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Revision or Re-envisioned?

Origin and Outcomes of Brahms’s Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

by

Madalyn Lee Möller

2022

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2022

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Revision or Re-envisioned?

Origin and Outcomes of Brahms's Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8

by

Madalyn Lee Möller

Doctor of Musical Arts

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor William Andrew Kinderman, Chair

The present essay addresses the double embodiment of Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 by Johannes Brahms. The 1854 "original version" and the 1891 "revised version" symbolize distinct compositional periods in the life of the composer, whose lack of authoritative opinion toward the two Trios' relationship created complications. Today, appreciation of Brahms's B Major Trio in its first incarnation requires an effort of historical reconstruction, and for musicians steeped in his music, an ability to look beyond the imposing image of the replacement trio, a work from 1889 and published in 1891. My research seeks to restore the 1854 Trio to its position of prominence as Brahms's first ambitious work of chamber music. This research extends to an exploration of Brahms's aesthetic environment during the early 1850s, from his poetic affinity with E.T.A. Hoffmann and his alter ego Johannes Kreisler to the artistic influence of Robert and Clara Schumann. The disparity between the two Trios suggests that "revision" is

an inadequate description of Brahms's far-reaching reshaping of the original work. The aging composer's emphasis on structural cohesion resulted in passages from three of the four original movements being substantially compressed or removed. While the re-envisioned version is economical and thematically compact, the original version possesses its own remarkable qualities: ambitious scope, diverse musical material, and potent allusiveness that encourages a different approach to analysis and performance. By examining the shared and divergent elements of both Trios, I aim to clarify their relationship, cast light on stylistic and historical factors, and promote a heightened appreciation of the music for performers and interpreters. A link to my lecture recital from May 2022, including performances of the first movement of the 1854 Trio and the complete 1891 Trio, can be found at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFytCe10bOM. These performances are intimately connected to my dissertation, as parts of a larger effort to integrate artistic practice and scholarly research.

The dissertation of Madalyn Lee Möller is approved.

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Raymond L. Knapp

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William Andrew Kinderman, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

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VITA

American violinist Madalyn Parnas Möller secures her place on today's concert stage by bringing inimitable style and artistic vision to each performance. Since her debut at the age of twelve, Ms. Parnas Möller's concert record throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia affirms her dedication to classical and contemporary repertoire. Enthusiastically endorsed by the *New York Times,* she toured France as guest soloist with the L'Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire and performed concertos with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Albany Symphony, and the New York String Alumni Orchestra conducted by Jaime Laredo. She has presented multiple premieres, including Sven-David Sandström's violin concerto *Force and Beauty* and Don Byrd's *Violin Concerto*. In recent seasons, she appeared as guest soloist in performances of the Sibelius Violin Concerto, and her solo recording project with Aqua, an Argentinian/Latin American label, was distributed by Naxos in 2021.

A passionate chamber musician, Ms. Parnas Möller's engagements include recitals at the Kennedy Center, New York's Subculture, San Francisco Performances, the Minneapolis Museum of Russian Art, and the San Francisco Academy of Achievement International Summit as a guest delegate. As winner of the Beverly Hills Chamber Music Auditions, performance appointments include the Boston Court Pasadena Chamber Music Series, Center Stage Chamber Music Series, Le Salon de Musiques, and Sitka Winter Classics Festival, among others.

As both soloist and collaborator, Ms. Parnas Möller has demonstrated her commitment to the legacy of chamber music while exercising a passion for contemporary music. Her collaborations have included projects alongside artists Peter Serkin, Jaime Laredo, Zuill Bailey, and her most long-standing partnership, Duo Parnas with her sister, cellist Cicely Parnas. Since winning 1st

prize in Carnegie Hall's International Chamber Music Competition in 2007, Duo Parnas has appeared at festivals throughout North America, Europe, Asia, and Israel including Tanglewood, Banff, Maverick Concerts, Music Mountain, the American Composers Festival, Lachine Music Festival, and the ProQuartet Festival. Frequently engaged as artists-in-residence, Duo Parnas has toured Asia as part of the International Musical Arts Festivals of Shanghai and Macao and has served residencies with the El Paso and Sitka Music Festivals. As recording artists, Duo Parnas released three albums on the Sheffield Lab label, which feature pre-existing works and commissions by award-winning composers of the 21st century, including William Bolcom, Charles Wuorinen, Paul Moravec, and Lera Auerbach.

Ms. Parnas Möller holds a Master of Music and Artist Diploma in Violin Performance from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music; a Master of Arts in Violin Performance, with distinction, from the Royal Academy of Music in London; a Bachelor of Science from The College of Saint Rose where she graduated summa cum laude with a double major in Music Industry and French; in December 2022 she will complete her doctoral degree at UCLA's Herb Alpert School of Music where she currently serves as a Faculty Teaching Fellow. Ms. Parnas Möller is a 2012 Marshall Scholar and earned the Josef Gingold Award and twice the Artistic Excellence Award while attending Indiana University. Her principal teachers include her grandfather and legendary cellist Leslie Parnas, Movses Pogossian, Varty Manouelian, Mark Kaplan, György Pauk, Jaime Laredo, James Buswell, and Betty-Jean Hagen. Ms. Parnas Möller resides in Los Angeles.

INTRODUCTION

According to Greek legend, there once was a king named Theseus. Having founded the ancient city of Athens through a lifetime of adventure and bravery, this mythical leader possessed a special ship that was preserved and cherished by the people for generations after his death. But over time, as the ship's wooden planks began to rot, they were replaced one-by-one until, eventually, hardly any of the original materials remained. In the end, can one say that this ship is the same object initially celebrated? Or is it altogether a new ship of its own?

This renowned thought experiment, debated by civilization's earliest philosophers, finds itself relevant to our present purposes. Comparisons and analogies can hold promise in elucidating relationships between "original" ideas and their fully fleshed counterparts; indeed, exploring a composer's *oeuvre* with this objective in mind can lead to new insights. In the case of Johannes Brahms, however, the opportunity to establish fresh connections between his definitive works and their origins is limited, owing to his unfortunate habit of discarding many of his early compositions and most of his sketches and working drafts (in later years, his maid was apparently required to leave the trash bin open at all times).[1]

In light of the meager samplings available to us in this regard, the Piano Trio No. 1 in B Major, Op. 8 presents itself as a specimen of unique interest. Not only are there two versions – an "original" and a "revised" – that Brahms allowed to coexist, but they bookend a remarkable span

[1] This odd instruction possibly intersects with an incident involving Brahms's landlady during the late 1880s and 1890s, Celestina Truxa. She rescued out of his wastebasket the torn pieces of a manuscript title page from the Op. 8 Trio's 1891 version. See M. L. McCorkle ed., *Johannes Brahms: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis* (Munich: Henle, 1984), 26. See also Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), xi.

of nearly forty years. The revised version is a masterpiece: structurally impeccable, thematically lucid, and aesthetically glorious. The original version, far from a mere sketch, is itself a finished work, complete with its own ideas and a striking musical profile. While sharing primary themes, these two Trios diverge as significantly as the decades in which they were written. Moreover, the lengthy time span which separates them brings into sharper focus their dual nature by symbolizing distinct poles of the composer's lifetime. This complexity of the Trios' coexistence adds a unique twist to the dilemma of originality: where do we draw the line between a revision and a related, but independent creation? Would "re-envisioned" be a more appropriate term for the second outcome of Brahms's B Major Trio?

Brahms remained conflicted towards the two versions and their relationship (or at least *appeared* to be so). His surviving comments are ambiguous and ironically self-deprecating given the effort he applied to the revision in 1889. That this new Trio never received its own opus number is puzzling, but it stands out as Brahms's only surviving model of an entirely re-written composition.[2] In this context, as the masterpiece's precursor, the status of the old Trio is elevated beyond its own merits to the unique position of "[affording] us a glimpse into the secret laboratory of creative genius, unparalleled in the history of music."[3]

The absence of authoritative opinion from Brahms, juxtaposed with the innate beauty and robust individuality of the two trios, arouses curiosity and invites opportunity for renewed dialogue

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[2] Jessica Embry, "The Role of Organicism in the Original and Revised Versions of Brahms's Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8, Mvt. I: A Comparison by Means of Grundgestalt Analysis." (Diss., University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2014), 5.

[3] Robert H. Schauffler, *The Unknown Brahms: His Life, Character and Works* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1933), 383.

regarding their posterity. Closer inspection of the works' origins proves highly informative and supports the view that, far from a pre-altered draft, the original version is in fact the cornerstone prequel of a larger narrative. Cast in this light, the "original" and the "re-envisioned" are separate-yet-inseparable, conceived by disparate-yet-unified versions of the same ardent Romantic. Laid side by side, the Trios offer a rare juxtaposition of evolutionary stages from one musical lifetime. Many musical planks were replaced, and the structure re-shaped, but for Brahms, the Ship of Theseus doesn't pose an unanswerable puzzle of originality, but a story about how the creative process transcended its own materials, casting light on the precious and enduring spirit of its composer.

CHAPTER 1: One Work or Two? The Double Embodiment of Brahms's B Major Trio

The Conundrum

> I think there is no other addition to op. 8 necessary than: New Edition. In announcements you may add: completely revised and changed and whatever you want to. What should happen to the old edition: it is really useless to discuss it and to make any decision – I only think that it cannot be announced with the new edition. If it is requested, just mail it, and if you think one day that it is necessary or desirable to print it again, so print it (and possibly let it replace the new edition).[4]

Johannes Brahms penned these unglamorous words to his publisher on December 29th, 1890. The composer had written two embodiments of the same work: an "old edition" composed in his youth and published in 1854, and thirty-seven years later, a "new edition" from 1889 that was published in 1891. According to the letter, this latter edition was a "completely revised and changed" version of the original, but noticeably absent is any definitive evidence of Brahms's intentions regarding their relationship to one another. His remarks are simultaneously unclear and somewhat contradictory: the old edition's fate is "useless to discuss," but it could coexist with or possibly even "replace" the new edition. The new edition is announced as a separate work yet retains the opus number of its much older counterpart.

This unique conundrum poses several issues. Firstly, it is remarkable – even misleading – for a composer known for his conviction to express an unabashed lack thereof. This assiduous creator

[4] Quoted in Antonio Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," *Acta Musicologica* 72, no. 2 (2000): 166.

is known for rejecting more works than he allowed to exist,[5] for agonizing over every note he ever wrote, and who was, by all accounts, highly controlling – even manipulative – towards how his music and his life were viewed by others.[6] Furthermore, the effort he extended to the revision was significant, consuming the summer months of 1889 and sporadic intervals leading to its publication in 1891. Against this backdrop, Brahms's profession of indifference towards Op. 8 appears suspicious and calls into question the authenticity of his tone. With a reputation for ambiguity and contradiction towards his own work, it is plausible that Brahms withheld his opinion of the two Trios behind a veil of characteristic irony.

Secondly, Brahms's show of indifference generated an invitation for those who followed – performers, audiences, and critics – to layer their own subjective interpretations over the conundrum he left behind. The consensus they reached is clear: in the last one hundred-and-thirty-two years since Brahms's letter to his publisher, the selective memory of history has set aside the 1854 Trio overwhelmingly in favor of the 1891 Trio.[7] This legacy is

---

[5] "One of the characteristics of Brahms's entire career as a composer is his stringent, even ruthlessly self-critical faculty. He composed far more than he published – of some twenty string quartets, only three reached the public – and rather than allow his rejected works to survive in manuscript, he burnt them." Styra Avins ed., *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters*, trans. by Styra Avins and Josef Eisinger, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

[6] "Over the course of the century since he died, however, Brahms's attempts to manipulate history, though they tend to dissolve under closer scrutiny, have indeed resulted in the kind of portrait he would have liked. On the whole, scholars have left him the lofty Master on the pedestal." (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, xii.)

[7] "Recent critical response has invariably preferred the revision, while the early version has all but disappeared from the repertory. I recently asked Menahem Pressler, the revered pianist of the Beaux Arts Trio whether they had ever programmed the earlier work, and he replied rather glibly that they had read through it but never performed it: 'It is just not the masterpiece he wrote later.' Curiously, the Beaux Arts Trio has issued a two-CD set with the title 'Brahms Complete Trios' without the 1854 version." Nathan Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations: The Piano Trio in B Major, Opus 8 by Johannes Brahms" (Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2009), 6.

perpetuated by the fact that performers and the listening public tend to prefer what is immediately familiar. As we shall see, there is merit to this outcome. But while performance tradition has distanced itself from the 1854 Trio, loyalists of the 1891 Trio are still faced with the chronological and conceptual dissonance of a nearly sixty-year-old Brahms publishing a work called Op. 8.

Finally, the conundrum of Op. 8 also challenges the assumption that revision is inevitably synonymous with improvement. In the traditional sense, revision addresses its subject through reexamination and consequent alteration. When composers produce a "revised" version of an original work, our expectation is for the first work to become subsumed by the modifications imparted by its author. As such, there would be no tangible distinction made between an original version and its revision because there simply would be no need for one. The composer's choice to take action seems proof enough that a revision should be superior to its original source. In the case of Op. 8, this assumption is somewhat open to question. The complexity of its double embodiment was clearly felt by its creator, who acknowledged that the original version might possibly assume primacy. As we shall see, the two versions awaken more than admiration for Brahms's compositional evolution; they stir within us a degree of humility as we are confronted by a composer who apparently felt the question of their relationship held no entirely clear answer. Could it be that too many years had passed for a fifty-six-year-old Brahms to straightforwardly revise the work of a twenty-year-old Brahms? Does the opportunity to "revise" a work come with an expiration date if the author had evolved too far from his earlier self? Is the conceptual category of "revision" adequate to describe what actually happened to the original version of Brahms's Trio?

Context and Objectives

The momentum of performance traditions shape the status of musical works like Op. 8 in the concert repertory. However, it is important, especially with Brahms, to consider the relationship between performance tradition and perception. Because most musicians are aware of Brahms's proclivity for self-criticism and his purging of his youthful scores, anything he wrote is, in a way, automatically viewed as "standard" repertoire. The potential for discovering a new version or embodiment of an established work seems unlikely by virtue of his own uncompromising filtration process. This vigilance has fortified our trust in the composer as much as it has distanced the works he approved from those who wish to examine his formative creative process.

Similarly, acquiring a fresh perspective on Brahms's life and works remains challenging on account of the nature of his musical output and our engagement with it. The composer's gift for uniting Romantic and Classical sensibilities sets his work apart from many of his contemporaries, even alienating him during his lifetime from those aligned with Liszt, Wagner, and Bruckner – "the self-proclaimed Musicians of the Future."[8] The objectivity with which Brahms controlled or masked the expression of his Romantic sensibilities served as a layer of protection against explicit and direct personal revelations. Over time, these intrinsic musical qualities, together with a tight rein over his personal privacy, endowed the Brahmsian artistic legacy with a distinctive aura after his death in 1897, at the threshold of a new century and a new era. Within a generation, modernist currents and the impact of external events – especially the First World War – would further erode those poetic sensibilities that inspired the young Brahms.

[8] Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews, and Other Germans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 236.

Viewed in this broader context, we can see how ongoing traditions of performance extended toward the present day, becoming intertwined with an objectification and even canonization of Brahms the Romantic Classicist and those works which survived his meticulous scrutiny. While this image is one that Brahms himself largely crafted and would have undoubtedly preferred, Peter Gay rightly reminds us that such perspectives are historical products of shifting "modes of judgment":

> The history of taste is, after all, full of shifts to which not even Dante, not even Shakespeare, have been immune. Only stability needs explaining. But more went into the making of the twentieth-century Brahms than this. What changed was not merely a judgment but a *mode* of judgment. Brahms the frigid intellectual has become Brahms the sultry sentimentalist. This is more than a widening appreciation, it is more than an act of learning. It warns the historian that not evaluations alone, but even presumably stable categories, are far from permanent or absolute.[9]

In short, those now conventional views of Brahms's life and music inherited by many of today's practitioners render some outlying works susceptible to discrimination, displacing them from the standard repertory. A youthful creation like the 1854 Trio is just such a work, made unique by its dual identity with the 1891 Trio. An assessment of the two versions is striking. Together they reveal different dimensions of the same composer through the lens of one opus, affording a rare "glimpse into the secret laboratory of creative genius." For performers, reexamination of the Trios' origins encourages a more dynamic form of engagement. For audiences, Op. 8 offers an invitation to contextualize their understanding of a composer who sought to distance the public

[9] Gay, *Freud, Jews, and Other Germans,* 253.

from his own humanity. Indeed, reevaluation of Op. 8 and other works from the formative artistic maturity of Brahms offers insight into the creativity of a composer somewhat at odds with the image widely held by many musicians today.

The late Brahmsian aesthetic of the 1891 Trio is compounded by the appeal of its status as a "revision." But I propose an alternative perspective, one which does not presuppose a revision to be synonymous with improvement and which seeks to elevate and restore the origins of the 1854 Trio to our performance consciousness. The following essay explores how the description "revised" may be an insufficient description given the disparity between the two versions and instead suggests how Brahms's recasting of the original is "re-envisioned" as a separate musical work. Moreover, by illuminating the shared and divergent elements of both Trios, I hope to sharpen definitions surrounding their origins, cast light on their stylistic, historical, and musical significance, and promote a heightened form of interaction for performers and interpreters alike.

In an effort to serve these aims, this chapter will examine the biographical contexts of both Trios, and will identify characteristics that have led to the more widespread popularity of the 1891 version. Chapter 2 will focus on an evaluation of the 1854 version, which will explore elements of Brahms's personal and compositional evolution. This includes the artistic kinship of Brahms with his youthful alter ego, Johannes Kreisler, and the philosophical and aesthetic concepts espoused by the character's creator, E.T.A. Hoffmann. Evaluation of these attitudes will extend to Brahms's relationship with the German musical community in the 1850s, especially the influence of Robert and Clara Schumann. Given the original Trio's richness of content, Chapter 2 will also discuss Brahms's use of allusion, quotation, and other compositional devices such as

stylistic referencing. Chapter 3 will focus on the changes that Brahms made to the 1854 Trio and how those changes depict an evolving artistic vision. These "old" and "new" (or "youthful" and "mature") visions underscore the ways in which Brahms's compositional style evolved over the thirty-seven-year gap while calling attention to their shared attributes. Chapter 4 will offer performance considerations that arise in light of the preceding chapters, including ways to integrate the two Trios into concert programming. Finally, Chapter 5 will provide concluding thoughts based on my personal background and experience with Op. 8.

The 1854 TRIO

When he turned twenty on May 7th, 1853, Johannes Brahms was almost entirely unknown. On that particular date, he was in the middle of a local concert tour, the first to take him outside of his native city of Hamburg. On the road with him was his performing partner and dubious friend, the Hungarian violinist Eduard Reményi. While the two didn't always see eye-to-eye, their collaboration during the summer of 1853 took them through several cities and experiences that would be transformative for the young Brahms. One of these included Hanover, home to Joseph Joachim, the acclaimed Hungarian violinist whose performance of the Beethoven Violin Concerto several years earlier in Hamburg had made a deep impression on Brahms. As a result of this brief visit, Joachim was able to hear Brahms's work for the first time, including the Sonata in C Major, Op. 1 and the Scherzo in E-flat Minor, Op. 4. His music-making, "so tender, so imaginative, so free and so fiery," marked the beginning of a lifelong friendship based on mutual admiration and shared sensibilities, as Hugh Macdonald has conveyed in his vivid account of this pivotal musical year in 1853.[10]

[10] Hugh Macdonald, *Music in 1853: Biography of a Year* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012), 7.

By summer's end, the small tour with Reményi had set in motion a chain of events that would culminate in a defining moment of Brahms's life: his presence on the doorstep of Robert and Clara Schumann's home in Düsseldorf on September 30th, 1853. Hindsight would have us imagine this moment was inevitable given the scope of the Schumanns's lifelong musical and personal influence on Brahms. However, their first encounter actually took place three years earlier in Brahms's hometown of Hamburg when the distinguished couple passed through for a concert tour in March 1850. At the time, the teenage Brahms was encouraged to send some of his compositions to Schumann while he was in town, but the parcel, unfortunately, was returned by Schumann unopened, and Brahms was humiliated. It was only after years of persistent prodding by colleagues, trusted friends, and finally Joachim in August 1853 that Brahms finally complied, seeking out the esteemed Schumann family once again, only this time on their home turf.

Past transgressions forgiven, the ensuing season of camaraderie, musical activity, and artistic exchange between Brahms and his new friends was a drastic change of pace and exposure for the young composer. Less than a month earlier, he had been hiking alone in the Rhine Valley; now he was positioned at the center of Germany's elite musical community, supported by the Schumanns, their influence, and their passionate advocacy for his talent. Not long after, this advocacy was manifested in one of music history's most famous public gestures when, on October 28th, 1853, Robert Schumann's article entitled "New Paths" ("Neue Bahnen") was released in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. In this rapturous endorsement, Schumann poetically assigns to Brahms the role of hailing hero of the nineteenth century, drawing spiritual parallels to an awaited musical messiah:

> . . . springing forth like Minerva fully armed from the head of Jove. And he is come, a young blood by whose cradle graces and heroes kept watch. He is called Johannes Brahms. . . He bore all the outward signs that proclaim to us, “This is one of the elect.” Sitting at the piano, he proceeded to reveal to us wondrous regions. We were drawn into circles of ever deeper enchantment. His playing, too, was full of genius, and transformed the piano into an orchestra of wailing and jubilant voices. There were sonatas, rather veiled symphonies. . . his companions greet him on his first course through the world, where, perhaps, wounds may await him, but laurels and palms also. . . There is in all times a secret union of kindred spirits. Bind closer the circle, ye who belong to it, that the truth of art may shine ever clearer, spreading joy and blessing through the world.[11]

Unsettled by the extremity of Robert Schumann’s prophecy, Brahms responded in a letter saying, “The praise that you have openly bestowed on me will arouse such extraordinary expectations of my achievements by the public that I don't know how I can begin to fulfill them even somewhat.”[12] Brahms may have known he was not the first young musician to be endorsed by Robert Schumann. The rest of German musical society, too, remained skeptical given Brahms’s obscurity and the loftiness of Schumann’s effusions. Nevertheless, this endorsement became nearly as famous as the recipient who eventually convinced the world by living up to it.

Thus, within a few months, Brahms went from an unknown traveling accompanist to being crowned by Robert Schumann as Germany’s most promising musical heir since Beethoven. It is in the wake of these pivotal months and the aura cast by “Neue Bahnen” that we find the earliest

[11] Quoted in Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms* (Neptune City, N.J.: Paganiniana Publications, 1981), 131-32.

[12] Quoted in Roger Moseley, “Reforming Johannes: Brahms, Kreisler Junior and the Piano Trio in B, Op. 8,” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 132, no. 2 (2007): 255.

written accounts of the Piano Trio in B Major, Op. 8. The precise dates when Brahms began drafting it are not entirely clear, although Max Kalbeck suggests sketches may have started as early as the summer or fall of 1853.[13] However, we do know that by January 1854, the work had taken shape and was nearing completion, according to an autograph score bearing the signature "Hannover, Januar 54. Kreisler jun."[14] Most importantly, as we examine its many striking components, we are reminded of the events that preceded its creation; that the impressionable 20-year-old would have been striving to live up to his mentor's imposing words is a reasonable assumption, especially when seen through the lens of the Trio's ambitious content and outlook.

Indeed, the version of Op. 8 that crossed the publisher's desk in November 1854 flexed impressive compositional muscle. Expansive in scope, it features rich inventiveness of motivic and thematic development throughout all four of its movements. The first movement alone comprises 494 measures, making it one-third *longer* than the form it would later assume in the 1891 revision (for a primary aspect of Brahms's reshaping of his trio involved compression). Intricate counterpoint is put on display, featuring passages in which the subject is exchanged and expanded in a contrapuntal context. A confluence of musical ideas, melodies, and a particularly remarkable class of allusions and quotations find themselves thrust to center stage, like a troupe of actors playing contrasting personages and yet connected by their shared role in the narrative. Both directly and indirectly, Brahms alludes to his musical predecessors, from Bach and Scarlatti to Schubert and Beethoven. These intriguing allusions, together with the world of aesthetics associated with literary character Johannes Kreisler, will be examined in Chapter 2.

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[13] McCorkle ed., *Johannes Brahms: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis,* 26. See also Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 98: "On January 3, [Brahms] returned to Hanover for a long stay with Joachim. There he began the first chamber work he would allow to survive…..the B Major Trio."

[14] McCorkle ed., *Johannes Brahms: Thematisch-bibliographisches Werkverzeichnis,* 26.

The 1891 TRIO

"Do you still remember something of a trio in B major from the time of our youth, and wouldn't you be eager to hear it now that – I didn't put a wig on it – but combed and tidied its hair a bit?"[15] One is tempted to acknowledge the irony of such a statement, delivered by Brahms in an 1890 letter to his friend Julius Grimm; for surely, the fifty-six-year-old composer penned these words as a long-bearded master gesturing towards the work of his clean-shaven former self. But physiognomy aside, when the Trio reappeared for publication in 1891, even a casual comparison revealed that it had indeed undergone extensive alterations. In Malcolm Macdonald's view, "the 1854 Trio is more than half a masterpiece; but the whole masterpiece Brahms was to make of it [thirty-seven years later] is not even the same artistic entity."[16] The majority of these revisions were made during the summer of 1889, after which Brahms spent a year appraising the Trio's reception by offering it in private performance settings for friends and colleagues. After furnishing an additional list of minor changes, the newly refined Op. 8 Trio was made ready for final publication in 1891.

With the exception of main melodic subjects and most of the Scherzo movement, few areas of the Trio would be left untouched by the older Brahms. The first movement offers a particular richness of comparison when laid alongside its revised counterpart. While its primary subjects are preserved, all traces of previous allusory and referential content are removed, including multiple secondary themes, transitionary sections, and extended demonstrations of counterpoint. Instead, the movement displays an economical and revitalized integration of its motivic-thematic materials, concentrating its energy on synthesizing those materials in a way both inventive and

[15] Avins ed., *Life and Letters,* 672.

[16] Malcolm Macdonald, *Brahms* (London: Dent, 1990), 79-80.

disciplined. In similar fashion, the third and fourth movements of the Trio were stripped of their allusory content, which included two prominent themes related to Schubert and Beethoven, respectively. Much like the first movement, these excisions were not replaced by new material: they cleared the canvas for a mature synthesis and unification of the themes that remained. The details of Brahms's revisionary process will be explored in Chapter 3.

Given the scale of the changes and the many years that had passed since its conception, it is intriguing to consider the array of factors which may have contributed to Brahms's decision to step into the role of revisioner in the first place. One year prior to revisiting Op. 8, the rights to many of Brahms's early works had been purchased by his publisher, Fritz Simrock, who intended to mine the catalogue for opportunities to sell fresh, marketable editions. While Brahms expressed distaste for his publisher's "unwise" business strategies, it appears that Simrock's outreach provided a partial impetus for his *rendez-vous* with the B Major Trio.[17]

Additionally, the timing of Simrock's prompting coincided with broader historical changes taking place within artistic circles, and more specifically, within the world of music criticism. Amateur music critics like Adolf Schubring generated attention for positioning themselves as experts intimately acquainted with the inner workings and nuances of compositional technique. From addressing specifics of motivic functionality to pointing out perceived weakness in tonal language, these "experts" appeared to sidle up to contemporary composers as equals whose opinions reverberated throughout the wider musical community. In many cases, interactions between critics and composers centered on the former's perceived identification of intentional

[17] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 256. Moseley notes, "For a while, Brahms considered publishing through Peters; he thought Simrock charged too much for his music, making it inaccessible to the public."

relationships between musical themes and motives, prompting responses like the one below from Brahms to Schubring:

> I disagree that in the third movement [of *Ein Deutsches Requiem*] the themes of the different sections are meant to have something in common….If it is nevertheless so – I deliberately call back nothing from my memory – I want no praise for it, but do confess that when I am working, my thoughts do not fly far enough away, and thus unintentionally come back with the same idea.[18]

Schubring's claims of intentionality in Brahms's *Ein Deutsches Requiem* remain innocuous when limited to musical topics. However, they reveal the detailed manner in which critics were listening to music, and such methods were not always as straightforward as Schubring's remarks about *A German Requiem*. Such observations often devolved further into pursuits centered on allusion-hunting, which placed every musical subject both past and present under meticulous scrutiny. From exposing personal trivia to attributing far-fetched theories to hidden quotations and their musical subjects, such analytical exploits drove composers like Brahms to become defensive caretakers of their own art:

> It seems unlikely that Brahms paid much heed to Schubring's finger-wagging on compositional aesthetics, but the critic's keen eye for allusions was symptomatic of a burgeoning trend that provided Brahms with a compelling motive to revise the Trio in B…..Brahms recoiled from what he perceived as the overweening superficiality of the allusion-spotters, as was illustrated by his infamous exasperation at those who pointed at

[18] Quoted in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 271.

> Beethoven's Ninth [Symphony] poking out from under his own First [Symphony] – "every jackass hears that."[19]

Irony and Implications

The forty years which separate the 1854 and 1891 Trios bring into focus distinct changes in Brahms's aesthetic attitudes. Less clear, however, are his feelings towards the two works as we seek to understand the puzzling commentary he left behind. From indifferent and dismissive to ironically self-deprecating, Brahms's only definitive statement is offered by his allowance of multiple editions to remain in Simrock's catalogue. According to the letter introduced at the beginning of Chapter 1, Brahms's outward ambivalence is directed towards the idea of the revised Trio being good enough to stand on its own. But its position does not appear threatened until he suggests that the *original* could "possibly. . . replace the new edition." In similar fashion, he gruffly assesses the recently completed 1889 revision in a letter to Fritz Simrock on December 13th, 1890:

> Regarding the new Trio I need to say explicitly, that the old one was bad, but I cannot claim that the new is better! Whatever you wish to do with the old whether to melt it down or to re-publish it, is – honestly – all one to me. [...] I only think that the old version will sell poorly not because of all the ugliness but because of the useless difficulties in it.[20]

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[19] Quoted in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 272.

[20] Quoted in Antonio Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," *Acta Musicologica* 72, no. 2 (2000): 166.

On the surface, Brahms portrays himself as one detached from the Trio's outcome altogether; it's as though he has washed his hands of the project, resigning himself to a closed circle of uncertainty with regard to their merits. Taken at face value, these remarks offer little insight. However, the ironic tone invites us to reflect on the true intentions of the speaker, whose habit of withholding judgment towards his own work corroborates the need for discernment. In place of sober commentary, he often provided casual quips and ironic understatements, designed perhaps to encourage his recipients towards what was obvious apart from his explicit assistance. Of his formidable Piano Concerto No. 2 completed in 1881, he mentioned to a friend, "I have written a tiny, tiny piano concerto with a tiny, tiny wisp of a scherzo."[21] Or, in 1885 when his friend and future biographer Max Kalbeck asked about his summer, Brahms replied, "once again I've just thrown together a bunch of polkas and waltzes."[22] This time he was referring to his tragic Symphony No. 4 in E Minor. "Dear lady, don't ask me such things," said Brahms when a singer inquired which of his songs he would recommend. "I'll usually just make some sort of a joke – and if a good one doesn't occur to me, then a bad one."[23] Apparently, even Brahms's sense of humor was not exempt from his own ironic critique!

While Brahms's wit comes across as charming and playful within a social context, the implications of his irony gain force when regarded in relation to his artistic output. The act of withholding opinion is important, suggesting there may be consequences to the distillation of artistic judgements (and anxieties) into fixed statements. In this sense, Brahms's caginess seems

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[21] Max Kalbeck ed., *Johannes Brahms: the Herzogenberg Correspondence,* trans. Hannah Bryant, (London: John Murray, 1909), 134.

[22] Quoted in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 514.

[23] Jan Swafford, "Classic Put-Downs," 2 October 2006, https://slate.com/culture/2006/10/was-brahms-a-wiseass.html.

to deflect responsibility while slyly arousing others to come to the defense of his work. This pairing of irony with objectivity finds traction in the attitudes of other artists, such as the German author Thomas Mann, whose view of the relationship is addressed by William Kinderman:

> In his essay "Goethe and Tolstoy," Mann refers to the "indispensable value of reserve in art," while identifying this restraint with irony. Alluding to music, Mann espouses "a type of irony which glances at both sides, which plays slyly and irresponsibly – yet not without benevolence – among opposites, and is in no great haste to take sides and come to decisions. . .[24]

Turning back to Op. 8, we observe that Brahms too was indeed "in no great haste to take sides and come to decisions." Under the guise of irony, however, his reticence affords us the opportunity to accept his implicit invitation and explore our role in the decision-making he was so keen to avoid. For all his lack of certainty, it is satisfying to observe that Brahms's catalogue continues to benefit from the contributions of, not one, but two B Major Trios. Taken together, this double opus casts light on the nuances of Brahms's intentions while assuming new meaning in the hands of posterity. According to him, neither one is categorically better than the other; neither one is unworthy enough to be flung into the fire; and neither intersects enough with the other to suggest there would be any serious ramifications imparted by their coexistence. In one breath, their fates are unique yet forever intertwined.

[24] William Kinderman, "The Motif of the Gaze (*Blick*) in Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*," *German Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (2018): 315-33.

Conclusion

From a musical perspective, the 1854 Trio is not well-aligned with the methodically groomed, mature handling of composition Brahms applied to the 1891 revision. Instead, it stands as an independent creation representing a youthful and transformative stage of the composer's life during the 1850s. Diverse in its materials, explorative, referential, allusive, and experimental, it obscures our picture of the "familiar" 1891 Trio by introducing a style and approach reminiscent of other works such as Brahms's Sonata in C Major, Op. 1 or the Ballades, Op. 10. In turn, this personal musical language draws us closer to the bearded master by providing a more intimate view of him as a human with a process (even if he sometimes attempted to suppress and conceal this from his contemporary and future public). By integrating the 1854 embodiment within the larger story of Op. 8, we as performers are presented with the chance to revitalize our relationship with the version of the Trio that we already know so well (or think that we do, given that it has been mostly separated from its other half for over one-hundred-and-thirty years). Along the way, we invite others into distant regions of Brahms's narrative, especially those areas of his creative life that he sought to silence and protect from what he perceived was the nosiness of posterity.

Obscured from view by the thick fog of performance tradition, an intersection between scholarship and performance presents itself in the form of this unusual opus, and I believe what was once a lost opportunity has paved the way for a fresh perspective and a clearing of the air. In short, Brahms's abdication from opinion is precisely the opinion that has been overlooked by performers. That the 1854 Trio is rarely programmed underscores the preference – or equally likely, the unawareness – of performers who favor the 1891 Trio. If anything, our perspective

towards the Trios might properly begin with the uncertain tensional connection that their composer himself evidently perceived. In this vein, what Brahms described as "useless to discuss" is, in fact, something that I believe is quite the opposite – a topic which is highly fruitful to consider. Performers and listeners ought to be assisted and encouraged towards the idea that the 1854 version deserves a place right next to the 1891 version – not because of its worthy-if-unexpected merits, but because of the role it serves in fleshing out the full story of the opus and its composer. To this end, I assert that Op. 8 might even be viewed ultimately as one work: not as an opus containing two versions of the same piece, but as two Trios needed for the opus to constitute one larger dual whole. I suggest we settle not for a basic version of the story, but explore a more complex and provocative one; that we embrace the attributes and qualities of the young Brahms that were later suppressed but belong to the whole picture; and that we examine not just a revision of a work, but the re-envisioned!

CHAPTER 2: The Allusionist in the 1850s: Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler

"Write down everything that you feel, so that it becomes part of you, as if it were a reminiscence."

~Joseph Joachim on Brahms's "Young Kreisler's Treasure Chest"[25]

Introduction

The young Brahms who in 1853 began sketching the B Major Piano Trio was impressionable and unaccustomed to the glare of the spotlight. At the same time, he was deeply steeped in the poetic world of E.T.A. Hoffmann. His proximity to esteemed artists like Robert and Clara Schumann advanced his career while burdening his future with the pressure of high, even inflated expectations. The "Neue Bahnen" article conveyed Robert Schumann's enthusiastic endorsement, promoting Brahms's legitimacy within the public sphere, but more significantly for the young composer, the efforts of both Robert and Clara Schumann to advocate for his potential went far beyond those words in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. The Schumanns became devoted mentors, inviting Brahms into the artistic activities of their household and social circles. Private musical evenings led to a sharing of work-in-progress compositions, four-hand performances of transcriptions, and provocative discussions about literature, poetry, music, and probably also the latest excesses of what became known during the 1850s as the so-called "Neudeutsche Schule," or "New German School."[26]

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[25] Quoted in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 70. The original German text "Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein" is more precisely conveyed as "Little Treasure Box of the Young Kreisler," an expression steeped in the literary world of E.T.A. Hoffmann.

[26] What later became known as the "New German School" included Franz Liszt and his elite circle at Weimar, one of Brahms's stops on his 1853 travels that ultimately led him to the Schumanns. A

While the unforgettable evenings shared by Robert, Clara, and Johannes were doubtless filled with brightness, merriment, and inspiration, they were tragically short-lived. A life-altering event for all three artists occurred in February 1854, when Robert attempted suicide by hurling himself into the frigid Rhine River. While this terrible event took place as an outcome of an ongoing chronic decline in Schumann's health, the ensuing shock forever disrupted the carefree spirit of Robert and Clara's friendship with Brahms. At his own request, Schumann was placed in a mental asylum in Endenich. Despite hopes of recovery, he would never return home to Clara and the family life that had become a home-away-from-home for Brahms.

Despite this tragedy, the circumstances generated a powerful shift in Brahms's compositional life that can be palpably sensed through the dark and dramatic material he produced.[27] After moving to Düsseldorf to support Clara after Robert's suicide attempt, Brahms was actively composing, writing, and exchanging letters and compositions with friends like Julius Grimm and Joseph Joachim. Making use of Schumann's private music library, this time of study would prove to be

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fascinating rivalry is personified by Liszt and the New Germans versus Schumann and the "Beethoveners." Ever at odds, their artistic purposes and ideals centered on competing schools of thought with regard to the role of music within the arts. For the New Germans like Liszt and Wagner, music's purpose is to unify the arts, bringing together literature, drama, symbolism, and music; by contrast, figures like Schumann, Joachim, and the "Leipzig conservatives" maintained that music aspires to give voice to the wordless – that to attach it to tangible things is to deplete it of its innate ability to transcend other art forms. Brahms, with the exception of Wagner whom he appreciated, held a stance of neutrality bordering on tolerance towards the New German School until he eventually concluded that the whole thing was "swindle." See in this context Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 9, 39, 63, 68, 83. See also Macdonald, *Music in 1853*, 33-41.

[27] Most notably, this includes the Op. 10 Ballades, as well as the materials that would become the D Minor Piano Concerto. "More ambitious [than the Ballades], though it never appeared publicly in its original form, was a sonata in D Minor for two pianos, whose catastrophic opening seemed to emerge from the nightmare events of February." This sonata ultimately was transformed into the D Minor Piano Concerto, which wasn't published until 1860. (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 111.)

of singular importance to Brahms's development, as he pored over scores from Schubert all the way back to Bach and even to the Renaissance. During this period, in Swafford's view

> Brahms enclosed for Joachim's comment a series of little piano pieces he proposed to call 'Pages from the Diary of a Musician/edited by the young Kreisler.' He explained about the collection, which included six neo-Baroque sarabandes, gigues, and gavottes….these studies in archaic genres were hardly a diary of emotional matters, but rather the diary of a young musician steeped in study of the past, in Robert Schumann's library.[28]

However, Swafford underestimates the way that Brahms blends his exploration of older musical forms with poetic ideas linked to E.T.A. Hoffmann. As William Horne has suggested, the last two of the Op. 10 Ballades seem to be revised versions of pieces from Brahms's "Pages from the Diary of a Musician," and both of these pieces can be associated with episodes in Hoffmann's *Kater Murr* novel, a favorite book of Brahms, which he urged Clara Schumann to read.[29]

During 1854, the musical evenings with Clara and close friends continued, albeit with the sobering absence of Robert.[30] It is here, under the aura of both tragedy and artistic discovery, that the original version of the B Major Trio makes one of its earliest appearances in personal records dating from 1854. Swafford explains the context as follows:

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[28] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 114.

[29] See William Horne, "Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades and His *Blätter aus dem Tagebuch eines Musikers*," *19th Century Music* 15 (1997): 98-115.

[30] Clara Schumann writes, "that good Brahms always shows himself a most sympathetic friend. He does not say much, but one can see in his face, in his speaking eye, how he grieves with me….Besides, he is so kind in seizing every opportunity of cheering me by means of anything musical." (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 110.)

> There were long evenings in the candlelit parlor with Clara and Brahms alternating at the piano before a quiet circle of listeners. He played the draft of his new B Major Trio, which struck her as fine if at times puzzling. Whatever her misery, her critical intelligence persisted: 'I cannot quite get used to the constant change of tempo in his works, and he plays them so entirely according to his own fancy that today….I could not follow him, and it was very difficult for his fellow-players to keep their places….'[31]

Despite these noteworthy hesitations (and the slight towards Brahms's ensemble skills), Clara's tone shifted after playing through the Trio several times herself:

> 'Now everything in it is clear to me,' she told her journal. She saw the digressiveness of the long opening movement and the other structural uncertainties….but she also saw much that was superb. In the first measures comes a fresh kind of singing melody: the lyrical Young Kreisler voice that would be always with him, growing in subtlety but holding a melting Romantic sweetness and yearning. She wrote her and Robert's publisher Breitkopf & Härtel, asking them to take the trio. They would publish it that year as Opus 8.[32]

Clara's initial hesitancy towards the B Major Trio is resonant of the perplexity that many of its listeners – past and present – experience the first time they hear it. Noteworthy for performers is that her perception evolved dramatically once she engaged the work more thoroughly, especially by playing it herself; what began as reserved puzzlement led to approval strong enough to

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[31] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 110.

[32] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 110-11.

warrant personal recommendation to Germany's leading publishing house. Moreover, Clara's shifting opinion appears to spring from the Trio's unusual juxtaposition of elements – the "digressiveness" versus "sweetness," and "structural uncertainties" contrasting the "fresh" and "yearning" melodic content rooted in Romantic sensibilities. Drawing us into the world of young Brahms (and "Young Kreisler"), these juxtapositions serve as a springboard into the rich poetic sphere that informed the Trio's genesis.

Who Is "Young Kreisler"?

The mysterious voice of "Young Kreisler" is a creative identity forged from the poetic values and philosophical ideals governing Brahms's intellectual world in the 1850s. Before his confinement to Endenich, Schumann had found in Brahms a passionate kindred spirit equally obsessed with the literary and aesthetic ideas of their Romantic contemporaries. Writings by Goethe, Jean Paul, and especially E.T.A. Hoffmann were favorites shared by the two composers, who, like many others, strove to capture the *Zeitgeist* of nineteenth-century German Romanticism in their creative output. Evocative themes drawn from a fascination with the concept of genius often focused on an artist's restlessness as he struggles to reconcile the tension between natural and supernatural spheres. A reverence for ancient or distant forms of artistic expression was also prevalent, even as the resurrection of those forms often resulted in subjective idealization and reinterpretation. In a larger context related to Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* (a work that strongly impacted Schumann and Brahms), William Kinderman has ascribed to this mode of thinking "the Romantic tenet that the current of subjectivity, of spiritual activity, of the individual's apprehension of *value*, is more real than external reality."[33] For Brahms, immersion in this

[33] William Kinderman, *The Creative Process in Music from Mozart to Kurtág,* (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 84.

fascinating aesthetic world began already during his early manhood in Hamburg, but this focus obsession was undoubtedly encouraged by Schumann's artistic model. The bond between these two musicians, strengthened by shared convictions and artistic ardor, surely contributed to the unlocking of Brahms's exceptional creativity by the early 1850s.

Who is this "Young Kreisler" and what is his connection to our composer and the B Major Trio? It is helpful to note that the full name – Johannes Kreisler or "Kreisler Junior" – is one which Brahms adopted, along with several others, as a pseudonym for many of his earliest compositions while still an adolescent in Hamburg.[34] (This pseudonym was later applied to Op. 8, whose autograph score bears the signature "Hannover, January 54. Kreisler Jun.")[35] A fictitious literary creation of E.T.A. Hoffmann, Kreisler was a frenetic composer and conductor who appeared in many of the author's writings, including the short story *Kreisleriana* and the aforementioned book *Life and Opinions of The Tomcat Murr*. Brahms knew both works intimately and was drawn to the protagonist, "Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler," who symbolized Romantic ideals and the often complex relationship between creators and their creations. Engrossed in imaginative mindscapes and musings, the Kreisler (or "circler") character "struck a chord" with Brahms, who identified in particular with Kreisler's view of composers as vessels who channel pre-existing forms rather than invent raw materials.[36]

[34] The other pseudonyms include "G.W. Marks," "Karl Würth," and "Werther." Brahms first used them during his workaday years as a young teenager in Hamburg, busying himself with small money-making publishing jobs. Later, "Werther" was alluded to once again in Brahms's dark Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 60, sometimes called the "Werther Quartet." The name refers to Goethe's tragic hero from *The Sorrows of Young Werther* who commits suicide. It is noteworthy that this quartet was initially sketched in C# Minor, a key associated with Johannes Kreisler. Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 54-8.

[35] The autograph manuscript of the 1854 Trio is difficult to locate, as it is reportedly being held in a private collection. Thomas Hauschka, "Klaviertrio op. 8," in *Johannes Brahms. Interpretationen seiner Werke,* ed. Claus Bockmaier and Siegfried Mauser (Laaber: Laaber Verlag, 2013), 55.

[36] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 250.

> For the teenaged Johannes Brahms, the mirroring of the name Johannes, the fact that Hoffmann/Kreisler was a composer like himself – these were reasons the dreamy young artist refracted his identity between mirrors he called Brahms and Young Kreisler, and why Kreisler became his Doppelgänger, shared with Hoffmann: an alter ego of an alter ego.[37]

An "alter ego of an alter ego": Johannes Brahms saw himself mirrored in the persona of Johannes Kreisler, and he savored the broader resonance with Hoffmann's fantastic poetic world of binary identities. E.T.A. Hoffmann – the real-life version of the crazed genius Kapellmeister Kreisler – gave himself in 1809 the initial "A" for Amadeus, as in Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. In turn, Robert Schumann's well-known alter egos, Florestan and Eusebius, were based on models by Jean Paul named Walt and Vult, characters that appear in Jean Paul's novel *Flegeljahre.* Musically, these two personas recall the passive and active sides of the dual nature Schumann perceived within himself, and they became entrenched signifiers within his compositions.[38] Fittingly, the term "*Doppelgänger*" was even coined by Jean Paul, one of Brahms and Schumann's favorite authors. Exploring this world of double identities and extravagant aesthetic attitudes reinforces the image of a young composer walking in parallel with his future mentor. In the weeks preceding Brahms's first meeting with Robert and Clara, "there came the spine-tingling moment when Young Kreisler first opened Schumann's rhapsodic set of piano pieces after E.T.A Hoffmann, called *Kreisleriana*…..once again fate seemed to be

[37] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 42-3.

[38] See Judith Chernaik, "Schumann's Doppelgängers: Florestan and Eusebius Revisited," *The Musical Times* 152, no. 1917 (2011): 45-55.

addressing him directly through the agency of Hoffmann."[39] These whispers of like-mindedness surely encouraged Brahms along the providential path that led him to the Schumanns' doorstep in September 1853, and further united him with the aesthetic language that would come to define his own authoritative voice in the musical world.

Thus, the B Major Trio, whose original manuscript was signed by "Kreisler Junior," blends the composer's affinity for poetic self-identification with his first ambitious attempt at chamber music.[40] This is intriguing in that it suggests that with closer examination we may seek to identify Kreisleresque elements in the music of the Trio. Given the dramatic and poetic associations held by the name Kreisler, it should come as no surprise that these attitudes found their way into the compositional process as Brahms sought to imbue his work with those ideals he held in such high esteem.

Allusion and Quotation

Baldassare has written concerning the aesthetic context of Hoffmann's Kreisler figure that

> Kreisler represented a literary artistic character, typical of the early Romantic period, who deeply mistrusted his own art and thus rebelled against writing down his compositions, and if he ever did, the notes were immediately destroyed. On the one hand, this attitude

[39] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 73.

[40] Prior to writing Op. 8, Brahms composed another piano trio entitled "Phantasie in D Minor for piano, violin, and 'cello." While originally listed as Op. 1, Brahms ultimately didn't approve of the work, which was lost and never published. After the Op. 8 Trio in 1854, Brahms would not publish another piece of serious chamber music until the Op. 18 String Sextet in 1862. See in this regard Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 4.

> is grounded in the social context of a public interested only in music which entertains and diverts, causing it to degenerate into a product. On the other hand, it reflects the widespread skepticism of the early Romantics concerning the possibility of adequately anchoring poetic ideas in language and music. In the end, poetry and music remain a matter of the heart and only allow themselves to be fixed through allusions.[41]

Baldassare thereby directs our attention to one of the 1854 Trio's most distinctive qualities: its pervasive use of musical allusion. This compositional device is nuanced, personal, and complex, offering the composer ample freedom to simultaneously make distinctions and blur the lines between his work and that of others. Drawing on numerous threads ranging from intertextuality to reverential homage, the use of allusion as a compositional practice can be expanded to include direct quotations, borrowings, and stylistic reminiscences, all of which are prominent in the 1854 Trio.

Before we continue further into the realm of allusion and analysis, let us pause to assess the unique confluence of factors we have addressed so far. The 20-year-old Brahms, pressured by the shadow of "Neue Bahnen" to become the next Beethoven, grapples with his individual and artistic identity as expressed through his alter ego Johannes Kreisler, while striving to support his personal friends the Schumanns during their time of tragedy. Through Schumann's library, Brahms was freshly introduced to aspects of the musical tradition and repertoire that he had not before encountered. In this context, can one imagine how mentally arduous it must have been for Brahms to channel these diverse and powerful ideas? Is it any wonder that Brahms may have looked to the work of the masters he sought to honor and emulate as he set to work composing

[41] Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," 154.

the B Major Trio? With these questions in mind, let us consider the role of allusion as a medium for Brahms's artistic expression in 1853-54.

Since allusion is often elusive, controversial, and subject to interpretation, it is perhaps best to settle a few definitions. For our current purposes, allusions depicting a majority or nearly note-for-note similarities with pre-existing materials with little-to-no effort to conceal them, will be referred to as "quotations"; less literal affinities suggestive in their import will be more inclusively referred to as "allusions." While a plethora of this second kind find their most extensive manifestations in the first movement of the B Major Trio, we will begin with examples of the quotations that Brahms included in the third and fourth movements. Rather than being veiled or disguised, these evocative quotations, of which there are two, stand as explicit repetitions of melodies that could have been easily recognized by Brahms's audiences and colleagues. The first instance is a Schubert quotation placed in the Trio's third movement and introduced by the piano; the second is a Beethoven quotation placed in the Trio's final movement and introduced by the cello.

Figure 1a (Schubert, "Am Meer," mm. 1-8):

Figure 1b (Brahms, 1854 Trio "Adagio non troppo," mm. 33-38):

The Schubert theme heard in the Trio's slow movement and illustrated in Figure 1a and 1b is taken from a song entitled "Am Meer" (By the Sea), which comes from a larger group of lieder based on six poems by Heinrich Heine and included in a posthumous collection of Schubert's songs. This collection, together with eight additional lieder based on the work of assorted poets, was first published in 1829 by the Viennese publisher Tobias Haslinger and titled *Schwanengesang* (Swan Song).[42] As we shall see, the unmistakable influence of Schubert can be felt in other areas of the B Major Trio, but why Brahms chose to specifically quote "Am Meer" in the third movement is not entirely clear. The song's connections to the city of Hamburg inspired some scholars to produce far-fetched theories suggesting the quotation alludes to Clara and a trip she and Brahms took to Hamburg in November 1854.[43] But as Birkholz points out, this would have been after the Trio was already finished, making it far more reasonable to assume that any Hamburg significance springs from purely autobiographical grounds. Beyond this, we may take note that the song's lyrics evoke themes of longing and love left unfilled.

[42] Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," 149.

[43] "['Am Meer'] was set in Hamburg, the home seaport to which Heine returned in 'Die Heimkehr.'" (Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 8.)

Figure 2a (Beethoven, “Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,” mm. 1-10):

Figure 2b (Brahms, 1854 Trio “Finale,” mm. 104-114):

By contrast, it is evident that Brahms’s selection of the Beethoven quotation seen in Figures 2a and 2b is distinctly personal and evokes a labyrinth of allusive contexts. The quotation comprises a melody entitled “Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder” (Take then these songs to you), which was taken from Beethoven’s 1816 song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the Distant Beloved), Op. 98.[44] However, before Brahms took up his own pen to include the melody in the B Major Trio’s 1854 version, it was well known that Robert Schumann had already done so under multi-layered circumstances in one of his own compositions, the Op. 17 Fantasy. Firstly,

[44] Joseph Kerman, Alan Tyson, Scott G. Burnham, Douglas Johnson, and William Drabkin, “Beethoven, Ludwig van,” *Grove Music Online* (2001).

Schumann originally conceived the Fantasy as a "Sonate für Beethoven" to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of the composer, and contribute to a joint project of erecting a Beethoven monument at Bonn. The allusive result originally included reference to both the song cycle and to Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, but this second allusion was evidently removed. Meanwhile, Schumann privately expressed to Clara that the *An die ferne Geliebte* allusion represented a musical love letter dating from before their marriage when Clara's father was striving to separate her from Robert.[45]

This suggests that Schumann's use of the Beethoven melody was initially twofold: as a means of paying homage to Beethoven the deceased master, as well as a personal call to his future wife expressing his lament of the forced distance between them. While less explicit in articulating his reasoning, Brahms's incorporation of the Beethoven melody into the fourth movement of the B Major Trio is made more fascinating through its shared history with Robert Schumann, assuming that Brahms was well aware of its previous contexts.[46] Furthermore, the timing of the Trio's completion (sometime in 1854) against the backdrop of Schumann's suicide attempt in February, suggests the intentionality of the quotation was aimed more towards Robert than anything or

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[45] Jacquelyn Sholes, "Lovelorn Lamentation or Histrionic Historicism? Reconsidering Allusion and Extramusical Meaning in the 1854 Version of Brahms's B-Major Trio," *19th-Century Music* 34, no. 1 (2010): 61-86.

[46] It is interesting to consider here the concept of "allusive tradition" as described by Christopher Reynolds. This idea can be applied to extraneous details such as composers intentionally writing a work in a certain genre to mirror the same opus/genre of another composer. Then there are musical examples, including the widespread use of Bach's "Es ist vollbracht" theme in allusive contexts ranging from Beethoven to Mendelssohn to Schumann. In this vein, perhaps we may view Brahms's use of Schumann's use of the *An die ferne Geliebte* melody as a similar allusive tradition. See Christopher Reynolds, *Motives for Allusion: Context and Content in Nineteenth-Century Music,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 140-61, and William Kinderman, "Schumann, Beethoven, and the 'Distant Beloved,'" in *The Creative Process in Music from Mozart to Kurtág* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 77-101.

anyone else.[47] Out of grief and sentimentality, Brahms may have selected the Beethoven melody as an appropriate symbol of both personal anguish and artistic reverence. Moreover, Birkholz astutely observes that from a musical point of view, "nothing could have been more fitting in this context, or more Schumannesque for that matter, than for Brahms to include a multi-faceted allusion to a pre-existing allusion in his own Trio from 1854."[48]

Compared with the Trio's other allusions, the Beethoven and Schubert quotations are unique in that they most closely resemble their origins. In serving the extra-musical purpose of homage while emphasizing themes of longing and lost love, the layers of allusion are indeed numerous. However, as we turn to the Trio's opening movement, the heart and soul of the 1854 embodiment is put on display, with allusive contexts finding potent expression. This movement, Allegro con moto, contains the majority of material excised in the 1891 revision; it is precisely this material which possesses the remarkable inventiveness that caused Brahms to consider a new opus number. Rather than drawing on recognizable melodies, his approach to allusion here is more nuanced: where the Beethoven and Schubert quotations suggest names and places, these allusions call upon the listener's imagination, encouraging us to invent, dream, reminisce, and remember things we may have encountered once before.

[47] "Most writers assume with unquestioning certainty that the 'Distant Beloved' allusion must be meant for Clara. Eric Sams and David Brodbeck go to great lengths to make the case for 'Clara' references abounding throughout the Trio and even in its revision. True as some of these may be, a far more compelling case for the 'Distant Beloved' allusion as having been meant for Robert can be made." (Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 12).

[48] Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 26.

Allegro con moto

Let us begin by addressing the movement's protagonist, Brahms's lush opening melody, which appears in three variations from mm.1-20. Comfortably ensconced in the key of B Major, the opening forty-three measures evoke the sweet, longing "voice of the Young Kreisler" that resonated with Clara Schumann when she first heard it. Depicted in Figure 3, the piano introduces the dominant melodic line, followed by an expanded iteration given by the cello before the violin joins to vocalize the theme in songlike duet. By electing to delay the entrances of the three instruments, Brahms seems to be signaling the expanded scope that the movement will outline.[49] Gently layered by the piano's bass pedal tones and the presence of parallel 3rds and 6ths in the melodic exchanges, this opening communicates a youthful, optimistic, and overtly romantic sensibility that would cause even the most hardened of hearts to melt, if just a little. The melodic emphasis on outer voices calls to mind an anecdote of Gustav Jenner, a student of Brahms who was one day seeking insight from the master on the art of lieder-writing: "Brahms would cover up the upper system of the piano accompaniment with his hand, and pointing to the vocal line and the bass he would say with an expressive smile, 'I read only this.'"[50]

[49] This approach is noteworthy in its similarity to the opening of Beethoven's "Archduke" Piano Trio in B-flat Major, Op. 97 from 1811.

[50] Quoted in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 280.

Figure 3 (Brahms, 1854 Trio “Allegro con moto,” mm. 1-19):

After the warm sonorities of the introduction, m.63 marks a sudden departure from the security of B Major. Relying on fragments of registral contrast and an unsettling, meandering descent in the violin in mm.74-79, the music spirals downwards in chromatic fashion towards the arrival of the second theme in m.84. Having descended to the dark and brooding relative minor of G#, the piano once again is first to present the new material. This time, however, the absence of the strings conveys a tone of isolation and austerity, emphasized by the piano’s stark octaves in the

lower register. The lamenting melody resembles the arching contours of the B Major theme, but, as if distorted in a broken mirror, the gestures are fragmented rather than sustained and developed. The lone voice of the piano underscores the eerie silence heard between the fragments, unapologetically left as rests. The opening syllables, a descending F# to E in m.84, recall the opening motive from m.2, but are bluntly detached from the optimism of its original context.

The B Major landscape disappears further into the distance with the arrival of m.98. As though falling into a wormhole depositing the listener 150 years earlier at the feet of Bach improvising at the organ, the piano closes the lament with an arresting turn figure. Decorative yet grave, this moment is stylistically charged, recalling provocative ornamental language used by Brahms's Baroque predecessors. These powerful connotations are evoked further in the dissonant and sinuous subject that follows in mm.98-103, still spoken by the ominous lower register of the piano. Illustrated in Figure 4, this subject is not only suggestive of Baroque tonal language, but has been posited by Moseley to allude specifically to the *Kyrie* from Bach's Mass in B Minor, as well as to Kreisler's (Hoffmann's) affinity for old forms:

> Alone once more, [the piano] murmurs a chromatic *stile antico* fugue subject (bars 98-103), reminiscent in its twists of the Kyrie from Bach's Mass in B minor….But Brahms's fugue subject does not merely pay homage to specific antecedents, for in a wider sense it points to the obscure romance of the archaic, beguilingly set forth by Hoffmann.[51]

[51] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 261.

Figure 4 (Brahms, 1854 Trio "Allegro con moto," mm. 98-103):

With the exception of the cello's accompanimental drones a few measures earlier, the strings don't participate in this alternate reality until m.104. In gentle canon, the violin and cello reiterate the lament melody before the latter breaks away in m.118 to imitate the unsettling chromatic figure heard first by the piano in m.98. Featured in its lowest register, the cello contributes a mournful, vocal timbre to this iteration. Brahms has infused these subjects with striking inventiveness, and the juxtaposition they pose is astonishing given how far removed they are from the opening theme's palpable expression of songlike Romanticism. Nevertheless, this is not the first nor the last unexpected character to grace the stage of Brahms's narrative, which brings us to the exposition's next chapter.

Once again, the listener is abruptly whisked away. The B Major motive lends three of its opening notes in mm.124-125 as a sparse frame for subito transformation, but then the air, a moment ago heavy with incense, gives way to a benevolent countryside breeze. Open-fifth horn calls in the cello begin in m.126, creating an inviting backdrop as the violin and piano sing in

canon to feature the lament melody's next stage of evolution. The melodic subject, articulated by the piano in m.126, is closely tied in contour and intervallic content to the B Major theme, but here the tonality has shifted to the destination of E Major. Marked "*dolce, poco scherzando*," this theme evokes a gentle, rhythmic energy as it passes between the three instruments in good-natured camaraderie. A blanket of parallel third, fifth, and sixth intervals further imprints pastoral allusions to the texture, eventually bringing the exposition to a close in m.162.

Figure 5 (Brahms, 1854 Trio "Allegro con moto," mm. 124-143):

This E Major theme, depicted in Figure 5*,* reveals multiple points of interest. On a personal level, thanks to Brahms's close friend Heinrich von Herzogenberg, it reminds us of the endearing perspective held by those who were accustomed to the 1854 Trio for thirty-six years before the 1891 revision was released. In Herzogenberg's words, "I still shed a tear each time for the dear departed E major subject" (it was scrapped from the revision, along with its many allusive comrades).[52] Secondly, the E Major theme indicates that "Am Meer" is not the Trio's only Schubertian reference. While not yet widely acknowledged in existing scholarship, Birkholz has

[52] Walter Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 62.

offered a compelling argument for the inclusion of Schubert's Piano Sonata in A Minor, Op. 143 in the Trio's list of allusive borrowings.

Birkholz points to the rich environment of influences Brahms experienced in Düsseldorf, exemplified by a comparison of his piano sonatas with the B Major Trio. Brahms's three piano sonatas, in C Major, F# Minor, and F Minor, represent a remarkable development in the composer's writing style and provide fascinating context to the composition of the B Major Trio. Named Opus 2 but composed first, the F# Minor sonata flaunts a Stürm und Drang styling and is marked by rhapsodic virtuosity. The C Major was written second, though Brahms switched the opus number to satisfy his anxiety in naming what he perceived as a worthy Opus 1. More economical and famously based on the opening of Beethoven's "Hammerklavier" Sonata, it represents a contrast to the F# Minor in its formality while still displaying a new approach to traditional models. By the time of the third sonata in F Minor, which closely preceded the B Major Trio, Brahms had transitioned to greater reliance on thematic integration and a tempered union of emotionalism with form.

Regarding the Trio's "significant departure" from these early sonatas, "it seems possible that this radical change of style reflects Brahms's initial exposure to Schubert in the Schumann household in 1853."[53] Addressing a passage from the Sonata's first movement (shown in Figure 6), Birkholz highlights the unmistakable similarities it shares with the Trio's E Major subject. In addition to shared tempo, meter, and key, he notes their mutual evocation of pastoral imagery, folk-like simplicity, and the exact duplication of the bass pedal line. Furthermore, beyond their

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[53] Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 15.

shared materials and looking to the larger narrative, Birkholz addresses what he calls their role in the discourse:

> Both themes have an aura of light that immediately follows some of the most severe and austere music ever written. It is less a motivic connection than a narrative partnership that binds them together. It is where they appear in the discourse: a ray of light after complete darkness. They symbolize an awakening from chaos to order, from the archaic and unfamiliar to folk music, from the church to the bucolic.[54]

Figure 6 (Schubert, Sonata in A Minor, Op. 143 "Allegro giusto," mm. 61-67):

With no fewer than four contrasting subjects presented in the exposition (B Major theme, lament, dissonant Bachian subject, and countryside Schubertian scene) Brahms furnishes an impressive selection of material to manipulate, reinterpret, and reframe in the development. Moreover, the allusions do not end in the exposition. In mm.201-221, triplets rhythmically separated in drumbeat fashion lend an almost militaristic energy to the score as the piano strives towards yet another variation of the B Major motive. In one of the more striking extended passages, the dissonant subject introduced earlier becomes a fully-fledged contrapuntal element in m.354.

[54] Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 15.

Here the composer provides the title "*Tempo un poco più Moderato*" and indicates "*marcato e pesante*" to communicate enhanced sense of weight.

Despite being introduced in the exposition to what would evolve into this fugal subject, its arrival in m.354 is nevertheless a shock. Without the mollifying presence of the lament to bridge the transition, the majestic return of the B Major theme is both concluded and replaced by the solo cello who alone begins the D Minor fugal subject with serious-minded resolve. Brahms ensures that this subject is put through its paces, culminating in a vibrant exchange of voicing as the three instruments (or four, if counting right and left hands of the piano) dovetail their enthusiastic iterations. After an affirming resumption of B Major leading into the coda in m.435, the original theme is called forth yet again, heightened by orchestral-like breadth in the piano part, soaring lines in the violin and cello, and a drawn-out cadence that brings the movement to a celebratory finish.

Self-Allusion and the 5-1-2-3 Motive

The B Major theme's main subject (Figure 7a) plays a crucial role in both the 1854 and 1891 versions; it was carefully preserved by the ruthless reviser. To begin with, the opening motive (5-1-2-3) is innately flexible due to its stepwise motion and arching simplicity, making it highly adaptable to other contexts. As shown in Figures 7b and 7c*,* Brahms takes advantage of this quality, not just in the Allegro con moto, but in promoting thematic continuity across the Trio's other movements. In addition to this adaptability, the opening motive offers to the 1854 Trio a

special, extra-musical function. For some scholars, a longer version of the motive (5-1-2-3-5-8) denotes a convincing affiliation with the Johannes Kreisler alter ego.[55]

Brahms's "Kreisler" period sometimes featured a weaving of musical codes or symbols into his works in a manner analogous to Schumann's practice. For instance, in the third of his ballades of Op. 10 – the Intermezzo in 6/8 meter – the ethereal, chime-like sounds of the middle section can be brought into relation with a passage in Hoffmann's *Kater Murr,* evoking two of Kapellmeister Kreisler's choral compositions, "Ave maris stella" and "O Santissimo," whereas the quicksilver, scherzo-like outer sections may represent a kind of portrait of Kreisler's energetic, unpredictable character. When we contemplate the opening of the 1854 Trio, its upbeat on the dominant followed by a 1-2-3 melodic ascent, might possibly already represent a kind of musical allusion to Kreisler, when we compare it to the melodic profile discussed by Reynolds. Furthermore, while subtle thematic modification would become a trademark of Brahms's mature compositional style, the manner in which he experimented during the mid-1850s to use thematic material for inventing secondary themes could also be seen as uniquely Kreisleresque; consider, for example, the alignment of this practice with Johannes Kreisler's emphasis on creative re-working of existing material.[56]

[55] "The Trio in B marked Brahms's first attempt to justify the legacy Schumann had thrust upon him: more than a mere pen-name, Kreisler Junior served as both an inspiration and a mask.......Reynolds argues that the contexts of these themes, which all consist of a 5-1-2-3-8 outline, make it 'probable that Brahms adopted this lively motive as a representation of his alter ego, 'Johannes Kreisler, Junior.'" (Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 260-64.)

[56] "Brahms readapts the melodic material from the initial theme to create secondary themes. Baldassarre attributes this borrowing and reworking of prior material to the Kreisler persona." (Jessica Embry, "The Role of Organicism," 9.)

Figure 7a (Brahms, 1854 Trio “Allegro con moto,” mm. 1-2):

Figure 7b (Brahms, 1854 Trio “Scherzo,” mm. 1-5):

Figure 7c (Brahms, 1854 Trio “Adagio non troppo,” mm. 1-4):

Viewed in context with Brahms's other creative output, the versatility of the 5-1-2-3 motive lends itself well to an additional category of musical borrowing: self-allusion. For example, Brahms used the 5-1-2-3 motive in 1868 when he sent it as a birthday gesture to Clara Schumann, this time enveloped within the famous horn solo of his first symphony.[57] Furthermore, while for some analysts the following similarities may be seen as too slight to warrant the self-allusion label, I believe a compelling case could be made for the 5-1-2-3 motive serving not only as a potential signature for Johannes Kreisler, but as an identifying detail for Brahms's melodies in general. Indeed, I notice the motive's characteristics – a rising or falling leap of a 4th, stepwise motion outlining a linear third, and the whole phrase contained within the octave – as presenting themselves as opening subjects in all three of Brahms's violin sonatas. This is illustrated in Figures 8a, 8b, and 8c*,* which compare the closely related nature of the B Major Trio's opening phrase with the opening notes from Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major Op. 78, No. 2 in A Major Op. 100, and No. 3 in D Minor Op. 108. On the one hand, such overreaching tonal relationships may seem like a merely coincidental happenstance of Romantic melody-writing – or even something resembling the purported motive-hunting Brahms himself sometimes disparaged. However, the prominent treatment in these three instances, along with the B Major Trio, seems genuinely noteworthy. Also significant are rhythmic parallels, such as the long-short-short configuration heard at the outset of the Trio's first movement (after the upbeat) and the Adagio non troppo.

[57] Opera-Inside.com, "Johannes Brahms: His Biography and His Places." https://opera-inside.com/johannes-brahms-his-biography-and-his-places/#Baden

Figure 8a (Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 1 in G Major "Vivace ma non troppo," mm. 1-2):

Vivace ma non troppo
Linear 3rd
4th
p m.v.
p m.v. dolce

Figure 8b (Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 2 in A Major "Allegro amabile," mm. 1-4):

Allegro amabile
4th
Linear 3rd
p

Figure 8c (Brahms, Violin Sonata No. 3 in D Minor "Allegro," mm. 1-3):

Allegro
Linear 3rd
4th
p sotto voce ma espressivo
p sotto voce

The density of thematic material, allusions, and poetic imagery in the B Major Trio's original version evokes a kind of musical drama. As experienced in performance, the interpretive challenges are formidable and can contribute to the sense that both player and audience have traversed a journey of epic proportions. It is as though the youthful Brahms sought to flex every compositional skill available, shaping even seemingly basic material such as the 5-1-2-3 motive in imaginative ways. By evoking his predecessors, his contemporaries – and not least Hoffmann's Johannes Kreisler – Brahms presents himself as the emblematic torch-bearer: one who relies upon tradition, honors its principles, and is masterful enough to reform timeless objects into whatever their present circumstances may require. As Moseley puts it:

> The motif appears in musical contexts that represent the pastoral and the militaristic, the spiritual and the earthly: in a word, the traditional. The wide range covered by these examples adds weight to the notion that Brahms's audience would have understood the 5-1-2-3 motif not as a discrete succession of pitches bearing a unique meaning, but as a topos in its own right. The implied sonority of the horn, the folk traditions from which the motif rises, and the upward trajectory that it outlines are connotative rather than denotative, suggestive rather than descriptive: the motif's significance lies precisely in its ubiquity.[58]

Cast in this light, the promising ingenuity of the theme's opening motive lies in its pliable reworkability, lending itself to the mechanics of compositional invention while illuminating the role of motivic subjectivity when extra-musical factors play a role. As such, Brahms brilliantly

[58] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 267.

juxtaposes objectivity and subjectivity, uniting them on the same spectrum and paving the way for the Trio's ultimate re-envisionment in 1889.[59]

Critique and Kreisler

The psychological complexity of Brahms's original B Major Trio has often drawn mixed impressions from listeners, as we have already seen in Clara Schumann's journal entries from 1854. In 1862, Adolf Schubring published a sharply critical review in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, stating that:

> Just as Brahms had been unable to uniformly shape the first movement of his sonata [Piano Sonata in C major, Op. 1], he had also not succeeded in the first movement of his first Trio; and here as there, the same causes have contributed to this failure, for one the flabby counterpoint and overloaded polyphony and principally the mistake that he chose incompatible contrasts in his main themes. After the development, the beautiful theme sounds again, but from then on, until the end, no further heed is paid to beauty….this fugue is to be considered, from the first imitation onwards, as disturbing, inappropriate and opaque….beauty sadly hides its face.[60]

Assessing harsh commentary such as this, along with similar critical opinions, one cannot help but notice how the bulk of the discontent was often directed against the Trio's incorporation of

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[59] In this context, Swafford perceived a paradox in Brahms's compositional evolution: "Thus the paradox of Brahms's music in the 1850s and 1860s: at the same time that he turned away from the Romantic subjectivity of his youthful, Kreisleresque piano music and in the direction of neoclassical objectivity, his work simultaneously became, for a time, not less but more personal and lyrically expressive. Still later, he would veil his life and feelings behind a mask of impeccable form." (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, 98.)

[60] Quoted in Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johanne Kreisler," 160.

Baroque-style fugal content. The Schubring remarks even go so far as to call Brahms's decision-making a "mistake," effectively removing the possibility for nuance in the composer's artistic intentions. The focus of critics' comments about the "flabby counterpoint" and "overloaded polyphony" invites a more detailed examination of their implications. First, it is noteworthy that these critiques are directed against the very material that Brahms took pleasure in writing. During the 1850s, Brahms initiated an exchange of counterpoint exercises with his friend and close collaborator, Joseph Joachim. The exchange occurred in sporadic intervals, but Brahms maintained a keen desire to expand on the rigors of his formal training, beginning with canons and progressing to fugues and counterpoint. While the B Major Trio's genesis pre-dates these exercises, it suggests a predilection for contrapuntal writing had long occupied space within the composer's artistic musings.[61] Brahms's extensive fugal studies in the Schumann library in 1853-54 suggest that the extended contrapuntal passages in the 1854 Trio were ones he worked through with particular care and assiduity. Moreover, stylistic experimentation gets to the heart of another way in which young Johannes Brahms was able to identify with his poetic Johannes Kreisler side. According to Hoffmann, Kreisler "was often content to play the piano for hours, elaborating the most curious themes with elegantly contrapuntal devices."[62] Viewed in this way, the Trio's relationship to counterpoint not only represented to Brahms his technical skill but a special mode of kinship with his alter ego.

Despite critical feedback, some listeners from Brahms's lifetime recognized and celebrated the 1854 Trio's undeniable merits. When introduced to the 1891 revision, Brahms's friend Elizabeth

[61] See in this regard David Brodbeck,"The Brahms-Joachim Counterpoint Exchange," in *Brahms Studies, Vol. I*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 30 - 80.

[62] Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," 160.

von Herzogenberg said "I was strangely affected by the old-new trio. Something within me protested against the remodelling. I felt you had no right to intrude your master touch on this lovable, if sometimes vague, production of your youth."[63] Max Kalbeck offers the view that "both versions should survive together; as one of the most interesting chapters from the musical diary of the young Johannes Kreisler, the B major Trio edited in November 1854 will always find admirers who prefer it to the later version."[64]

The 1854 Trio's significance is bound up with aesthetic themes from the German Romantic era. From a stylistic and historical perspective, the work's generous proportions provide a view of how music from previous centuries appeared through the lens of the Romantics. Put another way, the robustness of character and invention lend clarity to our view of the compositional priorities and values that dominated nineteenth-century modes of thinking. While the epic narrative offers a dramatic comparison to its compressed counterpart from 1891, we may appreciate its impact on our perspective of Brahms's younger self. At twenty years old and bearing the weight of messianic-like expectations, he embodies the internal conflict of one propelled by his inner voice yet burdened by external artistic pressures. The 1854 Trio, in striving to reference, honor, and reinvent the work of others, demonstrates a compositional style marked by impressionability, traditionalism, and a keen sensitivity to the role of compositional identity.

[63] Frisch, *Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation*, 62.

[64] Quoted in Joachim Reiber, liner notes for "Johannes Brahms: Piano Trios," recording including the 1854 Trio, performed by Trio Novanta, Tudor Digital, TUDOR796 April 2017, CD.

CHAPTER 3: The Vision of the Aging Composer

"Let it rest, let it rest, and keep coming back to it and working at it over and over again, until it is completed as a finished work of art, until there is not a note too much or too little, not a bar you could improve upon. Whether it is *beautiful* also, is an entirely different matter, but perfect it *must* be."

~Brahms to George Henschel in the latter's journal entry, July 12th 1876[65]

Introduction

The revision of Op. 8 did not straightforwardly produce two versions of the same work. Brahms was twenty when he wrote the 1854 Trio; he was fifty-six when he wrote the 1891 Trio. As the discerning, critical view of the aging composer fell upon his first impressive large-scale work of chamber music, he could not abide some artistic qualities of his earlier self. Thirty-six years had passed; the world had changed. In particular, those qualities of Romantic allusiveness so characteristic of "Young Kreisler" no longer received his endorsement. Still, Brahms did not disown his earlier work, even as he effectively dislodged it from the prominent position it would otherwise have held in his *oeuvre*. His creative offspring, preserved in one opus, were left to promote two distinct artistic visions. While changes in Brahms's creative outlook can be explained as the natural result of time passing, the juxtaposition of fixed points on his timeline offers uncommon richness of perspective. An examination of the B Major Trio's revision invites

[65] Quoted in George Henschel, *Personal Recollections of Johannes Brahms,* (Boston: R.G. Badger, 1907), 39.

us into the beautiful unfolding of this perspective, "juxtapos[ing] two contrasting worlds, opposing spheres that are nevertheless joined to one another through overlapping sonorites."[66]

As we have seen, Brahms was motivated by a variety of factors to revise the 1854 Trio. Simrock's marketing agenda and the zealous "allusion-hunting" of music critics motivated the composer to remove explicit voices of others in his work. Possessive of his privacy, we can imagine Brahms's choice to remove allusions was compounded by the sensitive nature of his connection to Clara Schumann, who figured prominently in his evaluation and treatment of the work during the 1850s. However, it should be noted that an eradication of musical reminiscences was not performed by Brahms on grounds of purely artistic principle. In 1888, Otto Dessoff confessed apologetically that the string quartet he had dedicated to Johannes contained an unintentional musical reference to Brahms's Second Symphony. Brahms replied,

> I beg you, don't do anything stupid. One of the dumbest things of dumb people is the business of reminiscences. . . don't mess it up, don't change anything! Actually, I'd have kept my mouth shut and made off with the unclaimed goods. You dare not change a single note. You know in the end of course, that I have on occasion stolen too and much more grievously.[67]

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[66] William Kinderman wrote these words while addressing Brahms's Op. 10 Ballades, specifically the Intermezzo. However, united by the composer's ethos, this description fittingly applies to Op. 8 as well. William Kinderman, "Capricious Play: Veiled Cyclic Relations in Brahms's Ballades Op. 10 and Fantasies Op. 116," in *Bach to Brahms: Essays on Musical Design and Structure*, ed. D. Beach and Y. Goldenberg, (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2015), 119.

[67] "Ich bitte Dich, mache keine Dummheiten. Eines der dümmsten Kapitel der dummen Leute ist das von den Reminiszenzen.... Verdirb nicht, rühr nicht daran! - Eigentlich hätte ich nichts sagen und hernach mir das herrenlose Gut nehmen sollen. Keine Note darfst du daran ändern. Schließlich weißt Du natürlich, daß ich bei der Gelegenheit auch und viel schlimmer gestohlen habe."

The raw appeal of Brahms's honesty threatens to draw attention away from its dominant message: theoretically, he doesn't draw any hard line with regard to musical borrowing. However, as we have seen, the allusions in Op. 8 are explicit in nature, causing them to stand apart from other examples. The mature composer chose to quiet the voices of others to make room for his own. In this context, it is unsurprising that the 1891 revision shows Brahms focusing his efforts on subverting and objectifying the plethora of material found in the 1854 score. Roger Moseley describes the situation as follows:

> The public probing of these intimate allusive issues helped force Brahms's editorial hand…..Insofar as allusions and references persist, they are musicalized and turned inward: this is music not about 'life,' but about music. Its meanings are shown to emanate not from Kreisler Junior, or even from Brahms, but from a different kind of musical tradition, strengthened and purified through depersonalization…..Brahms's renunciation of what had been identified as allusions to Schubert, Beethoven and the Schumanns seems to have constituted an attempt to situate his music beyond their reach, safely in the realm of the 'absolute.' The sounds of others, no matter how venerated, gave way to the pristine sonorities of Brahms's own 'better material'....[68]

On the one hand, Moseley's emphasis on depersonalization fails to address that Brahms, even at his most "absolute," was perhaps not as distanced from his allusions as the Trio's changes might indicate. According to Mark Evan Bonds, "Brahms….provides a useful reminder of just how

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Ernst Herttrich, "Johannes Brahms – Klaviertrio H-Dur opus 8. Frühfassung und Spätfassung: ein analytischter Vergleich," in *Musik – Edition – Interpretation*, Gedenkschrift Günter Henle, ed. M. Bente. Trans.William Kinderman. (Munich: 1980), 230.

[68] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 256, 276.

problematic the concept of the 'purely musical' can be. . . In reality Brahms's compositions nor (so far as we can tell) his aesthetics were nearly as 'absolute' as either his supporters or opponents perceived them to be."[69] In this context, the removal of specific passages from the 1891 revision didn't impair their aesthetic influence over the material that remained. However, what Moseley describes as Brahms's attempts to "situate his music…safely in the realm of the 'absolute,'" might also point us to an overarching motive for Brahms's recasting of Op. 8: to perpetuate his creative ideology. By returning to the work again and reforming it as radically as necessary to reflect his current ideals, Brahms put into practice principles that had come to guide him as an artist. His compositional language had transformed dramatically but methodically since the 1850s, synthesized in an ongoing evolution of aesthetics, compositional technique, and mastery of form. This altered approach to the Kreisleresque "young blood" speaks readily and unreservedly in the re-envisioned model of the B Major Trio. Rather than a sympathetic compromise with the past, the result is an authoritative evocation of artistic identity, unmistakable and utterly faithful to the voice of Brahms above all others. The impact of the revision is strengthened when we consider that Brahms was less motivated by the idea of "improving" the original Trio than by altogether reclaiming it for his present, mature self. Rather than exacting judgment or correcting shortcomings, this was an exercise in self-realization – an opportunity to continue living out his creative ethos:

> [The Trio's revision is] only the natural result of Brahms's development as a composer and not necessarily a rejection of the early work…. It is even possible that, in supplanting the work's allusory materials with new, more thoroughly original themes, the aging Brahms hoped on some level to demonstrate (whether to critics who had become aware

[69] Mark Evan Bonds, *Absolute Music: The History of an Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 231-32.

of the allusions, or simply to himself) that he was capable of even greater artistic independence and original inspiration.[70]

A New Vision

The new vision, or re-envisionment, of Op. 8 begins with a reorientation of priorities. The high Romanticism of Johannes Kreisler, as expressed through his poetics and freedom of form, gives way to the mature craftsmanship of Johannes Brahms. This craftsmanship centers on the composer's practice of perfecting form through reinvention and transformation. Far from rejecting emotion and intuition, these resources are instead harnessed for their expressive potential and repurposed to serve a higher calling. For example, contrapuntal skill in the hands of older Brahms is masterfully rendered but divorced from that explicit Baroque styling that would situate the music in a particular time and place. Contrapuntal writing, susceptible to association with past centuries, is treated objectively; external references are removed while their internal properties are engineered for maximum economy of design. In this process of assimilating the old with the new, Brahms manages to converge the ideals of his predecessors with the language of his contemporaries, uniting them on common ground. As Swafford has expressed it:

> Romanticism remained a galvanizing force in Brahms's personal and creative consciousness, but not the boundless, infinite, form-shattering side of it. In his maturity he would put away that part. Against the chaos of life, especially the chaos of emotional life, Brahms would create something as classically perfect as humanly conceivable, that both captured and restrained the chaos of emotion.[71]

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[70] Sholes, "Lovelorn Lamentation," 85.
[71] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 46.

Brahms's altered priorities in 1889 were not manifested at the expense of the work's original essence – main themes, primary subjects like the 5-1-2-3 motive, and almost all of the Scherzo, are preserved. Brahms's divergence from his previous approach is instead found in the areas of thematic consolidation and development, the integration of those themes with new contexts, structural integrity, and stricter key areas and relationships. Within this framework, few areas of the B Major Trio were not subjected to thorough reassessment and reduction. Moseley observes that "it soon became apparent that the scale of his changes [required] a fresh manuscript. Far from merely revising the piece, Brahms found himself radically recasting it, taming its profusion of ideas and disciplining its formal excesses."[72] Similarly, Max Kalbeck states that "[Brahms] allowed the principal main ideas, and even an entire movement, the Scherzo, to remain rather unchanged, but removed what was superfluous and overly personal and replaced the weaker, less integrated secondary themes with new ideas."[73] The first, third, and fourth movements received new second subjects, leaving behind opening themes as the only preserving evidence of the work's original guise. The first movement, vastly reduced, features a streamlined structure of 289 measures; emphasis is placed on simplification of form, refined thematic relationships, and a concentrated channeling of musical ideas. Moseley captures this process saying "when recasting the trio, Brahms approached the work as composer, editor and critic. The diverse requirements of these roles meant that overhauling the trio was at once preservative and modernizing, both a smartening up and a dressing down…"[74]

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[72] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 256.

[73] Ernst Herttrich, "Johannes Brahms – Klaviertrio H-Dur opus 8. Frühfassung und Spätfassung: ein analytischter Vergleich," in *Musik – Edition – Interpretation*. Gedenkschrift Günter Henle, ed. M. Bente. Trans. William Kinderman. (Munich: 1980), 219.

[74] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 294.

Allegro con brio

The opening phrase of Op. 8 is the musical seed that generates subsequent content for both Trios. Brahms's expansion of this material illustrates how he capitalized on different qualities that the primary subject offers. This led the B Major theme down two vastly different paths of development, indicating that "the revision is actually not a revision at all; rather….a re-composition process that uses the first sixty-two measures as a starting point."[75] Viewed through Arnold Schoenberg's *Grundgestalt* method of analysis, "[the B Major theme] appears as a basic shape, which, through repetitions and transformations, controls the content of the entire work….[it is] the initial thought of the piece, which in turn, acts as the generator for all subsequent musical events."[76] In this context, analysis of the 1891 Trio's first movement will show how Brahms's sonata form is treated from different angles.

Figure 9a (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 1-3):

[75] Quoted in Embry, "The Role of Organicism," 6.

[76] Embry, "The Role of Organicism," 2.

Figure 9b (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 20-22):

legato espress.
poco f
poco f
A
poco f

Figure 9c (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 40-54):

cresc.
cresc.
ben marc.
ben marc.
cresc.
marc.
ff
ff
C
ff

Apart from the inclusion of soaring, sighing violin comments in mm.5, 9, 14, and 16 in the opening of the 1854 Trio, the first 54 measures remained relatively unchanged between the two versions. However, it is fascinating how this shared opening material stresses the role of a 3-note motive, pictured in four different configurations in Figures 9a, 9b, and 9c. Firstly, the initial context is presented by the piano in m.2, where the descending pitches F#-E-D# are built into the opening theme as lyrical half notes. Then, at the strings' harmonized iteration of the theme in m.22, the motive is halved into quarter notes. After this, the lyrical, undulating material culminates in a moment of startling homogeneity when the descending 3-note motive is forcefully asserted by all three instruments in one voice. Finally, in m.52, these majestic fanfare half-notes expressed in emphatic *fortissimo* chords generate a cascade of triplets, as the 3-note descending form of the seminal motive is emphasized yet a fourth time by an exchange of these triplets between the piano and strings. This powerful use of rhythmic diminution lends to the music a strong forward momentum. The E-D#-C# figure, itself derived from the broad opening theme, is echoed by the compressed pattern in eighth-notes in the 3/2 meter. By gradually introducing the entrances of the three instruments while putting this motive through several distinct guises, Brahms creates an aura of scope, grandeur, and invention.

The 1891 Trio's moment of divergence from its older counterpart occurs subtly in m.55, pictured in Figure 10. Surrounding the melodic cello line, which remains the same in both versions, Brahms has discreetly but fundamentally altered the texture. Rather than omitting the root of the diminished chord as occurs in the 1854 version, here the right hand of the piano completes its journey of descending thirds to E#. Meanwhile, the left hand contributes to this building of harmonic urgency by mimicking the eighth-note pattern presented in the right hand.

Furthermore, rather than remaining in its high melodic role, Brahms places the violin intertwining with the cello by harmonizing below it, darkening the overall color through its descent to the G string. These transformations, however subtle, signal a substantial deviation from the 1854 Trio. Rather than integrating previously heard material into these transitional measures (like the sighing violin comments heard in the opening), Brahms instead relies on re-voicing and textural variation to create the effect of gathering clouds on a darkening landscape. It is also noteworthy that the changes he made to the violin line create a beautiful feeling of endless ascent, as the part begins on the instrument's second-lowest note and rises, unceasingly, until m.64.

Figure 10 (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 55-60):

The triplets first introduced in m.52 find full realization in a flurry of dialogue with the piano in m.68. As they gradually lose steam in a seamless relaxation to eighth-notes, the mysterious second subject of the movement appears at the upbeat to m.76. As seen in Figure 11, this figure provides a compelling example of Brahms's mature reinterpretation of his early work, accomplishing in a few bars what the former expressed through pages of extended material. Central to its effectiveness is a harmonic tension created between E Major and G# Minor, the latter serving as the ultimate destination of the exposition. The subject features a descending chain of thirds that are imperfectly reflected by a chromatic, ascending response that settles on the ambiguous note of D#; this pitch could, after all, lead back to either E Major or G# Minor. Rather than devoting entire sections to establish one tonal center in relation to another, this subject elegantly blends them together and contributes to their potent expressivity.

Figure 11 (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 75-79):

Concerning the movement's development section, a brief review of length will highlight the degree of reduction that Brahms applied to the revision. While the 1854 Trio's development comprises 131 measures, the analogous section in the revised version comprises just 70 measures. It is here, in the absence of decorative ornamentation, stylistic reference, or allusive

textures, that we observe Brahms engaging in some of the most complex contrapuntal writing seen in the whole Trio. Beginning in m.162, pieces of the primary thematic material introduced in the beginning are synthesized, united, and brought into intricate juxtaposition with one another. The various fragments of these motivic ideas are presented in Figure 12. For example, the piano plays a pronounced 8th-note dotted rhythm that appears in m.162, simultaneously affirming an unexpected harmonic shift to C Major. Here the rhythmic identity of this motive is emphasized and made particularly conspicuous by virtue of the strings sustaining together a half-note chord, allowing the piano's statement to pierce the texture in trumpet-like fanfare. An unmistakable moment of clarity in an otherwise dense soundscape, this rhythmic motive is noted by Birkholz to initially present itself in m.44, albeit under radically disguised circumstances.[77] In m.44, the motive is unassuming, not disruptive to the surrounding B Major tonal area, and complimentary to the strings' emphatic statement of the 3-note descending motive discussed earlier. Placed in m.162, however, it is transformed from a supportive role to one in which it is now the motivic protagonist, authoritatively announcing its presence in spite of an abundance of surrounding voices.

While the piano assumes prominence during this remarkable development, Brahms ingeniously draws in the strings to contribute to the contrapuntal web. The melodic line they play in mm.162-163 is based on the same fragment heard first in the violin in mm.31-32; running triplets from earlier transitional material dominate in mm.165-166; finally in m.170, the strings take part in the rhythmic motive that the piano had earlier introduced. In this case, the violin even incorporates a spirited triplet pickup that further condenses the motives.

[77] Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 26.

All these examples point to an important deviation from the 1854 Trio's development, which is the approach to integration of expository material. While the early version thoroughly develops the materials it uses from the exposition, the 1891 version goes further by reinventing those materials. Brahms addresses these new motives by exploring the extent to which they can be united on common ground. Consequently, the arc of the opening movement is made both shorter and steeper, with the richness of its contents incorporated into an impeccable design.

Figure 12 (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 162-171):

Recapitulation and the "Analytical Paradox"

As the climactic development draws to a close, we arrive at one of the movement's most notable moments, a delicate and highly unusual delay of the recapitulation. In preparation, an elegant descent of suspended, rising thirds in the violin invites the music towards restfulness, the piano murmuring gentle cascades of triplets in alternation with its right- and left-hand voices. In m.181, the cello joins the violin for its final rising third, expressed in a pure unison of E-G#. Without even a discrepancy in octave placement, this one thread of sound remains suspended for a moment of perfect stillness before the piano's entrance generates the return of harmonic motion. It is here that the new recapitulation demonstrates its breathtaking subtlety in navigating the return of the B Major theme. Brahms sets up a convincing harmonic progression rooted in G# Minor in mm.181-184 only to reveal that its true nature lies in an inventive disguise of the main theme's reemergence, exquisitely rendered in mm.185-192. Throughout this transformation, the strings continue their unison vocalizations until the magical moment (third beat of m.188) when the parts diverge, recalling the now-familiar harmonization of the B Major theme. While we expect its arrival by m.192, the emergence of the theme takes several measures to be fully realized, which prolongs and obscures any exact beginning to the recapitulation. Like clouds parting to reveal the rays of the sun, this masterful transition not only adds subtlety but promotes the narrative impact of seeing home in a new light and with a fresh perspective.

The mature Brahms is noted for his ingenuity in handling recapitulatory processes, but this is a superb example, in which (in Christopher Thompson's words) "Brahms transforms the central aesthetic event of the entire movement from a simple restatement of an earlier event into a highly

complex reinterpretation of that event."[78] Thompson brings into focus three nuances of the recapitulation's significance. Firstly, by omitting an exact restatement of the exposition's main theme in the recapitulation, Brahms decisively contrasts the 1891 version with the 1854 version. Secondly, it is remarkable to consider that, in avoiding this restatement of previous content, Brahms reinterprets or *re-envisions* his own material in one musical moment. This concept is captivating when we pair it with the larger plot that motivated the 1891 Trio's revision in the first place. Like a mirror within a mirror, Brahms uses a basic formal component – the recapitulation – to reflect his command over the direction any one piece of musical material (or an entire work) can take; as the B Major theme transforms and evolves away from its origins in m.1 through a re-envisioned recapitulation, so too the 1891 Trio evolves past its origins in the 1854 Trio to its own place of transformation and renewed identity.

Finally, the recapitulation invites us to observe with fresh ears Brahms's ability to unite disparate stylistic approaches as a means of serving his artistic ideals. In this case, that unification is put on display through his extravagantly Romantic handling of sonata design. Juxtaposing characteristics from each style, the first movements from the 1854 and 1891 Trios exploit the different potential of those characteristics, often in unexpected ways. With its freedom and expansiveness, the 1854 Allegro is able to traverse a wide range of expressive fields that produce the effect of a romantic fantasy or rhapsodic work – one that contains many contrasting sections in succession. Freedom of form was often a defining quality for Romantic progressives including Brahms's mentor, Robert Schumann. However, this freedom, achieved primarily through a diversity of musical language, actually disguises the fact that structurally, the

[78] Christopher Kent Thompson, "Brahms and the Problematizing of Traditional Sonata Form" (Diss., ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1996), 180.

movement does, in fact, adhere in many ways to classical sonata form. The recapitulation is one such example, since the 1854 Allegro features a conventional arrival of the opening theme's return in m.292. Furthermore, the original version's first and secondary themes are closely related, which indicates a classically-informed treatment of thematic relationships.

By contrast, the 1891 Allegro is stricter in its thematic content. Instead of showcasing numerous melodies, counter-melodies, and secondary themes, the majority of material derives from one primary source. Its tighter organization and general economy are suggestive of Classical influences. However, much like the 1854 Allegro's combination of Classical and Romantic features, the 1891 Allegro confounds those looking to tidily define its structural outlines. The expanded recapitulation is perhaps the movement's most apparent deviation from classical sonata form. In addition, the contrasting secondary theme, which under classical circumstances would be presented in its original key of B Major, is instead shifted to B Minor in m.208.
These divergent profiles highlight how both of the 1854 and 1891 Allegros uniquely blend Classical and Romantic streams of inspiration. Compared in Figure 13, we can see that the two movements equally embrace and resist categorization by virtue of the complementary and competing elements they possess. Knowing this, evaluations that merely address their shared-versus-divergent content would impose short-sighted conclusions upon what is a thoroughly complicated integration of Brahms's early and mature compositional styles. It is precisely this complexity which, in my view, renders the Trios' relationship to one another inseparable and necessary. Moreover, by looking to their respective roles in challenging sonata form, we may deepen our appreciation of the innovations each embodiment offers. Thompson perceptively describes this reality as an

analytical paradox. On the one hand, the complexity of 'thematic work' [in the original version] noted by Schubring…causes him to overlook its simplicity as a relatively straightforward sonata-form movement with characteristically unambiguous structural bounds. By contrast, the (outward) simplicity of drastically reduced dimensions in the revised movement induces [others] to slight its complexities in the interests [of] preserving a schematic sonata-form design. As a result, they emphasize Brahms's alleged conformity to the sonata form at the expense of his innovations…..a comparatively simple manifestation of sonata form in 1854 gives way to a complex reinterpretation of that form in 1891.[79]

Figure 13:

	1854 Trio	**1891 Trio**
Classical Sonata Form		
Formal organization		X
Homogenous musical language		X
Strict thematic content		X
Recap = original opening	X	
1st and 2nd themes strongly related	X	
Romantic Sonata Form		
Freedom of form	X	
Diverse musical language	X	
Numerous, contrasting sections	X	
Expanded recapitulation		X
1st and 2nd themes unrelated		X

[79] Thompson, "Brahms and the Problematizing," 184.

"But Is It Better?"

To dwell excessively on Brahms's remarks about Op. 8 can become an inconclusive exercise, producing more questions than answers. As we have seen, this is due to the ambiguous and often ironic tone he used when addressing the subject with friends, colleagues, and with Fritz Simrock in particular. Famously, on September 3rd, 1889, Brahms wrote the following words to Clara Schumann: "With what childish amusement I wiled away the beautiful summer days you will never guess. I have re-written my B major Trio and can call it Op. 108 instead of Op. 8. It will not be so wild as it was before – but whether it will be better?"[80] Birkholz notes that Brahms uses the phrase "'*noch einmal geschrieben'* meaning wrote it once again, or better yet, wrote it 'all over again'. . . [creating] an entirely new work that should indeed have been called op. 108."[81]

This letter is prized for its acknowledgement of the independence of the two versions, but Brahms's charming description of the process is what most catches my attention ("with what childish amusement I wiled away the beautiful summer days.") We are inspired to picture Brahms taking in the summer air and going back with fresh eyes to a work that likely inspired a sense of nostalgia and fond memories of his *Davidsbündler* days. That he approached it with "childlike amusement" suggests the aging composer took pleasure not just in revisiting the work of his younger self but also in the compositional process itself. While he professed not to be sure whether the revision was "better," it doesn't seem to have detracted from his enjoyment in the project.

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[80] Quoted in Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 1.

[81] Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 2.

This was not the final time Brahms addressed his 1891 revision. Two months later in November 1889, he wrote to Clara Schumann once again, “How dearly I would like to play my Trio (revised version) there! For that, after all, would be a sign that it pleases me a little! But unfortunately that’s not the case, not in the least, and since I can’t have this pleasure, I must do without the other!”[82] The longing expression indicates Brahms maintained an emotional connection to the work’s outcome and a desire to see it thrive. By contrast, he appears rather indifferent and disparaging in the letters to his publisher Simrock in December 1890: “What you now do with the old one, whether you melt it down or print it anew is quite seriously all the same to me.” Towards the new trio he remarks pointedly, “I do not nevertheless claim that the new one is good!” Three months after the Simrock letters, his cheeky, humorous side appears once more: “wouldn’t you be eager to hear it now that – I didn’t put a wig on it – but combed and tidied its hair a bit?”

While Brahms shrouded his opinions in diverse and ironic statements, critics were often less hesitant to articulate their views. In 1890, Eduard Hanslick stated on two separate occasions:

> ...the Piano trio Op. 8 has been haunting the composer now for nearly thirty years like a mischievous goblin murmuring to him: Dear Daddy, you could have made something better out of me!....”[83] [Followed by:] “What a splendid mature piece this trio has become! Since I've heard it, the original version no longer pleases me. From the start,

[82] Quoted in Birkholz, “One Opus, Two Incarnations,” 2.

[83] Quoted in Birkholz, “One Opus, Two Incarnations,” 2.

> certain elements were not to my liking, e.g. in the first movement the piano unison passage in G Sharp minor, [and] altogether the fugato.[84]

Contemporary evaluation rightly avoids explicit condemnation of the 1854 Trio, but it often remains analytical where its value is less felt than dryly provided:

> Such an assessment is basically only valid if, like Zaunschirm, one does not bother with the aesthetic ideas of the early version of the Trio and, as a result, favors the traditional pattern of sonata form as a criterion. That is to say, an improvement lies within the revision, if 'in the later version, the main themes should be placed in opposition to contrasting themes, which have the same value.'[85]

These responses are understandable, and there is merit to the issues they raise. The 1891 Trio does indeed present itself as the "preferable" or "better" choice, but only if evaluated against particular criteria. The work's adherence to formal structures and its late Brahmsian aesthetic contribute to its appeal, but not enough to elevate the work to a superior status. The notion of "better" is itself insufficient: the situation calls for a resurrection of *identity*. The popularity of the re-envisioned Trio can be traced in part to an issue of timing; namely, its relevance within the larger context of Brahms's *oeuvre* in 1891. The new Trio was born into a world that associated Brahms with mature craftsmanship (even if that craftsmanship was often viewed as "difficult" and "intellectual" during his lifetime.)[86] Works like the Piano Sonata in C Major, Op. 1 or the

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[84] Quoted in Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johanne Kreisler," 162.

[85] Baldassare, "Johannes Brahms and Johannes Kreisler," 165.

[86] Gay revisits forgotten critical literature from Brahms's lifetime, noting the use of phrases like "calculating intellectuality," "mathematical music," "dry pedantry," "abstruse, intellectual" and "unintelligible, dry, deliberate, and uncongenial." Gay, "Aimez-Vous Brahms?," 248-49.

Ballades, Op. 10 benefit from a less complicated identity, standing as remarkable specimens from the master's youth. Such early works were protected from the measure of comparison that fractured the status of the 1854 Trio, dislodging it from its rightful place in Brahms's youthful *oeuvre*. The arrival of the new B Major Trio meant there was no convenient place for a work that, by comparison, comes across as foreign and unfamiliar.

Polarity and The Coda

The intermingling of opposites is a noteworthy characteristic embodied in Brahms and his artistic endeavors. In both music and life, the composer seems to possess a gift for defying paradox. His delight in avoiding one-sidedness finds equal expression in his musical works and the ironic statements he made about them. He could infuse motives – or an entire Trio – with potential, endowing even basic materials with layers of perspective. William Kinderman describes this creativity as:

> "that space of imaginative freedom within which entities or motives can reappear, regarded from different perspectives and in contrasting settings. There is good reason to believe that Brahms continued to cultivate his love of such 'capricious play' to the end of his career…"[87]

Brahms's "love of such capricious play" transcends compositional materials, often juxtaposing seemingly irreconcilable qualities within one work. Past and present, old and new, and Classicism and Romanticism are elevated to the expressive realm unburdened by dissonance or consequence. In the master's hands, the limitations of natural boundaries fall away, achieving

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[87] Kinderman, "Capricious Play," 124.

freedom and expressive potential on the same spectrum. Peter Gay describes this phenomenon saying, "Brahms was a conservative difficult modern classicist…..[he] was both a traditionalist and an innovator, both a conservative and a radical, both a craftsman and a creator; he was an emotional intellectual, without crippling conflicts, without paradox."[88] As we turn back to Op. 8, the blend of Brahms's younger and older selves adds a unique poignancy to both Trios. Nowhere in the work is this quality more keenly felt than in the remarkable coda section of the 1891 Trio's first movement, a fitting close to our exploration of the mature composer's vision.

Figure 14 (Brahms, 1891 Trio "Allegro con brio," mm. 262 - 271):

[88] Gay, "Aimez-Vous Brahms?," 246, 255.

In contrast to the virtuosic close of the 1854 version, Brahms re-envisions the ending of the Allegro through a timeless, nostalgic coda section marked "*Tranquillo*." In m.255, the violin and cello exchange yearning, two-measure fragments of the B Major theme while the piano obscures the pulse through syncopated eighth-notes and rolling triplets. As seen in Figure 14, these two-measure phrases transform into an elongated, ten-measure phrase that begins in m.261. The violin elevates the B Major fragment, turning it into a sequential descent towards m.268. The violin's triplets are placed in contrary motion with the cello's eighth-note ascents, which once again obscures the placement of the beat and contributes to the sense of timelessness initiated by the piano in m.255. A pause of the rolling motion in m.268 invites the piano, supported by a single tone in the strings, to melt into an acute, wistful conclusion of the triplets in m.270. After a brief moment of stillness, re-envisioned melodic fragments of the Allegro's secondary theme are exchanged in heavenly ascent by the violin and cello. Each group of notes longingly evaporates before the instruments share a final duet, which resists but ultimately yields to the noble closing "*in tempo*" in m.283. Roger Moseley describes this remarkable moment:

> The young Brahms had all the time in the world, as the opulent length of the first version proved; now, scalpel in hand, he tries in vain to hold time back, finally yielding with weighty fortitude at the final in tempo [in m.283]…Heroism now lies in the acceptance, not the defiance, of fate's vicissitudes.[89]

The luminous reminiscence of the coda's closing utterances throws into sharp relief the bombastic excess of Brahms's original version. One might picture the brusque master, setting out with business-like intention to upgrade his earlier work, meeting with an unexpected personal

[89] Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 299.

encounter in this moment – a poignant face-to-face with the young blood, resurrected and illuminated by the lens of time. Brahms's two visions of Op. 8 provoke fruitful discourse and encourage the poetic notion that their remarkable connection stems from the unchanging essence of their author. That Brahms's creative genius was apparent from his earliest compositions is unmistakable, but what he *did* with this divine gift over the course of his lifetime produces greater degrees of reverence as we examine his creations. In its double embodiment, Opus 8 offers both lens and mirror, a simultaneous refraction and convalescence of the same unifying spirit.

CHAPTER 4: Performance Considerations

The Two Incarnations

In the 131 years since Brahms's Op. 8 assumed its double form, performers have perpetuated a tradition that isolates the 1891 incarnation from its creative origins. Given the work's merits and alignment with other mature examples of the composer's Brahms's work, this is an understandable outcome. Yet all traditions begin somewhere, and can obscure as well as clarify. For some of those who experienced proximity to Brahms and his generation, it seems that the existence of the doubled Trios posed a more urgent conundrum. For one thing, despite the revision receiving a favorable critical response, the 1854 Trio had the advantage of seniority in 1891. In February of that year, Brahms's close friend Heinrich von Herzogenberg expressed his admiration for the revision while also acknowledging what had been lost: "I still shed a tear each time for the dear departed E major subject."[90] W.A. Thomas San-Galli, a German critic and musicologist, stated "everything in this second version is more smoothly conveyed, but it lacks the splendor of youth."[91] Similarly, Heinrich Reimann, responding to critic Eduard Hanslick's comment about the 1854 Trio as "a product of unripe artistry," offers the following defense:

> I admit openly that to me the [revised] version is much less agreeable than the 'unripe artistry' of the original…The new version gives this movement a more regimented, 'beautiful' treatment at the cost of its original uniqueness.[92]

[90] Herzogenberg refers to the Schubertian melody in E Major contained within the 1854 Trio's first movement, a passage later removed from the 1891 revision. This has been discussed above, in Chapter Two.

[91] "Alles an dieser zweiten Ausgabe steht harmonischer vermittelt da, aber es fehlt—der Jugendglanz." W.A. Thomas San-Galli, trans. William Kinderman, *Johannes Brahms* (Munich: Piper, 1919), 43.

[92] Quoted in Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 35.

Still, such defenders of the 1854 Trio have often found themselves facing a retort along the following lines, here expressed by Ivor Keys:

> With a lifetime's experience behind him Brahms is able to put his finger on every weakness – inconsequential and merely episodic ideas, unnecessary and otiose details, especially 'effect' for their own sake – and instead has vastly improved the coherence of the work, and incidentally made it shorter in the process.[93]

While it is unsurprising that any piece of art receives its share of positive and negative feedback, in this instance the absence of a definitive statement from the composer is conspicuous. Still, Op. 8 faced a popular majority preference for the revision which gathered strength through its close ties to Brahms's contemporaneous works from his later years. As the "lofty Master on the pedestal"[94] (in Swafford's words) was raised to apparent artistic immortality, the Trio's transformed identity served as justification to ignore its younger, more extensive embodiment. Put bluntly, why should we go back when Brahms had clearly moved forward?

It is my conviction that revisiting the 1854 version is rewarding. My research leads me to the conclusion that the 1891 version by itself is an insufficient representation of Op. 8. As a violinist, I aim in this chapter to present my perspective as a performer, bringing together interpretive observations based on my experience with both versions, as well as programming

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[93] Ivor Keys, *Johannes Brahms* (Portland: Amadeus Press: 1989), 132.

[94] "Over the course of the century since he died, however, Brahms's attempts to manipulate history, though they tend to dissolve under closer scrutiny, have indeed resulted in the kind of portrait he would have liked. On the whole, scholars have left him the lofty Master on the pedestal." (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms*, xii.)

suggestions that might prove useful in integrating the contexts of both versions for presentation to audiences.

Interpretive Issues: Tempo and Fantasy

Given the complexity of their relationship, it is satisfying to explore how we may bring to life the distinctiveness of the 1854 and 1891 Trios in performance. On a personal note, the 1891 Trio was the only version I knew as a teenage chamber musician, and while I found myself enamored of the work from the start, I always found it striking that my fellow players were rarely – or not at all – interested in the crisp, untouched pages at the back of the Henle edition containing the 1854 version.[95] In recent months, I have had the pleasure of becoming acquainted with this new-but-familiar stranger, deepening my appreciation for that old friend – the 1891 Trio. Alongside the gift of colleagues equally curious to pursue a fresh perspective, a world of discovery awaits.

Let us begin with the shared content at the outset: the opening fifty-four measures of the Allegro movements. As one of only a few areas left untouched by Brahms, it is fascinating to observe how the different contexts in which the broad opening B Major theme is placed require nuance in its performance. When this music was first composed in 1853, Brahms had, in fact, already written another piano trio. That previous work was called "Trio Phantasie in D Minor for piano, violin, and 'cello." At the suggestion of Robert Schumann, it was supposed to be published as Op. 1 with Breitkopf and Härtel in the autumn of 1853, but as a letter between Brahms and

[95] An issue of importance lies in current access and availability of the 1854 Trio's score and parts. While certain editions (like Henle, edited by Ernst Herttrich, 1972) provide both versions, this is not consistent across editions nor is it common. In order to avoid confusion and ensure that Op. 8 is accurately represented to performers, the 1854 and 1891 Trios should, if possible, be presented together in editions.

Joachim indicates, anxieties on the part of the composer presumably led to it becoming lost or destroyed, along with a Sonata in A minor for Violin and Piano and a String Quartet in B-flat major:

> Write and tell me what you really think of this. I cannot make up my mind. Do you think the Trio... is worth publishing? Op. 4 [this would eventually become the Op. 1 C Major Piano Sonata] is the only one I am really satisfied with….Dr. Schumann thinks the F# minor [he is referring to what became the Op. 2 F# Minor Piano Sonata] and the Quartette in B-flat could come after any of the works….Do console me soon with a few lines.—Your Johannes. In great haste![96]

While it is unfortunate that these early works are no longer available, the existence of the *Phantasie* Trio is highly relevant to our present purposes. As far as we know, the B Major Trio was Brahms's first attempt at chamber music since the *Phantasie* Trio (it was also to remain his last attempt for eight years until he published the Op. 18 String Sextet in B-flat Major in 1862). This means that when Brahms began working on the 1854 Trio, his only other experience with the genre was manifested in a free-form, rhapsodic fantasy framework. When we couple this perspective with the diverse content of the 1854 Trio's opening Allegro, it is alluring to consider potential connections between the genres and thus their interpretive implications.

Let us consider how the idea of fantasy-as-inspiration impacts the issue of tempo in the first movement of Op. 8. The 1891 Allegro is marked "Allegro con brio" ("fast and with brilliance") while the 1854 Allegro is marked "Allegro con moto" ("fast and with movement"). While the

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[96] Quoted in Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 4.

replacement of one word might seem a small detail, Brahms's reputation for being meticulous suggests that this minor alteration carries potentially significant connotations. Differing opinions towards the nuances of these connotations is inevitable but also represent a necessary starting point as we explore interpretive possibilities. The difference between the two markings encourages performers to create a palpable distinction.

With this in mind, I believe a case can be made for "Allegro con moto" being faster or more animated than "Allegro con brio" through its explicit emphasis on motion. An obvious question arises concerning what do we think Brahms meant by "brio" rather than "moto," and how does this translate into tempo choices? The terms "moto" and "brio" hold unequal claims on the concept of speed. If we take their definitions at face value, "moto" means forward motion while "brio" encourages a more general approach towards sound quality and aesthetic character. Of course one facet to "brilliance" could naturally include a quicker tempo.

"Moto" communicates an approach driven by motion and forward direction – a notion which is heightened by the nature of the rhapsodic content of the 1854 Trio, not to mention the possibility of influence stemming from Brahms's previous *Phantasie* Trio. "Brio," while more suggestive than denotative, connects well with the design of its revamped Trio. Compared to the 1854 Allegro, it is dense, assertive, and intricate, three qualities which benefit from a certain restraint, promoting clarity and comprehensibility.

When we apply these distinct tempo differences to the opening fifty-four measures of both Trios, the B Major content assumes a unique nuance that reflects the sensibilities of its respective

context. For the 1854 Allegro, a slightly faster tempo highlights the main theme's innate lyricism and the larger shapes generated by each phrase, especially when vocalized by different groups of instruments (piano in m.1; cello in m.5, string duet in m.21). To move this melodic content forward not only takes into account how a vocalist might approach the theme (especially with regard to breathing requirements), but also helps the listener follow Brahms's conversion of the piano's initial four-measure phrase into the eight-measure phrase presented by the cello.[97]

Furthermore, awareness of tempo issues is relevant to the unique role of the violin in mm.6-17. While the 1891 Allegro doesn't introduce the violin until its duet with the cello in m.21, the 1854 Allegro incorporates brief, soaring gestures or "comments" from the violin while the cello is playing the extended version of the primary theme. This is notable in that it marks the only significant divergence from what is otherwise entirely shared content between the two versions. Played too slowly, these gestures – which elegantly follow the contour of an octave but are brief – can feel a bit out of place in the midst of the surrounding and highly extended melodic material. This awkwardness can be avoided by adopting a more flowing tempo, which transforms these cumbersome half-phrases into gestural ornaments akin to bird calls or poetic sighs.

By contrast, a slightly restrained approach to tempo in the 1891 Allegro directs the listener's attention to a different set of qualities in mm.1-54. Since Brahms infused this new version with

[97] It is noteworthy that the breadth of Brahms's instrumental music is perhaps overbalanced by his vocal music. One may draw a line between the many volumes of Romantic poetry that pervaded Brahms's intellectual world and the production of his lieder, vocal duets and quartets, which were often based on these poems and verses. In this way, it is only natural to make connections between Brahms's affinity for song-writing and his intuitive, lyrical style of instrumental writing. See in this regard Marjorie W. Hirsch, *Romantic Lieder and the Search for Lost Paradise* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

more integrated motivic-thematic material, the beginning presents itself as the first, strongly-worded statement of that material, which will proceed to govern the rest of the movement. While the 1854 Allegro also draws on the B Major material as initial inspiration for its many sections, those sections are so numerous and varied that the role of the B Major theme as a pronounced musical protagonist is reduced; instead, the theme retreats into the background and comes across as one of several main characters. With this context in mind, we can better understand that the opening measures of the 1891 Allegro serve a vital and enhanced function, not in initiating a wide-ranging narrative, but rather in presenting a more concentrated, dominant musical idea for the entire movement.

At the right tempo, this musical idea can be presented to listeners in a way that allows them the time and space to discern and become familiar with its pristine materials, structure, and components. For example, as discussed in Chapter 3, Brahms emphasizes the three-note motive F#-E-D#, first in descending half notes in m.2, next as quarter notes in m.22, and then in fanfare homogeneity between the three voices in m.43. This third time is additionally preceded by two preparatory iterations such that m.43 becomes a climax for both the motivic treatment and the B Major tonality. This climax, when played too quickly, loses dramatic effect and inhibits the sense of arrival achieved by the preceding motivic and formal development. Similarly, in m.52, a strict sense of tempo lends affirmation and clarity to the triplet version of the descending motive, now recognizable through spirited exchange between the piano and strings. Crucial to maintaining this well-articulated expression of Brahms's motivic transformations is a sense of unity among the players and knowledge of each iteration's placement in the exchange. This

awareness is especially important when, later in the development section, Brahms introduces a particularly intricate confluence of these motives at one time (see mm.162-181).

Another thought regarding tempo pertains to the musical material outside of the first fifty-four measures of the 1854 Allegro. We have already considered the potential significance of Brahms's *Phantasie* Trio in contributing to the 1854 Trio's general aesthetic environment. I believe performers ought to be encouraged to embrace a poetic spirit as they navigate the remarkably diverse material encountered in the work's opening movement. In Chapter 2 we explored the context of these materials in some detail, but let us consider once more the dramatic contrasts presented by the following sections: (1) B Major theme (2) Stark, expressive lament in m.84 (3) Schubertian pastoral theme in m.126 (4) Bachian chromatic subject in m.98; fully realized in extended counterpoint in m.354.

With the exception of the m.354 fugue, these other preceding sections secure for themselves no identifying tempo indication. This leaves performers to assume that every "*a tempo*" marking (of which there are six) refers back to the initial pacing of the B Major opening after following a brief *ritardando* or other temporary slowing. Meanwhile, Brahms clearly marks the fugue section "*Tempo un poco più Moderato*" and designates the closing coda section as bringing an acceleration: "*Schneller*." While I do not advocate for radical adjustments in tempo for the sections which did not receive their own designations, it merits attention that these varying styles and melodies invite, and indeed require, a proactive and sensitive treatment of tempo.

On the one hand, it is reasonable to assume that few musicians, including Brahms, would expect performers to adhere to a strict, unchanging pulse in the face of such expressive diversity; purely on grounds of musicality and the unique, expansive structure of the 1854 Allegro, this would conflict with common musical sense. However, these basic instincts are reinforced more forcefully if we call to mind Brahms's personal approach to tempo, about which Clara Schumann complained in her 1853 journal entries. Indeed, here we find even stronger encouragement to exercise our interpretive freedom in the case of the 1854 Trio, specifically when faced with Brahms's apparent practice of assuming considerable flexibility in tempo modification. Clara Schumann wrote as follows:

> I cannot quite get used to the constant change of tempo in his works, and he plays them so entirely according to his own fancy that today….I could not follow him, and it was very difficult for his fellow-players to keep their places…It is not easy to play with Brahms; he plays too arbitrarily, and cares nothing for a beat more or less.[98]

It brings a smile to my face imagining the twenty-year-old Brahms in this scenario as a less-than-ideal chamber music partner. And while personally I wouldn't advocate for expressivity at the expense of the ensemble's unity, I believe this account of Clara's should urgently appeal to our interpretive forces and pose a challenge to our comfort zones.[99] Reading

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[98] Quoted in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 110.

[99] Studies of nineteenth-century performance style suggest that tempo was treated with greater flexibility than today's practice. In this context, the extent of Brahms's liberties might be seen as a step beyond even the standards of his own time. In an 1880 letter to George Henschel, Brahms addressed metronome markings in *Ein deutsches Requiem:* "Those [markings] which are found in the Requiem are there because good friends talked me into them. For I myself have never believed that my blood and a mechanical instrument go well together." Deanna Joseph, "Nineteenth-Century Performance Practice: Reassessing Tradition and Revitalizing Interpretation," *The Choral Journal* 54, no. 9 (2014): 18-31.

between the lines, I sense that the "constant change of tempo" and the liberties Brahms took are closely bound up with the work's distinctive character, and that this awareness brings us closer to his artistic intentions. For performers, such considerations extend beyond the realm of tempo to include sound quality, vibrato, bow speed, phrasing, tonal color, pedaling, and much more.[100] Taking this idea one step further, we must consider a posture of risk-taking as necessary to fully animate the stylistic qualities, motivic interplay, rhythmic variation, and textural extremes that this imaginative work demands. That Brahms himself played these varying sections and styles "according to his own fancy" is, to me, a call to our own imaginations as performers – and a testament to the work's inherent ability to evoke fantasy, poetry, narrative, and music all in one art form.

Programming Suggestions

The current status of the 1854 Trio as the overlooked alternative version should encourage interested performers to actively pursue its integration with the rest of standard concert repertory. The art of programming offers a special avenue for this process of integration. However, it is important to acknowledge that, while an uncomplicated presentation of both trios side by side would be useful and elucidating for academic purposes, in the public performance sphere this approach is likely impractical. First of all, a typical performance of the 1891 Trio is approximately thirty-seven minutes long, while the 1854 Trio is closer to forty-five minutes long. The combined length would place a back-to-back performance in the realm of one

[100] It is useful to consider vibrato – like tempo – within the context of nineteenth-century performance practice. Violinists including Wieniawski and Ysäye introduced a pervasive use of vibrato while many others (including Joachim) felt it should be used sparingly to heighten the expressive effect of specific musical passages. Consideration of these trends helps broaden the interpretive possibilities and explorations of modern performers. Clive Brown, "Bowing Styles, Vibrato and Portamento in Nineteenth-Century Violin Playing," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 113, no. 1 (1988): 111-116.

hour-and-twenty-two minutes, which would occupy the majority of time available on a standard chamber music concert and leave little space for other repertoire. Moreover, because of their shared content, the placement of the two trios together on one program might come across as a less attractive choice in certain settings, though potentially attractive in a context focused specifically on Brahms. The performance of trios together is somewhat arduous for performers due to the formidable technical and emotional demands of both works.

For groups committed to the idea of presenting some portion of both Trios on the same program, I would advocate instead for integration of individual movements, especially in traditional concert settings. Given that the first movements of each Trio contain the greatest discrepancies, the opportunity to hear both of them on the same program is an ideal option for introducing audiences to this new repertoire. For example, a performance of the entire 1891 Trio could be presented alongside the 1854 Allegro. Similarly, a performance of the entire 1854 Trio could be presented alongside the 1891 Allegro. Meanwhile, given that the length of even one Trio is substantial, another option would be to present *only* the opening Allegros from each Trio. This would reduce the programming time to approximately thirty minutes (depending on whether the groups decide to take expository repeats), which would nicely comprise a chamber concert's second half.

It stands to reason that there are limits to merely juxtaposing the original and re-envisioned versions on the same concert program. This is especially true if one is motivated by a desire to heighten awareness and appreciation for the unfamiliar sides of Johannes Brahms (like his Kreisler side) and not just promote the 1854 Trio's rightful place in concert repertoire. To

program the work is by extension to invite discussion, and therefore, I believe groups should be encouraged to prepare brief but thoughtful notes to share with their audience, the majority of whom will likely not even be aware of the existence of the 1854 version, much less having heard it played before. While the most intricate details of Op. 8's background may not be suitable for every setting, a promising place to start would be to touch upon what this unusual specimen offers within the broader universality of Brahms's music; how this remarkable work stands out from his other repertoire in its ability to reveal other, fascinating sides of a composer whose symphonies, concertos, and sonatas have stolen the hearts of many classical music lovers for generations.

While integration through comparison poses one strategy for elevating the status of the 1854 Trio, the programming possibilities are even more exciting when we exhibit the work separately from its more well-known counterpart. This is evident when we review the assortment of biographical, stylistic, and artistic threads that the 1854 Trio embodies. These unique offerings range from its placement in a seminal but relatively neglected era of Brahms's development to its role in generating attention for compositional techniques like allusion and aesthetic concepts like intertextuality. In this vein, the work not only positions itself as foundational to the conception of the 1891 Trio, but as a musical treasure trove in its own right, boasting unique connections to other repertoire and genres.

For example, the 1854 Trio would make a compelling addition to a program designed to specifically showcase the works of the composer's Johannes Kreisler era. In addition to Op. 8, Brahms signed his Opp. 1, 2, and 5 piano sonatas (C Major, F# Minor, and F Minor,

respectively) with the name "Kreisler Junior"; this habit extended to his two song cycles from the same period, Opp. 3 and 6. Furthermore, because of the eventful biographical circumstances surrounding this period of Brahms's young life, it would be exciting from a programming standpoint to experience Johannes Kreisler through the lens of his peers and influences: Robert Schumann's *Kreisleriana* and the Op. 17 Fantasy*;* Schubert's C Major "Wanderer" Fantasy; Clara Schumann's Piano Trio in G Minor; the F-A-E Sonata whose contributions emanate from Brahms, Schumann, and their mutual friend Albert Dietrich; Brahms's Op. 4 E-flat Minor Scherzo and Op. 10 Ballades; and perhaps for purposes of further unveiling the humorous side of our untouchable composer, even his musical joke, "Hymn for Joachim" scored for two violins and double bass. The options become almost unlimited when drawn from the larger pool of Brahms's musical activities in the 1850s. In this way, a concert program featuring "Kreisler Junior" would not only promote the 1854 Trio, but also the unique aesthetics and inspirations of its entire creative sphere.

In addition to Johannes Kreisler programs, the 1854 Trio would add immeasurable interest to a program devoted to the art of allusion. Designed around Op. 8 specifically, this could include the work alongside its allusive and quoted contributors, namely Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte* song cycle, Schubert's Heinrich Heine songs from 1828 and his Piano Sonata in A Minor, Op. 143, and Scarlatti's Sonata in C Major, K. 159.[101] (These full works would need to be reduced to selections or specific movements in order to build a cohesive theme around particular

[101] See Sholes, "Lovelorn Lamentation," 61-86. Sholes thoroughly argues for the inclusion of Scarlatti's C Major Keyboard Sonata, Op. 159 in the 1854 Trio's list of allusions. She demonstrates how the influence of Scarlatti goes beyond a specific phrase or groups of notes and shows how the two works are related on a structural level. She also explores the background of Brahms's exposure to Scarlatti's music and his apparent enjoyment of it. This extends to Clara Schumann and her role in reinforcing Brahms's connections to Scarlatti's music through shared performances and discussions of Scarlatti's works.

allusions). By providing audiences a way to engage with these allusions alongside their origins, we are able to expand how listeners engage with the material they hear while also celebrating another side of the composer's genius – his gift for musical transformation. Highlighting the complex nature of allusion and its creative possibilities, such concert programs would provide a new avenue for exploring Brahms's personal brand of innovation in weaving musical seeds into his creative output.

Placed in more diverse contexts, the possibilities for enhancing the visibility of the 1854 Trio are evident. Because the work interlocks with many musical threads, it represents an ideal starting point for generating programs that stimulate the engagement of their audiences. Indeed, the following list of programming ideas demonstrates just how far-reaching these possibilities are: Counterpoint and the Romantics; Brahms and the 5-1-2-3 Motive; The "Dearly Beloved and Her Allusions;" perhaps even a program called Clara's Parlor that focuses on the autobiographical significance of the 1854 Trio and analogous works during the time period March 1854 - November 1854. Finally, music from this seminal period of Brahms's creativity might also be combined with readings of passages from the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann, a literary source of inspiration that should not be underestimated.

The 1854 Trio showcases an eclectic artistic palette that sets it apart from the refined, mature handling of Brahms's later works. In this way, it has something to offer which sets it apart from the 1891 Trio, especially in the area of performance. This innate potential provides a means for performers and enthusiasts to interact with the 1854 Trio in a new way programmatically; in

turn, this one work serves as an example for how to broaden and enliven musical engagement by bringing the audience into the realm of the artist and vice versa.

I have argued for a re-orientation of our collective mindset towards the 1854 Trio as, not only a separate work, but as the necessary other half to the 1891 Trio. Nevertheless, when it comes to performance and assimilation of the original trio into the repertory, this perspective can be too limiting. Combined with interpretive risk-taking, the above programming ideas demonstrate that by choosing to focus on the aspects of the 1854 Trio that are most distinctive, the work can likely thrive and occupy its own distinctive place within musical history. So long as it is relegated to preliminary status in relation to the 1891 Trio, it will never fully realize its own identity as an individual work. Put another way, as scholars, it is imperative to address the 1891 Trio through the context of its younger incarnation; but as performers, we can strive to go beyond this one perspective and resist the temptation of approaching the 1854 Trio only through the lens of its more popular incarnation.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusions

Des Jünglings Gesicht	A youth's face
Ist ein Gedicht.	Is a poem.
In Mannes Gesichte	In a man's face
Lies seine Geschichte.	One reads history.

~Kreisler Junior (Johannes Brahms)[102]

The Treasure Chest

The conundrum of Op. 8, manifested in the unequal treatment of its two embodiments, speaks to our human tendency to yield to what is comfortable and distill what is complex into something easier to quantify. Brahms succumbed to this tendency when he avoided his own opus problem by calling the 1891 creation simply a "revision," leaving the rest to posterity. Maybe his stance was borne out of self-consciousness or even discomfort stirred up by the face-to-face confrontation with his distant past, but Brahms evidently felt he didn't owe anyone, or himself, an explanation. And through the apparently indifferent tone of his comments to Simrock, I find it impossible not to discern grains of irony in the situation.

But as Swafford points out, Brahms never did have a way with words.[103] Instead, the B Major Trios speak volumes about their maker, forcefully taking up the gauntlet thrown down by his reticence. As a pre-revision, the 1854 Trio fails to meet our expectations while emphasizing our

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[102] Quoted in Moseley, "Reforming Johannes," 304.

[103] "As someone who thought in tones and felt clumsy with language, he was willing throughout his life to let writers articulate ideas for him." (Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 35.)

need for an historical, biographical, and aesthetic perspective: it's not merely a musical "draft," nor does it align with an exalted Brahms whose music rests on masterful objectivity. Similarly, in terms of revision the 1891 Trio casts itself as something of an imposter, pretending to improve upon its predecessor when in reality it stands as a re-envisioned entity; if anything, its new identity is made greater by the former's individuality. The changes Brahms made to the original trio, especially through the removal of allusions, references, and Kreisleresque experimentations, resulted in an erasure of the 1891 Trio's origins and history; re-introducing their relationship allows this history to be restored to life. To this end, the 1854 Trio was not the only work slighted by human subjectivity and interpretation – the 1891 Trio too has been altered by the omission of its full identity, which can only be made whole through a revitalized relationship to its earlier counterpart.[104]

The remarkable coexistence of these trios is a "little treasure chest," or *Schatzkästlein,* to quote E.T.A. Hoffmann once more. Together they embody the allure of paradox: objectivity and subjectivity, old and young, new and old. What's more, the role of allusion blurs the lines between these opposing forces in a way that is beguiling and mysterious. Deceased composers suddenly speak through their quotations, bringing the past into the present; Kreisler Junior resurrects old forms within a Romantic context, melding the archaic with the modern; allusions are removed and yet their essence is preserved through thirty-six-year-old melodies. These musical treasures are contained within one opus and yet draw on the seemingly infinite potential of the human imagination. Moreover, they focus attention onto the dynamic relationship

[104] Any confusion imparted by the Trios' perceived contradictions can quickly be mollified when given the benefit of context and familiarity. The following words were addressed specifically towards the 1854 Trio by Heinrich Reimann in 1919, but they can be applied to the entire opus: "all of this [contradiction] can put off the listener with only superficial experience, but becomes infinitely rewarding and intimate, when one perceives the idea of the whole." (Quoted in Birkholz, "One Opus, Two Incarnations," 35).

between fully-fleshed ideas and their origins; namely, that a promising initial idea is never static – it too can become transfigured by its new context, taking on a fresh shape and meaning.

Hence the musical treasure chest of Op. 8 is symbolic of Brahms's title for his Hoffmannesque childhood journal, "*Des jungen Kreislers Schatzkästlein*" (The Young Kreisler's Treasure Chest). It was created during a time in the composer's young life when, to counter his poor health, he was sent away from the city of Hamburg to join family friends in the countryside of Winsen. There he explored the woods, swam in the river, and sat in the fields practicing the keyboard and writing in his notebook. But Brahms didn't record his own thoughts into this notebook. Instead, in a manner reminiscent of Robert Schumann, he wrote down quotations from authors, philosophers, and poets whose words seemed to give expression to those "chaotic emotions" he struggled to articulate for himself.[105] These quotations were not childish musings, but rather a vast collection of ideals and expressions rooted in Romantic-era thinking. The contributors included Goethe, Novalis, Shakespeare and Jean Paul, but particularly notable are Brahms's entries authored by the notebook's titular character, E.T.A. Hoffman as Johannes Kreisler:

> "Music is the most romantic of all the arts – one might also say, the only genuinely romantic one – for its sole subject is the infinite. . . . music discloses to man an unknown realm. . . . a world in which he leaves behind him all definite feelings to surrender himself to an inexpressible longing."

[105] In a letter to Joachim in 1855, Brahms used these words to describe the emotional state of his adolescence. Ivor Keys, *Brahms Chamber Music* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 5.

> "But then, does not the spirit of music, even as the spirit of sound, pervade all nature too?. . . Music…is the universal language of nature, speaking to us in beautiful, mysterious sounds, as we wrestle in vain trying to confine these in symbols, those artificial notes no more than hints of what we have heard."[106]

Journal entries such as these depict a teenage Brahms filled with curiosity, youthful fantasy, and an affinity for not only music, spirituality, and nature, but the philosophical attitudes of his time. To the extent that these qualities call forth a *Doppelgänger* or poetic image of himself as Johannes Kreisler, it is intriguing to consider their lasting effects. Outwardly, Brahms may have abandoned his *Doppelgänger* while still in his early twenties,[107] but his music suggests that Kreisler's musical philosophies lingered for a lifetime.

Across compositional periods and stages of development, Brahms's work was marked by passionate evocation of "inexpressible longing" and a yearning for the "unknown realm." If these qualities of a compositional giant are even in part the result of a young boy jotting down inspirations in a notebook, then perhaps, much like the notebook itself, Kreisler remained a lifelong presence for the composer. Indeed, the last time Brahms signed one of his musical compositions as "Johannes Kreisler, Junior" was in the summer of 1854 when he began to

[106] Quoted in Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 42, 44.

[107] The last time Brahms signed a composition with his pseudonym was in July 1854, when he sent to Joseph Joachim his "Pages from the Diary of a Musician/edited by the young Kreisler." Joachim's tepid response to some of the pieces and the name may have played a role in the ultimate falling-out between Brahms and his *Doppelgänger*. Joachim felt that the use of Hoffmanesque devices and "mystifications" had been overused. Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 114. Kinderman, "Capricious Play," 120; and Andreas Moser ed., *Brahms im Briefwechsel mit Joseph Joachim Vol. 1*, (Berlin: Deutsche Brahms-Gesellschaft, 1908), 50.

conceive Op. 8, but as for his notebook, "…after a lapse of decades he would put down the final entries, in a shaking hand, in the last months of his life."[108]

The Two Faces

I first encountered the Op. 8 Trio as a child growing up in the countryside. I can still remember listening to it while staring out the window, reading lines from my classic novels, and reveling in the divine beauty of sound and nature at the same time. It seemed to me that in this piece by Brahms I had discovered something life-changing, something finally big enough to express the infinite, powerful yearning within myself that I couldn't put my finger on. What didn't have a place in the other areas of my young life suddenly had found its home in a B Major melody.
As I write these words in the final rays of sunlight, I find myself, decades later, staring out a different window, but one which is reminiscent of the one I looked out as a child, complete with trees, birds, and sky. I cannot help but acknowledge the parallel, made more poignant by my years of experience performing and studying the work I fell in love with so many years ago.

Whether he realized it or not, Brahms invited us into a shared space of reflection and revelation when he wrote his two Op. 8 Trios. Their simultaneous reflection of each other and of the versions of the composer who created them connects us to our own origins, just as my viewpoint towards Op. 8 has evolved since the earliest days of our introduction. Maybe like I do today, Brahms smiled and shook his head at his former self in 1889, appreciating only what hindsight and life can afford.

[108] Swafford, *Johannes Brahms,* 36.

Central to this appreciation is the role of music, and all art, in uniting us to our human condition. As performers, we honor music in its absolute form on its own merits; we honor the composer's intentions and opinions; but most importantly, we honor our role in presenting the work to the degree that it reveals a humanity, a process, and a narrative larger than us all. Reflecting on our common condition through musical ideas and artistic action, we come face-to-face with the only truly fixed result – the art itself. In the case of Johannes Brahms, his attempts to objectify his art would never successfully evolve into an objectification of his humanity. He may not have wished to see himself fully reflected in his work, but his pursuit of perfection is what draws us closer to the truth of that reflection - perfection brought nearer by imperfection. This thought leads us to one final paradox: the more objectified a piece of music becomes, the more broadly it may resonate on a personal level as it distances itself from the creator. By pushing aside his own image, Brahms made space for the rest of us to be reflected in his work. And what is art, if we are not able to see ourselves in it?

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