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*I hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under my supervision by* LARRY DALE KAUFFMAN

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*Approved by:*

Scott Huston

David G. Mulbury

Philip Kirstein

# RHYTHMIC STRUCTURE

# IN THE SIXTEEN WALTZES,

# OPUS 39, BY JOHANNES BRAHMS

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by

Larry Dale Kauffman

B.A., Bob Jones University, 1969
M.M., University of Cincinnati, 1970

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# INTRODUCTION

Stylized dance music for the keyboard has enjoyed a long, distinguished history. From the Renaissance through the nineteenth century, and to a lesser degree through the twentieth century, the melodies, rhythms, and manifold sentiments of the dance have provided inspiration for nearly all the great composers. Paired dances and sets of variations built on stylized dance movements are among the finest works of the late sixteenth century English virginalists. The keyboard suite, consisting of a series of dance movements, was, by the end of the seventeenth century (especially in Germany), a very popular form. The most notable of the dance suites were the contribution of J. S. Bach, whose French Suites, English Suites, and Partitas form a veritable anthology of seventeenth-century dance forms. Vestiges of the dance remained in the eighteenth-century keyboard sonata, although the majority of the old dances were replaced with genre pieces of the type found in the Sonata da chiesa. The minuet was very often the middle movement of the early Viennese sonatas; most of Haydn's early sonatas contain a minuet with trio, and many of the later works have movements which, though bearing the title "Tempo di Minuet," are truly minuets in more aspects than just tempo. In the sonatas of both Haydn and Mozart are finales which breathe the spirit of folk dance.

Each of the historical periods described above evokes an association with certain types of dances. With the late sixteenth century we associate the pavane and galliard; the seventeenth century eventually favored the grouping allemande, courante, sarabande, and gigue; the minuet was prominent in the eighteenth century. With rare exception the dances of the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries reflect the manners and sophistication of courtly society, but the main dance of the nineteenth century was a common denominator to all levels of society. The waltz was a phenomenon of social history. It enveloped most of Europe very quickly, and shortly after its inception the piano became one of the popular means through which the waltz was stylized. Most nineteenth-century composers wrote piano waltzes, and Johannes Brahms was no exception. His sixteen short pieces in this genre are the subject of the current study.

In 1862, Brahms moved to Vienna, and although the change of environment was fundamentally a professional expedient, he actually found the city to be a very agreeable home.

> And indeed, if he never quite became a typical Viennese, with the tendency towards frivolity as well as bittersweet nostalgia, he came to love the lighter music of Vienna, the waltzes and polkas, the street songs and cafe bands, and let it all seep deep into his mind and soul and come out again in guises not at all unrecognizable in his own compositions.[1]

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[1] Burnett James, Brahms: A Critical Study (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1972), pp. 109-10.

In 1865, Brahms composed what might be considered a "musical offering" for the Viennese sensibility. The original publication was a set of sixteen waltzes for piano, four-hands, dedicated to the Viennese music critic and friend of Brahms, Dr. Eduard Hanslick. The work was published in 1867 by J. Rieter-Biedermann under the title Walzer für das Pianoforte zu vier Händen. Brahms's dedicatory words indicate that the composer conceived his waltzes as social music:

> Your name /Dr. Hanslick/ came in spite of itself just now as I was writing the title of the duet waltzes which are to appear shortly. I hardly know how it was. I was thinking of Vienna, of the pretty girls with whom you play duets, of you yourself, who like such things, of my good friend, and what not.[2]

The waltzes were immediately popular. Even the Viennese critics, who at first maintained a cool reserve for Brahms's works, were favorably impressed. Perhaps they thought this relatively light work was indicative of things to come.[3] In that respect they were mistaken, but in any event the waltzes were truly successful. The measure of success is indicated by the unprecedented number of arrangements which were to follow. In 1867, Brahms arranged the entire set for piano solo, the score of which is the subject of this discussion, and some time later arranged a simplified solo version. Five of the waltzes were arranged by the composer for two pianos. In

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[2]Henry Levine, cited in "Brahms Simplifies Brahms," Clavier, XIII/2 (February, 1974), 56.

[3]Edwin Evans, Handbook to the Pianoforte Works of Brahms (New York: Lenox Hill, 1970), pp. 176-77.

addition to those arrangements by Brahms himself, there are also several by other musicians: a solo version, of moderate difficulty, by J. Carl Eschmann; arrangements for piano duet and violin, and for piano duet, violin, and 'cello, both by F. Hermann; an arrangement also exists for string quartet with double bass by Ferdinand Thieriot.[4]

Stylistically and chronologically, the waltzes divide the rest of the piano works. Opus 1 through Opus 35 are, with the exception of the Four Ballades, Opus 10, virtuoso works, including the three sonatas, the Scherzo, the D-Minor Concerto, and the six variation sets. Significantly, the last work of the series is the set of Variations on a Theme by Paganini, one of the most difficult works in the repertoire of the piano. In fact, all of the variations preceding Opus 35 are of such technical or philosophic grandeur that they occupy a most unusual position in mid-nineteenth-century music. Edwin Evans has used "Sturm und Drang" to characterize the piano works of this period in Brahms's life.[5] The Sixteen Waltzes, Opus 39, were the next works for the piano, and although the solo arrangements are technically challenging, they were, nevertheless, a significant departure from the sonatas and variations. Following the solo arrangements of 1867, Brahms was not to compose again for the piano until 1879, at which time he published the set of eight pieces in

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[4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid., p. 12.

Opus 76. Opus 1 through Opus 35 are, as explained earlier, large and complex in structure, while the waltzes are popular music in diminutive, binary forms. Opus 76 through Opus 119, the last of Brahms's piano works, are for the most part character pieces which neither partake of the technical force of the early works, nor the unabashed lightness of the waltzes. They are, rather, contemplative works which bespeak a composer secure and confident in his craft. Despite the composer's obvious preference for the character piece in his later piano works, there were several compositions which followed the precedent of the waltzes. The Liebeslieder waltzes (with vocal parts), Opus 52, the Neue Liebeslieder waltzes, Opus 65, and the four books of Hungarian Dances (the composer's arrangements of Hungarian dance melodies) have enjoyed popularity similar to the waltzes. Although the waltzes are popular for their immediate accessibility, it must be emphasized that Brahms made a contribution which has survived by virtue of its artistic substance. Louis Ehlert, a contemporary critic whose reviews did not normally praise Brahms, summarized the essence of the composer's achievement:

> Having in time assumed an ordinary and almost material character, dance music has been led back to the domain of high art by Schubert and Chopin. Dancing may be accomplished in many ways: passionately, indifferently, distractedly or symbolically. The symbolic dancer will introduce in his motions the poetic idea underlying the dance; that is, the fleeting, half confidential, and yet not binding, contact of one person with another of the opposite sex, a sort of rhythmic dialogue without words. And Brahms possessed the gift of substantiating his mastery in this field by the charm of half revealed sentiment, by the modest denial of the scarcely uttered

confession and by his power of rendering the wildest yearnings speechless with confusion.[6]

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[6]James G. Huneker, Mezzotints in Modern Music (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), p. 45.

# CHAPTER I

# INFLUENCES ON BRAHMS

## Brahms and Popular Music

Of the many influences which shaped Brahms's musical consciousness, one can in this case consider popular music first of all. Most of the biographies include a few paragraphs about his teenage experience as a dance hall pianist. Not as well known, however, is the fact that he played "entr'actes" behind the scenes at the Stadttheater in Hamburg,[7] and least known of all is the fact that Brahms composed salon music for the publishers, Peters, Hofmeister, and Bote & Bock, under the name G. W. Marks.[8]

> 'G. W. Marks' was the standard pseudonym used by these three publishing houses for poverty-stricken, yet idealistic composers who did not wish to be identified as the authors of popular music.[9]

While those pieces signed G. W. Marks were transcriptions and arrangements, those signed "Karl Würth" were Brahms's own compositions. Among the many pieces turned out under the latter

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[7]Walter Niemann, Brahms, trans. by Catherine Alison Phillips (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1937), p. 26.

[8]William Zakariasen, "Pop Music by Classical Composers," High Fidelity and Musical America, XXIV/1 (January, 1974), 97.

[9]Ibid.

pseudonym were about 150 fantasies on waltz airs.[10] Brahms's later confession, "One should never be ashamed of the way he gets started in this business,"[11] suggests that popular music was not at all repugnant to his artistic sensibility. If this is true, then the waltz music in question should not be regarded as unrepresentative of Brahms's staunch musical integrity. Persistent analysis reveals "lightness" that exists on the surface only. All the details of craftsmanship are "Brahmsian" at their best, and the performer who carelessly approaches the waltzes, expecting only a very modest challenge, will never apprehend their sophistication.

## Origins of the Waltz

It is unfortunate that dance music itself is only rarely exposed in the many histories of dancing. The dance is usually treated as an aspect of social history, and the hundreds of minuets, 'contredanses,' and waltzes which were composed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are seldom discussed. One must consult comparatively rare publications if one wishes to see some music. Doing so, however, rewards one with the knowledge that the history of dance music is as fascinating as the history of the dance. And if one wishes to gain understanding of stylized dance music, composed for the piano (i.e., the waltzes of Schubert, Chopin,

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[10] Niemann, p. 26.

[11] Zakariasen, p. 97.

or Brahms), both areas must be studied. Although it may be said that dance music of past centuries was made of the same stuff of which serious music consisted, it still did, perhaps, stand several steps away from that universality which characterized the best of serious music. In order to succeed as popular dance music it had to partake of the gesture and nuance of particular people at a particular time in history. If this is true, then the performer of waltzes by Schubert, Chopin, and Brahms must not only apply analytical techniques to the music, but he is constrained to apprehend the elusive quality of a narrowly defined cultural milieu.

Rhythm is as much a direct expression of an era or geographic location as harmony or melody. The rhythmic analysis offered in this paper will aid one's artistic conceptions only if the cultural and social origin of waltz music is given adequate review. Additional perspective will be gained by considering the several influences which formed Brahms's concept of the waltz.

To play the waltz correctly one must first understand how it is so fundamentally different from the minuet. The early popularity of the minuet was, curiously enough, based on the same ideals that allowed the waltz to conquer most of Europe over a century later. Both were a reaction against artificiality. During the sixteenth century, and even during the reign of Louis XIII, the ballet at the French court was characterized by ". . . aristocratic dilettantism: together with a few professional dancers, high society itself supplies

the participants. . . ."[12] The courtly dance soon, however, became something to be seen as well as performed. The ballet, leaving the exclusive domain of the court and entering the public theater, was no longer personal entertainment for aristocratic amateurs, but "the serious work of professional dancers."[13] Curt Sachs summarizes the attitude the French held toward professional precision:

> The artistic strength of the French dance of that time, however, lies mainly in its technical perfection. Here is no striving for expression, vitality, and for naturalism, but for the classical ideals of clarity, regularity, and balance, even if bought at the price of rigidity. . . . . The systematic spirit of the dance instruction of the time can be traced in the foundation of the teaching method on a scheme of invariable basic positions of the head, the trunk, the arms, and the legs as the beginning and end of each movement.[14]

The result of such technical intensification was the gradual suppression of instinctive naturalness, a quality which the minuet restored to French dance.

The age of Louis XIV "reacted against the préciosité of the first half of the century and turned again to . . . the sensible, simple, clear naturalness of classical antiquity."[15] The minuet, whose origin was outside the court, fulfilled the new preference for naturalness, but was praised

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[12]Curt Sachs, World History of the Dance, trans. by Bessie Schönberg (New York: W. W. Norton, 1937), p. 392.

[13]Ibid., p. 393.

[14]Ibid., pp. 393-94.

[15]Ibid., p. 396.

at the court not because of its primitive origin, but because "of its magnificent courtly transformation."[16] Although it consisted of small steps, avoiding any capricious leaps, the minuet was a relatively free form, allowing the participants a measure of expressive flexibility.

The minuet was not long in becoming an art form, and its successful execution depended on the mastery of a large number of complex movements. Gaston Vuillier describes the transformation:

> At first a gay and lively dance, simple, yet not without distinction, it soon lost its original vivacity and sportiveness, becoming grave and slow, like other fashionable court dances.[17]

Although the minuet remained popular until the French Revolution, signs of the time were prophesied a generation earlier by the growing popularity of the English country dance, or contredanse, the execution of which required little study and could therefore be danced by people of all social strata.[18] Its relative crudeness disgusted professional dancing teachers, but it soon began to virtually replace the minuet.

## Rising Popularity of the Waltz

Just as the minuet had risen from common origin to courtly favor, the waltz rose from folk culture to dominate

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[16] Ibid.

[17] Gaston Vuillier, A History of Dancing (Boston: Milford House, 1972), p. 150.

[18] Sachs, pp. 398-99.

most of Europe for nearly a century. Philip Richardson has written a concise summary of the events which led to the appearance of the waltz:

> The Minuet at the time of the French Revolution was over one hundred years old as a Court Dance, and signs were not wanting that it had outlived its day. Originally a mid-seventeenth-century attempt to symbolize the chivalry of the Middle Ages and to revive the ideology of the Troubadours and Minnesingers, it had become towards the close of the eighteenth century a mirror of the artificial courtesies and the rich costumes seen at the Court of the Bourbons, out of touch with the romanticism which was already beginning to permeate the bourgeoisie of Europe, who for their dances were turning to folk and peasant song for inspiration. The livelier, more sociable and warm-blooded dances of the people crept into the houses of the bourgeoisie and, as the Contredanse, invaded the court. This was a stepping-stone towards the inclusion of the still more intimate Waltz, which was then almost unknown.[19]

The waltz can be traced to the German turning dances (Drehtänze), popular folk dances characterized by the couples' rotation about the dancing area, close contact between the couple, a rolling movement from side to side, and a heavily accented first beat of every bar of music.[20] Thus, it is of cardinal importance to avoid the error of considering the waltz as an evolutionary product of the minuet. The waltz superseded the minuet, but in no way grew out of it.

The Ländler, also a derivative of the turning dances, had been popular in rural South Germany for many generations. It is this folk dance which was the most directly related an-

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[19]Philip J. S. Richardson, The Social Dances of the Nineteenth Century in England (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1960), p. 41.

[20]Joan Lawson, European Folk Dance (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd., 1967), pp. 121-22.

cestor of the waltz. Curt Sachs explains the difference between the Ländler and the waltz by emphasizing the faster tempo of the latter. The waltz, actually a Ländler danced to the exigencies of urban life, was danced without hobnails, upon smooth floors. The motion of the feet was simplified, and the skips and turning under the arm were avoided. The most significant quality of the waltz was its gliding motion, and in this respect alone it was fundamentally different from the minuet or the Ländler.[21]

The new waltz was at first attacked for its indecency, and with some justification, for on occasion the village interpretation of the waltz was an openly sensuous demonstration.[22] Despite early denunciations, the new dance became, by the early nineteenth century, the favorite of the Austrian and German people.

## The Viennese Waltz

The new dance form discussed in the foregoing paragraphs was originally identified as the German waltz, but during the course of the nineteenth century it underwent many transformations as most of Europe, England, and even America applied their own peculiar adaptations. The most famous development of the waltz took place in Vienna, where for nearly three quarters of a century the Strauss family gave dance music an international reputation. Brahms's waltzes are usu-

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[21]Sachs, pp. 429-30.

[22]Ibid., pp. 430-31.

ally identified as "Viennese Waltzes," and although the appellation is not entirely correct, several of the pieces are certainly more "Viennese" than others. For that reason it is helpful to understand the Viennese interpretation of the waltz, as well as the instrumentation which was most common to its earliest form.

Karl Kobald describes the relationship of the Viennese Waltz to Austrian folk culture:

> Its origin, its soul lies in the Austrian Volkslied, in the character and dances of the people living in the mountains and country round the city. Alpine wandering musicians of Steiermark (Styria) brought the music of the mountains and woodlands into the town. The violin players from Linz, a quartette consisting of two violins, guitar and double bass, or of violin, guitar, 'cello, and clarinet, played, as they came sailing down the Danube on board the steamers the instrumental songs of the mountains, in slow 3/4 time. When they arrived in Vienna they visited inn after inn in the suburbs and played for the dancers. The influx of this fresh primitive talent, mingled with Viennese grace, gave birth to the Viennese waltz. With its light, swaying rhythm, its infectious swing, it was a mirror which reflected the pastoral Viennese landscape, and was the ultra-expression of the soul of the Viennese people.[23]

It is important to note the musical instruments associated with the beginnings of the waltz. From the start, and throughout its long history, waltz music has been characterized by certain features idiomatic to the violin:[24]

1) exploitation of open strings

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[23]Karl Kobald, Franz Schubert and His Times, trans. by Beatrice Marshall (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928), pp. 24-25.

[24]Joseph Wechsberg, The Waltz Emperors (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 54.

2) double stops--"euphonious sixths" and "sobbing thirds"
3) wide leaps over the strings
4) different bowings--legato, spiccato, saltando, sul ponticello, and two short, crisp, up-bows following a strong down-bow.

Brahms's waltzes abound in passages which are easily related to such techniques, and the pianist does well to adjust his concept accordingly.

Haydn, Dittersdorf, and Mozart wrote waltz music[25] but to Josef Lanner (1801-43) goes credit for making the Viennese waltz an art form. Lanner and Johann Strauss, Sr. (1805-49), while still in their late teens, formed a quartet which soon became very popular.[26] Eventually the two partners separated to form their own orchestras, with Strauss achieving later fame for his celebrated European tours.

Brahms and Lanner

In addition to distinguishing the Viennese waltz from the German waltz, it is necessary to discuss the various qualities of the Viennese waltz itself. Already with Lanner and Strauss there were two different spirits at work:

> Lanner's music was perhaps a shade more traditionally Viennese in its warmth, gentleness, depth, and melodiousness than that of Strauss Father, whose more daring, stronger rhythms, appealed to a younger segment of Vienna just entering the age of dancing and courting.[27]

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[25] Ibid., p. 51.

[26] Egon Gartenberg, Vienna--Its Musical Heritage (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), p. 136.

[27] Ibid.

Brahms's waltzes share more of Lanner's attitude, and this adduces to the fact that Schubert, whose waltzes were the model for Brahms, was an admirer of Lanner's music. Schubert, Lanner, and Strauss, Sr., lived during Vienna's "Biedermeier" period, the post-Napoleonic era, when peace had been restored, and culture was experiencing a "second blossoming."[28] Its gentle romanticism was part of a society which had changed greatly by the second half of the century.

> The "Old Vienna" of Schubert, Lanner, and the elder Strauss was the Gothic city . . . surrounded by ramparts, suburbs and the vineyards and villages of the Vienna Woods. The earlier waltzes reflect the cosy atmosphere of the parochial town, when there was time for reflection and meditation. By contrast, the great waltzes of the second Strauss, those written after 1860, mirror the hectic gaiety and nervous tension of the latter part of the century, when Vienna became for a short time the glittering Imperial city, the sophisticated capital of Europe.[29]

Thus, compared to the cosmopolitan flavor of the younger Strauss's waltzes, the music of Lanner and the elder Strauss is related spiritually to the Ländler, whose characteristics were discussed earlier. So, when interpreting Brahms's waltzes, several readings are possible, depending on whether the individual piece is a German waltz, Austrian Ländler, or Viennese waltz.

While tracing thematic and rhythmic origins might require another volume of work, it is enough to comment on the frequent borrowing of materials among the early waltz

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[28]Kobald, pp. 1-4.

[29]Wechsberg, p. 56.

composers:

> Together, they /Lanner and Strauss/ built up a fund of rhythmic and melodic devices--sometimes merely "gimmicks"--which dominated the subsequent history of the waltz. Thus, any composer who circumscribed his melodic inspiration by the syncopated triple beat of the Viennese waltz was inevitably drawn toward rhythmic patterns already formulated by Lanner and Strauss.[30]

The significance of including such an observation is the slightly different perspective it gives us in understanding Brahms's waltzes. For although it is helpful to know Brahms's musical language, our subconscious is perhaps affected by the knowledge that the waltzes were built upon an already complex language which started to form several generations before.

Brahms and Schubert

Characteristic of his reverence of the past was Brahms's diligent study of the music of Bach and Handel. More recent composers also drew his admiration, among them Schubert, whose autographs of the Twelve and Seventeen Ländler Brahms owned.[31] That he studied them, and other dances by Schubert, is suggested by his having identified his own waltzes as "innocent little waltzes in Schubertian form."[32] "Schubertian form" refers to the short, binary structure (two eight measure

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[30]Philip T. Barford, "Josef Lanner: A Further Appraisal," The Music Review, XXI/3 (1960), 180.

[31]Kathleen Dale, "The Piano Music," in The Music of Schubert, ed. by Gerald Abraham (New York: W. W. Norton, 1947), p. 116.

[32]Niemann, p. 246.

sections, each repeated), in which Schubert so often set his own dances. In music actually composed for dancing it was the custom to group several dances which were framed by a short introduction and coda. Although Schubert's dances, intended for performing, not dancing, include neither introduction nor coda, usually a dozen or more are found grouped together. Thus, Brahms's grouping of sixteen waltzes in his Opus 39 is as "Schubertian" as the basic form of each dance.

Although each of the sixteen waltzes is a binary structure with each half repeated (with the exception of No. 15), only Nos. 3, 10, 13, and 16 are built of two symmetrical sections of eight bars each. The others express great variety within the binary frame (the result of Brahms's interest in line and development), and the resultant series of varied short forms creates a kind of formal rhythm which justifies a continuous performance of all sixteen pieces: 8+16, 8+16, 8+8, 8+18, 8+14, 8+27, 8+28, 12+18, 8+16, 8+8, 16+24, 12+20, 8+8, 12+24, 8+28 (second half not repeated), and 8+8. Some have argued against continuous performance, citing the disjunct key scheme: the series begins in B major and ends in C-sharp minor. However true this may be, it cannot have been an accident that Brahms placed the 8+8 structures at seemingly irregular intervals, thus creating unity within the formal scheme. Significant, too, is the placement of the longest piece, 16+24, approximately two-thirds of the way through the series. It must be remembered that Brahms was one of the undisputed masters of the variation form, and he was not unaware of the psychological effect of careful

pacing of musical events within the time continuum.

Brahms and Johann Strauss, Jr.

Although Brahms composed his sixteen waltzes before having made close contact with Johann Strauss, their friendship in later years corroborates the depth of Brahms's lifelong love of simple, domestic joys. All the biographies bear this out. Brahms was a great composer, but not a universal composer in the manner of Beethoven. His music communicates the warmth and objectivity of the middle class, and there is nothing enigmatic about the composer's sincere admiration for the man who wrote great popular music.

Hans Fantel has included in his recently published book a few remarks about the Brahms-Strauss relationship. Brahms was one of the very few friends who visited Strauss, on which occasions billiards or cards were the usual activities. The main social rule was that no serious or intellectual talk was allowed--it upset Strauss's creative impulse for days. Yet, they enjoyed each other's company, sometimes sitting together for hours without needing conversation to communicate. On occasion, Brahms would improvise his own versions of Strauss waltzes, and there is a record of his having played The Blue Danube in a most remarkable fashion.

Brahms admired the spontaneity of Strauss's music. He once autographed a fan for Adele Strauss, notating the opening bars of The Blue Danube and signing it, "Unfortunately, not by J. Brahms." Strauss and his wife were among the

few people in whose presence he was not bitter or sarcastic. He treated them with a courtesy and warmth which he extended to few others.[33]

The foregoing account is included to suggest that the composition of the sixteen waltzes was an endeavor which Brahms probably took very seriously, and if such knowledge affects our interpretation in the least way its exposure is justified.

## Brahms and Hungarian Music

Among the diverse origins of the waltzes is the very distinct influence of Hungarian music. The fourteenth waltz, although in 3/4 time, could be included with Brahms's Hungarian dances, and the disjunct, ornamented melody of the thirteenth waltz has, in lesser degree, the flamboyance of Hungarian music. While still a very young man Brahms made an extensive concert tour with the Hungarian violinist, Reményi, during which time the composer's attention was drawn towards Hungarian folk music. The influence extended to many of Brahms's later works, and it is not surprising that the waltzes echo Magyar sounds.

## Vienna's Musical Heritage

When one begins to describe the various shades of feeling within Viennese waltz music, one encounters aspects

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[33]Hans Fantel, Johann Strauss: Father and Son, and Their Era (London: Redwood Press Ltd., 1971), pp. 200-1.

of Viennese culture which are peculiar to that city alone. Vienna was a comfortable place, the result of a complex mingling of political, religious, economic, and geographic factors. People of all classes shared the musical culture of the city, reflecting the democracy which existed among the various levels of society.[34] Viennese Gemütlichkeit (a feeling for the unhurried life, and the accepting, forgiving attitude of the people), is a quality one must remember when playing waltz music associated with the city.

Viennese music reflects not only a particular philosophy toward life, but also diverse national influences. Vienna's geographic location and political position made her a gathering place for people from all countries. Several cultures in particular imparted their respective qualities to Viennese music: 1) the sentimentality of the Slavs to the north and south, 2) the sparkle of the Magyars to the east, and 3) the language and intellect of the Germans to the west.[35]

> All those migrations and invasions, acquisitions and marriages, made Vienna the capital of an empire, a commercial, political, scientific, and artistic center. It resulted in that unique blend of Viennese sentimentality, pessimism, penchant for the good life, intellect, and lively charm.[36]

It may be surprising to know that the best of the Strauss

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[34]Wechsberg, pp. 9-10.

[35]Gartenberg, p. 5.

[36]Ibid., p. 6.

waltzes contain Slavic, Hungarian, Bavarian, Italian, and even French elements, but they are blended well to create the Viennese Waltz.[37] There have been no successful imitations of this style, and although Brahms expressed many facets of the Viennese musical tradition in his waltzes, no single piece (with the exception of perhaps Waltz No. 11) actually achieves a synthesis of the kind achieved by Strauss.

## Brahms's Germanic Heritage

The several sources from which the Brahms waltzes draw their life--Austrian folk music, the Ländler, the German waltz, Hungarian music, and the Viennese waltz, with its international heritage--have already been cited. In addition to these, there is Brahms's own thoroughly Germanic heritage, which was manifest in several ways throughout his life. Above all other things, Brahms valued most of all the completion of the Bachgesellschaft edition, and the founding of the German Empire by Bismarck.[38] His love for German folk song was a fundamental factor in his art:

> Brahms's indebtedness to German folk-song was the direct result of his German temperament, the inherent saturation of his mind and spirit in the totality of Germanism, both in the times in which he lived and in the long historical perspectives of the individual and collective unconscious. . . . . Brahms then was a dyed-in-the-wool German composer . . . the most comprehensive representative in the music of the total German consciousness.[39]

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[37]Wechsberg, pp. 55-56.

[38]James, p. 4.

[39]Ibid., pp. 4, 14.

Thus, to the Gemütlichkeit of the Austrian-Viennese way of life we may add the earnest conservatism of Brahms's German background. To the musician sensitive to such distinctions of philosophy, both polarities of feeling can be delineated in the waltzes.

## Rhythmic Interpretation of the Waltz

Brahms's interest in rhythmic successions is commonly known, and it may seem quite ordinary that still another rhythmic analysis is applied to some of his works. Actually, a comprehensive study of Brahms's rhythmic technique does not exist, and when the subject is approached it is often given only superficial comment. The several reasons offered below explain the importance of careful rhythmic analysis:

1) Technical difficulties are made easier when rhythmic structure is understood. The placement of accent, whether resulting in increased tone, or simply mental grouping, affects the pianist's control of weight, and this in turn affects all that the hands do.

2) Paradoxically, the 3/4 time of the waltz is not easily performed in an artistic manner. Whether or not it affects the listener depends on the fragile compromise between projection of a long melodic line, and the maintenance of a regular, yet flexible meter. In the case of Brahms, the difficulty is compounded by rhythmic groupings which seem difficult to reconcile with the waltz meter.

3) Closely related to no. 2 is a compositional trait which Evans describes as "Bodily uplifting of the phrase, without recognition of any question of harmonic incongruity therefrom resulting."[40] "Bodily uplifting of the phrase" properly belongs with the study of rhythm.

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[40]Evans, pp. 25-26.

Nineteenth-century pianists complained about the "unpianistic" qualities of Brahms's keyboard style. His manner of writing was an original idiom, free of the standard items of virtuoso display, and could by this limited perspective be designated "unpianistic." This quality would suggest that in the absence of any purely decorative, sonorous figuration, the rhythmic element must be a highly developed aspect of the piano music, as well as in the rest of his works.

> He differs from other composers in frankly accepting the piano as it is; and in not making any attempt to compensate for its defects. He consigns his thoughts to it in the same way as to a more perfect exponent, depending upon those to whom those thoughts are addressed to accept them in their abstract sense. Other composers resort to varieties of device whereby the sound produced shall factitiously approximate to that of an ideal expression; and, in doing so, they notoriously decorate and modify the original conception. . . ."[41]

Thus, if the piano music is accepted as the undecorated abstraction of the composer's thoughts, it is important that the highly refined rhythmic structure of Brahms's music be understood in every detail.

It is interesting to compare a general rule for stylish interpretation with the musical principle which supports the rule. For example, consider Hans Fantel's brief instructions for playing a waltz:

> The cardinal rule for playing a waltz is the same for mastering other phases of life in Vienna: Don't push it--and keep the tempo loose.[42]

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[41] Ibid., p. 17.

[42] Fantel, p. 18.

Any definition of "loose" tempo must include discussion of the several aspects of rubato. The term may be descriptive of the most subtle rhythmic flexibility which the performer applies to the otherwise uncompromising tempo of a fugue by Bach. Chopin directed pianists to maintain relatively strict tempo with the left hand while playing the melody with more freedom. In any context, rubato may refer to adjustments in rhythm which are effected by taking time from one note and adding it to another. In Baroque music the adjustments are limited by stylistic considerations, while in music of the nineteenth century rubato may describe the gradual increase or decrease in tempo from one phrase to the next, or from one section to the next. It is the latter context within which one interprets waltz music, but to this general guide may be added the physical aspects of the dance itself. Far from the geometric posture of the minuet, the waltz carried its participants in gliding motions, in circles whose diameters were created by the free design of the dancers. Thus, "loose" tempo corresponds to that rhythmic interpretation which mirrors the spontaneous invention of the dancers' movements.

A concrete example of the rhythmic freedom discussed above is the Viennese custom of anticipating the second beat of each measure in a waltz. Is it a "custom" in the sense that it has no reasonable basis for existence? On the contrary, its value in conveying a faster, lighter rhythm is founded on the psychological fact that we respond in a positive way to the feeling of motion, power, and lightness that is created by minimum exertion. More specifically, antici-

pation of the second beat conveys, without actually increasing the tempo, the sensation of "motion, power, and lightness." The "custom," then, is simply the result of having sought after the most efficient manner of gratifying a basic human need. In summary, anticipation of the second beat, an aspect of that evasive quality called "loose" tempo, is validated by psychological fact. The analysis will show that, especially in his use of hemiola, Brahms built into the waltzes rhythmic relationships which, if interpreted correctly, also produce the pleasurable experience described above.

Since Brahms was, in our opinion, the nineteenth-century master of rhythm, and since the waltz relies heavily on subtleties in rhythm to move dancers and listeners alike, comments on the nature of true rhythm are in order. Curt Sachs has observed:

> Teachers take their pupils to task for not playing "rhythmically." Rhythm, they imply, is inexorable strictness of time values, and they enforce it by counting, clapping, stamping irritably: one, two, three, four. But other musicians tell us just the contrary: their "rhythm" is the willful deviation from deadly strictness. While they call "meter" a metronomic, mechanical norm, their "rhythm" is the human touch of freedom that makes "meter" non-mechanical, non-metronomical. . . ."[43]

Sachs goes on to trace the word rhythm" to a Greek verb, "rhythmos," which means "to flow."[44] He continues with a wonderful definition of rhythm:

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[43]Curt Sachs, Rhythm and Tempo (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953), p. 12.

[44]Ibid., p. 13.

> But evidently this flowing is not, and never was, a smooth, inert, continuous movement without articulation. It is, rather, a fluency due to some active, organizing principle, to ever renewed impulses whose very orderliness at once gives life and ease to the flow.[45]

The key word here is "articulation." In the Sixteen Waltzes articulation of the rhythmic flow is in itself a beautiful object of art. Articulation defines groupings, and according to Carl Seashore, in his Psychology of Music, it is the grouping of musical impressions which affords us the pleasure of understanding and remembering what we have heard.[46] This statement is in turn based on the factor of the human span of attention:

> The rhythmic measure, then, is simply taking advantage of nature's supply of pulsating efforts of attention. And, when the measure fits the attention wave, it gives us a restful feeling of satisfaction and ease. . . . Thus it comes about that we acquire a feeling of ease, power, and adjustment when we listen to rhythmic measures because we get the largest returns for the least outlay. . . ."[47]

In conclusion, understanding the rhythmic flow in each of the waltzes requires an understanding of how rhythmic articulation has been created. The following chapter outlines the analytical approach, listing the several techniques by which Brahms has articulated rhythmic flow.

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Carl Seashore, Psychology of Music (New York and London: McGraw-Hill, 1938), pp. 140-45.

[47] Ibid., p. 141.

# CHAPTER II

## DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES

### Part 1--The Nature of Accent

A common but erroneous, assumption is that rhythmic articulation is effected by dynamic accent. Seashore reported that in a study conducted with several great concert artists the results showed that temporal factors played a large part in creating accent.[48] The findings were based on demonstrations by the Iowa piano camera, a device which records the intensity and exact time at which the hammers strike the strings. Resultant graphs on performances by such pianists as Bauer, Hofmann, and Paderewski gave a readily accessible visual presentation of 1) the point in time at which keys are struck and released, 2) the speed of the hammer (thus indicating the relative intensity of successive tones), and 3) the movement of the damper pedal. Several important observations were made concerning the devices by which a performer creates accent:

1) Simply playing louder is not the most significant factor--Intensity is not essential to accent.
2) Time is always a rival of intensity in giving accent.
3) Stress may be obtained by lengthening a note or delaying its entrance.
4) Compositional factors such as harmony, repetition of identical rhythmic patterns, pitch placement, and

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[48]Seashore, pp. 237-44.

position of cadences all give emphasis, or accent.

The importance of such data is given emphasis by Sachs and Seashore, who concur in pointing out that although rhythm may exist as a purely mental fact, its aural, physical realization is the result of active, intelligent organization on the part of the performer. Thus, the elusive gift of "bodily rhythm" originates as complex thought process which then activates the physical apparatus.

Focusing the discussion on the Sixteen Waltzes of Brahms, one hastens to admit that thorough analysis of rhythm is only the beginning of successful performance. The music is given real life by the manner in which the player expresses the rhythmic structure. Not by slavish submission to dynamic marks or articulation signs ("articulation" here refers only to contrasts of touch), but by thoughtful structuring of temporal adjustments will the performer recreate living, musical form.

Part 2--The "Tyranny of the Barline"

When one studies the waltzes, it is natural to wonder why the composer insisted on challenging the "tyranny of the barline." It appears to have been a radical departure from the traditional concept of the waltz, whose 3/4 meter would, one supposes, have to remain free of the slightest irregularity. Actually, one of the major challenges to composers of waltz music was the problem of writing long, flex-

ible melodies, contrary to the restraining tendencies of the meter. Philip Barford, in one of his studies of Josef Lanner, has written:

> Thematically, the history of the Viennese waltz is the history of a complex, interwoven chain in which certain archetypal ways of breaking up a tyrannical triple rhythm are exploited to the full.[49]

Although Brahms's particular manner of solving the problem involved greater emphasis on rhythmic construction than on melodic contour, his technique is still based on a long tradition of working with the strictures of triple rhythm.

Part 3--Rhythmic Groups, Hemiola, Extended Anacrusis

> It is the intimate and intricate interaction of temporal organization with all the other shaping forces of music which makes the study of rhythm both a rewarding task and, at times, a difficult and perplexing one. The task is rewarding not only because the subject is itself intrinsically interesting but also because, by adding a new dimension to our related fields such as melody, harmony, counterpoint, and orchestration, it makes possible a more precise and penetrating analysis of those processes.[50]

Assuming that the several related fields are well understood, the analysis will be limited to the resultant rhythmic structure of the Sixteen Waltzes. Rather than giving a consecutive analysis of all the pieces, the method will treat each of the following aspects of rhythm, with examples drawn

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[49]Barford, p. 180.

[50]Grosvenor W. Cooper, and Leonard B. Meyer, The Rhythmic Structure of Music (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 1.

from the music:

1) rhythmic groups at the primary level[51]
2) hemiola.
3) extended anacrusis[52]

Obviously, each item in this list is not independent of the others, but for the sake of clear presentation it is necessary to treat them separately. Since frequent cross-references may occur within each section, the headings given to each study indicate major emphasis rather than exclusive consideration.

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[51] Ibid., pp. 12-59.

[52] Ibid., p. 129.

# CHAPTER III

# ANALYSIS

## Rhythmic Groups at the Primary Level

Recalling the earlier discussion about the importance of achieving a long, flexible melody in the waltz, it is not surprising that in many of the waltzes the melodies are not always constructed in groups which coincide exactly with the triple meter of the accompaniment. Before illustrating the several examples of irregular groupings, a few remarks are in order concerning the resultant performance problem.

> Both the composer and the performer must therefore beware of overarticulating the lower architectonic levels at the expense of the higher ones. One should articulate the smaller units only as much as it is necessary to make the musical intention clear. Added articulation, while it will change the character of the music (and this is of course important in one's interpretation), may well weaken the phrasing of larger parts without appreciably strengthening the grouping of the smaller ones.[53]

This refers not just to the overall pattern of weak and strong beats, but to the grouping of weak and strong beats, which may exist entirely independent of the barline. The complexity of determining the right interpretation is discussed in the following paragraph, in which the results of irregular grouping are explained:

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[53] Ibid., p. 18.

> . . . rhythmic organization can conflict with and work against an established meter. Thus, for instance, beats which might become accents (potential accents) or which actually are accented may be at odds with the accentual scheme established in the meter. Conversely, beats which for melodic, harmonic, or other reasons would naturally be weak may be forced because of the meter to become accents. While such conflicts of natural rhythmic groups with metric structure constitute disturbances which tend to modify groupings, they need not necessarily result in a change of meter. Rather they may produce either stressed weak beats or forced accentuation.[54]

Thus, the performer must determine his own proportions in compromising with the diverse possibilities of articulation. The term "forced accentuation" must not be construed to imply an attempt on the part of the performer to force the grouping to agree with the meter. For example, if in the waltz (as in No. 7) we encounter a 5/4 grouping which begins on the second beat of the measure, the third beat in the group would fall on the first beat of the next measure. Although by virtue of its placement within the measure that beat would seem to require an accent (especially in a waltz), it must, nevertheless, cooperate with the contour of the group to which it belongs. Dynamic accent, or any other conscious attempt at accentuation, would only contradict the composer's invention. Conversely, if the grouping suggests accentuation of a beat which in triple meter would otherwise be weak (beats two or three), one must be sensitive to the natural tendency of the group. Because in Brahms's waltzes these groupings often occur over traditional waltz accompaniment patterns, the resultant "metric crossing of voices" creates infinite possibility

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[54] Ibid., p. 88.

in the proportion of emphasis between the parts. Avoiding the vulgarity of continual dynamic accent, the performer may effect grouping in the following manner:

> . . . in order to obtain the desired impression of grouping, the performer often slightly displaces unaccented beats in the temporal continuum so that they are closer in time to the accents with which they are to be grouped than if he had played them with rigid precision.[55]

With these thoughts in mind the following musical examples shall appear less formidable in the interpretive problems than they suggest. Criteria for determining groupings are listed by Albion Gruber in his analysis of the Brahms waltzes:[56]

1) agogic accent--emphasis through a longer duration than those surrounding
2) contour accent--emphasis through placement, the highest or lowest note in a line (sometimes called the tonic accent)
3) textural accent--emphasis through relatively thicker texture than for surrounding beats
4) harmonic accent--emphasis through the harmonic rhythm (weak and strong harmonic progressions)
5) dissonant accent--emphasis through non-harmonic character of a given note
6) pattern accent--emphasis through leading position in a repeating or sequential figure

The writer admits that since two or more of the factors above may combine to produce accent, the readings given below are not necessarily the only possible interpretation. A reasonable measure of subjectivity must be taken for granted.

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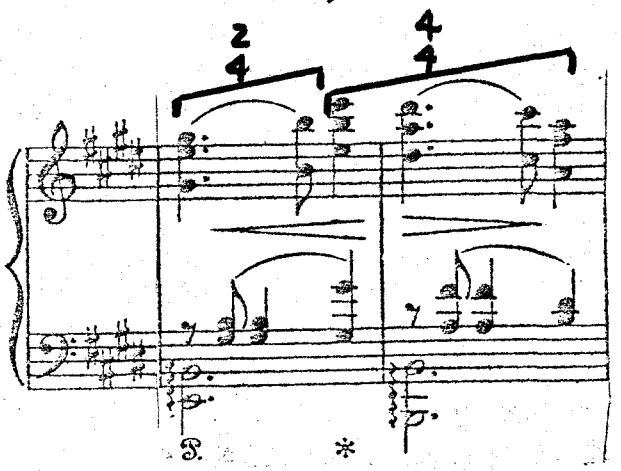
[55] Ibid., p. 8.

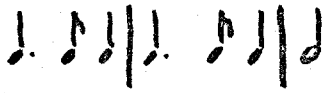
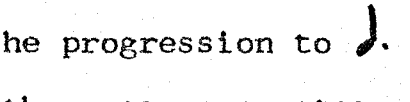
[56] Albion Gruber, "Some Viewpoints on Brahms: Understanding Rhythm in the Piano Music," Clavier, XIII/2 (February, 1974), 9.

Bars 3 and 4 of Waltz No. 2 in E Major would appear to be regular units of triple meter. However, the corresponding interpretation of playing two measures of strong-weak-weak yields disappointing results. A more natural sound may be achieved by following the contour of the melody, whose high point falls on the third beat of the third bar. If this pitch receives the slight dynamic accent suggested by the melodic contour, the rhythmic grouping becomes

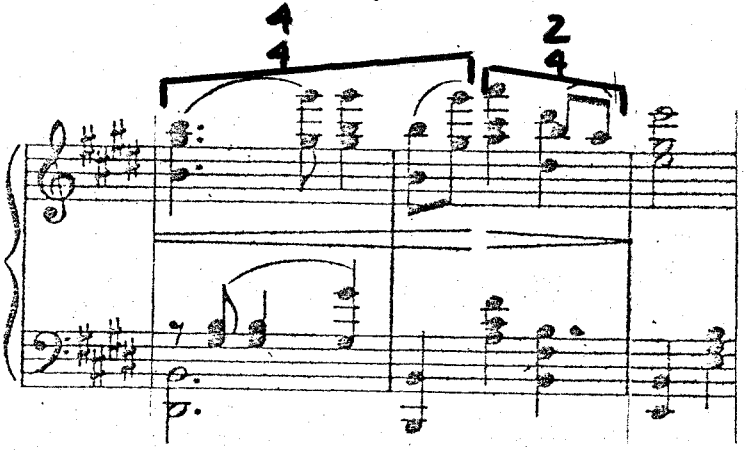
Waltz No. 2, bars 3-4



The tonic-dominant harmony of these two measures, as well as the accompaniment, sustain the feeling of triple meter even when the melodic grouping of 2/4 + 4/4 is deliberately expressed.

Bars 22-24 demonstrate Brahms's supreme mastery of the cadence. The unavoidable "squareness" which the figures  would produce in a final cadence has been rectified by changing the progression to  . The melodic contour of the passage creates a rhythm whose existence is independent of the actual time values of the pitches.

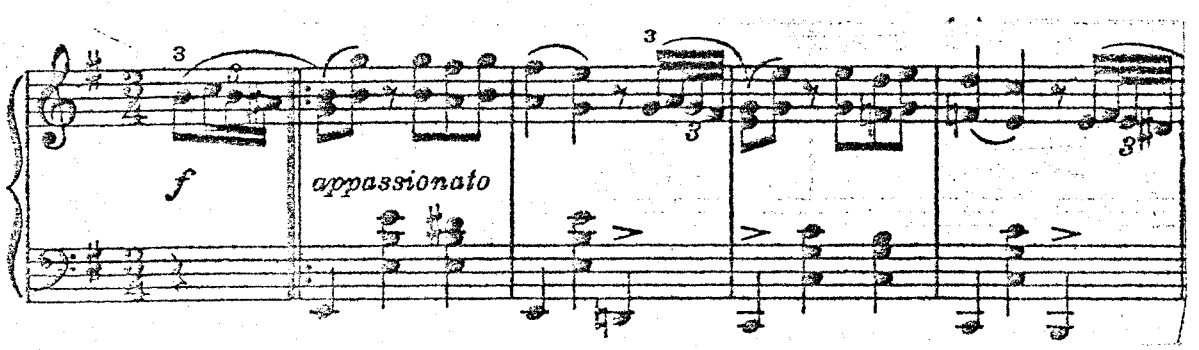
Waltz No. 2, bars 22-24




Notice that accenting the first beat of bar 23 would disrupt the natural step-wise progression between G♯ and A. Following the grouping described above stresses the G♯ and the A, to the relative neglect of the leaping eighth notes on beat 1 of bar 23. In addition to preserving the line of the melody, such an interpretation honors the composer's obvious intention to create a cadence by rhythm as well as of melody. The shift from triple to quadruple subdivision has the effect of slower tempo, created independently of an externally imposed ritard.

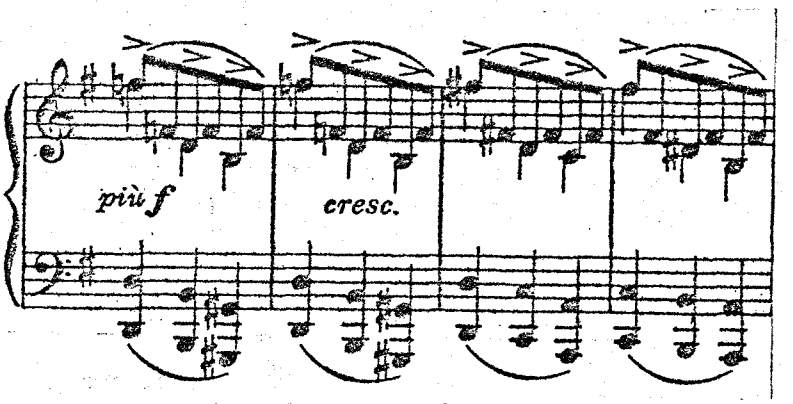
The primary melodic motif of Waltz No. 4 in E Minor contains a strong upward gesture which is suspended over the rest on beat two.

Waltz No. 4, bars 1-4



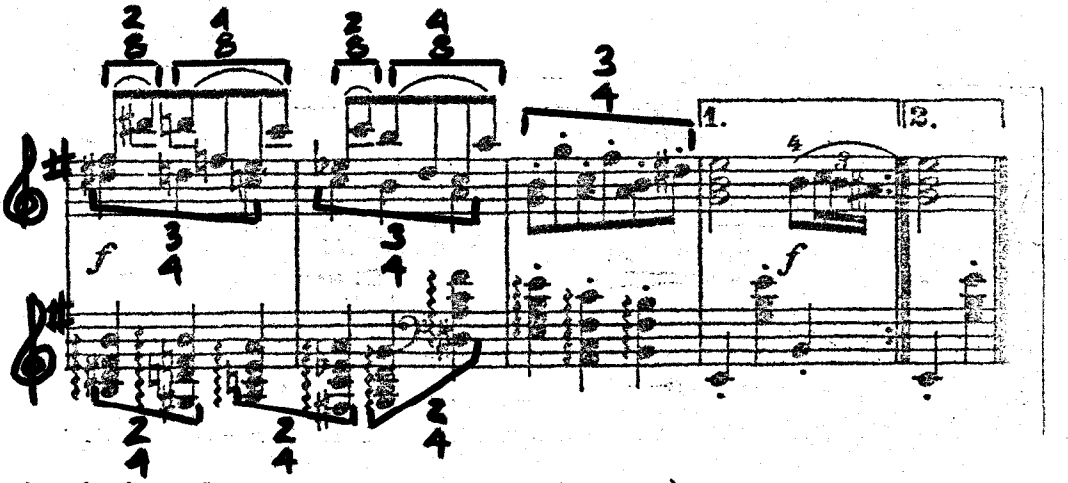
The restless, "appassionato" character of the piece is heightened by accentuation, in the accompaniment, of the third beat of alternate measures. Significantly, bars 13-16, precisely the middle of the piece, are strongly accented on all beats, and the melodic gesture is descending.

Waltz No. 4, bars 13-16




After a six measure developmental sequence of the primary theme a remarkable four measure phrase, in which are coalesced the several melodic and rhythmic elements, concludes the piece.

Waltz No. 4, bars 23-26




Three rhythmic planes are suggested by 1) the melody, whose intervals combine both upward and downward gestures, 2) the regularly descending steps of the middle part, and 3) the

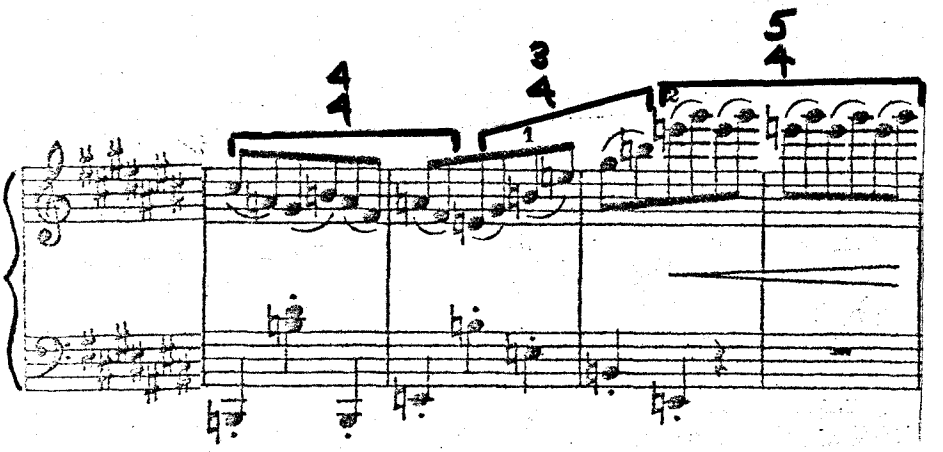
harmonic progression in the bass, whose sequential pattern is responsible for the 2/4 grouping. The penultimate measure, with its almost elemental assertion of triple meter, seems to immediately clarify all previous ambiguities or complexities. In this waltz, and in many of the others, we see freedom of rhythmic expression countered by just enough suggestion of the basic meter. In the case of Waltz No. 4 the penultimate measure is effective not only because of its rhythm, per se, but also because it is the penultimate measure. The listener's interpretation of the entire piece is altered by this "last impression" of metric regularity. If bars 23 and 24 seem to defy any one correct interpretation, it may be pointed out that if they remain ambiguous (i.e., if the performer doesn't try to force accentuation on the first beat of each measure in the left hand), the measure following will sound even more exciting by virtue of its clear triple rhythm.

One of the most amazing features of the waltzes is the feeling of breadth which each one, in spite of its modest dimensions, is able to create. One of the reasons for this was alluded to in the preceding paragraph, in the discussion of the psychological importance of the penultimate measure. A more complete explanation of the psychological aspect of rhythm must begin with remarks on a common analytical observation which the writer considers fundamentally wrong. It would be very easy to identify the many examples of irregular rhythmic groups in the waltzes and conclude each identification with a few comments on the "interesting variety"

provided by such groups. Unfortunately, rhythmic variety in itself does not ensure the illusion of breadth. Experts in the field of the psychology of music tell us that the mind, having once grasped a metric pattern, tends to perpetuate that pattern even when there are deviations from it. (This could not apply to a corpus of Eastern European music.) In the present context that would mean that rhythmic groupings (either in the melody, accompaniment, or in both), which are non-coincidental with triple meter function at a level much deeper than the superficial factor of mere "variety." If the mind tends to perpetuate triple meter in spite of numerous melodic groupings of 2/4, 4/4, or 5/4, it must be concluded that when such groupings occur they exist simultaneously with the original meter. This affects our perception far differently than would simple alternation of different meters. Specifically, when Brahms takes us on short excursions into the comparatively ambiguous regions of duple, quadruple, or quintuple rhythm, although we've never really been free of triple meter, its return is accompanied by the feeling of "having been somewhere." Thus, in the examples cited already the groupings of 2/4 + 4/4, 4/4 + 2/4, and 2/4 + 2/4 + 2/4 are, in terms of physical time, no longer than 3/4 + 3/4, but in terms of musical, psychological time, they are considerably longer. Subjective as this opinion may be, it is founded on the continual process of anticipation, evaluation, and re-evaluation which takes place as we hear music. Perhaps this has explained the expansive quality which is possessed by many of the waltzes.

Waltz No. 6 in C-Sharp Major is given psychological length by a rhythmic detail which might easily go undetected. The developmental section immediately following the double bar consists of two phrases, 4 bars, and 8 bars, respectively. The second half of the second phrase begins as an extension, transposed one octave higher, of the first half. The phrase extension itself broadens the effect of the line, but greater breadth is projected by the rhythmic grouping of the melody.

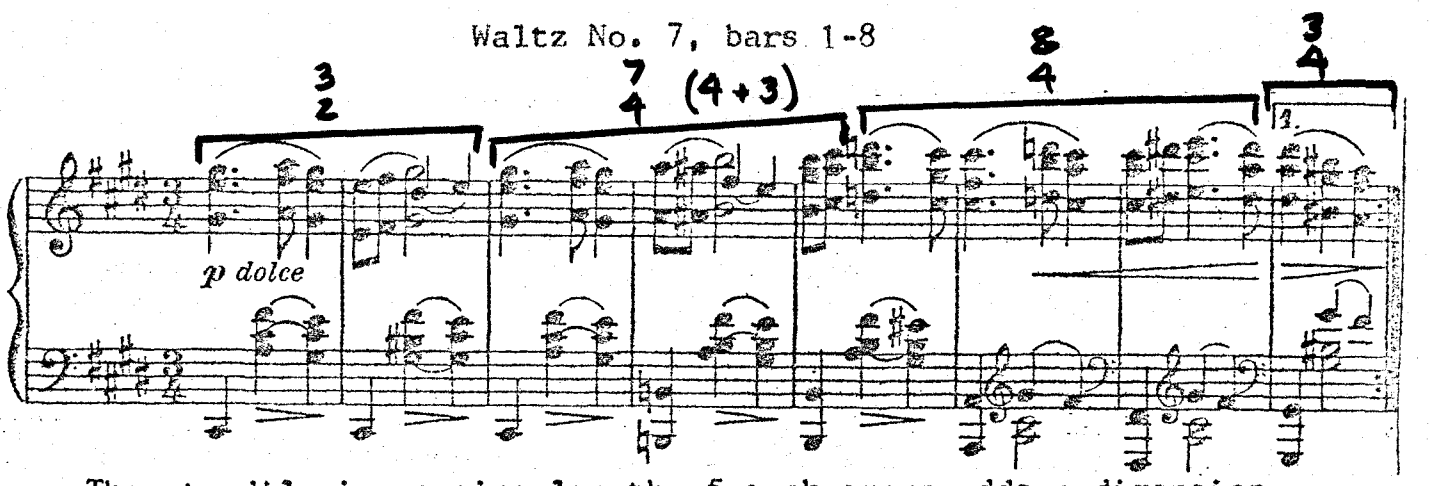
Waltz No. 6, bars 17-20




The relative uncertainty of that long line of 4/4 + 3/4 + 5/4, located at the end of a short development, immediately before the return of the main theme, makes the development seem longer than its twelve measures would make it seem to be.

Waltz No. 7 in C-Sharp Minor is the best example of long, flexible melody. Its entire melodic fabric exists in a rhythmic plane of its own, moving freely over the usually regular 3/4 accompaniment. When played by itself the contour of the melodic line of the first section suggests the following rhythmic division:

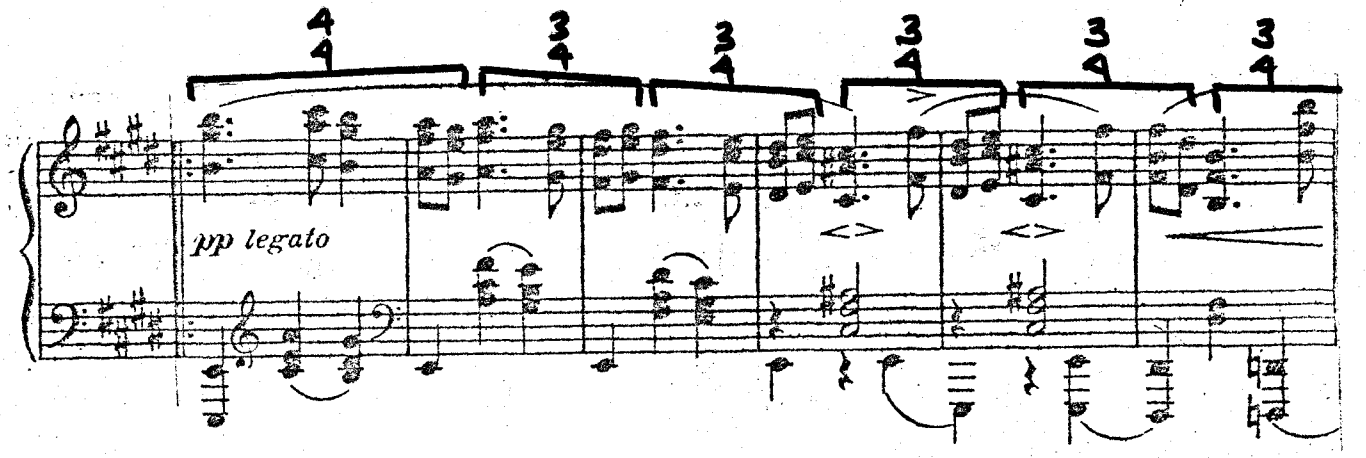
Waltz No. 7, bars 1-8



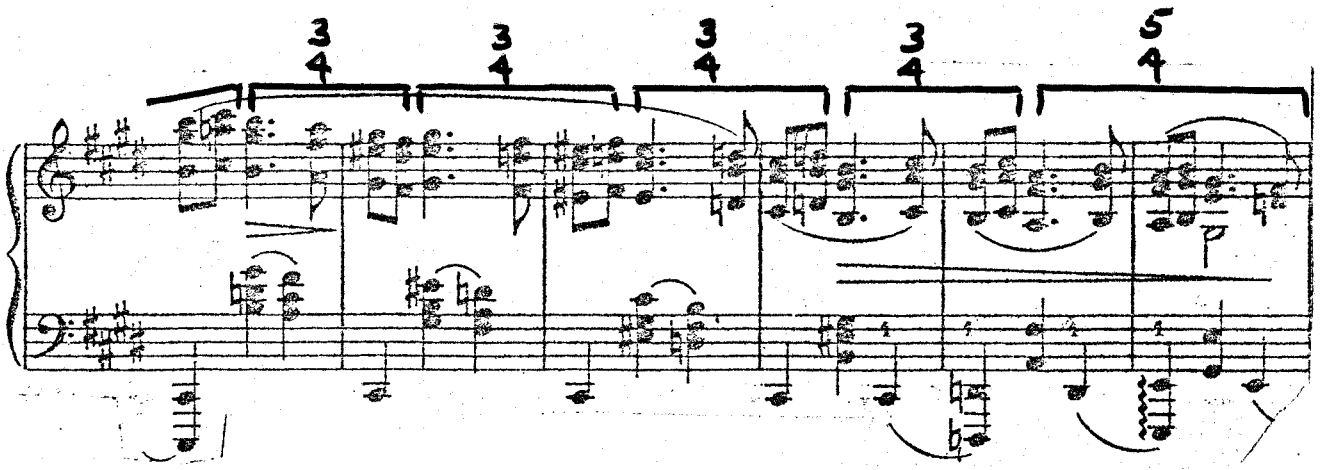

The steadily increasing length of each group adds a dimension to the direction of the phrase which neither harmonic tension nor pitch placement can achieve. In addition to the rising melody, descending bass, and dissonant suspension figures, the proportional extension of each rhythmic group arches the phrase in a manner which could be characterized as upward, outward, and forward. As in Waltz No. 4, the penultimate measure at the end of the line is in unmistakable triple meter.

The central section of No. 7, bars 9-20, consists of three phrases, the first two of which move in a triple pattern beginning on the second beat of each measure:

Waltz No. 7, bars 9-20

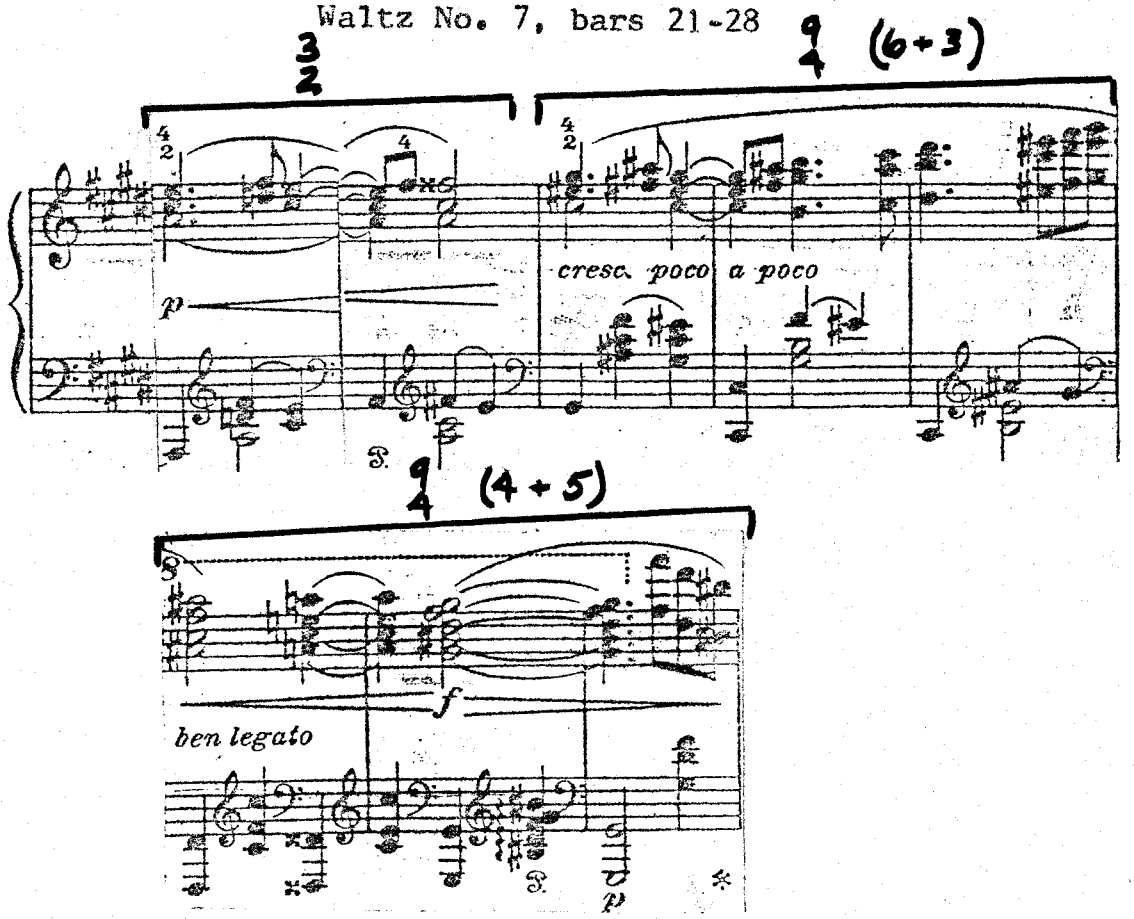


Waltz No. 7, bars 9-20 (cont.)



It is interesting to note that the emphasis given here to the second beat has been suggested from the beginning of the piece by the double appoggiatura figures on the second beat in the accompaniment. The third phrase, bars 21-28, demonstrates, to a more intense degree, the technique of rhythmic group extension, according to which the first line of the piece was built.

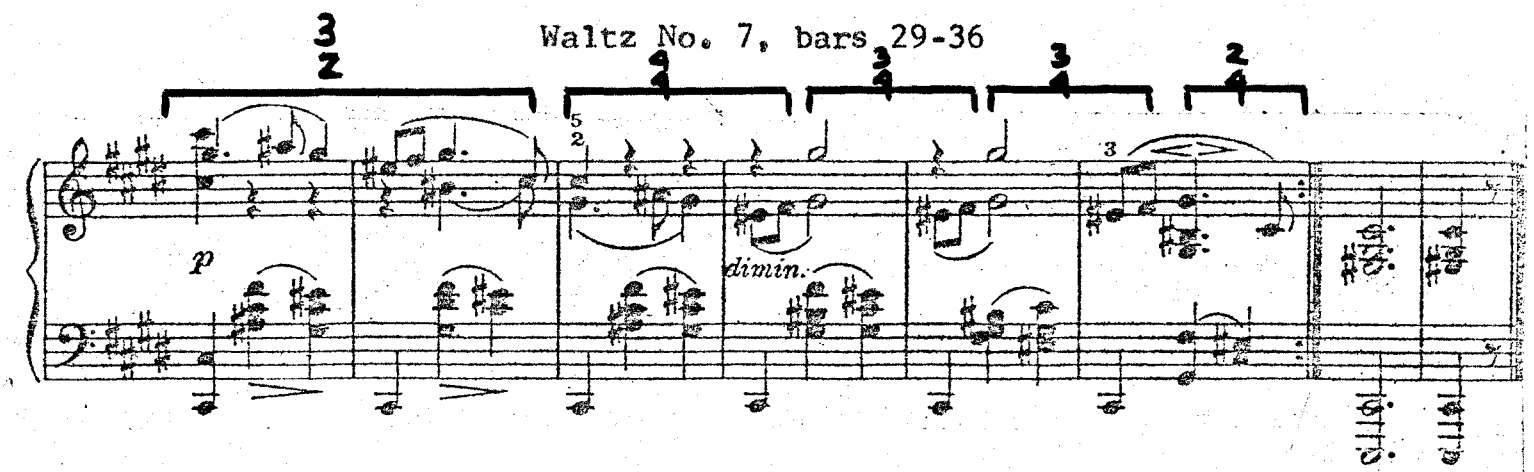
Waltz No. 7, bars 21-28



Although bars 23-25 and bars 26-28 occupy identical physical time, their respective internal divisions of 3/2 + 3/4 and 4/4 + 5/4 accomplish a proportional extension of the line. The five crucial beats of the second grouping are, in effect, "longer" than five beats normally would be, and significant is the fact that this group forms the climax of the phrase.

If it would seem that such a proportional increase in the lengths of rhythmic groups should be followed by a phrase constructed of proportionally decreasing groups, then we are not at all disappointed. The last phrase, over a C♯ pedal point, restrains, by the nature of its internal rhythmic structure, the sweeping upward gesture of the previous line.

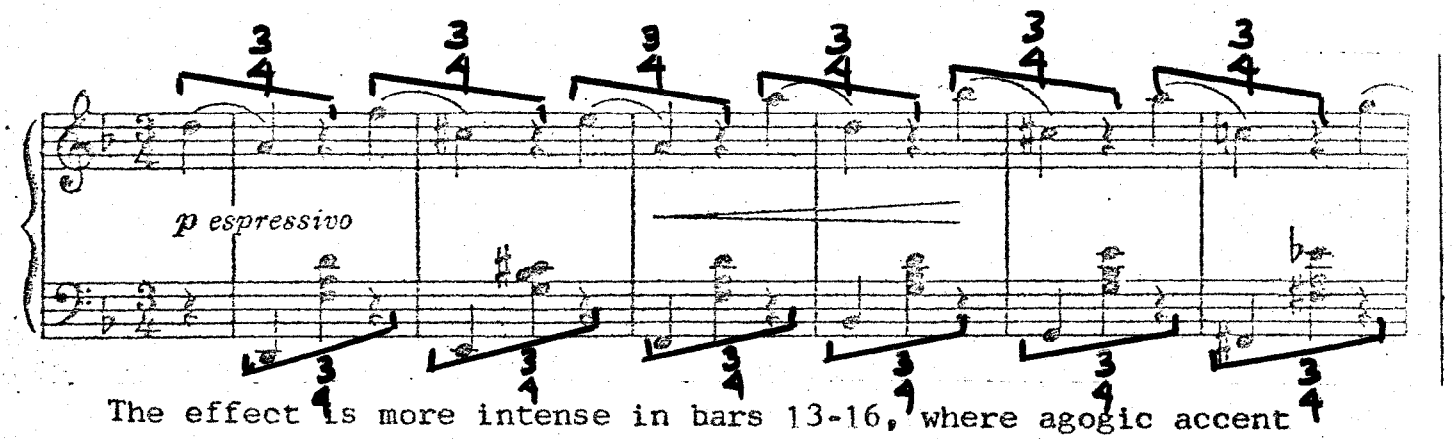
Waltz No. 7, bars 29-36




By this method has the composer successfully shaped a broad musical line, and dissipated its concomitant energy, within a short form.

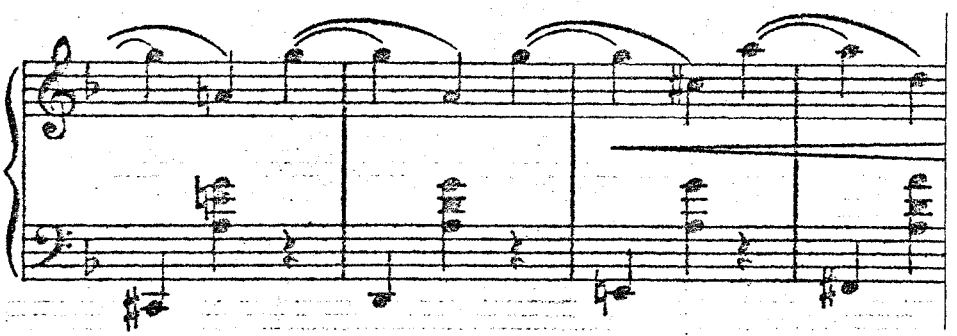
The first six bars of Waltz No. 9 in D Minor demonstrate what could be called rhythmic "stretto." The slur over the barline, pitted against the triple meter accompaniment, forms simultaneous layers of triple meter, at the close interval of one beat.

Waltz No. 9, bars 1-6



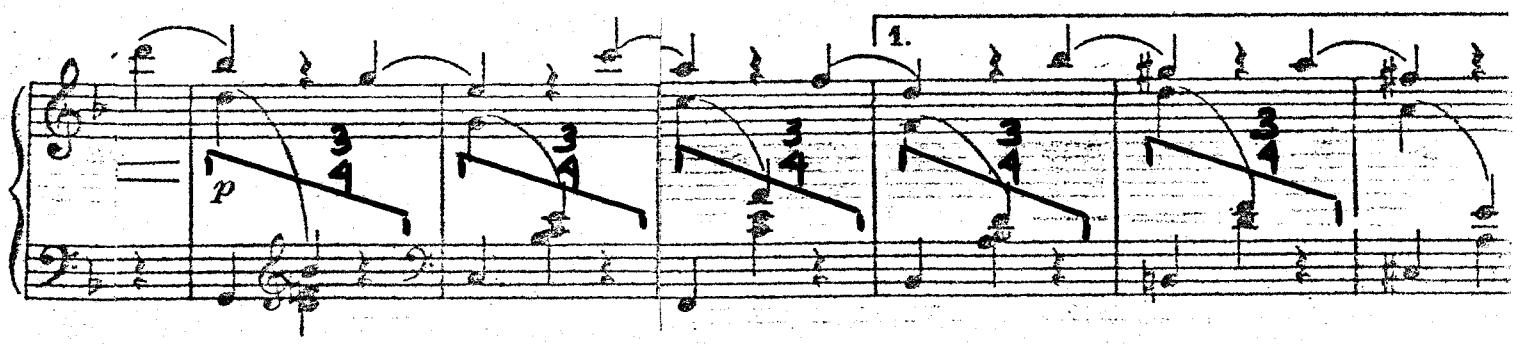

The effect is more intense in bars 13-16, where agogic accent (i.e., the tied notes) suggests a gradual breaking away from the metric displacement in the melody.

Waltz No. 9, bars 13-16



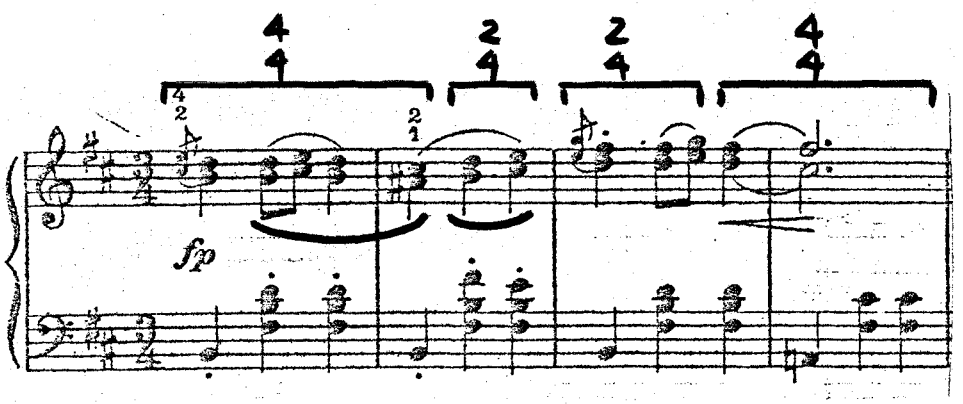
This suggestion is materialized in bars 17-22, where the true downbeat actually occurs at the beginning of the measures. The metric shift is accomplished by the stretto-like imitation of the slurred figure on beat one.

Waltz No. 9, bars 17-22



Waltz No. 11 in B Minor may seem to be, at first glance, quite elementary in its rhythmic structure; its subtleties are not immediately apprehended, but by comparing a performer's empirical judgement with what is already understood about Brahms's remarkable rhythmic sense, we may safely point out several features of its rhythmic detail. First of all, the opening phrase becomes very graceful if one gives mental assent, during performance, to the contour of the following grouping:

Waltz No. 11, bars 1-4



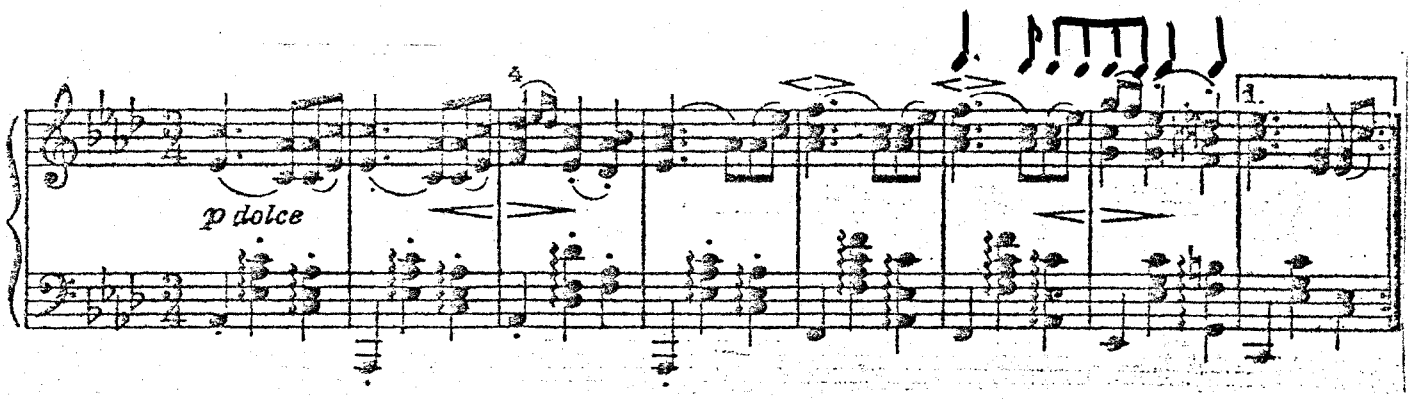

If this seems to lack theoretical foundation, it must be pointed out that the double lower neighbors (C♯, A♯, on beat one of measure two) are already accented by virtue of dissonance. If the chord is played with force equal to that which plays beat one of the previous measure, its sound, as perceived by the listener, will be too great. In a word, the phrase will not sound graceful, but crude. The best solution is not in simply avoiding dynamic accent on the lower neighbors, but in grouping them with beat three of the preceding measure. Subsequent phrases containing this motive may be interpreted in the same manner.

Proportional expansion and contraction of rhythmic groups has been pointed out in several of the waltzes, and in No. 11 the same feature exists, but at the more fundamental level of phrase grouping. At first hearing one can easily perceive the first sixteen measures in the following division of impulses: 4+4+2+2+1+1+1+1. Having recognized such a pattern, one must then be careful not to overemphasize its inherent quality of natural acceleration. As the phrases, or more correctly, the impulses within the phrase, are spaced at increasingly closer intervals, the illusion of speed is created, and therefore it is not necessary to actually increase the tempo. In fact, one may very carefully hold back the actual tempo and allow the phrase tempo to carry the line. In doing so, one can express a gratifying sensation of buoyancy and suspension, which in the repetition is particularly effective.

Waltzes No. 13 and No. 14, while containing many examples of irregular rhythmic groupings, may be analyzed in greater depth from the perspective of hemiola and extended anacrusis.

Waltz No. 15 in A-Flat Major illustrates still another method by which Brahms obscures the meter. Although the harmony and melodic contour at each of the cadences create accentuation on the first beat of each measure, the succession of rhythmic values in the melody suggests the grouping 4/4 + 2/4. Interpreted as such the cadential measures gently lift the phrase over its highest pitch.

Waltz No. 15, bars 1-8




Concluding this section of the analysis, let it be emphasized once again that the composer, in constructing rhythmically free melodies, was striving for natural, yet concise, expression within the limitations of metric uniformity and structural brevity.

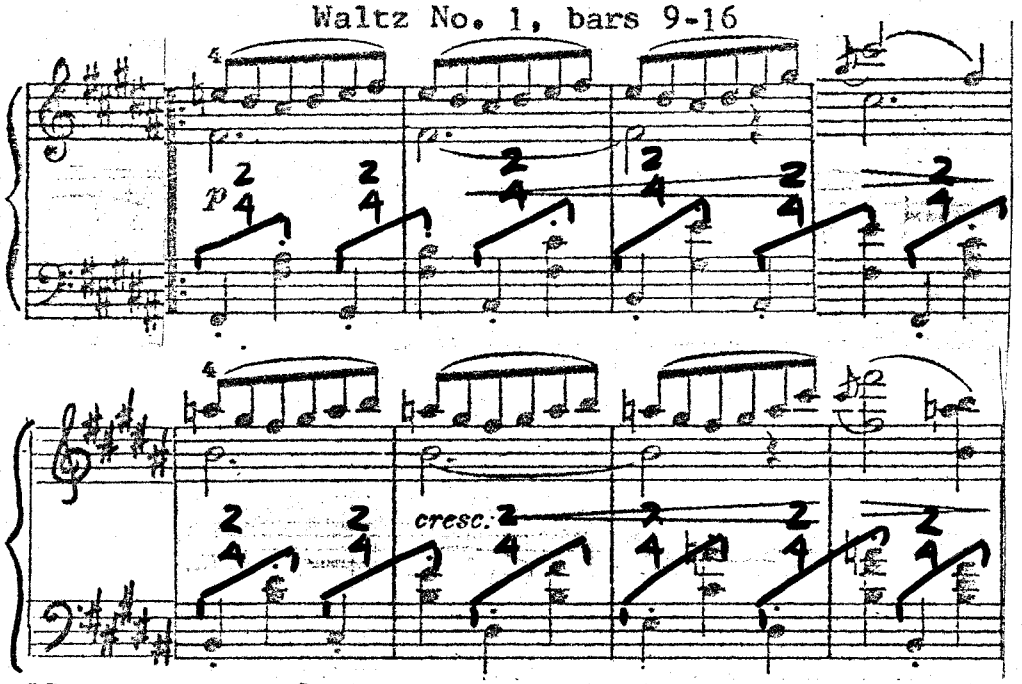
Hemiola

Brahms's use of hemiola accomplishes at a higher structural level what irregular groupings accomplish at the primary level. The groupings discussed in the preceding section enhance the breadth and flow of individual lines, while hemiolic structures seem contrived for imparting a distinctive quality to an entire composition. There are two reasons for this observation, the first of which is the fact that hemiola must be accomplished by both melody and accompaniment, resulting in metric deviation which is immediately perceived. Secondly, hemiola is usually found as a relatively large structural part, and as such it seems to function in an alternating sequence of triple and duple groupings. The rhythmic groupings considered in the last section of the analysis were well concealed within the confines of triple meter. Despite

the structural prominence of hemiola, it must not be held that the rhythmic pattern 2+2+2/3+3, found throughout Waltz No. 6, is an alternation, per se, of duple and triple meter. Just as Brahms was capable of sustaining a feeling for the tonic harmony in long passages in which the tonic is avoided, so was he able to sustain the feeling of triple meter even in the presence of pervasive duple meter. It will be shown in the following examples that duple meter within the fundamentally triple meter in the waltzes actually strengthens the effect of triple meter.

In Waltz No. 1 in B Major the eight measure excursion immediately following the double bar is actually twelve measures of 2/4. Although the melody is in triple meter, the accompaniment is so strongly duple that no other reading is possible.

Waltz No. 1, bars 9-16

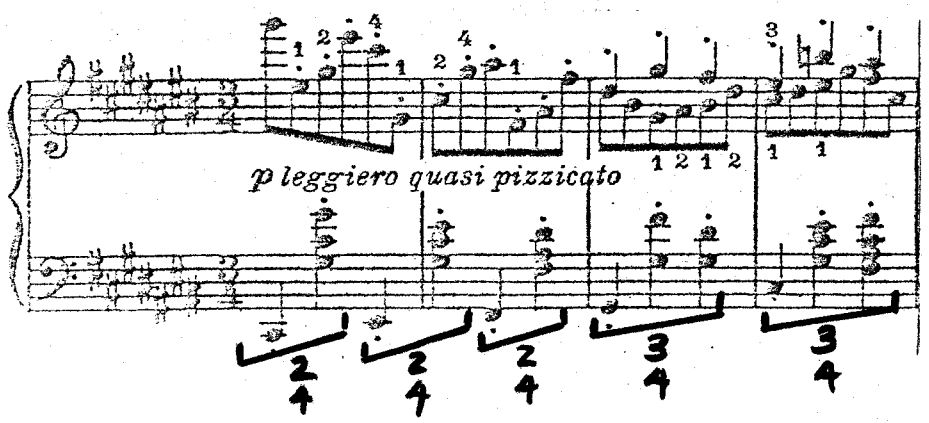



The effectiveness of this passage is based on the psychological principle, discussed earlier, which states that satis-

faction, pleasure, etc., is derived from experiencing motion caused by minimum effort. The passage illustrated above requires, psychologically speaking, more effort than the eight measure passage which precedes it. Whereas the latter consists of eight stressed beats, the former consists of twelve stressed beats. Thus, in terms of perception, bars 9-16 seem longer than bars 1-8, even though the primary temporal unit ( ♩ ) remains constant. At bar sixteen, however, the duple accentual pattern "modulates" back to triple meter, the resumption of which is perceived as a relatively faster, more exhilarating tempo. Again, the effect is the result of musical time having suddenly been carried by fewer impulses. The return to triple meter is made more effective by resisting the urge to accelerate bars 9-16, thereby ensuring perception of the shift from duple to triple. So strong is the resultant triple meter that one does not remember this waltz simply as a piece containing both duple and triple meter.

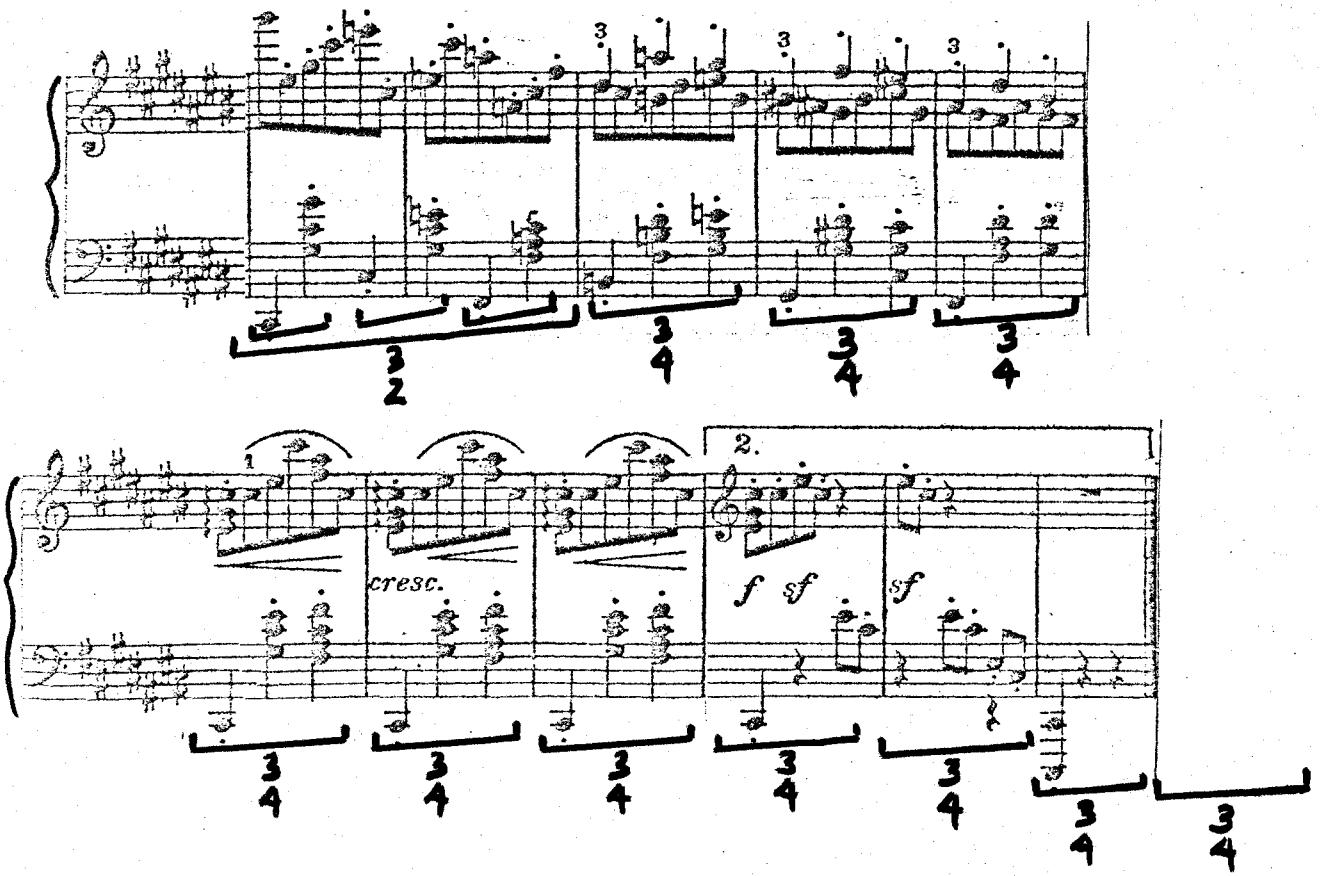
Waltz No. 6 in C-Sharp Major is unusual in that it begins with duple meter.

Waltz No. 6, bars 1-4



It is very important to consider the special function of each half of this passage. Bars 1-2, whose rapidly ascending bass line and disjunct melody are truly "Vivace" in effect as well as in actual speed, seem to lift the phrase immediately into the air. The triple meter and tonic-dominant harmony of bars 3-4 sustain the position of the phrase. In a comparative sense 2+2+2 is assertive and strong, while 3+3 is light and bouyant, the combination of which is analogous to the gesture of the phrase. The same structure may be seen in bars 5-8 and in bars 21-24, but bars 25-29, while having the same implied meters as the other passages, impart a slightly different effect. Included in the following example are bars 30-35, whose nature, in retrospect, determines the effect of bars 25-29.

Waltz No. 6, bars 25-35



The change of mode in bars 25-26, and the descending progression of bars 27-29 create a phrase which descends, and in so doing the strong upward thrust of the first section of the waltz is adequately balanced. It is the nature of this function which suggests that bars 25-26 be interpreted as a single measure of 3/2, rather than three measures of 2/4. The latter does not possess the relative smoothness of 3/2, and is therefore inappropriate for expressing the penultimate quality of bars 25-29. 3/2 + 3/4 + 3/4 + 3/4 is a broad, restrained line (relatively speaking) which casts the repeated cadential chord, bars 30-35, into the foreground. Notice that bars 33-35 are actually an extension of the cadence, which in themselves suggest yet another two bars of extension. Those two bars of music, whose existence is beyond the "frame" of the composition, are the result of the tension which has been generated by the continual juxtaposition of duple and triple meter. Such juxtaposition has not resulted in confusion, but has instead confirmed the supremacy, in this context, of triple meter.

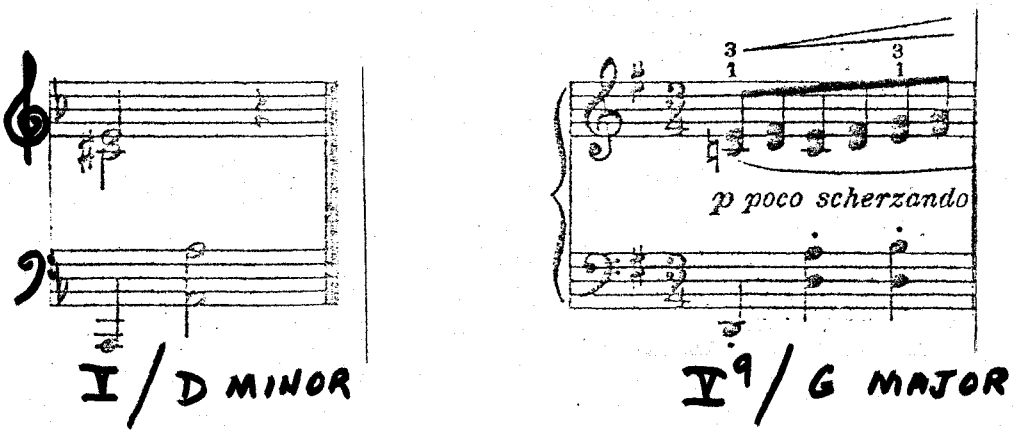
Extended Anacrusis

Just as individual pitches may be accented or unaccented, phrases, too, may be felt as accented or unaccented. The analogy may be applied to entire sections of music, which because of a combination of many factors may express the feeling of upbeat, or non-accent, or more properly, anacrusis. Musicians with the highly refined ability for experiencing the most fundamental relationships between large structural

parts, speak of having understood certain compositions as extended upbeats, with a true downbeat perhaps existing only on the last chord. Such perception may exist only in the realm of metaphysics, but in the brief forms of the waltzes one may adequately demonstrate the existence and function of extended anacrusis. Because extended anacrusis in certain of the waltzes makes these pieces formally dependent on others, it seems very likely that the composer intended the entire set for continuous performance. That this may be true has already been pointed out in the respective lengths of each piece, the overall pattern of which suggests a conscious attempt at creating "Grossform."

Waltz No. 9 in D Minor and Waltz No. 10 in G Major form, as a result of the dominant cadence of No. 9, an inseparable pair.

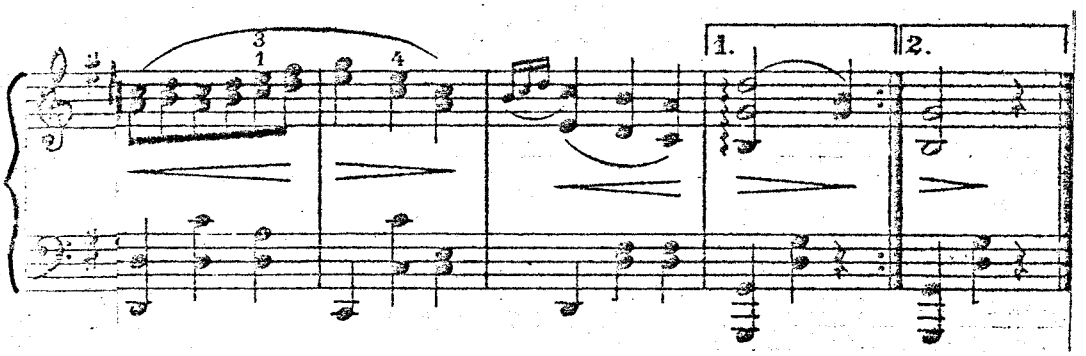
Waltzes No. 9, No. 10, last bar and first bar, respectively




Using E as a common tone, the dominant of D Minor moves directly to the dominant of G Major. Although the harmonic factor is directly responsible for the connection of the two pieces, it is interesting to analyze the rhythmic impli-

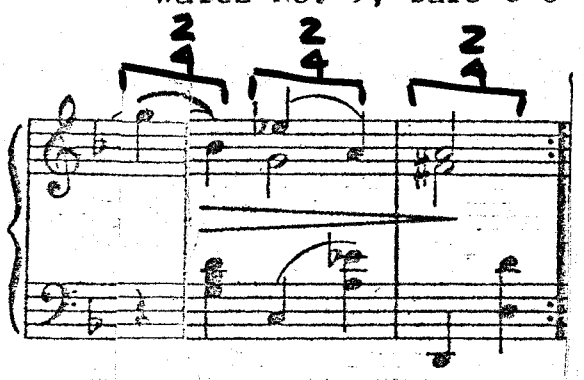
cations of the relationship. Waltz No. 10 sustains a long anacrusis until measure thirteen, at which point the penultimate phrase, with its decisive V-IV-III$^{6}$-V$^{7}$- I harmony, is felt as the real downbeat of the piece.

Waltz No. 10, bars 13-16




Although the anacrusis-downbeat structure is determined by harmony, a deeper understanding of the significance of bars 13-16 is obtained by re-examining the rhythmic structure of Waltz No. 9. In addition to the ambiguity of the harmony in its cadences, the rhythm itself lifts the phrase up at the end of each section. Following six measures of displaced 3/4 meter, the slurred figures are compressed to form a hemiolic structure, ending in the major mode.

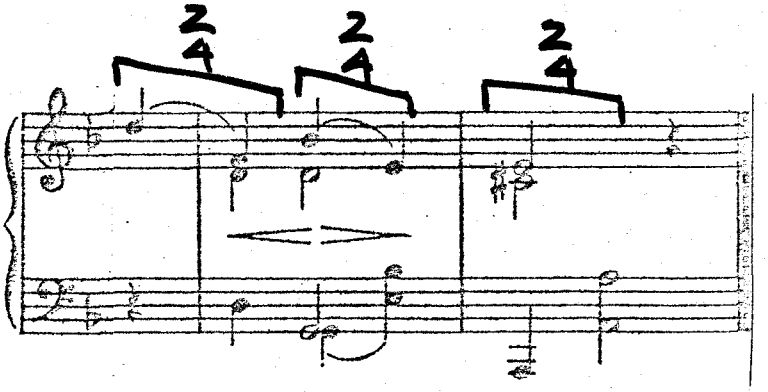
Waltz No. 9, bars 6-8



After a central section containing the most sophisticated use of agogic accent and metric crossing of voices, the same ca-

dence occurs, this time on the dominant of D Minor.

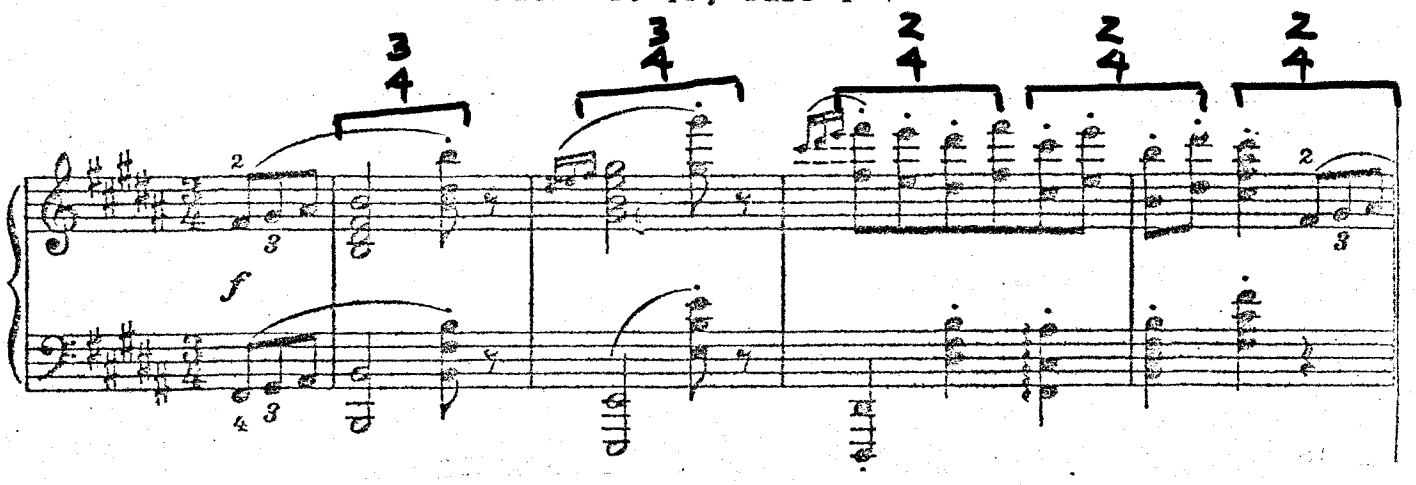
Waltz No. 9, bars 23-24



Thus, as a result of its general lack of decisive downbeats, especially at the cadences, all of Waltz No. 9 may be considered as an extended anacrusis. (Here, instead of strengthening the feeling of triple meter, the hemiolic cadential patterns actually obscure the meter.) Waltz No. 10, beginning with an unusually long anacrusis, is the perfect extension and resolution of the idea expressed in the preceding piece. In a very real sense, bars 13-16 of Waltz No. 10 not only conclude that piece, but No. 9 as well. For that reason one must be doubly careful to avoid forcing a rigid interpretation upon No. 9. Only by yielding to its free structure can one experience the intended impact of the downbeat in No. 10.

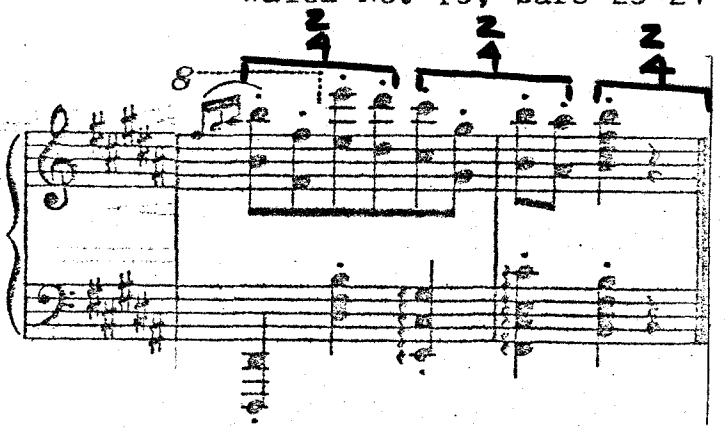
As a result of rhythmic structure alone, Waltzes 13-15 form an inseparable group. The first phrase of Waltz No. 13 in B Major characterizes the rhythm of the entire piece. Whereas in Waltz No. 6 the hemiolic pattern was 2+2+2/3+3, in No. 13 the reverse takes place. The phrase is lifted into the air, as are all subsequent phrases, with the exception of bars 5-8. In bar 8 an ornament occurs on beat 1, enforcing the

Waltz No. 13, bars 1-4



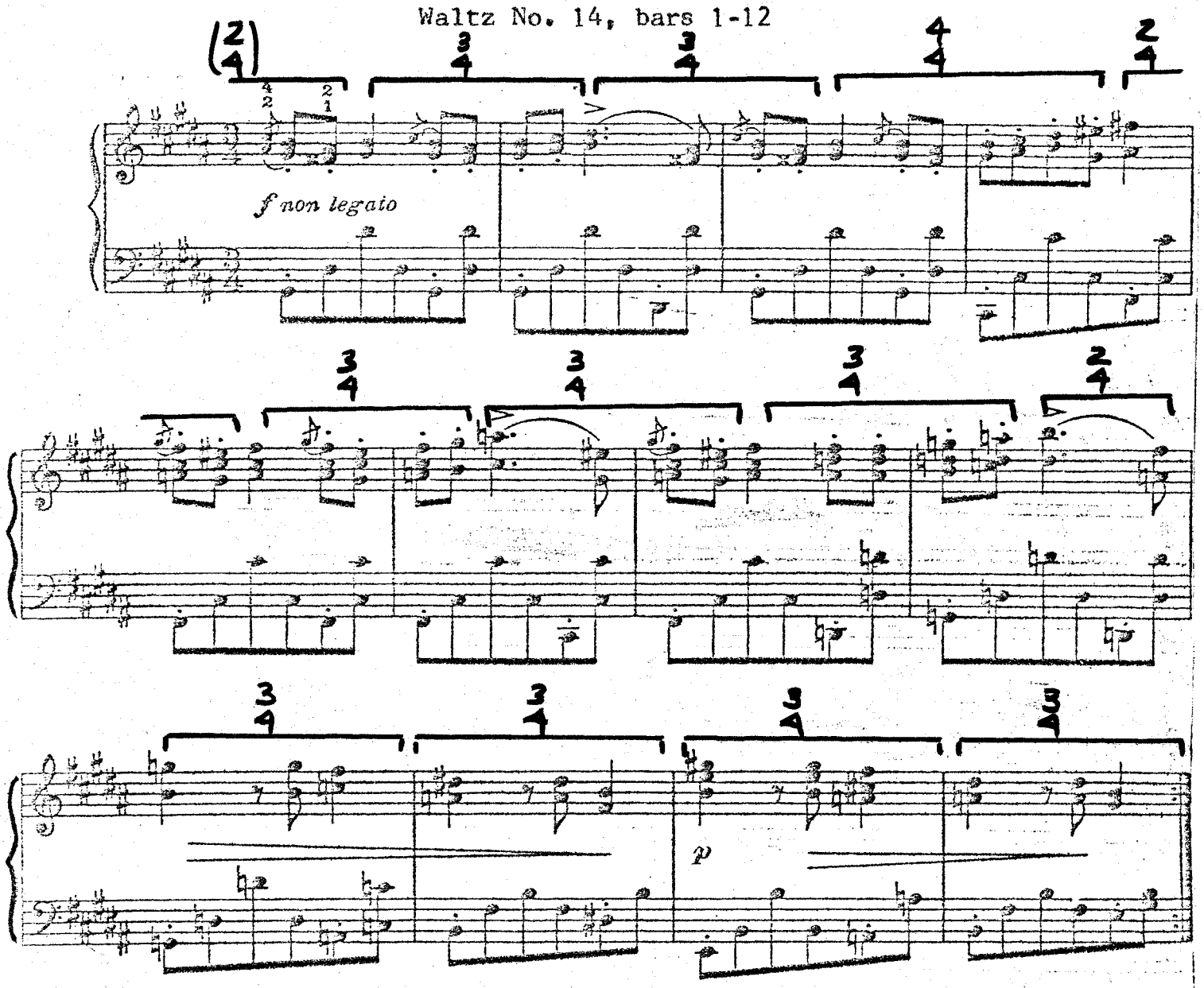
feeling of triple meter, and negating any feeling of duple meter. By the time the final cadence is reached,

Waltz No. 13, bars 23-24



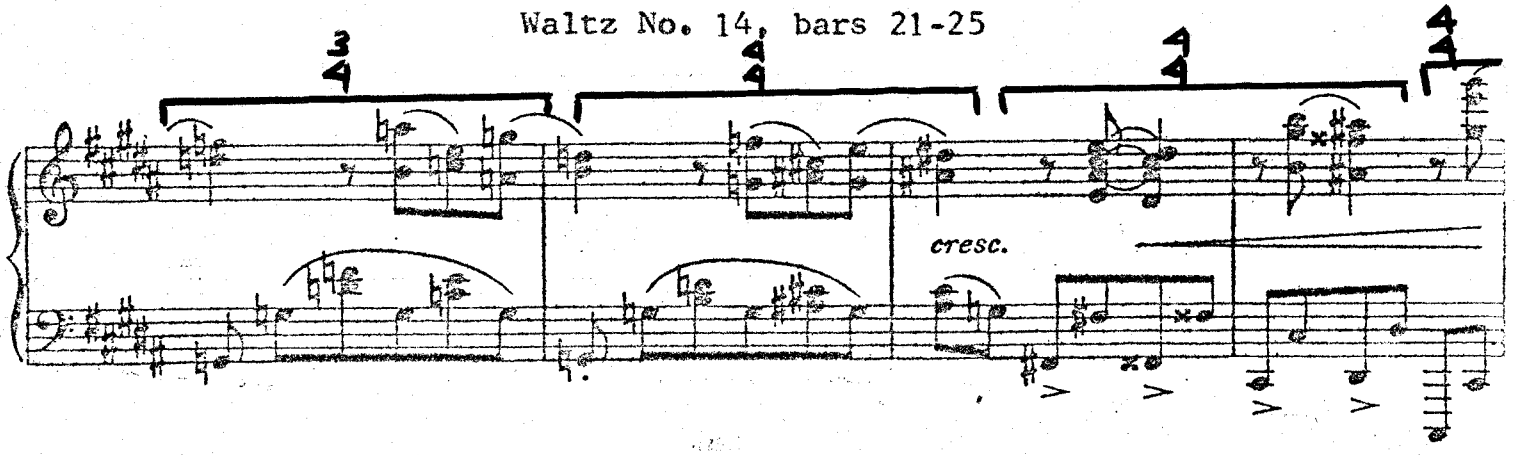
the entire piece is perceived as a long progression from downbeat to upbeat. Understanding it as such is the key to understanding the structure of the next piece, Waltz No. 14 in G-Sharp Minor, whose extended anacrusis naturally follows the open-endedness of No. 13. The first section, analyzed below, has an accentual pattern which does not coincide with the strong accompaniment. The incomplete 2/4 pattern at the beginning seems to beg at least intellectual connection with the last measure of No. 13. The continuous accentuation of the second beats of the measures convey the feeling of upbeat, but in bars 9-12 the pattern shifts to triple meter coincid-

Waltz No. 14, bars 1-12

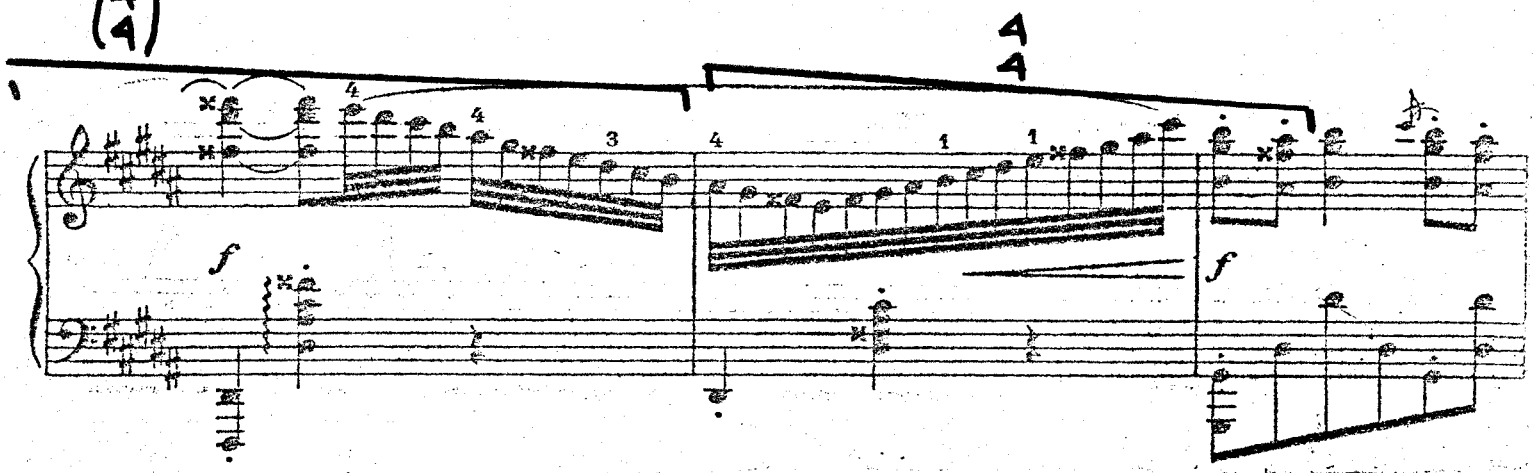



ing with the barline. The second section reaches a brilliant climax, almost recklessly passionate, effected by the insistency of quadruple meter.

Waltz No. 14, bars 21-25

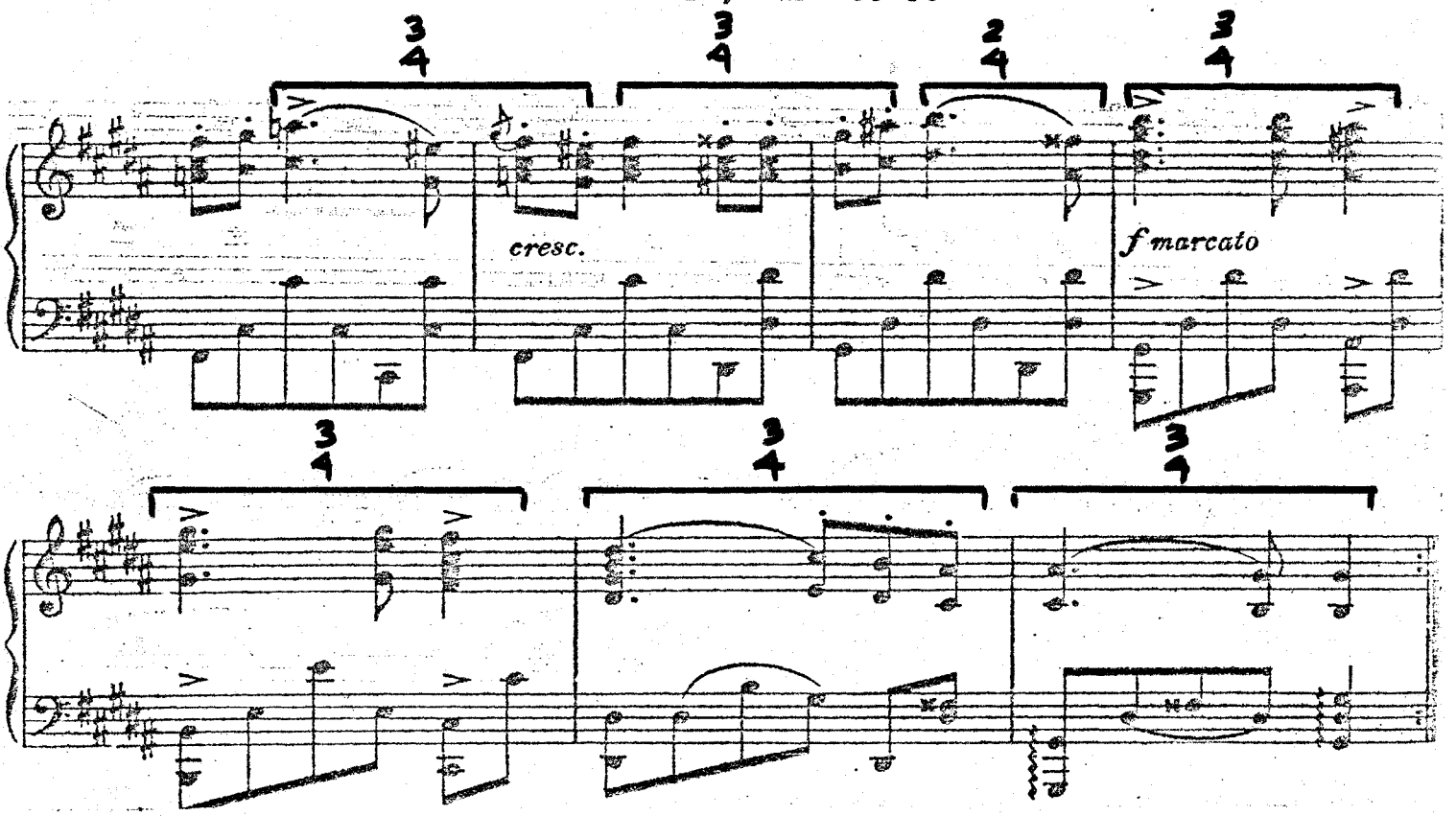


Waltz No. 14, bars 21-25 (cont.)

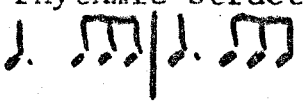


The section following is a more intense repetition of bars 1-12, but the rhythmic details are identical. Bars 33-36 may be considered the true downbeat for Waltzes 13 and 14.

Waltz No. 14, bars 33-36




This observation would be completely true, were it not for the final chord falling on the weak third beat. A cadence has been reached, but psychological completion has not yet taken

place. At this point, the music is still very much suspended, and it is altogether fitting that the next piece, Waltz No. 15 in A-Flat Major, should resolve these still active tendencies. Along with Waltz No. 3, the Waltz in A-Flat has the simplest rhythmic structure in the entire set. Its regular pattern,  , effectively quiets the mercurial motion of Waltzes 13 and 14.

## EPILOGUE

Eduard Hanslick, to whom Brahms dedicated the waltzes, once reviewed a concert in which Brahms played the Schumann Fantasy:

> I cannot imagine a more profoundly, more genuinely effective performance of this remarkable piece, than that which Brahms gave it. What a pleasure it is to hear him play! The instant he touches the keys one experiences the feeling: here is a true, honest artist, a man of intelligence and spirit, of unassuming self-reliance. . . . His technique is like a big, strong man, negligent in attire, and given to loitering. He has too many more important things in his head and heart to be constantly concerned with his external personal appearance. But his playing is always compelling and convincing.[57]

Brahms's manner of playing the piano was analogous, in at least one respect, to the content of his music. The statement, ". . . too many more important things in his head and heart to be constantly concerned with his external personal appearance," vindicates any effort we may expend in probing the sub-strata of the waltzes. Simple at the surface, elemental in their pianistic idiom, but still fundamentally intellectual in their rhythmic flow, the waltzes embrace "important things" which are only thinly veiled by a popular facade.

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[57]Eduard Hanslick, Music Criticisms 1846-99, trans. by Henry Pleasants (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1963), pp. 85-86.

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