Failed Musical Memory and Intertextuality in Brahms’s Op. 83 Andante

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Example No. 1: Song Allusions in the Op. 83 Andante

a) Lerchengeang, Op. 70, No. 2 (1877), mm. 1-3

b) Todessehnen, Op. 86, No. 6 (1878), mm. 36-43
c) Piano Concerto in B-flat Major (1878-81), III. Andante, mm. 59-66
Example No. 2: Op. 83 Andante Form Diagram

Most Significant Features

1. Interpolations in Ternary Form
2. Emphasis on Main Theme
3. Emphasis on B-flat tonic, save for Song Allusion
Example No. 3: Piano’s Thematic Involvement with Main Theme

a) III. Andante, mm. 1-4 (orch.)

b) mm. 13-14 (orch.)

c) mm. 23-25 (piano and orch.)

d) mm. 36-37 (piano)

e) mm. 38-39 (piano)

Most Significant Features

1. Double-neighbor motive
2. Starts on SD 3 or 5
3. Changes in affect/rhetoric
4. Variation in rhythmic/motivic shape
Example No. 4: Arpeggio

Interpolations

a) Interpolation No. 1, mm. 23-25  (Leads Directly to Variant of Main Theme)

b) Interpolation No. 2, mm. 55-58

(Leads Directly to Song Allusion)

(c) Interpolation No. 3, mm. 94-99  (Leads Directly to Recollection of 1st Movement’s coda, see Ex. 5)

Most Significant Features

1. Tempo reduction
2. Enharmonic G-flat/F#
3. Two-note figures
4. Exist on formal boundaries
5. Unlock past themes
Example No. 5: Conclusions from First and Third Movements of Op. 83

a) I. Allegro non troppo, mm. 369-376

b) III. Andante, mm. 94-99
“Todessehnen,” Max von Schenkendorf

Ach, wer nimmt von meiner Seele
Die geheime, schwere Last,
Die, je mehr ich sie verhehle,
Immer mächtiger mich fasst?

Möchtest du nur endlich brechen,
Mein gequältes, banges Herz!
Findest hier mit deinen Schwächen,
Deiner Liebe, nichts als Schmerz.

Dort nur wirst du ganz genesen,
Wo der Sehnsucht nichts mehr fehlt,
Wo das schwesterliche Wesen
Deinem Wesen sich vermählt.

Hör es, Vater in der Höhe,
Aus der Fremde fleht dein Kind:
Gib, dass er mich bald umwehe,
Deines Todes Lebenswind.

Dass er zu dem Stern mich hebe,
Wo man keine Trennung kennt,
Wo die Geistersprache Leben
Mit der Liebe Namen nennt.

“Yearning for Death,” trans. Eric Sams

Ah, who will take from my soul
this secret heavy burden which,
the more I conceal it,
seizes me ever more powerfully?

If only you could break at last,
my tormented anxious heart!
All you find here, with your weaknesses
and your love, is nothing but grief.

There alone will you completely recover,
where your yearning lacks nothing,
where a sister-being is united
with your own being.

Hear me, Father on high,
your child pleads from this alien land;
grant that your life-giving wind of death
may soon blow around me.

Grant that it may lift me to the star
where parting is unknown,
where the language of spirits
calls life by the name of Love.
“Lerchgesang,” Karl Candidus

Ätherische ferne Stimmen,
Der Lerchen himmlische Grüsse,
Wie regt ihr mir so süsse
Die Brust, ihr lieblichen Stimmen!

Ich schliesse leis mein Auge,
Da ziehn Erinnerungen
In sänften Dämmerungen
Durchweht vom Frühlingshauche.

“Larks’ Song,” trans. Eric Sams

Ethereal distant voices
of the larks’ heavenly greetings,
how sweetly you move my heart,
you dear voices!

I gently close my eyes,
and memories pass by
in soft haft-lights
pervaded by the breath of springtime.
Example 7: Todesehnen, Op. 86, No. 6,

Variation of phrase endings used to underscore gradual psychological transformation

1. Stanza

Variation begins (compare with m. 5)

3. Stanza

Subphrase is varied (compare with m. 22, b. 3)
Example 7 cont’d

4. Stanza

Hör es, Vater in der Höhe, aus der Ferne,

Gib, daß er mich bald um -

werbe, deines Todes Lebenswind.

5. Stanza

Daß er zu dem

Variation begins
(compare with m. 46)

Passage Re-used in Op. 83
Example 8: *Lerchengefang*, Op. 70, No. 2,

Variation of stanza beginnings
used for subtle recontextualization

fixed conclusion
to stanza
(compare with
mm. 33–34)
Example 8 cont’d

28

31

35

39

fixed conclusion
Example 9: Excerpts from Walter Benjamin, Regarding Memory and the “Folded Fan”

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<th>“Most people probably will have had the following experience: if you are in love, or even just intensely preoccupied with someone else, then you will find the other person’s portrait in nearly every book. Indeed, the beloved will appear as both protagonist and antagonist. In tales, novels and novellas you will encounter [the beloved] in ever new metamorphoses. Thus it follows from this that the faculty of imagination is the gift of making interpolations into infinitely small spaces, of conceiving every intensity as an extensiveness, thereby discovering in it a newly compressed fullness – in short, of receiving every image as if it were that of a folded fan that only in unfolding draws breath and presents, by way of its new expanse, the features of the beloved object within.”</th>
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<th>“He who has once begun to open the fan of memory never comes to the end of its segments. No image satisfies him, for he has seen that it can be unfolded, and only in its folds does the truth reside – that image, that taste, that touch for whose sake all this has been unfurled and dissected; and now remembrance progresses from small to smallest details, from the smallest to the infinitesimal, while that which it encounters in these microcosms grows ever mightier.”</th>
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<th>“It is through photography that we first discover the existence of [the] optical unconscious, just as we discover the instinctual unconscious through psychoanalysis. Details of structure, cellular tissue, [things] with which technology and medicine are normally concerned – all this is, in its origins, more native to the camera than the atmospheric landscape or the soulful portrait. Yet, at the same time, photography reveals in [these] material physiognomic aspects, image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things – meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams.”</th>
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Example No. 10: Form as Poetic Rendering with Benjamin’s Fan Metaphor

Atemporal cyclic interpolations, folds of the fan open

(A) Interpolations into infinitely small spaces

B Interpolations into infinitely small spaces

Intensity conceived as an extensiveness

A’ Interpolations into infinitely small spaces

No image satisfies, continual interpolations search the mind’s memory, which result in various triggers to other ideas/thoughts/images. After each, the fan closes, return from memory back to present.

“Only in the fan’s folds does the truth reside.”

Song interpolation marks most significant temporal expansion, perhaps longest contemplation of memory
Select Bibliography


