BRAHMS'S SERENADE OF SOLITUDE

KREISLER'S PHILOSOPHY OF "THE ARTIST IN LOVE" AND THE ADAGIO NON TROPPO FROM THE SERENADE IN A MAJOR, OP. 16

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Abstract

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Johannes Brahms signed many of his early musical manuscripts under the *nom de plume* Johannes Kreisler Junior. The name alludes to E.T.A. Hoffmann's arch-Romantic hero, the fictional Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler, and adopting it signaled the aspirations of the young composer. It served as the means by which Brahms laid claim to the ideology and philosophy the character represented: for him, this meant especially the artist's separation from society and troubled preoccupation with love. My dissertation interprets the third movement, Adagio non troppo, of Brahms's Serenade in A Major, Op. 16, in connection with the composer's well-known affinity for, and his interest in, the writings of Hoffmann. He composed the Adagio non troppo in the wake of breaking off his engagement to the soprano Agathe von Siebold, and the composer fashioned the movement as a Kreislerian rumination on romantic failure.

Beginning with the title of the opus, "Serenade," Brahms opens hermeneutic windows between orchestral and vocal music, the concert hall and the outdoors, and high art and popular

tradition, which invite us to be alert for allusions in the Adagio non troppo. As middle movements within multimovement instrumental works, nineteenth-century adagios occasioned heightened subjective expression; their long-breathed melodies associated them with song, and their non-standardized forms supported a wide range of musical and extra-musical allusions. Indeed, many of this movement's idiosyncrasies, including its striking basso ostinato and truncated sonata form, exhibit connections to Hoffmann's Kreisler stories. Brahms uses genre, musical rhetoric, musical topics, and key characteristics to support Hoffmannian and biographical interpretations. In addition to the Kreisler subtext, the movement emerges as an anchor point within an expansive, self-referential web that includes *Ein deutsches Requiem*, the Second Symphony, and numerous songs.

Central to my analysis is the remarkable modulation from A minor to A-flat major for the movement's second theme. Through a consideration of Brahms's solo songs, it becomes evident that he associated these keys with specific subjects: maidens and failed love (A minor), and yearning and memory (A-flat Major). These themes govern the intertextual narrative and musical rhetoric. Taken as a whole, the movement commemorates his love for Siebold and stakes claim to Hoffmann's philosophies of yearning and the "artist in love."

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CHAPTER 1

A KREISLER PRIMER: NESTED IDENTITIES AND ALTER EGOS

Johannes Brahms was named after his father Johann Jakob, his mother Johanna Henrike Christiane, and his paternal grandfather Johann. In order to distinguish Johannes from these relatives, when he was a boy his family called him by the diminutive nickname Hannes.[1] The Brahmses were fond of nicknames: Hannes's older sister Elisabeth went by Elise and his younger brother Friedrich by Fritz. Perhaps it was in this spirit that sometime in his late teens Hannes adopted an alias of his own choosing: Johannes Kreisler Junior. Plucked from the pages of E.T.A. Hoffmann, the name refers to the fictional Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler. The avatar for Hoffmann's moral, philosophic, and musical tenets, this arch-romantic hero was the subject of *Kreisleriana* and *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr* (Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr).[2] In a letter to Clara Schumann from August 21, 1854, Brahms suggested that she become "properly acquainted with Kreisler Senior" in order to understand his personality better.[3] Though Brahms used the name as an actual form of address for a short time only—the aforementioned letter was one of his last overt references to his alter ego—his identification with Hoffmann's character lasted a lifetime. Who, then, was Johannes Kreisler?

Kreisler was a musical genius, both a composer and a performer (piano was his primary instrument), who created art for art's sake and did not cater to public whimsy. For this reason he

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[1] Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997; Vintage Books, 1999): 7-16. Swafford explores the etymology of Johannes Brahms's given and family name in detail. He substitutes "Johnny"

[2] *Kreisleriana* was originally published as a set of short stories that appeared in Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*. The full title of Hoffmann's final novel is *Lebens-Ansichten des Katers Murr nebst fragmentarischer Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern*

[3] Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 58. Siegfried Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," *19th-Century Music* vol. 5, no. 3 (Spring, 1982): 195. Brahms broadly recommended Hoffmann to Clara Schumann, not just the Kreisler stories, however, his reference to Kreisler *Senior* indicates the personal nature of this particular reference, as it posits the fictional Kapellmeister as a paternal figure.

was misunderstood, and he stood apart from the crowd. Some even considered him mad. Pained by the dilettantish musical tastes of his patrons and plagued by an inability to complete his own compositions (relegating many manuscripts to the fire), he wandered far and wide, restlessly searching for kindred musical spirits and refuge in romantic love. He suffered in his isolation, but he found repose in nature's solitude. Ultimately he possessed relatively few true friends and found that romantic love, though desirable, was perilously fraught. It could "overset [one's] sanity" and drive an artist to ruin if consummated.[4] Hoffmann dubbed Kreisler's monastic commitment to chastity an "artist's love" and espoused the belief that "a true music-maker carries the lady of his choice in his heart, desiring nothing but to sing, write or paint in her honour, and may be compared to the chivalrous knights of old in [his] exquisite courtesy."[5] Tormented by unrequited and unconsummated love, Kreisler translated his unending yearning into musical tones.

Kreisler's personality therefore seems in keeping with what we know of Brahms. Any composition that was not up to snuff was consigned to the fireplace or the river. He was incapable of intentionally writing music to please the public, and critics panned many of his works for their difficulty. His commitment to older, outmoded forms and variation technique unfortunately earned him a reputation as a cool-headed technocrat. Self-defeating in love, he spent two years pining for Clara Schumann between 1854-56 and was secretly betrothed to Agathe von Siebold in 1858, but he ended both relationships in part based on his view that marriage would negatively impact his art. Brahms was a maddening friend; those close to him found him lovable on his good days but loathsome on his bad. He best expressed his nicer self

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[4] E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr together with a fragmentary Biography of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler on Random Sheets of Waste Paper*, trans. Anthea Bell, with an introduction by Jeremy Adler (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 119.
[5] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 119.

through music, which often served as the balm for his quick temper, egoism, and insensitivity. An artist self-consciously apart from the world, he never felt truly wanted in Hamburg after failing to secure the directorship of the Symphony, yet he longed for his birthplace while living abroad in Vienna. It seemed he was only ever truly at home while trekking along the banks of the Rhine, or hiking in the Alps or the Wienerwald.

However, to know Kreisler Senior truly we must know his creator, E.T.A. Hoffmann. Sometimes Kreisler was Hoffmann's pen name, sometimes he and Hoffmann were fictional acquaintances, and still other times he was Hoffmann's de facto Doppelgänger. In Hoffmann's introductory remarks to *Kreisleriana*, where he fictionally characterizes himself as "editor" of the ensuing collection, he succinctly describes Kreisler's enigmatic origins and identity:

> Where is he from? Nobody knows. Who were his parents? It is not known. Whose pupil is he? A good teacher's for he plays excellently, and since he is intelligent and cultivated one can certainly tolerate him, and even permit him to teach music. And he really and truly was a Kapellmeister.[6]

As exemplified by these lines, the opening sentences from *Kreisleriana*, along with key aspects of its plot and the plot from *Kater Murr*, Kreisler is defined by his mysterious origins, musical genius, and sudden comings and goings. Hoffmann was similarly unsettled as a young adult, and following his mother's death in 1796, he relocated from Königsburg, one of the most populous German cities and the capital of East Prussia (today the Russian exclave Kaliningrad), to Glogau, a town in the German provinces now part of Poland. The move was undesired but meant to

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[6] Translation from E.T.A. Hoffmann and David Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism* in Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 79. As Jeremy Adler remarks in his introduction to *Kater Murr*, these lines riff on Diderot's opening lines from *Jacques le Fataliste* (see Hoffmann, *Murr*, xxvii). Diderot's original French, courtesy of Project Gutenberg online, follows: "Comment s'étaient-ils rencontrés? Par hasard, comme tout le monde. Comment s'appelaient-il? Que vous importe? D'où venaient-ils? Du lieu le plus prochain. Où allaient-ils? Est-ce que l'on sait où l'on va? Que disaient-ils? Le maître ne disait rien; et Jacques disait que son capitaine disait que tout ce qui nous arrive de bien et de mal ici-bas était écrit là-haut." Denis Diderot, *Jacques le fataliste et son Maître* (Paris: Buison, 1796; Project Gutenberg, 2012), 9, accessed 26 October 2020, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/39976/39976-h/39976-h.htm.

encourage a clean start, specifically to distance him from his piano student Dora Hatt, a married woman ten years his senior with whom he was infatuated. His father, from whom he had been estranged since 1778, died 1797. Thus he was untethered to family by 21 and began his adult life living in provincial obscurity. Until he settled in Berlin nearly two decades later, Hoffmann bounced between urban and rural locales on a regular basis, never living in the same city more than once.

Kreisler was a character whose "biographies," *Kreisleriana* and *Kater Murr*, drew heavily upon Hoffmann's own life, and come across something like reflections in a carnival mirror. E.T.A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) was a polymath whose tombstone epitaph describes him as a poet, musician, and painter. He is best remembered today as a fantasy writer with a penchant for musical topics, though his primary vocation in life was as a jurist. He began his legal career in 1796 when he was twenty years old as a clerk in Glogau and eventually became a Councillor in the *Kammergericht*, the Berlin high court, where he served from 1814 until his death in 1822. Despite earning renown as a litigator and judge, Hoffmann was torn between his legal and artistic callings. Furthermore, he scorned and mocked authority, which often set him at odds with his professional cohort. His impudence necessitated a hiatus from his legal career from 1806-1814, during which time he pursued musical work. Hoffmann's sense of self-importance and his here one minute, gone the next lifestyle must have informed the framing of Kreisler's toilsome life as that of an unappreciated genius constantly on the move.

Hoffmann's first literary work, *The Letter from a Monk to his friend in the City*, was published in 1803 while the author was "exiled" in Płock, another small Polish town, and he began moonlighting as a music journalist around 1808 during a stint working as a theater manager in Bamberg, regularly signing articles under the *nom de plume* of Johannes Kreisler.

Kreisleriana was published between 1814-15 at the exact moment when Hoffmann recommitted to his primary vocation as a jurist. Though he continued pursuing all of the artistic avenues memorialized on his grave after receiving his legal position in Berlin—his musical magnum opus, the opera *Undine*, premiered there in 1816—the majority of his spare time was committed to literary endeavors from that point forward.[7] Hoffmann continued to live out his musical career vicariously through his fiction, particularly via the persona of Johannes Kreisler.

Kreisler's Origins and Literary Representation

Kreisleriana is a kaleidoscopic biography comprising critical essays, journalistic recollections, letters, and one collection of "extremely random thoughts" putatively authored by Kreisler or in which he appears as the central figure. Originally the *Fantasiestücke* were released in four installments, and *Kreisleriana* existed in the first and fourth volumes. It includes thirteen titles divided between two parts, six in part I (1814) and seven in part II (1815).[8] David Charlton describes the *Kreisleriana* as "a cycle of musical writings," calling to mind the apt named *Liederkreis* tradition, where individually complete songs are performed together as a cycle.[9] Abigail Chantler interprets the compendium through a Schlegelian lens and associates its

[7] Oxford Music Online includes an indexed list of Hoffmann's musical compositions. Of the 85 works to receive an *Allroggen Verzeichnis* (AV) number, only 14 were finished after 1814 (17% total output). Over half (eight) of these works were secular vocal works; six of this subset were for 4-6 male voices. Compare the final eight years of his life (1815-22) when he was gainfully employed in Berlin to the previous decade (1805-14) when his legal assignments were in the German provinces and he spent six-years without a legal position and instead pursued his artistic endeavors in Bamberg. During the earlier period he finished 43 compositions (51% total output). Gerhard Allroggen, "Hoffmann, E(rnst) T(heodor) A(madeus)" *Grove Music Online*, accessed 24 September 2021. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.

[8] Nine of its component works were previously published in various newspapers before their appropriation for *Kreisleriana*, including the *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, *Zeiting für die elegante Welt*, and *Die Musen*. Four entries and the short prefaces to each collection were newly written for the *Fantasiestücke*. Charlton informs us that Hoffmann submitted a version of the thirteenth entry *Johannes Kreisler's Certificate of Apprenticeship* to the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände* in June 1814, but the editor refrained from publishing it until 1816 after it appeared in *Kreisleriana*. Charlton, 75. The combinatorial and grotesque qualities of the *Kreisleriana* cycle recall the artistic style of Jacques Callot, the baroque printmaker for whom the *Fantasiestücke* was named. His detailed etchings chronicled the minutiae of everyday, military, and religious subjects within densely populated landscapes. Callot emphasized small, heterogenous scenes whose interaction combined to give an impression of the whole.

[9] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 23.

structure with the arabesque, whose disorderly nature evokes "the beautiful confusion of imagination."[10] As such, *Kreisleriana* resembles a character sketch more than a traditional biography, though its prefaces and final entry imbue the collection with a general chronological organization. Initially framed by Hoffmann as a hodgepodge collection of Kreisler's hastily-scribbled musings, the narrative trajectory of *Kreisleriana* defies this premise by its conclusion and gradually moves away from a single authorial voice. Part I precisely executes the original concept. In all six of these essays, the first-person author is assumed to be Kreisler himself. Part II mixes its authorial voices, featuring three entries referring to Kreisler in the third person, a letter ostensibly written by an ape, and an ambiguous final note in which the Kapellmeister's personality is clearly fractured between self and alter-ego as he gazes into the mirror and apparently writes his own Certificate of Apprenticeship.

An ink drawing with watercolor by Hoffmann from 1815 (see Example 1.1)—the year he published the fourth volume of the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, which included *Kreisleriana* part II—illustrates his conception of the fractured self and the Doppelgänger. It is a self-portrait of Hoffmann as Kreisler and explicitly renders the inseparability of creator and creation, what Joseph Hayse and Dassia N. Posner would term a case of "nested identities."[11] This condition stipulates "multiple identities contained within one another" where "characters move fluidly in and out of several selves that the reader is able to hold in the mind

[10] Abigail Chantler, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Aesthetics* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 34-35. Schlegel *Dialogue on Poetry*, 86. Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829) was a philosopher, philologist, literary critic, and proponent of early German Romanticism. His brand of literary analysis emphasized a thorough understanding of the generative processes leading to the creation of an individual novel or a poem. He often focused on aesthetic merits of generic mixture, wit, and the literary fragment. John Daverio describes Schlegel's theory of Romanticism as "a theory of the fantastically formed and generically ambiguous artwork," and applied Schlegel's "novelizing qualities" to musical analysis. John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 4.

[11] Dassia N. Posner, *The Director's Prism: E.T.A. Hoffmann and the Russian theatrical avant-garde* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2016): 9.

simultaneously."[12] The extent to which Hoffmann sought to embody the Kreisler persona in real life, along with the author's tendency to interweave actual current events and history into his works, demonstrates that for Hoffmann these nested identities extended well beyond the written word.

Example 1.1
***Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler in a Dressing Gown*, E.T.A. Hoffmann (1815)[13]**

In Hoffmann's picture, he inserts himself into a scene from "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," the third story from *Kreisleriana* II, whose dramatic focus is an improvised piano fantasy. Kreisler's regalia and the conditions for the musical performance are replicated in the drawing. Hoffmann writes, "Kreisler donned his little red cap, put on his Chinese dressing gown, and moved over to the [piano]." At this point one of the unnamed club members, enigmatically

[12] Posner, *The Director's Prism*, 9-10.
[13] E.T.A. Hoffman, *Selbstbildnis: Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler in Haustracht*, 1815, pen and ink drawing with watercolor, 11.9x12.3 cm, Staatsbibliothek Bamberg, I R 65, accessed 15 October 2021, http://digital.bib-bvb.de/view/bvb_mets/viewer.0.6.5.jsp?folder_id=0&dvs=1634309155619~357&pid=11590357&locale=en&usePid1=true&usePid2=true

described as Kreisler's "true friend," extinguishes the lights, plunging the room into darkness.[14] Visually recast, the portrait is of Hoffmann clad in Kreisler's garb having just extinguished a rather sooty candle set upon the piano. He is holding a very long-stemmed pipe, so long as to seem like a caricature, and the recently completed score for his opera *Undine* is set on the music rest. The inexact representation of the original scene demonstrates the simultaneous intersection and divergence of the nested identity. Charlton's analysis of this scene from *Kreisleriana* calls into question whether Kreisler's friends—all named for their chief character traits (cautious, dissatisfied, jovial, indifferent, and the aforementioned true)—are in fact separate individuals.

In his prefatory remarks to the individual essays, he describes how Hoffmann inserts himself into this story as the narrator, dubbed the "traveling enthusiast," who is revealed at the end of the story also to be the "true friend."[15] Charlton later remarks in a footnote to his translation of "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" that the "traveling enthusiast" is also the author of *Kreisleriana*.[16] As previously mentioned, Kreisler authored the majority of essays and letters contained within *Kreisleriana*. Following Charlton's circular logic, Kreisler, Hoffmann, the "traveling enthusiast," and the "true friend" are the same person. In this light, the other clubbists could easily be personifications of Kreisler/Hoffmann's inner voices, which would do well to explain their one-dimensional rendering. In other words, it is like Hoffmann extracted the supporting cast by beaming Kreisler's personality through a refracting prism. This conceit is supported by the parallel structure of Kreisler's piano fantasy, represented in prose by a list of key characteristic traits. In Kreisler's improvised performance, each named chord is given a specific affect or personality that advances the musical/literary plot. While these musical vignettes may stand alone, together they combine to form a cohesive narrative, just like the

[14] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 132.
[15] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 67.
[16] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 135. See footnote 234.

clubbists (cautious, dissatisfied, jovial, indifferent, and true) combine to form Kreisler's personality.

To this dizzying array of nested identities may be added another real-life inspiration for the Kreisler persona. In 1804 Hoffmann read a series of articles published in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* describing the behavior and eccentricities of an institutionalized musician named "Karl." The young man at the heart of the case study lived "completely and uniquely in music."[17] Recognizing aspects of his own personality embodied by Karl, Hoffmann sympathetically refashioned the details of Karl's psychosis and imagined a saner version of the man: expressionistic, mercurial, and eccentric, but ultimately tethered to reality. Characters at the margins of social society frequently appear as protagonists in Hoffmann's literary works, and as Jeremy Adler remarks in his introduction to Anthea Bell's translation of *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, "Hoffmann's sharply-delineated portraits of derangement . . . invite not condemnation but empathy, as he enables us to understand our own, innermost selves via the tortured beings who exist somewhere between sanity and madness."[18] Kreisler certainly exists on this continuum, but appears more closely related to Hoffmann than to "Karl."

When Hoffmann began plotting *Kreisleriana* in 1812, he described the project as a series of "essays by a mad musician during his lucid hours."[19] Though this premise remained in place when the essays were published between 1814-15 as a component of *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, Hoffmann left it up to the reader to ponder the question of Kreisler's sanity. In the introduction he writes, "many thought they had observed signs of madness in him . . . [but] his close friends had noticed nothing unusual."[20] Without Hoffmann's explicit prodding, the

[17] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 47.
[18] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, xi.
[19] Chantler, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Aesthetics*, 20.
[20] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 80.

question of the character's sanity may not have arisen at all. For this reason, how the reader answers the question seems to reveal as much about the reader as it does about Kreisler himself.

Hoffmann cast Kreisler fully as the third-person subject when the Kapellmeister returned in *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr*. Considered by many to be Hoffmann's finest work, *Kater Murr* retains the fragmentary nature of *Kreisleriana* as a key structural component, whimsically alternating between the autobiography of an autodidactic cat named Murr—based upon and named after Hoffmann's own housecat—and Kreisler's third person biography. The individual stories are literally rent apart and woven together, cutting from one to the other mid-sentence. However, while Murr's life-story is merely interrupted by Kreisler's—that is, the text picks up exactly where it left off when switching back from the Kreisler story—Kreisler's is dislocated by Murr's, beginning with what should be the last episode and containing temporal gaps in its otherwise sequential narrative. Hoffmann, humorously cast once again as Editor, explains the practical origin of the ruse:

> When Murr the cat was writing his Life and Opinions, he found a printed book in his master's study, tore it up without more ado, and, thinking no ill, used its pages partly to rest his work on, partly as blotting paper. These pages were left in the manuscript – and were inadvertently printed too, as if they were part of it.[21]

The printed book Murr destroyed was Kreisler's biography. A printing error left the pages of the earlier work uncut so that the clean reverse sides could serve as Murr's writing and blotting paper, and the transitions from Murr to Kreisler begin with the deprecating editorial shorthand "Mak. Bl." (*Makulatur-Blatt*), which means "sheet of wastepaper," and return "M. f. f." (*Murr fährt fort*). Contrary to the title of the novel and the "wastepaper" designation, Kreisler's story is approximately thirty percent longer than Murr's.[22]

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[21] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 4.
[22] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, xxii. Adler provides the 60/40 percent breakdown in his introduction to the novel.

Kreisler's first episode begins in the company of his friend and mentor, the illusionist Master Abraham, who is recounting the events of a calamitous name-day ceremony for Kreisler's music students, the Princess Hedwiga and her confidant Julia. Planned and implemented by Master Abraham, the event covertly mocked the court and announced Kreisler's presumptive return to the young women. Kreisler had previously fled the court of Sieghartsweiler after the murderous Italian prince Hector attempted to have him killed, taking refuge in a nearby monastery. At various points in the book, Kreisler appears to be enamored of each woman—though Master Abraham assumes he prefers Julia—but he must remain chaste or risk losing his mind. True artists, in his estimation, rely on unfulfilled yearning for inspiration.

The Princess is an empath with an enigmatic physical and spiritual connection to Kreisler. She experiences the sensation of electric shock upon physical contact with him and suffers a prolonged catatonic episode at the precise moment he is apparently shot dead, only to revive when Master Abraham receives a letter from Kreisler reporting his safety.[23] Julia is brooding and musically gifted, possessing a remarkable singing voice. Kreisler is deeply moved by her artistry, especially her ability to interpret his own music. For their part, the women rely on one another and have been "united heart and soul" since childhood.[24] In fact, they share a birthday and are given the same name, Maria, at the aforementioned name-day ceremony, in another instance of blurred identities. Resonances between natural and psychological phenomena, identity crises, veiled deceits, and unrequited love are themes that underpin *Kater Murr*.

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[23] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 106. Regarding electric shocks, Kreisler remarks, "I suppose her highness is a kind of Leyden jar, and sends electric shocks through honest folk at her gracious pleasure."

[24] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 52. Madame Benzon, Julia's mother, describes how Kreisler's appearance caused discord between the two women based on their initial reactions to him. Julia's first impression of Kreisler was as a "charmingly strange" and "sublime musician." Hedwiga saw in him only madness and the threat of violence.

Over the eighteen-year span from 1804-1821, beginning with Hoffmann's discovery of "Karl" in the *AMZ* and ending when he published the final installment of *Kater Murr*, Hoffmann considerably tempered Kreisler's madness. Although he based the character partly on a clinically insane musician, he merely suggested insanity as the explanation for Kreisler's disposition in the editor's notes preceding *Kreisleriana*, leaving the final diagnosis up to the reader. Siegfried Kross provides a more nuanced interpretation of Kreisler's eccentric temperament, describing it as the "state of stress felt by the artist between an external reality and an inner, artistic one."[25] Adler defines Kreisler in similar terms, as "the neurasthenic, anguished genius, unable to find a niche in society or to satisfy his desires; an artist whose wildly pendular moods swing between radical extremes, from the plainly ridiculous to the loftily sublime."[26] While Kross and Adler are correct in their assessments, Kreisler actively feared and fought against becoming clinically insane in *Kater Murr*. He is fascinated by the specter of madness, in fact, which arises in conjunction with Hoffmann's regular forays into magic and the occult, but ultimately finds the condition repulsive. Sorcery, supernatural events, carnival illusions, electromagnetism, storms, and psychotic breaks within Kreisler's social circle—thematic elements generally absent or subdued in *Kreisleriana*—further complicate the presentation of the character's madness.

The most famous portrait of Kreisler drawn by Hoffmann, K*reisler im Wahnsinn* (Kreisler in Insanity), represents the embodiment of Kreisler's fears and confounds a purely hyperbolic reading of his madness (see Example 1.2). Hoffmann planned to write a third volume in the Murr saga, and this drawing was intended for its cover. The final installment would have interwoven the biographies of cat and composer and tied off the numerous loose ends left

[25] Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 197.
[26] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, xxiii.

Example 1.2
Final Version of *Kreisler im Wahnsinn,* E.T.A. Hoffmann (1822)[27]

unresolved at the end of the second volume. Unfortunately, Hoffmann died six months after the completion of volume two, during which time the final installment in the trilogy went unwritten despite an advance from the publisher. Because we lack literary sketches or drafts for the third volume, Hoffmann's image of Kreisler's insanity, drawn just before the writer died on June 25, 1822, remains one of the only clues we have about the novel's plot. Though it offers a tantalizing hint about Hoffmann's plans, however, it would be imprudent to assume the image depicts Kreisler's ultimate fate. A simple reason to temper predictions based on *Kreisler im Wahnsinn* is

[27] E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Kreisler im Wahnsinn* (final version), 1822, pencil drawing, accessed 15 October 2021, https://etahoffmann.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/unterrichten/wissenswertes/kurioses-2/#toggle-id-6. The original sketch is lost. The image survives in facsimile only, originally preserved by Julius Eduard Hitzig in his book *Aus Hoffmann's Leben und Nachlass* (1822/23).

that of the four vignettes Hoffmann drew for the front and back covers of the extant volumes, only one explicitly depicts a scene actually drawn from the narrative: a courtship scene between Murr and another feline named Minna.[28]

As in the prefatory notes to *Kreisleriana*, Hoffmann obliges the viewer of *Kreisler im Wahnsinn* to accept or reject the diagnosis suggested by the image's title. Here, the figure appears somewhat uncouth but also elegant and genial in his dancelike posture and mirthful smile. Abandoning the Chinese dressing gown and little red cap, Kreisler is now clad in a tailcoat bound at the waist with a flowing sash. Beneath his jacket, a shirt with a frayed neckline is torn into a deep cut V, exposing a powerful torso. Overlong, frilly cuffs protrude from the sleeves. His leggings, torn above his calves and knotted behind the knees, and deep-creased Cordoban boots complete the disheveled image of fashionable dress. He holds what appears to be a churchwarden pipe—known as a *Lesepfeife* (reading pipe) in Germany—in his right hand and is either dancing alone or promenading in an odd, high-kneed manner. His gaunt facial features are only somewhat reminiscent of Hoffmann now, and he sports a cropped haircut with full sideburns.

Compare this image to Hoffmann's roughly sketched first draft, which features a skeletal figure strutting with overlong strides past a gabled doorway. His tattered apparel and pipe are relatively unchanged in the final copy, but the overall impression of the earlier work is of derangement. The focal point in this image is Kreisler's distorted face, especially the darkly

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[28] The remaining three vignettes relate to the plot but are representational or allegorical abstractions: 1. Murr stands at a rooftop writing desk with a feather quill in his hand and a plate of fish as his feet. He is clad in a Grecian robe. Only a background church spire rises higher than his perch, and the scene is set in relief against a turbulent sky; 2. A man, presumably Kreisler, stands in a woodland clearing with a firebrand in one hand and a book, which is he reading, in the other. His knees are bent into a lithe position, and he is centered within a double circle containing what appear to be the zodiac signs between the two rings. 3. A barefoot and hooded monk enters a monastery courtyard with a smoking brand held aloft. A shrine depicting Jesus crucified is to his right. For a more in-depth analysis of the vignettes, see Christopher R. Clason, "The Vignettes in E.T.A. Hoffmann's *Kater Murr*: Portraits of Artists and Lovers," *German Studies Review* vol. 15, no. 3 (October, 1992): 493-503.

shaded eyes, whose saturation and central location cause them to stand out against the lighter surrounding linework. In the final draft, his high-kneed stance exudes balletic poise, but here his raised right leg literally throws the character off of balance. He appears to be falling forward in an ungainly manner instead of walking or dancing, his pocket watch swinging wildly at head height. The evolution of this image from first to final draft shows Hoffmann tempering, once again, his original concept, transforming "Karl" into Kreisler (see Example 1.3).

Example 1.3
First Draft of *Kreisler im Wahnsinn*, E.T.A. Hoffmann (1822) [29]

Rather than attempt to forecast Kreisler's fate based on these drawings, a more fruitful analysis of *Kreisler im Wahnsinn* requires viewing it through a retrospective lens. Kreisler's regalia recall the garb of an important peripheral character in *Kater Murr*, the insane painter Leonhard Ettlinger. Driven mad by his longing and lust for the Princess Hedwiga's mother and incarcerated after his psychotic break, he once tried to murder the Princess when she was a child

[29] E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Kreisler im Wahnsinn* (first draft), 1822, pencil drawing, accessed 15 October 2021, https://etahoffmann.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/unterrichten/wissenswertes/kurioses-2/#toggle-id-6.

after escaping his prison cell. Hedwiga describes him as "a man in torn clothing, with tangled hair . . . eyes flashing dreadfully. His face was pale as death, haggard, scarcely recognizable." Wily enough to escape his jailors, Ettlinger had possessed a "giant's strength" and a murderous bent. Hedwiga confesses to Kreisler that he sometimes resembles Ettlinger. Her suggestion of their likeness takes frightening hold of Kreisler, so much so that, when gazing into a pond, he hallucinates his reflection transfigured into Ettlinger. Though troubled by the likeness, Kreisler rejects the vision:

> Know, my esteemed colonist of the madhouse, that the wound you inflicted upon that poor child the fair Princess Hedwiga still hasn't healed properly, and she sometimes performs strange antics in her pain. . . . Don't blame it on me, my dear fellow, if she takes me for a ghost and that ghost for yours. . . I am entertaining a great desire to show her that I'm no dreadful phantom but Kapellmeister Kreisler.[30]

The parable of Ettlinger serves as a warning to artists against unchaste love. Romantic yearning akin to the nineteenth-century concept of "courtly love" is the fuel that fires their artistic genius and the tenuous linchpin that preserves their sanity. The similarities uniting the painter and the musician reveal another case of nested identities; however, where Ettlinger's fate is decided already, Kreisler's remains unknown.

Embodying Kreisler: An Artist in Love

The French artist Jean-Joseph Bonaventure Laurens drew three profile images of Brahms at Robert Schumann's request in 1853 (see Example 1.4). The younger man's delicate features, flowing hair, orderly attire, and attitude of calm repose contrast markedly with Hoffmann's drawings of Kreisler. The portraits of the Kapellmeister from 1815 and 1822, which emphasize his eccentricity, little resemble the emotionally tempered and rational Brahms. However, the

[30] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 123-24.

Example 1.4
Three Profiles of the Young Brahms, Jean-Joseph Bonaventure Laurens (1853)[31]

right profile, which includes the incipit from Brahms's op. 4 Scherzo (in the composer's hand), seems to represent an artist at the crossroads, and this at least it shares with the drawing of *Kreisler*. Brahms's eyes are downcast in the other two images, both of which are rougher sketches that emphasize his childlike features—but here he casts a steely gaze toward the future, his jaw set resolutely. His moderately reclining pose is relaxed but exudes confidence and swagger, like a man quietly bidding adieu to his childhood. But perhaps the image is not so far from Hoffmann's literary rendering of the Kapellmeister. We know that the young Hannes was far more inclined than mature Brahms to wear his emotions on his sleeve, and despite his tendency to rein in these emotions later in life, Hoffmann's fiction fundamentally irrevocably shaped Brahms's adult worldview.

[31] Jean-Joseph Bonaventure Laurens, *Johannes Brahms at 20*, 1853, pencil drawings, (left) Schumann Haus at Endenich-Bonn, accessed 15 October 2021, https://thinkingmusically.com/fun-facts-brahms/, (center), Bibliothéque Inguimbertine at Carpentras, accessed 15 Octoboer 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brahms-Laurens-1853.png, (right), Bibliothéque Inguimbertine at Carpentras, accessed 15 October 2021, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:04_Bonaventure_Laurens_Johannes_Brahms_1833-97.jpg. For basic information about the three drawings, see H.P. Clive, *Brahms and His World: A Biographical Dictionary* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), 282-3.

We are not accustomed to thinking about Brahms's mature personality and full career in connection with Hoffmann. Perhaps the association is complicated by questions surrounding Kreisler's sanity. After all, Robert Schumann staked public claim to the fictional Kapellmeister with his solo piano fantasy *Kreisleriana*, and Kreisler has served as an avatar for Schumann among commentators who have presumed their shared madness. But we can accept him as an avatar for Brahms, too, without also seeing Brahms as mad, not least because, as I have argued in the preceding paragraphs, Hoffman's various representations of the character leave unresolved the matter of his sanity. Another challenge when considering the Brahms/Kreisler connection is that the philosophical concept of the "artist's love," a crucial feature of Brahms biography vis-à-vis his infatuation with Clara Schumann and broken engagement to Agathe von Siebold, often becomes conflated with or superseded by Joseph Joachim's motto *Frei aber Einsam* (free but lonely).[32] Joachim used the phrase to describe his emotional condition after his failed courtship of Gisela von Arnim, the youngest daughter of the famed German writer Bettina von Arnim, to whom he proposed marriage in 1853. *Frei aber Einsam* encapsulates his feelings of rejection and the turn of phrase is inextricably bound to his person, so much so that Joachim even used the initials F.A.E. as his signature for his entries in Brahms's quotation diary. In Brahms's case, neither Schumann nor Siebold rejected him; rather, he spurned them. His commitment to an "artist's love," which rejected marriage and cast women as muses, factored into his decision to end those relationships. Hoffmann was the more formative influence, predating his friendship

[32] Christopher Reynolds, "A Choral Symphony by Brahms?" *19th-Century Music* vol. 9, no. 1 (Summer 1985), 3-5. Reynolds points out that Joachim's F.A.E. motto occurs only in Brahms's correspondence with Joachim and Schumann. It is always used in reference to Joachim. Brahms does not use the motto elsewhere in his correspondence or music. Brahms's first biographer Max Kalbeck so strongly believed that Brahms adopted the motto as his own, that he believed Brahms developed his own permutation of this motto, *Frei aber Froh* (F.A.F.), to serve as the motivic basis for his third symphony. Kalbeck is not the most trustworthy biographer and provided no supporting evidence for this theory.

with Joachim, and we should generally prefer the terms Brahms himself favored when discussing the role of women in his life and their influence on his art.

Siegfried Kross took this exact approach in his article "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann."[33] Therein he describes how Hoffmann influenced Brahms's philosophical and artistic maturation, focusing on the manner in which Brahms embodied Hoffmann's artistic philosophy as distilled in Kreisler. For example, when the Kapellmeister arrives at Sieghartsweiler in *Kater Murr*, he struggles to finish his musical compositions or even to tune a guitar. But he eventually finds peace living in a monastery—where, in celibacy, he may cultivate an "artist's love"—and his compositions become "mellow [and] sweetly melancholy, instead of painfully expressive."[34] Another example from Kross along these lines focuses, literally, on how Kreisler views himself. While living in Sieghartsweiler, Kreisler cast as his Doppelgänger the painter Leonard Ettlinger after seeing the madman's image reflected as his own in a lake. After relocating to the monastery he notices his own reflection, again in a lake, and remarks**,**

> The person who is going next to me down there is a calm, thoughtful man who, no longer buzzing wildly around in vague, endless spaces, holds firmly to the established path; and it is a luck thing for me that the person is none other than I myself.[35]

Removed from the physical proximity of his love interests, Kreisler is able to channel his yearning into music and live without self-doubt. Kross uses the example of Brahms's First Piano Concerto to demonstrate a similar change in Brahms. The first movement, composed at the height of his infatuation with Clara Schumann and during Robert Schumann's internment at the asylum, is monstrous and tortured sounding. Audiences and critics alike found it bizarre. However, the second and third movements, composed after Robert died and Brahms decided not

[33] Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 193-200.
[34] Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 199.
[35] Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 199.

to pursue Clara as a romantic partner, abandon the hyper-expressivity of the first and showcase his newfound maturity.

Another reason Kross suggested that Kreisler, in particular, appealed to Brahms more strongly than other aggrieved artists in Hoffmann or in stories by different authors Brahms loved from youth owes to their shared first name Johannes. Kross proposes that whenever Hoffmann's characters addressed Kreisler by his first name, those "passages must have sounded [to the composer] like a direct address."[36] While Kross's suggestion may seem quaint at best and specious at worst, it is difficult to dismiss based on the simple fact that Brahms assumed the Kreisler Junior alter-ego. Consider the following passage from the first book in *Kater* Murr when Julia's mother Madame Benzon quarrels with Kreisler after his startling first appearance:

> I will call you by the gentle name of Johannes, so that I may at least hope the satyr's mask hides a gentle, tender disposition after all! And then again, nothing will ever convince me that your bizarre name Kreisler is not to be regarded as an invention, a substitute for some quite different surname![37]

Brahms might have delighted in this passage because the "quite different surname" could reasonably be his own. One can imagine a situation in which an acquaintance might repeat Madame Benzon's final remark to Brahms himself. In fact, Joachim did object to Brahms cultivating a public alter-ego, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Furthermore, Madame Benzon's reference to the "satyr's mask" rings true with contemporary descriptions of Brahms as Janus-faced or seeking to hide behind his beard.[38] Of course, these descriptions are used most often to emphasize apparent

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[36] Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 196.
[37] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 50. Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 197.
[38] For discussions comparing Brahms to Janus see: Constantin Floros, *"Free but Alone": A Life for a Poetic Music* trans. Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch (Frankfurt Am Main, Germany: Peter Lang, 2010), 16-26; also Roger Moseley, "Reforming Johannes: Brahms, Kreisler Junior and the Piano Trio in B, Op. 8," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* vol. 132, no. 2 (2007): 254. For discussions of of Brahms with and without a beard (*Brahms mit/ohne Bart*) see Swafford, *Brahms*, xiii, 3-4, 309, 424, 453. Swafford refers to the beard as a "patriarchal mask" and a "disguise."

differences between his youthful and adult personalities; however, even as a young man Brahms could be moody and downright cantankerous, regularly failing to convey his more generous feelings towards his closest friends. He and Kreisler clearly possessed similar dispositions, including the willingness to adopt surnames of their own choosing.

A more recent appraisal of the Brahms/Kreisler connection by Clive MacAuslan focuses specifically on Hoffmann's trope of the "artist in love" to illustrate convergences between Hoffmann's and Brahms's philosophies on the role of women in the lives of artists. MacAuslan divides an artist's life into four stages based on a meta-reading of Hoffmann's fiction:

1. The young artist in love
2. The middle-aged artist
3. The artist as heir and usurper
4. The final years.

He suggests that the points of intersection "between the stories of Hoffmann and Brahms's experience" are more than pure coincidence and demonstrate "cross-fertilization between art and experience."[39] As he suggests, we may map Brahms's experience onto the tropes of Hoffmann's art according to the following scheme. 1. A young artist leaves home and falls in love with an unattainable woman who will become forever idolized (Clara Schumann). Ensuing relationships cannot persist in the shadow of his first love (Agathe von Siebold, Julie Schumann), and over time he realizes the folly of marriage. 2. In his middle age, the artist becomes embittered and misogynistic. Women are idealized when they share traits with his first love and scorned when they do not. Unsurprisingly, none truly compare to his original muse. 3. The third category, "artist as heir and usurper," refers to younger men usurping their mentors. In truth, this category feels out of place within the chronological trajectory of the other three, both in regard to Hoffmann's protagonists and Brahms, but its premise is straightforward. The artist falls in love

[39] John MacAuslan, "'The Artist in Love' in Brahms's Life and in his 'German Folksongs,'" *Music & Letters* vol. 88, no. 1 (February, 2007), 88.

with woman who is married to a man of stature or that he idolizes professionally and attempts to replace the husband in love and life. 4. Finally, artists toward the end of their lives either succumb to madness or become gentler, isolated old men, full of longing for the past and regret. Brahms's assimilation of the "artist's love" philosophy helps to explain his lifelong bachelorhood and his ability to persevere despite the hardships in his love life. MacAuslan elucidates how Hoffmann's tenets appear to guide Brahms into and throughout adulthood. In this light, Hoffmann may be understood as a mentor or father figure to Brahms, which may explain Brahms's decision to cast himself as Kreisler's progeny (Junior) and not a precise embodiment of Kreisler himself.

Styra Avins also overlays fiction and reality in her epistolary biography of Brahms. Particularly important for the present study, she evocatively considers the parallels between Brahms's lived experience and the fictional life of Kapellmeister Kreisler in her preface to letters written during his first term of employ in Detmold:

> In area, the Duchy of Detmold rivaled Sieghartsweiler, that diminutive land where Johannes Kreisler, Meister Abraham, and his tom-cat Murr fought so many battles against the Philistines. At the time of Brahms's appointment . . . no railway yet led to Detmold, and paper money was still unknown. Tucked away at the edge of the great Teutoburger Forest, scene of the dramatic slaughter of three Roman legions at a crucial moment in ancient German history, the little principality was reached by horse-drawn coach and belonged to another century.[40]

I would add to her interpretation that Brahms came and went for three years, arriving in October and leaving early in the new year, never renewing his contract before departure. His ties to the court were tenuous and lent to his presence an element of Kreislerian uncertainty as to whether or not he would return.[41] Furthermore, while in Detmold, his duties to the court were to perform

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[40] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 155.

[41] Carl Bargheer. "Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms in Detmold, 1857-1865," trans. Patrick Aubyrn, TM, Lippisches Landesbibliothek, Detmold. In Bargheer's *Erinnerungen*, he mentions his surprise and disappointment that Brahms would not return to his post in 1860. "But next Fall we waited for Brahms in vain. The correspondence

at public concerts, to teach keyboard lessons to the princess and other members of the aristocracy, and to conduct the *Singverein*. Recalling Hoffmann's introduction to *Kreisleriana*, Brahms satisfied the conditions to claim Kreisler's mantle via his location and his appointment: he "play[ed] excellently," was "permitted to teach music," and "truly [i.e. literally] was a Kapellmeister." At every turn, Brahms seemed to espouse a Hoffmannian worldview, particularly in regard to his romantic relationships. The intentionally wrought and unintentionally occurring parallels that connect his and Kreisler's biographies demonstrate the seminal role of Hoffmann's literature upon Brahms's sense of self.

Did I Not Bear the Name Kreisler?

When exactly Johannes Brahms began styling himself Johannes Kreisler Junior is impossible to ascertain, but the first written evidence of his altered surname appears on the autograph copy of the *Rondo after C.M. von Weber* in March 1852. He continued signing works with this name through 1854, including seven of his first ten published works.[42] Brahms also signed his letters this way as early as 1853, and acquaintances followed suit, addressing him in this manner and using the name among themselves. By and large, however, Brahms and friends had stopped using the name in their correspondence by the end of 1854. In that same brief period of 1853–54, Brahms also began copying memorable literary quotations into commonplace books he attributed to Kreisler: two of these bear the titles *Schatzkästlein des jungen Kreislers* and *Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein* (The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler); a third,

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Hofmarschall von Meysenbug conducted with Brahms on behalf of the Prince did not come to the desired conclusion. It seems as though [he declined to renew his contract] because his wishes concerning the management of the court orchestra would be unfulfilled out of consideration for Hofkapellmeister Kiel." In fact, Brahms only visited Detmold once more in his lifetime.

[42] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 258.

Schöne Gedanken über Musik (Beautiful Thoughts about Music), bears the first title as its subtitle.[43]

The *Schatzkästlein* title plays on a passage from *Kater Murr* in which Master Abraham speaks to Kriesler,

> I would suppose that in your present tolerably good mood you couldn't do better than open up your heart or your mind, or whatever you like to call that *little treasure chest* inside you, and fish this or that item out of it.[44]

Brahms may have occasionally referred to himself as Kreisler Junior through the early 1860s as evinced by the playfully written by-laws governing the Hamburg Women's Choir written in 1859 and signed "Johannes Kreisler, Jun. (alias Brahms)." If we assume this document remained in force throughout his tenure with the choir, then perhaps we might date the end of Brahms's Kreisler era to his quitting the position in 1861.

It is unsurprising that Brahms styled himself this way only for a few years. Brahms adopted the nickname when he was still an unknown, teenaged musician in Hamburg, and then he virtually abandoned it when his professional fortunes changed for the better. Until he went on tour with the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi on April 19, 1853, the pseudonym represented his desire to leave home and make his way as a professional musician. His kinship with the Kreisler character was strictly a spiritual affinity; in fact, there were few similarities between Brahms's "lived" experiences and the fictional adventures of Hoffmann's Kapellmeister. Kreisler—musician *par excellence* and the epitome of Romantic idealism—was known for wandering far

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[43] Johannes Brahms and Carl Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks: The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler. Quotations from Poets, Philosophers, and Artists Gathered by Johannes Brahms*, ed. Carl Krebs, trans. Agnes Eisenberger (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003), xiii. As Krebs mentions in his prefatory remarks, "we do not know exactly when this notebook was started; we only read 'in Hamburg' without a more precise date. It was finished 'in Düsseldorf, March 1854.'" The other two notebooks were titled *Schöne Gedanken über Musik* (Beautiful Thoughts about Music). Compiled contemporaneously with the *Schatzkästlein*, the second volume bears the *Treasure Chest* nomenclature as a subtitle. Clearly they are all in the same vein and there should be no qualms with Eichendorff's compilation bearing the first *Schatzkästlein* title.

[44] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 67. Emphasis mine.

and wide and turning up in unexpected locales; Kreisler Junior was virtually unknown even in Hamburg. Before 1853, Brahms had rarely ventured farther afield than Winsen-an-der-Luhe, roughly 30 kilometers southeast of Hamburg's city center, which was the first destination on his and Reményi's provincial tour of North Germany. Setting out with his mercurial sidekick, Brahms left home without much money and completely without fame, yet this was surely the closest he had come to emulating his transient literary hero. The tour marked a rite of passage for the young composer.

What a difference the next year would make. Within a year of his departure from Hamburg, and before his twentieth birthday, Brahms had met Joseph Joachim, Franz Liszt, Robert and Clara Schumann, and Hector Berlioz. He had published his first two works (Opp. 1 & 3), and was preparing five more. Robert Schumann had penned the famous laudatory article "Neue Bahnen," which appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* on October 28, 1853, announcing Brahms's metaphorical arrival. Four months later, on February 27, 1854, Schumann threw himself into the Rhine. The sea changes in Brahms's professional and private life leading up to this point had already begun to make the maintenance of a fictitious Doppelgänger untenable, but it became especially complicated after his mentor and champion célèbre, famous for his artistic alter egos, very publicly suffered a psychotic break.

Nevertheless, Hoffmann's *Kapellmeister* continued to exert a profound pull on Brahms's youthful imagination. In this light, it may seem odd that Kreisler Junior did not copy any quotations from the *Kreisleriana* or *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr* into his commonplace books. In fact, the *Schatzkästlein* contains only two quotations from Hoffmann:

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> Great mischief with mediocre artistic doings derives because many mistake a strong external stimulus for their true artistic vocation. *~Der Artushof*[45]

[45] Brahms and Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks*, 5.

341.

> A human being should not, like a shy over-sensitive little insect, pull in his feelers at the slightest ungentle touch. ~*Serapionsbrüder*[46]

Brahms already owned Hoffmann's complete works when he began keeping his commonplace books.[47] Based on his comprehensive knowledge of Hoffmann's oeuvre, he clearly read the works often, in keeping with Brahms's lifelong penchant for re-reading familiar favorites.[48] Indeed, epistolary evidence suggests that the young Brahms already knew Hoffmann's stories so well that it was unnecessary to copy passages into his notebooks. Some of the most famous passages from Brahms's letters describe the importance of his self-identification with Kreisler and his familiarity with Hoffmann's oeuvre. Writing to Joachim following the dissolution of his touring partnership with Reményi, he proclaimed: "Did I not bear the name Kreisler, I would now have the weightiest of reasons to lose courage, to curse my love of art and my enthusiasm, and to withdraw as a hermit (scribe?) into the solitude (of an office) and lose myself in silent contemplation (of the documents to be copied)."[49] And in a letter to Clara of 1854, written while undertaking a solo walking tour of the Black Forest, he laid bare his internal dialogue: "I often quarrel with myself, that is, Kreisler and Brahms quarrel with one another."[50]

Brahms's reference to abandoning art for the life of a scribe in his letter to Joachim contrasts Kreisler with another of Hoffmann's protagonists, Anselm from *Der Goldne Topf*, "who, having been discouraged by the difficulty of making his way into a life of art, immerses himself in copying documents."[51] Simply by virtue of having claimed an artistic Doppelgänger,

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[46] Brahms and Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks*, 171.
[47] Michael Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 177.
[48] Brahms and Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks*, xiii. Krebs writes: "While fairly curious about all new publications, he chose to read older books for a second or third time before finding dubious entertainment in new ones."
[49] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 12. The parentheses are Brahms's own.
[50] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 51.
[51] MacAuslan, "The Artist in Love," 80. See footnote 8. Eventually Anselm dies, potentially by suicide, much like his better-known *Bildungsroman* counterpart Werther. In other words, were Brahms not firm in his artistic resolve,

Brahms participates in the Hoffmannian tradition as well, since, as we have seen above, Hoffmann understood Kreisler as a representation of his poetic self, and Kreisler glimpsed the mad painter Ettlinger in his reflection. In each case—Brahms/Kreisler Junior, Hoffmann/Kreisler, Kreisler/Ettlinger—the subject imagines his Doppelgänger as a more impulsive, overwrought version of himself. In another letter to Clara Schumann, Brahms related Robert Schumann's madness to Hoffmann's characters Serapion and Krespel, and referred her to *Kater Murr* and *Kreisleriana* to become "properly acquaint[ed] with Kreisler Senior," as mentioned earlier.[52] These off-the-cuff references, and the regularity with which such references emerge in Brahms's letters, demonstrate his deep familiarity with Hoffmann's writings.

At the end of his life, Johannes Brahms apparently owned just one edition of Hoffmann's literary works: *Hoffmanns sämmtliche Werke in einem Bande* (1841).[53] This was a collector's desk copy replete with colorful ribbons to bookmark several pages simultaneously, and it would have been wholly unsuited to long reading without a surface upon which it might lie open. Compared to nineteen volumes of Goethe, Hoffmann's scant shelf space belies his importance to Brahms, but his meager representation is in keeping with several others of Brahms's youthful favorites, Novalis and Jean Paul. Works by these authors, two of the most frequently copied in the commonplace books, were even scarcer than Hoffmann in Brahms's library when he died, at which time he owned a single volume of Novalis and no copies of Jean Paul. It is possible that Brahms may have owned more editions of works by these writers. His will stipulated that his "true and worthy friends and acquaintances" could take items found within the estate otherwise

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like Kreisler, he might despair to the point of death. For more about Hoffmann's own suicidal fantasies and Anselm's death, see: James M. McGlathery, "The Suicide Motif in E.T.A. Hoffmann's 'Der Goldne Topf,'" *Monatshefte* vol. 58, no. 2 (Summer, 1966), 115-123.

[52] MacAuslan, "The Artist in Love," 82.

[53] Kurt Hofmann compiled a bibliography of all books and scores in Brahms's library at the time of his death based on the holdings of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna. The entry for *Hoffmanns sämmtliche Werke in einem Bande* can be found on page 54. Kurt Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms: Bücher- u. Musikalienverz* (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandl, 1974).

bequeathed to the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna—his library of books and music—to remember him by, and some such volumes may have disappeared before the final inventory of the collection. That is, editions of Hoffmann, Jean Paul, and Novalis may have found new homes immediately after his death and before the Gesellschaft took official legal ownership of the bequest and compiled their catalogue.[54]

There remain other material signs, however scant, of Brahms's lasting affection for Hoffmann's writings. In 1924, Marie Schumann bequeathed an edition of Hoffmann to the Brahms Archive at the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde in Vienna: the copy of *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier* that Brahms had purchased for himself in January 1854 and later given to her. It is the seventh volume from the collection *Hoffmanns ausgewählte Schriften*, but there is no indication that Brahms owned the other volumes from this series and may have purchased this volume one-off. That he owned this volume in particular is more telling of Brahms's love for Hoffmann's fiction, and his Kreisler stories in particular. It was a cheap, pocket-sized edition and shows signs of wear that indicate frequent use. The copy is weathered and well loved, its cover worn through at the corners and its pages dog-eared (sometimes multiple times over), and it is filled with annotations in Brahms's hand. Marie Schumann may have read from the book, but it is clear that she viewed it primarily as an heirloom, since the annotations appear to be Brahms's alone. The condition of the book speaks to his active engagement with Hoffmann's writings. Brahms did not need to copy quotations from it into his commonplace book, because this volume was often close at hand.

As we have seen, however, Brahms began phasing out the nickname in the summer of 1854, roughly six months after he purchased his pocket edition of the *Phantasiestücke*, following

[54] Otto Biba, "New Light on the The Brahms *Nachlass*," in *Brahms 2: Biographical, Documentary, and Analytical Studies*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 45.

an epistolary exchange with Joseph Joachim. On June 19, Brahms sent a stack of new piano compositions to the violinist for review. This collection included the *Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann*, which was published later that year in November as Opus 9. Originally, Brahms had envisioned the variations as the second of two parts in a volume titled *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers. Herausgegeben vom jungen Kreisler* (Pages from the Diary of a Musician. Published by the Young Kreisler). The title adapts the subtitles from Hoffmann's Kreisler stories: *Phantasiestiicke in Callots Manier. Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines reisenden Enthusiasten* and *Lebensansichten des Katers Murr. Nebst fragmentarische Biographie des Kapellmeisters Johannes Kreisler in zufälligen Makulaturblättern. Herausgegeben von E.T.A. Hoffmann*.[55] In a reply to Brahms on June 27, Joachim wrote:

> I have to put my foot down categorically against the title. In Hoffmann's and Jean Paul's time such mystifications were new, because [they were] the product of a true, brilliant bravado, which liked to outwit the old school in all possible ways — nowadays similarities to this form are so much degraded through the meaningless use which almost every young little poet . . . has made of it, that you may not encourage it through your example.[56]

Composer and musicologist William Horne relates Joachim's term "mystification" to the masquerade. Specifically, that *Kater Murr* and Brahms's proposed *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch* pose as "found material."[57] Joachim considers this ruse, or mask, outmoded and ill-suited for emulation in the current artistic era. He urges Brahms to take full ownership of his artistry and cease participating in the dilettantism of lesser talents. It is a call for Brahms to assert his individualism and henceforth disguise the exact nature of the artistic cross-fertilization inspiring his musical compositions. In other words, Joachim advises Brahms to let his music speak for itself and embrace the non-representational type of mystification often described as "absolute

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[55] William Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades and his *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers*," *The Journal of Musicology* vol. 15, no. 1 (Winter, 1997), 98; 108-109.
[56] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 47; Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades," 100.
[57] Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades," 109.

music." The suggestion that Brahms remove explicit interpretive guideposts from his titles, minimally, was not entirely unappealing to Brahms because both Hoffmann and Ludwig Tieck discussed the appeal of instrumental music from this vantage point.[58]

Despite Joachim's strong words and likely his own sympathy toward the suggestion, it seems that Brahms's infatuation with Hoffmann and the evocative *Blätter* title was no less fervent in June 1854 than it had been in January. He was so loath to abandon the proposed title that he solicited his former teacher Eduard Marxsen's opinion after receiving Joachim's response, writing: "I should be sorry to strike [the title] out."[59] Marxsen must have agreed with Joachim, because Brahms scrapped the *Blätter* project that summer, but it seems unlikely that Brahms fully abandoned his desire to contribute a musical entry to the *Kreisleriana* canon à la Schumann. The vestiges of the abandoned Hoffmannian conceit can be observed in the autograph copy of the *Variations*, which are famously signed both by Brahms and by "Kreisler Junior." It is unclear whether Brahms ever meant to publish the work with these signatures, or whether they were always meant as a private tribute to Schumann, for they go unremarked upon in his letters.

Brahms's fascination with Kreisler was not common knowledge beyond his immediate circle; his "signatures" were not included in the published scores and his letters were not a matter of public record. Joachim's protestation against the *Blätter* title assured that the name-play remained private. Having finally acquiesced to his friend's misgivings and abandoned the pseudo-literary project, Brahms may have set himself the new challenge of evoking Hoffmann

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[58] Hoffmann's essay "Beethoven's Instrumental Music" from the first volume of *Kreisleriana* is the best-known example of his commitment to the "absolute music" aesthetic. Based on the preponderance of corner folds in Brahms's copy of *Kreisleriana*, he was supremely familiar with the essay. Wagner originated the terminology in his program notes for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony from 1846. Today, Eduard Hanslick's *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* (*On the Musically Beautiful*) is the primary touch point for the term; however, that book was newly published in 1854 and it is unclear whether Joachim or Brahms had read it by June.

[59] Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades," 109. See footnote 16.

by other means. Indeed, a veiled reference to Kreisler bridges the gap between 1854 and the formation of the Hamburg Women's Choir in 1859.

That reference appears in the second movement of Brahms's First Piano Concerto, which he completed in early 1857. Included in the autograph score beneath the initial violin and viola melody is the phrase *Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*. Its placement under the staff gives it the appearance of sung text, and Brahms considered keeping the Latin in the published version of the concerto.[60] These words were ripe with meaning on several levels, not only by imbuing the movement with religious solemnity but also by referring obliquely to Robert Schumann, Clara Schumann, and Kreisler. Schumann died on July 29, 1856 just before Brahms began work on the second movement, which led Tovey to suggest that the Adagio is a requiem for the recently deceased.[61] Brahms's first German biographer Max Kalbeck speculated that the biblical reference was meant to invoke Robert Schumann based upon a letter Brahms wrote to Schumann on November 29, 1853 wherein he addressed his mentor playfully as "*Mynheer Domine.*" Kalbeck's interpretation attributes considerable importance to what may have simply been a playful greeting and relies primarily on the similarity of *Domine* and *Domini.* Like many of his assertions, this one is flimsy and irreverent, but may have struck close to the mark coincidentally. Brahms gave an entirely different explanation for the movement's genesis in a letter of December 30, 1856, when he told Clara Schumann that he was "painting a gentle portrait of [her] which will then be the Adagio."[62]

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[60] John Daverio, *Crossing Paths: Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 149.
[61] Donald Francis Tovey, *Concertos and Choral Works: Selections from Essays in Musical Analysis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2015), 89.
[62] Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, *Briefe aus den Jahren 1853-1896* vol. 1 (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1927), 198; see also, Reynolds, 3-25. The beginning of Reynolds's essay summarizes various origin stories related to the Piano Concerto in D minor.

But the Latin text may have carried Hoffmannian connotations for Brahms as well, for it appeared in *Kater Murr* as an epigraph adorning the entryway to the Abbey of Kanzheim, where the fictional Kapellmeister found respite. The text is most famous as one of the closing lines of the Sanctus in the Mass, but this paraphrase of Psalm 118 appears originally in Matthew 21:9, where it represents the calm before the storm of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem. In *Kater Murr*, Hoffmann channeled this association by marking the Abbey as a place of calm.[63] Kreisler's sojourn at the Abbey precedes the tempestuous name day ceremony that effectively begins and ends the fragmentary biography of the Kapellmeister. In the context of the Concerto, the Adagio serves a similar role: it offers refuge following the tumultuous first movement.

My view is that Brahms used the text to mark a moment in which he finally found some respite, like Kreisler at the Abbey, after two and a half years of emotional turmoil owing to his connection with the Schumanns. Having broken free from their gravity, he found solace in composition, a sanctuary of his own creation. But whatever modicum of peace he felt welcoming the new year, he also grappled with the burden of the high expectations set forth by Robert Schumann and the prospect that his ensuing works—the piano concerto in particular—might be poorly received. As Berlioz noted after the two composers met on December 4, 1853, "he will suffer much."[64] Relief for Brahms, as it was for Kreisler Senior in *Kater Murr*, would only be temporary.

The Similar Circumstances of Kreisler Junior and Senior: Detmold and Siegartsweiler

In 1858, Brahms fell in love with Agathe von Siebold during a summer holiday in Göttingen. This romantic entanglement would test his resolve in different ways from the affair

[63]Kross, "Brahms and E.T.A. Hoffmann," 199-200. Michael Musgrave, *The Cambridge Companion to Brahms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011),,162.
[64] Clive, *Brahms and His World*, 36.

with Clara Schumann. Siebold was two years younger than Brahms, unmarried and without renown, and possessed a lovely soprano voice for which Brahms composed many songs.[65] They were briefly and secretly engaged, but Brahms prompted the dissolution of their relationship in early 1859. I will explore their relationship further in the next chapter. For now, let us focus on its context in regard to his employment at the court in Detmold. The Agathe chapter of his life coincided with his second season in the Duchy, and her presence colors the full term of his employ in retrospect. Together, these pivotal events tested the aspects of his philosophical outlook gleaned from Hoffmann, namely his adherence to the "artist's love" and the necessity for artists to be unbound from interpersonal and occupational constraints in order to realize their full potential. The court job was his first salaried position, and it buttressed his hitherto occasional and meager income, but it also limited his freedom to travel during the last months of the year and must have felt somewhat old fashioned. To a degree, the position represented a setback toward achieving the Romantic ideal, as exemplified by Mozart and Beethoven and described by Hoffmann, which was to subsist as an autonomous artist without the need for court-based employment. Hoffmann used scathing humor to describe the necessity of wealthy benefactors in the first chapter of *Kreisleriana*, identifying the artistic constraints and self-indulgent pageantry of court life as the root cause of Kreisler's "musical sufferings." By all accounts, Prince Leopold III of Lippe was a better boss than Hoffmann's Privy Councillor Röderlein, but court life in Detmold was regimented.

Recalling Avins's argument about the similarities between Brahms's experiences in Detmold and Kreiser's in Sieghartsweiler, let us explore in greater detail how the real-life composer might have conceived of his circumstances by comparison with his fictional

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[65] Paul Berry, *Brahms Among Friends: Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). Berry provides a detailed description of Agathe von Siebold's vocal type and quality in chapter nine "Counterpoint and Catharsis." See pages 316-18, specifically.

counterpart. First, the name Sieghartsweiler: a cheeky bit of wordplay, its etymology reveals much about the nature of Hoffmann's fictional principality. The first component, Sieghart, is a German surname meaning hard-won victory (*der Sieg*: victory; *hart*: hard, arduous, bitter). It has the same stem and is aurally similar to Sigurd, or Siegfried, which may impart a pseudo-mythical quality to the name even without specifically connoting the hero of the *Niebelungenlied*. The second half of the name, -weiler (*der Weiler*), means hamlet, thereby suggesting a rural setting apart from, but not truly independent of, other towns and regional centers. Hoffmann clearly intended the name to underscore the "false brilliance" of the deposed Prince Irenaeus, now a "private gentleman of means," who presides over a mock court in Sieghartsweiler. The former Prince, Hoffmann humorously informs us, "lost his [previous] little state out of his pocket one day when he went out for a walk over the border."[66] Despite its remote-sounding name, the Sieghartsweiler Hoffmann describes evokes instead a bustling provincial city, if one of little national importance.

Brahms may have noted that Detmold resembled the principality from *Kater Murr*. This interpretation is bolstered by their defining geographic features. The court of Prince Leopold III lay in the shadow of the nearby Grotenburg ("large castle") mountain, sometimes called Teutberg. Sieghartsweiler lies in valley near the *Geierstein* (a name that means "vulture rock").[67] Notably, the *Geierstein* has a real-life correlate in southern Germany in the Alpine range lining the Isar valley. Detmold's diminutive peak is a mere 386 meters high compared to the 1,491 meters of the actual Geierstein, but the Grotenburg stands tall metaphorically as the long-presumed location where Hermann defeated three legions in the Teutoberger Wald to prevent

[66] Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, 28.

[67] Vultures are commonly associated with putrefaction and purification, as their ability to consume dead carrion—including diseased specimens—signifies an opportunity for rebirth. "Vulture Rock" is an appropriate name for the peak adjacent to Sieghartsweiler for two reasons: 1. The dissolution of Irenaeus' princedom and the collapse of the mock aristocracy offers an opportunity for moral rebirth in Sieghartsweiler. 2. It is easy to perceive the cast of characters circling like vultures over the court, waiting for some calamity to befall it to their advantage.

Rome from conquering Germania in the year 9 CE (this event is sometimes called the Varian Disaster). Reflecting the growing nationalist sentiments in the 19th century, a towering statue of Hermann was constructed atop the peak in 1875 to commemorate the historic battle. For all intents and purposes, Hermann could easily be seen as a real-life proxy for the legendary Siegfried/ Sigurd for whom Sieghartsweiler was named. The second elements *–fried* and *-urd* (deriving from *-ward*) mean "peace" and "protector," respectively, and Hermann is revered as a protector of ancient Germany. Notably, the monument atop the *Grotenburg* was under construction during Brahms's court employ, but only the temple, dome, and pedestal were complete by 1857, so that when Brahms hiked up the mountain, he needed to imagine the hero atop the pedestal.

Thus, the juxtaposition of the backwoods princely court in Detmold set against the low-slung mountain range and Teutoberger Wald might have reminded Brahms of Hoffmann's fictional Sieghartsweiler. Brahms's life reflected Hoffman's art in other ways, too. When Brahms auditioned for the court position during his first visit to Detmold in May, 1857, he befriended one of the court violinists, a man named Carl Bargheer. Based on the latter's recollections, it would appear that Brahms made quite a distinct first impression and that he struck his hosts and some of the local residents as high-spirited and somewhat eccentric, cut from the Kreislerian cloth. For starters, he had forgotten to bring the appropriate attire and needed to be furnished with several items of clothing, courtesy of the young violinist, mere hours before his concert. Following the concert, a lively party ensued, which Bargheer described in some detail:

> After the concert, in which Brahms delighted everyone with his wonderful performance of Beethoven's G-major Piano Concerto [No. 4], some of his audience went with him to Richter's candy shop where a very merry party took place. The animated company could not bring itself to disband until

> Hofkapellmeister Kiel, usually one of the most sedentary night watchmen, himself admonished us to break it up. However, Brahms thought it a splendid summer night for a stroll through the Teutoburger Forest and found two perseverant companions to wander with him. Early the next morning we arrived in the village of Hiddesen, and finding the tavern still closed for the night, we sought a little place to have a rest in the beer garden. The innkeeper was extremely bewildered to find us there at six in the morning, sound asleep and dressed in tailcoats, white vests, and polished leather boots. Fräulein von Meysenbug was likewise bewildered when, on her morning walk, she saw us dressed and groomed for a concert.[68]

Here Bargheer makes special mention of Brahms's performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. Unpopular during Beethoven's day, it was a highly expressive choice, beginning idiosyncratically with a quiet chordal passage for the pianist, and lacking the bombast and virtuosity that were characteristic of Beethoven's first three essays in the genre. The result is a work that is intimate, lyrical, even, as Swafford writes, "anti-virtuosic."[69] It was a choice worthy of Johannes Kreisler. So too was the decision to go for a moonlit hike in the nearby wood. The state of his dress the next morning recalled the disheveled but fashionably dressed Kreisler at the beginning of *Kater Murr* when Hedwiga and Julia first met him. Wearing borrowed clothes, having partied late into the night and hiking the Grotenburg, Brahms and his new friend slept on a bench waiting for the public house at the inn to open, where they were discovered in their roughshod state by Laura von Meysenbug, one of his hosts. Apparently he remained unable to manage courtly dress or rein in his behavior once employed. Sometimes Brahms forgot to wear a necktie, to the horror of his aristocratic employers, and shouted loudly over the choir under his

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[68] Bargheer, *Erinnerungen*. Nach dem Konzert, in welchem Brahms durch den wundervollen Vortrag des G=dur-Konzertes von Beethoven alles entzückt hatte, ging noch ein Teil seiner Zuhörer mit ihm in die Konditorei von Richter, wo eine höchst fidele Nachfeier stattfand. Die animierte Gesellschaft konnte sich nicht trennen, bis der Hofkapellmeister Kiel, sonst einer der seßhaftesten Nachtwächter, selber zum Aufbruch mahnte. Brahms wollte aber in der herrlichen Sommernacht noch einen Spaziergang im Teutoburger Walde machen und fand auch zwei ausdauernde Begleiter, die mit ihm wanderten. Frühmorgens gelangten (sic.) wir nach dem Dorfe Hiddesen, fanden das Wirtshaus aber noch versclossen und suchten deshalb ein Plätzchen zum Ausruhen in der Gartenlaube. Hier fand uns der Wirt morgens gegen 6 Uhr im tiefsten Schlaf, höchst verwundert über die frühen Gäste im Frack, weißer Weste und Lackstiefeln. Ebenso verwundert war nachher Fräulein von Meysenbug, welche uns auf ihrer Morgenpromenade in dieser Konzerttoilette sah.

[69] Swafford, *Brahms*, 167. Jan Swafford describes the piece as a "magnificent, introspective, antivirtuosic concerto."

direction. He regularly complained about his duties to the court in letters, much like Kreisler, and he took great joy in scrimping together money to buy wine for woodland picnics.[70]

Finally, Brahms rediscovered his creative energy during this period and began composing with renewed fervor, which resulted in an outpouring of published works in the early 1860s. Despite his frequent claims of boredom while working for the court, there were ample opportunities for artistic inspiration. In addition to regular rehearsals and performances, Brahms spent considerable time in the well-stocked music library selecting works for his chorus and examining scores by Palestrina, Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin, to name only a few. Self-education was a widely idealized concept during the Romantic era, and reverence for the musical past is a particularly crucial component of Kreislerian philosophy. Furthermore, his position in Detmold afforded him the freedom to live a quasi-nomadic lifestyle for nine months of the year. Brahms was no longer bound to his hometown, cash-strapped and beholden to the whims of a mercurial touring partner, or consumed with the Schumann affair, and he experienced true independence for the first time in his life. While it may seem as though Brahms abandoned his Kreisler Junior persona in 1854 after Joachim spoke forcefully against his *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch* project, the circumstances surrounding his employ in Detmold, his tumultuous courtship and broken engagement with Agathe von Siebold, and his growing sense of self-reliance resound with Kreislerian overtones. Faced with all these resonances between Brahms's experiences at Detmold and those of the fictional Kapellmeister he held dear, we might well ask: do any of his compositions from the period between 1857-59 evoke his subsumed alter-ego?

[70] There is a comical scene at the beginning of the third book in *Kater Murr* where Kreisler is wandering in the woods between Sieghartsweiler and the monastery when he encounters the monk names Father Hilarious, a keen drinker of wine. They share a meal and many toasts by a woodland spring. The Grotenburg is known for its numerous natural springs, which would have allowed Brahms to recreate this scene during his escapades.

In 1859, Brahms penned the subtlest entry yet in his personal *Kreisleriana* canon, the *Adagio non troppo* from his Second Serenade. Critics have long admired the work for its formal, harmonic, and melodic idiosyncrasies, both in the context of the Serenade and among the other works of his early catalog, the *Adagio non troppo* has received more scholarly attention than the other movements, but it has not been analyzed intertextually. Several of its most prominent musical features including the basso ostinato and tempestuous modulation from A minor to A-flat major can be read as allusions to passages from Hoffmann in pastiche, which coalesce in a hazy dreamscape to evoke elements from the Kreisler stories. Taken together, the overarching theme suggested by these overlaps evokes the "artist's love." Yet the work bears no explicit program. Recognizing it as an entry into the *Kreisleriana* canon, rather, requires that we probe it for allusions of a musico-literary nature.

In the ensuing chapters, I will examine issues related to genre, appraise musical allusions, analyze formal and musical idiosyncrasies, and assess the influence of key-characteristic traits in the composition. Links to literature, most often Hoffmann, and poetry, via Brahms's Lieder, will be forefront in my interpretation. Paul Berry has pointed the way toward this type of analysis in his book *Brahms Among Friends* by highlighting the way in which musical and literary allusions share the same basic technique, which "operates by bringing separate works into conscious and interpretively productive proximity during the act of listening, reading, or performing."[71] It seems likely that Brahms, who was deeply interested in literature and poetry, might allude to literature via musical themes, gestures, harmonies, and singularly expressive moments without ever explicitly revealing his literary inspiration. As I shall demonstrate shortly, Kreisler Junior is inextricably bound to the majority of Brahms's early works in some manner. Brahms's vocal works, especially his songs, feature at the heart of my study. The volume of his texted works far

[71] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 343.

outweighs the purely instrumental, indicating his general poetic bent, and demonstrable connections between songs and the *Adagio non troppo* offer a complementary narrative to the Kreislerian interpretation.

Signed, Johannes Kreisler Junior

Before I assess allusions to Hoffmann's Kreisler stories in the *Adagio non troppo*, it is necessary to give an overview of the other early works linked to Kreisler and the sheer number of intertextual references they feature more generally. Eight of Brahms's autographs bear his pseudonymous signature Johannes Kreisler Junior (see Table 1.1). This group of works comprises a youthful collection, for they were composed entirely between Brahms's nineteenth and twenty-second birthdays (1852-4).[72] Brahms signed the first seven of these pieces with the fictitious Kreisler Junior signature. The character pieces comprising Op. 9 he signed alternately as Brahms, as Kreisler, or else left blank.[73] All eight works feature the piano, four of them in a solo capacity; all six of the instrumental works feature prominent allusions (see Table 1.2).[74]

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[72] Of Brahms's first ten published works, only the Opus 4 *Scherzo* and the Opus 7 *Gesänge* do not bear the Kreisler signature. The first of these works Brahms finished in 1851, making it the oldest of his published instrumental works. It is possible that the *Scherzo* simply predated Brahms's adoption of the Kreisler persona. Moreover, the work became a calling card of sorts. Brahms regularly played it at both formal concerts while on tour with Reményi and informally when he was making professional and friendly acquaintances. He recognized the strategic importance of signing his first serious work with his birth name, even if his tendency to issue non-chronological opus numbers disguised its primacy. Recall, he signed the Laurens drawing with his given name and the motto from the *Scherzo* before any of his works were published. It is less clear why Brahms did not connect his Op. 7 songs with his literary Doppelgänger. Perhaps its application seemed inappropriate based on the inclusion of "Heimkehr" as the final song in the set, which was also written in 1851. Another possibility is that their texts do not match the themes in *Kreisleriana* or *Kater Murr*. The first five songs deal with maidenly suffering; four of them are narrated from the third person, and all include a line about a girl sitting in wait for her erstwhile lover. The fifth is in the first person, and like the first ends with a suicidal pronouncement. The sixth and final song, which is sung from a male perspective, is the capstone piece and describes the aforementioned lover mounting a perilous return to his maiden. The collection as a whole can be read either as heroic or as hyperbolic, but in either reading it is a far cry from the world inhabited by Johannes Kreisler.

[73] Presumably, Brahms's alternating authorial attributions in the Variations paid homage to Robert Schumann's *Davidsbundlertänze*, in which Schumann used individual movements to evoke his alter egos Florestan and Eusebius (or occasionally the pair together).

[74] Horne makes the case that the Ballades covertly bear the Kreisler Junior signature as two of them may have been preserved from the original packet sent to Joachim.

Table 1.1
Early Works Bearing Brahms's Kreisler Signature

Composition	Opus	Year Composed
Rondo after C.M. von Weber	Anh. La/1 no. 2	1852
Piano Sonata No. 1 in C Major	Op. 1	1852-3
Piano Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp minor	Op. 2	1852
Sechs Gesänge	Op. 3	1852/3
Piano Sonata No. 3 in F minor	Op. 5	1853
Sechs Gesänge	Op. 6	1852/3
Piano Trio No. 1 in B minor	Op. 8	1853-4
Variations on a Theme by Robert Schumann	Op. 9	1854

Table 1.2
Brahms's musical and literary allusions in his early instrumental compositions

Composition	Allusions
Rondo after C.M. von Weber	Theme based on the finale of Weber's Sonata Op. 24, No. 1
Piano Sonata No. 1 in C Major, movement II	-Subtitled "(Nach einem altdeutschen Minneliede.)" -Allusion to "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" (trad. Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio)
Piano Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp Minor, movement II	Free response to the Minnelied "Mir ist leide" (per Dietrich)
Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, movement II	-C.O. Sternau Inscipit: "Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint/da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint/und halten sich selig umfangen" -Allusion to "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" (trad. Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio)
Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, movement IV	-Titled "Intermezzo. (Rückblick.)" -Free response to the C.O. Sternau poem "Bitte" per Kalbeck
Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, movement V	Uses Joachim's F-A-E motto
Piano Trio No. 1 in B Minor (1854 ed.), movement III	Allusion to Schubert's "Am Meer"
Piano Trio No. 1 in B Minor (1854 ed.), movement IV	Allusion to Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*

When viewed through a Kreislerian lens, it makes sense that Brahms would include a variety of musical and literary referents in these works because Hoffmann's writing itself is hyper referential. To appreciate the full range of references in Hoffmann's writing, readers must also be polymaths, well versed in the arts (literature, poetry, music, painting), science, psychology, current events, and even the legal system. Furthermore, self-referentiality plays an important role as well, and many of Kreisler's musical compositions exist as real-world entries in Hoffmann's catalog.

In fact, most of Brahms's early instrumental works include some type of extramusical reference. The Op. 4 Scherzo covertly riffs on Chopin; the first of the Op. 10 Ballades is subtitled *Nach der schottischen Ballade: "Edward" (in Herder's Stimmen der Völker)* and the third and fourth are holdovers from the original *Blätter* set; the First Serenade Op. 11 is replete with allusions to Haydn and Beethoven; the First Piano Concerto Op. 15 includes the aforementioned *Benedictus* and its third movement shares many structural and thematic elements with Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3. Charles Rosen has written about the importance of allusion in Brahms's output:

> With Brahms, we reach a composer whose music we cannot fully appreciate without becoming aware of the influences which went into its making . . . Influence from Brahms was not merely a part of the compositional process, a necessary fact of creative life: he incorporated it as part of the symbolic structure of the work, its iconography.[75]

Like with Hoffmann's literature, a full appreciation of Brahms's music requires a broad referential lens. This is not to say that every one of Brahms's works with extramusical or intertextual references constituted an instance of *Kreisleriana*. Instead, his allusive tendency first

[75] Charles Rosen, "Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration," *19th Century Music*, vol 4, no. 2 (Autumn, 1980), 94.

took hold in his hyper-literary youthful works, many of which he composed in the spirit of Kreisler.

CHAPTER 2

LOVELY SORROWS: BRAHMS AND THE SERENADE IN A MAJOR

Musicologists have rarely devoted much attention to Brahms's Serenades. Generally well received by nineteenth-century critics, they were overshadowed within Brahms's lifetime by the ten works that emerged between 1873 and 1887, which included the four symphonies, three concertos, two concert overtures, and Variations on a Theme by J. Haydn. The Serenades remain the least performed of Brahms's orchestral works today, which undoubtedly contributes to their relative neglect in the scholarly literature.[76] In histories of progress, writers emphasize the arduous struggle Brahms faced in composing symphonies after Beethoven and have considered the Serenades merely as preparatory exercises toward his later, "true" symphonic compositions or labeled them as "immature" works. For example, Walter Frisch writes that Brahms "tested the symphonic waters" with his serenades after positioning the genre as one of the "safer harbors ... to write orchestral music but avoid the great symphony."[77] Frisch is not unkind in his estimation, for him the works "mark a significant stage on [Brahms's] road to the symphony."[78] Jan Swafford, on the other hand, denigrates the Serenades as "orchestration exercises . . . of no great consequence" on account of the fact that Brahms "would not give them the exulted name of

[76] The League of American Orchestras compiled thirteen years of repertoire reports from its member orchestras beginning with the 2000-01 season and ending with the 2012-13 season. Performances of Brahms's orchestral works during that span break down as follows: 1. Symphony No. 1 (230), 2. Symphony No. 4 (227), 3. Symphony No. 2 (223), 4. Violin Concerto (210), 5. Piano Concerto No. 1 (152), 6. Piano Concerto No. 2 (151), 7. Symphony No. 3 (137), 8. Haydn Variations (109), 9. Academic Festival Overture (104), 10. Double Concerto (88), 11. Tragic Overture (66), 12. Serenade No. 1 (35), Serenade No. 2 (26). The ratio of total performances is equivalent to their ratio on a yearly basis. Total performances of the two Serenades combined (61) number fewer than the Tragic Overture, the third least-performed work. Serenade No. 1 went unperformed in four seasons; Serenade No. 2 went unperformed in two seasons. Over the thirteen-year span, the Serenade in D Major received a 1.75% performance share, and Serenade in A Major received 1.30%. The full archive is available online: https://americanorchestras.org/knowledge-research-innovation/orr-survey.html

[77] Walter Frisch, *Brahms: The Four Symphonies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 12.

[78] Frisch, *The Four Symphonies*, 32.

symphony."[79] Regarding the topic of their "maturity," Donald Tovey suggested that Brahms's works composed between 1859 and 1865, beginning with the String Sextet in B-flat Major, Op. 18, represent his "first maturity."[80] While this designation is a convenient historiographical tool, it contributes to the characterization of the Serenades as immature compositions.

More recently, however, Michael Vaillancourt and Jacquelyn Sholes have sought to rehabilitate the Serenades. Vaillancourt builds on Tovey's measured observation that these works evince "a deliberate reaction toward classical sonata style and procedure" and positions them as musical counterparts to the ill-fated Declaration of 1860, which condemned the artistic tenets of Liszt and the New German School.[81] Vaillancourt's position is distilled through Frisch, who related the quoted passage from Tovey to a stylistic shift in Brahms's early music (opp. 1-10), which embraced elements of "Lisztian transformation," to a "purer idiom that recalls Haydn and early Beethoven" in the Serenades.[82] Vaillancourt situates this development within a broader social construction, writing:

> Taken together with the Declaration . . . Brahms's rehabilitation of the orchestral serenade, a seemingly obsolete genre, was interpreted by contemporary musicians as evidence of a surprising new classical orientation in his work and as a challenge to the principles of radical modernism advocated by several influential contemporaries.[83]

Rather than viewing the Serenades as essays in avoidance or orchestration exercises, Vaillancourt advocates for their autonomy based on distinct generic markers. Brahms intentionally chose a type and style pre-dating Beethoven's *Eroica* to espouse a particular classical aesthetic and offer a musical rebuttal to the principles of the New German School.

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[79] Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 204.
[80] Donald Francis Tovey, "Brahms's Chamber Music," *Essays and Lectures on Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1949), 243.
[81] Tovey, "Brahms's Chamber Music," 230.
[82] Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 65.
[83] Michael Vaillancourt, "Brahms's 'Sinfonie-Serenade' and the Politics of Genre," *The Journal of Musicology* 26, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 382.

Jacqueline Sholes has also worked to shift the analytical focus away from the ways in which the Serenades do or do not anticipate Brahms's Symphonies, inquiring instead into the manner of Brahms's engagement with historical models and their expressive import.[84] She demonstrates how the tendency to focus on fleeting allusions to Beethoven, Schubert, and Schumann in Brahms's Serenade in D Major often obscures the deeper and all-encompassing connection to the finale of Haydn's Symphony No. 104. Allusions to the latter are forefront in the first movement of the Serenade in D and recur throughout the piece in various permutations, most obviously in the finale. The imperfect recollections of the original allusion in later movements enact a narrative wherein Brahms struggles to preserve music of the past while simultaneously forging his own way. For Sholes, "the effort to recall the first theme of the Serenade later in the work is perhaps more fundamentally an attempt to recapture the music of Haydn's finale, which threatens to fade into the musical past."[85] Ultimately, he situates Haydn's ending as his beginning, literally in regards to its allusive prominence and figuratively as it pertains to his orchestral ambition.

Both Sholes and Vaillancourt deal primarily with the Serenade in D Major, and the Serenade in A remains in a state of comparative neglect.[86] In several contemporary studies it features as a case study, but it is rarely the primary focus. Essays by James Webster and Elaine Sisman comment on the hybridization of sonata and ternary forms in the Adagio non troppo and draw attention to its striking second theme.[87] For them, this early example of *Mischformen* set a

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[84] Jacquelyn E. C. Sholes, "Musical Memory and the D-Major Serenade" in *Allusion as Narrative Premise in Brahms's Instrumental Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018): 103-132.
[85] Sholes, *Allusion as Narrative Premise*, 128.
[86] Sholes discusses the Serenade in A Major in considerably more detail in her article "Gustav Jenner and the Music of Brahms: The Case of the Orchestral Serenades," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 15 (2018): 237–272. The details of her analyses primarily support intertextual comparisons between Brahms and Jenner's orchestral serenades.
[87] James Webster, "Schubert's Sonata Form and Brahms's First Maturity (II)," *19th-Century Music* 3, no. 1 (July 1979): 52-71; Elaine Sisman, "Brahms's Slow Movements: Reinventing the 'Closed' Forms" in *Brahms Studies:*

precedent for similar formal play in later works where it became a hallmark of his style. Margaret Notley, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of melody toward determining form. She wonders whether "large-scale formal novelty" in the Adagio non troppo "might be secondary, a complementary by-product of more primary, melodic concern."[88] Their studies lay the foundation for my dissertation.

Of the three multi-movement orchestral works that emerged out of Brahms's half-decade "silence" between 1856–60, the Serenade in A Major stands apart from the Serenade in D Major and the Piano Concerto in D Minor. Scored for a wind-dominated small orchestra without violins, trumpet, or timpani, it exudes a somewhat mysterious *je ne sais quoi* that is absent the more famous orchestral compositions from this era. Only the Second Serenade was conceived in its orchestral form from the start and it was completed expediently in approximately one year, as opposed to three in the case of the First Serenade or six in the case of the Piano Concerto. Begun in 1857 and 1854, respectively, but completed simultaneously, the latter two works employ large orchestras, though both were originally conceived as chamber works: the Serenade was an octet or nonet for winds and the Concerto was a sonata for two pianos. Brahms briefly considered converting these works into his first symphony—the Serenade bore the title Sinfonie-Serenade and the Concerto passed through an intermediate phase as a symphony—but in the end, neither work truly satisfied the requirements of that genre as inherited.[89]

Analytical and Historical Perspectives: Papers Delivered at the International Brahms Conference, Washington, DC, 5-8 May 1983 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 79-103.

[88] Margaret Notley, "Late Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio," *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 45.

[89] It is worth noting that the terms "Sinfonie" and "Symphony" were not synonymous in Brahms's lexicon, For Brahms the designation "Sinfonie" suggested a hybrid generic cross between a Serenade and a Symphony. Describing his Second Symphony in a letter to Elisabet von Herzogenberg from November 22, 1877 he wrote, "But the latest one really is no *Symphony*, but merely a *Sinfonie*." See Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 399. See also Reinhold Brinkman, *Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms*, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 13. Palmer translate the term "Sinfonie" as "sinfonietta" in this context.

One problem with respect to writing a symphony was determining what those requirements ought to be in the post-Beethoven world. Toward the end of 1859, in a conversation with his friend Carl Bargheer, the concertmaster of the Detmold Orchestra, Brahms revealed his desire to reimagine the symphony. Bargheer recalled Brahms saying, "If one dares to continue writing symphonies after Beethoven, they must look entirely different."[90] This statement precipitates the other problem, which was that the two works Brahms considered reworking as symphonies looked different because they clung to their original mediums. Though he expanded them and availed himself of the resources of the full orchestra, casting them as symphonies would seem like Brahms was forcing the issue. The Serenade in D Major remained a serenade and the Piano Concerto in D Minor remained a piano feature. There is no evidence that he considered these "lesser" works because he did not turn them into symphonies. Perhaps the time Brahms spent adapting these chamber works for orchestra and wrestling with matters related to their genre resulted in newfound ease and conceptual clarity when composing the Serenade in A.

The Serenade in A major is also unlike the other two works because it does not contain explicit allusions. Brahms put his referential tendencies on full display in the Serenade in D and the Concerto, borrowing musical themes and structures from Haydn, Schubert, Schumann, and Beethoven. The First Serenade is so chock-full of easily apprehended allusions that it offended the sensibilities of some critics, including his future champion Eduard Hanslick.[91] Several scholars have discerned that the Concerto begins and ends with references to Beethoven, albeit

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[90] Carl Bargheer, "Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms in Detmold, 1857-1865," TM, Lippisches Landesbibliothek, Detmold. Translation by Patrick Aubyrn. It is unclear if Brahms was shying away from Bargheer's assumption (e.g. "they must be completely different [than this]") or agreeing with him, tacitly suggesting that a Serenade turned Symphony might represent acceptable difference. At this point in time, Brahms was wrangling with questions concerning the future of German music contra Liszt and the New German School. He obviously espoused a neoclassicist bent. Eventually he would adopt the Beethovenian model as his own.

[91] Vaillancourt, "Sinfonie-Serenade," 397.

discreet ones. James Hepokoski has connected the opening statement from Brahms's Concerto to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. He writes:

> The *fortissimo*, apocalyptic ferocity of the onset, initially a B-flat^6 (mm. 2–3), seems to point toward the blazing D^6 moment of recapitulation in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (m. 301), just as it may also evoke in its "B-flatness" the D-minor/B-flat major conflict (i and VI) in that earlier work.[92]

Charles Rosen, meanwhile, has illustrated thematic and structural likenesses between Brahms's finale and the last movement from Beethoven's Third Piano Concerto, asserting that "the two finales may be described and analyzed to great extent as if they were the same piece."[93] Here, according to Rosen, the model is explicit but "not intended to be audible to the general public, however much it may add to the appreciation of the connoisseurs."[94] Finally, as discussed in the previous chapter, Brahms described the Adagio movement as a "gentle portrait" of Clara Schumann and included the mysterious *Benedictus* text underlay.

Just as the Serenade in A Major does not include overt allusions to other musical works, neither does it make reference to literature or poetry, like most of his early works predating 1860. And because no autograph score for the work survives, we cannot know whether he signed this work Kreisler Junior or underlay text as he had done with the *Benedictus* in the Piano Concerto. In short, the apparent absence of allusions or other types of textual and intertextual "external" references make it unique among the works composed between 1850–60. But in fact, a closer analysis of the work reveals a rich web of contextual and intertextual meanings bound up with Brahms's own compositional output, his self-presentation as a Kreisler-like figure, and his relationship with Agathe von Siebold.

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[92] James Hepokoski, "Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, op. 15" in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, ed. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 229.
[93] Charles Rosen, "Influence: Plagiarism and Inspiration, *19th-Century Music* 4, no. 2 (Autumn 1980): 91.
[94] Rosen, "Plagiarism and Inspiration, 93.

Brahms began the Serenade in A Major in 1858 during his second autumn working at the court of Lippe-Detmold, and he completed it the following November, midway through his third and final three-month term of employ in the principality.[95] The Serenade represents something of a paradigm shift away from the *Sturm und Drang* style characteristic of his early works toward a more mid-century, Romantic rendering of *Empfindsamkeit*. In his personal life as in his composition, 1858 was an especially pivotal year for the twenty-five year old composer. The preceding four years saw the young Brahms's compositional output dwindle as he wrestled with newfound celebrity, Robert Schumann's suicide attempt, madness, and death, and his *Werther*-esque infatuation with Clara Schumann (sans the literary hero's suicidal tendencies). His emotional struggles during this period found musical evocation in the expressive works he struggled with around the same time, particularly the Piano Concerto in D Minor and the Piano Quartet in C Minor.

Understandably, it took Brahms the greater part of two years following Robert's death to disentangle himself emotionally from the Schumann imbroglio, and in the summer of 1858 he fell in love with the soprano Agathe von Siebold. Swept up in the first normal romantic relationship of his life, Brahms began composing new works with increased fervor, especially Lieder. Secretly engaged in late 1858 or early 1859, Brahms reconsidered their relationship following the premiere of his Piano Concerto, which was poorly received in Leipzig, and unceremoniously ended things with Siebold in January 1859. By today's standards his change of heart hardly seems egregious, but according to the dating standards of the day he "played the

[95] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 223. Johannes Brahms, Hamburg, to [Hofmarschall von Meysenbug], Detmold, Summer 1860. Brahms renewed his court contract on a yearly basis, opting out after his third year. Von Meysenbug was the official in Detmold charged with hiring Brahms.

scoundrel."[96] Siebold paraphrased his break-up letter for her children in the story *In Memoriam J.B.*:

> I love you! I must see you again! But bound I cannot be. Write to me, whether I am to come back, to take you in my arms, to kiss you and tell you that I love you![97]

Later in life he claimed that he missed his best chance to marry—with Siebold—because the opportunity presented itself when his works "were booed in the concert halls or at best received with icy silence" and he could not bear "the pities of one's own wife at the failures of her husband."[98] Paul Berry observes that all of the women Brahms loved became a part of his friendly social circle except for Siebold.[99] They were never truly reconciled, and the emotional scars dogged Brahms for the remainder of his life. Whatever reasons Brahms gave for ending their relationship, he was also falling back on life lessons learned from his favorite author E.T.A. Hoffmann, for whom marriage was antithetical to creativity. Yearning was crucial for artistic inspiration, and with two failed romantic relationships now in his recent past, Brahms recommitted to the Kreislerian worldview that had carried him from adolescence into young adulthood. And if yearning inspired Brahms's desire to compose and therefore reflected his lived experiences, the Second Serenade responds to that stimulus in two forms: yearning for the future and the past. He composed the first movement in the throes of love and the remaining four followed the end of his relationship with Siebold. Over the course of this chapter I will demonstrate how the Serenade, and the Adagio non troppo in particular, represents a rumination on lost love.

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[96] Robert Haven Schauffler, *The Unknown Brahms: His Life, Character and Works* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1933), 267-8; quoted in Swafford, *Brahms*, 192.
[97] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 188.
[98] Viktor Widmann, *Johannes Brahms Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Gebrüder Patel, 1898), 47-48; quoted in Paul Berry, *Brahms Among Friends: Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 324.
[99] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 323-4.

An Orchestra without Violins

The most remarked-upon feature of the Serenade in A is that it is scored for small orchestra without violins. As a result, it is often compared to Étienne Méhul's one-act opera *Uthal*, in which the highest strings are likewise absent. Brahms professed his admiration for Méhul's compositions—and *Uthal* in particular—on many occasions, though it is unclear whether or not he heard the opera or read its score by 1858 when he began composing the Second Serenade.[100] The opera was a critical success when it premiered in 1806 and had a semi-successful run of 15 performances, but it was received coolly by the general public. Méhul was one of the earliest composers whose music was described by contemporaries as "Romantic," and he bridged the traditional rift between French and German musical tastes.[101] Though he never became truly famous in Germany, he was well known among the early Romantics. Mendelssohn programmed Méhul's Symphony No. 1 in G minor during the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra's 1837–38 season, and Robert Schumann ranked it among his favorite of those performances in a review he published in 1838.[102] That same year, Wagner drew fresh inspiration from the "noble and simple style" of Méhul's opera *Joseph*, which was particularly well-liked in Germany having received its first performance outside of France two decades earlier under the baton of Carl Maria von Weber.[103] Appreciation for the underrated Méhul may have functioned as a sort of social currency among the German musical elite when Brahms arrived on the scene in 1853.

In France, Berlioz too admired Méhul and described *Uthal* in his *Grand traité d'instrumentation et d'orchestration modernes*. Berlioz was critical of Méhul's unusual instrumentation, emphasizing its monotonous quality, but drew attention its expressive potential:

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[100] Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms* (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 74.
[101] Adélaïde de Place, *Étienne Nicolas Méhul* (Paris: Bleu Nuit Éditeur, 2005), 53.
[102] Alexander L. Ringer "A French Symphonist at the Time of Beethoven: Etienne Nicolas Méhul," *The Musical Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (October 1951): 543.
[103] Ringer, "A French Symphonist," 543-44.

"Méhul, seduced by the sympathy which exists between the sounds of the violas and the dreamy character of Ossianic poetry, wanted to use it constantly and entirely excluded the violins from his opera *Uthal*."[104] It is unclear whether Brahms had read any of Berlioz's *Treatise* by late 1858 and thus taken inspiration from his appraisal of the opera. Perhaps he sought it out when he endeavored to learn more about instrumentation and orchestration in the mid-1850s. It is plausible, at least, that Brahms had already encountered the book in the libraries of Schumann, Theodor Avé-Lallemant (in Hamburg), or Prince Leopold III of Detmold. It certainly seems in keeping with Brahms's character to stay up to date with the seminal musical and prose works of his artistic contemporaries. Berlioz received him warmly when they met at the end of 1853 in Leipzig and their friendly interaction may have impelled the young composer to read the elder's *Treatise*. We know that Brahms respected Berlioz, as evinced by his desire to distinguish between Liszt on the one hand, and Berlioz and Wagner on the other, in the Declaration of 1860.[105]

Brahms may or may not have known the Frenchman's opera in 1858, but there are no obvious similarities between *Uthal* and the Serenade in A Major apart from their violin-less orchestration. If nothing else, he may have known the work by reputation, perhaps through Berlioz; as I shall discuss later, the latter's suggestion that *Uthal*'s orchestration projected a dream-like character aligns with Brahms's evident goals for Opus 16, and especially the *Adagio non troppo*. More directly related to this work, surely, were the examples of Mozart's Serenades, the pinnacle of the genre. Karl Geiringer pegged its Mozartean lineage when he described it as a

[104] Hector Berlioz, *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et d'Orchestration Modernes* (Paris: Schonenberger, 1844), 57. "Méhul séduit par la sympathie qui existe entre les son des altos et la caractèr reveur de la poësie Ossanique, voulut s'en servir constemment et à l'exclusion entière les violons, dans son opéra d'*Uthal*."
[105] Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 96.

"true divertimento."[106] David Brodbeck has linked the work to Mozart in suggesting that Clara Schumann provided inspiration for the piece in a letter dated November 8, 1858. Therein she wrote disparagingly of Mozart's Serenade in B-flat major for thirteen instruments (K. 361/370a):

> Recently I heard for the first time a Mozart Serenade (B-flat major) for 13 wind instruments, during which it became completely clear to me how this [serenade] was specifically imagined for these 13 instruments while yours [the D Major Serenade] requires a full orchestra throughout. . . . What struck me in particular in the Mozart was a great monotony of sound—I generally don't like to hear several movements of only wind instruments, in which case the oboe especially, often so wonderfully moving otherwise, becomes completely exhausting.[107]

Brahms may have regarded Clara's indictment of Mozart, which coincidentally echoed critical reactions to *Uthal* when the opera had first premiered, as a latent challenge that he write a musical response to K. 361/370a for she received a draft of the first movement of the Serenade in A Major one month later.[108] Clara's challenge arrived at a fortuitous moment as Brahms had spent the summer of 1858 adapting the Serenade in D for small orchestra.[109] To this end, Joachim loaned Brahms his personal copies of several Mozart Serenades in May 1858.[110] Brahms continued to tinker with the First Serenade that fall, adding two movements to the work and bringing the total number to six around the time he received Clara's letter reviewing the Gran Partita.[111]

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[106] Karl Geiringer, *Brahms: His Life and Work*, 3rd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), 250.
[107] Clara Schumann and Johannes Brahms, *Ein Künstlerleben nach Tagebüchern und Briefen*, ed. Berthold Litzmann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1903-08); quoted in David Brodbeck, "Brahms" in *The Nineteenth Century Symphony*, ed. D. Kern Holoman (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), 226. Schumann to Brahms, 8 November 1858. Schumann refers to the piece as "a Mozart Serenade (B-flat major) for 13 wind instruments." The actual scoring is 12 winds and double bass. Based on her description, she likely saw a performance where the contrabassoon was substituted for the double bass.
[108] Clara received the first movement of Op. 16 while in Vienna, sometime between Dec. 9 and Dec. 20 based on the letters in Litzmann.
[109] Johannes Brahms and Joseph Joachim, *Johannes Brahms in Briefweschel mit Joseph Joachim,* ed. Andreas Moser, vol. 5 (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1907), 205. Brahms to Joachim, Feb 24 1858. Letter begins: "I am just sitting and changing the voices of my serenade."
[110] Brahms and Joachim, *Briefweschel*, vol. 5, 206.
[111] Vaillancourt, "Sinfonie-Serenade," 382-3.

Brahms scored his Serenade in A for thirteen wind instruments and string accompaniment, with doubled flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, and horns, piccolo, violas, cellos, and double basses. In this configuration, his orchestra closely resembles Mozart's wind ensemble from K. 361/370a. Brahms notably substituted flutes for the outmoded basset horn, a known favorite of Mozart and E.T.A. Hoffmann, and augmented the string section by expanding it from a single double bass to eight violas, six cellos, and four double basses.[112] The string section supports a wind-forward texture that is reminiscent of Mozart's, but the increased forces and the expansion of their combined tessitura balance the sonic palette better than a single double bass. Technically, Brahms exceeds Mozart's instrumentation by one with the inclusion of the piccolo, but the instrument remains tacet until the finale, preserving the twelve against "one" framework until the fifth movement. Similarly, he trimmed the overall length of the work, so that it spans five movements instead of seven.[113] These alterations help lessen the monotony of sound about which Clara had complained.

Its connection to Mozart seems all the more likely when considered alongside the Serenade in D and the Piano Concerto. Each of the three orchestral works premiered in 1859-60 commemorates a classical Viennese forebear, thereby laying claim to their legacies: 1. The Serenade in D Major contains many allusions but is ultimately a monument to Haydn, 2. The Concerto in D Minor follows Beethoven, and 3. The Serenade in A Major recalls Mozart. Brahms begins each of his works where the deceased composers left off, drawing inspiration from terminal generic entries: Beethoven and Haydn's last symphonies and Mozart's final wind

[112] Musgrave, "Serenades," *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, ed. Leon Botstein (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 44. Brahms clarified the size of the string section when he issued the revision of op. 16 in 1875.

[113] Modern performances of Brahms Op. 16 typically run approximately 30 minutes compared to 45-50 minutes for Mozart K 361/370a.

serenade. In this way all three of his first orchestral works supplement the Declaration of 1860 and position Brahms as the true keeper of the German orchestra tradition.

Having investigated the historical context behind Brahms's instrumentation, let us consider two later examples where he also omitted violins from the orchestra: his arrangement of Schubert's *Greisengesang* (1862) and the first movement of the *German Requiem* (1865-7). These are the only other instances where he excluded violins for an entire movement or work, and their texts evoke similar narratives, which suggests that the unique orchestration might have carried specific meaning for Brahms independent of Méhul and Mozart's influence. Furthermore, he compiled the religious texts for the *Requiem* including "Selig Sind, die da Leid tragen" in 1861, the same year he and Julius Stockhausen developed an affinity for Schubert's *Greisengesang* through regular collaboration, and completed both of the vocal works within a decade of the Second Serenade. The tight chronology linking these three pieces increases the likelihood that they share a similar pathos. The full texts are reproduced below (see Examples 2.1 and 2.2).

Example 2.1
***Greisengesang*, Friedrich Rückert**

Der Frost hat mir bereifet des Hauses Dach; Doch warm ist mir's geblieben im Wohngemach.	The frost has covered the roof of my house, But I have kept warm in my living-room.
Der Winter hat die Scheitel mir weiss gedeckt; Doch fliesst das Blut, das rote, durchs Herzgemach.	Winter has whitened the top of my head, But the blood flows red in my heart.
Der Jugendflor der Wangen, die Rosen sind Gegangen, all gegangen Einander nach – Wo sind sie hingegangen? ins Herz hinab: Da blühn sie nach Verlangen, wie vor so nach.	The youthful flush of my cheeks, the roses Have gone, one by one. Where have they gone? Down into my heart; There, as before, they bloom as desired.
Sind alle Freudenströme der Welt versiegt? Noch fliesst mir durch den Busen ein stiller Bach.	Have all the rivers of joy in this world run dry? A silent stream still flows through my breast.

Sind alle Nachtigallen der Flur verstummt? Noch ist bei mir im Stillen hier eine wach.	Have all the nightingales in the meadows fallen Silent? Within me, secretly, one still stirs.
Sie singet: "Herr des Hauses! verschleuss dein Tor, Dass nicht die Welt, die kalte, dring ins Gemach. Schleuss aus den rauhen Odem der Wirklichkeit, Und nur dem Duft der Träume gib Dach und Fach!"	She sings: "Master of the house, bolt your door Lest the cold world should penetrate the parlour. Shut out the harsh breath of reality And give shelter only to the fragrance of dreams!"
Ich habe Wein und Rosen In jedem Lied, Und habe solcher Lieder noch tausendfach. Vom Abend bis zum Morgen und Nächte durch Will ich dir singen Jugend und Liebesach.	I have wine and roses in every song, And have yet a thousand more such songs. From evening till morning and all through the night I will sing to you of youth and love's pain.[114]

Example 2.2
"Selig sind, die da Leid tragen"

Selig sind, die da Leid tragen, denn sie sollen getröstet werden. (Matthew 5:4)	Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.
Die mit Tränen säen, werden mit Freuden ernten. Sie gehen hin und weinen und tragen edlen Samen, und kommen mit Freuden und bringen ihre Garben. (Psalm 126: 5,6)	They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.
Lutheran Bible	King James Bible

Both texts are mournful but not without consolation. Rückert's poem describes the human condition of aging, suffering, and loss wherein the poetic speaker takes comfort in his memories. Schubert only set the first four verses of the poem, which tempered its bitter edge. The opening lines in the *Requiem* text, which are drawn from the Book of Matthew, effectively

[114] Richard Wigmore, translation of "Greisengesang," liner notes for *The Hyperion Schubert Edition* (Hyperion, CDJ33035, 2005), 37.

gloss Rückert's poem: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Brahms excerpted this text from Christ's Sermon on the Mount, singling out the second of nine Beatitudes. Sung by the full chorus at the beginning of the work, these words are meant to reflect the universal experience of loss. We listeners, then, take comfort in the knowledge of the shared experience of loss articulated by a choir of voices, and, should we choose to heed the text, seek solace in this shared humanity.

The bulk of the Serenade in A Major was composed after Brahms and Siebold ended their relationship, and the themes of loss, mourning, and consolation paramount to "Greisengesang" and "Selig sind, die da Leid tragen" serve as a fitting subtext. Begun happily in love, the first movement opens with a graceful and stately theme and is generally genial in its overall affect, becoming of a suitor. It prominently features yearning strains of chromaticism and highly expressive harmonies, which evince his amorous passions. The finale, on the other hand, is a bucolic and somewhat maniacal Rondo, rollicking and rhythmically insistent. Replete with wistful emotional shifts endemic to its form, this movement projects a "grin and bear it" attitude characteristic of someone recently unattached romantically. The linchpin of the narrative arch and the location for emotional reckoning is the expressive Adagio non troppo. Nearly all of its musical features serve to differentiate it from the Allegro bookends, its minor key, slow tempo, and contrapuntal texture being the most prominent. The Scherzo and Quasi Menuetto function like intermezzos connecting the expressive pillars of the work. In this interpolation, Brahms yearns for Siebold in the first movement, laments love lost in the middle movement, and laughs in the face of sorrow in the finale. The final line of "Greisengesang," unsung in Schubert's song and Brahms's arrangement, encapsulates this trajectory, "I will sing to you of youth and love's pain."

One last point for consideration on this topic specifically related to Siebold is the description of her voice proffered by Joachim who compared its quality to an Amati violin.[115] Coming from a revered violin virtuoso, the comparison is notable. While nothing suggests that Brahms altered the orchestration of the Serenade between the time he sent the first movement to Clara Schumann in November 1858 and its completion a year later, his decision to exclude violins undoubtedly acquired additional significance in 1859. Siebold's voice is absent, figuratively speaking, from the Serenade, and the expressive connotations of its instrumentation evolved to reflect her absence in his life.

Expressive Adagios

During the nineteenth century, the ideal Adagio served as a "vehicle for subjective inwardness," in which composers strove to express the profound, ineffable, otherworldly, and sublime.[116] Critics especially lauded slow movements whose large-scale forms supported the aura of unending melody. The emphasis on long-breathed melodies destabilized Classical Era formal types and aligned the Adagio's aesthetic priorities with the Romantic novel, which, according to Schlegel, was a "fantastically formed and generically ambiguous artwork."[117] In fact, the "soul-stirring Adagio" itself became a trope in German novels, serving as "the aesthetic symbol of melancholy soliloquy and sentimentally excessive feelings of love."[118] Brahms's early slow movements present in this literary sense.

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[115] Agathe von Siebold, "Allerlei aus meinem Leben," in *Brahms in Göttingen: Mit Erinnerungen von Agathe Schütte, geb. Von Siebold* (Göttingen: Herodot, 1985), accessed 29 July 2020. https://josephjoachim.com/2015/05/31/agathe-von-siebold-summer-of-1857/. Siebold recalls Joachim first describing her voice in this way sometime during the summer months of 1857, a year before she met Brahms.
[116] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 35-43.
[117] John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 4.
[118] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 35.

Slow movements in Brahms's compositions predating the Second Serenade universally bore allusive or extramusical references and lay the groundwork for the heightened poetics of the Adagio non troppo. Brahms wrote six multi-movement instrumental works prior to beginning the Serenade in A Major. The Piano Sonatas in C Major, F-sharp Minor, and F minor along with the Piano Trio No. 1 in B Minor were already published, and the Serenade in D Major and the Piano Concerto in D Minor were under revision. He chose various permutations on the Andante tempo designation for the four slow movements in the Piano Sonatas and Adagio for the ensemble works.[119] All seven of these movements include intertextual references (Table No. 1). With the exception Adagio non troppo from the Serenade in D, where the allusion to Robert Schumann's Second Symphony in its coda appears simply to be a form of homage, an underlying theme at the heart of his early slow movements is easily discerned: the Piano Sonatas, Piano Trio, and Concerto all include musical or poetic references whose topic is romantic love, love lost, and its complications. Thus, all seven slow movements including the Adagio non troppo from the Serenade in D pay tribute to interpersonal relationships, both real and imagined.

The Andantes from the Piano Sonatas include allusions to the German folksong and *Minnelieder* traditions whose topic is metaphysical or unattainable love (see Table 2.1).[120] A brief synopsis of each sonata proceeding sequentially by opus follows. In the Piano Sonata in C Major Brahms included the parenthetical attribution "Nach einem altdeutschen Minneliede" under the tempo designation Andante and musically alluded to the melody of the folksong "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" in mm. 1-12. He set the text of its first verse beneath the bass melody to make the reference clear. As George Bozarth remarks, this song was a folksong from

[119] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 44. Notley notes that "musicians did not distinguish between Adagios and Andantes with any consistency" in the 1850s.

[120] George Bozarth, "Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*: The 'Poetic' Andantes of the Piano Sonatas" in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives: Papers Delivered at the International Brahms Conference, Washington, DC, 5-8 May 1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 345-378. Bozarth provides and in depth history and analysis of the songs associated with opp. 1, 2, and 5.

Table 2.1
Extramusical references and allusions in Brahms's slow movements, Opp. 1-15

Composition	Tempo	References
Piano Sonata No. 1 in C Major, Op. 1, movement II	Andante	-Subtitled "(Nach einem altdeutschen Minneliede.)" -Allusion to "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" (trad. Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio)
Piano Sonata No. 2 in F-sharp Minor, Op. 2, movement II	Andante con espressione	Free response to the Minnelied "Mir ist leide" (per Dietrich)
Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 5, movements II & IV	Andante espressivo — Andante molto	-Includes C.O. Sternau Inscipit: "Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint/da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint/und halten sich selig umfangen" -Allusion to "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" (trad. Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio)
	Andante molto	-Titled "Intermezzo. (Rückblick.)" -Free response to the C.O. Sternau poem "Bitte" per Kalbeck
Piano Trio No. 1 in B Minor, Op. 8 (1854 ed.), movement III	Adagio non troppo	Allusion to Schubert's "Am Meer"
Serenade No. 1 in D Major, Op. 11, movement III	Adagio non troppo	Allusion to Schumann Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61, Adagio espressivo (III)
Piano Concert No. 1 in D Minor, Op. 15, movement II	Adagio	-"Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini" underlay in autograph -"Gentle portrait" of Clara Schumann

Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio that Brahms imaginatively attributed to the Minnesinger tradition.[121] It describes two lovers separated by distance and, perhaps, incompatible social status. Its refrain, interwoven within each stanza as lines two and four, begins "Blau, blau Blümelein." Brahms likely understood this line anachronistically based on his deep engagement

[121] Bozarth, "Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*," 348.

with literature and poetry by E.T.A. Hoffmann and Novalis, who developed the blue flower metaphor as a stand-in for longing in stories where romantic love obfuscates the true object of an artist's passion: poetry and art. Novalis employs the metaphor as the central component in his fragment novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, the story about a thirteenth-century Minnesinger widely acknowledged as instigating the "blue flower" trope.[122] Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen described its import in 1892:

> [The blue flower] is meant to symbolize the deep and nameless longings of a poet's soul. Romantic poetry invariably deals with longing . . . The object of the Romantic longing
> . . . is the ideal—the ideal of happiness, the ideal of womanhood.[123]

Approaching "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" through the Romantic lens of Novalis suggests a reading in which the poet's love cannot be reciprocated, but which inspires a sense of yearning particularly conducive to artistic endeavors (including the song itself). The "blue flower" imagery connecting the folksong and Novalis's novel may also explain Brahms's decision to label this song as a *Minnelied* because it suggests fictional authorship of "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" to Heinrich von Ofterdingen.

Brahms took similar creative license in his response to "Mir ist leide" in the Piano Sonata in F-sharp Minor and allusion to "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" in the Piano Sonata in F Minor. "Mir ist leide" was never set to music so he was free to craft his own "word-tone synthesis."[124] In the second movement Andante con espressione, Brahms composed a bass melody whose declamation allows for text underlay in a manner reminiscent of "Verstohlen geht

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[122] Brahms copied a sonnet fictitiously attributed to Heinrich von Ofterdingen (from the eponymous novel) into his running quotation notebook *Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein* as entry 469. See Johannes Brahms and Carl Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks: The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler. Quotations from Poets, Philosophers, and Artists Gathered by Johannes Brahms*, ed. Krebs, trans. Agnes Eisenberger (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003). E.T.A. Hoffmann also wrote a novella inspired by Heinrich von Ofterdingen titled *Der Kampf der Sänger*.

[123] Hjalmar Hjorth Boyessen, *Essays on German Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 324-325.

[124] Bozarth, "Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*," 353. See footnote 20 for a full account of the history connecting "Mir ist leide" to the Andante con espressione.

der Mond auf," as demonstrated by Bozarth, but whose import is secondary to the expressive nature of the theme and variations, which strive in purely musical terms to capture the poet's despondent and fatalistic mood.[125]

"Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" is a curious case because it is one of several referents connecting the two Andante movements in the five-movement Sonata in F Minor, and it is not the primary intertextual source in the second movement. In the first Andante (II), Brahms prominently included the opening lines from the poem "Junge Liebe" by Otto Inkermann (alias C.O. Sternau) in a small font above the score and adjacent to the right margin. The Sternau inscipit describes a happily unencumbered rendezvous between lovers. The allusion to the folk song "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" occurs in the coda. Its text describes a conscripted soldier parting from his beloved and wondering if she will remain true while he is at the front. It sows doubt about the uncomplicated nature of the Sternau incipit. Bearing the contemplative title "Intermezzo. (Rückblick.)," the second Andante (IV) confirms this doubt to be well founded. Kalbeck suggests that the fourth movement was based on another Sternau poem, "Bitte," which memorializes a relationship that ended. The overarching narrative commiserates with the poetic themes presented in Piano Sonatas No. 1 and 2.

The ensemble works paint a similar picture. Brahms alluded to Schubert's "Am Meer" in the original version of the Piano Trio in B Minor, Op. 8. In Heine's poem the narrator, consumed with longing, recollects the tearful evening he departed from his beloved (see Example 2.3). It is impossible to interpret Brahms's reference to "Am Meer" in the second movement Adagio non troppo without also addressing his allusion to "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder," from Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, in the Finale of the Trio. The final song in Beethoven's song

[125] Bozarth, "Brahms's *Lieder ohne Worte*," 356. Bozarth hypothesizes a text-setting of the first eight lines from "Mir ist leide."

Example 2.3
"Am Meer," Heinrich Heine

Das Meer erglänzte weit hinaus Im letzten Abendscheine; Wir sassen am einsamen Fischerhaus, Wir sassen stumm und alleine.	The sea glittered far and wide in the sun's dying rays; we sat by the fisherman's lonely house; we sat silent and alone.
Der Nebel stieg, das Wasser schwoll, Die Möwe flog hin und wieder; Aus deinen Augen liebevoll Fielen die Tränen nieder.	The mist rose, the waters swelled, a seagull flew to and fro. from your loving eyes the tears fell.
Ich sah sie fallen auf deine Hand, Und bin aufs Knie gesunken; Ich hab' von deiner weissen Hand Die Tränen fortgetrunken.	I saw them fall on your hand. I sank upon my knee; from your white hand I drank away the tears.
Seit jener Stunde verzehrt sich mein Leib, Die Seele stirbt vor Sehnen; – Mich hat das unglücksel'ge Weib Vergiftet mit ihren Tränen.	Since that hour my body is consumed and my soul dies of longing. That unhappy woman has poisoned me with her tears.[126]

cycle, the poem by Alois Jeitteles also describes lovers separated by distance. Many commentators link these poems to Brahms's burgeoning infatuation with Clara Schumann, but as Sholes notes, "the Trio was essentially complete by the end of January 1854," which predates their fraught romance.[127] More likely, his allusion to "Am Meer" reflects his expressive tendencies related to slow movements already established in the poetic Andantes from the Piano Sonatas, whose referents also deal with the theme of lovers apart. In this light, the allusion to "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder" functions similarly to the "Rückblick" Intermezzo in the Piano Sonata in F Minor, continuing and commenting upon the earlier narrative.[128]

[126] Wigmore, translation of "Am Meer," liner notes for *The Hyperion Schubert Edition*, vol. 37 (Hyperion, CDJ33037, 2005), 75.
[127] Sholes, "Lovelorn Lamentation of Histrionic Historicism," in *Allusion as Narrative Premise in Brahms's Instrumental Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 90.
[128] Sholes, "Lovelorn Lamentation," 96. Sholes proffers her own newly unearthed allusions to Scarlatti as grounds for an interpretation mirroring her take on the Serenade in D in which the plurality and sequence of the references suggest "the distance between [Brahms] and the unresurrectable past."

In the previous chapter, I proposed a composite reading of the Adagio from the Piano Concerto combining the various interpretations of the Benedictus text related to Robert Schumann and Kreisler in *Kater Murr* and Brahms's epistolary description of the movement as a "gentle portrait" of Clara Schumann. Together they present a melancholy reflection on paternal and romantic love and suggest that for Brahms inner peace required disentangling himself from the Schumanns. After Robert died, this necessitated stepping back from his relationship with Clara and transmuting his love into worshipful reverence. This Adagio serves primarily as a memorial to their romantic relationship.

The allusion to Robert Schumann's Second Symphony in the coda of the Adagio non troppo from the Serenade in D represents a touching farewell to his deceased mentor. As one of many fleeting allusions in the piece, it inducts Robert into the historic pantheon including Haydn, Beethoven, and Schubert. Notably, it is the only allusion in the Serenade that appears for the first time at the end of a movement. The Adagio non troppo begins with a lilting theme in duple meter whose melody, beginning in measure 7, is built around arpeggiated horn calls, common harbingers of memory and pastness. Its slow tempo, duple meter, dotted rhythms, and ponderous character are consistent with the topical markers for a funeral march.[129] Considering the pastoral context of the Serenade, this elegiac processional sounds like a solemn contemplation of the Elysian Fields. Brahms's allusion, situated just before the double bar, is like coming face to face with Robert Schumann, perhaps bending over a casket. Its revelatory quality simultaneously represents an encounter with and farewell to his mentor, whose death brought a sense of peace to his family and friends. Brahms included a similar gesture in the Second String Sextet when he withheld his Agathe cipher (A-G-A-D-B-E) until the climax of the second theme, where her

[129] Janice Dickensheets, "Topical Vocabulary of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Musicological Research* 31, iss. 2-3 (2012): 104. Dickensheets describes the basic parameters for funeral marches in this article.

melody also emerges like a revelation (beginning in m. 162; reprised in m. 496). Brahms described its import in a letter to Josef Gänsbacher, writing, "There I freed myself from my last love!"[130] Both the allusion to Schumann in the Serenade and Siebold in the Sextet are gestures of absolution.

The Andantes from the Piano Sonatas and the Adagio non troppo from the Piano Trio predate the amorous entanglements of Brahms's twenties and depict fictional romances. Unrequited love, experienced by proxy through poetry and song, served as a conduit for his early artistic creativity. With the Serenade in D Major and the Concerto in D Minor, whose Adagios postdate Robert Schumann's death and Brahms's decision not to pursue marriage with Clara Schumann, Brahms shifts to commemorating real interpersonal relationships under the banner of the previous literary themes. It stands to reason that the Adagio non troppo from the Second Serenade similarly commemorated his relationship with Agathe von Siebold. Composed in the wake of their broken engagement, this would be in keeping with the themes of longing and love denied associated with slow movements and the mournful yearning suggested by its instrumentation, inferred from "Greisengesang" and "Selig sind, die da Leid tragen."

Brahms's Love Serenades

Historically, serenades of all types, including popular songs, cantata-like works, arias, and instrumental compositions, were written to praise revered individuals. Brahms's various tributes to his predecessors in the First Serenade satisfy this prerogative. The vocal serenade, specifically, is the oldest type and began as a eulogistic song popularly understood as a greeting

[130] Max Kalbeck, *Johannes Brahms*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1915-27), 157; quoted in Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 34.

from one lover (or perspective lover) to another.[131] Examples of this type in art music include Mozart's "Deh, vieni alla finestra" from *Don Giovanni*, Rossini's "Ecco ridente in cielo" from *The Barber of Seville*, and Donizetti's "Com'è gentil" from *Don Pasquale*. The instrumental type cannot escape its close association with vocal music signaled by the word "serenade," an association which invites us to be alert for allusions to songs—especially those that share this title. Within the context of these multi-movement works, adagio movements, prized for their songlike qualities in the nineteenth century, seem the obvious location to explore this specific intersection. In ballet, the adagio is "a duet by a man and a woman or a mixed trio displaying difficult feats of balance, lifting, or spinning."[132] Its style is lyrical, continuous, and graceful. More specifically, the *adagio* is a traditional component of the *grand pas de deux*, in which a ballerina holds extended poses with the support of a male dancer in a spectacular display of worshipful objectification. The serenade (song) and the adagio (dance) present men idolizing women and underscore the expressive potential for the Adagio non troppo in the Serenade in A major to commemorate Brahms and Siebold's relationship. Furthermore, the wind melody at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo includes stylistic traits likening it to a lover's serenade, and Brahms appears to refer back to this melody in his setting of Schack's "Serenade" Op. 58, No. 8, opening a hermeneutic window to compare these like-named works.

We will focus our attention on Brahms's songs titled "Serenade" and "Ständchen" below. But first, we must extrapolate the noteworthy characteristics of the lover's serenade based on the aforementioned operatic arias to establish the basic topic. Brahms never fully conforms to the parameters established by these historic models in his songs, but neither does he create a new

[131] Oxford Music Online defines the serenade as follows: "the term originally signified a musical greeting, usually performed out of doors in the evening, to a beloved or a person of rank." Unverricht, Hubert, "Serenade," in Grove Music Online, accessed 29 July 2020. https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000025454

[132] *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "Adagio," accessed 29 July 2020. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/adagio

genre. Like his decision to revitalize the instrumental serenade, his critical engagement with the lover's serenade marks his individualism and progressivism. The poetic content of the arias "Deh, vieni alla finestra," "Ecco ridente in cielo," and "Com'è gentil" can be summarized as follows: a would-be lover, a man, attempts to awaken a sleeping woman by singing a wooing song beneath her window. He praises the woman and suggests he should die if his love is unreciprocated. The music articulates compound rhythms, though only "Com'è gentil" is notated in compound time, and the accompaniment features plucked instruments. They employ various tempo designations—Mozart uses Allegretto for "Deh, vieni alla finestra," Rossini uses Largo for "Ecco ridente in cielo," and Donizetti uses Andante mosso for "Com'è gentil"—but in practice they are performed on the slower end of the tempo spectrum, typically in the adagio or andante range, and the vocal solo is written in a graceful style. All three are in major keys. The Mozart and Donizetti arias are in strophic form and the Rossini is a *cavatina*.

Brahms composed eight vocal works bearing the title *Serenade* or its German language equivalent *Ständchen* (see Table 2.2).[133] Three types of compositions make up this list: "Abendständchen" is for a six-part, mixed choir without accompaniment, the pair of "Ständchen" in WoO 37 and WoO 38 are for unaccompanied women's choir, and the remaining five are solo songs. The texts are split equally between named poets and anonymous authors from folk compilations. Two of the published works bear the title "Serenade": the eighth and final song from opus 58 is a setting of Adolf Friedrich von Schack's "Serenade," and the third of four songs

[133] Similar examples may exist under other names in his oeuvre, but for the purposes of this study, I chose to limit my sample size eponymously named works. This decision is in keeping with my singular focus on Mozart's Serenades to the exclusion of other related types like Divertimenti or Cassations.

from opus 70 is a setting of Goethe's "Liebliches Kind," renamed "Serenate" by Brahms (and subsequently respelled "Serenade in later editions).[134]

Table 2.2
Chronology of vocal works titled "Serenade" and "Ständchen"

Title	Opus/No.	Incipit	Text	Completed
Ständchen (Volkslied)	Op. 14 No. 7	Gut Nacht, gut Nacht	trad., in Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio	1858
Abendständchen	Op. 42 No. 1	Hör, es klagt die Flöte wieder	C. Brentano	1859
Ständchen	WoO 37 No. 16	Wach auf, mein's Herzens Schöne	trad., in Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio	1859-62
Ständchen	WoO 38 No. 20	Verstohlen geht der Mond auf	trad., in Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio	1859-62
Serenade	Op. 58 No. 8	Leise, um dich nicht zu wecken	Schack	1867, rev. by 1871
Serenade	Op. 70 No. 3	Liebliches Kind	Goethe	1876
Vergebliches Ständchen	Op. 84 No. 4	Guten Abend, mein Schatz	trad. Lower-Rhenish, in Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio	by 1882
Ständchen	Op.106 No. 1	Der Mond steht über dem Berge	F. Kugler	by 1888

The "Serenades" incline toward more serious poetry and the Lieder tradition of Schubert and Schumann, whereas "Ständchen" rely on traditional folksongs for inspiration represented by Kretzschmer and Zuccalmaglio. All of the poems express themes commiserate with a lover's serenade but only three specifically recall its location and circumstances: "Serenade" (Schack)

[134] In its Stichvorlage and first edition, the "Serenade" (Goethe) was titled "Serenate." It was respelled in later editions. These scores are available for online viewing through the Brahms Institut in Lübeck: https://brahmsinstitut.de/Archiv/web/bihl_digital/jb_werkekatalog/op_070.html

and "Vergebliches Ständchen" enact wooing scenes and the narrator in "Ständchen" (Kugler) describes a trio of young men thus engaged from afar. "Serenade" (Goethe) indirectly relates to the tradition via its source material. The song comes from *Claudine von Villa Bella*, one of six *Singspiele* with texts by Goethe, and is sung by Rugantino, accompanying himself on the zither, to Claudine as he tries unsuccessfully to seduce her away from Pedro.[135] Notably, all four of these songs are solo Lieder. The fifth and final song in this bunch is the first Brahms composed, his setting of "Gut Nacht, gut Nacht" (Op. 14). Here the protagonist takes leave of his lover, and the song is a postlude to their amorous rendezvous. Taken together and considered chronologically, these Lieder suggest a narrative related to Brahms's relationship with Siebold. "Ständchen" (Op. 14) was the only one of these songs composed during their relationship and presents the aftermath of a blissful encounter. "Serenade" (Shack), "Serenade" (Goethe), and "Vergebliches Ständchen" describe failed wooing attempts, and the narrator in the final entry "Ständchen" (Kugler) observes an evening of serenading from afar but does not participate. Their linear progression chronicles the life of a man whose happiest, youthful relationship fell through then working through his grief before finding acceptance in old age.

The three works for unaccompanied chorus are presented as exemplars of a slightly different serenade tradition, sung by one group of people to another. As such, the "amatory content of [their] 'collective' serenata is likely to be less narrowly focused . . . than the solo kind."[136] The exemplar from WoO 37 "Wach auf, meins Herzens Schöne" describes a suitor calling for his darling to wake up with the sunrise and revel with him in the new day. WoO 38 "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf"—the same folksong that formed the basis for the Andante in the

[135] Lorraine Byrne "Schubert, Goethe and the Singspiel. An Elective Affinity," 1, accessed 29 July 2020. https://www.ucd.ie/pages/99/articles/byrne.pdf. Byrne submits that Goethe sought to elevate the Singspiel genre to a level equivalent to the Italian *Opera Buffa*.
[136] Michael Talbot, "The Serenata in Eighteenth-Century Venice," *Royal Music Association Research Chronicle* No. 18 (1982), 2.

Piano Sonata in C Major, op. 1—presents the other side of the coin: lovers separated by distance.[137] The era of their composition between 1859-62 corresponds with the three-year period Brahms led the Hamburg Women's Chorus. One of their pastimes following rehearsal was to serenade acquaintances before heading home for the night, suggesting that the Ständchen for women's choir were purposefully composed.[138] "Abendständchen" sets *Hör es klagt die Flöte wieder*, by Clemens Maria Wenzeslaus von Brentano, for unaccompanied choir. This poem does not recollect a courting scene. Excerpted from its original context, where it forms part of a dialogue between a father and daughter in Brentano's Singspiel *Die lustigen Musikanten*, the text suggests the sounds of the natural world and a shepherd's flute serenading a solitary speaker at sunset.[139] The poem's pastoral imagery links it to the quiet nighttime scenes featured in this group of works, but at best we might regard its speaker as eavesdropping on their scenes from a distance.

Returning to the five solo songs that are representative of the lover's serenade, we notice that their scaffolding largely corresponds with the operatic references (see Table 2.3). Rhythmic groupings of three, major keys, and strophic form predominate. Brahms indicates that they should be performed in a lively, graceful, and sweet manner, and their performance tempos roughly correspond with our expectations based on the archetypes. Brahms drew a subtle distinction between the vocal works titled "Serenade" and "Ständchen." The two Lieder titled

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[137] Brahms set *Wach auf, meins Herzens Schöne* four times under three different titles: once as *Wach auf mein Herzensschöne* (WoO 33, no. 16), twice as *Wach auf!* (WoO 35, nos. 2 & 7), and once as *Ständchen* (WoO 37, no. 16). Brahms set *Verstohlen geht der Mond auf* three times under three different titles: *Verstohlen geht der Mond auf* (WoO 33, no. 49), *Altes Volkslied* (WoO 35, no. 9), and *Ständchen* (WoO 38, no. 20).

[138] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 216. Brahms described the antics of his choir to Clara Schumann in a letter from April 2, 1860, "It is really quite delightful. The girls are so charmingly lively and enthusiastic, without ever being soft or sentimental. On the way home (an hour away), it rained, unfortunately. Otherwise glorious singing and serenades are presented along the way. For my girls will actually parade into a garden without embarrassment and awaken people after midnight with their singing."

[139] From the beginning of the fourth scene. Piast, a blind Norwegian nobleman, is travelling along a country road with his daughter Fabiola and a lame boy Eusebio. Together they perform once yearly as part of the musical troupe known as *Die lustigen Musikanten*. In the Singspiel Fabiola and sings the first two lines of each stanza and Piast the concluding two.

"Serenade" enact psychological dramas absent from the folksy "Ständchen," all of which present straightforward courting scenes. Brahms's setting of Schack presents a unique spin on the lover's serenade. The song is considerably longer than the other four, begins and ends in a minor key, modulates to a major key including a key signature change in the middle, and changes meter along with the key change. Naturally, the shift in mode and meter correspond with a change in character. Brahms also omitted two stanzas from Schack's poem in his setting, demonstrating a different level of ownership over this poetic text than the others, which remain fully intact. Within the autobiographical timeline of remorse and acceptance presented earlier, it is the immediate sequel to the Ständchen written for Siebold in 1858 and appears to be a direct continuation of that story.

Table 2.3
Key, time signature, affect, and form of Brahms's "Serenades" and "Ständchen" for solo voice

Title	Key	Time	Affect	Form
Ständchen Op. 14, No. 7	F major	3/4	Allegretto *leggiero*	3 verses Strophic
Serenade Op. 58, No. 8	A minor, F major	6/8 9/8	Grazioso *dolce*	7 verses ABA (ABACC'AB)
Serenade Op. 70, No. 3	B major	6/8	Grozioso *dolce*	1 verse Through composed
Vergebliches Ständchen Op. 84, No. 4	A major	3/4	Lebhaft und gut gelaunt	4 verses Modified strophic
Ständchen Op.106, No. 1	G major	Common	Anmuthig bewegt. Allegretto grazioso.	3 verses ABA

A Serenade within a Serenade

Schack's poem is nine stanzas long, the first three set the scene for the lover's serenade and the final six are enclosed in quotation marks, demarcating the serenade proper (see Example 2.4). It is nighttime, and a faint breeze gently rustles the leaves of his former lover Dolores's vine-wreathed lattice. Nearby, the *chanteur* stands, steeling his heart and tuning his zither. In his song, he implores Dolores to remember their amorous rendezvous behind the leafy screen of a garden trellis where they were alone, unseen, and undisturbed even by birds. He asks her to meet him in the garden, to embrace and kiss him again. When she does not come, the poet asks if she has forgotten him. Sunrise is imminent, the moonlight waning, and the fountain interminably drips water into its basin. At the end of the poem, the reader is unsure whether or not Dolores relents to her former lover's pleas because his song concludes the scene, though Schack's imagery suggests the poet is unsuccessful. The waning sickle moon, which represents changing seasons in nature, implies that the season of their love has ended, and the dripping fountain connotes the poet's tearful sadness. Even the name of his ex-lover Dolores, whose meaning is "sorrows" (i.e. dolorous), portends the outcome of his attempted reconciliation. Viewed in this light as the avatar for lovesickness, she transcends individual personhood and becomes a symbol of lost love more generally.

Brahms makes the inferred outcome more explicit by adjusting Schack's structural parameters. He excluded the quotation marks in his text underlay but did not abandon the conceit of a song within a song; rather, he altered its boundaries so that the lover's serenade is fully contained as the middle component of a drama framed by soliloquies. His setting excludes the fifth and sixth stanzas, and refashions the fourth and seventh as the lover's serenade. The last two stanzas are thus recast as a poetic aside, and we watch the singer fret. In the poem, the second

Example 2.4
"Serenade," Adolf Friedrich Graf von Schack

Leise, um dich nicht zu wecken, Rauscht der Nachtwind, teure Frau! Leise in das Marmorbecken Gießt der Brunnen seinen Tau.	Gently, so as not to awaken you, Rustles the night wind, dear woman! Quietly into the marble basin The fountain pours its dew.
Wie das Wasser, niedertropfend, Kreise neben Kreise zieht, Also zittert, leise klopfend, Mir das Herz bei diesem Lied.	As the water, dripping down, Draws circle after circle, So, gently pounding, does my heart Tremble at this song.
Schwingt euch, Töne meiner Zither, Schwingt euch aufwärts, flügelleicht; Durch das rebumkränzte Gitter In der Schönen Kammer schleicht	Vibrate, o sounds of my zither, Float upwards, on light wings; Through the vine-wreathed lattice Slip into my darling's boudoir.
"Ist denn, liebliche Dolores", Also singt in ihren Traum – "In der Muschel deines Ohres Für kein Perlenwörtchen Raum?	"Is there then, my lovely Dolores," sing to her in her dream - "In the mussel-shell of your ears, Is there no room for pearl-like little words?
Denk der Laube, dicht vergittert, Wo, umrankt von Duftgesträuch, Ihr in Seligkeit gezittert, Wie die Blätter über euch!	Think of the leaves, thickly enclosing the trellis, Where, entwined among sweet-scented bushes, You trembled in bliss, Like the leaves above you!
War der Platz doch still und sicher Und kein Zeuge hat gelauscht; Selten, daß ein abendlicher Vogel durch das Laub gerauscht.	The place was yet still and safe And nothing espied us; It was seldom that a night Bird rustled in the foliage.
O dem Freund noch eine Stunde, Wo dein Arm ihn so umschlingt, Und der Kuß von deinem Munde Feurig bis ans Herz ihm dringt!	O give your friend one more hour, When your arms enfold him thus, And a kiss from your mouth Pierces his heart like fire!
Hast du ihn so ganz vergessen? Einsam harrt er am Balkon, Überm Wipfel der Zypressen Bleicht des Mondes Sichel schon.	Have you so completely forgotten him? Alone, he awaits you on the balcony; Over the tops of the cypresses The sickle-moon is already turning pale.

Wie das Wasser, niedertropfend,	As the water, dripping down,
Kreise neben Kreise zieht,	Draws circle after circle,
Also zittert, leise klopfend,	So, gently pounding, does his heart
Ihm das Herz bei diesem Lied."	Tremble at this song.[140]

stanza describing the fountain inspires the last verse of the serenade, but in Brahms the fountain becomes a fixation. His singer knows that Dolores will not come and instead focuses his attention on the fountain, stunned into silence and unable to look away.

Natasha Loges describes the formal parameters of "Serenade" as a "developing rondo form" ABACC'AB used by Brahms on multiple occasions.[141] Another way to view its arrangement is in ternary form, where the first A section contains stanzas 1-3, the B section contains stanzas 4 and 7, and the reprise of A contains stanzas 8-9. The first A section is itself ternary, a microcosm of the song as a whole, and its incomplete reprise represents a structural reflection of unrequited and unfulfilled love. The musical characteristics of the lover's serenade in the B section correspond with the established parameters for his Serenades and Ständchen, which are usually in major keys, strophic form, and exhibit qualities akin to his folksong settings. All of these night songs except his arrangement of "Verstohlen geht der Mond auf" (WoO 38, no. 20) for women's choir, are in major keys, and only his settings of Goethe (one verse, through composed) and Kugler (ternary form) diverge from strophic form. In his setting of Schack, Brahms modulates from A minor in the A section to F major in the B section, and its two stanzas are set in modified strophic form. Its simple melody and the transparent quality of its accompaniment recall standard features of Brahms's folksongs, exemplified by his titled

[140] Emily Ezust, translation of "Serenade" for The LiederNet Archive online (accessed 1 August 2020). https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=14351

[141] Natasha Loges, "Adolf Friedrich von Schack" in *Brahms and His Poets: A Handbook* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 347.

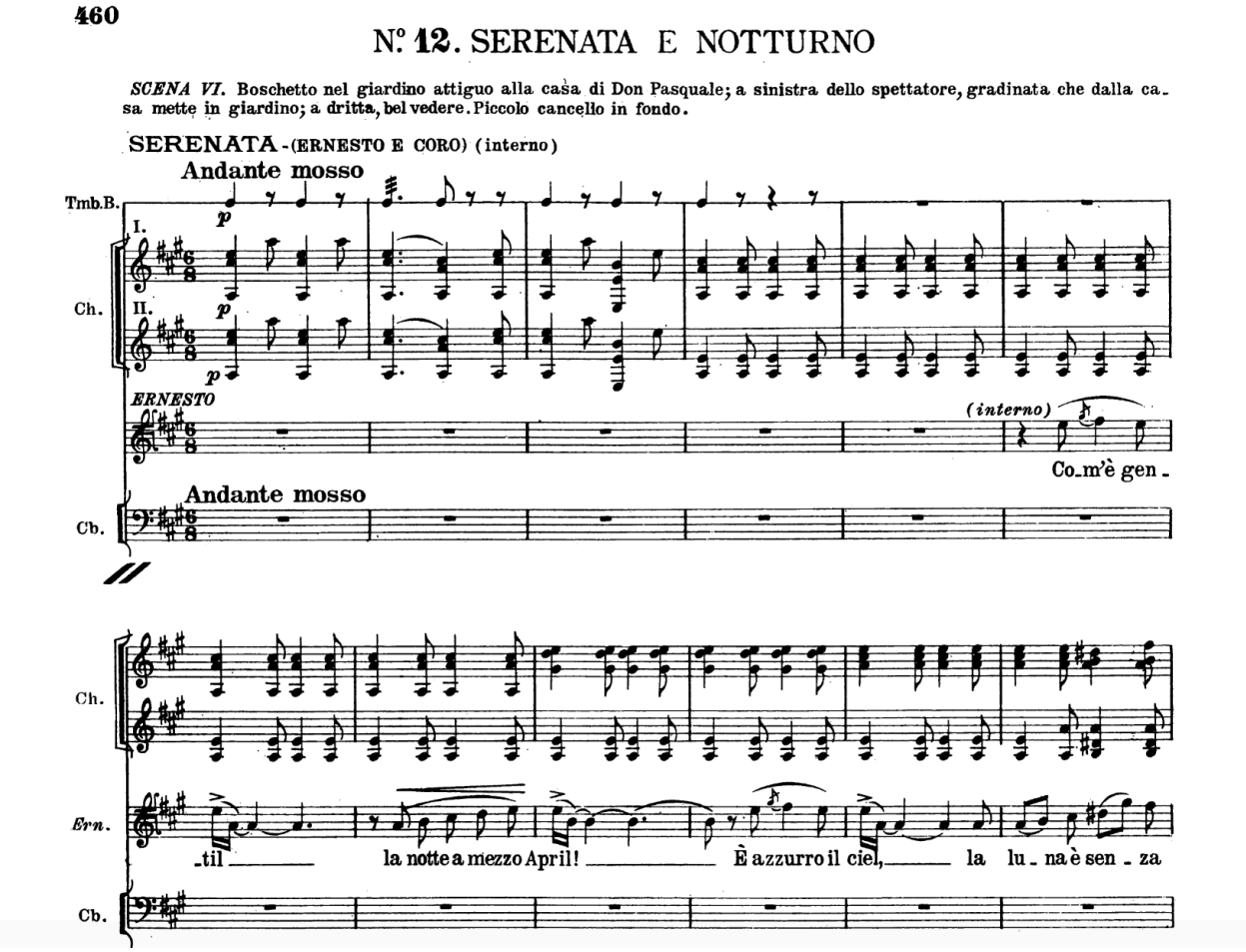
Ständchen.[142] George Bozarth compares the melody in F major to the "unsophisticated popular Italian serenade."[143]

Using the example of "Com'è gentil" as a representative of this popular style in art music, we immediately notice similarities between its melody and the B theme from "Serenade." "Com'è gentil" begins with a simple six-note motto. Starting on the fifth scale degree of A major, the tonic chord, it features an expressive upper neighbor embellished by a dissonant grace note appoggiatura 5-7-6-5 (Example 2.5). This gesture is followed by a rearticulation of the fifth scale degree on the downbeat of the next measure that immediately falls to the fundamental pitch. "Serenade" includes a virtually identical gesture as a component of its B theme (see Example 2.6). The pitch level and rhythm of the neighbor figure is equivalent. It also presents the sixth tone as an accented non-chord tone, falls away from the fifth scale degree in the ensuing measure, and resolves with a clear articulation of the tonic chord. Following this motto, both Brahms and Donizetti conclude their initial phrases with stepwise motion toward an expression of the dominant harmony against a tonic pedal.

The opening wind melody in the Adagio non troppo appears to refer to the Italian serenade as well and is remarkably similar to the melody from "Serenade," written eight years later (see Example 2.7). The first flute and clarinet enter with a sustained note on the fifth scale degree of A minor. Its duration is roughly equivalent to the held note at the beginning of the vocal melody from "Serenade," and it is followed immediately by a version of the embellished neighbor motto present in "Serenade" and "Com'è gentil." Though this melodic figure is rhythmically dissimilar and in a minor key, its structural framework is unchanged: Brahms again

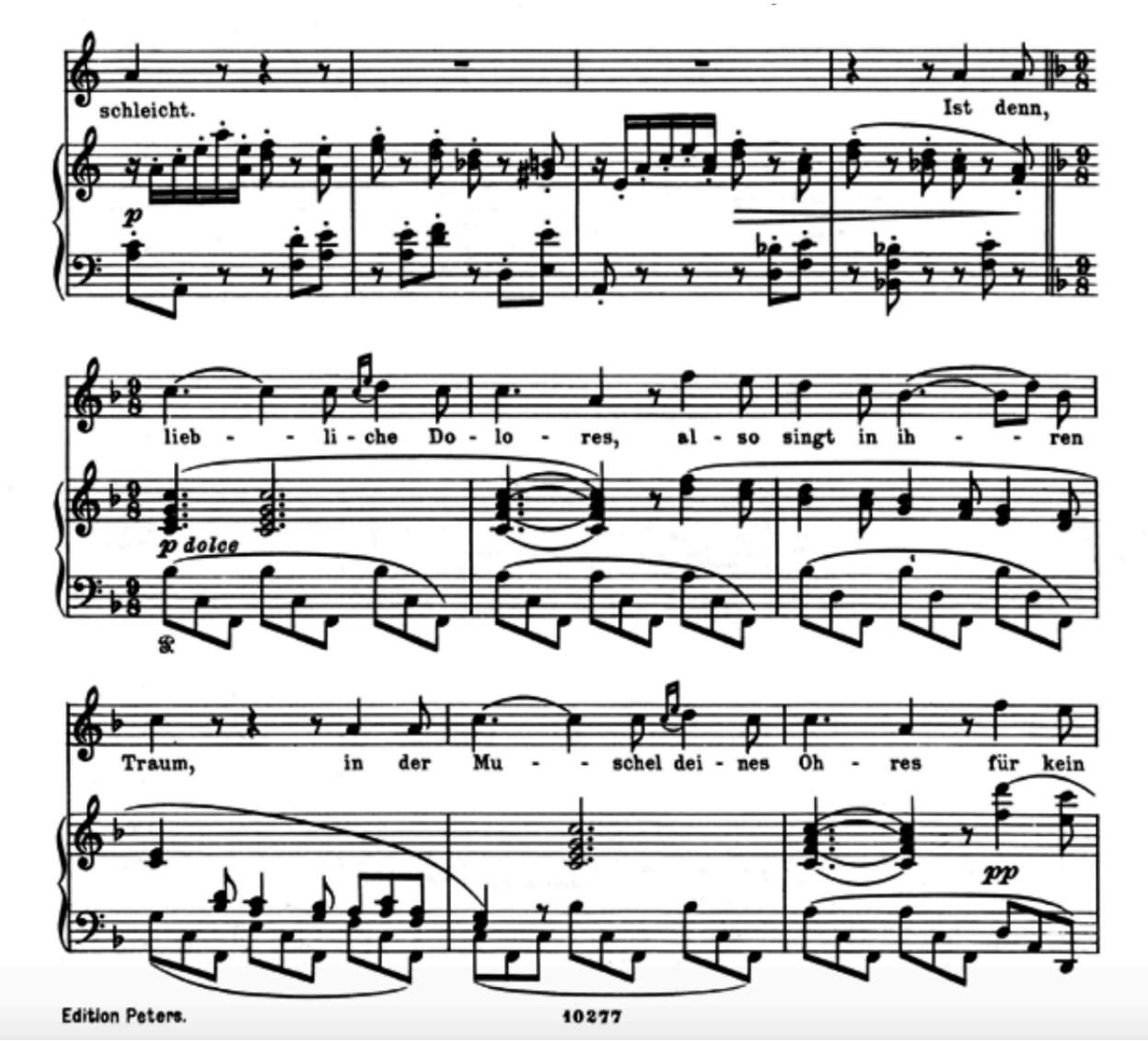
[142] Natasha Loges, "How to Make a 'Volkslied': Early Models in the Songs of Johannes Brahms," *Music & Letters* 93, no. 3 (August 2012): 324-26.
[143] Bozarth, Introduction to *Johannes Brahms: Three Lieder on poems of Adolf Friedrich von Schack: A Facsimile of the Autograph Manuscripts of "Abenddämmerung," Op. 49 No. 5, "Herbstgefühl," Op. 48 No. 7, and "Serenade," Op. 58 No. 8 in the Collection of the Library of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Published by the Da Capo Fund in the Library of Congress, 1983). https://www.loc.gov/resource/ihas.200033469.0/?sp=6 (accessed 29 July 2020).

Example 2.5
Gaetano Donizetti "Com'è gentil" from *Don Pasquale*



embellishes a 5-6-5 upper neighbor with a dissonant grace note appoggiatura. Also like the vocal melody in "Serenade," the wind melody in the Adagio non troppo falls to the third scale degree in order to release the tension built up around the fifth. Following a one-measure voice exchange in conjunction with a stretto entry of the main theme in the second clarinet, the first flute and clarinet descend in a stepwise manner to G-sharp, the major third of the dominant harmony. This phrase emphasizes a perfect-fifth descent from E to A before falling by half step at its conclusion. In "Serenade," the vocal melody also outlines a perfect fifth in its second half, falling from F and to B-flat, but it rises to C at the end of the phrase.

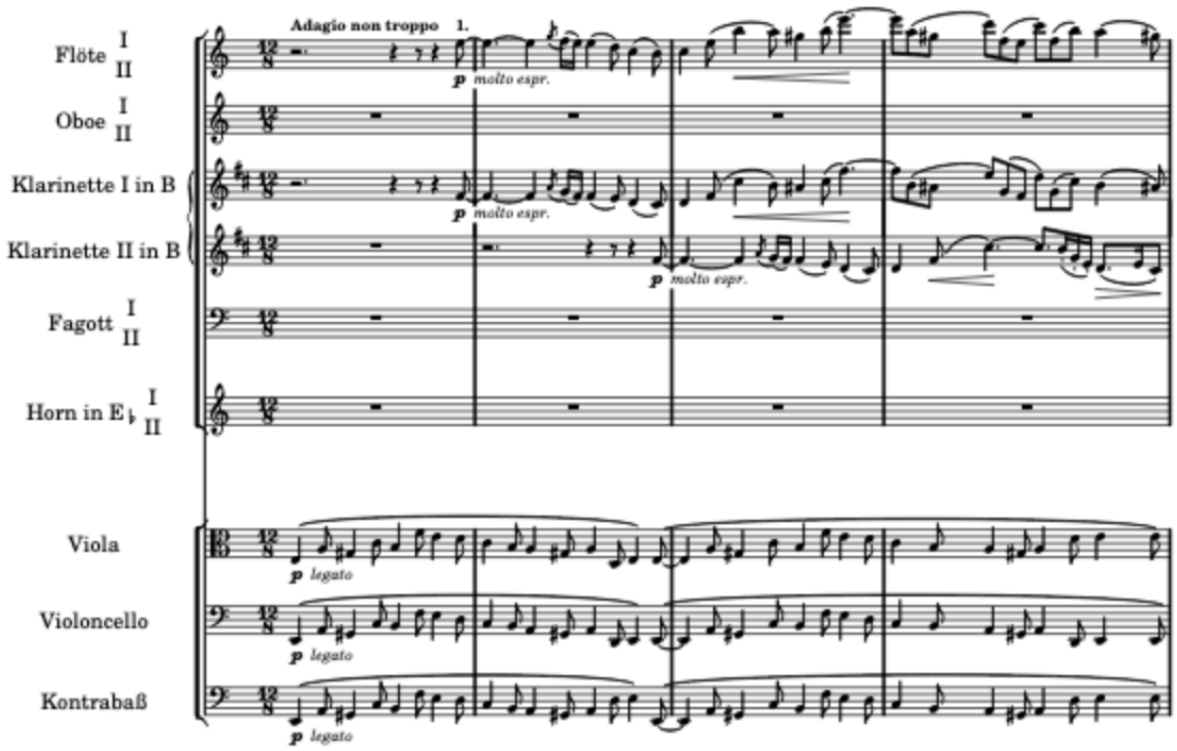
Example 2.6
Brahms "Serenade" Op. 58, No. 8



The resemblances between the initial wind melody in the Adagio non troppo and the lover's serenade from the song "Serenade" open the door for an intertextual reading. In Schack's poem and in Brahms's song, the serenade proper begins by invoking "liebliches Dolores." Understood as a poetic conceit rather than an actual person, she personifies lovelorn memory. Brahms's decision to modulate to F major at this point in the song was likely driven by his desire to evoke the lover's serenade topic, but the dual meaning of "Dolores" complicates the

Example 2.7
Brahms Serenade in A Major, Adagio non troppo

-- III --



happy-sounding tonality with a whisper of irony. In the wordless Adagio non troppo, Brahms necessarily relied on musical rhetoric to perturb the serenade melody. Poignant minor seconds delimit the minor third descent from E to C in mm. 2-3, rendering the theme especially suitablefor an invocation to recall lovely sorrows. And when Brahms wrote this melody in 1859, the impetus for those recollections was Agathe von Siebold.

Siebold provided the catalyst Brahms needed to begin composing new works after four years of relative languish. She inspired a dozen or more songs, several of which were thinly veiled love letters or tailored specifically for her voice including “Vor dem Fenster,” “Ein

Sonnett," "Ständchen," "Der Kuß," "An eine Äolsharfe," and "Die Liebende schreibt."[144] She remained inspirational after their breakup and continued to haunt his works. Her presence is most obviously present in the Second Sextet where he famously memorialized "Agathe" in tones, but as Paul Berry notes, he was still wrestling with her memory in 1888 when he alluded to "Ein Sonett" in "Auf den Kirchhofe" Op. 105. No. 4. It is unsurprising that Brahms never came to grips with this period in his life because their relationship was an outlier in the grand scheme of his love interests. Brahms generally maintained close, friendly relationships with the women he stopped just short of courting but never reconciled with Siebold. She was the only one of these women in his peer age group—Clara Schumann was more than a decade older than he and most of the other women were a decade or more younger—and the only woman to whom Brahms proposed marriage.

Evidence suggests similarities between Brahms's emotional state in the 1850s, when he ended his relationship with Siebold and began work on the second Serenade, and the late 1860s, when he set Schack's "Serenade." Brahms considered proposing to Ottalie Ebner in 1863 (née von Hauer) but Eduard Ebner was more decisive and asked first. Following another missed opportunity to marry, likely triggering memories of Siebold on its own, he visited Göttingen in 1864 and indulged his nostalgia. This trip inspired the Second Sextet (1864-65). That same year, he penned the song "Von ewiger Liebe," which borrowed significantly from "Brautgesang," an unpublished composition from 1858 for women's chorus and orchestra inspired by Siebold.[145] Paul Berry suggests that the rhetorical implication of this reference further raises "the possibility of a deliberate parallel between compositional strategy and biographical circumstance."[146] Soon after publishing the Sextet in 1866, Brahms became acquainted with Schack's *Gedichte*. The

[144] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 316.
[145] Today only the vocal parts survive in handcopied partbooks used by the Hamburg Women's Chorus.
[146] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 34.

following year, he set three of its poems, "Herbstgefühl," "Abenddämmerung," and "Serenade." Brahms completed the first two songs on May 6, the day before his 34th birthday, and Clara Schumann linked their gloomy, fatalistic mood to Brahms's own at the time. In a consoling letter written later that year, she suggested that he find peace in his domestic life, recommending that he take a permanent home in Vienna and find a wife. Her suggestion to marry intersected with Brahms's recollections of the missed opportunity with Siebold recalled in these songs, especially "Serenade." The five-year period Between 1864 when he visited Göttingen and 1868 when he published "Von ewiger Liebe" demonstrates that Brahms continued to grapple with his split from Siebold a decade later.

In fact, Schack's poem could well have described Brahms's return to Göttingen in 1864. Memories from the summer of 1858 undoubtedly flooded his consciousness during that visit, as he trod familiar paths and covertly visited Agathe's former home. The scenery described in Schack's poem is reminiscent of the Siebold home with its iron gates and gardens. Even the manner in which Dolores' erstwhile lover pleads for forgiveness and the opportunity to rekindle their past romance recalls Brahms's letter to Seibold that precipitated their estrangement. Schack's protagonist casts his longing in physical terms, and rather than praising her virtues, he strives to stoke the fires of passion: "give me one more hour to hold and kiss you!" In his letter from January 1859, Brahms mused whether he and Siebold could relieve the unencumbered days of their courtship. In effect, his famous statement, ""I love you! I must see you again! . . . Write to me, whether I am to come back, to take you in my arms, to kiss you and tell you that I love you!" serves as a gloss on Schack's poem.[147]

The similarity to his own circumstances may even account for why Brahms did not set Schack's fifth and sixth stanzas in his song.

[147] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 188.

Think of the leaves, thickly enclosing the trellis,
Where, entwined among sweet-scented bushes,
You trembled in bliss,
Like the leaves above you!

The place was yet still and safe
And nothing espied us;
It was seldom that a night
Bird rustled in the foliage.

Perhaps Brahms found these eight lines too suggestive in general, or maybe they too closely mirrored his own lived experiences for comfort. Clara Schumann's daughter Eugenie describes a game of hide-and seek that took place in a Göttingen garden with her mother, Brahms, and Siebold during the summer of 1858, which was likely a ruse for the young couple to flirt in brief, secret moments.[148] Later that summer, in September, Clara spotted Brahms pulling Siebold behind some bushes to kiss her, perhaps thinking them unseen, which prompted Clara to leave Göttingen with hurt feelings.[149] For people familiar with Schack's poem, the excised stanzas still existed in their memories, but for Brahms they might have represented his actual memories.

Another occasion that supports a connection between the Serenade in A Major and Siebold and bridges the gap in years between the Adagio non troppo, the Second Sextet, and "Serenade" occurred in April 1862 when Julius Stockhausen joined Brahms in Hamburg for several Philharmonic concerts at the end of the month.[150] The programming emphasized the baritone's talents, with Brahms as his accompanist for Lieder, and included performances of the Serenade in A. Over the course of two weeks, Stockhausen sang several song cycles in their entirety including Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, and Beethoven's

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[148] Edward Hitschmann, "Johannes Brahms and Women," *American Imago; a Psychoanalytic Journal for the Arts and Sciences* 6, iss. 2 (June 1949): 77.
[149] Swafford, *Brahms*, 185.
[150] Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms* vol. 1 (England: E. Arnold, 1905), 263. The engagement included a full orchestra concert on April 16 and three soirées on April 19, 27, and 30. The Schubert cycle was performed on the 16th and 19th; the Schumann cycle on the 27th and 30th.

An die ferne Geliebte.[151] He also sang the concert premiere of Brahms's "Ein Sonett" during this engagement, which was one of the songs expressly written for Siebold in the summer of 1858. The pathos of these vocal works is in concert with the elegiac yearning endemic to the *Adagio non troppo*. The cycles by Schubert and Schumann depict lovelorn despair and culminate with literal and figurative drownings: the suicide of the miller in *Die schöne Müllerin* and love's watery grave in *Dichterliebe*. *An die ferne Geliebte* deals with the condition of yearning brought about by separation, and "Ein Sonett" evokes futile longing in the *fin'amor* tradition of the Medieval troubadour or the German Minnesinger.

At the time, Stockhausen was smitten with a married woman, which likely infused this program with personal significance for him.[152] Brahms was privy to his friend's situation and was in the mindset to reflect upon his own romantic failure owing to this stimulus. The inclusion of "Ein Sonett" raises the possibility that the programming resonated with Brahms as well.[153] Whether or not he had a hand in selecting "Ein Sonett" for these performances is unclear, but he was probably charged with determining which of his orchestral or chamber works to perform. The muted affect of the Serenade in A, especially its dolorous Adagio, fits in well with the vocal slate and suggests, by proxy, that he sought to recall Siebold in his vocal and instrumental inclusions to the program. Certainly, practical considerations may have influenced its selection as well: the Serenade in A is shorter than the Serenade in D and requires fewer musicians, making it a better fit for its soirée billing, and the orchestra was familiar with the work having performed it in 1860. But one final coincidence hints that its inclusion was both practical and topically programmatic.

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[151] Natasha Loges, "Julius Stockhausen's Early Performances of Franz Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*," *19th-Century Music* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2018): 216. Stockhausen had undertaken a similar feat the previous spring booking the Schubert and Schumann consecutively with Brahms accompanying him on Dichterliebe.

[152] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 319-20.

[153] "Ein Sonnet" was one of several songs composed while Brahms resided in Göttingen during the summer of 1858. Siebold owned an autograph copy of the song. It is the only autograph definitively linked to her provenence.

That same month, Brahms composed his orchestral arrangement Schubert's "Greisengesang." Stockhausen inspired the project, and the baritone incorporated "Greisengesang" into his performance arsenal immediately following its completion. Though the narrator is an old man, the last two lines in Schubert's song and the final stanza of the poem speak directly to his current situation in love.

Shut out the raw breath of reality, and give roof and
Room only to the fragrance of dreams!"

I have wine and roses in every song,
And have yet a thousand more such songs.
From evening till morning and all through the night
I will sing to you of youth and love's pain.

Stockhausen must have realized that pursuing a married was likely a doomed proposition, but proceeded under the delusion of success. Brahms's decision to exclude violins from his arrangement may have been directly inspired by the contemporaneous performances of the Serenade in A Major and "Ein Sonnett," which triggered sad memories for him. Excerpted, the final six lines of Rückert's poem enact a liminal space for yearning that connects Brahms's romantic failure and Stockhausen's ill-fated affections, embodying both pastness and futurity. In both cases, yearning is the crucial component inspiring artistry.

Brahms often bemoaned his inability to write or speak eloquently and claimed that only through music could he convey the true depth of his feelings. As Brahms wrote to Clara Schumann on August 21, 1854, in the full bloom of love: "Words flow from my pen so laboriously that even my conversation may be more interesting. I would gladly write to you just in music."[154] The regularity with which he drew upon vocal music for inspiration in his instrumental works suggests another way in which he recognized that music was his preferred medium for communication. Instrumental music was particularly well suited to communicating

[154] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 55.

his feelings of love and longing, not least because, as a reader of E. T. A. Hoffmann, Brahms knew that its content was always more profound, and its impact more direct in bypassing verbal language.[155] But Brahms also relied on extramusical reference in many forms, including musical allusions, text underlay, poetic adjuncts, and descriptive titles. The interaction between music and poetry was a crucial component of his dialogic compositional process, which built upon his historicist tendencies and hermeneutic view of genre, tempo markings, style, and musical topics.

Considered as a statement of feelings, however, the Serenade in A Major does not plainly communicate its content on Brahms's behalf. In order to understand the work in this light, we need a holistic approach to analysis that considers the full scope of his dialogism. The work draws attention to itself first and foremost through its anachronistic genre and idiosyncratic instrumentation. The violin-less orchestra of the Serenade recalls Mozart's wind ensemble from the Gran Partita, but in order to understand the significance this texture held for Brahms we must look to his later works, when he associated it with poetic and biblical texts that describe loss and consolation through suffering. His exploration of these themes spans the entire Serenade but is most poignantly realized in the Adagio non troppo. Brahms used his slow movements as venues to explore these same themes relative to love lost. The wind melody that begins the movement includes features that are reminiscent of the popular lover's serenade, and which may have served as the model for the serenade melody in his setting of Schack's "Serenade." Taken together, all of these references coalesce around the interpretive nexus of his relationship with Agathe von Siebold. And in this light, we may carry the interpretation a step further: the Adagio non troppo was Brahms's first of several attempts to console and heal himself through music after breaking off his engagement.

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[155] E.T.A. Hoffmann and David Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 96.

CHAPTER 3

A LONG-BREATHED LAMENT: ENDLESS MELODY AND HOFFMANNIAN RHETORIC IN THE ADAGIO NON TROPPO

Brahms composed the Adagio non troppo during the first eight months of 1859. He sent the manuscript to Clara Schumann for her birthday on September 13, along with his copies of the first and last movements.[156] An accompanying letter conveys the evident pride and sense of accomplishment Brahms took in this movement, even in soliciting feedback:

> I look forward to hearing from you at last about the Adagio for the new serenade. I hope you'll write back what you mean, just as though you were speaking freely. If it's only worth all the effort I've put into it.[157]

Schumann replied as requested on September 18. Her effusive response tumbles across the page in a breathless manner and follows below in full:

> What am I say to you about the Adagio? The proverb which says, 'When the heart is full, the mouth runs over,' is not always true. I feel as if I could find no words to express the joy that it gives me, and yet you want to hear so much. I shall find it hard to dissect it; I must think of something beautiful so that I may enjoy doing it; it will be like inspecting the separate stamens of some rare and lovely flower. It is exquisitely beautiful. The bass moves so softly and yet with such dignity like a noble figure, the gait of Bach and the 2nd theme begins so sublimely, with such sadness (the mere sound takes hold of one) and then interweaves so marvelously with the other parts. And how magnificent the close of the first part is, with the pedal note coming in the middle! And then the ff is so fine, and the way it immediately quiets down again, and the whole transition in A-flat major, the horn, the new theme, the liquid pedal note, the entrance of the viola with the first theme again, and the crescendo! Up to G major it is all beautiful, but from there on it carries one to heaven. But I always play [the] passage [beginning with the wind entrance in measure 70 and including its answer in measures 71-72] pp. It is so indescribably soft and moving, and the finish when it is so quiet — draws the very soul out of one. I can say no more. The whole thing has a feeling of Church-

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[156] Michael Musgrave, "Serenades" in *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, ed. Leon Botstein (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 43. Clara only received the outer movements on her birthday proper, September 13, and collected the Adagio from the customs house the next day.

[157] Margaret Notley, "Late Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio," *19th Century Music* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1999), 44.

> music, it might well be an *Eleison*. Dear Johannes, you know well that I feel more than I can put into words.[158]

Clara Schumann's reluctance to "dissect" the movement is evident in her reply. Clearly she felt its beauty was best experienced as a whole. As such, her review comes across like a highlight reel of favorite moments, and her observations focus on the subtle expressivity of the Adagio non troppo, which offered a poignant blend of sentiments including dignity, magnificence, sorrow, and penitence.

Altogether the movement felt like a prayer for mercy. Coming as it does at the end of her synopsis of the movement, Schumann's comment that it "might well be an *Eleison*" seems inspired most immediately by the amen-like plagal cadence with Picardy third that concludes the Adagio non troppo and the cloistered feel of its primary theme, reprised at the end of the movement. Other aspects of the movement might have contributed to this impression as well: the Adagio non troppo exhibits formal features consistent with ternary form, which was typical of Kyrie movements in the 19th century; its repetitive *ostinato* could be compared to a religious litany; and its melody evokes the melismatic style of Kyrie movements in in general.[159] Taken in conjunction with the earlier comparison to Bach, Schumann's comment invites us to regard the movement as conveying religiosity of a specifically German character, underscoring the depth of

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[158] Berthold Litzmann, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters*, vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1913), 174-5. In Clara's letter, she included musical examples for the weeping gesture in the flute, oboe, and first clarinet in measures 70-72.

[159] Daniel R. Melamed and Virginia Hancock, "Brahms's Kyrie and *Missa canonica*: Two Discussions of the Mass Moements and their Publication," *The Choral Journal* 28, no. 9 (April, 1988): 11, 14-15. For his part, Brahms composed just a single Kyrie during his lifetime: the standalone Kyrie in G minor WoO 17. It is often paired with the fragmentary *Missa Canonica* WoO 18, which only included three movements: the Sanctus, Benedictus, and Agnus Dei/Dona nobis pacem. Both were written as counterpoint exercises in 1856 and remained unpublished during his lifetime. Their pairing is convenient but stylistic differences preclude literal combination. The Kyrie in G minor was written in a Baroque style for four-part choir and basso continuo, whereas the a cappella *Missa Canonica* for five voices draws upon Renaissance music for its model. In addition to the noted stylistic differences, Melamed and Hancock point out discrepancies in tonality—the Kyrie is in G minor and the Mass is in C major—and cite evidence from Brahms's letters in which he refers to the Kyrie as a distinct composition separate from the *Missa canonica*.

her veneration for the Adagio non troppo. I will return to the hermeneutic implications of Schumann's interpretation later in this chapter.

Schumann's comparison to Bach was particularly apt because in the preceding years, Brahms was immersed more than usual in Bach's works. In late 1858, around the time that Brahms began the Serenade but before had he begun work on the Adagio non troppo, he conducted the Detmold Chorus in performances of Bach's Cantatas Nos. 4, *Christ lag in Todesbanden*, and 21, *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis*.[160] That Christmas, the Princess Friederike gave him a set of the Complete Works Edition, the final volume of which had been published the previous year.[161] Bach was often performed in in Detmold, by Brahms and other members of his circle, at court concerts and in private. In his *Erinnerungen*, Brahms's friend Carl Bargheer recalled performances of the concertos for two and three pianos, sonatas for violin and keyboard, and the Organ Toccata.[162] Brahms also devoted himself to studying counterpoint in 1855 and 1856, some of the fruits of which the Adagio non troppo bears.[163] During these years, Brahms had also acquired copies of influential theoretical treatises by the Baroque musicians Kirnberger, Mattheson, and Marpurg, but Bach served as the practical touchstone.[164] In short, Bach was very much on Brahms's mind when he began work on the Adagio non troppo. Against the backdrop of his contrapuntal studies and his deep engagement with Bach, Brahms's query as to whether or not the movement was worth the effort assumes additional significance: among other things, he

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[160] Virginia Hancock, "Brahms's Performances of Early Choral Music," *19th-Century Music* 8, no. 2 (Autumn, 1984), 126.
[161] Carl Bargheer. "Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms in Detmold, 1857-1865," trans. Patrick Aubyrn, TM, Lippisches Landesbibliothek, Detmold.
[162] Bargheer, "Erinnerungen."
[163] David Brodbeck, "The Brahms-Joachim Counterpoint Exchange; or, Robert, Clara, and 'the Best Harmony between Jos. and Joh.,'" *Brahms Studies* I, ed. Brodbeck (Lincoln, NE, 1994), 30-80. Brodbeck provides a full account of Brahms and Joachim's counterpoint studies.
[164] N.B. Kirnberger was a student of J.S. Bach.

sought affirmation that his efforts to synthesize Romantic idioms with elements of Bach's contrapuntal practice had succeeded.

Later commentators have also connected the movement with Bach. When Donald Tovey analyzed the Serenade in a series of music appreciation essays he published between 1935 and 1939, he, too, found that the basso ostinato evokes Bach:

> Its main section moves on a ground bass which, like those in some of Bach's slow movements, from time to time changes its key. After eight rotations have brought us to a full close in C major, an episode begins with dramatic modulations.[165]

Unlike Schumann, Tovey did not compare the movement to church music, though he did take note of the plagal harmony characterizing the final seven measures of the movement, describing them as being in the "home tonic with subdominant color."[166] Curiously, Tovey never names the key in question. Perhaps he assumed his reader would infer the key signature (A Minor) from his musical example, but the omission is curious when we consider that he names each of the secondary key areas within the movement (A-flat major and C minor), and that he also names the home keys of the Scherzo (C major) and the Quasi Menuetto (D major).[167] Tovey's omission establishes the identity of the home tonic as an object of special analytical interest. For now, let us note that the Adagio non troppo is the only minor key movement in the Serenade; this is the first of many factors differentiating it from the other four movements.

Writing many decades apart from one another and with very different aims, Schumann and Tovey clearly establish the ostinato as the primary driver of melody and structure in the Adagio non troppo. Schumann twice refers to it as the first theme: she does so directly when describing the viola entrance at the beginning of the short development in C minor (m. 57) and

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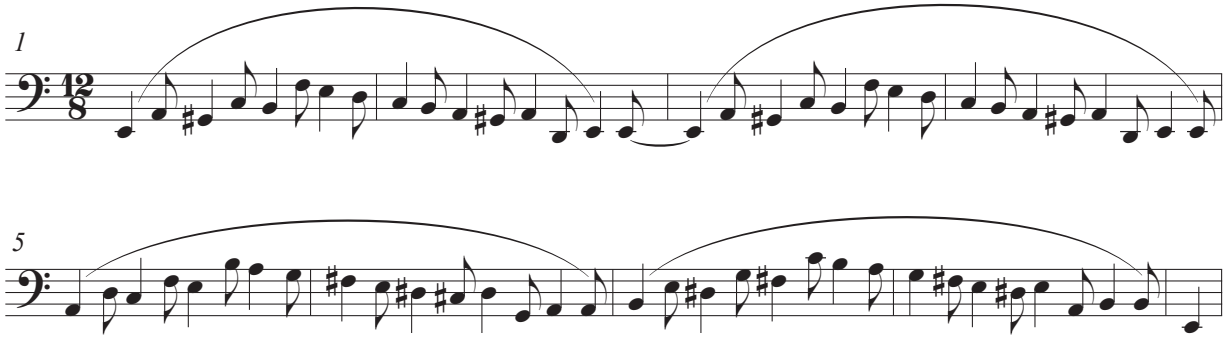
[165] Donald Tovey, *Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works: Selections from Essays in Musical Analysis* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2015), 239.
[166] Tovey, *Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works*, 240.
[167] Tovey does not name the tonic for the first or last movements, but classical convention dictates that a composition in A major typically begins and ends in that key.

indirectly when she refers to the initial wind melody (m. 1) as the "sublime second theme." As Tovey notes, the ostinato is the primary subject for variation in the development, presented in fugato style with a countersubject based on its inversion.[168] The second theme does return but not until the false reprise (mm. 68-69) in the final seven measures of the development. More recently, Margaret Notley has analyzed the Adagio movements from Brahms's Second Serenade, the A-Major Piano Quartet (Op. 26), and the Horn Trio (Op. 40), observing that Brahms often "devised (seemingly) subsidiary motive[s] or theme[s] that would underlie or join statements of (apparently) more important thematic materials and also unobtrusively set the tone of the movement."[169] Her parenthetical modifiers underscore the foundational importance of the ostinato melody in the Adagio non troppo. Indeed, the ostinato helps the listener make sense of the sinuous and somewhat amorphous wind melody and is crucial to understanding the pathos of the movement, but it also serves as the musical basis for every ensuing melody.

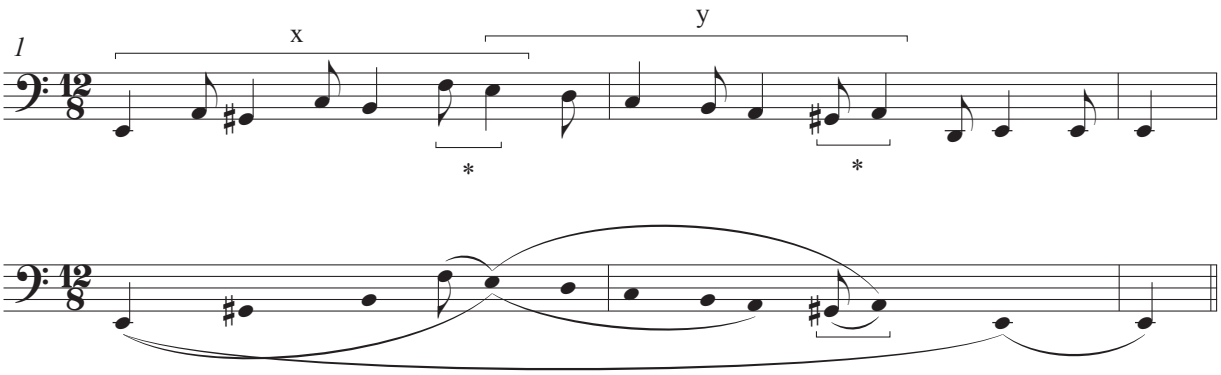
One of the primary functions of Baroque ostinati was to support melodic variations; they were also common vehicles for improvisation in the period. Brahms is well known for having used a wide variety of variation techniques, several of which are at play in the Adagio non troppo. In order to ascertain the manner in which Brahms spun themes from his ostinato template, we must first take a closer look at the melody itself (see Examples 3.1 and 3.2). The movement begins with the strings playing the ostinato alone, in unison, marking a striking timbral departure from the other four movements. In those movements, the contrabass plays a supporting role; here, by contrast, the instrument stands forward, driving the ostinato by playing the fundamental above which the cellos and violas intone the first and third overtones. The initial E in the bass sounds nearly three octaves below middle-C, marking another strong contrast from

[168] Tovey, *Symphonies and Other Orchestral Works*, 240.
[169] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 47-8.

Example 3.1
Brahms's basso ostinato, mm. 1-9



Example 3.2
Outline of the ostinato melody, mm. 1-2



the surrounding movements, which uniformly begin with a noticeably higher tessitura. This is the lowest pitch possible for a four-stringed bass in standard tuning and likely the lowest pitch attainable by this ensemble.[170] The Adagio begins at its deepest point.

The ostinato repeats in two-measure cycles. Some of the ensuing iterations are exact transpositions of the original theme; others adjust the intervallic content while preserving the basic contour. Quasi-isorhythmic, the ostinato proceeds in trochaic rhythms, giving the string

[170] Brahms's four-hand piano score retains the octave spacing throughout the ostinato. In this score, the contrabass line performs a low D that exceeds the contrabass's standard tuning. Similarly, in the transition to A-flat major, the four-hand piano score features a low C in the contrabass line. Both of these pitches are easily attainable by modern five-string instruments or four-string instruments with C-extensions, and it is common practice to perform the lower notes today. However, Brahms uniformly adjusted his unison cello/bass lines to account for the low E-string, which suggests that instruments with the lower range were uncommon in orchestras during his lifetime.

parts a monotonous quality. The ostinato has three parts: an ascending arpeggio with half-step appoggiaturas (x); a stepwise descent of a perfect fifth ending with a half-step lower neighbor (y); and a short cadential gesture. The first half of the melody is more dissonant, the second half more consonant, and the terminal half step in the x-motive is balanced symmetrically by the lower neighbor in the y-motive. Perhaps its most notable feature is a thrice-repeated, two-note sighing motive. Rhetorically, falling seconds, or *pianti*, in Raymond Monelle's semiotic terminology, may suggest sighing or weeping, both of which are in keeping with the affect ("with such sadness") suggested by Schumann.[171]

Here, sadness builds with each successive *pianto*. Consider the ostinato prototype (mm.1-2, 3-4), which outlines an E major chord in the first and third measures. The first *pianto* is consonant relative to the tonic, but the second and third *pianti* are increasingly dissonant. The flat sixth resolving to the fifth on the third beat (C-B) perturbs the E major sonority but still relates to the tonic by way of its parallel minor. This is not the case for the flat ninth resolving to the tonic at the melodic apex on beat four (F-E), which has no basis in either E major or E minor. The final *pianto* sounds like a Phrygian second, the terminal interval in a lament bass. Augmenting the feeling of melancholy imbued by the sighing gestures is the erosion of the interval preceding them. Cast initially as a perfect fourth from E to A, the upward leap becomes a diminished fourth (G-sharp to C) and a then a tritone (B to F) in its second and third iterations. Like the *pianti*, the dissonant interval becomes more fraught with each repetition, and the concluding tritone stands out aurally as the most dissonant interval.

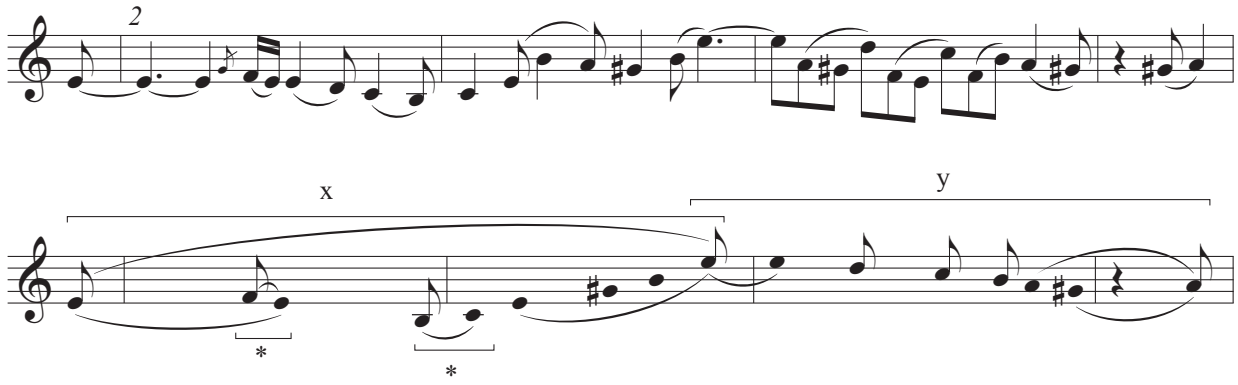
The unpredictable harmonic quality of the ostinato is reflected in the wind melody it supports. Initially the treble melody sounds improvisatory but closer inspection reveals it to be a

[171] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 66-73.

heterophonic elaboration of the ostinato itself (see Example 3.3). Brahms expands the rigid two-measure basso ostinato by one measure in the first half of the first flute and clarinet line. In both cases the initial pitch E is displaced one octave higher through arpeggiation before descending in a stepwise manner to a G-sharp that returns to A. Brahms uses smaller motives from the ostinato melody to effect the melodic elongation. First, he features an embellished version of the expressive half-step F-E from the apex of the ostinato melody. The flute and clarinet both play a long E beginning on the last eighth note of the first measure, which swells through the mournful and rhythmically intense *pianto* that comes midway through the second measure. This variation begins, in effect, as a suspension. The first clarinet emerges from the viola line, sustaining the highest consonant pitch from the ostinato, and the flute maintains the octave stratification implemented in the strings at the outset. Brahms uses rhythm to enhance the sorrowful qualities of the ostinato, contrasting a note three times longer than the quarter notes in the strings against a sixteenth note subdivision of the F-E *pianto*. This rhetorical gesture features a grace note G above F and an early return to the suspended E, transforming the gentler weeping gesture into an anguished sob. After rearticulating the E on the third beat, the winds acquiesce to the lilting trochaic rhythm of the ostinato. Immediately following the expanded *pianto* is an echo of the ensuing descent from E to A in the strings, aborted too soon but preserving the half-step lower neighbor at its nadir. Two measures later Brahms breaks up the full descent from E to A in Bach-like manner by inserting intra-melodic, contrapuntal line whose contour riffs on the same lower neighbor motive in the upper voice, falling in a stepwise manner through a half-step turn at the bottom.

Brahms reuses the full ostinato scaffolding twice more, first in the transition to A-flat major and then for the primary theme in A-flat major (see Examples 3.4 and 3.5). The first

Example 3.3
Outline of the wind melody, mm. 1-5

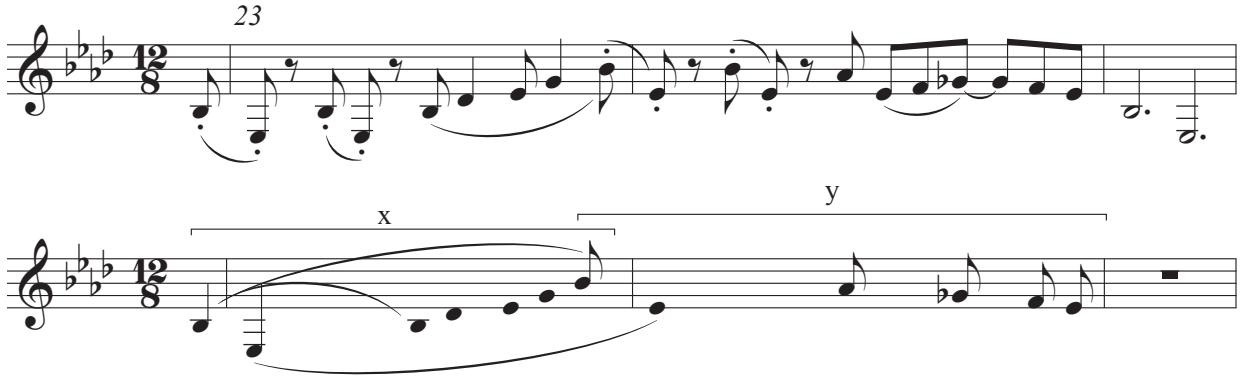


instance occurs in the second half of the transition, beginning in m. 21, where Brahms introduces a horn melody over an E-flat dominant pedal (m. 23). Its begins with a repeated, two-note horn call, the falling fifth from B-flat to E-flat, which is displaced one octave higher in the ensuing measure. It reaches the higher register through an arpeggiation of the E-flat dominant seventh chord, and beginning with the high B-flat, falls through an elaborated stepwise descent to E-flat. Though it features neither of the neighbor tones found in the initial presentation of the theme, it exactly transposes the intervallic identity of the falling fifth through its inclusion of G-flat in m. 24. The inclusion makes this a magical moment, as G-flat is recast as the fifth degree of the C-flat Neapolitan chord.[172]

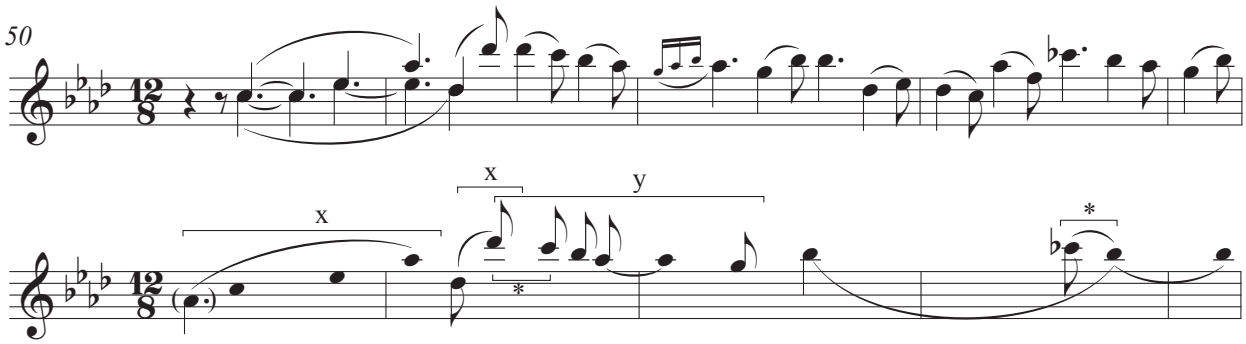
The second permutation of the ostinato begins in m. 30 as the basis of the theme in A-flat major. Emerging seamlessly from an imperfect authentic cadence with a 4-3 suspension, the oboe and clarinet melody ascends through an arpeggiated A-flat major chord. Though their melody begins on the third degree, we may borrow the tonic pitch from the strings to make the arpeggio whole. Departing from his procedure in the ostinato and the two previous variations in which the descending fifth begins with the octave iteration, Brahms alters the second half of the

[172] The Neapolitan chord functions as an subdominant chord in the tonicized key of E-flat major, progressing here to a B-flat dominant seventh chord in m. 25.

Example 3.4
Horn melody, mm. 23-5



Example 3.5
Melody in A-flat major, mm. 30-4



A-flat major melody to correspond with the strongly articulated predominant harmony in m. 31. He restates and transposes the octave displacement of A-flat, compressing the arpeggio to an empty octave leap on D-flat, and the second half of the phrase features a falling fifth from D-flat to G-flat. Note that the descent begins with a chromatic half step from D-flat to C, which recalls the sighing gesture from the ostinato and becomes of primary motivic importance beginning in m. 42. In the second half of the phrase, the upper neighbor figuration from B-flat to C-flat in mm. 32-4 could be read as another reference to the original *pianto*.

In addition to basing the principal themes of each section on the ostinato, Brahms manipulates its smaller motives throughout the movement to create the sensation of endless

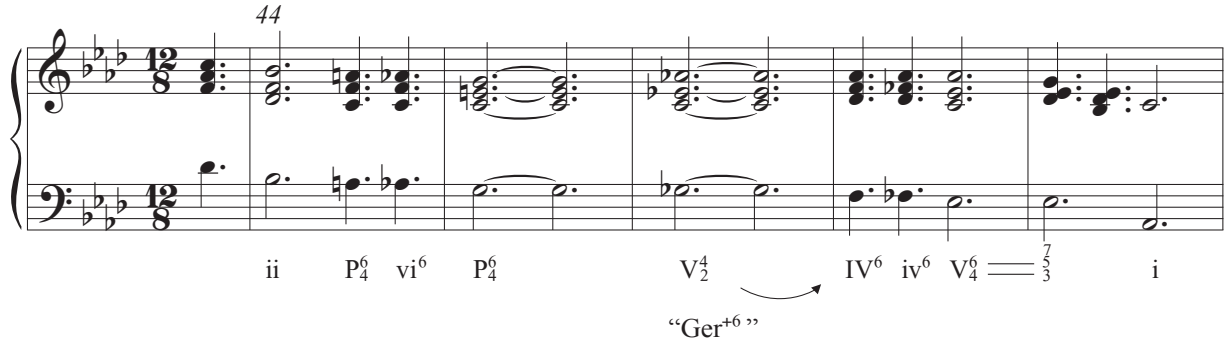
melody. Margaret Notley describes this "process of ongoing clarification" as creating the "illusion of formal continuity."[173] She focuses her analysis on the section of the Adagio non troppo that begins with the transition to A-flat major and ends with the modulation to C minor, highlighting the manner in which Brahms adjusts the sequential pattern between mm. 18-21 to effect the modulation to A-flat major. In those four measures, Brahms tweaks the upward resolving leading tones from m. 19 and the first half of m. 21—inversions of the appogiaturas in the ostinato—to become ascending minor thirds, which invert the falling minor thirds from mm. 18 and 20 and launch the horn melody in A-flat major.[174] Motivic development of this type—in which "the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations"—is an example of developing variation in Schoenbergian terms.[175]

The falling minor third featured at the outset of the transition in the flute, oboe, and horn (mm. 18 and 20) echoes at the end of the ensuing horn melody in conjunction with the Neapolitan harmony (m. 24). This motive returns in mm. 42-44 and 48-50 when Brahms fragments the initial A-flat major melody and features the embellished minor third with a turn from its midpoint as the new principal theme. Brahms juxtaposes this melodic variant with a cadential phrase built around the *pianto* and a newly devised ground bass. The ground begins with the D-flat falling to B-flat in the cellos and bassoons (mm. 43-44), proceeding chromatically thereafter from B-flat to E-flat. In conjunction with the conspicuous *pianti* in the high winds, the ground takes on the expressive characteristics of a chromatic *lamento* (see Example 3.6) Within the context of a minor-key movement, descending chromatic passages alone have the tendency to

[173] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 48-9.
[174] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 49-51.
[175] Arnold Schoenberg, "Bach, 1950," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 397. As developing variation relates to the Adagio non troppo, see Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 51.

evoke the lament symbol, especially when repeated.[176] In the Adagio non troppo, Brahms also appears to base his harmonic progression on standard lament schemata. As outlined by William Caplin in *The Oxford Handbook for Topic Theory*, laments typically move from the minor tonic to the dominant, primarily through iterations of the predominant (IV or iv) and dominant (V or v) harmonies.[177] The classic progression for a diatonic lament follows: i, v^6, iv^6, V. Chromatic variants necessarily expand the progression but retain the basic framework: i, V^6, v^6, IV^6, iv^6, V.

Example 3.6
***Lamento* topic, mm. 43-8**



Brahms's chromatic descent spans a perfect fifth, rather than the traditional perfect fourth, but it still ends on the fifth scale degree, supporting an E-flat dominant harmony (V^7). The chord progression begins off-tonic with a root position B-flat minor chord (ii), which then passes through F major en route to a first inversion F minor chord (vi^6). A typical lament would tonicize F minor at this point and feature a descending bass line beginning on F and ending on C. However, Brahms's bass line continues its linear chromatic descent and supports the F minor chord with A-flat in the bass, the third scale degree of the relative minor and the first scale

[176] Peter H. Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His* Werther *Quartet* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 232. Smith describes the various factors complicating a straightforward reading of C major in the finale of Brahms's Piano Quartet in C minor (Op. 60). They include prominent non chord tones and "the lament symbol of extended descending chromaticism."
[177] William Caplin, "Topics and Formal Functions: The Case of the Lament," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 416-423. Caplin describes the basic harmonic outline and provides musical examples for several standard versions of the lament.

degree of the key-signature tonic. In other words, the lament begins with the correct harmony but the incorrect bass. As a result, the bass line is rooted in A-flat major despite the fact that laments are usually in the minor mode. It appears as though Brahms capitalized on the indeterminate modal nature of the chromatic scheme to blend the relative major and minor.

The ensuing C major chord in second inversion (V^6_4/vi) recalls the i-V motion that characteristically opens a lament, but it remains at odds with the bass. Like the F major chord in m. 44, the C major chord in m. 45 also functions as a passing chord. The final three measures of the ground, beginning with the flatted seventh scale degree G-flat, outline a typical dominant-predominant-dominant harmonization: V^4_2/IV, IV^6, iv^6, V^6_4, V. One of Caplin's six examples demonstrating standard harmonizations and formal functionality includes the applied dominant V^4_2/IV in conjunction with the flatted seventh degree.[178] Brahms's lament possesses what Caplin would call *ending* function because its final harmony is part of a perfect authentic cadence in A-flat major.[179] Amazingly, this is the first PAC in the entire movement, but it is undercut by its weak beat placement and because it immediately initiates the second iteration of the new melody based on the third with turn and leading into the restatement of the ground.

Intersections with "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club"

So far I have discussed numerous elements of the *Adagio non troppo* that contribute to its affect: the striking difference from the other movements achieved by the minor key, the low tessitura, and the role of the contrabass; the ostinato as primary melody; the unremitting presence of emblems of sadness in the form of the half-step *pianto* (sighing) and the related falling minor third (sobbing); the chromatic descending bass line in the A-flat major section reminiscent of a

[178] Caplin, "The Case of the Lament," 420. See example 15.3e, specifically.
[179] Caplin, "The Case of the Lament," 420.

lament bass; and the emphasis on variation techniques, which lend the movement an air of unending melody. Taken together, these features give the movement a pensive, melancholy quality; it is cloistered and plaintive. Brahms's emphasis on techniques that project the feeling of unending melody, through the interrelatedness of the themes and variation processes, results in a movement that simultaneously languishes in the doldrums and unfurls in a fantasy-like manner, where themes emerge from one another kaleidoscopically. The movement sings a song without words through the musical semiotics of sadness.

Adagios seem tailor-made to express themes of grief or despondence. Their slow tempos easily convey mournfulness, especially when combined with a minor key, and they became increasingly significant within the German imagination after Beethoven, prized for their spiritual and subjective attributes. Owing to Beethoven's influence, Adagios, like Symphonies, became a loaded genre that made them tricky to compose as well. Ludwig Nohl, the scholar of eighteenth-century music and Beethoven aficionado, who was a near-contemporary of Brahms, reportedly "regarded the Adagio [genre] as the vehicle for subjective inwardness."[180] For his part, Brahms certainly toiled over his early Adagios. Recall his letter to Clara Schumann, quoted earlier in this chapter, in which he asked if his hard work on the Adagio non troppo was "worth the effort." He expressed a similar sentiment in a letter to Joachim that accompanied the manuscript to his Adagio from the Piano Concerto in D. In that letter Brahms remarked, "If only I could finally take pleasure in a successful adagio!"[181] Indeed, the composer's correspondence frequently mentions the hard work required for his success and how he would have liked to compose more elegant music along the lines of Mozart or Mendelssohn but was doomed to labor drudgingly in

[180] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 35.
[181] Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 149. Also see Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 44.

his own idiom. Whatever difficulties he confronted in writing Adagios, Brahms, like so many of his contemporaries, regarded them as opportunities for the expression of subjectivity.

How, then, to interpret the subjectivity to which the Adagio non troppo gives expression? All of Brahms's slow movements predating the Second Serenade made literary or musical allusions, and accordingly we might well look for this movement to have done the same. The Adagio non troppo exhibits many similarities to a freestanding fantasia including the long-breathed nature of its singular melody, constantly subject to variation, its improvisational sound, and its contrapuntal texture emphasizing fugato style.[182] Brahms might have drawn generic inspiration from Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, or Schumann in this respect, all of whom composed numerous fantasias, but his theme does not evidently allude to any specific musical work. On the other hand there are clear correspondences between the Adagio non troppo and Hoffmann's *Fantasiestücke*. In Chapter 1, I described the third story from *Kreisleriana II*, "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," as it relates to Kreisler/Hoffmann's comportment and the nested identities in the Kreisler stories. That story also serves as a starting point for examining relationships between Hoffmann's text and the expressive structural components in the Adagio non troppo listed above.

"Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" is a story in three parts: 1. Guests arrive at Kreisler's home for an evening of music and poetry and accidentally break his piano; 2. Kreisler improvises an aphoristic tone poem that expresses his emotional distress, accompanying himself on the damaged instrument; and 3. Guests depart dissatisfied with Kreisler's performance and leave him emotionally rent. The story unfurls roughly in ABA form, as if to underscore its musical qualities. Its outer sections are framed by the entrance and exit of Kreisler's guests, wherein

[182] Brahms only used the titular designation *Fantasien* once in his lifetime for the collection of seven piano pieces in Op. 116.

Hoffmann focuses on interpersonal dynamics; the action is real, present, and matter of fact. The middle section is mostly removed from the real world, existing on a fantastical, imaginative plane, and evokes Kreisler's genius, yearning, and despair; it culminates with a frenetic rumination on his psychological distress. This story within a story—the symbolic heart of the piece—unfurls as a set of fantasy-pieces meant to evoke the titular imagery for the tome containing *Kreisleriana*, the *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*. Just as Jacques Callot combined innumerable small vignettes into a single unified scene—the author specifically mentions Callot's grotesque masterpiece *The Temptation of St. Anthony* in his prefatory remarks to the *Fantasiestücke*—so too does Hoffmann in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" in the guise of key characteristic descriptions. Of Callot, Hoffmann wrote:[183]

> No master has known so well as Callot how to assemble together in small space such an abundance of motifs, emerging beside each other, even within each other, yet without confusing the eye, so that individual elements are seen as such, but still blend with the whole.

The collection of short stories in the *Fantasiestücke*, similarly distinct but inextricably interconnected, resembles Callot's manner. *Kreisleriana* is a microcosm of the *Fantasiestücke*, and the collection of expressionistic vignettes in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" is a microcosm of *Kreisleriana*. Another way to view this structure is as a series of concentric circles radiating outward from the same center, an especially fitting image based on the etymology of Kreisler's name, which derives from *Kreis* (circle).[184] In this construction, Kreisler's fantasy is the smallest circle rippling outward through "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" and *Kresileriana* to the largest circle represented by the *Fantasiestücke* as a whole.

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[183] Hoffmann and David Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: Kreisleriana, the Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism* in Cambridge Readings in the Literature of Music (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 76.

[184] The image of concentric circles radiating outward recalls a nesting doll, which is the basis for Posner's concept of the nested self, discussed in chapter 1.

A cursory analysis of Brahms's Adagio non troppo reveals formal characteristics consistent with ternary form. The movement begins and ends with the ostinato theme (A) whose statements surround a secondary theme and a short development (B). Also like "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," its intra- and inter-movement key signature scheme evokes a nesting structure that emphasizes the middle movement as the expressive center of the Serenade as a whole. The outer movements in A major surround the middle movement in A minor, whose ostinato theme bookends an expressive theme in A-flat major. The parallel major/minor relationship between the Allegros and the Adagio non troppo unite them through their shared tonic, but the Adagio non troppo conveys a strikingly different affect compared to the surrounding movements, as previously discussed. And while A-flat major is not closely related to either key harmonically, its tonic is physically proximal to A, and its theme borrows the ostinato scaffolding from the A minor section. Also recall one of the key features of the y-motive from the ostinato was the A-G-sharp-A lower neighbor that opposes the F-E *pianto* in the X-motive. In effect, the key of A-flat major functions as a large-scale lower neighbor relative to A minor (and A major), enharmonically respelling the motive from the ostinato. As we shall see, Brahms complicates this high-level reading in practice, heightening the movement's expressivity and deepening its connection to the Kreisler stories. I will discuss the relationship between key signatures again later in this chapter and in greater detail in chapter 4, at which point I will also return to issues surrounding the formal construction of the Adagio non troppo.

Returning for now to "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," specific details from the story also resonate with musical features in the Adagio non troppo. A brief synopsis of the story follows. Hoffmann's scene begins just after eight o'clock when a small group of musical enthusiasts gather at Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler's home for an evening of music and

poetry.[185] They are humorously named the true friend, the cautious one, the dissatisfied one, the jovial one, and the indifferent one. Each guest acts solely in accordance with his name, and the one-dimensional personalities of the other characters throw the all-feeling Kreisler into sharp relief. Indeed, we might even interpret the other characters as figments of Kreisler's own imagination, representing different sides of his personality. Every meeting of the club begins with Kreisler improvising a fantasy at the piano. One of his guests, the cautious one, recalls a sticking hammer at the previous week's meeting. While examining the piano by lamplight, the wick-scissors fall into the piano, severing twelve to fifteen strings. Though aggrieved, Kreisler stubbornly insists on performing the preordained fantasy, announcing defiantly, "the bass is completely unaffected."[186] With that the true friend plunges the room into darkness, and Kreisler begins a recitation accompanied by a sinuous chord progression.

Hoffmann devotes fully half of the story to Kreisler's performance, which takes the form of a spoken fantasy with piano accompaniment, in the manner of melodrama. (The full text of Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy is reproduced in the Appendix). Kreisler's stream-of-consciousness declamatory style combined with the harmonically ambiguous chord progression appears to be a literary approximation of unending melody, and it resembles the catalogues of key characteristics made famous by earlier writers such as Mattheson and Schubart. As David Charlton observes in his prefatory remarks to this chapter, the descriptions of key characteristic in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," "are connected to past or forthcoming passages in *Kreisleriana*."[187] Upon arriving in C minor, Kreisler becomes overexcited and the true friend

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[185] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 69. In the first published edition of *Kreisleriana*, Hoffmann had one of Kreisler's guests, the jovial one, perform a recitation immediately after the key characteristic fantasy. The story, *Prinzessin Blandina*, was removed prior to the 1819 reprint. Hoffmann removed it because he thought the *Blandina* story was weak. The new, more focused version of "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" presents a considerably tighter narrative as a result.
[186] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 132.
[187] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 68

lights the lamps, "[knowing] that Kreisler had now reached a point from which he usually plunged into a dark abyss of inconsolable lamentation." After all of his guests excerpt for the true friend leave, Kreisler and the true friend have the following conversation:[188]

> "I don't know what to make of you today, Kreisler', said the true friend. 'You are so excited, and yet without any humour, not at all your normal self!"
> "Ah, my friend!" replied Kreisler, 'a dark cloud is passing over my life! Don't you think a poor innocent melody, that desires no – no abode on this earth, might be permitted to wander freely and harmlessly through the wide spaces of heaven? If only I could sit on my Chinese dressing-gown as though it were Mephistopheles' cloak and fly out of that window there!"
> "As a harmless melody?" interrupted the true friend with a smile.
> "Or as a *basso ostinato* if you prefer,' replied Kreisler, 'but I have to get away soon, however I do it."

Here, then, is an important link between "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" and the Adagio non troppo: Hoffmann establishes the *basso ostinato* as a metonymic stand-in for Kreisler. As the translator David Charlton astutely remarks in a footnote, Hoffmann contrasts the "free spirit" (the "innocent melody") and "one forced to toil" (the bass "carrying" the rest of the musical structure).[189] For musically inclined readers, Kreisler's self-identification with a *basso ostinato* is one of the most striking and memorable moments in the novel. Not only does its sentiment encapsulate the entirety of the episode described in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," it is also the last word on the events triggering Kreisler's mysterious disappearance as described in the prefatory remarks to both volumes of *Kreisleriana*. For the composer who nicknamed himself Kreisler Junior, it seems primed for programmatic adaptation in a Kreisler-inspired composition.

The burdensome weight of being an artist apart from society is one of the overarching themes governing the *Kreisleriana* as a whole, and this sentiment—that a true artist is perpetually encumbered—suited Brahms's worldview. Writing to Clara Schumann in October of

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[188] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 135-36. Translation by Charlton.
[189] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 136.

1854, he alluded to the end of "Kreisler's Musico Poetic Club" when describing his own situation living at home again in Hamburg:[190]

> I can no longer find myself in my former life... In the past I would lie at the bottom, as a solid pedal-point, or float high above, and let everything pass me by; now I always tag along, I cannot detach myself and go my own way.

It seems unlikely that the reference to Kreisler was unconscious, because Brahms continues an ongoing conversation with Schumann about Hoffmann's literature later in the same letter, enigmatically declaring, "that Hoffman had its effect" on her and the she, too, possessed "two selfs." He then promises to send her his brother's copy of the *Fantasiestücke*.[191] Here then, Brahms not only adopted Hoffmann's general worldview, but paraphrased his actual words. When Brahms wrote the Adagio non troppo in 1859, he still styled himself with the Kreisler Junior moniker, even if he used it in a more limited sense than in the mid 1850s. What was most new about the movement was the musical procedure that drew the connection with Hoffmann in a different way: to that point in his career, Brahms had not composed a movement with an ostinato as its principal theme. In this respect, the Adagio non troppo stands out not only when compared to the other movements in the Serenade in A Major, but also when compared to his entire oeuvre to date. The idiosyncratic and expressive nature of the ostinato, as we have already seen, calls additional attention to the theme.

The unique instrumentation in the Serenade intensifies the connection to "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club." Without violins, it lacks treble strings, just like Kreisler's damaged piano. This feature of the orchestration is not unique to the Adagio non troppo and extends across all five movements, but the absence of violins is emphasized in the Adagio non troppo by the bass-

[190] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 67.
[191] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 68. Berthold Litzmann omitted this passage about Clara's "two selfs" from the *Schumann-Brahms Briefweschel*, which Clive MacAuslan interprets as an attempt to hide a reference to Clara's "split between the bodily self (faithful in marriage) and the dream self (in thrall to someone else)." See Clive MacAuslan, "'The Artist in Love' in Brahms's Life and in his 'German Folksongs,'" *Music & Letters* vol. 88, no. 1 (February, 2007), 84.

driven ostinato. The dark timbre of the ostinato approximates the literal and psychological darkness that characterizes Kreisler's fantasy. Juxtaposed against the C major Scherzo, which ends with a unison flute/oboe melody above C5, the registral shift is akin to extinguishing the lamps, as in Hoffmann's story. Scherzos traditionally connote humor; one could go so far as to call this example extroverted, because jokes typically require an audience, whereas the Adagio non troppo represents the inward retreat after a public display. The order of the movements, and their contrasting affects, suggests another parallel with Hoffmann. In "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club," the last friend to speak before Kreisler's fantasy is the jovial one, who declares "we shall have some fun in any case." Kreisler's moody melodrama, performed in the dark, is a direct riposte to this view. In summary, the Adagio non troppo appears to be a compilation of noteworthy features from "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club." The structure of the Serenade, which draws attention to the Adagio non troppo and especially its secondary theme in A-flat major, projects the image of concentric circles, perhaps riffing on the etymology Kreisler's name or Hoffmann's emphasis on nested identities in the Kreisler stories, of which the clubbists in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" are an example. Furthermore, the basic formal outline of the Adagio non troppo (ternary), the metonymic potential of its ostinato to represent Kreisler, and the variety of rhetorical features insinuating darkness—including the emphasis on the violin-less texture and the sudden timbral and registral shifts following the Scherzo—all find parallels in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club."

Long-held Notes as Evocations of Longing

Before subjecting Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy to further analysis, I want to explore another instance where Brahms seems to borrow one of Hoffmann's metonymic musical

gestures at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo. The initial wind melody, like the ostinato, has a correlate in a musical passage from *Kreisleriana*, and it too supports an intertextual reading. Brahms initiates this melody with a sustained E in the first flute and clarinet whose initial duration spans six eighth notes. In effect, the E is sustained for nine eighth notes when the elaborated *pianto* on the second beat of measure 2 is subsumed into the pitch from which it arose and to which it returns. Though the wind melody derives from the ostinato, as I demonstrated earlier, the held note is a conspicuous gesture that stands out in relief against the isorhythmic strings and marks it for deeper consideration. As it turns out, Hoffmann twice refers to "long-held notes" in the *Fantasiestücke*, once in *Kreisleriana* and again in the novella *Don Juan*, written in 1813 and included in the first volume of the *Fantasiestücke*.

Beginning with Hoffmann's preface to the second volume of *Kreisleriana*, we learn that before he vanished, Kreisler[192]

> Spoke frequently about the ill-fated love of a nightingale for a purple carnation, although the whole affair (according to him) was nothing but an adagio, and this in turn was actually a single long-held note sung by Juliet, which transported Romeo, filled with love and happiness to the highest heaven.

In this passage, Hoffmann suggests Adagios as venues for exploring doomed love, singling out "long-held notes" within this context for their ability to represent sublimity and spiritual transmutation. Charlton connects this remark to a passage from Hoffmann's novella *Don Juan*. The narrator, a stand-in for Hoffmann once again named the "traveling enthusiast," spins a fantastic tale related to the performance of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, at one point saying:[193]

> In Donna Anna's scene I felt myself fairly shuddering for drunken bliss at the warm, gentle breeze that was then wafting over me; I involuntarily closed my

[192] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 123-4.
[193] Hoffmann and Charlton, *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, 124. Translation by Douglas Robertson, "A Translation of 'Don Juan' by E.T.A. Hoffmann," The Philosophical Worldview Artist (Weltanschauungskunst für alle Weltanschauer), 2008, accessed 10 November 2021, http://shirtysleeves.blogspot.com/2007/06/translation-of-don-juan-by-e-t-hoffmann.html.

> eyes, and a passionate kiss seemed to sear my lips: but this kiss was like a single, indefinitely-sustained note bespeaking eternally unsatisfied longing.

For Hoffmann, long-held notes evoke loving kisses, conjured mentally as memory or fantasy but experienced viscerally. Owing to their temporal or metaphysical disjunction, they rouse feelings of anguished yearning.

In both cases, Hoffmann represents a kiss by means of a long-held or sustained note, though the exact nature of the metaphor is clearer in *Don Juan*, where it speaks of eternally unsatisfied longing. The extended metaphor from *Kreisleriana*, which begins with the curious pairing of a nightingale and a purple carnation and ends with a somewhat vague reference to the ill-fated love from *Romeo & Juliet*, requires unpacking. Hoffmann bases his personalized use of the nightingale symbol on several standard tropes: the bird is a solitary nighttime singer, its song is sorrowful (especially when the bird is female), and it is often paired with a flower (usually a rose).[194] Based on the ordering of pairs—nightingale precedes carnation; Juliet precedes Romeo—Hoffmann apparently intends his nightingale to be a female singer, more specifically, Shakespeare's Juliet, despite the fact that only male birds sing.[195] Female depictions of the nightingale trace their origins to ancient Greece and the myth of Philomela and Procne. The best-known version of the story from antiquity is by the Roman poet Ovid, whose retelling appears in the sixth book of his *Metamorphoses*. It is a violent tale beginning with the rape, mutilation, and imprisonment of Philomela by King Tereus of Thrace. To keep her from revealing his treachery, he cuts out her tongue. Unable to speak, she weaves a tapestry for her sister Procne, Tereus's wife, concealing an account of his crimes against her and her whereabouts. Together, the sisters

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[194] Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 140. The nightingale is frequently depicted pressing its breast against a rose thorn and bleeding from the wound.

[195] The most repugnant event in ETA Hoffmann's life was his pedophiliac desire for one of his young singing students, Julia Marc. She was thirteen years old when she began lessons with Hoffmann during his stint in Bamberg, and Hoffmann fell in love with her by the time she was fifteen. He was 20 years her senior and himself married. Many of the love interests in Hoffmann's stories are based upon and named after Marc. His reference to Juliet in this passage should be interpreted as a reference to her.

murder Tereus and Procne's son Itys and serve the child's remains to the king for dinner. They present Itys's head to Tereus, exposing him as a cannibal, then flee with him in pursuit. Finally, Philomela and Procne are transfigured into a swallow and a nightingale when the story ends.[196] Over time, the gory events contributing to Philomela's sorrow were jettisoned for relatively gentler depictions of grief. As Michael Ferber notes, it was Milton who fully flipped the script in the seventeenth century "called the bird 'love-lorn' as if it is her mate she has lost, not her child."[197]

If the nightingale represents Juliet, then it stands to reason that the purple carnation fills in for Romeo. Within the *Blumensprache* tradition, otherwise known as the language of flowers, a Victorian era concept whereby lovers communicated coded messages through floral arrangements, purple carnations indicated capriciousness. This meaning seems to reflect its Greek etymology (*porphureos*), which "originally did not name a color or hue but a sheen or iridescence, a mixture of light or dark on the surface."[198] Its lustrous changeability based on lighting conditions implies a sort of visual caprice. The color purple was often associated with blood in Shakespeare, whose hue and sheen possesses similar changeable and intangible qualities. French traditions, meanwhile, associate purple carnations with funerals, which likely builds upon the longstanding symbolic tradition whereby purple flowers are components of the pastoral elegy.[199] These coded meanings work well together in conjunction with Hoffmann's

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[196] Authors are inconsistent in the retelling of Philomela and Procne's transfiguration. Sometimes Philomela is the swallow, which can only chirp, whine, or gurgle—appropriate relative to her tonguelessness—other times she is the nightingale. The second option offers two equally compelling readings. The first is ornithologically correct: Philomela becomes a nightingale because the females of this species are mute. The second is ornithologically incorrect: her transfiguration reverses her injury by Tereus and she becomes a songstress.
[197] Ferber, *Literary Symbols*, 140.
[198] Ferber, Literary Symbols, 162.
[199] Anthony Mercatante, *The Magic Garden: The Myth and Folklore of Flowers, Plants, Trees, and Herbs* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 9; Ferber, *Literary Symbols*, 164.

allusion to *Romeo & Juliet*: Romeo is known for being capricious, and his impulsiveness, culminating with his suicide, is part of what leads the young lovers to ruin.

The intertextual connection Charlton proposes, which links the "single long-held" and "single, indefinitely-sustained" notes from *Kreisleriana* and *Don Juan*, suggest that Juliet's nightingale song is the kiss that transported Romeo to "highest heaven." In Shakespeare's play, Romeo and Juliet definitively kiss in three different scenes: in Act I, Scene 5, when they first meet at the ball; in Act III, Scene 5, the morning after their wedding; and in Act V, Scene 3, in the tomb before they commit suicide. Although Hoffmann could be referring to any of these kisses in his passage, the most likely candidate is the pair at the end of the play, either when Romeo kisses the unconscious Juliet before drinking poison or Juliet kisses her dead lover before stabbing herself. These kisses immediately precede their deaths and (presumed) ascension into heaven to live eternally with one another.[200] In both kisses, one partner is passive and motionless. In this respect, their last kisses are memories of and memorials to their earthly life and short-lived love.

Hoffmann's metaphors comparing long-held notes to yearning and love lost are not unique. Brahms also encountered this idea in Friedrich Rückert's poem "Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram" from *Östliche Rosen* (see Example 3.7), which Brahms set to music and included as the final piece in his Thirteen Canons for Women's Choir in Op. 113 (1891).

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[200] Beatrice Groves, *Texts and Traditions: Religion in Shakespeare, 1592-1604* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 61-88. In the stories upon which Shakespeare based his version of *Romeo & Juliet*, the lovers meet at a Christmas party and die on Easter. Their relationship thus marks the time beginning with Christ's birth and ending with his death and resurrection. A common interpretation of the suicides in *Romeo & Juliet* plays on this concept. Because the lovers could not be together in life, they must die, and only in death can they be together. Groves contends that Shakespeare's play maintains the "paschal motifs" from Shakespeare's sources despite changing the time of year and timeline in his play. However, in her view Shakespeare subverts these motifs. She stipulates that audiences seeing *Romeo & Juliet* for the first time might have expected a happy ending based on the Easter themes and because the tragedy includes many staples of comedy, including a "sleeping potion death." Ultimately, Romeo's suicide dashes these hopes.

Example 3.7
"Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram," Friedrich Rückert

Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram,	Monotonous is love's sorrow,
Ein Lied eintöniger Weise,	A song with but one note;
Und immer noch, wo ich's vernahm,	Yet always when I heard it,
Mitsummen musst' ich's leise.	I had to hum along with it.

Though Brahms composed the majority of his Rückert settings after 1883, he was undoubtedly familiar with "Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram" during his Kreisler years. Rückert, like Hoffmann, was a childhood favorite of Brahms's, and he read both authors extensively in the 1850s.[201] Evidence of his early engagement with the poet includes fourteen quotations from Rückert copied into his *Schatzkastlein*.[202] He likely became more familiar with the poet after spending hours in the Schumanns' library between 1854-6. Rückert was favored by Robert Schumann, and Robert and Clara collaborated on *Zwölf Gedichte aus F. Rückerts Liebesfrühling*, Op. 37 (1841). Brahms received a copy of *Die Weisheit der Brahmanen* as a gift in 1857, and he owned a heavily annotated copy of the Rückert's collected works.[203] Finally, three of the five canons based on Rückert poems and included in Op. 113 were written between 1859-63: "Nachtwache" (no. 10), "Ich weiss nicht" (no. 11), and "Wenn Kummer" (no. 12). Each of these poems came

[201] Natasha Loges, "Friedrich Rückert," in *Brahms and His Poets: A Handbook* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2017), 337-38. Loges writes, "Few poets meant as much to Brahms as Rückert. [His] importace to Brahms is reflected in the range of genres in which he set his words, including solo songs, mixed choral works and canons for female voices.

[202] Johannes Brahms and Carl Krebs, *The Brahms Notebooks: The Little Treasure Chest of the Young Kreisler. Quotations from Poets, Philosophers, and Artists Gathered by Johannes Brahms*, ed. Krebs, trans. Agnes Eisenberger (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2003). See entries 265, 381, 386, 389, 397, 405, 426, 427, and 441 through 446.

[203] Loges, *Brahms and His Poets*, 338; Kurt Hofmann, *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms: Bücher- u. Musikalienverz* (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandl, 1974), 95. Hofmann includes a transcription of the dedication in his catalogue (entry number 588): "On the flyleaf the dedication 'The Brahmins from the Ganges to their tribal comrade Johannes Brahms, from [their] time on the *Hammar Burg,* 1857.'" (Auf dem Vorsatzblatt die Widmung "Die Brahmanen vom Ganges dem Stammesgenossen Johannes Brahms, der Zeit auf dem Hammar Burg, 1857.) The giver did not sign the inscription. Based on the jocular character of the dedication, the reference to Hammar Burg seems likely to be a play on Hamburg or perhaps its nearby borough Hamm (where Brahms occasionally lived in the early 1860s).

from a different Rückert compilation, further demonstrating the breadth of Brahms's engagement with the poet during his young adulthood.

Brahms doubles down on the concept of monotonous sorrow described in "Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram" by borrowing the melody for his canon from Schubert's song "Der Leiermann," the final song in *Winterreise*. The hurdy-gurdy player in Müller's poem is an outcast: shunned by the village people and poor, standing barefoot on the ice and playing his instrument unceasingly. His instrument possesses numerous drone strings, inherently monotonous and producing sustained pitches, and the poet feels compelled to sing along with him just like the speaker from "Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram" (see Example 3.8). Through the juxtaposition of these two poems, Brahms reflects bitterly on love lost in his old age. The text setting of Schubert's haunting melody, recast for women's voices, seems to represent actual women loved and lost. Their disembodied voices roll and tumble about like waves of grief washing over Brahms. The isolation expressed in "Einförmig ist der Liebe Gram" recalls Shelley's famous conception of the poet as "a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds."[204] Shelley likely meant for his audience to gender the nightingale as male in opposition to Hoffmann's female conception, but the metaphor connotes the same emotional and psychological condition regardless of gender. His position seems to reflect the Troubadour and Minnesinger tradition, which also held that the nightingale represented the male poet, whose song describes his unhappiness in love. He cannot stop singing until hehas found his mate.[205] For Brahms, the long-held note at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo is a symbol of yearning, ill-fated love, and sorrow.

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[204] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays*; Project Gutenberg, 2013, accessed 11 November 2021, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5428/5428-h/5428-h.htm.

[205] Ferber, *Literary Symbols*, 140. In German poetry, the nightingale's song is often represented by the words *zurück* (back) or *zu spät* (too late), both of which imply a sense of yearning based on missed opportunities and a longing for the past.

Example 3.8
"Der Leiermann," Wilhelm Müller

Drüben hinter'm Dorfe	There, beyond the village,
Steht ein Leiermann,	stands a hurdy-gurdy player;
Und mit starren Fingern	with numb fingers
Dreht er was er kann.	he plays as best he can.
Barfuss auf dem Eise	Barefoot on the ice
Schwankt er hin und her;	he totters to and fro,
Und sein kleiner Teller	and his little plate
Bleibt ihm immer leer.	remains forever empty.
Keiner mag ihn hören,	No one wants to listen,
Keiner sieht ihn an;	no one looks at him,
Und die Hunde knurren	and the dogs growl
Um den alten Mann.	around the old man.
Und er lässt es gehen	And he lets everything go on
Alles, wie es will,	as it will;
Dreht, und seine Leier	he plays, and his hurdy-gurdy
Steht ihm nimmer still.	never stops.
Wunderlicher Alter,	Strange old man,
Soll ich mit dir geh'n?	shall I go with you?
Willst zu meinen Liedern	Will you turn your hurdy-gurdy
Deine Leier dreh'n?	to my songs?[206]

Reimagining Kreisler's Key Characteristic Fantasy

Brahms, like Kreisler, preferred to express himself through music. In his letters, Brahms regularly professed his inability to speak or write meaningfully, especially when he felt particularly strong emotions or under duress. He often made this claim to Clara Schumann, whom he loved and revered. He wrote to her on August 21, 1854, "Words flow from my pen so laboriously that even my conversation may be more interesting. I would gladly write to you just

[206] Wilhelm Müller, "Der Leiermann," Oxford Lieder, trans. Richard Wigmore, accessed 8 March 2021, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/2046.

in music."[207] On February 3, 1855, "So often I sit before the sheet of letter paper and would like to write to you truly consolingly, truly beautifully—I have never yet succeeded in that, for I cannot manage letters as I can notes."[208] In early September, 1868, "It is through my music that I speak . . . [I] am incapable of writing letters."[209] Of course these statements were only half-true. If Brahms was perhaps not the most eloquent of writers, there are plenty of examples in his correspondence where he deftly navigates tricky subjects and emotions. The truth is that Brahms was reluctant to record his feelings in the limited terms of verbal language.

Key characteristics afforded Brahms another musical avenue for non-verbal communication, and "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" offers a starting point for analysis along these lines. In the story, Hoffmann provides prose descriptions for ten chords, and this collection includes all three key signatures and most of the important secondary harmonies used in the Adagio non troppo. The following list reproduces the chord progression from Kreisler's fantasy without its narrative descriptions with the harmonies used in the Adagio non troppo in bold face (see Example 3.9).

Example 3.9
Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy with Brahms's keys/harmonies in bold

A-flat major chord (pianissimo)
A-flat minor chord (mezzo forte)
E major, first inversion chord (ancora più forte
E major chord (forte)
A minor (arpeggio dolce)
F major
B-flat major (accentuato)
B-flat major seventh (smanioso)
E-flat major (forte)
G major seventh; second inversion (piano)
C major (fortissimo)
Several **C minor** chords (fortissimo)

[207] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 55.
[208] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 85.
[209] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 365-7.

Two themes dominate Kreisler's fantasy: the burdensome gift of genius and the anguish of unending yearning. Taken together, these themes illustrate the precarious conditions of an artist's inspiration and livelihood, which Kreisler describes using the image of a balancing act on the knife-edge, where any slip will be fatal. Kreisler questions his emotional resolve and his ability to manage everyday distractions. Failure on either front will sever his connection to the spirit realm and possibly drive him into madness. This crisis comes to a head two thirds of the way through his fantasy with the ill-fated arrival of the west wind, which recalls Percy Bysshe Shelley's autumnal poem "Ode to the West Wind," written contemporaneously. In both cases, the west wind is a harbinger of death, and trumpets herald the arrival of judgment day (C major). Shelley posits death as a precursor to rebirth and does not fear his passing because his poetry will live on in the world. Kreisler, on the other hand, envisions damnation as his fate, having failed to transcend death through his musical legacy (C minor).

The key characteristic fantasy is also a testament to the "artist's love." Awakening in the realm of propitious spirits (A-flat major), Kreisler realizes that yearning is the essential condition for artistic creation and that romantic love, personified by the maiden (A minor), is the greatest inspiration for an artist as well as the greatest temptation. Kreisler speaks to the maiden, embraces her, and fulfills her desires through music. However, their courtship is short-lived. Spring and summer pass quickly to autumn, and now the maiden is left to pursue Kreisler (E-flat major), who has become sad and withdrawn from their relationship. Reunited, Kreisler becomes nihilistic and gives in to his carnal desires when he dances with the maiden (C major), but their physical connection condemns him: he must renounce his access to the musical spirit realm (C minor).

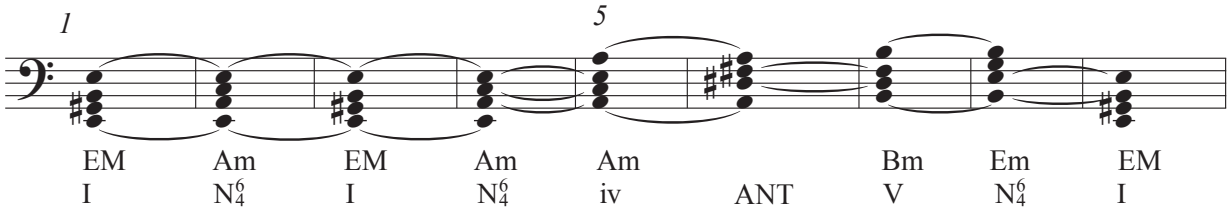
The key characteristic fantasy in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" marks another correspondence between *Kreisleriana* and the Adagio non troppo. Brahms modulates four times in the Adagio non troppo: from A minor to C major, C major to A-flat major, A-flat major to C minor, from C minor to A minor. Each of these key changes is accompanied by a new key signature where applicable. Brahms also tonicizes E-flat major during the transition from C major to A-flat minor, and subverts the A-minor tonic with an underlying harmonic progression in E major. Kreisler cycles through all six of these keys in his fantasy, though Brahms orders them differently to tell a slightly different story.

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Tovey inexplicably refrains from specifically naming the home key in his analysis of the Adagio non troppo. The key signature and the initial pitch collection suggest that the movement is solidly in A minor, which fits well within the overarching scheme of the Serenade, whose first and final movements are in A major. Brahms appears to begin the movement off-tonic, arpeggiating a root-position E major chord in the first measure. The second half of the ostinato melody elides with the arpeggio and begins with the E on the fourth beat of the first measure. The strings descend stepwise through a minor sixth to G-sharp, which functions here as a leading tone and returns to A, relieving the tension of the first measure and seemingly establishing the key signature tonic. The last two beats of the second measure seem to confirm the movement's tonal identity, projecting a cadence in A minor, but Brahms avoids resolution and instead repeats the ostinato from the first two measures verbatim. Within the key of A minor, the first four measures outline a V-i-V-i progression.

Brahms resolves the second iteration of the ostinato to A in m. 5, but its arrival comes four measures too late at the midpoint of the eight-measure phrase. Any sense of cadential closure is attenuated by the half-empty downbeat and the manner in which the flutes and

clarinets continue to spin out their melody. Moreover, the pitch collection in mm. 5-6 is fluid, the least stable of the first four statements of the ostinato that comprise the main theme. In m. 5, Brahms swaps G-natural for G-sharp and introduces F-sharp; in m. 6 he adds D-sharp, and C-sharp. These accidentals predict the pitch collection used in the fourth iteration of the ostinato beginning on B in mm. 7-8, where Brahms exactly restores the archetypal construction of the ostinato. As a result, the harmonic underpinning of mm. 5-6 feels transitional rather than structural, passing from E to B. Finally, Brahms concludes the first phrase with a perfect authentic cadence on E in m. 9, the first PAC in the movement. In summary, Brahms changes harmony every two measures and outlines a relatively standard tonic-predominant-dominant-tonic progression (I-I-iv-V-I) with E as the tonic over the first nine measures, which undermines the actual home key of A minor (see Example 3.10). However, it is unclear whether we are dealing with E major, E minor, or some type of modal blend. If we omit the expressive half-step appoggiaturas in mm. 1-4 and 9-10, we reveal an E Major chord. However, Brahms sets up a cadence in E minor relative to the ostinato beginning on B, owing to the prominent G-naturals in mm. 7 and 8. Finally, the pitch E could be considered the tonic within the eight-note pitch collection E-F-G-sharp-A-B-C-D-E; it seems to articulate some indistinct mode.

Example 3.10
Harmonic progression in the ostinato, mm. 1-9



Before we assess possible modal implications of the ostinato, let us revisit Hoffmann's key characteristic descriptions for A minor and for E major to discuss how they support the

established themes in this movement of sorrow and ill-fated love. In "Kreisler's Musico Poetic Club," E major and A minor appear sequentially, with E major functioning as the dominant of A minor, and the two keys characterize different people: E major Kreisler and A minor a maiden. In E major Kreisler steels himself to bear the strife and pain associated with unending yearning: "Be steadfast my heart!... Be refreshed my gallant spirit!" Music gives him life, and his gift of genius is like a "magnificent crown" whose diamonds are "the thousand tears" he shed (and will continue to shed). A maiden, the object of his yearning, appears in A minor, and Kreisler "[caresses her] with the language of the spirits... which [she] understands so well." These descriptions are particularly apt as they relate to the Kreislerian themes projected at the outset of the Adagio non troppo. Brahms strides forth, following in the footsteps of a master (Bach), striving to capture his crown but is so far unproven, perhaps even unworthy. Taken as a whole, the ostinato is a steadfast theme, fixed in its ways: repeating every two measures and doggedly maintaining its singular rhythm. Minor second appoggiaturas adorn the E major chord like the diamond tears glistening in Kreisler's crown, complicating the otherwise straightforward sonority. However, E major exists under the purview of A minor, the key of plaintive yearning. In this key, a lovely maid attempts to flee from Kreisler but is restrained by the bonds of his music, which "gnaws painfully at [her] breast, at the same time filling [her] with sweetest joy." Clara Schumann's description of the opening passage in the Adagio non troppo outlines a narrative similar to Hoffmann's descriptions for the various key characteristics. The dignified ostinato, with its emphasis on E major, ambles with the "gait of Bach" in pursuit of the tonic A minor, which is represented by the first flute and clarinet, and whose initial statement ending on the downbeat of m. 3 emphasizes the tonic. Schumann's description of the second theme, with its long-held note and elaborate *pianto*, mirrors the pain and joy described by Hoffmann in his

description of A minor as well as his description of bondage. She wrote that the wind melody "begins so sublimely [and] with such sadness (the mere sound takes hold of one)." Hoffmann's descriptions of E major and A minor support the premise that Brahms sought to evoke sorrow, yearning, and ill-fated love in this movement of the Serenade in A Major.

Intermezzo: Modal Undertones

The ambiguous tonality at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo blends characteristics of A minor and E major. We recognize A minor as the home key by default based on the key signature—it is the parallel minor of A major, the home key of the Serenade, and the relative minor of C major, the key signature of the preceding movement—and because the string and wind melodies emphasize the pitches making up the A harmonic minor scale. On the other hand, the chord progression over the first nine measures suggests that E major is the tonic. The problem with hearing E major as the home key is that the melody does not imply a major key. Without the benefit of a score for reference, the exact nature of the harmony proves evasive. Brahms avoids cadences in mm. 3 and 5, uses the process of developing variation to pivot the initial wind melody away from the key signature tonic in mm. 5-6, and ends the first eight-measure phrase with an authentic cadence in E. What are we to make of the bifurcated tonality?

John Daverio describes a similar disjunction between melody, harmony, and key signature in his analysis of the Adagio movement from Brahms's G-major String Quintet, Op. 111. Its head motif cannot be classified within the traditional tonal scheme as major or minor, and the harmonies of the first eight measures suggest what ought to be (to judge from the key signature) the dominant as the tonic, that is, A major instead of D minor. An analysis of its structural harmonies reveals commonplace tonic-dominant motion over this span, but the fore-

and middle-ground details plausibly suggest a plagal relationship between D and A (see Example 3.11). Daverio's suggestion that the melody is governed by a plagal system of harmony rather than the preferred authentic system runs against the grain, particularly in light of Heinrich Schenker's outsized influence on modern analysis.[210] He notes that "the D-minor tonic has been undermined from the outset, by the melodic G-sharp of m. 1, and the C-B half step of m. 2."[211] The unstable nature of the inflected tones increases the sense of harmonic ambiguity in mm. 1-2: the melodic G-sharp in m. 1 becomes G-natural in m. 2, and the high C-natural in the first viola in measure 2 is immediately replaced by C-sharp in the second viola. Building on this analysis, Daverio further undermines the authentic system by asserting that the melody in mm. 1-4 does not function within the typical major/minor dichotomy characterizing western classical music at all, but consists of a modal scale that combines two, fifth-related tetrachords, each of which contains an augmented second between the second a third tones.[212] The scale features A as its tonic and combines two tetrachords: A-B-flat-C-sharp-D and E-F-G-sharp-A. Daverio traces this scale to Liszt, who in turn locates its origins in the music of the Hungarian Roma.[213] Steven Rings also describes this scale in his later analysis of the Adagio from Op. 111. He writes, "this scale admits of hearings as either an A-major scale with lowered 6 and 2, or as a D-minor scale with raised 4 and 7."[214] In other words, tonal ambiguity is built into the scale.

Daverio describes the basic expressive value of mixed-mode scales built on tetrachords in his analysis of another late work by Brahms, the Finale of the Double Concerto for Violin and Cello, Op. 102, which featured a similar modal construction. He suggests that these scales imbue

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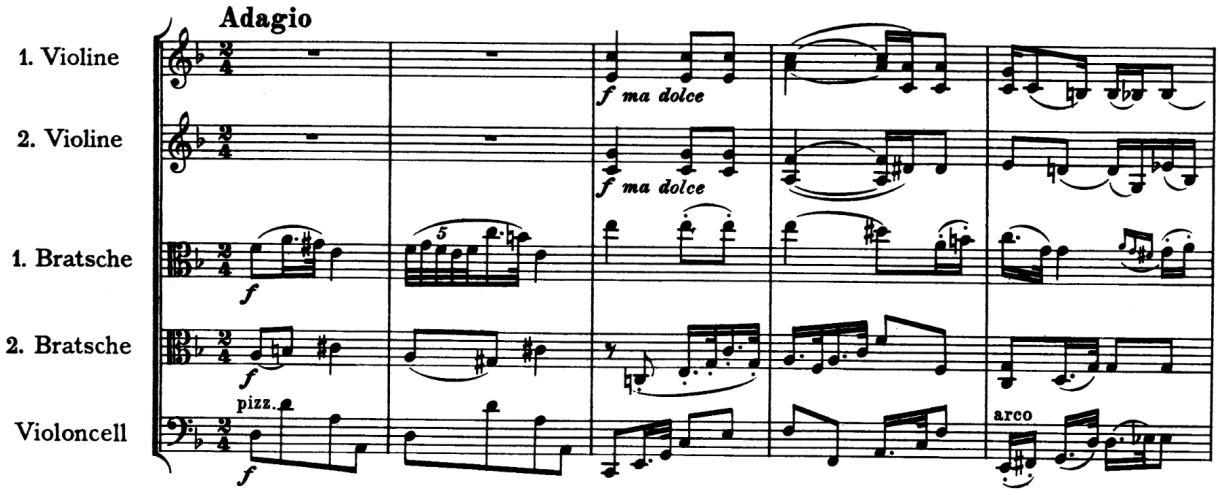
[210] Margaret Notley, "Plagal Harmony as Other: Asymmetrical Dualism and Instrumental Music by Brahms," *The Journal of Musicology* 22, no. 1 (Winter, 2005), 92.
[211] John Daverio, *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1993), 150.
[212] Daverio, *German Romantic Ideology*, 150.
[213] Steven Rings, *Tonality and Transformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 209.
[214] Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, 209.

Example 3.11
Brahms G Major String Quintet, Op. 111, mm. 1-5



the music with a sense of "otherness." Daverio bases his analysis on a comment made by Hugo Riemann, who "discerned [in the concerto the presence of a] 'minor-major' scale, which created a sound 'resonating as if from long-gone centuries and distant realms.'"[215] Riemann's term "minor-major mode" describes Brahms's use of another scale based on discordant tetrachords. In this mode, the lower tetrachord corresponds with the tonic minor scale, and the upper tetrachord with the tonic major: A-B-C-D and E-F-sharp-G-sharp-A (hence its "minor-major" designation). Its pitch content is the same as in an ascending melodic minor scale, but the 6th and 7th tones are not lowered in descending melodies. Daverio wrote that "the 'sudden change' from one modal quality to another implicit in the minor-major scale" is reminiscent of the harmonic effects one finds in *style hongrois*.[216]

Rings also hears representations of otherness and pastness in these tetrachordal constructions, like Riemann and Daverio. He views the highly adorned, fantasy-like melodic

[215] Notley, "Plagal Harmony as Other," 90.
[216] John Daverio, *Crossing Paths: Schubert, Schumann, and Brahms* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 227-8.

construction in the Adagio from Op. 111 as suggestive of the Hungarian *hallgató* style.[217] *Hallgató* melodies inherently embody pastness through their connection to memory, nostalgia, and sorrow. The practical performance of *hallgató* melodies, usually improvised by fiddle players to paying customers, involved the musician divining the customer's deepest sorrows or concerns and then expressing them through music. These personal details are not verbally disclosed but surmised by the musician, who gazes deeply into their customer's eyes just prior to the commissioned performance.[218] The word *hallgató* literally means "to be listened to."[219] In the aforementioned musical performance, listening is thus a two-way street: the customer listens to the music and feels understood (i.e. listened to) by the performer. The expressive character of the motto in the Adagio from Op. 111—tonally ambiguous, harmonically mercurial, psychologically intense—triggers introspection and deep listening.

These analyses by Daverio, Rings, and Riemann offer a revealing vantage point from which to view the ostinato melody in the Adagio non troppo. Brahms suggests that E is the tonic pitch at the melody's outset in the harmonic progression of the first nine measures as well as the starting and ending pitch of the first ostinato rotation. The melodic content of the ostinato archetype in mm. 1-2 reveals a modal scale based on the following tetrachords: E-F-G-sharp-A and B-C-D-E. The lower four notes recall Daverio's Roma tetrachord, and the upper four notes the Phrygian tetrachord. Taken as a whole, this scale is sometimes called the Phrygian dominant scale because it includes the pitches required to form a dominant seventh chord on its tonic and both its lower and upper tetrachords begin with Phrygian half steps.

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[217] Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, 204.
[218] Jonathan Bellman, "Toward a Lexicon for the *Style hongrois*," *The Journal of Musicology* 9, no. 2 (Spring, 1991), 221.
[219] Rings, *Tonality and Transformation*, 204.

While the Phrygian dominant scale is uncommon in western classical music, it is relatively common in Eastern European and Middle Eastern traditions, most notably in Jewish and Arabic music.[220] Brahms was more likely familiar with its Jewish roots via his Hungarian Jewish acquaintances, who included the violinists Ede Reményi and Joseph Joachim. They were responsible for his early forays into Hungarian music more broadly. In Jewish musical traditions, the Phrygian dominant scale is called the *Ahava Rabboh*. Named for its initial words of prayer, the *Ahava Rabboh* is a mode of supplication. The beginning of the prayer follows:[221]

> How deeply you have loved us Adonai, our God, gracing us with surpassing compassion! On account of our forebears whose trust led You to teach them the laws of life, be gracious to use, teaching us as well. O Merciful One, have mercy on us by making us able to understand and discern, to heed, learn, and teach, and, lovingly, to observe, perform, and fulfill all that is in Your Torah.

The scale associated with this prayer is generally heard in music that expresses strong emotion, and the specific character of the scale, often described as poignant, is primarily due to the melodic augmented second framed by the semitones before and after it.[222] The request for mercy in the Jewish prayer recalls again Clara's description of the Adagio non troppo when she wrote that "it might well be an *Eleison*."

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[220] Ellen S. Whitaker, *Jewish Traditions for Classical and Fingerstyle Guitar: Traditional Jewish Melodies Arranged for Guitar* (Durham, NC: Press for Peace, 2008), 97. Whitaker writes: "the *Ahava Rabboh* scale is heard most often in the music of Eastern European Jews. It is the most frequently encountered mode in the Chassidic *nigunim* and is also often found in Klezmer music, folk tunes and Synagogue song. The Oxford Music Online article discussing these modes supports her assessment: "the most complex of the three [main modes] is *Ahavah Rabbah*. Used mainly by Eastern *ḥazzanim*, it is said to be an excellent means of expressing agitated emotions, both joyful and sad. Its most developed form is built on what might be described as a modified Phrygian scale with an augmented 2nd between the second and third degrees." See Edwin Seroussi et al. "Jewish music," Oxford Music Online, accessed 11 November 2021. In Arabic music, the Phrygian dominant is called *Maqam Hijaz*. The Arabic scale system is built upon interlocking tetrachords (*ajnas*) and the aforementioned *maqam* (scale) combines *hijaz* and *nahawand* tetrachords. Various microtonal differences exist between western and Arabic scales, but they are virtually equivalent. E is the traditional tonic for this scale and the fourth degree A, where the two tetrachords overlap, is of particular importance. Timothy Rice and Dave Wilson describe the manner of its use in Western classical music: "in European and American music the *hijaz* scale has become an index of the 'exotic' Middle East, which, from a Euro-American perspective might be considered a 'distant desert.'" See Rice and Wilson, *Gateways to Understanding Music* (Milton, UK: Routledge, 2019)..; also Habib Hassan Touma, *The Music of the Arabs* (Portland, OR: Amadeus, 2003), 43.

[221] "Ahavah Rabbah," Temple Sinai, accessed 4 February 2020, https://www.templesinairi.org/ahavah-rabbah.html.

[222] Whitaker, *Jewish Traditions for Classical and Fingerstyle Guitar*, 97.

In summary, a modal interpretation of the harmony at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo enriches the emotional subtext suggested by Hoffmann's key characteristic traits for A minor and E major, underscoring its memorial and yearning qualities. The Phrygian dominant scale "explains" the collection of half-step *pianti* in the ostinato and its unique, non-Western tonality contributes strongly to the antique and religious qualities of the movement. Its suggestion of cultural "otherness" may be construed broadly as a component of an "artist's love," which prescribes a life of solitude, or specifically as a representation Kreisler's mysterious origins: "Where is he from? Nobody knows. Who were his parents? It is not known."

Brahms's Key Characteristic Fantasy Resumed: The *Tempesta* and Memory

Brahms establishes a complementary rhetorical structure at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo, combining Hoffmannian themes with musical gestures whose topic supports a unified semantic. He continues this approach as the movement progresses, and these intertextual intersections align with structurally significant moments in the movement: transitions and key changes. The next instance occurs in conjunction with the modulation to C major transition to C major at the conclusion of the primary theme.

The first section of the Adagio non troppo ends with a dancelike theme and imperfect authentic cadences in C major in mm. 16 and 18. Brahms delays the latter, which concludes the first section of the movement, until the third beat of m. 18 and does not linger on this harmony. Instead, he collapses the major chord on the downbeat of m. 19, where it becomes a C diminished seventh chord. This transition reflects the calamitous shift from C major to C minor in Kreisler's fantasy; Hoffmann does not linger in C major; its description is the second shortest of the twelve chords in Kreisler's fantasy. Nor does Brahms: there is something primal and

terrifying about the C-diminished explosion that arrives on the downbeat of m. 19, especially when the contrabass performs a C1 an octave below the cellos, as is common practice today.[223] One reason this section sounds so awesome, from a purely technical perspective, is due to the breadth of the vertical sonority on the downbeat of m. 19: the interval from C1 to E-flat6 is the widest simultaneous interval in the movement and the C diminished harmony is its first, full-throated vertical chord. Also, the horn plays for the first time in conjunction with this harmonic event, enriching the collective timbre and playing out as a soloist on the third and fourth beats.

The first four measures of the transition bear the hallmarks of the *tempesta* topic, which typically represents "cataclysmic events or emotional outbursts."[224] As one would expect, the name of this topic derives from its connection to scenes in 18th-century opera "involving storms, floods, earthquakes, and conflagrations."[225] It also connotes "flight or pursuit, and even metaphorically in depicting rage and madness."[226] Standard musical indicators of the style include tremolos, diminished harmonies, sudden and unusual modulations, full textures, octave doubling, and imitative or sequential patterns.[227] Following the yearning, lovesick primary theme ending with the false promise of C major, the transition includes all of these stylistic markers, and the booming diminished chord with its anguished cry in the uppermost voices certainly sounds cataclysmic, like a sudden onset storm. Presaged by an ominous tremolo in the cellos, the violence with which the diminished chord arises is startling nevertheless and it upends the tranquil arrival in C major on the third beat of measure 18. Octave doubling accompanies the ostinato and wind melody throughout the first section of the Adagio non troppo, and it continues

[223] In Brahms's four-hand piano arrangement of the Second Serenade, he notates C1 in the second part, lending credence to the ad-lib alteration by 21st-century bassists.
[224] Clive McClelland, "Ombra and Tempesta," in *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 286.
[225] McClelland, "Ombra and Tempesta," 282.
[226] McClelland, "Ombra and Tempesta," 282.
[227] McClelland, "Ombra and Tempesta," 282.

throughout the transition as well. The conspicuous falling third motive in the flute and oboe is doubled at the octave and reappears as an echo in the horn one octave below the oboe.

Brahms lets the bass slip one half step from C-B on the last beat of measure 18, which transforms the diminished chord into a root-position B dominant seventh chord. The new harmony initiates a 6/4-5/3 cadence resolving to E minor. This two-measure phrase is repeated in a pseudo-sequential manner between mm. 20-21, beginning a major third higher with an E diminished seventh chord. However, the ensuing E-flat dominant seventh chord does not resolve to A-flat minor as expected in m. 21. Brahms instead prolongs the dominant harmony for nine measures, setting up the modulation to A-flat major.[228] While the practical outcome of the brief sequence between mm. 19-22 is to initiate the modulation to A-flat major, the sequence also uses the *tempesta* topic to disorient the listener. Because Brahms never truly established the tonic in the primary theme, preferring to mix modes, the listener cannot be absolutely sure of its key. In this light, the unexpected diminished chords represent a reversion to the norm—harmonic ambiguity—after appearing to settle in C major, and expediently facilitate modulation to a spectacularly remote key. The pictorial nature of the sudden *tempesta* functions as aural misdirection to disguise the key change, a truly theatrical trick of smoke and mirrors.

Storms occupied a powerful place in Brahms's imagination. They presented as occasions for introspection and triggered memories. Three specific storms, two from real life and one from literature, may well have shaped Brahms's representation of them in the Adagio non troppo. First, let us consider an event from Brahms's Detmold period, around the time of the

[228] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 48-52.

composition of the Second Serenade. The violinist Carl Bargheer recounts a time that he and Brahms went for a hike and were caught outdoors in a storm:[229]

> When 'the late Autumn storms through the dying forest' went, Brahms begged me one evening to come with him to the Grotenburg. We could not quite reach the summit, but had to remain laid up in a sheltered spot at the halfway point where the wild wind shook the trees and the tempestuous roar of the gale sounded eerie. I soon realized that Brahms, who had fallen completely silent, hearkened only his inner voices and so I didn't disturb him. Still, his quiet introspection lasted a very long time to me.

Bargheer describes how the storm caused Brahms to become withdrawn and oblivious to his company, suggesting that it must have inspired Brahms's compositional mindset because he spent the next several days working on sketches for the stormy Piano Concerto in D Minor. It is difficult to parse the exact timeline of events in Bargheer's *Erinnerungen*, specifically whether they occurred in 1857, 58, or 59, because his memories do not appear to be fully chronological. If he correctly linked the storm to the Piano Concerto, 1859 is ruled out because Brahms tested the concerto behind closed doors in March 1858 and staged its public premiere in January 1859. As such, the occasion on which Brahms and Bargheer were waylaid on the mountain might seems most likely to have occurred in 1857 or 1858. In either case, the storm may have also inspired the brief *tempesta* in the Adagio non troppo, a component movement of a fully Detmold-era composition, particularly if Bargheer's recollection is from the later year.

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[229] Bargheer, "Erinnerungen." Als "der Herbstnacht Stürme durch den sterbenden Wald" gingen, bat Brahms mich eines Abends, ihn auf die Grotenburg zu begleiten. Ganz auf die Höhe konnten wir aber nicht gelangen, sondern mußten halbwegs auf einem geschützten Platze liegen bleiben, wo die vom Winde geschüttelten Bäume ächten und das Brausen des Sturmes schaurig erklang. Ich merkte bald, daß Brahms, der völlig verstummt war, nur noch auf die Stimmen in seinem Innern lauschte, und ich störte ihn nicht, trotzdem es mir sehr lange dauerte. *Des Sturmes* might simply mean storm, or more specifically a tempest, gale, or windstorm. Bargheer's quotation in the first line seems to be a reference to Max Kalbeck's poem *Herbstnacht*, which was published in the *Allgemeine Illustrierte Zeitung* in1874. The quotation paraphrases the first two lines in reverse: "Ein Brausen geht durch den sterbenden Wald,/Das sind der Herbstnacht Stürme;" (A roar of the wind goes through the dying forest/those are the the Autumn night storms).

Sheltering out-of-doors during this violent storm may have reminded Brahms of a memorable storm from August 1855. Such was the impression that storm made on Brahms that he devoted a lengthy letter to describing it to Clara Schumann the next day:[230]

> One thing I shall state about this night; I shall never forget it as long as I live …At about 2 o'clock [in the morning] I awoke with a start, the was the most dreadful thunderstorm. It looked as if the whole city were aflame, accompanied by the most dreadful thunder claps. A hail storm smashed my window, wind howled throughout the whole house. With horror I moved to the dark corner of my bed and thought it must be an earthquake, or the end of the world... that the Judgement Day had come... After an hour it calmed down... [and] I went back to bed, naturally, I couldn't sleep; out of my two windows I could just see the two thunderstorms, blazing clouds hung there from which lightning bolts shot out in all directions. The thunder rolled continuously. It did not take long, and another hailstorm and lightening as powerful as the first arrived... For a good hour the immense fury continued again; never could one imagine such weather even in one's mind. Other storms are like child's play in comparison... In the morning it became more and more peaceful.

His description of the long night seems particularly well matched with the epic first movement of the piano concerto, which he began in 1854; however, the weather event, which featured *twin* storms, might have inspired the *tempesta* from the Adagio non troppo as well, which features a *pair* of diminished chords. In the Serenade, the storm's duration does not factor into its musical representation—the four-measure *tempesta* is obviously incongruous with the hours-long storms—but the psychological impact is the same: cataclysmic terror precedes uneasy reprieve twice in succession. In life, the storm ultimately resolved as the new day dawned, and in the Adagio non troppo, the horn melody in E-flat major, sounding against the rich chords and shimmering viola line, heralds the arrival of the new theme.

The Detmold storm also may have caused Brahms, still in his heady Kreisler youth, to recall the beginning of *Kater Murr*. In the novel, Kreisler's biography first interrupts Murr's

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[230] Avins, *Life and Letters*, 109-110. One wonders whether Brahms's comment about the city looking ablaze triggered memories from his childhood of the Great Hamburg Fire in 1842.

autobiography with a scene taking place in the immediate aftermath of a cataclysmic storm, described by Master Abraham:[231]

> The storm broke with fiery red lightning flashes, and cracks of thunder that made the forest and the castle ring. The hurricane roared into the park, setting a thousand voices wailing and lamenting in the depths of the undergrowth. I snatched his instrument from the hand of a fleeing trumpeter and blew it with gleeful merriment... Well, in half an hour it was all over. The moon came out from behind the clouds. The night wind rustled soothingly through the terrified forest.

Like Brahms, Hoffmann pairs the natural calamity with psychological terror and even evokes the musical *tempesta* in his prose. As we have seen repeatedly, Hoffmann was keenly aware of musical tropes and incorporated them often into his fiction and reviews. When Master Abraham blows a trumpet in defiance of the gale, Hoffmann describes the instrumentation of a typical *tempesta*, which tends to include prominent brass. Likewise, Brahms introduces the horn precisely when the storm breaks in the Adagio non troppo. In both cases, the trumpet and horn perform in imitation of nature, represented by the hurricane in Hoffmann and the high winds in Brahms.

Horns serve other referential functions directly or indirectly related to the *tempesta* in Romantic music, and musicians and listeners of the period strongly associated them with distance, disembodiment, death, and memory. Daniel Beller-McKenna demonstrates the link between distance and memory particularly vividly when comparing the alphorn melody from the finale of the first symphony to the Four Songs for Women's Chorus, op. 17, which is scored for women's choir, harp, and two horns.[232] Brahms famously sent Clara Schumann a birthday postcard in 1868 upon which he inscribed the alphorn melody with the text underlay "Hoch

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[231] E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr together with a fragmentary Biography of Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler on Random Sheets of Waste Paper*, trans. Anthea Bell, with an introduction by Jeremy Adler (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 19-20.

[232] Daniel Beller-McKenna, "Distance and Disembodiment: Harps, Horns, and the Requiem Idea in Schumann and Brahms," *The Journal of Musicology* vol. 22, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 47-89.

auf'm Berg, tief im Thal, grüß ich dich viel tausendmal!" ("High on the mountain, deep in the valley, I greet you several thousand times!") Their friendship was strained at the time, and Brahms, as he was wont to do, decided to express himself through music. The end of his greeting resembles the first stanza of Joseph von Eichendorff's poem "Der Gärtner," set by Brahms as the third chorus in op. 17 (see Example 3.12).

Example 3.12
"Der Gärtner," first stanza, Joseph von Eichendorff

Wohin ich geh' und schaue,	Wherever I walk and gaze,
In Feld und Wald und Tal,	Through valley, wood and field,
Vom Berg hinab in die Aue;	From mountaintop to meadow:
Viel schöne, hohe Fraue,	I, lovely gracious lady,
Grüß ich dich tausendmal.	Greet you a thousand times.[233]

Beller-McKenna interprets the distance implied by the alphorn melody as multivalent: it represents not only the vertical distance between mountaintop and valley, but also the physical distance between Brahms and Schumann in 1868 as they spent their summer apart, as well as the temporal distance between 1868, a period of interpersonal stress between Brahms and Schumann, and 1859, when their relationship was on better footing. Schumann was very familiar with the Songs for Women's Chorus dating back to the year of their composition and she hosted the public premier of the work at one of her concerts in 1861.[234] In this way, Brahms surely meant for the alphorn melody to recall a happier time and to reunite them in friendship despite the physical distance between them.

Brahms uses the horn to signify distance and memory in the Adagio non troppo as well. To better understand how he does so, a sequential overview of its primary key areas is necessary. As previously stated, most of Brahms's structural harmonies are included in Kreisler's fantasy

[233] Joseph Von Eichendorff, "Der Gärtner," Oxford Lieder, trans. Richard Stokes, accessed 16 March 2021, http://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1132.
[234] Beller-McKenna, "Distance and Disembodiment," 69-71.

though not in the same order. It is noteworthy that Brahms used Kreisler's first and last chords and that the others he chose represent transitional moments in Kreisler's fantasy. The Adagio no troppo begins with the blend of A minor/E major/E Phrygian Dominant at the beginning, which occurs at the transition from the spirit realm to reality. The whirlwind tempest in mm. 19-22 began with a collapse from C major to a C diminished seventh chord whose musical affect is reminiscent of transition from C major to C minor concluding Kreisler's fantasy and representing his emotional breakdown. E-flat major is a key of pursuit, the moment where the maiden, who previously fled from Kreisler's advances, decides to pursue him. Its melody is first performed by the horn in exact congruence with Kreisler's fantasy, which equates E-flat major with "yearning words [and] the sweet sounds of horns... full of pleasure and melancholy." The west wind impels the maiden to pursue Kreisler into the green thickets of the wood. It also precipitates Kreisler's demise in the relative minor three chords later. Finally, A-flat major represents the magical spirit realm where Kreisler began his performance and received the gift of musical genius.

Unlike Kreisler's fantasy, the Adagio non troppo reverses course back to A-flat major. Specifically, Brahms backtracks from Kreisler's final chord (C minor/C diminished) through a middle harmony (E-flat major) en route to the first chord (A-flat major). The musical emblems of pastness and memory, represented by the *tempesta* topic and the horn, respectively are particularly important to consider at this point if we are to accept a Kreislerian interpretation of the movement that hinges in part on key characteristics. Once again, we turn to the storm scene from the beginning of *Kater Murr* for an explanation. This vignette postdates every ensuing episode from Kreisler's biography, which proceeds like a flashback in its wake. Hoffmann's structural conceit is that the cataclysmic weather event prompts the memories of the events preceding it. *Kater Murr* culminates with an episode from Kreisler's biography that occurs just

prior to the storm, which gives the novel a cyclical form: we end where we began. In the Adagio non troppo, Brahms follows a similar course and we eventually arrive in C minor proper for a developmental section, which serves, in a way, as a course correction. In other words, if the shift from C major to C diminished at the beginning of the *tempesta* was meant to recall Hoffmann's shift from C major to C minor, Brahms missed his mark. Perhaps C minor is where Brahms meant to go all along, but became sidetracked by memory in A-flat major. He ends the movement with a return to the primary themes and blended tonality from the beginning of the movement, furthering the cyclical theme in his own work and, like Hoffmann did in *Kater Murr*, ending where he began. If the primary theme recounts a state of painful yearning for love lost and the second theme exists as a memory, the question then becomes: what does Brahms recall in A-flat major?

CHAPTER 4

A-FLAT IS FOR AGATHE: BRAHMS'S INTERTEXTUAL TAPESTRY OF LONGING

In this chapter, I will further demonstrate the hermeneutic significance of key characteristics and formal rhetoric in the Adagio non troppo. The keys A minor and A-flat major, which are the primary and secondary keys, respectively, in the third movement of the Serenade, are well represented among Brahms's songs, where they appear in conjunction with distinct topoi. The songs in A minor are generally *Mädchenlieder*, and the songs in A-flat major express yearning. When these key characteristics are brought to bear in interpreting the Adagio non troppo, the internal logic governing the transition from one key area to the next suggests a narrative in keeping with Hoffmann's philosophy of artists in love and the Kreisler persona. A reason for the otherwise unusual pairing of A minor and A-flat major thus becomes clear, and it influences the formal design of the movement, which straightforwardly articulates sonata form until the movement ends abruptly without a full recapitulation. I will focus primarily on A-flat major in this chapter, not only because it makes for an unlikely secondary key but also because the key bears a strong association with Brahms's fiancée in 1858, the soprano Agathe von Siebold. Of the six songs written expressly for Siebold during Brahms's 1858 sojourn in Göttingen when they fell in love, only two share a key signature, "Ein Sonnett" (Op. 14, 4) and "An eine Aeolsharfe" (Op. 19, 5), and it is that of A-flat major.[235] Overall, the A-flat major songs postdating Brahms and Siebold's split evinces a subtle change in its manner of expression, and this transformation is salient to the trajectory of the Allegro non troppo.

[235] Paul Berry, *Brahms Among Friends: Listening, Performance, and the Rhetoric of Allusion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 316. The other four songs express four different keys: "Vor dem Fenster" (Op. 14, 1) begins in G minor and ends in G major, "Ständchen" (Op. 14, 7) is in F major, "Der Kuß" (Op. 19, 1) is in B-flat major, and "Die Liebende schreibt" (Op. 47, 5) is in E-flat major. In Berry's ninth chapter, "Rhetorics of Closure: Counterpoint and Catharsis," he describes how all six of these songs including "Ein Sonnett" and "An eine Aeolsharfe" were tailored for Agathe von Siebold's voice.

Key Characteristics

Musicians have long embraced various practices that assign symbolic meaning to key signatures and chords. Often their meanings are subjective, unique to the individual composer, performer, or theorist. This was especially the case before the period when equal temperament became standard, and we see these idiosyncrasies reflected in the numerous descriptions of key characteristics published during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.[236] Over time, certain tropes became commonplace and resulted in a greater degree of shared ground among such descriptions, especially in regard to the most common keys. For instance, descriptions of C major coalesced around concepts such as naturalness, simplicity, joyfulness, nobility, and military grandiosity.[237] Canonical works, such as Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, sometimes codified particular associations. In that work, the process of moving from C minor to C major came to represent the triumph of joy over sorrow, or light over darkness, and other composers followed suit in their own compositions, as did Brahms, for example, in his First Symphony.

Despite their continuous development well into the first half of the nineteenth century, key characteristics have not often been used to analyze music from the Romantic era. Yet there is ample reason to suppose that such characteristics are salient to this repertory: nineteenth-century exponents of the idea that each key possessed its own characteristics included Beethoven, Robert Schumann, and Berlioz, the last of whom published a comprehensive list of key characteristics in his orchestration treatise *Grand traité d'instrumentation* (1843).[238] Reluctance to use this interpretive tool today seems to stem primarily from the subjective nature of its development and

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[236] Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd edition (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001). Steblin's book remains the most comprehensive assessment of key characteristics in the literature.
[237] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 226-230.
[238] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 140-1, 171-173.

application, but it also relates to the widespread adoption of equal temperament in the late eighteenth century, which eliminated the intervallic differences among keys that often inspired the descriptions in the first place. Key characteristics certainly became quainter, even maxim-like, as equal temperament became standard; however, their influence persisted despite this change.[239] Furthermore, related constructions of meaning built around psychological factors like the sharp-flat principle and the major-minor dichotomy gained prominence as well. Erwin Rieger attributed the changing attitudes regarding key characteristics to the general societal shift from a subjective, poetic-aesthetic mindset in the 18th century to a scientifically oriented, objective mindset in the 19th century.[240]

Rita Steblin, the leading modern scholar of key characteristics, has highlighted the importance of the sharp-flat principle, which generally described sharp keys in terms of "ever-increasing strength and brightness" or possessing "wild and strong passions;" flat keys in terms of "[ever-increasing] weakness and sombreness" best suited to express "tender and melancholy feelings."[241] There was also a tendency to conflate the sharp-flat principle with the better-known major-minor dichotomy (i.e. happy-sad): sharp keys often took on joyful connotations related to

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[239] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*. Chapters 4-6 deal with the conflict between unequal and equal temperament. In chapter 5, "Rameau and Rousseau," Steblin describes the debate between Rameau and Rousseau: Rousseau favored a version mean-tone tuning because it imparted keys with individual character, and Rameau was a proponent of equal temperament and against key characteristics. Their debate continued into the nineteenth century because of the lasting importance and popularity of Rousseau's *Dictionaire de musique* (1768). A practical example of key characteristics retaining influence (and popularity) in the nineteenth century despite the shift toward equal temperament is represented by Robert Schumann's decision to publish Johann Mattheson's and E.T.A. Hoffmann's key affects side-by-side in an 1834 issue of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Furthermore, Steblin includes fourteen examples of key characteristic lists written between 1814-39 in chapter 9, "Tradition and Key Characteristics in the Early Nineteenth Century." Notably, twelve of the authors were German, increasing the likelihood that Brahms participated in the tradition. In her conclusion to chapter 9, Steblin writes: "It is evident that by the 1830s a tradition of key characteristics . . . had become *well established*" (emphasis mine). . . . There seems to be comparatively little written evidence of nineteenth-century opposition to the concept of key characteristics" (184). She singles out one prominent attack on these systems from 1848, published anonymously in the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, but notes several important theorists, including A.B. Marx, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Hugo Riemann, who defended the concept of key characteristics. Finally, she references six additional authors who penned entries to the key characteristic canon—the latest was published in 1895—but those authors fall outside of her purview.

[240] Erwin Rieger, "Die Tonartencharakteristik im einstimmigen Klavierlied von Johannes Brahms," vol. 1, PhD diss., (Universität Wien, 1946), 1-2.

[241] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 96, 119.

major keys and flat keys acquired the somber attributes of minor keys. Meaning was also associated with physical factors including the dexterity required to play in certain keys and the acoustic properties of orchestral instruments.[242] For instance, as the number of accidentals increases, instruments in the violin family cannot utilize as many open strings in passagework or capitalize on the resonance their sympathetic vibrations, which can lead to a more "restrained," less acoustically robust sound.[243] Interestingly, this technical consideration also intersects with the sharp-flat principle: sharp keys preserve a greater number of open strings and were often characterized as "bright, piercing, and noisy," whereas flat keys require more closed strings sooner—including the highest pitched strings on violin, viola, and cello (open E and A)—and sounded "muted, deadened, and sorrowful" to historical listeners.[244]

Brahms must have formed an opinion on key characteristics, though he never committed one to writing. Rieger explained the implications of this postulation in his 1946 dissertation *Die Tonartencharakteristik im einstimmigen Klavierlied von Johannes Brahms*, the only book-length, scholarly exploration of the topic of key characteristics in Brahms:[245]

> [Contemporaneous] dispute[s] over the character of keys in the age of Romanticism meant that no composer could avoid a statement on the matter. If we therefore answer in the affirmative to the question of the rule of key-characteristic principles in Brahms' song, then of course there is no question of the application of a scheme.

If a composer chose keys based on their extramusical associations, then naturally one would expect the existence of a system governing their usage. In the middle of the twentieth century, when Rieger wrote his monograph, it was again fashionable to invoke key characteristics in

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[242] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics.* Steblin deals with the psychological and physical factors that inform key characteristics in chapters 7 and 8.
[243] Today, performers are often encouraged to avoid open strings, especially the highest pitched strings with the thinnest gauges, early in their musical education to avoid the sudden timbral shift from finger-stopped notes to the bright open strings. Closed notes still capitalize on sympathetic vibrations of the adjacent open string.
[244] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 131.
[245] Rieger, "Tonartencharakteristik," vol. 2, 1.

connection with Lieder, where the connection of the music with text grounded such discussions in the score. The existence of text allowed interpreters to assess whatever associations a composer might have meant to invoke in choosing a particular key. Songs are particularly well suited for identifying the associations possessed by different keys in the mind of an individual composer because they are short, they often remain in a single key throughout, and they are generally less complicated and more intimate than works in other genres.

Rieger undertook a comprehensive analysis of every song in Brahms's catalogue, described the system of key characteristic tropes they evinced, and applied the findings to analyses of the composer's works for solo piano. While he found the earliest song collections (opp. 3, 6, and 7) to be somewhat capricious or anachronistic in their representation of key characteristics, he points to the eight *Lieder und Romanzen* (op. 14) as the first song collection to exhibit Brahms's mature application of key schemes that persisted for the remainder of his life until the very end, when formal clarity took precedent over all other concerns, including key.[246] If, as Rieger asserts, Brahms had clarified his understanding of the characteristics of each key by 1858, when he composed op. 14, and these characteristics can inform our interpretations of his instrumental music, then it seems plausible, if not likely, that they stand to enrich our understanding of the Serenade in A Major.

In the previous chapter, I made the case that Brahms employed Hoffmann's key characteristics as part of a multifaceted literary reference to the Kreisler stories. This case is complicated by the simple fact that Brahms never publicly or privately disclosed any sort of a program for the Adagio non troppo. However, Brahms was steeped in the history of key characteristics. His letters, for example, reveal that he certainly encountered the key characteristic descriptions by Hamburg theorist Johann Mattheson and poet C.F.D. Schubart in

[246] Rieger, "Tonartencharakteristik," vol. 2, 1-2.

addition to Hoffmann's list from "Kreisler's Poetico-Music Club."[247] Many of the authors whose writings on counterpoint formed the basis of his self-education also wrote about key characteristics and related issues, including Johann Nikolaus Forkel, Georg Christoph Kellner, Johann Philipp Kirnberger, and Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg.[248] Brahms may have discussed key characteristics with Robert Schumann, and if he read Berlioz's *Grand traité d'instrumentation*, as I have speculated in Chapter 2, then he would have encountered one of the most contemporary lists. Furthermore, several of his seminal works derive intertextual meaning based on recently developed cultural understandings of key related to their canonical forbears—especially those by Beethoven. For instance, the first movement of the Piano Concerto in D minor includes an allusion to the D minor/B-flat major conflict in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the First Symphony was a direct response to the C minor-to-C major paradigm made monumental by Beethoven's Fifth.[249]

In this chapter, I will examine the significance of two keys in Brahms's works, A minor and A-flat major, because of the important roles they play as the primary and secondary keys, respectively, of the Adagio non troppo. I will also touch briefly on C minor, the key of the movement's development section, mostly by way of focusing on how it recontextualizes the primary and secondary themes. I will begin by developing working constellations of meanings and associations for each key with reference to Rita Steblin's compendium of key characteristics,

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[247] Mattheson was a regular touchstone during Brahms's period of counterpoint study between 1854-6, and he was familiar with *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre*, the work containing Mattheson's descriptions. Schubart was widely known, and Brahms copied several excerpts from *Ideen zu einer Ästhetik der Tonkunst* into his *Schatzkästlein* in the early 1850s. Furthermore, Robert Schumann, a self-professed adherent to the theory of key characteristics, published Mattheson and Hoffmann's descriptions side by side in an 1834 edition of the *Neue Leipziger Zeitschrift für Musik*.

[248] An overview of Brahms's library can be found in Karl Geiringer and Irene Geiringer, "The Brahms Library in the 'Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde,' Wien," *Notes* 31, no. 1 (September, 1973), 6-14. Kurt Hofmann *Die Bibliothek von Johannes Brahms: Bücher-und Musikalienverzeichnis* provides individual entries for each item.

[249] For more on Brahms's allusion to Beethoven's Ninth see James Hepokoski, "Monumentality and Formal Processes in the First Movement of Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 1 in D Minor, op. 15," in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, ed. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 217-251 (229).

A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, referring also to historical writings that Brahms certainly knew, namely those by Hoffmann, Mattheson, and Schubart. Next, I will summarize the poetic themes from Brahms's solo Lieder in each key to determine the extent to which their meaning was fixed and how closely they relate to the standardized definitions. Finally, I will propose a narrative for the Adagio non troppo that combines these findings with the Kreislerian subtext, which together suggest a musical rumination upon yearning and romantic asceticism. Specifically, I make the case that Brahms reflects in this movement upon his failed relationship with Agathe von Siebold in the wake of his failed relationship with Clara Schumann.

Brahms's A Minor Key Characteristic

Steblin's *History of Key Characteristics* includes twenty-three unique descriptions of A minor in historical sources of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.[250] The earliest of these, by Jean Rousseau, dates from 1691 ("Serious subjects.") and the latest, by Hector Berlioz, from 1843 ("Tolerably sonorous; soft, mournful; rather noble."). Two are by the same author, Christian F. D. Schubart. By the nineteenth century, descriptions of its characteristics coalesced around such concepts as sorrow, tenderness, piety, naivety, and femininity. Piety also emerged as a theme in the seventeenth century, but it became virtually synonymous with tenderness, naivety, and femininity in the late eighteenth century, thanks to Schubart's description in *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (c. 1784, see Example 4.1). Indeed, Schubart's description of A minor evidently became a lodestone for later authors. Several writers simply copied it wholesale, whereas others, like Hoffmann, riffed on it in various manners. Fifteen of the twenty-two authors describe the key in melancholy terms, referring to

[250] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 285-287.

such concepts as sorrow, sadness, grief, and pain. Only three authors include none of these, and all sixteen descriptions published after 1783 include at least one, often more of them. All of the descriptions of A Minor that Brahms demonstrably knew converge on these characteristics.

Example 4.1
A minor key characteristics by Mattheson, Schubart, and Hoffmann[251]

> Somewhat plaintive, honorable, and calm. It invites sleep, but is not on this account unpleasant. Moreover, it is highly suitable for keyboard and instrumental music.
>
> *Das neu-eröffnete Orchestre* (1713)
> Johann Mattheson
>
> Pious womanliness and tenderness of character.
>
> *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (c. 1784)
> Christian F.D. Schubart
>
> A minor (arpeggio dulce). Why are you fleeing, lovely maid? Why do you try, since invisible bonds hold you completely. You cannot tell what it is that gnaws painfully at your breast, at the same time filling you with sweetest joy. But you will understand everything when I caress you with the language of the spirits, the language I speak and which you understand so well!
>
> *Kreisleriana*, Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club (c. 1814)
> E.T.A. Hoffmann

The descriptions of A minor by Matheson and Schubart present these tropes in a straightforward and typical manner. They differ chiefly in that Mattheson emphasizes the plaintive elements of the key while Schubart emphasizes its "womanliness." Hoffmann whimsically incorporates all of these tropes into his story, associating the key with a maiden (womanliness) who attempts to flee the unwanted advances of the narrator (piety/honor). Her mixed emotional state (pain/joy) is bittersweet at best. Finally, the narrator wishes to "caress" the maiden with his music, a type of touch generally embodying gentleness or tenderness.

[251] Translations by Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 285-6.

Rieger's description of how Brahms must have understood A minor, based on his analysis of the composer's Lieder, begins: "Sadness clearly prevails here."[252] The terms he uses to describe these compositions drew on their poetic themes, which include "mourning," "laconic," and "*kirchentonal*" (church sound). Such concepts generally find accord in historic descriptions of A minor. Sadness certainly prevails, but more specifically it does so in relation to unrequited or unhappy love. Brahms's songs in A minor are universally sung by, or else concern, a maiden. Clearly Rieger sought to echo language drawn from historic descriptions, which makes his omission of femininity or womanliness notable, especially because such topics rank among the more readily apparent aspects of Brahms's songs in A minor. Table 4.1 provides an overview of Brahms's songs in A minor, whose shared concern with maidenhood, femininity, and womanliness is clear. Heather Platt has noted that "more than twenty percent of Brahms's lieder have texts with a female narrative voice."[253] Brahms composed eleven Lieder in A minor, of which five feature a distinctly female narrative voice. A minor is marked in this regard, as being clearly linked with womanliness. In selecting texts for this key, or a key for these texts, Brahms hewed closely to the historical characterization of A minor by writers he knew well.

Table 4.1
Overview of Brahms's A minor songs

Song	Summary
"Spanisches Lied" Trans. from Spanish by Paul von Heyse Op. 6 No. 1 (1852)	Sung by a woman while her lover sleeps. If she wakes him, he will tell her how he languishes in her presence and call her a serpent (temptress), so she lets him sleep.[254]

[252] Rieger, "Tonartencharakteristik," vol. 2, 60.
[253] Heather Platt, "Brahms's *Mädchenlieder* and Their Cultural Context," in *Expressive Intersections in Brahms: Essays in Analysis and Meaning*, ed. Heather Platt and Peter H. Smith (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 80.
[254] Interestingly, "Spanisches Lied" was first performed at a public concert in 1883 bearing the title "Spanische Serenade" (the change of title was not Brahms's doing). See Lucien Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 20-1. Stark suggests that the "the affair has reached its turning point" based on "pungent" altered harmonies.

"Die Trauernde" German Folk Song Op. 7 No. 5 (1852)	Sung by a maiden. Dour and morbid. She sings about a loveless life and longs for death.
"Anklänge" Joseph von Eichendorff Op. 7 No. 3 (1853)	Sung about a maiden by an omniscient narrator whose gender is unattributed. The maiden lives alone in the forest and is engaged in the work to be married, spinning her wedding dress. The implication is that it will not be worn.
"Vom verwundeten Knaben" Folk Song Op. 14 No. 2 (1858)	Sung about a maiden by an omniscient narrator whose gender is unattributed. She finds her sweetheart dead in the woods. Her mourning shall have no end.
"Serenade" Adolf Friedrich von Schack Op. 58 No. 8 (1867/71)	Sung by a man to his former lover who is sleeping. Her name, Dolores, implies a general sense of unhappiness, which is confirmed by singer's lonesome fate (see Chapter 2).
"Eine Gute, Gute Nacht" Trans. from Russian by Georg Daumer Op. 59 No. 6 (1873)	Ostensibly sung by a man to a woman. It describes unfulfilled sexual desire.
"Klage ii" Trans. from Slovakian by Joseph Wenzig Op. 69 No. 2 (1877)	Sung by an unhappy woman. Her parents arranged her marriage with a man she does not love, thereby forcing her to end her relationship with her preferred suitor.
"Vom Strande" Trans. from Spanish by Joseph von Eichendorff Op. 69 No. 6 (1877)	Sung by a woman left alone on the seashore watching her beloved sail away, possibly never to return.
"Mädchenlied" Trans. from Serbian by Siegfried Kapper Op. 85 No. 3 (1878)	Sung by a maiden whose lover has gone away to the battlefield, possibly never to return.
"Meerfahrt" Heinrich Heine Op. 96 No. 4 (1885)	Narrative voice ambiguous. A couple is desolate in their love. They drift past a mirthful island full of sweet music in silence.
"Es hing der Reif" Klaus Groth Op. 106 No. 3 (1888)	Sung by a man whose is preparing to serenade a woman, but he ascertains from her initial reception of him that she is not interested in his advances.

Brahms's A-flat Major Key Characteristic

Steblin's *History of Key Characteristics* includes thirty unique descriptions for A-flat major, which she presents alongside its enharmonic equivalent G-sharp major.[255] Twenty-five name A-flat major only, two name G-sharp major only, one treats them interchangeably (G-sharp *or* A-flat major), and two describe the keys together but compare their different affects. The earliest description, by Georg Joseph Vogler, dates from 1779 ("Plutonian realm.") and the latest, by Hector Berlioz, from 1843 ("G-sharp major. Dull; but noble. A-flat major. Soft; veiled, very noble."). The date of Vogler's description, written eighty-eight years after the earliest description of A minor, corresponds approximately with the wider adoption of equal temperament and may suggest increased use of A-flat major in conjunction with new temperaments. Many authors describe A-flat major using nocturnal language, relating to night, death, and eternity. By extension, some also mention its solemn, mournful, or supernatural qualities. Terms related to love and devotion occur regularly as well. Historical sources conflict with one another about whether its secondary traits relate to positive themes like majesty, solemnity, gentleness, and amorousness or negative themes like gloom, horror, and putrescence. As was the case for A minor, many writers after Schubart repeat his description of A-flat major, which emphasizes its negative connotations. Those who do not follow his lead generally tend to attribute more positive attributes to the key. Mattheson did not describe A-flat major, which leaves only Schubart and Hoffmann as sources we can connect directly with Brahms (see Example 4.2).

Whereas Hoffmann's A minor vignette embellishes Schubart's canonic key characteristic, the younger author's description of A-flat major diverges from the older. They use strikingly different language to describe the key: Hoffmann emphasizes its miraculous

[255] Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 276-280.

connotations, and Schubart leans into its potential to express darker feelings. However, they do overlap slightly despite their differences: Hoffmann seems to be describing supernatural forces, and Schubart invokes the afterlife; Hoffmann evokes the infinite through his description of a boundless, ethereal realm, and Schubart describes eternal death. Rieger's description of A-flat major in Brahms's songs is less defined than that of A minor, but it finds resonance in Hoffmann's "ethereal fragrance" and "tender spirits." In a roundabout way, Rieger describes the key as possessing "lovely" qualities and a degree of "spirituality," sometimes describing it pictorially by means of light-based imagery. Longing or yearning for the distant beloved are prominent themes, in his estimation, but they do not appear across all of the songs.

Example 4.2
A-flat major key characteristics by Schubart and Hoffmann[256]

> A-flat major. The key of the grave. Death, grave, putrefaction, judgement, eternity lie in its radius.
>
> *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* (c. 1784)
> Christian F.D. Schubart
>
> A-flat major chord (pianissimo). What is it that rustles so miraculously, so strangely around me? Invisible wings glide up and down. I am swimming in an ethereal fragrance. But the fragrance shines in flaming circles, mysteriously intertwining. They are tender spirits, moving their golden wings in magnificently voluminous tones and chords.
>
> *Kreisleriana*, Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club (c. 1814)
> E.T.A. Hoffmann

Brahms composed eleven songs in A-flat major: five in the 1850s, four in the 1860s, and two in the 1870s. Primarily juvenilia and early mature works, nine of these songs predate, or coincide with, his move to Vienna in 1868. A-flat major was one of Brahms's favorite keys for Lieder during this period of his early career: between 1852-1868, he wrote nine songs apiece in

[256] Translations by Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics*, 276-7.

A-flat major and E minor, accounting for nearly a quarter of his 82 songs from that period.[257] In the same years, Brahms composed six songs apiece in F major, E-flat major, and E major, and no more than five in any other key.[258] In addition to being one of the composer's favorite keys, A-flat stands at a remove from the contiguous groups of keys E-flat, E, and F, further contributing to the feeling that it possessed a particularly expressive affect. After Brahms traded the Elbe for the Danube, as it were, he virtually abandoned A-flat major as a key for his Lieder, with only two more entries, one from 1874 and the other 1877.

My survey of the texts of Brahms's songs in A-flat major reveals that he definitely hewed closer to Hoffmann that Schubart in his representation of the key, and that Rieger missed the mark somewhat in his characterization (see Table 4.2). Rieger classifies loveliness, spirituality, and light as the primary themes and longing, yearning, and distance as secondary themes. Upon reexamination, Brahms's A-flat major text settings typically do reflect on love, unattainable love, and love lost, but their prevailing sentiment is yearning tinged with melancholy. Other underlying themes of these songs include distance—physical distance, emotional distance, and distance as a state of being—and timelessness. Imagery describing the natural world abounds, and the songs in A-flat major project a pastoral mood. All of the poems are written in the first person, and the speaker typically exists in a hypersensitive state where powerful feelings of nostalgia coexist with a wariness of the future. Notably, especially in comparison to the A minor songs, none of the A-flat major songs are Mädchenlieder. In fact, the poetic voice is overwhelmingly male. Only "Mondnacht," which Brahms published anonymously, is gender

[257] The five keys including A-flat major (9), E minor (9), F major (6), E-flat major (6), and E major (6) account for 44% of his solo song output through 1868 (36 out of 82 songs).
[258] For me, songs only modulate when Brahms changes the key signature, otherwise I term their harmonic variance tonicization.

Table 4.2
Overview of Brahms's A-flat major songs

Song	Summary
"Nachwirkung" Alfred von Meissner Op. 6 No. 3 (1852)	A man tearfully sits alone at the end of the day, feeling removed from the physical world and unable to work. He is fully consumed with longing for his beloved.
"Mondnacht" Joseph von Eichendorff WoO 21 (by 1853)	The poet desires salvation through death and resurrection. The expansive celestial and pastoral imagery invokes the infinite; the moon, itself representative of longing, kisses the earth goodnight. Brahms may have read this poem simply as a song of love and longing.
— ("Nactigallen schwingen lustig") Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben Op. 6 No. 6 (1853)	The poet hears nightingales awakening flowers with songs of the past. His longing transforms into a nightingale, but he is mute and lost in thought for a flower that will not bloom.
"Ein Sonnett" Thibault de Champagne Trans. from French by Johann Gottfried Herder Op. 14 No. 4 (1858)	A man, entirely besotted, wishes to forget his beloved because they cannot be together, but he cannot forget because lovesickness and yearning prevent it.
"An eine Äolsharfe" Eduard Mörike Op. 19 No. 5 (1858)	The poet recalls a boy recently dead and buried. His/her song is initiated by the wind and accompanied by a wind harp. The poet grieves the loss deeply and longs for the past. Brahms likely interpreted the speaker in this poem as a bereaved lover, though Mörike wrote it to commemorate his brother.
— ("Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden") Ludwig Tieck Op. 33 No. 3 (1861)	A man is wrecked by lovesickness, torn between feelings of joy and sorrow. He is hesitant to pursue the woman he desires but cannot stay away from her. He will suffer/die if they are parted. (From *Romanzen aus L. Tieck's Magelone*.)
— ("So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide") Khāwje Shams-od-Dīn Mohammad Hāfez-e Shīrāzī Translated from Persian by Georg Friedrich Daumer Op. 32 No. 8 (1864)	A man worships a woman who does not return his love. Therefore he relishes her anger toward him and the pain she inflicts upon him. They cannot be reconciled.

— ("Ruhe, Süssliebchen") Ludwig Tieck Op. 33 No. 9 (by 1868)	The poet lulls his/her lover to sleep; imploring them to dream fair fantasies of love. S/he requests the noisy sounds of nature to become quieter: murmurs, whispers, and hums. A tender song that evokes a sense of timelessness. (From *Romanzen aus L. Tieck's Magelone*.)
"Sehnsucht" Trans. from Czech by Joseph Wenzig Op. 49 No. 3 (by 1868)	A man longs to behold his beloved. A great distance separates them. He commands rocks and valleys to burst and rise up so that he might see her from afar.
"An ein Bild" Max von Schenkendorf Op. 63 No. 3 (1874)	A "banished" man gazes at the portrait of his youthful lover. She was his one, true love. He feels young again when he thinks of her and would be gladly reunited if she summoned.
— ("O kühler Wald") Clemens Brentano Op. 72 No. 3 (1877)	A man reflects on the past. He walks alone in the forest, searching for his former lover; however, she now walks only in the forests of his heart. Echoes of his youthful songs have blown away.

neutral, though "An eine Äolsharfe," which Mörike wrote to commemorate his deceased brother, may also feature a female speaker depending on the reader's interpretation.

Certain words weave common threads throughout the set, including four different words for the concept of yearning: *Sehnsucht*/*Sehnen*. *Wünschen*/*Wunsch*, *Schmachten*, and *Weide* (the last of which I explore in detail below).[259] The third song from Opus 49 bears the title "Sehnsucht," and six additional poems include one or more of the aforementioned keywords (see Table 4.3). The reader easily infers yearning as a guiding theme in the remaining works even though it goes unnamed in title or text. A sense of yearning emerges in the final stanza of "Mondnacht" as the speaker's soul flies home over field and forest: the explicit longing for place

[259] Brahms described his songbooks as *Blumensträußen* ("floral bouquets"), and Inge van Rij writes that "Brahms himself saw textual coherence as a defining feature of the song bouquet." Van Rij focused on textual coherence within single opuses, but her point may also reveal something about Brahms's total oeuvre. In the *Blumensprache* tradition ("language of flowers), relatively fixed meanings were assigned to individual flowers so that their code could be cracked, and the combination of different flowers in a bouquet resulted in more complex communication than a single flower alone. For Brahms, keys may have functioned like a species of flower or the hue of a petal and bore specific meanings demonstrated by their shared lexicographies. See Inge Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2, 9-10.

Table 4.3
Themes by keyword and implication in Brahms's A-flat major songs

Song	Yearning	Pastoral	Nocturnal/Memorial
"Nachwirkung"	Wunsch, Sehnen	säuseln, Nachtluft, Wind, Bienen, Blüthen, Linde	träumend, Nachtluft,
"Mondnacht"	*implied*	Blütenschimmer, Luft, Felder, rauschen, Wald	Himmel, träumen, strenklar, Nacht
("Nachtigallen schwingen lustig")	Sehnsucht	Nachtigallen, Blumen, blühende, Laubeshallen	*implied* (nocturnal)
"Ein Sonnett"	*implied*		*implied* (memory)
"An eine Äolsharfe"	Sehnsucht	luftgetbornen, Wind, Frühlingsblüten, säuselt, Rose	*implied* (memory)
("Sind es Schmerzen")	Wunsch, Schmachten, Sehnen	Blumen, grünende Flur	Dämmerung, dunkel, Traum, Sterne
("So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide")	Weide	Weide	
"Ruhe, Süssliebchen"	*implied*	säuseln, Matten, rauschen, Hain, Vögel, murmeln, Bach, flüstern, Bienelein	dämmernden Nacht/Schein, Träume
"Sehnsucht"	Sehnsucht,	Wäldern, Felsen, Täler	*implied* (memory)
"An ein Bild"	Sehnen	Meer	Sterne
O kühler Wald"	*implied*	Wald, rauschen	*implied* (Träume)

encapsulates a tender desire for the magnificent love demonstrated by heaven and the earth in the first stanza. Yearning is wholly embodied by "Ein Sonnett." Inspired by the troubadour songs of

Thibaut IV, Count of Champagne and King of Navarre, and subtitled "Aus dem 13ten Jahrhundert" (From the 13th Century), this Romantic poem by Johann Gottfried Herder explores the tension between the illicit and the transcendent qualities of courtly love. "Ruhe, Süssliebchen" describes a poet who yearns to watch his beloved fall asleep. There is a gently pleading quality to this desire, reflected in the repeated line "Schlafe, schlaf ein" (sleep, fall asleep). Apparently unable to serenade his darling—a difficulty rendered ironic in song form—the poet asks nature to sing its pastoral lullaby in his stead, *sotto voce*. In "O kühler Wald" the poet, alone in the woods, strains his ear listening for echoes of his youthful love songs and the footsteps of his former lover for whom those songs were written.

Sights, sounds, and sensations of the natural world set the scene in ten of the eleven poems, sometimes replacing conversational and physical intimacy. Their settings are generally pastoral, most commonly described with references to geographical features (forests, valleys, streams, seas), abundant flora (trees, blossoms), and occasional mentions of fauna (quite literally—and exclusively—the birds and the bees). A prominent subcategory of this theme describes susurrations of wind and water, which occur in five poems. Along with direct mentions of those elemental forces (*der Wind*, *die Luft*, *der Bach*), these poems unite around key words including and related to rustling (*rauschen*), whispering (*säuseln*, *flüstern*), and murmuring (*murmeln*). If we include flight as a related construct as it pertains to the state of being airborne or borne on the wind, "Nachtigallen schwingen lustig" joins this subset. In Hoffmann von Fallersleben's poem, the speaker's yearning becomes a nightingale that flies off into the blooming world. This avian transformation is similar to the manner in which the poet's soul spreads its wings and takes flight in "Mondnacht." Eight of the eleven songs use nocturnal or memorial language. These concepts are interrelated: nighttime and its mysterious periods of

liminal light—dusk and dawn, moonlight and starlight—invite introspection and a dreamy consciousness; physical and metaphysical realms are united. Two more songs in addition to the eight, "Ein Sonnett" and "Sehnsucht," are heartful outpourings of longing brought about by memories of the beloved.

In surveying these songs, it has become clear that Brahms linked the key of A-flat major with particular themes: lovesick yearning, distance, nature, and feelings brought on by the advent of evening. "Ein Sonnett" and "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide" stand somewhat apart from the other nine songs in A-flat major owing to the poetic voice and because they do not include any of the standard keywords related to the aforementioned themes. In "Ein Sonnett" the poet is so besotted, so overcome by his enflamed passions, that he apparently loses the ability to speak. His stuttering repetitions, platitudinous praise, clumsy alliteration, and saccharine conceits feel ephebic. The song's lesson, as Paul Berry remarks, is that "it is better to remain in love with no hope of consummation than to abandon the ideal vision of [the] beloved."[260] Like *Sehnsucht*, it is a meditation on yearning and it might easily bear the same title. It also encapsulates E.T.A. Hoffmann's notion of the artist in love, where artists renounce consummate love in favor of art. This denial or sacrifice is noble and necessary, freeing the artist to achieve greatness on his own terms. "Ein Sonnett" can be read as a gloss on the first stanza from "Nachwirkung," hyper-focusing on the poet's lovesick state (see Example 4.3). In both cases, the poet is removed from his lover and experiences profound grief at their separation. He is entirely preoccupied by memories of their most recent encounter and in each case describes the physical sensation of his throbbing heart. His life and courage depend on her proximity, and away from her, he suffers. Overall, the trajectory of the first stanza from "Nachwirkung" and the poem "Ein Sonnett" moves from a fretful negative emotional space to a defiantly positive one.

[260] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 307.

Example 4.3
Comparison of the first stanza from "Nachwirkung" to "Ein Sonnett"

"Nachwirkung"	"Ein Sonnett"
Sie ist gegangen, die Wonnen versanken, Nun glühen die Wangen, nun rinnen die Tränen, Es schwanken die kranken, Die heißen Gedanken, Es pocht das Herz in Wünschen und Sehnen.	Ach, könnt' ich, könnte vergessen Sie! Ihr schönes, liebes, liebliches Wesen, Den Blick, die freundliche Lippe, die! Vielleicht ich möchte genesen! Doch ach! mein Herz, mein Herz kann es nie! Und doch ist's Wahnsinn, zu hoffen Sie! Und um sie schweben, Gibt Muth und Leben, Zu weichen nie! -- Und denn, wie kann ich vergessen Sie, Ihr schönes, liebes, liebliches Wesen, Den Blick, die freundliche Lippe, die! Viel lieber nimmer genesen!
She has gone away, all bliss has vanished; now my cheeks are hot, now my hot tears pour down; my sick, feverish mind is reeling, my heart pounds with wishing and longing.[261]	Oh, if I could only, only forget her, her beautiful, lovely, loving nature, her glance, her friendly mouth! Perhaps I could then grow well! But ah, my heart, my heart can never do so! And yet it is madness to hope for her! And to hover about her gives courage and life, never to draw away. And then, how can I forget her, her beautiful lovely, loving nature, her glance, her friendly mouth? Much better never to grow well![262]

The truest outlier of Brahms's eleven A-flat major songs is his setting of Georg Friedrich Daumer's "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide" (see Example 4.4). At first glance, the song's stark couplets, its bitter tone, the apparent absence of signs of nature from its text, and the physical proximity of the lovers it concerns set it in opposition to the other songs in this key. But upon further inspection, thedetails of the poem are actually in keeping with the prevailing themes for A-flat major. Daumer poignantly considers solitude and distance as figurative constructs in "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide." The poem describes the tension between actively loving

[261] Translation by Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 23.
[262] Translation by Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 45.

someone within a loveless relationship and simultaneously evokes love *and* love lost. The deterioration of the relationship causes the (former) lovers to be alone in their thoughts and emotionally distant from one another. The situation of being together physically but emotionally distant is reminiscent of the scene in "Meerfahrt," described earlier in this chapter, where a couple drifts past the mirthful island in their little boat. And like "Ein Sonnett," it implies that unreciprocated, even disdainful, love is better than renouncing that love entirely.

Example 4.4
"So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," **Georg Friedrich Daumer (after Hafez)**

So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide, So leider mit einander beide:	So here we stand, I and the delight of my eyes, so sadly at odds with each other.
Nie kann ich ihr was tun zu Liebe, Nie kann sie mir was tun zu Leide.	All my attempts to show her I lover her are in vain; in vain are all her attempts to hurt me.
Sie kränket es, wenn ich die Stirn ihr Mit einem Diadem bekleide;	It offends her when I adorn her forehead with a diadem.
Ich danke selbst, wie für ein Lächeln Der Huld, für ihre Zornbescheide.	I even thank her, as I would for a smile of grace and favor, for her intimations of anger.[263]

The first line of Daumer's poem does not rule out the union of the speaker and the object of his desire, but the mood shifts definitively in the second stanza. Ending as it does with a colon, the first couplet introduces a short list of reasons why the lovers are at odds with one another. The final word of the first line, "Weide," is the interpretive linchpin for the entire poem and serves as the primary connection to the other A-flat major songs. It is a tricky word to translate. Lucien Stark renders it as "my darling," Eric Sams as "the delight of my eyes," Emily Ezust as "mistress," and Richard Stokes as "my heart's desire."[264] These translators all interpret

[263] Translation by Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 87.
[264] Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs*, 72; Eric Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 87; Emily Ezust, "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," The LiederNet Archive, accessed 3

"Weide" as a contraction of "Augenweide," or "a feast for the eyes." One of the earliest known uses of "Weide" comes from Bach Cantata 182. There, the poet Salomon Franck coined the related construction "Meines Herzens Weide" (my heart's pastures). These translations all imply that "Weide" refers to some object of yearning or desire.

Taken literally, "die Weide" usually translates as "pasture" or "field," but it also is the word for "willow tree." The botanical reference is particularly intriguing because weeping willows were often used in conjunction with poetic descriptions of forsaken or unfaithful lovers, perhaps owing to the popularity of "The Willow Song" from Shakespeare's *Othello*. The tree also became a stock image on gravestones during the Romantic era, deepening its connection to yearning, loss, and grief. The natural histories of willow trees surely contributed to these interpretations. Willows are resilient and they grow rapidly, but they are not particularly long-lived. In fact, they are easily damaged or toppled despite flexible boughs and expansive root complexes, which often radiate wider than the canopy. Daumer appears to exploit the multiple meanings of "Weide" to describe a fruitless, long-term courtship. Like a willow, the relationship matured quickly, but it cast shallow roots and its passionate phase was short-lived. It now appears as a sallow "feast for the eyes," requiring memory to enliven its color.[265] Viewed in this light, "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide" does, in fact, evince many of the same themes as Brahms's other A-flat major song, albeit in subtler fashion.

Thus, two different groups of concepts, themes, and topics recur throughout Brahms's songs in A minor and A-flat major, respectively. In A minor, sadness related to unrequited or unhappy love prevails. These songs are also *Mädchenlieder*: they are either sung by, or else they are about, unmarried women. A-flat major, by contrast, is a key of dreamlike, melancholy

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January 2022, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=18613; Richard Stokes, "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," Oxford Lieder, accessed 3 January 2022, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/1080.

[265] The word sallow also refers to type of broad leaf willow.

yearning. All of Brahms's song in A-flat major are in the first person, and all of them emphasize nocturnality and pastoral imagery. These two keys work well as a pair, and their combination in the Adagio non troppo suggests a narrative in which, at the broadest level, a present state of sadness (A minor) briefly gives way to longing for the past (A-flat major), before returning again at the end of the movement (A minor).

Whether or not Brahms generally considered key characteristics when deciding upon the tonal plans of instrumental works is an open question.[266] But the frequency with which he applied poetic, literary, or musically allusive subtexts to his compositions, especially in his earliest works, considered alongside with the evident meanings he associated with the keys in question, gives reason to suppose that in this case, at least, he did. The Andante from his third piano sonata (Op. 5) demonstrates how a poetic allusion can be supported by the underlying key characteristic, and that movement offers one example of Brahms deploying identifiable key characteristics from vocal music in his instrumental works. That movement is particularly germane to any assessment of the Adagio non troppo because it, too, begins in A-flat major, and it bears an epigraph from a poem by C.O. Sternau (a.k.a. Otto Inkermann, see Example 4.6). Brahms appends the first three lines from the poem "Junge Liebe" below the title and opposite

[266] The notable exception to this position is Brahms's implementation of the C minor/major topos after Beethoven. Peter H. Smith provides an excellent example of how this discussion manifests in his book *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music*, in which he discusses expressive components that derive, in part, from an understanding of key characteristic. Smith describes the significance of minor mode compositions broadly using terms underpinning the major-minor dichotomy: "Minor-key tonality represents not just one of two, equally weighted options, but a special case. This special case or marked status tends to endow minor-mode pieces with a heightened expressive significance." More specifically, major keys represent positive emotions, and minor keys represent negative emotions. This discussion is in the service of a bigger conversation surrounding the C-minor/major topos that defined many classical and romantic era compositions. A result of these discussions is a rough key characteristic for Brahms's compositions in C minor. Smith, *Expressive Forms*, 192, 198, 234-284. One of the few recent works to reference key characteristics specifically is Colin Lawson's Oxford Handbook for the Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115. He discusses historical descriptions of the physical properties ("tone qualities") differentiating A (*propre au genre pastoral*) and B-flat clarinets (*propre au genre pathéthique*), which themselves read like key characteristics, and also the key characteristic traits for A major (Grétry and Schubart) as a possible reasons behind Brahms's decision to use the Clarinet in A in the Quintet. Colin Lawson, *Brahms: Clarinet Quintet* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2-3, 9.

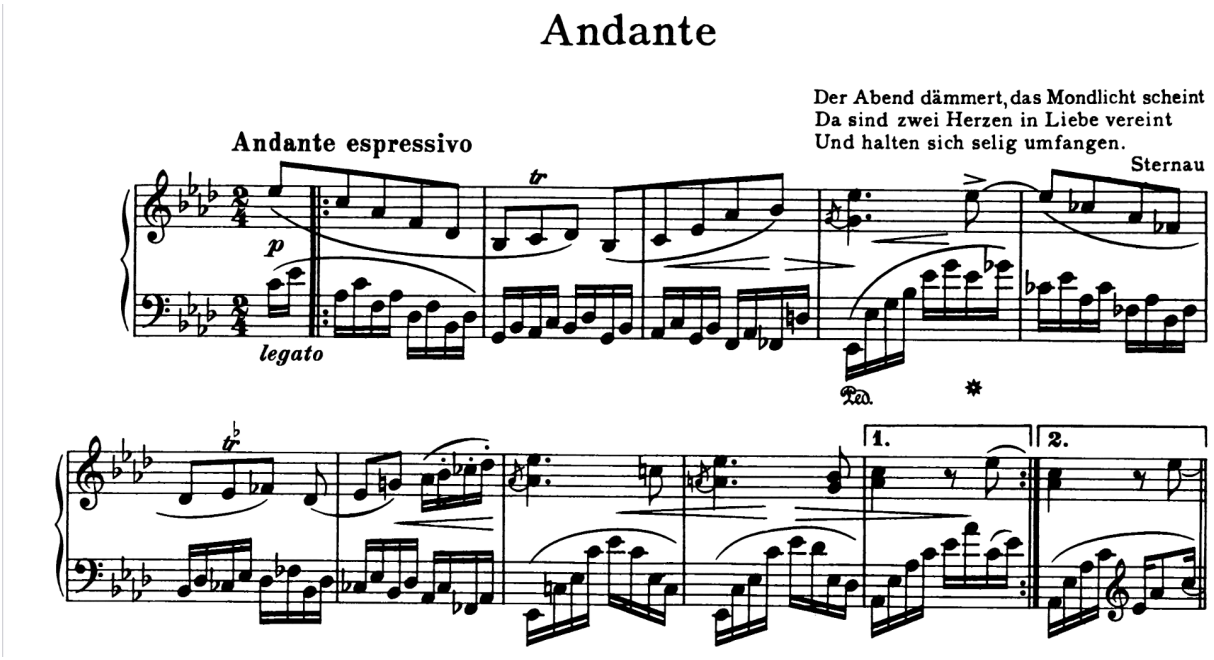
the tempo. The poem, reproduced in its entirety below alongside George Bozarth's translation, resonates with the other A-flat major themes we have encountered in the text of Brahms's songs (see Example 4.5).[267] The poem projects youthful exuberance and capacious desire, though in this case the poet's desires are given at least partial satisfaction, complete with a vivid allusion to Catullus 5 ("Vivamus, mea lesbian") and the long literary tradition of "kiss" poems it inspired. Airborne susurrations—love wafts and rustles with the fragrance of roses—play an important role in the refrain, lending the poem a light pastoral feel. Notice the presence of several keywords present in the A-flat major songs, which connect that key with evening and moonlight.

Example 4.5
"Junge Liebe," C.O. Sternau

Der Abend dämmert, das Mondlicht scheint,	Twilight is falling, moonlight shines,
Da sind zwei Herzen in Liebe vereint	there two hearts are united in love
Und halten sich selig umfangen.	and keep themselves enclosed in bliss.
Es weht und rauschet durch die Luft,	It wafts and rustles through the air,
Als brächten die Rosen all ihren Duft,	as if the roses were yielding all their fragrance,
Als kämen die Englein gegangen.	as if the little angels came on foot.
Ich küsse Dich zum ersten Mal,	I kiss you for the first time,
Ich küsse Dich viel tausend Mal.	I kiss you many thousand times.
I küsse Dich immer wieder;	I kiss you again and again;
Auf Deine Wangen lange Zeit	Down your cheeks, for a long time,
Rollt manche Träne der Seligkeit	roll many tears of blissfulness
Wie eine Perle nieder.	like pearls.
Die Stunde verrauscht, der Morgen scheint,	The hours pass away, the morning appears,
Wir sind noch immer in Liebe vereint	we are still united in love
Und halten uns selig umfangen.	and keep ourselves enclosed in bliss.
Es weht und rauschet durch die Luft,	It wafts and rustles through the air,
Als brächten die Rosen all ihren Duft,	as if the roses were yielding all their fragrance,
Als kämen die Englein gegangen.	as if the little angels came on foot.

[267] Translation by George Bozarth, "Brahms's *Lieder Ohne Worte*: The 'Poetic' Andantes of the Piano Sonatas, in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives: Papers Delivered at the International Brahms Conference, Washington, DC, 5-8 May 1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 361.

Example 4.6
Opening statement from Piano Sonata No. 3 in F Minor, Op. 5: II. Andante



Two curious features of the Andante enrich its meaning in connection with the poetic epigraph. First, the movement modulates three times in alternation between A-flat major and D-flat major, beginning in the one key and ending in the other. Either key makes sense for a major-key slow movement, because the Sonata itself is in F minor, to which A-flat major and D-flat major are both related by thirds. However, because the movement ends in D-flat major, George Bozarth describes A-flat major as an "illusory home key."[268] Here there are hints of Kreisler: illusions were standard fare in Hoffmann's writings and especially in the Kreisler stories. For example, in *Kater Murr* Master Abraham is a famous illusionist, Kreisler is dogged by visions of his spectral Doppelgänger, and the entire court of Sieghartsweiler is, in fact, a sham. Illusions are peppered throughout the *Kreisleriana* stories as well. The key characteristic description for A-flat major from Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club, to which the opening melody in the Andante

[268] Bozarth, "The 'Poetic' Andantes," 362.

could refer, is one example. Recall, Kreisler envisions himself floating in the ether, surrounded by intertwining flaming circles. Upon closer inspection, these circles turn out to be "tender spirits" rustling all about him and "moving their golden wings in magnificently voluminous tones and chords." Brahms begins the Andante quietly in A-flat with a voluminous falling thirds chain, which rises and falls and rises again (see Example 4.6). The moment recalls the slow beating of "golden wings" in Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy. Likewise, in the "miraculously rustling" bass, intervallic thirds sound against the treble melody and suggest simple harmonies changing with each eighth note, alternatively minor and major. Brahms avoids sounding a straightforward triadic harmony until m. 4, when he lands on an E-flat major chord (V), and he puts off a definitive statement of the tonic until mm. 8-10. The resulting tonal ambiguity presents a wonderfully simple harmonic mystery and further contributes to the sense that A-flat major is an illusory key. As we will see, A-flat major occupies an illusory space in the Serenade as well.

The second feature that enriches the epigraph text is a pair of allusions occurring at the end of the movement. The melody from the D-flat major postlude beginning in m. 144 alludes to the German folksong "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" and the chorale "Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten." Though these allusions occur in the five-flat key, the postlude brings together musical themes from both key areas, potentially as a representation of the lovers entwined, and indicates that the allusive subtexts can be viewed as a single narrative rather than as explicitly referring to A-flat or D-flat major sections in isolation.[269] "Steh' ich in finst'rer Mitternacht" builds directly upon themes of contented love we glimpsed in Sternau, describing a soldier away on duty recalling his faithful lover back home. Distance—a common theme in A-flat major songs—notably factors into the equation now. Perhaps the conflation of lovers together and apart

[269] Dillon Parmer, "Brahms and the Poetic Motto: A Hermeneutic Aid?" *The Journal of* Musicology 15, no. 3 (Summer, 1997), 361-4.

comments on the come-and-go nature of conscription. In any event, the chorale is an invocation to put your trust in God because everything will turn out all right if your faith is strong. Both allusions in the D-flat major section emphasize faithfulness in concert with the Sternau poem.

Brahms builds upon this narrative in the fourth and fifth movements. The fourth movement, Intermezzo, subtitled "Rückblick" (and also marked Andante) inflects the narrative that began in the second movement by alluding to its themes. The original mood has soured, as is evident in the B-flat minor key signature (which demonstrates the salience of the major/minor dichotomy), the fragmented or broken nature of the musical reminiscences, and the persistent triplet motto that recalls of the "fate motive" from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Kalbeck associated this movement with another poem by Sternau entitled "Bitte," which describes the bitter end of a relationship. Its imagery includes withered trees and barren landscapes, negating the pastoral qualities Brahms seems typically to have associated with A-flat major. As Dillon Parmer succinctly puts it, "summer love becomes wintry desolation."[270] The fifth movement seems to focus on the aftermath of the relationship because it features prominent references to Joachim's "*Frei aber einsam*" (F-A-E) motto at the beginning of the first F major section in mm. 39-40 and 52-3. In this way, the quality of presentness Sternau's poem "Der Abend dämmert" bestows on A-flat major comes to serve a memorial function within the Sonata, in much the same way it does in the Serenade.

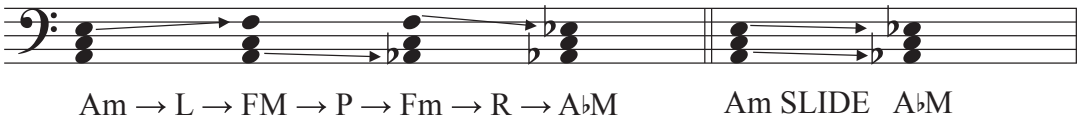
Harmony and Form

I have suggested above how A-flat major functions in the Adagio non troppo by way of the characteristics Brahms evidently associated with the key, but on strictly harmonic grounds it is an unlikely choice for the secondary key of a movement in A minor that is part of a work in A

[270] Parmer, "Brahms and the Poetic Motto," 366.

major. From a Neo-Riemannian perspective, A Major (the home key of the work) and A minor (the home key of the movement) are very closely related, separated from one another by a single P transformation. By contrast, it takes consecutive Riemannian transformations to modulate from either A minor or A major to A-flat major. A minor to A-flat major requires a secondary operation called the "slide," in which L, P, and R transformations are applied successively (see Example 4.7). Naturally, the move from A major to A-flat major requires an additional P transformation ahead of the slide. A-flat major only shares three pitches with A minor: C, F, and G; by contrast, it shares only two enharmonically equivalent pitches with A major: D-flat/C-sharp and A-flat/G-sharp (see Example 4.8).

Example 4.7
Riemannian transformation from A minor to A-flat major



Example 4.8
Shared pitches between A major, A minor, and A-flat major scales

A major	A		B		C#	D		E		F#		G#
A minor	A		B	C		D		E	F	(F#)	G	(G#)
A-flat major		Bb		C	Db		Eb		F		G	Ab

Notably, the three key signatures share just one pitch (requiring enharmonic equivalence to do so): G-sharp/A-flat. This pitch is conspicuous within the primary theme of the Adagio non troppo because it is the seed from which Brahms cultivates his harmonic ambiguity. G-sharp is the only accidental pitch in the archetypal ostinato module, where it establishes the conflict between A minor and E major, and the augmented second relationship between F (the uppermost note in the ostinato) and G-sharp opens the door for a Phrygian modal interpretation. It also opens up the space for the eventual modulation to A-flat major.

The manner in which the first accidental foreshadows the key of the second theme is similar to the opening gambit from the Op. 60 Piano Quartet, whose first movement, coincidentally, was written in the mid-1850s, before Brahms began work on the Second Serenade. The first movement of the Quartet is in C minor, but Brahms prominently introduces the dissonant pitch E-natural toward the end of his slow introduction. This tone jibes neither with the decaying harmony G major (V), nor with the tonic. Its function, according to Peter H. Smith, is to open up the harmonic space of the third movement, an Andante in E major. Because the other movements are all in C minor, the slow movement appears like an oasis amid a barren desert.[271] A-flat major performs a similar role in the Adagio non troppo. An interesting wrinkle in the Adagio non troppo is that A-flat is not truly foreign to the home key; rather, it appears as a disguised version of G-sharp, simultaneously anticipating a return to the tonic when construed as the leading tone and existing as a separate entity by virtue of its enharmonic respelling.

Owing to its location within the movement, we consider A-flat major the secondary key in the Adagio non troppo; however, we must also note that A-flat major is actually the movement's first stable tonal center. Because the key seems at odds with the home key, it is important to understand how Brahms opened up this harmonic space. Following the tonally ambiguous primary theme and the disorienting *tempesta* sequence in the transition, it would be virtually impossible for someone without perfect pitch to comprehend aurally how the new key, which is one half step removed from the tonic of the movement, relates to the old one, or if we have actually gone anywhere at all. In fact, this surreal modulation is unlike anything else in Brahms's instrumental oeuvre. While the tempestuous beginning of the transition between mm. 18-21 may sound bizarre at first, a close reading of the score demonstrates that the modulatory

[271] Peter H. Smith, *Expressive Forms in Brahms's Instrumental Music: Structure and Meaning in His* Werther *Quartet* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 16-7, 89.

process in question is highly controlled. The relative distance between keys illustrated above in Example 4.7 is needlessly convoluted and does not reflect the actual transformative process Brahms used to move from A minor to A-flat major. Its unusual harmonic course features common-tone chord changes and dominant-tonic resolutions in alternation, which confuse our fleeting sense of a harmonic center and confer a fantastic, dreamlike atmosphere upon the new key. A brief examination of the modulatory process in the *tempesta* sequence will help to elucidate this point.

Brahms begins the *tempesta* by replacing the C major harmony in m.17 with the C diminished harmony in m. 18. Diminished seventh chords famously possess the potential to open up multiple harmonic spaces, because lowering any constituent pitch by half step while sustaining the other three forms a different dominant seventh harmony. Brahms first capitalizes on the ambiguous quality of these symmetrical chords by avoiding establishing a backward-relating dominant function for his diminished chords. The C diminished seventh chord in m. 18 relates to C major, the key signature supertonic and newly established local tonic, instead of D-flat major or B-flat minor, keys in which the harmony plays a functional role. Brahms's transformation of the C major chord into a C diminished seventh chord exhibits a modulatory process consistent with Neo-Riemannian theory. Specifically, it looks like a botched P transformation in which the fifth falls in unison with the third over a common-tone bass. The simultaneous emergence of A, the enharmonic equivalent of B-double-flat, thus appears to be a last-ditch effort to cling to the key signature tonic. At the end of m. 18, C falls by half step to B, executing a permutation of Riemann's leading-tone exchange. The parsimonious chord progression concludes with a B dominant seventh chord resolving via cadential $^{6}_{4}$ to E minor. In theory, Brahms could have transformed the C diminished seventh chord into any of four different

dominant harmonies, each of which could resolve authentically to the major or minor tonic or deceptively to a relative minor or major key. A single diminished harmony resolved in this manner yields twelve distinct tonic harmonies and sixteen distinct cadential progressions (see Example 4.9).

Example 4.9
Diminished harmony family tree

C^{o7}		$E\flat^{o7}$		$G\flat^{o7}/F\sharp^{o7}$		A^{o7}			
$Fdom^7$		$A\flat dom^7$		$Bdom^7$		$Ddom^7$		$Fdom^7$	
I/vi	i/VI	I/vi	i/VI	I/vi	i/VI	I/vi	VI/vi	I/vi	i/VI
B♭M	B♭m	D♭M	D♭m	EM	Em	GM	Gm	B♭M	B♭m
Gm	G♭M	B♭m	AM	C♯/D♭m	CM	Em	E♭m	Gm	G♭M

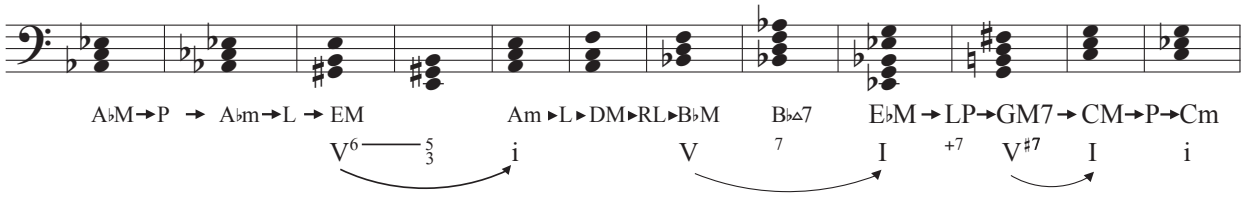
Brahms reuses this kaleidoscopic modulatory process in mm. 20-21. E minor becomes an E diminished seventh chord, which then resolves by half step in the bass to an E-flat dominant seventh chord. He once again fails to establish a backward-relating dominant function for the diminished seventh chord, further disorienting the listener. Brahms eschews an exact reprise of the two-measure sequence by prolonging the dominant harmony and taking advantage of the harmonic indeterminacy inherent in the progression: he basks in the realm of E-flat for nine measures and cadences in A-flat major instead of A-flat minor.[272] The half-step resolutions from C-B and E-E-flat clearly recall the initial *pianto* gesture, displaced here to the lowest voice. In fact, every major transition in the movement hinges upon the descending half-step motto. *Pianti*

[272] Margaret Notley, "Late-Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music and the Cult of the Classical Adagio," *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 1 (Summer 1999), 49. Notley describes the rising third in the bassoon as "opening up space" for the modulation to A-flat major. Her analysis focuses on the necessity to prepare A-flat major because it is the "wrong" chord; however, as I hope to have demonstrated, A-flat major was equally as plausible an option from the outset based on the indeterminate nature of the diminished seventh chords. Furthermore, once could understand the sequence beginning with the C major chord in measure 17 instead of the diminished chord in measure 18, which would undermine the perfectly sequential precept because it calls for resolution on E major in measure 19. In this hypothetical situation, A-flat major is, in fact, the correct resolution for the prolonged E-flat dominant seventh chord. However one views this progression, it is clearly meant to be unpredictable and disorienting.

abound in the *tempesta*, including the aforementioned bass resolutions, the lowering of pitches to form diminished chords (the third and fifth in m. 18, and the fifth alone in m. 20), and initiating the falling third in the high winds and horn (mm. 18 and 20). Later, Brahms implements a leading tone exchange to effect the transition and modulation from A-flat major to C minor between the secondary theme and the development, letting A-flat slip to G in the bass (m. 56-7). He reuses the A-flat to G half step before the false reprise (m. 68), and then F resolving to E—the exact pitches cresting the initial ostinato—with the arrival of the recapitulation (m. 75). The prominence of this rhetorical gesture underscores the melancholy and lamenting character of the movement, reminding the listener at every turn that the affective situation is a sad one.

One last thing to note about the modulatory process in the *tempesta* is that the manner in which Brahms alternates between common-tone transformations and dominant-tonic resolutions recalls the modulatory process in "Kreisler's Musico-Poetic Club" (see Example 4.10). Brahms's approximates the harmonic movement from A-flat major to A minor that opens Kreisler's fantasy (and effectively reverses its course) in his twice repeated progression. Both begin with a parallel transformation followed by a leading tone transformation and end with a dominant tonic resolution. As previously mentioned, Brahms's version of the P and L transformations are more expressive because they are based on seventh harmonies, especially the P transformation (C major to C diminished). Additionally, Kreisler's bookends (A-flat major and C minor) correspond with Brahms's harmonic trajectory from secondary theme to development.

Example 4.10
Harmonic analysis of Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy



The arrival of A-flat major in the Adagio non troppo evokes the same sense of wonder as it did in the beginning of Kreisler's key characteristic fantasy. In fact, the language Hoffmann uses and the situation he describes overlap with that of the poems that Brahms set in his A-flat major Lieder. Hoffmann begins his description: "What is it that rustles so miraculously, so strangely around me?"[273] Rustling leaves, whispering breezes, and murmuring water appear frequently in Brahms's A-flat major Lieder; the keyword *rauschen*, specifically, occurs in three of those songs. Winged flight appears twice in the earliest songs and finds its parallel in Hoffmann's "invisible . . . golden wings." Likewise Brahms's fragrant blossoms, epitomized by "the trembling blossoms of the fragrant Linden tree" in the final line of "Nachwirkung," evoke Hoffmann's "ethereal fragrance." Yearning, though not specifically named, is a crucial trait of A-flat major in "Kreisler's Musico Poetic-Club," though we are left to infer this on the basis of Kreisler's ensuing description of A-flat minor. The "tender spirits" associated with the major key transport Kreisler to the land of eternal yearning in the parallel minor: "Ah, they are carrying me to the land of unending desire."[274] Though Hoffmann explicitly associates yearning with the parallel minor, the close connection between the two keys is evident in the narrative thread, which imbues the major key with that same sense of yearning. And in fact we see Brahms capitalize on the yearning quality of the flat third in m. 33, where the oboe ascends to C-flat5 on the third beat. While this C-flat is a component of the applied diminished harmony vii^{o7}/V, the chromatic tone audibly negates the tonic third upon which the A-flat major melody began in m. 30 in the service of a phrase-ending *pianto* gesture. Finally, Hoffmann's description clearly

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[273] E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*. *Blätter aus dem Tagebuche eines reisenden Enthusiasten* vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Bamberg: C.F. Kunz, 1819), 306. "Was rauscht denn so wunderbar, so seltsam um mich her? – Unsichtbare Fittige wehen auf und nieder –ich schwimme im duftigen Aether. – Aber der Duft englänzt in flammenden, geheimnißvoll verschlungenen Kreisen. Holde Geister sind es, die die goldnen Glügel regen in überschwenglich herrlichen Klangen und Akkorden."

[274] Hoffmann, *Fantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, 306. "Ach! – sie tragen mich ins Land der weigen Sehnsucht"

describes a dreamscape, the very same condition of liminal consciousness uniting many of the A-flat major songs.

Hoffmann's influence appears to guide Brahms's treatment of the secondary theme relative to the surrounding material, too. The A-flat major section concludes with the strongest perfect authentic cadence in the Adagio non troppo, which suggests that the secondary theme is actually the focal point of the movement. Interpreting the music in A-flat major as a dislocated primary theme reveals a Hoffmannian touch. Recall that Hoffmann begins *Kater Murr* with an entry in Murr's autobiography: though the cat's story appears to be the primary story based on the novel's title and on its location within the alternating sequence, Hoffmann's real focus is Kreisler's biography. Contra Hoffmann, who interrupts Murr's complete thoughts with fragmentary entries from Kreisler's story, Brahms locates the complete theme between fragmentary musical sections. The theme in A minor is both harmonically ambiguous and transitory. Its initial statement ends with an incomplete authentic cadence in the relative major and its recapitulation terminates with a plagal IAC in the parallel major. The primary theme always sounds slightly unresolved, especially when compared to the strong resolution in the secondary theme. Inge van Rij describes the power of fragmentary gestures in his monograph *Brahms's Song Collections*: [275]

> The fragment is defined by its contradictions: it is both complete and incomplete, self-contained and yet part of something bigger, defined but indefinite. These contradictions cannot be resolved within the work itself without destroying its very essence.

Unsurprisingly, van Rij explores Brahms's predisposition toward musical fragments vis-à-vis *Kater Murr*, and his comments underscore why the formal construction of the Adagio non troppo

[275] Inge Van Rij, *Brahms's Song Collections*, 19.

is so striking. Ending the movement with incomplete musical statements also evokes Hoffmann's fragmentary style in the Kreisler stories more generally.

Another way that Brahms establishes the fragmentary nature of the movement is by implementing audible structural markers that are commensurate with sonata form but failing to fully articulate it in any recognizable fashion.[276] Specifically, Brahms does not reprise the secondary theme in the recapitulation and therefore bypasses the crucial moment that James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy term Essential Structural Closure (ESC).[277] A detailed overview of the sonata form benchmarks in the Adagio non troppo follows.

Brahms presents his primary theme (P) in mm. 1-8. He insinuates a second iteration of the P theme in m. 9, but subtle adjustments to the ostinato in m. 10 coupled with modifications to the wind melody in m. 11 seamlessly initiate the transition to C major, which arrives at the halfway point of the second eight-measure phrase in m. 13. We feel a strong sense of harmonic resolution at this moment, not only because of the V-I cadence from G major to C major, but also because the strings and winds coalesce for the first time at this moment. The consequent phrase is fully homorythmic and finally evinces the pastoral qualities insinuated by the work's titular genre and the movement's 12/8 time signature and trochaic meter. Brahms's transition is a dissolving transition type, ending in m. 17 with an IAC in C major. This is the medial caesura (III:IAC MC). The second half of the transition (mm. 13-17) emerges like a brief ray of sunlight between the cloistered P theme and the ensuing *tempesta*. The resolution in C major underscores the key signature tonic because it is the mediant key of A minor, and III is a standard harmonic

[276] Listeners familiar with Brahms's Serenade in D Major might remember that the third movement Adagio non troppo in that work was in complete sonata form, and so the third movement in the Serenade in A Major deviates from the earlier generic model.

[277] James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 20. "ESC represents the tonal goal of the entire sonata form, the tonal and cadential point toward which the trajectory of the whole movement had been driving . . . it is only here where the movement's tonic is fully called forth, stabilized as a reality as opposed to a mere potential."

destination for minor-key P themes. However, C major functions as the flatted submediant of E major or E Phrygian dominant, which, in a sense, "predicts" the modulation from C major to A-flat major because it enacts the same harmonic progression from "I" to flat-VI/"I". This interpretation would be in keeping with Brahms's tendency to favor Neopolitan relationships (i.e. flat-II and flat-VI), especially in his earlier instrumental compositions.[278]

At this moment Brahms inserts a long and expressive caesura fill (CF), undercutting the first moment of harmonic clarity. At first, listeners may be unsure about the formal function of the CF due to its startling emergence, but it was relatively standard fare in sonata-form compositions from Schubert onward to feature modulating caesura-fill, and expanded rhetorical gestures of this type "provide an opportunity for careful compositional fashioning, elegant or special effects, wit, or an exquisitely poised attenuation of previously gained energy combined with a psychological preparation for the S-to-come," per Hepokoski and Darcy.[279] That said, nineteenth-century composers usually inserted modulatory CF to correct an issue with the original MC, whereas Brahms undoes a relatively effective MC. Brahms declines the C major medial caesura and inserts a twelve-measure CF modulating to A-flat major, a tonal *non sequitur*. This decision marks the passage and the ensuing S theme with additional expressive weight based on its striking difference from the norm.

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[278] Several authors consider the "Neapolitan complex" in Brahms's music, including: James Webster, "Schubert's Sonata Form and Brahms's First Maturity I & II," *19th-Century Music* vol. 2, no. 1 (July, 1978): 18-35, and vol. 3, no. 1, (July, 1979): 52-71; Christopher Wintle, "The 'Sceptered Pall': Brahms's Progressive Harmony," in *Brahms 2*, ed. Michael Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 197-222; Margaret Notley, "Brahms's Cello Sonata in F Major and Its Genesis: A Study in Half-Step Relations," in *Brahms Studies*, vol. 1, ed. David Brodbeck, Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 139-60; Peter H. Smith, "Brahms and the Neapolitan complex: [flat]II, [flat]VI, and their multiple functions in the first movement of the F-Minor Clarinet Sonata," in *Brahms Studies*, vol. 2, ed. David Brodbeck (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 169-208. Brahms's full-fledged modulation to flat-VI for the secondary theme in the Adagio non troppo demonstrates a stronger commitment to the Neapolitan-inspired harmony (flat-VI relative to the IAC: III MC in C major) than his typical, mid-exposition tonicization of the harmony.

[279] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 41.

The V-I cadence leading into the secondary theme (S) in m. 30 reveals itself as the new MC, this time in A-flat Major (flat-I: IAC MC). S elides with the MC in A-flat just like the tremolo in m. 17 elided with the IAC in C major. Though S does not arrive until m. 30, its length—26-measures—is significantly longer than the primary theme. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the longer S features overlapping variation techniques, whose functional purpose relative to sonata form is to delay Essential Expositional Closure (EEC). When comparing the relative length of the two themes, P is eight measures long, strictly speaking, though it may be perceived as 12 or even 17 measures when combined with the transitional material. The omnipresent ostinato might cause some listeners to group the two phrases P and TR together, especially in light of the expressive caesura fill, which also serves a TR-like function and initially seems to contrast strongly with the musical trajectory of the first 17 measures. In either case, the length of the theme in A-flat major and its varied presentation eschews the subordinate moniker.

The PAC in m. 56 is clearly the moment of EEC, and so follows a short development section, as expected in 19th-century sonata form movements. (Brahms does not include a closing-zone, or C.) The development features a return of the ostinato melody and generally builds upon music from the primary thematic zone and the transition, as we would expect based upon its minor orientation. This half-rotational type raises a rhetorical question relative to the harmonic trajectory of the movement and its affective narrative. When developments in minor-key movements cannot "burst through the MC point" to include materials from the S-theme, it may indicate the inability of light to overcome dark, and can serve as "powerful representations of tension, of frustration, of hopes dashed."[280] In the Adagio non troppo, Brahms's decision to

[280] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 217.

dwell on the minor key themes in his development has very real implications relative to the conclusion of the movement.

After a false reprise in mm. 68-9, Brahms initiates the final sequential push toward the recapitulation. He features a sixteenth note *pianto* motto borrowed from the initial wind melody, performed by a solo horn in m. 69, whose expressive vertical harmonies and their resolution to dominant seventh chords is reminiscent of the thunderclap thirds in the transition. Here Brahms replaces the vertical diminished seventh chords with Neapolitan harmonies, but the bass line outlines a diminished chord in its stepwise descent of a tritone resolving to dominant seventh harmonies. Because the primary theme begins with an E major/E Phrygian dominant harmony, the development cannot end with the traditional dominant chord, and ends instead with a German augmented sixth chord in A minor, which resolves to the modal articulation of E on the downbeat of m. 75.

Brahms disguises the beginning of the recapitulation by omitting the archetypal string ostinato in its first six measures. A version of the theme in diminution can be observed in the violas, but it is difficult to perceive by ear alone because it only presents the ascending arpeggio and lacks the trochaic rhythmic signature. Brahms injects a sense of disorder into the return of the P theme by way of this omission—the listener may question whether we have actually arrived at the recapitulation—and by two additional melodic alterations. First, the basses and cellos seem to be on a corrective course toward reinstituting the ostinato in m. 76, but in m. 77 they perform the stretto response to the wind theme instead, finally returning to their typical role in measure 84. It is the only point in the movement where the strings perform the wind melody. The second and more poignant alteration occurs in mm. 83-4 when the strings switch from arco to pizzicato, transforming the sustained and lugubrious ostinato into a softer and more delicate

version of itself. Then, in m. 84, the archetypal wind melody is transformed to recall the clarinet motto from the secondary theme in mm. 44-6. The original presentation of this motto occurred during the initial presentation of the chromatic *lamento*, which posits its recollection in m. 84 as a sad memory casting a pall on the remainder of the movement.

Hepokoski and Darcy refer to the final resolution in the parallel major as the "extra burden" of minor-mode sonatas, and state the "possibility of a tonic-minor-to-tonic-major trajectory (or the represented inability to attain that transformation) is rich in metaphorical implication," namely the aforementioned trope of darkness to light or the overcoming of turbulence.[281] Though the movement ends with an A-major chord, Brahms hardly commits to the parallel major in a decisive manner. When it first arrives in the ostinato in m. 85 it evokes the same modal character as the E Phrygian Dominant/A minor version. And nine measures later the movement ends abruptly with an expanded plagal cadence in mm. 91-3. While Brahms technically satisfies the extra burden of the minor key, it feels artificial on account of its modal articulation, the plagal cadence, the missing second theme, and the lack of ESC, which leads the listener to question whether or not the difficult situation was actually overcome. Recalling the work that it took to introduce the secondary theme, the lack of S content in the development, the recollection of the *lamento* melody in the recapitulation, and the insincere commitment to A major at the conclusion of the movement, Brahms indicates that the minor-key sadness has not been overcome. If anything, the conclusion suggests a "grin and bear it" ethos.

James Webster concludes that the movement is "an original synthesis of A B A structure and sonata style."[282] He asserts that the second theme in A-flat major "could not possibly bear full recapitulation" because it is considerably longer than the first theme in A minor, thematically

[281] Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 306.
[282] Webster, "Brahms's First Maturity (II)," 60.

"heterogeneous," and in a remote key relative to the tonic. Elaine Sisman describes the movement as a "symphonic *Mischformen*," citing Webster, but she also emphasizes that fifty percent of Brahms's instrumental slow movements were in ternary form, which suggests that A B A form may be the main principle in play here.[283] She also points out that Mozart and Beethoven had already set the precedent for slow, sonata form movements without a reprise of the second theme.[284] It is notable that both of these authors emphasize the dissimilarity between the first and second themes in this movement despite their strong motivic and thematic connections, as demonstrated in Chapter 3. Finally, Margaret Notley suggests that melodic considerations determined the movement's form, and that analysts tend to place too much weight on the formal construction of Adagios in any event. I concur with these perspectives, but what all three writers overlook is the expressive narrative potential of a form that mixes different types.

Within the context of the movement, the secondary theme in A-flat major unfolds like a dreamscape, memory, or parallel universe, a feeling that is deepened at the conclusion of the movement when it is not recapitulated. The proximity of the keynotes A and A-flat makes it seem as though A-flat major occupies a subconscious realm within the harmonic trajectory of the movement and the Serenade as a whole. Because it is located precisely at the center of the Adagio non troppo, which in turn is the midpoint of the Serenade, it can be viewed as the expressive heart of the work. To borrow science fiction terminology relating to parallel dimensions, the flat-major tonic harmony exists just *out of phase* with A minor and A major. While A-flat major literally occupies the same space as the parallel keys in A, it is ultimately incompatible with both. Because the S theme is not reprised, Brahms requires a listener attuned

[283] Sisman, "Brahms's Slow Movements: Reinventing the 'Closed' Forms," in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives: Papers Delivered at the International Brahms Conference, Washington, DC, 5-8 May 1983* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 85, 100.
[284] Sisman, "Brahms's Slow Movements," 100.

to the formal markers of sonatas to "complete" the recapitulation from memory. Whom or what, then, did Brahms intend to memorialize? Biographical evidence suggests a clear answer to this question.

Agathe von Siebold

Brahms began writing the Serenade in A major during his courtship of Agathe von Siebold. He composed the Adagio non troppo, however, and finished the rest of the work, after she had broken off their engagement. The secondary theme in A-flat major is unusually expressive by virtue of several features, including its function within the truncated sonata form movement, its key relative to the tonic, and its stand-alone key characteristics based upon standardized themes in his A-flat major Lieder. Recall that Brahms composed eleven songs in A-flat major over a twenty-five year period between 1852-1877. Two of these, "Ein Sonnett" and "An eine Äolsharfe," he wrote for Siebold herself in 1858. An important feature of the latter is that it is the only song in the collection whose narrator is female (Brahms's interpretation), which strongly associates the song with Siebold, specifically.[285] Using these two songs as a benchmark, we can observe among the A-flat major songs a basic chronology in parallel with Brahms and Siebold's relationship, which suggests the key of A-flat major as a metonym for Siebold, specifically, and the artist's love more broadly. The first three songs in A-flat major, "Nachwirkung," Mondnacht," and "Nachtigallen schwingen lustig," predate their relationship and define the general terms of the A-flat major key characteristic; "Ein Sonnett" and "An eine Äolsharfe" were written for Siebold during their summer of love and apply the key characteristic

[285] "Mondnacht" is definitively gender neutral. Also, Brahms published this song under a pseudonym and never bestowed it with an opus number, casting it as an outsider relative to the other songs in A-flat major. To the general public unaware of Brahms's works published under another name, "An eine Äolsharfe" would be the only A-flat major with the potential for a female narrator.

to Brahms's lived experience; "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden," "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," "Ruhe, Süssliebchen," "Sehnsucht," and "An ein Bild" are more melancholy than the first five songs and demonstrate Brahms grappling with the end of their relationship; and "O kühler Wald" bids adieu to the key of A-flat major (in his Lieder) and with it, the composer's attachment to Agathe von Siebold.

Brahms fell in love with the soprano Agathe von Siebold while on summer holiday in Göttingen in 1858. He composed "Ein Sonnett," "An eine Äolsharfe," and other songs for her during this stay. After leaving Göttingen for his second three-month stint in Detmold, he began work on two orchestral compositions: the Serenade in A Major and the unpublished *Brautgesang* (Bridal Song), a work for women's choir and orchestra that begins with a solo soprano. Brahms sent an early draft of the latter to Göttingen for Siebold to sing through with her teacher, Brahms's friend Julius Otto Grimm, as an overture to their engagement in late 1858 or early 1859.[286] Following the conclusion of his autumn tenure in the court of Leopold III, Brahms paid a brief visit to Göttingen to see Siebold in January 1859 before traveling to Leipzig to premiere his Piano Concerto in D minor. By the end of the month, he had called off their engagement. Or rather, Brahms attempted to scale back the seriousness of their relationship while implying they could still remain together, a move that was clearly designed to goad Siebold into ending things entirely: hence Brahms's later admission that he had "played the scoundrel toward Agathe."[287]

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[286] Swafford and Berry suggest that they were engaged in January 1859; however, the Brahms Institut in Lübeck dates Brahms's engagement photo where he is shown wearing a ring to 1858. The exact timeline is murky because there is no surviging evidence of this event in the correspondence between Brahms and Siebold. In the end, the exact date of their engagement is a moot point because Brahms was already making overtures in that direction in 1858, having composed his *Brautgesang* (Bridal Song)—an unpublished work for women's choir and orchestra—that year and sent it to Göttingen for Agathe to sing. See Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1997; Vintage Books, 1999), 188; Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 32-3; Ernst Milster, *Johannes Brahms* (10050), 1858, Photograph, Brahms-Institut, accessed 7 July, 2021, https://www.brahmsinstitut.de/index.php?cID=509.

[287] Agathe recalled his letter precipitating their breakup as follows: "I love you! I must see you again! But I cannot wear fetters! Write to me whether I am to come back, to take you in my arms, to kiss you and tell you that I love you." See Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 192.

When Brahms ended his romantic relationship with Clara Schumann, he wounded her and strained their friendship, but overall the decision bore little impact on his social life. They remained lifelong friends and he remained a de facto member of the Schumann family. In fact, Brahms remained on friendly terms with all of the women he loved except for Siebold.[288] They were never truly reconciled and never saw one another again following their reunion in January 1859. In the process, Brahms also severely damaged his close, five-year-long friendship with Grimm, which dated back to November 1853 and was itself born out of strife in the wake of Brahms's failed concert tour with Remenyi. Throughout his life, Brahms occasionally provided reasons why he never married, in the process singling out his relationship with Siebold as his best chance at matrimony.[289] Siebold also dealt with the pain of their breakup for her entire life as recollected in her remembrances.[290]

At various junctions following the dissolution of their relationship, Brahms grappled with its aftermath musically. Let us now consider the A-flat major Lieder. The following timeline postdating Brahms's courtship of Agathe will provide more clarity as to how the key appears linked to their broken engagement. Compared to the first five songs in that key, the final six adopt an altogether more somber, if not outright pessimistic, tone. Brahms composed the first of this second group of A-flat major songs, "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden" ("Are these sorrows, are these joys"), in 1861. It was published in 1865 as the third song in the Op. 33 *Romanzen aus Ludwig Tiecks Magelone*. The overarching plot of Tieck's work *Liebesgeschichte der schönen Magelone und des Grafen Peter von Provence* (*Love-Story of the Beautiful Magelone and Count Peter of Provence*) tells the story of Count Peter, who falls in love with

[288] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 323-4.
[289] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 324.
[290] Agathe von Siebold, "Allerlei aus meinem Leben," and "In memoriam J. B." in Hans Küntzel, *Brahms in Göttingen: Mit Erinnerungen von Agathe Schütte, geb. Von Siebold* (Göttingen: Herodot, 1985).

Magelone. Though he is separated from her for a time, they are reunited happily at its end. Tieck's story traces back to a 15th century French *roman*, which itself is based on an oral tale from the 13th century. Its origin in French medieval chivalry loosely connects it with "Ein Sonnett," which was subtitled by Brahms "Aus dem 13. Jahrhundert." Johann Gottfried Herder purportedly based "Ein Sonnett" upon a poem by Thibaut IV, Count of Champagne (1201-1253). "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden" was later repurposed by Tieck with fifteen of the eighteen poems from *Liebesgeschichte der schönen Magelone* in a new collection titled *Des Jünglings Liebe* (*Of the Young Man's Love*) and titled "Zweifel" ("Doubt").

In this long ballad recalling lost love, the poet wrestles with his emotions, trying to disentangle his conflicted emotional state. The first two stanzas describe a man who desires a fresh start in love. His narrative describes the tearful struggle to move on from a previous relationship even as he feels amorous stirrings renewed: *Durch die Dämmerung der Tränen/Seh ich ferne Sonnen stehn—/Welches Schmachten! Welches Sehnen!/Wag ich's? Soll ich näher gehn?* (Through the twilight of my tears/I can see distant suns—/What yearning! What longing!/Dare I? Shall I draw nearer?). In the ensuing two stanzas he explores the depths of his sadness and expresses his fears that new relationships will not live up to the one he mourns. The fourth stanza ends with the lines *Ach, Lust ist nur tieferer Schmerz,/Leben ist dunkles Grab* (Ah! Pleasure is but deeper pain,/Life a dark grave). The hopefulness expressed at the outset of the poem becomes despondency, and the speaker seems resigned to suffering. "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden" ends somewhat ambiguously with the unanswered question "must [he] suffer without deserving?" Brahms set the final two stanzas predominantly in 6/8 time, and the music becomes upbeat and valliant, prominently featuring horn calls that sound the muster. How we

read the final two stanzas of the text greatly impacts the way we hear this musical bravado: is the poet heartened, defiant, or fatalistic? Will future love bring joy or disaster?

"Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden" bears unmistakable textual similarities to "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof" (Op. 44, no. 10), a bleak part-song for women's voices that describes how unhappy love brought upon the death of the poetic subject (see Example 4.11). Both draw upon similar imagery: ambitious/ardent love, bitter tears, the grave. We know that Brahms was still ruminating on his feelings for Agathe in 1859-60 when he composed "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof" because it was the first composition to feature the "Agathe" cipher A-G-A-B-E, more famous for its second iteration in the Second String Sextet Op. 36. Intriguingly, in the light of the construction of the Adagio non troppo, the "Agathe" cipher in the part song is used as the melody in a basso ostinato; this similitary underscores the pessimistic, lovelorn bent of the ostinato in the Adagio non troppo.[291] These connections establish a through line uniting the Adagio non troppo, "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof," and "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden" around the themes of reckoning with love lost and the difficulty of moving on from a meaningful romantic relationship.

1864 was a monumental year for Brahms, a year of bitter reckoning about what might have been. That summer the composer visited Göttingen for the first time since 1858, having recently renewed his ties with Grimm. The familiar scenery inspired reminiscence and introspection. Following this trip, he once again sought to purge himself of any lingering love for Siebold, seeking catharsis through music. Brahms immediately began working on the Second Sextet Op. 36, which famously memorializes "Agathe" in the first movement using the musical

[291] Another potential connection between "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof" and the Adagio non troppo is that the partsong alternates between E minor and E major. While it never presents a modal blend of the keys, a similar sense of vagueness exists in this alternation. The song is in both the major and minor, designating neither as the primary key.

Example 4.11
Comparison of "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof"
and "Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden"

"Und gehst du über den Kirchhof"	"Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden"
Und gehst du über den Kirchhof, Da find'st du ein frisches Grab; Da senkten sie mit Thränen Ein schönes Herz hinab. Und fragst du, woran's gestorben? Kein Grabstein Antwort giebt; Doch leise flüstern die Winde, Es hatte zu heiß geliebt.	Sind es Schmerzen, sind es Freuden, Die durch meinen Busen ziehn? Alle alten Wünsche scheiden, Tausend neue Blumen blühn. Durch die Dämmerung der Tränen Seh ich ferne Sonnen stehn— Welches Schmachten! Welches Sehnen! Wag ich's? Soll ich näher gehn? Ach, und fällt die Träne nieder, Ist es dunkel um mich her; Dennoch kömmt kein Wunsch mir wieder, Zukunft ist von Hoffnung leer. So schlage denn, strebendes Herz, So fließet denn, Tränen, herab, Ach, Lust ist nur tieferer Schmerz, Leben ist dunkles Grab.— Ohne Verschulden Soll ich erdulden? Wie ist's, daß mir im Traum Alle Gedanken Auf und nieder schwanken! Ich kenne mich noch kaum. O hört mich, ihr gütigen Sterne, O höre mich, grünende Flur, Du, Liebe, den heiligen Schwur; Bleib ich ihr ferne, Sterb ich gerne. Ach! nur im Licht von ihrem Blick Wohnt Leben und Hoffnung und Glück!
If you go across the churchyard, You will find a freshly dug grave; They laid there, with tears, A lovely heart down to rest.	Are these sorrows, are these joys That steal through my heart? All my old desires depart, A thousand new flowers blossom.

And if you ask what caused its death,
No gravestone will give an answer;
But the winds will whisper softly
That it loved too ardently.[292]

Through the twilight of my tears
I can see distant suns—
What yearning! What longing!
Dare I? Shall I draw near?
Ah! and when my tears fall,
There is darkness all around me;
Yet if no desires return,
The future is void of hope.

So beat then, ambitious heart,
So flow then, tears, down my cheek,
Ah! pleasure is but deeper pain,
Life a dark grave.

Must I suffer
Without deserving?
How is it that in my dreams
All my thoughts
Drift up and down!
I hardly recognize myself.

Oh hear me, kindly stars,
Oh hear me, greening meadow,
Hear, O Love, my sacred vow;
If I remain far from her,
I shall gladly die.
Ah! only in the light of her eyes
Dwell life and hope and happiness![293]

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letters of her name A-G-A-B-E at the climax of its second theme (mm. 162-166). Contemporaneously, Brahms composed one of the most bitter song collections in his oeuvre (and the first published since Opus 19) in 1864, the nine *Lieder und Gesänge*, Opus 32. Swafford argues that the entirety of Op. 32 ruminates upon Brahms's romantic failings with Siebold.[294] The eighth song in this set is "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," and it is the only song in A-

[292] Translation by Emily Ezust, "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof," The LiederNet Archive, accessed 3 January 2022, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=70378.
[293] Translation by Richard Stokes, "Sind es Schmerzen," Oxford Lieder, accessed 3 January 2022, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/3541.
[294] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 192-3.

flat major that deals with a committed relationship. It is also the only truly negative text in this key.

As I wrote earlier in this chapter, Daumer's poem describes the tension between actively loving someone within a loveless relationship and simultaneously evokes love *and* love lost. Oddly, this poem may have served as consolation during this period of regret, as if to say, "look at what would have happened had you entered a marriage with Agathe." The "fetters" of marriage would have stifled the artist's love; passion would have given way to resigned commitment if allowed to persist.

The two songs that Brahms completed by 1868, "Ruhe, Süssliebchen" and "Sehnsucht" reflect the straightforward yearning and amorous qualities of the songs from 1858 and earlier; however, rather than describing youthful lovesickness, they reflect Brahms's continued bachelorhood. Brahms would have learned, of course, that Agathe von Siebold had returned to Göttingen and was newly married in April 1868, foreclosing the possibility of renewing their romantic involvement. He understood how he had wronged her, and he likely felt some relief on the occasion of her nuptials. Musical reminiscences of 1858 may have triggered thoughts of Siebold as well. Brahms published the last of the six songs composed specifically for her, "Die Liebende schreibt," in 1868 as the fifth song in Op. 47. "Ruhe, Süssliebchen" was the ninth song in *Die schöne Magelone*, published in its second volume. In Tieck's story, Peter sings this song to Magelone just before he leaves her and becomes lost at sea. Specifically, he pursues a raven who has taken a parcel of rings and flown away. The raven drops the rings into the sea, and Peter sets out in a boat to retrieve them. A fell wind arises and he is driven out to sea and away from Magelone. In a way, the disastrous premier of Brahms's Piano Concerto in Leipzig is like the raven and the wind: an unaccounted for force that drove a wedge between Brahms and Siebold.

The final stanza of "Ruhe, Süssliebchen" seems almost to foreshadow his departure (see Example 4.12). Tieck's word choice "Liebesphantasien"—love fantasies—implies a certain degree of falseness to the situation, literally realized when those "tender dreams" drift away upon the stream. Nature must finish Peter's lullaby because he himself must leave.

Example 4.12
Final stanza, "Ruhe Süssliebchen"

Murmelt fort, ihr Melodien,	Murmur on, you melodies;
Rausche nur, du stiller Bach.	Rush on you quiet brook.
Schöne Liebesphantasien	Beautiful love fantasies
Sprechen in den Melodien,	Speak in the melodies,
Zarte Träume schwimmen nach.	Gentle dreams float after them.
Durch den flüsternden Hain	Through the whispering grove,
Schwärmen goldene Bienelein	Golden bees swarm
Und summen zum Schlummer dich ein.	And hum you to sleep.[295]

Though "Sehnsucht" was not a part of the *Magelone* song cycle, it seems to describe Peter's situation immediately after becoming exiled from his lover (see Example 4.13). The complementary nature of the two songs from 1868 is reminiscent of the interplay between the pair from 1858, "Ein Sonnett" and "An eine Äolsharfe." In each case, Brahms appears to connect two songs from different collections by creating a dialogical relationship between two poems by different authors. The earlier pair reflects the condition of two lovers apart: Brahms narrates "Ein Sonnett" and Siebold "An eine Äolsharfe," whereas "Ruhe, Süssliebchen" and "Sehnsucht" enact a narrative sequence based on the *Magelone* plot.

Brahms composed his second-to-last song in A-flat major "An ein Bild" in 1874, ten years after his lonesome return to Gottingen. We know that Brahms felt particularly nostalgic between 1873-1875 and that these feelings found an outlet in his Klaus Groth text settings in opera 59, 63, and 66. The Dithmarsch poet was most famous for his *Quickborn* collection written

[295] Translation by Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 97.

Example 4.13
"Sehnsucht," Josef Wenzig

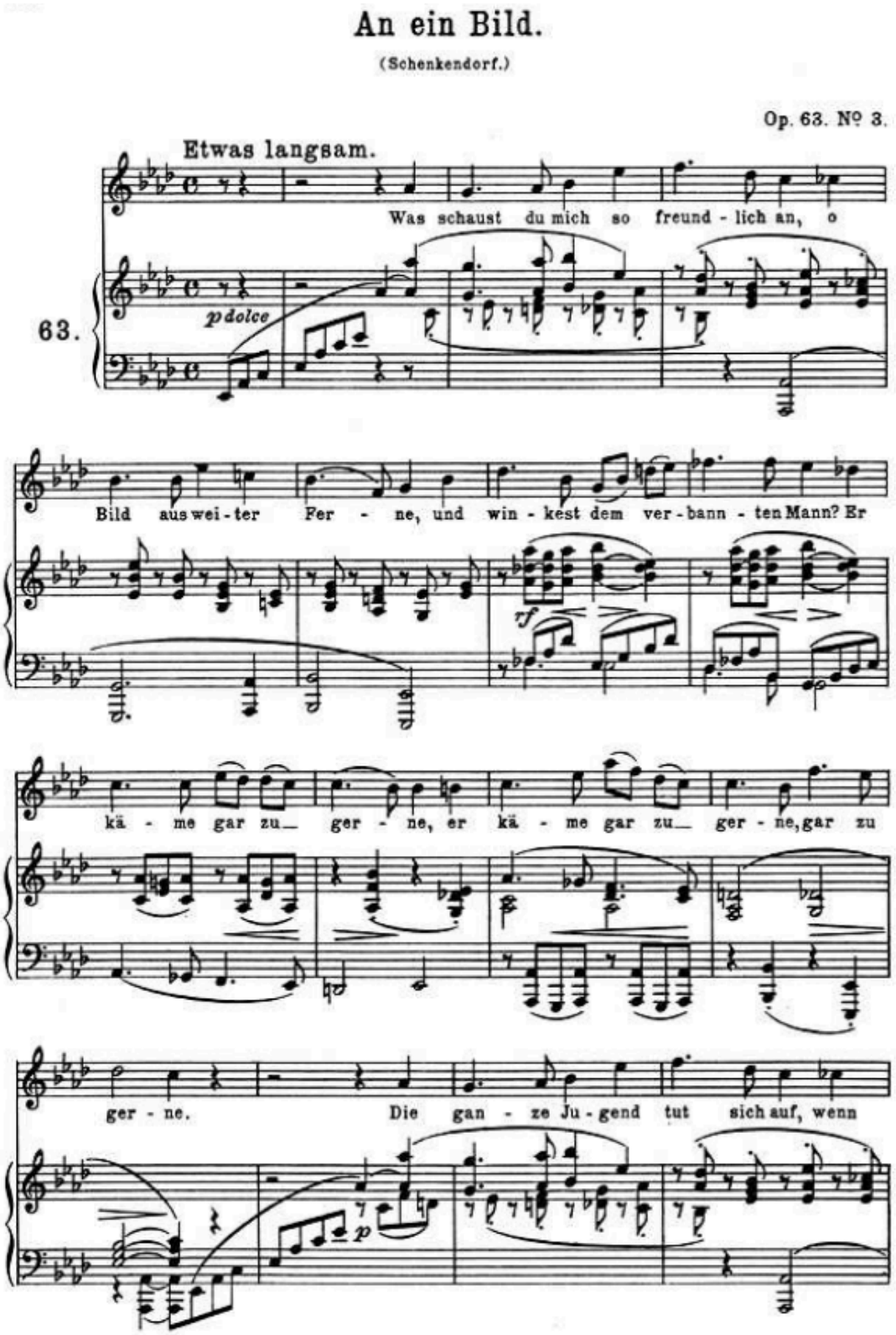
Hinter jenen dichten Wäldern	Behind those dense forests
Weilst du, meine Süßgeliebte,	You dwell, my sweet love,
Weit, ach weit! Weit, ach weit!	Far, ah far! far, ah far away!
Berstet ihr Felsen,	Burst, you rocks,
Ebnet euch Täler,	Rise up, you valleys,
Daß ich ersehe,	That I might glimpse,
Daß ich erspähe	That I might behold
Meine ferne, süße Maid!	My sweet, far distant maiden![296]

in the low-German dialect and was on friendly terms with Brahms. The Groth settings and "An ein Bild" express a longing for things lost to aging: childhood, homeland, and youthful love. In "An ein Bild," the poet, a "banished man," stares at the photograph of a former lover and wistfully remembers treading the path toward her home in happier times. All of his "yearning and spirit are founded" in the "dear picture," and he would "come to [her] all too gladly."

"An ein Bild" was clearly written with Siebold in mind because the A-G-A-H-E theme reappears transposed as an idée fixe.[297] Though all of the pitches save G have slipped by a half step, the motto is easily recognizable and its presence is supported by the text. The song is in varied strophic form (A A B B' A'), and Brahms continuously employs the Agathe theme in the first, second, and fifth stanzas: it appears in the vocal melody and r.h. piano in mm. 1-2, 13-14, 46-7, the l.h. piano in mm. 3-5, 15-17, 48-50, the r.h. piano in mm. 6-7, 18-19, 51-2, the r.h. piano in mm. 8-9, 20-21, 53-4, and the l.h. piano in mm. 10-11, 22-3, 53-6 (see example 4.14). Brahms develops her theme in the third and fourth stanzas—long-winded similes describing the

[296] Translation by Richard Stokes, "Sehnsucht," Oxford Lieder, accessed 8 January 2022, https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk/song/3265.
[297] Eric Sams also interprets this theme as a reminiscence of the Agathe motto. Though Sams was often led astray in his hunt for musical ciphers—especially by his preoccupation with a purported "Clara" theme—here we agree. He poignantly describes the theme existing behind a "thin veil of flats," suggesting both the veil of memory and Siebold's unworn wedding veil. See Sams, *The Songs of Johannes Brahms*, 200-1.

Example 4.14
Brahms's Agathe theme in the first verse of "An ein Bild"



poet's gaze—while generally avoiding full restatements.[298] The motto remains full of yearning in its new, flatted guise—like a memory recalled imperfectly—but it sounds gentler here when compared to its bravado setting in the Sextet. Brahms's mourning has taken on a more serene hue and he seems momentarily at peace with his decision not to marry Seibold ten years after composing the Sextet. Three years later, in 1877, Brahms composed his final song in A-flat major, *O kühler Wald*, setting a text by Brentano (see Example 4.15). The poem tells the story of a man wandering in the forest, hoping to encounter a former lover. He knows that the search will be fruitless, but nevertheless he maintains a shred of hope, which is expressed in the final, pleading stanza. The sparse text plays on the common themes that unite the A-flat major songs, though in many ways this song relates most closely to "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide," especially in Brahms's adaptation, which only sets the first and third verses. Both discern a hopeless quality in yearning, recognizing that the love is truly gone. The key difference between "O kühler Wald" and "So steh'n wir, ich und meine Weide" is that in the later song the lovers have clearly ended their relationship, whereas in the earlier they persist in a loveless relationship.

As previously mentioned, "O kühler Wald" shares many of the same tropes as the other A-flat major songs, but a highly unusual lexical choice stands out in the word "Widerhall," or "echo." This word appears just twice in all of Brahms's solo songs, here and in "Nachtigall" Op. 97/1 (see Example 4.16); and because the latter is in F minor, the two songs also share the same key signature. In general, Brahms's F minor songs share topoi with their brethren in the parallel major, but their prevailing tone is one of bitterness and remorse. The poet often feels robbed, cheated, or otherwise wronged. The poet in Christian Reinhold's "Nachtigall" and Brentano's "O

[298] Brahms only uses the exact Agathe theme once in his setting of stanzas 3-4, in the r.h. piano in mm. 35-6. The omnipresence of the theme in the A sections implies that the poet (i.e. Brahms) is actively looking at the photograph of his former love, and its dearth in the B sections suggest he looks away. The one restatement of the theme at the beginning of the fourth stanza is, in effect, the poet glancing back at the photo momentarily.

Example 4.15
"O kühler Wald," Clemens Brentano

O kühler Wald, Wo rauschest du, In dem mein Liebchen geht? O Widerhall, Wo lauschest du, Der gern mein Lied versteht?	O cool forest, Where do you rustle, O forest in which my darling walks? O echo, Where do you listen, O echo that understands my song so well?
(O Widerhall, O sängst du ihr Die süßen Träume vor, Die Lieder all, O bring sie ihr, Die ich so früh verlor!)	(O echo, If you were to sing to her The sweet dream, And all the songs, O bring them to her, Those which I so early lost!)
Im Herzen tief, Da rauscht der Wald, In dem mein Liebchen geht, In Schmerzen schlief Der Widerhall, Die Lieder sind verweht.	Deep in my heart, There rustles the forest In which my darling walks; In pain sleeps the echo; The songs have dispersed.
(Im Walde bin Ich so allein, O Liebchen, wandre hier, Verschallet auch Manch Lied so rein, Ich singe andre dir!)	(In the forest Am I so alone, O sweetheart, wander here Also, many a song so pure Are no longer audible, I will sing another to you!)[299]

kühler Wald" recounts the pain of lost love and love songs silenced. The poignancy of each text hinges on the word "Widerhall." In each case the poet strains to hear a former lover only to hear echoes of old songs slowly fading away.

Lieder composers co-opt poetic texts as their own, effectively creating their own compendium over a lifetime. Brahms's entire Lieder output functions like a collection of poetry in its own right, and his songs in A-flat major evoke a key characteristic that unites them as a

[299] Translation by Ezust, "O kühler Wald," The LiederNet Archive, accessed 7 January 2022, https://www.lieder.net/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=3128.

Example 4.16
"Nachtigall," Christian Reinhold

O Nachtigall, Dein süßer Schall Dringt mir durch Mark und Bein. Nein, trauter Vogel, nein! Was in mir schafft so süße Pein, Das ist nicht dein, -- Das ist von andern himmelschönen, Nun längst für mich verklungenen Tönen In deinem Lied ein leiser Widerhall.	O nightingale, your sweet sound penetrates my inmost being. No, dear bird, no! what causes such sweet pain in me is not your singing; it is a soft echo within your song of other music, divinely beautiful, but long slienced for me.[300]

subset within his total oeuvre, bridging numerous opera. This collection of poems exhibits a web of connective threads both in terms of their themes and their ability to recall his relationship with Agathe von Siebold. Specific keywords suggest intertextual relationships, especially because those words are particularly significant toward the understanding of the poetic text. Brahms's later A-flat songs "echo" the earlier ones through the choice of key and the connection with Siebold. Just as keywords connect the A-flat major songs, the word "Widerhall" links "O kühler Wald" with "Nachtigall." In Brahms's oeuvre, another song echoes these later laments, and it, too, is in A-flat major: this is "An eine Äolsharfe." There the harp echoes—*der Harfe wiederholt*— to the singer's sweet alarm, when the wind causes the clangorous resonance of its strings. The noun "Wiederholung," meaning repetition, from which the verb "wiederholen" is derived, is synonymous with "Widerhall." This lingual connection unites the two groups of songs in A-flat major pre- and post-engagement and suggests that the latter group of six post-dating Brahms's relationship with Siebold are echoes of the earlier love songs.

[300] Translation by Stark, *A Guide to the Solo Songs of Johannes Brahms,* 301.

Echoes of the Past

Most of the A-flat major songs postdating Brahms's relationship with Agathe von Siebold coincide with experiences from his life that caused him to recall the heady summer of 1858: visiting Göttingen in 1864, Siebold's marriage in 1868, and the wistful "Groth" years between 1873-75. "O kühler Wald" does not exhibit the same type of biographical coincidence; however, it is not without a connection to the past. Brahms composed his Second Symphony in D Major, Op. 73 the same year as the song in 1877, and the two pieces exhibit intertextual resonance. In the first two movements of the symphony, Brahms includes musical and poetic allusions that together coalesce around a narrative reflecting on his missed opportunities for marriage and family. In effect, the pastoral nature of the symphony could easily set the forest scene described in "O kühler Wald," wherein the allusions sound like the echoes of lost love songs**.**

Widely regarded as his most affable symphony, it is surprising how often Brahms characterized it as doleful in the run-up to its publication and premier. In an offhand remark to Fritz Simrock before its publication he wrote: [301]

> The new symphony is so melancholy that you won't stand it. I have never written anything so sad so *mollig*: the score must appear with a black border [in mourning].

He continued to mention its mournful quality and the requisite "black border" in later letters to Simrock and other acquaintances. It is easy to assume that Brahms wrote in jest, but Clara Schumann echoed his sentiment when she described the first movement as possessing "quite [an] elegiac character" in a letter to Hermann Levi.[302]

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[301] Reinhold Brinkman. Late Idyll: The Second Symphony of Johannes Brahms, trans. Peter Palmer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 13.
[302] Brinkman, *Late Idyll*, 11; Litzmann, Berthold, *Clara Schumann: An Artist's Life Based on Material Found in Diaries and Letters,* vol. 2 (London: Macmillan, 1913), 363.

The most fascinating reference Brahms made to his symphony as it pertains to the present study comes from a letter to his friend Elisabet von Herzogenberg. Brahms wrote:[303]

> The new one, though, is really no symphony [*Symphonie*] but merely a sinfonietta [*Sinfonie*] . . . you need only sit down, with your little feet on the two pedals alternately, and strike the F minor chord for a good while, alternately in the bass and the treble, *ff* and *pp*—then you will gradually get the clearest picture of the 'new one.'

First, Brahms draws a distinction between the *Symphonie* and *Sinfonie* genres. His emphasis on the latter as a better generic description than the former links the new work to the pastoral idiom of the First Serenade, which briefly bore the title "Sinfonie-Serenade." Second, rather than describing the character of the new symphony to Herzogenberg, Brahms instructs her simply to play repeated F minor chords. He continued to describe the symphony using the wrong key on several other occasions, including a letter to the judge and music critic Adolf Schubring. He wrote, "You have never heard anything as world-weary—entirely F minor."[304] In conjunction with his comments to Simrock and others about its mournfulness, we begin to get a sense for a Brahmsian key characteristic associated with F minor. Earlier in this chapter I suggested that F minor embodied the yearning qualities of A-flat major but emphasized bitterness and remorse. Mournfulness and world-weariness certainly fit the mold of the F minor songs. These statements present strong evidence that Brahms cultivated a personal set of key characteristic tropes. But what about the genial Symphony in D major, which consists entirely of major key movements and recalls the pastoral idiom of his youthful Serenades, was meant to provoke the F minor sadness Brahms describes?

Like many of the ironic or mischievous statements he made about his own compositions, there is a grain of truth in this one. A closer examination of the Symphony reveals that the

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[303] Brinkman, *Late Idyll*, 13.
[304] Brinkman, *Late Idyll*, 15.

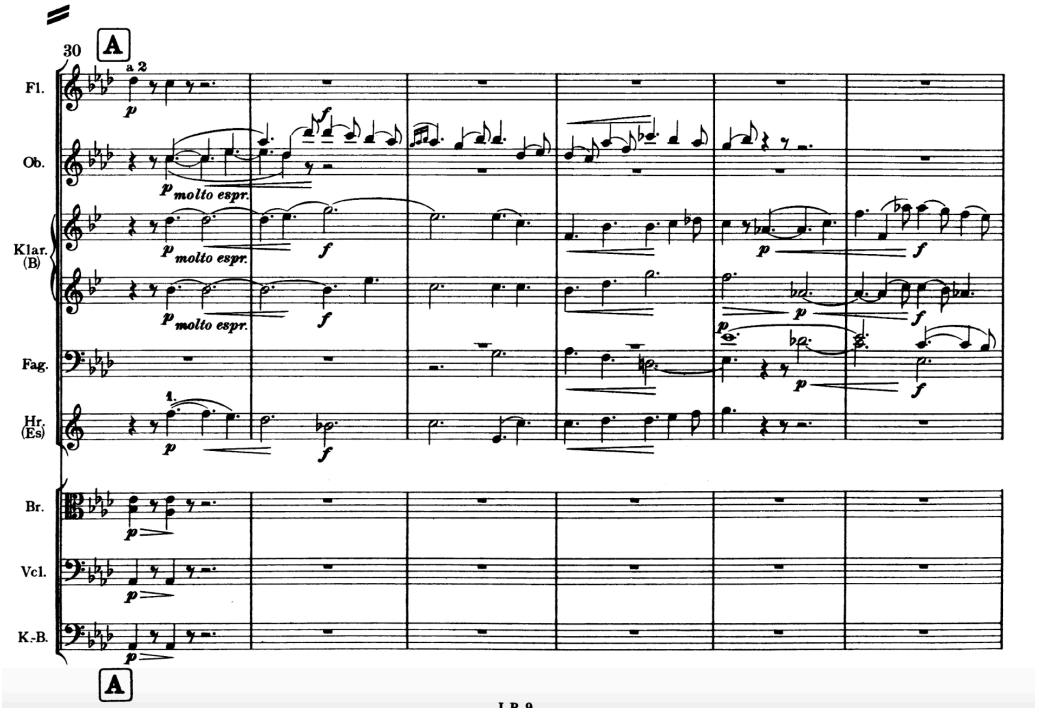
beginning of the *L'istesso tempo* from the second movement, Adagio non troppo, alludes to the beginning of the A-flat major section in the third movement of the Second Serenade (see Example 4.17). Brahms's decision to revisit the A-flat major theme in his Symphony represents another occasion in which he returned to music associated with Siebold in later compositions. We see this tendency most clearly in his decision to reuse the A-G-A-B-E theme from the part song "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof" Op. 44/10 (1859-60) in the Second Sextet Op. 36 (1864-5) and "An ein Bild" Op. 63/3 (completed 1874). We see it again when he alluded to the opening vocal melody from his unpublished work for women's choir and orchestra, *Brautgesang* (1858), at the end of his song "Von ewiger Liebe," Op. 43/1 (completed 1864); and again, though less clearly intentional, in the self-referential bent of "Auf den Kirchhofe" Op. 105/4 (1888), which appears to draw upon musical and linguistic touchstones from "Ein Sonett" Op. 14/4 (1858) and whose title and poetic themes refer back to "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof."[305] In sum, over a thirty-year span from 1858-88 Brahms regularly commemorated his failed relationship with Siebold by recasting old melodies anew. This memorial process epitomizes Hoffmann's philosophy of the artist in love and recalls the author's own allusive style: Brahms used his feelings of yearning and longing for the past, for young love, to inspire compositions spanning his entire adult life.

The allusion to the A-flat major theme in the Symphony is straightforward and easy to hear. In both the Serenade and the Symphony, the wind melodies arpeggiate the local tonic, beginning on the third. After ascending a minor sixth mi-sol-do, the melody falls to fa before leaping to a high pitch above the previously articulated local tonic. In the case of the Serenade, the oboe leaps one octave from D-flat5 to D-flat6, in the Symphony the flute leaps from B5 to

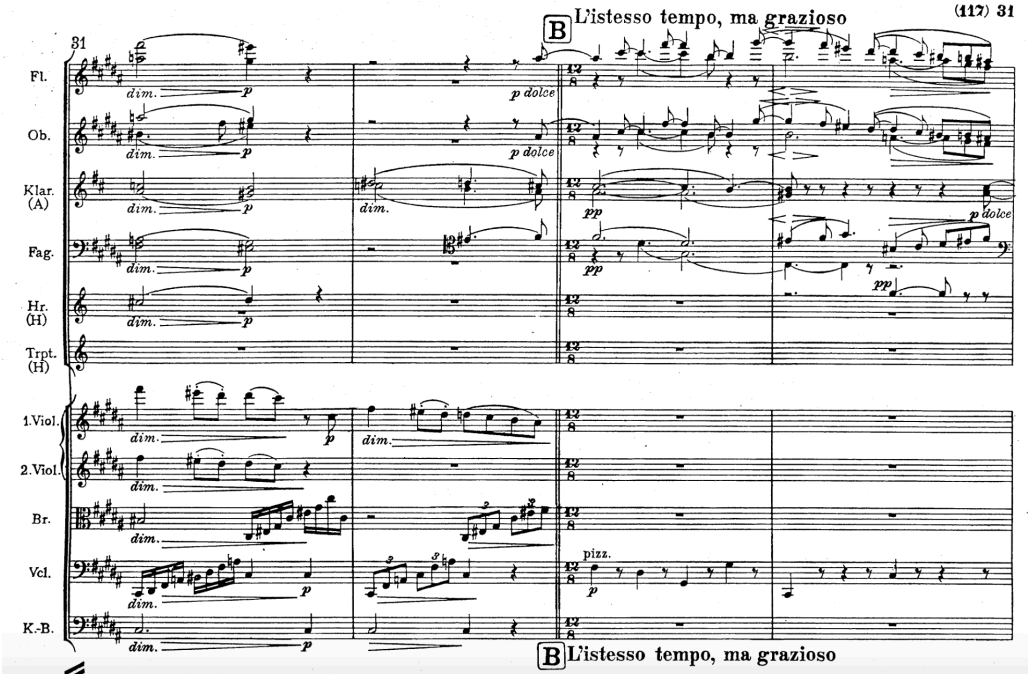
[305] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 311-16. Berry describes the connection between "Auf den Kirchhofe" and "Ein Sonnett." The titular connection between "Auf den Kirchhofe" and "Und gehst du über den Kirchhof" is my own. These are the only two compositions whose titles include "Kirchhof/Kirchhofe."

Example 4.17
Comparison of the A-flat major theme from the Serenade in A Major and the L'istesso tempo from the Symphony in D Major.

Serenade



Symphony



G-sharp6 (supported an octave lower by the oboe). Each melody then descends in a lilting stepwise manner alternating short and long durations in 12/8 time. In both works the second part plays in unison on the first two notes (mi-sol) and sustains the fifth underneath the octave in the first part before reconvening on fa. Brahms adds pizzicato celli to the mix in the Symphony but it retains the wind-forward texture of the Serenade.

Brahms's expressive tempo markings unite the slow movements from the Symphony and Serenade as well: both bear the overarching tempo designation Adagio non troppo.[306] He used this designation precisely four times to describe an internal slow movement in an instrumental composition, in three previously discussed youthful works from the late 1850s—the Piano Trio in B Major and both Serenades—and one last time eighteen years later in his Second Symphony.[307] The D major Symphony is also the only symphony with an Adagio for its slow movement, setting it somewhat apart from the other three, which include Andantes. The exactly

[306] Brahms greatly preferred descriptive tempo markings (interpretive) to metronome markings (proscriptive) and only begrudgingly provided metronome numbers on rare occasions. Styra Avins cites two examples of how exacting Brahms was when it came to the specific wording of his descriptions: "As a young man he reminded the publisher Breitkopf & Härtel to print a *poco a poco più sostenuto* at the end of the motet op. 29 no. 1; and when the plates for the First Symphony were being engraved, he wrote to Simrock to ask for a change in the heading of the last movement. Allegro moderato ma con brio became *Allegro non troppo ma con brio*." Brahms also endorsed when performers drew connections between his tempos and historical models, establishing informal companion pieces. For example, he supported the conductor Otto Dessoff's suggestion that the Adagio non troppo in the Second Symphony should match the pace of the Adagio from Beethoven's String Quartet Op. 59, No. 1, III. Brahms's nuanced approach to the specific verbal constructions for tempo designations and his willingness to find correlatives in other compositions suggests that his lexicography carried hermeneutic meaning. Furthermore, Avins also proposes that Brahms may have meant for a distinction between lower case and upper case performance instructions, where lower case words (e.g. *tranquillo*) were meant to confer a performance instruction while maintaining the current tempo and upper case words (e.g. *Tranquillo*) were directions to change the tempo along with the style. See Styra Avins, "Performing Brahms's music: clues from his letters," 20-26, and Bernard D. Sherman, "Metronome marks, timings, and other period evidence regarding tempo in Brahms," 99-102, in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performance Style*, ed. Michael Musgrave and Bernard D. Sherman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[307] Notley, "Cult of the Classical Adagio," 46. Notley provides a table of the tempo designations for all of Brahms's slow movements. Her list includes 38 instrumental works whose internal slow movements bear the designation Andante or Adagio. It is also worth noting that when Brahms revised the Piano Trio, Op. 8 in 1889, he shortened the tempo designation from Adagio non troppo (1854) to Adagio (1889). This decision suggests that he came to view the designation befitting only slow movements in symphonic genres with a pastoral bent.

matching tempos create a bond that unites the trio of early works with the Symphony and reinforces the sense of wistful reminiscence inherent to the allusion. Brahms's tempo designation corresponding with the allusion, L'istesso tempo, ma grazioso, opens a similar hermeneutic window as Adagio non troppo. Though Brahms regularly used the expressive term "grazioso" in his compositions, here it is notable because both of Brahms's Lieder bearing the title "Serenade"—Op. 58/8 (Schack) and Op. 70/3 (Goethe)—are marked Grazioso. Both vocal Serenades, which describe the futility of love, were written and published before the Second Symphony, and as I discussed in chapter 2, the earlier song from Op. 58 appears to allude to the wind theme at the beginning of the Adagio non troppo from the Serenade in A Major. "L'istesso tempo" refers to the last stable tempo within this movement in its directive sense, but in light of the other hermeneutic connections based on tempo, it may be read as a subtext to the allusion. Because the invocation to play "the same tempo as before" refers to the shared designation Adagio non troppo, "L'istesso tempo" may simultaneously refer back to the source of the musical reference in the Serenade. In other words, Brahms instructs a keen reader of the score to expand the scope of the "before" and make further connections to earlier works based upon the specific allusion and textual clues, which together suggest a deeper connection between the Symphony and the serenade genre writ large.

This conceptualization of "L'istesso tempo" as a suggestion to look back in time and consider a number of works related to the allusion inspires a feeling of multiplicity: "the same as before, as before, as before." In essence, one can neither escape the past nor prevent history from repeating itself. Siebold was not the first woman Brahms loved nor was she the last, but the outcome of every dalliance was always the same because Brahms remained true to Hoffmann's precepts governing the artist in love. We see this trend borne out in the Second Symphony

because the allusion to the A-flat major theme from the Serenade and its connection to Siebold is not the only reference in the symphony to a woman that Brahms loved in his twenties. In the first movement, Brahms includes a variation of his famous "Lullaby" melody from "Wiegenlied" Op. 49/4 (1868), which he wrote for his friend Bertha Faber to commemorate the birth of her son Johannes. A decade earlier, Faber (née Porubsky) was a member of the Hamburg Women's Choir that Brahms directed from 1859-61, and she was the first woman toward whom Brahms felt romantic feelings after Siebold.[308] "Wiegenlied" features in its piano counter melody a reference to Alexander Baumann's duet "S'is Anderscht," which Faber sang for Brahms in 1859.[309] Its lyrics describe young love and are flirtatious with sexual undertones.[310] When Brahms gifted the Fabers a signed autograph copy of "Wiegenlied" he also provided specific, written instructions for locating and identifying the allusion by referencing lyrics from the duet. In the same breath he described his reason for including the reference:[311]

> Now Frau Bertha will see at once that I made the lullaby yesterday especially for her little one; she will also find it completely fitting, as I do, that while she sings Hans to sleep, her husband sings to her and murmurs a love song. Moreover Frau Bertha would do me a favor if at some point she ovtained for me the music and text to said love song "Du meinst wohl, Du glaubst wohl." I have only a vague notion of it in my ears.

Though Brahms suggested that Arthur was the second voice in the "Lullaby" duet owing to his role as accompanist, it is difficult to ignore the extramarital implications of the reference.[312] The sexual desire characterizing the duet complicates the purely occasional nature of the

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[308] Their letters from 1859 demonstrate that the feelings were mutual.

[309] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 63-72. Brahms evidently took pains to make sure the Fabers and other close friends were aware of the allusion to "S'is Anderscht," and early reviewers of the song called attention to it as well.

[310] Karen Bottge, "Brahms's 'Wiegenlied' and the Maternal Voice," *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 3 (Spring, 2005), 192. Bottge describes the final lines of the song, "if one steps on a flower, it never gets back up," as a reference to losing one's viriginity ("de-flowering").

[311] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 63.

[312] Berry, *Brahms Among Friends*, 63-9. Berry suggests that Brahms himself appears aware of how the allusion came across based on a later letter to Bertha Faber predating the song's publication. In it, Brahms refers to himself as a cuckoo, which Berry describes as "a brood parasite that famously lays its eggs in the nests of other birds." The etymological link between "cuckoo" and "cuckold" is plainly evident.

"Wiegenlied," and when the "Lullaby" melody reappears in the symphony it retains that baggage: it commemorates Brahms's feelings for Bertha.

Brahms emphasized the memorial nature of the lullaby as a reference to Bertha Faber by scrawling the poetic subscript "Es liebt sich so lieblich im Lenze!" ("It's so lovely to be in love in the springtime!") in his manuscript of the first movement where the coda begins. The line quotes the refrain from Heinrich Heine's poem "Die Wellen blinken und fließen dahin," which Brahms set to music that same year. Heine was notorious for ironic twists, often souring feelings of love, and this poem is no exception. A shepherdess sits on the bank of a river weaving flower wreaths when she observes a horseman approaching. She perceives him as a suitor and flirts coyly. He greets her kindly but continues on his way without stopping, which causes her to weep and dejectedly throw her wreaths into the river. Heine states the refrain three times, in the first, second, and fourth stanzas. In the first half of the poem, it is situated mid-verse and embodies springtime feelings of hopefulness and new beginnings, but it is recast as a sarcastic rejoinder following the maiden's rejection in the last stanza as the final line in the poem. Together the allusions to the "Lullaby" for Faber, the A-flat major Serenade theme for Siebold, and the Heine refrain create a narrative describing Brahms's missed opportunities for love and explain the elegiac mood of the symphony. Musical cues in the first movement emphasize the theme of yearning for the past. Brahms gives the first melody to a pair of horns and begins the coda with a long-winded and wistful horn solo, marked by repeated *pianti*, syncopations, and hemiola. The horn clearly plays a similar role here as it did in the Adagio non troppo from the Serenade in A Major, where it symbolized nature, distance, and memory.

By observing the allusions from the first and second movements together, each a reference to a woman Brahms loved—Bertha Porubsky in the first movement and Agathe von

Siebold in the second—and considering them against the backdrop of Heine's poem, we begin to get a sense for why the Symphony could very well be the "saddest thing [Brahms] ever wrote." The first and second movements commemorate occasions when Brahms rode off into the distance like Heine's horseman and missed his opportunity for marriage and family, the former represented by his broken engagement to Siebold and the latter epitomized by the happy Faber home: Bertha, Arthur, and baby Hans. Understood this way, Brahms continues to explore the themes from "O kühler Wald" in the Symphony, wherein the allusions to the "Lullaby" and A-flat major theme from the Serenade evoke its echoes of youthful love songs. These lost songs, partially and imperfectly "remembered" in the Symphony, reframe its pastoral ethos; however, Brahms does not recreate a real-world landscape à la Beethoven in his Sixth Symphony, to which his Second is sometimes compared, but describes instead the "forests of the heart." Brahms remained forever an artist in love, like his namesake Johannes Kreisler, idolizing women from his past and plumbing the depths of his yearning for musical inspiration.

APPENDIX

KREISLER'S KEY CHARACTERISTIC FANTASY FROM "KREISLER'S MUSICO-POETIC CLUB"

A-flat major chord (pianissimo)

What is it that rustles so miraculously, so strangely around me? Invisible wings glide up and down. I am swimming in an ethereal fragrance. But the fragrance shines in flaming circles, mysteriously intertwining. They are tender spirits, moving their golden wings in magnificently voluminous tones and chords.

A-flat minor chord (mezzo forte)

Ah, they are carrying me to the land of unending desire. But as they lay hold of me they give rise to a pain which would rend my breast asunder in an effort to escape.

E major, first inversion chord (ancora più forte)

Be steadfast my heart; do not break at the touch of the burning ray that has penetrated my breast! Be refreshed my gallant spirit! Rise and move in the element which has given you birth and which is your home!

E major chord (forte)

They have offered me a magnificent crown! But those diamonds sparkling in it are in reality the thousand tears which I have shed, and in its gold shine the flames which have consumed me. Courage and strength to him who is destined to reign in the realm of spirits!

A minor (arpeggio dolce)

Why are you fleeing, lovely maid? Why do you try, since invisible bonds hold you completely. You cannot tell what it is that gnaws painfully at your breast, at the same time filling you with sweetest joy. But you will understand everything when I caress you with the language of the spirits, the language I speak and which you understand so well!

F major

Ah, how your heart rises with desire and love when I embrace you with melodies filled with glowing enchantment. You can flee from me no longer, for those secret desires which have oppressed your soul are fulfilled. Like a consoling oracle, tones pour out of my soul and speak to you.

B-flat major (accentuato)

How joyful are the meadows and forests in spring! All the flutes and panflutes, which during the winter lay frozen in dusty corners, are awake and are recalling their favorite melodies which they are now trilling as happily as the birds.

B-flat major seventh (smanioso)

A mild west wind arises like a mournful secret in muffled grief and as it passes the fir and birch trees whisper: “Why has our friend become so sad? Do you harken to him lovely shepherdess?”

E-flat major (forte)

Go after him! Go after him! Green is his coat, like the dark wood. His yearning words are the sweet sounds of horns. Do you hear the rustling in the underbrush? Do you hear the sound of horns, full of gaiety and melancholy? It is he! Let us go to meet him!

G major seventh; second inversion (piano)

The game of life is a game of provocation. Why wish, why hope, why demand anything?

C major (fortissimo)

But let us dance with furious frenzy over the open graves. Let us rejoice! They cannot hear down there Hurrah! Hurrah! Dancing and rejoicing! The devil is coming with trumpets and drums!

Several C minor chords (fortissimo)

Don't you know him? Don't you know him? Look, he clutches after my heart with his fiery claw. He grimaces, masquerading himself as a quack doctor, a corporation lawyer, a concertmaster. He throws candle shears on the piano strings so that I cannot play. Kreisler! Kreisler! Pull yourself together! Can you see him lurking, this pale ghost with the gleaming red eyes, a claw-like bony fist stretching out of this torn coat? The crown of straw shakes on his bald skull. It's madness! Johannes, be brave! Mad! Mad! Phantom, why do you ensnare me? Let me go! I curse the singing and the music, only release me from this pain. Oh! Oh! You have tramped all over my flowers. Not a single stalk of green is left in this dreadful desert. Everything is dead, dead, dead![313]

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[313] Translation by Rita Steblin, *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2002), 147-8.

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