

STRUCTURAL COHERENCE IN THE VARIATION MOVEMENT FROM  
BRAHMS'S PIANO TRIO NO. 2, OP. 87

by

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## THESIS ABSTRACT

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Title: Structural Coherence in the Variation Movement from Brahms's Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87

The variation form, despite its significant to Brahms, has often been neglected in favor of the sonata form. A Schenkerian perspective of the *Andante con moto* from Brahms's Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87 reveals the motivic and harmonic connections that occur on the surface and deeper levels. The salient features of the music arise from the deeper-level changes, and certain features do not become clear until one looks at the music from a broader structural view. My analyses will reveal how the music unfolds, with a sense of departure and return, to create an expressive and progressive narrative that spans the entire movement. This is achieved through the changes in the fundamental structure, as illustrated by the complete Schenkerian analysis: the first two variations are a foreground variation, the next two are middleground variation, and the final variation returns to the theme's fundamental structure.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Chamber music is a vital part of Brahms's repertoire, and many of these pieces are also staples in the classical repertoire. Brahms also had an affinity for the art of writing variations, and this is most apparent in his chamber works. In this thesis, I will discuss the large-scale form of the *Andante con moto* from Brahms's Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87. This piece is the first of the two late chamber works with a variation movement, and it is the only trio with a theme and variations. A Schenkerian perspective of the piece reveals the motivic and harmonic connections that occur not only on the surface level but at the deeper levels as well. The relationship between the middleground and foreground brings to light the various factors that contribute to the structural coherence of this music across the variations. The salient features of the music arise from the deeper-level changes, and certain features do not become clear until one looks at the music from a broader structural view. Understanding the large-scale form helps us to recognize the processes that contribute to the overall expressiveness of the music.

Chamber music was important to Brahms as a composer, performer and pianist. From his first chamber work in 1854, the Piano Trio No. 1, to his last chamber works for the clarinet in 1894, Brahms dedicated a large part of his compositional life to his 24 chamber works. In 1862, the 29-year-old Brahms made an entrance into Viennese musical circles as a performer and a composer with his Piano Quartets Nos. 1 and 2, Opp. 25-26. He also said his farewell in 1895 with a performance of his last chamber works, the Op. 120 Clarinet Sonatas.<sup>1</sup> The String Quintet No. 2, Op. 111 also has significance. In

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Pascall, "Ruminations on Brahms's Chamber Music," *The Musical Times* 116, no. 1590 (1975): 697.

1890, five years before his final farewell, Brahms wrote to his friend and publisher Fritz Simrock: “With this scrap bid farewell to notes of mine – because it really is time to stop.”<sup>2</sup> It was his short-lived “farewell” as a composer. The following year, Op. 111 was published together with his revised Piano Trio No. 1, Op. 8.<sup>3</sup> He wanted to bookend his compositional career with these two chamber works.<sup>4</sup> While Brahms’s solo piano works certainly had a profound impact on the composer’s life, it was the idiosyncratic characteristics of the instruments in his chamber music and their relationship to the motivic ideas that were so vital. Robert Pascall beautifully stated in his 1975 article “Ruminations on Brahms’s Chamber Music”: “The instruments are not simply outward show, or merely a vehicle for presenting ideas: they have an intimate relationship with the ideas—they help generate them, they shape them and colour them.”<sup>5</sup> The solo and orchestral works by Brahms provide a window into his musical language. However, intimate relationships between the instruments and the musical materials are explored in his chamber works.

In terms of musical structure, Brahms had an affinity for the classical forms of the past. Many scholars, including Peter H. Smith and James Webster, have written extensively on Brahms’s contribution to the sonata form. Another form that is not discussed as frequently and extensively as sonata is the variation form, both as independent sets and integrated movements within a larger collection. Brahms’s preferred medium for the independent sets was the solo piano. Except for the *Schumann*

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Musgrave, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 98.

<sup>3</sup> The original version was composed in 1854.

<sup>4</sup> Pacun also reminds the reader that Beethoven’s last movement of his last piano sonata, Op. 111 is a variation movement. Brahms’s “final” piece, the String Quintet, Op. 111 contains a variation movement. It would be interesting to compare these two variation movements.

<sup>5</sup> Pascall, “Ruminations on Brahms’s Chamber Music,” 699.

*Variations*, Op. 23, a four-hand set, and *Haydn Variations*, Op. 56, a two-piano set that was also orchestrated, the rest are for the solo piano.

Brahms's preference for variations as solo sets and integrated movements lasted less than a decade in the middle of his career, with the exception of the *Haydn Variations* (1873).<sup>6</sup> Composed in 1863, the *Paganini Variations*, Op. 35 was his final solo variation set. His first two piano sonatas, written at age 19, have slow variation movements. These were Brahms's first and only time writing a variation movement in a solo work. Out of 24 chamber works, seven contain variation movements, which are further divided into four slow movements (opp. 18, 36, 87 and 111) and three finales (opp. 67, 115 and 120/2). One only needs to glimpse at Brahms's list of variation movements to see the extent of Brahms's fascination with the form; it is in "almost every major instrumental genre - sonata, trio, quartet, quintet, sextet, and symphony."<sup>7</sup> The chamber music repertoire simply would not be the same if it were not for Brahms, and nowhere is Brahms's affinity for the variation form greater than in his chamber music. Despite the significance of variation form to Brahms, this form has often been neglected by scholars in favor of the sonata form. Also, while the Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87 has been mentioned and discussed in existing literature, Brahms's better known, non-chamber works such as the *Haydn Variations* and *Handel Variations* often overshadow the Trio. Looking at the variation movement of Op. 87 will allow me to explore different dimensions of the

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>7</sup> David Edward Pacun, "Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1998), Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International (UMI), 7.

variation form, both the “expressive curve of the movement”<sup>8</sup> as well as the progressive developments, which create the long-range coherence across variations.

Brahms started composing the Trio Op. 87 in March 1880, and completed it during his trip to Bad Ischl in June 1882.<sup>9</sup> The Op. 87 Piano Trio is in four movements, and is written for piano, cello and violin. The first and fourth movements are in C major and in sonata form. The second movement is in A minor, the relative minor of the tonic key.<sup>10</sup> The third movement is a *Scherzo* in C minor, a parallel minor of the tonic. Out of his three piano trios, Op. 87 is the only one with a variation movement.

Brahms sent the manuscript of the Trio to Clara Schumann, who was one of Brahms’s most trusted, but severest critics. When Clara received it in August 1882, she wrote in her diary: “I am so charmed with the way in which one motif grows out of another, and phrase follows phrase. The scherzo is exquisite, as is also the andante with its lively theme which must sound quite original in the placing of the double octaves. How fresh the last movement is, and, moreover, interesting in its thoroughly artistic combinations.”<sup>11</sup> On Christmas of that same year, a few days before the first performance in Frankfurt, Brahms received another stamp of approval from Clara as she further expressed her delight/satisfaction at the second movement.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Leon Botstein, *The Complete Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 138.

<sup>9</sup> Karl Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 236 and 151. In addition to the Op. 87 Trio, Brahms also completed his F major quintet, Op. 88 during this trip.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Brahms’s variation movements are mostly in a minor key. The exceptions are Op. 67 String Quartet and Op. 120 Clarinet Sonata No. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Henry S. Drinker, *The Chamber Music of Johannes Brahms* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974), 77.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

Tovey thought highly of the variation movement of Op. 87, writing that the “glorious set” is on a “higher plane” than the first sextet.<sup>13</sup> He was referring to the String Sextet No. 1, Op. 18 (1860), and his association of these two works is valid as he is comparing the first two chamber works with the theme and variation as the second movement. Interestingly, there is a gap of over two decades between the two works. Unfortunately, Tovey does not provide any examples, or expand on his praise for the Op. 87 variations. What places the movement on a “higher plane” is the structural molding, the intricate shaping of the motivic and harmonic materials and textural variations. In short, it is not merely a simple change of character, meter, tempo and texture from one variation to the next. It is a more complex process that can only be revealed through a detailed analysis. My analyses will reveal how the music unfolds, with a sense of departure and return, to create an expressive and progressive narrative that spans the entire movement. This is achieved through the changes in the fundamental structure, as illustrated by the complete Schenkerian analysis: the first two variations are more foreground variations, the next two are middleground variations, and the final variation returns to the theme’s fundamental structure.

Chapter 1 of my thesis has discussed the significance of Brahms’s chamber music, focusing on pieces with variation movements. The next chapter presents existing scholarship on Brahms’s variation form as it pertains to this thesis. While many scholars have written about Brahms’s works that contain variation form, not many have placed emphasis on the structure of variation form. Furthermore, it is rare to find an analysis of Brahms’s variations from a Schenkerian perspective. David Pacun’s 1998 dissertation on

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<sup>13</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays and Lectures on Music* (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 258.

large-scale form in Brahms variations is most relevant to my work. I advocate for a Schenkerian approach to the analysis of variation form, which reveals the complexity of the form through a complete voice-leading graph. My approach departs from the notion that the variation process just involves changes to the foreground elements. Chapter 3 is a case study of the variation movement from Brahms's Piano Trio No. 2, Op. 87 with complete voice-leading graphs (see Appendix A). The expressive qualities of each variation result from the middleground changes as the salient features of the music arise from the deeper-level changes. Looking at the music from a broader structural view allows us to see the complexities the variation form offers. The final chapter summarizes the unique features of the theme and each variation, and suggests the *Adagio* from String Quintet No. 2 for further analysis.



## CHAPTER II

### PACUN'S LITERAL AND ABSTRACT PLOTS

The Piano Trio is often mentioned in Brahms literature, as in biographies from Geiringer and Swafford, but only few scholars go into detailed analysis. Unlike past analyses that focused on motivic processes, David Pacun argues for a more “network-based approach” in his 1998 dissertation “Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms.” In the chapter “Literal and Abstract Plots in the C-major Piano Trio, Opus 87,” Pacun attempts to explain the notion of large-scale coherence across variations. Divided into three sections, the first section of Pacun’s discussion examines the formal organization of the variation movement as a whole. Pacun confirms the validity of the rondo-like interpretations by previous scholars, and points out that there is a conflicting design, a bipartite one, that also exists in the movement. As a result, Pacun advocates for a large-scale hemiola, also known as a polyform. The two plans—alternating and bipartite—exist simultaneously, uniting and producing closure in the last variation. In the second section of his chapter, Pacun explores the literal and abstract plots, and provides evidence of a large-scale motivic reversal. The literal plot is the actual motive-to-motive progression whereas the abstract plot is the section-by-section comparison of the motivic treatment. By understanding these plots, it is possible to see that the first and the last variations “contrast [with] each other in both the type of thematic return (literal vs. abstract), and the exact theme phrase(s) (section D vs. sections A, B, A’).”<sup>14</sup> In short, variation 1 distorts the opening, but preserves the closing. Variation 5 does the opposite, essentially reaffirming the last variation as a point of closure and conveying a sense of structural openness as the movement comes to a close.

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<sup>14</sup> Pacun, “Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms,” 311.

According to Pacun, it is necessary to understand both the literal and the abstract plot of a variation set in order to establish a formal model.<sup>15</sup> The chapter concludes with an addendum. It is here that Pacun provides a brief overview of the voice-leading structure for the first four bars of the theme and of each variation, which will be discussed in more detail. Moreover, it “provides additional evidence of an arch-like construction consistent with the motivic reversal” mentioned in the above section.<sup>16</sup>

Pacun first examines the theme’s form and structure, and discusses the motivic features that contribute to its complex design. The form is clearly through-composed,<sup>17</sup> but my analyses differ from Pacun’s slightly: he divides the theme into 5 sections, A B A’ C D, based on the motivic changes. Example 2.1 displays his theme divisions with bar numbers in the left column. On the other hand, I divide it into 3, A B C, each section marked by motivic features and cadential motions. Dividing the theme into 3 sections allows me to compare and contrast the corresponding sections as larger units. It not only maintains the music’s flow, but also is more relevant to the type of analysis my work calls for. Pacun’s next step is to attribute the complex phrase structure to the internal motivic developments and transformations that occur consistently throughout the theme.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 289.

5 SECTIONS		3 SECTIONS	
<b>A:</b>	mm. 1-8	<b>A:</b>	mm. 1-8
<b>B:</b>	mm. 9-12	<b>B:</b>	mm. 9-20
<b>A':</b>	mm. 13-16		
<b>C:</b>	mm. 17-20		
<b>D:</b>	mm. 21-27	<b>C:</b>	mm. 21-27

Example 2.1: Theme division.

Many authors have briefly mentioned the motivic elements of this particular movement, but Pacun is the first to discuss the close relationship between simple motives and the entire structure (Example 2.2 on page 11). Pacun studies the motives present in the opening antecedent phrase (mm. 1-4), emphasizing the canonic element between the instruments: the violin's ascending A-B-C motive in m. 1 is rhythmically altered by the piano in mm. 3-4. Conversely, the piano's double neighbor figure E-F-D-E in mm. 1-2 is shortened to an upper neighbor figure E-F-E in mm. 2-4.<sup>19</sup> He further breaks down the motives and their relation to the main violin motive, which Pacun calls motive X (A-B-C-A) in mm. 1-2.<sup>20</sup> The four notes of motive X are crucial to Pacun's analysis of the theme, as the gradual and persistent transformation of motive X ultimately affects the theme's unusual form as well as its phrasings, which will be discussed in detail in my analyses. Example 2 below illustrates Pacun's motivic relations within the context of the music.<sup>21</sup> This main motive is further developed in the final section (m. 21) not just within one instrument but also between the parts. The last section begins with a compound melody that is formed by uniting the two main motives: E-F-D-E plus A-B-C.<sup>22</sup> Pacun makes motivic connections, pointing out that the piano's left hand motives C-D-A (mm. 21-22)

<sup>19</sup> See Pacun's Example 6.1 on p. 289.

<sup>20</sup> In my analyses, I simplify Pacun's motive X into just a 3-note ascending motive.

<sup>21</sup> See Pacun's Example 6.4 on p. 291.

<sup>22</sup> See Pacun's Example 6.5 on p. 293.

and C-B-E (mm. 24-25) are derived from the strings' melody above. The last three sixteenth-notes of the strings in m. 21 and cello in m. 24 —D-C-F and B-C-G# respectively—are rhythmically augmented and inverted.<sup>23</sup> The motive F-E in the piano's right hand in mm. 24-25 echoes the strings' larger neighbor motive in mm. 21-22. In conclusion, there is a heightened sense of development as the theme progresses and the instruments integrate with each other.<sup>24</sup>

When discussing the large structure of the movement, Pacun acknowledges the alternating plan put forth by many scholars, most notably Elaine Sisman.<sup>25</sup> Her analysis centers on the “twin melodies” of the theme, which is the violin's ascending notes and piano's neighbor figure, and its alternating presence in each variation through textural changes as expected in this kind of form. Pacun adds that this rondo-like scheme is clearest in the second half of the movement (variations 3 to 5), but not so clear in the first two variations.<sup>26</sup> Analyzing this movement solely from a rondo-like perspective would be like hearing only one side of the story. Pacun argues that a binary plan exists simultaneously that equally divides the movement into half: theme to variation 2 and variation 3 to the end. He makes a convincing argument based on these musical elements: a diminishing in dynamics and texture, melodic correlations between the corresponding variations, and other minor factors such as similar climax points and octave string texture. This leads Pacun to suggest a polyform that unites the rondo-like and binary plans, ultimately working together to produce closure in the last variation.

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<sup>23</sup> See Pacun's Example 6.6 on p. 294.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 293-294.

<sup>25</sup> See Sisman's “Brahms and the Variation Canon” on p. 150, nn. 60. Another notable author is Geiringer in *Brahms* on p.237.

<sup>26</sup> Pacun, “Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms,” 294-295.

X: mm. 1-2	X3: mm. 17-20
X1: mm. 3-4	X4: m. 21
X2: mm. 12-13	X5: mm. 23-24

**Theme**

(189) 19

*Andante con moto*

*Andante con moto*<sub>2</sub>

*poco f*

*f*

*f*

*poco f*

*dim.*

*p*

*dim.*

*p*

*dim.*

*p*

J. B. 31

Example 2.2: Pacun's motivic connections within the context of the music.

Moreover, this polyform is reinforced by tempo, timbre, motives, harmonies and plot. Pacun's argument for the polyform is quite interesting, as it informs my understanding of the piece's structure. However, while Pacun's work is certainly unique and revealing, what I find even more interesting is how the theme's structure is reshaped as the music progresses, and how each variation contributes to this inevitable/overall sense of unity and balance.

Pacun explores the motivic materials that are repeated from variation to variation, and exactly when and how they are reworked.<sup>27</sup> Just as the polyform tells more than one side of the story, the literal and abstract plots also do the same. The literal plot is the actual motive-to-motive comparison in the theme and each variation, whereas the abstract plot is the section-by-section comparison of the motivic treatment. The second type of analysis reveals the substantial changes that occur from the first variation to the penultimate variation, which ultimately reinforces the last variation's role as both a closure and return. Due to the repetitive nature of this form, it's necessary to understand both plots in order to "establish a formal model."<sup>28</sup>

While Pacun's detailed analyses of the motivic changes are quite helpful, what is more relevant to my work are his two tables that provide a motivic map of the whole movement. His Table 3 provides an abstract plot. Table 4<sup>29</sup> is a different view of the abstract plot: a vertical comparison of the corresponding phrases. Table 4 reworks Table 3 to compare the theme and 5 variations according to individual phrases,<sup>30</sup> which shows

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<sup>27</sup> See Pacun's Table 3 on p. 305.

<sup>28</sup> Pacun, "Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms," 303-304.

<sup>29</sup> See Pacun's Table 4 on p. 310.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

that “a variation may utilize new motives, but retain the theme’s abstract plotting.”<sup>31</sup>

Below is Table 1, which is a simplified reproduction of Pacun’s Table 3. Because it is an abstract plot, the letters stand for the ideas given in each variation, not the common material. An exception is section D in which the letters do represent the literal plot.<sup>32</sup> The purpose of it is “to capture what ideas are repeated and when and how they change.”<sup>33</sup>

These tables are helpful to my analyses for 2 reasons: first, it clearly displays the sense of motivic return in the middle and final variations, and second, it shows the changes that occur in the second interruption.<sup>34</sup> My sketches have the same purpose of displaying these changes, but from a Schenkerian perspective; we can see the motivic materials, range, and contour in context. Pacun’s analysis is quite motive-driven and almost data-like, whereas mine is structure-driven, taking into consideration the musical characteristics that make this piece what it is.

	<b>A</b> (mm. 1-8)	<b>B</b> (mm. 9-12)	<b>A'</b> (mm. 13-16)	<b>C</b> (mm. 17-20)	<b>D</b> (mm. 21-27)
<b>T</b>	a b a b'	a b a b'/c	c b a b'/c	c' c c' d	m m n o
<b>V1</b>	a a' b c	a a' b c	c c b c'	b' b' d d	m' m' n' o
<b>V2</b>	a a' a b	a a' a b	b' a' a' b	a'' a'' a'' a''	a'' a'' c o
<b>V3</b>	a b a b	a b a b'	a' b a a'	a'' a'' a'' a''	m'' m'' m'' o
<b>V4</b>	a a a b	a a a b'	b' a' a b	a a'' a a''	p p q
<b>V5</b>	a b a b'	a b a a'	a'' b' a a'	c a' c c''	s s' s'' d'' o

Table 2.1: Abstract plot of the theme and variations 1-5.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 307.

<sup>34</sup> The second interruption in my section B is Pacun’s section C.

Pacun's detailed tables show one aspect that might be easily overlooked. Despite variation 1's initial departure from the theme's opening, there is a sense of return in the last section as the theme's section D (mm. 21-27) is repeated in variation 1's section D (mm. 48-54) with minor changes. The opposite occurs in the last variation. Variation 5's structure resembles the theme's, but there is a sense of fragmentation in the last section,<sup>35</sup> which also "imparts a degree of structural openness to the large-scale form."<sup>36</sup> The last variation, despite its new timbre, meter and texture, follows the abstract plot of the theme. In mm. 136-151, both strings strictly follow the theme's melody. In other words, variation 1 distorts the opening plot, but preserves the closing plot. The reverse is true in the final variation, as well as the third variation.<sup>37</sup>

Within this reversal, there is another layered component. In the first and last variations, the type of return differs as well as the exact materials. Variation 1 maintains the literal return—actual motive-to-motive progression—in its final section. Variation 5, on the other hand, has the abstract return—section-by-section comparison of the motivic treatment—in the opening sections. Variation 3 is a compromise between the strategies, as it has a literal return in the final section with an abstract restatement in the opening sections. It is clear that the melody in sections A, B and A' (mm. 82-97) resembles the theme's in mm. 1-16. The theme's melody is embellished with rhythmic variety and arpeggiation. Variation 3 closes with a literal return, just like variation 1. Pacun argues that despite the contrasting melodic shape of section D (mm. 102-108), the melodic notes are present and the rhythmic pattern is the same. In other words, the outer variations have

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<sup>35</sup> Pacun, "Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms," 303.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-316.



a reversal in return while the middle variation does both.<sup>38</sup> Thus, this idea of reversal “invades many aspects of the piece, from the choice of motivic material to its enactment in the plot of each phrase.”<sup>39</sup> As I have mentioned above, Pacun’s analysis is thorough and sensitive to these small motivic changes. What I hope to accomplish in my work is to show how each structure grows in its individual ways, and how this might affect/inform one’s interpretation.

According to Pacun, Schenkerian analysis “helps to reveal the marvelous flexibility with which Brahms treats the theme structure without stepping outside its bounds,” and states that the theme’s outline is maintained throughout with altered surface and middleground features.<sup>40</sup> However, he analyzes only the antecedent phrases of the theme and the variations,<sup>41</sup> and focuses on the basic harmonic motion of tonic to dominant: i-i6-V. He further explores how each antecedent phrase is elaborated harmonically and motivically mostly through the changes in the subdominant region.<sup>42</sup> My approach to the *Andante* of Piano Trio No. 2 differs from Pacun’s in one significant way: I provide a complete Schenkerian analysis of each variation movement. The complete voice-leading graph of the *Andante* reveals a progressive and expressive narrative rather than the reversal idea by Pacun, and enables me to describe the unfolding of the musical events that occur from the theme to the last variation. This will allow me to explore the entire theme-to-variation relationship as well as variation-to-variation from a shared *Ursatz* point of view. Therefore, I hope to achieve in my work a detailed

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<sup>38</sup> See Pacun’s Example 6.12 on p. 311.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>41</sup> See Pacun’s Example 6.18 on pp. 322-323: Voice-leading reduction for all the antecedent phrases.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

discussion that is “musical and analytical in the best sense.”<sup>43</sup> Instead of understanding the motivic materials from the bottom up, I hope to illustrate how the sections grow in their unique ways from the same fundamental structure.

### Methodology

The music of Brahms deeply interested Heinrich Schenker, and he often referred to Brahms as “the last great master of German music.”<sup>44</sup> Examples of Brahms’s music are frequently found in Schenker’s writings, though they are usually very brief. Interestingly, the only published analysis of a complete piece by Brahms is the *Handel Variations*.<sup>45</sup> It seems as though Schenker knew the importance of variation form to Brahms. Schenker’s motto on the title page of *Free Composition* states “*Semper idem sed non eodem modo*,” which translates to “always the same, but never in the same way.”<sup>46</sup> What better way to use Schenkerian analysis than in variation form, where we have the theme as a preexisting fundamental structure and multiple variations of that structure? The structural changes that occur from one section to another and from one variation to another are displayed at the middleground and foreground levels, and these changes essentially provide each variation with its expressive content. Also, certain variations are structurally affected more than others, and the voice-leading graphs illuminate exactly which variation, or more specifically which section, goes through structural changes. The

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<sup>43</sup> Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1982), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Allen Cadwallader, and William Pastille, “Schenker’s Unpublished Work with the Music of Johannes Brahms,” in *Schenker Studies 2*, ed. Hedi Siegel and Carl Schachter (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 26-46. Certainly by 1894, Schenker and Brahms were acquaintances.

<sup>45</sup> “A large body of unpublished material on Brahms survives in the portion of Schenker’s *Nachlass* housed in the Oster Collection at the New York Public Library.”

<sup>46</sup> Allen Clayton Cadwallader and David Gagné, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12, 14.

questions regarding how and when structural changes are made can also be addressed through detailed motivic analysis.

My thesis makes an important contribution to Brahms studies not only because it focuses explicitly on variation form in his chamber works, but also because it applies Schenkerian analysis to a work that has never been explored in this manner and to this extent. Examining the Piano Trio from a Schenkerian perspective allows us to demonstrate how each variation grows in different ways from the shared *Ursatz* of the theme. In essence, I will use Schenkerian analysis to explore theme-to-variation relationships as well as variation-to-variation relationships, going beyond David Pacun's work by creating analyses of complete variations. Ultimately, I will demonstrate the coherence of the large-scale form and expressive narrative that exists across the variations. My thesis will consider various musical factors that contribute to the unity of the form: melodic and rhythmic motives, harmony and texture being the main contributing factors. My goal, however, is not to assert that there is only one way to investigate structural coherence in variation form, since there isn't a single right way to convey the sense of unity. I also will not attempt to suggest an *Ursatz* that spans the entire movement, as there is "no theory of variation structure to rival Schenker's theory of tonal structure, and it is probably in the nature of variations not to be susceptible to that kind of approach."<sup>47</sup> Instead, I will argue that each section grows in unique ways from a shared *Ursatz*. Viewing the music in this way allows us not only to see the various relationships in different levels, but also to reassess our understanding of the form, and, by extension, the composer, through further exploration. I hope that my work broadens

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<sup>47</sup> Esther C. Cavett-Dunsby, "Mozart's Variations Reconsidered: Four Case Studies (K.613, K.501, and the Finales of K.421 [417b] and K.491)" (Outstanding Dissertations in Music from British Universities. New York: General Music Publishing Co., 1984.), 308.

our understanding of Brahms's compositional process as well as our understanding of the application of Schenkerian analysis to not just sonata form, but to variation form as well. In addition, I hope that it not only provides insight about the musical structure, but also helps the listener and performer to make informed decisions and artistic choices as they see fit.

## CHAPTER III

### PIANO TRIO, OP. 87

A Schenkerian perspective of the Piano Trio's *Andante* reveals the complex and expressive characteristics that might not have been apparent otherwise. As will be evident in my analysis, each variation demands a new sound that is different from the theme. The proportions remain the same, but the treatment and emphasis of certain musical elements vary from one variation to the next. There is no structural change from the onset in variation 1, but the piano's new motive and chromatic harmonies become salient features. Melodic and harmonic tension heightens our expectation of a climax in the theme and variation 1, but that is not the case in the next variation. Rather, variation 2's climax is brief and out of place, resulting in a sense of continuous and seamless phrasing. Also, certain features of the theme—the P5 motive and chromatic harmonies—are isolated and exaggerated in variation 2. The first major structural change occurs in variation 3. Motivic sequences in contrary motion and secondary harmonies provide a larger sense of predominant to dominant motion, ultimately changing the structure. In variation 4, the registral expansion, new meter and *dolce* sound provide a contrast to the previous music. But it's the deeper structural change that has a greater effect on the course of the variation and its relation to the motivic materials. The modulations and motivic sequences build up an expectation for the listener, but the melodic and harmonic tension of the climax is out of alignment with the dynamics. There are many similarities between the theme and the final variation, but variation 5 could not be more different in terms of its character and sound. The presence of two climactic points is followed by the coda's final harmonic closure, which Brahms prolonged until the very end. By examining the variations from

these different perspectives, the analysis focuses on what is unique to each variation. This also includes how each instrument engages with the others and with the various motives to provide rich color and a distinct shape to the music.

### Theme

In a theme and variation form, the variations build on the theme's middleground and foreground elements. Therefore, examining the theme's structure is the first step to understanding the work as a whole, and exactly how we maintain the same structure but never reveal its expressive content in the same way. In the *Andante* of Op. 87, the theme provides a complex starting point in regards to the form and phrase structure.<sup>48</sup> Binary and rounded binary structures are commonly found in a theme and its variations, but the theme can utilize other forms, such as the through-composed form in the Piano Trio.<sup>49</sup> The *Andante* consists of three sections, and at 27 bars, it is on the more lengthy side of Brahms's themes for the variation form. Section A is a typical eight-bar antecedent and consequent unit. Section B is a long 12-bar phrase formed by two half-cadential motions and elided phrases. In fact, the first half cadence in m. 16 is obscured due to the strings. Unlike the previous music in mm. 12-13, the motivic elisions here build momentum to the climax at the end of section B, and move on to the closing material in the final section. As will be discussed in the variations, section B becomes a great source of diversity and expressiveness.

While section A is an eight-bar period with clear phrase divisions in all three instruments, the phrase structure of section B is quite unique. The piano in section B follows a clear four-bar pattern, each separated by an eighth rest similar to section A. On

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<sup>48</sup> Pacun, "Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms," 290.

<sup>49</sup> See Example 1 on page 10 for the annotated score of the theme.

the other hand, the strings' motivic elisions in mm. 12 and 16 provide a sense of continuous motion, and the effect is of one long phrase. Brahms also manipulates our sense of meter by shifting the eighth-note motive starting in mm. 12 and 16 across the barline so that the notes A and C, which were agogic accents in m. 1, are placed on the weak beats of the bar. This shift of the motive is even more unique since it is out of sync with the piano's part. Just as the piano achieves harmonic resolution from the subdominant to tonic in m. 12, the strings enter in unison. The first occurrence of the rhythmic shift in mm. 12-13 was short-lived as the "corrected" rhythm takes in the following bar. The second time in m. 16, however, there is a gradual buildup of tension toward the climax in m. 20 with the repeated phrase elisions and motivic sequences (Example 3.3). In section C, the two strings elide with each other in m. 24 without the piano, but the tension created by the shifted eight-notes in the earlier section is resolved here. The piano's rest is in line on the downbeat with the strings' agogic accent, and the accompaniment provides subtle harmonic support for the strings' unison.



Example 3.3: Theme, mm. 14-20.

The foreground of the three sections provides a sense of diversity and development within the small boundaries of the theme. In addition, the intricate phrasings in the theme also provide a creative starting point for the subsequent variations. The

theme's sketch not only reveals the motivic and harmonic processes in its three sections, but it also provides the underlying middleground structures.

The motivic materials in the *Andante* germinate from the two motives presented in the opening two bars: three ascending notes in the strings and the double neighbor figure in the piano. The strings' A-B-C ascent grips the listener from the onset with its *forte* dynamic and Scotch snap rhythm. This motive is ubiquitous on many levels, and can be heard with different pitches, octaves and rhythm. It is also shared among the different timbres of the instruments throughout the movement. Section A of the theme utilizes this motive in consistent parallel double octaves and identical rhythms. Other sections, however, manipulate these elements. Section B starts in a similar manner to the previous section, but at the first elided phrase in m. 12, Brahms uses rhythmic diminution from quarter-note to eighth-note divisions. Brahms then takes it to the next level at the end of section B. The next elided phrase in m. 16 seems ordinary until the C# in the following bar. The A-B-C is altered to A-B-C# (mm. 16-17), which is sequenced up a note to B-C#-D and B-C#-D# (mm. 18-19). As will be evident in the analysis of the variations, each variation adds a new layer of motivic development, providing an example of how one small motive can have an effect on both the middleground and foreground structures.

Simple it may be, but section C has a significant role, especially after section B's elided phrases and the climax. First, it functions to return to the diatonic motive from the opening bars. Although it is in an altered and concealed form, it is aurally refreshing after the chromatic motives from the previous section. Second, section C decelerates the tension created by the sequenced motive at the end of section B. Brahms does so by



stating the new motive twice in mm. 21-22 over the piano's tonic prolongation. This new motive is repeated again at the elided phrase in m. 24, but is varied through melodic inversion. Third, a sense of long-range development is achieved through rhythmic diminution, a technique often used in variations. The diminution from the quarter note (m. 1) to the eighth note (m. 12) is extended as the strings sing the melody in sixteenth notes starting in m. 21. Last but not least, the fundamental structure reaches its final goal, which I will discuss in more detail in a later paragraph. The energetic ascending figure of the opening is now less assertive in a new context, with a sense of motivic coherence and variety.

The piano embraces the double neighbor figure beneath the energetic union of the strings (Example 3.4 on page 24). This double neighbor motive is closely associated with the piano while the ascending figure belongs mostly to the strings. As with the 3-note motive, the piano's motive occurs at different places on different pitches. While the strings' motive is subjected to rhythmic diminution, the piano's motive remains somewhat stagnant. After the opening bars, it only occurs every four bars until m. 15. The piano eventually abandons the motive just before the buildup to the climax. What is important to note here is that these two simple yet powerful motives link the five variations, and have a logical progression from section to section as well as variation to variation. Moreover, the contrapuntal motion of these motives is delivered and further elaborated through the carefully-controlled texture.

Example 3.4: Two motives in the theme.

The fundamental structure of the theme is greatly affected by the small processes that occur from measure to measure, and textural manipulation is a contributing factor to that process. The *Andante* starts with a somewhat simplistic texture, as expected in a theme. The piano provides harmonic progressions via Brahmsian chords—often characterized by thick textures, parallel motions, syncopated rhythm and intricate voice leading. It is subdued, yet sounds rich to the ears. In contrast to this placid sound, the strings vehemently vocalize the melody in unison. The juxtaposition of the strings’ and piano’s idiosyncratic sounds reinforces the differences between the two main motives of the theme. Various textural manipulations—emphasis of one instrument over another, blocks of rests, change in articulation and contrapuntal motion—provide each successive variation with its own unique sound. While the texture does not have a direct effect on the design of the *Ursatz* of the theme and its variations, Brahms relies on textural manipulation to elaborate the contrapuntal structures and create the expressive narrative of the music.

The middleground sketch of the theme displays two important features: the implied *Urlinie* and the elaborated bass arpeggiation. See Example 3.5 on page 26 for the

voice-leading graph of the theme. Section A contains a 3-line *Urlinie* with an interruption in m. 4. The primary tone C6 in m. 1 is salient with rhythmic and melodic accents. The  $\hat{2}$  is implied in the strings at the half cadence (m. 4) as they hold the E over the piano's cadential gesture. The  $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$  descent reaches its goal in m. 8, but these notes are implied in the strings while they appear as the top notes in the left hand. In the next section, there are two interruptions. The first descent occurs at the half cadential motion (mm. 15-16), but is devalued with an implied  $\hat{3}$  and agogically weak  $\hat{2}$ . The second descent has a different effect and dynamic, as it is in proximity to the climax. Nonetheless, the  $\hat{\#3}$  in m. 19 occurs fleetingly as part of the motivic sequence, and the  $\hat{2}$  in m. 20 is implied on the downbeat. The distinct changes to the *Urlinie* and the interruptions give coherence and variety from one variation to the next.

As illustrated in the sketch, the ineffective descent of the previous two sections is followed by a more effective one in section C. In contrast to section A's primary tone, the  $\hat{3}$  in m. 22 is brief and part of an ascending gesture. The  $\hat{2}$  becomes explicit in the following bar through agogic accent from the strings over the piano's rest, which has the opposite sound from mm. 21-22. The fundamental structure reaches its final goal  $\hat{1}$  with a decrease in momentum. The metric and agogic accent on A provides a clear pivot note, and the cello further elaborates the descent through melodic inversion of the strings' melody in mm. 21-24. The same intervals are heard, but flipped to reflect an opposite melodic contour. Except for the primary tone in m. 1, the *Urlinie* has been either implied or agogically weak. That changes in section C when the  $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$ - $\hat{1}$  is explicitly doubled by the strings in the same range, and occurs consecutively. As the music progresses in the

Theme

A

am: i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI<sup>5</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup> V i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI<sup>5</sup><sub>3</sub> iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> V i

B

dm: i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{2}$  am: i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> iv<sup>6</sup> 7 ii<sup>nd</sup> i ii<sup>nd</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>/iv iv vii<sup>nd</sup><sub>3</sub>/iv V<sup>7</sup>/v v vii<sup>nd</sup><sub>3</sub>

C

i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>3</sub> i i<sup>4</sup><sub>4</sub> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{2}$  I

Example 3.5: Theme

next five variations, the sketch will illustrate the descents materializing to fit the new textures, often becoming more visible and audible in the process.

In addition to the surface motives, a closer examination of the bass line in the piano shows a significant detail: section B stretches and elaborates the bass arpeggiation of the opening bars. The tonic-predominant-dominant progression in section A produces the ornamented bass arpeggiation A-B-C-E (mm. 1-4). In section B, the harmonic context of the bass motive is maintained in mm. 9-16. The bass A is replaced by the key change to the subdominant D, but soon returns to the tonic key in m. 13 with the bass A in the following bar. The exact bass motion A-B-C-E occurs at the end of the first interruption. It is worth noting the bass arpeggiation, since it is a motivic and harmonic connection between the sections, and also between variations, that contributes to the larger sense of structural coherence.

Section B mainly consists of expanded subdominant to tonic motions. The opening bars of this section emphasize the key of D minor, pushing the interrupted descent toward the middle of the long phrase. After repeating the exact progression in tonic in mm. 13-16, the half cadential motion signals the descent from an implied  $\hat{3}$  to a brief  $\hat{2}$ . The first interruption (m. 16) is followed by an expanded dominant via the subdominant and its secondary harmonies. The emphasis on the subdominant region in mm. 17-19 also exposes the lower neighbor figure E-D-E in the piano in mm. 16-19. The piano's descending 3-note segments also highlight the D to E motion: F-E-D in mm. 17-18 and G-F#-E in mm. 19-20. The piano's right hand harmonizes the bass in 10ths while mirroring the strings' ascending figures and matching their metric ambiguity. What is

unique is that Brahms elaborates these subdominant to tonic motions and the additional motivic layer differently in each variation.

The harmonic tension and ascending melodic gestures—A-B-C and its variants—are the primary driving forces toward the climax. However, another layer of motive is embedded in the piano. The descending tetrachordal bass G- F#-E-D in mm. 19-20 has two functions. First, it supports the second interruption. Second, it provides another motive that connects section B to section C. Although not prominent here, it will provide another motivic connection between the theme and the succeeding variation(s). For example, Brahms will isolate and exaggerate this motive in variation 2 to build to the climax with new harmonies. In the final variation, the bass motive returns to the theme's design at the same exact spot, but has the opposite effect. The strings' decrescendo in descending parallel motion seamlessly connects to the next section. The piano's tetrachordal bass connects to the ascending figure C-D-E-F# in mm. 156-158, further providing coherence from one section to another.

The middleground sketch of the theme illustrates the motivic and harmonic connections between the sections, and sets a precedent for the subsequent variations. Equally important are the bass arpeggiation and the interruptions that build momentum to the climax. Some of these motives will later be exaggerated more than others through textural manipulation, giving a special identity and sound to each one of the variations. The foreground elements of the theme play a significant role in shaping the surface level of the variations, as expected in a theme and variation form, but the middleground also provides an expressive template for further variations.

## Variation 1

Variation 1 is also through-composed, and has three sections with equal numbers of bars to the theme. The structure is less intricate than the theme, omitting the elided phrasings in section B. The clear 4-bar phrases are achieved through the strings' reduction of motivic materials followed by the addition of rests. Section C, however, maintains the elided phrasing, as is also the case for the remaining variations. There is no drastic change to the middleground structure in variation 1, but the motivic and textural changes give a glimpse of the possibilities in the subsequent variations. The foreground elements of the theme are brought to a higher level in variation 1, becoming 3rds in the middleground. The piano's solo moments help deliver these motivic changes.

Brahms varies the ascending motive through rhythmic diminution in variation 1 (Example 3.6 on page 30). The strong statement of the opening bar is transformed into a timid suggestion in m. 28: the sound that filled the entire bar is now broken down into sixteenth notes with rests in between the repeated As. In addition, the syncopated piano chords of the theme are now "corrected," occurring on the downbeats of the bars in mm. 28-29, 32-33 and 36-37. The agogic accents on the metrically weak parts of the bar resemble the syncopated sound of the theme. Between these metrically "corrected" chords, the piano takes the main ascending motive of the theme and inverts it to a descending figure starting in m. 30. It is then extended to form a long descending line to the next bar as C descends to E in m. 31. These two related motives are linked at C—A-B-C and C-B-A-G-F-E—forming an expressive arch over the piano's sextuplet arpeggiation. This bar is unique in that the piano's arch motive is harmonized in 3rds while echoing the strings' ascent in the previous two bars. This arch is essentially an

elaborated arpeggiation (C-A-F) of the subdominant seventh, as illustrated by the sketch. This figure is worth noting, as it becomes one of the elements that create unity as well as diversity between the theme and variation 1.



Example 3.6: Two motives in variation 1 (mm. 28-31).

The theme's essential bass arpeggiation is maintained in section A, but the predominant changes (Example 3.7 on page 31). The bass motion A-D-C-E (mm. 28-31) in variation 1 is a variant of the theme's A-B-C-E (mm. 1-4). Similarly, section B copies the harmonic motion of the theme's section B. The repeated subdominant to tonic motion also reflects the theme's design mentioned earlier. After tonicizing D minor in mm. 36-40, it returns to the minor tonic in m. 41. The basic outline of section B is the same as the theme, but the motivic elements are unique to this variation. Rather than the ascending and descending 3-note motive of the theme, Brahms capitalizes on the descending skips that were part of the expressive arch in the beginning of the first variation in m. 30. This adds another layer of motivic



Variation 1

**A**

am: i<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI iv i<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup>/V V<sup>6</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I

**B**

dm: i<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>o6</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI iv i<sup>6</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ivADD<sup>6</sup> V<sup>6</sup> i VI iv v<sup>4</sup> i<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o4</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o4</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/IV IV<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>6</sup>

**C**

vii<sup>o7</sup>/IV IV vii<sup>o7</sup> i ii<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> IV iv<sup>6</sup> I

Example 3.7: Variation 1

development, and provides an example of how one small motivic transformation affects the rest of the variation.

While the structure itself remains the same, the implied *Urlinie* of the theme becomes explicit in variation 1 as a result of the piano's soloistic texture. The drive to the authentic cadence in m. 35 is attained by the strong presence of a descent in the surface layer. The piano's solo moment in mm. 30-31 is sequenced up to the C in mm. 34-35, as evident in Example 4 above. The  $\wedge^3$  is further elaborated until the descent to the  $\wedge^2$ - $\wedge^1$  in the following bar. While the first descent in section B is similar to that of the theme, the second descent in mm. 46-47 is more visible and audible. It is brought to the foreground, and played by all three instruments: C# in m. 46 and B in m. 47. The propelling force of the repeated rising motion in addition to the chromatic harmonies provides a different quality to the climax.

Section B starts off with the piano's double neighbor figure in mm. 36-37, but is soon abandoned in favor of the new motive. The piano's harmonic 3<sup>rds</sup> and the expressive arch of m. 30 are transposed up to the key of D minor in m. 38. This new motive is elaborated in every measure by the piano, and is occasionally altered to an arpeggio. The consonant 3rds occur even in the bass, harmonizing the top voice of the right hand: descending 3rds B-flat-G, F-D and D-B in mm. 38-41. This new motive parallels the main motive while also providing a different layer in the motivic network.

With the renewed cadential motion in mm. 42-43 comes the first interruption. What is unique here is the presence of a third-progression (Example 3.8 on page 33). But

not only that, this third has the same function as the rising and descending 3rds of the theme: to elide the first phrase of B to the beginning of the second phrase. The consonant skips are further enforced by



Example 3.8: Part of the third-progression (E-C) in the piano's top voice in m. 43. the horizontal progression in the piano. The right hand's grouping of the sixteenth notes obscures our sense of internal meter: E occurs on the downbeat, which is followed by a descending gesture down to the B on the second beat. Another gesture occurs on the weak beat on D, and falls to the A in the next bar. The violin then carries the A and rises to the C (Example 3.9), emphasizing the main motive once again. In fact, the E-D-C in mm. 43-44 is in the same octave, but split between the piano and violin. Another layer of motive that connects the two phrases in section B is the lower neighbor bass motive E-D-E in mm. 43-47. Unlike the theme, it is highly ornamented in variation 1. The C# in m.

46



Example 3.9: Variation 1, mm. 44-46.

elaborates the D in the previous bar, and also serves as a consonant support for C#5 above. The chromatic step from D to D# finally takes us to the E at the end of m. 47. This ornamented motion provides additional push to the climax. The one motive missing from variation 1 is the descending tetrachordal bass. It was associated with the climax in the theme, but is discarded in favor of the chromatic linear progression. However, it returns and is intensified in variation 2 with a new identity.

It is also interesting to note the treatment of the descending motive in the B section. It belongs more to the surface level, and is further used to embellish and extend the move toward the climax. The E-C-A-F in the piano in mm. 43-44 is repeated in m. 45, then enhanced to E-C#-A-F# in the next bar through mode mixture and secondary harmonies. It is then transposed up to F#-D#-B-G# in m. 47. The sketch illustrates the *descending* arpeggiation, which first started at the end of the first interruption. The gesture continues toward the second interruption, and drives the melody to its climax in m. 48. In addition to the ornamented D to E motion mentioned earlier, the descending arpeggiation in an ascending sequence shifts the exact moment of the climax one beat backwards from where it occurred in the theme, to the downbeat of section C. Also, despite the lack of elided phrasings in section B, the force of the expanded descending motive builds the tension toward the inevitable climax.

The theme and variation 1 share a fundamental structure, but it is in fact the manipulation of motives and texture that contribute to the larger sense of coherence. The main motive of the theme was on the foreground; however, the consonant skips are on a higher level in variation 1, becoming middleground 3rds in passages such as mm. 38-47.

This new layer of motivic development not only prolongs the descents, but also becomes the force that drives to the climax. With the emphasis on the piano's idiosyncratic sound, the motivic development further enriches the expressive narrative that is unique to this particular variation.

### Variation 2

Changes in foreground elements are surely expected from one variation to another; however, what can be easily overlooked are changes to the deeper structure. A closer examination of the middleground often reveals the processes that manipulate our sense of coherent structure, and this is the case in variation 2. The climax in the traditional sense is absent from variation 2. Instead, the unfolding of  $\wedge^{\#3}$ , secondary harmonies and motivic sequences prolong the tension to where the climax should have been located. Certain features of the theme, such as the P5 motive and chromatic harmonies, become salient in this variation.

The opening P5 motive from the climax of variation 1 takes on a new character in variation 2 with the shift in its dynamic level, rhythm, timbre, range and character. It becomes the dominating motive in this variation in all three sections and in all three instruments. The piano (Example 3.10), with its ability to take on a harmonic role, layers other motives while the strings deliver a single melodic line. In the right hand's inner voice, the motive



Example 3.10: Opening bars of variation 2 (mm. 55-56).

A-B-C-B-A resembles the arch motive in m. 30 (also mm. 12-13 and 16-17). Above this legato motive is an upper neighbor figure E-F-E, which is essentially a simplification of the theme's double neighbor. (Another upper neighbor, C-D-C, follows it in parallel tenths in the tenor voice.) The piano's polyrhythm from the earlier variation continues in variation 2, and provides harmonic support and rhythmic diversity to the melody.

These motivic and textural changes are certainly compelling aurally. But what also contribute to the overall expressiveness of the variation are the changes to the middleground (Example 3.11 on page 37). There is no third-progression eliding the two phrases of the B section together, unlike variation 1. Instead, the third-progression is replaced by the unfolding of  $\wedge^3$  starting in m. 71. As part of the unfolding process, the C#-A and D#-B motion is further elaborated into a series of descending consonant skips from E5 with an octave transfer: E-C#-A-F#-D#-B in mm. 71-74. This unfolding of  $\wedge^3$  (and transition to  $\wedge^2$ ) occurs through sequence and imitation of a two-bar melody. The violin's melody from the pickup to m. 71 emphasizes the P5 motive on the E. The subsequent notes outline the chromaticized tonic with C# and G. Then from the G, the melody steps down to the D in m. 72. This two-bar melody is sequenced up a step in mm. 73-74. At the same time, the cello imitates the melody exactly in mm. 72-75.

The unfolding of the  $\wedge^3$  in the second phrase lends itself to a long seamless phrase. Section B ends with an altered half cadence via modal mixture. The theme did have the same altered dominant, but followed it with the climactic note over a fully-diminished chord. In variation 2, however, the minor dominant moves straight to the chromaticized tonic (compare mm. 20 and 74). Underneath this ascending motion, the

Variation 2

**A**

35 dolce

57

59

61

HC

PAC

am: i iv<sup>3</sup><sub>3</sub> i ii<sup>o4</sup><sub>2</sub> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> 7 i iv<sup>3</sup><sub>3</sub> i ii<sup>o4</sup><sub>2</sub> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

**B**

63

65

67

climax

69

71

73

HC

dm: i iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  ii<sup>o5</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>  $\frac{4}{2}$  V<sup>6</sup>/iv 7 iv V<sup>6</sup>/V 7 v 6 V/IV

**C**

75

77

79

81

PAC

IV<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>3</sup><sub>3</sub>/IV vii<sup>o3</sup><sub>3</sub>/IV IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o2</sup><sub>2</sub> V<sup>3</sup><sub>3</sub>/iv 7 iv ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv i<sup>6</sup> V/iv iv vii<sup>o6</sup> i vii<sup>o7</sup>/iv N<sup>6</sup> iv vii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

Example 3.11: Variation 2

E-D-E bass motion persists with an important A between E and D, but E-D-E is elaborated with descending figures. For example, in mm. 70-71, the piano's accompaniment figure outlines a descending A major chord with a passing tone D. In mm. 72-73, the D# serves as a middleground passing tone up from D (m. 72), and the D# is elaborated with a descending figure F-E-D# as well. The bass motion from B to E in mm. 73-74 also provides a cadential motion. The melodic and harmonic tension heightens our expectation of a climax, but that is not the case here. Rather, the result of this tension is the sense of a continuous and seamless phrase. The end of section B and beginning of section C is integrated, the only sign of a new section being the solo texture of the strings.

The manipulation of the climax in regards to its location and execution also gives this variation a new identity. First, it is out of place in the phrase compared to the theme and variation 1. Instead of occurring near the boundaries of sections B and C, the climax is located in the middle of section B. As the sketch illustrates, the climax occurs at the first interruption rather than the second interruption. It is the same motive from the climax of variation 1, but with rhythmic inversion as the dotted eighth-sixteenth inverts to a sixteenth-dotted eighth (Example 3.12 on page 39). The preceding motivic materials are unique as well. Instead of the long buildup to the climactic moment, it is somewhat subtle here. With the repeated motion from A to B-natural, the strings reach the climax within a single bar. This short buildup to the climax softens the dynamic effect. However, the indicated *più f poco a poco* is a request for more sound *after* the climax, not *at* the moment. Moreover, the melodic interweaving after the climax in mm. 71-74 sounds tenser than the actual climax with its sequences, imitations and secondary harmonies.



Although the actual climax is brief, the dynamic indication and continued tension prolong the climactic moment until the end of the entire phrase.

The image shows a musical score for Variation 2's climax in measures 67-68. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are in bass clef, and the bottom two are in treble clef. The music is in 3/4 time. The first two staves have a dynamic marking of *più f poco a poco*. The third staff has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 67. The fourth staff has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 68. The music features a descending line in the upper voices and a more active line in the lower voices.

Example 3.12: Variation 2's climax in mm. 67-68.

Interestingly, the P5 motive in m. 68 is not supported by any harmonic tension, as previously demonstrated. For example, the theme's climactic F (m. 20) was over a half-diminished leading tone chord while variation 1's E (m. 48) was over a fully-diminished leading tone chord. The climactic E in m. 68 is instead harmonically supported by an inverted tonic (see Example 7). Other harmonic aspects of variation 2 set it apart from the previous music. The flatted major subtonic chords in mm. 64 and 68 have a captivating aural effect. They also provide a somewhat hidden motivic drive to the climax, which will be explained in a later paragraph. Hypothetically, Brahms could have used a different chord. Instead of C major in m. 64, E major could have worked with E-G#-B. But then moving to the submediant B-flat would have been aurally strange. A major, the dominant, would also be an option. But this would raise a similar issue to E major. The augmented step from C# to B-flat would sound completely out of place. Brahms wanted the descending parallel motion from D minor through C major to B-flat major.

Melodically, notes of the C major chord become essential to the violin and piano. The harmonic parallel motion just mentioned also provides the descending tetrachordal bass first encountered at the theme's climax. The theme's descending motion from G (mm. 19-20) is exaggerated here with G-F-E-D (mm. 63-65) and D-C-B-A (mm. 67-69), and becomes the central force in prolonging the  $\hat{1}$  and the  $\hat{3}$ , respectively, to expand section B.

The first change in section C's fundamental structure occurs in variation 2. The last 3-line *Urlinie* begins by imitating the  $\hat{3}$ - $\hat{2}$  descent from the end of section B (mm. 71-74). The string of secondary harmonies of the subdominant in mm. 75-76 chromaticizes the tonic chord in m. 76, and pushes forward to the predominant in the following bar. In variation 1, the secondary harmony of the subdominant also appeared, providing the C# in m. 49. But the violin instantly corrected it in the same bar. In variation 2, the harmony is essentially the same, but the C# in mm. 75-76 is doubled and reinforced by both the piano and violin, becoming more salient on the surface. So, the tonic minor chord (m. 22) is varied to a chromaticized tonic (m. 49) and finally becomes salient (m. 76).

Variation 2 is also where the surface-level melody and harmony in section C is drastically altered. The melody in section C is essentially a continuation of the motives in the previous section, further providing surface-level coherence between the sections. In addition to the flattened subtonic harmony in section B, the Neapolitan chord in m. 79 also provides a distinct sound to the final section. The Neapolitan is resolved to the dominant with its proper voice leading by the piano in the following bar. The *le* in the right hand resolves down to the *sol*, and the *fa* in the left hand resolves up to the *sol*. The B-flat (*ra*)

in the piano left hand resolves up with register transfer to the G# (*ti*) in the cello. With this new chromatic predominant, harmonic closure is inevitable. Variation 2 is not the only time Brahms writes a perfect authentic cadence. Variations 4 and 5 also have a perfect authentic cadence, but the latter reintroduces the mediant chord from the theme. More striking are the drastic changes to variation 4's structure, which ultimately affect the final descent and closure. Harmonies such as flatted subtonic and chromatic predominant further provide a sense of newness to variation 2 while maintaining its structure.

While variation 1 is more of an example of a foreground variation, variation 2 has more changes to the middleground structure. The location of the climax point and the brief buildup lessen the climax's effect compared to the previous variation. However, the unfolding of  $\text{^{\#}3}$ , secondary harmonies and motivic sequences prolong the tension to where the climax should have been located. There is no doubt that the surface-level changes are aurally intriguing, but the expressiveness of the variation rises from the changes to the deeper level, as will be clearer in the next variation.

### Variation 3

The drastic dynamic change from variation 2 to variation 3 is even more effective with a sudden change in instrumentation, while still maintaining a familiarity to the theme. In terms of structure, variation 3 is unique in two ways: it is the middle variation of the movement and it has elements of both return to and departure from the theme. Despite its obvious texture and articulation changes, variation 3 conveys a sense of return to the motivic design and harmonic progressions of the theme. What sets this variation apart from the previous music is that the middleground changes in the buildup to the

climax. The repeated contrary motion becomes a significant feature that reinforces the structural differences of this variation. To gain a comprehensive understanding of this variation, it is necessary to examine the similarities to the theme, and proceed to the structural changes. We can then explore the relationship between motive and structure, the presence of balance and variety, and the implication for the final two variations.

The motivic plot of variation 3 progresses logically from the theme. The corresponding bars of the theme and variation 3 share the basic outline, but variation 3 has rhythmic urgency and melodic drive with sixteenth notes, registral expansion and contrary motion. In the theme, the strings' outline of the tonic with A-C-A-E (mm. 1-2) is followed by the cadential motion with F-A-E (mm. 3-4). This is repeated in variation 3's opening with nonchord and chord tones, as evident in the descending gesture in m. 83. Contrast to this downward motion, the F-A-E in mm. 84-85 is dramatized with arpeggios, becoming part of a larger rising motion (Example 3.13).



Example 3.13: Theme's F-A-E (mm. 3-4) is embellished in variation 3 (mm. 84-85).

Even at the buildup to the climax in section B, the basic melodic outline remains the same. The strings' ascending A-B-C#-D in mm. 17-18 is reflected and condensed in

mm. 98-99. The difference here is that the eighth notes of the theme are “corrected” to match the rhythm of the theme’s opening bar. So an opposite technique is used in this variation compared to the theme: the rhythmic motives are “normalized” from the theme’s eighth note divisions to variation 3’s quarter note pulse. Another example of this occurs in the piano. In the left hand, the rhythmically stretched F-E-D in mm. 17-18 is reduced to a single bar in m. 99. Unlike the opening of variation 3, it is not so much the rhythmic urgency and melodic drive that adds tension. Despite the strings’ simplified rhythm and thinner texture, the piano’s repetition and elaboration of the strings’ melody prove to be effective at building to the climax in m. 102. The simplicity in delivery provides balance and variety between the two sections, as well between the theme and variation 3. While the basic motivic plot remains the same, the normalized rhythm and the simplified texture achieves the same goal of reaching the climax, and overall it adds a new layer of motivic development to the narrative.

As expected in a theme and variation form, the underlying harmonic progressions of the theme are preserved in the successive variations. Brahms, however, varies the closing sections of the first two variations, intensifying the closure to the cadence. The texture is more involved with secondary harmonies, a chromatic melodic line, and an elaborated accompaniment (see mm. 48-54 and mm. 75-81). Variation 3 does the opposite (Example 3.14 on page 44). It parallels the theme’s section C in the sense that it has simplistic harmonies, melody, and accompaniment. There is a short prolongation of tonic with inverted diminished and root-position half-diminished sevenths on B in mm. 102-103. A cadential motion to the final descent follows in m. 105, and is further

Variation 3

**A**

am: i iv<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>♯</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI i vii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub>/V V i iv<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>♯</sup><sub>2</sub> i V VI i V<sub>7</sub> I

**B**

dm: i iv<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>♯</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI iv i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{4}$  i<sup>6</sup> | 7 ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>♯</sup><sub>1</sub> V<sup>6</sup> VI i iv V VI iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub>/iv iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub>/IV IV v<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub>/v v<sup>6</sup> V<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub>/V V<sup>♯</sup><sub>3</sub> HC

am: | iv<sup>6</sup>

**C**

*f* sempre climax

i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>6</sub> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>6</sub> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♭</sup><sub>7</sub> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{4}$  I

Plagal

Example 3.14: Variation 3

prolonged to the plagal cadence three bars later. The final section tapers off with decreased tension in both the theme and variation 3.

Other than the structural changes at the end of section B, which will be the center of discussion in the following paragraphs, the middlegrounds of the theme and variation 3 are quite similar if not identical. Sections A and the beginning of B have the same structure with arpeggiated tonic in the soprano and double-neighbor figures in the inner voices (mm. 1-8 and 82-89) as well as an arpeggiated subdominant (mm. 9-12 and 90-93). Section C in variation 3 avoids tension, and brings back the Theme's simplicity, contrasting to variation 2's chromatic bass and melodic leaps. The double neighbor figure of the opening bars (mm. 1-2 and 82-23) returns to the piano's bass line in the beginning of section C (mm. 102-104). The chromaticized  $\hat{3}$  of the previous variation switches back to the diatonic  $\hat{3}$  in the corresponding bar in m. 103. As a matter of fact, these similarities in motive, harmony, and structure only provide a deeper contrast with what occurs toward the climax in section B. The deeper structural changes become clearer when surrounded by these similarities.

The motivic and harmonic connections between the corresponding sections, as well as within the variation itself, provide a sense of balance and variety that leads to structural coherence. For example, variation 3 has clearer phrases, but lacks a solid predominant. It may not seem obvious when looking at these elements alone, but they indeed affect the middleground structure. In sections A and B of the previous variations, there was a clear predominant to dominant cadential motion in the bass arpeggiation. This is not the case in variation 3: there is no substantial predominant approaching the half cadence in mm. 85 and 97, and the perfect authentic cadence in m. 89 (in the next

variation, the flat VII substitutes for the predominant). Perhaps due to this absence of the predominant, the cadential motion toward the climax (mm. 98-102) is uniquely different. The subdominant region is carefully expanded with minor to major motion and secondary dominants and sevenths. One way to understand this is that the lack of predominant in the opening of variation 3 is “made up for” by placing a larger IV-V motion that stretches from mm. 98-101. A clearly constructed motivic plot that lacks phrase elisions and rhythmic/metric ambiguity supports this harmonic expansion, which also increases tension. Most importantly, all of the elements mentioned above change the structure by omitting the first interruption and delaying the  $\hat{2}$ .

Brahms avoids a half cadence in m. 97 with a tonic substitute VI. This evaded cadence produces the bass D-E-F in the piano, which is sequenced down from the previous bar (F-G-A). As the dominant becomes a passing harmony instead of a cadential arrival, the piano’s bass E becomes a surface note. So the first interruption of section B is omitted in favor of a bass passing motion. Likewise, the bass motion that supports what should be  $\hat{\#3}$  (m. 99) is a passing motion within another chord: the piano echoes the cello’s F-E-D (m. 98), and the secondary dominant embellishes the minor to major subdominant motion.<sup>50</sup> In other words,  $\hat{\#3}$  (in m. 99) doesn’t have proper harmonic and bass support, and as a result,  $\hat{3}$  (in m. 96) is prolonged with a large IV-V harmonic motion and a consonant skip to A (mm. 98-99) until the  $\hat{2}$  (mm. 100-101). The effect is an increase in harmonic tension toward the half cadence in m. 101, and a greater sense of arrival and resolution in the following bar with the return to the tonic harmony. Variation 3 illustrates the close relationship between structural change and motivic manipulation, specifically the motivic sequences that occur in contrary motion by all three instruments.

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<sup>50</sup> For an example of where the  $\hat{3}$  had proper harmonic and bass support, see mm. 19, 46 and 71.



The bass motives and the ascending sequences, which all germinated from the 3-note ascending motive of m. 1, affect the middleground structure. Due to the middleground changes, the E-D-E bass motive is varied and has a slightly different function here than in the previous music. Since section B lacks the first interruption in m. 97, the bass becomes part of the surface layer, prolonging the  $\wedge^3$ . Instead of the E-D-E motion, there is a motivic emphasis on D-E (mm. 99-101). It is also supported by major-sounding harmonies—IV to V in mm. 99 and 101, respectively—gesturing toward the next major variation. By comparing the sketches of the corresponding bars, we see an example of how Brahms elaborates the motive differently in each variation, adding a unique motivic layer to the texture. The E-D-E bass motive is ornamented with chromatic notes in variation 1 and descending figures in variation 2. In variation 3, the D-E motion is decorated by a 3-note descending motion in the bass, which ultimately changes the middleground structure: F-E-D in mm. 98-99 and G-F#-E in mm. 100-101 (Example 3.15). This repeating figure is then extended to become the tetrachordal bass. In contrast to the previous variation, Brahms doesn't isolate and exaggerate the tetrachordal bass. It is more similar to the theme in its function as it supports the interruption at the end of section B and connects it to the next section.

The image displays three staves of musical notation. The top staff shows a single melodic line with a 3-note ascending motive (E-D-E) and chromatic ornamentation. The middle staff shows a similar motive with a 3-note descending motion (F-E-D) in the bass. The bottom staff shows a more complex texture with multiple voices, including a 3-note descending motion (G-F#-E) in the bass, which is extended to become a tetrachordal bass.

Example 3.15: Variation 3, mm. 98-101.

What is more interesting is the sequential use of the 3-note motive, and its relation to the bass motives mentioned above. The violin provides a motivic and textural layer above the cello and piano with an ascending gesture toward the climactic point. The contrary motion in each bar is repeated and linked through normalized rhythm and simplified texture. In the theme, for instance, the strings ascended in double octaves and the piano descended in tenths (mm. 17-20); this has a very different sound than what happens in variation 3. In mm. 98-101, the strings have contrary motion within themselves while the piano has its own contrary motion. Due to the continuous descent by the lower voice of the cello and piano in these four bars, a greater emphasis is placed on the tetrachordal bass in m. 101. Also, the strings' rests clearly amplify the piano's bass. This alternating A-B-C#-D in the upper register and its sequence by the violin and piano (mm. 98-101) builds to the climax, and the strings maintain that tension in the following section.

The violin's long solo descent from the climactic point stretches over two octaves in mm. 102-105 (Example 3.16 on page 49). The ascent prolonging  $\wedge^3$  and  $\wedge^2$  at the end of section B and the descent prolonging  $\wedge^3$  in the beginning of section C create a melodic arch that spans eight bars. There is a new motivic connection between these two contrasting sections. The climactic note is back in its default location, but it occurs at the moment of harmonic and melodic resolution, which is quite different from theme and variation 1. In this sense, it is similar to variation 2 in its melodic and harmonic simplicity (see m. 68). A new motivic layer is built around the climax, and this new closure provides a different experience for the player and listener alike.



Example 3.16: Violin's long descent in mm. 102-105.

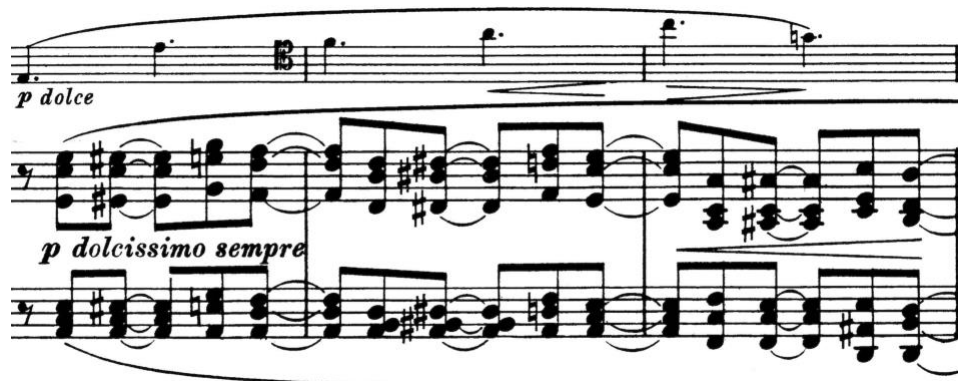
The theme and variation 3 share a special relationship, the latter serving as sort of a checkpoint within the movement. Despite the many similarities, however, variation 3 has a new character and sound. The initial sound of the variation sets it apart from the previous music, and the structural changes, which are motivically driven, are less clear at first glance. The missing features, such as the predominant, phrase elisions and metric ambiguity, affect the construction, and the repeated contrary motion reinforces the structural difference. Overall, variation 3 is an example of how elements of return and departure can work together to create a unique voice. In the next variation, Brahms takes drastic measures to obscure the structure, which is then followed by a return to the theme's structure in variation 5.

#### Variation 4

Variation 4 is the penultimate variation, and it can hardly be called typical. It shifts to the parallel major, which was implied in the last bar in variation 3. The meter changes from simple duple, 2/4, to compound duple, 6/8, adding variety to what previously had been a strict quarter-note pulse. In terms of the texture, the strings' bel canto melody and the piano's embellished accompaniment contrasts with the defiant character of the middle variation. It is also interesting to note that variation 4, the most

structurally different variation, follows the most theme-like variation. The motivic changes initiated by the cello and piano provide a great contrast and unity from the other variations. The sequenced motives result in an “initial ascent” that builds momentum toward the climax, and ascending modulations give it a new structural identity, which further contributes to our understanding of Brahms’s variation process.

Variation 4 is most unrecognizable in terms of its melodic changes. Starting with the lowest A, the cello leaps from one note to the next, reaching over two octaves within the first few notes (Example 3.17). The first four notes are actually a retrograde of the piano’s last four in the previous section: the A-F-A-A in the piano’s right hand octaves become A-A-F#-A in the cello.<sup>51</sup> However, we do hear an embellished 3-note motive at the tail end of the phrase in m. 112 with a similar rhythm to m. 1: ascent on F# and descent on F-natural in long-short-long rhythm. Below this bel canto melody is the piano’s double neighbor motive in *dolcissimo*, indicating an even sweeter sound. The double neighbor figure on E—E-F#-D-E—is embellished with chromatic passing tones and non-chord tones: the E to F# motion expands to E-E# G#-F# and D to E becomes D-D#-F#-E in mm. 109-110 and 110-111, respectively. This chromaticized melodic layer is consistently maintained



<sup>51</sup> Pacun, “Large-Scale Form in Selected Variation Sets of Johannes Brahms,” page.

Example 3.17: Cello's melody and piano's embellished figure in mm. 109-111. with its syncopated rhythm while the strings have their own elided phrases (there is another layer of the double neighbor figure within the piano's thick texture, but it's not brought to the surface). In variation 4, it is not the main motive that reminds us of the theme, as it has previously done. It is the accompaniment with its decorated motive and altered rhythm that provide motivic contrast and unity.

In general, the middleground structure of section A remains somewhat ordinary in this movement (Example 3.18 on page 52). Variations 1 and 3 have arpeggios and double neighbor motives. Variation 2 has a layered 3-note melodic arc and upper neighbor figure, but is repetitive and predictable. In variation 4, on the other hand, the  $\wedge^3$  is registrally expanded within the cello and violin. The long melodic arch is created between the two strings, covering over 3 octaves from the cello's low A in m. 109 to the violin's high E in m. 114. This reflects the melodic arch in the preceding variation's drive to the climax (mm. 98-105). In addition to the changes in melodic shape and register, there are minor changes to the phrasing, harmony and *Urlinie*. The phrase elisions are consistent, yet subtle between the strings. Also, the chromatic predominant flat VII (G major) substitutes for the diatonic ones in sections A and B (mm. 111 and 123). It is not only the double neighbor motive that is chromaticized. Finally, the primary tone in the opening bar and its descent are both implied. The violin then takes over in the consequent phrase (mm. 113-116) with a more explicit *Urlinie* (but  $\wedge^2$  is still implied).

The strings' melodic line is noticeably different even from the foreground's first bar. Not so obvious are the structural changes. Only when we look at the middleground sketch do the changes become apparent. For example, the sketch embraces

Variation 4

A *109 dolce*

HC PAC

A: I IV<sup>4</sup> ii<sup>4</sup> I vi vii<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sup>4</sup> ii<sup>4</sup> I IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

B *117 119 121 123 125 127*

D: I IV<sup>4</sup> ii<sup>4</sup> I vi vii<sup>4</sup> vii<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>4</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> IV I<sup>6</sup> vi vii<sup>7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sup>4</sup> I V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sup>4</sup> I V<sup>7</sup>

A: | IV<sup>6</sup> B: | C#: |

C *129 climax pp 131 133 135*

vii<sup>4</sup> I<sup>7</sup> vii<sup>4</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/ii ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>6</sup>/ii ii<sup>4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

A: | PAC

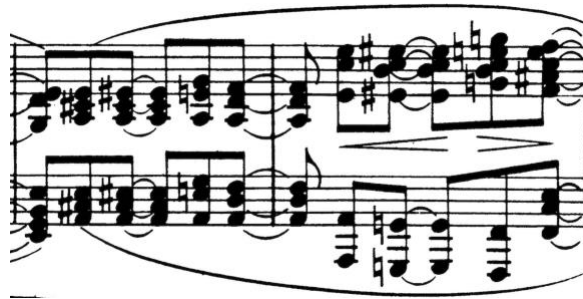
Example 3.18: Variation 4

progressively obscured sections B and C. Following the pattern of the theme, the first interruption occurs eight bars into section B in m. 124. The consonant thirds F#-A prolong the ascent to the C# in m. 123, and the subdominant modulates back to the tonic two bars before, just in time for the  $\hat{3}$ . With the harmonic return is also a motivic return. The cello's antecedent in section A is repeated here with slight rhythmic changes (mm. 121-125). If this variation had continued the pattern, a second interruption would have occurred in m. 128. Instead, sections B and C are structurally obscured via modulations. The ascending modulations occur soon after the first interruption, replacing the IV-V motion that existed in the preceding variations. Similar to the opening section in mm. 109-116, the violin's entrance elides with the cello's exit in m. 125. However, this melodic fragment is imitated by the cello, which then initiates the harmonic change to B major in m. 126. Again, the cello's imitation of the sequenced violin's motive pushes for another harmonic change to C# in m. 128. Both strings unite at the climactic point in the following bar, and the return to tonic soon follows. Not only does the harmonic scheme obscure the sections, but it also creates a disconnect to the motivic structure.

The harmonies used to modulate and reshape the structure are not new to this variation movement. The flatted seventh and mediant chords are isolated and exaggerated with a unique purpose. In the Theme, the mediant embellished the dominant. In variation 2, the flatted seventh had a few simple roles. It added a unique sound, was part of a passing bass motion and supported the climax. In variation 4, the flatted seventh is the chromatic predominant to the dominant, as well as the pivot chord for modulations. It signals the harmonic closure to the half cadence in mm. 111 and 123. The flat VII to V7 motion in mm. 126 and 128, as in Example 10, prolongs the tonic chords in mm. 125, 127

and 129. The mediant pivot chord brings us back to the tonic key in m. 129, and provides harmonic support for the violin's chromatic passing tones in mm. 132-133. To recap, the previous variation lacked certain elements, one being the predominant. This missing feature was “made-up” with a large IV-V motion at the end of section B. Here, the half cadences lack a diatonic predominant. The chromatic one takes its place, and is also used as a pivot chord for ascending modulations. While there is a big contrast to the harmonic scheme, the motivic connections between the theme and variation 4 remain close.

As in the previous music, the motivic manipulations ultimately affect the structure. First, Brahms discards the two bass motives in favor of the ascending gesture. The tetrachordal and E-D-E motives are replaced by the large ascending bass motion E-F#-G# that are supported by the dominant harmonies in mm. 124, 126 and 128. Within this gradually ascending bass are the 3-note motives in contrary motion that are prolonged via the tonic: A-A-G-F# (mm. 125-126 as in Example 3.19) and B-B-A-G# (mm. 127-128).



Example 3.19: A-A-G-F# in the piano's lower voice in mm. 125-126.

During this motivic process, an “initial ascent” takes shape. The middleground “initial ascent” to the primary tone  $\hat{\#3}$  (m. 129) is melodically exaggerated and harmonically supported. The violin first elaborates the ascending motive A-B-C# to A-C#-D in m. 125, which is taken by the cello in the following bar with A-C#-E. The melodic content of



these two bars is sequenced up in mm. 127-128 with violin's B-D#-E and cello's B-D#-F# (Example 3.20).



Example 3.20: Violin's B-D#-E is followed by cello's B-D#-F# in mm. 127-128.

The strings' elaborated 3-note motive reach the climax in m. 129, and both instruments are harmonized in 3rds and 6ths. The piano also provides harmonic support for its "initial ascent" with its thick chords: ^1 is supported by A major, ^2 by B major, and ^3 by C# major. Furthermore, the piano's V7-I motion provides a stronger harmonic presence to the strings' melodies. The strings alternate and imitate one another in sequence toward the final section; all the while the piano provides an additional motivic and textural layer. Like variation 3, there is a melodic arch connecting sections B and C. The ascending melodic gestures starting in the middle of section B in m. 125 lead to the high point in m. 129, and the descent follows in the ensuing bars until m. 132. This ascending and descending gesture connects the two sections via modulations *and* motivic sequences, which inevitably obscures the structure. This long-range motive doesn't just take us to the climax; it also reshapes the structure.

After the first interruption in m. 124, the entire structure is transformed (see Example 11). The sequenced motives with harmonic support result in an "initial ascent" that builds momentum toward the climax. The melodic high point F# is on the downbeat of section C in m. 129 (Example 3.21 on page 56), which is similar to variations 1 and 3. The same note is harmonically unstable as in the theme. Not only does it occur on the

dominant seventh and fully diminished seventh, it is also in the mediant key of C# major. However, this moment is dynamically weak with a *pianissimo* marking. In this sense, it is out of sync with the melodic and harmonic tension. What is, however, in sync is the presence of the climax point F# and the primary tone ^3 in the same bar in m. 129, which is also explicit.



Example 3.21: Climactic point in variation 4 (mm. 129-130).

The structural change at the final closure is also affected by the “initial ascent.” The simple prolongation of the theme (mm. 21-27) is gone here. There is a more elaborate scheme to the cadence, and a greater harmonic drive to the authentic cadence. With the return to the tonic in m. 129, the ^3 is prolonged with an IV-V motion in mm. 130-131. This harmonic motion was missing from the end of section B. The extension of the primary tone is confirmed in m. 132 from m. 129, and is even embellished with the major seventh in the same bar. There is even rhythmic decoration with the hemiola right before the ^3 in m. 132. The final descent ^2-^1 is stretched to the very end of the phrase, and the chromatic predominant disappears. This is the second variation in this movement that closes with an authentic cadence. The first was variation 2 in which the Neapolitan

prompted the harmonic closure from the dominant seventh to the tonic. The entire variation movement also concludes with an authentic cadence in m. 170, which will be discussed in detail in a later section. As the “initial ascent” affects the structure of the final descent, it perhaps influences the final cadence as well, as variation 4 closes with a more assertive cadence.

This penultimate variation is different from the others in numerous aspects. The middleground changes in all three sections give this variation a new identity. The motivic and harmonic changes are complex, greatly affecting the overall structure. To name a few, the registral expansion and melodic arch between the strings, the return of certain harmonies with a new purpose (a Brahmsian feature), and the addition of the “initial ascent” all contribute to the complex process. The obscuring of sections via modulations and motivic sequences contributes to this variation’s transformed structure. This ultimately affects the following section as well, providing a more elaborate harmonic scheme to the final closure. These unique qualities of variation 4 become a significant addition to the entire movement, and a great source of variety before the return of the theme-like structure in the last variation.

#### Variation 5 and Coda

Brahms’s mastery of instrumentation never fails to please our ears. Variation 5 completely transforms the sound of the given material, more so in this variation than in the one preceding. The final variation returns to the minor tonic, but remains in 6/8.<sup>52</sup> Its opening melody grips the listener’s ears from the first note: the cello starts high in the range and fills each bar with its bright, penetrating sound. The piano, on the other hand, is

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<sup>52</sup> The *Andante* is followed by the C minor *Scherzo* in 6/8. The metric connection between the *Andante* and the *Scherzo* provides additional coherence to the entire work.

under the surface with *una corda*. In fact, the accompaniment is an arpeggiated version of the theme until section C. It is also harmonically and structurally identical to the theme until section C. While it reflects variation 2 in its motivic content, variation 5 capitalizes on the fact that it is the last variation, and the last chance to remember the theme.

Variation 5 is stripped of any modifications, and the deeper level changes of the preceding two variations are normalized. The similarities of the theme to variation 5 are striking. However, the complete opposite occurs as well: the intensity of the opening turns to *dolce* in a reversed dynamic, and the two climactic points are followed by the coda's complete closure. The overall outcome is that the differences in the climax and the closing music provide further evidence of structural coherence between the beginning and end of the movement.

The beginning, middle and end of this slow movement all maintain the basic melodic outline. As mentioned in my discussion of the middle variation, the corresponding bars share the basic outline, and this also applies to the final variation. Each variation has its own sound, embracing completely different moods; variation 3 has rhythmic urgency and melodic drive while variation 5 embraces a gentler demeanor. In terms of its content, the opening melody (mm. 136-139) is taken from variation 2's inner voice, which essentially is an ornamented version of the theme's melody. The cello brings it to the surface with an incisive and bright timbre, carried out with rhythmic stability and consistency. Looking at the bigger picture, the theme's bass arpeggiation with exactly the same harmonic support and progression returns as well with the same predominant. Even after the extensive structural and motivic changes in the penultimate variation, the two bass motives—E-D-E and tetrachordal bass—come back unchanged.

There is also a pattern to the structural changes in section B. The consonant skips of variations 1 and 2 alter the second interruption in section B, whereas the motivic sequences of variations 3 and 4 eliminate the presence of two interruptions either with an evaded cadence or prolonged modulation. In variation 5, the theme's two interruptions return with the same harmonic closures. There is a real sense of return to the beginning at the end of the music, perhaps because of the various changes that had occurred before variation 5.

Other than the foreground and textural changes, there are minimal differences between the theme and variation 5. In the theme and variation 1, the climax is supported in terms of melody, harmony and dynamics (see m. 20). In variation 2, the climax changes location and is simplified in its harmony and melodic buildup. Variation 3 is stable in its harmony and melody, similar to the previous variation, but the penultimate variation is the opposite in its harmony, melody and dynamic. In variation 5, there are two climactic moments (Example 3.22). One is dynamic and the other is motivic. Not only is this a change in the climax, but the climax also supports and coincides with the two descents in section B (Example 3.23 on page 60). The dynamic climax occurs in m. 151 at the first interruption. Motivically, it connects the two bars (mm. 151-152) with the

The image shows a musical score for Example 3.22, consisting of three staves: Treble Clef (top), Bass Clef (middle), and Grand Staff (bottom). The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The first staff (Treble Clef) has a melody with a forte (f) dynamic marking and a 'dim.e rit.' marking. The second staff (Bass Clef) has a melody with a forte (f) dynamic marking and a 'dim.e rit.' marking. The third staff (Grand Staff) has a piano accompaniment with a forte (f) dynamic marking and a 'dim.e rit.' marking. The score shows two climactic points in variation 5 (mm. 151-154).

Example 3.22: Two climactic points in variation 5 (mm. 151-154).

Variation 5

**A** *dolce una corda*

136 138 140 142

HC PAC

am: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♯7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V i

**B**

144 146 148 150 152 154 170

climax *f* climax

HC

dm: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> 3 am: i<sup>6</sup> 7 ii<sup>♯7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♯7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub>/iv iv V<sub>3</sub>/iv v<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub>/iv v vii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup>

**C** *più tranquillo poco a poco*

156 158 160 Rest 162 K 164 166 168 170

HC PAC

i<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sub>3</sub>/iv vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/iv iv<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/V V<sub>4</sub><sup>♯</sup> 7 i<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/V V<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/IV IV<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI ii<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> 7 VI ii<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI ii<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i i

Example 3.23: Variation 5 and coda

melodic arch on A. The ascending sequences in the cello bring the next climax at m. 155. The A-B-C# in m. 152 is sequenced up in 154, pushing toward E in the following bar. Despite its melodic impact, the sound pulls away and diminishes at this exact spot. Brahms indicates *dim. e rit.* in the B-C#-D# bar, and places a diminuendo sign starting on the climax note E. This is then quickly followed by a change in sound to *più tranquillo poco a poco* in m. 156. The dynamically weak E has motivic support in contrary motion as well. The ascending gesture B-C#-D#-E is mirrored by the piano's tetrachordal bass G-F#-E-D, which is also layered and supported by its right hand and by the violin in thirds B-A-G-F#.

The other difference between the two bookends of the slow movement is small, but still fascinating to the overall variation. After 155 bars of music, not to mention numerous textural combinations, we hear for the first time a complete silence through the eighth rest, and the harmonic tension of the fully diminished seventh resonates during this stillness. The same occurs later in m. 160, hinting of slowing down for the final closure. Missing is the melodic arch of the previous two variations. While it added an interesting motivic layer, a different kind of layer exists here. The P5 interval that consistently appeared in the final sections returns here with embellishments. Following the first rest is the violin's ascending gesture from A to E in chromatic steps. The rhythmic pattern also slows down from eighth notes to dotted quarter notes, stretching the chromatic effect. After the next rest in m. 160, the piano mirrors the violin with a descending gesture from E to A. It is identical in rhythm to the above music. Reflecting the cello's descending chromatic gesture is the piano's descending bass line from A to E in mm. 161-164. The only other time this has happened was in variation 2 from B to E (mm. 78-80) in

ascending motion. In variation 5, the chromatic A to E motion provides a motivic connection to the coda's descent.

The  $\hat{3}$  (m. 158) in section C is a chromaticized tonic through secondary harmony, and part of a chromatic gesture that embellishes the P5 motion. On the contrary, the  $\hat{3}$  (m. 164) in the coda has harmonic stability, but is implied in the strings. Also, there is a correlation between the  $\hat{3}$  and the type of cadence. The  $\hat{3}$ , when supported by a chromaticized tonic or a major tonic, always leads to the authentic cadence as shown in variations 2, 4 and 5. If  $\hat{3}$  is supported by a minor tonic, then it closes with a plagal cadence as in the theme, variation 1 and 3. As mentioned above, variation 5's final descent follows a  $\hat{3}$  in m. 164, therefore closing with an authentic cadence. Moreover, all of the cadences before this have occurred on a major tonic. The final ending, however, makes a full circle and cadences on a minor tonic. This return to A minor sounds appropriate when considering the melodic simplicity and rhythmic restraint of the final few bars.

The motive that brings us to the cadence is based on the upper and lower neighbor figures. Both the strings embellish the P5 in the first four bars of the coda: cello from A3 to E4 and violin from A4 to E5 in mm. 163-166. The last four bars consist of a reduced figure and range: C4-E4 for the cello and A4-C5 for the violin. Towards the end of the coda, Brahms even includes a written-out ritardando in the new 9/8 meter with the consonant skip figure A-B-C-B-A in sixths (see m. 168), emphasizing the dominant harmony and the anticipation of the tonic note. As for the harmonic content, there is an emphasis on the mediant chord (Example 3.24 on page 63). It is used to delay the final



cadence for five bars (mm. 164-169) with the submediant. This mediant was rarely heard throughout the movement.

The image shows a musical score for a coda section, measures 167-168. It is written in 3/8 time and consists of three systems. The first system has a treble and bass staff with a piano part below. The second system has a treble and bass staff. The third system has a grand staff (treble, middle, and bass). The music is marked 'p dim. e rit.' and features a submediant cadence. There are triplets and slurs throughout the piece.

Example 3.24: Coda, mm. 167-168

We first hear it in the theme (m. 8) as part of the cadential motion, and we hear the same harmony again in variation 4 (mm. 129 and 132) after 121 bars of music. Although brief, the mediant functions as a passing chord in the piano and provides smooth linear motion to the next chord. The same occurs at the end of variation 5. The mediant harmony provides both the harmonic support for the salient melodic notes and a linear sound to the accompaniment. As with the minor tonic at the final cadence, this harmony returns as a recollection of the first cadence.

The big takeaway from variation 5 is that it is not much different from the theme. Our perception of the theme has evolved since the first variation, and the return to its initial structure has a meaningful impact. It's not just the surface ornaments that have changed over the course of the movement. The salient features of the music arise from the deeper level changes, and certain features do not become clear until one looks at the music from a broader structural view. Brahms ultimately achieves closure in the variation movement through the return of the theme's middleground structure.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The Schenkerian approach to the Piano Trio reveals many different layers of motivic development that inform the listener and the performer alike. In the Trio, the theme provides a complex starting point in regards to the form and phrase structure. The antecedent and consequent unit of section A is followed by a long irregular phrase in section B, and the harmonic and melodic tension are resolved in the final section. The two motives—three ascending notes and the double neighbor figure—are ubiquitous throughout the work. These motives are simple, yet they have an effect on the middleground and foreground levels of subsequent variations. The implied *Urlinie* and the elaborated bass arpeggiation in mm. 1-8 provide a template for the rest of the theme, and the harmonic and motivic features of section B affect the descent and the climax. In the theme, the motives have a logical progression from section to section, and provide larger coherence to the variations.

There is no drastic change to the middleground structure in variation 1, but the foreground elements of the theme are brought to a higher level, becoming 3rds in the middleground and an expressive arch in the foreground. The timid suggestion of the strings' motive is paired with the piano's "corrected chords." The descending tetrachordal bass is missing in variation 1, and Brahms intensifies the climax through the chromatic linear progression. Despite the lack of elided phrasings in section B, the force of the expanded descending motive in ascending sequence builds the tension toward the inevitable climax.

No less striking is variation 2. There is a shift in what motive is emphasized. The P5 is prioritized, and the unfolding of  $\hat{\#3}$  in section B becomes salient. The climax in a traditional sense is absent, and the unfolding of the  $\hat{\#3}$  in section B lends itself to a long seamless phrase. The flattened major subtonic chords and the change in section C's fundamental structure provide a unique sound to variation 2. The expressiveness of this variation rises from the middleground changes.

Unlike the previous two variations, variation 3 has a sense of return to as well as departure from the theme's motivic design and harmonic progression. What is unique to this variation is the change to the middleground structure: the single interruption in section B builds tension toward the climax via normalized rhythm and simplified texture. The long melodic arch connects the two sections at the climax, and adds a new layer of motivic development to the narrative. The missing features, such as the predominant, as well as the phrase elisions and metric ambiguity, affect the construction, and the repeated contrary motion reinforces the structural differences.

Motivic changes in variation 4 provide a great contrast and unity from the other variations. Both of the main motives are highly decorated, almost transforming them into new motives in the context of a new key and meter. Brahms further obscures the structure in section B via modulations and motivic sequences, which results in an "initial ascent." It replaces the IV-V motion that has been prevalent in the theme and previous variations. Certain harmonies—flatted seventh and mediant chords—provide additional color to the new structure, and even the structure of the final section is altered. These unique qualities of variation 4 become a significant addition to the entire movement, and a great source of variety before the return of the theme-like structure in the last variation.

After the major structural changes in variations 3 and 4, the return to the theme's initial structure has a meaningful impact in variation 5. It is not just the surface ornaments that have changed over the course of the movement. Other than the basic foreground and textural changes, the theme and variation 5 share many similarities, including the melodic and harmonic outline. This last variation, however, has two climactic moments: both the dynamic and motivic climaxes support and coincide with the two interruptions in section B. The coda reiterates the descent with harmonic stability, and achieves complete harmonic closure.

My voice-leading graphs of the Piano Trio, No. 2, Op. 87 illustrate the expressive elements of section B in particular, and the motivic and harmonic connections between the sections as well as subsequent variations. Certain foreground elements become middleground features, as in variations 1 and 2. In variations 3 and 4, there is a drastic change to the middleground structure. Elements of return exist in variations 3 and 5, while also providing new motivic development. The foreground elements of the theme shape the surface level of the variations, but the middleground structure provides an expressive template for deeper level changes. A major advantage of analyzing variation form from a broader structural view is that we can see the relationship between the deeper-level changes and the salient features of the music. Schenkerian analysis of the Piano Trio reveals the complex and expressive characteristics of each variation, and displays how one structure links to one another to create a musical narrative.

Another piece by Brahms that would be appropriate for further analysis is the *Adagio* from Brahms's String Quintet No. 2, Op. 111. The *Adagio* is the second of the two late chamber works with a variation movement. Like the Piano Trio, the String

Quintet has never been fully explored from the Schenkerian perspective. Many scholars have noted the musical significance of Op. 111, but no scholar has esteemed the work as highly as Donald Francis Tovey. Tovey makes two claims in *Essays and Lectures on Music*: first, Op. 111 is “one of the most impressive of all Brahms’s tragic utterances” in regard to its expressive form. Second, Tovey compares the *Adagio* to a cavatina, and emphasizes its continuous form.<sup>53</sup>

Littlewood also discusses Op. 111 in his chapter titled “The Late Chamber Works.”<sup>54</sup> He focuses on the fluid organization of the theme and the variations: the irregular call and response of the opening, and the unconventional response to the opening and the developing lead-back of the ending. Littlewood stresses the unique treatment of the lead-back phrase—the transitional material leading back to the beginning of the next variation—and the effect it has on the variation set as a whole. For example, the lead-back brings the structure to a close, but also provides momentum to the entire structure in terms of the texture and expression.<sup>55</sup> It would be interesting to explore the relationship between the String Quintet’s fluid organization and the deeper underlying structure. We can then explore how each variation grows in different ways from the shared *Ursatz* of the theme, and how this might affect the performance of the piece.

In both the Trio Op. 87 and the String Quintet, Op. 111, because of the repetitive nature of the theme and variation form, each variation demands a new sound. In the Piano Trio, my analysis has focused on what is unique to each variation by examining them from the structural and motivic perspectives; but at the same time I have emphasized how all these changes contribute to a coherent narrative across the theme and variations.

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<sup>53</sup> Donald Francis Tovey, *Essays and lectures on music*, 265.

<sup>54</sup> Julian Littlewood, *The Variations of Johannes Brahms* (London: Plumbago, 2004).

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

## APPENDIX A: VOICE-LEADING GRAPHS

**A**

Theme

am: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI<sub>5</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sup>♯7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI<sub>5</sub><sup>♯</sup> iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> V i

HC PAC

**B**

dm: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i VI iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{2}$  am:  $\frac{i^6}{iv^6}$   $\frac{7}{ii^{\circ 7}}$  i  $\frac{ii^{\circ 7}}{i^6}$  V iv<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/iv iv vii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup>/iv V<sup>7</sup>/v v vii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup>

HC

**C**

i<sup>6</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> i i<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>♯7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{2}$  I

Plagal

Variation 2

**A**

55 dolce 57 59 61

HC PAC

am: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> i ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sub>4</sub><sup>♯</sup> 7 i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup> i ii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

**B**

63 65 67 climax 69 71 73

HC

dm: i iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  ii<sup>o6</sup><sub>3</sub><sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>  $\frac{4}{2}$  V<sup>6</sup>/iv<sup>7</sup> iv V<sup>6</sup>/V<sup>7</sup> v<sup>6</sup> V/IV

am: iv<sup>6</sup>

**C**

75 77 79 81

PAC

IV<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/IV vii<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/IV IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>2</sub><sup>♯</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>♯</sup>/iv<sup>7</sup> iv ii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv i<sup>6</sup> V/iv iv vii<sup>o6</sup> i<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o7</sup>/iv N<sup>6</sup> iv vii<sup>o7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

Variation 3

A

82 84 86 88

HC PAC

am: i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI i vii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub>/V V i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i V VI i V<sub>7</sub> I

B

90 92 94 96 98 100

HC HC

dm: i iv<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>2</sub> i VI iv i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{7}{4}$  ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V<sup>6</sup> VI i iv V VI iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>/iv iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>/IV IV v<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>nd</sup><sub>3</sub>/v v<sup>6</sup> V<sup>4</sup><sub>3</sub>/V V<sup>4</sup><sub>2</sub>

am: iv<sup>6</sup>

C

102 104 106 108

*f* sempre climax

Plagal Plagal

i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> V<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>nd</sup><sub>7</sub> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{5}{3}$  I



Variation 4

A

109 dolce 111 113 115

HC PAC

A: I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>#</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>#</sup> I vi vii<sup>o7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>#</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>#</sup> I IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>#</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

B

117 119 121 123 125 127

D: I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>#</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>#</sup> I vi vii<sub>3</sub><sup>#</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>o6</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii<sub>3</sub><sup>o6</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>7</sup> IV I<sup>6</sup> vi vii<sup>o7</sup>/V V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>#</sup> I V<sup>7</sup> I IV<sub>4</sub><sup>#</sup> I V<sup>7</sup>

A: I<sup>6</sup> C#: I<sup>6</sup> B: I

C

129 climax pp 131 133 135

vii<sub>3</sub><sup>o4</sup> I<sup>7</sup> vii<sub>3</sub><sup>o4</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/ii ii<sup>7</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I<sup>6</sup> ii<sub>3</sub><sup>o6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> vii<sup>o6</sup>/ii ii<sub>3</sub><sup>o4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> I

A: I PAC

Variation 5

**A** *dolce una corda*

136 138 140 142

HC PAC

am: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> i VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> i VI<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V i

**B**

144 146 148 150 152 154 170

climax *f* climax

HC

dm: i iv<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> i VI iv<sup>7</sup> i<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{3}{3}$  am: i<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup>  $\frac{7}{7}$  ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sup>6</sup> ii<sup>o7</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>/iv iv V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>/iv v<sup>6</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>/v v vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup>

**C** *più tranquillo poco a poco*

156 158 160 Rest 162 164 166 168 170

K PAC

i<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> i<sup>6</sup> VI<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>/iv vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup>/iv iv<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup>/V V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>  $\frac{7}{7}$  i<sup>6</sup> vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> i<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup>/V vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup>/V V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup> vii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup>/IV IV<sup>6</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> I<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> iv<sup>6</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI ii<sup>o6</sup> ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>  $\frac{7}{7}$  VI ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> VI ii<sub>2</sub><sup>o4</sup> V<sup>7</sup> i i

## APPENDIX B: LIST OF BRAHMS'S VARIATIONS

### **Independent Variation Sets**

Schumann Variations in F# minor, Op. 9 (1854)  
Original Theme in D major, Op. 21 No. 1 (1857)  
Hungarian Theme in D major, Op. 21 No. 2 (1856)  
Theme and Variation in D minor, Op. 18b (1860)  
Schumann Variations for Four-Hands in E-flat major, Op. 23 (1861)  
Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel in B-flat major, Op. 24 (1861)  
Variations on a Theme of Paganini in A minor, Op. 35 (1863)  
Haydn Variations in B-flat major, Op. 56a/b (1873)

### **Integrated Variation Movements**

Piano Sonata No. 1 in C major, *Andante*, Op. 1 (1852)  
Piano Sonata No. 2 in F# minor, *Andante con espressione*, Op. 2 (1852)  
String Sextet No. 1 in B-flat major, *Andante*, Op. 18 (1860)  
String Sextet No. 2 in G major, *Adagio*, Op. 36 (1864)  
String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat major, *Poco Allegretto con Variazioni*, Op. 67 (1875)  
Piano Trio No. 2 in C major, *Andante con moto*, Op. 87 (1882)  
Symphony No. 4 in E minor, *Allegro energico e passionato*, Op. 98 (1885)  
String Quintet No. 2 in G major, *Adagio*, Op. 111 (1890)  
Clarinet Quintet in B minor, *Con moto*, Op. 115 (1891)  
Clarinet Sonata No. 2 in E-flat major, *Andante con moto—Allegro*, Op. 120 (1894)

### **Chamber Variation Movements**

String Sextet No. 1 in B-flat major, *Andante*, Op. 18 (1860)  
String Sextet No. 2 in G major, *Adagio*, Op. 36 (1864)  
String Quartet No. 3 in B-flat major, *Poco Allegretto con Variazioni*, Op. 67 (1875)  
Piano Trio No. 2 in C major, *Andante con moto*, Op. 87 (1882)  
String Quintet No. 2 in G major, *Adagio*, Op. 111 (1890)  
Clarinet Quintet in B minor, *Con moto*, Op. 115 (1891)  
Clarinet Sonata No. 2 in E-flat major, *Andante con moto—Allegro*, Op. 120 (1894)

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