oboes and third horn.

The texture of this variation is ingeniously put together. Drawn in large from Leon Stein, this variation may be outlined as follows:

Part one:

	Phrase one	Phrase two
A	"X"	Melodic Inversion of "X"

Part two:

	Phrase one	Phrase two
B	"Z" - Imitation of "Y" "Y"	Melodic Inversion of "Y" Melodic Inversion of "Z"
A'	Melodic inversion of "X" "X"	
Codetta	2 + 2 + 3 over tonic pedal	

Figure 6: Summary Chart of Variation VIII

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FINALE

Background on Continuous Variations

The Finale is itself a set of variations above a basso ostinato, or ground bass. This compositional technique can be traced back to the thirteenth century.[1] A ground bass is a melodic passage in the lowest voice employed over and over again, functioning as a support for numerous and varied superstructures. According to Douglass Green, the characteristics of a set of continuous variations of the ground bass type are as follows: 1) A melody, normally in the lowest voice, is repeated a number of times; 2) Ornamentation of this bass melody may or may not be introduced during the course of its repetitions; 3) The melody is fairly short, usually a single phrase, and normally no more than eight bars in length; 4) The bass melody is not ordinarily transposed to a different pitch, though on occasion transpositions take place; 5) The recurring melody supports other voices that supply a changing fabric above it by added melodic counterpoint, motivic figuration, chordal harmonies, or any other means the imagination of the composer has devised; and 6) The supporting voices often cadence at a point different from the ground-bass melody in order to keep a continuous flow.[2] These characteristics apply to Brahms' use of this device in the Finale. Brahms also used this device, in a less strict form, in the Finale of his Symphony No. 4 in e minor.[3]

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[1]Douglass Green, *Form in Tonal Music*, p. 118.

[2]*Ibid.*, p. 122.

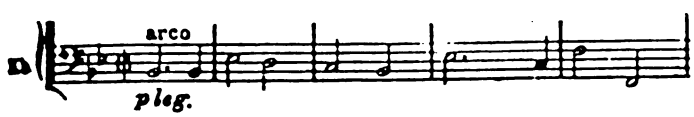
[3]Rey M. Longyear, *Nineteenth-Century Romanticism in Music*, p. 201.

After its first presentation, the ground bass motive recurs sixteen times in succession, followed by the chorale theme and then a coda. In repetitions 1 - 12, the theme is situated in the bass, however; the melody for repetitions 13 - 15 is transferred from the bass to the upper part. This is often called a soprano ostinato and is defined by Douglass Green as "the recurring melody in the uppermost voice rather than the lower."[4] The last appearance of the ground bass returns to the lowest voice.

The Basso Ostinato

Brahms, obviously enough, derived this five-bar basso ostinato from the first phrase of the theme. The bass line is used for the first, fourth, and fifth bars of the ground bass. A diatonic note is substituted for the chromatic passing tone in the fourth bar of the theme. The second and third measures of the basso ostinato are taken directly from the upper part of the theme's second and third measures. Brahms put the Finale into duple meter.

Example 61: Measures 361 - 365



This ostinato theme first appears in the cellos and double basses. Entering in measure 362, the violas imitate the first two measures of the ground bass. The lower strings and the second violins are scored in four and five-part chordal harmony and use nothing faster than the quarter note.

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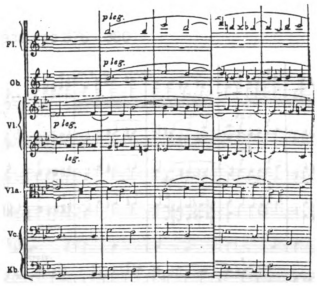
[4]Green, p. 128.

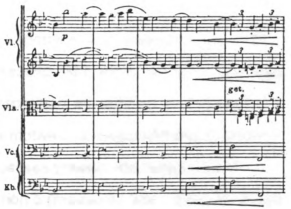
Repetition 1 (measures 366 - 370) continues in quarter notes and remains piano. The first violins, horn, and woodwinds join the lower strings with the contra bassoon also playing the basso ostinato. The first violins freely imitate the ostinato theme and during measure 367, the flutes and oboes enunciate the beginning of the motive one bar after its lower counterpart as the violas do in measure 362.

Example 62: Measures 366 - 370

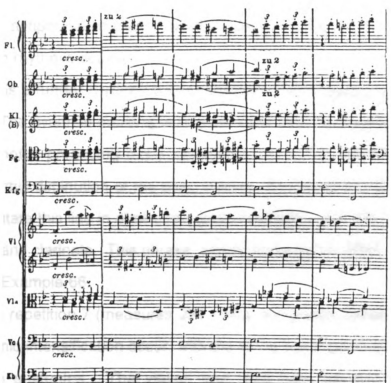


During repetition 2 (measures 371 - 375), the harmonization becomes much thicker. The strings and winds continue their development and imitation of the ostinato theme. In measures 373 - 374, the first violin imitates the descending figure of the ostinato theme from measures 372 - 373, up two octaves and in syncopated form. Measure 375 introduces a triplet figure in the upper strings. This figure predominates throughout the next repetition.

Example 63: Measures 371 - 375



Example 64: Measures 376 - 380



Repetition 3 (measures 376 - 380), illustrated above, presents the rhythms  and  in the winds and strings over the ground bass. The texture becomes more complex because both rhythmic figures are

also used simultaneously. This phrase is harmonized more chromatically than repetition 2.

By the time repetition 4 (measures 381 - 385) gets under way, the dynamics have increased from *piano* to *forte*. The alteration of quarter-note chords gives this repetition an antiphonal character. The winds and strings alternate a two-note motive in a heavy and detached style. The contra bassoon, cellos, and double basses present the basso ostinato.

During repetition 5 (measures 386 - 390), the detached chordal treatment of the preceding repetition continues. A rhythmic intensification in the middle strings and middle winds occurs by the addition of a descending eighth-note pattern. The antiphonal character is still present, but the running eighth-notes produce more rhythmic activity.[5]

There is a further rhythmical intensification during repetition 6 (measures 391 - 395). The dynamic marking is now *più forte*, and the middle strings move in sixteenth-notes producing more movement. The first violins and first horn present rhythmic diminution of the bass motive. The bassoons during measure 392 freely imitate this line in diminution, and in measure 393, this line is imitated by the flutes and clarinets. This phrase, which produces the effect of a canon, is illustrated in Example 66.

During repetition 7 (measures 396 - 400) still greater dynamic power and further rhythmic intensification occur, with the string accompaniment rhythm now presented in sextuples. The violins and third horn develop the rhythmic diminution of the basso ostinato. The first climax of the Finale is reached during measure 399, with certain instruments increasing to a *fortissimo* dynamic level.[6]

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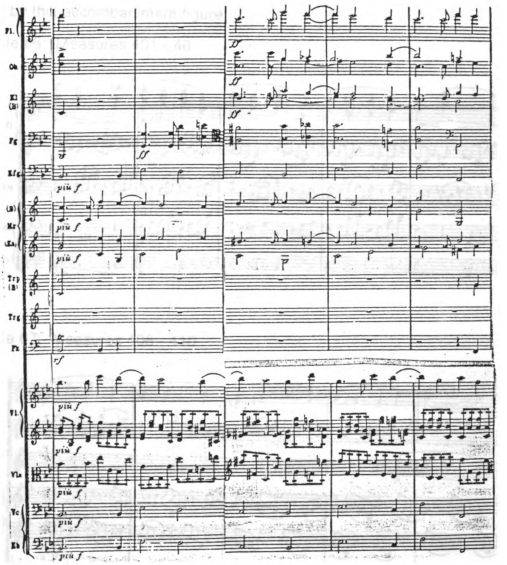
[5]Leon Stein, *An Analytic Study of Brahms' "Variations on a Theme By Haydn,"* p. 14.

[6]*Ibid.*

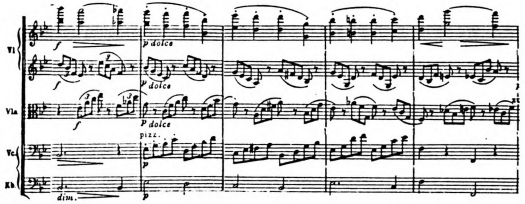
Example 65: Measures 391 - 395



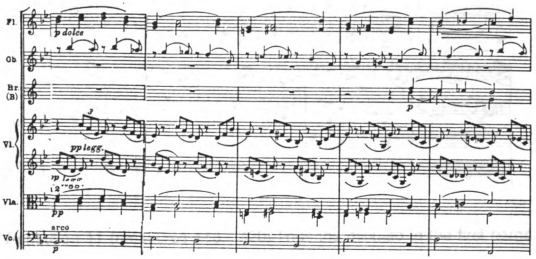
During repetition 8 (measures 401 - 405), the dynamic level is reduced to *piano*. The basso ostinato occurs in both the double basses and cellos, but during measures 402 - 405, the cellos break away from the strict ground bass and present a pizzicato arpeggiated figuration of the ostinato. The first violins' melody, in octaves, becomes in itself a theme, which is varied in the four succeeding phrases. A triplet accompaniment figure is introduced in the strings,

alternating between the second violins and viscas. Repetitions 8 - 11 are unified by this accompaniment figure.

Example 66: Measures 401 - 40



Example 67: Measures 406 - 410

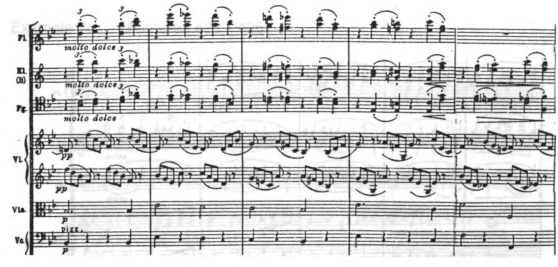


During repetition 9 (measures 406 - 410) illustrated above, the double basses cease to play the ground bass for the first time. The ostinato is taken over by the cellos, and the triplet accompaniment figure alternates between the first and second violins. The oboes present a syncopated version of the violin melody from repetition 8 with a sustained melodic accompaniment in the flutes

and violas. (In some versions of the Eulenberg score, there is a misprint on page 56. The upper line is marked piccolo, instead of flute, and the second staff is labeled flute, instead of oboe.)[7]

Repetition 10 (measures 411 - 415) is quieter, yet still very rhythmically active. The cellos present a pizzicato treatment of the ostinato, while the violas play the sustained version at the upper octave. The eighth-note triplet accompaniment figure continues to alternate between the first and second violins. The flutes, clarinets, and bassoons, in broken quarter-note triplets, present a harmonized version of the violin melody from repetition 8.

Example 68: Measures 411 - 415



Repetition 11 (measures 416 - 420) finds the ostinato in the first horns, doubled by the cellos and violas employing pizzicato. The violins still alternate the triplet accompaniment figure. A solo flute presents the quarter-note triplet melody, an embellishment of the triplet theme of the preceding phrase. The fabric of this repetition is quite bare, containing only the quarter-note triplet

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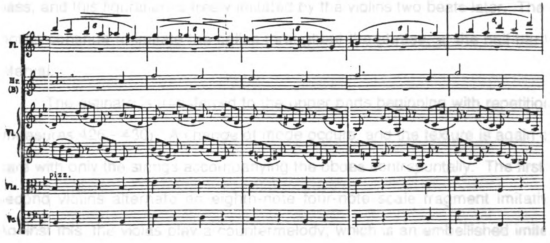
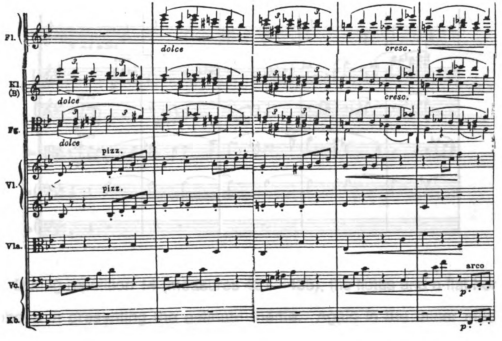
[7] *Ibid.*

theme, basso ostinato, and triplet accompaniment figure.

Example 69: Measures 416 - 420



Example 70: Measures 421 - 425

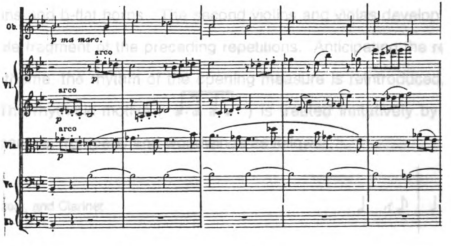


During repetition 12 (measures 421 - 425, illustrated above), the flutes are joined by the clarinets and bassoons. The quarter-note triplet melody predominates throughout this phrase and is closely harmonized. The violas

present a pizzicato version of the ostinato with several cases of octave displacement. The cellos play an ornamented pizzicato version of the ground bass, and this figuration is freely imitated by the violins two beats later. The first violins continue to imitate the cellos throughout the phrase, at the half-bar time interval.

The ostinato is transferred to the upper parts beginning with repetition 13 (measures 426 - 430). A change of mode occurs, and the texture is again quite bare with only the strings accompanying the oboes contrapuntally. The first and second violins alternate an eighth-note four-note scale fragment imitatively. Against this, the violas play a countermelody, which is an embellished imitation of the basso ostinato.

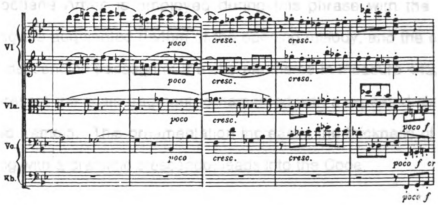
Example 71: Measures 426 - 430



During repetition 14 (measures 431 - 435), the flutes and b-flat horns join the oboes in presenting the ostinato theme. Again in the minor mode, this repetition is more fully scored. The countermelody of the preceding phrase is further developed by the violas. The first and second violins, in octaves, develop the scale fragment of eighth-notes. This phrase becomes increasingly

louder and is further intensified in measures 434 - 435 by the simultaneous use of the ascending and descending forms of the minor scale fragment.

Example 72: Measures 431 - 435



Marked *poco più forte*, repetition 15 (measures 436 - 440) comprises the second climax of the Finale. The ostinato, still in b-flat minor, is moved to the first violins and b-flat horns. The second violins and violas develop the eighth-note scale fragment of the preceding repetitions. Anticipating the return of the chorale theme, the rhythm of the opening measure is reintroduced, in various parts. The rhythmic motive (♩.♪♩♩) is treated imitatively by the cellos, double basses, trumpets, and woodwinds as follows:

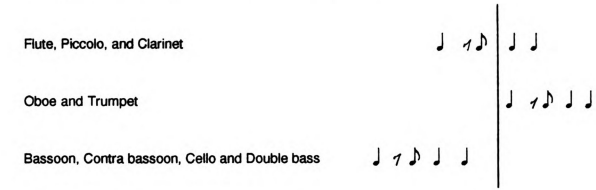


Figure 7: Imitative Treatment during Repetition 15 of Finale

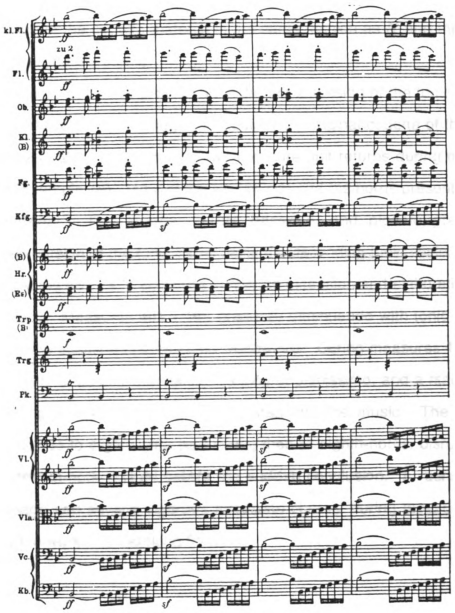
Repetition 16 (measures 441 - 445) has the last appearance of the ostinato theme in its entirety. The ground bass returns to the cellos and is doubled by the horns. The dynamic level suddenly returns to piano. Durchbrochene Arbeit is employed during this phrase with the woodwinds presenting the augmented rhythm of the opening melody, and the cellos taking over the descending passage of the chorale theme in measure 442. The upper strings present the scale fragment, ornamented with a repeated sixteenth-note measured tremolo. This ornamentation increases the thickness of the texture and, along with a dramatic crescendo, leads into the Coda.

The Coda

The remaining section (measures 446 - 471) may be identified as a coda. An abbreviated form of the chorale theme is brought back, consisting of section A and an extended version of the codetta.

During measures 446 - 447, the violas, cellos, and double basses have a modified fragment of the beginning of the chorale theme. This becomes evident in measure 446 as the melodic instruments recall the neighbor-note motive of measure 1. The violins make use of this motive during measure 446, and it is repeated an octave higher in measure 447. Two-bar overlapping imitation anticipates the return of the chorale theme itself. The modified fragment of the chorale theme, presented by the lower strings during measures 446 - 447, is played up an octave by the second violins in measures 447 - 448. This modified fragment is stated a third time, another octave higher during measure 448 - 449, by the first violins. This theme fragment is accompanied by sixteenth-note ascending scale passages in the woodwinds, and these scale passages predominate throughout the coda, providing much rhythmic activity.

Example 73: Measures 457 - 460



During measures 448 - 457, part one of the original theme returns in the first violins, with a slight modification occurring in measure 448. This modification occurs as a result of two-bar overlapping imitation during measures 446 - 449. Measure 448 lies down a major third from the chorale theme's original pitch level, but the leap into measure 449 corrects this

alteration. The woodwind accompaniment develops a scalewise passage, and a tonic pedal sounds in the brass. The consequent phrase's ending elides with the beginning of the codetta material in the same fashion as A' and the codetta of the original chorale theme.

Measures 457 - 471 provide an elaborate extension of the tonic harmony over a tonic pedal. This passage reproduces the original codetta of the theme (measures 23 - 29). The repeated two-measure unit returns during measures 457 - 460 (Example 74). Most of the woodwinds and the horns present chorale-theme material. The strings, contra bassoon, and piccolo present an ornamented version of the tonic pedal using the ascending tonic scale.

Measures 461 - 471 comprise simply an extension and elaboration of the tonic harmony. Measures 461 - 466 gradually diminuendo with tonic scales in the strings over sustained notes in the woodwinds. During measures 463 - 466, the diminuendo ends at the dynamic marking of pianissimo, and a ritardando is marked along with a ritardando incorporated into the music. The rhythmic motion is slowed to eighth-note sextuplets, then to eighth-notes, disrupting the steady sixteenth-note rhythm before the sudden conclusion. A rushing string scale passage and several vigorous *fortissimo* chords, during measures 467 - 471, bring the work to an exciting finish.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY

The Viennese technique of durchbrochene Arbeit, meaning "broken work", was adapted and intensified by Brahms.[1] Motives are continually moving from one instrument to another and longer melodies are divided among different instruments so the focus of attention is continuously changing from one section of the orchestra to another. Franz Liszt and Hector Berlioz gained inspiration from the tonal color of each instrument, and although Brahms rarely sought inspiration in this manner, his orchestral tone has great variety, and his combinations of sound are fascinating.[2]

The general relationships of the variations may be observed from the table on the following page. There is a regular alteration of the major and minor modes up to variation VI. The dynamic climax is reached in variation VI, and variations VII and VIII represent a gradual dynamic decline. The following illustrates the dynamic plan of the eight variations :

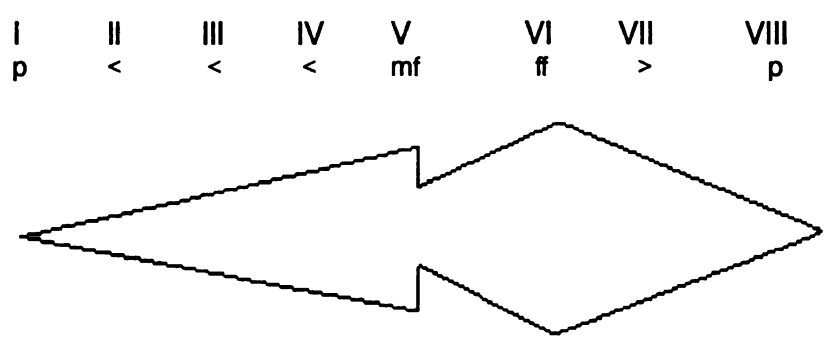


Figure 8: Dynamic Plan of the Variations

[1]Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Works*, p. 252.

[2]*Ibid.*

Variation	Mode	Tempo	Meter	Structure			
Theme	Major	*Andante*	2/4	A ||: 5+5 :	B ||: 4+4	A' 4	Codetta 2 + 2 + 3 :||
I	Major	*Poco piu animato*	2/4	Same			
Quiet; Essentially the same harmony.							
II	Minor	*Piu vivace*	2/4	Same			
More rhythmic animation; five measure phrase of A is grouped 1 + 4; essentially the same harmony, but in minor.							
III	Major	*Con moto*	2/4	A ||10+10	B+A'+Codetta || 8 + 4 + 7		B+A'+Codetta 8 + 4 + 7 ||
"Dolce legato"; tranquil; written-out repeat of part one with changes of orchestration and pitch location.							
IV	Minor	Andante con moto	3/8	A ||10+10	B+A'+Codetta || 8 + 4 + 8		B+A'+Codetta 8 + 4 + 8 ||
Quiet but with a flowing accompaniment figure; written out repeats with second statement in invertible counterpoint at the twelfth.							
V	Major	*Vivace*	6/8	A ||10+10	B+A'+Codetta || 8 + 4 + 7		B+A'+Codetta 8 + 4 + 7 ||
Diminution and distortion of the theme often using hemiola; *sfortzando* accents; quick and sharply rhythmic; marked dynamic contrasts.							
VI	Major	*Vivace*	2/4	A ||: 5+5 :||	B : 4 + 4	A' 4	Codetta 2 + 2 + 3 :||
Softer beginning, but soon louder; *forte;* general rhythmic character; theme recognizable, but with changes in harmony, especially at cadences.							
VII	Major	Grazioso	6/8	A ||: 5 + 5 :||	B : 4+4	A' 4	Codetta 2 + 2 + 3 :||
Piano; dolce; graceful; quiet; richer harmony; oscillation between 6/8 and 3/4, especially in section B.							
VIII	Minor	*Presto non troppo*	3/4	A || 10+10	B ||: 4+4	A' 4	Codetta 2 + 2 + 3 :||
Quiet, subtle, shadowy character; evasive; mysterious; variation farthest removed from the theme.							
Finale	Major	Andante	2/2	Five measure ground bass derived from the melody and harmony of the main theme.			
Bass pattern is repeated 11 times; 12th time ornamented; 13th through 15th time in minor and in upper parts; 16th time as before; concludes with a statement of chorale theme and a coda.							

Figure 9: Summary Chart of Entire Work

Technically, the eighth is the most ingenious of the variations before the Finale, and in terms of complexity it represents a kind of climax, one which escapes most listeners. Brahms achieved a kind of culmination using a complex contrapuntal web. According to Leon Stein, this intellectual culmination does not disrupt the dynamic plan of the whole work, yet it brings the variations to a point of repose and a height of achievement before the Finale.[3]

The plan of the Finale is a remarkable example of effective dynamic pacing. The distribution of tension and relaxation gives it a very real and organic quality. It begins with longer swells of rising and falling, which become increasingly shorter, until the final climax is reached. This is typical of any gradual emotional development. The following illustration, by Leon Stein, shows the dynamic plan of the Finale with numbers referring to the variants:[4]

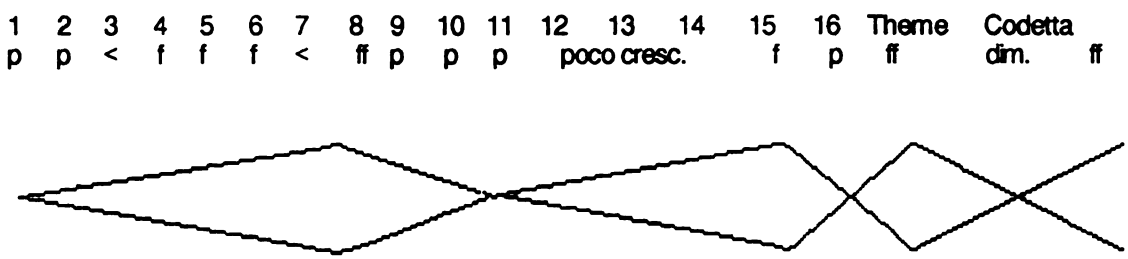


Figure 10: Dynamic Plan of the Finale

There is much to be enjoyed during this masterful Finale. Aside from the compositional skill, there is beauty of idea, gorgeousness of sound, and dignity, which the composer knows exhibits so eloquently. The work as a whole is one

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[3]Leon Stein, *An Analytic Study of Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn,"* p. 13.

[4]*Ibid.*, p. 15.

of the most enduring of those written for orchestra in the last half of the nineteenth century. It is, in essence, just satisfying music in the purest state.[5] The theme of this work is very simple in character, yet very dense in musical value. Brahms used the motives, form, and harmonies of this theme to create a masterpiece of sound with great variety. Although it was one of his first orchestral compositions, it is still at the top of his mature works.[6]

Arnold Schoenberg's intense preoccupation with the problem of thematic unity in his own work led him to make some observations of enormous importance about this same problem in the works of others.[7] Schoenberg believed that truthful interpretation often depends on conscious awareness of structure. He stated:

> The descriptive view of form, fails to take into account the organic nature of musical structure. If a work is not to remain static it must unfold, reach out for new stages in its evolution and leave old ones behind. It will exhibit stability and instability as its structure develops; the qualities of repose and unrest are in constant alteration in music and help to make it the organic thing which it is.[8]

As the variations unfold, points of instability occur more frequently. The harmonic vocabulary is expanded, especially in section B and the codetta of each variation, and the rhythms increase in complexity as the variations unfold. The classical period's clarity and balance of form is very evident in this work. The Finale balances the variations with its fifteen repetitions, and its adherence

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[5]E. Markham Lee, *Brahms' Orchestral Works*, pp. 23-24.

[6]Geiringer, p. 252.

[7]Alan Walker, *Study in Musical Analysis*, p. 9.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 27.

to the five-bar phrase structure of section A of the theme and each variation, provides an underlying connection with the previous material. The dynamic plan of the Finale is also very similar to that of the variations and gives a sense of symmetry. This symmetrical quality is reinforced by the return of the chorale theme at the end of the Finale.

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