The Effect of the Developing Variation Technique on Brahms' Early Piano Solo Works in the Form of Theme and Variations

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THE EFFECT OF THE DEVELOPING VARIATION TECHNIQUE ON BRAHMS’ EARLY PIANO SOLO WORKS IN THE FORM OF THEME AND VARIATIONS

By

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A DOCTORAL ESSAY

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THE EFFECT OF THE DEVELOPING VARIATION TECHNIQUE ON BRAHMS' EARLY PIANO SOLO WORKS IN THE FORM OF THEME AND VARIATIONS

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The Effect of the Developing Variation Technique On Brahms’ Early Piano Solo Works in the Form of Theme and Variations

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The term, developing variation, was introduced by Arnold Schoenberg to describe one of the fundamental compositional principles of the western music in which the technique of modifying and elaborating the initial idea generates all necessary components for the remainder of the piece. The term is often associated with Johannes Brahms because of Schoenberg’s celebrated essay “Brahms the Progressive,” where the function of developing variation in Brahms’ music was convincingly analyzed as being representative of the most advanced form of this technique. Many scholars have since been drawn to the examination of the thematic connections in various works by Brahms, but curiously excluding the works in the form of Theme and Variations, a medium favored by Brahms throughout his life. The present essay examines the developing variation technique in Brahms’ early variation sets: op. 9; op. 21, no. 1 and op. 21, no. 2. One of the most crucial finding was the prominence of developing variation in the harmonic aspect in forming the fundamental musical structure in Brahms’ music.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Essay

As an opponent to New German School, Brahms has been seen as a conservative composer who followed the path created by the legacy of music history. This is particularly evident in his frequent use of traditional musical forms, such as Theme and Variation. The form appears in the second movement of his Piano Sonata, op. 1, and from then, he composed seven variation sets and nine variation movements across a period of over forty years.¹ The main purpose of this essay is to closely examine his characteristic compositional technique in his preferred structural medium, Theme and Variations. Among the greatest admires of Brahms’ music was no other than Austrian composer and theorist, Arnold Schoenberg. He was particularly fascinated by the function of developing variation in Brahms’ music. This term indicates the specific compositional technique rather than the formal structure such as Theme and Variations. Schoenberg defines it to describe the musical composition in which all the musical materials within a piece are indeed constructed by the continuous variation of an initial idea. Although the technique is not employed exclusively by Brahms but is also used by Classical composers such as Haydn and Beethoven, the term is often associated with Brahms’ works. It is partially because Schoenberg admiringly mentions Brahms’ developing variation in his writing and, more definitively, his influential analysis in his essay “Brahms the Progressive” explicitly shows

the function of developing variation in Brahms’ music. Inspired by his study, other scholars also applied the idea of examining developing variation to Brahms’ music. Notably, German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus describes Brahms’ compositional style more specifically, arguing that developing variation appears to be the “primary formal principle” and that “musical form takes the shape of a discourse in sound in which motives develop out of earlier motives like ideas, each of which is a consequence of its predecessors.”

Because of this consistent development throughout Brahms’ works, he further argues that “a system of formal relations” in musical form weakens its function, which Classical composers were still able to maintain in their compositions since the manipulation of the initial idea acted as “corollary of the whole.” He considers these phenomena as the characteristic of Brahms’ compositional style. From my point of view, the balance between developing variation and musical form becomes unstable when musical form itself presents distinctive structural character by the predetermined subsections such as in sonata-allegro form. On the contrary, this conflict does not become apparent when musical form itself is designed in more open-ended structure. In fact, most scholars have been drawn to the analysis of developing variation in sonata-allegro form in Brahms’s compositions. To my knowledge, no one has yet examined developing variation in Theme and Variations, a structural medium that seems less restrictive for free use of his characteristic developing variation. Considering that Theme and Variations is not designed in such a way that


4. Ibid, 42, 43.
musical ideas are required to change their characters according to the structural need, this form seems more capable to accommodate continuous development of musical ideas. Therefore, I consider that the examination of developing variation in the form of Theme and Variations is quite meaningful for unveiling Brahms’ fundamental compositional technique.

Interestingly, there is a period that Brahms intensively employed the form, Theme and Variations, for his independent piano solo works. This occurred in the enigmatic four years in the middle 1850s that has generated much speculation among the scholars. After producing large-scale instrumental works within the two years from 1852 such as Piano Sonatas op. 1, 2 and 5 and Piano Trio op. 8, Brahms’s creative activities slowed for about four years. Some attribute it to Brahms’s suffering triggered by the incident in 1854 when Robert Schumann committed suicide. Others refer to the time as the period of professional development: it is the time Brahms waited to be a more mature composer. This perspective comes from the fact that Brahms completed a number of large-scale works after these four years such as Piano Concerto op. 15, String Sextet op. 18, Piano Quartets op. 25 and 26, Piano Quintet op. 34, Cello Sonata op. 38 and Horn Trio op. 40 in years 1859-1865. Scholars often refer to these productive years as Brahms’s first maturity. ⁵ The musicologist James Webster commented on this period as follows: “for the first time Brahms synthesized many relevant musical traditions with a contemporary harmonic language in fully achieved works on the largest scale.”⁶ He associates Brahms’s progress

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⁵. James Webster, “Schubert’s Sonata Form and Brahms’s First Maturity (II)”, 19th-Century Music 3, No. 1 (Jul., 1979), 53.

⁶. Webster, 55.
of the compositional skill with his close study of the music by J.S. Bach, Beethoven and Schubert in the mid-1850s. Moreover, Brahms scholar Walter Frisch’s analysis shows that the musical construction in his works of this period becomes more creative and sophisticated than in his works written before 1854. Thus the years 1854-1858, before he reaches the stage of his first maturity, can be considered as the period of internalization when Brahms prepared himself for the quantum leap in his compositional ability. Most notably, among the few works he wrote in this period, the majority of his instrumental works were written in Theme and Variations. He completed his Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann op. 9, Variations on an Original Theme op. 21, no. 1 and Variations on a Hungarian Song op. 21, no. 2 in the years 1854-1857. Although he had already employed Theme and Variations for several movements in his earlier works, majority of the works are written in sonata-allegro form or rondo form and these three variation sets are the first independent works that are written in Theme and Variations form. Considering the earlier discussion that the characteristics of Brahms’s compositional technique may have suited the more open-ended structure of Theme and Variations, this shift is quite notable: as if Brahms realized the limitation in his previous choice of musical forms and sought new compositional possibilities in a newly preferred structural medium. Therefore, these three pieces are fascinating works to examine his characteristic developing variation. Moreover, from biographical standpoint, it is a meaningful examination since these variation sets signifies the four years of Brahms’s developmental period. Following scholars’ description of Brahms’s characteristic compositional technique, I ultimately suggest the analysis of these three variation sets contributes to highlight the detailed examples of
continuous musical development generated by the developing variation technique in Theme and Variations by Johannes Brahms.

**The Definition of Developing Variation**

To understand the principle of developing variation more closely, the examination of Schoenberg’s writing is indispensable. Defined in somewhat metaphysical terms, Schoenberg considers developing variation as a fundamental compositional technique in Western music ever since it was first exploited by J.S. Bach, then later developed by Viennese Classical composers. He identifies the music of these Classical composers as style of a homophonic music. Here is the often-cited quote from Schoenberg’s essay “Bach” on this concept:

> Music of the homophonic-melodic style of composition that is, music with a main theme, accompanied by and based on harmony, produces its material by, as I call it, *developing variation*. This means that variation of the features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity, on the other hand—thus elaborating the *idea* of the piece.  

In *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*. Schoenberg clarifies the idea further by providing a description of a more common concept of variation as a contrast:

> Homophonic music can be called the style of ‘developing variation’. This means that in the succession of motive-forms produced through variation of the basic motive, there is something which can be compared to development, to growth. But changes of subordinate meaning, which have no special consequences, have only the local

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7. Schoenberg, 118.

8. Ibid, 397.

effect of an embellishment. Such changes are better termed variants.¹⁰

Later in the same chapter, Schoenberg again emphasizes the distinction between developing variation and variants by stating, “some variations, however, are merely local ‘variants’ and have little or no influence on the continuation.” As it gradually becomes apparent, developing variation is a variation technique by which a basic motive continuously grows and thus contributes to the structural development of the music. Conversely, the variation technique employed, for instance, in the refrain of dance music from the Baroque period consists primarily of “variants” instead of developing variation, because it simply serves to ornament the original melodic contour. The content of ornamentation itself does not come from earlier musical materials and is not applied to musical development, either. As Schoenberg describes the characteristic of developing variation as the variation technique that produces “consequences” or has “influence on the continuation,” developing variation can be compared to a chain of musical development: an idea inspires to create a new idea which becomes another inspiration to create a subsequent idea.

As Schoenberg’s description of the definition suggests the kinetic character of developing variation, it is equally important to examine what types of musical features are subjected to developing variation. Schoenberg presented various ways of variation techniques in his Fundamentals of Musical Composition.

The rhythm is changed:
1. By modifying the length of the notes.

¹⁰. Ibid, 8.
2. By note repetitions.
3. By repetition of certain rhythms.
4. By shifting rhythms to different beats.
5. By addition of upbeats.
6. By changing the metre—a device seldom usable within a piece.

The *intervals* are changed:
1. By changing the original order or direction of the notes.
2. By addition or omission of intervals.
3. By filling up intervals with ancillary notes.
4. By reduction through omission or condensation.
5. By repetition of features.
6. By shifting features to other beats.

The *harmony* is changed:
1. By the use of inversions.
2. By additions at the end.
3. By insertions in the middle.
4. By substituting a different chord or succession.

The *melody* is adapted to these changes:
1. By transposition.
2. By addition of passing harmonies.
3. By ‘semi-contrapuntal’ treatment of the accompaniment.\textsuperscript{11}

As the quote above shows, there are various ways of variation technique as there are many kinds of musical features and different ways of varying them. However, these variation techniques can be employed both as developing variation and variants. Thus it is crucial to understand how these variation techniques are employed in the continuation of musical development instead of functioning as an embellishment at a local effect. Although Schoenberg’s definition of developing variation does not include musical examples, it is clear he had this in mind when he analyzed the main theme of the *Andante* movement in Brahms’s String Quartet, op. 51, no. 2 in his essay “Brahms the Progressive.” This analysis

shows “the addition of notes” specimen that is subjected to the function of developing variation.

Example 1.1. Schoenberg’s analysis on the theme from *Andante* movement in Brahms’s String Quartet, op. 51, no. 2.\(^{12}\)

Schoenberg’s analysis demonstrates that the basic motive, the interval of a second labeled as \(a\), quickly grows into the entire theme consisting of the six phrases by continuously...

\(^{12}\) Schoenberg, *Style and Idea*, 431.
varying the previously stated musical idea. The first phrase consists of the interval of a second, \(a\), and its inversion figure, \(b\). The combination of both motives results in the motive \(c\). The motive \(c\) (the first phrase) grows into the second phrase by the additional notes. The fact that the second phrase is based on the first phrase is clarified by the figure \(c^1\) (D-E-F-E) written above the second phrase. The additional notes create the descending fourth E-D-C-B and ascending fourth B-E in the first half of the second phrase. Schoenberg now shows us that the third phrase is based on these newly introduced materials in the first half of the second phrase. Both the descending fourth and the ascending fourth are repeated twice in the third phase. In the fourth phrase, he now shows that it is based on the second half of the second phrase, which he labels as \(d\). The fourth phrase is created by the additional notes to the motive \(d\). The melodic structure of the fifth and sixth together is similar to the third and fourth phrases. It starts with the repetition of the descending fourth and is followed by \(d\) motive. It can be said that the development from the third and fourth phrases to the fifth and sixth phrases is quite small.

The analysis of the musical construction of these phrases shows the continuation in musical development. The interval of a second is repeated to become the first phrase and from there, new phrases are continuously produced by the modification of the previous phrases. In this example of developing variation, it can be summarized that the musical feature that contributes to the structural development is the addition of notes. Subsequent phrases are mainly created by additional notes to the preceding phrases.

A few questions may now arise: Are there other musical features that are subjected to developing variation? How does developing variation work in the larger musical
structure? To explore this effect, Adolf Schubring's analysis of the first movement of Brahms's Piano Sonata op. 5 is relevant to the following discussion.

Example 1.2. Brahms, Piano Sonata op. 5 mm. 1-2.

Schubring identifies the second and third beat of the melody in the first measure (A\textsuperscript{b}-G-F-D\textsuperscript{b}) as a basic motive. The basic melodic contour of this motive is characterized by the initial descent and the upward motion which follows. Schubring observes, “the motives of all parts of the movement are derived from this basic motive, whose initial energy becomes dissipated when the subsidiary motives are extended, principally by means of augmentation.”\textsuperscript{13} During the course of this movement, the modified basic motives appear in each section of the exposition by maintaining the melodic outline of the basic motive. The prominent change that affects the structural development in this movement is the rhythmic feature. Each time the music enters a new section, the note values of the basic motive are gradually extended.

Schubring points out that the basic motive reappears with its extended figure at mm. 7-16, the middle section in the first subject group. The contour of the basic motive, a

descending line followed by an ascending line, is clearly presented in Eb-D-C-D at m. 7 and it is transformed in the different degrees in the following measures.

Example 1.3. Brahms, Piano Sonata op. 5 mm. 7-8.

After the first group, it moves to the transition section at mm. 23-38. At mm. 23-24, the contour of the basic motive, descending followed by ascending, is further extended, making the two measure melody, C-Bb-Db.

Example 1.4. Brahms, Piano Sonata op. 5 mm. 23-26.

When it finally reaches to the second theme at mm. 39-55, the contour of the basic motive is even further extended, now creating the 3 measure-long lyrical melody, C-Bb-Eb, at mm. 39-41.
What one can observe from this analysis is the example of developing variation that involves the gradual rhythmic expansion. In addition, this example also explicitly shows the relationship between developing variation and musical form. The variation of the same basic idea persistently appears in all the essential parts of exposition, and because of its dominancy, though by no means completely, the conventional design of the sonata-allegro form, which is supposed to convey the distinctive change in each section, weakens its function. This analysis echoes Dahlhaus’ observation that Brahms’ developing variation appears to be a formal principle rather than functioning as the corollary of the whole.

After observing the examples of developing variation in both the melodic and rhythmic aspects, one must wonder its function in the harmonic aspect. I personally think that developing variation of the harmonic aspect is one of the most powerful features in Brahms’ music. I have reached to this perspective through the analyses of op. 9; op. 21, no. 1 and no. 21, no. 2. I understand that this point of view radically differs from the preceding analyses of Brahms’ developing variation conducted by various scholars. They somehow focus on the melodic element, when it comes to the examination of the thematic connection, and almost ignore its function in the other musical features, rhythm and harmony. However, Schoenberg never excludes the other musical features to be functioned as developing variation. The list of variation techniques (See p. 6-7) clearly demonstrates that these
techniques can be applied in various musical features. It was a revelatory experience for me to observe the function of developing variation in all the musical features, and its special importance in the harmonic aspect.

As shown in the examples above, developing variation serves as a fundamental rather than a subordinate role in the construction of Brahms’ music. Thus tracing the technique from moment to moment along with the course of his music explicitly reveals the essential part of his compositional process. I hope that applying this analytical approach to the three variation sets, Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann op. 9, Variations on an Original Theme op. 21, no. 1 and Variations on a Hungarian Song op. 21, no. 2, contributes not only to reveal the effect of developing variation in Theme and Variations form but also to understand Brahms’ comprehensive compositional style in the four years of his developmental period as a composer.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introductory Remarks

For many years, scholars have examined the thematic elaboration in Brahms’ music. Although these analyses focus on developing variation in the sonata allegro form, and mostly examines the function in the melodic aspect, the review of these analyses provide a general idea how developing variation works in Brahms’ works. In addition, this chapter also examines the analyses of Brahms works in the form of Theme and Variations. Although it does not necessarily deal with the principal of developing variation, I believe that the review, in turn, elucidates what is the indispensable point of view to understand Brahms’ characteristic compositional technique in the structural medium.

The Analysis of the Thematic Elaboration in Brahms’ Works

The significance of thematic elaboration in Brahms’ music was already examined in the mid-19th century. When Adolf Schubring published the article “Five Early Works by Brahms” in *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* in 1862, Brahms was still twenty nine years old and had just completed the publication of his works up to op. 18. His analysis clarifies that the employment of the continuous thematic elaboration plays fundamental role even in his early works. In op. 1, he recognizes the three themes in the exposition of the first movement and describes their thematic development as follows: “These three main themes are now split up into their component motives and each of these smaller motives or motivic particles

leads to other combinations, which are treated mostly by sequence.”¹⁵ This sequential elaboration is often seen in the development section of sonata-allegro form in the music of Classical composers. Brahms, however, uses the technique from the beginning of exposition. Due to this employment, however, he points out that Brahms struggles with building up the music convincingly in the development section in Piano Sonata op. 1. In Piano Sonata, op. 2, on the other hand, he notices Brahms’ more sophisticated approach to the thematic development. In contrast to op. 1 where fully formed themes first appear and are split into particles for elaboration, in op. 2, the initial small idea gradually grows to be the principle melody during the course of the music.¹⁶ Moreover, Schubring aptly claims that the initial idea in the first movement and the themes in all other movements share a similar musical idea. He sees that the organic use of a motive in op. 2 results in a combination of diversity and unity in the musical construction. His analysis of Piano Concerto no. 1 op. 15 shows Brahms’ unique approach to the sonata-allegro form in the first movement of piano concerto. In traditional formal procedure, the exposition section consists of the tutti (orchestra) and solo expositions, both of which share the similar materials. In op. 15, however, he recognizes that the four main themes, appearing in the beginning of the work, freely develop between the two expositional parts. He states: the tutti exposition “begins to develop the first two [themes]. The piano now enters and develops the third and second themes after one another and then a new fifth main theme, and finally the fourth. The piano is frequently interrupted by the orchestra, which competes

¹⁵. Frisch and Karnes, Brahms and His World, 199.

for the thematic development.” His analysis clarifies that both the orchestra and piano parts pursue their own thematic elaborations as if these sections are written in the through-composed style. He also mentions the thematic unity in the entire piece by claiming that the second and fifth themes prominently appear in the second and third movement. He describes the characteristic thematic development of this piece as follows: “Nowhere does Brahms merely write a phrase or figuration for its own sake; never does he seek aftereffects. His only concern is a process that moves from within to without.” Schubring’s analysis clarifies Brahms’s compositional style, which he absorbs from Classical composers and employs it in his own characteristic way.

While Schubring’s analysis traces thematic development mainly within the first movement of the works and provides only the brief reference to the thematic connections in the other movements, Rudolf Réti, Serbia-born pianist, composer and musical analyst, provides the analysis in his *The Thematic Process in Music* that clarifies the continuation of thematic development between the two independents pieces. He chooses Brahms’ *Two Rhapsodies* op. 79 to exemplify “how a theme moves by transformation toward a goal and how in this process the dramatic development of the work and its thematic course are intertwined.” In the first *Rhapsody*, he demonstrates how the opening theme gradually develops toward the second subject and then toward the interlude theme. He notes that the

17. Ibid, 212.
21. Ibid, 139.
trace of the opening theme is quite subtle in the second subject, but it becomes clearer in the interlude theme, which at the same time emphasizes the existence of the second subject. In short, he points out that the opening theme and the second subject are all together combined and they find their goals in the interlude theme. Furthermore, he argues that the interlude theme continues to be modified in the second *Rhapsody* and finally reaches “a triumphant climax” at the end of the piece.²² He states that “What was, structurally and emotionally, search and problem now becomes finality and solution.”²³ His conclusion that motives continuously develop throughout a large musical structure toward a climax point is the insightful argument in his analysis of Brahms’ music.

Later in the 20th century in his “Issues in Composition,” Carl Dahlhaus describes the characteristics of Brahms’ compositional technique in comparison to composers from the New German School.²⁴ He first discusses the different types of motivic procedures for the sonata-form exposition by these composers. While Liszt and Wagner often use the sequential technique, in which an individual musical idea could stand out by itself, Brahms’ motives, Dahlhaus states, “would not have in themselves, as isolated figures,” and that “the whole significance of the musical instant, unimportant in itself, is that it points the way forward to something greater.”²⁵ He also argues that for Brahms, the thematic manipulation itself becomes the musical form rather than the traditional sense of musical form, which takes an initiative to control musical ideas for its structural need. He explains that the

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²². Reti, 149.

²³. Ibid, 148.


²⁵. Ibid, 49.
tendency in Brahms’ music is attributed to “the social and intellectual preconceptions of the time.” Composers in the 19th century felt an aesthetic demand to create “originality” in music. The conventional usage of musical form before the 19th century, in which “mere formulaic expansion of the essential musical idea” or “superfluous padding,” often appears, was not sufficient enough to live up to their aesthetic expectation. To make every moment of music original, the employment of thematic manipulation throughout the music was an unavoidable solution for composers. He explains this characteristic as follows:

With Brahms, on the other hand, the elaboration of a thematic idea is the primary formal principle, on which depends the integration of the movement as a whole, preventing it from appearing as a mere pot-pourri. Musical form takes the shape of a discourse in sound in which motives develop out of earlier motives like ideas, each of which is a consequence of its predecessors.

As this quote describes, thematic elaboration takes place incessantly by manipulating the earlier musical materials in Brahms’ music.

Later, Dahlhaus discusses the characteristics of Brahms’ harmony. By showing the common harmonic procedure in the opening of Brahms’ op. 8, op. 15, op. 79, no. 2 and op. 90, he argues that Brahms tends to begin with ambiguous harmony and solidifies the tonality later in the pieces. The characteristic opening harmony can be seen as a preparation to make the later harmonic development more effective. Since this harmonic progression is utilized for structural purposes, he considers this characteristic an example of developing

26. Ibid, 42.
27. Dahlhaus, 42.
28. Ibid, 44.
29. Ibid, 50.
variation. He states, “The variation of the harmony is not coloristic in intention, but corresponds functionally to the various changes in the situation and significance of the motto; it can therefore be described as a ‘developing’ variation-one, that is, which affects the formal progress, and not simply one which provides transient coloring.”

Although his analysis is not very detailed, it provides a comprehensive view of both Brahms’ melodic and harmonic use.

More recently, Walter Frisch has done an extensive analysis in his Brahms and the Principle of Developing Variation. He covers eighteen works by Brahms for the analysis of developing variation and elucidates Brahms’s development as a composer from his early period to his late period. Frisch emphasizes the examination of rhythmic development throughout his research. He also closely examines Brahms’ characteristic way of relating neighboring phrases through linkage technique. The term was originally coined by Heinrich Schenker to refer to a technique that disguises the musical seam between two phrases by utilizing common musical elements in the end of a phrase and the beginning of the subsequent phrase. Although this is not directly related to developing variation, Frisch considers the technique an efficient compositional tool and examines Brahms’ phrase connections throughout the book.

His findings show that in his early works written before 1854, Brahms tends to employ motives that have a distinct melodic character. This type of motivic manipulation is similar to what Dahlhaus calls sequential technique, which he discerns in the music of


32. Ibid, 15-16.
Wagner and Liszt. In sequential motivic manipulation, the melodic outline of the basic motive that can stand by itself is preserved, and both rhythm and harmony contribute to the structural development. On the other hand, in Brahms’ works written in the early 1860s, Frisch observes that the basic motive becomes simpler and insignificant. This type of motive gives Brahms more creative possibilities to produce various kinds of melodic contour than motives that already have a distinct melodic character. In addition to the characteristic change of the motive, Frisch notes the prominence of metrical displacement in this period of Brahms’ works. His assumption is that Brahms employs it for the purpose of developing variation.33 In the course of the music, the emphasis on the normally weak beat first occurs gently and later it is emphasized. As it has shown, Frisch’s contribution in his analysis is to examine developing variation in Brahms’ music from various points of view in the different periods of his compositions.

Inspired by Frisch’s analysis, James Ian Nie also investigates Brahms’ music in his “‘Developing Variation’ in Brahms’ Scherzos and Scherzo Substitutes.”34 His main focus here is to examine developing variation in Brahms’ ternary forms. For this purpose, he chooses scherzo movements and other movements written in ternary form, which he calls “scherzo substitutes.” Similar to Frisch’s comparison of Brahms’ works written before 1854 with works written in the early 1860s, Nie also attempts to detect changes in developing variation by comparing ternary forms of the early works, op. 5 and op. 11, with that of op. 25 and op. 26 written in his first maturity. Nie confirms Frisch findings, and he

33. Frisch, 93.
notices that Brahms more freely adapts his developing variation in scherzo-substitute movements than in scherzo movements. This finding shows that Brahms consciously changed the approach of developing variation according to the character of the piece.

The review of several authors’ studies leads to the conclusion that there is a characteristic method of thematic elaboration in Brahms’ compositions. Although this idea comes from compositions of Classical composers, Brahms makes the technique his own. Scholars emphasize that thematic elaboration incessantly appears from the beginning of the pieces. Also for Brahms, it seems that thematic elaboration is more crucial compositional aspect than keeping the function of the traditional musical form. Scholars also trace it in extended musical spans, such as entire movements and an entire set of pieces. Although in Brahms’ early works, he often employs motives that have a distinct melodic character, overall scholars agree that Brahms tends to manipulate a melodic motive which is insignificant by itself. Both Dahlhaus’ analysis of harmony and Frisch’s analysis of metrical displacement expand the idea of developing variation from the extent where Schoenberg shows it in his analysis of Brahms’ music. Also several scholars remark that Brahms’ skill of motivic elaboration became more sophisticated over the course of time.

What follows will examine what has been covered in the studies of Brahms’ op. 9, op. 21, no. 1 and op. 21, no. 2 all written in the form of Theme and Variations.

**The Analysis of Brahms’ Works in the Form of Theme and Variations**

Alan Charles Brandes’s “The Solo Piano Variation of Johannes Brahms” provides detailed analysis of all the variation sets written for piano solo.35 His basic analytical

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approach is to compare the features of the theme with that of each variation. The analysis of the theme begins with the identification of periods and their phrase structures. Later he detects the characteristic rhythmic and melodic motives that recur in the course of the variations. He also includes a detailed harmonic analysis of the theme. These detailed analyses of the theme contribute to clarifying the characteristic changes in each variation. However, since he explains these changes in variations by comparison with the theme, this analysis lacks the observation of how the changes occur over variations; in other words, it does not show the dynamic and cumulative process of musical development that Brahms was trying to achieve through the use of techniques including developing variation. If the one of the important aspects of the musical analysis is to clarify the characteristic of one’s compositional craft, the comparison of theme with variations in the analysis does not provide the sufficient information because it can hardly presume that Brahms creates variations only by modifying the features of the theme. By considering the scholars’ observation of Brahms’ music in which musical development incessantly occurs, I believe that some variations are composed in relation to previous variations and this affects the composition of a subsequent variation. Despite this fact, his analysis is valuable since this is the only existing resource that includes a detailed analysis of all variation sets written for solo piano.

In “Large-Scale Coherence in Selected Nineteenth Century Piano Variations,” Craig C. Cummings conducts his analysis of Brahms’s “Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann,” op. 9 within the framework of Schenkerian analysis.36 His main goal is to find

related variations that have common musical features. He employs Schenkerian analysis to classify variations by similarity of voice leading and harmony. He also classifies the variations by key, rhythm and tempo. He concludes his analysis by observing whether op. 9 can be separated by the grouping of variations that contain all the common musical features. Since variation form is not comprised by the distinctive sections as sonata form, this classification supports to understand that several variations together can be seen as one section from the large structural level of Theme and Variations.

Another work using Schenkerian analysis is Julian Littlewood’s *The Variations of Johannes Brahms*.\(^{37}\) He briefly describes the characteristics of all the pieces in the form of Theme and Variations by Brahms. In the end, he conducts a case study on “Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann,” op. 9 with Schenkerian analysis. Unlike Cummings’ analysis, which is to find common features among variations, this research emphasizes the distinct musical features in each variation. The reduction of texture by Schenkerian analysis contributes to the articulation of significant changes in each variation from the theme.

Ralph Wood takes a different analytical approach in “Brahms’s Glimpse.”\(^{38}\) Although his analysis of op. 21, no. 1 is not detailed, I believe that it clarifies Brahms’ characteristic compositional approach. In the article, Wood first points out the historical prejudice, that Brahms’ music lacks large-scale form.\(^{39}\) Then he defends Brahms’ music against this criticism by showing continuity in the process of Theme and Variations. He describes how each variation organically produces a subsequent variation without breaking


\(^{39}\) Ibid, 98.
the musical flow. His point echoes Dahlhaus’ statement: “Musical form takes the shape of a discourse in sound in which motives develop out of earlier motives like ideas, each of which is a consequence of its predecessors.” Moreover, Wood comments on the traditional analytical approach to Brahms’ music. He states “Brahms idolaters, which all his biographers seems to be, may sprinkle their pages with the words ‘form’ and ‘architecture,’ but they obviously fail to comprehend the very meaning of those words when applied to the kinetic art, music. All their formal concepts are static ones.” The formal or architectural analysis is “static” because it is the comparison of sections with sections in music, which is possible to execute for the analyst only after knowing the entire music. To reveal the “kinetic” character of music, on the other hand, it is necessary to trace the musical development moment by moment as if the music is played through for the first time in front of the analyst. What he tries to reveal “continuity” or “kinetic character” in Brahms’ music can best be illuminated in analysis of developing variation, which traces variation technique that results in a chain of musical development. His statement is quite provocative and suggests an insightful approach to the analysis of Theme and Variations by Brahms.

Despite the fact that these analyses above all have their own advantages, it seems to me that the characteristic of Brahms’ compositional style, which has been revealed in the analysis of sonata or ternary form by Brahms, is not sufficiently examined in their studies of Theme and Variations by Brahms. As scholars have argued that thematic elaboration continuously appears in Brahms’ music, the comparison of a theme with

40. Dahlhaus, 50.

41. Wood, 108.
variations or grouping variations does not explicitly reveal the characteristic of Brahms’ compositional process. I believe that it is thus indispensable to detect this continuity of musical development in the form of Theme and Variations through the examination of developing variation.
CHAPTER 3
METHOD

The Procedure of the Analysis

The general process of the analysis is to trace developing variation along with the course of the music. The first step to detect it is to find a musical feature that is consistently employed and renewed throughout the entire piece. This must be a daunting part of the analysis. One should capture only the fundamental aspect of the musical material without being misled by the various facets produced by developing variation at this point. After finding the idea, one now examines what musical features are preserved and what musical features are changed. It is also important to analyze if the transformation of the idea signifies the developmental aspect, as Schonberg describes the phenomena of developing variation as “something which can be compared to development, to growth.” That is to say that one observes if the context of the idea is intensified from its previous appearance.

To clarify the process of the development, one examines only one of the three musical features—melody, rhythm and harmony—at a time, indicating that the analysis of each work is divided into the three sections. The analysis first states the musical feature that shows the most consistent use of developing variation, and proceeds to the other musical features that show the less distinctive use of developing variation.
CHAPTER 4

VARIATIONS ON A THEME OF ROBERT SCHUMANN OP. 9

Developing Variation in the Harmonic Aspect

The most consistently employed idea in op. 9 is the harmonic progression that involves chromatic voice leading. The chromatic line is notably articulated in the theme by Robert Schumann, and Brahms cultivates this feature in the harmonic aspect throughout the variations. The consistent use of the chromatic voice leading evolves to the point where it plays an important role in controlling a key scheme, which becomes evident from Variation V and on. That is to say that structurally crucial notes of a new key, such as leading, tonic and dominant tones, are articulated by the chromatic voice leading ahead of time. Although it may seem tonally obscure before the modulation, Brahms’ intention to articulate the specific voice leading becomes clearer when he proceeds to the new key. The role of the chromatic voice leading can hardly be seen as ornamental since it assumes the central role in the harmonic aspect by functioning as developing variation.

The theme is written in the key of F# minor in the ternary form, A (mm. 1-8), B (mm. 9-16) and A’ (mm. 17-24). It is the characteristic feature that the second beat of the odd-numbered measures (both beats in m. 17) consistently creates a harmonic tension throughout the theme by the chords such as the dominant 7th chord, the augmented chord and the diminished 7th chord. When these chords resolve to the following harmony, the chromatic lines are often articulated by the dotted rhythm or the grace notes (see the blue squares below.)
Example 4.1. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-24 in the theme

In the B section, the repeatedly appeared chord progression, the G# augmented chord on the second beat of m. 9, 11 and 13 turning to the C# minor chord on the first beat of m. 10, 12 and 14, is an enigmatic feature. However, the intension of the conspicuous harmony becomes clearer when the tonicization on C# minor, G#7- C# minor, appears at the end of B section in mm. 15-16. It highlights the chromatic voice leading E-D# in the transformation from the G# augmented chord to the G#7 chord. The use of the chromatic voice leading toward the harmony that belongs to the outside of the original key is the imperative feature. It is the similar function with the chromatic voice leading used for the anticipation of the new key from Variation V.

Variation I further reinforces this distinctive feature of the theme. Although Variation I does not follow the thematic harmony, which is due to the placement of the thematic melody in the bass line, the chord that creates the harmonic tension appears in the same place as in the theme, on the second beat of the odd-numbered measures.
Example 4.2. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-8 in Variation I

It is now created by the applied chords that involve the chromatic voice leading, and these chords are again emphasized with the dotted rhythm as in the theme. In mm. 17-24, the overall chord progression from the C#7 chord in m. 17-18, to the D major chord in mm. 19-20, to the D# diminished 7th chord in mm. 21-22, and to the F# minor chord in mm. 23-24 shows that the chromatic voice leading becomes the primary idea in the construction of the chord progression.

Example 4.3. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 17-24 in Variation I

To accommodate the intensive chromatic harmony, the thematic melody disappear from the bass line, which is now replaced to the chromatic bass line, C#-D-D#-D♭-C#.

In contrast to Variation I, the preservation of the thematic harmony is the prominent feature in Variation II. All the thematic harmony is now accommodated within
the first six measures, and it is repeated in the following six measures.

Example 4.4. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-6 in Variation II

The thematic harmony is clarified by the employment of the thematic bass line in the LH.

The characteristic feature of the variation is the use of a harmonic suspension in the RH. While the bass notes on the first, fourth, and seventh beats imply the change of harmony, the preceding harmony from the offbeat is still prolonged over in the RH by the tied notes. This delay of the harmonic change by the suspension in the RH is notable, highlighting the voice leading of each chord progression.

In Variation III, the chromatic voice leading plays an important role in generating the modulation from F# minor to F minor in the B section in mm. 9-16.
Example 4.5. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 9-16 in Variation III

The A7 chord in m. 9 (which is a thematic harmony) becomes the A dominant minor ninth chord in m. 10. The third of this extended chord is slipped down to C♮ in the LH in m. 11, creating the C7 chord in m. 11-12. After the chord progression, C7-F minor, in mm. 13-14, the Db7 chord surprisingly appears in mm. 15-16. Since Db7 is enharmonically equivalent to C#7, these two chords C7 and Db7 in this section chromatically represents the oscillation between the new key, F minor, and the original key, F# minor. It is the last beat of m. 16 where C7 wins over D7 and leads to the F minor chord in m. 17 at the beginning of A’ section.

The main function of the harmonic feature in Variation IV is essentially to reestablish the original key, F# minor, with the pedal point since the previous variation diverts from it by the chromatic modulation. After the clarification of the tonal center, the next notable harmonic development appears in Variation V. In the A section in mm. 1-11, the chromatic voice leading is notably presented in mm. 6-7 with the extensive rhythmic feature.
Example 4.6. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-11 in Variation V

It shows that the C# major chord on the first beat of m. 6 is transferred to the E# minor chord on the second beat of m. 6 by the chromatic voice leading C#-B#. Since the E# minor chord is enharmonically equivalent to the F minor chord, it can be considered that it momentarily refers back to the modulation to the key of F minor in Variation III.

In the A’ section of this variation in mm. 22-43, the chromatic voice leading is further emphasized in the chord progression. The first five measures of the section articulates the harmonic cadence on F# minor with a Neapolitan chord. This harmonic progression deepens the implication of the F# minor chord on the following repeated F# cascade in mm. 27-28. Thus, it is quite shocking when the A# minor chord appears with sffz in m. 29 immediately after.
Example 4.7. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 19-31 in Variation V

It particularly emphasizes the chromatic crash, A-A#, with the expected F# minor chord. This voice leading is notable because it signifies the opposite direction of voice leading from A-Ab seen in the modulation to F minor in Variation III. After the prolongation of the A# minor chord for the two beats, it now turns to the F# major chord and eventually F#7 appears. In the following four measures after F#7, the first two measures in mm. 32-33 employ the chords that articulate B, such as B minor and G major chords, and the following two measures in mm. 34-35 employ the chords that articulate Bb, such as G minor, Bb major 7th and Eb major chords.
The chords with Bb clearly refer back to A# crash made by the surprising A# minor chord. As shown above, the series of the chord progression in the A’ section articulates the voice leading A-A#(Bb)-B. It is notable that the same voice leading is employed also in the chord progression of Variation VI and it eventually induces the key of B minor in Variation IX.

In Variation VI, the exploration of the voice leading A-A#(Bb)-B starts with the A# minor chord in m. 9, the same chord as the one used with sffz in A’ section of the previous variation.
The A# minor chord is now transformed to the F major chord in m. 10 by the chromatic voice leading and in the middle of it, the Bb minor chord is also inserted in m. 10. Since the Bb minor chord is enharmonically equivalent to the preceding A# minor chord, the chords in m. 10 clarify the chromatic voice leading by comparing the chord after the transformation (the F major chord) with the chord before the transformation (the A# minor chord). In m. 11, the Bb minor chord is now transformed to the G7 chord by another chromatic voice leading, and this G7 chord extensively appears for three measures in mm. 11-13. To simplify this chord progression above, A# in the A# minor chord in m. 9 first falls to A in the F major chord, and rises back to Bb in the Bb minor chord, and further rises to B in the G7 chord. This oscillation of the voice leading A#-A-Bb-Bb is similar to the one at the end of the previous variation, but this variation employs the distinctive harmonic progression. This extensive use of G7 emphasizes the B for a long time, thus anticipating the appearance of the B minor key more strongly than in the previous variation.

In Variation VII, the prevailing descending chromatic lines produce the various harmonic transformations. This is closely related to the exploration of the voice leading A-A#-B in the previous two variations. Since these two variations basically cultivates this ascending chromatic line in the chord progression, it becomes an interesting feature that Variation VII now explores the harmonic transformation with the descending chromatic
line. In this variation, the key of B minor is more clearly prepared. The B minor chord is now articulated on the fourth beat of m. 1 and 3 so that it clearly creates a juxtaposition of the F# minor chord the B minor chord.

Example 4.10. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation VII

It is also important to note that the bass line in mm. 1-2, F#-E#-E♭-D-C#, foresees the thematic melody, F#-E-D-C#, in Variation IX where the key of B minor finally appears.

Example 4.11. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-2 in Variation IX
In Variation VIII, this descending line from F# appears more extensively in mm. 1-4, and above it, the two consecutive applied chords, C#7 and F#7, create the forward impetus toward the B minor chord on the second beat of m. 2.

Example 4.12. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-5 in Variation VIII

As shown above, the intentional emphasis on the B minor chord in these two variations is apparent. It shows that Brahms’ logical preparation for the key of B minor in Variation IX, starting from the emphasis on the voice leading A-A#(Bb)-B in the series of the enigmatic chord progressions in Variations V-VI, leading to the more direct anticipating features in Variations VII and VIII such as the emphasis on the B minor chord and the descending line from F# that will turn into the opening thematic melody in Variation IX in B minor.

The harmonic progression in Variation IX follows that of the theme in the key of B minor. The notable feature is the chord progression C#9-F#7 above the bass line B-C#-F# in mm. 12-14 which corresponds to the tonicization on C# minor in the end of the B section in the theme.
The C#9 (7) chord does not immediately turn to F#7 even after the bass note shifts from C# to F#, but is suspended for a while in mm. 13-14. The emphasis, thus rendered, on C#9 in these measures is the distinctive feature. It indeed becomes even more distinctive in the following two variations that now modulate to the key of D major. The C#7 chord is peculiarly emphasized in these variations with the voice leading of B#-C#. The purpose of the persistent emphasis on the chord is to prepare for the appearance of the original key, F# minor, in Variation XII by emphasizing the chord that functions as the dominant.

Variation X follows the thematic harmony in the A section in the key of D major in mm. 1-16, however, it does not continue to do so in the B section in mm. 17-24. The section instead consistently articulate the C# major chord.
Example 4.14. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 17-24 in Variation X

The basic chord progression for the first four measures of the B section in mm. 17-20 is the B minor 7th chord turning to the C# major chord from m. 17 to 18, and from m. 19 to 20. In mm. 21-22, the B minor 7th chord now turns to the B# diminished 7th chord, and finally leads to the toniciation on C# major on the pedal point C# in mm. 23-24. The chromatic voice leading B-C# is articulated in the chord progressions, B# diminished 7th-C# major in mm. 21-22, and G7-C# major in mm. 23-24. The entire B section creating the chromatic voice leading B-B#-C# is the notable feature.

It is Variation XI that reinforces the chromatic voice leading of Variation X, yet, with the different harmony. This variation repeatedly presents the D7(9) chord. The other chords included in this variation can be considered the peripheral harmony as the music always settles back to the chord.
Example 4.15. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 14-27 in Variation XI

This chord is eventually resolved to the C# major chord in the last measure, m. 27, and it leads to the F# minor chord at the beginning of Variation XII in the key of F# minor.

Example 4.16. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation XII

It clarifies that D7 in Variation XI functions as the augmented 6th chord resolving to the dominant chord in the key of F# minor. The 7th note of D7, C, is enharmonically changed to B# in m. 26, highlighting the chromatic voice leading, B#-C#. It signifies the employment of the distinctive harmonic feature from the previous variation, however, in the use of the same voice leading, B#-C#.
The exploration of the chromatic voice leading toward C# continues also in Variation VII. It now plays a role to solidify the return of the original key, F# minor. The intensive chromatic harmony is seen in the B section in mm. 5-11. The first six measures of the section present the A7 chord in mm. 5-6, the B7 chord in m. 7-8 and the C# major chord in mm. 9-10.

Example 4.17. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 5-12 in Variation XII

The first two chords, A7 and B7, respectively present 9th notes, B♭ and C♮, in the measures of *sostenuto*, thus making the smooth transition to the root of the following B7 and C# major chords. It shows the long chromatic voice leading, A-B♭-B-C-C#, in the chord progression from the A7 chord in m. 5 to the C# major chord in m. 9. After this chord progression, now the soprano line shows the chromatic line G♯-A-A♯-B in mm. 10-11 and applies the chromatic harmony underneath, C# major, B# diminished, A# major and C#7 chords. This B in the high register comes back a few measures later in m. 15.
Example 4.18. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 13-22 in Variation XII

Through the D augmented 6th chord with f, it finally reaches C#. It thus forms the long ascending chromatic line from m. 10, G#-A-A#-B-B#-C#. The use of the long chromatic voice leading toward C# is the distinctive feature of this variation, cultivating the more various chromatic harmonies than in the preceding variations.

Variation XIII now signifies a different type of a harmonic progression. After the A section in mm. 1-4 presents the thematic harmony, the chords on the second beat of mm. 5-7 show the chromatic transformation from the C# minor chord in m. 5, to the A7 chord in m. 6, and to the F#7 chord in m. 7, all of which are preceded by the F# minor chord on the first beat in mm. 5-7.
Example 4.19. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 5-20 in Variation XIII

It is notable that the F#7 chord in m. 7 introduces the chord progression in mm. 8-10 that harmonizes the B minor scale. This is a distinctive departure from the preceding variations that consistently built the harmonic tension toward C#. It is notable that mm. 16-17 also
present the tonicization on B minor, confirming that the reference on the key of B minor is the characteristic feature in this variation.

This consistent reference on B minor does not seem coincidental. It was the first step to prepare for the modulations in the last two variations, Gb major in Variation XV and F# major in Variation XVI. It is because the modulations from F# minor to these keys involve the voice leading A-Bb and A-A#, and this ascending voice leading is expressed by the tonicization on B minor chord. As it has been shown, the appearance of F#7 in Variation XV articulates the A-A# voice leading with the preceding F# minor chord, and it thus plays an important role in anticipating the new modulations. Variation XIV, the last variation in the key of F# minor, also employs the tonicization on B minor in the irregular place in mm. 8-9, articulating the voice leading A-A# with the preceding F# minor chord in m. 7.

Example 4.20. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-13 in Variation XIV
The characteristic feature in developing variation of the harmonic aspect can be summarized to the consistent use of the chromatic voice leading that prepares for the modulations. The modulation to B minor in Variation IX is prepared by Variations V-VIII that articulate A-A#-B voice leading by the series of the chromatic harmony. In order to establish the return to F# minor, the harmonic feature in Variations IX-XII consistently articulates the C# major chord with the chromatic voice leading, B#-C#. After F# minor is solidified in Variation XII, the reference on B minor by tonicization becomes the characteristic feature. It articulates A-A# voice leading, which thus anticipates the new modulations to Gb major and F# major in the last two variations.
Developing Variation in the Rhythmic Aspect

The most consistently employed rhythmic idea in op. 9 is the emphasis on the offbeat. The offbeat is notably articulated by the both rhythmic and harmonic features in the theme, and Brahms carries over the idea into the variations. The idea evolves to the point where it influences the large-scale structure. It triggers the misalignment of the pulse structure, the articulation of the unconventional place in the phrase structure, and the gradual acceleration of the offbeat figure across the variations. The evolvement of the initial idea is the characteristic phenomenon of developing variation.

As I mentioned in the analysis in the harmonic aspect, the characteristic feature in the theme is the emphasis on the second beat of the odd-numbered measures by the chords that trigger the harmonic tension such as the dominant 7th chord. The beat is further articulated by the distinctive features on the surface level, such as the dotted rhythm and the grace notes that have the similar effect to the dotted rhythm (see the blue squares.)

Example 4.21. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-24 in the theme
It is notable that this articulation of the second beat is counterbalanced by the following measures that clearly emphasize the first beat by the extended dotted rhythm (see the red squares.) This rhythmic pattern, the alternative articulation of the second and first beats, is maintained with consistency throughout the theme, with the exception of mm. 13-16 which present the irregular rhythmic pattern. While mm. 13-14 consecutively emphasize the weak beats by the dotted and syncopated rhythms, the following two measures in mm. 15-16 normalize the pulse structure. These four measures thus show the enlargement of the established rhythmic pattern. The syncopated rhythm in m. 14 has a more striking effect of the offbeat emphasis than the second-beat accent caused by the dotted rhythm.

Variation I further intensifies the characteristic rhythmic feature of the theme. In the middle section of the variation in mm. 9-16, Brahms extends a use of the syncopated rhythm so that mm. 9-14 successively emphasize the weak beats.

Example 4. 22. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 9-16 in Variation I

These measures are counterbalanced by the following two measures in mm. 15-16 that restore the importance of the downbeat. However, the articulation of the offbeat in the RH in these two measures maintains the rhythmic tension between the strong and weak parts of the beat.
The intensification of the offbeat continues in Variation II. It is notable that this variation introduces the triple pulse structure, 9/8, and the third beat of each triple pulse is consistently articulated by the suspension in the RH.

Example 4.23. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-3 in Variation II

The triple pulse structure creates a clearer hierarchy between strong and weak beats than in the duple pulse structure. In other words, the triple pulse structure reinforces the existence of strong beats such as 1, 4, and 7 beats in case of 9/8. Thus this variation becomes tolerable for the consistent emphasis on the offbeat by the suspension in the RH. The appearance of the dotted rhythm on the first and fourth beats in the LH also contributes to rein the pulse structure.

Variation III shows the influence of the triple pulse structure used in the previous variation. This variation introduces the triplet rhythm in the stepwise melodic pattern within an ascending third, which is consistently placed on the second beat of the odd-numbered measures.
Example 4.24. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-8 in Variation III

This new rhythmic figure articulates the offbeat in these measures, while the measures immediately following this figure once again normalize the pulse structure.

The ascending third in triplet rhythm in Variation III is now transformed into the two eighth notes that present the ascending third in Variation IV, articulating the second beat now with the duple rhythm, as seen in mm. 1-2 of the following example.

Example 4.25. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-4 in Variation IV

This variation shows a different type of the rhythmic organization from the preceding variations. In the first phrase in mm. 1-4, for instance, the first two measures in mm. 1-2 consecutively emphasize the second beat by the two eighth notes, while the following two measures in mm. 3-4 present the rhythm that recovers the importance of the down beat.
Indeed the two-quarter notes in m. 3 may still be considered neutral since the accent of the second beat in the preceding two measures naturally carries over to m. 3 as a reminiscence. However, the emphasis on the first beat becomes much more decisive when m. 4 articulates it with the 16\textsuperscript{th} note triplet. The same rhythmic structure is presented also in the second phrase in mm. 5-8. This measure-to-measure evolvement of the downbeat from m. 3 to m. 4 is notable, influencing the rhythmic structure of the following variation.

Variation V reinforces this characteristic rhythmic feature of Variation IV. It is distinctive that the second measures of each phrase (mm. 1-4 and 5-11) are much more accentuated than the first measures of each phrase.

Example 4.26. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-11 in Variation V

It is seen that the entire first measures function as an anacrusis for the second measures. This is quite similar to the first 2 phrases of the previous variation that the third measure prepares for the fourth measure by the growth of the downbeat. This articulation of the
unconventional place of the phrase structure, the second and fourth measures, in these two variations is remarkable. This unusual articulation on the phrase-structure level conceptually parallels the idea of articulation of the offbeat, both being examples of an unorthodox rhythmic accentuation. Such parallel, in turn, can be seen as the rhythmic evolvement; the initial idea, the offbeat accent, now influence on a larger scale structure. This evolvement constitutes the first notable development of the rhythmic idea in this piece.

The other notable feature in this variation is that the first and second phrases employ contrasting rhythms in their second measures, interrupting the otherwise continuous 16\textsuperscript{th} note rhythmic movement of the surrounding measures. The first phrase employs the dotted rhythm that emphasizes the first beat of m. 2, and the second phrase employs the syncopated rhythm in mm. 6-7 that emphasizes the second beat of m. 6. These two rhythms respectively correspond to the alternative emphasis on the downbeat and offbeat in the preceding variations. The contrasting rhythms are now articulated separately, becoming more prominent in this variation.

Unlike Variations IV and V, Variation VI clearly articulates the first measure of each phrase such as m. 1 and 3 by the anacrusis figure. It can be seen as a counter-reaction to the unconventional accentuation in the phrase structure of the previous two variations.
Example 4.27. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-4 in Variation VI

The introduction of the compound meter 6/8 in Variation VI generates various types of rhythmic gestures. In mm. 1-2, for instance, the bass line creates a rhythmic gesture that articulates beats 2-3 and 5-6, while the soprano line creates a rhythmic gesture that articulates beats 3-4 and 6-1. These gestures respectively correspond to the alternative emphasis on the offbeat and the downbeat in the preceding variations. Despite of this juxtaposition, the rhythmic gesture of the soprano line, in other words the emphasis on the downbeat, plays a leading role in controlling the pulse structure in the above measures. It is largely because the first beats of m. 1 and 3 are strongly articulated by the anacrusis figure, which influences the rest of the measures above. Interestingly, the emphasis on the downbeat at the beginning of the variation is suddenly distorted near the end of the variation in mm. 20-23.
The articulations of the second and fifth beats in mm. 21-23 by the bass notes and the slurred articulation in the RH show the close relationship with the rhythmic gesture of the bass line that articulates beats 2-3 and 5-6 at the beginning of the variation. The continuous articulation of these offbeat beats leads to the misalignment of the pulse structure within the 6/8 meter. As a result, the second and fifth beats begin to be perceived as the first and fourth (strong) beats of a normal 6/8 pulse structure. This growth of the offbeat into the downbeat is another significant evolvement related to the initial idea, the emphasis on the offbeat.

A prominent feature of Variation VII in 4/4 is the consistent emphasis on the fourth beat by the repeated notes. The characteristic thematic melody, the repeated C# notes, is now placed completely upon the offbeat for the first time, which triggers the consequence that the fourth beat begins to be perceived as the strong beat. It once again presents the
misalignment of the pulse structure, showing the influence of mm. 20-23 in the previous variation.

Example 4.29. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-5 in Variation VII

This misalignment is apparent at the beginning of the variation, however, the normal pulse structure becomes more influential when m. 8 introduces the new time signature, 3/4.

Example 4.30. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 6-11 in Variation VII

Compared to the duple pulse, the triple pulse has a more definitive hierarchy between the down and off beats, thus the first beat here is articulated more clearly than in the preceding measures. Meter change from duple to triple is a recurring technique that Brahms employs in this piece in order to clarify the down beat of the pulse structure.
The recovery of the first beat by the 3/4 meter in Variation VII plays an important role in introducing the thematic rhythm in Variation VIII.

Example 4.31. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-5 in Variation VIII

The development of the initial idea, the emphasis on the offbeat, reaches to its first climactic point via Variations IV-VII by generating the unorthodox emphasis in the phrase structure and the misalignment of the pulse structure. Variation VIII now liquidates these rhythmic development thus far by employing the thematic rhythm. The reset of the rhythm provides room for the following variations to generate a new type of the rhythmic development. The new type of the rhythmic development that Brahms presents is the acceleration of the offbeat accent. After the Variation VIII alternately emphasizes the offbeat and downbeat as in the theme, Variation IX presents the rhythmic features that intensively articulate the offbeat.

Example 4.32. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-3 in Variation IX
It is notable that the inner voice line articulates the offbeat by the syncopation, and the outer voice lines, the soprano and bass, also articulate the second beat by stretching out to high and low registers by contrary motion. The successive emphasis on the offbeat in every measure is a feature distinctive from the thematic rhythm, in which the measures that articulate the offbeat are always counterbalanced by the following measures that articulate the downbeat.

Variation X continues the emphasis on the offbeat in the accompanying part, while the main polyphonic melodic lines present the thematic rhythm that comes from the bass line of the theme.

Example 4.33. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-4 in Variation X

The 16th note figure in the middle line in mm. 1-8 creates the rhythmic gesture that articulates the second beat of each measure by the preceding two 16th notes, which act as an anacrusis. This frequency, an accent per measure, is accelerated when m. 9 introduces the rhythmic gesture in the LH that creates the gentle accent on the offbeat of every beat. It becomes the consistent feature in the rest of the measures in Variation X.
Example 4.34. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 9-12 in Variation X

This accelerated frequency, an accent per beat, continues in Variation XI. In this variation, the RH figure consists of the two voice lines, and the inner voice line articulates the offbeat by the eighth note.

Example 4.35. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-13 in Variation XI

Since the time length of each measure in this new meter, 4/16, corresponds to that of each beat of the previous variation in 2/4, the frequency of the emphasis on the offbeat in Variation XI is same as the one from m. 9 of the previous variation. Interestingly, m. 9 of
Variation XI introduces the syncopated rhythm, which continues for five measures. With this rhythm, the offbeat accent is even more accelerated than the preceding measures. It shows that both the previous and present variations increases the appearance of the offbeat accent at their midpoints. Thus, the emphasis on the offbeat is increasingly accelerated from Variation IX to XI, which exemplifies a new type of rhythmic development.

The prevailing syncopated rhythm in Variation XII shows the reasonable transition from the syncopated rhythm appearing in the midpoint of the previous variation. The syncopated rhythm here is occasionally prolonged, as seen in mm. 6, 8 and 10-11 marked by brackets in the example below.

Example 4.36. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 5-12 in Variation XII

Interestingly, these successive syncopated rhythms do not employ a subordinate rhythm that clarifies the downbeat, in contrast to the previous variation where the successive syncopated rhythm is counterbalanced by the LH figure that maintains the regular pulse structure.
Example 4.37. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 7-13 in Variation XI

This unrestrained syncopated rhythm in Variation XII now evolves into a chaotic rhythm near the end of the variation in mm. 18-21.

Example 4.38. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 18-22 in Variation XII

In these measures, the three-16th note group is the prevailing feature, articulating the thematic melody C#-B-A-G#-F# on the offbeat. This feature, however, cannot be heard as the emphasis on the offbeat in the same sense as in the preceding cases. Due to the lack of the clarification of the downbeat, which is a prerequisite for the recognition of the offbeat, it is difficult to discern the basic pulse structure of 2/4 in the above measures. The process reaching to this chaotic rhythm can be summarized as follows: the continuous acceleration of the offbeat accent in Variations IX-XI leads to the successive syncopated rhythm in the
middle of Variation XII; these successive syncopations, lacking a subordinate rhythm to clarify the pulse structure, further develop towards the end of Variation XII, resulting in a total emancipation of beat hierarchy of the 2/4 meter.

Interestingly, Variation XIII now restores the articulation of the downbeat for the first time after Variation IX. The articulation is executed through the placement of non-chord tone on the downbeat.

Example 4.39. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-4 in Variation XIII

It becomes clearer that the chaotic moment at the end of Variation XII signifies the climactic point of the new rhythmic development, the consistent acceleration of the offbeat accent in Variations IX-XII. At the same time, it signifies the turning point that prepares the return of the normalized pulse structure in Variation XIII. Despite of that the downbeat is now secured, this variation still shows the reminiscence of the preceding rhythmic development. In mm. 1-4, for instance, the odd-numbered measures consistently gravitate toward the even-numbered measures with the inward contrary motion. This unorthodox emphasis within the phrase structure (seen also in Variation IV and V) serves as the middle ground or the transition to the completely normalized rhythmic structure at both the local (pulse) and large-scale structures (phrase) in the following variations.
Variation XIV further articulates the downbeat by various rhythmic features. Given the new time signature 3/8, the downbeat of the variation become even clearer than the preceding variations in the duple meter. As I stated earlier, the intensification of the downbeat by changing the pulse structure from duple to triple is a recurring technique Brahms employs in this piece. The downbeat is also articulated by rhythmic figures in the RH such as the dotted rhythm and the slurred two-note figure.

Example 4.40. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-13 in Variation XIV

It is notable that these rhythmic features always appear in the odd-numbered measures, while the even-numbered measures, on the contrary, inarticulate the downbeat by placing an eighth rest. It is a contrasting feature from the previous variation that places the gravity on the even-numbered measures. It shows that the normal rhythmic structure is now restored in both the pulse and phrase structures.
The normalization of the pulse structure in Variation XIII and the phrase structures in Variations XIV leads to the most neutral rhythmic structure in Variation XV where the emphasis on the offbeat is completely eliminated, and the first and fourth beats of the 6/4 meter are steadily articulated throughout the variations.

Example 4.41. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-3 in Variation XV

Variation XVI only briefly recalls the characteristic rhythmic idea, the emphasis on the offbeat, by the suspensions in the RH.

Example 4.42. Brahms, op. 9, mm. 1-6 in Variation XVI

The analysis of developing variation in the rhythmic aspect shows the organic development of the offbeat throughout the piece. It gradually evolves from the theme, and becomes more prominent in Variations IV-VII by triggering the unusual accentuation within the phrase structure, and the misalignment of the pulse structure. After the conflict
is momentarily resolved in Variation VIII by the thematic rhythm, a new development begins in Variation IX. This new development accelerates the appearance of the offbeat accent in Variations IX-XII, and culminates at the end of Variation XII. This incident becomes the turning point, paving a new path to the normalized pulse structure in the rest of the variations.
Developing Variation in the Melodic Aspect

Another unique feature of the piece is the consistent cultivation of the polyphonic feature throughout the piece. In using a form of Theme and Variations, one might face the difficulty in making variations when the theme consists of the polyphonic lines and all the voice lines are considered equally important or nearly so. It might become musically weak if one only takes care of the single melodic line and does not cultivate the full potential of the polyphonic aspect into the variations. In op. 9, Brahms, foreseeing the inherent difficulty, creates his own polyphonic figures while keeping the thematic melody, and fully cultivates the polyphonic aspect of the theme written by Schumann. It helps forming logical musical development in that the initially insignificant polyphonic feature develops into the more prominent polyphonic feature during the course of the variations.

The distinctive feature in the earlier variations is the realization of the antiphonal style. The call and response in the style signifies the two distinctive voice lines, thus it is categorized as a type of polyphony. Brahms first realizes the style in the RH of Variation I above the presence of the thematic soprano line in the LH.

Example 4.43. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-8 in Variation I
The examination of the musical materials at mm. 1-8 shows that each phrase in mm. 1-4 and 5-8 can further be divided to the two sections, mm. 1-2 and 3-4, and mm. 5-6 and 7-8, representing the call and response of the style. The delineation of subsections is clarified by the melodic content on the dotted rhythm; the interval of a second in the first half of each phrase in mm. 1-2 and 5-6, and the leap motion in the second half of each phrase in mm. 3-4 and 7-8. The harmonic progression also supports this division. The first half in mm. 1-2 and 5-6 employs the dominant chord and it is resolved to the tonic chord at the second half in mm. 3-4 and 7-8. The evocation of the polyphonic feature above the thematic melody is the remarkable feature.

In Variation II, Brahms now introduces the thematic bass line in the LH. Above it, he freely creates his own melodic contour by following the thematic harmony.

Example 4.44. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-6 in Variation II

The examination of the melodic pattern in the RH in mm. 1-6 shows that it consists of the combination of the leap motion and the interval of a second. These two melodic elements
are employed on the dotted rhythm in Variation I to clarify the antiphonal style. The separately articulated intervals are now combined, forming the distinctive melodic line.

It is Variation III that now uses this melodic contour in the RH of Variation II and realizes the antiphonal style again. The melodic contour in the RH placed above the thematic soprano melody in the LH shows the similarity with that of the previous variation.

Example 4.45. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-8 in Variation III

The leap motion in the previous variation is now filled in, generating the interval of a third in the stepwise motion played by the triplet rhythm, and this is followed by the interval of a second as in the previous variation. The distinctive feature is that this melodic line appears in the high and low registers alternatively. The use of the different registers contributes to the expression of the antiphonal style in this variation.

Variation IV places the thematic melody in the RH for the first time after the theme, and presents the 16\textsuperscript{th} note-accompanying figure in the LH. This thematic melody, however, integrates the intervals used in the counter melody in the previous variation.
Example 4.46. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation IV

The melodic line consistently articulates the ascending third followed by the descending second, clearly evoking the melodic structure in the RH of the previous variation. The register change used to express the antiphonal style in the previous variation is now integrated in the 16th note-accompanying figure that alternatively appears in the low and high registers. Although the antiphonal style is not realized in this variation, the integration of the melodic elements (the intervals and register change) used in the antiphonal style of the previous variation contributes to the unification of the melodic feature in the adjacent variations. This case is similar to Variation II. Variation II does not realize the antiphonal style, however, employs the melodic elements that are used in the antiphonal style in Variation I.

In Variation V, the antiphonal style is presented quite differently from Variations I and III. The two distinctive roles of the style are now expressed between the part where the repeated single note across registers is the prominent feature, and the part where the harmonized melodic line is the prominent feature. The density of the musical texture makes the comparison, and it is clear such as between mm. 1-2 and 3-4, or mm. 5-7 and 8-11.
Example 4.47. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-11 in Variation V

The prevailing 16\textsuperscript{th} note-figure, an outgrowth of the accompanying figure in the previous variation, articulates the register change, which is originated in the antiphonal style in Variation III. The other notable feature is that the response parts of the antiphonal style present the contrasting melodic feature. Mm. 3-4 articulate the leap motion in the outward contrary motion, and mm. 8-11 features the stepwise motion in the inward contrary motion. The leap motion in the outward contrary motion at mm. 3-4 seems to correlate with the ascending third, often appearing in the RH of the preceding variations, and the stepwise motion in the inward contrary motion in mm. 8-11 seems to correlate with the descending second, often appearing right after the ascending third in the RH of the preceding variations. The both melodic features are significantly enlarged and separately featured in this variation.
The antiphonal style is thus far is expressed by the various musical features such as the intervallic contrast between the leap and the interval of a second in Variation I, the alternation between the high and low registers in Variation III, and the contrast between the unharmonized and harmonized melodic lines in Variation V. It shows the shift of the means from the local level such as the intervallic content to the overall musical texture such as the range and density. It is Variation VI that employs the other distinctive feature to realize the antiphonal style. The call and response in the style is generated now by the contrast of the tonal centers.

Example 4.48. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-5 in Variation VI
While the first two measures clarifies the key of F# minor with the harmonic cadence, the following two measures refer to the key of C# minor with the tonicization. The both melodic features in mm. 1-2 and 3-4 are related by the sequence and express the polarized call and response of the antiphonal style. This characteristic contrast is also seen in the following four measures in mm. 5-8.

As it has been shown, the length of each call and response in the antiphonal style thus far is mostly two measures. This length is kept even when the time signature is changed to 4/4 in Variation VII.

Example 4.49. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-5 in Variation VII

The antiphonal style of the variation is expressed by the materials that alternatively appear in the high and low registers. The length of each call and response here is basically four beats, and it corresponds to the two measure-long phrases of call and response in 2/4 or 6/8
in the preceding variations.

The consistent articulation of the antiphonal style in Variations I, III, and V-VII now evolves to the more sophisticated form of the polyphony in Variation VIII, a canon. The thematic soprano line is presented both in the soprano and tenor lines throughout the variation.

Example 4.50. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-5 in Variation VIII

The tenor line imitating the soprano line after the two measures reflects on the distance between the call and response in the antiphonal style in the preceding variations. It is also notable that the alternation of the high and low register in Variation VII directly influences the structure of the canon between the soprano and tenor registers.

Variation IX signifies the distinctive melodic feature. This variation is based on the fifth piece of *Bunte Blatter* op. 99 by Robert Schumann. This quotation in the middle piece influences the melodic structure of the following variations. After this variation, Brahms introduces another sophisticated polyphonic figure in Variation X that shows the influence from this quotation. The most characteristic feature in Variation IX is the contrary motion formed by the 16th note figure in the RH and the 8th note figure in the LH. The contrary motion is further articulated at the end of variation in mm. 19-20.
Example 4.51. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 15-21 in Variation IX

In order to clarify the contrary motion in the outer melodic lines, the thematic melody is now placed in the inner voice line, such as F#-E-D-C# in mm. 15-16, which is an unprecedented melodic setting.

In Variation X in the key of D major, Brahms now presents the polyphonic lines by applying the thematic bass line. The thematic bass line appears in the soprano line of this variation, and its inverted melodic line appears in the bass line of the variation. The soprano and bass lines together thus form the mirror motion, signifying the logical consequence from the contrary motion in the previous variation.
The other distinctive feature is the appearance of the thematic soprano line in the inner voice line. For instance, the 16th note figure A-A-A-G-F#-E in m. 1 is considered as the diminution of the soprano line in mm. 1-3 in the theme. The similar figure appears each measure in mm. 1-8 and it shows the motivic use of the thematic soprano melody. This feature indeed recalls the previous variation that introduces the thematic melody in the inner voice line. The combination of the thematic bass and soprano lines to form the new type of the polyphonic figure is quite notable. It can be considered a more sophisticated
polyphonic figure than the canon in Variation VIII, showing the development of the melodic feature. Indeed later in this variation, a canon is also integrated to this type of polyphony using the thematic bass line. It appears in mm. 9-16 in the A section and in mm. 20-24 in the B section.

Example 4.54. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 9-16 in Variation X

Example 4.55. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 20-24 in Variation X

It shows the continuous use of the canon in Variations VIII and X after it is developed out of the antiphonal style.
The following four variations in Variations XI-XIV are considered as a transition to prepare for the last climactic point of the melodic development, the canon in Variations XV in the key of Gb major. There are notable features in this transition: the gradual growth of both the half step and the thematic soprano line. The half step plays an important role to introduce the modulation from F# minor to Gb major in Variation XV. The growth of the thematic soprano line functions to transfer from the canon by the thematic bass line in Variation X to the canon by the thematic soprano line in Variation XV.

The melodic line in the RH in Variation XI shows a similarity with the one in the inner voice line in Variation X that uses the thematic soprano line in diminution.

Example 4.56. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-6 in Variation XI

Example 4.57. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation X
It shows that the thematic soprano line starts taking the initiative again, becoming a more prominent feature from Variations X to XI.

In Variation XII, the more space is distributed to the thematic soprano line by the new time signature 2/4, showing the recovery from the use of it in diminution.

Example 4.58. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation XII

The other notable feature is the emphasis on the half step in the inner voice line such as F#-E# in m. 1 and F#-F♮ in m. 3. The half step becomes more prominent in the B section.

Example 4.59. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 5-11 in Variation XII
In mm. 9-11, the half step appears also in the soprano line, showing the growth of the half step.

This feature triggers further development in Variation XI in which the half step is now integrated to the thematic melody.

Example 4.60. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation XIII

It is especially apparent to the half step attached to the thematic melody, the repeated C#, in m. 1 and 3. C# is ornamented by the lower and upper non-chord tones, B# and D. The other notable feature is that the thematic melody, especially the descending line in m. 2 and 4, is more clearly presented than in the previous variation.

Example 4.61. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-4 in Variation XII

The growth of the half step and the thematic soprano line in the previous three
variations leads to the canon in Variation XIV. This is the last variation in the transition preparing for the canon in Gb major in Variation XV.

Example 4.62. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-13 in Variation XIV

Here not only the thematic melody is clearly presented in both parts of the canon in the RH, but also the integration of the half step to C#, C#-D-C#, is also prominently presented. It is now articulated with the dotted rhythm such as in m. 1 and 7. It is more apparently emphasized than in the previous variation. The intensification of both the thematic soprano line and the half step in this variation is notable, clearly preparing for the canon in Gb major in Variation XV.

The reason why the half step is consistently articulated in these three variations becomes clearer when Variation XV presents the modulation to the key of Gb major. The voice leading A-Bb seen in the modulation from F# minor to Gb major is clearly articulated.
in the transition from the last measure of Variation XIV to the first measure of Variation XV.

Example 4.63 Brahms, op. 9 at mm. 33-34 in Variation XIV and m. 1 in Variation XV

It is notable that the thematic melody in m. 1 in Variation XV starts with the mediant note, Bb, instead of the familiar dominant tone, Db, so that the voice leading A-Bb becomes clarified from the last note of Variation XIV, A. It can be considered that the purpose to integrate the half step especially to the opening thematic melody, the repeated C#, in the preceding variations is to foresee this imperative half step ascent A-Bb seen in this transition which represents the modulation from F# minor to Gb major. The half step, having achieved the imperative task, is now detached from the opening thematic melody, appearing only as an ornament in the accompanying figure of Variation XV.

Example 4.64. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-6 in Variation XV
The canon in Variation XV is presented between the soprano and bass lines. The thematic soprano line here is most clearly presented. That is to say that the gradual clarification of the thematic soprano line in Variations XI-XIV finally reaches its climactic point.

The focus of the thematic bass line in the last variation, Variation XVI, shows the relation to the preceding variations.

Example 4.65. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-13 in Variation XVI

It seems characteristic in this work that the thematic soprano and bass lines are focused consecutively. The pattern is seen between Variations I (soprano) and II (bass), VIII (soprano) and X (bass), and XV (soprano) and XVI (bass). Excerpt the quoted variation between Variations VIII and X, each melodic line is successively focused between these adjacent variations. It shows Brahms’ desire to fully realize the polyphonic aspect of the theme during the course of the variations.
The analysis of developing variation in the melodic aspect shows the consistent development of the polyphonic feature in op. 9. This process is summarized as that the melodic idea develops toward an appearance of a sophisticated type of polyphony, canon. The first canon in Variation VIII is prepared by the consistent realization of the antiphonal style in the preceding variations. The canon in Variation X in which the former and latter parts of the canon consist of the mirror motion is prepared by Variation IX, the quotation of Robert Schumann’s work, which intensively articulates the contrary motion in the outer melodic lines. After these evolutions, the following variations prepare for the presence of the last canon in Variation XV by gradually making the existence of the half step and the thematic soprano line apparent. It forms the logical consequence, contributing to present the developing variation technique in the melodic aspect in op. 9.
CHAPTER 5

VARIATIONS ON AN ORIGINAL THEME, OP. 21, NO. 1

Developing Variation in the Harmonic Aspect

The most distinctive harmonic feature is that the tonal center of D major gradually becomes obscured during the course of the variations. It occurs almost unperceptively in Variation I, then it gradually becomes more recognizable from Variation III to Variation V. The incessant deviation from the tonal center eventually triggers the modulation to the key of D minor in Variations VIII-X. This forms a logical, yet unique principal in the use of the developing variation technique in the harmonic aspect. Brahms’ ingenious skill is seen by how he manages to obscure the tonal center before modulating to D minor. It is that the shift the tonal center basically occurs within the thematic harmony and also in the original key, D major. It is the various external musical features that cause the shift of the tonal center. The other notable feature is the pace of the harmonic development. The covering of the tonal center occurs only every other variation, Variations I, III, and V, and it is always counterbalanced by the following variations, Variations II, IV and VI, that clarify the tonal center, D major. It shows Brahms’ careful concern in the pace of the harmonic development, and it contributes to form the logical procedure before it reaches to the climactic point of the harmonic development.

The theme is written in the key of D major, and in binary form, A (mm. 1-9) and B (mm. 10-18). The harmonic progression in the theme is constructed in such a way that the tonal center is clarified especially at the climactic point of each section. In the A section, the tonic pedal D encourages the forward motion of the chord progression in mm. 1-6, D
major, G major, E minor 7\textsuperscript{th}, G major 7\textsuperscript{th} and A7 chords until it reaches the climactic point at m. 7 that presents the D major chord.

Example 5.1. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in the theme

It is not only the harmonic gesture V7-I, but also the melodic structure that clearly indicates m. 7 as the climactic point in the A section. It is because m. 7 is the turning point that the overall ascending motion in mm. 1-6 reverses to the descending motion in mm. 7-9. The pedal point disappears in m. 7, paving a path to the tonicization on A major in mm. 8-9.

Surprisingly, the B section now starts with the tonic minor chord in m. 10, and it leads to the tonicization on F major at mm. 11-12.
Example 5.2. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-12 in the theme

Since this tonicization on F major enunciates C♮ in the chord progression, C7-F major, in mm. 11-12, the appearance of A7 at m. 13 becomes prominent. It not only indicates the return of the D major but also articulates the chromatic voice leading C♮-C♯.

Example 5.3. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 at mm. 13-19

This C# in A7 at m. 13, however, again moves down to C♮ when A7 resolves to D7 in m. 14. This harmony D7 is quite notable, generating another forward impetus toward the G major chord in m. 16 before it is completely resolved to the D major chord at the end. Indeed, it can be observed that these is a dual climactic point in the B section. From the melodic standpoint, the D7 chord in m. 14 signifies the climactic point; the overall
ascending motion in mm. 10-13 reaches the highest pitch A in m. 14, and turns to the
descending motion in mm. 14-18. It is also the appearance of the pedal point on D in m. 14
that creates a sense of arrival on the D7 chord, preceded by the dominant chord of the main
key, A7. From the harmonic stand point, however, it cannot be decisively stated that m. 14
is the climactic point because the D7 chord in m. 14 further generates the forward motion
toward the G major chord in m. 16. The creation of the dual climactic point across the span
of the D7 and G major chords, as seen here, is indeed one of the most important harmonic
features in this work. This is because later in the piece, in Variation V, Brahms completely
shifts the harmonic gravity from a tonic chord to a subdominant chord, and he takes an
advantage of this dual climactic point on the D7 and G major chords. Here in the theme, it
still seems that the D7 chord in m. 14 has a more powerful effect than the G major chord
in m. 16. However, when the shift occurs in Variation V, a D7 chord plays only a
transitional role moving forward to a G major chord that shows the sense of arrival. It
shows that Brahms cleverly constructs the thematic harmony in such a way that the main
task of the harmonic development, the obscurity of the tonal center, is executed within the
thematic harmony later in the piece.

The deviation from the tonal center on D major occurs only gently in Variation I.
It is however apparent that this variation weakens the presence of the tonic chord much
more than in the theme. The characteristic harmonic gesture of the theme, the clarification
of the tonal center toward the climactic point of each section, is no longer seen in this
variation. Instead this variation places a harmonic emphasis on a dominant chord.
A weakening effect of a tonic chord is already seen from the beginning of the A section that the arpeggio figure in m. 1 avoids using F#. It moves to the G major chord in m. 2, and to the E minor 7th chord in mm. 3-4 by following the thematic harmony. The distinctive feature however is the placement of E in the bass line in mm. 3-4, which has not seen in the theme (see the circles in Example 5.4.) Since E in the bass line is clearly presented before preceding to the A major chord in m. 5, it particularly articulates the chord progression ii7-V in mm. 3-5 by conjuring up the dominant-tonic relationship. That is to say that the dominant chord in m. 5 somewhat signifies the sense of arrival, and contrarily has little driving force toward the following tonic chord in m. 6. The appearance of the RH figure from the upbeat to m. 5 also contributes to create the sense of arrival on V in m. 5. It contrasts with the theme in which the tonic chord in m. 7 is prominently articulated by
the preceding harmony, especially the persistent A7 chord preparation. The obscurity of the tonic chord continues in the B section in mm. 10-18.

Example 5.5. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-18 in Variation I

After the first three measures of the section follow the thematic harmony, D minor, C7 and F major chords in mm. 10-12, the appearance of the A7 chord in m. 13 becomes prominent. It is because the gradual ascending melodic motion on the third beat in mm. 10-12, E-F-G-A-Bb-C, creates the forward motion toward C# in A7 at m. 13, and it now turns to the descending motion, leading to the D7 chord at m. 14 in the pp marking. This is again a contrasting feature from the theme in which the ascending motion peaks at 14 and creates the sense of arrival on the D7 chord with the f marking. It is also notable that the tonic chord at the last measure appears in obscurity after the consecutive diminished chords in m. 16-18 without the preparation of the harmonic cadence as in the theme. The harmonic
feature in Variation I clarifies the subtle, however, ingenious technique to cover the tonal center within the thematic harmony.

In contrast to Variation I, Variation II clarifies the tonal center from the beginning of each section. The articulation of F# and F♮ plays an important role for the clarification.

Example 5.6. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation II

Example 5.7. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-14 in Variation II

It is notable that the first two measures of the A section in mm. 1-2 prominently present F# in the D major-B minor chord progression, and the first two measures of the B section in mm. 10-11 articulate F♮ in the D minor-Bb minor chord progression. The use of submediant chords in m. 2 and 10 is not included in the thematic harmony, however, the substitution further articulates the median tones F# and F♮, and thus contributes to clarify
the tonal center in each section. After D major is returned in mm. 13-14 by the same chord progression as in the theme (see the blue square above), F♯ surprisingly appears in the G7-G♯ dim 7th chords in mm. 15-16, which signifies another modification of the thematic harmony.

Example 5.8. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 15-18 in Variation II

![Example 5.8. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 15-18 in Variation II](image)

This irregular harmony creates the F♯-F♯ crush with the preceding chords, thus highlighting the characteristic feature of the variation, the emphasis on median tones F♯ and F♯♯.

The harmony in Variation III shows a similarity with that of Variation I. A dominant chord becomes prominent, and contrarily tonic chords in the A and B sections become obscured.
Example 5.9. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation III

The A7 chord appears on the upbeat to m. 1 as the suspension, which subsequently triggers the irregular tonicization on G major in mm. 2-3. It is notable that the consecutive appearance of the A7(9) chord in mm. 5-6 deceptively resolves to the B minor chord in m. 7, instead of the D major chord as in the theme. It clearly shows an avoidance of a tonic chord. A similar feature is also seen in the B section. The section starts with the A7(9) chord in mm. 10-11, instead of a D minor chord, and it now resolves to the Bb major chord in m. 11. Bb is further articulated in the following thematic harmony C7 in m. 12-13.

Example 5.10. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-18 in Variation III

It gradually becomes apparent that this variation expresses the different tonality of each section by centering on the submediant chords; the B minor chord in the A section and the
Bb major chord in the B section. Contrarily, the tonic chord in each section is purposely unarticulated. The harmonic structure focusing on the submediant chords surely obscures the tonal center, compared with the cases that clearly center on the tonic chord in the chord progression such as in the theme and Variation II. It is also important to note that the degree to conceal the tonic chord here is much greater than in Variation I because of the focus on the submediant chords, signifying the intensification of the deviation from the tonal center from Variation I to Variation III. The harmonic structure of this variation clarifies the sound of B and Bb, which is distinctive from Variation II that articulates F# and F♮ by the emphasis on the tonic chords.

In contrast to Variation III, Variation IV now clarifies the tonic chord in each section. The tonal center is clarified not only at the beginning of each section in m. 1 and 9, and but also in m. 7 and 14, the same place as in the theme that has shown the climactic point.

Example 5.11. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-18 in Variation IV

A third descend
This variation presents the additional chords to the presentation of the thematic harmony. For instance, the D major chord on the first beat in m. 1 is immediately followed by the A major chord on the offbeat of the first beat, and the both chords respectively descend by a third until m. 6. A similar chord progression is seen in the B section, starting with D minor and A minor chords on the first beat of m. 10. The use of the additional chords enriches the thematic harmony in each section, and contributes to clarify the tonal center of each section.

The obscurity of the tonal center again becomes prominent in Variation V. The degree to conceal the tonal center is much more intensive than in Variations I and III. Brahms now centers on the subdominant chord, the G major chord in the A section and the G minor chord in the B section, so that the sound of B and Bb again becomes prominent. This feature clearly recalls Variation III in which the emphasis on the submediant chord in each section articulate the sound of B and Bb. The emphasis on the G major chord is notable
especially at the beginning of the A section in mm. 1-4. After the first two measures follow the thematic harmony from the D major to G major chords, m. 3 restates the G major chord.

Example 5.12. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-8 in Variation V

Because of the prolongation of B in the RH in m. 3 and the pedal point on G starting from m. 3, Brahms’ intention to articulate the G major chord in m. 3 over the preceding harmony in mm. 1-2 is apparent. The appearance of the new inner voice line in m. 3 by the canon also contributes to the articulation. All these features create an illusion that the first two measures of Variation V is an introduction, and m. 3 that presents the G major chord is the actual start of the variation. The pedal point on G moves to A in m. 5 and presents the familiar thematic harmony in mm. 5-9.
A similar feature is seen in the B section in mm. 10-18. Although the section starts from m. 10 that present the D minor chord, the G minor chord in m. 11 is much more prominently articulated because of the prolongation of Bb in the soprano line, the pedal point on G, and the presence of the inner voice line by the canon.

Example 5.13. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 9-14 in Variation V

The Bb continuously appears in the familiar thematic harmony, C7, in mm. 12-13, and the chord is chromatically transformed to the A major chord in the end of m. 13. After the A7 chord moves to the D7 chord in m. 14, the G major chord prominently appears with the f marking in m. 15, clearly signifying the climactic point. The notable feature is that these A7-D7-G major chords (V7-V7/IV-IV) all signify the use of the thematic harmony. However, unlike in the theme, the G major chord here is much more articulated than the preceding D7 chord. The D7 chord here acts only as a stepping-stone that prepares for
presence of the G major chord. It contrasts with the theme in which the D7 chord in m. 14 signifies the sense of arrival before it proceeds to the G major chord. Brahms takes an advantage of the dual climactic point created in the thematic harmony, clearly shifting the harmonic gravity from the D7 to G major chords in order to signify the important progress of the harmonic development, the deviation from the tonal center by the focus on the subdominant chords.

After Variations VI and VII recover the prominence of the tonic chord as oppose to Variation V, the modulation to the key of D minor finally occurs in Variations VIII-X. The appearance of D minor in these three variations is seen as the final phase of the harmonic development, the constant attempt to stray away from the original tonality D major, started from Variations I, further cultivated in Variations III and V. It is notable that in these development, the sound of B and Bb gradually becomes prominent; through the comparison of the B minor and Bb major chords in Variation III, and the comparison of the G major and G minor chords in Variation V. The prominence of the B-Bb comparison foresees the important transition from D major to D minor, thus forming the reasonable transition to the climactic point of the harmonic development, the modulation to D minor in Variations VIII-X.

The extensive form of the last variation, Variation XI, can be divided into the three sections, A (mm. 1-36), B (mm. 37-57) and C (mm. 58-89.) It is notable that this variation presents the similar harmonic development to what Brahms presents in the preceding variations. The tonic chord is gradually obscured, and contrarily the growth of the subdominant chord, the G major chord, becomes prominent over the sections, eventually triggering the modulation to G major in the second half of the B section. This
procedure is similar to the part of the preceding harmonic development in which the consistent attempt to deviate from D major in Variations I and III triggers the emphasis on the subdominant chords in Variation V.

In the A section of the last variation, the materials in mm. 1-9 corresponds to that of mm. 1-9 in the theme. However, the difference here is that the D major chord is presented only once in m. 1.

Example 5.14. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI

This is unusual, considering that in the theme, the D major chord dramatically reappears at the climactic point in m. 7 with the preparation of the A7 chord in mm. 5-6. In mm. 1-9 of this variation, the A7 chord appears in the corresponding measure in m. 5, however, it now moves to the B minor chord in m. 6, and leads to the G# half-diminished chord and the A major chord in m. 7. It clearly shows the avoidance of the tonic chord. The most prominent harmony in these 9 measures instead is the G major chord extensively used in mm. 2-3. This G major chord is also articulated by the melodic content; the swift ascending motion starting from m. 1, reaching the highest pitch, D, in the G major chord in m. 3, and turning to the overall descending motion for the rest of the measures. The emphasis on this
particular G major chord reasonably anticipates the shift of the tonal center to G major occurring later in this variation.

The following 9 measures of the A section in mm. 10-18 also consist of the materials in mm. 1-9 of the theme. These 9 measures more clearly show the thematic harmony than the previous 9 measures. It is especially so at the first 6 measures that present the D major chord (m. 10), the G major chord (m. 11), the E major 7th chord (mm. 12-13) and the A7 chord (mm. 14-15.)

Example 5.15. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-18 in Variation XI

The interesting feature is that this chord progression in mm. 11-15 does not resolve to the D major chord in m. 16. The D major chord appears only briefly on the third beat of m. 15, and is immediately followed by the more prominent D minor chord in m. 16. The prominent
F ♯ in the soprano line in m. 16 reinforces the impression of betrayal that it does not move to the tonic chord, the D major chord. It shows Brahms’ continuous intension to avoid the clear statement of the tonic chord in this variation.

The following 9 measures of the A section in mm. 19-27 consist of the materials of mm. 10-18 in the theme. Although it meticulously follows the thematic harmony, the G major chord in m. 25 is particularly articulated more than the preceding D7 chord in m. 23. It is due to that the consistent ascending motion peaks at B in the G major chord in m. 25.

Example 5.16. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 20-27 in Variation XI

This is distinctive from the theme that creates the sense of arrival on the D7 chord in m. 14 before proceeding to the G major chord. The articulation of the G major chord continues also in the next 9 measures in mm. 28-36, which again corresponds to the materials of mm.
10-18 in the theme. The ascending motion in the soprano line peaks at m. 32 that coincides with the presentation of the G major chord.

Example 5.17. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 31-35 in Variation XI

The creation of the climactic point with the G major chord becomes the consistent feature in the A section of this variation. That is to say that this harmonic feature is clearly hinting the modulation to G major occurring in the second half of the B section of the variation.

The B section can be divided into the two subsections, the first 9 measures in mm. 37-45 and the following 12 measures in mm. 46-57. The shift of the harmonic gravity to the G major chord becomes more apparent in the first half of the section. Because of that, the thematic harmony is no longer used in this section. In the beginning of the section, the G major chords is extensively employed for about 4 measures in mm. 38-41.
Example 5.18. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 37-41 in Variation XI

When this G major chord finally moves to the A major chord in m. 42, the listeners anticipate the appearance of the D major chord, however, it is denied by the insertion of the G# diminished 7th chord in m. 43 and the C# diminished 7th chord in m. 44.

Example 5.19. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 42-46 in Variation XI

This use of F♮ to signify the denial for the resolution to a D major chord is a same technique as the one Brahms used earlier in this variation. The avoidance of the tonic chord and the prominence of the G major chord further solidify the preparation for the key of G major in the following section.

The second half of the B section at mm. 46-57 finally shows the modulation to G major. After the tonicization on G major chord at m. 50, the harmonic cadence on G major
appears in mm. 51-53, and it clearly indicates the key of G major.

Example 5.20. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 47-55 in Variation XI

This part is considered as the climactic point of the harmonic development in the last variation; the gradual intensification of the G major chord over the sections finally triggers the modulation to G major. It is for the first time that Brahms actually shifts the tonal center to G major. This is distinctive from Variation V that emphasizes on the subdominant chord, but, executes it within the framework of the key of D major.

The last section of the variation, C, in mm. 58-89 gradually recovers the tonal center on D major. The first 5 measures of the section present the two consecutive dominant 7th chords, E7 and A7, which lead to the D major chord in m. 63.
Example 5.21. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 56-65 in Variation XI

The notable feature here is that after the statement of the D major chord for the two beats in m. 63, the chromatic harmony appears on the third beat of m. 63, ornamenting the G major chord in m. 64. Also the melodic line that suddenly rises to C for the timing of the ornamentation provides the special attention to the chord progression. It still shows the influence of the B section, the modulation to G major, despite of the fact that D major is secured by the preceding V7/V-V7-I chord progression. After the recurrence of the similar chord progression in the following measures in mm. 66-72, the dominant pedal appears in m. 72, and the key of D major is further solidified through the harmonic cadence.
Developing Variation in the Rhythmic Aspect

The most notable feature in the rhythmic aspect is the growth of the anacrusis figure. An anacrusis is a rhythmic gesture that creates the forward impetus to following stronger beats. It can occur in any structural level besides the most commonly used one at the beginning of the piece. In op. 21, no. 1, Brahms consciously articulates the third beat of 3/8, and intensifies the character of the anacrusis by the various musical means. Later in this piece, Brahms starts articulating the subdivided beats, and integrates the anacrusis figures into them, creating the rhythmic gesture that ornaments each of the beats. This growth of the anacrusis figure into the local level signifies the developmental aspect, forming the developing variation technique in the rhythmic aspect of the work.

In the theme, the anacrusis figure is not yet apparent, however, it is notable that the second and third beats are constantly articulated by the various musical features. The characteristic pattern is that the articulation of the second beat shifts to the third beat at the climactic point of each A and B section.

Example 5.22. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-18 in the theme.
In mm. 1-7 and mm. 10-12, the second beat is often articulated by the ascending leap motion. This motion becomes conspicuous because it is followed by the contrasting stepwise descending motion. Mm. 7-8 and 14-15 now shifts the articulation to the third beats. The third beats of these measures are articulated by the neighbor tone figure by which the third beats are emphasized by the non-chord tones. This shift of the accentuation from second to third beats is notable, giving the solid impression that the emphasis on the offbeat is the important aspect in the theme.

The first three measures of Variation I integrate the characteristic feature seen in the climactic point of the theme. It shows the consistent articulation of the third beat with the neighbor tone figure in mm. 1-3.
Example 5.23. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-5 in Variation I

The distinctive feature, however, is that the non-chord tone here is placed on the offbeat of the third beat, while in the theme, the non-chord tone appears right on the third beat. This delay of the non-chord tone here generates the clearer forward impetus toward the following downbeat, infusing the character of the anacrusis on the third beat more clearly than in the theme. Influenced by these 3 measures, the rest of the measures in the A section also consistently articulates the third beat, which is executed by the additional voice line appearing on the third beat in the RH. In the B section, this rhythmic tendency is weakened for a while, however, the introduction of hemiola in the last two measures shows the logical consequence to the emphasis on the third beat in this variation.

Example 5.24. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 14-18 in Variation I
It shows that the emphasis on the third beat can lead to the articulation of the duple rhythm within the triple pulse structure.

In Variation II, the rhythm in the RH is constructed in such a way that the third beat becomes the attentive feature. The third beat is now preceded by the extensive quarter note, and it draws an attention to the appearance of the eighth note on the third beat.

Example 5. 25. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation II

It is Variation III that the anacrusis figure is most intensively cultivated thus far. The suspension clearly creates the forward impetus from the third beat to the first beat.

Example 5. 26. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-8 in Variation III
After the function of the anacrusis on the third beat is fully cultivated in Variation III, Variation IV starts a new development, preparing for the anacrusis to be the ornamental figure for each of the three beats in 3/8. The first step for the development is to articulate the subdivided offbeat in Variation IV.

Example 5.27. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-6 in Variation IV

Due to the succession of the same chords, which functions as the harmonic suspension, the offbeat of each beat is consistently articulated throughout this variation for the first time in this work.

It is the cultivation of the subdivided offbeat in Variation IV that influences the rhythmic development in Variation V. The harmonic syncopation in the previous variation now appears as the rhythmic syncopation, articulating the subdivided offbeat by the tied notes in mm. 1-2 (see the blue circles.)
Example 5.28. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-8 in Variation V

When this melody in mm. 1-2 in the RH reappears in the inner voice line by the canon in mm. 3-4, it is notable that the syncopation applied on G and A# in mm. 3-4 creates the more forward impetus toward the following beats than the syncopation applied on E and D in mm. 1-2. It is because the triplet rhythm makes the appearance of the syncopation delayed, thus more clearly infusing the character of the anacrusis on the subdivided offbeat. This technique recalls Variation I that delays the appearance of the non-chord tone in order to create the clearer forward motion toward the following downbeats. Indeed the same feature can be observed in all the other beats in this variation. That is to say that the application of the triplet rhythm for the latter part of the canon in the LH intensifies the forward moment toward the following each beat, much more than the one written in the duple rhythm in the former part of the canon in the RH. The triplet rhythm plays an important role in cultivating the anacrusis on the subdivided offbeat (see the red arrows.)
It signifies the developmental feature that the offbeat of the each beat articulated by the harmonic syncopation in the previous variation is further articulated and thus infused the character of the anacrusis by the triplet rhythm in this variation. The evolvement of the anacrusis figure into the local level is the remarkable feature.

After the prevailing triplet rhythm in Variation VI solidifies the characteristic of Variation V, Variation VII now shows further development of the anacrusis figure. The anacrusis figure is expressed by the 16th note moving forward to the following eighth note in this variation.

Example 5.29. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-3 in Variation VII

The notable feature is that the 16th note is consistently preceded by the extensive rhythm, such as a dotted eighth note, and it can be considered that the appearance of the anacrusis in this variation is even more delayed than the one in the triplet rhythm in the previous variations. The more delayed anacrusis creates the more powerful forward impetus toward the following beat, signifying the intensification of the anacrusis figure over the variations. The delay of the appearance of the anacrusis is a recurring technique in this piece, playing the important role in the development of the anacrusis figure. The other notable feature is that the number of anacrusis per measure is increased in this variation. Compared with the
preceding two variations that introduce three anacrusis figures per measure, the one in this variation presents four anacrusis figures in each measure due to the application of the canonic figure between RH and LH, and the more space created by the change of the time signature to 2/4.

The rhythmic structure of Variation VIII is based on that of Variation VII, and the increasing use of the 16th rest is the only difference.

Example 5.30. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-3 in Variation VIII

It can be said the development of the anacrusis figure reaches its climactic point in both Variations VII and VIII, and Variation IX now shows the tendency to move the articulation to the downbeat.

Example 5.31. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation IX
In this variation, the subdivided beat of the first and second beats is no longer articulated as in Variations VII and VIII, and the beginning of each beat is emphasized in this variation. The last five measures of the variation more clearly show this tendency by the consistent accent on each beat. This variation liquidates the rhythmic development of the anacrusis figure that has been intensified in the preceding variations.

Example 5.32. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 12-18 in Variation IX

After Variation X similarly shows the tendency to recover the downbeat, the development of the anacrusis is once again reproduced in the last variation, Variation XI. This variation, consisting of the three sections, A (mm. 1-36), B (37-57) and C (58-89), gradually intensifies the appearance of the anacrusis figure toward the end of the variation by employing a similar technique with the one in the preceding rhythmic development. The first nine measures of the A section begin the development with the articulation on the second beat by the use of slur marks.
Example 5.33. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI

It clearly recalls the development of the anacrusis that starts with the emphasis on the second beat with the leap motion in the theme. In the following nine measures in the A section in mm. 10-18, the anacrusis figure starts appearing on the subdivided offbeat.

Example 5.34. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-19 in Variation XI

In mm. 14-17, the 16th note appears right before the third and first beats. Since this 16th note is played by the triplet rhythm, it clarifies the forward motion toward the following
beats. This figure clearly recalls the anacrusis figure applied at the local level by the triplet rhythm in Variation V.

It is the LH in the B section that further intensifies this anacrusis figure. In the four-note group by the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note seen in the blow example, the non-chord tone consistently appears on the last note of the four-note group, ornamenting the first note of the following group.

Example 5.35. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 47-50 in Variation XI

This musical gesture is none other than an anacrusis. It is apparent that this anacrusis figure has the more forward impetus than the one in the triplet rhythm in the A section of this variation because the subdivision of a beat by the 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes makes the appearance of the anacrusis figure delayed, and thus creates the more powerful gesture toward the following beat. This development recalls the moment when the anacrusis figure in the triplet rhythm in Variations V is intensified by the dotted rhythm in Variations VI and VII.

Another notable feature in the B section is the slurred two note figure in the RH.
Example 5.36. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 37-41 in Variation XI

This figure comes from the soprano line in mm. 1-9 of this variation, however, it now express an anacrusis by appearing from the third beat to the first beat. This type of the anacrusis figure continuously appears in the B and C sections, and finally leads to the canonic figure near the end of the piece in mm. 66-69.

Example 5.37. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 66-71 in Variation XI

It shows the increasing appearance of the anacrusis figure by the canonic figure. It clearly recalls the canonic use of the anacrusis figure in Variations VII and VIII. It is interesting to note that Brahms has thus far integrated the similar types of the anacrusis figure used in the climactic point in the preceding variations. The delay of the anacrusis by the 32nd note figure in the B section, and the canonic figure here recall the anacrusis figure in Variation VII and VIII that show the most intensive moment of the rhythmic development. As shown
above, the last variation combines the several familiar techniques that the preceding variations employ to intensify the anacrusis figure. It certainly highlights the important tuning point of the rhythmic development in this work.
Developing Variation in the Melodic Aspect

The melodic structure of the piece is radically different from his other variation sets, op. 9 and op. 21, no. 2. It is because the recurrence of the thematic melody in op. 21, no. 1 does not occur as often as in these two pieces. Especially earlier part of op. 21, no. 1, each variation presents the distinctive melody that has little correlation to the thematic melody, and it is basically the use of the thematic harmony in the variations that holds the relationship with the theme in op. 21, no. 1. Toward end of the piece, the thematic melody gradually becomes more prominent, and it shows Brahms’ deliberate intension to wait the clarification of the thematic melody. This technique, the gradual clarification of the familiar melody, is indeed employed also in the last variation, and it becomes the one of the most characteristic features in the piece. It forms the logical consequence, and it can thus be considered as the developing variation technique in the melodic aspect.

The characteristic melodic pattern seen in the theme is a leap motion followed by a stepwise motion, seen as in mm. 1-2, A-D-C#-B-G-F#-E.

Example 5.38. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-6 in the theme
It is only the beginning of Variation I that literally integrates this opening melody of the theme.

Example 5.39. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-5 in Variation I

The thematic melody, A-D-C#-B-G-F#, appears on the offbeat of mm. 1-2. It already becomes imperceptible because it is integrated in the part of the harmonic progression, and is also stated with the rhythmic diminution. This is the distinctive feature from his other variation sets, op. 9 and op. 21, no. 2, that clearly transfer the thematic melody into the LH of Variation I.

Example 5.40. Brahms, op. 9 mm. 1-8 in Variation I
After Variations I, Variations II-VI successively present a distinctive new melody especially in the RH in each variation, which has little correlation with the thematic melody.
Example 5.44. Brahms op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-6 in Variation IV

Example 5.45. Brahms op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation V

Example 5.46. Brahms op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation VI

It is Variation VII that the thematic melody starts becoming more recognizable.
Example 5.47. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-3 in VII

As it shows, the thematic melody, A-D-C#-B-G-F#-E, is intertwined between the clefs at mm. 1-3. It becomes the turning point, and the following two variations more clearly show the thematic melody.

Example 5.48. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-3 in Variation VIII

Example 5.49. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-4 in Variation IX
The notable feature in these two variations is that the thematic melody clearly appears in the soprano line so that the characteristic pattern of the thematic melody, a leap motion followed by a stepwise motion, becomes the apparent feature for the first time in the variations. This gradual clarification of the thematic melody in these three variations paves the way to the appearance of the thematic melody in the inner voice line at the beginning of the last variation, Variation XI (see the blue circles.)

Example 5.50. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI

This is the clearest presentation of the thematic melody thus far since it is now presented with all the original features such as key, rhythm, time signature, and tempo. It gives the impression that the thematic melody is finally back in the beginning of the last variation. This logical clarification of the thematic melodic melody is remarkable, signifying the distinctive way of using the developing variation technique in the melodic aspect. There is another notable melodic line presented together with this thematic melody. It appears in the soprano line (see the red circles), consisting of the slurred ascending seconds, F#-G and B-C#, followed by the descending arpeggio, D-B-G-E, and the descending stepwise motion, G-F#-E-Eb-D-C#. The significant feature is that this new melody constantly influences the melodic feature of the following sections, and eventually comes back at the last section of
the variation. Contrarily, the thematic melody presented in the inner voice line gradually becomes obscured, letting the new melody take the initiative of the melodic feature. This development of the new melody in the last variation is the quite notable feature. It parallels to the gradual clarification of the thematic melody in the preceding variations.

It is clear that the soprano line in mm. 10-13 shows the influence of the new melody in mm. 1-9.

Example 5.51. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 10-14 in Variation XI

Example 5.52. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI

The presence of the slurred two note figures in mm. 10-12 and the following descending line in mm. 13-14, G-F#-E-D-C#-B-A, clearly shows the influence from the new melody in the soprano line in mm. 1-9. In addition, the inner voice line played by the 16th note
figure still shows the use of the thematic melody (see the blue circles) although it becomes much obscured, compared with the one in the inner voice line in mm. 1-9.

In the middle section of the last variation in mm. 37-57, the new melody becomes more prominent. The two note slurred figures followed by the descending lines appear in the beginning of each phrase in mm. 37-41 and mm. 46-52.

Example 5.53. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 37-41 in Variation XI

Example 5.54. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 46-54 in Variation XI
Contrarily, the thematic melody is no longer used in the above measures.

It is the last section of the variation in mm. 58-89, which eventually presents the melodic line that is quite similar to the original new melody in mm. 1-9.

Example 5.55. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 56-54 in Variation XI

It starts with the slurred two note figures in mm. 58-61 and proceeds to the descending
arpeggio in mm. 61-62, and the descending stepwise motion in mm. 63-65. It is notable that this section includes the descending arpeggio before preceding the descending stepwise motion, and this makes the melody more resemble to the new melody in mm. 1-9 than in the preceding sections.

Example 5.56. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI

![Example 5.56. Brahms, op. 21, no. 1 mm. 1-9 in Variation XI](image)

It is apparent that Brahms intends to wait the clarification of the new melody until the last section of the variation. This is the same developing variation technique as the one he employs in the preceding variations. Indeed, the employment of the same developing variation technique in the last variation is the characteristic feature of this work. It is also seen in the harmonic and rhythmic aspects. The gradual obscurity of the tonal center and the intensification of the anacrusis figure are reproduced also in the last variation, solidifying the characteristic musical development in each of the musical features.
CHAPTER 6

VARIATIONS ON A HUNGARIAN SONG, OP. 21, NO. 2

Developing Variation in the Harmonic Aspect

The most frequently employed and consistently renewed musical idea in op. 21, no. 2 is the harmonic contrast of the major and minor qualities. This idea notably appears in the theme and becomes influential in the harmonic structure of the following variations. This prevailing idea leads to the consequence that the preservation of the thematic harmony becomes obscured in the earlier variations. Later, a use of the thematic harmony gradually becomes more prominent, yet, the idea of the harmonic contrast continues to evolve at the same time, producing the new effects until the end of the piece. This incessant development of the initial idea is the typical of Brahms’s developing variation. It is not exaggeration to state that this idea, the harmonic contrast, undertakes the heart of the musical structure in this work.

The seed of this harmonic development is embedded in the second half of the theme, after mm. 1-4 presents the harmonic cadence in the key of D major, I-IV-V-V7/V-V(7)-I.

Example 6.1. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in the theme
It is the distinctive feature that that m. 5 and 7 have the same melodic line, A-A-D-A, however, differ by the harmonic content, which is due to the appearance of the B minor chord by the chord substitution at the latter measure. This minor chord contrasts not only with the harmonic content of m. 5, D major chord, but also with the rest of the harmony in the theme that exclusively consists of the major quality. The employment of the same melodic line makes listeners easier to discern the harmonic difference, and thus the major-minor contrast becomes the prominent feature in the theme.

This idea is immediately followed by the more decisive event. The modulation to the parallel minor key, D minor, in Variation I is rather radical, giving the listeners the clearer impression of facing the harmonic contrast than in the theme.

Example 6. 2 Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation I
After the key is set to the minor mode, the harmonic contrast now appears in the local level. The tonicization on F major chord appears in m. 2, making the surrounding harmony in mm. 2-3 relates to the key of F major. These measures that impose the major quality contrast with the rest of the measures that clarify the minor quality. It is distinctive that m. 5 and 7 of this variation do not employ the major-minor contrast as in the theme, but solidify D minor key with A major-D major chord progression.

Variation II expands the characteristic harmonic feature of Variation I. The tonicization on F major is employed more extensively, creating the consistent harmonic contrast with the measures that clarifies the key of D minor.

Example 6.3. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation II
The contrast between D minor and F major is clarified especially at the odd-numbered measures. The even-numbered measures play the transitional role, presenting the C7-F major and A7-D minor chord progression. It shows the initial idea, the major-minor harmonic contrast, is becoming the center of the harmonic structure.

Variation III develops the idea of the harmonic contrast now by adding the other types of the tonicizations. A new tonicization appears at m. 4 that presents the D7-G minor chord progression. It creates the harmonic contrast with the preceding mm. 2-3 that refer to F major key by the Bb major-F major-C major chord progression which is a reminiscence of the tonicization on F major in the preceding variations.

Example 6.4. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation III
Another new tonicization appears in mm. 7-8 that shows Bb7-Eb major chord progression. Besides having an effect of the Neapolitan harmony, this chord progression also creates the harmonic contrast with the preceding mm. 5-6 that solidifies the key of D minor with A7-D minor chord progression. As shown above, it is clear that the both new tonicizations are introduced here to reinforce the effect of the harmonic contrast.

Variation III is indeed seen as the first climactic point of the development of the harmonic contrast thus far because the following variations gradually weaken this characteristic in order to prepare for the new way of expressing the harmonic contrast. The harmonic contrast in Variation IV is similar to Variation II. The alternative emphasis on D minor and F major chords appears in the even-numbered measures by the chord progression, C7-F major or A7-D minor.

Example 6.5. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation IV
The difference, however, is that the odd-numbered measures are not involved in the contrast as clearly as in Variation II. It signifies the diminishing effect of the harmonic contrast.

Variation V further presses forward this tendency, resulting in the minimization of the harmonic contrast. The major quality barely appears and contrarily, the diminished and minor qualities become the prevailing harmonic feature in this variation.

Example 6.6. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation V
It is the use of the distinctive harmony, such as the A dominant minor ninth chord in m. 1, the D dominant minor ninth chord in m. 5 and E half diminished 7th in m. 3 and 7, that create the diminished quality, contributing to evoke the Hungarian atmosphere in this variation.

Variation VI presents the new way of the harmonic contrast. From this variation to Variation XIII, the juxtaposition of the minor and major qualities is presented in mm. 5-6 and 7-8. This variation is the first variation that clearly presents the contrast in this manner. While the chord progression in mm. 1-4 follows the thematic harmony in the minor mode by i-iv-ii7-V7/V-V, mm. 5-6 emphasizes on the minor chord by the D7-G minor chord progression, and mm. 7-8 articulates the major chord by the E7-A major chord progression.

Example 6.7. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation VI

The use of the tonicization for the harmonic contrast clearly shows the influence from the preceding variations.

In Variation VII now in the original key, D major, mm. 5-8 create the harmonic contrast by employing the different type of the tonicizations from the previous variation.
Example 6.8. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation VII

It is the tonicization on E minor in mm. 5-6, and the tonicization on G major in mm. 7-8 that create the harmonic contrast in this variation. It is notable that the latter tonicization in mm. 7-8 is preceded by the additional applied chords, G# diminished 7th chord on the 4th beat of m. 6, and A major chord on the first beat of m. 7. These chords creates the forward impetus toward the tonicization on G major in mm. 7-8, thus intensifying the major harmonic quality. In other words, it contributes for the polarization of the harmonic contrast.

Inspired by Variation VII, Variation VIII further intensifies the polarization of the harmonic contrast between mm. 5-6 and 7-8.

Example 6.9. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation VIII
Basically this variation creates the contrast by employing the same tonicizations as in the last variation, the tonicization on E minor in mm. 5-6, and the tonicization on G major in mm.7-8. The distinctive feature, however, is the appearance of the mode mixture technique on the fourth beat of m. 6, which signifies the transitional place for the harmonic contrast. This E half-diminished 7th chord is not included in the key of D major but in the key of D minor. This chord contributes to clarify the both harmonic qualities in mm. 5-6 and 7-8. This borrowed chord from D minor key surely enhances the minor quality of mm. 5-6. In addition, this chord also articulates the following major quality in mm. 7-8 since this E minor 7th chord creates the forward motion toward A7 at m. 7 on the first beat of m. 7 that leads to the tonicization on G major in mm. 7-8. The emergence of this E minor 7th chord by the mode mixture technique further reinforces the polarization of the harmonic contrast.

It is Variation IX that expands the use of the mode mixture in order to further intensify the harmonic contrast.

Example 6.10. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation IX

The mode mixture technique now appears from the first beat of m. 5, producing the D minor chord. This D minor chord becomes the contrasting feature when m. 7 introduces the D7 chord, creating the minor-major contrast on the tonic chord. The Eb augmented 6th
chord in m. 6 creates the strong impetus toward to D7 chord, further articulating this effect. It is the extensive use of the mode mixture technique that intensifies the harmonic contrast.

The appearance of the mode mixture technique in mm. 5-6 becomes the stable feature in the following Variations X-XIII. It is notable that Variations X and XI further cultivate the use of the mode mixture, influencing not only the tonic chord but also the submediant, subdominant and supertonic chords.

Example 6.11. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation X

In Variation X, after m. 5 presents the D minor chord, the Bb major 7th chord at m. 6 signifies the submediant chord in the key of D minor. These two chords are respectively contrasted by the D major chord in m. 7 and the B minor 7th chord in m. 8. It shows the extensive use of the mode mixture technique. In Variation XI, the key of D minor by the mode mixture technique is further articulated.
After the D minor chord in m. 5, m. 6 presents the G minor 7\textsuperscript{th} chord (subdominant) and the E minor 7\textsuperscript{th} chord (supertonic), in the key of D minor. It is notable that both Variations X and XI cultivate the harmony that includes Bb in m. 6. The articulation of Bb-B\flat contrast besides F\natural-F# in the chord progression further reinforces the difference between D minor and D major.

The integration of the key of D minor within a variation by the mode mixture plays an important role in introducing the distinctive harmonic structure in the last section of the piece, \textit{Allegro}. \textit{Allegro} consists of rondo form, A (mm. 1-8), B (mm. 9-30), A’ (mm. 31-41), C (42-101), A’’ (102-122), and each section is distinguished by the modulations. It starts with the key of D major in the A section, and shifts to D minor in the B section. After it returns to D major in the A’ section, it now moves to the key of Bb minor in the C section, and again settles back to D major in A’’ section. This key scheme is indeed quite similar to the harmonic progression of the preceding variations that employ the mode mixture technique. The insertion of D minor in the B section parallels to the appearance of the D minor chord in m. 5, and the insertion of Bb major in the C section evokes the employment of the chords that involves Bb in m. 6 such as the submediant, subdominant, and supertonic chords. Thus the modulations in \textit{Allegro} are seen as the enlargement of the harmonic
progression that uses the mode mixture technique. It is quite notable that the initial idea in the theme, the harmonic contrast, continuously influences the harmonic structure of the following variations, generating the various tonicizations that shows the harmonic contrast, introducing more powerful effect by the mode mixture, and finally evolving to the modulations in Allegro. It shows the continuous evolvement of the initial idea, signifying the developing variation technique in the harmonic aspect in op. 21, no. 2.
Developing Variation in the Rhythmic Aspect

The rhythmic structure of the piece also shows the use of developing variation. The most notable feature is the consistent manipulation of the rhythmic pattern, a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. This pattern first appears in the second half of the theme, and is consistently manipulated in the following variations. It plays a central role in controlling the entire rhythmic structure of op. 21, no. 2.

In the theme, the rhythmic pattern in mm. 1-2 becomes the basis for that of mm. 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8. It is, however, notable that m. 5 and 7 distinctively introduce the dotted rhythm, a dotted quarter followed by an eighth, after the two eighth notes. This dotted rhythm is thus considered as the variation of the two quarter notes in m. 1 and 3.

Example 6.13. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Theme

It signifies the first notable variation technique in the rhythmic aspect. I believe that the appearance of the dotted rhythm in m. 5 and 7 is closely related to the harmonic rhythm in
m. 2 and 4. Both measures clearly change the harmonic content on the fourth beats while maintaining the same harmonic content for the first three beats. This harmonic rhythm is compressed and becomes an inspiration to create the dotted rhythm in m. 5 and 7. This newly created dotted rhythm in m. 5 and 7, in turn, influences the harmonic rhythm of the D major chord on the first two beats of m. 8 that clearly evokes the dotted rhythm. This is the part of the reason that m. 8 irregularly employs the two eighth note on the second beat while the other even-numbered measures consistently present the four quarter notes.

This dotted rhythm plays an important role in creating the rhythmic structure in the following variations. In Variation I, the dotted rhythm appears more prominently than in the theme. It now appears on the first and second beats in m. 3 and 5-8.

Example 6.14. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation I

The appearance of the rhythm at the beginning of these measures is the distinctive feature from the theme that employs it only on the second and third beats. It shows the development
of the dotted rhythm. This variation also presents a new rhythmic pattern, which is closely related to the dotted rhythm. An eighth note followed by a dotted quarter note in m. 2 and 4 is constructed by reversing the components of the dotted rhythm. This new rhythm has a similar effect to a presentation of two eighth notes, and also contains the effect of a syncopated rhythm. This latter effect is now cultivated on the third and fourth beats of m. 6 that clearly presents the syncopated rhythm.

The dotted rhythm is a prominent feature also in Variation II. It now appears at the beginning of the even-numbered measures.

Example 6.15. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation II

The distinctive rhythm in this variation is that the LH at the even-numbered measures presents the consecutive eighth note figure. This shows a direct influence from the new rhythm in m. 2 and 4 in Variation I, which has a similar effect to a presentation of two eighth notes. This consistent eighth note figure in the LH is thus seen as the development
of the new rhythm in m. 2 and 4 in Variation I created by reversing the components of the dotted rhythm.

In Variation III, the 16\textsuperscript{th} note figure in the LH is seen as the rhythmic acceleration of the eighth notes in the LH in Variation II. It is thus subjected to the continuation of the rhythmic development traced back to the new rhythm in Variation I, which indicates that this 16\textsuperscript{th} note figure here is also attributed to the thematic dotted rhythm. This 16\textsuperscript{th} note figure signifies the first climactic point of the rhythmic development attributed to the thematic dotted rhythm, because the following variation goes back to the eighth note figure as in Variation II.

Example 6.16. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation III
Another notable feature in Variation III is that the thematic rhythm, the two eighths followed by two quarters, is manipulated in the RH. This rhythm has been used only in the odd-numbered measures thus far, and is now for the first time transferred to the even-numbered measures by trimming the last quarter note. It creates the consistent appearance of the rhythmic pattern, two eighths followed by a quarter, in the even-numbered measures.

The rhythmic pattern in the RH in Variation III triggers another type of the rhythmic development. It is the distinctive in Variation IV that the odd-numbered measures present a canon by repeating the rhythmic pattern, two eighths followed by a quarter.

Example 6.17. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation IV

The repeat of this rhythmic pattern shows the close relation to the use of the same pattern at the even-numbered measures in the previous variation. The consecutive appearance of the rhythmic pattern there is now tightly attached and overlapped, generating the canon between the RH and LH. The creation of the canon thus signifies the continuation of the rhythmic development started in the RH of the previous variation. It is notable that the
canon is executed not only by repeating the rhythmic pattern, but also by repeating the melodic content. The intervallic content on the two eighth notes, such as a third in m. 1 and a second in m. 2, is imitated between the RH and the LH, solidifying the canonic figure.

A canon also appears in the odd-numbered measures in Variation V, however, it now starts with the LH.

Example 6.18. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation V

The characteristic feature in this variation is a written tempo rubato created by the consecutive appearance of the interval of a second in the RH in the various time spaces. For instance, in mm. 1-2, the time space of A-Bb in the RH gradually becomes shorten by the following seconds, Bb-A played by the two eighth notes, and G-F# played by the triplet rhythm. The consecutive appearance of a same interval recalls the component of the canon in the previous variation in which the intervallic content especially on the two eighth notes is exactly imitated between the RH and LH. Thus it signifies the influence of the rhythmic
development which can be traced back in the RH of Variation III. The written tempo rubato creates the characteristic Hungarian atmosphere in this variation.

After Variation VI presents a similar rhythmic feature to that of Variation V, all the rhythmic manipulation thus far is reset in Variation VII for the time being. It plays a reasonable role to prepare for the new rhythmic development in the following variations.

The rhythmic structure of Variation VII is quite similar to that of Variation I. Not only does the dotted rhythm on the first and second beats in the RH evoke that of Variation I, but also the overlapped dotted quarter at the beginning of m. 2 and 4 creates a similar rhythmic effect to the new rhythm in m. 2 and 4 of Variation I, which is created by reversing the dotted rhythm.

Example 6.19. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation VII

Example 6.20. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation I
As the new rhythm in Variation I, the overlapped dotted quarter notes has the effect to signify a syncopation. The notable feature in Variation VII is that the syncopated rhythm is extensively cultivated at m. 6 and 8.

Example 6.21. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 5-8 in Variation VII

This expansive syncopation with the supportive rhythm in the LH that reins the pulse structure is characteristic, influencing the rhythmic structure of the following variations.

It immediately influences the fundamental rhythmic structure of Variation VIII.

Example 6.22. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation VIII

The consistent alternation of the eighth notes between the RH and LH signifies the same rhythmic structure as the one in m. 6 and 8 in Variation VII. The alternative appearance of
the eighth note figure here now inspires to generate the tremolo figure in the LH in Variation IX.

Example 6.23. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation IX

The rhythm becomes the more prominent feature by appearing in the soprano line in Variation X.

Example 6.24. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation X

It now induces the rhythmic acceleration, introducing the 16\textsuperscript{th} note figure in Variation XI.
Example 6.25. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation XI

The 16\textsuperscript{th} note figure is now transferred to the LH in Variation XII, and the RH continues the rhythmic acceleration, introducing the faster rhythm, the 16\textsuperscript{th} notes triplet figure.

Example 6.26. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-4 in Variation XII

Variation XIII also continues the rhythmic acceleration, introducing the 32\textsuperscript{nd} note rhythm in the RH while keeping the 16\textsuperscript{th} note triplet figure in the LH.
It is notable that all the rhythmic accelerations in Variations IX-XIII are originally attributed to the rhythmic manipulation in Variation VII. The overlapped dotted rhythm in m. 2 and 4, which is seen as the reverse of the thematic dotted rhythm, creates the expansive syncopation in m. 6 and 8 in Variation VII, and it provides the platform for the rhythmic acceleration in Variations IX-XIII. It shows that the thematic dotted rhythm again plays an important role for the continuation of the rhythmic development.

During this rhythmic development, there is another notable rhythmic manipulation appearing in Variation IX.

The one in the odd-numbered measures is the familiar one, the reversed dotted rhythm, introduced in m. 2 and 4 in Variation I. It is also the overlapped dotted rhythm in m. 2 and
4 of Variation VII that creates the similar effect to the reversed dotted rhythm. This rhythm now comes back again in the RH of Variation IX, and shows another distinctive rhythmic manipulation. The appearance of the separated eighth notes in the odd-numbered measures is seen as the reversed dotted rhythm returning to the original dotted rhythm with the insertion of the two eighth rests at the middle. It shows the consistent manipulation of the thematic dotted rhythm throughout the piece, playing a central role in inducing the rhythmic development.

The rhythmic feature of *Allegro* shows the opposite tempo direction to the rhythmic acceleration in Variations X-XIII. It signifies the gradual expansion of the rhythmic feature toward the C section of the rondo form in *Allegro*. In the process, the thematic dotted rhythm plays an important role in controlling the tempo structure. The indication, *doppio movimento*, in *Allegro* makes the tempo of the 16th note figure in the A section in mm. 1-8 same as the preceding 32nd note figure in Variation XIII.

Example 6.29. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-6 in *Allegro*

![Example 6.29. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-6 in Allegro](image)

Example 6.30. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-2 in Variation XIII

![Example 6.30. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-2 in Variation XIII](image)
This tempo now slows down in the B section starting at m. 9 by the increasing appearance of the 8\textsuperscript{th} notes.

Example 6.31. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 7-19 in \textit{Allegro}

However, this section also shows the influence of the tempo from the preceding A section because of the frequent appearance of the 16\textsuperscript{th} notes. After the four-16\textsuperscript{th} notes on the second beat of m. 10, a distinctive rhythm pattern, a 16\textsuperscript{th} followed by a dotted 8\textsuperscript{th}, appears in mm. 11-12. This pattern functions as \textit{ritardando}, playing a middle ground role between the tempo of A and B sections. It is seen that the tempo of A section, symbolized in the 16\textsuperscript{th} note, is intentionally expanded by the following dotted 8\textsuperscript{th} note. The rhythmic pattern is a diminution of the reversed dotted rhythm, frequently appeared in the preceding variations. It now plays the important role in controlling the tempos structure.
It is in the C section starting at m. 42 that the most expansive rhythm appears.

Example 6.32. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 43-19 in *Allegro*

The section even more increases the use of the 8th notes. Also it is notable that the dotted rhythm frequently appears in this section. The dotted rhythm now appears in the original form and is the extended form such as in mm. 52-53 and 57-58. They contribute for presenting the most expansive rhythm in *Allegro*.

The analysis of developing variation in the rhythmic aspect clarifies that the dotted rhythm plays a central role in the rhythmic development of the piece. The manipulation of the dotted rhythm is apparent especially in Variations I, VII, X and *Allegro*. It is also
clarified that the rhythmic development of the dotted rhythm often associates with the control of the tempo structure. The manipulation of the dotted rhythm in both Variations I and VII eventually leads to the rhythmic acceleration, and that of *Allegro* leads to the rhythmic expansion. This is one of the most characteristic rhythmic features of the piece. In addition to the dotted rhythm, the other thematic rhythm, two eighths followed by a quarter appearing at m. 1 in the theme, is also skillfully manipulated especially in the earlier variations. The highlight of the development is the creation of the canonic figure at the odd-numbered measures in Variations IV-VI.
Developing Variation in the Melodic Aspect

This work can be categorized as a melodic variation in which the thematic melody recurs in each of the variations. This structure functions as a coherence of the melodic structure, thus one can hardly detect another recurring melodic material, such as a so-called motive, that organizes the melodic structure of the work. However, there are several melodic patterns that can be explained as the logical transformations, which I would thus categorize as developing variation of the melodic aspect. The most notable melodic feature is the manipulation of the contrary motion. Also the manipulation of the stepwise and the leap motions is prominent especially in the earlier variations.

In the theme, the characteristic unisons D-F#-A-A in m. 1 and A-A-D-A in m. 5 are closely related each other.

Example 6.33. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Theme
The latter is created by opposing the melodic direction of the former, and also by expanding the register of the former, the fifth, to the octave. Especially the shift of the melodic direction largely influences the entire melodic structure of the theme. This is apparent in the comparison of the overall melodic structures between mm. 1-4 and mm. 5-8. While mm. 1-4 present the ascending followed by the descending lines, mm. 5-8 show the descending followed by the ascending lines. It can be seen that the overall melodic structure of the theme is attributed to the variation technique applied for the two unisons in m. 1 and 5.

The change of the melodic direction in the theme influences the melodic structure of Variation I. It is the overall melodic structure that the RH and LH melodic lines form the inward contrary motion every two measures.

Example 6.34. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation I
The contrary motion is the distinctive feature of this variation since the theme frequently employs the parallel motion between the RH and LH. I assume that this contrary motion is inspired by the clear shift of the melodic direction from m. 1 to 5 in the theme. The opposing melodic directions there are now combined together, forming the contrary motion in this variation.

Variation I introduces a new melody in the RH above the thematic melody in the LH. The intervallic content in the RH shows the close relation to that of the LH. It is that when the LH shows the leap motion, the RH tends to present the stepwise motion, and vice vasa (see the example below; a circle indicates the stepwise motion, and a rectangular indicates the leap motion.)

Example 6.35. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation I

The role of the counter melody in the RH is to counterbalance with the intervallic content of the thematic melody in the LH.
The mixed presentation of both the leap and stepwise motions between the counter melody and the thematic melody in Variation I is organized more clearly in Variation II.

Example 6.36. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation II

It is characteristic that the RH persistently articulates the stepwise motion with the slurs, and the LH articulates the leap motion by the arpeggiated octave figures. The both melodic features are now clearly sorted out between the clefs, and thus they become the more recognizable features in this variation.

Variation III reinforces the melodic organization of Variation II. The appearance of the long scalar melody in the RH is seen as the development of the emphasis on the stepwise motion in the RH in Variation II. Also the leap motion is further emphasized in the LH by the octave arpeggio appearing throughout the variation.
The other notable feature is the reappearance of the contrary motion every two measures. The first four measures employ the inward contrary motion as in Variation I, and the last four measures presents the outward contrary motion. This change of the direction in the latter half is not seen in the contrary motion in Variation I, thus it signifies the developmental feature. It is also notable that the contrary motion is much more clearly presented here than in Variation I. It is because the RH consistently presents the scaler melody, and the LH also employs the scaler melody on the first beat every two measures. This is another new feature added to the expression of the contrary motion.

In the articulation of the thematic melody, the notable feature in Variation IV is the emphasis on the leap motion. Not only does the canonic figure articulate the leap motion
in the odd-numbered measures such as m. 1, 5 and 7, it is also reinforced in the LH in the even-numbered measures by presenting the two octave of the leap motion for the first time.

Example 6.38. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation IV

The stepwise motion is minimized in this variation which is related to the fact that the previous variation thoroughly emphasizes on the scaler melody in the both clefs.

In Variation V, the ratio of the leap and stepwise motions again comes in balance.

Example 6.39. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation V
In this variation, the LH does not employ the octave arpeggio as in Variations II-IV, however the leap motion is articulated in the RH in the odd-numbered measures where the thematic melody is modified to show the increase of the interval from m. 1 to m. 3, and from m. 5 to m. 7. The stepwise motion is now articulated by the slurs in the even-numbered measures, which is the similar feature as the even-numbered measures in Variation II.

Variation VI reinforces the melodic structure of Variation V. It is notable that the odd-numbered measures reinforce the leap motion by presenting the octave figure in the LH.

Example 6.40. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation VI
The even-numbered measures articulates the stepwise motion by presenting the scalar melody in the contrary motion. This contrary motion now consists of both the outward and inward motions. This can be considered as the influence from the contrary motion in Variation III that changes the direction from the inward motion in mm. 1-4 to the outward motion in mm. 5-8.

The characteristic feature in Variation VII is the appearance of the thematic melody in the LH and the counter melody in the RH. This melodic setting clearly recalls that of Variation I. The contrary motion also appears here as in Variation I, however, it is more sophisticatedly presented. It is due to the influence of the preceding variations that present the various directions of the contrary motion.

Example 6.41. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation VII

It becomes a distinctive feature in mm. 1-4 that the inward motion is prominent in the odd-numbered measures, and the outward motion is prominent in the even-numbered measures.
This melodic structure is opposed in the following 4 measures in mm. 5-8. It shows the more frequent changes of the melodic directions, compared with the contrary motions in the preceding variations, signifying the developmental aspect. The other notable feature is the consistent articulation of the interval of a third with the dotted rhythm in the RH. This interval has not been the focus of the melodic aspect thus far, excerpt being used as the part of the thematic melody. This interval, however, is the most basic element presented as the first interval in the theme. The appearance of the most basic interval later in the piece somewhat parallels to the rhythm development. It is Variation III that the most basic rhythmic feature, two eighths followed by two quarters, becomes the center of the rhythmic development for the first time while Variations I-II intensively manipulate the dotted rhythm which is created in the second half of the theme. I assume that the procedure is related to the fact that Brahms’ developing variation prioritizes the continuity of the musical development by producing new materials from the previously created materials instead of going back to the most basic material.

Variation VIII exchanges the RH and LH materials of Variation VII so that the thematic melody now appears in the RH and the counter melody appears in the LH.

Example 6.42. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation VIII

A pedal point
Besides that, the integration of the pedal point is prominent feature in this variation.

Variation IX now articulates the interval of a third in the bass line. The use of the interval shows the correlation to the emphasis on the interval in the RH of Variation VII. It is transformed to the chromatic descending third appearing every two measures, strongly influencing the harmonic structure. The appearance of the chromatic line signifies a drastic change from the previous variation that presents the stable pedal point.

Example 6.43. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation IX
It is the bass lines of Variations X and XI that combine the bass lines of the previous two variations. The common feature in these two variations is the appearance of the pedal point and the slurred interval of a second. This interval of a second, playing the important role in the harmonic progression, is closely related to the chromatic descending third in the bass line in Variation IX, thus showing the continuation of the melodic development from Variation VII.

Example 6.44. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation X

Example 6.45. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation XI
The other notable feature in these two variations is that the RH presents the symmetric melodic contour every measure in mm. 1-4, and every two measures in mm. 5-8. This type of the melodic line appears for the first time in this piece, however, signifies the correlation to the contrary motion of the preceding variations in the sense that this symmetric melodic contour also consists of the opposing melodic lines.

In Variation XII, the contrary motion between the RH and LH again becomes the prominent feature.

Example 6.46. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation XII
The distinctive feature here is that every half beat also presents the opposing octave figure between the RH and LH. It is the first time that the contrary motion appears at the local level. The emphasis on the contrary motion in this variation supports the previous hypothesis that the melodic contour in Variation X and XI is related to the contrary motion. It creates the reasonable transition to the clearer appearance of the contrary motion in the both large and local structural levels in Variation XII.

In contrast to Variation XII, the parallel motion becomes more prominent in Variation XIII. The ascending motion is articulated in both RH and LH every half beat. It is the contrasting feature from the previous variation that employs the octave figures in the opposing directions every half beat.

Example 6.47. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-8 in Variation XIII

This switch of the melodic direction to the ascending one in the RH plays the important role in introducing the distinctive melodic structure in Allegro. It is notable that
*Allegro* consistently presents the outward contrary motion. It is the first time in this piece since the preceding variations that mostly start with the inward contrary motion such as in Variations I, III, VII and XII. The outward contrary motion creates the forward impetus much more than the inward contrary motion, thus contributes to evoke the Hungarian traditional dance, Czardas, in *Allegro*. The outward contrary motion is already distinctive in the A section in mm 1-8.

Example 6.48. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 1-18 in *Allegro*

The employment of the ascending motion in the RH in Variation XIII becomes the reasonable transition to the ascending motion in the RH at the beginning of A section. The outward contrary motion becomes more prominent in the B section in mm. 9-30.
Example 6.49. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 7-30 in *Allegro*

The outward contrary motion is extensively articulated in mm. 9-16 and mm. 22-24. It shows the intensification of the melodic feature from the A to B sections, creating the more forward impetus.
The outward contrary motion is seen in most of the sections in *Allegro*. However, there is a section that shows the distinctive melodic structure. It is the C section in mm. 42-101 that ceases the characteristic melodic feature of the preceding sections for the time being.

Example 6.50. Brahms, op. 21, no. 2 mm. 37-61 in *Allegro*
This melodic feature is somewhat similar to an inward contrary motion excerpt that the RH figure such as mm. 42-44 shows the characteristic symmetric melodic line, which clearly recalls the RH figure in Variations X and XI. This melodic motion has much less energetic forward motion than in the outward contrary motion. The change of the melodic structure contributes to create the contrasting musical characters in the C section of Allegro along with the change of the other musical features, such as the use of the expansive rhythmic feature, and the modulation to the key of Bb major.

The analysis of the melodic feature in op. 21, no. 2 shows that the most frequently manipulated melodic feature is the contrary motion. The contrary motion can be traced back to the contrasting melodic directions seen between m. 1 and 5 in the theme, and after Variation I forms the contrary motion, the following variations presents the various types of the contrary motion. Also it is notable that Variations I-VI intensively articulates the leap and stepwise motions, and Variation VII for the first time manipulates the interval of a third, the most basic melodic feature in the work.
CONCLUSION

The analysis of op. 9, op. 21, no. 1 and op. 21, no. 2 demonstrates that each piece exemplifies Brahms’ incessant elaboration of an initial idea by using various musical techniques. This process is none other than developing variation that Schoenberg has observed in Brahms’ works. In the open-ended structural medium of Theme and Variations, each variation provides the idea with opportunities to be varied with a renewed focus, and Brahms has not missed any opportunity, creating the continuous manipulation of an idea throughout the pieces. It has also been shown that the recurrence of an idea is often associated with a developmental feature. Each time an idea is presented, the context of the idea is intensified more than its previous appearance and, it seems that this succession of development continues until it achieves a structurally important task. In other words, the continuous development is maintained until it fully cultivates the potential of the idea.

As I have shown, the context of an idea is varied from piece to piece. Each piece presents a distinctive idea in each of the musical features—melody, rhythm and harmony. However, I have noticed through this analysis that the harmonic aspect is most influential among all the musical features. This can be observed in all the three pieces and it is not an exaggeration to state that all the three pieces center on the continuous manipulation of an initial idea in the harmonic aspect. Indeed, I had a difficult time analyzing these three pieces because I initially tackled the task in the mindset that the melodic feature is the center of the musical development. However, I gradually realized that the intervallic content is very often influenced by the harmonic context in Brahms’ works, and thus it is not reasonable to trace it independently without relating it to the harmonic aspect. When I began to focus on the harmonic aspect as the center of the musical development, I was able to distinguish
between the melodic feature that is the outgrowth of the harmonic content, and the melodic feature that by itself shows the unique feature without the influence from the harmony. The latter type of the melodic feature is examined in the analysis of developing variation in the melodic aspect.

It seems that Brahms himself had a similar mindset when he was composing works in Theme and Variations form. In a letter to Joachim written in 1856, he wrote:

Sometimes I reflect on variation form and think that variations should be treated with greater strictness and purity. The old composers strictly maintained the bass line of the theme, their true theme, throughout….But sometimes I find that later composers (like the two of us!) do more rooting about (I don’t know how to express it) in the theme. We timidly stick to the melody, but we don’t treat it freely and really create nothing new from it, but merely encumber it.  

Since the bass line is closely associated with the harmonic progression, it is obvious that he refers to the thematic harmony when he mentions that the bass of the theme is the actual theme. The relationship between harmony and melody is more clearly stated in his letter to Adolf Schubling, written in 1869:

In a theme for variations, almost the only thing that actually has meaning for me is the bass. But that is sacred to me, it is the firm footing upon which I then build my tales. What I do with a melody is merely playing around or ingenious-playing around. I recall with horror:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{example.png}
\caption{Example figure}
\end{figure}

When I vary only the melody, then I can hardly do more than clever or charming, or lend depth to a beautiful thought, albeit with genuine feeling. On top of a given bass, I truly invent the new, I invent new melodies for it, I create. 

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In Brahms’ creative mind, the harmonic aspect comes first as the fundamental structure, and he manipulates the melodies freely based on the harmonic foundation. If the melodic aspect is the primary feature in his creative mind, then we, analysts, can find the recurring melodic element, such as the variation of the D major arpeggio quoted above, everywhere in his pieces. However, this is not the case. In my analysis, I recognize his manipulation of the overall melodic qualities, such as the change in melodic direction, the evocation of the antiphonal style, and the gradual clarification of the thematic melody in these three pieces. Even the often-employed technique—the manipulation of the leap and the interval of a second—only appears in the beginning of the pieces in op. 9 and op. 21, no. 2, and does not have the power to control the melodic feature until the end of the pieces. The harmonic feature, on the other hand, shows much more insistency. The ideas, such as the chromatic voice leading that influences the modulations in op. 9, the gradual obscurity of the tonal center in op. 21, no. 1, and the major-minor contrast in op. 21, no. 2, are the backbone of these pieces, and develop continuously throughout these works. It can be said that without these ideas, these pieces lose their most characteristic features.

One should not forget the importance of the rhythmic feature in his music. I found it interesting that the rhythmic aspect also shows consistent development throughout the examined works. Each piece has a distinctive rhythmic idea such as the emphasis on the offbeat in op. 9, the devolvement of the anacrusis figure in op. 21, no. 1, and the manipulation of the dotted rhythm in op. 21, no. 2. These ideas become the most influential features throughout the pieces. It can be seen that the consistency of the rhythmic development is comparable with that of the harmonic development.

There is a common tendency I have noticed through observation of all the musical
development in the works analyzed for this study. It is that, although for each of the features Brahms generally presents one idea to develop, a technique that manipulates the idea is not exclusive to one. It is true that he persistently uses a same technique to vary the idea for a while, however, once the technique fully realizes an aspect of the idea, he switches to another technique, and this shift generates the variety of effects from the one general idea. This observation clarifies that there is always a musical moment that a technique is most intensively employed, thus most intensively drawing an effect from the idea, before the shift of the technique occurs. I would call this moment the climactic point of the musical development. Each musical feature has its own climactic point, and once it is achieved, it starts developing again toward another climactic point.

This observation arouses another curiosity; whether or not, the climactic point of each musical feature corresponds with that of the other musical feature within a piece. If several musical features achieve the climactic point simultaneously, it surely creates structurally more convincing moment. In this sense, I would like first to point out the ingenuity of the structural organization in op. 9. In this piece, each time the harmonic development achieves its climactic point, it also coincides with the climactic point of the other musical features, creating the structurally imperative moments. The first climactic point of the harmonic development is in Variation VIII. It is the last variation before the modulation to the key of B minor so that the harmonic development of the chromatic voice leading A-A#-B appears to be the most intensive, clearly hinting the appearance of the new key by the tonicizations. Along with it, the melodic development also reaches the first climactic point in Variation VIII. It is the place that the consistent evocation of the antiphonal style finally steps into the next level, introducing the more sophisticated form
of the polyphony, a canon. Since this canon is presented with the thematic melody and thematic rhythm, the first climactic point of the rhythmic development does not occur right in Variation VIII, however it does so a little earlier, in Variations VI and VII. In these two variations, the consistent emphasis on the offbeat finally causes the misalignment of the pulse structure where the offbeat grows to be treated as the down beat. It shows that all the musical features reach their first climatic point nearly at the same time. After the point, they start a new development toward another climactic point. The harmonic development now articulates the B-B#-C# voice leading in order to prepare for the modulation to the original key, F# minor, in Variation XII. Even after the modulation, Variation XII still employs the chromatic harmony toward C# and signifies the climactic point of the harmonic development. The other musical feature that reaches its climactic point in Variation XII is the rhythmic feature. It is in Variation XII that the continuous acceleration of the emphasis on the offbeat from Variation IX reaches its climactic point, intensively employing the syncopated rhythm throughout the variation. After Variation XII, Variations XIII and XIV once again change the content of the harmonic development, now articulating the A-A# voice leading to prepare for the modulations from F# minor to Gb major and F# major in the last two variations. The other musical feature that coincides with the harmonic development is the melodic feature. The half step is continuously emphasized in Variations XII-XIV and this element also contributes for the modulations in the last two variations. It is notable that the melodic feature and rhythmic feature alternatively associate with the harmonic development for the last two climactic points. It shows that, although all the musical features do not always reach their climactic point at the same time, at least the two musical features do so simultaneously, and this creates the structurally powerful moments
in op. 9.

Despite of the fact that the effect creating the structurally imperative moment is somewhat weaker than op. 9, op. 21, no. 2 also shows the intersection of the multiple developments. The harmonic development reaches its first intensive moment in Variation III where various types of tonicization contribute to create the major-minor harmonic contrast. This moment corresponds with the first climactic point of the rhythmic development. The manipulation of the dotted rhythm in Variation I creates the consecutive 8th-note figure in the LH in Variation II, and this figure evolves to the intensive 16th-note figure in the LH in Variation III. The next climactic point of the harmonic development is in Variations IX-XIII where the major-minor contrast is now expressed with the mode mixture technique. These variations also coincide with the climactic point of the rhythmic development. Variation VII manipulates the dotted rhythm, creating the extensive syncopated rhythm, leading to the rhythmic acceleration in Variation IX-XIII. Thus, it signifies the intersection of the harmonic and rhythmic development in both the first and second climactic points. Despite of the facts above, the effect of reaching structurally imperative points in this piece is somewhat weaker than in op. 9. This may be attributed to the lack of variety in the context of both the harmonic and rhythmic developments. In the harmonic development of op. 21, no. 2, there are only two variations before reaching the first climactic point, whereas in op. 9, there are seven variations before the first climactic point. A smaller duration span offers lesser opportunities for musical development, thus it cannot create the convincing impetus toward the climactic point. The similar disadvantage is also seen in the second climactic point of the harmonic development. After Variation IX introduces the mode mixture technique, there is no significant harmonic development until
the section of *Allegro*. The similar harmonic progression continues for about five variations. This is the contrasting feature from op. 9 in which once the harmonic development achieves an imperative task, it immediately changes the context of the harmonic development, and propels toward another climactic point. There is no moment of stagnation in the harmonic development in op. 9. The lack of variety is also seen in the rhythmic development in op. 21, no. 2. It is the dotted rhythm in Variation I and VII that initiates the rhythmic development toward Variation III and toward Variations IX-XIII. Although each variation manipulates the dotted rhythm differently, it ends up with the similar rhythmic feature, the rhythmic acceleration, once they reach the climactic point. The lack of variety of the context again highlights the difference from op. 9 in which each climactic point is achieved by the different combination of the musical development.

Through the analysis of all the three pieces, I was quite fascinated to discover the ingenuity of the structural organization in op. 21, no. 1. Here the climactic point in the musical development of all three features comes together nearly at the end of piece, and it is preceded by smaller-scale structurally imperative moments created by the intersection of the several musical developments.

The first notable moment for the harmonic development is in Variation III. This is where the tonal center D major is obscured by the emphasis on the submediant chords, the B minor and Bb major chords. This moment coincides with the evolution of the anacrusis figure. The appearance of the suspension on the third beat in Variation III clearly creates the forward impetus toward the first beat, thus more intensively evoking the role of the anacrusis than in the preceding variations. The second notable harmonic evolution occurs in Variation V. This is the variation that the entire harmonic progression centers on the G
major and G minor chords, and the tonal center on D major is most substantially concealed thus far. This harmonic development interacts with the distinctive rhythmic feature that cultivates the anacrusis figure at the local level for the first time by integrating it on the subdivided beat of each beat. The succession of the structurally imperative points in Variations III and V further evolves to the moment in Variation XII in which all the musical development reaches their climactic points simultaneously. This is the moment that the tonal center finally strays away to D minor by the consistent oppression to obscure the tonal center from the preceding variations. The anacrusis figure at the local level also appears to be the most intensive by the delay of its appearance and the use of the canonic figure. Above all, it is fascinating to see that the variation employs the thematic melody in the soprano line. This is quite unusual in the piece since most of the preceding variations avoid the explicit reference to the thematic melody. It is only in Variation XI that the thematic melody begins to transpire, becoming even clearer in Variation VII where it appears in the soprano line. It is obvious that Brahms deliberately and carefully paces the development of ideas and features, as well as the scale of preceding imperative moments in such a way that the main imperative moment near the end of the piece has the strongest and truly climatic effect. This ingenuity of the structural organization in this piece is even more superior to that of op. 9. In op. 9, the only structural weakness I would point out is that the most structurally imperative point occurs quite early in the piece. It is around Variation VIII that the climactic points of all the musical developments come together, and the following imperative points are made only by the combination of the harmonic feature with either the melodic or rhythmic feature. The piece ends without succeeding to leave an impact stronger than the one made in its early part.
Through the observations which reveal various levels of mastery and control of the use of developing variation technique, one could trace Brahms’ own development as a composer. Despite of the consistent controversy, it is likely that op. 21, no. 2 is the earliest piece Brahms composed among all three pieces, and most scholars agree that op. 21, no. 1 is the piece composed last among the three. It is evident that structural consideration is at the heart of his search for perfection in using the developmental techniques, and he succeeds it through the composition of these works by discovering new ways to let various elements interact in more structurally meaningful ways.

The analysis of developing variation is to trace an idea that repeatedly appears and develops throughout the pieces. This type of analysis clarifies the musical processes that shape the structure of the piece, deepening performer’s understanding of the composition and its main structural elements. Understanding such compositional processes aids the performer in developing a more convincing and clearer interpretation of the work, both on a larger structural level, as well as on the more elemental level. I have performed all three pieces, however, the performances had been done before I initiated this project. I feel that I had not yet found the essence of these pieces at the time of those performances. Having done the analysis of these works tracing the developing variation technique, I can now interpret these pieces in a more convincing way. The following statements are points I would like to integrate in my future performance of these compositions.

Since I have found that in these three pieces, the manipulation of the idea in the harmonic aspect is the most essential and quite often influential to the melodic contour, it would not be sufficient if I am only preoccupied with the interest of the melodic context without being aware of the importance of the harmonic underpinnings. While this is true
of any works, in this context in particular, it runs the risk of distorting the musical balance between harmony and melody and marring the structural integrity. For instance, it is often the case that a performer tends to emphasize a moment that contains the conspicuous leap motion in musical texture. However, it is indispensable to reexamine the moment if the leap motion delivers an equally meaningful message in the harmonic aspect as well. If the leap motion occurs within the unchanged harmonic context, it would be more convincing to withhold highlighting such a feature prominently until when supported by harmonic change. It is not desirable to make interpretative decisions with sole consideration of the melodic musical content, however apparently prominent it may be, before conducting a harmonic analysis.

Another aspect I would like to highlight in the performance aspect is the importance of the offbeat. I have observed that Brahms consistently develops the idea of the offbeat accent by using various musical features. Such consistent development is especially apparent in op. 9 and op. 21, no. 1. The importance of the offbeat revealed in these works challenges the common perception that the rhythmic gesture starts from downbeat to offbeat. The emphasis on the downbeat is surely important, however, being aware of the function of the offbeat generating a forward impetus toward the downbeat is essential to fully understand the rhythmic development in these pieces. Such a gesture is especially needed when Brahms intensifies the anacrusis figure gradually toward middle of the piece in op. 21, no. 1.

Besides these points, the most imperative aspect I would like to incorporate for the future is to be more proactive in initially seeking the essential musical features involved in the musical development that contributes to form the actual structure of the music.
Tracing such a feature subjected to developing variation contributes to understand the logical consequence behinds an appearance of a new musical feature. Having the logical explanation in each musical events in one’s mind makes the distance to the composer much closer, thus making easier for performers to build their personal relationships with the music. I believe that such relationship eventually builds deeper affection and oneness with the music, drawing the performer into the heart of the composition and leading to more convincing and truthful interpretation in their performances.
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