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ARTISTIC WORK

Intermezzos from Op. 116–119 by Johannes Brahms. In search of your own interpretation.

Liudmila Sivaronava

J.Brahms Intermezzos :

op.116: a-moll nr 2, E-dur nr 4, e-moll nr 5, E-dur nr 6,

op.117: Es-dur nr, b-moll nr 2, cis-moll nr 3,

op.118: a-moll nr 1, A-dur nr 2, f-moll nr 4, es-moll nr 6,

op.119: h-moll nr 1, e-moll nr 2, C-dur nr 3.

Duration: 56 min. 6 sek.

Academy of Music Stanislaw Moniuszki in Gdansk

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DESCRIPTION OF THE WORK OF ART

**Intermezzos from op. 116–119 by
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INTRODUCTION

Finding an interpretation that would reflect the composer's intention as accurately as feasible is the main challenge facing a musician. A deep comprehension of the composition's essence is the primary requirement for reaching this goal. To do this, one can try to learn everything there is to know about the author and his work, including the author's life story, aesthetic tastes, philosophical and religious beliefs, etc., as well as the circumstances surrounding the composition's creation (such as the time it was made and where it was placed in the work) and distinguishing characteristics. The second requirement is to specify the degree of freedom in using the musical text: where can one continue in the pursuit of one's own interpretation and where should one stop in order to maximally disclose and avoid obscuring the work's core.

Of course, if the composer had been alive, he could have spoken the most about the matter. It is impossible in the case of Johannes Brahms because there are no recordings of his music, but by examining the materials that are available, one can infer a lot about how to correctly interpret the composer's works. Based on this supposition, the author assigned the following tasks: to describe the musical personality of Brahms; the style, development, and main genres of his piano work; the context of the compositions being performed; to define the specificity of the *Intermezzo* genre in general and in the Brahms version; to detect, to the best of his ability, „encoded” artistic sense in the author's text and to consider his realizations in his own performance; and to identify the most appropriate musical expressions.

The study's primary source is *Intermezza*, the composer's greatest piano composition and one of his final works. The individual pieces that make up the content of this work were not chosen randomly; rather, they emphasize the key traits and components of the composer's later works. The author of the work uses Peterson's edition, in which the works of Brahms are made by Emil Sauer. The pianist claims that this edition best reflects the intentions and stylistic demands of the composer. Brahms's own personal and professional correspondence, as well as books and articles on the composer, are important sources of information about his personality.

My study approach combines the following components: historical-personal (an analysis of biography in terms of how Brahms' musical personality crystallized); theoretical-practical (each *Intermezzo* from ops 116-119 is analyzed); the work has been broken into three chapters as a result. The first gives information on Johannes Brahms' life story so that readers can comprehend the steps he took to develop a musical sensibility in his latter years. The second part serves

as a review of the composer's piano compositions. The author attempts to determine the best interpretive approaches for the *Intermezzos* from Opuses 116–119 in the third chapter with the use of a musical text analysis, printed materials, and his own experience.

The author hopes that this work will assist pianists searching for the most suitable interpretation of J. Brahms' late *Intermezzi* in coming up with their own thoughts that are as close to the composer's intended meaning as is possible.

Chapter I: The Specificity of Johannes Brahms' Musical Personality

It is important to examine the uniqueness of the composer's musical personality in order to determine the proper interpretation of Johannes Brahms' compositions and how they should be performed on an instrument. His innate ideals, views, attitudes, and principles, which primarily shaped the composer's work's direction, gave rise to his musical consciousness. In addition to his intrinsic abilities, personality traits, preferences, and knowledge, Brahms' surroundings and life experiences also had an impact on the process of forming his musical identity.

In his early years, Brahms' musical personality started to develop. The composer's father played double bass in the Hamburg Philharmonic and wished for his son to follow in his footsteps and become a musician. Little Johannes was first exposed to various musical instruments by Johann Jakob Brahms. Brahms' ability to play the horn, cello, and violin, which he learned from his father when he was young, benefited him in his work on chamber music and influenced the growth of this area of his output. But the most well-known future composer adored the piano, and Friedrich Willibald Cossel began teaching him the fundamentals of playing the instrument when he was just seven years old. Later, the teacher gave Eduard Marxsen the gifted pupil. Mihail Druskin, a Brahms scholar, notes that the composer and pianist „instilled in the student a passion for classical and folk music” (Druskin, 1988, p. 6). According to Ekaterina Carëva, Marxsen „guided his [Brahms] compositional studies, and the teacher's influence was manifested both in his liking for variational forms and in relying on Beethoven's principles of shaping forms, and in particular care for the bass line (Marxsen wrote, like later Brahms, piano pieces for the left hand), and-perhaps most importantly-in love with folk songs” (Carëva, 1986, p. 23–24).

The first people to provide Brahms with an example of the fusion of expertise and dignity in a human being were his professors. The composer will carry these principles with him throughout his life as an integral part of his identity. But it is impossible, because it's not even conceivable to separate the artist from the individual, Brahms remarked in a letter to Klara Schumann after a long period of time (quoted in Carëva, 1986, p. 23).

The composer's early musical influences were mostly the works of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, and Mendelssohn. Brahms performed pieces by Bach, Beethoven,

and the then-fashionable virtuoso composers Henri Herz, Theodor Döhler, and Jakob Rosenhain at performances in 1848 and 1849, but his in-depth research focused on the works of the great masters. It is clear from his later pieces that Bach and Beethoven were among his favorite composers. The works of Brahms exhibit this broad interest in composers and the compositions of earlier periods. He worked to maintain the conventional methods of composition, making reference to classical genres and forms, and realizing their potential for expressing new aesthetic materials. Richard Wagner, the composer's rival, acknowledged the composer's achievements in this area when he commented, „How much more can the classical forms yield when someone comes who knows how to deal with them!”, in reference to the *Variations on a Theme by Haendla*, Op. 24 (cited in Carëva, 1986, p. 128). As a result, the majority of Brahms' compositions are categorized as sonatas, variations, rondos, reprises, etc.

Brahms established the habit of writing in the morning when he was still a teenager. „I had already started writing at that time, but only in the very early hours and in utter secret. I played the piano in taverns in the evenings after arranging marches for wind instruments in the afternoon” (1986, p. 25; Carëva). Brahms' inner world was always filled with music, which was also a lucrative profession for him. He started working in pubs at the age of 13, and instead of using sheet music, he would put books on the desktop while playing the piano. He needed to read; it wasn't a diversion for him. He once observed: „You need to practice a lot, but you also need to read more to become a good performer” (Druskin, 1988, p. 24). He recorded quotes that he really liked from his readings in a separate notepad. The composer has a huge list of diverse literary interests, and here are only a few of the names: Jean-Paul, Hoffmann, Herder, Dante, Schiller, Goethe, Kleist, Swift, Cyceron, and Byron.

Brahms' range of interests was versatile; apart from music, literature, and philosophy, the composer was also interested in painting and politics. Most of his colleagues were representatives of the German and Austrian intelligentsia. The circle of close friends included musicians: Robert and Klara Schumann, Joseph Joachim, Albert Dietrich, Julius Otto Grimm, Carl Tauzig, Antonin Dvořak, Hermann Levi, Ignaz Brüll, Hans von Bülow; music critics: Max Kalbeck, Eduard Hanslick, Martin Gustav Nottebohm, Philipp Spitta, Eusebius Mandyczewski, Hermann Deiters; poets and writers: Joseph Victor Widmann, Gottfried Keller, and Klaus Groth; Julius Allgeyer, engraver; and surgeon Theodor Billroth. All these outstanding personalities created and preserved the national culture. Brahms' views on the matters of national culture were similar; his music, firmly rooted in the German tradition, is proof of this, using not only German-speaking folk melodies abundantly but also characteristic melodic phrases, rhythms, and the

character of this folklore. Like none of his contemporary composers, from the age of 24 until the end of his days, Brahms thoroughly studied and developed German folk songs and promoted them by conducting a choir. Not only choral works have become an area of use for folklore elements. Instrumental music also abounds in quotes of this type, a striking example of which is the slow movement of the *Piano Sonata in C major*, Op. 1, which uses the melody of the last piece from the series of forty-nine German folk songs: „The Moon is rising stealthily”. Brahms wrote to Klara Schumann about this: „You have probably noticed that the last song is in my Op. 1? What do you think about it? It has a certain meaning; it is a snake biting its tail, which in this way symbolically says: »the story is over, the circle is closed«” (Rogovoj, 2003, p. 275).

The composer spent a portion of his life in the multicultural city of Vienna, where he gained a thorough knowledge of not just German melodies but also Slavic, Scottish, Italian, and Hungarian music. Brahms included these songs' German versions in his compositions. At the start of his artistic career, the picture of Hungary made its way into his musical consciousness and stayed with him for the rest of his life. He adopted the distinctive Hungarian rhythms and melodies as an example of how to express himself freely. The Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi, a friend and collaborator of the composer, served as the impetus for Brahms' independence and improvisation. His energetic and creative playing, particularly of native tunes, gave Brahms a persistent drive to advance in this field. „Hungarianness” and everything associated with it have come to represent his aesthetic.

The biographers of Brahms concur that the composer was extremely critical of his own work. He once stated, when he was older: „I never trusted my new composition, and I doubt anyone would enjoy it” (Druskin, 1988, p. 28). Gustav Jenner, Brahms' sole composition student, is quoted by Franz Grasberger as saying: „Anyone who was well acquainted with Brahms knows how harshly negative, almost contemptuous, he could speak about his own compositions; precisely in this it is particularly difficult to grasp” (1980, p. 5). The composer takes a very responsible approach to the writing process, as evidenced by his comments: „How often one of them [colleagues] joyously writes their *Fine*, which also means: I'm done with what is on my heart!” How long will I be able to hold the slightest *Fine* inside of me before I finally decide to do it!” (cited on page 335 of Rogovoj, 2003). The composer asserts: „Composing is not tough at another point. However, it is very challenging to place unused notes beneath the desk” (quoted in Rogovoj, 2003, p. 333).

Like most romantics, Brahms had a deep love of nature. He frequently took lengthy walks outside of the city while writing music. The outcome is that „ »Go for a walk«" has significantly come to mean »create music«". Nearly all of Brahms' compositions were inspired by the Austrian, German, and Swiss natural landscapes" (1986, p. 26; Carëva). According to musicologists, introversion is a psychological trait of the composer. His preference for instrumental music was a manifestation of this psychological feature. Even if the pieces were connected to the word, as is the case, for example, in songs, the goal of the music was to express sentiments rather than to be illustrative. Additionally, verbal mottos are occasionally included in purely instrumental works (such as the first from the *Ballades* Op. 10, *Andante from the Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor*, Op. 5, or the first *Intermezzo in E flat major* from Op. 117), but this in no way affects their lack of an illustrative quality.

Brahms' musical consciousness was significantly shaped by personal events. According to Carëva (1986, p. 29): „Brahms has always been inseparable from duty and affection toward one's loved ones". He was uniquely moulded toward the poetics of Romanticism by the drama and tragedies of his life; his writings are filled with poetry, drama, and a romantic incoherence of emotions.

If the aforementioned information is summarized, it may be claimed that Brahms' music is challenging to sum up in one concise statement. It is too complex and variable. Themes like art, human existence, nature, spiritual goals, and the strength of reason take on a particular dominant quality in the *German Requiem* composer's work. Brahms explores a range of sometimes intense emotions in his works, including happiness, fear, depression, doubts, joy, grief, ecstasy, bitterness, and lyrical dreams. The juxtaposition between the dramatic, tragic inconsistencies of life and the need for security and happiness is one of the factors that shaped Brahms' artistic understanding. Unusual important element of his music personality is also nature as well as surrounding environment and folk music, of arising in close correlation with eternal nature and human existence rhythm.

Chapter II: The Piano Works of the Late Period of Johannes Brahms

2.1. The style, evolution and main genres of Johannes Brahms' piano work

When it comes to the piano literature, Johannes Brahms' contribution cannot be overstated. For pianists, it is not only a significant contribution to world literature but also to music in general. Both performers and audiences enjoy the composer's compositions. Almost all of the piano compositions by the best musicians are performed at concerts and on recordings. A specific style, the traits of which will be discussed later, is responsible for this appeal. As was already established, J.S. Bach and Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as later W.A. Mozart, Franz Schubert, and Robert Schumann, as well as his own keyboard ideas, all had a significant effect on Brahms' style. As a superb pianist with a vast and amazing creativity in the area of piano technique and tone, Brahms' compositions are particularly original in this regard. The 20-year-old Brahms' performance was praised by Robert Schumann as „excellent” (Druskin, 1988, p. 66). The performance was described by the composer's contemporaries as having „as much vigor, power, and intensity as if not one, but two pianists were playing with four hands!” (Druskin, 1988, p. 66). Additionally, everyone who heard him perform praised his intonation, sensuality, and subtlety of performance, praising „the preferences that Brahms revealed thanks to the moderate speed and nuanced gradations of sound in the *mp-mf* range” (Druskin, 1988, p. 66). Brahms' performance lacked the concert sparkle that was so evident in Liszt's concerts. He was uninterested in the virtuoso's skill or career for any reason related to external influence. The composer admitted to his buddies: „Honestly, I hate public speaking” (Druskin, 1988, p. 67). The composer valued logic in his mind more highly than emotion, and spirituality more highly than sensuality. Because of the rarity of exhibitionism in his works, as well as the constant sacrifice of technical complexity for emotion, the following letter from German musicologist Philipp Spitta to Brahms after reading his *Piano Concerto No. II* is essential in this context: „I frequently pondered your unique piano playing technique. We historians frequently argue that nothing comes from nothing, yet I must admit that I am unable to identify the forerunners from which you derived this technique” (quoted in Erhardt, 1984, p. 227).

Brahms' piano compositions are characterized by movements with parallel intervals, particularly thirds, sixths, and octaves; a highly polyphonic texture; and a propensity to maintain the melody in the middle voice. According to Druskin, „the shimmering color of the flowing figurations is also characteristic. The significance that Brahms's uneven, complicated rhythms—syncopated, blending even and odd meters—play in producing an intimate sound is also significant”(1988, p. 67).

Despite the fact that Brahms only „wrote a few pieces for solo piano, mostly in the early and late years of his career” (Druskin, 1988, p. 68), they are outstanding pieces in terms of creative skill and melodic originality. Three solo sonatas, five cycles of variations for piano for two hands, one for four hands, and two pianos, five ballads, three rhapsodies, sixteen waltzes (in versions for two and four hands), seven capricci, scherzos, romance, two gigs, two sarabandas, and eighteen intermezzas make up the composer's legacy in terms of genre. On the basis of Brahms' piano compositions, one can see how his style changed over time, moving from classical forms to a focus on romantic miniatures. Late miniatures in particular show the intimate and personal aspects of soulful poetry.

A pivotal work in the evolution of the miniature genre in J. Brahms' piano compositions is *Eight Pieces, Op. 76* (1877). Beginning with this opus, *Capriccio* and *Intermezzo* became the two most major genres in the composer's piano poetry. The *Intermezzo*, which dominates Opus 116–119, is particularly significant (1892–1893). „The *Intermezzo* captures the essence of Brahms' artistic discovery in the canon of romantic piano music. »*Intermezzo Brahms*« shares the same stable genre-stylistic concept as »Chopin's *Nocturne*« or »Liszt's *Rhapsody*«, according to Carëva (1975, p. 379).

„Brahms was mostly drawn to this name, possibly due to its »non-binding« character, according to Carëva (1986, p. 333). According to the work's author, the *Intermezzo* genre gave the composer the opportunity to realize his artistic goals and worldview.

The word „intermezzo” comes from the Italian „intermezzo” and the Latin „intermedius”, which literally means „in the middle” or „intermediate”. In music, it is used in several senses:

1. A term used to describe the light theatrical interludes that occur between acts of Renaissance comedies;
2. In the 18th century, it was referred to as a miniature comic opera in Italian, performed in sections between acts of a larger work, usually a series of operas;

3. In the nineteenth century, the intermezzo was sometimes referred to as insertions between larger parts of a cyclic work—sonata cycles (for example, the 3rd movement of F. Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's *2nd String Quartet*, Op. 13, or the 3rd movement of R. Schumann's *1st Sonata in F sharp minor*, Op. 11), operas (for example, the famous *Intermezzo from P. Mascagni*) or cycles of miniatures (for example, in R. Schumann's *Carnival of Vienna* op.26);

4. In the nineteenth century, composers began to treat the intermezzo as an independent genre, often combined in cycles, an example of which is the relatively early (1832) *6 Intermezzi*, Op. 4 by R. Schumann (<https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/>) [access to: 2019-07-29].

It is important to note that the term „intermezzo” has also been used in literary works. As was already established, J. Brahms enjoyed reading German Romanticism, and among its works is the *Lyrical Intermezzo*, a collection of poetry by Heinrich Heine.

Brahms's *Sonata No. 3 in F minor*, Op. 5, and *Piano Quartet in G minor*, Op. 25, are the first examples of an intermezzo in Brahms' own compositions. „The transitional character from the scherzo to the lyrical utterance in the second (which Brahms named „intermezzo” also the scherzo composition from the *Ballades*, Op. 10) already sketched the nuances of meaning that Brahms gave that word”, according to E. Carëva. „After that, as we've seen, the intermezzo form from the *G minor Quartet* was extensively developed in the middle sections of his instrumental cycles (which were already known by that name), demonstrating a tendency to strengthen the dance genre, especially lyrical song, and culminating in *Un poco Allegretto* from *String Quintet No. II* (waltz) and *Symphony No. III*. This approach was furthered by piano intermezzos, but in the caliber of independent works” (Carëva, 1986, p. 333).

As previously indicated, Op. 76 contains the first "mature" Intermezzos, *Intermezzi* in A flat major, B flat major, A major, and A minor. They are sandwiched between the sonically and figuratively more prominent capricci. Only capriccia and intermezzo are found in *7 Fantasies*, Op. 116, although the composer makes clear his preferred genre in this cycle. Each *Intermezzo*—of which there are already a majority—No. 2 in A minor, No. 4 in E major, No. 5 in E minor, and No. 6 in E major—reveals its distinctiveness and individuality by extending the spectrum of feelings and meanings that are accompanied by dramatic and epic qualities in addition to the lyrics.

Only the Intermezzos—No. 1 in E flat major, No. 2 in B flat minor, and No. 3 in C sharp minor—make up Opus 117, which demonstrates how prominent this genre has become. The four *Klavierstücke*, Op. 119: No. 1 in B minor, No. 2 in E minor, and No. 3 in C major, as well as the six *Klavierstücke*, Op. 118: No. 1 in A minor, No. 2 in A major, No. 4 in F minor, and No. 6 in B flat minor, are all dominated by this genre.

Summing up, it can be said that in Brahms' work, intermezzo as a species evolves, which is manifested in:

1. its gradual emergence in the form of standalone works;
2. an increase in the number of works in this genre written;
3. gradual strengthening of each piece's value and self-sufficiency.

According to Konstantin Zenkin, „the universe of intermezzo appears as the most significant thing, as the essence of the composer's spiritual world, thanks to its limitless versatility and depth of lyrical reflection” (Zenkin, 1997, p. 166). Therefore, it may be said that in Brahms' later piano compositions, the intermezzo form realizes all of its potential and functions as a kind of synthesis of his composing endeavors in the piano miniature genre. Therefore, it is a challenging test of a performer's intellectual and spiritual growth.

2.2. The History of the Creation of the Last Piano Works of Johannes Brahms

Brahms' final piano compositions date from the latter part of his career. It is concluded in the years 1890–1997, according to Ludwik Erhardt (1984, p. 265), who also notes that in the early 1990s, the composer „felt old, thought he had used up his creative abilities, and decided it was time to start organizing his papers, get rid of unnecessary paperwork, and start working on unfinished projects [...]. He started outlining a will ” (Erhardt, 1984, p. 266).

In his biography of Brahms, Max Kalbeck uses the following quotation from the composer: „I've recently started numerous things, including symphonies, but nothing has been successful. I therefore firmly decided not to write anything else since I felt too old to do it. I've come to the conclusion that because I've worked hard and accomplished a lot throughout my life, I can now live comfortably and worry-free in my senior years. And because I made this choice, I felt so happy and satisfied that I restarted everything” (quoted on page 321 of Carëva, 1986). So, it

was close, and 20 of the German composer's later masterpieces would have left the piano literature in worse shape. Thankfully, this did not occur. The below-mentioned triggers allowed the composer of the *German Requiem* to continue writing.

The first of these triggers was a meeting with clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld from the Meiningen princely orchestra in 1891. The composer (who had discovered his playing a few years previously) was enthralled by it and was moved to write several important pieces that included the clarinet. In response to this inspiration, Brahms wrote the *Quintet h-moll*, Op. 115 for clarinet, two violins, viola, and cello, and the *Trio a-moll*, Op. 114 for piano, clarinet, and cello in 1891. Three years later, he wrote two *Sonatas*, Op. 120, for clarinet and piano (1894). In the interim, he completed his piano compositions in the years 1892–1893, producing four collections totaling twenty works, numbered opuses 116–119. Carëva cites the existence of another collection of Schumann's works as evidence for such creative activity in this genre. „And the entire story involving Klara [Schumann] was unable to prevent her from bringing back old memories” (Carëva, 1986, p. 332).

Due to the unfortunate occurrences in his life at the time, the composer did not have the opportunity to live joyfully. Six months later, in June, Brahms' friend Elizabeth von Herzogenberg passed away, and his sister Eliza was married. Hermine Spies' marriage at the same time forced her to stop attending concerts. She was a superb singer and the inspiration for most of Brahms' vocal compositions, but his primary worry was for Klara Schumann, his lifelong love and best friend. The emotions and emotional experiences of piano works from this era, meanwhile, shouldn't be too closely related. „It would be quite dangerous to just compare the biographical details and the work's emotional substance in the instance of Brahms. The theories on the impact of severe emotional shocks on the substance of Brahms' works are particularly significant. Examples include Robert Schumann's illness and death, the breakup with Agathe von Siebold, the passing of his mother, and the death of Klara before other authors. These plainly visible linkages run counter to the central idea of Brahms' creative process, which intended to eliminate all incidental and ephemeral elements, including brief shocks, from the composition's structure. It is alarming that in order to discuss Brahms' solidarity with this theory, one must greatly stretch his or her current words” (Rogovoj, 2004, p. 37).

In Bad Ischl, a stunning alpine resort that fits the bill for a typical romantic, Brahms wrote four cycles of piano pieces. *Fantasy* Op. 116 and *Intermezzi* Op. 117, were probably written in the

summer of 1892; *Klavierstücke* Op. 118, and Op. 119, in the summer of 1893. Some biographers think that Brahms partially based these compositions on earlier sketches. For instance, the tone of the *Capriccio* Op. 116 No. 1, is similar to the first *Ballade "Edward"* from Op. 10. Carëva observes: „Perhaps some of the works' sketches were created in the 1970s at the same time as Op. 76. According to Kalbeck, the individual sketches might have been written during the »Düsseldorf« era. The use of the epigraph from Herder's anthology's *Intermezzo* op. 117 No. 1” (Carëva, 1986, p. 332). It is also important to point out that the *Intermezzo*, Op. 117, No. 1, has slow sections that are similar to those of young sonatas.

The composer revealed his ideas and sentiments at the conclusion of these brief piano pieces, demonstrating his inner youth in the process. The correspondence with friends serves as more proof of this. „ It is incorrect to assume that Brahms purposefully avoided addressing the purportedly negative emotions expressed, in particular, in the emotional content of the piano pieces, Op. 116–119, in letters, for example, from the 1890s. Even in a private letter to Klara Schumann, not a single word hints at a troubled mindset. Instead, letters just exude a tremendous amount of life force and enthusiasm” (Rogovoj, 2004, p. 21). According to Rogovoj: „there is no evidence to support the notion that Brahms faked happiness in his letters. He also points out that the composer obviously did not fully express his feelings following the loss of his loved ones in his correspondence and remarks. The psychological profile of the composer that is developing from the letters leaves no doubt that Brahms was by nature an entirely psychologically healthy person, with an approach to creation and an extremely positive view of the world” (2004, p. 21). After studying the composer's letters, Rogovoj came to the conclusion that: „ Op. 116–119 of Brahms' piano works incorporate his friendship with Klara Schumann, a significant aspect of his life. The texture of these pieces, as well as a number of musical and compositional characteristics, are »representatives« of this influence” (Rogovoj, 2004, p. 39). The final works are not virtuosic; rather, they are within the scope of Klara Schumann's technical prowess at the age of 74. Additional evidence also suggests that the composer had Klara on his mind when writing his final piano compositions: „Brahms hurried to Frankfurt after finishing Op. 114-120 in order to lose to Clara. He said to Richard Heuberger in 1895 : »Mrs. Schumann was more feminine and youthful than ever. I'm sending her a draft of one of my most recent pieces. She will be the one to read them first, and I can see how enthusiastically she embraces everything, right down to the last note, how she is thrilled, and how she plays them repeatedly from memory!«” (Rogovoj 2004, p. 39). Brahms handed Clara the manuscripts for Opuses 118 and 119, which he gifted to her without demanding payment in exchange. The

publisher, Simrock, received a copy from the composer. Johannes Brahms left for Italy and then Ischl with his friend Widmann as the composer's 60th birthday drew near so that he wouldn't have to attend the celebration. The composer writes in a letter to Klara that he will be writing her a dissonant piano piece for the piano. He says : „This little piece is quite sad, and to say 'play very slowly' about it means to say too little. Each bar and note should sound like a ritard, as if one were seeking to be saturated with sorrow independently. The stated dissonances should be accompanied by joy and fulfillment” (quoted in Carëva, 1986, p. 331). Brahms is most likely referring to the *Intermezzo in B minor* from Op. 119 in this passage, as Carëva notes.

Philipp Spitta, a German musicologist, wrote to the composer after reading Opus 116–119: „I am inexpressibly fascinated by pieces that differ so much from everything that you have created for the piano, and which, maybe, are the most concise and deep of all of them. I am familiar with your musical styles. Not just as postludes, but also as preludes to meditation (nicht nur zur Nach-, sondern auch zum Vor-Denken), they are meant to be stated gently in silence and seclusion. If I interpret the Lord right, I also feel that the Lord intended to imply something similar under the phrase »intermezzo«. Each performer and audience member can independently imagine the premises and outcomes of [title] »Intermediate Works«. [...] Simply said, I wouldn't want to take them to performance venues with our virtuosos. A rhapsody, a ballad, and romance all in one place! However, intermezzo? What a moronic expression the spectators will be wearing!” (Kalbeck, 1915, p. 276, cited on page 334 of Carëva, 1986). The Brahms intermezzos nevertheless found a home in performance venues. Spitta felt their special significance, which was later fully understood. They are still performed today, more than a century after they were first composed, in both huge concert halls and private studios. In addition to being filmed and used for instruction, they always elicit strong feelings in the audience.

Let's repeat Carëva's excellent summary of the importance of the composer's final miniatures, which he wrote: „These pieces, created towards the conclusion of musical romanticism and at the end of Brahms's life, absorbed the entire history of the romantic instrumental miniature. They became a living example of the nostalgia lyric while retaining the crispness of melodic breath and a truly sincere feeling of not being tired of life. Folk songs, ancestors' customs, a sense of solidarity, and the universality of human joys and suffering all feed into the Brahmsian elegy of „sunset” (Carëva, 1986, p. 334).

Chapter III: Interpretation of the Intermezzos from Opuses 116–119

3.1. Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 116 no. 2

Op. 116's opening *Intermezzo* resembles a melancholy ballad in terms of mood. The composition is written as a three-movement ABA reprise with some variational elements. Intermezzo Maria Judina said of it : „In terms of clarity of style and design, it is one of the most exquisite miniatures of Brahms”. The accomplished pianist wrote: „Ahead of us is a Serbian song, mournful, meek, and obedient”. One of the innumerable »songs of a girl« who is mistreated, abandoned, or sacrificed for someone she doesn't love” (Judina, 1978, p. 284).

According to M. Judina : „ the middle section of the piece (starting at bar 19) has an »intermezzo in intermezzo«; in the middle of the piece, the rhythmic waveform shrinks, changing from 3/4 to 3/8, and in the unrelenting spin of sixteenths, zigzags, and curves of high intonations, similar to the hands of imploring rejected or a pearl necklace of tears that choke the heart, we hear, »Why, why, why?!«. A lament about the inexplicability and injustice of your awful lot, followed by 9 bars of a horrifying consolation in the key of A major, a glimmer of hope; again, a tragic outcome at first”. „The composition is finished, returning to the inevitable rejection of this unfortunate Gretchen, unrelieved either by his existence on earth or by the second, unwritten by Brahms, part of Faust” (Judina, 1978, p. 284).

Without even going into great detail about the images in the Brahms miniature, one can say that there is a certain similarity between this piece and Slavic music, consisting of the „truthfulness of feelings” (Frołow, 2012, p. 7) [access to: 2020-06-30], which is a trademark of the German composer and unquestionably present in the Intermezzo under discussion. As a result, the creator of the piece sees this composition in the framework of a melancholy Slavic song.

The opening section of the intermezzo is played in an andante tempo (quarter note = 65) with a sense of melancholy. The melody's melody, which is in legato and has a gentle, singing tone that penetrates the heart, is its key component. It speaks with sincerity by using distinct variety of articulation . The first phrase is played quietly, emphasizing the high voice. The performance gets more emotional after bar 5. He recognizes a bass melodic line at the end of the first period (bars 8, 9), which, as previously stated, Brahms paid special attention to. The pianist plays the

second period in exactly the same way, but because the theme is different, he plays with more feeling.

The author carefully specifies three sentences in the middle section, slowing down a little at the end of each to underline the formal structure. His use of the dynamic notations that are noted in the notes helps him perform each sentence with growing expressiveness as he develops them emotionally and portrays experiences of fear and worry. The soprano and bass melodies are clearly intonated by the pianist, who treats them almost polyphonically.

The author of the work plays the first four bars of the reprise (from bar 51) with a deep sound. Bars 55–58 are delivered by him in the high register with a gentle tone that conjures up images of dreams. From bar 59 on, a full, deep sound reappears. It is crucial to focus on the emotional state at bar 60 rather than only the dynamics of crescendo and *f*. The pianist sees the bar just before the climax as a change from contentment and satisfaction to the catastrophic breakdown of hope that comes next.

From bar 66 through bar 78 of the reprise, the interpretation is more emotional and depressed than it was at the start of the *Intermezzo*. It is advisable to approach this topic a little differently because it is a rehash of earlier content. Bars 79–82, when not only sadness, but even tragedy, resounds, provide further evidence of this. The final bar's empty fourth and „lonely” A₁ note in the bass further convey the sense of helplessness and loneliness.

3.2. Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 4

This piece was originally titled Nocturne by the composer. Brahms „removed, already during the publishing of the piece, the manuscript of the Fantasy, Op. 116 No. 4, subtitle Nocturne”, according to Alfred Einstein (1965, p. 310). The simple three-part structure resembles the baroque two-part due to the non-literal reprise that transforms into a brief summary.

The tune that opens the Intermezzo is based on the leitmotif from Tristan's desire by Richard Wagner (h, his, cis), which the composer had previously used in the *Andante* from *Symphony No. 1*. He discusses the conundrum of placing the bass in the right-hand part in his lecture on Brahms (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g1098nQ2Hyk>) [access to: 2021-07-02], and Brahms did not say otherwise just like that: The Tristan motif in the left hand and bass in the right hand; what causes the arms to cross? In response, Professor Sokołow asserts that the bass is more significant in this piece because it is the lowest register, represents night, God the Father, and has both hands forming a cross (much like how Busoni starts his version of Bach's

Chaconna in D minor). The lecturer claims that the hands' out-of-place stance makes very profound sense. The ethereal E major melody, which is made up of brief breath-like melodies, relates to the *Fourth Symphony's* opening theme. Sokołow refers to a melody that appears to be missing. Sokołow thinks of a poem by Afanasij Fet that lacks the verbs: „Whisper, hesitant breathing, nightingale trills”. Fet discusses the connection between man and nature in this love poem. Sokołow connects the middle section's ideas to pantheism because this is God „poured out” in the world. The professor also recalls a scenario from Tristan and Isolde's love story in which the lovers first meet and are surrounded by pitch-black trees that are alive with wind. Additionally, it states that Brahms and Wagner, two different composers, interact in this *Intermezzo*.

The *Intermezzo* is performed by the composer at a 57-quarter-note speed. It's crucial to separate the musical content into three planes during the early stages. The original *piano* melody very obviously transitions to a yew sound and tends toward a hissing sound. As was already mentioned, the bass sound is crucial. Therefore, when interpreting this section, it approaches the bass as a distinct voice rather than a harmonic background, and play it with passion and sincerity. It performs the „breathing motifs” in the right-hand part with a warm, gentle tone. The initial, four-bar phrase should be played with a calm demeanor. The composer gives the piece momentum by exploring brief motifs in time with the fourth measure. A new melodic-rhythmic theme with a more complex structure first develops in the second, five-bar phrase. The falling thirds of this motif are comparable to the subject of the preceding *Capriccio*, while the first four rising notes of this motif resemble Tristan's theme. It's best to approach this location with more emotion while keeping the dynamics mentioned in the notes in mind. The melody from bar 15, which is a variation arrangement of the opening bars and directly references the preceding *Capriccio* with its brief themes and falling noises, deserves special attention. However, they play an entirely different role in *Intermezzo*. Even though the notes are the same as in *Capriccio*, the statement's key and personality are already shifting. The front element in this instance serves as a counterbalance to the previously employed „breath motifs”, which call for aural separation between the two voices. Beginning with bar 19, this motif changes again, developed with variations and harmonically modulating. It is worthwhile to slow down a little at the beginning of bar 28 to emphasize the emotional expression of this sentence, which is marked by the composer with the term *espressivo* and a distinct articulation that appears in the *legato* setting. The fragment in bars 30 to 32 is also significant in terms of performance and necessitates careful and

exact interpretation of rhythm and articulation. The composer here creates a rhythmically surreal course using polyrhythm. Interestingly, the *crescendo* that accompanies these rhythmic movements ends with a *smorzando* rather than a climax, as if in a gesture of regret, reversing the direction that was previously chosen. The work's author may be heard playing the bass in bar 32, which is created in an interval movement based on „breath themes”.

After considering the fact that Brahms loved nature and how Professor Sokołow described *Intermezzo*, the creator of the piece performs the meaning portion in accordance with the idea of a quiet night. He plays softly and warmly, emulating the sound of the wind with his left hand while using the notes of *dolce* and *una corda*.

Pay close attention to the bass line, which is evidently built on the foundation of the inverted Tristan theme and the „breath motive”, at the beginning of the quasi-reprise (from bar 49). The composer plays the *tutti corde*, articulating each note in the lower register with great depth. The Tristan motif, which is played for the final time in bars 55–56, sounds substantial in her performance. The composer of the piece performs additional fragments of the piece in a manner similar to the earlier sections, showcasing the variety of musical material and savoring each note of one of the most exquisite pieces of piano literature.

3.3. Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 116 no. 5

The two Intermezzos in the key of E major are contrasted by the fifth *Intermezzo* in the key of E minor in opus 116-*Andante con grazia ed intimissimo sentimento*. The composition has a straightforward three-part ABA form with a contrasting middle section. The first and third movements' melodic content is composed of brief motifs that alternate between chords and double notes. A „questioning” *h-c* theme in the upper vocal, which corresponds to the downward leap of the reduced seventh, opens the work (*g-ais*). The second motif is created from the lowest note of the chord in the right-hand section and is then the falling second, assuming another interpretation of the composer's notation. The reduced Tristan theme is answered to by either a jump like the „breath motive” or by the inversion of the reduced Tristan's motive, giving the impression that the composer was processing the ideas from the previous *Intermezzo*. These brief motifs have a unique metrorhythmic quality that merits attention: they are harmonized in such a way that the six-note chord falls on the weak measure and only two voices stay on the strong measure; in addition, Brahms places pauses between each motif. It seems as though each motivation in this relationship is attempting to fly away or vanish.

In his lesson, Professor I. Sokołow compares this piece with the previous Intermezzo, the melody of which is also composed of two-note motifs and is similarly breathable. He treats motifs as an image of the universe enclosed in a dewdrop, in a sigh, in a flower petal, he tells that this is the idea that at the end of the 19th century captured the minds of composers and artists in general (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-X3tXuKOi8>) [access to: 2020-07-22].

The major motifs' nature alters in the middle section; voices overlap with the motifs instead of being homophonic, creating a continuous narration without breaks. An elegiac character best describes this section. The choice of the key of E major at the conclusion of the piece lightens the atmosphere and has a calming effect.

The pianist performs the Intermezzo at a pace of eight = 136, singing the motives clearly and paying attention to the depth of the chords while favoring the melody. She emphasizes the top and lower voices the most in the first recital's chords, and the center voices in the second. The pauses between motives require particular attention because Brahms exploited Tristan's motive and interrupted it in an apparent manner. As a result, the pedal must be operated exactly, being removed as soon as the verticals are joined and precisely for a pause. From the second phrase onward, the composer of the work plays with rising emotional tension in contrast to the first phrase, which is calm and analytical and covers the four initial motifs. The structure of the substance, which rises consecutively, indicates this method of treatment. Bars 7-8, 9 and 10, as well as the 10th and 11th, feature note stopping and *diminuendo*. The author stresses the top notes and also employs a more lengthened pedal, which gives the sound a melancholy tone. She executes these patterns with an underlying sense of sadness. She focuses especially on the recitals in bars 8 and 10, which are „extended” in comparison to the other bars. She gradually cools off emotionally and the sound at the end of the piece. With its motif structured on rising thirds, the first volta's musical material foreshadows the middle section. In the left-hand part, the pianist plays the top voice with clarity and accents the middle voice.

At the start of the middle section, the author of the piece begins to play softly. A rich, full sound is produced by the contrast between the sections. It is crucial to pay attention to and implement three sound plans. The conversation of the line of the upper and middle voices is exposed the most in bars 13–16, and the author pays close attention to the line of the lower voice. The pianist starts to play more passionately and with dramatic markings in bar 17. In bar 21, after the *cre-scendo*, she clearly starts to develop the bass melody, ending on *f*. Character and texture are returned to their initial values for four bars starting at bar 27, following a somewhat jarring

diminuendo. It is important to note that Brahms marks the reprise part more subtly than the piece's opening (here *pp dolcissimo*, there *p dolce*), and the harmonic progression moves it downward rather than upward as it did before. The primary voice in the final section (bars 40–43) merits extraction, which the singer performs in a soothing and dulcet (*dolce*) persona.

3.4. Intermezzo in E major, Op. 116 no. 6

The Op. 116 E-major *Andantino teneramente* Final *Intermezzo* is a three-movement composition comprising a trio and a coda that uses the trio's content. The chorale and prelude genres are combined in this composition, and the motifs from the fourth *Intermezzo* are also intriguing because they feature counterpoint.

Let us recall Prof. Sokołów, who says about the specificity of this work: „Ghostly, shaded, hazy-this is what already appears in impressionism. In this *Intermezzo* by Brahms, the melody and the accompaniment are combined even more in a way. (...) An *Intermezzo* in which we do not understand where the melody is, where the accompaniment is. Everything is a melody, everything is an accompaniment, and at the same time, there is no melody or accompaniment left. And in the middle [...] there is a song, and everything else is accompaniment. And this is what Brahms says: this is good, and that is good. This is something that will happen in the 20th century. Yes and yes, it is possible, but there is no one right way. There is no rigid, imperative view of art: only that which is right and nothing else ” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-X3tXuKOi8>) [access to: 2020-08-22].

The *Intermezzo* is performed by the composition's author at a 72-quarter-note tempo with a delicate sound. He plays the first two bars, this time stressing the transition in the center voice and continuing the Tristan motif. He pays close attention to each voice in the „chorale”, particularly the upper vocal's diatonic theme, which expresses the piece's calming nature, and the bass's falling fifths, which serve as the piece's „breath motifs” in the fourth *Intermezzo*. She stresses the upper voice in bars 3 and 4 because the melodic line is more intriguing in these measures. He also pays close attention to Tristan's motif, which is led by the lower and middle voices in parallel sixths. The speakers' roles again shift in the subsequent themes. The pianist additionally prominently highlights the voices of the most developed and fascinating melodic line in each case in the middle of section A. Beginning with bar 8, it accentuates the middle voice; however, bar 11 places more emphasis on the upper voice. In bar 20, the author of the piece establishes a dynamic contrast between the E major chord and the g-sharp minor chord

that follows it, hinting at the character's melancholy side. It's crucial to hear the entire vertical in this section, leading the melodic lines of all the voices and highlighting the most significant.

Because of the minor key and the typically decreasing direction of the melodic line, the author interprets the middle section as a song with a depressing, nostalgic feel, forming a dialogue between the lines of the upper and middle voices. The pianist gently steers the subject into the upper voice from the start. The form of this portion is broken by the introduction of *f* in bar 32. The middle voice then assumes the melody, and the extreme voices are intertwined with scattered chords, making a ring of flowers around it. This calls for a piano that is silky but distinct, able to cut through the layers of the accompaniment. The pianist skillfully divides the sound into two distinct voices in the brief motifs in bars 38–40, building to the *forte's* peak in bar 40. At the conclusion of this section, the tension that had built up quickly releases, and the melody freezes on the lengthy *gis*¹ before gently blending into the shifting harmonics.

The reprise should be played more softly than the opening, just like in the previous *Intermezzo* by Brahms. The melodic material starts to get more emotional at bar 47 and builds to a happy climax at bar 52. In bars 51 and 52, the pianist speeds things up, which makes the climax sound more important. In this rendition, the chord in bar 57 before the coda is more distinct than the ones preceding it. The A₁ movement and the upbeat major coda are combined in this performance. The author performs optimistically, with a brighter and warmer tone, drawing specific attention from the pianist to the brief motifs in bars 59 and 60 because, unlike the middle section, they sound in a major key and, at the same time, as if they are in agreement with one another in a dialogue.

3.5. Intermezzo in E flat major, Op. 117 no. 1

Op. 117's *Intermezzo* is opened in E-flat major. Brahms submitted the music for all three of his „*Intermezzos*” —as he named them—in 1892, „lullabies of my sufferings”, in Krefeld, telling Rudolf von der Leyen that they were: „so beautiful with the Lord. Please get in touch with me soon to see whether the others sound good as well” (Kalbeck (1915), page 276; cited in Carëva (1986), page 333).

The motto of this piece is a line from the Scottish ballad *Lady Anne Bothwell Lament* that was left by the father of her child, her beloved: ” Sleep, sleep peacefully, my darling, it pains to see you cry”. Brahms, however, borrowed it from a German version written by Johann Gottfried

von Herder and included in the Volkslieder collection, not the original. „Lullaby” is a straightforward three-part form. It begins in an *Andante moderato* pace with *dolce* and *piano*, indicating a tranquil personality. The pianist must be accompanied by an „enlightened tranquility” (as stated by *Intermezzo* E. Carëva (1986, p. 335)) while playing the composition. The first theme is concealed by accompanying accompaniment chords in the middle register of the texture. As a result, the pianist performs the melody clearly while hearing the accompaniment pulse. A basic and unambiguous song with an unfurled tonic chord and tones from the E flat major scale serves as a melody. The soundtrack illustrates the cradle's constant motion through its beat. A smooth, round sound should be used at the beginning of the song. The composer's favorite canon may be heard in bars 7-8. The lower voice intones the main theme (NB in the form of a tonal response in the fugue), which is reproduced by the highest voice with a little rhythmic alteration. Polymetry is included in bar 13: meter, 6/8 by 3/4. The existence of a 3/4 time indicator in the accompanying drawings creates the idea that the mother's thoughts, which the recording attempted to depict, temporarily stopped the swaying movement. The melody that reaches the clear three-way octave and is here enhanced by the introduction of six-doubling is highlighted in the foreground by the composition's author.

At bar 17, a brief connecting segment starts. Its goal is to progressively create a central section that is dark and contrasted. The Gregorian chant-like unison at the beginning of this episode, together with its severity and asceticism, indicates that this episode is performed with focus and progressive calm, setting up part B of the composition.

The *più adagio* is composed in a very gloomy multi-story key in E flat minor. Maria Judina wrote about this part as follows: „The melody flows in the fullness of being, with different voices, imitations, transparent chords, swayed with six eighth notes. We inevitably resemble the »music of the spheres«, which we see many times in Mozart's work. And in this *Intermezzo*, in the middle of this three-part form, we can recall the words of Pushkin which he put into Mozart's mouth: »Suddenly a grave vision, Sudden darkness« (Mozart and Salieri)” (Judina, 1978, p. 285).

The heart of the piece is treated as a dialogue by the author. Given the song's tagline, it might be a form of protest from a mother who has been left alone. He performs the motives in the right-hand part with emotional strain in the higher register yet quietly in the lower register. The accompaniment mimics the cradle's motion. Carëva draws attention to the motif of this part's resemblance to Bach's „pictures of tears” from Passions and Cantatas (1986, p. 336). The pianist

plays falling thirds while crying in response to this. In this section, the author of the work typically employs the dynamics *p* and *pp*, but in instances of greater emotional intensity, she achieves greater dynamics to accentuate components that could be characterized as dramatic.

„Fortunately, a reprise follows, and the piece closes in the same key of E flat major, making the darkness totally vanish. The music flies to the top of the keyboard, soars in the high registers, adorns itself with the adornment of sixteenths, as if with the joy of singing birds, chords sound festive, and everything changes and becomes calmer. An idyll, a song, and glory are presented to us” (Judina (1978), p. 285). Even more cheery than *Intermezzo's* opening is the reprise, which the composer plays. For instance, the sound of „crystal” chords (bars 38–40) or the sound of the theme (bars 50–51) in the high register, as well as a counterpoint of sixteenth notes, both contribute to the sensation of brilliance. The concluding bars of the repeat, where the *Intermezzo* material figuratively melts into the sound of the last chords, demonstrate how fully the calming is restored by the repetition.

A line from F. Dostojewski's *The Karamazov Brothers* comes to mind while considering *Intermezzo* as a deeply philosophical piece of art: „This is your motherly fate here on earth. [...] And you will have this huge maternal cry for a very long time, but at last this cry will become silent joy, and your tears will be bitter tears of silent love and loving purification, which will wash away your sins” (Dostojewski 2022, p.47).

3.6. Intermezzo in B flat minor, Op. 117 no. 2

On the basis of processing the opening melodies, a three-part reprise form with a dark key conclusion was devised for the piece. According to M. Judina, he is:

„We juxtapose it in its characterization and understanding with the *Intermezzo* in E minor, Op. 119 No. 2. In both *Intermezzos*, the gravity of the Earth seems to disappear. The *Intermezzo* in B flat minor finds its tonic only in the penultimate bar of the composition, bar 84, wandering in mysteriously gloomy, sometimes bitter and pathetic, sometimes immediately-unexpected, ghastly-bright intonations. You can hear anxiety throughout the song.

However, where there is fear, there is also its source: searching for the truth in its entirety, astonishment, questioning, searching for one's own fate, and a hint about the cause of the world's pain (*causa mali*), and the mysteries of the universe that are generally incomprehensible to the mind. In this lyrical and philosophical plan, we bring both these *Intermezzos* closer together.

But they are different: *Intermezzo*, Op. 117 No. 2, not fully finding its tonic, receives a kind of illusory consolation in the middle, in D flat major, as if we might recall:

Ophelia was dying and singing
And she sang while weaving wreaths;
With flowers, wreaths, and a song
It fell to the bottom of the river.
(A. Fet-Ofelia died while singing...)

In the eerie fantasy of her death song, Ophelia finds consolation in Another Reality” (Judina, 1978, p. 288).

The author of the work plays *Intermezzo* at a speed of eight = 74. The composer defines the tempo and mood of the piece in the following way: *Andante non troppo e con molto espressione, p dolce*. The song genre dissolves here into a lyrical statement, leaving only a lulling rock from the previous lullaby. The motifs are composed as an opposition of diatonics and chromatics, in multidirectional lines of figuration, in the contrast of rising and falling. Due to this, as well as the key of the piece and harmonic tensions, the *Intermezzo* acquires somewhat dramatic features. It is worth noting that the piece clearly reveals the improvisational nature of the narrative. The author of the work performs part A as a lyrical narrative with elements of drama and a philosophical foundation. Performed by the pianist, she focuses on the numerous dialogues between the voices, changes in the color of the sound due to changes in registers, and the richness of which M. Judina wrote, and focuses on simplicity and honesty of expression.

The first sentence sounds quiet and peaceful, dying in *pp*, with a clear exhibition of the melody and its counterpart in the lower voice (bar 9). The pianist plays the motif from bar 11 more powerfully and with *expressive* attention in the second clause. With the addition of additional notes in the left-hand half, this sentence, which is obviously longer than the first, similarly finishes with a „melting” G flat minor chord (thus anticipating a similar type of texture used in the E flat minor *Intermezzo*, Op. 118 No. 6). The opening movement's entire tone is lyrical and serene.

The middle part, in which a kind of choral texture appears, is performed by the author of the work in a philosophical and sublime character. The beginning plays as a reflection—unhurried, with a velvety sound, bars 27–29 with pain. He performs the most improvisational fragment of the piece (bars 39–52) with a slight movement. With the return to the core theme (part A₁), the

pianist again plays with a feeling of calm. The climax (bars 66–69) sounds dramatic, like the last event that touched the soul the most. In this coda *Più Adagio*, in which the material of part B appears again, the pianist plays as a philosophical ending—significantly, the last notes of which melt into the dynamics of pp in eternity and are at the same time the highest notes used in this piece.

3.7. Intermezzo in C sharp minor, Op. 117 no. 3

The Third *Intermezzo* from Op. 117 is written in the form of a compound reprise of three parts. In Part A, the influence of the variation technique, of which Brahms was a master, is clearly visible. The form of this part is based on two melodic ideas, which are subject to variation and create a structure similar to a stanza song with a refrain or rondo: a b a₁ b a₂. Prof. Sokołów while describing the main theme resembles parts of Bruckner's symphonies in which unison appears. It also talks about Gregorian chant and austere prayer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9hR4XMJ84A>) [access to: 2021-07-16]. The character of the theme is singing-narrative, which is clearly visible in the singing of the original version of the verse (a) with each subsequent variant of the repetition. The theme unfolds: texture and harmonics gradually get complicated, but the refrain (b) is the opposite of the stanzas by its own invariability. The middle movement - *più mosso ed espressivo* - a contrasting, bright trio in A major, directs thoughts to the realm of clear visions.

The *Intermezzo* is performed by the composer at a 50-quarter-note speed. The introductory theme is played by the pianist as a Gregorian chant. The theme sounds stern, ascetic in her performance. Beginning in measure 6, the pianist distinguishes the theme from the left hand accompaniment of sixteenth notes. The pianist plays more passionately starting in bar 16, when the topic of the refrain moves to the higher register. The theme in the middle voice begins to sound clearly in bar 21. With longing and a sense of helplessness, the pianist plays the return to the topic of the stanzas (bars 40–45).

The middle section of the piece is treated by the author as a memory from the past. The pianist's performance of this portion produces a bright sound. She calls attention to the frequent shifts in register: while the themes in the higher register sparkle, the lower register is played with a deeper, more relaxed touch from the pianist, producing a velvety tone.

The author interprets the main theme's arrival in the reprise as a departure from the lovely realm of dreams and a return to reality. The pianist plays the reprise while yearning to engage in a

pleasurable activity. The reprise sounds more dramatic and emotive, which adds to the emotional strain. The code is performed by the author of the work with a whiff of sadness and melancholy. As shown in the notes, the concluding chord (bar 107) sounds loud and goes beyond the limit of the calm sound. The composer is forced to play with a powerful and even slowdown (*rit. molto ed egualmente*), which the pianist is also attempting to execute in this final closing (which is a variant and harmonic elaboration of that in the first movement and unlike it).

3.8. Intermezzo in A minor, Op. 118 no. 1

In the opening movement of Opus 118, Brahms appears to let go of the sorrows from his previous opus. The music is energetic and bursting with movement and tumultuous emotions. This *Intermezzo* has a free form that bears some resemblance to the two-part baroque form, although these comparisons are a long way off. The early phase's tonal non-obviousness is an intriguing effort by the composer. Brahms starts this *Intermezzo* with a dominant in F major, much like the opening of *Piano Concerto No. 1* in D minor, where the tonic is achieved after a long time from the initial chord, and the entire harmonic sequence proceeds towards the key of C major. Despite being present in the second bar, the A minor chord is not a tonic there. After the repetition sign, the second section begins in the basic key's dominant, and a reduced four-note that is utilized for modulation has a significant impact on the piece. The minor tonic switches to the major tonic at the conclusion of the piece, which has the effect of brightening the composition's primarily gloomy tint.

The piece's composer plays an *Intermezzo* at a 96-half-note speed. The low register progressively shifts from the first two bars' light tone to one that is thicker and deeper. After a brief silence at the conclusion of the first movement, the inverted frontal motif that opens the second movement contrasts with the first movement's content with its explosiveness. The climax of this outburst is the diminished chord in bar 12 *sf*. A dramatic piano performance is given. Because it runs in a lower register than the previous one, the phrase in bar 15 begins more subduedly. The music gradually becomes more emotional starting in bar 19 and uses Beethoven's „development through elimination” to build to a dramatic climax in bar 23. From bar 25, there is a calming down process. The passage in bars 33–37, where the deconstructed reduced quadratures increase tension in both the upward and downward movements, is the piece's last emotional climax. With a modest tempo, assuredly guiding the final presentation of the theme, the

pianist underscores the significance of this location. She ends the song in the vibrantly colored key of A major.

3.9. Intermezzo in A major, Op. 118 no. 2

The piece reads, „in happiness, already transformed into delight [...]. Here we are no longer on the threshold of the harmony of the world, but as if in it” - writes M. Judina (1978, p. 285) and resembles the poem by A. Feta, *Tired of Life, a Betrayal of Hope* (Измучен жизнью, коварством надежды), in which the poet reflects on the meaning of life, about your own experiences:

„And so all the abyss of aether is available,

That I look straight from time to time

And I recognize your flame, the sun of the world” (quoted in: Judina, 1978, p. 285).

The *Intermezzo* is a three-movement composition with a trio in the center. The composition is drenched in polyphony, which takes several forms, from the canon to the tiniest voices countering the melodies. We will refer to the opening motifs as „inquiry motives” since their melodic-rhythmic structure, which stops at the final, high sound attained by a jump, evokes brief questions. The second clause of the statement could be referred to as an „effort at an answer” to the prior questions. The *Intermezzo in A major* is one of the most lovely and frequently performed miniatures of the cycle thanks to its unpretentious and creative melodic forms, textural solutions, natural but original harmony, and simplicity of construction (regular four-bar phrases). By focusing on the influence of song simplicity, the creator of the piece attempts to capture the almost heavenly peacefulness of the composition's opening sections. It uses a sensitive sound to play with „query motives”, acoustically exposing them and attempting to „hang” them on extended sounds.

The second section of movement A, which starts at bar 16, has a slightly gloomier and more enigmatic feel. When interpreting this fragment, the creator of the piece focuses more on the left-hand part, particularly the pedal sound *E*, and builds a dynamically undulating melody on top of it. A clear emphasis is placed on the significance of this time by the pianist as he carefully builds the sequencing of motifs from bar 25 to bar 30, which is performed with an elongation. The pianist soothes the departure after the climax by clearly revealing the brief motifs in the upper voice and the first appearance of the opening motif in the lower voice. A transparent

dolce shines light on the *Calando* in minor, which is played in a dark tint. The „inquiry motives” are reversed, and they now have a more „informative” and positive appearance.

The trio is internally built using the tiny ABA₁ theory. As an „intermezzo in intermezzo”, M. Judina refers to this section as: „the notion of Remembrance, Eternal Remembrance” (1978, p. 285). The distinguished pianist cites the G. Byron poem *Stanzas for Music (Strofas for Music)*, which Brahms admired, as fitting the tone of the trio:

They say Hope is happiness;
But true love should appreciate the past
And Memory awakens thoughts that bless:
They rose first, they entered last;
And everything that Memory loves the most
It used to be our only Hope ...

The trio's opening piece has a melancholy tone. A canon-like theme is imitated by the center voice in a rhythmic manner suggestive of amplification. The upper voice is highlighted for the first time in the author's work with its lyrical simplicity, and with repetition, the middle voice, which mimics the upper melody, takes center stage. The texture of the trio's middle section in F sharp major shifts to choral, the music becomes more vibrant, and the traditional imitation between the planes of the right and left hand reveals its beautiful, though delicate, face. The mood thickens with the trio's first part's repeat; the voices' roles now differ from those at the beginning; the middle voice, which the pianist accentuates more than the top voice, is now the major voice (imitating in the canon). Due to the texture being more dense in the middle than the top and the composer's trademarked dynamic progression, the sound is denser (*cresc.*) This brings the trio to its conclusion, as the higher voice soars to its highest points throughout the *Intermezzo* and the expression almost assumes a dramatic quality. The *Intermezzo* reprise is performed by the author of the piece in a similar manner to the opening section.

3.10. Intermezzo in F minor, Op. 118 no. 4

This song also has elements of variation in the form of ABA₁. Beginning with the *Allegretto un poco agitato* character, a delicate, transparent figure in the key of F minor is introduced. The piece's primary melody recurs in a canon between the soprano and tenor (the texture is always four-voice at the outset), and it is accompanied by a waving motif in a triol rhythm that is likewise subject to a quasi-canonical treatment but is erroneous and reversed this time. The main melodic theme, in the opinion of the work's author, can be regarded as an imitation of the

sound of a bell, particularly since the composer added emphasis to each note. Figurative, undulating parts could be a representation of human worry, vanity, or anxiety. Such a connection opens up a wide range of symbolic interpretations for this *Intermezzo*, including the bell as the voice of God opposing the actions of incompetent man; the bell accompanying births, marriages, and funerals; the bell as a symbol of time passing and time itself; the bell swinging as a symbol of moving from one reality to another; and the bell as a symbol of extremes, such as good and bad; death and immortality. The *Intermezzo in F minor's* musical content and expression seem to go well together when bells and waving (swaying) are connoted in this way.

There are three sections in Part A, the final of which alludes to the first. The melody's extended sounds are highlighted by the composer from the outset, who interprets them as the voice of God accompanying man through life. The pianist's agitated playing serves as a metaphor for life's pressures and difficulties. The bells' melody is gone in bar 17, leaving only wavy figurations that span the full area employed there with muted dynamics but a restless quality. Small waves start to lengthen from bar 28, and the alterations happen in a whole-bar cycle. This time, the material is divided between the two hands in a manner that engages the upper and lower planes in conversation. Poco crescendo combined with thirds provides the chance to go back to the „ringing” sound. Before the mini-reprise in part A, there is a phenomenon that causes the melody's „wave” to first become two bars long (bars 36–37) before being cut in half (bars 38–40) (bar 39). In the meantime, the bells start to ring again, first timidly and then loudly. The notes c, which are maintained for a longer period of time in three separate octaves, pause the constant undulations as if to call the listener's attention to something crucial that is about to happen.

And in fact, a trio enters, completely contrasting the previous movement's mellow mood, major key of A flat major, and texture. However, the theme of bells, which is obviously present here, unites the two sections. The canon is another bonding component that is used here remarkably frequently up until the reappearance of section A₁. Regarding the above-discussed symbolism, we may add two more points: the absence of the triol movement, which takes the form of an earthly battle (*agitato*), and the direction of movement within the canon's motifs, which is falling. This conjures up the idea of heavenly peace descending gently to the tumultuous earth. The left-hand section returns to the triol beat at the conclusion of this movement through the accompaniment's broken chords. It can be a man's reaction to the grace that he has previously experienced from God. The trio is performed by the work's composer in a lyrical, thoughtful style, accentuating the sound of the bells. The character shifts start in bar 99, where the triplets return,

the pianist performs dramatically, and the pianist prepares a reprise, the turbulence of which is even greater than at the beginning due to the enhanced, more widely dispersed texture and larger dynamics. After a violent section down in the canon, the piece's closing chords in the key of F major brighten with a gentle sound. This Picardian third, which by no means constitutes a rule in Brahms' later works, turns minor grief into joy major, is a metaphor of the ultimate solace after the sufferings of earthly conflicts with life.

3.11. Intermezzo in E flat minor, Op. 118 no. 6

„We hear the similarities between the soul's desperation and the fate of man, the departing life, in the abundance of rhythmic variations, movement of the center of gravity, fluctuating intonation, and accumulation of foreign harmonies. The mind and emotions are tortured by a wronged, immoral past. The reconciling giant wings of the archangels, however, gather a troubled personality, or rather fragments of it, even sawdust, with these vast chord arcs across the keyboard in an inconceivable variety of fast modulations. At the end of the »play of the cosmos«, remnants of an almost late repentance coalesce into an infinite storehouse of forgiveness” (Judina, 1978, p. 287). This is how the excellent Russian pianist imagines the final, astounding *Intermezzo* from Opus 118.

Using the variation technique, it is also written as a three-part reprise. The song's composer performs it at an *ósemka* = 52 tempo. She begins by revealing the vocal-recitative sound of the theme and singing the symbolic intonation of *Dies irae* in a dramatic and dismal manner. She improvises and contemplatively plays the Passages of Thirty-Two, being careful not to overshadow the central theme. The pianist assists herself by using the left pedal while she plays the theme's lead in a lower register than bar 5 and with a deeper finger penetration into the keyboard. Since the theme is doubled starting in bar 8, it is reasonable to believe that the first suffering is twofold. In order to more effectively convey the pain element, the performance raises the dramatic level of the music in this fragment. The original theme is condensed starting in bar 13 but is superimposed on a canonical basis, which causes an increase in emotional tension. Beginning in bar 17, the theme is led by an octave-unison that is reminiscent of Gregorian chant (as in some earlier *Intermezzos*). Ascetic and rawer tones start to emerge. With only slight alterations to the accompaniment portions, the entire thing is repeated.

The first movement's magnificent, even anthem-like nature, key (G-flat major), rhythm, and texture serve as the foundation for the middle movement, which is constructed in antithesis to

it. The sorrowful numbness vanishes right away, and the trio's direction of development continues to develop energetically. This section is introduced by the work's author with a calm, focused sound. Beginning with bar 47, she builds on the musical material dynamically and emotionally to a climax where the basic theme changes. It sounds pitiful and passionate, as if the idea that had been drifting towards the sublime had been suddenly dragged back to the concept of death (*Dies irae*). The work's creator also delivers the climax badly starting in bar 60, but thanks to the unanticipated modulation to D flat major, the provided theme seems more triumphant and joyful. The original theme reappears unexpectedly in a straightforward monophonic rendition, but the dominant is not given the tonic of a new key, which results in a startling emotional and dynamic withering out. Instead of the „doubling of suffering”, a motif in parallel sixths and a major key appear in bar 66, bringing clarity and a small amount of optimism. The motif again shifts and transforms into variations, starting at bar 71. This time, a brief dynamic buildup results in a poetic climax that dissipates rapidly. A new topic with the Gregorian chant as its leader appears. The central concept that is thus given in yet another form serves as the foundation for the *Intermezzo* Coda. The pianist plays it darkly, even with a tinge of sorrow, in the organ manner.

3.12. Intermezzo in B minor, Op. 119 no. 1

Thirds, one of Brahms' favorite intervals, are employed throughout this melancholy composition. It takes the format of a straightforward three-part, like many others. The *Adagio's* speed, the first and third movements' transparent, delicate textures, the harmonic figure's slow, peaceful fall, and all of these elements combine to create a delicate sound. The pianist plays the opening of *Intermezzo* in a lyrical, melancholy manner, revealing the upper voice and paying attention to the sustained notes of the lengthy notes rather than letting them be swallowed up by a chord constructed of falling thirds. He accentuates a rough replica of this motif in the lower voice in bar 4 in addition to the rising fourth in the upper voice. Due to the polyphonic imitation in the following five bars (4–8), the emotional strain rises. Bars 9–16 of the second sentence feature a return of the original lyrical character. The final (16th) bar of the opening movement's mournful melody highlights the key of F sharp major.

The key of D major is introduced in the *Intermezzo's* middle portion. This occurs without any prior modulation preparation, which creates the illusion of contrast even though the dynamics are low and the sound is similar. The first notes of the *Intermezzo* (*fis, a*) are used at the start of this movement, but the pace of this theme is more reminiscent of the second motif

from the first movement (especially in the version from bar 12). Here, the music is more objective. By „speaking” with assurance, clarity, and persuasion, themes are revealed. One of the developmental elements in this situation is intervals. The expansion-prone thirds and fourths dominate the narrative's construction. The chromatic processions of brief motifs, which are particularly apparent in the broken octaves of the bass (bars 21–24), are used to prepare the initial climax in addition to the intervals. Prior to the second movement's initial climax (bar 24), the pianist broadens the speed while highlighting the sixth jump. It's important to note that this section's music culminates twice, and in each instance, the texture widens its auditory range, giving an almost orchestral sound volume and character. The work's first climax sounds triumphant in the author's rendition. Bars 27–30 feature chromatic, fading lines of middle and lower voice counterpoint that support the upper voice. In contrast to the chord texture at the start of a given part, the chromatic motif in the middle voice is accompanied by the upper voice a moment sooner in bar 31, and the pianist makes this obvious. Bars 37 and 38 have a second ascending chromatic movement in the left hand before the second climax. The trioles facilitate a rapid buildup of emotional tension, extending the climax until bar 39. The pianist's performance of the second climax has a melancholy tone. The change from the minor to the double octave, which favors the brightening of the atmosphere, is accompanied by descending themes constructed of thirds, similar to the harmonic layer at the beginning of the work.

If Brahms hadn't altered the reprise with variations in connection to the opening movement, he wouldn't be himself. He lengthened the rhythm and melody of the descending thirds while preserving their harmony, and he gave the chord's middle note a leading note. Even more delicate and depressing than at the piece's opening, the triols and chromatisms in the reprise produce a mood.

Koda mixes components from the two themes in the first section. Their relationship is a conversation, just like it was at first. But in this instance, the altered texture changes the pleading and mournful attitudes. The mood briefly warms up as a result of it and the broken articulation of the individual notes, but in the final three bars it returns to melancholy and despair. The chord there incorporates each of the seven steps of the B minor harmonic scale before resolving into the tonic.

3.13. Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119 no. 2

„Fear transforms into exhilaration in the drawing and construction of repeating, delicate hexadecimal chords”, writes M. Judina: *„of the Intermezzo in E minor, Op. 119 No. 2. The E-major*

episode provides a ray of optimism during this *Intermezzo*, though. With its obvious thirst for eternity, it also reminds us, typologically, of the spirit of German Romantic music. And we can't help but think of Pushkin:

It's time, my friend. It's time! The heart asks for peace -

Days go by and every hour rises

A part of life ” (Judina, 1978, p. 289).

In the poem that has been cited, Pushkin explores the issues of life and death, as well as the gradual approach to passing away. Despite the fact that the poem is primarily about sadness and regret, it is important to note that optimism is expressed in the final line, „*I have thought of an escape to a shelter distant from sufferings and bliss*”. Judina continues, „*All music normally slips, beats, flutters in the whisper, rustle of the night, in the dark, in the unknown*”, in her analysis of the *Intermezzo* in E minor (Judina, 1978, p. 289).

The *intermezzo* has a conclusion and a three-part reprise structure. The essence of this piece—the sensations of uneasiness, uncertainty, and fragility—is somewhat revealed by the tempo marking alone (*Andantino un poco agitato*), which is portrayed in the main and accompanying parts through brief sixteenth-note motifs and a meandering, frequently changing melody. The rhythmic line of the theme appears to be gathered into a whole of uninterrupted recitation by the arcs of motives. The author of the piece approaches the subject as a statement made by a man who is frantically and anxiously trying to tell or prove something. In bars 2 and 8, *Sostenuto* appears to temporarily restrain the expression of emotions, allowing time for introspection. Triplets and a rhythmic variation on the primary idea in bars 13–17 appear to settle the narrative. However, the constant syncopations in the music continue to evoke worry, which is occasionally broken up by pauses that resemble „sighing” in the left-hand half of the accompaniment. The image becomes hazy, gives the sensation that it is being viewed through tears, and gradually gets darker by superimposing a new harmonic function on the preceding one. The theme melody is introduced in yet another form starting in bar 17. They produce an atmosphere that, despite its peacefulness, conveys a concealed emotional force because they rhythmically complement one another and contrast one another in the unfamiliar, distant tone of F minor. This weight gradually starts to emerge from hiding and takes on a dominant role in the melodic story, building to a slow-moving climax. Bar 29 marks the beginning of a real settling down and the middle section of the *Intermezzo*. Although the melody develops in intervals (in the performance, it is worth highlighting the second measure of the bars—achieved by jumping),

the beat eventually becomes uniform, resulting in a local conclusion. The evolution of the „Tristan motif”, heard in the works previously covered, may be heard in the climax as a chromatic theme against the main melody. The first movement's final three bars create an „escape to a sanctuary distant from trials and happiness”, where the two top levels masterfully contrast one another.

The second movement, *Andantino grazioso*, which is actually another variation of the original theme, begins in this setting. According to Carëva (1986, p. 335), „The motive of the uneasy complaint... turns into a memory of the Viennese waltz, which intensifies the fear and hopelessness of the »circulation of the heart«”. The author of the piece transforms the recitative sound into a cantilena while performing this passage. He sings extended sentences throughout the entire song. He highlights the polyphonic interaction between the voices, which was created on the basis of the rhythmically processed material from the first period of this part, in the first sentence of its second period. Beginning in bar 60, the initial theme, *Andante grazioso*, reappears with a little pronunciation shift due to the minor key (F sharp minor) and the descending counterpoints in the middle voice. The pianist enlarges the movement in bar 63, emphasizing the climax when the texture's raised voices brighten the musical space. The ending and the new beginning, which takes the form of a question, are both clearly presented in the first volt and come together here. The *intermezzo's* opening section is similar to the reprise. A hint that „the escape to a sanctuary distant from suffering and bliss” was effective is when the work's code returns to the major mode and the texture from the middle section. The emotions are calmer, and the narrative slows down, almost as if the heartbeat is doing so.

3.14. Intermezzo in C major, Op. 119 no. 3

Only in this *Intermezzo* does Brahms explicitly use the word „*giocososo*” as a general performance comment. The composition stands out not only for its fundamentally unique atmosphere but also for its abrupt changes in image, texture, and character. In this composition, Brahms employs his go-to strategy of placing the topic in the middle voice, surrounded by supporting layers. These layers are structured in many ways, including three-note ascenders, rows of bass with chords, and *quasi-pizzicato* sounds. Sometimes they are *legato* sections with six notes in a convex direction.

Unlike several of the other *Intermezzos*, this one does not have a clear three-part shape. Although the piece flows rather freely formally because of the piece's undivided evolving structure and some degree of diversity, it is easy to hear a kind of reprise in bar 41. The opening is played

by the pianist in a gentle, joyful, and courteous manner, and the subject floats in the dazzling light of the surrounding voices. It stresses the bass, which forms the foundation of the harmonic layer that can either stabilize or change quickly and whose various permutations are crucial to the work's narrative. A brief counterpoint appears from the altered accompaniment pattern in measures 7, 9, and 10. It's important to note how the theme changes in bars 11 and 12, becoming livelier thanks to the introduction of *staccato* in the accompaniment layer and syncopations in the melodic structure.

From bar 25, there is a phase of a direct approach to the climax, although it is internally differentiated and returns to a low dynamic (in keeping with the overall nature of the work). The piano distinguishes between the theme's two motifs: dancing and lyrical (in equal eighth notes) (syncopes and staccata). The progression is also being supported by changes in the key. In a happy yet dignified tone, the severe climax in bars 29–32 is broken up into two two-bar sections. In the first, which has a swaying quasi-waltz rhythm, the pianist highlights the upbeat nature of the piece by emphasizing the powerful parts of the bars and adding a distinct but light bass. The second movement is a majestic descent in four octaves (in third octave increments), which is played with a strong and determined entry into the piano. It has the appearance of slowing down. Short, smooth waves in the right hand section, supported by lengthier waves in the left hand, gradually fade away after the last *sf* of this fall. In a kind of reprise, the cantilena reappears. The pianist resumes a soft, covert game of singing.

In bars 41–42, Brahms adds a new textural and emotional aspect as well as a metrorhythmic novelty—apparent polyrhythm—following the theme in rhythmic augmentation. All of this heightens the passage's delight and levity. The author of the piece further accentuates the character the composer has suggested with a brief *staccato*. The character abruptly shifts once more starting in bar 49: the tone seems to grow more solemn, the sound becomes more lyrical, and the musical action rises while also calming the emotionality, leading to one more local climax (bars 56–58) that, because of the high register, does not reach the same dynamic level (despite the same attention to detail as the *f*), previous one. Long periods of high and medium registers in the texture contribute to the impression that this fragment is suspended in a state of joy, contentment, or delight. Even when plunging into extremely low registers, which is made up for by brief articulation and low dynamics, this good „humor” is not lost. The final C major in *forte* chords only serves to reinforce the *Intermezzo's* overall feeling of happiness and sunshine.

End

The author was aware that it was impossible to cover every aspect of playing *Intermezzos* in this piece. The pianist discussed the songs' content, backed up by her own ideas as well as the knowledge and expertise of other pianists and musicologists. Her understanding of the performance elements of the *Intermezzos* was widened as a result. It should be underlined that a performer's personality, education, intelligence, experience, and a variety of other characteristics all have a role in how well they perform in the end. The author's descriptions of the pieces are only one of the various performance options presented in this piece, which leaves room for other interpretations. This work merely represents the author's attempt to convey what was significant to her as she formed her own interpretation.

At a high level of artistry, the idea of artistic suggestibility cannot take the place of the concept of regularity. Because he always keeps in mind the composer's personality, the particulars of the epoch, the time of creation of the piece, and style, the performer-artist is not frightened of a peculiar, creative approach to the interpreted work. Each performer highlights what is close to his personality and reveals what he thinks is particularly relevant. The author of this paper also suggested using this strategy.

Some general conclusions and observations emerge after the *Intermezzos'* analysis of the last piano opus. From a philosophical point of view, it can be said that Brahms presents in them the multifaceted nature of the world and life, their diversity, durability and changeability, as well as mortality and transience. Considering the compositional technique, these are mostly works of three movements, with a clear separation between each of them. The variation technique and polyphony, especially the canon, play an important role in them. When it comes to the aesthetic and emotional sphere of these works, they are dominated by lyricism with a shade of sadness, nostalgia, reverie, and anxiety, but also dramatic, cheerful, optimistic, and joyful moments. The piano technique in the *Intermezzos* does not come to the fore. It is even possible to say that it is somewhat absent, despite the fact that a truly deep and artistic performance necessitates numerous opportunities to differentiate the sound in multiple hierarchical planes at the same time. Referring to the problems of technology in Brahms's late work, prof. Ivan Sokołow, in one of the lectures, says that the composer's output includes *51 Exercises for the piano*, among which there are „almost *Intermezzi*”. On the contrary, in *Capriccio* in G minor,

Op. 116 No. 3, there are places that give the impression of exercises but express with sounds all the pain of the composer's life (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-X3tXuKOi8>) [access to: 2022-08-11]. According to the author of the work, Johannes Brahms expressed an important philosophical idea in his works: every moment of life is worth appreciating; every moment of life is important.

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