

THE ALLURE OF BEETHOVEN'S "*TERZEN-KETTEN*":  
THIRD-CHAINS IN STUDIES BY NOTTEBOHM AND MUSIC BY BRAHMS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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## ABSTRACT

My primary argument concerns Brahms's use of a specific musical resource: chains of thirds or "Terzen-Ketten" as this device is sometimes described in the original sources. Brahms used third-chains in various ways as a motivic and harmonic technique. Some of his earlier works, such as the Piano Sonata in C major, op. 1, and the Piano Concerto in D minor, op. 15, already show the use of such chains of thirds as a prominent feature. However, Brahms's treatment of such "Terzen-Ketten" in his later works shows an especially impressive inventiveness and importance. The ways the chains of thirds are treated often lend to these works a character of intense concentration and melancholy, culminating in the setting of "O Tod," the third of the *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121.

I argue that Brahms's sustained preoccupation with chains of thirds after 1862 was connected to his friendship with the pioneer Beethoven scholar Gustav Nottebohm who facilitated the composer's access to Beethoven's sketch materials for the "Hammerklavier Sonata" op. 106. Through Nottebohm, some of Beethoven's sketches for op. 106 passed into Brahms's personal collection of musical sources. It is remarkable that Brahms also acquired the autograph score of Mozart's G minor Symphony and the corrected copy of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123—two other celebrated works which make prominent use of chains of falling thirds.

Gustav Nottebohm's transcriptions of Beethoven's sketches represented a major contribution to musicology in the late nineteenth century. Some of these transcriptions appeared with his commentary in issues of the *Allgemeine Musikalisches Zeitung* and the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in the 1860s and 70s; other studies were published as short monographs. As the

surviving sources show, Brahms took an interest in these transcriptions and helped arrange for their publication. Brahms and Nottebohm socialized often and shared a strong interest in Beethoven's creative process. An original sketchbook for parts of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata op. 106 containing a prolonged "Zirkel-Ketten" (or circle-chain) of descending thirds became one of the prized treasures of the composer's collection. Brahms's fascination with such descending third-chains is evident in many of his late works, and his use of this device in the Fourth Symphony bears close comparison with Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata.

My dissertation presents new findings on Beethoven's use of "Zirkel-Ketten" drawn from Nottebohm's posthumous papers (*Nachlass*) at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna as well as previously unpublished correspondence between Nottebohm and Brahms. This material provides support for my argument that Nottebohm played a key role in enabling the composer's study of Beethoven's sketch materials, which was bound up in turn with the composer's intensive exploration of "Terzen-Ketten" and their subsequent incorporation and development in his later compositions.

The second part of my dissertation offers analytical investigation of third-chains in the late works of Brahms. Following an examination of descending third-chains in Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, op. 106 and Brahms's Fourth Symphony, op. 98—two works frequently cited for their pervasive use of this device—I discuss selected examples from the later instrumental and vocal works of Brahms, some of which have received much less attention in the literature. Descending third-chains are used poignantly in texted works like "Feldeinsamkeit," op. 86 no. 2, and the *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121, especially "O Tod, wie bitter bist du," no. 3. An even more elaborate treatment of chains of falling thirds—or their inversion as rising sixths—occurs in instrumental works including the piano *Fantasien*, op. 116, the *Klavierstücke*,

op. 118 and 119 and the Clarinet Sonata in F minor, op. 120 no. 1. In op. 116 the use of such “Terzen-Ketten” contributes importantly to the integration of the seven pieces, which can be heard as a larger work or cycle, despite the powerful contrasts between the successive pieces. Brahms’s lifelong preoccupation with chains of thirds reaches a remarkable climax in this cluster of works from his final years.

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## INTRODUCTION

On a Monday in early September 1862, Brahms left his North German hometown of Hamburg and headed south to Vienna with plans for a short visit. Brahms had contemplated the visit for some time with hopes to concertize and make professional connections with Viennese composers, musicians and directors. While looking forward to this Viennese adventure, he also anticipated returning later to Hamburg, where he was hoping to be appointed associate conductor of the Hamburg *Singakademie*; that position might have lead toward his permanent installment as director of both the Hamburg Philharmonic and the *Singakademie*, allowing him to remain anchored there. History had other plans for Brahms. He would soon learn that the Hamburg job was given to someone else, which forced him to reconsider his future. The eventual decision to remain permanently in Vienna would alter his life and career.

Once Brahms arrived in Vienna that autumn he was soon introduced to the Beethoven scholar, Martin Gustav Nottebohm (1817-1882), commonly known as Gustav. Nottebohm had very few friends owing to his withdrawn and sometimes surly character. Despite his difficult disposition, Brahms befriended him warmly; the two men enjoyed a twenty-year friendship that was rich in musical scholarship, and was spiked by the occasional pranks that Brahms was known to play on him. One of these jokes involved a walk through Brahms's favorite Viennese park, the *Prater*, with a few friends. Knowing that Nottebohm frequented a particular sausage stand, Brahms arranged for the vendor to wrap Nottebohm's sausage in old music paper that the composer painstakingly prepared to look like a genuine Beethoven sketch leaf. As Brahms and the onlookers stood nearby, Nottebohm received his sausage with cheese tightly wrapped in the

manuscript, which he indeed eyed with keen interest and quietly tucked away in his pocket. On another occasion, when Brahms's facial features had just disappeared behind his full beard and he had not seen Nottebohm in the interim, the composer wryly pretended to be a certain Herr Müller from Braunschweig. If the composer awaited an astonished response to his personal transformation just as he surely did with some of the thematic transformations in his music, he had to be patient: it took Nottebohm over an hour to realize Brahms's true identity!

Such pranks exploit the interplay between appearance and reality, art and life, which supplied a rich topic for discussion and reflection on the part of Brahms, Nottebohm, and their colleagues. More than some others, Brahms showed deep respect for his friend's commitment to pioneering investigation of the creative process in music, and Beethoven's voluminous sketchbooks in particular. The two men also spent many an evening drinking beer at Gause's beer hall—in the company of a circle of friends including prominent music makers, artists, professors, writers, and critics.

At the heart of their friendship was their shared love for musical study and scholarship. As a musicologist Brahms collected an extensive gathering of manuscript materials and first edition sources from other composers, some through the assistance of Nottebohm. Together they collaborated on various musicological endeavors concerning earlier Renaissance and Baroque composers in addition to Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; this cooperation is documented in their correspondence. Nottebohm's colossal undertaking of transcribing and annotating as many of Beethoven's sketch materials as he could access was of great interest to Brahms, who was helpful in getting Nottebohm's work published.

Brahms has been called an “avid student of Beethoven's sketchbooks,”<sup>1</sup> a

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1997), 261.

characterization that is confirmed through his work with Nottebohm and from the manuscript materials that would end up in his private library. Among the most cherished gems in Brahms's collection are more than sixty sheets of Beethoven's sketches including some for the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, op. 106 and the Ninth Symphony. Brahms also came into possession of precious sources such as the *Arbeitskopie* of the *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123, a manuscript written by a copyist but containing additions and corrections in Beethoven's hand; as well as the autograph manuscript of Mozart's celebrated G minor Symphony, K.550, which Brahms received as a thank-you gift from the Landgravine Anna of Hesse in return for dedicating his Piano Quintet, op. 34, to her.<sup>2</sup>

Many thematic ideas and compositional devices that Brahms discovered in works by earlier masters were assimilated into his own musical style. As a historically conscious artist, Brahms built his innovative path into the future out of components with a rich history. During this career-long voyage of discovery, certain compositional resources assumed unusual importance. One such device is the manipulation of the basic interval of a third such that a series of thirds linked together form a chain. As it happens, Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, *Missa Solemnis*, and Mozart's G minor Symphony all contain conspicuous and far-reaching examples of this technique, suggesting that Brahms's own scrutiny of these manuscript treasures bears some connection to his own music.

Brahms's strong interest in chains of falling thirds reaches back to the early stages of his career, and was already then linked to Beethoven's legacy. As is well known, the opening salvo of his Piano Sonata in C major, op. 1, employs a rhythmic motive unmistakably recalling Beethoven's "Hammerklavier". Another impressive example of falling third-chains in Brahms's

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Geiringer, *On Brahms and His Circle: Essays and Documentary Studies*, revised and enlarged by George S. Bozarth (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2003), 16.



works of the 1850s is the monumental opening movement of his Piano Concerto in D minor, op. 15. The harrowing passages with octave trills elaborate a descending series of minor thirds outlining diminished-seventh sonorities. Many scholars have commented on the presence of third-chains in Brahms's music. Detlef Kraus has regarded "Terzen-Ketten" in Brahms's music as a "constant" feature. He finds early examples in the Scherzo of op.1, the beginning of the second movement of the Sonata op. 5, and the third movement of the First Symphony, while also mentioning the last movement of the Fourth Symphony, op. 119 no.1 and 3, and op. 121 no. 3.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Giorgio Pestelli recognizes the use of this device as characteristic of Brahms, and lists some of the same examples. Pestelli also indicates that descending thirds occur in a handful of Sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti, namely K. 364, 394, 515 and 554.<sup>4</sup> Despite the appearance of third-chains in selected early compositions, Brahms's development of the device is most intensive in his later works.

Through his later contact with Nottebohm and with Beethoven's sketches, Brahms deepened his engagement with this compositional device of "Terzen-Ketten," as this technique of third-chains is described in the original sources stemming from Nottebohm's analyses of Beethoven's works. It appears that Brahms's ongoing preoccupation with the descending thirds-chain in his later works was encouraged and perhaps inspired by his awareness of Beethoven's treatment of this compositional strategy. In any case, Brahms's relationship with Nottebohm and his subsequent access to Beethoven's sketch materials for the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, op. 106, are surely relevant in this context. Of particular importance is the manuscript now known as

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<sup>3</sup> Detlef Kraus, "Konstanten im Schaffen von Johannes Brahms," *Brahms-Studien* 11 (1997): 41-48. See especially examples on p. 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> Giorgio Pestelli, "On the Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony," *Brahms-Studien* 15 (2008): 127-148. See especially p. 143.

*Vienna A45*, the portable pocket-format sketchbook that is the largest single surviving source of sketches for Beethoven's op. 106 Sonata.<sup>5</sup> Brahms acquired the sketchbook upon Nottebohm's death in 1882; it is now housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (GdM) in Vienna.

Through Nottebohm, Brahms could study manuscript materials to which he otherwise would not have had access. At the time of their friendship Nottebohm worked on numerous essays that were published in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in the 1870s, including a study of the falling-thirds passage from manuscript A45. These essays appeared later in the posthumous collection, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, compiled by Eusebius Mandyczewski.<sup>6</sup> Both Nottebohm and Brahms left their entire research collections to the GdM. Nottebohm's notes and preliminary materials for the scholarly studies that appeared in *Zweite Beethoveniana* remain uncatalogued in the GdM, and until now have received scant attention.<sup>7</sup>

The present dissertation explores the personal and musical relationship of Nottebohm and Brahms, giving special attention to their common concern with "Terzen-Ketten," a musical device of great versatility. The investigation is divided into four chapters. Chapter one examines the relationship between Nottebohm and Brahms as illustrated through their surviving correspondence. Five previously unpublished letters from Nottebohm to Brahms are transcribed, translated and discussed. The nature of these letters is important, because they clearly describe

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<sup>5</sup> Beethoven used bound sketchbooks for composing his music in larger format written in ink in his lodgings, as well as smaller pocket sketchbooks written in pencil when he was away from his apartment. The A45 manuscript is a sketchbook of the pocket variety.

<sup>6</sup> Gustav Nottebohm, "Skizzen zur Sonate Op. 106," *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 6 (1875): 297-298, 305-307. Gustav Nottebohm, "Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817," *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 10 (1879): 41-42, 53-54, 65-67, 77-78, 89-90. Gustav Nottebohm, "Skizzen zur Sonate Op. 106," *Zweite Beethoveniana*, Ed. Eusebius Mandyczewski, (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1887. Reprinted—New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1970), 123-137.

<sup>7</sup> My preliminary findings on Nottebohm and Brahms's connection to A45 were published in *Arietta* 5 (2005) and presented at the annual national meeting of the American Musicological Society (AMS) in Washington DC in October 2005. This preliminary work was based on my master's thesis, which served in turn as a springboard for some aspects of the present dissertation. This earlier research is confined to very limited sketches from Beethoven's A45 sketchbook.

the close relationship of these two men documenting their collaboration in studying Beethoven's manuscripts and works by earlier composers.

Chapter two presents new findings from Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the GdM in Vienna. During my research, I discovered relevant documents in the uncatalogued materials of Nottebohm's *Nachlass*, including several transcriptions of Beethoven's sketch of a long descending third-chain for the introduction to the fugal finale of the "Hammerklavier". One of these transcriptions appears on a manuscript page where Nottebohm transcribed selected sketches from the A45 sketchbook. Next to the transcription of the third-chain passage, there is an additional entry made to the previous transcription in Brahms's hand. This evidence confirms that Brahms studied Beethoven's A45 pocket sketchbook and examined Nottebohm's transcriptions. Other documents in this collection include a manuscript page titled "Zirkel. Ketten" (or circle chains), on which Nottebohm transcribed multiple examples of third-chains used in Beethoven's works, as well as pages of transcriptions from the so-called "Boldrini" sketchbook that went missing in the late nineteenth century. Only a handful of Nottebohm's transcriptions from the Boldrini sketchbook were ever published in his *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* articles or posthumously in *Zweite Beethoveniana*.

Brahms was situated at a distinctive point in cultural history, having been born only six years after Beethoven's death, and dying three years before the threshold of the twentieth century. His music is rooted in the forms and practices of what then became known as the Classical period, causing his music to be perceived as outdated by some members of his late nineteenth century audience, yet he was also immersed in the aesthetics of Romanticism. Brahms often felt he lived in the shadow of Beethoven, an insecurity that was intensified after Robert Schumann's "Neue Bahnen" article in 1853 proclaiming Brahms as the next great symphonic

composer, when he had yet to write a symphony.<sup>8</sup> The Polish pianist Arthur Rubenstein recounted the story of an exchange between Brahms and a wine connoisseur who had invited him to dinner: “‘This is the Brahms of my cellar,’ [the host] said to his guests, producing a dust-covered bottle and pouring some into the master's glass. Brahms looked first at the color of the wine, then sniffed its bouquet, finally took a sip, and put the glass down without saying a word. ‘Don't you like it?’ asked the host. ‘Hmm,’ Brahms muttered. ‘Better bring your Beethoven!’”<sup>9</sup> The anecdote rings true and is characteristic, illustrating Brahms’s deep admiration for Beethoven.

Because Brahms was composing in this transitional time in the late nineteenth century when Wagner’s music was increasingly celebrated as the embodiment of a new and progressive musical style, his own late style has sometimes been overlooked or underestimated. In her book on this subject, Margaret Notley reflected on what “lateness” in Brahms may mean:

Brahms rightly considered himself to be the last in a line of composers, as the final distinguished product of pedagogical traditions he had to reconstruct for his own purposes...the tradition that ended with Brahms had in fact placed high value on a kind of intellect in music...Brahms thus wrote his late music during the twilight years of Liberal politics and musical culture in Vienna...The very sense of being outdated, the tension between Brahms and the changing times, may have given rise to a body of late compositions in his oeuvre that have the peculiar, ambivalent qualities of “late works.”<sup>10</sup>

Brahms cultivated the compositional tools and forms of the Classical masters, and his innovation arose from the ways he developed these older techniques. At their first meeting on 6 February 1864 after hearing Brahms play his Handel Variations, op. 24, Wagner commented that “One sees what can still be done with the old forms in the hands of one who knows how to deal

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Schumann, “Neue Bahnen,” in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 39 (28 October 1853): 185-186.

<sup>9</sup> Arthur Rubenstein, *My Young Years* (New York: Knopf, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Notley, *Lateness and Brahms: Music and Culture in the Twilight of Viennese Liberalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

with them.”<sup>11</sup> Brahms’s incorporation and development of third relations into his late works is one important manifestation of his artistic innovation. The interval of a third is of course commonplace in Western music, and plays an indispensable role in the musical language. It forms building blocks of triads consisting of one major and one minor third, generates modulation from relative major to minor by descending minor third, and serves to enrich the harmony in diatonic thirds either above or below a given melody. Heinrich Schenker celebrated Brahms for his ability to “concentrate the spirit of Bach, Handel, and Beethoven within the focus of his own originality.”<sup>12</sup> Theorist Brent Auerbach describes the use of third-chains as “third cycles” and gives examples from J. S. Bach’s Courante from French Suite no. 2 in C minor, mm. 42-51 and Handel’s Concerto Grosso in G major, op. 6 no. 2, IV mm. 1-4.<sup>13</sup> While he clearly was not unique in his choice to use third-chains, Brahms nevertheless succeeded brilliantly in exploiting new expressive and structural possibilities based on third relations.

Whereas the first two chapters of this dissertation address historical and biographical matters, the final two chapters explore the role of thirds and third-chains in the late works of Brahms in analytical terms. The third chapter examines Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata op. 106 and Brahms’s Fourth Symphony, op. 98—two works that are often cited for their pervasive use of descending thirds. Through detailed study of these third-chains, we can discern similarities in the way they are used and gain a frame of reference for the innovative variations

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<sup>11</sup> Karl Geiringer, *Leben und Schaffen eines deutschen Meisters*, translated by H. B. Weiner and Bernard Miall as *Brahms: His Life and Work* (Brünn and Leipzig: 1934; Anchor Books, 1961), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Heinrich Schenker, “Ein Gruß an Johannes Brahms. Zu seinem 60. Geburtstag, 7. Mai 1893,” *Die Zukunft* 3 (1893); reprinted in *Heinrich Schenker als Essayist und Kritiker*, ed. Hellmut Federhofer (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1990), 43. Quoted and cited in Kevin C. Karnes, “Schenker’s Brahms: Composer, Critic and the problem of Creativity in Late Nineteenth-Century Vienna,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 24 (2005): 145-176; see esp. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Brent Auerbach, “Tiered Polyphony in the Piano Music of Brahms,” *Journal of Music Theory* 52 (2008): 273-320, see especially 312-314.

of this device that appear in later works of Brahms.

In the fourth and final chapter, I examine the many varied uses of third-chains in Brahms's last compositions. Rich examples are found in his short piano pieces, the first movement of the F Minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, and a handful of songs. The piano works include all pieces in the *Fantasien*, op. 116 from 1892, the *Intermezzi*, op. 118 no. 1 and no. 6 from 1892, and the *Klavierstücke*, op. 119 nos. 1, 3, and 4 from 1893. Songs displaying an especially prominent use of these techniques include "Feldeinsamkeit" op. 86 no. 2, and the *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121, especially "O Tod, wie bitter bist du," no. 3.

As we will see, Brahms's techniques include chains of descending and ascending thirds in melodies, harmonic accompaniment, and bass lines. Beethoven had used thirds arranged in a diatonic chain passing through tonic, subdominant, and dominant-seventh chords in the Credo fugue subject of op. 123. Brahms often uses the interval of the third as a primary focal point for the structural framework of a passage or piece. Thirds comprise the initial four-note motive in Brahms's Fourth Symphony, implying a relation between third-related harmonies or keys, which in this instance highlights the E minor / C major relationship. Brahms uses falling chains of minor thirds representing prolonged diminished-sevenths in passages of op. 116 no. 1, whereas in op. 118 no. 1 and op. 119 no.1, falling third-chains create dissonant harmonies through overlapping, as the pitches forming the chain are prolonged. Third-chains are also found stacked in complex vertical sonorities. In the F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, third-chains are present both in the melody of the clarinet and in the harmonic sequence of the piano accompaniment. My analytical approach to these works focuses on third relationships in various levels of the compositional structure and how they relate to the affect of the piece. These analyses are not as detailed and narrowly focused as Heinrich Schenker's analyses of Brahms,

nor are they as loose and general as those by Deryck Cook, for example.<sup>14</sup> Rather, I aim to present a balanced perspective with regard to both the theoretical and emotional aspects of the music.

In his texted works, Brahms uses third-chains to convey darker moods associated with melancholy and death. According to Joseph Joachim, the nervous, turbulent chains of falling thirds with octave trills in the D minor Piano Concerto, op. 15 of 1858 were bound up with Brahms's response to Schumann's shocking suicide attempt in 1854. This appears to be his first explicit connection of falling thirds to mortality, a theme that he would richly develop in the aforementioned songs. Very different is the treatment in "Feldeinsamkeit," in which falling thirds in octaves are targeted for a passage of text describing the feeling of having already died. The musical texture changes abruptly at this moment and Brahms uses the third-chain to characterize and set apart just this one line in the song. In "O Tod, wie bitter bist du," a languishing melody constructed of falling thirds is echoed in the bass in the piano while this primary idea is later developed in the inverted form involving ascending sixths. In both of these songs, Brahms vividly conveys the lurking shadow of darkness and death in the text of his songs through the musical device of descending third-chains or their inversion, a series of ascending sixths. One is reminded here of the general relevance of some recent studies of metaphoric tropes and gestures in music, such as those of Robert Hatten, who discusses for instance the "short interpretive step from dissociated melody to dissociated consciousness," an attitude

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<sup>14</sup> Schenker's analyses and thoughts on Brahms's composition and creative process are discussed in Karnes, "Schenker's Brahms," 145-176. For Schenker's thoughts on Beethoven's op. 106 Sonata, see the forthcoming book by Nicholas Marston, *Heinrich Schenker and Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata* (Ashgate). Deryck Cooke, *The Language of Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

“compounded of repressed feeling and negated hope”.<sup>15</sup>

In Brahms’s hands, third-chains serve as a means of exploring new expressive possibilities. Most importantly, this technique also enables him to realize an organic process in music that has sometimes been described as “developing variation”.<sup>16</sup> In his classic study of Romantic aesthetics, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, M.H. Abrams writes that “...in organic unity, what we find is a complex inter-relation of living, indeterminate, and endlessly changing components”; elsewhere Abrams describes organic form as “innate; it unfolds itself from within, and reaches its determination simultaneously with the fullest development of the seed.”<sup>17</sup> This root idea of organicism applies well to Brahms’s treatment of the rich tonal possibilities afforded to him through use of “Terzen-Ketten” in all of their diverse manifestations. The flexible nature of third-chains, which allows them to be continually sculpted anew, generating major, minor and diminished thirds and sixths in a variety of expressive contexts, offered a seemingly unlimited creative wellspring for Brahms.

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<sup>15</sup> See Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). This quotation is drawn from Hatten’s discussion of gestural aspects of Debussy’s *Des pas sur la neige* the sixth of his *Préludes*, Book I (p. 228).

<sup>16</sup> For an evaluation of Schoenberg’s concept in relation to Brahms, see especially Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

<sup>17</sup> M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 220. 172-173. Nineteenth century commentators on aesthetics including August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Samuel Taylor Coleridge stressed the importance of the organic concept in artistic creation.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE FRIENDSHIP OF BRAHMS AND NOTTEBOHM

#### Brahms and Nottebohm's Relationship

On 23 February 1897, just a few weeks before his death on 3 April, the weakened and ailing Brahms wrote to Theodor Engelmann (1843-1909) after perusing an original Beethoven sketchbook that had come into Engelmann's possession. Brahms studied its many pages for the first movement of the Ninth Symphony, observing that "about the *first* birth pains of the symphony the sketchbook has little to say," whereas he also drew attention to Beethoven's corrections to the Diabelli Variations.<sup>18</sup> Through such rigorous pursuit of study of the creative process in music, the aging Brahms continued an activity that had long fascinated him and that had been triggered by his encounter thirty-five years earlier with Gustav Nottebohm, a music scholar and composer whose fame is based mainly on his pioneering research work on Beethoven's sketchbooks.

The twenty-year friendship of Johannes Brahms and Gustav Nottebohm began in 1862. Brahms left Hamburg in September of that year for what was to be a short trip to Vienna. However, he ended up staying for much longer than he intended, leaving on occasion for months

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<sup>18</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Th. W. Engelmann* [23 February 1897], in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Th. Wilhelm Engelmann*, ed. Julius Röntgen (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft m.b.H.; and Leipzig: W. Engelmann, 1918), Letter 171, p. 175-176. Engelmann had lent the sketchbook in question (the "Engelmann" Sketchbook now held in the Beethoven-Haus at Bonn) to Brahms at his request: *Johannes Brahms to Th. W. Engelmann* [12 October 1896], in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Th. Wilhelm Engelmann*, Letter 166, p. 168-169.

For a description of the contents of the Engelmann sketchbook and its previous owners see Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks: History, Reconstruction, Inventory*, California Studies in 19th Century Music, v. 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 279-285. The Engelmann sketchbook is also discussed in William Kinderman, "Beyond the Text: Genetic Criticism and Beethoven's Creative Process," *Acta Musicologica* 81 (2009): 99-122.

at a time but always returning. It was in Vienna that he made the acquaintance of several scholars including Nottebohm. The two were introduced almost immediately through J. P. Gotthard (1839-1919), whom Brahms had known as the manager of the Spina publishing house prior to his arrival in Vienna. Brahms took a particular interest in Nottebohm for several reasons: Nottebohm had studied with Schumann and Mendelssohn and was already regarded as a leading Beethoven scholar of his time. Their friendship grew ever closer for twenty years until Nottebohm's death in 1882.

This long friendship between the two men developed through discussions about common interests in earlier music and composition. They developed a close friendship immediately through this common interest, evident from Nottebohm's invitation to Brahms (shortly after their first meeting) to transcribe items from his collection.<sup>19</sup> Brahms was a well-recognized composer with a strong interest in musicology, while Nottebohm was a prominent musicologist with a passion for composition. Throughout their friendship they followed each other's work closely and even traveled together. Brahms was helpful in bringing Nottebohm's compositions to publication, and Nottebohm similarly helped Brahms gain recognition for his analytical work on earlier music. Brahms's interest in musicological endeavors is documented from the books, scores and manuscripts he held in his personal library.<sup>20</sup> Perusing his collection, Brahms scribbled notes in the margins and made corrections to scores and manuscripts where he found errors. His passion for manuscripts, autograph scores and first edition copies of works by earlier composers lasted until the end of his life.

That Brahms found a kindred spirit in Nottebohm is evident from their collaboration in

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 156.

<sup>20</sup> Kurt Hoffmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms* (Hamburg: Karl Dieter Wagner, 1974).

studying earlier music. Another area of mutual interest was Nottebohm's research concerning Beethoven, Mozart and other composers. Evidence of their close collaboration is found in the remarks entered by both Brahms and Nottebohm on copies of Beethoven and Mozart works in Brahms's collection. While writing notes on a Beethoven piano sonata, Brahms evidently made "heavy blue markings" while Nottebohm wrote with a "fine black scrawl."<sup>21</sup> These markings indicate that they studied and discussed published editions of Beethoven's piano sonatas together.

Further examples of their collaborative commentary are found on scores in the Brahms *Nachlass* at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna, several that formed part of the 2006 exhibition: "*Ich schwelge in Mozart...*": *Mozart im Spiegel von Brahms*, presented by the *Brahms-Institut* and the *Musikhochschule Lübeck* in collaboration with the Archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.<sup>22</sup> The exhibit included three examples of Brahms's and Nottebohm's markings on the same pages. The first example is the title page of Brahms's first edition copy of Mozart's Rondo in A minor KV 511 for piano, on which they both made annotations.<sup>23</sup> Otto Biba, director of the archive at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna, attests that Brahms and Nottebohm often discussed philological issues concerning Mozart.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the title page of Brahms's "Original-Ausgabe" of Mozart's *Fantasie et sonate Pour le*

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<sup>21</sup> Elfrieda F. Hiebert, "The Janus Figure of Brahms: A Future Built upon the Past," *American Liszt Society Journal* 16 (1984): 74. Hiebert does not supply a source for this information.

<sup>22</sup> An exhibition catalogue has been published as Wolfgang Sandberger, ed. "Brahms und die Mozart-Rezeption in Wien," in "*Ich schwelge in Mozart...*": *Mozart im Spiegel von Brahms*, An Exhibition by the Brahms-Institut and der Musikhochschule Lübeck in collaboration with the Archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Wien 28 April-31 Juli 2006 (Lübeck: Brahms-Instituts Lübeck, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> A photograph of the title page appears in Otto Biba, "Brahms und die Mozart-Rezeption in Wien," in "*Ich schwelge in Mozart...*": *Mozart im Spiegel von Brahms*, An Exhibition by the Brahms-Institut and der Musikhochschule Lübeck in collaboration with the Archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Wien 28 April-31 Juli 2006, ed. Wolfgang Sandberger (Lübeck: Brahms-Instituts Lübeck, 2006), 18.

<sup>24</sup> Biba, "Brahms and Mozart", 18-19.

*Forte-Piano composes pour Madame Therese de Trattner par le Maitre de Chapelle*, bears markings by Brahms and Nottebohm. Brahms wrote “Original-Ausgabe J. Brahms”, and Nottebohm wrote probable composition dates for the *Fantasie*: “20 März 1785” and the *Sonate* “14 Ok[t]ob[er] 1784”. Even though Mozart’s own autograph catalogue of his works gives 20 Mai as the entry date for completion of the work, Nottebohm clearly writes 20 März. Commentary suggests that the score was well-used.<sup>25</sup>

Also found in the Brahms *Nachlass* is a book by Nottebohm’s good friend, Carl Ferdinand Pohl (1819-1887), titled: *Mozart and Haydn in London*. It bears signatures of “G. Nottebohm”, [Eusebius] “Mandyczewski”, and “J. Brahms”, as well as a note by Mandyczewski (1857-1929) that explains the many signatures. He says this book was a gift from the author to Nottebohm, he [Mandyczewski] bought it from Nottebohm’s *Nachlass*, and many years later gave it to Brahms at his request.<sup>26</sup> It passed to the GdM as part of the Brahms *Nachlass*.

Apart from their study of earlier music, Brahms and Nottebohm took a friendly interest in each other’s compositions. Brahms paid special attention to Nottebohm’s *Variations on a Theme by J. S. Bach* for piano, four hands, op. 17. The theme of Nottebohm’s Variations is the Sarabande of Bach’s French Suite No. 1 in D minor, BWV 812. Nottebohm presents Bach’s theme in its original key of D minor and writes a set of nine variations. (See Plate 1.1). Brahms was quite familiar with these variations by Nottebohm. He owned a copy and played them together with the composer.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Sandberger, ed., “Ich schwelge in Mozart,” 42-43.

<sup>26</sup> Sandberger, ed., “Ich schwelge in Mozart,” 76-77.

<sup>27</sup> The mention of Nottebohm and Brahms playing together appears in the footnote commentary of a letter from Brahms to the Herzogenbergs dated 20 August 1876 and collected in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet Herzogenberg* v.1, ed. Max Kalbeck, trans. by Hannah Bryant, *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence* (Berlin: Deutschen Brahms Gesellschaft, 1907; New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1909), 7-8. Given that Kalbeck wrote the footnote and knew both Nottebohm and Brahms, I take his

In a letter from Brahms to Heinrich and Elisabet von Herzogenberg from 1876, Brahms expresses his thoughts on the variation form. He wishes there would be a distinction in the title between variations and fantasy-variations. Brahms says Beethoven treats his variations with strictness, while Schumann, Herzogenberg and Nottebohm's are very different. He is careful not to pass too much judgment, saying that he does not object to the form or the music but calls for recognition of the distinctive character of each approach.<sup>28</sup> Brahms writes that Nottebohm's Variations are closer to what he considers "fantasy-variations", closer to Schumann's style rather than the stricter variations of Beethoven. Nottebohm's Variations are also mentioned in a review from the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* in 1865, which compares Nottebohm's Variations to the style of Schumann and Mendelssohn, stating that they display the "harmonic riches of Schumann and the formal dexterity of Mendelssohn."<sup>29</sup>

Nottebohm also played his Variations, op. 17 with Clara Schumann.<sup>30</sup> There are conflicting views about her response to the Variations. Lewis Lockwood claims these Variations were "admired by Clara Schumann and also by Brahms", while a letter from Clara Schumann to Brahms says that "the real thing—originality—is lacking".<sup>31</sup> Perhaps Clara enjoyed playing them, but felt they were not as original as other variation sets she knew.

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observation as plausible, but Lockwood has doubts about its credibility. See Lewis Lockwood, "Nottebohm Revisited," in *Current Thought in Musicology*, ed. John W. Grubbs (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), 140.

Brahms's ownership of Nottebohm's Variations is stated in Elaine R. Sisman, "Brahms and the Variation Canon," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 14/2 (1990): 132-153, see esp. 136.

<sup>28</sup>Brahms to the Herzogenbergs [20 August 1876], in *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberger Correspondence*, 7-8.

<sup>29</sup> Sisman, "Brahms and the Variation Canon," 136 fn. 20. In this footnote, Sisman gives the excerpt of the review from the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 37, 13 September 1865, cols. 610-612.

<sup>30</sup> Sisman, "Brahms and the Variation Canon," 136 fn. 20.

<sup>31</sup> Lockwood, "Nottebohm Revisited," 140. Clara's assessment in a letter from Clara Schumann to Brahms dated 4 February 1866, *Clara Schumann-Johannes Brahms: Briefe aus den Jahren 1853-96*, ed. Berthold Litzmann, 2 vols. (Leipzig: 1927), vol. 1, 516. Also given in the footnotes of Sisman, "Brahms and the Variation Canon," 136.

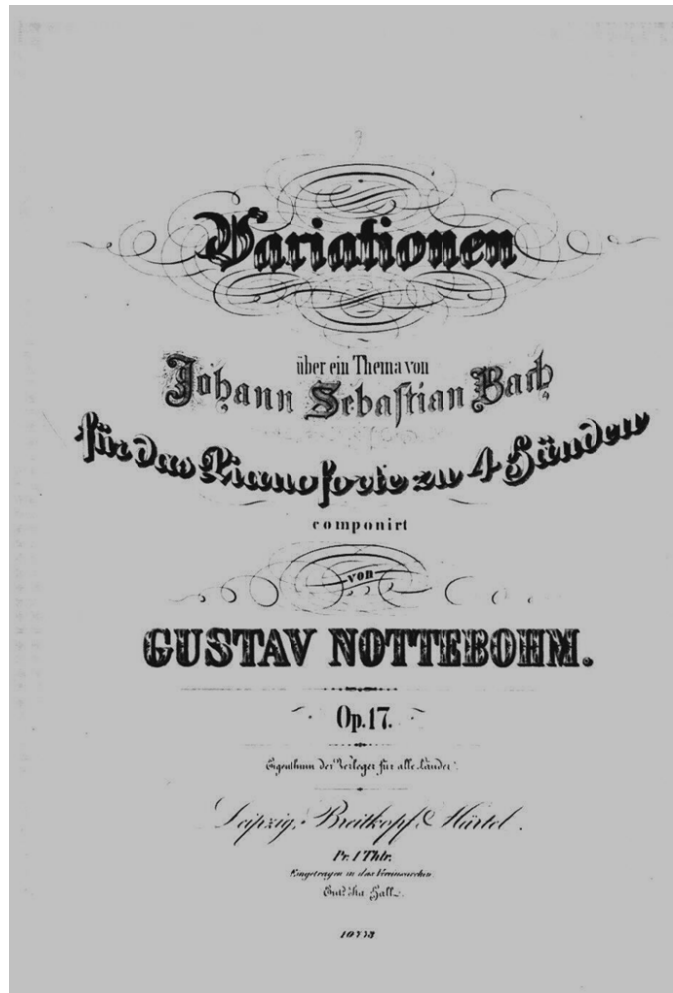


Plate 1.1: Title Page of Nottebohm's Op. 17 Variations on a Theme by J. S. Bach<sup>32</sup>

Nottebohm and Brahms shared other traits. Both men were unmarried and remained bachelors their entire lives. They also shared North German roots. Nottebohm hailed from Ludenscheid in Westphalia and Brahms was born Hamburg. Even though Ludenscheid is not nearly as far north as Hamburg, Nottebohm still “remained a fervent North German patriot all his

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<sup>32</sup> Published in Leipzig by Breitkopf and Härtel in 1865. The reproduction of the title page is found in Hans Clauss, *Gustav Nottebohms Briefe an Robert Volkmann: Mit biografischer Einführung, Erläuterungen und anderen zeitgenössischen Zeugnissen* (Lüdenscheid: Kommissionsverlag Rudolf Beucker, 1967), 57.

life.”<sup>33</sup> Both men spent a significant portion of their life in the city of Vienna. Nottebohm lived there for over 35 years and Brahms for about 25 years. Brahms’s awareness of differences between Viennese attitudes and his own eventually caused him to long for his north German friends. This affinity with Nottebohm is presumably part of the reason they became friends so easily. Brahms describes this connection in a letter he wrote to music critic Adolf Schubring (1817-93) in 1864:

... When your last refreshing article arrived, so soul-stirring to read, I was instructed to transmit without fail this greeting to you from me and from Gustav Nottebohm, who with his seriousness, his extensive knowledge and quiet diligence, reminds me most gratifyingly of north-German musicians and friends. At the time you were probably thoroughly bored by his articles about Beethoven studies, but had probably also considered that a serious investigation of a serious subject doesn’t exactly look amusing... Will you allow us soon again to read such fresh and lively essays with such lovely Schumannesque supplements as the last time? I forgot to tell you, the last time, that Nottebohm and I thought it most splendid, and that we enjoyed it enormously...<sup>34</sup>

Brahms’s mention of “Schumannesque supplements” refers to Schubring’s article about Schumann in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, 4 December 1863, which included two unpublished letters from Schumann. In this letter Brahms speaks glowingly of his time spent with Nottebohm reading and discussing Schubring’s essay on Schumann. Brahms’s reference to Nottebohm’s Beethoven articles shows his respect for the serious nature of Nottebohm’s work and recognition of its importance. In her notes on this letter, Styra Avins remarks that Nottebohm’s friendship with Brahms was “an exception” in his life as an “eccentric musicologist”, while also noting that Brahms took a “keen interest” in Nottebohm’s work with Beethoven’s sketchbooks.<sup>35</sup> Her remark that Brahms’s friendship is “an exception” is not given further explanation, but she is

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<sup>33</sup> Lockwood, “Nottebohm Revisited,” 139.

<sup>34</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Adolf Schubring* [Vienna, 17 January 1864]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, transl. Josef Eisinger and Avins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 286-287.

<sup>35</sup> *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 287.

presumably referring to the lack of other close friendships sustained by Nottebohm. It is well known that Nottebohm kept to himself, but he did have friendships with Robert Volkmann (1815-83) and Carl Ferdinand Pohl.

Nottebohm was an introverted man and kept very few close friendships during his lifetime. In the 1850s Nottebohm shared a close friendship with composer Robert Volkmann. However, upon meeting Brahms in 1862 Nottebohm began to feel more comfortable in his friendship with Brahms and distanced himself somewhat from Volkmann. Nottebohm's lack of friends may be partially due to his rather surly personality. Brahms biographer Max Kalbeck's description of Nottebohm's harsh and difficult personality is mentioned in various writings about Nottebohm.<sup>36</sup> If Kalbeck's account is true, then Brahms's close friend Joseph Joachim (1831-1907) was likely making a sarcastic remark about the nature of Nottebohm's personality in the closing of no fewer than five of his letters to Brahms during the 1870s: "Greet our jovial Beethoven friend warmly from me. (*Grüße unsern jovialen Beethoven Freund herzlich von mir.*)"<sup>37</sup>

While Nottebohm had few close friends he remained close to Brahms until his death, relying heavily on Brahms not only for personal and professional support, but also social interaction. Brahms invited Nottebohm into his circle of friends, known as the *Brahmskreis* (Brahms circle), where Nottebohm could socialize with other Viennese musicians, professors, writers and critics. One of their favorite gathering places was Gause's Beer Hall. In a letter to

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<sup>36</sup> Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 4 vols. (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft: 1908-1921), vol. 2, 109-111. In Lockwood's "Nottebohm Revisited," he writes about possible reasons for Kalbeck's portrayal of Nottebohm as a difficult man. See his footnote #5 on p. 187. Also see in this regard Richard Specht, *Johannes Brahms: Leben Und Werk Eines Deutschen Meisters* (Hellerau: Avalun-Verlag, 1928), 192-195.

<sup>37</sup> *Joachim an Brahms* [Berlin, 8 November 1874]; collected in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim* 6:2, ed. Andreas Moser (Berlin: Deutschen Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912), 104-105. More general greetings to Nottebohm are found in Joachim's letters to Brahms from Berlin on 10 October 1872, 13 April 1874, 8 November 1874, 10 April 1875, and 22 October 1875.



conductor Hermann Levi (1839-1900) in 1873, Brahms invites him to join some friends for a beer at Gause's Beer Hall in what is now Vienna's first district: "In case you are free this evening: you will find Lachner, Nottebohm, me at Gause's, Johannesgasse (beer hall). Until about 8-8:30, I'll be at home."<sup>38</sup> Brahms and his friends had a *Stammtisch*, or regular's table, which they dubbed 'The Cynic's Bench'. This meeting-place was reserved for them regularly at *Gause's* where they would meet to drink, converse and crack jokes about each other. *Gause's* is the location immortalized in a song including its regular characters, Brahms and Nottebohm. In his multi-volume biography on Brahms, Kalbeck writes in a lengthy footnote:

To illustrate the boisterous tendencies which were predominant at these gatherings—Brahms introduced the author [Kalbeck] there in April 1877—is a series of verses set to the student song from "*Wirtshaus an der Lahn* [Tavern on the River Lahn]". Late in the evening, if the other guests had dispersed long ago, they would sing this at their regular table. Every member of the society with a verse about him would stand riveted to the spot and do to others as was done to him.<sup>39</sup>

*Speidel:*

*Bei Gause saß ein schwerer Saft,  
Der schimpft' und trank, von Wut erfaßt,  
Nach jedem Wort ein Seidel;  
Er meint', auf einen groben Klotz  
Gehört ein gröb'rer Speidel.*

Speidel:

At Gause's sat a heavy sap  
who chided and raged there by the tap  
after every word a pint  
he says: on such a rough hard chunk  
belongs a coarser Speidel-hunk

*Nottebohm:*

*Bei Gause trank auch Nottebohm,  
Der wollte eines Tags nach Rom  
Und kam nur bis Benedig;  
Ein alter Cyprer macht ihn dort  
Der Weiterreise ledig.*

Nottebohm:

At Gause's too drank Nottebohm  
who wanted once to go to Rome  
but made it just to Venice;  
Old wine of Cyprus made the man  
his further plans to travel fade

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<sup>38</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Hermann Levi* [Vienna, October 1873]. English translation in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 459.

<sup>39</sup> Kalbeck, *Brahms* v.2 no. 2, 424-25. Kalbeck's description and the verses all appear in a lengthy footnote.

*Thausing:*

*Bei Gause lag ein dünner Schlauch;  
Gefüllt mit Bier und Weisheit auch  
Doziert' er Kunstgeschichte,  
Wenn er total be—geistert war,  
Macht' er sogar Gedichte.*

*Brahms:*

*Bei Gause sang Johannes Brahms,  
Und was er Gutes fand, er nahm's  
Ins Reich der luft'gen Geister;  
Doch weil's schon einen Meister gab,  
So ward er Vizemeister.*

Thausing:

At Gause's lay a thin, long tube  
through which beer and wisdom ooze  
he lectured on art history  
And when he was so lifted up  
then in his mind the poetry struck

Brahms:

At Gause's sat Johannes Brahms  
what pleased him he seized  
into the realm of the airy spirits  
Yet since there was already a master of that land  
he was bound to become second in command.

The song about their time together drinking at Gause's has four verses, each sung about a different person. Ludwig Speidel (1839-1906), a Viennese writer and music critic, was the subject of the first and Nottebohm the second. The third verse was about Austrian art historian, Moritz Thausing (1838-1884), and the fourth and final verse was reserved for the master, Brahms. No doubt they had great fun writing the verses of this song, and as Kalbeck recalls, the melody comes from a student drinking song. Through the colorful descriptions of each person, we can see the characters emerge: Speidel as the harsh, angry critic; Nottebohm as the forever bachelor and lover of Cyprian wine; Thausing as the wise poet historian; and Brahms as the highly respected master, second in command to Wagner, the first master. Gal says, "In those days any mention of the 'Master' unequivocally referred to Richard Wagner. Understandably this did not always please Brahms."<sup>40</sup> The context of Nottebohm's verse comes from an Italian vacation he took with Brahms, Billroth and Dr. Adolf Exner. Apparently, Billroth left for home early, and Brahms tried to persuade Nottebohm to leave Venice and travel on to Rome, but

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<sup>40</sup> Hans Gal, *Johannes Brahms: His Work and Personality*, trans. Joseph Stein (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), 85-86. Also cited in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 425.

Nottebohm refused. He “found a Cyprian wine he loved like a woman and could not tear himself away from it.”<sup>41</sup> There may have been more verses to this song, as there certainly were more “characters” present at the *Stammtisch*. However, Kalbeck only recalls these four. Hans Gal says there were others who were part of Brahms’s group at Gause’s, such as popular columnists and humorists Hugo Wittmann and Daniel Spitzer.<sup>42</sup>

Eduard Hanslick (1825-1904), a notable Brahms apologist, was also a regular at these gatherings in addition to Brahms and Nottebohm.<sup>43</sup> Nottebohm seemed to feel quite comfortable with the friends in Brahms’s circle, and he would regularly attend their social gatherings even though he was seen by others as a perpetual bachelor and somewhat eccentric person who liked to be alone.<sup>44</sup>

Stories of Nottebohm’s somewhat anti-social and defensive nature were apparently in abundance. It seems many who knew Nottebohm have a story or two about his disposition. Brahms, on the other hand, seemed to have a part in setting up some of these situations. Brahms is revealed as something of a jokester who enjoyed playfully tormenting Nottebohm. In his recent book on the friendship of Brahms and George Henschel (1850-1934), George Bozarth offers a handful of anecdotes that provide further insight into Brahms and Nottebohm’s friendship, as well as Nottebohm’s personality.<sup>45</sup> A few were told to George Henschel by Brahms himself, and a few are recollections of Max Kalbeck in his biography of Brahms.

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<sup>41</sup> Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 462-463.

<sup>42</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Notes taken from Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. v.2, 423; cited in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 459.

<sup>44</sup> Paraphrased from p. 739 of Franz Grasberger, “Gustav Nottebohm: Verdienste und Schicksal eines Musikgelehrten,” *Österreichische Musikzeitschrift* 22/11 (1967): 739-41.

<sup>45</sup> George S. Bozarth, *Johannes Brahms and George Henschel: An Enduring Friendship* (Sterling Heights, MI: Harmonie Park Press, 2008).

In a journal entry from 9 July 1876 Henschel recalls two situations Brahms described to him where Nottebohm became easily and quite unnecessarily upset, making others around him very uncomfortable. The first has to do with a letter that was delivered a day late to Nottebohm and he became immediately angry. It was the fault of the postal carrier. At that time in Vienna, it was the job of the mail carrier to deliver letters directly to the door of the recipient. Frequently, they would leave them instead with the concierge of the building to be distributed. Nottebohm lived on the fourth floor, and the letter did not make it to him until the day after it was delivered. When Nottebohm complained to postmaster general, an investigation was launched. A fellow mail carrier succeeded in persuading a young housekeeper to take the blame on behalf of the postman when the postal department came inquiring, knowing that the worker would be fired if the truth was discovered. She did just that and saved the job of the carrier who had a family to provide for. Henschel says, “Brahms’s whole face beamed with joy as he told the story.”<sup>46</sup>

In the second account, Brahms tells Henschel how he and Nottebohm would often get together at a local café. When it came time to pay the bill, Nottebohm would quibble with the waiter over his portion, questioning what he did and did not have. This display embarrassed Brahms. On the waiter’s last night he told Nottebohm he hoped he did not think him a dishonest man. Nottebohm was irritated and left. When Brahms left later, he gave the waiter a large tip and told him it was from the other man as well.<sup>47</sup> We know Nottebohm struggled financially, but his rude manners toward service workers seem to have really bothered Brahms. If he was this unfriendly to other potential acquaintances, it is no wonder that he did not enjoy more friendships.

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<sup>46</sup> Bozarth, *Johannes Brahms and George Henschel*, 33-35.

<sup>47</sup> Bozarth, *Brahms and Henschel*, 35.

Two stories relayed by Kalbeck tell of tricks Brahms played on Nottebohm. Pohl writes Nottebohm in a letter dated 1 February 1876 and tells of how Brahms told the waiter of a café they frequented that Nottebohm ran off and eloped with a woman. Apparently the waiter was so shocked he threw his hands in the air and said “Oh dear, what is happening this year! I would never have believed such a thing of Herr Nottebohm!”<sup>48</sup> It is unfortunate we do not have Nottebohm’s response to this story. The second story comes from Max Kalbeck’s account:

Nottebohm, who went with Brahms and others to the Prater to eat there in the evening, was in the habit of buying his dinner en route from a particular salami and cheese cart for a few Kreuzer. One evening he received his portion wrapped in old music paper covered with a tangle of notes, apparently in Beethoven’s handwriting. Mastering his excitement, he walked to the nearest street light, unfoled the sheet, examined it closely through his spectacles, smoothed it, and without saying a word, shoved it into his pocket. The cheese he kept in his hand and ate from it while he walked, assuring the others that he was uncommonly hungry today. Never was he heard to say anything about his find. The group, which had been apprised [of the joke] in advance by Brahms, awaited in vain a comical scene. For the mysterious sheet contained a variation of the latest Viennese couplet and had been given to the salami man beforehand by Brahms, with instructions to wrap the Herr Professor’s cheese in it.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps Nottebohm guessed that his friends had played a prank on him and he chose not to give them the satisfaction of his acknowledgement. Maybe he thought it was his lucky day. Either way, this story also speaks to Nottebohm’s deep interest in Beethoven’s manuscript materials. His friends knew he would be pleasantly shocked to see his dinner wrapped in such a precious article.

In the following photograph of Brahms and his circle of friends, Nottebohm is not pictured (see Plate 1.2). There is no date given on the photo, but it is reasonable to think it is after Nottebohm’s death in 1882 because Brahms has a full white beard. There is a photograph of Brahms from 1881 that shows him with a dark beard, not yet full and long. Because of this facial

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<sup>48</sup> Bozarth, *Brahms and Henschel*, 254-255.

<sup>49</sup> Kalbeck, *Brahms* v.2, 110n; cited in Bozarth, *Brahms and Henschel*, 155.

feature and because Nottebohm is absent from the photograph, we can logically place it after 1882. The men pictured from left to right in the back row are Ignaz Brüll, Anton Door, Josef Gänsbacher, Julius Epstein, Robert Hausmann, and Eusebius Mandyczewski. Left to right seated in front are Gustav Walter, Eduard Hanslick, Brahms and Richard Mühlfeld.



Plate 1.2: Brahms and his Friends<sup>50</sup>

Brüll and Door were both Austrian pianists. Brüll was known to assist Brahms in playing through his new piano compositions for their friends. Door, Gänsbacher and Epstein were all professors at the Vienna *Conservatoire*. Gänsbacher was instrumental in hiring Brahms as director of the Vienna *Singakademie*. Epstein was an early supporter of Brahms in Vienna and a

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<sup>50</sup> This photograph appears without a date in Specht, *Johannes Brahms*, 193.

lifelong friend. Mandyczewski belonged to a younger generation and was a notable musicologist, having studied under Nottebohm. Also relevant to this study, he edited Nottebohm's *Zweite Beethoveniana* for publication after his death. He succeeded Pohl as director of the Archives at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna in 1887 and later co-edited Brahms's complete works with Hans Gál in the 1920s. Hanslick was a notable Austrian music-critic and apologist of Brahms. He wrote most famously for the *Neue freie Presse*. Clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld became the dedicatee of Brahms's late clarinet works: the Clarinet Quintet, Trio and both Sonatas.<sup>51</sup>

While several scholars have written on Nottebohm's groundbreaking work with the Beethoven sketches, only passing reference has been made to his relationship with Brahms over the last twenty years of his life. Similarly, in the literature about Brahms's own musicological ventures, his long friendship with Nottebohm is rarely given much consideration. This neglect is unjustified, since the relationship of the two men raises issues of importance in connection with Brahms's aesthetic views and musical projects.

Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the Vienna *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* contains new sources bearing on his relationship to Brahms. The professional and personal relationship between Nottebohm and Brahms will be further clarified through previously published letters from Brahms to various friends, colleagues, and publishers, either on Nottebohm's behalf or with regard to Nottebohm. In addition, new sources of scholarship are disclosed: ten unpublished handwritten letters from Nottebohm to Brahms<sup>52</sup> and examination of Nottebohm's work with Beethoven's manuscript materials as these pertain to Brahms. Of special interest in this regard is

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<sup>51</sup> Malcolm MacDonald, *Brahms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001 [1990]), 458-467.

<sup>52</sup> The first five of these letters were kindly brought to my attention by Professor George Bozarth; an excerpt from Nottebohm's letter of 26 October 1882 to Brahms is cited in Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, 135.

the structural chain of thirds and Beethoven's op. 106 Sonata, the so-called "Hammerklavier".<sup>53</sup>

### **The Letters of Brahms and Nottebohm**

The surviving correspondence between the two friends and scholars sheds light on their close relationship. There are ten previously unpublished letters from Nottebohm to Brahms held in Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the archives of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna. These letters are dated from 1863-1882 and reflect the scope of their evolving relationship from professional and polite to casual and personal. I have transcribed them from the old German *kursiv* script, translated them, and provided contextual commentary to clarify the content.<sup>54</sup> The following part of the present chapter is a chronological presentation of these letters together with a discussion of their importance. These letters give us insight into the musical compositions the two men studied together, as well as their requests for scores of early music, job advice, and publishing news. Also included here are Nottebohm's final letters to Brahms from the last days of his life. Letters written by Brahms (already in publication) are included in the discussion as well, where these make reference to Nottebohm or respond to one of his letters.

As one might expect, the letters from early in their relationship are cordial but reserved. The first three unpublished letters from Nottebohm to Brahms are dated from 1863-1864. The content of these letters centers on topics in early music, their jobs and future work.

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<sup>53</sup> I have gained access to these letters and manuscript materials at the GdM with the kind help of the archive director, Professor Otto Biba.

<sup>54</sup> Where I have been unable to transcribe a word, an underscore: \_\_\_\_\_ takes its place.



20 Mai 1863 (#1)<sup>55</sup>

Lieber Herr Brahms!

Als Sie uns verlassen hatten, dachte ich mir, daß Sie wohl der erste sein würden, welchen sich schriftlich vornehmen ließen und über allerlei alte Schätze, über aufgefunden verstaubte Bände mit Stücken von Buxtehude, Bruhns, R. Keiser, u. a. Meldung machen würde. Statt dessen sollte die Reihe an mich kommen. Sie werden wissen, daß Sie in der Generalversammlung der Singakademie vorgestern, 18 Mai, zum Chormeister gewählt wurden. Ich schreibe Ihnen nur weniger, nun Ihnen zu dieser Wahl zu gratulieren und Ihnen zu sagen daß ich darüber erfreut bin, sondern mehr in der Voraussetzung, daß es Ihnen nicht unlieb sein wird, die Ansicht von Jemanden zu vernehmen, welchen mit den Verhältnissen nicht unbekannt ist und als Unbetheiligter eine unbefangene Meinung haben kann. Ich wüßte Ihnen nur keinen Grund anzugeben, welchen mir die Annahme einer solchen Stellung als nicht wünschenswert erscheinen ließe. Falls Sie keine Beweggründe haben, welche Sie abhalten, so meine ich, sollten Sie zugreifen. Die Singakademie ist nach dem Vorbild der Berliner Singakademie angelegt, sie ist ein unabhängige für sich bestehende, geschlossene Gesellschaft; sie hängt mit keinen andern Institut zusammen, ander mit dem Theater, noch mit der Kirche, u. Universität, noch, wie es beim Singverein der Fall ist, mit dem Conservatorium; sie ist auf kein eigentliches Concertinstitut und gibt nur selbständige Concerte für ihre Mitgliederschaft; alle Woche ist ein Singabend; im Sommer sind Ferien; der feste Gehalt ist zwar nicht bedeutend, nur 400 Gld (Stegmeyer hatte in der letzten zeit mit Zulagen etwa 800 Gld.); die Mitglieder sind meistentheils Liebhaber der Musik und gehören den gebildeten Kreisen anheim, --Alles das sind Dinge, die Einem in Wien nur selten geboten werden.

Unter Ihren Bekannten hat sich Dr. Gänsbacher für Ihre Wahl interessiert; er ist je Mitglied der Singacademie. Außer Ihnen waren Krenn und Weinwurm vorgeschlagen; beide blieben in der Minderheit. Wollen Sie fast nach etwas wissen, oder eine Auskunft haben, so stehe ich Ihnen, so gut ich kann, zu Diensten.

Um mit andere Dinge zu kommen, wird es Sie interessieren zu vernehmen, daß ich gestern mehrere alte geschriebene Orchesterstimmen der Eroica aufgefunden habe, welche Correcturen von Beethoven's hand enthalten. Ich bin nun nach mit Nachgrabungen beschäftigt. Gefunden haben sich bis jetzt: Flaute 1 u. 2, Clarinetto 1 u. 2, Oboe 2 und vielleicht mit Viola. Ein solcher Fund macht Einem Freude.

Für den Fall, daß Sie dortige Bibliotheken besuchen und sich meinen historischen Aufgabe freundlich erinnern wollen, nenne ich ein Anzahl von verschiedenen Werken, die für mich besonders wichtig sind und die ich nicht kenne. Alle diese Werke beziehen sich auf Instrumentalmusik, von Suiten u. dgl:

Bruhns, Nic.[olaus]-- Orgel- u. Klavierstücke

Buxtehude, D.[ietrich]-- Klaviersuiten

Bertholdo, [Sperindio]-- Toccaten (n.d. Jahre 1591)

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<sup>55</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 20 May 1863. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

Diruta, G.[irolamo]-- *Il Transilvano* (1615) *Theil mit Toccaten*  
 Durante, Fr.[ancesco]-- *Studii e Divertimenti für Klavier* (diese Sammlung ist in Berlin;  
 ich habe sie aber noch nicht benutzen können)  
 Ford, Th.[omas]-- *Musicke of sundry Kindes* -- 1607 -- mit versch. Instrumentalstücken,  
 u. a. Tiggs  
 Gorlier, S.[imon]-- *Livre de Tabulature d'Espinette* -- 1560  
 Graupner, [Christoph]-- „*Monatliche Klavierfrüchte*“ 1722 -- *Suiten, Partien*  
 Gabrieli, Andr.[ea] *Canzoni, Riceriari*  
     *d. . Giov[anni]* u. a. *Sachen für Orgel in ältere Ausgaben*  
 Hoffheimer (oder Hofhaimer) Paul, -- (um 1520) *Orgelstücke*  
 Keiser, Reinhard-- *Suiten* (ich verweise auf Mattheson's *Orchester I*, S. 217, wo solche  
 erwähnt werden)  
 Kerl, J. C. von-- (+ um 1690)—*Suiten u. Tocatten*, -- ferner: *Modulatio organica*  
 Legrenzi, [Giovanni]-- *Sonaten, Sonate da camera* um des Jahr 1655 ff.  
 Morlaye G.[uillaume]-- *Tabulature de Guiterne*, 1550.  
 Pachelbel, J.[ohann] *Klavier= oder Orgelstücke in alten Drucken od. Handschriften.*  
 Pasquini, [Bernardo] *Poglietti et Kerle—Toccaten + Suites--* um 1704 gedruckt.  
 Reinken, J.[ohann] A.[dam] „*An Wasserflüssen Babylons*“ -- G\_\_\_bearbeitung  
 Scarlatti, Alessandro -- *Toccaten für Cembalo*  
 Reufsner, E.[saias] „*Musikalische Gesellschafts: ergänzung für die Laute*“ 1673.  
 (Suiten)  
 Speth J.[ohannes] *Organisch-instr/ kunst --garten*  
 Taubert, [?] *Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister* (um 1700, anth. eine Beschreibung von  
 Tänzen)  
 Wright, [?] *Lessons for Harpsichord u s w. mit Suiten*  
     *Was von diesen Sachen in neuerer Ausgaben steht, kenne ich. Nun aber genug.*  
*Sie sehen aus den Verzeichniß, wieviel mir noch fehlt, u. wieviel Wichtiges. Mich wird es*  
*freuen, wenn Sie mir eins oder des andern zugänglich machen können. Und im Herbst*  
*hoffe ich Sie wieder in Wien zu sehen.*  
     *Mit herzlichen Grüßen*  
     *Ihr*  
     *G. Nottebohm*  
 Wien, 20. Mai 1863 (Krugerstrasse No 13.)

Dear Mr. Brahms!

When you left, I imagined that you would probably be the first to approach  
 writing about all sorts of old treasures, discovering dusty volumes with pieces by  
 Buxtehude, Bruhns, R. Keiser and also Meldung. Instead, the set should reach me. You  
 shall know that you would be appointed as the choir master in the general meeting of the  
*Singakademie* the day before yesterday, May 18. I write you only less, now to  
 congratulate you on this appointment and to say that I am pleased about it, but more in  
 the understanding that it will not be disagreeable for you to hear the opinion of someone  
 who is not unfamiliar with the circumstances and can offer an unbiased opinion. I would  
 know no reason to indicate to you, that the acceptance of such a position would appear  
 undesirable to me. If you have no discouraging considerations, then I think you should

accept the position. The *Singakademie* is modeled after the Berlin *Singakademie*, which is an independent closed society; it is connected with no other institution, neither with the theatre, nor with the church and university, nor, as is the case with the *Singverein*, with the conservatory; it is at no actual concert institute and gives only independent concerts for its members; every week there is one singing evening; in the summer are holidays; the regular salary is indeed not substantial, only 400 Gulden (last time Stegmeyer had, with a bonus, about 800 Gulden.); the members are mostly amateurs of music and belong to the well-educated circles, -- All of these things, which one will very rarely find necessary in Vienna.

Among your acquaintances Dr. Gänsbacher was interested in your appointment; he is a member of the *Singakademie*. In addition to you, Krenn and Weingurm were recommended; both remained in the minority. If you want to know some more, or have information, then I will be at your service, as best I can. On another topic, you may be interested to hear, that yesterday I found several old written orchestral parts from the *Eroica*, which contain corrections from Beethoven's hand.

I am currently still occupied with the follow-up research. Those found as of now: Flute 1 and 2, Clarinet 1 and 2, Oboe 2 and perhaps with Viola. Such a discovery is delightful.

In the event that you visit the libraries there and want to kindly remember my historical endeavor, I mention a number of different works, which are particularly important for me and which I do not know. All these works refer to instrumental music, from suites and the like:

Bruhns, Nicolaus—Organ and Keyboard pieces

Buxtehude, Dietrich—Keyboard Suites

Bertholdo, Sperindio—Toccatas (n. d. 1591)

Diruta, Girolamo—Il Transilvano (1615) First Part with Toccatas

Durante, Francesco—Studies and Divertimenti for Keyboard (this collection is in Berlin; I have not been able to use it yet)

Ford, Thomas—Musicke of Sundry Kindes (1607)—with different instrumental pieces and also Tiggs

Gorlier, Simon—Book of Tablature for Spinnet--1560

Graupner, Christoph—“Monatliche Klavierfrüchte” (1722)--Suites, Partitas

Gabrieli, Andrea—Canzoni, Ricercari

d . . Giovanni-- \_\_. \_\_. Things for Organ in older editions

Hoffheimer, Paul—(c. 1520) Organ pieces

Keiser, Reinhard—Suites (I refer to Mattheson's *Orchester I*, page 217, where such pieces are mentioned)

Kerl, J. C. von—(c. 1690)—Suites and Toccatas,-- besides: *Modulatio organica*

Legrenzi, Giovanni—Sonatas, Sonate de camera around the year 1655 and following.

Morlaye, Guillaume—Tablature for Guiterne, 1550.

Pachelbel, Johann—Keyboard or Organ pieces in old prints or manuscripts

Pasquini, Bernardo—Pogliatti and Kerle—Toccatas and Suites—printed around 1704.

Reinken, Johann Adam—“An Wasserflüßen Babylons”—\_\_\_\_arrangement/transcription

Scarlatti, Alessandro—Toccatas for Harpsichord

Reusner, Esaisas—„Musical Society's: Charming Pieces for Lute“ 1673. (Suites)

Speth, Johannes—Organisch-Instr/ kunst –garten

Taubert, --Thorough Dance master (around 1700 anthology of dance descriptions)  
Wright, Daniel—Lessons for Harpsichord, etc. with Suites

I know which of these pieces exists in a newer edition. At the moment, however, it is enough. You see from the list, how much I am still missing, and how important it is. I will be delighted, if you can make one or another accessible to me. And in autumn I hope to see you again in Vienna.

With sincere greetings,

Your

G. Nottebohm

Vienna, 20 May 1863 (Krugerstrasse No. 13)

Nottebohm wrote the first of these letters to Brahms in May of 1863, just a year after they first met. Brahms had left Hamburg after an unsuccessful attempt to develop a career there, and moved to Vienna in early September 1862. In his first visit to Vienna Brahms did as much as he could to locate Schubert's manuscripts, edit them, and submit them for publication. In addition to his research, he gave two successful concerts, met many of the city's most prominent musicians, and was nominated to be director of the Vienna *Singakademie*. He returned to Hamburg the first week of May 1863. Nottebohm's letter to Brahms is dated a few weeks later.

He opens the letter with a friendly salutation: "Lieber Herr Brahms". Nottebohm mentions that Brahms had just left. Brahms returned to Hamburg after an eight-month stay in Vienna. He and Nottebohm must have discussed their shared interest in researching early music, because Nottebohm mentions "digging through dusty volumes with pieces by Buxtehude, Bruhns, R. Keiser and Meldung." The first three composers, and presumably the last, are Baroque composers from the German tradition.<sup>56</sup> Nottebohm's more specific interest in these composers is noted further down in the letter.

Much of the first part of the letter concerns Brahms's opportunity to become choir director of the Vienna *Singakademie*, a position which Nottebohm suggests Brahms should

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<sup>56</sup> The last composer Nottebohm refers to is "Meldung". It is possible that it might be an incorrect transcription, because, I can find no reference to a composer by the name of Meldung or anything close to that spelling. R. Keiser is likely Reinhard Keiser, a German Baroque opera composer.

accept. Nottebohm assumes that Brahms has heard that he was selected for the position of director at the general meeting of the *Singakademie* on the previous day, May 18. Brahms may or may not have known for certain by the time he received this letter, but he likely had a suspicion they would choose him. He addresses Joachim in a letter dated Vienna, 13 April 1863: “It appears that the position of chorus master of the *Singakademie* here is being offered to me. I’m asking nothing about it and fear the moment an official approach may soon oblige me to think about it seriously anyway.”<sup>57</sup> He goes on to suggest that he does not need a job in Vienna to keep himself pleurably occupied. Perhaps he was still jaded by the rejection he received in Hamburg only five months earlier.

Brahms was anticipating a letter inviting him to work with the Hamburg *Singakademie*, but instead received a letter in mid-November from Avé-Lallement informing him that Julius Stockhausen had been offered the job as director of both the *Singakademie* and the Philharmonic. Brahms was bitter.<sup>58</sup> He wrote Clara Schumann about it in a letter dated Vienna, 18 November 1862, asking her to keep his frustrations just between them.<sup>59</sup> He confided in her how the *Singakademie* was considering a second director and that he was asked either indirectly or in private whether or not he was interested. Brahms was deeply saddened, as he felt a strong attachment to his hometown and wished to stay there.

Nottebohm offers his unbiased opinion about Brahms accepting the position as director of the Wiener *Singakademie* and suggests that he do so. He talks about the structure of the *Singakademie* and the details of the position. He describes how the Wiener *Singakademie* is an

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<sup>57</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Joseph Joachim* [Vienna, 13 April 1863]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 273

<sup>58</sup> *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 257

<sup>59</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Clara Schumann* [Vienna, 18 November 1862]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 258

independent organization, much like the Berlin *Singakademie*, and unlike the *Singverein*, it has no ties to any other institution—theatre, university, church—with the exception of the Berlin *Singakademie*'s connection to the conservatory. Concerts are given once a week for its members and there are holidays in the summer. The pay is not much, about 400 Gulden, but Stegmeyer made 800 Gulden last year including a bonus. Members of the *Singakademie* are well-educated amateurs.

Nottebohm says that Dr. Gänsbacher, a member of the *Singakademie* and acquaintance of Brahms, was interested in his being appointed. He also offers to tell Brahms more about the topic if he wishes to know. It appears that Josef Gänsbacher was instrumental in Brahms's selection for the post of choral director for the Wiener *Singakademie*. Gänsbacher was a cellist in the Philharmonic orchestra when Brahms performed his A major Serenade with the orchestra in March 1863, at the invitation of conductor Otto Dessoff.<sup>60</sup> Brahms came to know him better over the years and dedicated his Cello Sonata in E minor, op. 38 to Gänsbacher.

Brahms accepted the position as director of the *Singakademie* in a letter to the Committee of the Vienna *Singakademie* on 30 May 1863: "That your choice as conductor of the Wiener *Singakademie* could have fallen to me is a mark of confidence that surprises as much as it honors me, and which I cherish greatly."<sup>61</sup> He continues to ask about practical matters concerning his appointment, including his payment. Brahms wrote a personal letter to Gänsbacher on the same day, in which he asks him to take care of a few details for him concerning the position.<sup>62</sup> He even asks for his salary to be 600 gulden (or florins) instead of the offered 420. Even with 600 gulden,

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<sup>60</sup> *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 280.

<sup>61</sup> *Johannes Brahms to the Committee of the Vienna Singakademie* [30 May 1863]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 280.

<sup>62</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Joseph Gänsbacher* [Hamburg, 30 May 1863]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 282

he was still taking a substantial decrease in pay from what he received teaching private lessons at the court in Detmold.<sup>63</sup>

On a completely different topic, Nottebohm tells Brahms that he has found several old orchestral parts from the *Eroica* with corrections in Beethoven's hand. At the time he wrote this letter, he had found parts for Flute 1 and 2, Clarinet 1 and 2, Oboe 2 and possibly the viola part. Nottebohm was delighted by his discovery.

In the remainder of the letter Nottebohm shares with Brahms an alphabetical list of early composers and their instrumental works "which are particularly important for me [Nottebohm] and which I do not know." He hopes Brahms might search for them at the libraries in Hamburg and share his findings. Nottebohm's request reveals his trust in Brahms's musicological instincts, welcoming his assistance with the research and soliciting his critical opinion. Therefore, it is interesting to learn of the composers and pieces mentioned by Nottebohm to better understand what he was asking Brahms to do.

The only extant compositions by German composer Nicolaus Bruhns (1665-1697; German) are five organ pieces and twelve vocal works. Four of the organ works are modeled on those of Buxtehude, his teacher.<sup>64</sup> Nottebohm mentions Bruhns's organ and keyboard pieces, but refrains from referring to specific works.

Dieterich Buxtehude (c.1637-1707; German or Danish) was best known for his organ compositions, but also wrote many sacred vocal works and instrumental ensemble pieces. Nottebohm is interested in his keyboard suites. However, it is not clear if he was interested in any particular one. Buxtehude wrote keyboard suites in C major (6), D major (1), D minor (2), E

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<sup>63</sup> *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, p. 282 footnote.

<sup>64</sup> Hugh J. McLean, "Bruhns, Nicolaus," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 4, 2001, p. 492.

minor (3), F major (2), G major (1), G minor (2), A major (1) and A minor (1).<sup>65</sup>

Sperindio Bertholdo (c.1530-1570; Italian) was a composer and organist. Nottebohm is interested in his toccatas. He wrote two—"Tocate, ricercari et canzoni francese intavolate per sonar d'organo" published in Venice, 1591.<sup>66</sup>

Girolamo Diruta (c.1554-1610; Italian) wrote the first comprehensive treatise on organ playing. Nottebohm refers to its name, "Il Transilvano" along with the date 1615. I am unsure what that year refers to, for New Grove says the treatise was published in two parts in 1593 and 1609 in Venice. The *Prima parte* contains toccatas by various composers including Diruta himself, and the *Seconda parte* contains ricercares by various composers.<sup>67</sup> It appears Nottebohm was mostly interested in the toccatas, having mentioned specifically "first part with Toccatas."

Francesco Durante (1684-1755; Italian) was a prominent composer of church music but not exclusively. Nottebohm refers to a set of six sonatas, "Studies and Divertimenti for Keyboard," also know as "6 Sonate per cembalo divisi in studii e divertimenti" in the keys of g, D, c, A, f, B $\flat$  and published in Naples, 1747-49.<sup>68</sup> He has not been able to use due to its location in Berlin.

Thomas Ford (d. 1648; English) was a composer and viol player. His *Musicke of Sundrie Kindes* mentioned by Nottebohm contains ayres and lyra viol duets. Published in London in 1607, the collection is in two parts; the first is dedicated to Sir Richard Weston, and the second

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<sup>65</sup> Kerala J. Snyder, "Buxtehude, Dieterich," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 4, 2001, p. 708.

<sup>66</sup> Klaus Speer and Kimberly Marshall, "Bertholdo, Sperindio," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 3, 2001, p. 462.

<sup>67</sup> Claude V. Palisca, "Diruta, Girolamo," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 7, 2001, p. 364-5.

<sup>68</sup> Hanns-Bertold Dietz, "Durante, Francesco," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 7, 2001, p. 744.



to Sir Richard Tichborne.<sup>69</sup>

Simon Gorlier (1550-1584; French) was best known as a music printer and bookseller, although he did compose and play guitar and spinet himself. He published his book of Music for Spinet in Tablature in 1560.<sup>70</sup>

Christoph Graupner (1683-1760; German) was best known as a composer, but wrote in other genres as well. His “Monatliche Klavierfrüchte,” published in Darmstadt in 1722, is the first of two sets of teaching pieces and bears the subtitle “mostly for beginners”. He also wrote Suites or Partitas for keyboard; twenty-six of them remain today.<sup>71</sup>

Andrea Gabrieli (c.1532-1585; Italian) was primarily known for his composition of masses, motets and madrigals, but also wrote theatre and keyboard pieces. Gabrieli’s canzonas and ricercars for keyboard interested Nottebohm. Gabrieli’s canzonas are very contrapuntal, and his ricercars are mainly transcriptions of French chansons.<sup>72</sup>

Giovanni Gabrieli (c.1554-1612; Italian) was Andrea’s nephew. Along with his uncle, Willaert and Merulo, he was one of the leading composers of Venetian music in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>73</sup> Nottebohm was interested in “Things for Organ in older editions.” These may have included the ricercars, canzona, fugues and toccatas by Gabrieli.

Paul Hoffheimer (1459-1537; Austrian) was an organist and composer. Nottebohm

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<sup>69</sup> Ian Spink and Frank Tragicante, “Ford, Thomas,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9, 2001, p. 87.

<sup>70</sup> Samuel F. Pogue and Frank Dobbins, “Gorlier, Simon,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 10, 2001, p. 163.

<sup>71</sup> Andrew D. McCredie, “Graupner, Christoph,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 10, 2001, p. 313.

<sup>72</sup> David Bryant, “Gabrieli, Andrea,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9, 2001, p. 386.

<sup>73</sup> David Bryant, “Gabrieli, Giovanni,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9, 2001, p. 390.

mentions his organ pieces from c. 1520. Only three of his organ pieces survive—*Recordare*, *Salve Regina* and *Tandenaken*. There are also two others in organ intabulation.<sup>74</sup>

Reinhard Keiser (1674-1739; German) was primarily a Baroque opera composer, but is also recognized as a leader in early German opera during the beginning of the eighteenth century. He also wrote ballets, cantatas, oratorios and other sacred music. There are three extant suites (in D minor, D major and G major) for four instruments, and some other works (possibly including more suites) mentioned by Mattheson are lost.<sup>75</sup> In Nottebohm's list, he refers to "Suites (from Mattheson's *Orchester I*, p. 217) where such pieces are mentioned." No specific pieces are named.

Johann Caspar von Kerl (1627-1693; German) was a composer and organist. The full title of the organ work Nottebohm was referring to is "Modulatio organica super Magnificat octo ecclesiasticis tonis respondens" published in Munich, 1686. He was interested in pieces c. 1690, including the *Modulatio organica* as well as "Suites and Toccatas". Eight toccatas and four keyboard suites survive, but their dates are not listed.<sup>76</sup>

Giovanni Legrenzi (1626-1690; Italian) was a prominent composer of the late Baroque style in Northern Italy. Nottebohm was interested in his sonatas and *Sonate de camera* from c.1655.<sup>77</sup> There are five surviving sets of sonatas for various numbers of instruments, two of

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<sup>74</sup> Manfred Schuler, "Hoffheimer, Paul," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 11, 2001, p. 602. I am unsure if the extant pieces mentioned are from c. 1520, and whether or not they are among those Nottebohm was interested in.

<sup>75</sup> Gerhard Brunner, "Keiser, Reinhard," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 13, 2001, p. 448.

<sup>76</sup> New Grove references his name as "Johann Caspar Kerll" or sometimes spelled "Kerl." It does not mention the "von" that Nottebohm added. C. David Harris with Albert C. Giebler, "Kerll, Johann Caspar," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 13, 2001, p. 493.

<sup>77</sup> Nottebohm writes "ff." after the date, which is likely F.f. = *Fortsetzung folgt* = to be continued.

which were published in 1655 and 1656.<sup>78</sup>

Guillaume Morlaye (b. c.1510; French) was a lutenist, editor and composer. He published three books of “Tabulature de Guiterne” in 1552-1553.<sup>79</sup> Nottebohm gives the year 1550; it is unclear whether anything was published in that year.

Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706; German) was a well-known composer and organist. Nottebohm was looking for his keyboard or organ pieces, of which there are many, in old prints or manuscripts.<sup>80</sup>

Bernardo Pasquini (1637-1710; Italian) was a virtuoso keyboard player and composer.<sup>81</sup> Nottebohm writes that he is interested in “Pogliatti and Kerle—Toccatas and Suites—printed around 1704.”

Johann Adam Reinken (1643-1722; German/Dutch) set the chorale “An Wasserflüssen Babylon” for two harpsichords and organ, a work chorale fantasia that interested J. S. Bach and also Nottebohm.<sup>82</sup>

Alessandro Scarlatti (1660-1725; Italian) was a very famous composer, well-known for his development of the Neopolitan School of eighteenth century opera and for his keyboard music. Nottebohm was interested in his “*Toccate per cembalo*”. Scarlatti wrote several sets of

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen Bonta, “Legrenzi, Giovanni,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 14, 2001, p. 489.

<sup>79</sup> Frank Dobbins, “Morlaye, Guillaume,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 17, 2001, p. 126.

<sup>80</sup> Ewald V. Nolte and John Butt, “Pachelbel, Johann,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 18, 2001, p. 853-4.

<sup>81</sup> John Harper and Lowell Lindgren, “Pasquini, Bernardo,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 19, 2001, p. 187-190.

<sup>82</sup> According to New Grove, the more common spelling is “Reincken”. Ulf Grapenthin, “Reinken, Johann Adam,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 21, 2001, p. 155.

toccatas for harpsichord and Nottebohm does not mention any one in particular.<sup>83</sup>

Esaisas Reusner<sup>84</sup> (1636-1679; German) was a composer and lutenist. His collection of ten suites titled: “Musicalische Gesellschafts-Ergetzung bestehend in Sonaten, Allemanden, Couranten, Sarabanden, Gavotten, und Gigueen „, or “Musical Society’s: Charming Pieces for Lute” was set for three strings and basso continuo. Nottebohm cites the date 1673, but the collection was published in Brieg, 1670.<sup>85</sup>

Johannes Speth (1664-c.1720; German) was an organist and composer. Nottebohm refers to his „Organisch-Instrumentalischer Kunst-, Zier- und Lust-Garten“, part of his *Ars magna* for organ published in Augsburg, 1693.<sup>86</sup> It is unknown if Speth composed any of these pieces, or if they are all compiled from the work of others.

Gottfried Taubert (1679 -c. 1760; German) was a German dance instructor who wrote “Der Rechtschaffener Tanzmeister”, published in Leipzig in 1717 as a comprehensive anthology of dances in the early eighteenth century. It also contains his translation of the French *Chorégraphie* of Raoul-Auger Feuillet.<sup>87</sup>

Daniel Wright was a publisher in the early eighteenth century. He pirated “Lessons for Harpsichord” by Maurice Greene, publishing them without permission in 1733.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Roberto Pagano, “Scarlatti, Alessandro,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 22, 2001, p. 395.

<sup>84</sup> Nottebohm spells his name as “Reufsner” in the letter.

<sup>85</sup> George J. Buelow, “Reusner, Esaisas,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 21, 2001, p. 233.

<sup>86</sup> Gwilym Beechey, “Speth, Johannes,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 24, 2001, p. 176.

<sup>87</sup> Angleika R. Gerbes, “Eighteenth Century Dance Instruction: The Course of Study Advocated by Gottfried Taubert,” *Dance Research* 10/1 (1992: 40-52). See especially p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Frank Kidson, et. al., “Wright, Daniel,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 27, 2001, p. 578.

At the close of his letter, Nottebohm tells Brahms he has some of these works in newer editions, but judging from the size of the list there are many pieces he does not possess. He hopes Brahms may find some of them for him, and that he will see Brahms again in Vienna in autumn. Brahms does indeed return to Vienna in autumn as the new director of the *Singakademie*.

Nottebohm writes a response to Brahms the following month, after receiving a response from him in the meantime. The letter Brahms wrote back to Nottebohm in June is no longer extant. This letter continues with the same topics of searching for earlier music and the possibility of Brahms returning to Vienna to direct the *Singakademie*.

28 Juni 1863 (#2)<sup>89</sup>

*Lieber Herr Brahms!*

*Ihren Brief habe ich erhalten und bin ich Ihnen sehr dankbar für Ihre bibliothekarischen Stöberungen. Das Werk von Frescobaldi „Toccate“ u.s.w. kenne ich, es ist zweitemal in Wien. Jedoch ist unter der Namen, welche Sie anführen, einer, der für mich von Wichtigkeit ist. Es ist Michael Prätorius. Sein wichtigstes Werk „Syntagmatis“ die kenne ich; es enthält u. a. Beschreibungen aller damaligen (um 1620) Formen, theilt aber keinen Beispiele oder Stücke mit. Möglich, welche ich nicht kenne, derartiges findet. Dem Titel nach sind folgende 3 Werke zu nennen:*

- 1) M. Prätorius, Anderer Theil Terpsichore, darin allerlei englische Tänz vors Frauenzimmer-- Leipzig 1612*
- 2) d.o. -- Terpsichore Musarum Aoniarum quinta. Darin französische Tänze u. Lieder - - - Hamburg 1611<sup>90</sup>*
- 3) d.o. -- Musarum Aoniarum sexta Terpsichore—(Auch mit frz. Tänzen) Hamburg 1611.*

*Wollten Sie nun wohl die Güte haben, gelegentlich nachzusehen, ab etwas von diesen Werken dort ist und ab sich darin Sarabanden und Giguen befinden? Mit diesen Formen bin ich, was die früheste Zeit anbetrifft, nach sehr ch versehen. Allemanden u. Couranten habe ich in ziemlicher Anzahl, auch aus der frühesten zeit. Die ältesten Sarabanden, die ich habe, sind aus den Jahren 1636 u. 1606, und bei dem aus den letzten Jahren ist die rhythmische feierichtung zum Theil zweifelhaft. Noch schlechter bin ich mit Giguen bestellt; die ältesten sind etwa aus der Mitte das 17. Jahrhunderts. Es*

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 28 June 1863. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

<sup>90</sup> The New Grove listing gives the date as 1612, not 1611. Walter Blankenburg and Clytus Gottwald, “Praetorius, Michael,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 20, 2001, p. 265.

würde mir diesen beiden Formen vervollständigen könnte. Sollten sich also Sarabanden und Gigueen aus früherer Zeit und bei Prätorius finden, so bitte ich Sie, mir einige von jeder Art abschreiben zu lassen, natürlich auf meine Kosten, und wenn sich der Copist nicht auf das Zusammensetzen der Stimmen in Partiten verstehen sollte, nur die einzelner Stimmen derselben, der ich daran das Zusammensetzen selbst vernehmen kann. Die Note ♩ mag der Copist durch unsere ♪ wiedergeben, die Note ♫ durch unsere Viertelnote ♩, u. s. w., sonst aber keine Taktstriche hinzufügen u. dgl. mehr. Nicht wahr, Sie nehmen diese Angelegenheit freundlich auf und entschuldigen, daß ich Ihnen damit lästig falle.

Was sind das für Bearbeitungen deutscher Lieder, die Sie zu studieren gedenken? Haben Sie Forster's „Auszug“ – u. Anderes mehr gefunden, vielleicht die Nürnberger Liedersammlung (121 neue<sup>91</sup> Lieder) v. J. 1533--?

Ich wünsche, daß sich Ihre Hoffnung, Chormeister zu werden, verwirkliche. Gewählt sind Sie, daß Sie es nun wirklich werden, hängt nur von Ihnen und der A\_\_\_\_\_ der Wahl ab. Ich kann mir nicht denken, daß Sie die Wahl ausschlagen. Was an Wien ist, wissen Sie, und Stegmayer's Vorgang brauchen Sie nicht zu fürchten. Eben so wenig die Rivalität anderer Vereine, denn diese kann doch nur der Verein selbst, nicht aber Sie treffen. Daß die Singakademie Lebensfähigkeit besitzt, beweist ihr Bestehen trotz mancher Hindernisse. Auf Grädener hat man nicht reflectirt, und nach Allem, was ich vernommen habe, ist keine Aussicht da, daß man ihn nimmt, falls Sie von der Wahl zurücktreten, u. selbst, wem Sie ihn vorschlagen.

Der evangelische Chorverein gedeiht und nimmt zu. Die Sache geht besser als man erwartet hatte. Die Mitglieder haben viel Eifer und das letzte Mal hatten wir über 30 Singende, eine Zahl mit der man bei der Jugend des Vereins und mit Berücksichtigung der ungünstigen Sommerzeit zufrieden sein muß. Gesungen wird Kirchliches u. Weltliches, Lieder von Mendelssohn u. s. w.

Grädner läßt Sie wiedergrüßen; er ist der Alte.

R. Wagner scheint ganz hier bleiben zu wollen. Auch spricht man von Liszt, er wolle herkommen u. wieder als Klavierspieler auftreten.

Nun, auf Ihr ferneren Mittheilungen u. Entschließungen begierig, mit herzlichen Grüßen

Ihr

G. Nottebohm.

Wien 28 Juni 1863.

Dear Mr. Brahms!

I have received your letter and I am very grateful for your librarian-like rummaging. I know the work of Frescobaldi "Toccate" etc., it has been performed twice in Vienna. However under the names, which you state, one is of importance to me. It is Michael Praetorius. I know his most important work "Syntagmatis"; it contains among other things descriptions of all forms at that time (around 1620), but shares no examples or pieces. It is possible, though I do not know, whether such things will be found. After

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<sup>91</sup> Nottebohm spells "neue" with a "w". It is also written this way in Forster's New Grove listing: "Ein Auszug gutter alter und newer teutscher Liedlein, einter rechten teutschen Art". Kurt Gudewill, "Forster, Georg," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 9, 2001, p. 106.

the title the following three works are to be called:

- 1) M. Praetorius, Another part of the Terpsichore, containing various English dances of the dames – Leipzig 1612
- 2) \_\_\_\_.—Terpsichore Musarum Aoniarum quinta. Containing French dances and songs—Hamburg 1611
- 3) \_\_\_\_.—Musarum Aoniarum sexta Terpsichore—(also with French dances) Hamburg 1611

Would you now probably have the kindness to occasionally look for other pieces from this work there and locate the Sarabandes and Giges in them? I am making sense of these forms, with regards to the earliest period. I have a considerable number of Allemandes and Courantes, also from the earliest period. The oldest Sarabandes, that I have, are from the years 1636 and 1606, and the one from the last year arguably has the rhythmical feel in part. I am still worse with Giges; the oldest are from about the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These two forms could complete my work. Should you find Sarabande and Giges from an earlier time and by Praetorius, then I ask you to let me copy some of each kind, of course at my expense, and if the copyist ought not be understood from the combination of parts in Partitas, only those of the same individual part, that I can hear the combination of it myself.

The ♪ may be reproduced by the copyist by our ♪, the note ♫ by our quarter note ♩, and so forth, but otherwise no barlines to add and so forth. Please take this matter into consideration and excuse me for inconveniencing you with this.

What kind of adaptations of German songs are you thinking of studying? Have you further located Forster's "Auszug"—and others, perhaps the Nuremberg Song collection (121 New Songs) from the year 1533?

I hope that your desire to be choir director is realized. You are chosen/elected, which you now really shall become, depends solely on you and the \_\_\_ of the election. I cannot imagine, that the selection committee would reject you. You know what is at Vienna, and Stegmeyer's procedure you need not fear. So few are the rivalries of other associations, because of it can only affect the association itself, but not affect them. That the *Singakademie's* existence possesses ability, proves its existence despite many an obstacle. One has not reflected on Grädener, and after everything, that I have examined, there is no chance, that one takes him, if you resign from the election, and even, if you recommend him.

The Evangelical Choir Association thrives and grows. The business is going better than one would have anticipated. The members have much enthusiasm and last time we had over 30 singing events, a number with which one must be satisfied with from the youth of the association and with consideration of the unfavorable summertime. They sang songs both sacred and secular, songs by Mendelssohn etc.

Grädner sends you greetings again; he is old.

Richard Wagner seems to want to stay here. Also, one talks of when Liszt will come here and once more perform on the piano.

At the moment, I eagerly await your further messages and resolutions, with cordial greetings

Your

G. Nottebohm

Vienna 28 June 1863.

Nottebohm is continuing the exchange he started with Brahms in the previous letter, where he asked Brahms to research some names and pieces for him at the library in Hamburg. Brahms appears to have completed the request and suggested some names for Nottebohm to consider. In this letter Nottebohm says he knows of Frescobaldi, and the only name that interests him is that of German composer and theorist Michael Praetorius (1571-1621). Praetorius's largest theoretic work, *Syntagma musicum* consists of three volumes (there was supposed to be a fourth). Nottebohm was likely making reference to the third volume which is a dictionary of musical forms from Praetorius's time. Nottebohm comments that Praetorius lists these forms but does not give specific examples. Nottebohm also makes reference to the only secular work of Praetorius's to survive. His *Terpsichore* (1612) is a collection of French dances, originally planned to have eight parts with both choral and instrumental sections. Nottebohm draws specific attention to fifth and sixth parts.

From his reference to various Baroque dances, it seems Nottebohm desires to study the earliest forms of these dances, likely to trace their beginnings. His interest lies specifically in *sarabandes* and *gigues*, as it appears he has enough early examples of *allemandes* and *courantes*. Nottebohm asks for Brahms's assistance in locating early examples by Praetorius, and should he find them, Nottebohm will reimburse Brahms for a copyist's fee to transcribe the pieces for him. He also shows two older notation marks, and how he would like the copyist to render them in modern notation.

After discussing his request to Brahms, Nottebohm asks Brahms how his search for German *Lieder* is progressing. He mentions Forster's work as possible song sources for Brahms—his „Auszug“ and „121 Neue Lieder“ from Nuremburg in 1533. Georg Forster was a composer and song collector. The sources Nottebohm was likely referencing are Foster's „Ein



Auszug guter und newer teutscher Liedlein, einer rechten teutschen Art“ published in Nuremberg in 1539. (Nottebohm may have been wrong on the date.) Its second through fifth parts were published from 1540-1552. The entire collection is known as *Frische teutsche Liedlein* and contains 382 songs by about fifty different composers from the late-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps Brahms was looking for text to set himself, or inspiration from an existing song to shape into his own. Brahms’s love of the German *Lied* is apparent by his hundreds of song settings throughout his career. Such an output meant that he was constantly on the lookout for new sources.

As in the previous letter, Nottebohm urges Brahms to accept the position as choir director at the *Singakademie* once his selection is finalized. From the tone of Nottebohm’s letter, it seems that Brahms is feeling anxious over his appointment, perhaps worried about Stegmayer’s procedure and Grädener. Ferdinand Stegmayer founded the *Singakademie* in 1858, and it is likely that he set the procedure for appointing its choir director. Nottebohm tells Brahms not to worry about Stegmayer’s procedure and that Grädener, an older composer and director friend of Brahms, would not be considered even if Brahms resigned and recommended him. Brahms indeed does become the appointed director of the Vienna *Singakademie* in 1863, but only keeps the position for one year.

Next, Nottebohm tells Brahms news of the Evangelical Choir Association’s continued success. Fellow Hamburg musician Grädener sends his best wishes to Brahms, and Nottebohm passes along information on Wagner’s intent to spend some time in Vienna and for Liszt to return once more and give a concert. Nottebohm closes by saying he looks forward to hearing from Brahms again soon. He signs his letter from *Krugerstrasse* in Vienna, which is mere blocks

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<sup>92</sup> Gudewill, “Forster, Georg,” 106. For more information see Stephen Rose, “The Mechanisms of the Music Trade in Central Germany, 1600–40,” *Journal of the Royal Music Association* 130 (2005): 1-37.

away from the *Musikverein* where both Nottebohm and Brahms frequented.

One year later Nottebohm writes to Brahms seemingly in response to another request for song material. After some research, Nottebohm tells Brahms of his findings and gives a few suggestions for text in this next letter.

21 Juli 1864 (#3)<sup>93</sup>

*Lieber Herr Brahms!*

*Seit früh Vormittag habe ich den gesuchten Text erlangt. Sie werden sich vielleicht wundern, damit zu erfahren, daß es kein Volkslied, sondern ursprünglich ein jesuitisches Lied ist. So ist gedruckt in Fr. Spee's „Trutz Nachtigal“ --. Die Hofbibliothek ist geschlossen und so stand mir nur die Universitätsbibliothek offen, um die dort befindlichen Ausgaben zu benutzen. Diese sind in „Cölln 1683“ gedr. 5. Auflage und eine Berliner Ausgabe v. J. 1817. Beide stimmen wesentlich überein; nur ist letzten neu orthographisch. Danach sind auch die auf inliegenden Blatte abgeschriebenen Strophen. Die \_\_\_\_\_ Strophen werden Sie wohl gar nicht brauchen können. Vielleicht wählen sie die 1. 2. 13. 14. 15.—oder die 1. 8. 14. 15 u. s. w.--. Vorher muß ich Sie darauf aufmerksam machen, was ich aus der Vorrede der erwähnten Berliner Ausgabe entnehme, daß Fr.[iedrich] Schlegel, Wessenberg u.s.w. die „Trutz Nachtigal“ bearbeitet, neu bearbeitet, haben. Möglich, daß der Text der 1. Strophe, der Sie haben und welcher von dem in der Originalgestalt etwas aber nicht, so von Schlegel eingerichtet ist. Auch soll es Ausgaben mit Noten (Musikbeilagen) geben. Die zwei mir vorgekommenen sind ohne solche Beilagen. Nun denke ich, wissen Sie genug. Ohne Zweifel ist Spee's „Trutz Nachtigal“ in Hamburg; vielleicht auf die Bearbeitungen von den Romantikern, deren Lesart für Ihren Zweck vielleicht brauchbare ist.*

*Scarlatti's Klaviersachen waren bereits verkauft.*

*Neues kann ich Ihnen nicht mittheilen; es ist Alles halt beim Alten. Lassen Sie doch bald von sich hören, u. wenn Sie wiederkommen, u. was Sie vorhaben u. s. w. Vielleicht bringen Sie die Abschrift der Sonata op. 110 von Beethoven mit; es würde mich sehr interessieren, solche kennen zu lernen. Seit acht Tagen besitz ich eins von Beethoven corrigirtes Exemplar der f-moll Sonate, op. 57 und einige Kleinigkeiten dazu. Der Brief soll heut[e] nach zur Post. Deshalb schließe ich.*

*Mit vielen herzlichen*

*Grüßen*

*Ihr*

*G. Nottebohm*

*Wien, 21. July 1864*

*(Krugerstraße No. 13)*

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<sup>93</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 21 July 1864. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

Dear Mr. Brahms!

Early this morning I obtained the sought-after text. You will perhaps be surprised, to learn that it isn't a folksong, but originally a Jesuit song. So it is listed in Fr. Spee's "Trutz Nachtigal"--. The court library is closed and so the university library is the only one accessible to me, and they have editions located there to utilize. These are printed in "Cöllen 1683", 5<sup>th</sup> edition and a Berlin edition from 1817. Both editions essentially agree; only the last is orthographically new. Accordingly, there are also enclosed pages of copied strophes. You shall probably never have a need for the \_\_\_\_\_ strophes. Perhaps choose the 1. 3. 13. 14. 15. or the 1. 8. 14. 15. etc. --. Before I must call attention to them, what I gather from the preface of the mentioned Berlin edition, that Friedrich Schlegel, Wessenberg, etc. have edited the "Trutz Nachtigal", new editions. Possibly, that the text of the first strophe, that you have and which something from it in the original form or not, that is arranged by Schlegel. It should also give editions with notes (musical inserts). The two I found are without such inserts. Now I think you know enough. Without a doubt, Spee's "Trutz Nachtigal" is in Hamburg; perhaps from the adaptations of the romantics, whose version is maybe suitable for your purpose.

Scarlatti's keyboard pieces were already sold.

I can not re-inform you; it is all retained by the old. Nevertheless, let me hear from you soon, and when you're coming again, and what you're planning, etc. Perhaps bring along the manuscript copy of Beethoven's Sonata op. 110; it would interest me very much to become acquainted with it. Eight days ago I came into possession of one of Beethoven's corrected copies of the F minor Sonata, op. 57 and some odds and ends in addition. The letter should go out today in the mail. Therefore, I close.

With many cordial  
greetings

Your  
G. Nottebohm

Vienna, 21 July 1864  
(Krugerstraße No. 13)

Nottebohm writes that he has located the text Brahms was looking for in a collection of German Baroque poems from the Jesuits: *Trutz Nachtigal*, written by Friedrich (von) Spee (1591-1635) in 1649. The name of the specific text he was looking for is not given. Brahms may have used Spee's *Trutz Nachtigal* as a source for one or more of his songs. The likelihood of the *Trutz Nachtigal* as the source of Brahms's song setting for "In Stiller Nacht" is the subject of an

article by George Bozarth, who posits that the origins of this song are a mystery.<sup>94</sup> In this article Bozarth names Gustav Ophüls, who put together an anthology of the song texts used by Brahms in 1898,<sup>95</sup> as the first to locate the text of “In Stiller Nacht” in Spee’s *Trutz Nachtigal*. He says that a few lines in Brahms’s song are very similar to text in the poem “Trawer-Gesang von der Noth Christi am Oelberg in dem Garten” which was first published in Cologne in 1635 in the *Seraphische Lustgarten* and later in Spee’s *Trutz Nachtigal* of 1649.<sup>96</sup> Nottebohm’s letter was written in 1864, the same year Brahms published his song “In Stiller Nacht.” While we do not know which text Brahms was looking for (“In Stiller Nacht” or another), it is possible that Nottebohm’s assistance in locating the text helped Brahms find a new source for one or more of his songs.

Nottebohm makes a few remarks about various editions and editors of the *Trutz Nachtigal* and tells Brahms he should be able to find at least one version in Hamburg. In addition, Nottebohm lists a few strophes for Brahms to consider. Gustave Arlt wrote an article concerning the various editions of Spee’s *Trutz Nachtigal*, which he describes as “a collection of fifty-one spiritual lyrics”.<sup>97</sup> Nottebohm mentions three versions: “Cöllen 1683”, and those revised editions of selected poems in the *Trutz Nachtigal* by Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg and Friedrich Schlegel in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

To close, Nottebohm says that Scarlatti’s keyboard pieces were sold and that he wishes to

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<sup>94</sup> George S. Bozarth, “The Origin of Brahms’s in Stiller Nacht,” *Notes*, 2nd Ser., 53/2 (1996): 363-380. See especially p. 364.

<sup>95</sup> Gustav Ophüls, *Brahms-Texte: Vollständige Sammlung der von Johannes Brahms komponierten und musikalisch bearbeiteten Dichtungen* (Berlin: N. Simrock, 1898; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1908; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1923; 4<sup>th</sup> ed. rev. ed. Kristian Wachinger, Ebenhausen bei München: Langewiesche-Brandt, 1983).

<sup>96</sup> Bozarth, “The Origin of Brahms’s in Stiller Nacht,” p. 364.

<sup>97</sup> Gustave O. Arlt, “Friedrich von Spee’s ‘Trutznachtigall’: The Editions and a Bibliography,” *Modern Philology* 33/2 (1935): 159-168. See esp. p. 159.

see Brahms again. He wants to know when Brahms will return and requests that he bring with him the manuscript of Beethoven's Sonata op. 110. This request is of particular interest to my purpose in establishing the relationship between Brahms and Nottebohm because it proves that they shared a mutual affinity for Beethoven's manuscript materials and conversed regularly about them (Nottebohm mentions another Beethoven sonata in the following letter).

Of their many shared interests, Beethoven's manuscript materials are perhaps the most interesting. By the mid-1860s Nottebohm was already hard at work with his transcriptions of the Beethoven sketchbooks. Brahms shared his enthusiasm and helped Nottebohm compile his *Beethoveniana* for publication. In a letter Brahms penned to Clara Schumann in 1864, he writes from Nottebohm's lodgings saying that he wants to send her a quick greeting but regrets that he cannot write her a longer letter since "Nottebohm has a thousand Beethoveniana to show me and I must run soon..."<sup>98</sup> This remark speaks to their shared eagerness for discussing Beethoven's manuscript materials with one another. Having known each other for only two years, Nottebohm and Brahms had developed a close working relationship over the sketches of Beethoven. While Brahms surely gave Nottebohm important advice about preparing his manuscripts and commentaries, the extent to which Nottebohm incorporated Brahms's advice is unknown. However, Brahms did play an instrumental role in getting Nottebohm's Beethoven studies published into a book. Years later in 1870 Brahms wrote to publisher Rieter-Biedermann on Nottebohm's behalf with a glowing review of his work:

In your newspaper you have published 'Beethoveniana,' by Nottebohm. Are you aware that Nottebohm has some extremely thorough and significant works on Beethoven ready? As far as I know there are three works in particular. One on Seyfried's studies of Beethoven and their spuriousness, a very substantial one about Beethoven's studies with Haydn and Albrechtsberger, and finally, a collection of smaller things (such as those in

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<sup>98</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Clara Schumann* [Vienna, 13 October 1864]. English translation in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 304-305.

the newspaper) that should actually appear in book form. A very friendly relationship to Härtel has now become so strained for him (as for everyone) such that he hasn't offered the things to them yet. Would you feel like it? I am not a scholar; I ought not attach my recommendation to Nottebohm's works, but you may be assured that they are the products of immense diligence and that they are of the greatest interest to artist, expert, and connoisseur. That in addition he unflaggingly employs luminous brevity and good German style you can see in his 'Beethoven's Sketchbook,' for example. In my opinion you should not let the things escape, and quite generally you should 'hook up' with Nottebohm, also for new editions of old works (Härtel's Scarlatti was edited by him).<sup>99</sup>

Brahms typically devalues his own expertise as a scholar. In this case, he assures the publisher that Nottebohm's work is not only thorough in its analysis, but will be very interesting to all levels of musicians and music lovers. Reiter-Biedermann did contact Nottebohm and eventually published his *Beethoveniana* (1872), *Beethoven's Studien* (1873), and *Zweite Beethoveniana* (posthumously in 1887).

Two years after writing his letter to Reiter-Biedermann, Brahms wrote another letter on Nottebohm's behalf to Ernst Rudorff in 1872. Rudorff had access to the great library in Berlin where some of Beethoven's manuscripts were housed. Brahms wrote to Rudorff requesting research materials for Nottebohm:

Herr Nottebohm is working on a splendid work about Beethoven's studies. Someday it is going to give you great pleasure; pardon if today it causes you a small inconvenience... For the time being, Herr Nottebohm naturally wishes only to learn if and what is available. Should something look more important to him, the request to arrange for a copy of such will follow.<sup>100</sup>

Brahms's willingness to support Nottebohm's musicological endeavors with Beethoven shows a strong enthusiasm for his work. Brahms has enough respect for Nottebohm and his studies to share his own professional contacts and ensure Nottebohm can continue working on his

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<sup>99</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Melchoir Reiter-Biedermann* [Vienna, 15 October 1870]. English translation from *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 415-416.

<sup>100</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Ernst Rudorff* [Vienna, March 1872]. Collected in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Rudorff* v.3, ed. Wilhelm Altmann (Berlin: Deutschen Brahms Gesellschaft, 1912). English translation from *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 438.

monumental Beethoven project in a thorough manner. Although, perhaps this was done with somewhat selfish motives, as it seems Brahms was highly interested in the research and analysis that Nottebohm did so well and similarly enjoyed learning of his findings and conclusions. Regardless of his motivation, Brahms served as an important link for Nottebohm to share his work on Beethoven's sketch materials with the larger musical community.

A decade later, another of the unpublished letters to Brahms discusses work related to Beethoven's sketches and shares news of a more personal nature. Brahms is now director of the choral association and orchestra at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* and is spending the summer in Switzerland when Nottebohm writes to him.

*Wien 15 Aug. 1874 (#4)*<sup>101</sup>

*Lieber Brahms!*

*Beifolgend erhalten Sie das Blatt zurück. Es erscheint mir ganz wertlos. Die Unterschrift lese ich "Hoschek,"[?] die Unterschrift: "Marper"[?]. Ich finde drei Violinspieler dieses Namens. Wegen des Concert-Programms werde ich mit Pohl sprechen. Ich glaube aber, daß die Sammlung hier vollständig ist. Beethoven's Billets sind am 7. August im Musik[alisches] Wochenblatt erscheinen.*

*Dem Vater der Frau Ebner soll es schlecht gehen. Ich denke daran, in den nächsten Tagen auch hinaus zu fahren.*

*Breitkopf und Härtel veranstalten eine Gesamtausgabe von Mendelssohn's Werker. Rintz, der die Ausgabe redigirt, wird im [diesem] Respekt als "der unstreitig größte Kenner seiner Werke" bezeichnet.*

*Es gehe Ihnen gut!*

*Freundl[icher] Gruß*

*Ihr*

*G. Nottebohm*

*S.S.*

*Ich habe mich in der letzten Zeit viel mit Beethoven'schen Sonaten beschäftigt und gefunden, das die B[reitkopf] und H[ärtel]'sche Ausgabe weniger Anspruch auf Correctheit machen kann, als ich früher glaubte. Es kommen aber auch zweifelhafte Fälle vor. Z. B. : In der alten Ausgabe von Op. 53 lauten Takt 27 und 28 im letzten Satz so:*

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<sup>101</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 15 August 1874. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.



*Ebenso lautet die Stelle in den Skizzen und, ich möchte mich sehr irren, im Autograph. In der von Czerny redigierten Ausgabe steht bei + und + Statt F:G, und ich glaube, daß diese Lesart auf einer von B[eethoven] spatter vorgenommenen Änderung beruht, also die richtigeren ist. Ich bin nun darauf aus, mir noch alte Drucke zu sammeln. So kann man vielleicht der Sache auf die Spur kommen. Ahnliche zweifelhafte Abweichungen kommen auch in andern Sonaten vor, z. B. in Op. 23 und 54.*  
*der Obige*

Vienna 15 Aug. 1874  
 Dear Brahms!

Hopefully you received your document back. To me, it appears to be completely worthless. I read the signature "Hoschek,"[?] and the signature: "Marper"[?]. I find three violinists with this name. I will speak with Pohl in regards to the concert program. I believe, however, that the collection here is complete. Beethoven's tickets appeared in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* on August 7<sup>th</sup>.

The father of Mrs. Ebner is doing badly. I think in the next few days I will make a trip out there.

Breitkopf and Härtel are promoting a complete edition of Mendelssohn's works. Rintz, who will edit the collection, is viewed in this respect as "the indisputable great authority on his works."

Hope all is well with you!

Friendly greeting,  
 Your  
 G. Nottebohm

S.S.

Lately I have been busy with many of Beethoven's sonatas, and I have found that the Breitkopf and Härtel edition is less accurate than I thought earlier. But doubtful cases also arise. For example: in the old edition of Op. 53, measures 27 and 28 in the last movement read as such:



The passage is the same in the sketches and, I believe, in the autograph score. In the edition edited by Czerny, at the markings + and +, a G appears instead of an F, and I think this reading derives from a later change by Beethoven and is more correct. I am now no longer collecting old prints. Perhaps that can put the issue on the right track. Similar doubtful discrepancies occur in other sonatas, for example in Op. 23 and 54.

the above  
 [G. N.]



This letter provides more insight into the relationship between Nottebohm and Brahms. It is friendly in tone, and discusses matters both professional and personal. Its salutation and closing are among those most commonly used by friends—“Dear Brahms” and “Friendly Greetings”. As in the previous letters, Brahms has made an earlier request to Nottebohm asking for his opinion about a document. Nottebohm responds by saying he thinks the document Brahms gave him has no value. He mentions an upcoming program he is working on with Pohl and also makes reference to some Beethoven tickets that appeared in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* on August 7. While he does not make it clear in his letter, perhaps the Beethoven tickets Nottebohm was referring to are for the concert he was working on with Pohl. It may be unlikely, but this could also be a reference to the concert of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis* at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna on 6 December 1874. Brahms was the music director there for that concert season (1874-1875), as well as the two previous ones (1872-1873 and 1873-1874).<sup>102</sup>

On a note of personal interest, Nottebohm told Brahms that Frau Ebner’s father is not well and that he is considering a visit to see him. Brahms had a close personal relationship with Otilie (Hauer) Ebner, a young singer from Vienna. He was well acquainted with her father as well. Otilie met Brahms at the gathering of a small women’s choir in the fall of 1862 at the home of Clara Schumann’s friends, the von Astens. Soon after they met Brahms became a frequent visitor at the Hauer’s house. Brahms, Otilie and her father enjoyed reading together songs by Schubert and Brahms. Otilie married Dr. Ebner in 1864 and moved to Budapest. She regained close contact with Brahms when she moved back to Vienna in 1871, writing many

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<sup>102</sup> *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien, Geschichte der K. K. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien: Herausgegeben von der Direktion der K. K. Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Wien*, 2 vols. Ed. Richard von Perger and Robert Hirschfeld (Wien: Druck von A.Holzhausen, 1912), 304-305.

letters to Brahms in the years following her return. Brahms told Hermann Levi in 1872 that Otilie was his inspiration to compose a number of songs. Consequently, Brahms gave her sixteen holographs and three manuscript copies of his songs from Op. 33, 57-58 and 84-86.<sup>103</sup> The reference to Frau Ebner and her father in Nottebohm's letter speaks of the personal relationship between Nottebohm and Brahms. They were close enough for Nottebohm to know of Brahms's interest in Otilie, and because of this, Nottebohm thought Brahms would care to know about the failing health of her father.

After the brief comment about Frau Ebner's father, Nottebohm informs Brahms that Breitkopf and Härtel are working on a collected works edition of Mendelssohn. Julius Rietz, a friend of Mendelssohn's and an authority on his works, was to edit the collection. Rietz was appointed as the director of music in Leipzig upon recommendation by Mendelssohn, and later conducted the famous Gewandhaus orchestra. The Leipzig publishing company, Breitkopf and Härtel, had by this time in 1874 published Nottebohm's thematic catalogs of Franz Schubert and Ludwig van Beethoven, as well as his *Ein Skizzenbuch aus Beethoven*. With Mendelssohn, they were continuing their project of assembling collected works editions of recent great composers.

In what is perhaps the most interesting part of his letter, Nottebohm discloses a fragment of his current work in the postscript. He tells Brahms how he has recently spent much of his time working with Beethoven's sonatas, and in doing so he has noticed some discrepancies between the published versions and those in Beethoven's manuscript materials. He transcribes an example from Op. 53, where two notes are changed. Nottebohm explains that the early Brietkopf and Härtel version contains the incorrect notes, while the later edition from Czerny is correct. Most

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<sup>103</sup> George S. Bozarth, "The First Generation of Brahms Manuscript Collections," *Notes*, 2nd Series, 40/2 (1983): 239-262. See especially 247-248. For more information on Otilie Ebner, see her memoir in Kalbeck, *Brahms*, Vol. 2, 107 and a biography written by her daughter, Otilie van Balassa, *Die Brahmsfreundin Otilie Ebner und ihr Kreis* (Vienna: Kommissionsverlag F. Bondy, 1933).

of Beethoven's sketch materials and the autograph score contain the incorrect notes. He implies that Czerny made the correction based on a later change by Beethoven after the autograph score. He closes his postscript by saying that similar differences are found in the Op. 23 and 54 sonatas, but does not give further details. Nottebohm not only openly shared his findings about Beethoven with Brahms, but also sought Brahms's opinion on matters such as these.

As their friendship deepened, Nottebohm and Brahms continued to seek the opinions of each other on musical issues. Nottebohm reached out four years later in this next letter to get Brahms's perspective on a particular passage from a Mozart aria.

18 Juli 1878 (#5)<sup>104</sup>

*Lieber Brahms!*

*In beifolgender Motette finden Sie nun einige Anmerkungen. Vielleicht finden Sie einen Theil derselben nicht treffend und zu subtil. Vielleicht ist auch die Brille, mit der ich gesehen, schartig und staubig. Daß Sie das Kunst—mit dem Ausdrucksvollen verbinden, habe ich nicht angemerkt.*

*In einer Aria Mozart's aus dem Jahre 1788, also aus seinem letzter Lebensjahren, kommt folgende Stelle vor,*

*(die blasinstr. haben die bezifferter Töne) die mit den bezeichneten, außer der Harmonie liegenden Noten A, F, u. D in der 2. Violine und mit den Sprüngen darauf ins Capitel der wilden Noten einschlägt und insofern ein Analogon zu einer Ihrer Motette angemerkten Stelle (im 2. u. vorletzten Stück) ist. Mozart mag die Stelle flüchtig hingeschrieben haben, würde Sie aber, so meine ich, wahrscheinlich geändert haben, wenn er die Aria so genau angesehen hätte, wie seine Haydn gewidmeten Streichquartette u. s. w. Es kommt aber nun darauf an, was Sie von solchen Stellen halten. Das Urtheil sitzt nicht in der Regel, sondern im Geist und im Sinn, im Aug' und im Ohr. Sie schreiben von dem*

<sup>104</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 18 July 1878. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

*schönen Italien, wo Sie waren. Doch—da muß ich abbrechen. Hoffentlich werden mir Sie in einigen Monaten wiedersehen. Es gehe Ihnen gut.*

*Herzlichen Gruß!*

*G. Nottebohm*

NS.


*Kyjanka's Rechnung habe ich bezahlt.*

*D. O.*

Dear Brahms!

In the following Motet you will now find several comments. Perhaps you will find one part to be the same not relevant and too subtle. Maybe it is also the eyeglasses, with which I saw, nicked and dusty. In so much as you connect the art—with the expression, I have not annotated.

In an aria by Mozart from the year 1788, also from the last years of his life, the following passage can be found,



The image shows a musical score for two violins (V. I. and V. II.) and a bass line. The V. I. part is in the treble clef, and the V. II. part is in the bass clef. The bass line is also in the bass clef. The score is in 2/4 time and features a series of eighth notes in the V. I. part, with some notes marked with an asterisk (\*). The bass line has figured bass tones (6 and 7) and some notes marked with an asterisk (\*).

(the winds have the figured [bass] tones) which with the asterisked notes, excluding the harmony, are the notes A, F and D in the 2<sup>nd</sup> violin and drive with leaps into the sphere of wild notes and is thus analogous to one of the marked passages in your Motet (in 2<sup>nd</sup> and penultimate piece). Mozart may have briefly written down the passage, however you would, so I reckon, to have presumably modified, if he had just as precisely considered the aria, as Haydn was dedicated to his string quartet etc. However, it now depends (it is now essential) on what you retain/consider from such passages. The decision rests not in the canon but in the spirit and in the sense, in the eye and in the ear. You write from the beautiful Italy, where you were. But there I must break off.

Hopefully I will see you again in a month. I hope you are well.

Cordial greetings!

*G. Nottebohm*

PS.

I have paid Kyjanka's bill.

As above

The context of this letter to Brahms is somewhat difficult to discern. Nottebohm mentions a motet about which he has made several comments but does not give its name. However, I believe it to be Brahms's Motet, "O Heiland, reiss die Himmel auf," op. 74 no. 2, which he must

have given to Nottebohm for his critical comments. There are many reasons to believe this is the motet mentioned in this letter. Nottebohm gives an excerpt from a late Mozart aria, and in the discussion that follows he says it is analogous to a passage in *your* (meaning Brahms's) motet.

Brahms wrote three sets of motets: Two Motets op. 29, Two Motets op. 74 and Three Motets op. 110. He was working on his op. 74 motets during the summer of 1877 while spending time in Pörtlach. It is uncertain exactly when Brahms started work on the op. 74 no. 2 “O Heiland” motet.<sup>105</sup> Both of these motets are in a Bachian style, and Brahms appropriately dedicated them to Bach scholar Philipp Spitta. It seems Brahms was seeking critical feedback for the second motet (“O Heiland”) because he sent a copy of the score to conductor Franz Wüllner in August 1877, shortly after his visit to see Brahms in Pörtlach. Wüllner gave the motet high praise in his reply to Brahms on 15 August 1877.<sup>106</sup> He especially liked the double canon in contrary motion at its conclusion, which led Brahms to send him three additional short canons—one a double canon.<sup>107</sup> Brahms first mentioned the op. 74 motets to publisher Simrock in a letter dated 2 July 1878, saying he wanted them dedicated to Spitta.<sup>108</sup> Simrock published them in 1879. From this correspondence it is clear that Brahms had the op. 74 motets on his mind in early

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<sup>105</sup> This is discussed further in George Bozarth, “Johannes Brahms und die geistlichen Lieder aus David Gregor Corners Groß-Catholischem Gesangbuch von 1631,” in *Brahms-Kongress Wien 1983 Kongressbericht*, ed. Susanne Antonicek and Otto Biba (Tutzing: Hans Schneider) 1988, p. 67-80.

<sup>106</sup> Letter from Brahms to Wüllner dated August 1877, #35 in *Brahms Briefwechsel XV: Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Franz Wüllner*, ed. Ernst Wolff, (Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1921; Tutzing: Hans Schneider 1974) p. 78-79. Letter from Wüllner to Brahms dated 15 August 1877, #36 in *Brahms Briefwechsel XV: Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Franz Wüllner*, ed. Ernst Wolff (Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1921; Tutzing: Hans Schneider 1974), 79-81.

<sup>107</sup> See David Brodbeck, “On Some Enigmas Surrounding a Riddle Canon by Brahms,” *The Journal of Musicology* 20/1 (2003): 73-103. See especially p. 83. One of the short canons Brahms sent to Wüllner was “Aus Auge der Liebsten,” op. 113 no. 9, known as a riddle canon and also a double canon.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Brahms to Simrock dated 2 July 1878, #266 in *Brahms Briefwechsel X: Johannes Brahms Briefe an P. J. Simrock und Fritz Simrock*, Vol. 2, ed. Max Kalbeck (Deutsche Brahms Gesellschaft, 1917; Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 1974), 79-80.

July of 1878, and it is then reasonable to assume that Brahms also sent his good friend Nottebohm a copy of the second one for his thoughts before publishing it.

Nottebohm references an aria by Mozart from 1788: “Ah se in ciel, benigne stelle,” written for soprano with orchestral accompaniment. The two measures Nottebohm has transcribed correspond to measures 6-7 in the published score. Drawing attention to the dissonance and motion created by the second violin part of the Mozart aria, Nottebohm notices similarities to Brahms’s Motet, op. 74 no.2. At the asterisk marks in Mozart’s “Ah se in ciel,” are stacked dissonances. The first sonority at the A sounds: B $\flat$ , C, D, F, G and A; the second sonority at the F sounds: C, E, F, G, A, B $\flat$ ; and the third at the marked D sounds: C, D, E, F, G, B $\flat$ . While these pitches were spread across orchestral parts, there is still a predominance of dissonant major and minor seconds in these sonorities, however brief. There are similar dissonances in the fourth and fifth verses of the five-verse through-composed “O Heiland”, though not as extended as Mozart’s.

Perhaps more striking is the similar melodic shape of the Mozart excerpt and the final Amen double canon in the fifth stanza of “O Heiland” (see Example 1.1). Both passages contain repeated stepwise descents interrupted by upward leaps. Here in mm. 98 and 99 of the fifth stanza of “O Heiland”, the soprano and alto voices descend by eighth-notes in canon, only to be interrupted by a leap up (by minor third) and then to continue their descent. The tenor and bass voices have the same passage, but in contrary motion—ascending, leaping down by minor third, and ascending again. Both passages also contain motion by parallel sixths: between the violins in the Mozart aria, and the soprano and alto in the Brahms motet.

Example 1.1a: Reduction of Mozart's "Ah se in ciel, benign stele" Aria, mm. 6-7

Example 1.1b: Brahms's "O Heiland" Motet, op. 74 no. 2, mm. 97-100

Nottebohm tells Brahms he has some decisions to make concerning passages in his motet and gives him advice to follow his eyes and ears. He knows Brahms is in Italy and wishes him well, hoping to see him in a month. The postscript says Nottebohm paid Kyjanka's bill.

Nottebohm mentioned paying a bill in the previous letter, yet he was so often lacking money and taught private lessons for extra income even though he disliked teaching. Knowing that Nottebohm was strapped financially, Brahms often recommended students to him. In April of 1879, Elisabet von Herzogenberg wrote to Brahms inquiring about Nottebohm's ability to teach:

What is the Vienna Conservatorium like? Could one advise a young student, who is taking up composition, to go there? There are two poor fellows here who would like to try a change, and have asked Heinrich's advice. If it has to be a conservatorium, which should you recommend? Berlin, Frankfurt, or Vienna? Another thing: Is Nottebohm expensive for private lessons? One of these young men would prefer that, but he is afraid

it may be beyond his means. I am ashamed to importune you in this way, but it is no use going to any but the best for advice...<sup>109</sup>

Brahms replied:

...our conservatorium is in a terrible state as regards the teaching of composition...I should not recommend Frankfurt either, just now; Berlin and Munich possibly, if it has to be a conservatorium at all—you know I am not partial to them! Nottebohm charges three *gulden* a lesson, so far as I know, and we can hardly expect consideration from him, as that would imply that he needed it from us! I can strongly recommend him as a teacher. I send him everyone who comes my way, and have often had reason to be delighted with his results.<sup>110</sup>

Another student Brahms recommended to Nottebohm was the young Hugo Wolf, who would later go on to become an accomplished composer of the late nineteenth century. When Wolf discovered he could not afford to take lessons from Nottebohm, he wrote with irritation to his father: "...With Nottebohm it is not possible. He demands 3 fl. per hour and will not accept anything less. I will make due without Nottebohm, and it is just on account of the north German pedantry of Brahms that he thrust Nottebohm upon me. (...*Mit Nottebohm is nichts zu machen. Er verlangt 3 fl. für die Stunde und tut's nicht anders. Ich werde schon ohne Nottebohm fortkommen, und ist das nur eine norddeutsche Pedanterie von Brahms, wenn er mit dem Nottebohm aufdrängt.*)"<sup>111</sup> Nottebohm likely held firm on his fee for lessons because he needed the income and felt his time was worth that amount.

Nottebohm and Brahms traveled to Italy with Theodor Billroth in 1881.<sup>112</sup> In a letter to

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<sup>109</sup> *Elisabet von Herzogenberg an Johannes Brahms* [Leipzig, 21 April 1879]. Collected in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Heinrich und Elisabet von Herzogenberg*, v.1, ed. Max Kalbeck (Berlin: Deutschen Brahms Gesellschaft, 1907), 95. English translation from *Johannes Brahms: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, ed. Max Kalbeck, translated by Hannah Bryant (London: John Murray, 1909), 81-82.

<sup>110</sup> *Johannes Brahms an Elisabet von Herzogenberg* [Vienna, 29 April 1879]. Collected in *JB Briefwechsel* v.1, 96-97; English translation in *JB: The Herzogenberg Correspondence*, 82-83.

<sup>111</sup> *Hugo Wolf to his father* [7 April 1879], quoted in Grasberger, "Gustav Nottebohm," 741.

<sup>112</sup> According to Franz Grasberger in his "Gustav Nottebohm," 741.



his wife, Billroth paints a somewhat humorous picture of the trip: “We are a peculiar three-leafed clover; on the streets we are seldom together. Brahms, as the youngest, always ahead, always jolly, looking into all the stores, and amused about everything; ten or fifteen paces after him come I, somewhat more slowly; then thirty or fifty paces back is Nottebohm, very slowly! We meet on the corners and discuss the map of the city.”<sup>113</sup> This image depicts three men at different stages in life, each moving at their own pace through the city. Despite their differences in age, their shared interests made them suitable travel companions. Aside from this image very little is known about their trip together, taken just one year prior to Nottebohm’s death.

The events surrounding Nottebohm’s death in 1882 are captured somewhat in Nottebohm’s five letters to Brahms from the week before his death and in Brahms’s letters to Nottebohm and others from that autumn. While on vacation in Salzburg and Gleichenberg Nottebohm became very sick with some sort of lung disease. He was not well enough to travel back to Vienna and could only make it as far as Graz. He would never make it back to Vienna, dying in Graz a short time later. The following five letters to Brahms show a quickly deteriorating Nottebohm. These letters are short, having been written on postcards, and Nottebohm’s handwriting becomes increasingly illegible—so much so that his nurse transcribed the final letter to Brahms.

*22 October 1882 (#6)*<sup>114</sup>

[Postcard addressed: An “Herrn Johannes Brahms” In “Wien. Vorst. Wieden, Karlsgasse Nr. 4.”]

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<sup>113</sup> *Johannes Brahms and Theodor Billroth: Letters from a Musical Friendship*, trans. and ed. by Hans Barkan (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1957), 65-66.

<sup>114</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 22 October 1882. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

[Postcard Stamped: “Graz 22 10 82” and “Wieden in Wien 23 10 82]

*Graz 22. Octbr 1882.*

*Ich leide an einem heimtückischen, hartnäckiger Abföhren, zunächst eine Folge der Gleichenberger \_\_\_\_ar. Ich bin sehr vorsichtig und hoffe, daß die Sache bald überwunden sein wird. Sehr diät lebe ich. Nur etwas Geduld. Zwischen den nächsten Tagen kann sich etwas sehen entscheiden. E Hier im Erzherzog Johann würden Sie sehr zufrieden sein. Zusammen können wir nicht wohnen. Ich will versuchere, Ihnen übermorgen wiederzuschreiben.*

*G. Nottebohm.*

*[1] In Folge das Abföhrens, (gestern) bin ich sehr matt.*

*[2] An Kyjanka gedenke ich noch heute zu schreiben.*

*[3] Ihre Hälfte wurde mir wirklich eine Hälfte sein.*

Graz, 22 October 1882

I am suffering a treacherous, stubborn illness, first a result/consequence of Gleichenberger \_\_\_\_\_. I am very careful and hope that the matter will soon be overcome. I live [on a] very [strict] diet. Only some patience. In the next few days they can see something decided. You will be very satisfied here in the archduke Johann. We cannot live together. I will try, to write to you again in the morning.

G. Nottebohm.

[1] As a consequence of illness. (yesterday) I am very weak.

[2] I thought I will yet write today about Kyjanka.

[3] Your assistance will really be a help to me.

Nottebohm writes to Brahms to inform him of his unfortunate sudden illness. In his monograph on Brahms, Karl Geiringer writes that Nottebohm became ill with a “pulmonary complaint” in the summer of 1882.<sup>115</sup> He received unsuccessful treatment in Gleichenberg and was too ill to travel back to Vienna, and had to remain in Graz. He wrote to his only two friends, Brahms and Pohl daily from this point.<sup>116</sup> Nottebohm believes he can overcome his illness with some time and a strict diet. The numbered statements at the conclusion of the letter are written

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<sup>115</sup> Karl Geiringer, *Brahms*, 135.

<sup>116</sup> Geiringer, *Brahms*, 135.

vertically, crossing over top of the body of the letter perhaps as an afterthought. In these statements Nottebohm mentions that his illness is making him weak, he wishes to write about Kyjanka, and he also asks for help from Brahms. Brahms's reply mentions the possibility of a trip to Italy, in an attempt to give Nottebohm hope.<sup>117</sup> His handwriting worsens with the next letter, written the following day as promised.

23 October 1882 (#7)<sup>118</sup>

*[This letter bears no salutation.]*

*Ja ---- ja ---- Dort im Süden liegt meine Rettung ---- Der Rest von Husten u. was noch, wurdet alles verschwinden. Aber wie soll das einer in seinen Mitteln beschränkter Mensch machen, wenn sein Besitz Thurm sich auf mehrere (ja nicht viele) hundert Gulden beschränkt. Einige, mehrere Monate hält es aus. Aber dann? Mir kommen die Tränen in die Augen wann ich daran denke. Bedenken Sie was ich in den 4 Monaten schon auszugeben habe. Ich bin noch sehr schwach, matt in den Knieen. ~ bitte, kommen Sie nicht früher, als bis ich etwas ~~ich~~ sehen u., gehen kann. Es muß sich bald alles machen.*

*Ihr*

*Ihr*

*Ihr*

*G. Nottebohm.*

*Graz, 23. Octbr.*

*1882.*

*[An Brahms gerichtet]*

*Jeder Tag kann ich Nachricht geben. Dieser Brief soll nur ein interemistischer sein.*

*G. N.*

Yes ---- yes ---- There in the south lies my redemption--- The remainder of the cough and what else, has all disappeared. But how much more restricted should a person who is in his middle [years] be made, to contemplate his total possessions as limited to not much more [than] a few hundred Gulden. A few more months it will hold out. But then? Tears come to my eyes when I think about it. Think about what I have already paid out in four months. I am very weak, weak in the knees. ~ please, do not come before I am somewhat up and about. It must all be possible.

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<sup>117</sup> Geiringer, *Brahms*, 135.

<sup>118</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 23 October 1882. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

Your  
Your  
Your  
G. Nottebohm.

Graz, 23 October  
1882.

Every day I can give a report. This letter should only be provisional.  
G.N.

Nottebohm feels slightly better the next day. He wishes for Brahms to refrain from visiting until he feels well enough to go out. He remains optimistic that he will get better. It is unclear to what Nottebohm is referring when he mentions his property being limited to a hundred Gulden, and what he has given up the past four months. Nottebohm's condition has worsened by the next time he writes Brahms a few days later.

*25 October 1882 (#8)<sup>119</sup>*

[Postcard addressed: An "Herrn Johannes Brahms" In "Wien. Karlsgasse Nr. 4."]  
[Postcard Stamped: "Graz 26 10 82" and "Wieden in Wien" --the date is illegible]

*Graz. 25. Octbr. 1882*

*Seit gestern habe ich Krankenverpflegerinnen, bin nur anders und vortrefflich versorgt—jetzt bin ich erst wirklich ein Kranker—aber ich bin mehr eingeengt.*

*G. Nottebohm*

Graz, 25 October 1882

Since yesterday I have nurses to feed me, [I] am presently otherwise well taken care of—now for the first time I am really a patient—but I am really pressed to the wall.  
G. Nottebohm

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<sup>119</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 25 October 1882. Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

Nottebohm's condition has become very serious. He now has nurses to help him eat, and admits that he is very ill.

26 October 1882 (#9)<sup>120</sup>

[Postcard addressed: An "Wohlgeboren Herrn Johannes Brahms" In "Wien Wieden Karls-gasse Nr. 4."]

[Postcard Stamped: "Graz 26 10 82" and "Wien 27 10 82"]

Graz 26/10

*ich bin kraftlos, mir solber zu helfen. Mit dem Arzt kann ich nicht streiten, nicht unterhandeln. Ich bin zu alle. Solchern zu schwach habe kein Vortheil ~ Nur ~~#####~~ andere, die Einsicht haben \_\_\_\_\_. Meine schleches schreiben zu entschuldigen. Ich liege.*

Graz, 26 October 1882

I am powerless to help myself. I cannot quarrel with the doctor, nor negotiate. I am at the end. I have no advantage to such a weakness. Only others have the insight ... Excuse my poor writing. I rest.

The handwriting on these final two letters is especially poor. Nottebohm has grown increasingly weaker since the day before, and he has now lost his prior optimism and feels he is at the end of his life.

26 October 1882 (#10)<sup>121</sup>

[This letter is written in a different hand and marked by someone else probably later: "an Brahms 26 Oct 82"]

*Herr Nottebohm.*

*Dicktirt der Krankenwerderin.*

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<sup>120</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 26 October 1882 (first of two). Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

<sup>121</sup> Letter from Gustav Nottebohm to Johannes Brahms dated 26 October 1882 (second of two). Housed in the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna.

*Mir geht es schlechter und schlechter. Ich weiß nicht, was aus mir werden soll. Immer matt und immer matt. Einen Entschluß kann ich nicht fassen. Ich werde wohl in Graz liegen bleiben, und dann? – Kann ich es wissen?*  
G. N.

*Ich brauche helfe u. Kraft. Ich bin zu müde um Euch an Pohl zu schreiben.*

Mr. Nottebohm

Dictates to the nurse.

I am getting worse and worse. I do not know, what will become of me. [I am] weaker and weaker. I can not grasp a resolution. I will surely remain lying in Graz, and then? --Can I know that?

G. N.

I need help and strength. I am too tired to write to Pohl.

In this, his final letter to Brahms, Nottebohm is too weak to write and instead dictates this letter through his nurse. He is getting worse and unable to see how he can get better. He asks for help and strength. Perhaps his mention of being too tired to write to Pohl is a passive request for Brahms to inform Nottebohm's other friend of his quickly deteriorating condition. It may also be an indicator that Nottebohm saw Brahms as his closest friend. Because he had been writing to both Brahms and Pohl daily during the last phase of his illness, when he had time to write to only one, he chose Brahms. When Brahms received this letter from Nottebohm he made plans to travel to Graz.<sup>122</sup> Brahms's final letter to Nottebohm is dated October 1882—the exact date unknown. Brahms writes as follows:

This morning I packed my portmanteau to travel to Graz. Now, after having talked back and forth with Pohl, I merely send this letter...I can only ask you very sincerely to talk over with your physician and possibly Dr. Karajan or Hausegger what is best for your condition, then to do it without thinking of anything else—specifically not about the necessary money, which is available without further ado...As I said, think it over and make your decision without troubling yourself about anything other than your health. In closing I say that I can come any day and will be glad to come, that I will be glad to carry

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<sup>122</sup> Geiringer, *Brahms*, 135.

out all of your commissions.<sup>123</sup>

Brahms arrived in Graz only a few days before Nottebohm died of tuberculosis. His final three days were spent lying in the hospital. Nottebohm died in Graz on October 29, 1882. Brahms stayed with him until the end and took care of the final arrangements, even paying for them out of his own pocket because Nottebohm's resources were limited. Brahms spoke at his funeral and also took it upon himself to inform others of his passing. These actions all reflect the closeness of the friendship they shared.

After Nottebohm's death, Brahms wrote a letter to Robert Volkmann in which he details Nottebohm's final days in the hospital and the arrangements he made. Volkmann, Brahms and Pohl were Nottebohm's closest friends.

When I found your last visiting card on Nottebohm's desk, I resolved to write to you. I thought warmly about you. As I have always thought, you are after all the only person to whom Nottebohm was seriously and sincerely attached! I shall try now, in response to your letter, to apprise you of a few things. Nottebohm had been in Salzburg for about 4 weeks and in Gleichenberg for 6-8. Then, on his way to Vienna, he got only as far as Graz and had to be carried up to the first floor of the 'Erzherzog Johann'; the last three days he was in hospital—always with the best of care. Upon being alerted by us, several distinguished gentlemen (Prof. Karajan, among them) took a friendly interest in him. I don't understand his doctor here, for his illness must have been growing worse for a long time; his one lung was entirely, the other largely, destroyed. I found Nottebohm already seriously weakened. He was delighted to see me, but could only speak a little and was difficult to understand. (On the other hand he ate and drank a great deal and with pleasure.) Apparently he did not suffer and he died very quietly and easily. The four local musical societies participated in his funeral. The death announcements were for the most part copied from Hanslick's notice, which appeared the very day after his death. Unfortunately I don't have a copy here. An essay by Carl Grün should appear shortly in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*. Grün is from the same town and attended the same school, and his wife was Nottebohm's most assiduous student. Nottebohm made no arrangements regarding his estate; nor did he seem to have any thoughts of death—since he was still making plans for the winter and Italy! He left behind only two sisters and children of his brothers, who are apparently entrusting his legacy to us. Herr Pohl will attend to what is necessary. The legacy; as far as I have seen up to now, is considerably

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<sup>123</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Gustav Nottebohm* [October 1882]. English translation from *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 598-599.

less significant and interesting than you think.<sup>124</sup>

Because Nottebohm was editor in chief of the new Complete Bach Edition with Breitkopf and Härtel, someone needed to take his place. They knew Brahms was close with Nottebohm and asked him for his advice. Breitkopf and Härtel eventually asked Brahms to take over as editor upon Nottebohm's death, but he declined the offer. Brahms responded with details from a conversation he had with Nottebohm in his final days:

I tried in vain to obtain specific instructions or information from him. He was partly too weak to speak of serious matters at any length, partly also he apparently did not think he would have to die; at least, he gladly went along with the plan to go to Italy for the winter. Indeed, he could have made significant contributions for the revision of the Bach edition. That you should now be thinking of me for this lofty artistic task is flattery that goes too far. I lack all sorts of the requisite knowledge. In this I can only take pleasure in the fine and earnest diligence of others while gratefully savoring it, and ponder to myself alone, with utmost modesty—any possible reservations. Herr Pohl will tell you in greater detail about Nottebohm's bequest.<sup>125</sup>

Nottebohm did not think this particular illness would take his life. At the end he must have been aware that death was a possibility, but chose instead to focus on plans to spend the winter in Italy—“*Dort im Süden liegt meine Rettung*,” as he wrote on 23 October. He chose Brahms as his closest friend in the end, and was given hope by the prospect of being well enough to travel with him again.

While it is impossible to know the full extent of the relationship between Nottebohm and Brahms, we can be certain that the influence they had on one another was paramount to their careers as scholars and composers. Their twenty-year friendship fostered shared interests, particularly Brahms's interest in Beethoven's manuscript materials. By the end of his life Brahms owned over sixty pages of sketches by Beethoven including autographs, manuscripts and

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<sup>124</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Robert Volkmann* [November 1882]. English translation in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 599-600.

<sup>125</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Breitkopf and Härtel* [9 November 1882]. English translation in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 600.



early editions. Ownership of these materials allowed him to thoroughly study specific works, making corrections and comments based on the source materials he had.<sup>126</sup> Some of these documents passed into the personal possession of Brahms around the time of Nottebohm's death in 1882, and as we have seen, even shortly before Brahms's own death in 1897, he took the opportunity to examine yet another Beethoven sketchbook, the one then in Engelmann's possession. Nottebohm never did see that sketchbook, so Brahms was in a sense continuing Nottebohm's project of surveying all of the available Beethoven sketchbooks. His desire to seek out the Engelmann sketchbook shows that Brahms retained a strong interest in Beethoven sketchbooks until the very end of his life.

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<sup>126</sup> Karl Geiringer, "Brahms as Musicologist," *The Musical Quarterly* 69/4 (1983): 465-466.

## CHAPTER 2

### GUSTAV NOTTEBOHM AND BEETHOVEN'S SKETCHES

Gustav Nottebohm's pioneering musicological work in the mid-nineteenth century is broad in its scope. From tracing early forms of Baroque dances to transcribing and critically analyzing Beethoven's sketch materials, his scholarship is still highly regarded today. He was not the most social of men, but his focused dedication to transcribing much of Beethoven's manuscript materials is extraordinary. After a brief synopsis on Nottebohm's work with Beethoven's sketch materials, I will present findings from my own work with Nottebohm's transcriptions and comments concerning Beethoven's sketch materials, particularly those related to the Piano Sonata in B $\flat$ , op. 106 and its use of third-chains.

Much of Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna (GdM) has not been explored in scholarship, apart from some work by Eusebius Mandyczewski and Michael Ladenburger. Eusebius Mandyczewski collected selections of Nottebohm's work for the posthumous publication of Nottebohm's *Zweite Beethoveniana* in 1887. Michael Ladenburger described a few documents from the *Nachlass* in his essay "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher" published in 2001.<sup>127</sup>

My research focuses on a selected portion of Nottebohm's notes and transcriptions from Beethoven—pages containing both transcriptions and commentary. Analysis of these documents provides detailed insight into Nottebohm's work with materials he may have shared with Brahms and clarifies Nottebohm's supportive role in facilitating Brahms's exploration into Beethoven's

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<sup>127</sup> Michael Ladenburger, "Johannes Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher. Oder: Archivare und Musikwissenschaftler als Lehrer, Schüler, Kollegen berühmter Komponisten," *In Internationaler Brahms-Kongress Gmunden 1997, Kongressbericht*, hrsg. von Ingrid Fuchs (Tutzing: Veröffentlichungen des Archivs der *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Wien, Band 1, 2001), 459-486.

use of descending third-chains in his late works.

### **Nottebohm's Pathbreaking Work with Beethoven's Sketch Materials**

Gustav Nottebohm's early musical training was in piano and composition. Hailing from Lüdenscheid, Westphalia, he studied piano with Ludwig Berger and composition with Siegfried Dehn in Berlin during the late 1830s. Upon traveling to Leipzig in the early 1840s he developed professional and personal relationships studying with composers Felix Mendelssohn and Robert Schumann. Nottebohm then moved to Vienna in 1846, a city he would call home for the rest of his life. He first made his living in Vienna teaching lessons in piano and theory which still allowed him time for his own composition and scholarship. Nottebohm's compositional output was strongest during the first part of his career and includes many short piano pieces and chamber works with piano. Seventeen of his works were published with opus numbers; many others remain unpublished.<sup>128</sup>

Nottebohm's focus shifted in the early 1860s from composition to scholarship. He began intensive study of works by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert and Mendelssohn. His early success in scholarship led him to serve in 1864 as director of the archives and library at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna for one year only until Pohl took over as director in 1865.<sup>129</sup> Nottebohm always remained interested in earlier music, but his focus centered largely on Beethoven for much of his career.

Along with his contemporaries—Otto Jahn (1813-1869), Ludwig Ritter von Köchel

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<sup>128</sup> Biographical information found in Douglas Johnson, "Nottebohm, (Martin) Gustav," In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 18, 2001, p. 203.

<sup>129</sup> As documented in *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Wien, *Geschichte*, 104.

(1800-77), C. F. Pohl, Alexander Wheelock Thayer (1807-97), Philipp Spitta (1841-94) and Friedrich Chrysander (1826-1901)—Nottebohm took a new approach to recording biographical material. Instead of concentrating on personal accounts, this group of musicologists based their work on the verifiable facts they uncovered by critically evaluating of all the source materials available.<sup>130</sup> In part because of their credibility with this new approach, Breitkopf and Härtel asked Nottebohm in 1862 to work on revising a complete works edition for Beethoven. This assignment resulted in a thematic catalog compiled by Nottebohm and published in 1868.<sup>131</sup>

It is Nottebohm's pioneering work with Beethoven's sketch materials that earned him lasting recognition. He devoted his time to a methodical examination of Beethoven's manuscript sketches and exercises, providing both a transcription along with critical analysis. Thayer was aware of Beethoven's sketch materials and may have even used them to assist in determining the chronology of his works, but Nottebohm was the first to systematically study Beethoven's creative process through his sketches and attempt transcription of Beethoven's difficult and sometimes almost illegible handwriting. This intense study led him to libraries and private collections throughout Europe. After making selected transcriptions, he often analyzed his findings. Until Nottebohm arrived on the scene much of the previous scholarship on Beethoven was mostly biographical, and the chronology of his works was largely inaccurate. These inaccuracies in dating Beethoven's works only added to the difficulty of his task.<sup>132</sup>

Nottebohm had two primary goals with regard to researching Beethoven's sketch

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<sup>130</sup> This group of musicologists and their new approach is outlined in Johnson, "Nottebohm, (Martin) Gustav," 203.

<sup>131</sup> *Thematisches Verzeichniss der im Druck erschienenen Werke von Ludwig van Beethoven*, ed. Gustav Nottebohm (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1868). This catalog replaced the one published in 1851 that was missing the name of its compiler.

<sup>132</sup> Nottebohm's work on Beethoven's sketches found in Johnson, "Nottebohm, (Martin) Gustav," 203.

materials. According to Douglas Johnson, Nottebohm's primary concern with the sketches was "to establish the chronology of Beethoven's works and to supplement the known canon with projects that were planned but not completed," and his secondary concern was "the musical content of the sketches."<sup>133</sup> Because of Nottebohm's intensive work with Beethoven's manuscripts he was able to better determine the chronology of Beethoven's works. Consequently, he revised much of the previously accepted chronology.<sup>134</sup>

It is worth remembering that Beethoven made notations in his sketchbook for his own purposes. He did not intend for them to be carefully dissected by others for generations after his death. Beethoven used both his large format and pocket sketchbooks in two primary ways: to expand upon or rework an idea, and to make a brief note of ideas he had while away from his desk. Nottebohm's reflection on the study of Beethoven's sketch materials brings to light some important issues, namely what can and cannot be inferred from analyzing them. In essence, Nottebohm believes that Beethoven's sketches reveal only glimpses into Beethoven's creative process and contribute not to the understanding of the completed work but rather to the understanding of the artist. Nottebohm writes:

Without betraying the secret of genius, Beethoven's sketches provide some idea of his method. They illustrate the fragmentary conception and slow growth of a composition—a manner of composing that seems somewhat enigmatic to us. The enigma lies first and last in Beethoven's struggle with his demon, the wrestling with his own genius. The demon has dwelt in these sketchbooks. But the demon has vanished; the spirit that dictated a work does not appear in the sketches. The sketches do not reveal the law by which Beethoven was governed while creating. They can provide no conception of the idea that emerges only in the work of art itself, they reveal to us not the entire creative process, but only single isolated incidents from it. What we term the organic development of a work

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<sup>133</sup> Quoted from p. 4 of Douglas Johnson, "Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven's Sketches," *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 2/1 (1978): 3-17. This essay also appears as the introduction of Johnson's book, *Beethoven's early sketches in the "Fischhof miscellany,"* Berlin Autograph 28 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980).

<sup>134</sup> For a more detailed look at Nottebohm's writings, see the article published not long after his death: J. S. Shedlock, "Gustav Nottebohm and the Beethoven Sketchbooks," *The Monthly Musical Record*, 13 (1 March 1883): 59-65, 81-87.

of art is far removed from the sketches. This means that the sketches do not contribute to the understanding and actual enjoyment of a work. They are superfluous to the understanding of a work of art, certainly—but not to the understanding of the artist, if this is to be complete and comprehensive. For they assert something that the finished work, where every trace of the past has been shed, suppresses. And this extra something that the sketches offer belongs to the biography of Beethoven the artist, to the history of his artistic development.<sup>135</sup>

While I agree with Nottebohm's description of Beethoven's sketches as glimpses into his creative process and not the whole picture, I disagree in part with Nottebohm's assessment of the value of Beethoven's sketches. Contrary to Nottebohm, I do believe the sketches can contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the completed work and that they are not superfluous in this regard. While they are not necessary for appreciation and understanding of the finished artwork, they certainly can enhance our experience of a work. For example, discovering how a particular complex passage was reworked by Beethoven can provide a deeper understanding of that particular passage. That new level of understanding impacts the way the listener hears that passage and reflects upon it. Studying the sketches also gives the listener a more intimate connection to Beethoven's working process.

Nottebohm's research in the area of Beethoven sketches resulted in numerous articles published in the *Allgemeine Musikalisches Zeitung* and the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in the 1860s and 70s. Most of these articles eventually made their way into two books: *Beethoveniana* (1872) and *Zweite Beethoveniana* (1887).<sup>136</sup> *Zweite Beethoveniana* was published posthumously

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<sup>135</sup> Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, viii-ix; English translation by Douglas Johnson in "Beethoven Scholars," 5.

<sup>136</sup> *Beethoveniana* (Leipzig: Reiter-Biedermann, 1872) is based primarily on essays published in *Allgemeine Musikalisches Zeitung* from 1863-1871. *Zweite Beethoveniana*, ed. Eusebius Mandyczewski (Leipzig: Reiter-Biedermann, 1887 pub. posthumously), is based mostly on articles appearing in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* from 1875-1879. For a detailed list of where and when each essay was previously published, see Lockwood, "Nottebohm Revisited," 143-144. The main thrust of Lockwood's article focuses on the discrepancies between the essays published in periodicals and their later versions in Nottebohm's books.

with a forward by Eusebius Mandyczewski, who was a former theory student of Nottebohm's. Later in this chapter I will discuss new findings about specific articles in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* as they pertain to sketches of Beethoven's op. 106 piano sonata. These findings include additional details from Nottebohm's notes and corrections to the publications left out by Mandyczewski in his compilation of *Zweite Beethoveniana*.

Another publication by Nottebohm is *Beethovens Studien* (1873), which contains notes on the instruction Beethoven received from Haydn, Albrechtsberger and Salieri.<sup>137</sup> Nottebohm also wrote specific monographs about two Beethoven sketchbooks: *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven* (1865) concerning the Kessler Sketchbook and *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven aus dem Jahr 1803* (1880) about the Eroica Sketchbook.<sup>138</sup> While he made valuable contributions in the field of Beethoven scholarship, his work in other areas of music scholarship is important as well. Nottebohm created the first thematic catalog for Schubert's works and wrote various essays including an extensive essay on Mozart titled *Mozartiana*.<sup>139</sup> At the time of Nottebohm's death in 1882, he was working as the chief editor for a complete edition of the works of J. S. Bach. In 1880 he published a notable article in *Musikwelt* on Bach's *Die Kunst der Fuge (The Art of the Fugue)*, demonstrating that the unfinished fugue of that work with three subjects (including the BACH motive) can be combined contrapuntally with the main subject of the entire work,

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<sup>137</sup> *Beethovens Studien, v.1: Beethovens Unterricht bei J. Hayden, Albrechtsberger und Salieri* (Leipzig: Reiter-Biedermann, 1873). This book was first published abridged in the *Allgemeine Musikalisches Zeitung* from 1863-1864 and later revised in *Beethoveniana*. There was supposed to be a second volume of *Beethoven's Studien* dealing with Beethoven's teachings, but that one was never written.

<sup>138</sup> *Ein Skizzenbuch aus Beethoven* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1865); *Ein Skizzenbuch von Beethoven aus dem Jahr 1803* (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1880). There is an English translation of both monographs together in one book: Gustav Nottebohm, *Two Beethoven Sketchbooks: A Description with Musical Extracts*, translated by Johnathan Katz (London: Gollancz, 1979).

<sup>139</sup> *Thematisches Verzeichniss der im Druck erschienenen Werke Franz Schuberts* (Schreiber: Vienna, 1874); *Mozartiana* (Breitkopf und Härtel: Leipzig, 1880).

demonstrating that Bach surely intended this final culminating piece to be a quadruple fugue.<sup>140</sup>

Nottebohm's analyses of Beethoven sketches have been highly influential to the field of sketch research. His findings have been regularly quoted in scholarship for over a century. Of particular importance are his transcriptions of sketches for which the original no longer exists. This is the case with the Boldrini sketchbook that was examined by Nottebohm and Ludwig Nohl (1831-85) at Artaria's shop in Vienna in the 1870s. It has since disappeared, and all that is known about its contents comes from Nottebohm's and Nohl's notes and writings, although Nottebohm's work is more thorough.<sup>141</sup> While examining his *Nachlass*, I examined Nottebohm's notes and transcriptions for the Boldrini sketchbook. To my knowledge, these materials have not received previous scrutiny. They contain several excerpts not included in Nottebohm's many publications. These findings are presented below.

### **Recent Nottebohm Scholarship**

A handful of scholars in the twentieth century have worked on interpreting Beethoven's sketch materials to supplement Nottebohm's work, but Douglas Johnson, Alan Tyson, and Robert Winter thoroughly reexamined the original sketchbooks in the 1980s.<sup>142</sup> Their thorough work with original sources allowed them to reconstruct the original sketchbooks based on the study of watermarks and paper types while clarifying issues of chronology. More recently, Beethoven scholar William Kinderman has carried this work further by transcribing original

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<sup>140</sup> Gustav Nottebohm, "J. S. Bach's Letzte Fuge," *Musikwelt* (1880/1881): 232-236; 244-246.

<sup>141</sup> Johnson, Tyson, Winter. *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, 347.

<sup>142</sup> Johnson, Tyson, Winter. *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*. In Johnson's article, "Beethoven Scholars and Beethoven Sketches," he discusses the field of Beethoven research in more detail, including the names of many scholars from the last century. He also takes a critical look at Nottebohm's work and addresses its shortcomings.



sketches in a broader context, comparing selected sketches to other known drafts, autograph scores and the final published versions. Consequently, he has sought to explore new aspects of Beethoven's compositional process while extending the limits of this research that were drawn by Nottebohm.<sup>143</sup>

Michael Ladenburger is the only recent scholar to examine Nottebohm's *Nachlass* in relation to Brahms. His article, "Johannes Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher"<sup>144</sup> [Brahms as Beethoven-Researcher], offers a general overview of Brahms's engagements with Beethoven's sketch materials and his work with Nottebohm. While this aspect is closely aligned with my research, the article only mentions a few selected *Brahmsiana* from the Nottebohm *Nachlass*: a letter from Brahms to Nottebohm in 1874 with passages from Haydn's *Divertimenti* for Winds,<sup>145</sup> and a page of transcriptions by Brahms of Böhm's *Lieder*.<sup>146</sup> He compares Brahms's transcription page with an example of one by Nottebohm and observes that the similarity in style and structure of their research methods closely resembles that of "research colleagues [Forscherkollegen]."<sup>147</sup>

Ladenburger also notes that Brahms owned many of Nottebohm's publications concerning Beethoven which contain comments by both Brahms and Nottebohm, including

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<sup>143</sup> See William Kinderman, *Beethoven's Compositional Process*, North American Beethoven Studies v.1. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press in association with the American Beethoven Society and Ira F. Brilliant Center for Beethoven Studies San José State University, 1991), and *Artaria 195 : Beethoven's Sketchbook for the Missa Solemnis and the Piano Sonata in E Major, Opus 109*, 3 vols. Beethoven Sketchbook Series (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003).

<sup>144</sup> Michael Ladenburger, "Johannes Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher. Oder: Archivare und Musikwissenschaftler als Lehrer, Schüler, Kollegen berühmter Komponisten." In *Internationaler Brahms-Kongress Gmunden 1997. Kongressbericht*, hrsg. von Ingrid Fuchs (Tutzing: Veröffentlichungen des Archivs der *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Wien, Band 1, 2001), 459-486.

<sup>145</sup> Ladenburger, "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher," 462-3, 480.

<sup>146</sup> Ladenburger, "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher," 468, 484.

<sup>147</sup> Ladenburger, "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher," 468.

additions made by Brahms to Nottebohm's monograph on Beethoven's Kessler Sketchbook.<sup>148</sup> These remarks show that "Brahms thoroughly studied and critically reflected upon Nottebohm's work. [*Brahms Nottebohms Arbeiten gründlich studierte und kritisch reflektierte.*]"<sup>149</sup> He also mentions the importance of the manuscript materials from Beethoven that Brahms had in his collection. Brahms owned Beethoven's *Arbeitskopie* (working copy) of the *Missa Solemnis* as well as an *Abschrift* of his op. 110 piano sonata with corrections made by Beethoven.<sup>150</sup> Brahms's engagement with the *Arbeitskopie* of the *Missa Solemnis* will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

Overall Ladenburger seeks to understand the extent of the engagement Brahms had with Beethoven's materials. I am searching in turn for the answer to the same question, but more specifically in regard to the sketches for Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata and the descending chain of thirds. Ladenburger's findings from Nottebohm's *Nachlass* help establish the strong working relationship between Brahms and Nottebohm, especially as it pertains to Beethoven's materials.

### **New Findings Concerning Beethoven's Op. 106 Sonata, the "Boldrini" Sketchbook, and "Zirkel-Ketten" in Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna**

I have examined many of Nottebohm's original transcriptions and analyses of sketches for Beethoven's op. 106 piano sonata. Included in these transcriptions are those of the missing

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<sup>148</sup> Ladenburger, "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher," 464.

<sup>149</sup> Ladenburger, "Brahms als Beethoven-Forscher," 464.

<sup>150</sup> For a listing of Brahms's library, score and manuscript collections, see Hoffmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms*, esp. p. 147.

Boldrini Sketchbook and the larger pocket sketchbook, A 45. Before I discuss the details of my work with the materials in Nottebohm's *Nachlass*, I must first explain some general characteristics about the state of these materials because very little has been published about these uncatalogued materials.

Most of these documents come from three boxes of uncatalogued materials in Nottebohm's *Nachlass* at the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna. The boxes are labeled: "Nottebohm 10925/I, ad: Beethoven", "Nottebohm 10925/II, ad: Beethoven", and "Nottebohm 10925/III, ad: Beethoven". They contain all (or most) of Nottebohm's transcriptions and notes from his work with Beethoven's manuscript materials. The contents of these boxes are in no particular order and are not numbered. Much of the first box contains brief notes in Nottebohm's hand mixed with pages of music transcriptions and examples.

Nottebohm made many short notes to himself during his detailed sorting of Beethoven's materials. Most of these notes are written on small pieces of scrap paper, sometimes found loose and other times pasted together to form a long chain. He wrote notes on the back of concert tickets and programs, title pages of books, unfolded envelopes that were addressed to him, discarded letters to others, score jackets, hotel receipts and newspaper margins. Nottebohm has made some attempt to organize this collection of notes and transcriptions himself by bundling like materials together inside a cover and labeled on the outside with its subject. These covers were often pages of the *Neue Freie Presse* from the 1870s and 80s or jackets of published compositions (mostly from Beethoven and Mozart). In a few cases they were labeled by Mandyczewski instead.

For the purpose of discussing individual documents within these boxes, I have given each individual item or bundle a number in the order I came across it. For the most part, I assigned

each bundle one number and listed its given title. If there were particular items of interest inside the bundle, I assigned a letter as well, followed by page numbers if necessary. I discuss in detail only those items that directly pertain to Beethoven's op. 106 sonata, the chain of thirds, or the Poldrini/Boldrini sketchbook.

For each document, or set of documents, I give its number, title, and location (box name) followed by a brief physical description and then an analysis of its contents.

1. *Double-sided manuscript page with transcriptions of selected passages from Beethoven's A 45 Sketchbook. (Nottebohm 10925/I)*

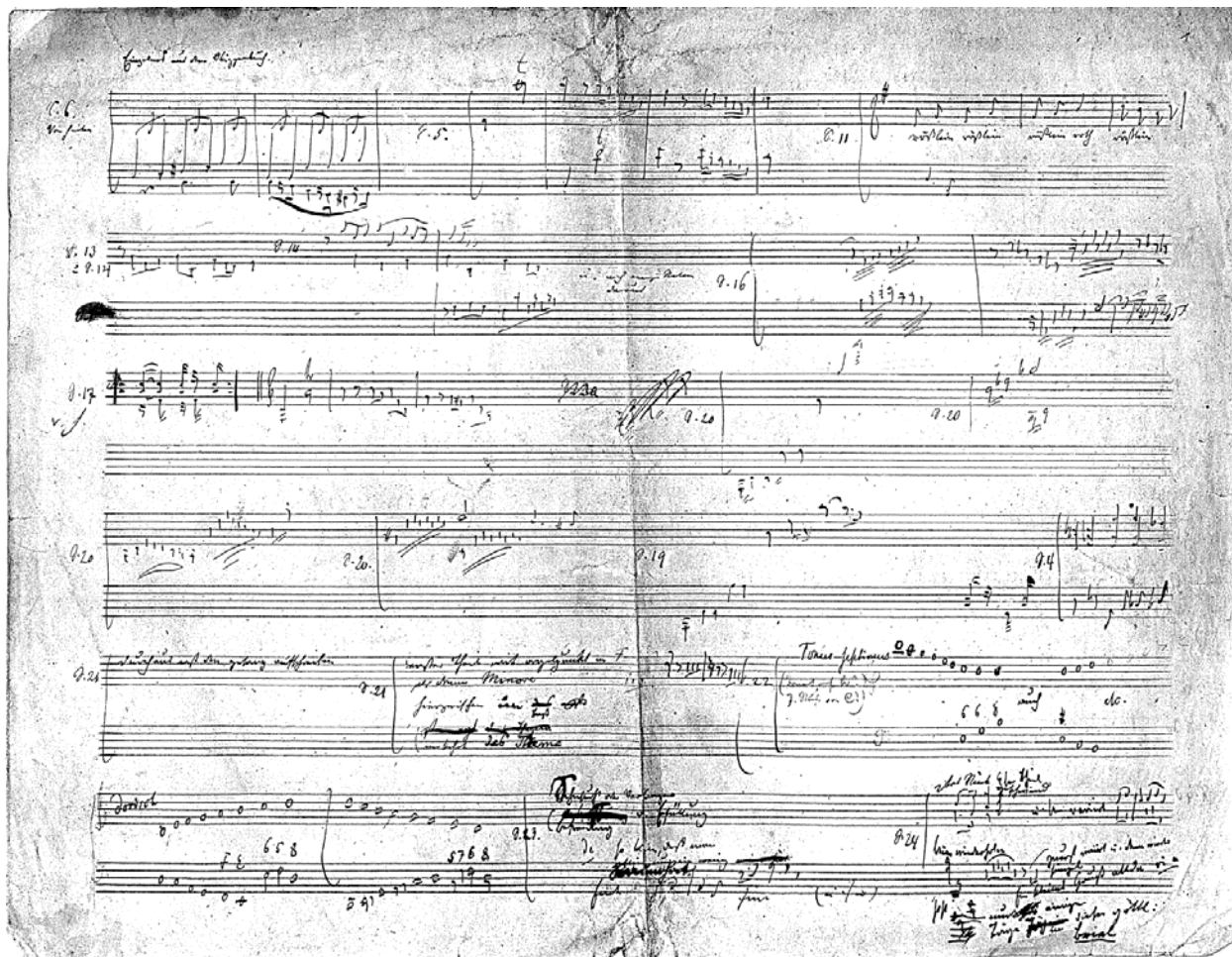


Plate 2.1: Nottebohm's Nachlass 1.1a

The loose page shown in Plate 2.1 was folded and not part of a bundle; it is placed near another folded page that reads “Nottebohm’s Auszuge aus dem Skizzenheft zu op. 106.” At my request, Prof. Dr. Otto Biba identified the handwriting as that of Eusebius Mandyczewski. It is likely that the folded, labeled paper was intended to cover this manuscript page as a jacket.

### 1.1a

The front side of this manuscript page (1.1a) is labeled “Einzelnes aus der Skizzenbuch” at the top. Nottebohm does not specify which sketchbook these transcriptions are from, but after careful comparison with the A 45 sketchbook, they clearly match. Among the excerpts transcribed on this page is part of the “Röslein, Röslein” melody from the “Heidenröslein” fragment of 1796. According to Johnson, Tyson and Winter,<sup>151</sup> there were sketches for “Heidenröslein” Hess 150 on fol. 31v of A 45. This excerpt, along with the two others on the first system, is published on the third page of Nottebohm’s article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/25, 18 Juni 1875. Also of potential interest are two sketches of scales written out and labeled “Tonus septimus” (on B) and “Dorisch” (on D). These scales appear on #163b, too. Nottebohm labeled his transcriptions according to their corresponding page numbers in the sketchbook.<sup>152</sup> However, Nottebohm’s numbers on this particular page do not correspond with those on the pages of the A 45 sketchbook as it is in the GdM today. [It is my understanding that the GdM numbered the pages, and perhaps Nottebohm’s numbers refer to Beethoven’s or his own numbering system.]

### 1.1b

The reverse of this page (1.1b) contains examples from many pages of A 45. Among the transcribed musical phrases and text passages are two transcriptions with a descending third-

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<sup>151</sup> Johnson, Tyson and Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, 354.

<sup>152</sup> “S.”, is short for *Seite*, or page.

chain—“S. 10” and “S. 35”. Sketches from S. 5, 6, 7 and 35 are published on the second page of Nottebohm’s article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/25, 18 Juni 1875. The sketch from S. 10 is labeled “Adagio” at [m.] “78”. It roughly corresponds to the passage in the *Adagio* of the published work, mm. 77-86, differing in the length of the chains and some pitches.



Plate 2.2: Nottebohm’s *Nachlass* 1.1b

Further down on this page is an exciting discovery. The sketch labeled S. 35 is the passage of the introduction to the fugal finale of op. 106 containing the descending third-chain which is described in detail in the third chapter. It is the same version (minus a few accidentals) that is published in *Zweite Beethoveniana* on p. 135. Of even greater interest, however, is the

additional entry in pencil immediately before the sketch begins (see Plate 2.3). It appears darker than Nottebohm's ink in the example. According to Dr. Biba this entry is written in Brahms's hand. Compared to other facsimiles of Brahms's handwriting, this entry certainly seems to be a match. Even though Brahms's addition is related to the transcription from S. 34 appearing earlier on the staff, this single example provides very strong evidence that Brahms was familiar with Beethoven's sketch of the descending third-chain in op. 106. It also confirms that he viewed and edited some of Nottebohm's transcription work and discussed it with him.

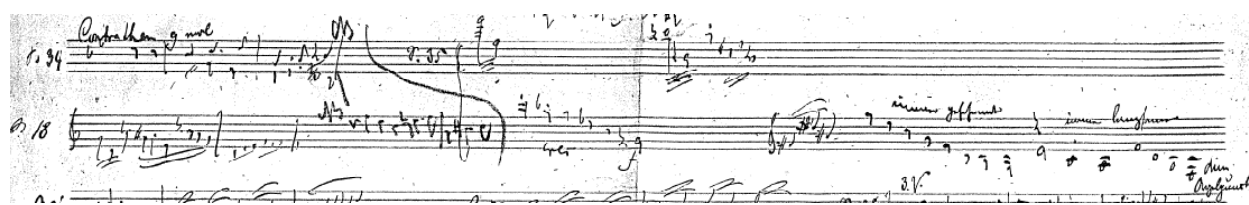


Plate 2.3: Nottebohm's transcriptions from Beethoven's A 45 with an addition in Brahms's hand, *Nottebohm's Nachlass 1.1b*

58. *Manuscript pages containing multiple drafts of the op. 106 IV/intro AND a collection of descending thirds chains from Beethoven's other works. (Nottebohm 10925/I)*

These pages stem from a bundle titled “Die einzelne Gegenstände” [The individual objects/topics] (on yellow paper) with another title underneath on the next page “Enharmonik Artikel”. Within the bundle are five full manuscript pages, two of which are double sided. Writing on the pages is mostly in pen with some additions in pencil. Page 58/2a has a small scrap of paper pasted over the ends of the third and fourth staves. While it bears no date, by the time Nottebohm was working on the “individual topics” put together in this bundle, he must have been very familiar with most of Beethoven's works and sketch materials. He organizes compositional curiosities by topic, devoting a page or two to examples of each one drawn from the many works of Beethoven. Often these excerpts are only a few bars long. Among these topics is Beethoven's use of the third, which is highly relevant to the discussion here. It also shows that

Nottebohm found third-chains to be an interesting and worthy topic as well.

*58.1a*

The first side of the first page (58.1a) is titled “Enharmonische Ausweichungen u Rückungen.” [Enharmonic Modulations and Abrupt Modulations]. It is full of brief examples where Beethoven used both enharmonic equivalents of a pitch in the same passage, often right next to or on top of each other in different voices. He transcribes examples from nearly a dozen works including op. 106. There are two passages from op. 106 that he transcribes on this page. The first is from the first movement at measure 266 immediately before the key change into B minor. [See the end of the third system in Plate 2.4, on page 58.1a]. In this particular measure, Beethoven writes four D $\flat$ s followed immediately by a C $\sharp$ . Here Beethoven is using the enharmonic C $\sharp$  as a transitional pivot in the modulation to B minor.

The second transcribed passage from op. 106 is from the third movement mm. 145-147. [See the beginning of the fourth system in Plate 2.4, on page 58.1a]. He has left out a few chords in his transcription that appear in the published version m. 146, and a second E $\flat$  major chord in m. 147 on beat two is present in his transcription, but is missing the 5<sup>th</sup> (B $\flat$ ) in the score. Other than those two differences it is transcribed as published. Penciled between the staves he writes: “Vgl. Die Skizzen Schwer beladen Enharm. [Compare to the Sketches heavily laden with Enharmonics.]” Below the staves in pencil he writes: “Dis-dur. Fis-dur.” Here Beethoven modulates by a third using this enharmonic modulatory technique. The key signature for this whole passage is that of F $\sharp$  major, however the progression moves from what looks like F $\sharp$  major to E $\flat$  major (by way of a diminished E $\sharp$  chord) to F $\sharp$  major. The enharmonic modulation referenced by Nottebohm happens in the move from the E $\flat$ s to D $\sharp$  in measure 147.





In addition to various other examples on the page, there is a longer comment at the bottom that makes reference to three more examples in op. 93 and 106, but those examples are not explicitly illustrated. Nottebohm's reason for not illustrating these examples may be the lack of space on the page (although there is some room on the bottom system), his perception of them as less important, or they may have been an afterthought. He writes: "Dazu: op. 93, das cis statt des in letzten Satz (S. "Versch. Noten"); der umstehenden Terzen=Ketten in op. 106 u.s.w.; die Noten am Schluß des 2. Satzes in op. 106 (d fis). [What is more: op. 93, the C# instead of D $\flat$  in the last movement (see "Various Notes"); the surrounding third-chains in op. 106 etc.; the notes at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement in op. 106 (D F#).]" This comment contains the only reference I have found of Nottebohm's use of the term "Terzen=Ketten" or third-chains. In other instances he uses the more generic "Zirkel=Ketten" or circle-chains.

These examples point to further instances of enharmonic modulations. In op. 93, Nottebohm is referring to the passage toward the conclusion of the fourth movement where fragments of the main theme are played in the strings over a dominant pedal (C) and then abruptly and forcefully interrupted by a resounding D $\flat$  across the orchestra. The violins then softly mimic the previous melodic fragment but are once again interrupted by the same resounding pitch. However this time it is written as C# instead of D $\flat$ . This C# aids in the modulation from F major to a brief statement of the theme in F# minor. Nottebohm's references to sections of op. 106 include the modulatory function of the third-chain overall, as well as the D and F# bridge between octave A#s and subsequent octave B $\flat$ s in the measures leading up the final brief *Presto* of the second movement.



58.1b

In Nottebohm's pursuit to transcribe Beethoven's sketch materials, he noticed striking compositional techniques and made note of them. Similar to the collection of excerpts showing enharmonic modulation, he made another collection on the reverse side. While these collections of examples are taken from the finished score in many cases, Nottebohm occasionally makes reference to a similar occurrence in the sketch materials. On this page (58/1b) Nottebohm wrote out instances of the descending third-chain in Beethoven's works (see Plate 5). Examples from op. 106 are included in this collection. I find it especially remarkable that Nottebohm was similarly intrigued by this compositional device! He thought this technique was common enough in Beethoven's compositions to draw special attention to these instances and to compare them. The page is titled "Zirkel. Ketten. [Circle. Chains.]" in the top left corner.

Nottebohm chose Beethoven's Variations for Piano, op. 34 as his first example, which presents a structural descending third-chain that spans an entire work. By extracting the key of the theme and each key employed in the variations, Nottebohm draws a chain of descending thirds, or as he preferred to think of it in this case, ascending sixths. He made the following remarks above the example on the first staff: "Sexten (nicht Terzen=) Zirkel in der Reihenfolge der Variationen [Sixths- (not thirds) Circle in the order of the Variations.]" (See Plate 2.5 of page 58.1b). This remark is somewhat odd, as he clearly draws the pitches in descending order on the staff: theme in F major, first variation in D major, second variation in B $\flat$  major, third variation in G major, fourth variation in E $\flat$  major, and fifth variation in C minor. The sixth variation, which returns to F major, is not included as it is not part of the chain or circle. He acknowledges this by following the fifth variation with: "Folgt wieder F dur [The following is again in F major]." Underneath the example, Nottebohm mentions the alternation of descending thirds.

Beethoven's op. 34 Variations is an explicit example of how a chain of thirds can be used structurally to outline the sections of a larger work.

Comments to the right of the op. 34 example draw comparison to a Haydn quartet: "Vgl. Haydn's 4tett N 72 in C-dur Bd. 5, wo der Menuet in C--, der Trio in A-dur steht. [Compare to Haydn's Quartet N. 72 in C major Vol. 5, where the Menuet is in C, the Trio is in A major." He is drawing a parallel connection to the large-scale key change by a third, but one that is not a typical Classical move. One would expect C major to A minor, but not C major to A major. The Hoboken entry for this Quartet in C major, op. 74 no. 1 is Hob. III:72. (See also the forthcoming comments concerning Haydn references on staff lines 6, 9-10).

Looking at the second staff on the "Circle-Chains" page, there are two more instances of third-chains—one from op. 105 and the other from op. 106. Beethoven's Six Sets of Variations for Piano with Flute or Violin, op. 105 was written close to the time of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata. Labeled "Op. 105 Nr. 4 Letzte Var.," the third-chain appears in the *Air Ecossais*, No. 4 in the third and last variation. Nottebohm's illustration is a brief five-measure sketch corresponding to the progression in the bass of the piano part at measures 16-20. This particular *Air Ecossais* and all its variations are in E $\flat$  major. Dotted half-notes in Nottebohm's transcription show the root of each arpeggiated chord, and he has written the figured bass notation "3" and "5" above each note to reflect this. In the faster eighth-note descent that follows, Beethoven emphasizes the descending third-chain as it moves quickly through the progression. The root of each chord is still arpeggiated, but with faster 32<sup>nd</sup> notes causing the root to change every eighth-note. Over five measures, Beethoven has created an entire circle-chain of thirds: E $\flat$  C A $\flat$  F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  C $\flat$ . Underneath the passage, Nottebohm again mentions the descending thirds in the bass pointing out that two thirds make a fifth, and that the

third scale degree in relation to the fifth will determine the key. This likely refers to the figured bass 3 and 5 penciled in above the root notes.

Labeled “Terzen=Ketten. Sexten=Zirkel. [Thirds-Chain. Sixths-Circle.]” on the second staff, the first example from op. 106 outlines a long continuous chain of thirds spanning nearly four octaves: F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  [C $\flat$ ]B G $\sharp$  E C $\sharp$  A F $\sharp$  D B G E C A F D // A. Comparing Nottebohm’s transcription to the original A45 sketchbook of Beethoven’s, it is clear that Nottebohm transcribed this passage exactly as it appears in this sketch. Underneath the third-chain he has penciled “8ven Terzen abwärts. [Descending thirds in octaves.]” This sketch passage must have been intensely fascinating for Nottebohm because he transcribed it numerous times and included it in his regular publications. Chapter three will discuss the final manifestation of this chain in the published version of op. 106.

Nottebohm has marked the passage on the third staff “Op. 123”, “S. 81 u. S. 123.” and draws the following third-chain: C A F D B $\flat$  G E $\flat$  C A $\flat$  F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  C $\flat$  A $\flat$  E (F $\flat$ ) C $\sharp$  (D $\flat$ ); ending with a chromatic A A $\sharp$  B. “Enharmonik. B’s Wort über Enh. in Skizzenbuch paßt hierhin. Hier ist eine ‘Veränderung’ [Enharmonic. Beethoven’s word about enharmonics in the sketchbook fits up to here. Here is a ‘change’].” This comment explains that in order for the third-chain to progress, enharmonic equivalents must be used. He writes “Here is a change,” directly underneath the A A $\sharp$  B piece, marking the change in pattern from descending thirds to ascending chromatic. Beethoven evidently made a note to this effect in his sketchbook. Chapter four discusses further instances of third chains followed by chromatic passages. After the notation passage it says “Vor dem 3telligen Rhythmus. [Before the rhythm in 3.]” It is unclear where this third-chain is meant to correspond to the final work. Both the *Credo*

and *Benedictus* movements of the *Missa Solemnis* have third-chains, but this chain is not the same as those. It is possible that this chain was transcribed from one of Beethoven's sketchbooks and the page numbers 81 and 123 refer to that source.

There is an extended "Quarten = Zirkel," or circle progression of fourths from the Eighth Symphony, op. 93 notated on the fourth staff. It is marked "S. 44", and the page number corresponds to the Breitkopf und Härtel edition of Beethoven's collected works issued from 1864-1890. This circular chain of ascending fourths appears in the fourth movement of the symphony at m. 120-144. Nottebohm has illustrated the chain quite literally here in terms of register and rhythm. The alternation between treble and bass clefs represents the register differences as the progression moves through various voices in the orchestra. Rhythmic acceleration is accurately shown by the tied whole-notes, whole notes, and half-notes. After the double-bar, Nottebohm sketches the first interval again, presented in the flute, oboe and first violin, with its motivic harmonization in the strings. This passage is marked in "D dur [D major]," despite the B $\flat$  in the key signature. It is followed by an "u.s.w. [and so forth]," as the pattern is continued.

Beethoven uses the chain of fourths to build intensity. While they are intended to be an accompaniment to the motivic interplay, their presence is audible and not masked by dense harmonies. As the ascending fourths are passed throughout the orchestra, the timbre of each instrument changes the character of the accompaniment. Together with the gradual rhythmic acceleration, this chain builds in intensity as it pushes toward the symphony's close.

In the center of the page, an extensive third-chain is given from "Op. 106". Labeled "S. 20," this passage corresponds to page 20 of the Breitkopf und Härtel edition of Beethoven's collected works issued from 1864-1890. The extended chain of descending thirds winds its way

through three different key signatures—3 flats, none, 3 sharps. It corresponds with the uppermost notes in the right-hand of the piano in measures 78-87 of the third movement *Adagio* in the finished score. Nottebohm's comment underneath the transcribed passage reads, "Klavier u. große Terzen. Vgl. die Skizze. [Piano with many thirds. Like the sketches.]."

Similar to the circle-chain of fourths from op. 93, Beethoven uses this descending third-chain to propel the listener through a modulatory transition into a section of brilliant passage-work. Making use of the pervasive rhythmic motive of alternating quarter and eighth notes, the descending third-chain makes occasional leaps of an ascending sixth to keep the progression in the right-hand.

Using examples from the *Rondo a Capriccio* for piano, op. 129, the Piano Sonata no. 13 in E $\flat$ , op. 27 no. 1, the Six Variations for piano, op. 34, and Haydn's Quartet in F, op. 74 no. 2, Nottebohm identifies instances where Beethoven (and Haydn) use the interval of a descending minor third to modulate between major keys. The first example on the sixth staff is labeled "Op. 129. Zum 1790?" It seems Nottebohm was unsure exactly when op. 129 was written. Kinsky's Thematic Catalog is also unsure of the exact date but gives an approximation of "between 1795 and 1798". Nottebohm's estimation was a few years too soon.

While it is common to modulate by third from major to minor, it is uncommon to modulate by third from major to major. Nottebohm observes: "Die 3. einer Durtonart [major key] wird 5. einer neuer Durtonart. [The 3<sup>rd</sup> of a major key will be the 5<sup>th</sup> of a new major key]." Each example supplies two keys with this relationship. The op. 129 example has a G major chord with a G major key signature followed by an E major chord with an E major key signature. The third of G (B) is a fifth in the next key (E). While this relationship seems quite obvious, Nottebohm is defining the structural use of the descending third as the reason for an unconventional jump in



key—G major to E major, for example. It is not a conventional Classical modulation by perfect fourth, fifth, or relative minor. This is a deliberate modulation of a third unrelated to the relative minor key at a minor third below. The modulation in the op. 129 example appears in the middle of the piece at measures 106 and 107 where the first measure is the final chord of a G major section and the second measure of the example is the first measure of an E major section. Nottebohm found it noteworthy that Beethoven would abruptly change keys by a third. The previous modulation in the piece was from G major to its parallel minor key, G minor.

The second example is labeled “Op. 27 Nr. 1.” With a key signature of E $\flat$  major and an E $\flat$  major chord, the first measure leads into C major with a corresponding key signature and tonic major chord. This is the same relationship of the first example, where the third of E $\flat$  (G) is a fifth in the next key (C). Corresponding to measures 38-39 from the first movement, this rather abrupt transition from E $\flat$  to C is accompanied by changes in meter, tempo and dynamic as it shifts from cut-time Andante with a soft *piano* dynamic to and abrupt *forte* in 6/8 as the C major section begins. By using the descending minor third as a means for modulation within a movement, Beethoven’s desired effect of audible change is more effective.

Following the example from op. 27, Nottebohm wrote, “Ebenso Op. 34 Thema u. Var 1. [Just like op. 34 Theme and Var. 1].” Once again this is the same relationship, as the third of F (A) is a fifth in the next key (D). This modulation receives only this passing reference and is not written out musically.

Nottebohm’s final example of modulation by descending third comes from Haydn. He writes “Aehnlich bis Haydn 4tett [quartet] in F. III. 59. [Similar to the Haydn Quartet in F III:59]”. It is unclear exactly which catalogue system Nottebohm was using for Haydn’s works,

but it was either one of Haydn's own catalogs, or an early thematic catalog compiled by Joseph Elssler in 1805. Elssler was Haydn's copyist at Esterhaza, and this catalog was prepared by both Haydn and Elssler.<sup>153</sup> It is likely to be in Elssler's catalog where this particular Quartet in F is listed as III:59.<sup>154</sup> In Anthony von Hoboken's now-standard catalog of Haydn's works from 1957 this Quartet in F major, op. 74 no. 2 is Hob. III:73. Nottebohm briefly illustrates the move from C major to A major in the first movement of the quartet both here and in a more detailed example at the bottom of the page.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> staves, Nottebohm gives an example from the Fourth Symphony, "Op. 60", "S. 69". It is a 10-measure excerpt with "x"s marking two places and a comment underneath the excerpt also marked by an "x" explaining its meaning: "Das dis hat eine ähnliche Stellung wie das cis in Op. 93. [The D# has a similar function as the C# in op. 93.]" In the Fourth Symphony example, the x's are marking the top and bottom of a chord of stacked thirds—a B major 7 chord coming from a D minor 7 chord in a B $\flat$  major key signature that resolve to a four octave B chord, which leads into D major chords. Here Beethoven uses a B major chord (complete with D#) and octave B's, (which are a third away from D) as a pivot chord to change modes from D minor to D major. This note makes reference to his next example on the final two staves, as well as to a comment about op. 93 at the bottom of the previous page, 58.1a.

The final two staves on the page (9 and 10) contain examples of more unconventional modulations. Labeled "Op. 93", "1812", and "S. 38, 47", the page numbers correspond to the Breitkopf und Härtel edition of Beethoven's collected works issued from 1864-1890. With an F

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<sup>153</sup> Barry S. Brook and Richard J. Viano, *Thematic Catalogues in Music: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd ed., RILM Retrospectives No. 4 (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1997), 179-180. See especially annotations 510 MS and 516 MS.

<sup>154</sup> However, copies of the catalog are now extremely rare, and I was unable to locate one to make a confirmation.

major key signature, the first example shows a modulation from C major to F major by way of open octave C♯s. This corresponds to m. 17-18 and 178-179 on pages 38 and 47 of the fourth movement of the Eighth Symphony, op. 93. The bold *fortissimo* C♯s are abrupt and striking. Beethoven's use of C♯ instead of D♭ is also curious, as D♭ is a major third lower than F and would draw a parallel to the motion from B to D in the last op. 60 example. Perhaps this is why Nottebohm wrote that the D♯ in op. 60 functions similarly to the C♯ in op. 93.

Immediately following this example, Nottebohm recalls his previous connection to Haydn's Quartet in F, op. 74 no. 2: "Vgl. Haydn's 4tett in F. III.59 [Compare to Haydn's Quartet in F III:59]". As discussed earlier, this quartet is Hob. III:73. Nottebohm transcribes the same modulatory passage from the sixth staff, but adds the first ending, which clarifies its comparison with the op. 93 example. This passage marks the repeat and end of the exposition of the first movement. The end of the exposition emphasizes the dominant C major as expected. Beethoven uses D♭ to return to F major, as is shown in the first ending of Nottebohm's example. However, Beethoven uses the enharmonic C♯ to move to A major in the second ending. (See Example 2.1). The move to F major is shown in Nottebohm's transcription of the first ending, but in the published score shown in Example 2.1, the move to F major happens after the repeat when it returns to the opening measures. Nottebohm's transcription begins at measure 98.

What draws Nottebohm's attention is that Beethoven used C♯ to move from C major to F major, while Haydn used D♭ as the pivot for the same move. At the bottom of the page Nottebohm reasserts his belief concerning modulation by third: "Cis statt Des (Berlioz). Ich nehme cis als 3. von A-dur, der ja sagen Dur = Tonart, daran 5. die 3. der vorhergehenden

Tonart war. S. Verschiedene Notten. -- S. Marx II.19, cis da Spur der Exaltation. [C# instead of Db (Berlioz). I take C# as the third of A major, which says of the major key, that the fifth was the third of the previous key. See Various Notes. – See Marx II.19, C# as a sign of Exaltation.]”<sup>155</sup>

The image displays a musical score for Haydn's Quartet in F, Op. 74/2, 1st movement. The score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. Measure 95 is marked with a box. Trills (tr) are indicated above several notes in the first system. The first ending (1.) concludes with a repeat sign. The second system shows the second ending (2.), which begins with a repeat sign and features a melodic line in the Violin I part.

Example 2.1: Haydn's Quartet in F, Op. 74/2 1st mvt.

Nottebohm again references Haydn's C major Quartet op. 74 no. 1 (Hob. III:72) where he makes a similar modulation by third from C major in the Menuet to A major in the Trio:

“Former steht in Haydn's Quartett in C-dur Bd. [vol.] 5, Nr. 72 der Menuet in C dur, das Trio in

<sup>155</sup> Nottebohm does not say which March work he is referencing, but it is likely the second volume of theorist Adolf Bernhard Marx's four-volume *Die Lehre von der Musikalischen Kompositen*, published from 1837-1847. Marx wrote extensively on musical form and applied some of his principals to Beethoven piano sonatas.

A dur, also. [As stated earlier, in Haydn's Quartet in C major Vol. 5 Nr. 72 the Menuet is in C major, the Trio in A major as well.]" Nottebohm provides a brief two-measure illustration of the key change from C major to A major.

*58.2a: Sketches for Op. 106 Adagio*

While the first page of this bundle highlighted two compositional techniques of Beethoven through examples taken from throughout his works, remaining manuscript pages in this bundle contain excerpts from Beethoven's sketches. Pages 2a-5a are Nottebohm's transcriptions of sketches for op. 106. They contain multiple drafts of the descending thirds passage where Nottebohm struggled with which accidentals to include in his ultimate transcription of the passage. Nottebohm must have been deeply interested in this passage if he transcribed it on no fewer than six occasions.

Labeled "Aus den Skizzenbuch zu Op. 106 [From the Sketchbook for op. 106]," page 58.2a contains sketch transcriptions from pages 1, 2, 4, 10, 13, and 35 of Beethoven's pocket sketchbook, A 45. Before these passages can be discussed, Nottebohm's use of three different sets of page numbers on 58.2a needs to be explained. Most of the page numbers refer to Beethoven's pocket sketchbook A 45. This particular numbering is made even more confusing by the page numbers given by the GdM later after Brahms's death. Nottebohm's page numbers from A 45 do not directly correspond to the GdM's. (Refer to Appendix A for a chart listing both Nottebohm's and the GdM's numbering systems for A 45.) In addition to page numbers from the A 45 sketchbook, Nottebohm uses abbreviations with page numbers to link his sketch transcriptions to places in the published scores. A. A. stands for *Artaria Ausgabe*, the first edition of op. 106 published by Artaria in 1819. B. + H. refers to the Breitkopf and Härtel edition of op. 106 in the complete works series published from 1864-1890.

Sketch transcriptions on this page are for the third movement *Adagio*. All of the passages except for the two marked “S. 2” and “S. 4” are for measures 145-147 in the finished score, and according to Nottebohm’s note they correspond to: “op. 106 (B & H) S. 79 od. 25 System 2.—oder S. 35 der A. A. [op. 106 (Breitkopf and Härtel edition) p. 79 or 25 System 2—or p. 35 in the Artaria edition.]” The sketches (marked “S. 1”, “S. 4” and “S. 13”) consist of altered versions of the enharmonic-rich chords from the F# major section near the end of third movement *Adagio*. This passage is full of enharmonic changes, and Nottebohm has penciled in a few accidentals. Nottebohm confirmed that these accidentals were found in the published editions, as he notes at the top of page 58.2a: “Was mit Bleistift geblieben ist, habe ich Sie zugesagt. [What remains in pencil, I have confirmed.]” These few measure must have challenged Beethoven because he sketched them multiple times in various forms. The two measure transcription beginning after the double bar line on the first two lines appears identically in Nottebohm’s *Zweite Beethoveniana* except for a missing D# in the third chord of the bass line.<sup>156</sup> Nottebohm was unable to find the source for the very first transcribed measure at the top of the page: “Wohin? Die Note finde ich nicht [Where from? I cannot find the notes]”.

Near the *Adagio*’s close, there are two chords (E# diminished 7 and F# major) given in the sketch marked “S. 2” on the third line, but these are crossed out. Beethoven did not have them crossed out, nor did he have the E# or G# written in. Nottebohm added them in pencil to correspond with the published version and also transcribed Beethoven’s comments found adjacent to the pair of chords: “Die Tonarten welche sich mit B oder # bezeichnen der später Bearbeiten. [The key of which will be indicated by B b or # in later editing.]” Beethoven must

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<sup>156</sup> Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 135.

have been unsure whether to use A# or Bb in the second chord, and made a note to decide later—ultimately choosing A#. Nottebohm pasted a paper scrap at the end of this line where he shows the F# minor key signature with an E major 7 chord over an F# pedal leading to an F# major chord, with the note: “Die Tonarten [The Key].” It seems quite likely that Nottebohm mistakenly omitted the E# here. He added it in his sketch transcription, and it appears that way in the in the final score at measures 177-178 as an E# diminished 7 chord in second inversion moving to the F# major chord in first inversion over an arpeggiated tonic/dominant bass line leading to a soft closing in F# major. As indicated by Nottebohm, this passage is found on page 27 of the Breitkopf and Härtel edition and page 38 of the Artaria edition.

The example labeled S. 10 (on staves 6 and 7) is a long chain of descending thirds. It is exactly the same third-chain transcribed on the fourth stave of 1.1b (mm. 77-86 in the finished score) but in a sloppier manner with more accidentals. However, some of the accidentals and bass notes have been added in blue pencil in this example. While some of the notes in the chain are varied by octave in the finished score, the chain appears as it was sketched with very few alterations to accidentals. Nottebohm writes: “Sei S. 29+ der A. A. [See p. 29+ in the Artaria Edition].” This passage corresponds with pages 29 and 30 of the Artaria edition. A portion of this chain appears again in pencil at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> stave along with a larger passage in pencil crossed out by Nottebohm. It is labeled “Harmonie” and provides four separate harmonic progressions. Nottebohm uses a footnote “x” to provide comments at the bottom of the page mentioning the use of circles of thirds, fourths, and fifths.

April dem Überwindung in Op. 106  
 Motoren? in offener Form

Was mit Geringfügig geänderten...  
 Op. 106  
 19. 7. 25  
 System 2. - ad  
 A. 35 in A. A.

8.1  
 8.2  
 8.4  
 8.10  
 8.13

Ar. d. 106 (19. 7. 25) (A. 35) (A. A.)  
 A. 35 in A. A.  
 A. 25 in A. A.  
 Harmonik

A piano eines...  
 Gedank (abwärts) auf...  
 Ein Überwindung...

Plate 2.6: Nottebohm's Nachlass 58.2a

58.2b: Sketches for Op. 106 Intro to IV

This transcription page is found on the reverse of the previous page 58.2a, and carries over a brief one measure sketch at the top of the page from S. 33 of the A45 sketchbook. This brief sketch of an enharmonic modulation near the end of the third movement closely corresponds to the final sketch on 58.2a labeled S. 13. Both sketches correspond to page 35 of the Artaria edition.





Plate 2.7 Nottebohm's Nachlass 58.2b

The transcription of the sketch for the op. 106 introduction to the fourth movement fills the remainder of the page. It is cited from S. 35 of the A45 sketchbook and appears almost exactly the same way it does in Nottebohm's *Zweite Beethoveniana*.<sup>157</sup> Differences include a few more courtesy accidentals in *Zweite Beethoveniana* and an extra line of transcription on this page. On this page Nottebohm added some clefs and accidentals in blue pencil. It is significant that he devoted an entire page to this sketch transcription. I believe it is Nottebohm's "final" version of this sketch transcription. It is the most complete compared to other versions, and it is

<sup>157</sup> Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 135.

the one that most closely corresponds to the printed transcription in *Zweite Beethoveniana*. This passage clearly shows an extended chain of descending thirds which forms the structural skeleton of the entire introduction to the fugal finale of the “Hammerklavier.”



Plate 2.8 Nottebohm's Nachlass 58.3a

58.3a: Sketches for Op. 106 Intro to IV

Beethoven's creative process is vividly captured here. In many ways these sketch transcriptions from S. 24, 35, 53, and 56 of the “Grosses Skizzenbuch” expand on material for the introduction to the fourth movement of op. 106, taking the structural outline of the sketch on the previous page and fleshing it out to be closer to the final work. For example, the ascending

octave Fs appear at the very beginning of the introduction and give way to an extensive descending third-chain as suggested here on the first line. The octave passage in the sketch is more extensive than in the final version, appearing as a series of octave leaps from below over four octaves of Fs before the descending third-chain is written out; however it is clearly an intermediary step from the tremolo on octave Fs from the previous sketch page (58.2b). Here we see Beethoven working out the very beginning to the introduction. The flourishing passages on the fourth line of this manuscript page are similar in character to the *Un poco piu vivace* section in the introduction. Also notable are the rising octave As on the sixth line that appear immediately after the A major key change in the introduction. The passages from S. 24, 53, and 56 all have different variations of the descending third-chain and then proceed differently. Nottebohm has indicated that the sketch from S. 35 belongs in this group of sketches for the introduction. He writes “s. anderes Blatt [see other page]” referring to the large sketch on 58.2b



Plate 2.9 Nottebohm's Nachlass 58.4a

#### 58.4a: Sketches for Op. 106 Intro to IV

Yet another transcription of the structural descending third-chain for the introduction is found on this half-page of manuscript paper (the top half). Titled “Aus den Skizzen zu Op. 106”,

it contains the op. 106 IV/intro sketch similar to the way it appears in *Zweite Beethoveniana*. Nottebohm has penciled in key signatures that do not appear in *Zweite Beethoveniana*, left out a trill, and erased a penciled-in bass note. He labels this transcription “Aus dem Skizzen zu Op. 10” and writes “Sexten=Cirkel” at the top of the page, calling this excerpt a circle of sixths. In this version of the introduction, Nottebohm’s addition of key signatures is unique. The A major key signature is made clear by Nottebohm with his clarification “Fis Cis Gis”.

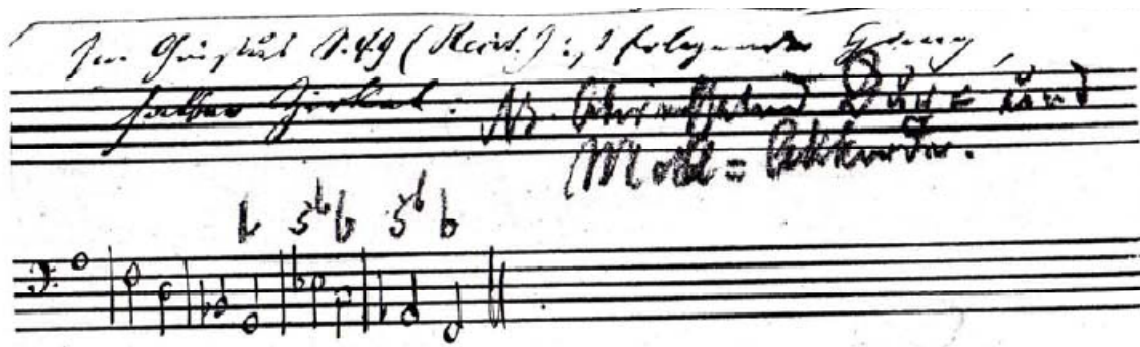


Plate 2.10 Nottebohm's Nachlass 58.5a

58.5a

The final page in this group of sketches for the introduction is a small fragment consisting of two lines of staff paper with text and a five-measure descending thirds progression. Nottebohm writes: “Im Gristus S. 49 (Reit.) ist folgende gang, halber Zirkel” and in pencil: “NB Abwechselnd Dur = und Moll = Akkorde. [Alternating major and minor chords.]” followed by a nine-step descending thirds outline with penciled-in accidentals above. This chain is not immediately recognizable as being from the op. 106 IV/introduction, but Nottebohm must have thought it belonged with this group.

139n. Bundle labeled “1817” containing multiple sketch transcriptions of the “Boldrini” sketchbook. (Nottebohm 10925/II)

This bundle was inside a box/binder (#139) with the typed label: “NOTTEBOHM: Skizzen und Entwürfe zu Beethoven-Arbeiten.” [Sketches and Drafts of Beethoven’s works.] Its contents are mostly loose transcription pages, notes, and fragments. There were a few booklets and smaller bundles. A loose page, 139c, contained transcriptions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of op. 106. The booklet 139n is an exciting discovery of Nottebohm’s notes and transcriptions concerning the “Poldrini” (or Boldrini) sketchbook that Nottebohm saw at Artaria’s shop but has since long been missing. Nottebohm’s notes may reveal some new information concerning the sketchbook that is mostly devoted to Beethoven’s op. 106.<sup>158</sup>

The “Poldrini” label written on the first page of this pocket sketchbook is a misspelling of Beethoven’s. It refers to Carlo Boldrini. His connection to this sketchbook is mostly unclear, but we do know Boldrini worked at Artaria from 1807 to about 1824. Beethoven started using this sketchbook in 1817, and it became part of the Artaria collection after Beethoven’s death only to disappear between 1890 and 1893.<sup>159</sup> I will continue to refer to this sketchbook as the “Boldrini” sketchbook.

Within the grouping of 139n, pages 1a, 2a-b contain transcriptions of sketches *possibly* for the transition to the fugal finale. These two pages were attached to each other. 1a is one-sided; 2a-b is two-sided.

Pages 3a-b, 4a-b, 5a-d, 6a-b, 7a-b form a grouping of 10 pages labeled 1-10 by

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<sup>158</sup> There are also sketches for the op. 137 Fugue in D major, the WoO 149 song “Resignation”, for the first movement of op. 125 Ninth Symphony, as well as a few other copied pieces. A list is provided in Johnson, Tyson, Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, 349-50.

<sup>159</sup> The brief history of the Boldrini Sketchbook is described in Johnson, Tyson, Winter, *The Beethoven Sketchbooks*, 347-350. See especially 347.

Nottebohm. Containing transcriptions from the “Boldrini” Sketchbook, these pages are half-sheets of manuscript paper, written on front and back to form a booklet of sorts. Odd numbered pages (in other words, the front side of the page) have the label “VIII A”.

The final two pages of this group, page 8a-b, contain more transcriptions from the “Boldrini” Sketchbook. Instead of the numbered half-sheets, these pages are from one full manuscript page, front and back. Page 8a (in other words, the front side of the page) has the label “VIII A”, standing for “Artaria VIIIA.” These two pages are very closely related to the passages that were published in Nottebohm’s articles in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* concerning op. 106 and the “Boldrini” sketchbook. Many of Nottebohm’s published examples in these issues were transcribed sketches on these pages.

*139n.1a*

In the top right corner of this smaller manuscript page with only two transcriptions Nottebohm has penciled “Zeit 1818”. The phrase in the top left corner is hard to distinguish—possibly “Auf der Seite”. The first transcription is labeled “le meilleur” [the best] and corresponds to the opening of the second movement of op. 106.

The following brief sketch for the introduction to the fourth movement of op. 106 shows that Beethoven likely originally sketched the introduction in B $\flat$  major with ascending octave Fs (as they are in the final work) and intended to use a fugue for the finale. The relevant second transcription on the bottom two staves (6 and 7) bears the note “Andere Seite Z. 4” in the margin. It consists of three measures with a B $\flat$  major key signature opening with three ascending octave chords spanning six octaves total with a fermata on the last. It is followed by a melodic fragment labeled “Fuga” and a few penciled words (unfortunately, mostly illegible) in the remaining staff.

*Le meilleur*  
*Vivace*

1818

*Andreas Bach*  
3.4

*1a 139n / 1a*

Plate 2.11 Nottebohm's *Nachlass* 139.1a

At first glance, the melodic fragment does not seem to be from the introduction to the fourth movement or the fugal finale itself. However, the first part of this transcription is interesting because it contains a six-octave stretch of Fs with a fermata at the end, as does the opening of the introduction to the final fugue. In the published score the key signature is F major, not B $\flat$  major. Beethoven's other sketches for this section, described above in the pages of bundle 58, show the octave Fs descending, and the fugue that follows is different. Despite these differences, they do appear ascending in the final work, and it looks like this is an early sketch for the form of the fourth movement as an introduction followed by a fugal subject.

139n.2a

This manuscript page continues the sketch for the fourth movement from 139.1a. It is the top half of a full-size manuscript page. In the upper right corner, Nottebohm wrote in pencil, “Zeit 1818, ~~Ende 1817~~”. Nottebohm has crossed out the second part containing 1817, probably after doing more research to find that this sketch was from 1818 (even though it is still in the bundle labeled 1817). In the upper left corner, Nottebohm writes a brief description of the page labeling it “Seite X”. The short musical transcriptions are indeed related to 139n.1a, in what looks like a later version.

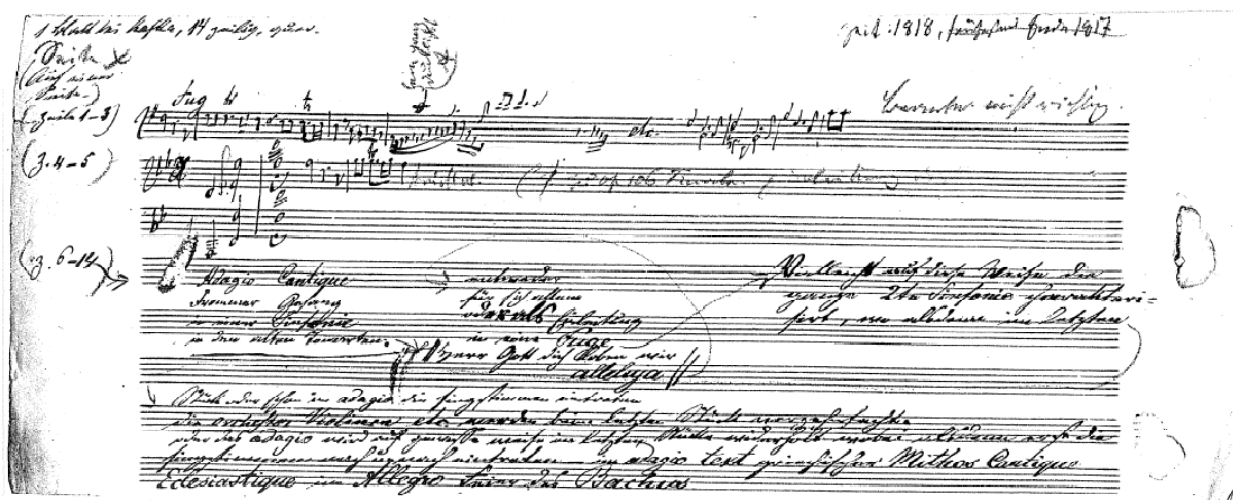


Plate 2.12 Nottebohm's Nachlass 139.2a

The transcription on the first line bears a G major key signature and the same melodic fragment from 139n.1a, only transposed down a third. It is similarly labeled “Fug” here and is expanded by a few more measures. After an “etc.,” there is a short four measure sketch of overlapping descending thirds, creating vertical thirds and sixths as well. This passage does not make its way into the finale and is followed on this page by a penciled “nicht wichtig [not important]”.

Lines 2 and 3 show an identical fugal subject in B $\flat$  major to the one in 139n.1. After this



passage Nottebohm wrote in pencil “zu op 106 Finale. Einleitung [For the op. 106 Finale. Introduction].” Clearly Nottebohm felt this passage was a sketch for the beginning of the fourth movement as suspected above.

Underneath the musical notations are a few scattered sections of comments in ink, with arrows and lines pointing from one section to another in blue pencil. Labeled “z. 6-14”, they do not refer to op. 106.

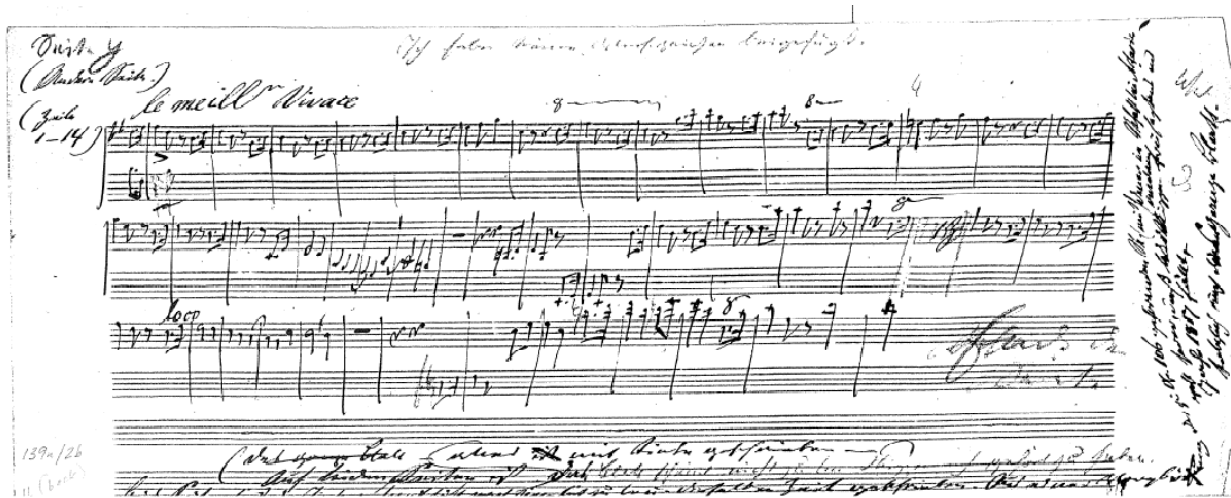


Plate 2.13 Nottebohm's Nachlass 139.2b

### 139n.2b

The reverse side of 2a, is labeled “Seite Y” “(Andere Seite.)”. Across the top of this page Nottebohm wrote in pencil “Ich habe keinen Verf. zeichen beigefügt.” [I have attached no author’s notes]. The musical notation is the same passage from the second movement of op. 106 found in 139n.1a, but with a few differences. Here, the passage continues beyond where the other left off, it is copied in a sloppier hand, and it contains more comments at the bottom of the page continuing up the right side.

### 139n.3a Sketches from Boldrini pages 1-4

This page contains information from the title page of the Boldrini sketchbook, as well as

fragments from pages 1-3, and a sketch for Bach's Fugue in B minor from the Wohltemperete Klavier. Page 3a is labeled "1" with the title "Poldrini" and the year "1817". The caption after the name and date are hard to decipher, but Nottebohm published these words in an article in *Musicalisches Wochenblatt* X/4, 17 Januar 1879; 193b: X/4a. It reads, "Mit inniger Empfindung, doch entschlossen, wohl accentuirt u. sprechend vorgetr." [With heartfelt emotion, yet with determination, well articulated and eloquently presented.] In his manuscript booklet it is followed by "Unterschrift herum Binde "Resignation!" [Caption around the binding "Resignation!"]. There are numerous comments on the page in ink and pencil. It looks like Nottebohm came back to this page and made comments at different times. After "Poldrini" Nottebohm marks an "x" for a footnote and has written two corresponding footnotes marked by an "x". At the bottom of the page in pencil, the first footnote reads "Poldrini was der Geschichtsforscher bei Artaria u. Comp." [Boldrini was the historical researcher for Artaria Co.]. There is a smaller illegible note marked by an asterisk underneath. The second footnote runs along the right margin of the page. Also marked by an "x", but in a sloppier hand, it is largely illegible. There are a few other smaller text notations and five fragmented musical transcriptions.

#### *139n.3b Sketches from Boldrini pages 5-9*

Labeled "2", this page contains sketches for Beethoven's op. 137 Fugue in D major for string quartet and Bach's *Art of Fugue*, Contrapunctus 4. There is a sketch on the top four staves labeled "Die letzten 4 Takt aus op. 137" [The last four measures of op. 137] and "op. 137, geschr. am 28. Novbr. 1817" [op. 137 written on 28 November 1817]. Three measures of a sketch in 6/8 are marked "pizz." with a penciled "bricht ab" [breaks off] after the fragment. Below that sketch, a passage from Bach's *Art of Fugue* appears. The notes penciled after this sketch are again "bricht ab," and the label is "Aus Bach's Kunst der Fuga. H4". Marked by an

“x”, he notes below “alle 3tte Stücke eine wahre Fuge zum B. das Trio neues Sujett welches als dann beim wiederholen den ersten Them zum Kontrassubject dient.” [All third pieces of a true fugue of Beethoven’s the trio new subject which then repeats the first theme of the countersubject.] The last two staves of the page labeled “S. 8” are transcriptions of short melodic fragments labeled “N 1” and “N 2” after which Nottebohm made a pencil notation in the bottom right of the last staff: “Nicht bei Kirnberger, Albrechtsberger. Bei Marpurg II. Tab. 16 der 1-6.” [Not in the works of Kirnberger or Albrechtsberger. In Marpurg II Tab. 16, 1-6]. And again below he references the same work: “Seihe Marpurg’s AbF. II Tab. 16.” [See Marpurg’s *Abhandlung der Fuge* Tab. 16].

Nottebohm is referring to German theorist Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg (1718-1795). Marpurg wrote a new preface in 1752 for a new edition of Bach’s *Art of Fugue*. Marpurg’s *Abhandlung der Fuge* (1753-4) is the work Nottebohm references here. This lengthy treatise discusses treatment of the fugue in late Baroque music, including the counterpoint of J. S. Bach.<sup>160</sup>

Two other eighteenth century theorists are mentioned in this same comment by Nottebohm: German composer and theorist Johann Phillip Kirnberger (1721-1783), a student of J.S. Bach’s; and Austrian composer, organist and theorist Johann Georg Albrechtsberger (1736-1809), one of Beethoven’s teachers.

The transcription to which this comment refers is likely a technique mentioned in Marpurg’s writings, but not those of Kirnberger and Albrechtsberger. Nottebohm must have found this interesting to have looked for it and included it here in his notes. Kirnberger’s theory

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<sup>160</sup> Howard Serwer, “Marpurg, Friedrich Wilhelm,” In *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Vol. 15, 2001, p. 880-882.

concerning chains of thirds and sixths is discussed later in chapter four in the context of Brahms's Clarinet Sonata in F minor, op. 120 no. 1.

*139n.4a Sketches from Boldrini pages 10-21*

The first half of the page labeled “3” contains transcriptions of “Skizzen zum Lied: Resignation.” [WoO 149]. Nottebohm has a footnote about this transcription that is mostly illegible but appears to mean that this passage is also found in sketches in Berlin. Sketches on this page are small fragments consisting of only a few bars each. There are three short sketches for the first movement of op. 106 on this page from Boldrini pages 18 and 19. The one from page 19 makes reference to the opening statement of the symphony. Some of them appear again on page 139n.8a-b and subsequently on the first page of his published article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875.

*139n.4b Sketches from Boldrini pages 23-37*

Most of this page labeled “4” has transcribed sketches for the first movement of op. 106, identified by Nottebohm. A very interesting sketch from page 34 of the Boldrini sketchbook is a short setting of the words “Vivat Rudolphus” to a melodic fragment that resembles the opening statement of op. 106 (see Example 2.2). Beethoven originally wanted to write a choral work for Archduke Rudolphus. Although he later abandoned that idea, Beethoven held on to the desire to dedicate a work to the Archduke for his name day. Movements 1 and 2 were complete by his name day on April 17.<sup>161</sup>

This melodic fragment is based on the interval of a descending third. The essence of this melody complete with descending thirds was transformed into the opening of the “Hammerklavier” and played a significant structural role in the entire work. It all began with the idea for the opening statement seen here.

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<sup>161</sup> Barry Cooper, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 261.



Example 2.2: Sketch transcription from Boldrini Sketchbook p. 34; as transcribed in NN 139n.4b

Notes accompanying the sketch read: “Dieses anfangs durchgeführt u. später 4 stimmiger Choir” [This beginning implemented, then later four-voice choir]. This note clearly shows Beethoven’s plans for a choral work in honor of Archduke Rudolphus. A second footnote says “für den Namenstag am der 17 April. [For the nameday on 17 April.]” This particular passage appears as it does here and is further discussed on the second page of Nottebohm’s *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875.

Also on this page is a sketch for an organ fugue beginning with two chords labeled “Zuerst Menuel” which leads into a fugue fragment labeled “Adagio Fis moll oder Fis dur” and “B moll” near the end.

#### *139n.5a Sketches from Boldrini pages 38-88*

Continuing with sketches for op. 106, this page labeled “5” contains numerous small melodic fragments, some labeled and with comments. Sketches for op. 106 first and second movements are among the fragments on this page. “Vivat rudolphus” appears again on the first staff in a shortened version. The passages from pages 75 and 76 of Boldrini contain the main theme of the second movement. It is discussed and published on the second page of his article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875. The brief passage marked “S. 81” is the first few measures of a canon sketched further on “S. 110” and published on the second page of his article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875.

*139n.5b Sketches from Boldrini pages 92-113*

Sketches on this page, labeled “6”, are from op. 125 and 106. The first four are labeled op. 125 by Nottebohm for the first and second movements. Each sketch has comments by it. There are three sketches for op. 106 at the end. The first two labeled “S. 110” and “S. 112” look to be a longer continuation of the one labeled “S. 81” on 5a. “S. 110” is published on the second page of Nottebohm’s article in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875. “S. 112” is also labeled “meilleur”. The final sketch, “S. 113”, is marked “letztes Fuge”. It is not labeled “op. 106” and does not correspond to the final fugue of op. 106. However, there is a lengthy comment concerning op. 106 directly below it, and there are two sketches for the second movement of op. 106 just above. The comment at the bottom of the page mentions Beethoven’s intended dedication to Archduke Rudolphus for his name day on 17 April 1818 or 1819 and that the first movement was complete by April 1818, but the final work was not completed until 1819.

*139n.5c Sketch from Boldrini page 41*

Found attached to 139n.5a, this small piece of manuscript paper contains three staves. This piece was likely attached to 139n.5a as an afterthought. Because it contains sketches from pages 41 and 42 of the Boldrini sketchbook, it fits within the page range of 139n.5a. Though not labeled, (other than “S. 41”) the sketch is for the imitative development of the first movement of op. 106, based on the opening motive. Despite many similarities, the motive does not seem to appear in the pitches written in the sketch, nor with the structure of a fermata over a pause as in the opening.

*139n.5d Sketch from Boldrini page 42*

This page is the reverse side of 5c. It contains one sketch from Boldrini page 42 with more workings of the motive from the opening of op. 106. The sketch consists of three phrases.

Sketches one and two look like sketches for the opening statement and the following phrase, but then the third sketch moves directly into a passage similar to m. 47 in the final score. However, it is marked “in tempo”, and that could correspond to the *a tempo* section at m. 35 in the final score. It looks like Beethoven meant for this sketch not to be used in the opening because of the “in tempo” marking. It likely corresponds to the key change at m. 130 in the score and continues with a fugue based on the opening theme. Of interest in this sketch is addition of a natural sign in pencil in front of the very first high E. It is E $\flat$  in the final score both times it returns. Also differing from the finished version, there are three long tones in the beginning of the sketch before the main motive that do not appear in the final work. Nottebohm wrote about this section in his *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* article VI/24, 11 Juni 1875 on the second page (193b/VI/24b). In Nottebohm’s personal copy it is labeled S. 42, and that corresponds with the label on this particular sketch.

*139n.6a Sketches from Boldrini pages 116-121*

Labeled “7”, this page contains seven very brief sketches for the third movement of op. 106, and possibly the second.

*139n.6b Sketches from Boldrini pages 123-128*

None of the sketches on this page are labeled except for the page they come from. The page itself is labeled “8”. There are lengthy comments by Nottebohm that are largely illegible. Words are crossed out and there is penciled writing in the margins up and down the page as well. The passages marked S. 128 Z.6 and Z. 1 ff [following lines] appear in print on the second page of Nottebohm’s *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875 (193b/VI/24b). The order is reversed with the passage marked Z. 1 [line 1] appearing first. Next to the transcription from Z. 6, Nottebohm writes “(letzte Noten im Büch.)” indicating that these are the last notes in the

Boldrini sketchbook.

*139n.7a Sketches from Boldrini pages 92-110*

This page contains sketches for the Ninth Symphony. Labeled “9”, the top of the page also says “Nachträglich [*additional*]: Zur Sinfonie in D”. Three of the sketches have labeled horn parts. There are very few comments by Nottebohm on this page of mostly sketch transcriptions.

*139n.7b Sketches from Boldrini pages 105-117*

The final half-page of transcriptions from the Boldrini Sketchbook is labeled “10”. It contains sketches for op. 125 and possibly one for op. 106, third movement. Nottebohm’s comments at the end of the page describe how this small sketchbook is from a bookbinder and the sketches are for the most part written in pencil and gone over again in ink.

*139n.8a*

Also labeled “VIII A” with a title at the top in pen: “Nachträglich” [*supplemental*], this page (and its reverse side 8b) are an addendum to the preceding booklet of transcriptions. Nottebohm’s notes at the top of the page say this page contains sketches for the first movement of op. 106. This page contains passages from Boldrini S. 16, 17, 18, 19. The passage from S. 19 is related to op. 106, the first movement around measures 267-275. The S. 16 passage also contains a small two-measure section that is circled and titled “*allegro molto*”. Nottebohm includes this example in his copy of *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875; 193b/VI/24a where he pencils “S. 16 Artaria’s \_\_\_” next to its appearance. He says the main motive of the first movement springs from this passage [*“Das Hauptmotiv des ersten Satzes erscheint ursprünglich in folgenden Fassungen.”*].



139n.8b

The back side of 139n/8a, this page contains notes and sketches of op. 106, with page references to Boldrini S. 20, 21, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 109, 110. The transcriptions from S. 20 are sketches for a section of the op. 106 first movement beginning in measure 295 with the descending thirds passage. The transcription marked S. 21 has a note to the side of it that reads “Mus. Wochenb. Op. 106”. This transcribed passage corresponds with the example that is published in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* VI/24, 11 Juni 1875. Nottebohm’s copy of this issue, 193b/VI/24a, contains an additional note where he describes this passage as closing material for the first movement [“*Der Schluss des ersten Theils.*”]. While this passage does not appear in this exact form in the final score, it appears to be a sketch for the passage around m. 336 of the first movement. The sketch should be read in bass clef to correspond.

*193b. Nottebohm’s personal copies of the Musikalisches Wochenblatt containing his published articles. (Nottebohm 10925/III)*

In a big bundle tied in string labeled “Beethoveniana Ge\_\_\_t” there is a list of articles that Nottebohm wrote, the number of pages, and year and volume/issue of the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in which each was published. Those pertaining to op. 106 are listed here:

VI/24	11 Juni 1875	“Skizzen zur Sonate op. 106”	[2 pages: a-b]
VI/25	18 Juni 1875	“Skizzen zur Sonate op. 106” (cont.)	[3 pages: a-c]
X/4	17 Jan 1879	“Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817” (Boldrini)	[5 pages: a-e]
X/5	24 Jan 1879	“Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817” (cont.)	[2 pages: a-b]
X/6	31 Jan 1879	“Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817” (cont.)	[2 pages: a-b]
X/7	7 Feb 1879	“Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817” (cont.)	[2 pages: a-b]

X/8 14 Feb 1879 “Ein Taschenskizzenbuch aus dem Jahre 1817” (cont.) [2 pages: a-b]

Each published M.W. article about the Beethoven sketches was annotated with more notes and/or corrections by Nottebohm, sometimes with a few working materials appended. These seven issues discuss the op. 106 sonata; the first article spanning two issues will be discussed below.

*193b.VI/24a 11 Juni 1875 “Skizzen zur Sonate op. 106”*

The few musical examples on this page are excerpts from Nottebohm’s transcriptions of sketches in the Boldrini sketchbook (139n.8a-b). Marked “Allo molto”, the first sketch is labeled S. 16 and corresponds to a sketch in 139n.8a. The second example with octave Ds is from S. 18 and corresponds to a sketch in 139n.8a and 4a. The third sketch in the article starting with octave E $\flat$ s and the example on the line below it are from S. 19 both appear in 139n.8a and 4a. On the bottom of the page is an example from S. 21 which appears in 139n.8b and has a note about it in 4a to see page 8b.

*193b.VI/24b*

There are five musical examples on this page, all of which are excerpts from Nottebohm’s transcriptions of sketches in the Boldrini sketchbook (139n). The first musical example labeled “S. 42” is a replica of his transcription on 139n.5d, similarly labeled. The second example on the page is from “S. 34” and appears in 139n.4b along with its caption published here. The third example marked “Allegro” is from S. 75, Z. 3 ff. and 76. Its transcription appears on 139n/5a and is also marked op. 106, 2 Satz., as it is a sketch for the theme of the second movement. The fourth example labeled “meilleur” is from the last page of the Boldrini sketchbook, S. 128, Z. 1ff and Z.6. This transcription is on 139n/6b, where

Nottebohm also notes that these are the last in the book [*“letzte Noten im Büch.”*]. The fifth and final music example on this page is for a canon found in the Boldrini sketchbook on S. 81 and S. 110. Nottebohm’s transcriptions of this passage are on 139n.5a and 5b. The sketch from 139n.5a, S. 81 is very brief, and the one on S. 110, 139n.5b appears to be its continuation as it is published in the article. There are also a few other comments and corrections that Nottebohm made to his article on this, his personal copy.

*193b.VI/25a 18 Juni 1875 “Skizzen zur Sonate op. 106” (continued)*

I am unable to locate the long music example on the first page in Nottebohm’s transcriptions. Nottebohm wrote some comments at the bottom of this page, but these are extremely difficult to decipher—no less challenging than some of Beethoven’s most inscrutable notations.

*193b.VI/25b*

The longer music example in the middle of the first column is from a transcription of Beethoven’s sketch on 1/1b labeled “S.7”. The music example of the descending third-chain that begins at the bottom of the first column and continues to the top of the next is from the introduction to the fourth movement of op. 106 and appears on 1.1b, 58.2b, 58.4a in part, and 58.2b in whole. Nottebohm must have found this particular descending third-chain interesting because in a few versions of his transcription (all are labeled S. 35) it fills the entire page. The example in the middle of the second column appears in part on 1/1a and 1b on lines labeled S. 5 and S. 6. At the bottom of this column, Nottebohm has written a comment in pen outlining the pitches of the descending third-chain example: “f des b ges es ces-h ges e cis a fis d h g e c a f d”.

I am unable to find where the first musical example is transcribed, but the second one is on 1/1a under S. 11. Nottebohm has a few penciled comments on this page as well as a footnote in pen.



Nottebohm's prolific transcriptions of Beethoven's sketches represent a significant contribution to the further study of Beethoven's creative process. He has painstakingly transcribed sketches that were previously unidentified. The intimate knowledge of Beethoven's many works that enabled Nottebohm to identify his sketches is admirable, and sometimes astounding. These materials also display Nottebohm's organizational skill in preparing his many periodical publications. He occasionally comments on a passage and will organize sketches onto pages by technique or peculiarity to aid further study. These documents represent a great body of material awaiting further scholarly examination. David Sills writes that "During the nearly one hundred years when Nottebohm's monographs stood alone in the field of Beethoven sketch studies, many composers—we will never know how many--must have studied these monographs with an eye not only toward understanding how Beethoven worked, but also toward gaining some insight into their own creative processes."<sup>162</sup> Of all the significant composers who consulted Nottebohm, Brahms was surely the first.

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<sup>162</sup> David L. Sills, "Bloch, Beethoven, and Nottebohm" in *Studies in the History of Music*, vol. 3: The Creative Process (New York: Broude Brothers, 1992), 275-319. See esp. 285.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**BEETHOVEN'S "HAMMERKLAVIER" SONATA**  
**AND BRAHMS'S FOURTH SYMPHONY**

Rightly considered an “avid student of Beethoven’s sketchbooks,” Brahms was keenly interested in the creative process of Beethoven.<sup>163</sup> Hans Gal remarks that “Brahms showed the most lively interest in the many years of labor which his friend Nottebohm devoted to these sketches, and it was largely because of his efforts that Nottebohm’s excellent work was published.”<sup>164</sup> Brahms’s aggressive championing of Nottebohm’s work with Beethoven’s sketches was based on his detailed knowledge of their contents and worth. This perspective came from their collaboration on issues pertaining to the manuscript sources. Gal also notes:

The fact that [Brahms] had a clearer grasp of Beethoven’s principle of construction than either of his immediate predecessors, Mendelssohn and Schumann, is due to his better understanding of the difference between the episodic, [and] sectionally developed form, for example the scherzo form, and the grand, truly symphonic form; he never carried the small-scale articulation of the former into the latter. The quintessence of the smaller form is that, from a single rhythmic impulse, it can develop with narrowly confined thematic material. The larger form, on the other hand, must satisfy two contradictory conditions which are equally essential and, in a certain sense, mutually complementary; it must be borne along by a continuous inventive drive that pervades its entire extent, and yet it must, by means of sufficient thematic contrast and lucid punctuation which clarifies the structural supports, fashion this invention into an impressive, well-balanced architecture.<sup>165</sup>

It is especially in Brahms’s Fourth Symphony, op. 98 that we see a manifestation of this “continuous inventive drive” through his resourceful treatment of third-chains in the larger form. The Fourth Symphony is remarkably rich with variations of the third-chains in all four

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<sup>163</sup> Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 261.

<sup>164</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 156.

<sup>165</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 159

movements, which are used melodically or structurally as a unifying element. Various commentators have mentioned the use of third-chains in the Fourth Symphony, but the affinities of these chains to those in Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata merit closer examination.

Brahms's access to and eventual possession of the sketch sources for Beethoven's op. 106, as facilitated by Nottebohm, is a crucial factor in the discussion of affinities between the "Hammerklavier" Sonata and Brahms's late compositions. That Brahms's interest in descending third-chains could have been intensified by his engagement with Beethoven sketches seems too likely to dismiss as merely coincidental. Brahms's deep musicological interest in the piece likely served as the impetus for his allusions to the work. The strong influence of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata on Brahms and his evident engagement with Beethoven's manuscript sources allows us to draw further connections between the creative processes of Beethoven and Brahms. The Fourth Symphony, op. 98 is perhaps Brahms's richest example of implementing third-chains in a manner most closely related to that of Beethoven.

This chapter will consider how Brahms's contact with Beethoven's manuscript materials for the "Hammerklavier" facilitated his engagement with third-chains as a distinct compositional technique suitable for his own use. Beethoven was of course by no means the first to use a series of falling thirds, but it is in his "Hammerklavier" Sonata more than any other work that we encounter this technique in a highly developed form, one resembling the way Brahms would eventually incorporate this device into the fabric of his later symphonic, piano and vocal compositions.



the left hand of the piano at measure 63 of the first movement in the published work. Here in the G major section of the exposition, the pitches correspond to those in the sketch, but the octave placement has changed as the melody moves from the left-hand to the right-hand. When this passage returns in the recapitulation beginning in measure 294, it is heard in the tonic B $\flat$  major this time but still remains largely diatonic. Nottebohm's second transcription (see Example 3.1b) is a complete diatonic third-chain utilizing all of the pitches in the sketch. This sketch is a variant of the previous one, altering the eighth-note rhythmic pattern that propels the chain onward. The variation of the melody in this form does not appear in the finished work; however, this sketch does reveal Beethoven's intent and subsequent trial of varying the use of third-chains in the melodic structure of the first movement.

Apart from the frequent melodic use of the descending third-chain in the "Hammerklavier", third-relations also play an important role in the larger formal context of the work. Charles Rosen and William Kinderman have both charted the significance of the modulatory descent by third in the tonal structure of the first movement.<sup>167</sup> According to Kinderman, "On the larger, architectural level of the tonal structure, Beethoven develops the same relationships based on descending thirds."<sup>168</sup> The exposition begins in the tonic B $\flat$  major with statements of the opening themes, and the second group is presented in G major—a modulation by descending minor third—as we have seen above with the third-chains from Nottebohm's transcription. Continuing the pattern of modulation by third, the development opens in E $\flat$  major and closes in B major (C $\flat$  enharmonic), with the recapitulation returning to

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<sup>167</sup> Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Co., 1997 [1971]), see especially 404-434; William Kinderman, *Beethoven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>168</sup> William Kinderman, *Beethoven*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997 [1995]. See especially p. 202.



B $\flat$  major, but with shifts to G $\flat$  major and B minor. Therefore, the tonal structure of the first movement can be illustrated as follows: B $\flat$  → G → E $\flat$  → B(C $\flat$ ) // B $\flat$  → G $\flat$ .

Rosen details Beethoven's use of descending thirds in the "Hammerklavier" Sonata and strongly asserts that "In the *Hammerklavier*, the use of descending thirds is almost obsessive, ultimately affecting every detail in the work."<sup>169</sup> In his analysis of the first movement development he draws attention to the underlying structure of falling thirds and remarks that Beethoven "uses sequences of descending thirds as almost its only method of construction, and concentrates on them with a determination and a fury previously unheard in music".<sup>170</sup> In the fugal passage near the beginning of the development, Beethoven's subject material is derived from the opening chordal sequence and a series of falling thirds. This series of thirds (beginning in bar 139) is presented as an ascending sixth followed by two descending thirds, the second of which serves as the launching point for the next sequence. The sequencing of this pattern becomes more relaxed as it is further developed, but the overall motion by descending third remains constant throughout the remainder of the development section. The final descent from D (or D $\sharp$ ) to B is treated with special significance as the prolonged D changes briefly to D $\sharp$  then moves to B, establishing the new key of B major which closes the development. Beethoven's pervasive use of thirds in the first movement is one of his more sophisticated uses of the device. Rosen notes, "the large modulations are built from the same material as the smallest detail, and set off in such a way that their kinship is immediately audible," meaning we can hear the

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<sup>169</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 407.

<sup>170</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 409.

structure.<sup>171</sup> Another unconventional result of this complex treatment of thirds is the tension that results from the B $\flat$ /B $\natural$  dichotomy that is established here in the development and carried through parts of the recapitulation.<sup>172</sup>

As in the first movement, elements of the Scherzo and Trio are built upon descending thirds. The opening melody flows through sequences of rising and descending thirds (see Example 3.2) sounding reminiscent of the first movement; Rosen calls the Scherzo a “parody” of the previous movement and describes the opening statement as a “humorous form of the main theme of the first.”<sup>173</sup> Here Beethoven uses the dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm that he hinted at in his sketch for the first movement above (Example 3.1b). Nottebohm’s transcriptions of Beethoven’s sketches for this passage were published in two of his *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* articles from 1875, and later in *Zweite Beethoveniana*.<sup>174</sup>



Example 3.2: Beethoven’s op. 106, II mm. 1-3

Near the close of the second movement, the B $\flat$ /B $\natural$  tension returns with octaves in both hands alternating between the two sonorities in a battle extending over twelve bars before ending softly

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<sup>171</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 413.

<sup>172</sup> Rosen discusses this tension between B $\flat$  and B $\natural$  further on pp. 413-422 of *Classical Style*.

<sup>173</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 423.

<sup>174</sup> Nottebohm, *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 11 June 1875, 6/24 (1875): 297-298; *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 18 June 1875, 6/25 (1875): 305-306; *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 130-132.

in B $\flat$  recalling the opening motive of the Scherzo.

Beethoven opens the third movement with a more subtle treatment of falling thirds embedded within the melody. The return of this melody in the bass at the beginning of the development in bar 69 initiates a long extended series of falling thirds that continues throughout the development section, as in the first movement. The most audibly prominent sequence is found in bar 78 onward in which the right-hand moves through a series of descending thirds in octaves over an arpeggiated sixteenth-note accompaniment figure in the left-hand that in turn drives a series of brief harmonic modulations. Beethoven uses the thirds in this passage as a means of modulation and abandons the mainly diatonic form of the third-chains used previously. Beethoven is progressively widening the scope of this compositional resource within the “Hammerklavier,” and will continue to do so into the fourth movement.

As we have seen, third-chains in the first three movements of Beethoven’s op. 106 sonata are woven into the melodic, harmonic and tonal structures with varying degrees of complexity. However, the most compelling treatment of the descending third-chain in the “Hammerklavier” lies in the introduction to the fugal finale of the fourth movement—a passage that Beethoven took care to notate in his pocket-sketchbook from 1817-1818, as we have uncovered in Chapter two.

Beethoven’s A 45 pocket sketchbook contains, among other sketches for the “Hammerklavier”, an extensive chain of descending thirds in folios 18v-19r (see Plate 3.1).<sup>175</sup> These concept sketches for the Largo introduction to the fugal finale can be seen in the lower right quadrant of folio 18v with the last fragment of the transcription continuing on the lower

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<sup>175</sup> Nicholas Marston, “Approaching the Sketches for Beethoven’s ‘Hammerklavier’ Sonata,” *Journal of the American Musicological Association* 44/3 (1991): 404-450. See especially 446-447.

staff in folio 19r at the marker “1000”. Beethoven often used numbers to join sketches together across multiple pages. The very bottom of folio 18v bears the first joining marker “1000”. Nottebohm describes this sketch as one that was sketched in a single gesture without the interludes.<sup>176</sup>



Plate 3.1a: A 45 folio 18v containing sketches for the Introduction to the Fourth Movement of op. 106

<sup>176</sup> (“Die Einleitung zur Fuge wurde, jedoch mit Übergang der Zwischenspiele, in einem Zuge entworfen.”) Nottebohm, *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 135.



Plate 3.1b: A 45 folio 19r containing sketches for the Introduction to the Fourth Movement of op. 106

Nottebohm's transcription of this sketch was published in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* in 1875 and posthumously in *Zweite Beethoveniana* (see Example 3.3). In Nottebohm's personal copy of the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* issue in which this sketch appears (now part of his *Nachlass* at the GdM) he has written the alphabetical pitches of this third-chain in the margin, further underscoring his strong interest in this particular compositional device of Beethoven's.

The extended chain of descending thirds is clearly notated within the sketch. While Beethoven does not write a flat before the E in his sketch, he does in the finished work. In view of the tonal context of the sketch, it is reasonable to supply the E flat editorially. In contrast to the melodic and underlying tonal functions of the third-chains in the first three movements, the chain in this sketch functions as a controlling structural framework for the entire introduction to the fugue of the fourth movement. Beethoven extends the progression of thirds by interrupting

the chain to insert “interludes” as Nottebohm referred to them above. Rosen describes this section as “less an introduction to the fugal finale than a transition from the slow movement, and to be understood it must be played without pause after the Adagio.”<sup>177</sup>

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with piano (p) and forte (f) markings, and a 'cresc.' instruction. The middle staff is a bass clef staff with 'immer geschwinder' and 'immer langsamer' markings, and a 'tr dimin.' instruction. The bottom staff is a treble clef staff with 'u. s. w.' and 'tr' markings. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and trills.

Example 3.3 Nottebohm's transcription of passages in Beethoven's A 45, folios 18v and 19r<sup>178</sup>

All of the pitches included in the sketch of this extended chain have their place in the final published work (see Example 3.4). Boxes surrounding the pitches in this example outline this progression. Beginning with the repeated octave Fs at the opening of the Largo, the first segment of the third-chain sounds: F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$ , before it is interrupted by a short interlude. The G $\flat$  is then repeated, followed by E $\flat$  B[C $\flat$ ] before giving way to a flourishing interlude at the *Un poco piu vivace*, which begins a passage of Baroque-like counterpoint in the style of Bach, interrupted only briefly for a short continuation of third-chain—the B repeated and paired with G $\sharp$ . phrases from the fugue in B $\flat$  from the second part of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* are

<sup>177</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 426.

<sup>178</sup> *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, 18 June 1875, 6/25 (1875): 305-306; *Zweite Beethoveniana*, 135



Musical score for the Introduction to the Fourth Movement of Op. 106, showing measures 2 through 10. The score includes piano and bass staves with various musical notations such as dynamics (*fp*, *cresc.*, *f*, *p*, *ff*, *dim.*, *pp*), articulation (*tenuto*, *tr.*), and performance instructions (*Allegro*, *Prestissimo*, *Tempo I*, *a tempo*).

Example 3.4: Introduction to the Fourth Movement of op. 106 (cont.)



The fast-changing progression of thirds in the final segment brings the device to the forefront of the audible landscape. The entire structural third-chain spanning the whole of the *Largo* introduction is extended over five octaves:

$F \rightarrow D^b \rightarrow B^b \rightarrow G^b \rightarrow E^b \rightarrow B \rightarrow G^\# \rightarrow E \rightarrow C^\# \rightarrow A \rightarrow F^\# \rightarrow D \rightarrow B \rightarrow G \rightarrow E \rightarrow C \rightarrow A \rightarrow F \rightarrow D \rightarrow (A \rightarrow F)$ .

Example 3.5 illustrates this large progression of descending thirds within the larger tonal structure of the transitional passage. Beethoven again uses third-chains as a means of modulation between  $B^b$  major and  $B$  major, further intensifying the tension between  $B^b$  and  $B^\natural$  in this sonata.

Example 3.5: Descending thirds progression for the Introduction to op. 106, IV

The final A, which Beethoven marked as “*Orgelpunkt*” or pedal point, does not form an interval of a third with the preceding D, but rather becomes part of the last third:  $A \rightarrow F$ . This A is crucial because of its repetition in four octaves simultaneously at a *fortissimo* dynamic level for an extended period. Repetition of the A in this way works to establish the importance of the very last dyad of a third. It is this final third which ultimately brings the entire third-chain full circle from F to F after an extensive expansion. Most importantly, the last third prepares the key of  $B^b$  major for the final fugue with the chain ending on F, the dominant of  $B^b$ . Rosen calls this transitional passage “one of the most astonishing in the history of music” due to Beethoven’s ability to combine improvisatory passages within a strictly controlled structure.

The tonal motion in the final movement of the “Hammerklavier” also descends by third

and outlines the following progression through different sections of the fugue: B $\flat$  major exposition; G $\flat$  major episode; E $\flat$  minor variant of theme; B minor retrograde variant of theme; G major inversion of theme; E $\flat$  major development and *stretto* ending; D major slow episode; B $\flat$  major transition, theme and coda.<sup>180</sup> Concerning the opening of the fugue, Rosen writes that “the descent in thirds was so important to Beethoven that in his sketches he tried to turn the opening of the *inversion* of the fugue into a descent by thirds. However, this made for an uninteresting melodic form and he quickly dropped it.”<sup>181</sup> From the evidence of the pervasive and varied treatment of third-chains in the “Hammerklavier” Sonata, it is clear that Beethoven achieved a remarkable feat marking a new stage of his compositional style.

Later composers have also recognized third-relations within the “Hammerklavier” as significant. Of course, Brahms would certainly have read about Nottebohm’s findings concerning the sketches for this passage when they were published in article form, but A45 is the one manuscript source for the op. 106 sketches that we know Brahms had in his possession, since it passed to him after Nottebohm’s death. Beethoven’s A 45 sketchbook is now in the archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna as part of Brahms’s *Nachlass*. Brahms’s engagement with these materials facilitated his later intensive use of the descending thirds device in his own compositions.

A passage in one of the sketchbooks belonging to Robert Schumann, a source dating from around 1832, demonstrates that the use of extended chains of thirds was recognized during

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<sup>180</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 430-433.

<sup>181</sup> Rosen, *Classical Style*, 433.

the nineteenth century as a distinctive musical strategy (see Plate 3.2 and Example 3.6).<sup>182</sup> It is even conceivable that Schumann might have discussed this topic with the young Brahms in the 1850s; the shared fascination of Schumann and Brahms with Beethoven's op. 106 is all the more striking in view of Brahms's later ownership of sources for Beethoven's "Hammerklavier." In this connection, it is notable that Schumann recognized a quality of ambiguity in op. 106, referring to "an almost goal-less and generalized [*ziellos und allgemein*] orientation."<sup>183</sup>

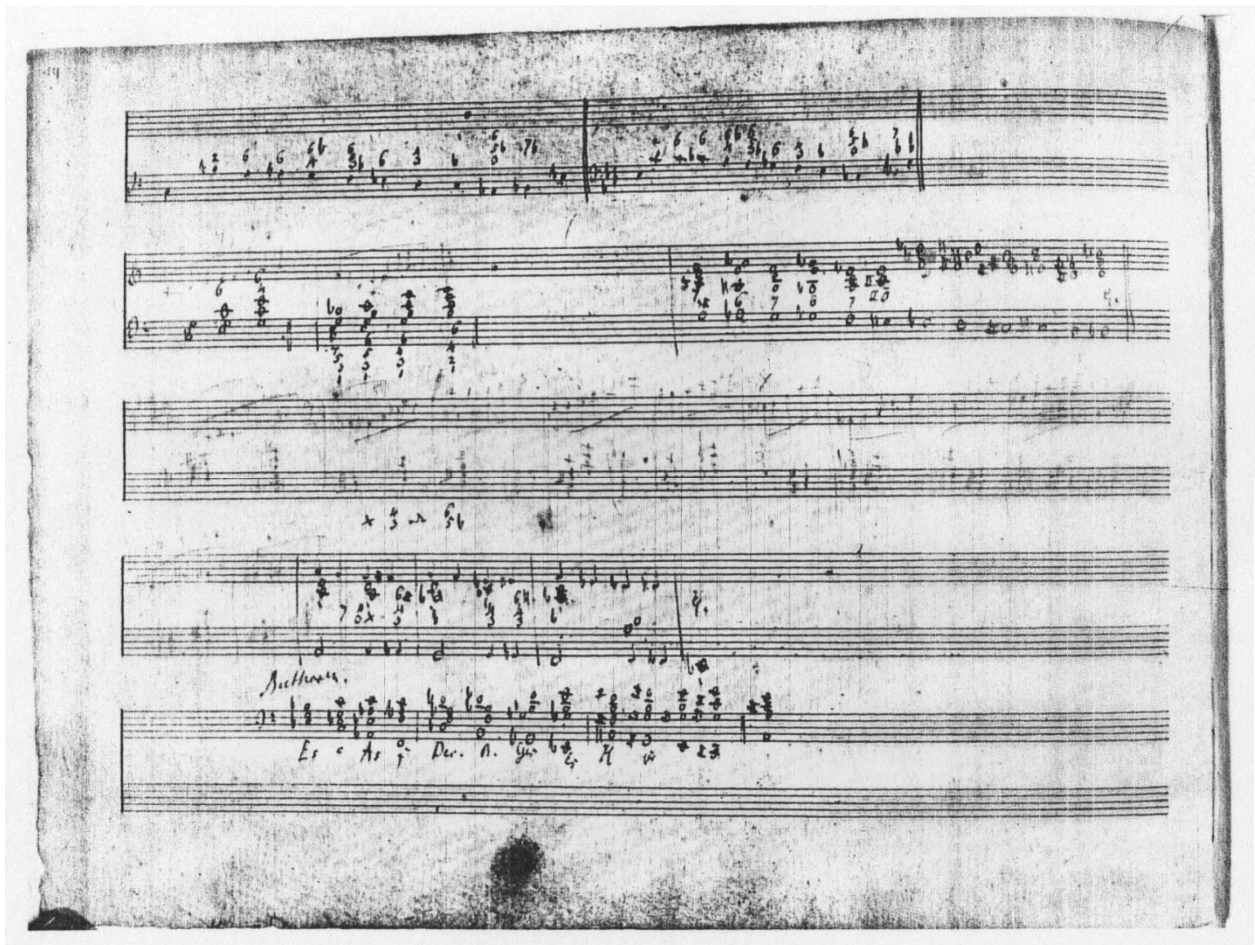


Plate 3.2: Schumann's *Skizzenbuch 1*, p. 14<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup> Bodo Bischoff, "Beethoven's Sonaten op. 54 and op. 106," In *Monument für Beethoven: Die Entwicklung der Beethoven-Rezeptions Robert Schumann* (Köln: Verlag Dohr, 1994), 119-131, 484.

<sup>183</sup> Bischoff, "Beethoven's Sonaten," 119.

<sup>184</sup> In Bischoff, "Beethoven's Sonaten," 484.



Example 3.6: Bischoff's transcription of the thirds progression as noted by Schumann<sup>185</sup>

Beethoven's use of the descending thirds as a formative device is evident from his sketches for the entire introduction, which show that he first notated this larger structural framework and later worked out the resulting interlude material amongst the framework of thirds. After Beethoven had sketched the descending third-chain for the introduction to the fourth movement repeatedly and masterfully built the introduction around that structure, it is astounding to discover that Beethoven himself once suggested *leaving it out* in order for the Sonata to be accepted by a wider audience. In a letter to Ferdinand Ries (1784-1838)<sup>186</sup> dated 19 April 1819, Beethoven writes of his dire financial situation and strong desire to have the Sonata published as soon as possible.

Dear friend,

Please do forgive me the inconvenience I am causing you. It is incomprehensible to me how so many mistakes could creep into the copy of the Sonata—the incorrect copying probably stems from the fact that I can no longer keep my own copyist. Circumstances have brought that about, and may God preserve me until... finds himself in a better position! This may take yet another full year.—It is truly dreadful how this business has transpired and what has become of my salary. No one can say what will happen until the year is over. Should the Sonata (Opus 106) not be suitable for London, I could send another one; or you might also leave out the Largo and start straightaway with the fugue in the last section; or use the first section, then the Adagio, and for the third movement the Scherzo and the Largo and *Allo. Risoluto.*—I leave all that to you, do as you think best... The Sonata was written under oppressive circumstances. It is hard to write almost for the sake of bread alone, and it has now come to that.

Let us keep in touch about my coming to London. It would certainly be the only

<sup>185</sup> In Bischoff, "Beethoven's Sonaten," 123.

<sup>186</sup> Ries was a former student of Beethoven's. They became friends, and for awhile Ries worked as Beethoven's copyist. He was also a composer and conductor.

way to extricate myself from this miserable anxiety-producing situation. Here I shall never regain my health nor achieve what I might under better circumstances.<sup>187</sup>

Beethoven's tone of desperation in this message concerns having the work published in London in order to be paid an additional fee. He did of course know that the Sonata would be printed correctly by Artaria in Vienna. His suggestion to leave out the *Largo* introduction and move immediately to the Fugue suggests that he may have found this section to be the most challenging part of the "Hammerklavier". He also tells Ries that "the Sonata was written under oppressive circumstances." For an immensely difficult and pathbreaking Sonata like the "Hammerklavier" to have arisen out of these oppressive circumstances is notable, and the sheer number of sketches for this work alone was very substantial. The Artaria edition of the "Hammerklavier" Sonata, op. 106 appeared in September 1819. In London, on the other hand, because of Beethoven's suggestion to alter the contents for a British audience, the English edition was published in two parts. The first part as *Grand Sonata* with movements I, III and II in that order was published in London in October 1819. The second part was published in December 1819 as *Introduction and Fugue* containing the *Largo* introduction and the fugal fourth movement.<sup>188</sup>

The "Hammerklavier" Sonata can be considered an uncompromising and even extreme work in which Beethoven interpolates here a series of contrapuntal interludes which are inlaid into the descending steps of the falling third-chain. (In his sketches, these interludes are not yet present, although one is suggested in the top system.) As we shall see, Brahms hints at this

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<sup>187</sup> Letter from Beethoven to Ferdinand Ries [19 April 1819], published in Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries, *Beethoven Remembered: The Biographical Notes of Franz Wegeler and Ferdinand Ries*, trans. Frederick Noonan (Arlington, VA: Great Ocean Publishers, Inc., 1987), 131-132. This book is translated from the German *Biographische Notizen Über Ludwig van Beethoven* originally published in 1838 and 1845.

<sup>188</sup> For a discussion of the English editions see Alan Tyson, "The Hammerklavier Sonata and its English Editions," *The Musical Times* 103/1430 (1962): 235-237.

technique in the recapitulation of the first movement of his Fourth Symphony in which he also inserts pauses into the basic chain of descending thirds.

In the hands of Brahms, the third-chains employed in his Fourth Symphony are subject to developing variation. Beethoven's op. 106 anticipates such a procedure and could well have inspired Brahms in that regard, especially considering Beethoven's treatment of thirds in the development sections of the first and third movements. While the opening fanfares of the "Hammerklavier's" first movement have a limited presence of falling thirds, they are later transformed into the extended fugal subject and long descending third-chain in the development. Similarly, the main theme of the slow movement in F# minor is developed as it passes through a long series of steps in the third-chain. Thirds are also expressed on a large formal level through the tonal plan. Beethoven's transformation of this single compositional resource in all four movements of the op. 106 Sonata is a precursor to the developing variation style of Brahms.

### **Scholarship on Brahms and the Third**

As a common building block in Western music, the interval of a third plays an indispensable role in the musical language. It forms structural units of triads consisting of one major and one minor third, generates modulation from relative major to minor by descending minor third, and serves to enrich the harmony in diatonic thirds either above or below a given melody. However, the way Brahms developed the third-chain and emphasized third-relations as a larger structural tool of composition departs from common practice and displays qualities of innovation. Brahms was well-known for his innovative integration of the compositional tools and forms of the Classical masters into his own compositions, and his incorporation and development

of third-chains is one important manifestation of this artistic originality.

Malcolm MacDonald's monograph on Brahms contains the most detailed discussion of the composer's treatment of thirds, although it is confined to a few pages.<sup>189</sup> He identifies numerous examples illustrating of the varying ways Brahms employs the third, but refrains from providing much detail. In his overview of this topic he describes Brahms's treatment of the third as "staggering in variety and resourcefulness," and comments on the ways Brahms uses the third as a melodic interval, a harmonic interval, a building block in more complex harmonies, and as a tool for establishing key relations.<sup>190</sup> For instance, doubling a melodic line in thirds is very common, but can yield quite different aesthetic results in different contexts. Brahms sometimes relates whole movements by thirds. This also appears in Classical practice; it is most striking when the shift is by major third in a minor key work. An example is Beethoven's C minor piano concerto, which features an E major slow movement and which stresses A $\flat$  in the Finale—a pitch corresponding to the prominent G# of the slow movement. Brahms used this concerto as a compositional model for his C minor piano quartet, op. 60 and the finale of his D minor piano concerto, op. 15.<sup>191</sup> Following an E major slow movement as in the Beethoven concerto, Brahms uses an A $\flat$  pedal in the finale of his C minor piano quartet after the introduction to the second subject.

As we shall see in selected compositions from Brahms's later years, the third-chain can become "a profoundly ambiguous symbol of tonal stability" as it creates 3rds, 5ths, 7ths, 9ths,

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<sup>189</sup> Macdonald, *Brahms*, 388-393.

<sup>190</sup> Macdonald, *Brahms*, 388.

<sup>191</sup> Charles Rosen, "Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration," *Nineteenth Century Music* 4/2 (1980): 87- 100.

11ths, and 13ths.<sup>192</sup> Each successive third brings with it new meaning, becoming increasingly dissonant and tonally ambiguous. MacDonald observes: “The longer the series, the weaker the gravitational pull of the root at the end of the series.” Furthermore, a third-chain can be so extended that it incorporates all twelve tones without repetition, as Liszt accomplished in the opening measures of his *Faust Symphony*, only in predominantly ascending form.<sup>193</sup>

In a dramatic context, sequences of thirds can act as chains of “infinite modulation” or “as an agent of destabilization and change,” often applied by Brahms in the form of textual associations. Some of these changes include perennial Romantic themes such as transformations of a spiritual state, life changes including death, altered states, other-worldliness, the supernatural, and impermanence. In these cases, the chain of falling thirds can assume a particular narrative or symbolic meaning. The works featuring thirds that are often ascribed characteristics of death and darkness, include “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” from the *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121 no.3 and *Feldeinsamkeit*, op. 86 no. 2. Other songs sometimes mentioned in this context include, *Mit vierzig Jahren*, op. 94 no. 1, *Nänie*, op. 82 and *Es reit ein Herr und auch sein Knecht*, WoO 33 no. 28.

Max Kalbeck rightfully observed that passages using falling thirds had long been a characteristic of Brahms’s music, even from his Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 1 (mm. 48-50) which begins with an allusion to the opening motive used in Beethoven’s op. 106. He felt it was unnecessary to look for other models that may explain Brahms’s inspiration to open his Fourth Symphony with a chain of descending thirds, although he does propose the opening of Mozart’s

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<sup>192</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 390-91.

<sup>193</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 391. This example is best understood as a series of four augmented triads linked through descending semitonal motion.



G Minor Symphony as a possible influence.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, Brahms also uses the device melodically in his First Piano Concerto in D minor, op. 15, especially in its opening movement. The basic idea of a juxtaposition of falling thirds is built into the opening, as the pedal point on D is impacted by the first vertical harmony on B $\flat$  major and not the tonic D minor. The ensuing point of motivic emphasis lies a tritone higher on A $\flat$ —a pitch which is emphasized by trills that eventually spread themselves into a series of falling thirds. The piano entrance begins with a lengthy narrative theme which gradually rises in pitch and in expressive intensity. When it reaches its climax, the music spells out a diminished seventh sonority starting on B $\flat$  in the highest register and then passing through G E and C $\sharp$ . This device is given tremendous reinforcement through the use of trills doubled in octaves. Detlef Kraus and Giorgio Pestelli have also recognized Brahms's use of third-chains as a characteristic of his compositional style, noting the Piano Sonatas op. 1 and 5 as early examples, and the late piano works such as op. 119 in addition to the Fourth Symphony as later examples.<sup>195</sup>

Affinities between the compositional practices of Brahms and Beethoven run deep. On matters of allusion in general, but in this case specifically to Beethoven, Christopher Reynolds describes the young Brahms following a Beethovenian model for his First Piano Sonata. Beyond the refiguration of the opening "Hammerklavier" figure in his op. 1, Brahms imitates the structure of Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata, op. 53 both harmonically and formally.<sup>196</sup> Not

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<sup>194</sup> Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*. See vol. 3, p. 461-463. See also Raymond Knapp, "The Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony: The Tale of the Subject," *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 13 (1989):3-17; see especially 10-11.

<sup>195</sup> Kraus, "Konstanten im Schaffen von Johannes Brahms," 46-47. Pestelli, "On the Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony," 143.

<sup>196</sup> Christopher Alan Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion: Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2003). See especially pp. 25-26.

unlike Brahms in this manner, Beethoven found a compositional model for the first movement of his Symphony no. 1 in Mozart's last symphony, K. 551. On a sketchleaf likely from 1790, Beethoven commented on a six-measure phrase: "this entire passage has been stolen from the Mozart symphony in C minor."<sup>197</sup> Brahms too had an affinity for modeling, and he often drew upon Beethoven's compositional devices.

Arnold Schoenberg cherished Brahms's compositional style, and wrote a celebrated essay to this effect. His article, "Brahms the Progressive," addresses Brahms's use of Classical structures in conjunction with progressive harmonic practice and describes an ongoing, continual modification of melodic or thematic material, or "developing variation".<sup>198</sup> Schoenberg regarded this phenomenon in Brahms as a continuation and expansion of the Classical procedures forged especially by Haydn and Beethoven. Schoenberg identifies the third-chain in Brahms's Fourth Symphony as it is used in the main theme of the first movement and compares it to the *passacaglia* of the finale. He argues that this relationship was "inspired" and not pre-constructed, suggesting that the aesthetic significance of third-chains in the two movements is highly effective and sounds like a naturally developing relationship rather than one that was methodically analyzed and constructed.<sup>199</sup> Schoenberg also discusses the innovative use of the third-chain in "O Tod, wie bitter bist du," from his *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121 no. 3. Peter Roggenkamp suggests that "[Schoenberg] particularly valued the way in which Brahms, following Beethoven's lead, sought to unify the compositional material and construct entire

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<sup>197</sup> Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion*, 26-27.

<sup>198</sup> Arnold Schoenberg, "Brahms the Progressive," [1947] in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, translated by Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984 [1975]), 398-441. See especially p. 407.

<sup>199</sup> Schoenberg, "Brahms the Progressive," 407.

works from basic motivic units.<sup>200</sup>

MacDonald notes that the chain of thirds held “special significance” for Brahms, and suggests Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata as a model for this inspiration. He states, “If any single work demonstrated to him the constructive power with which such material might be treated, it was probably the ‘Hammerklavier’ Sonata, and indeed the development section of Beethoven’s slow movement throws up, as a natural consequence of its working, the opening theme of Brahms’s Symphony no. 4.”<sup>201</sup> Brahms’s Fourth Symphony is indeed a remarkably rich reservoir of third-relations showing some striking affinities to Beethoven’s “Hammerklavier” Sonata.

### **Brahms’s Fourth Symphony, Op. 98**

According to Walter Frisch, Schoenberg’s notion of developing variation similarly refers to “the construction of a theme (usually of eight bars) by the continuous modification of the intervallic and/or rhythmic components of an initial idea.”<sup>202</sup> Brahms executed this technique through the inversion and combination of intervals, the augmentation or diminution of rhythms, and metrical displacement. Schoenberg, and no doubt Brahms as well, saw this method of development effective in preventing monotonous repetition. Frisch contends that “Brahms’s music stands as the most advanced manifestation of this principle in the common-practice era, for Brahms develops or varies his motives almost at once...thereby creating genuine musical

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<sup>200</sup> Peter Roggenkamp, “Notes on Interpretation,” translated by Richard Deveson, in Johannes Brahms, *Piano Sonata C Major Op. 1* (Vienna: Wiener Urtext Edition, 1997), X-XIII. See especially XII.

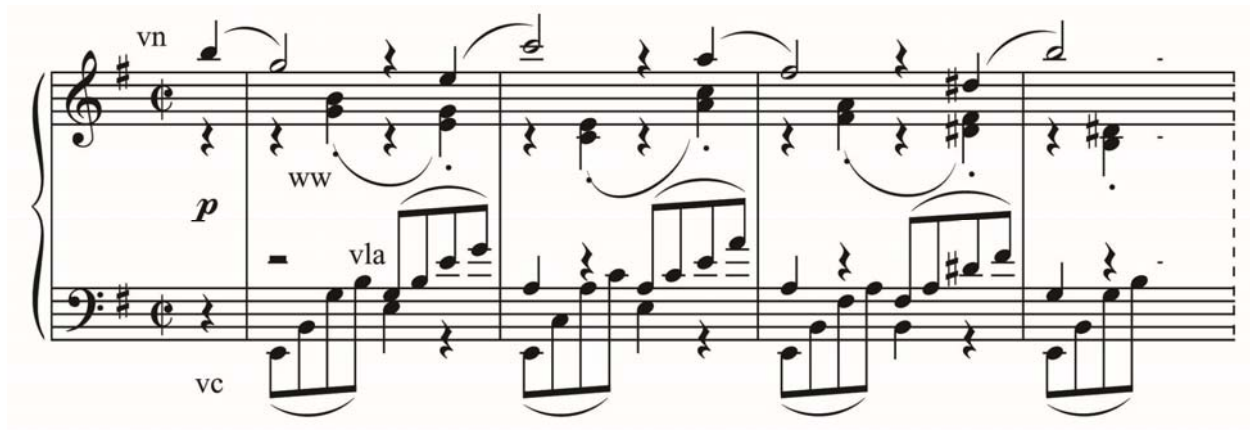
<sup>201</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 389.

<sup>202</sup> Quoted in Frisch, *Brahms and Developing Variation*, 9.

prose.”<sup>203</sup>

In his late career Brahms employs developing variation in conjunction with the chain of falling thirds both melodically and structurally, as Beethoven did in his late period with the “Hammerklavier” Sonata and the Credo and Benedictus movements of the *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123. Brahms also owned Beethoven’s *Arbeitskopie* or corrected copy of the *Missa Solemnis*, which is notable in light of Beethoven’s elaborate use of falling third-chains in that work.

The opening theme of the Fourth Symphony unfolds in the violins as a series of falling thirds and rising sixths which is echoed in the woodwinds who are also doubled in thirds. Thus, instead of using a pure chain of thirds Brahms mixes the descending third interval here with its inversion of an ascending sixth. The presence of the echoing woodwinds adds depth of sonority to the orchestral texture (see Example 3.7).

The image shows a musical score for the opening of the Fourth Symphony, op. 98, I. It features four staves: Violin (vn), Woodwind (ww), Viola (vla), and Violoncello (vc). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The violin part starts with a melodic line of descending thirds and rising sixths. The woodwind part provides harmonic support with chords. The viola and violoncello parts play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The dynamic marking is piano (p).

Example 3.7: Opening of the Fourth Symphony, op. 98, I

In his aforementioned essay on “Brahms the Progressive,” Schoenberg illustrates the first eight measures of the violin melody as a chain of descending thirds followed immediately by a chain of ascending thirds (see Example 3.8).<sup>204</sup> Roger Scruton also mentions this Schoenberg

<sup>203</sup> Frisch, *Brahms and Developing Variation*, 9.

<sup>204</sup> Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive,” see especially ex. 12 on p. 406.





ascending sixths. He simultaneously develops the opening motive with the appearance of two falling third-chains in alternation. In this case the chain of falling thirds is used both as the primary melody and as a countermelody, but when it appears later in the exposition (m. 53) it is arpeggiated as an accompaniment beneath a different violin melody. Following this passage, descending thirds played by the bassoons, violas, and double basses in bars 57-60 accompany the melody above in the horns and cellos initially (see Example 3.10) and then later the same melody passes to the violins and upper woodwinds.



Example 3.10: Fourth Symphony, op. 98, I mm. 57-60

Later in first movement Brahms uses third-chains to tonally link the development and ensuing recapitulation. In measure 243 the cello presents the initial progression of thirds in the form of E C A F# B, with the missing D# appearing as a resolution of the suspension held in the violins (see Example 3.11). Stacked thirds in the form of an F# half-diminished seventh chord are sustained softly in the strings over the descending cello figure. Having begun in the cello, this chain is then continued by the winds as the beginning of the recapitulation in augmented form: B G E C, interrupted only by a prolonged C major chord. It then progresses again by thirds from C to A F# D#, and then to a sustained B/G sonority before leading back to the tonic E at measure 259 by way of the leading tone D#. After a brief pause, the woodwinds continue with accompaniment similar to that of the exposition, but instead of descending thirds the violins have

ascending thirds. Brahms has kept the same interval, but reversed the direction. Similarly, we also find descending sixths, the inversion of ascending thirds. The sustained vertical sonorities in the winds at the beginning of the recapitulation are accompanied by a flourish of arpeggiation in the strings. These passages function similarly to the interlude material between third progressions in Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata. Brahms develops the descending thirds motive through both augmentation and orchestration. This magnification of the thirds is analogous to the techniques discussed above in relation to the *Largo* introduction of the fugal finale in Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the Fourth Symphony, op. 98, I, measures 243-263. The first system (measures 243-258) shows a piano (ppp) section with strings and cello, and a piano (p) section with winds (oboe, clarinet, bassoon). The second system (measures 259-263) shows a piano (p) section with violins and winds (flute, clarinet, bassoon). The score includes dynamic markings like 'ppp', 'p', and 'dolce', and various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and arpeggiated chords.

Example 3.11: Fourth Symphony, op. 98, I mm. 243-263

Concerning the treatment of the main theme in the opening of the first movement, Gal remarks that this theme:

is not merely repeated with richer orchestral colors, as Beethoven would have done under similar circumstances (compare the first movements of his 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> Symphonies), but as variation with the melodic line dissolved by ornaments and with a contrapuntal accompaniment. And, even in the burlesque, thematically concise third



movement, a close-knit sonata form, the graceful, melodic second subject is not just repeated but instead made into a variation.<sup>210</sup>

The first movement is rich in examples of the structural third-chain. While developing variation has been used to describe the workings of this device quite effectively, another explanation is proposed by William Mahrt. He argues that during the progression of a movement “the thematic process is more than simply ‘developing variation’; the transformation and juxtaposition of motives progressively illuminate their interrelationships and what are at first perceived as distinct are subsequently understood as closely related.” He continues on to say that “This progressive recognition of the relationships of motives is a kind of reminiscence.”<sup>211</sup> Mahrt uses multiple versions of the descending third-chain in the first movement of op. 98 to illustrate his point.<sup>212</sup> In this case, it appears that Brahms is indeed working with motives that upon first hearing seem to be distinct, but then as he develops them we realize their close similarities. Brahms is seeking not only to expand and modify his motives, but rather to connect them through carefully crafted composition. However, the very nature of variation assumes that the original is recognizable which gives rise to a sense of reminiscence in later passages.

Yet another revealing connection to the chain of falling thirds in the first movement can be found in Brahms’s original sketch for the introduction to the work. Brahms composed a four-bar introduction to the first movement that he later decided to abandon. Appearing at the end of the first movement in the autograph score, the four-bar introduction consisting of a harmonic progression—two bars of IV 6/4 followed by two bars of resolution—is crossed out (see Plate

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<sup>210</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 175-176.

<sup>211</sup> William Peter Mahrt, “Brahms and Reminiscence: A Special Use of Classic Conventions,” In *Convention in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, Festschrift Series No. 10, Ed. Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, and William P. Mahrt (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992). See especially 83.

<sup>212</sup> See Mahrt, “Brahms and Reminiscence,” 83-87.

3.3 and its transcription in Example 3.12).<sup>213</sup> The introductory progression of IV 6/4 to tonic (an A minor triad moving to an E minor triad), foreshadows the similar progression at the final cadence. Louise Litterick has noted that the descending third of B to G in the clarinets, bassoons and 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> horns “can certainly be viewed as an anticipation of the first notes of the primary subject and of the pervasive use of third relationships at all levels throughout the movement,” and while she notes that this interpretation can seem tenuous, I think it is a valid and sensitive observation.<sup>214</sup> It foreshadows the first descending third (B to G) heard in the published version (refer to Example 3.7).

While Litterick argues that the opening progression sketched by Brahms contains a condensed version of some of the major principles of the movement, Brahms’s final decision to leave it out of the published work further emphasizes the descending third-chain because it is the first statement heard. Brahms preferred in the end to present the thematic material based on the third-chain directly without this succinct introductory preface.

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<sup>213</sup> This introduction appears in the autograph score for the symphony which is now in the *Zentralbibliothek* in Zürich. Published in facsimile by Adliswil-Zürich: Edition Eulenberg GMBH, 1974. Original in the Zürich *Allgemeine Musikgesellschaft*. See Louise Litterick, “Brahms the Indecisive: Notes on the First Movement of the Fourth Symphony,” in *Brahms 2: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 223-235. Quotation from 226.

<sup>214</sup> Litterick, “Brahms the Indecisive,” see footnote #8 on 226. Litterick also provides a convincing discussion of further meanings packed into the rejected introduction including implications of the falling thirds chain in addition to other devices.



Plate 3.3: Sketched introduction of Brahms's Autograph Score for op. 98

Winds and Brass

Strings

Example 3.12 Litterick's transcription of the sketched introduction from Brahms's Autograph Score for op. 98

In the third movement Scherzo of the Fourth Symphony Brahms uses the falling third-chain as an interjection in the woodwinds (mm. 48-51). Example 3.13 shows this soft, sweeping phrase. Because it follows a passage that builds to a loud climax through fast, short notes, the *piano* appearance of the descending third-chain greatly contrasts the previous phrase. In this case the chain of thirds provides a link between contrasting sections.

The image shows a musical score for three woodwind instruments: Flute, Clarinet in C, and Bassoon. The music is in 2/4 time and marked *p* (piano). The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of four measures. In the first measure, the Flute and Clarinet in C play a descending third-chain (F4, E4, D4), while the Bassoon plays a descending second (F3, E3). In the second measure, the Flute and Clarinet in C play a descending third-chain (D4, C4, B3), while the Bassoon plays a descending second (E3, D3). In the third measure, the Flute and Clarinet in C play a descending third-chain (B3, A3, G3), while the Bassoon plays a descending second (D3, C3). In the fourth measure, the Flute and Clarinet in C play a descending third-chain (G3, F3, E3), while the Bassoon plays a descending second (C3, B2). The notes are connected by a long slur, indicating a soft, sweeping phrase.

Example 3.13: Fourth Symphony, op. 98, III mm. 48-51

Brahms again utilizes descending thirds in the fourth movement of the symphony to develop the *chaconne* subject, thought to be borrowed from Bach’s Cantata 150 “*Nach dir, Herr, verlangst mich.*” While performing it for some friends in 1882, Brahms is said to have asked, “What would you think about a symphony written on this theme sometime? But it is too clumsy, too straightforward. One must alter it chromatically in some way. (*Was meinst du, wenn man über dasselbe Thema einmal einen Sinfoniesatz schriebe. Aber es ist zu klotzig, zu geradeaus.*)

*Man müßte es irgendwie chromatisch verändern.)*<sup>215</sup>

Bach's *chaconne* subject in B minor as it is found near the end of his Cantata 150 is illustrated in Example 3.14. In employing this subject, Brahms transposed it to E minor, and added one chromatic alteration—an A♯ (see Example 3.14). That chromatic alteration in turn corresponds to another possible influence on Brahms's theme: the theme of Beethoven's Variations in C minor, WoO 80. Beethoven's C minor Variations, like the finale of Brahms's symphony, display an unmistakable engagement with the musical tradition of the Baroque, and especially the legacy of Bach.



Example 3.14: Chaconne subjects of Bach's Cantata 150 and Brahms's Fourth Symphony, op. 98, IV

In addition to the *chaconne* theme itself, the variation finale of Brahms's work contains numerous descending third-chains in various functional roles, reinforcing the cyclic nature of the work. One example of its use in a melodic form is shown in the wonderfully moving passage for the flute in mm. 102-104 (see Example 3.15).



Example 3.15: Fourth Symphony, op. 98, IV: Flute, mm. 102-104

In this passage, the flute moves from B G E C#(C) A F# D#(D), traversing through

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<sup>215</sup> From a story recounted by Siegfried Ochs, cited in Knapp, "The Finale of Brahms's Fourth Symphony," 4-5. Knapp's article also includes several examples of falling thirds in the fourth movement, and proposes possible sources of inspiration for Brahms in regard to these passages.

almost two complete octave cycles in a stirring melodic fall. Other passing tones are present, but the notes of the descending third-chain are each repeated at least twice, emphasizing those pitches as the chain moves from dominant to tonic. The expressive nature of this passage gives rise to an unstable wandering character, as the flute moves its way to the tonic by way of descending thirds.

Elsewhere in the finale movement of the symphony, Brahms uses falling thirds to develop the *chaconne* subject. Example 3.16 illustrates this development in a long series of descending thirds played pizzicato by the strings. He devises the music such that the first pitch of each measure corresponds to the first four pitches of the *chaconne* subject—E F G A, therefore emphasizing the *chaconne* motive by taking advantage of the natural emphasis placed on the first pitch after the bar line.



Example 3.16: Fourth Symphony, op. 98, IV: Strings, mm. 233-236

Almost immediately following in measures 241-243 the violins, cellos and basses play a series of *marcato* descending thirds coming full circle in octaves: E C A F# D# B G E, establishing the tonic E major.

Gal describes Brahms's treatment of the *chaconne* segment in the style of a Baroque *passacaglia* as a "spontaneous flow of invention."<sup>216</sup> He goes on to describe the depth of his variation technique:

At this stage of his development the variation technique had become an intrinsic part of

<sup>216</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 174.

Brahms's style, just as motivic development had in the case of Beethoven. Since Beethoven's time the variation principle has moved into the realm of the grand form; its possibilities embrace the entire gamut from brief, two-bar ostinato phrases in codas...to the imaginative transmutations of themes in the same composer's late sonatas and quartets. With Brahms the variation form penetrated everywhere—into his sonatas, into his rondos, and even into his dancelike intermezzi.<sup>217</sup>

Walter Frisch has noted this incorporation of the falling thirds and *chaconne* subject into a single passage: “In one of those epiphanies that Brahms is so good at creating, we recognize all at once the relationship between the first theme and the *chaconne* subject: when every fourth note from a chain of descending thirds is abstracted or given metrical stress, the result is a rising stepwise line—hence, the first four notes of the *chaconne*.”<sup>218</sup> Brahms is simultaneously making reference to Bach with the *chaconne* subject, as well as perhaps to Beethoven, who used the descending third-chain in a similar manner in various works including his *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123.

Gal suggests that “Brahms also learned from Beethoven how to deal with the problem of the variation finale, whose function is to bring a long series of short pieces to a dynamically summarizing, broadly conceived finish.”<sup>219</sup> Brahms was a master at the variation form, so much that Hanslick made a remark in a newspaper column about Brahms, who had recently grown a beard, saying, “his original face was just as hard to recognize as the theme in many of his variations.”<sup>220</sup> As we have already seen, this was one variation that stymied his friend Nottebohm while surely giving delight to the composer.

Malcolm MacDonald has suggested that as the first major work Brahms conceived after

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<sup>217</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 175.

<sup>218</sup> Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003 [1996]). See especially 139.

<sup>219</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 172.

<sup>220</sup> Gal, *Johannes Brahms*, 173.

Nottebohm's death in 1882, the Fourth Symphony may represent a "symbolic memorial" to Nottebohm.<sup>221</sup> Given the close relationship the two shared both as friends and colleagues, it would come as no surprise if Brahms had regarded this symphony as involving a personal homage to Nottebohm, all the more considering its rich levels of allusion to works by Beethoven and Bach—the two composers they cherished perhaps most of all. Brahms's study of Beethoven's sketchbooks even after the death of Nottebohm carries on his legacy in part. Of course, the Fourth Symphony, with its copious references to Beethoven, should also be regarded as a symbolic memorial to him as well. Through detailed study of these third-chains, we have discovered similarities in the ways both Beethoven and Brahms used the device and have gained a frame of reference for the innovative variations of this device that appear in later works of Brahms.

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<sup>221</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 312 (see footnote).



## CHAPTER 4

### “TERZEN-KETTEN” IN LATE BRAHMS

In the later years of his life, Brahms gave few public performances and retreated from the larger public genres into an intensely private world. He continued composing, and the pieces he produced during his last years are often markedly contemplative and reflective in character. As Michael Musgrave notes, “the late style exists in the context of very marked symbols, chiefly the recollections of the Fourth Symphony and the presence of the ‘chorale shape’.”<sup>222</sup> Other commentators have regarded the onset of a late style differently. Siegfried Kross stresses the complexity of the motivic shapes in Brahms’s ripest works and sees the “techniques of developing his thematic material out of pre-thematic shapes” as a striking characteristic.<sup>223</sup>

One of these “pre-thematic shapes” that assumes outstanding importance in the late piano and chamber music of Brahms is provided by “Terzen-Ketten” or third-chains. To appreciate Brahms’s resourcefulness in treating “Terzen-Ketten” in his later years we must reflect both on the expressive importance of this troupe and on its extraordinary versatility as a compositional resource. Numerous works from the 1890s embody his expanded use of the descending third-chain as a compositional device. Descending third-chains are present in his sets of short piano pieces, the *Fantasiën*, op. 116, *Klavierstücke*, op. 118, and *Klavierstücke*, op. 119, as well as in the F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, and in “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” from the third of the *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121.

The appearance of descending third-chains in the late works of Brahms has become a

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<sup>222</sup> Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 256.

<sup>223</sup> Siegfried Kross, *Johannes Brahms Versuch einer kritischen Dokumentar-Biographie*, vol. 2 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1997), 962.

mode of expression for darker sentiments. His use of motivic falling thirds is associated with melancholy, anxiety, and mortality. At the opening of his “Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer,” op. 105 no. 2, Brahms employs descending thirds in the bass line: G# E C# to convey the misery and grief of absence, of painful distance from the beloved. Brahms himself once drew the attention of Clara Schumann to the melancholic expression of one of his late piano pieces most obsessively filled with descending thirds, as we shall see, while the presence of falling thirds in his last serious songs reflects emotions bound up with the contemplation of death.

In his monograph on Brahms, Richard Specht describes hearing Brahms perform his op. 116, 117 and 119 piano pieces shortly after they were written: “...seine letzten Klaviermonologe, die tiefsinnigen, traumreichen op. 116, 117 und 119, waren noch kaum trocken in der Niederschrift, als ich das Glück haben durfte, sie von ihm in ganz intinem Raum zu hören.”<sup>224</sup> [...his last piano monologues, the more profound, dream-rich op. 116, 117 and 119, were barely dry in the manuscript, when I had the good fortune of hearing them played by him in an intimate room]. This comment by Specht also rightly emphasizes the contemplative dream-like nature of the pieces, as well as their solitary character as monologues.

These late piano pieces were the subject of exchanges between Brahms and Clara Schumann in autumn of 1892 and were offered as an olive branch of sorts. Brahms felt deeply wronged by Clara. She had not taken well to the publication of the early version of Robert Schumann’s Fourth Symphony, and she had failed to include in the Complete Schumann Edition, those pieces that Brahms had worked diligently to edit years earlier. He felt she had something against him and his letters to her from this period took on a somewhat bitter tone.<sup>225</sup> In her reply

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<sup>224</sup> Specht, *Johannes Brahms*, 88.

<sup>225</sup> Avins, *Johannes Brahms*, 696.

to his letter from 13 September 1892, Clara wrote that she was ready to hear Brahms's recommendations for the complete edition and offered reconciliation: "So then, dear Johannes, let us strike up a more friendly tone towards each other, to which end your beautiful new piano pieces...offer the best opportunity if you want it!"<sup>226</sup> Brahms accepted with delight, sending her a response in early October 1892 in which he thanks her for her friendly reply and continues that:

Since you asked for them, I am sending herewith a volume of piano pieces. I am going to Berlin on Monday, when I return (in about a week) I'll have a few more copied and will send them, so you can then send back the lot when convenient.

I don't need to ask you not to let them out of your hands,--unfortunately also, not to give them too often to your own for their enjoyment!

In the little E minor piece, it's probably better if you always take the 6<sup>th</sup> eighth as indicated on the first beat, in parentheses.

Of course, the peculiar appeal which is always connected with a difficulty is then lost, as here, the strong pliant curve of the hands—of *large* hands! But all the pieces put together aren't worth such a lot of words—put them aside and pick up the Rhapsodies, say, if you want to recall with pleasure the music.<sup>227</sup>

According to Avins, Brahms sent eleven piano pieces to Clara with his letter; these were gratefully received by Clara. They included op. 116, op. 117 and other pieces that may have later been included in op. 118 or 119, or were rejected.<sup>228</sup> In the years 1892-1893 Brahms composed even more short piano pieces than the twenty that were published as op. 116-119.<sup>229</sup>

Brahms's letter hints at the aesthetic difficulty of these pieces by suggesting that Clara might turn instead to playing the *Rhapsodies*, op. 79 for her musical pleasure. The heightened dissonance and tonal ambiguity of these late pieces arises in part from the presence and varied development of more complex compositional techniques including descending chains of thirds.

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<sup>226</sup> Quoted in Avins, *Johannes Brahms*, 697

<sup>227</sup> Letter from Brahms to Clara Schumann, [Early October 1892]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 697-698.

<sup>228</sup> Avins, *Johannes Brahms*, 698.

<sup>229</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 355.

MacDonald describes these late piano pieces as “reflective, musing, deeply introspective, and at the same time unfailingly exploratory of harmonic and textural effect, of rhythmic ambiguity, of structural elision and wayward fantasy.”<sup>230</sup> Brahms seeks a more modern and progressive approach to composition in these pieces. He focuses less on melodies and their variations and instead explores fundamental aspects of the musical language by using rigorous and sometimes even severe compositional techniques—an approach capable of conveying a “deeply introspective” character.

### ***Fantasien, Op. 116***

Brahms’s op. 116 *Fantasien* from 1892 are full of examples of descending third-chains. Indeed, this cycle of seven fantasies shows even more diversity in using “Terzen-Ketten” than any of his earlier works. The *Fantasien* consist of three vigorous framing *Capriccios*—(No. 1, 3 and 7)—interspersed with four quieter *Intermezzos*: No. 2, 4, 5 and 6. Brahms layers the third-chains and uses them melodically in the first, third and seventh pieces. He builds themes from these chains and continually varies their appearance by sequencing, augmentation, vertical stacking, and by using the inverted interval of an ascending sixth. In the three *Capriccios* from op. 116, Brahms has employed the descending third-chain as a connecting thread. He lends balance and structure to this set of piano pieces first by placing the *Capriccios* in the position of beginning, middle and end; even more importantly, he connects these pieces motivically. His use of the descending third-chain as the basis for the opening theme in all three pieces creates a tangible and readily audible connection between them. He carries this thread of thirds through all four *Intermezzos* as well, using a milder and sometimes highly subtle approach.

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<sup>230</sup> MacDonald, *Brahms*, 355.

*No. 1 Capriccio*

From the very outset of the *Capriccio* No. 1 in D minor the opening theme unfolds structurally as a third-chain, descending D B $\flat$  G E in the right hand (see Example 4.1).

The image shows a musical score for Brahms' No. 1 Capriccio, measures 1-12. The score is written for piano in D minor, 3/4 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1-8, and the second system shows measures 9-12. The right hand (treble clef) features a descending third-chain of notes: D, B-flat, G, E. The left hand (bass clef) features an ascending third-chain of notes: D, B-flat, G, E. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *sf*, and articulation like staccato. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in measure 10. The piece concludes with a final cadence in measure 12.

Example 4.1: Brahms op. 116 no. 1 mm. 1-12

Significantly, this third-chain begins with the rising sixth D to B $\flat$ . From this sixth will spring the progressions built on ascending sixth-chains that lead to the final cadence in the last section of this piece. In the case of the opening, the left-hand echo creates a vertical third with the descending third-chain in the right hand, as in measures 1-3 and 9-11. As the third-chain enters its repetition in measure 9, Brahms uses a procedure of developing variation to present the third-chains in a slightly different form. The descending third-chains in the right and left hands are now switched, putting the metric displacement in the right hand and the repeated staccato thirds in the left hand in the form of rising sixths: D B $\flat$  G E. The descending thirds coupled with

the displaced accents give a somewhat playful lilting character to the opening theme and set the tone for the first piece. The opening sixth initiates the chain of descending thirds that is further emphasized through metric displacement before the theme continues with *sforzando* syncopated accents beginning in bar 4. Here too, descending thirds are used as motivic material together with the *sforzando* accented syncopation; the music passes through: F E D; G F E; F E D; and lastly D B $\flat$  in measure 8. This creates an eight-bar thematic unit that directly leads into a restatement of the theme in the bass using rising sixths instead of falling thirds, since the initial register is low.

Brahms resembles Mozart in this opening, though the affinity is indirect and may not have been conscious on his part. The rising sixth (D to B $\flat$ ) followed by two descending thirds (B $\flat$  to G and G to E) are in the same configuration in the violin melody of Mozart's G minor Symphony no. 40, measures 3 and 4 (with the exception of E $\flat$  instead of natural). It is noteworthy that Deryck Cooke, in his book *The Language of Music*, offers an extended discussion of Mozart's Symphony in G minor, but neglects to mention the descending third-chain used in its opening passage. Cooke even cites the opening violin motive in a music example, but stops short of commenting on the falling third-chain. Instead he ends his excerpt with the rising sixth—the first of the third relations—and goes on to describe the repeated E $\flat$  to D semitone figure as expressing a “hopeless” character.<sup>231</sup> Near the end of his discussion Cooke describes the “anguish, joy, despair, and obsession which Mozart expressed *precisely* in his Fortieth Symphony and which we can only experience by listening to that work,” but he fails to

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<sup>231</sup> Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 240-241.

adequately describe what is involved in Mozart's shaping of this theme, since this involves motivic units larger than these two-note figures, namely the guiding chain of falling thirds.<sup>232</sup> Even though Brahms's op. 116 and Mozart's G minor Symphony are in different keys, Brahms's ownership and study of his manuscript copy of Mozart's G minor Symphony may well have been connected to his choice of pitches here, despite the difference in key, with the piano piece beginning in D minor.

Later in this piece, falling thirds are presented in a second, more compressed form beginning in measures 38-41. Instead of repeated eighths, the progression moves by eighth notes in short phrases. Starting at measure 38, the progression begins F D B, then A $\flat$  F D B A $\flat$ , creating a pattern of falling minor thirds repeated to pass through two octaves. This combination of minor thirds forms diminished seventh chords in arpeggiated form, which are in turn treated in sequence. This iteration of the falling third-chain is restated beginning on G in measure 42, then A $\flat$  in measure 46 and B $\flat$  in measure 50. Similarly, this pattern is developed and intensified in the middle section of this piece beginning with measure 103. Here we find an especially protracted series of falling thirds (with an occasional second) sounded in octaves spread wide in both hands reaching even the lowest register. This pattern is repeated immediately five more times and then again after a brief return to the chordal texture in the beginning section.

Perhaps one of the most ominous chains begins in measure 123 before the chordal section. Here we see octaves again falling by minor thirds and forming arpeggiated diminished seventh chords as before, but this time the pattern is stressed through longer note values, similar structure echoed in the right-hand as well, and a continual descent spanning just over three octaves into the depths of the bass (see Example 4.2). The chain in the right-hand moves: D $\flat$  B $\flat$

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<sup>232</sup> Cooke, *The Language of Music*, 251.

G $\flat$  F/ E D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G E/ D $\flat$  B $\flat$ . The left-hand follows with the exception of G $\sharp$  and no F in the first group. Following these third-chains there is a chromatically rising passage begun in the left-hand and echoed a third above in the middle note of the right hand beginning with A and ascending chromatically to D. Even in this chromatic passage, thirds are used harmonically. Out of the depths rises a chromatic phrase anchored only by the steady octave Fs in the right-hand.

The image shows a musical score for Brahms' Op. 116, No. 1, measures 123-136. The score is written for piano in 3/8 time. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The second system has a bass clef on the top staff and a bass clef on the bottom staff. The music features a complex interplay of chromatic lines and harmonic structures, including falling thirds in the bass and chromatic passages in both hands.

Example 4.2: Brahms op. 116 no. 1 mm. 123-136

Falling thirds are also present harmonically in the bass in measures 67-70, outlining a B diminished seventh chord: A F $\sharp$  D B. Here Brahms also stacks triads vertically within the linear harmonic progression ending with seventh chords on B in both hands, emphasizing the sonority that had just been outlined in the bass (see Example 4.3).





Example 4.3: Brahms op. 116 no. 1 mm. 67-70

Yet another form of falling thirds appears in measures 79-86. Sustained E major chords begin a descending chain of chords which fall by thirds and then lead into another modulatory passage. The chain moves through the following series of descending thirds: E C# A F# D#. Movement from E major to C# is stressed here in measures 79-83 before the chain carries on. Surprisingly, this progression in turn becomes the springboard for the *Intermezzo* no. 4 in E major, where the opening two sonorities are E major leading to C# minor. Brahms's quiet harmonic transformation of the progression of the E major/C# minor triads is yet another way of unfolding the underlying structural idea of falling thirds that surfaces in all the pieces of op. 116.

Various presentations of the descending third-chain permeate the entire opening *Capriccio*. The passage leading up to the final cadence is built on rising sixths, drawing from the opening figure. These sixths rise up from out of the lowest register and are reinforced by the right hand an octave and a third higher. Once again, Brahms layers his thirds employing them linearly as well as vertically. The lighter character of this third-chain in inversion as sixths is shown by the brevity of the notes and the line and is underscored by an acceleration in tempo. This final statement stands in stark contrast to the darker character in the middle of the piece where the falling minor thirds descend deep into the bass. In this single piano piece Brahms

shows astonishing mastery of the third-chain and its variations, using different forms of the chain to convey specific musical meaning in an unfolding narrative. At the same time, the striking harmonic move from E to C# presages the later *Intermezzo* in E major. This music harbors secrets which reveal themselves only through intimate acquaintance with the entire cycle of seven fantasies.

### No. 2 Intermezzo

The first *Intermezzo* No. 2 in A minor stands in strong contrast to the robust *Capriccios* on either side. Whereas the *Capriccios* have an anxious, energetic character, Brahms opens this piece softly and slowly with lullaby-like qualities such as the *rubato* rocking motion in the first *Andante* section. Here, he uses a series of stacked thirds throughout this opening section which move by ascending or descending seconds and thirds creating a subtle rocking motion (see Example 4.4).

The image displays a musical score for the first nine measures of Brahms's Op. 116 No. 2. The score is written for piano in 3/4 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 1 through 4, and the second system shows measures 5 through 9. The music is characterized by a rocking motion created by stacked thirds in both the treble and bass staves. The bass line features a triplet of eighth notes in measures 1, 2, 3, and 5, and a triplet of quarter notes in measure 9. The treble line features a triplet of eighth notes in measures 1, 2, 3, and 5, and a triplet of quarter notes in measure 9. The overall mood is soft and lullaby-like.

Example 4.4: Brahms Op. 116 No. 2 mm. 1-9

This primary motion by seconds and thirds is carried into the quicker *Non troppo presto* section that follows where they make up the composition of the left hand part complete with stacked thirds; these are accented through a change of register in the right hand. As this section builds in intensity, a series of four descending thirds is stressed in the highest register at measures 40-42 (see Example 4.5). This particular version of descending thirds is similar to a passage in the first movement of the F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, in measures 72-76, a passage which will be discussed below in greater detail.

Brahms's choice to use a specific variant of thirds in a given context can be telling. In this instance, an obvious chain of falling thirds would feel out of place with the calmness of this piece. By using a series of stacked thirds instead, Brahms conveys a quality of gentleness and subtlety while still forging a link to the other six pieces in this set which feature descending third-chains even more prominently. The thread of motivic configurations built from thirds that Brahms weaves through this collection leads to the next *Capriccio*, which opens with a very bold chain of descending thirds.



Example 4.5: Brahms Op. 116 No. 2 mm. 40-42 and reduction

While this *Intermezzo* in itself is not a particularly rich example of Brahms's use of "Terzen-Ketten", the presence of these textures assumes added weight in the larger context of the *Fantasien*, where all the movements contain various manifestations of third-chains.

### *No. 3 Capriccio*

In the following *Capriccio*, the initial falling motive in the right hand: G E $\flat$  C A (with a passing tone B $\flat$ ) leads to a stacked half-diminished seventh chord comprised of these same thirds and accented by a *szforzando*. In measure 3, the same technique is sequenced with B $\flat$  G E $\flat$  and C $\sharp$ , with a D passing tone (see Example 4.6). The descending thirds from the outset of this piece once again set the tone. Here they become the primary means of motion that dominate the first and third sections of the piece. The *Allegro passionato* character is dramatized by the yearning effect of the descending thirds enhanced by immediate arrival of the accented seventh chord as in measures 1 and 3. The downward fall through three successive thirds generates the accented seventh chord with successively sounded tones that are sustained to create a verticality. The initial G, which thereby becomes the uppermost pitch of this rich sonority, then becomes in bar 2 the middle pitch of another third: the rising stepwise motive F $\sharp$  G A, which is played against the falling counterpoint in the left hand. Edward Cone refers to this technique as a "peculiar keyboard texture in which arpeggio and chord are inextricably blended." He asks if they are to be heard "melodically, harmonically, or as the elements of four polyphonic lines" and

goes on to suggest “no single answer is correct, that the basic motivic sonority—the chordal seventh in all its varieties—is to be heard vertically, horizontally, even diagonally!”<sup>233</sup>

In measures 13 and 14, the same motive is augmented in the right hand and layered with the descending thirds in its original eighth-note form in the left hand. This original motive is sequenced many more times in the outer G minor sections of the piece. In addition to augmentation, Brahms alters the opening motive by pairing it with its inversion. The passage in measures 9-11 alternates descending and ascending thirds. This alternation returns in measures 21-23, where it is followed by a chromatically ascending line. As if this were not enough, Brahms also supplies a double augmentation of the falling-third progression in half-notes first through E $\flat$  and C to A, and then in the bass through D and B $\flat$  to the tonic G at the end of each of the G minor sections to affirm the tonic cadences.

Carl Dahlhaus notes how “Brahms was a virtuoso in the practice of combining musical devices from different genres,” making reference to the use of augmentation and inversion of the opening motive.<sup>234</sup> He also proposes that material for the second section of this piece is generated from the rising three note figure in the second measure.<sup>235</sup> This ascending pattern is repeated and sequenced in every measure of the B section. The motion of the figure ascends by a third, often in triplet form. Occasionally the figure inverts to descend a third.

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<sup>233</sup> Edward T. Cone, “Harmonic Congruence in Brahms,” in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. George S. Bozarth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 165-188. See especially p. 171-172.

<sup>234</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, trans. J. Bradford Robinson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press: 1989), 258.

<sup>235</sup> Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, 259.



Example 4.6a: Brahms Op. 116 No. 3 mm. 1-3

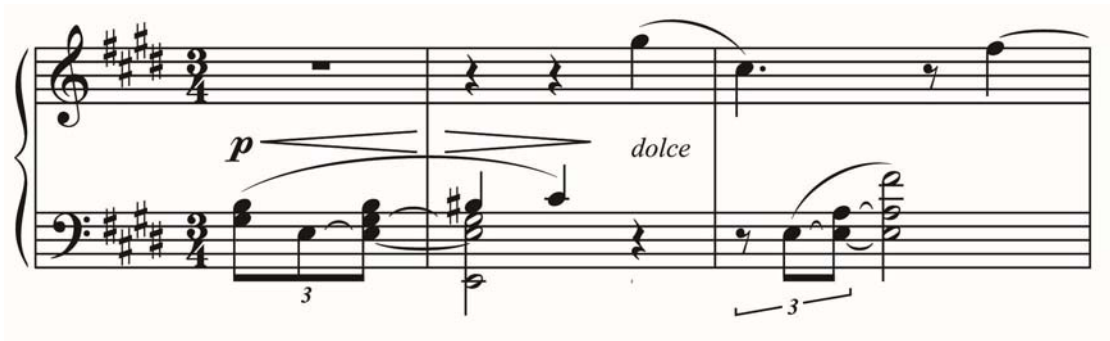


Example 4.6b: Brahms Op. 116 No. 3 mm. 13-14

#### *No. 4 Intermezzo*

This *Adagio* at the heart of op. 116 was labeled by Brahms as a “Notturmo” in the autograph manuscript, a title that was later changed to the simpler designation *Intermezzo*. The original title fits the subdued, somewhat elusive character of this piece. As mentioned earlier, the opening sonorities contained in the first two measures of the *Intermezzo* No. 4 involve a progression by minor third from E major to C# minor harmonies. However, Brahms uses the rising motion from B B# C# as the harmonic pivot point between these chords and emphasizes the connecting dissonance B# through his dynamic indications (see Example 4.7). This figure returns repeatedly in changing harmonic contexts. In measure 32, the motto appears reharmonized in G# minor and without falling sighs in the right hand. Near the end of the piece

beginning in measure 49, the move is from E major to C# major—a change in harmony, but once more a move by minor third. An exquisitely subtle effect is created beginning in measures 15-16. Here, the falling fifth G# to C# which earlier answered the opening motive has now been elaborated to become G# E# C# B A. This intervallic sequence remarkably resembles the opening chain of falling thirds in the previous *Capriccio* no. 3: G E $\flat$  C B $\flat$  A. The motivic kinship can be immediately felt in adequate performance, yet it is a veiled allusion, as if the motivic outline were transformed, carried into another expressive dimension.



Example 4.7: Brahms Op. 116 No. 4 mm. 1-3

The stressed harmonic motion by third from E to C# in op. 116 no. 4 embodies a technique of tonal pairing of keys a third apart. While the key does not change initially, Brahms confirms the dynamic potential contained in this motive in later passages, in which the music is carried to G# minor and C# major. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs have discussed this kind of tonal pairing in relation to music of the early and late nineteenth century. Kinderman describes tonal pairing (otherwise known as directional tonality or the double-tonic complex) as

“works beginning in one key and ending in another.”<sup>236</sup> Krebs’s study of the E major-C# minor pairing in Schubert’s celebrated song “Der Wanderer” D489 is most relevant here. He describes “a persistent alternation between prolongations of the C# minor and E major harmonies” and finds that the alternation of these harmonies “(which are heard as surface key areas) throughout ‘Der Wanderer’ is the most obvious indication that a pairing of these keys underlies the work.”<sup>237</sup> Brahms employs a somewhat similar technique in the *Intermezzo* no. 4, even though the piece does end solidly in E major and therefore does not qualify as a true tonal pairing.



Example 4.8: Brahms Op. 116 No. 4 mm. 10-13 and reduction

Brahms uses thirds to vary the opening motive, and Musgrave comments how the variations of the chain in the *Capriccios* can be compared to the different variations used in the Fourth Symphony. One of his examples is drawn from this E major piece. Beginning in measure

<sup>236</sup> William Kinderman, “Introduction,” in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1-14. See especially p. 1.

<sup>237</sup> Harald Krebs, “Some Early Examples of Tonal Pairing: Schubert’s ‘Meeres Stille’ and ‘Der Wanderer,’” in *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, ed. William Kinderman and Harald Krebs (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 18-33. See especially p. 17-18.



11, the highest note of each group of three eighths outlines a full-circle falling third chain: B G E C A F# D B (see Example 4.8). By placing the thirds at the top of each descending sigh figure, Brahms places emphasis on these motives, even though they fall metrically in the middle of groups of triplets. Musgrave also remarks on the role of the interval of a third in the tensional harmonic structure of the piece, balanced as it is between E major and C# minor.<sup>238</sup>

### *No. 5 Intermezzo*

Brahms embeds another falling third-chain in the *Intermezzo* no. 5 in E minor. While not unfolded in linear fashion as in the falling thirds in the *Capriccios*, this progression appears in the top notes of the right-hand in measures 20-23 where the uppermost voice traces a path from G# E C, then continues in the right hand with A F# then D# over a B in the left hand (see Example 4.9).

The motion of descending thirds in duplets embedded in a rising and falling melody earlier in measures 4-6 is somewhat reminiscent of the Fourth Symphony. In op. 98, the opening of the first movement begins with the chain of descending thirds played in a similar metrical arrangement by the violins and echoed by the woodwinds. Brahms uses a time signature of 6/8, but the way he has grouped these notes across the bar line results in disagreement with the meter.



Example 4.9: Brahms Op. 116 No. 5 mm. 20-23

<sup>238</sup> Musgrave, *Music of Brahms*, 259.

No. 6 Intermezzo

The *Intermezzo* No. 6 is also in E major and features falling thirds in the running accompaniment in measures 25-31 of the B section (see Example 4.10). In this internal section, the legato melody line, marked *dolce*, unfolds above flowing triplets which descend by thirds at first in the right hand and then in the left before being repeated a third lower. The melody moves diatonically in descending seconds for the most part. The third-chains thereby created outline alternating major and minor triads: D# B G#; B G# E; G# E C#; A# F-double sharp D#; C# A# F# D#.

Here we see a simpler and more direct use of falling thirds. As in the *Intermezzo* no. 2, these simpler forms of third-chains are used by Brahms in sections that reflect a calmer and sweeter character.

Example 4.10: Brahms Op. 116 No. 6 mm. 25-31

No. 7 Capriccio

Brahms opens the third and final *Capriccio* of the op. 116 *Fantasien* with yet another descending third-chain. The initial motive in the right-hand outlines a diminished seventh chord (F D B G $\sharp$ ) that immediately leads into an inverted, rising chain of minor thirds in the left-hand (C $\sharp$  E G B $\flat$ ) (see Example 4.11). Sequencing of this pattern with some variation continues for the first seven measures of the piece and returns in measures 11-16. The rapid descending and ascending motion of these motivic patterns in thirds propels the piece, giving it a turbulent *agitato* character.

Example 4.11: Brahms Op. 116 No. 7 mm. 1-6

Brahms writes an elaborate transition from the middle section in A minor and 6/8 meter to the reprise of the opening music in D minor and 2/4 meter. This transitional section is also built on rapidly descending and ascending third-chains in the form of arpeggiated seventh

chords. By using thirds so conspicuously in this transitional passage of the final piece of the cycle, Brahms underscores the importance of this characteristic texture. Not only has he built themes and developments from the technique, but he has also employed third-chains in intermediary sections as well.

A strong argument can be made for cohesion among this collection of piano pieces. Looking closely at all three opening themes of the *Capriccios*, we can see how they build in complexity, each drawing on its predecessor. *Capriccio* No. 1 begins with two relatively simple chains of descending thirds. Here there is a little vertical overlap of the thirds; the theme is built on linear chains offset slightly from one another through the division between the hands of the pianist. *Capriccio* No. 3 intensifies the linear motion of thirds from No. 1, but draws attention to the vertical or stacked thirds that follow. Carrying the process one step further, the opening theme in *Capriccio* No. 7 uses both the linear motion and stacked thirds of No. 3, but realizes these textures through faster, more harmonically complex motion through a series of diminished seventh chords, while also employing both descending and ascending third-chains. The *Intermezzos* of op. 116 also vary in complexity, from the gentle stacked thirds and rocking motion by third in No. 2, to the deeply embedded thirds in inner texture of No. 5, and the *dolce* textures of the interlude in G# minor in No. 6.

It seems obvious that Brahms was keenly aware of his development of this compositional device through the course of these seven remarkable pieces. Jonathan Dunsby has made a case for cohesion among the pieces in op. 116 using elements other than melodic structure to make his point. His discussion relies heavily on Schenkerian analysis emphasizing voice-leading, but awareness of Brahms's motivic and harmonic use of third-chains lends powerful support to his

basic argument that these are not merely a collection of pieces, but must be regarded as a cohesive group or a “multi-piece.”<sup>239</sup>

Descending third-chains generate the basic thematic material in the three *Capriccios* Nos. 1, 3, and 7, but they also appear in all four *Intermezzos*. As discussed above, the argument can even be made that the third-chains of the second and third *Capriccios* represent developments of the material of the earlier pieces. Dunsby quotes Kalbeck on the subject of cohesion in op. 116 to the effect that “One piece always seems to be contained as a kernel in another: or always has its shoot, which grows into some offspring (*Tochterpflanze*).”<sup>240</sup> Recognition of the role of the third-chains as generative musical elements points toward how this organic process takes place. The third-chains simply cannot be overlooked in discussion about the integration of these pieces, which nevertheless embrace powerful contrasts and a sharp diversity of moods.

The tonal plan of the seven fantasies also contributes to their overall cohesion. The *Capriccios* are all placed in minor keys with the first and last pieces in D minor. The coda of No. 7 also reclaims the 3/8 time signature from No. 1, but the last three measures of its stirring coda return to 2/4 and break through to a key never before heard in the cycle with stacked thirds forming a *fortissimo* cadence in D major.

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<sup>239</sup> Jonathan Dunsby, “The multi-piece in Brahms: *Fantasien* Op. 116,” in *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Robert Pascall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 167-189.

<sup>240</sup> Dunsby, “The multi-piece,” 173. Dunsby’s reference to Kalbeck’s quote: Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, v. 4 (Berlin: 1915), 286.

## *Klavierstücke, Op. 118*

### *No. 1 Intermezzo*

The op. 118 piano pieces exploit third relations as well, in imaginative and far-reaching ways. Particularly conspicuous is the passage beginning in measure 31 near the close of the first of these pieces, the *Intermezzo* in A minor, op. 118 no. 1. One hears here a rising eighth-note figure in minor thirds spanning three octaves over a sustained E in the bass. This gives way to an extended descending third-chain in four-note segments whose last two units outline diminished-seventh chords: F♯[G♭] E C A F♯ F D B G♯ G E C♯ B♭[A♯] (see Example 4.12). Brahms emphasizes this progression through a *crescendo* reaching *forte* at the dotted-quarter note on B♭.



Example 4.12: Brahms Op. 118 No. 1 mm. 31-33

Musgrave distinguishes the op. 118 pieces from those of op. 116, remarking that the “forceful manner” of the *Capriccios* in the earlier opus is present only in the G minor *Ballade*, no. 3 of op. 118.<sup>241</sup> However, we can sense how Brahms has actually extended his exploration of third relations from op. 116 in the first piece of the later group of *Klavierstücke*. Indeed, the opening motive in octaves is itself expressed as an unfolding of thirds, beginning C B♭ A and A

<sup>241</sup> Musgrave, *Music of Brahms*, 261.

G F. The emphasis on the middle pitch of each of these thirds (featuring a rich tritone dissonance in bar 1) makes clear that the two-bar units are magnifying the linear fall of a third. The outer notes of these motives, on the other hand, spell out a sequence of falling thirds C A F, with a further downward expansion in pitch accomplished in the ensuing measures.

Thus the later descending arpeggiated textures, such as are first heard in measures 12-13, represent a kind of figurative diminution of the initial three-note motives in octaves in the right hand. This is the motivic origin of the later evocative passage cited in Example 4.12. Hence the resourceful, highly differentiated treatment of third relations that we observed in a piece like op. 116 no. 1 surfaces here as well, in a different expressive context. Five bars from the close, Brahms prolongs the second unit of his main motive as an accented F/D dyad over arpeggiated tritones in the left hand sounding D and G#. Here, Brahms's use of third-chains is supplanted by a kind of tritone-chain which can be understood as half of a diminished-third chain. It is this sonority that resolves into the *major* tonic chord of the final bars, a sonority Brahms has held in reserve until the close of the piece, just as in op. 116 no. 7. After the preceding cadenza-like flourish based on rising and falling thirds and the probing, introspective character of earlier passages, this close in major suggest a kind of awakening, expressing a new quality of feeling and sensibility.

#### *No. 6 Intermezzo*

The final piece of op. 118 in E $\flat$  minor exploits the descending third in a uniquely probing fashion. The initial motive of this *Intermezzo* is an elaboration of the minor third space from G $\flat$  to E $\flat$ . An emphasis on motivic descent by third is also prominent in the *Intermezzo* no. 1 where the opening motive is also based on falling thirds moving from C B $\flat$  A, then A G F,

then F E D $\sharp$  as we have seen. Marked “*Largo e mesto*,” or slow and sad, this *Intermezzo* begins *sotto voce* on G $\flat$  as the right hand weaves amongst the pitches G $\flat$  F and E $\flat$  ornamenting the G $\flat$  before slowly falling to a prolonged F and then E $\flat$  (see Example 4.13). This opening motive is then repeated an octave lower immediately, and it returns several times throughout the movement, perhaps most hauntingly before the final cadence. Here the figure is heard dramatically one final time in double octaves played by both hands beginning *pianissimo* and building to *fortissimo* before solidly and softly establishing the cadence in E $\flat$  minor. Brahms’s melodic use of the third in this piece is direct yet subtle. He skillfully constructs a mesmerizing melody based on one single descending minor third.



Example 4.13: Brahms Op. 118 No. 6 mm. 1-4, right hand

The direction that op. 118 no. 6 is to be played in a slow and sad (*mesto*) manner reinforces the frequent association of this compositional approach with melancholic effect. But it is important to realize that Brahms’s development of third relations in this piece is by no means limited to the motivic magnification of the falling third G $\flat$  to E $\flat$  as a primary, almost obsessive musical idea. The uncanny clouds of rapid figuration in the bass heard already near the outset of op. 118 no. 6 also represent third-chains, rising and falling, providing a striking kind of counterpoint to the main motive. In this somber, mysterious context, the sweeping arpeggiations



based on diminished-seventh harmonies must also be recognized as third-chains which elaborate the same minor-third interval that is so hauntingly profiled from the outset.

Other pieces with the *mesto* indication are not abundant, but two that stand out in relation to this discussion are the second movement *Largo e mesto*, in D minor of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in D major, op. 10 no. 3, and the third movement *Adagio e mesto* in E $\flat$  minor from Brahms's Horn Trio, op. 40. The *mesto* movement of the Horn Trio also contains descending thirds and alludes to death with its tragic ending.<sup>242</sup>

References to the E $\flat$  minor *Intermezzo*, op. 118 no. 6, appear at the end of Englemann's letter to Brahms on 18 Jan. 1897. Englemann reports that they are hoping for an F# in place of a G $\flat$  at the opening of the piece, which is based on the descending third interval of G $\flat$  to E $\flat$ . He says they will continue playing the piece with G $\flat$  until they hear better news about Brahms's health, whereupon they would play F#. Brahms's E $\flat$  minor *Intermezzo* is here brought into relationship with the composer's serious illness from the liver cancer that would lead to his own death in April.<sup>243</sup>

### ***Klavierstücke, Op. 119***

Brahms's op. 119 from 1893 provides further examples of the prominent use of thirds, and the first of these pieces is one of the most extraordinary of all. These four pieces are the last solo piano pieces that Brahms wrote, and it comes as no surprise that he resorts to the descending

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<sup>242</sup> See John Walter Hill, "Thematic Transformation, Folksong and Nostalgia in Brahms's Horn Trio op. 40," *The Musical Times* 152/1914 (2011): 20-24.

<sup>243</sup> *Th. W. Englemann to Johannes Brahms* [18 January 1897], in *Johannes Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Th. Wilhelm Englemann*, Letter 170, p. 173-175.

third-chain once again in the opening statements of these pieces. Structural third-chains appear in the first two *Intermezzi* and the last *Rhapsodie*. Brahms writes to Clara Schumann about the first *Intermezzo* of op. 119 in a letter from May 1893:

...The little piece is exceptionally melancholy and to say ‘to be played very slowly’ isn’t saying enough. Every measure and every note must sound ritard[ando], as though one wished to suck melancholy out of each and every one, with a wantonness and contentment derived from the aforementioned dissonances!...<sup>244</sup> [“...*sehr langsame spielen, ist nicht genug gesagt. Jeder Takt und jede Note muss wie ritard. klingen, als ob man Melancholie aus jeder einzelnene saugen sollte.*”]

Schumann treasured this “exceptionally melancholy” B minor piece, asking Brahms in turn to send her the other pieces in op. 119.<sup>245</sup> In his letter, Brahms describes the melancholic nature of this first *Intermezzo* as closely bound up with dissonances. When it is played slowly and sensitively as Brahms suggests, the falling melodic motion coupled with the harmonic ambiguity of the successive unfolding thirds conveys a strangely bleak yet richly emotional character, a feeling touched as well by a kind of “contentment” or fulfillment.

This exquisite *Adagio* reminds us once more of the range and depth of expression represented in Brahms’s late music in which third-chains are prominent. The spectrum of emotions evoked by his use of this compositional strategy embraces melancholic themes of longing, despair and sadness, but also wandering, dreaming, nervousness and anxiety. Brahms often employs chains of descending thirds in his last introspective works to convey reflective sentiments. For this reason, he dwells on the sonorities, sustaining the pitches of the rich chords made up of superimposed thirds. The resulting dissonances and the gradual decay of these complex, poignant sounds contribute to the character of melancholy that Brahms himself

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<sup>244</sup> *Johannes Brahms to Clara Schumann* [May 1893]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 706.

<sup>245</sup> *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 706.

especially stressed in relation to the B minor *Intermezzo* of op. 119.

### *No. 1 Intermezzo*

The B minor *Intermezzo* opens with delicate descending thirds presented in three chains over the first three measures: F# D B G E; G E C# A F# D; C# A F# D B G. In this case, the descending thirds in linear form also form a vertical sonority of stacked thirds by the end of each measure as a result of the prolonged individual notes; other examples of this technique are found in op. 116, as well as in op. 118 no. 1. Consequently, in the first measure we hear an accumulation of tones forming a ninth-chord (an eleventh-chord once A is sounded as the last note in the measure); regarded from the lowest to the highest pitches, this sonority includes E G# B D F# A—an all diatonic sonority constructed of major and minor thirds (see Example 4.14). Brahms subsequently uses another chain of descending thirds in the bass beginning in measure 7, with one link missing: F# D (B) G E C.

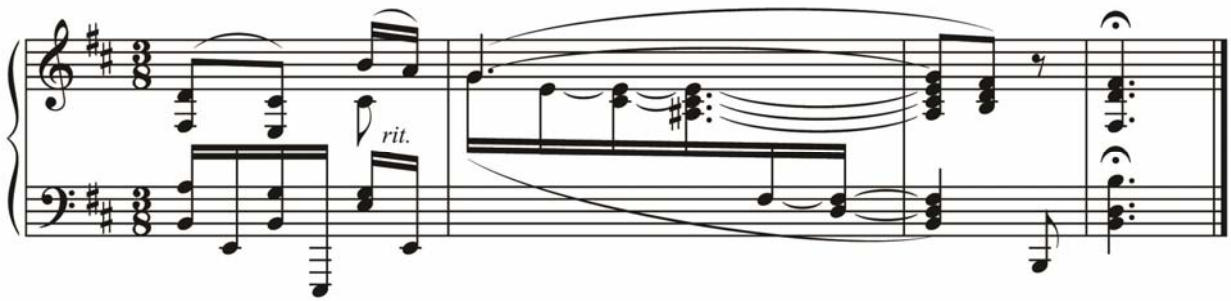
Brahms uses chains of descending thirds as a transition to the return of the opening theme, much like he does in the finale of the Fourth Symphony. But in this passage (shown in Example 4.15), the entire transition (m. 43-46) is made up of descending third-chains and stacked thirds—a form not used in the Fourth Symphony, but which is more similar to the *Capriccios* of op. 116. When the original melody appears again, the descending thirds are once more present, but they are treated in a slightly different way. Brahms uses some enharmonic spellings and adds a few neighboring notes, changing the rhythm slightly to be more florid. The rhythmic animation of the middle section of the piece in D minor exerts an influence here on the reprise of the opening theme built from the falling thirds.

Example 4.14: Brahms op. 119 no. 1 mm. 1-8

Example 4.15: Brahms op. 119 no. 1 mm. 43-46

At the conclusion of this piece, following several striking pauses and short silences, Brahms employs a thirteenth chord made up of six stacked thirds. Regarded from the bottom upward this series is B D F# A# C# E G; it represents therefore a B minor tonic triad above which Brahms superimposes a diminished-seventh chord spanning the intervallic space from A# to G. This highly dissonant sonority appears in the penultimate measure before it resolves to a B minor triad (see Example 4.16). Such a technique of stacking thirds is one that Brahms used

more than once in his op. 116 pieces, but only in vertical sonorities of four or five notes. Here, just a year later in 1893, he employs a more audacious, even radical harmony resulting in this vertical sonority of seven stacked thirds. This chord is not articulated in a single moment, but is built up gradually one descending third at a time through prolonged holds before achieving its full harmonic presence. In this context, we might even regard the top of this chain as including the B in the right hand which appears as part of the plagal E minor harmony just before the third to last measure. While it is not present in the stacked sonority (except in the bass), this B begins the descent of prolonged pitches and extends the chain to cover a full octave.



Example 4.16: Brahms op. 119 no. 1 mm. 64-67

Cone admires this passage as an example of Brahms's use of arpeggiated melodies constructed from descending thirds in the bass line, which "affect not only a gradual shift in function but often a constant harmonic enrichment as well, for each successive bass-note may be retained as an element of the chords that follow."<sup>246</sup> Dunsby writes in this connection that: "...the succession of thirds establishes a separate organizing principle which demands to be continued. A complete cycle of thirds using only one scale will repeat itself on the seventh step, and will have presented the notes of the complete scale."<sup>247</sup>

<sup>246</sup> Cone, "Harmonic Congruence in Brahms," 170-171.

<sup>247</sup> Dunsby, *Structural Ambiguity in Brahms*, 94.

Jürgen Uhde, on the other hand, stresses the dissipation of sonority at the close of op. 119 no. 1, commenting that “Das Ende des Stücks ist darzustellen, als verlösche alle Lebenskraft.”<sup>248</sup> [The end of the piece is depicting the dying vigor for life]. His observation is supported by the four silences that occur in the closing *pianissimo* passage in the last ten measures. As the falling third-chain returns moving slower and ever softer until the final chord, this melancholic piece gradually comes to rest. The transparent textures of this piece place even more emphasis on the tonally ambiguous descending third-chains. Brahms probes these chains of thirds from the outset and continues them even more searchingly at the end, weaving a melancholic tone through the entire piece. As we shall see, Uhde’s association of the third-chains at the end of the piece with dying is echoed in other late compositions by Brahms, most notably in his songs “Feldeinsamkeit,” op. 86 no. 2 and “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” op. 121 no. 3.

### *No. 3 Intermezzo*

The *Intermezzo* no. 3 in C major invites comparison in its use of third relations to the E $\flat$  minor piece of op. 118. In character, these two *Intermezzi* could not be more different. Whereas the character of op. 118 no. 6 is somber or even tragic, op. 119 no. 3 is gracious and lively, with distinct touches of humor. The structural parallel between these pieces is nevertheless striking. Like op. 118 no. 6, the C major *Intermezzo* employs a principal motive that itself outlines the interval of a third: here the major third E to G. Brahms also stresses the sixth scale degree, A, which appears in repetitive, dance-like rhythmic patterns of the melody once in bar 1 and twice in bar 2. In support of this shifting melodic emphasis, Brahms often uses A minor and E minor harmonies, thereby emphasizing harmonic degrees at the distance of a third from the tonic C.

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<sup>248</sup> Jürgen Uhde and Renate Wieland, *Denken und Spielen: Studien zu einer Theorie der musikalischen Darstellung* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988), 275.

In the later transitional passage in measures 35-36, on the other hand, Brahms employs descending thirds in octaves in both hands; this passage represents an outcome of an emphatic *crescendo* to *forte* in the preceding bars, providing a bold means of continuation to the following section. The third-chain is emphasized here in four octaves at the same time: G E C A $\flat$  F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G (see Example 4.17). The progression by falling thirds is underscored by the lack of harmonization in this passage; they function rather like a cleansing palate for the ear at this transitional juncture.



Example 4.17: Brahms op. 119 no. 3 mm. 35-36

Later in op. 119 no. 3, Brahms prominently uses both rising and falling thirds in an expressive passage (mm. 49-55) built as a variation on the opening theme. Rising and falling thirds appear in the arpeggiated left-hand accompaniment beginning in m. 49, and continue to build in intensity and register with rising and falling thirds from the right hand until measure 55 where linear rising third-chains are stacked in all voices: E G B D F in the right hand, harmonized by linear chains D F A and G B D F in the higher registers; similarly B D F, in the left hand bass, harmonized by G B D, and D F A (see Example 4.18). In some of the closing gestures of this delightful *Intermezzo*, on the other hand, Brahms often juxtaposes the sixth, A, with the notes of the tonic triad, C, creating a kind of tonal pairing of C major with A minor

harmonies, as is evident in the sweeping downward gesture in sixteenth-notes in bars 62-63.

Example 4.18: Brahms op. 119 no. 3 mm. 49-56

#### *No. 4 Rhapsodie*

Brahms caps his op. 119 piano pieces with a *Rhapsodie* which contains a most varied use of thirds on multiple structural levels. On the largest level, his choice of key reflects movement by thirds. The piece opens in E $\flat$  major and concludes in E $\flat$  minor, but modulations in between include C minor and major as well as A $\flat$  minor and major, keys that are related by thirds. The opening statement appears in E $\flat$  major but is immediately followed by a similar statement appearing boldly in E $\flat$  minor at measure 16 (see Example 4.19). It is this E $\flat$  minor portion that is full of descending thirds. Not only are the chords in the right hand part stacked with thirds, but they descend by thirds in parallel motion with the top line outlining the longest chain: E $\flat$  C $\flat$  A $\flat$  G $\flat$ /F D B $\flat$ .





Example 4.19: Brahms op. 119 no. 4 mm. 16-20

In comparison to the descending third-chains of the first and third pieces, those appearing the fourth are embedded even more deeply within the musical textures. Because there are other neighboring notes between the thirds, they subsequently act as structural markers appearing on longer notes or at the beginning of a measure or group of notes. After three measures of punctuated chords with a descending bass line, the falling thirds resume three more times in measure 24 with the first note of each beat in a more truncated fashion. When the thirds appear in measure 56 in a restatement of the passage at measure 16 but in C minor, the descending thirds are represented in the uppermost note of each grouping in a syncopated manner: G E $\flat$  C A $\flat$  F. Accented thirds occur at the beginning of each triplet group starting at measure 65 with the passage largely in C minor (see Example 4.20). This occurrence of the third-chain is especially noteworthy because of its motion—first ascending then descending: C E $\flat$  G E $\flat$  C. It continues on, skipping A $\flat$  and beginning anew in measure 71 with the rising thirds F $\sharp$  A C E G, then passing through E C A. In the C minor passage beginning at measure 133, the first notes of each triplet figure move by thirds, outlining the primary keys used in the piece: C E $\flat$  A $\flat$ .

The image displays a musical score for Brahms' op. 119 no. 4, measures 65-78. The score is written for piano and features a 2/4 time signature. It consists of three systems of staves. The first system (measures 65-68) is in the bass clef, with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system (measures 69-72) is in the treble clef, with a *cresc.* (crescendo) dynamic. The third system (measures 73-76) is in the treble clef, with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score includes numerous triplet markings (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and asterisks (\*) above certain measures, likely indicating specific harmonic or melodic features of interest. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor).

Example 4.20: Brahms op. 119 no. 4 mm. 65-78

Another prominent descending third-chain appears in a linear form without neighboring notes at measure 192. Voices in the left hand are moving in contrary motion, and the lowest voice outlines a descending third sequence: B $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  C $\flat$  A $\flat$  F $\flat$  (see Example 4.21). This sequence is similar to the one Beethoven sketched and used for his “Hammerklavier” Sonata: F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$  E $\flat$  B/(C $\flat$ ). The first four tones of this sequence used by Brahms are identical to the last four used by Beethoven.



Example 4.21: Brahms op. 119 no. 4 mm. 192-196

Eight years after the Fourth Symphony, the structural chain of thirds remained an indispensable compositional device for Brahms. Indeed, as the late cluster of piano works shows, he retained an intense, and sometimes almost obsessive interest in the various compositional possibilities afforded by textures centered on third relations. The structural and expressive potential of third-chains, especially but by no means exclusively in their descending configurations, are thoroughly explored in these remarkable works.

### F Minor Clarinet Sonata, Op. 120 No. 1

It is hard to contemplate the opening of the F minor Clarinet Sonata without also thinking of the earlier Piano Quintet op. 34 in the same key. In both works, Brahms stresses the relation between the third related triads of F minor and D<sup>b</sup> major. The pivot between these triads consists of the semitone C to D<sup>b</sup>, or the 5<sup>th</sup> to <sup>b</sup>6<sup>th</sup> scale degrees, a relationship which is announced and stressed in octaves in the unharmonized openings of both pieces.

The first movement of the F minor Clarinet Sonata is an excellent example of the how Brahms has embedded thirds into the harmonic structure as well as into the melody, varying the

use of this device each time it appears. Brahms uses both rising and falling thirds in the opening piano gesture which are also expressed harmonically through the chord progression underneath the clarinet entrance and in the clarinet entrance itself as falling thirds and rising sixths. Brahms sketched the opening of this first movement on the only extant sketch page for this piece, which is now housed at the GdM in Vienna. This single sketch page contains material for the first sixty-eight measures of the first movement written in ink and the first twenty-eight measures of the third movement sketched in pencil. At the top of this sketch page, the opening octave piano figure is expressed in a single line, and the first phrase of the clarinet melody appears in its entirety, lacking the piano accompaniment.<sup>249</sup>

The piano entrance in octaves soon presents a rhythmic diminution of the opening figure where the C, E $\flat$  and D $\flat$  (minus the F) are repeated in eighth notes in the second measure (see Example 4.22). This pattern of a rising third and falling second is repeated in the third measure preceding two pairs of descending thirds. Brahms builds a G $\flat$  major triad of falling thirds over the opening measures as well: D $\flat$  in measure 2, B $\flat$  in measure 3 and finally G $\flat$  in measure 4. G $\flat$  is the Neapolitan scale-step a semitone above the tonic F minor. In the fifth measure where the clarinet enters, the chord progression in the piano moves from the harmonics of F minor to D $\flat$  (with clarinet supplying the A $\flat$ ) and then to the sonorities of B $\flat$  minor and G $\flat$ . This harmonic progression—F D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G $\flat$ —involves not simply a descending chain of thirds, but the outline of a major seventh chord. Here, as in the op. 116 pieces, the third-chains are realized not just as a falling series of single pitches, but as a sequence of harmonies. This kind of

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<sup>249</sup> This single sketch page for the Clarinet Sonata in F minor, op. 120 no. 1 is housed at the Archive of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna, and is reproduced as Figure 3.2 in Notley, *Lateness and Brahms*, 100.

coordination of motivic and harmonic aspects parallels the treatment in Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata as well, as we have seen. As used here, the chains of thirds are not simply motivic, but they are harmonic as well and can also be reflected in the modulatory scheme within movements.

The image shows a musical score for the first movement of Brahms's F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, measures 1-12. The score is in 3/4 time and F minor. It features a Clarinet part and a Piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a series of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The clarinet part has a melodic line with some grace notes and a triplet at the end.

Example 4.22: Brahms F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, First Movement mm. 1-12

A by-product of these third-chains is the tensional  $D\flat$  to C and  $G\flat$  to F steps that are exposed at the outset of the first movement. The tension that stems from these semitones contributes to the imaginative, almost wandering character of the music and to the sustained melodic interest in the clarinet part. Peter Smith scrutinizes this opening passage of the movement in his article on the Neapolitan complex in this first movement of the F minor Clarinet

Sonata. In the accompaniment under the opening clarinet statement, the harmonic progression moves one chord each measure from 5- 11 as follows: i (VI) iv (bII) V<sup>h</sup> V; the first four chords are connected by descending thirds. The progression from the i to VI in measures 5 and 6 is facilitated through motion from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> scale degree (C to D<sup>b</sup>). Similarly, the progression from the iv to bII is facilitated by motion from the 5<sup>th</sup> to b6<sup>th</sup> (F to G<sup>b</sup>).<sup>250</sup> The Neapolitan and b6 scale degrees also play a crucial role in the outer movements of Beethoven's "Appassionata" Sonata op. 57, also in F minor, a work that perhaps exerted some influence in this regard. Beethoven's "Appassionata," also displays prominent stress on semitones G<sup>b</sup> to F and D<sup>b</sup> to C, the latter of which is present in a motto near the beginning of the piece.

The rich complexity of Brahms's use of this device in op. 120 no. 1 comes from layering descending third-chains in the clarinet melody over a harmonic progression of falling thirds. Brahms's veiled use of thirds in the opening piano motive provides an excellent platform for the opening statement of the solo clarinet. The melodic presentation of descending thirds is directly audible, appearing as it does in the form of descending thirds and rising sixths, doubling back on occasion (see Example 4.22). Beginning in measure five, the chain of thirds can be outlined as C A<sup>b</sup> F D<sup>b</sup> B<sup>b</sup>, eventually leading to G. Despite this gap, the G in measures 11 and 12 can be regarded as part of the chain because of the emphasis given to it at the end of the phrase. Even as the direct succession of descending thirds breaks down in the melody at measure 8, the music continues to be built on thirds through the end of the phrase in measure 11: B<sup>b</sup> to D<sup>b</sup> is an

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<sup>250</sup> Peter H. Smith, "Brahms and the Neapolitan Complex: bII, bVI, and Their Multiple Functions in the First Movement of the F-Minor Clarinet Sonata," *Brahms Studies*, Vol. 2, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 169-208. See esp. 176 and the example on 177.

ascending minor third (or 10<sup>th</sup>), E to G is also an ascending minor third, A to F is a descending major third, and G to B $\flat$  and back to G is a minor third. In this context, Brahms isolates the interval of a third and presents it in changing contexts, absorbing this compositional device into his characteristic treatment of what has become known as developing variation.

The image shows a musical score for Brahms' F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, First Movement, mm. 72-76. The score is in 3/4 time and F minor. It features a Clarinet part and a Piano accompaniment. The Clarinet part consists of two staves of music, with the first staff starting with a treble clef and the second with a bass clef. The Piano accompaniment also consists of two staves, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The music is characterized by chains of thirds in both the melody and the accompaniment.

Example 4.23: Brahms F minor Clarinet Sonata, op. 120 no. 1, First Movement: mm. 72-76

We can recognize that even in this short twelve-bar opening section of the first movement, Brahms has used chains of thirds in multiple ways: structurally, harmonically and melodically. As a master of developing variation, Brahms has created an opening passage that combines ongoing variations based on a single device into a thematic presentation of richness and subtlety. In many other parts of this Sonata, Brahms continues to display this ability to

continually re-fashion familiar musical ideas in new ways.<sup>251</sup>

Later in the first movement Brahms constructs the clarinet line from successive descending thirds in major, minor and diminished forms. This passage (mm. 72-76) can be interpreted in two ways: either as two interwoven chains of descending thirds, alternating with each couplet of eighth notes, or as a continuous chain of descending thirds (see Example 4.23). As we have seen, a descending stepwise series of thirds was already latent in the opening motto; here in the clarinet, that tendency comes to the surface of the musical texture expressed as two-note slurred figures in a series of sequences with a falling contour. The first series of descending figures in bars 72-73 passes through A $\flat$  to D; Brahms then uses a sequence of that entire phrase in bars 74-75, passing through G to D, but each of these points in the falling line is expressed as a slurred interval of a third.

As at the beginning of the piece, the accompaniment in the piano is built from another chain of thirds. In this instance, the right-hand of the piano mirrors the clarinet beginning in measure 73 and creates vertical harmonies of major and minor thirds in addition to the linear chains. Brahms has deepened his use of this compositional device by varying its appearances and layering the musical texture.

This method of constructing descending third-chains from a series of motivic thirds in a falling sequence was of course not entirely new. This figurative technique is mentioned for instance in an eighteenth century compositional treatise by Johann Philipp Kirnberger in which he states that “a whole series of leaps by thirds that ascend or descend by step can be used” and that “progressions by thirds can be counted among the lightest and most pleasant

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<sup>251</sup> More detailed discussion of developing variation in Brahms’s F Minor Clarinet Sonata is offered by Walter Frisch in his book *Brahms and Developing Variation*, see especially 147-151. Also see in this regard Frisch, “Brahms, Developing Variation, and the Schoenberg Critical Tradition,” *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* 5/3 (1982): 215-232.



progressions.”<sup>252</sup> He describes his given illustration (see Example 4.24) as a “pleasant and agreeable progression” in which the presence of the tritone is hardly noticeable.<sup>253</sup> The similarity between Kirnberger’s example and the one by Brahms (in Example 4.23) is remarkable. However, Kirnberger shows the chain in its purest form comprised of purely diatonic pitches. Brahms for his part strays from diatonicism in his chain and occasionally skips a couplet in the progression. It is likely that Brahms was aware of this treatise since he held a copy of Kirnberger’s *Kunst des reinen Satzes* in his personal library, as well as some of his other writings and compositions.<sup>254</sup>



Example 4.24: Kirnberger's example of a progression of descending thirds

In addition to its melodic and harmonic functions, the descending third-chain in the first movement of op. 120 no. 1 has a particularly moving effect. The opening passage assumes a lilting but purposeful character that is sustained with intensity by both the clarinet and piano. Along with the flowing triple meter, the chain helps create a sense of continual unfolding motion. Kirnberger also addressed the affective qualities of the interval and its inversion in his treatise, describing them as follows:<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Johann Philipp Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, from *Die Kunst des reinen Satzes in der Musik* [1771-1779], translated by David Beach and Jurgen Thym, Music Theory Translation Series, 4, ed. Claude V. Palisca (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982), 357, 360.

<sup>253</sup> From Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 359. See example 3.29.

<sup>254</sup> Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms*, 155-156.

<sup>255</sup> Kirnberger, *The Art of Strict Musical Composition*, 373.

<i>Descending third</i>	<i>Ascending sixth</i>
Diminished—very melancholy, tender	Augmented—does not occur in melody
Minor—calm, moderately cheerful	Major—merry, vehement, intense
Major—pathetic, also melancholy	Minor—melancholy, imploring, caressing

It is very noteworthy that among the six listed variations of a descending third, the adjective “melancholy” appears no less than three times in Kirnberger’s descriptions. Brahms’s use of the descending third chain is often directed to the expression of melancholy, among other darker emotions such as grief and anxiety, and also a general atmosphere of tension, wandering or drifting. A century before Brahms came on the scene, Kirnberger had already listed these expressive associations. The perception of these intervals by a notable theorist of the Classical era was still fully relevant at the end of the nineteenth century in the music of Brahms. While the chains of falling thirds in the first movement of the F Minor Clarinet Sonata provide a memorable example of this melancholy expression, it is conveyed still more explicitly and intensely in the manifestations of third-chains in two of his songs, “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” op. 121 no. 3, and “Feldeinsamkeit,” op. 86 no.2.

**“O Tod, wie bitter bist du” from *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, Op. 121 No. 3 and**

**“Feldeinsamkeit,” Op. 86 No. 2**

Brahms’s final published work from 1896 is perhaps the most introspective of all—a set of four serious songs, reflecting on death. There are surely several sources of inspiration for these extraordinary songs: the recent deaths of close friends, the artistic inspiration from Brahms’s friend and visual artist Max Klinger, the increasing urgency toward expression of his religious feelings and thoughts about mortality. In the years leading up to the composition of

these songs, Brahms lost two dear friends and was about to lose a third. Elizabeth von Herzogenberg died in 1892, Hans van Bülow in 1894. Brahms gives a composition date of May 1896 for these songs, shortly before Clara Schumann's death on 20 May 1896. Eduard Hanslick writes:

Certainly these *Vier Ernste Gesänge* had always been perceived and interpreted as a certain premonition of his own death, although Brahms was still in good health when he wrote them. I thought in my own mind that they had an immediate connection to the death of Clara Schumann, which left him deeply shaken. But today I must declare this supposition to be erroneous. Brahms's intimate friend Herr Alwin V. Beckerath, one of the most well-informed supporters of music in the Rhineland, writes to me from Crefeld on this subject.

Alwin Beckrath writes that two days after Clara Schumann's funeral, Brahms performed the "Vier Ernste Gesänge" for him and then said, "I wrote these for myself for my birthday." Beckerath goes on to comment that these compositions do not stand in any casual relationship to Clara Schumann's death.<sup>256</sup>

These songs were dedicated to German artist Max Klinger (1857-1920) as a token of gratitude for the *Brahms-Phantasie*.<sup>257</sup> Klinger, who had a strong interest in music, had given to Brahms his latest work—*Brahms-Phantasie*, an ambitious cycle of images complete with reproductions of select Brahms songs published in 1894.

A closer look at their relationship in Brahms's later years reveals an important evolving friendship. According to Inge Van Rij: "The composer with whom Klinger had the longest and arguably deepest involvement was Brahms. He dedicated the graphic cycle *Amor und Psyche* to

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<sup>256</sup> Letter from Alwin V. Beckerath to Eduard Hanslick. Printed in Eduard Hanslick, "Erinnerungen und Briefe," in *Am Ende des Jahrhunderts (1895-1899): Musikalische Kritiken und Schilderungen*. Die Moderne Oper, part VII (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Berlin, 1899), 372-409. Translated by Susan Gillespie as "Memories and Letters," in *Brahms and His World*, ed. Walter Frisch (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 163-184. See esp. 177.

<sup>257</sup> Hanslick, "Memories and Letters," 177. Max Klinger, *Brahms-Phantasie* (Leipzig, 1894). For a more detailed look at Brahms and Klinger's *Brahms-Phantasie*, see Kevin C. Karnes, "Brahms, Max Klinger, and the promise of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: Revisiting the *Brahms-Phantasie* (1894)," in *Brahms and His World*, revised ed., ed. Walter Frisch and Kevin C. Karnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 167-193.

Brahms in 1880, produced title pages for several of the composer's works, corresponded with Brahms over the final years of his life, and met with the composer both in Leipzig and in Vienna.<sup>258</sup> Brahms also admired Klinger's art and was especially complimentary after receiving the *Brahms-Phantasie*. Their relationship lasted almost twenty years, and while they only met three times, they exchanged sixteen letters in which they primarily discussed art.<sup>259</sup>

Klinger's graphic cycles resemble song cycles in their structure. Klinger called these visual works compositions and gave some of them musical titles such as the *Intermezzi Opus IV* from 1881, of which Brahms also owned a copy.<sup>260</sup> Brahms may have been influenced by Klinger to name his op. 117 piano pieces *Intermezzi* and his op. 116 piano pieces *Fantasien*.<sup>261</sup> Klinger's *Brahms-Phantasie* responds graphically and in symbolic terms to a select group of Brahms *Lieder*; he was inspired by the music to elaborate flights of fancy whose imaginative scope and power were appreciated by the composer. An excellent example of this graphical depiction is the pages of Klinger's illustrations for Brahms's *Feldeinsamkeit*, op. 86 no. 2. The text of the song depicts solitude in the field with a man lying on the grass staring up at the blue sky and dreaming, and similarly the illustration of a man lying on grass looking up at the sky is a very literal interpretation. However, Klinger originally used a similar illustration (with a man lying under a tree) for the cover of Brahms's op. 96, leading Brahms to write him and suggest that this

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<sup>258</sup> Inge Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 190. Max Klinger, *Amor und Psyche* [46 prints] (Munich, 1880).

<sup>259</sup> Jan Brachmann, "Johannes Brahms und Max Klinger—eine Kunstfreundschaft," *Brahms-Studien* 15 (2008): 69-87. See especially the abstract on p. 69.

<sup>260</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections*, 193.

<sup>261</sup> See Thomas K. Nelson, "Brahms in Accorde with Klinger," Part II, *The American Brahms Society Newsletter* 18/2 (2000), 4. Cited in Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections*, 193, 242n.

Walter Frisch also discusses the Brahms-Klinger connection in his book on turn-of-the-century German Modernism. Walter Frisch, *German Modernism: Music and the Arts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

cover may have been intended for "Feldeinsamkeit" instead. In a letter from Brahms to Klinger in March 1886, the composer expresses his sincere fondness for Klinger's work and excitement over their collaboration, but also his concerns about the illustration showing the man on the grass.

I should have told you long ago how pleased I was with the thought of seeing your fantasies on the title-pages of my compositions. The whole style of your art—your rich and fantastic invention which is at the same time of such splendid earnestness, of such momentous depth, leading then to ever further musings and imaginings—seems to me to be very appropriate for announcing music... Well, to my thanks for everything you give us, I could now simply add my specific thanks for the first printed title-pages of my new songs. But that would be dishonest, and I regard you much too highly not to speak to you—as I would to myself. Honestly, therefore: so far, I cannot take as much pleasure in these pages as I had expected on the basis of your sketches... I cannot possibly be mistaken; after all, I even saw the very first page among those sketches, and was it intended for 'Feldeinsamkeit'? If I am right—how dearly I wish it could have appeared in that volume, instead of here, where it may remain ineffective because it is too enigmatic and unintelligible (if I may be the judge of that, since I believe I know it)...<sup>262</sup>

Brahms writes with a respectful tone, taking care not to offend Klinger. Klinger seems to have taken Brahms's comments to heart having included a similar illustration with *Feldeinsamkeit* in the *Brahms-Phantasie*.

Musically, Brahms's setting of *Feldeinsamkeit* (1860) by German poet Hermann Allmers (1821-1902) is rather light and soft and rhythmically constant.<sup>263</sup> It is almost as if we can "see" the clouds passing by slowly overhead. The ostinato rhythmic pattern in the bass (a dotted-quarter and eighth-note figure) is sustained throughout most of the song, except for one passage in which time seems to stand still. Brahms abruptly changes the style and feel of the song at the words "als ob ich längst gestorben bin" [as if I died long ago] where descending thirds are used

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<sup>262</sup> Letter from Brahms to Max Klinger, [March 1886]. English trans. in *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, ed. Avins, 632-633.

<sup>263</sup> Johannes Brahms, *Feldeinsamkeit* Opus 86 Nr. 2 "Ich ruhe still im hohen grünen Gras," Faksimile nach dem in Privatbesitz befindlichen Autograph, Commentary by Ernst Hertrich (Munich: Henle, 1983).

exclusively in the voice and piano accompaniment: D $\flat$  B $\flat$  G—A $\flat$  F D $\flat$  B. (See Example 4.25). The soft staccato octaves of the accompaniment in this passage stand apart; they are markedly different from the rest of the song, and more attention is drawn thereby to the words. In this case, as in op. 121 no. 3, Brahms uses descending thirds and *only* descending thirds to emphasize and express death in the text. This is an important observation, since it reflects on the symbolism of this technique in Brahms’s late music. The thirds are foreshadowed earlier in the accompaniment conveying a sense of “ruhe”.

Example 4.25: Brahms “Feldeinsamkeit,” op. 86 no. 2, mm. 26-28

In Klinger’s work, this passage appears on the second page of the song with an illustration of two faces in the left margin. The man is gazing longingly at the woman, but her attention is not directed back at him. In this simple scene Klinger visually represents the despairing nature of the descending thirds in this passage. Van Rij comments on the visual connection of this illustration to the troubling personal relationship alluded to in the companion songs.<sup>264</sup>

In addition to this striking passage, Van Rij argues for the presence of a second third-

<sup>264</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms’s Song Collections*, 205.

chain in the song, one that is embedded in the vocal line beginning at the opening of the setting on C in the vocal part, mm. 2-6 and again in mm. 10-11.<sup>265</sup> Because of the non-linear nature of this chain, meaning there are many other notes in the melodic line that are not part of the chain, it is more difficult to hear.

Due to the strong emphasis Brahms places on the contrasting passage of the songs at the words “mir ist, als ob ich längst gestorben bin,” this line assumes enhanced importance for the listener and changes the contextual focus of the song from being nature-centered to being primarily about the feelings of the individual protagonist. The stark descending thirds conjure feelings of hopelessness and despair. Perhaps this is why Allmers felt Brahms missed the point of his poem.<sup>266</sup> The text by itself does not suggest an emphasis on the protagonist feeling as though he has long been dead. While the composer changed the poetic emphasis of the song through his musical setting, it should be noted that he also altered the second word in Allmers’s poem from “liege” to “ruhe”.<sup>267</sup> While this single word substitution does not drastically change the meaning, it does present a subtle difference from “I lie calmly in the high green grass” to “I rest quietly in the high green grass.” The second meaning could be interpreted as a subtle hint towards the feeling of being dead as is emphasized later in the song. Klinger’s depiction of the man gazing lovingly at the woman while she is focused elsewhere is closer to Brahms’s aesthetic interpretation of this passage in the poem evoking despair and hopelessness. It would seem then, that both Brahms and Klinger altered the intended meaning of Allmers’s poem.

Other composers have offered settings of this text, giving the poem very different

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<sup>265</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms’s Song Collections*, 206. See especially Example 5.1.

<sup>266</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms’s Song Collections*, 204. See also Christian Martin Schmidt, *Johannes Brahms und seine Zeit* (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 1998), 150.

<sup>267</sup> Allmers’s original poem appears in *Hermann Allmers: Werke*. Ed. Kurd Schulz (Göttingen: Sachse & Pohl Verlag, 1965), 341.

interpretations. The young Charles Ives set this poem as an exercise for a class at Yale taught by Horatio Parker, who wanted Ives to compose new settings of texts already set by composers like Schumann and Brahms. Ives's winding melody is accompanied by a series of steady running arpeggios ascending from the left hand to the right. While the song is set in D<sup>b</sup> major, it passes through many modulations. A few lines of text are repeated immediately after their first occurrence, and Ives brings back the words of the opening line at the close (Brahms uses no repetition of text in his setting). Ives used the same text Brahms did, substituting "ruhe" for Allmers's "liege," which shows that he must have used Brahms's setting as a point of departure.

Among the lines of text repeated are "mir ist, als ob ich längst gestorben bin" and "und ziehe selig mit durch ew'ge Räume." While Brahms singles out "mir ist, als ob ich längst gestorben bin" as the one striking point of textual contrast in the song, Ives chooses "und ziehe selig mit durch ew'ge Räume," as the focus of his song. The line emphasized by Brahms is repeated in Ives songs, but that repetition is the only extra attention Ives gives to those words, since the accompaniment does not change here as it does in Brahms's setting. However, Ives's accompaniment and meter do change with the next phrase, "und ziehe selig mit durch ew'ge Räume," a line he chooses to emphasize before returning to the opening text and similar chain of running arpeggios. He uses a series of half-note chords, both in minor and diminished form, in the right hand of the piano followed by syncopation in the left and a *rallentando* at the end of a single measure in 3/2. While Ives's change in accompaniment is not as stark as the octave descending thirds in Brahms, it certainly deviates strongly from the wave of two-octave arpeggios. In this setting, Ives emphasizes the image of blissfully drifting with the clouds through space forever rather than the feeling of having died long before, as in Brahms's setting. While there are many differences between these songs, it is striking to note how both Ives and



Brahms choose rather uniform accompaniment and break the pattern only to emphasize a line of text before returning to a similar style. As Ives studied Brahms's setting, he presumably found this technique attractive and incorporated it into his setting.

When this piece was introduced the day American composer George Whitefield Chadwick (Parker's former teacher) was visiting class, Ives recalled the comments made by both: Chadwick said, "In its way ['*Feldeinsamkeit*' is] almost as good as Brahms...[and] as good a song as you could write." Parker said he preferred the setting of "Ich grolle nicht" because "it [was] nearer to the G[rolle] of Schumann than the *Summerfields* ['*Feldeinsamkeit*'] was near to Brahms."<sup>268</sup>

There is a strong symbolic correlation for Brahms between chains of descending thirds and a consciousness of morality and the inevitability of death. In relation to an awareness of the transience of life, such descending third-chains can evoke despair, ambiguity and a sense of endless wandering. Despair is conveyed through each descent in pitch, as if hope fades away and is driven deeper into remoteness through the tonal ambiguity that arises from a series of descending major or minor thirds with no clear audible tonic goal. The cyclic nature of descending third-chains sometimes evokes a sense of drifting, of continuing on without end. In fact, as we saw in the second chapter above, Nottebohm labeled these chains "Zirkel-Ketten" or "Circle-Chains," alluding to their capacity to cycle back to where they began, or even recommence their wandering through tonal space. In view of all these associations, it seems logical for Brahms to have drawn the connection between chains of falling thirds and death and to have used them in such a way in some of his songs. *Feldeinsamkeit*, op. 86 no. 2 and "O Tod,

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<sup>268</sup> *Charles Ives: 129 Songs*, ed. H. Wiley Hitchcock (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, Inc., 2004), xxxvii. Quoted from *Charles E. Ives: Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Co., 1991 [1972]), 183-184. See also Hitchcock, *Ives*, plates 3 and 4 appearing after p. lxxi. Plate 3 shows Ives's pencil sketch of "Feldeinsamkeit" dated 1897 and plate 4 shows his ink copy of the song.

wie bitter bist du,” from *Vier Ernste Gesänge*, op. 121 no. 3 are outstanding examples of this association. Roger Scruton has described the falling thirds in “O Tod” as Brahms’s acknowledgement of “the inescapable grief of being human: or rather, the grief that we escape only by unscrupulous shallowness towards self and other.”<sup>269</sup>

The position of the *Vier Ernste Gesänge* as Brahms’s last opus underscores his enduring preoccupation with ultimate issues in his last years. Although all four songs are set using biblical text, they are more spiritual in tone than religious as neither God nor Christ are directly mentioned. “Denn es gehet dem Menschen,” No. 1 is set to Ecclesiastes 3: 19-22; “Ich wandte mich und sahe an,” No. 2 is set to Ecclesiastes 4: 1-3; “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” No. 3 is set to Ecclesiastes (Sirach) 41: 1-2, and “Wenn ich mit Menschen- und mit Engelszungen,” No. 4 is set to 1 Corinthians 13: 1-3, 12-13. It is fitting that Brahms chooses descending thirds to illustrate the melancholy tone of the text in the third song. He emphasizes the meaning of the opening words “O Tod” (“O Death”) by setting them to descending thirds that are delivered very deliberately in half notes followed by an ascending sixth (see Examples 4.26 and 4.27). This motive in the voice begins the song and is immediately echoed and confirmed by the piano. Brahms’s isolation of this interval set to these words is significant and weighty; only rarely does the voice begin a Brahms song before the accompaniment. In op. 121, the first, second and fourth songs in this set all begin with a brief piano introduction.

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<sup>269</sup> Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*, 437.

The image displays the first two measures of the vocal line and piano accompaniment for Brahms' "O Tod, wie bitter bist du". The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are "O Tod, O Tod, wie". The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs, also with a key signature of one sharp and a 3/4 time signature. The piano part features a prominent chain of thirds in the right hand, with the left hand providing a simple harmonic accompaniment.

Example 4.26: Brahms "O Tod, wie bitter bist du", op. 121, mm. 1-2 and reduction

The image displays measures 31-32 of the vocal line and piano accompaniment for Brahms' "O Tod, wie bitter bist du". The vocal line is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are "O Tod, O Tod, wie". The piano accompaniment is in treble and bass clefs, also with a key signature of three sharps and a 3/4 time signature. The piano part features a complex texture with a chain of thirds in the right hand and a more active bass line.

Example 4.27: Brahms "O Tod, wie bitter bist du", op. 121, mm. 31-32

Walter Frisch has written about this topic, and he argues that the chain of thirds with their ensuing inversion as rising sixths is "one of Brahms's most profound thematic

transformations.”<sup>270</sup> This process unfolds in two stages: one in strict descending thirds and the other in ascending sixths (see Examples 4.26 and 4.27). Frisch has interpreted these variations as “two viewpoints on death,” one is “harsh” and the other “blissful.”<sup>271</sup> Thier expressive nature is based on the key change and the shift from descending thirds to ascending sixths, which conveys a quality of acceptance or consolation.

This conciliatory and even triumphant tone towards death is also present in Brahms’s German Requiem, op. 45. In the sixth and penultimate movement, the text at the *Vivace* m. 82 proclaims: Then the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. Then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” [*Denn es wird die Posaune schalen und die Toten werden auf erstehen unverweslich, unverweslich, und wir werden verwandelt, verwandelt werden. Dann, dann wird er füllt werden das Wort, das geschrieben steht: ‘Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg’.*]. Triumphantly, the choir continues in m. 152: Death, where is your victory? Hell, where is your sting? [*Tod, wo ist dein Stachel! Hölle, wo ist dein Sieg!*]. In the ensuing *Allegro* at m. 208, descending thirds accompany the beginning of the text setting: Lord, you are worthy to receive glory and honor and power...” [*Herr, zu bist würdig zu nehmen Preis und Ehre und Kraft...*].<sup>272</sup> The thirds in this setting emphasize the Lord’s power and triumph over death.

Similarly, in the Credo movement of Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*, op. 123, the rising sixths interspersed among descending thirds in the fugue: *Et vitam venture saeculi Amen*. [“And the life of the world to come.”], also displays the use of descending thirds and rising sixths to

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<sup>270</sup> Frisch, *Brahms and Developing Variation*, 152.

<sup>271</sup> Frisch, *Brahms and Developing Variation*, 152. Schoenberg also discusses the importance and meaning of the falling third-chain in “Brahms the Progressive,” 431-435.

<sup>272</sup> Texts for these portions of the German Requiem, op. 45: IV are from the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15:52-55 and Revelation 4:11.

construct a tone of consolation as we shall see. Brahms would have known this passage well, as he owned the *Arbeitskopie* of the *Missa Solemnis*.

Van Rij regards the third-chains of op. 121 in the context of a narrative plot archetype. The archetypal process of seeking consolation—moving from sorrow to comfort—applies both to the biblical texts of these songs and their musical settings while also shaping the narrative that spans the four songs understood as a cycle. The shift from death experienced as a heart-wrenching event to death as a release from the suffering endured during life is conveyed through the elemental brightening change from minor to major. The first song begins and ends in the minor mode (D minor), grounded as it is in an anguished lament of death. Beginning with an angry tone towards death, but with a gleam of hope at the end, both the second and third songs begin in the minor mode and close in the tonic major (II: G minor to G major, III: E minor to E major). The fourth song opens and concludes in the major mode (E $\flat$  major), reflecting the love within the text and the emphasis on comfort for those left behind.<sup>273</sup>

Descending third-chains appear in the second, third and fourth songs of this set, although most boldly in the third song. Van Rij argues that the middle songs are connected to one another through a chain of falling thirds. The pedal tone in the final measure of the second song is G. This G begins a chain that continues in the bass notes of the third movement opening, which continues E C A F $\sharp$ .<sup>274</sup> A nuanced performance of these songs played without much pause between them would assist in the listener's recognition of the bass progression as a continuation from the previous song.

Brahms's choice to set these biblical words to descending thirds is reminiscent of a

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<sup>273</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections*, 79-84.

<sup>274</sup> Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections*, 80-81. See especially example 3.1a.

passage in the Credo of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* op. 123, specifically at the words "et vitam venturi saeculi amen." Beethoven uses a chain of descending thirds as the subject material for a fugue based on that text. This passage was sketched more than any other passage of the Mass, filling a large portion of his *Artaria 195* sketchbook. Brahms would come to own Beethoven's *Arbeitskopie* (or working copy) of the *Missa Solemnis*, which contains some of Beethoven's important late compositional corrections to the score.<sup>275</sup> This document eventually passed to the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna as part of the Brahms *Nachlass*; it is cataloged as A 21. Brahms's ownership of this manuscript source is noteworthy and cannot be ignored as a possible source of compositional inspiration here.

After having used chains of descending thirds in his "Hammerklavier" Sonata, Beethoven returned to that compositional device in this great choral-orchestral work and especially in composing the subject of the fugal finale in the Credo of the *Missa Solemnis*, which is bound up with the notion of the eternal life (see Example 4.28). Here we see a chain coming full circle and passing through the tonic, subdominant, and dominant-seventh sonorities of B $\flat$  major: F D B $\flat$  G E $\flat$  C A F. Kinderman suggests that Beethoven may also have been influenced by the opening theme of Mozart's Symphony in G major, K. 550 from 1778.<sup>276</sup> Mozart famously opens this symphony with a quiet two-part phrase in the violins, which includes an ascending sixth followed by three successive descending thirds with passing tones in between. As we have seen, Brahms also owned the original autograph manuscript copy of this symphony in his personal

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<sup>275</sup> William Kinderman, ed., *Artaria 195*, 49. For more information on the autograph score of the Credo and the *Arbeitskopie*, see Kinderman's commentary in volume 1, chapter 9.

<sup>276</sup> Kinderman, *Artaria 195*, 67. For further discussion on the sketches for this fugue, see the entire chapter 13 of volume 1.

library.<sup>277</sup>

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is a vocal line in 3/2 time, starting with a whole rest followed by a series of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lyrics 'et vi - tam ven - tu - ri sae - - - cu - li a - men\_\_' are written below the notes. The bottom staff is a piano reduction of the same melody, showing the notes G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4 on a single treble clef staff.

Example 4.28: Fugal subject of the Credo in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* op. 123 and reduction

“O Tod” is Brahms’s most elemental and direct, yet profoundly moving use of the compositional resource of the falling third-chain. Falling thirds permeate the motivic structure but Brahms places special emphasis on the single interval of the third, setting this into sharp relief. Schoenberg has also discussed this work and its use of thirds.<sup>278</sup> His analysis of the different chains of thirds heard simultaneously is labeled in the vocal part, and he also shows a harmonic reduction underneath. Schoenberg’s reduction of the first system clearly shows a chain of descending thirds created from the melodic vocal line as well as the accompaniment. It is evident from the very opening of the song how Brahms can take a simple compositional idea and vary it, making it richer and more complex.

In the opening sequence of “O Tod,” the falling thirds in the vocal line are supported by the triads of E minor, C major, A minor and F# major in the piano, therefore harmonizing the seventh sonority B G E C outlined by the repeated "O Tod", which is itself treated as a harmonic dissonance. With regard to Brahms’s treatment of the third in his Fourth Symphony and “O Tod,” op. 121 no. 3, Cone suggests that Schoenberg failed to recognize the full significance of

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<sup>277</sup> Hoffmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms*, 157.

<sup>278</sup> Schoenberg also discusses the importance and meaning of the falling thirds chain on p. 431-435 of his article “Brahms the Progressive” in *Style and Idea*.

this device as used by Brahms. Cone asks provocatively: “Could he, subconsciously or even consciously have suppressed his recognition of a technique that came too close to what he considered an important innovation of his own?”<sup>279</sup> Perhaps. Or maybe Schoenberg did recognize the innovative potential of Brahms’s third-chains and in turn, developed an even greater appreciation for the compositional expertise of the master Brahms.



As we have seen from this investigation, Brahms’s use of “Terzen-Ketten” in the later music goes well beyond melodic occurrences and is incorporated harmonically and structurally through processes of layering and embedding. Examples of third-chains from his early works beginning in the 1850s use the device melodically and in a more isolated fashion, and we can therefore perceive an intensification and deepening of his treatment of this compositional resource during his later years.

The manifestation of Brahms’s intensified development of third-chains is apparent in his multi-faceted use of the device. He favored using a chain of thirds near the beginning of a work, often in the opening statement as we have seen in op. 98 no. 1, many of the short piano pieces of op. 116, 118 and 119, as well as both the first movement op. 120 no. 1 and op. 121 no. 3. He also used this device in transitional passages, as Beethoven had in the introduction to fourth movement of the “Hammerklavier” and near cadence points in a vertical sonority, as in op. 119 no.1. Examples from Brahms’s Fourth Symphony are most closely related to the way Beethoven used the device in his “Hammerklavier” Sonata. The *Klavierstücke* contain more varied methods of fashioning the chain with stacked thirds and modulations by a third. Brahms uses descending

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<sup>279</sup> Cone, “Harmonic Congruence in Brahms,” 187-188.



thirds in octaves to create contrast and emphasis in “Feldeinsamkeit,” op. 86 no.2 when he saves the device to highlight a particular line of text. In the F minor Clarinet Sonata, Brahms layered his use of this texture and integrates thirds into the harmonic progression of the accompaniment. Finally, in “O Tod, wie bitter bist du,” the chain of thirds is present in descending form in the initial melody, then as rising sixths in its development, but the main focus is on the individual interval of a third.

By tracing this one compositional device through Brahms’s late works, we can better understand his compositional process and how he responded to his inspirational models. Brahms studied Beethoven’s use of structural descending thirds and implemented the device in a similar manner as if learning from a model. He then developed the technique and made it his own, finding new ways to apply the third-chain—a practice he carried out with compositional ideas drawn from his admired predecessors. Anna Ettlinger recalls listening to Brahms play the piano accompaniment of his “Dunkel wie Dunkel” from *Von ewiger Liebe*, op. 43 no. 1 and her telling him that he had taken the beginning of the Beethoven’s “Appassionata” and inverted it. Brahms is said to have responded: “You have discovered my tricks! I have always done it that way. I always took things from Beethoven and turned them upside down.”<sup>280</sup> The present investigation of Brahms, Nottebohm and Beethoven’s “Terzen-Ketten” has indeed uncovered one of Brahms’s “tricks” but moved beyond that recognition to probe some of the abiding artistic strategies that sustained his remarkable creativity.

The twenty-year friendship of Brahms and Nottebohm was mutually beneficial and artistically fruitful. For Brahms, the access he gained to Beethoven’s sketch materials was crucial and cast a spell over him. He developed a life-long fascination with these materials, and even

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<sup>280</sup> Anna Ettlinger, *Lebenserinnerungen für die Familie* (Leipzig: published by the author [=Ettlinger], n.d.), 66. In Geiringer, *On Brahms and His Circle*, 86.

examined the “Engelmann” Sketchbook—a source Nottebohm had never seen—just weeks before his death. His dedication to Nottebohm’s work as well as his own impressive collection of manuscripts remind us of his convictions about the living legacy of musical art and his personal philosophy of commitment to the great past masters of composition.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**PAGE NUMBERING SYSTEMS FOR BEETHOVEN'S A 45 SKETCHBOOK**

Gustav Nottebohm cites page numbers along with his transcriptions from Beethoven's sketchbooks, including those transcribed from the pocket sketchbook now called A 45. After the sketchbook passed to the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna after Brahms's death, the pages were numbered. These numbers do not directly correspond to those listed by Nottebohm. This chart gives the page equivalents in both systems.

MR	GN	GdM
<b>title page</b>		title page
<b>explanation</b>		explanation
<b>1</b>	1	1 and 2
<b>2</b>	2	3
<b>3</b>	5	
<b>4</b>	6	
<b>5</b>	7	4
<b>6</b>		36
<b>7</b>		5
<b>8</b>		35
<b>9</b>		6
<b>10</b>		34
<b>11</b>		7
<b>12</b>		33
<b>13</b>		8
<b>14</b>		32
<b>15</b>	11	9
<b>16</b>		31
<b>17</b>	13	10
<b>18</b>	14	30
<b>19</b>		11
<b>20</b>		back of 11
<b>21</b>		12
<b>22</b>		29
<b>23</b>		13
<b>24</b>		28
<b>25</b>	19	14

MR	GN	GdM
<b>26</b>	20	27
<b>27</b>	21	15
<b>28</b>	22	26
<b>29</b>	23	16
<b>30</b>	24	25
<b>31</b>		17
<b>32</b>	34	24
<b>33</b>	35	18
<b>34</b>		23
<b>35</b>		19
<b>36</b>		22
<b>37</b>		20
<b>38</b>	40	21
<b>39</b>		explanation
<b>40</b>		7
<b>41</b>		<u>7</u>
<b>42</b>		2
<b>43</b>		<u>6</u>
<b>44</b>		4
<b>45</b>		<u>5</u>
<b>46</b>		5
<b>47</b>		<u>4</u>
<b>48</b>		3
<b>49</b>		<u>3</u>
<b>50</b>		6
<b>51</b>		<u>2</u>
<b>52</b>		1
<b>53</b>		<u>1</u>

MR = Marie Rule; numbering in print order from the Microfilm  
 GN = Gustav Nottebohm; as indicated by his sketch transcriptions  
 GdM = *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* in Vienna; as indicated on the pages