Romanticizing Brahms: Early Recordings and the [De]Construction of Brahmsian Identity

Scott, A.M.

5) Tests and Experiments in Early-Recorded Brahms Style

5.1) Copying the Recordings of the Schumann-Brahms Pupils

5.1.1) Op. 79 no. 2, Adelina De Lara

When copying Adelina De Lara's performance of this work, among the least difficult elements to incorporate are the many arpeggiated left-hand octaves. Whether rolled quickly to propel temporal motion or slowly to ground it, they generally involve sounding the lowest note first, playing the associated right-hand material with the upper note, and thus starting the roll slightly before where you want the right-hand material to sound. What takes getting used to however, is how arpeggiation changes the orientation of the left hand as you navigate the spaces between these octaves. When playing them solidly one tends to lead with the left-hand thumb: it is both stronger and closer to the centre of one's field of vision, making it easier to visually track while leaping from octave to octave. Leading with the thumb in this way both encourages and is helped by a vertical attack and release where, with the help of the pedal, octaves are released immediately after being played in order to reposition the hand mid-air while moving to the next. Arpeggiation on the other hand requires a horizontal movement; it forces the hand to follow the lead of the weaker and more distant fifth finger; it lengthens the amount of time one's hand remains in position; and it thus affords less time to release and reposition the hand in order to reach the next octave in a timely and reliable fashion. In

slower material however, problems of accuracy and timing can soon be overcome with practice, and before long it is tempting to arpeggiate even where De Lara doesn't.

Things can become more perilous at quicker tempi and when these arpeggiated octaves occur in quick succession with other octaves either rolled or not. De Lara's technical problems and early playing of some left-hand sixteenth note octaves in the closing material of the exposition and recapitulation seem symptomatic of precisely this situation: m. 27 - 30 and 142 - 47 feature rushing as well as sixteenth note octaves sandwiched between one rolled dotted eighth note octave and one solid quarter note octave. In a way, De Lara's arpeggiations could be said to both hinder and help here: on one hand, they require a horizontal motion of the hand, they force the left-hand fifth finger to navigate, and they lengthen the amount of time that the hand must remain in position when it could otherwise be released, moved, and repositioned for the next octave. On the other hand, arpeggiation means that by lingering in position on the rolled dotted eighth note octave your hand is already there to play an early sixteenth note octave, which in turn gives you extra time to accurately reach the quarter note octave. Having tried to play this material with and without early sixteenth notes at De Lara's speeds however, it seems that no amount of rhythmic alteration can overcome the extent to which arpeggiation impedes one's ability to play quickly and accurately. As such, while Lara's rushing and arpeggiations are to blame for her technical problems, the early sixteenth notes seem like an attempt to regain a modicum of security.

Another counterintuitive aspect of De Lara's performance style here is how she shapes materials with time on a local level. In the primary subject for example, after slightly drawing out the beginnings of upbeats, she immediately rushes through the first,

second and third beats of nearly every measure. As a result, one has the impression that time is briefly suspended at upbeats, before it ‘swings’ into and through the material that follows. While it is fairly easy to replicate De Lara's stretching of time over the upbeats, accents and *rit*. indications of this subject, as well as her rushing between them, it is oddly difficult to resist the temptation of emphasizing downbeats with time. Indeed, when modern pianists accentuate upbeats in such a way, our ears are trained to expect that the following downbeat will be similarly emphasized. Because De Lara's upbeats thus seem to initiate a temporal impulse that is left unfulfilled, when imitating her performance it is quite difficult not to somehow fill in this 'missing' time. The rolled left-hand octaves at many downbeats only intensify the impulse to cheat here, but the key seems to be to roll them early and quickly in order to propel rather than ground temporal motion. Indeed, if one were to only stretch upbeats and rush between them while emphasizing downbeats in a modern way, the resulting time feel would be quite different from De Lara’s. Lengthened downbeats would both ‘correct’ the rushing just before and after, while fulfilling the anticipatory impulse initiated by lengthened upbeats, thereby preserving a regular sense of pulse.

One faces a similar issue in the second subject, where the temptation to ground downbeats is particularly strong due to the subject's lyrical nature and the presence of both early left-hand bass notes and an early inner right-hand note at the subject’s outset. The trick however again seems to be to play these dislocations early and quickly in order to shorten rather than widen the temporal berth of the downbeats. Furthermore, it also seems important that the early-dislocated left-hand bass notes are immediately followed by their following rising figures, meaning that the right-hand material coincides with the

second or third notes of those figures. In other words, if you sound the left-hand bass note early and then wait for the right hand before continuing with the rising left-hand figure, you will have effectively emphasized the downbeat where De Lara does not. In order to accomplish this free overlapping of otherwise discretely notated materials, each hand must play its materials independently and beyond any one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes.

Elsewhere in the second subject, the incised right-hand slurs before 17.2 and 18.2 in all iterations seem a bit odd at first, but do make sense given De Lara's shortening of 18.3. Indeed, in anticipation of the *crescendo* in m. 19, she not only begins to rush as early as m. 17 resulting in a shortened third beat at 18.3, but she also begins to imitate the slurs of the rising right-hand figures of the *crescendo* proper here as well. It is also strangely difficult to bring out the right- and left-hand 'thumb' melodies of the second subject to the detriment of the clarity of the upper soprano line, though this difficulty is just a by-product of our obsession with prominent soprano lines. In the statement of this second subject in the recapitulation, De Lara's rhythmic alterations in the upper right-hand line of m. 131 - 132 also seem to stem from this focus on inner thumb lines, as the notes she lengthens in the right-hand line coincide with the rising E flat - E natural line played by the left-hand thumb. De Lara's forceful and brisk playing here however subverts any tonal or temporal contrast between the first, second and transitional subjects, while also undercutting the weight of the work's ending. Her dramatic slowing over the final hairpin of the subject in all iterations only further destabilizes small- and large-scale structure, as it in a sense 'steals' weight from the much more important structural slowing at the end of the exposition and recapitulation.

De Lara's emphasis of upbeats intensifies in the closing material, where one has the sense that they occupy the apexes of imaginary hairpins: beats one through three are rushed as if accompanied by an imaginary *crescendo*; the first note of the triplet upbeat is lengthened and time is briefly suspended where the hairpin's apex would be; and then one swings through the following downbeat before rushing to the next upbeat. In the closing material and in many places in the development section however, this often results in the impression that local details are again being emphasized to the detriment of overall structure, especially given how slowly De Lara plays this material. Modern pianists would never even stretch every downbeat at these tempi, much less every upbeat. While De Lara's stretching of upbeats similarly overemphasizes the local in the primary and secondary subjects, these passages remain unified because of their higher overall tempi and more dramatic large-scale tempo modifications. In the slow closing material and development section on the other hand, this focus on the local often grinds temporal motion to a standstill, causing one to lose sight of both overall structure and pulse.

Adding to this privileging of local details in the closing material and development section is the sense that the weight and motion of the hands favour the 'inner' over the outer. Modern pianists voice this material so that the outer bass and soprano notes ring out clearly, while using their finely honed techniques (and carefully balanced instruments) to unobtrusively and evenly play the repeated triplet figures. De Lara's playing of these repeated inner triplet figures on the other hand seems vastly overdone, both because they often ring out more clearly than the bass and soprano notes, and because they are not played in either a temporally or tonally consistent manner. Her playing of some left-hand sixteenth note octaves with rather than after these inner triplet

figures in the closing material only adds to their overemphasis. In the development section, this favouring of the inner is extended to include her prominent playing of the rising left-hand figures over the hairpins in m. 72, 80 and 83, as well as the murmuring left-hand repeated figure in m. 115 - 117. In both cases, accompanimental left-hand materials are emphasized to the detriment of the more expressive and dynamic right hand.

In the martial transitional subject, it is surprisingly unsettling to cut the slur at the outset of the first phrase group, to link materials into 11.1 between phrase groups, and to shorten the tied note values at 9.2 and 11.2. Using the slur to 'swing' into a quickly attacked and released downbeat at 9.1 before landing squarely on a fully-held second beat is what establishes the rhythmic impulse and organization of the first phrase group of this subject in modern performances; while keeping the first and second phrase groups discrete not only serves a structural purpose but reasserts the pulse of the second phrase group as well, provided of course that its second beat is held for its full value. By cutting the slur into 9.1 and eliding materials into 11.1 therefore, De Lara undermines the rhythmic impulse of each phrase group from its outset; and by shortening 9.2 and 11.2 she subverts the rhythmic organization of the quickly alternating and rushed *staccato* chords that follow. In the recapitulation, De Lara's drastic cutting of the *fermata* before the outset of this subject only further destabilizes its rhythmic arrangement.

To make matters worse, instead of cutting a full beat between 9.2 - 9.4 and 11.2 - 11.4 thereby preserving a regular pulse, De Lara begins the alternating chords somewhere around where the third beat should fall. In other words, instead of cutting out the equivalent of three triplets at 9.2 and 11.2, she only cuts about two; meaning that the material associated with the fourth beat is already sounding before where the ear thinks

the fourth beat should be. In addition to this unsettling lag in hand-ear coordination, this asymmetrically shortened chord leaves you feeling as though you haven't had enough time to prepare yourself for the challenge of attacking the quickly alternating and rushed *staccato* chords that follow. Indeed, if you cut the equivalent of three full triplets at 9.2 and 11.2 rather than two so that chords associated with fourth beats actually sound on third beats, somehow the following alternating chords are easier to play.

While there's no way to know how all of this felt to De Lara, the difficulty I experience when replicating her approach here might be evidence of the interdependency of technical security and rhythmic periodicity in modern pianism: in other words, being able to accurately predict where a beat will fall in fast and difficult passages seems linked to our sense of navigation (where am I going) and orientation (what position does the hand need to be in when I arrive). This might explain why cutting more time here makes this material easier to play: if I can accurately predict where chords associated with 9.4 and 11.4 will fall according to the logical division of the measure, regardless of whether that turns out to be on beat three or four, I am then able to make the required adjustments to the navigation and orientation of my hands. De Lara's undermining of the rhythmic impulse, organization and regularity of this subject thus makes for some tense moments. This unease resurfaces in the closing material at the end of the recapitulation where De Lara shortens the long note values at 140.3 and 146.3, again in conjunction with rushing. Much like the second beats of the transitional subject, these longer note values would normally be used to assert the rhythmic impulse and organization of the material to come, while also serving as signposts at which one can reset and prepare the ear and hand.

Returning to the transitional subject, the variety and frequency of De Lara's arpeggiations only adds to the conundrum of navigation and orientation initiated by her rhythmic alterations and modifications. Indeed, arpeggiation here means lingering in position where you would otherwise release and move to the next chord; ensuring that you arrive at the next chord with your fingers poised to execute a roll in the correct order; starting to roll chords much earlier than where you want their last notes to fall; and thus also initiating rolls while the previous one is still sounding. These arpeggiations thus require a very close, high and curved position of the hand on the keyboard, with the fingers interspersed amongst the black keys, and with the hand lingering and moving horizontally: no small task at De Lara's speeds. Her arpeggiations here also seem weighted towards the inner voices of each hand while also favouring an 'inward' motion. At 10.3 for example, the last and thus most prominent note of the roll is the inner right-hand F#, while the notes of each hand are rolled towards each other, from the outside in. This inner weight and movement intensifies at 13.1 where, with right- and left-hand thumbs overlapped, the latter plays the last note of the roll. In material that would today be played with a quick and vertical attack for maximum speed, accuracy and power, this 'inward' weighting and moving of the hands makes replicating De Lara's arpeggiations treacherous: indeed, it's a wonder she doesn't miss more notes than she does.

Now compare her arpeggiations of the same chords at 12. 2 and 12.4: in the former she sounds the left-hand octave first, then the inner right-hand note, and then the outer right-hand notes; while in the latter she sounds the upper two notes of the right-hand first, followed by the inner right-hand note, then the left-hand octave. This may seem insignificant, but at her speeds the difference is enormous. At 12.2 it is possible to

roll the right-hand notes with a vertical attack and release: you can 'drop' into the inner note from above, and then your hand is already in position to sound the upper and lower notes around it with a dynamic upward motion that propels you to the next chord. At 12.4 on the other hand, by playing the upper two right-hand notes first and then the lower note, the resulting motion is again inwards as well as down, resulting in a stagnant movement of the hand. In the quicker statement of this subject in the recapitulation, it is thus no surprise that De Lara plays all chords on beats two and four of m. 127 and 129 as she does at 12.2. As a final note on imitating De Lara's arpeggiations here, when playing as quickly as she does it can be difficult for listeners to perceive the order in which I roll chords. While it would be safer to roll chords in orders that favour an upward and outward motion of the hand, the resulting performance would be different: perhaps not audibly, but certainly from the subjective perspective of the performer. Only when imitating the precise order in which De Lara rolls these chords, in conjunction with her tempo modifications and rhythmic alterations, is one truly outside their comfort zone from a temporal, tonal, navigational and orientation point of view. Indeed, the insecurity that comes from not being able to do what comes naturally is what this process is all about.

When imitating De Lara's performance of this work I have found it both illuminating and off-putting to reproduce the 'inward' element of her approach. Weighting and moving the hand in this way runs counter to my habits of playing fast and loud material with an upward and outward attack and release, while using a deep and connected tone and attack in even the softest of passages: 'as if you are wearing velvet gloves lined with iron and the keys are magnets,' as my teacher used to say. Indeed, De

Lara’s approach forces you to move the hand where otherwise you would ‘dig’ into the keys; it tilts the weight of the hands towards the thumbs and away from the singing and navigating fifths; it encourages the emphasis of local details and figures that tend to be downplayed in the name of structure and rhythmic regularity in modern performances; and it impedes the accurate and timely playing of technically-challenging passages. You can listen to my copy of Adelina De Lara's performance in Sound Ex. 5.1.1, while following along with the annotated score I used to rehearse (including the findings of both 'naked ear' and software-assisted analyses) in Score Ex. 5.1.1. An annotation key has also been included with the accompanying audio-visual materials.

5.1.2) Op. 117 no. 1, Adelina De Lara

When replicating Adelina De Lara's many dislocations, arpeggiations and rhythmic alterations in the A section of this work, it soon becomes clear that they lend a rather direct, stilted and vertical feeling to one's tone, attack and time feel. While her tendency to both lengthen downbeats and swing sixteenth note melodic upbeats here seems fairly straightforward and rather complimentary, with the lengthened downbeats completing and in a sense correcting the swung upbeats thus preserving regularity of pulse, what complicates matters are the shortened quarters at the ends of local phrases. They make the swung sixteenth note upbeats and lengthened downbeats sound early, meaning that time feel isn’t maintained but rather accumulates from phrase to phrase.

The resulting small-scale temporal irregularity of De Lara’s approach also makes shaping this material with subtle variations of tone and articulation quite difficult,

especially as both the early swung sixteenth notes and shortened quarter notes at the beginnings and ends of local phrases often coincide with dislocation or arpeggiation. As a result, the outer edges of these phrases become emphasized both tonally and temporally where normally they'd be played in an underemphasized way so as not to detract from the hegemony of the downbeat and the unity of the larger phrase group. While all of this can feel quite rhythmically and tonally lopsided at the local level, everything does remain unified because De Lara's larger phrase groups are similarly shaped with slower and more accentuated playing at their outer edges and with faster and underemphasized playing over their middles. Though her increased use of arpeggiation and lessened use of rhythmic alteration over the quicker middles of these phrase groups does encourage a relatively softer, smoother, and more horizontal approach to tone and attack, it is still not as connected and focused as modern pianists would like.

This is yet more evidence that De Lara's approach to the keyboard results in a feeling of verticality (too much attack and release) in lyrical musical material, and a feeling of horizontality (not enough attack and release) in louder and faster material. This may also be further evidence of the relationship between temporal predictability and matters of tone and technique in modern pianism. In the faster more technically challenging material of Op. 79 no. 2, De Lara's 'inward' weighting and motion of the hands robs us of the time and space needed to navigate and orient the body and mind; in Op. 117 no. 1 these arpeggiations, dislocations and rhythmic alterations sever one's physical contact with the keyboard, they interrupt the temporal predictability of where notes will fall, they skew the hierarchical weighting of tone and time needed to produce a smooth, connected, focused and singing legato line, and as such they create an 'outer'

weighting and motion of the hand. Indeed, modern pianists both ‘feel’ and ‘hear’ their way from note to note: our ears judge what loudness, duration and speed is needed relative to what came before and what comes next; while our hands sense the weight of keys, the speed with which they need to be attacked and released, and the distances between them. Though it’s impossible to know whether De Lara physically lifts her hands with each arpeggiation, dislocation and local rhythmic alteration, when imitating her performance I certainly find myself doing so. The resulting disruption to my ingrained habits of listening and feeling alters my relationship to the instrument, and I find myself seeking ways of connecting materials through intricate manoeuvres of fingering and pedalling.

De Lara’s performance of the B section of this work on the other hand is characterized less by local rhythmic alterations and much more so by large-scale rushing. If one can resist the temptation of trying to retain a sense of a regular underlying pulse here, De Lara’s restless early dislocations of the left hand's bass notes and the many of the right hand's second and fifth eighth notes actually help rather than hinder hand-ear coordination: they make one’s tempo accumulate by initiating a rhythmic impulse forward that drags the hand along so that somehow it ends up in the right place at the right time; the spaces between dislocated bass notes become closer while rushing and more distant when slowing, thereby also creating some temporal predictability of when and where material will fall; and the dislocated right-hand notes facilitate the voicing of inner lines thus providing an aural compass.

When playing along with De Lara’s recording however, it soon became clear that my dislocated left- and right-hand notes were not nearly as early as hers: in her

performance, the left-hand entries sound in the spaces occupied by interstitial rests and thus with the third and sixth eighth notes of the right hand. I on the other hand was trying to preserve these rests while maintaining a one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes and associated material. In order to produce something close to De Lara's performance therefore, I had to completely ignore the vertical and discrete placement of notes, bar lines, and the values of notes and rests; thereby encouraging dislocation and tempo modification to pull the hand and ear along, rather than trying to control them. The resulting overlap between discrete materials in this section however, in combination with De Lara's emphasis of inner right-hand voices here, seems to create a shift towards the 'inner' and thus provides structural contrast with the surrounding sections. Indeed, when imitating De Lara's performance of this work, while the A sections can feel stilted as a result of too much vertical attack and release, the B section allows for the much more fluid and intuitive orientation, navigation and coordination of the hand and ear.

In the A^1 section however, De Lara now seems to combine the inner and outer, thereby creating further structural contrast between each of this work's three sections. The outer is achieved simply by virtue of the musical material itself, the slower overall tempo at which it is played, and by De Lara's more restrained use of unifying and driving tempo modifications. Regarding the inner, at the outset of the A^1 section she creates a softer, more horizontal and ethereal atmosphere by rolling most chords from bottom to top. Her variations to this order of rolling notes at 42.4 and 44.6 favour the voicing of inner lines, as do her early dislocated inner right-hand notes at 43.6 and 48.6 and the combination of dislocation and arpeggiation at 54.3. Even her reduced use of rhythmic alterations in m. 46 - 49 cultivates less local temporal irregularity and thus less tonal disjointedness; while

in m. 50 - 51 she focuses so much on inner lines that she goes so far as to cut the upper B flat of m. 50 and the first upper D of m. 51. You can hear my copy of Adelina De Lara's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.1.2 while following along with Score Ex. 5.1.2.

5.1.3) Op. 118 no. 3, Ilona Eibenschütz

When tackling the imitation of Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work, one immediately gains an appreciation for what must have been her impressively facile technique. It is extraordinarily difficult to play this material as quickly as she manages, even before attempting to rush where and as much as she does. At these speeds one is also forced to adopt a very superficial tone and attack, as well as a thoroughly vertical one: all chords in the A sections of this work have to be attacked briskly, with a shaken movement of the hand (as though shaking off water), with straight arms and fingers, and with guidance and weight provided by one's left-hand thumb and right-hand fifth finger. This upward and outward focus and motion characterizes Eibenschütz's performance of the A sections of this work, and is particularly evidenced by her frequent omission of inner notes on the downbeats of many measures, especially where rushing through structural boundaries like at 11.1, 23.1 and 73.1 for example. Having leaner chords to negotiate cleanly and quickly indeed helps one to play materials as quickly as she does.

In Eibenschütz's hair-raisingly quick performance of the B section of this work however, we see glimmers of De Lara's 'inner' approach. Here, the position and motion of the hand suddenly changes: one's tone and attack is still quite superficial and quick, meaning one has little time to play keys to their bottoms in order to draw a full and

connected tone from the instrument; but now the hands must be extremely close to the keys, enabling one to 'feel' one's way from note to note. Eibenschütz also uses subtle variations of dislocation and arpeggiation here to bring out inner melodies, especially at the beginnings and ends of the section's phrase groups. This is perhaps further evidence of these pianists' use of oscillations between inner and outer approaches when creating large-scale structural contrast, rather than through variations of dynamics and overall tempo. While Eibenschütz's quick and vertical attack in the A section and her closer attack in the B section are second nature to modern pianists, few would dare to omit inner voices in loud and fast passages or to play so tonally fleetingly in lyrical ones, and as a result it is exceedingly difficult to replicate the velocity of her approach to this work. When our reluctance to truncate materials and to not draw a full tone from the keyboard is relinquished however, it is truly remarkable just how fast one can play.

In the primary subject of the A section, Ilona Eibenschütz stretches time slightly over some upbeats at the beginnings of phrase groups, but like De Lara's triplet upbeats in Op. 79 no. 2, she immediately rushes through their subsequent downbeats, which as result become underemphasized. This feature of her performance is very difficult to replicate, and I again catch myself sneakily trying to stretch rather than rush through downbeats. This underemphasizing of downbeats becomes even less intuitive into m. 3 and 8, where it is customary to take a slight amount of time to set up the harmonic progressions to the structural boundaries at m. 6 and 11. While Eibenschütz does slow into their preparatory measures in m. 5 and 10, it is very hard to bring oneself to rush through the remainders of those measures and straight into the new phrases at m. 6 and 11. Like De Lara’s upbeats however, the key seems to be to think of both upbeats and

these structurally preparatory measures like temporal swings into and through the material they precede.

Because all downbeats in the primary subject of this work coincide with longer note values in its melodic material however, Eibenschütz's emphasis of and rushing between upbeats again disjoints the hand and ear. Not only do these downbeats seem to come too early relative to the temporal impulse established by the stretching of their upbeats, but rushing between these upbeats often results in the shortening of third quarters. In modern performances, one would use these long melodic downbeats and third quarters to assert and ground the temporal organization of this material while preparing the ear and hand for the quickly alternating and rushed eighth note chords between them. When imitating Eibenschütz's approach, the longer note values coinciding with downbeats and third beats lose their grounding, ordering and preparatory function, while one also has less time to navigate the spaces between them. This last point is particularly important, as the spaces between third and fourth beats often involve a repositioning and leap of the hand. When shortening third quarters as a result of rushing therefore, not only do you have to accomplish this repositioning and leaping in less time, but you also have to ignore your ears which tell you that, based on the rhythmic organization of the melodic line and emphasized upbeats, that you have much more time to get to the fourth beat than you actually do.

Eibenschütz's underemphasizing of downbeats is particularly difficult at m. 10, where one must ignore the *rit. - ten.* indication, while also resisting the urge to linger over both the end of the primary subject at 10.1 and the beginning of the secondary subject at 11.1. As we have already seen, Eibenschütz blurs the structural boundary at m. 10 in both

A sections with elision. In practice however it becomes clear that this structural subversion is greatly aided by her omission of inner right-hand voices at 11.1, her temporal underemphasizing of the downbeats at 10.1 and 11.1, her shortening of the third beat at 10.3, her placing of the left-hand octave at 10.4 with the upper note of the rolled and early right-hand entry of the new subject, and her immediate rushing into and through the second subject. All of this places more relative emphasis on this early upbeat, thereby undermining the rhythmic impulse and organization of the new subject. Indeed, Eibenschütz's rushing, shortened third beats and underemphasized downbeats result in the lengthening, displacement and thus overemphasis of the upbeat to the transitional subject and primary subject in both m. 22[98] and 72 respectively. The temporal regularity of the material that follows both instances is thus undercut from their very outsets, and as such the pianist enters the new subject matter disoriented both temporally and technically - a feeling that is only enhanced when they begin to rush anew as Eibenschütz does.

It is thus again important to resist the temptation of lingering on downbeats in any way when replicating Eibenschütz's structural blurring at m. 10[86], 22[98] and 72. In practice I've found that to reproduce both her temporal asymmetry and accumulation it helps to continue to shorten third quarters well into the ensuing second subject, reprise of the primary subject, and transitional subject. If you do so while imitating Eibenschütz's subsequent rushing, by the return of the primary subject in m. 23 and 77 your speeds are every bit as precipitous as hers, resulting in that effect noticed when analysing her performance whereby each statement of the primary subject returns faster than the last.

Within the second subject for example, the early, lengthened and overemphasized right-hand upbeat at 14.4[90.4], followed by some precipitous rushing over the accented

syncopations of the following two measures, indeed intensifies the temporal instability established by the blurring of the subject's outset. This is because it catalyses a chain reaction whereby the weight of the downbeat at 15.1 is undercut; the hairpins of m. 17 - 18 are skimmed over; the upbeat to m. 17 enters early; the start of the *crescendo* in m. 18 is blurred; and the primary subject returns underprepared in m. 23 as a result of rushing, elision and now also truncation. If you allow this chain reaction to undercut details that would normally be used to both ground and assert the rhythmic organization of the subject while also functioning as signposts at which to prepare the ear and hand, the unravelling and breathless feeling of Eibenschütz's playing is fairly easily reproduced.

It is also important to avoid the temptation of recreating Eibenschütz's elisions and truncations in m. 22 - 23[98 - 99] while trying to play the remaining notes according to some logical rhythmic division of the measure. Indeed, when truly imitating her approach here, nothing is given its full weight or value, and the hands seem to be playing the primary subject before the ear tells you it has arrived. This is because in lightning-quick succession she links the top E at 22.3 with the rolled inner right-hand chord of the same beat, which is then linked to the left-hand chord at 22.4 and the top right-hand F#, which is finally linked to the downbeat of 23.1. Beats three and four of this structurally preparatory measure thus become a kind of ornament, beyond logical rhythmic and harmonic delineations, to the downbeat of the primary subject at 23.1. When executed correctly, there is no way to predict when and where this downbeat will sound because of the harmonic and rhythmic ambiguity of the measure that precedes it. Once the hands have played this downbeat however, the ear still struggles to identify its structural importance because it is again underemphasized through the omission of inner notes, the

avoidance of lingering, the shortening of its following third beat, and the further accumulation of tempo.

Despite Ilona Eibenschütz's subtle shift towards a more 'inner' tonal focus and weight of the hand in the B section of this work, it is still unsettling not to have the time to shape and mould its many beautiful harmonic and melodic details; especially where these details become more densely packed over the middles of the section's four phrase groups. It is odd for example not to slow to close the first halves of the first and third phrase groups at m. 44 and 60, or at the end of the hairpin in m. 52 and into the beginning of the next hairpin in m. 53. While her doubled F#s at the slower ends of the first and third groups do make a lot of sense, with the first F# played by the left hand to close one phrase group and the second played with the right hand to open the next, it is unclear why she doubles the F# in the left hand at 69, other than for added emphasis. What is clear however is that her dislocations and arpeggiations in m. 69 - 70 are primarily motivated by the voicing of inner lines. My copy of Eibenschütz's performance of this work can be heard in Sound Ex. 5.1.3, while the annotated score is found in Score Ex. 5.1.3.

5.1.4) Op. 119 no. 2, Ilona Eibenschütz

Again one encounters the difficulty of unlearning the tendency to slow into and out of phrases when replicating Ilona Eibenschütz's performance of this work. One finds instead that almost all phrases are rushed through in their entirety, and when time is taken it tends to occur either after they have already begun or at their middles in the presence of hairpins. When this blurring of the outer edges of local phrases becomes extended to

larger structures, as in the truncations and elisions of m. 6 - 9, 11 - 13, 22 - 27 and their reiterations for example, just like in Eibenschütz's performance of Op. 118 no. 3 materials come before their time and nothing is held its full length. It is thus imperative to retrain one's fingers and ears in order to resist the temptation of fitting what remains into a mathematical division of the bar or to temporally ground elements where possible. This is particularly pertinent at the outsets of the main subject in m. 9 and the triplet subject in m. 13: just like at the boundary between the second subject and reprise of the primary subject in m. 22[98] of Op. 118 no. 3, in both cases the material just before is truncated and elided beyond rhythmic and harmonic delineations and thus becomes a kind of ornament to the outset of the new subject. In each instance the right-hand subject entries are early, lengthened, and displaced to an imaginary downbeat; while a slight amount of time is taken after they have already begun before tempo again starts to accumulate.

At m. 13[92] this structural subversion is especially counterintuitive, as most pianists slow here to emphasize the shift to both F major and a triple time feel. Interestingly, Eibenschütz's rhythmic alteration of the left hand of this subject so that its second note coincides with the third of the right results in a very vertical motion, with each hand being lifted at the end of each triplet figure and dropped at the beginning of the next. This helps immensely when trying to replicate Eibenschütz's extremely fast tempo over this material, while also creating contrast with the material that surrounds it. Indeed, the A sections of this work and the second half of its middle section are generally played much like the B section of Op. 118 no. 3: with a very close, quick, and superficial tone and attack. Given the breathlessness of Eibenschütz's playing of this triplet subject however, she then takes a disproportionately large amount of time to emphasize its final

hairpin in m. 16 - 17, thereby 'stealing' weight from the more important structural slowing at the end of the section. In the A^1 section on the other hand, while this hairpin in is still stretched it is nonetheless underemphasized relative to its surrounding materials as Eibenschütz elides materials right before and after it.

In both iterations of the alternating subject, her displacement of the right hand to strong beats in m. 19 - 20 seems motivated by a desire to bring out the inner right-hand melody, as well as to shape the hairpin indication. Her dislocations in m. 30 - 31 on the other hand are very difficult to reproduce, and do not seem to represent an attempt to focus on inner lines. Indeed, in a much more extreme version of De Lara's dislocations in the B section of Op. 117 no. 1 and the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2, here there is no discernible one-to-one relationship between dislocated notes and their associated materials, with the left-hand figures of one measure still sounding while the right hand has moved onto the next. The resulting disjointedness at this point in Eibenschütz's performance seems to be merely a by-product of extreme rushing and the impressive independence of her hands, rather than evidence of a desire to highlight textural details.

After struggling to reproduce Eibenschütz's rhythmic alterations in the first and second phrase groups of the B section, it became clear that in order to differentiate early quarters that result from rhythmic alteration from those that result from local rushing, I needed to focus on the proportional relationship of each of the three beats in a given measure. In measures with rhythmic alteration, the third quarter sounds suddenly early compared to what came before, while in the rushed measures one senses a smooth transition from beat to beat as the spaces between those beats become gradually more constricted. In the second phrase group things become slightly more convoluted however,

as now there are many more anticipatory and delayed melodic eighth notes to contend with. Interestingly, the effect of Eibenschütz's rhythmic alterations in these opening two phrase groups is highly reminiscent of De Lara's 'outer' approach to the A section material of Op. 117 no. 1, particularly as related to the relationship between temporal asymmetry and tonal unevenness. Indeed, these rhythmic alterations make the spaces between notes uneven, which then makes connecting those notes with a smooth and focused tone nearly impossible, resulting in more lift and release.

Between these two phrase groups we again encounter an instance where Eibenschütz rushes into and through internal structural boundaries, while taking time after they have begun. After rushing over the end of the first phrase group in m. 42 - 43, she immediately plays the dislocated inner right-hand and bass notes of the second phrase group at 44.1, after which she slightly stretches time by delaying both the rest of the right-hand material at 44.1 and the following eighth note. After then rushing right into the third and fourth phrase groups of this middle section, one again struggles to cope with the sheer speed of Eibenschütz's approach, as well as with the return to a more fleeting tone and attack and the resulting lack of time or space to ground, shape, and 'dig' into details. The most distressing examples of this occur at the thoroughly deemphasized *dolce* marking at m. 60, with a whisper of time being taken at the apex of the hairpin just prior to that measure; and at the drastically shortened downbeat of m. 63[79], which subverts both the pulse and the weight of the final statement of the section's primary thematic material.

Eibenschütz's dislocations at the end of each iteration of the fourth phrase group in m. 66 - 67 and 82 - 83 do however seem motivated by a desire to ground and shape

musical materials. In the first iteration, her dislocations in the right-hand melodic line are both delayed, thereby closing the phrase group before she elides the end of m. 67 with the beginning of 68. Upon repetition however, now her right-hand dislocations are both early, thereby anticipating the transitional material that leads to the reprise of the A section. Because she slows dramatically over this transitional material, perhaps she didn't feel the need to do so at the end of the second iteration of the fourth phrase group as well. You can hear my copy of Eibenschütz's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.1.4 while following along with the annotated score in Score Ex. 5.1.4.

5.1.5) Brahms as Played by Adelina de Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz

In the summary of the precepts of contemporary Brahms style in the previous chapter we saw that literal Brahms performances are those where notes and rests are given their full value; where materials notated vertically are played simultaneously; where nothing is added, removed or altered; where all instances of notation prompt some appropriate and relative action; and where allowable departures from scores are those that highlight the detail and structure of scores. Detailed Brahms performances are those where every part of a work is understood to form an essential part of its meaning; where clarity and complexity are preserved; and where parallel notation is rendered similarly or in structurally staggered ways. Structural Brahms playing is where local details are shaped according to their structural weight; where consistency within and contrast between structures is maintained; and where the outer edges of small- and large-scale structures are clearly delineated. Temporally-measured Brahms performances are those

that afford enough time to shape local details without obscuring structure; that avoid rushing at all costs; that maintain an underlying sense of pulse and the divisions of the measure; that shape parallel indications with time in similar or structurally staggered ways; and that maintain temporal consistency within and contrast between sections. We have also seen how control is understood as both impetus and outcome of pianists' adherence to these norms.

What then might a summary of the tenets of Brahmsian pianism according to Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz look like? While it is clear that neither pianist played Brahms's piano works in the same ways all of the time, like modern Brahmsian pianists their recorded performances lay bare a set of propensities that intimate their understanding of this repertoire, its creator, and their roles as performers. Rather than establish a set of rules for a recordings-inspired style of Brahms performance therefore, the following summary instead seeks to clarify what it might take to play in such a way today by highlighting tensions between De Lara and Eibenschütz's approaches and the strictures of contemporary Brahms style.[455] Based on the outcomes of both analysing and copying these pianists' recorded performances, this knowledge is thus informed as much by listening as it is by doing: how does it *feel* when our most ingrained habits and assumptions regarding Brahmsian pianism collide with theirs? Indeed, the hope is that the

[455] Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison have adopted a similar approach in their *Chasing the Butterfly* project. In their discussion of what they call the 'inverse characteristics' of Grieg's playing style, they zero in on those elements that are fundamental to modern pianists' performances, but that are either nonexistent or used sparingly for effect in Grieg's. Indeed, Slåttebrekk and Harrison assert that, "when studying Grieg's 'footprint,' we are not only looking at the actual area and pattern which is covered, but also its 'negative' – where does he not step and where are the borderlines?" This tension between what is actually done (or not) and what one has been conditioned to expect is key to understanding a past performance style, and can often only be achieved through the confrontation of imitation. Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Approaching a Performance Style," in *Chasing the Butterfly*, http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=137.

summary below elucidates a space of resistance between the Brahms of today and Brahms as he was recorded: a space that, once revealed, can then be narrowed by those inclined to do so.

5.1.5.a) Adelina De Lara

- **Literal:** Playing like De Lara involves the use of arpeggiation and dislocation almost everywhere, and not just at particularly poignant local details or structurally-important junctures. Dislocation however does feature more prominently at the slower outer edges of musical structures, with arpeggiation occurring more frequently over their faster middles. Wide and powerful dislocation also tends to be used in dramatic passages in lower registers, with arpeggiation being used to soften changes of colour or to highlight passages in higher registers. Chords are spread and the hands are disjointed either slowly to ground temporal motion, or quickly to propel it; with materials being rolled or dislocated in orders dependent on the voicing of inner melodic lines. In most cases dislocation and arpeggiation are initiated early, leading to localized asynchronicity between the hands and the linking or overlapping of discrete materials. Elsewhere, notes can be doubled, added or removed for effect, emphasis or voicing; while tied notes can be sounded again for extra resonance.

- **Detailed:** De Lara's approach to notated details involves cutting slurs and ignoring *fermati*, especially where rushing or consciously blurring structural boundaries. Inner melodic materials are often brought out much more so than upper soprano lines; *crescendi* are anticipated by starting to rush early; and indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity in lyrical materials can be ignored, resulting in what would today be interpreted as reduced temporal and tonal contrast between subjects and sections. When arpeggiating and dislocating,

materials otherwise notated discretely can become linked or overlapped, leading to the alteration of rest and note values; while local details and figures can be tonally and temporally shaped where they would today be underemphasized in the interests of rhythmic and structural regularity and clarity.

- **Structural:** While playing like De Lara generally involves the unification and delineation of all structures by playing more slowly at their outer edges and faster over their middles, the boundaries between these structures can often be softened through elision, the cutting of *fermati*, and the ignoring of indications to modify tonal and/or temporal intensity, especially where lyrical subjects or sections are concerned. While consistency of time and tone does not necessarily have to be maintained within larger sections, contrast indeed tends to be created between them. This structural contrast is sometimes achieved by oscillating between an 'outer' or more vertical approach to time and tone in slower passages, and an 'inner' or more horizontal approach in faster passages. Local details and figures that would today be downplayed in the interests of structure and rhythmic regularity are often emphasized; while reoccurring materials can be shaped differently and in ways that either elucidate or subvert overall structure.

- **Temporally-Measured:** De Lara's approach includes the shaping of all structures small and large with both rushing and slowing; the accumulation of tempo from phrase group to phrase group, uncorrected by slowing at their ends; and the expressive lengthening, shortening, early and late sounding of notes, thereby undercutting the rhythmic regularity and clarity of the divisions of the measure so prized in modern Brahms performances. These rhythmic alterations often coincide with the blurring of structural boundaries in rushed up-tempo subjects, thereby subverting their rhythmic impulse and organization from the very outset. Elsewhere, rhythmic regularity can also be relaxed by allowing combinations of arpeggiation, dislocation and rushing to link discreet materials; by emphasizing local details and figures; by ignoring indications to slow, particularly in lyrical sections; by shortening longer note values, *fermati* and rests when rushing; and by

using rhythmic alterations to simplify difficult materials and the voicing of inner melodic lines.

- **Expressively- and Technically-Controlled:** By simple virtue of the many tensions between Adelina De Lara's style and the principles of modern Brahms pianism, her approach to detail, structure, tone and time simply does not tend to read as expressively or technically controlled today. This impression is further compounded by her technical missteps, and by how her approach can feel too vertical in lyrical passages and too horizontal in faster ones. Indeed, you know that you are playing in ways similar to De Lara when you feel as though you are using too much attack and release in slower tempi, thereby severing the physical and aural connection with the keyboard needed to produce deeply connected, focused and singing melodic lines; while in faster passages it feels as though your tone and attack is too horizontal, connected and slow, thereby robbing you of the lift and release needed to execute materials quickly and accurately. Playing like De Lara is also governed by a weighting of the hands and ears inwards, as evidenced by her focus on inner lines, her use of inwardly-voiced and -rolled arpeggiations, and by how her approach forces one to linger where they would move in faster passages, while moving where they would linger in slower ones.

Given how 'unBrahmsian' many elements of Adelina De Lara's approach can sound and feel to modern pianists, it is remarkable that her pianism is still regarded as generally reflective of the described precepts of Clara Schumann's hyper-controlled performance ideology. Indeed, as discussed in previous chapters, not only is she reported to have staunchly "maintained and professed the Clara Schumann method"[456] throughout her career, but much of what we know about Clara's style in the first place comes from

[456] "Madame Adelina de Lara," *The Guardian* (November 27, 1961): 2.

De Lara's own recollections. Let us recall for instance Michael Musgrave's summary of De Lara's distillation of the essential elements of Clara's approach:

> She stresses first and above all Clara's requirement 'to be truthful to the composer's meaning, to emphasize every beauty in the composition,' which implies the thorough study of and knowledge of the score. She required constant attention to tone, rhythm, and phrasing - each phrase as though it were given to a musical instrument. She required tempos proper to the music. She was extremely averse to speed and thought it the curse of modern performance: 'keine Passagen' (no passagework) was her expression, referring to the routine rushing through figurations for brilliance of effect.[457]

Aside from De Lara's use of both slowing and hastening to shape musical materials however, there isn't anything particularly contradictory between her recorded approach and her verbal account of the precepts of Clara's teaching. In fact, while she does rush in the more technically challenging passages of Op. 79 no. 2, her use of arpeggiation makes it difficult to play successions of leaping chords quickly and accurately, thereby preventing the kind of extreme rushing one hears in Ilona Eibenschütz's recordings for example. Furthermore, her rhythmic alterations, arpeggiations and dislocations sever the contact needed to produce a coaxed and singing legato tone in lyrical materials, reflecting contemporaneous reports that in her playing "the notes clin[k] together freely, instead of being, as in most modern performances, clogged together with the syrup of studied expression."[458] As such, the resulting

[457] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316, from De Lara, *Finale* (London, 1955), 55.
[458] "Two Schumann Recitals," *The Manchester Guardian* (September 17, 1952): 5.

straightforwardness of her approach does seem to echo accounts of how Clara's self-abnegating pianism "brought one as near to the composer as lay in her power."[459]

Even more tantalizing are connections between the 'inward' nature of De Lara's approach and Clara's use of the terms 'Innerlich ruhig' (keep quiet inside), 'Das Getragene' (providing support by giving full value to inner voices and the bass), and especially 'hineinlegen' (to put inside): the latter of which is described by Fanny Davies as a quality achieved through technique and by "something spiritual and emotional," "as is conveyed by the pressure of a hand one loves," and not through "extreme digging into the keys." As we have seen, De Lara's playing in slower materials indeed encourages a less 'dug in' approach to tone and attack, while in quicker materials it encourages a close, covered and connected one. While De Lara's recorded performances are full of examples where inner materials are emphasized with tone and time, her use of inwardly- and downwardly-rolled arpeggiations in the martial transitional subject of Op. 79 no. 2 also recalls Clara's insistence that chords be played "in a way that will convey to the hearer the significance of the harmonies therein contained."[460]

Because many elements of De Lara's recorded style do seem to support descriptions of Clara's performance ideology as detailed in previous chapters and as briefly reiterated here, her historical Brahmsian authority remains intact. Indeed, as Musgrave asserts, De Lara's Brahms recordings have a degree of historical authority "despite her obvious limitations of technique and occasionally memory of reading."[461] When playing in ways consciously informed by De Lara's approach however, our performances should be at least as distant to the precepts of contemporary Brahms style

[459] "Clara Schumann," *The Academy* 49, no. 1252 (May 30, 1896): 454.
[460] Davies and Corder, "Robert Schumann," 494, 493.
[461] Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 314 - 15.

as hers, which might mean including many of those elements traditionally dismissed as mere consequences of a deteriorated body and mind. In other words, they should exhibit what we would interpret today as a rather casual approach to notation, musical details, time and structure; and they must feel too straightforward in lyrical passages and not direct and powerful enough in faster ones. De Lara's approach to the performance of Brahms's music may have been understood as controlled within her own musical contexts, but performances based on that approach that read as controlled today are unlikely to sound anything like hers.

5.1.5.b) Ilona Eibenschütz

- **Literal**: Playing like Eibenschütz involves using arpeggiation and dislocation sparingly when highlighting local details like the apexes of hairpins, inner lines, and the beginnings and ends of lyrical passages; and much more so when eliding and/or truncating musical materials, especially while rushing through and blurring the boundaries of structures large and small. When combined with rushing, these dislocations and arpeggiations often result in the complete disjointing of the hands, with materials overlapping and becoming linked where otherwise notated discretely. Elsewhere, notes can be doubled, added and altered at will for effect, voicing or emphasis; tied notes can be played again; and large parcels of musical material can be rewritten or omitted altogether as the performer sees fit.

- **Detailed:** Eibenschütz's approach to notated detail includes ignoring *fermati* when rushing or where blurring structural boundaries; ignoring indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity both in lyrical materials and in many other places as well; and altering the values of notes and rests almost everywhere. Most importantly, when playing in an Eibenschütz way one generally has little time to

shape local details or even to preserve local complexities of rhythm, harmony, melody and texture due to the briskness of her tempi and her tendency to rush precipitously. In performances consciously inspired by this approach therefore, shaping musical works through extreme rushing should read as significantly more important than elucidating the details of those works. Where local details are emphasized with the taking of time however, these instances tend to assume near structural significance against this general backdrop of rush and hurry.

- **Structural:** When playing like Eibenschütz, nearly all structures large and small are delineated with an approach to tempo modification that is defined by rushing. The outer edges of these structures are often softened through combinations of arpeggiation, rhythmic alteration, truncation and elision; but when these demarcations are emphasized through the taking of time, this stretching tends to occur before or after rather than at the boundary proper. This structural subversion is often further compounded by a tendency to render the preparatory and subsequent measures of structural boundaries in rhythmically- and harmonically-ambiguous ways. Elsewhere, reiterated materials tend to be played in highly similar ways; indications to reduce temporal and/or tonal intensity in contrasting lyrical subjects and sections are often passed over; and while there is rarely much temporal or tonal contrast between sections, in general there tends to be too much consistency within up-tempo sections by modern standards, and not enough consistency within more lyrical ones. Playing in an Eibenschütz way also includes the contrasting of materials by oscillating between a quick, vertical and thus more 'outer' approach to tone and attack, and one that is fleeting, closer to the keys and thus more 'inner.'

- **Temporally-Measured:** Like De Lara, Eibenschütz's approach includes the accumulation of tempo from phrase group to phrase group; the expressive lengthening, shortening, early and late sounding of notes, thereby undercutting rhythmic regularity and obscuring the divisions of the measure; the subverting of subjects' rhythmic impulse and organization from their very outsets by blurring

their structural boundaries; and the ignoring of *fermati*, indications to slow, note values, and rests. Unlike De Lara however, Eibenschütz's approach is primarily defined by rushing; her tempo almost never settles anywhere and rarely affords the time and space to shape local details; her wholesale truncation and elision of musical materials happens beyond logical divisions of the measure, thereby thoroughly subverting any sense of underlying pulse; and she not only ignores indications to slow in lyrical passages but often uses those passages in order to further increase tempo over entire sections and even works.

- **Expressively- and Technically-Controlled:** If De Lara's approach to manipulating detail, structure and time is an ocean away from the strictures of contemporary Brahms style, then Eibenschütz's is from another planet. Indeed, it's no wonder that Eibenschütz's performances sound and feel so foreign to modern ears and hands: details of rhythm, harmony, melody and texture seem to flit by unaccounted for; structures small and large seem to come and go unprepared and unresolved; and tempo is always wayward, volatile and perpetually leaning forward, pulling all material along with it in some cases while blurring and excluding materials in others. Playing like Eibenschütz must therefore always include extreme rushing; the conscious blurring of both the outer edges of musical structures as well as the details contained therein; the adoption of a quick and superficial tone and attack throughout, while playing more vertically in fast passages and closer to the keys in lyrical ones; and the large-scale omission, alteration or linking of materials. This dismemberment of the skeleton and internal organs of Brahms's scores necessarily leaves one feeling thoroughly out of control.

Unlike De Lara, Ilona Eibenschütz's performances feel just as uncontrolled to modern hands and ears as they did in her own musical contexts, adding credence to

Clara's protest that she "goes too quickly over everything."[462] Her extremely facile technique and tendency to rush through phrases while blurring their outer edges probably also explains the exasperation of Clara's letter in which she pleads with Eibenschütz to "BE PRECISE AND METICULOUS with everything even to the smallest detail...especially in the PHRASING...Do not take it lightly because it does not present technical difficulties for you!"[463] Indeed, the breathless quality of Eibenschütz's performance style recalls contemporaneous observations of a certain "nervousness that spoiled both tone and technique," while her negation of both detail and structure probably underlies assertions that her playing "lacks distinctiveness" and "a little dignity."[464]

Accusations of carelessness aside however, the consistency and facility of Eibenschütz's approach suggests that she wasn't *unable* to play Brahmsian detail and structure according to the precepts of Clara Schumann's teaching, but rather that she was aiming for some other content altogether.[465] Even with practice, attempts to imitate her performance style are ruled by corporeal and psychological impossibilities that cannot be

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[462] *Clara Schumann-Brahms Briefe,* II: 540 - 42, in Musgrave, *Performing Brahms*, 316.
[463] Evans, *Behind the Notes*, 25.
[464] "Mdlle. Ilona Eibenschütz," *The Academy* 39, no. 977 (January 17, 1891): 72; "Monday and Saturday Popular Concerts," *TMTASCC* 34, no. 601 (March 1, 1893): 151; and "Our London Correspondence," *The Manchester Guardian* (March 30, 1904): 4.
[465] Slåttebrekk and Harrison have also described Grieg's performance style as having been consistently characterized by rushing, the elision of structural boundaries, and the blurring of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic detail. Grieg's playing style therefore, just like Eibenschütz's, has trenchant implications for those elements of scores considered to be most important today: namely, their detail and structure. As Slåttebrekk and Harrison assert, "Grieg in his own performances contradicts almost everything his own written page seems to reinforce." These observations lend credence to the argument that late-Romantic pianists in a sense 'played against the score': in other words, their performance styles are irreducible to notation, regardless of that notation's perceived complexity and coherence. In their discussion of Grieg's very Eibenschütz-like tendency to place emphasis before or after rather than *at* structural boundaries, thereby creating musical shapes that are unpredictable based upon notation alone, Slåttebrekk and Harrison muse: "And where may we ask is that perfectly balanced symmetry so often associated with this composer? It is, practically speaking, non-existent." Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Grieg Performs Grieg," *Chasing the Butterfly,* http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=87.

easily solved, and perhaps they are not meant to be. As such, when playing in ways consciously inspired by "the little note eater,"[466] you know you have gotten it right when it is this content that emerges in performance, and not necessarily the detail and structure of Brahms's piano music. While Eibenschütz's attendance to neither the local nor structural has been traditionally levied against assertions of her historical Brahmsian authority, let us recall Brahms's claim that, "she is the pianist I best like to hear playing my works."[467]

[466] Ducat, "Conversations with Ilona Derenburg," in Rountree, "Ilona Eibenschütz," 14.
[467] Evans, *Behind the Notes,* 26.

5.2) Experimenting with the Recordings of the Schumann-Brahms Pupils

When selecting works from Brahms's late opuses that were left unrecorded by the Schumann-Brahms pupils, while it is tempting to experiment with those similar to Op. 79 no. 2, Op. 117 no. 1, Op. 118 no. 3 and Op. 119 no. 2, it seems important to resist the positivist one-to-one mapping that might come of such a methodology; with elements being incorporated only when they could be said to fit some pattern or rule. Indeed, if we only applied Ilona Eibenschütz's use of truncation and elision in music that shares rhythmic, harmonic, textural and melodic features with Op. 119 no. 2, these experiments would be over before they began. Her use of these devices doesn't seem to have been restricted by such parameters, and as such it seems odd to limit oneself accordingly. Instead, what follows here are three case studies centred around Brahms's *Intermezzo in E Major* Op. 116 no. 4, *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5 and *Intermezzo in B Minor* Op. 119 no. 1. Although two of these works are from the as yet unrepresented *Fantasien* Op. 116, in general they were selected precisely because they differ in material and spirit to those recorded by Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz.

It seems equally vital to avoid undertaking these experiments with the intention of trying to play each work in either a 'De Lara' or 'Eibenschütz' way. Given the overlapping nature of each pianist's approach, they seem to represent opposite poles of a common spectrum. Indeed, if Brahms appreciated Clara's approach, as so seemingly well represented by De Lara, and Eibenschütz's as evidenced by his enthusiasm for her playing, then it seems reasonable to suggest that what we have here is a continuum of

approaches to his music with which he was familiar. Rather than impose yet another restriction upon these experiments in early-recorded style, it is this continuum that will instead be freely drawn upon. When it comes to establishing the boundaries of this work therefore, I like Hans-Jörg Rheinberger's assertion that experimental systems must be "differentially organized and sufficiently open to play out their own capacities, unanticipated by the researcher."[468] In other words, for these experiments to truly problematize the aesthetic ideology of control, thereby revealing new insights into Brahms's musical contexts, their parameters cannot be pre-structured in such artificial ways.

Furthermore, following Philip's observation that learning to slide like a nineteenth-century violinist is probably less about pinpointing when and where to slide and more about bringing oneself to slide almost everywhere, it seems unlikely that Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz followed concrete rules when using any of the expressive and technical devices discussed thus far. They did however demonstrate a set of tendencies, both individual and shared, that seems to have been applied in a rather improvisatory way to Brahms's piano music. Mary Hunter makes the analogy to 'riffs' in her discussion of Carl Czerny's meticulous writing-out of expressive devices in the musical examples that accompany his performance treatises. According to Hunter the idea was that these effects could be practiced in isolation, abstracted from concrete musical works, and that once perfected they "could be applied as the spirit moved the performer, and not necessarily at predetermined places in any given piece." She asserts that these examples, "despite their sometimes obsessive attention to detail implicitly, if

[468] Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, *Toward a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), under the glossary entry for "Experimental Systems," in *Artistic Experimentation in Music: An Anthology*, 377.

counter-intuitively, teach a kind of improvisational mentality."[469] While the preceding chapter of this volume also includes detailed written-out examples of the minutiae of De Lara and Eibenschütz's recorded performances, they too are intended as practice aids: examples of 'riffs' to be abstractly learned for the purposes of extrapolating them across many other works. While it can be difficult for modern performer-scholars to accept that these pianists' use of such effects may have been motivated by general propensities and spur-of-the-moment decisions rather than by rules or the notational features of specific works, this does seem to be one of the keys to playing as they did.

In the following case studies we will again briefly discuss how contemporary Brahms performance norms play out in each of the three selected works, thereby establishing a baseline against which to juxtapose a snapshot of a possible recordings-inspired approach. Snapshot seems like an apt term here because the recordings-inspired styles proposed here are a mishmash of newly-learned riffs, tendencies and tastes: the specific recipe for which changes performance to performance. Some elements of these recipes however are less ephemeral than others, and those are what will be discussed here.

[469] Mary Hunter, "'To Play as if from the Soul of the Composer': The Idea of the Performer in Early Romantic Aesthetics," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 58, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 391, accessed January 28, 2014, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jams.2005.58.2.357.

5.2.1) *Intermezzo in E Major* Op. 116 no. 4

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

Modern pianists tend to shape the first twenty-five measures of this introspective little work into five clear phrase groups bookended by expressive hairpins. As the apexes of most of these hairpins occur at downbeats, the bass notes of which are played by the right hand crossed over the left, pianists will often stretch time into these downbeats thereby clearly delineating the pulse as well as each phrase group's outer edges. In between these signposts, pianists maintain a consistent approach to tempo while producing a singing, connected and *dolce* tone and attack that is as ever focused on the upper soprano line. Dynamics are manipulated subtly and within a fairly narrow palette throughout as indicated, and as a result this material doesn't dream and soar but rather ruminates. Pianists will however slightly widen this temporal and tonal spectrum during the dynamic, rhythmic, articulation and textural complexities of the final phrase group in m. 20 - 25; using inflections of tone and attack to outline its interwoven melodic lines, while maintaining their expressive composure and a clear sense of the underlying pulse. After an elaborated transitional subject comes to a clear close with the *dim. molto smorzando* in m. 31, we hear the first iteration of the darkly solemn chordal material that bookends the work's middle section.

Pianists continue to shape the more ethereal material of the middle section into four-measure phrase groups by taking slight amounts of time into the downbeats at their outer edges. Despite the *dolce una corda* indication in m. 36, the higher register of the

right-hand material and the lyre-like nature of the left however, pianists maintain a clear-eyed approach to rhythm here except perhaps over the hairpins and notated arpeggiations in m. 44 - 47; contrasting this middle section from its surrounding material primarily by adopting a more diffuse approach to tone production. After the final and often quite forcefully played iteration of the chordal material in m. 49 - 52, the primary subject returns with pianists again highlighting and shaping its textural details with subtle inflections of tone and touch, before taking quite a bit of time into the last and loudest statement of the hairpin figure in m. 57. The piece closes after a brief return of the middle section material, which is played much as before. You can hear Evgeny Kissin's 1990 performance of this work from the Deutsche Grammophon CD (DG POCG 1488) entitled "Schubert *Wanderer Fantasy*; Brahms *Fantasien* Op. 116; Liszt *Ungarische Rhapsodie no. 12*," in Sound Ex. 5.2.1a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.1a.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

While experimenting with this work, I was primarily inspired by how Adelina De Lara emphasizes triplet upbeats and rushes between them in her recording of Op. 79 no. 2. After arpeggiating the left-hand entry at this work's outset for the sake of voicing and emphasis, I thus stretch and in a sense 'hang' on the triplet upbeat to m. 1, before 'swinging' the temporal motion into that measure and all the way through to the right-hand upbeat at 1.3. The bass note at the apex of the hairpin is played early, but otherwise this downbeat is much less emphasized than it would be in modern performances. By allowing the temporal momentum established at this first triplet upbeat to carry through

the remainder of the first phrase group and into the next emphasized triplet upbeat at 4.3, tempo accumulates, second beats become increasingly shortened, third beats seem to enter earlier, the interstitial rests between left- and right-hand materials become undervalued, and a clear sense of the underlying pulse and divisions of the measure becomes more obscure. Just as we have seen in both De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz's performances, the next stretched triplet at 4.3 doesn't re-establish tempo but rather provides even more momentum, meaning that the second phrase group unfolds at a higher tempo than the first.

After briefly stretching time at the apex of the hairpin in m. 8, like Eibenschütz's shaping of local phrases in the opening measures of Op. 119 no. 2, the boundary between the end of the second phrase group and the outset of the transitional subject in m. 10 is blurred as I rush to a stretched and arpeggiated hairpin at 10.3. In so doing, the long note value associated with the downbeat and 'true' outset of the new subject at 10.1 is shortened. I then begin to rush as the melodic material of this transitional subject descends into yet another emphasized triplet upbeat at 14.3; using more dislocation where playing slowly in m. 12, and more arpeggiation and elision where tempo accumulates in m. 13. These elisions, in combination with another shortened note value at 14.1, then become linked to the arpeggiated entry of the triplet upbeat at 14.3, and another structural boundary is blurred as a result.

The next phrase group continues much as at the opening, only this time with the rhythmic organization of the hands becoming even more ambiguous as the rising left-hand figures in m. 16 - 18 are dislocated and begin to overlap with the otherwise discretely-notated descending right-hand figures. The triplet upbeat at 18.3 is again used

to catapult temporal motion into and through the next phrase group, where the textural complexities of m. 22 - 25 are elucidated through dislocation, extreme independence of the hands, and the favouring of inner lines, as inspired by De Lara's playing of the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2 and the middle section of Op. 117 no. 1. Here, bass notes are sounded early, with their rising figures following immediately afterwards; left- and right-hand materials otherwise notated discretely begin to overlap; the upper and inner lines of the right hand become disjointed and enter into dialogue with one another, with the inner lines being played quite forcefully; and rushing continues until the resolution of that inner line at 25.3 and the apex of an arpeggiated hairpin at 26.3.

While again using combinations of dislocation, arpeggiation and elision as I rush over the *crescendo* of the elaborated transitional subject, just like both De Lara and Eibenschütz might do I pay careful attention to inner and bass lines; I ignore the ***dim. molto smorzando*** indication in m. 31; and while I slightly draw out the triplet upbeat at 32.3, I maintain tonal and temporal intensity until the end of the chordal material, thereby linking these discrete subjects. Furthermore, because this chordal material is entered obliquely rather than patently, it assumes a snarling character as opposed to the broodiness more frequently heard in modern performances.

Inspired both by De Lara's use of arpeggiation in the high register material of the A^1 section of Op. 117 no. 1, and by both her and Eibenschütz's impassioned playing of lyrical materials, I then rush over both four-measure phrase groups of the middle section while adopting a much more extroverted tone than that suggested by the *dolce una corda* indication. Throughout this material, all right-hand chords are arpeggiated, while those occurring at upbeats and after second beats are sounded early; bass notes are dislocated

with the remainder of their rising lyre-like figures following immediately and independently afterwards; downbeats are underemphasized; and tonal and temporal intensity is maintained right through the *pianissimo* indication in m. 48 and into the second iteration of the chordal material in m. 49 - 52. Rather than contrast this middle section material from its surroundings by narrowing one's tonal and temporal palette as a modern pianist might do, this approach achieves the opposite and as a result this material rhapsodizes, pleads and delights rather than cogitates.

After once again shortening the value of the long note value at 52.1, the final statement of the opening subject features rushing, widespread dislocation, and complete asynchrony between the hands as well as between the right hand's upper and inner lines, the latter of which is forcefully favoured. Having stormed into the final stretched triplet upbeat of the work at 56.3, m. 57 - 59 are played in a rather rhythmically ambiguous manner, while the middle section material returns briefly and is played much as before. Much like Eibenschütz's doubling of the F#s in the B section of Op. 118 no. 3 however, the Es at 61.1 are played twice: once as part of the arpeggiated right-hand octave, and once by the independently meandering left hand. The brief return of the transitional material in the final measures of this work is again shaped with combinations of rhythmic alteration, rushing, arpeggiation and elision; thereby imparting some exuberance to material that otherwise tends to be played in a resignedly introspective manner.

Indeed, by rushing through most phrase groups here while blurring their outer demarcations and wrenching apart their insides, qualities fairly unheard of in modern performances of this work emerge: shadowy longing, clamorous discontent and effusive joy. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.1b while following

along with Score Ex. 5.2.1b. Because the elements of this recordings-inspired approach have not been in any way 'fixed' or rehearsed, I have only provided lightly annotated scores for these experimental performances. While I have described general tendencies and intentions here, I fully expect (and perhaps even hope) that subtle variations will be audible in my recorded snapshots.

5.2.2) *Intermezzo in E Minor* Op. 116 no. 5[470]

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

While modern pianists are keenly aware of the presence of some ambiguous and ephemeral quality in this sphinx-like little work, they are relegated to communicating this content through tone colour and attack alone, while controlling the detail and structure of its container in the ways to which they are so accustomed in Brahms's piano music. As in all matters of emotional content in this repertoire, the ineffable is understood to emerge only through the detailed, literal, structural, regular and controlled performance of a thoroughly resolved outer carapace. This inability to escape the strictures of contemporary Brahms style results in performances that can often seem awkward and insincere rather than mysterious. Though hardly the most challenging work in pianists' repertoires, many admit to performing this *Intermezzo* grudgingly, and it is not uncommon to see titans of the keyboard anxiously searching for its notes in performance, brow furrowed, shoulders hunched and hands contorted.

[470] Parts of this material were jointly developed and presented with Darla Crispin as part of a lecture-performance given at the Orpheus Institute's 2012 ORCiM Research Festival.

In this work's opening A section, some control can be achieved from a rhythmic point of view by maintaining a consistent tempo, by observing all note and rest values exactly, and by maintaining a clear sense of the underlying pulse and divisions of the measure. Though a common feature of Brahms's late piano works, the impulse to resolve his treatment of hemiola seems particularly pressing here. Because the slurred couplets of this work's A section are arranged across the bar lines, pianists must decide where the temporal emphasis of each measure should fall. While emphasizing the upbeats here respects both the classical 'down-up' approach to shaping two-note slurs as well as late 19th-century Viennese waltz rhetoric, this approach can make the rests feel too long, while making the couplets sound choppy and vertical. By 'moving to' downbeats on the other hand, a horizontal impulse forward is initiated, the temporal ordering quality of the bar lines is respected, and the unification of the couplets becomes easier, thereby helping the ear to push through the interruptions of the rests.

In a ploy to make sense of the distinctly unBrahmsian texture of these materials, pianists will often further link its eerily stilted couplet slurs into one overarching twelve-measure phrase group by maintaining a consistent approach to tone and attack, with the notes of each chord being played firmly, simultaneously, and to the bottoms of the keys: no small feat given that Brahms has arranged the notes of the chords coinciding with upbeats so that they must be played with crossed thumbs, with the rest of the fingers spread wide and palms wrenched together. For some chords, the right-hand thumb must pass below the left, while other times it's best played above: a negotiation rife with the potential for lapses of timing, memory, coordination, as well as missed or not fully

sounding notes. Once accomplished, the pianist must then leap outwards to reach the next chord, and then back again to the centre of the keyboard, thumbs crossed.

Anticipating this physical conundrum, in an 1892 letter to Clara Schumann Brahms writes: "In the little E Minor piece, it's probably better if you always take the 6th eighth as indicated on the first beat, in parentheses. Of course, the peculiar appeal which is always connected with a difficulty is then lost, as here, the strong pliant curve of the hand – of large hands!"[471] Within these parentheses in the attached score, Brahms had simply exchanged the notes played by each thumb, leaving two discrete triads in closed position. Because Brahms's solution survives in modern editions of this work pianists tend to regard it as evidence of composer intent: if his own *ossia* affords more technically secure performances, then its ethos should apply even when playing with the original fingering.

When the B section finally arrives, pianists contrast it from the surrounding A section materials by celebrating its ringing bass notes, clearer melodic focus, more intuitive rhythmic organization and relative technical ease with a slightly relaxed approach to tempo, a more resonant tone, and an amplified dynamic range. When the A section materials do return they are played much as before, with the inner voice of the right hand being brought out in the chordal closing measures through tone and attack alone. Sviatoslav Richter's 1992 live performance of this work is available on Doremi's CD entitled "Legendary Treasures vol. 12," but you can watch it in Sound Ex. 5.2.2a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.2a. If you watch very closely, you can see Richter panic every so slightly while negotiating the thumb crossing on the sixth eighth

[471] *Clara Schumann: ein Künstlerleben*, III: 562 - 63, in Avins, *BLL*, 698.

note of m. 32. While this particular chord is executed much more smoothly upon repetition, he plays quite insecurely right before it and uses a touch of pedal to cover his tracks - perhaps in anticipation of another near-disaster.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

Brahms's assertion that his *ossia* version is 'probably better' most likely refers to a physically debilitating ailment that struck Clara Schumann around the time he penned this work. Indeed as we have already seen, later in life Brahms was wrestling with the weakened minds and bodies of many of those closest to him, including his own. Perhaps he was also thinking of the 'small hands' of their many fine pupils: young women like Adelina De Lara and Ilona Eibenschütz, with whose technical apparatuses he was so familiar. The most telling part of Brahms's letter however, might be his reference to what is lost when 'the peculiar appeal that is always connected with a difficulty' is eliminated. Brahms seems to have been sure that Clara would understood that the 'peculiar appeal' to which he referred lay not only in the bodily implications of the awkward *pas de pouces* written into the fabric of this work, but in how a performer's sense of insecurity and fallibility translates into aesthetic experience. As we have already seen, De Lara's approach was characterized by the emphasis of inner 'thumb lines,' while Brahms is known to have jokingly asked listeners to "admire the gentle sonority of his 'tenor thumb.'"[472] It's possible therefore that a performer's unsound state of mind and body lies at the heart of what this piece 'tells of.' If so, then a provocative performance of this

[472] Ethel Smyth, *Impressions*, I: 266, in Musgrave, *A Brahms Reader*, 124.

work might be one in which this insoluble quality is allowed to emerge from behind the controlled curtain of contemporary Brahms style.

A good place to start might be to mimic both De Lara and Eibenschütz's tendency to shape larger phrase groups by playing more slowly at their outer edges and faster over their middles. In the opening A section of this work, this would mean anticipating the *crescendo* in m. 5 by starting to rush as early as m. 2 or 3, just as De Lara anticipates the *crescendo* in the second subject of Op. 79 no. 2. In so doing however, the more physically challenging thumb-crossings and leaps in m. 5 - 9 end up being played extremely quickly as a result, leading to an increased sense of risk. Where careful control of tone and rhythm once provided a unifying solution to the ambiguous potentialities of this *Intermezzo*, the pianist now suddenly finds herself at their mercy. While rushing, the temporal spaces between each couplet suddenly become more and more constricted, meaning one has less time to ensure that the notes of each chord sound simultaneously and fully to the beds of the keys. The lag in hand-ear coordination that results from this tonal and temporal instability is not unlike that experienced when mimicking De Lara's performance of the martial transitional subject of Op. 79 no. 2, where her rhythmic alterations, rushing and arpeggiations collude to rob one of the time and space needed to navigate and orient the mind and body. If temporal and tonal irregularity leads to technical insecurity, then rushing over the most difficult and awkward measures of this section is risky business indeed.

Inspired by De Lara's tendency to emphasize the contours of phrases large and small with both time and tonal emphasis, what if instead of trying to decide whether to move 'from' upbeats or 'to' downbeats, the pianist applies emphasis according to the

proximity of her thumbs: by playing with either dislocation or arpeggiation when the thumbs overlap or move towards one another, and by playing with less emphasis when they are wrenched apart. In the opening measures of this work we see that these points of convergence coincide with the outer edges of couplets grouped in pairs. When deciding whether to use dislocation or arpeggiation for this local emphasis, what happens if we then follow De Lara's example in her performance of Op. 117 no. 1 and use the former at the slower outer edges of this section and the latter over its faster middle. Arpeggiation over these faster and more technically problematic measures naturally only adds to their tonal, temporal and technical uncertainty.

In so doing, one ends up with an approach to emphasizing materials with tone and time on both a small and large scale that is as deliberate as it is oceans away from the tenuous control of modern performances. Indeed, the result is thus not one of a regular pulse but more like that of the gravitational and elliptical orbits of celestial bodies. Because this tonal and temporal emphasis doesn't occur with predictable regularity, and because it increases rather than alleviates insecurity, something ambiguously impressionistic, unsolved and confounding is allowed to emerge. It is perhaps fitting therefore that De Lara primarily inspires this approach, as not only does she seem to have been less technically equipped than her studio mate, but she also seems to have had a special appreciation for the thumbs. Furthermore, placing emphasis here where these thumbs collide, hands tilted awkwardly towards one another in 'the pliant curve' alluded to by Brahms himself, also seems reminiscent of De Lara's 'inner' approach to the weight and motion of the hands.

While modern pianists immediately begin to play the B section materials of this work with an amplified dynamic range and a more resonant tone and attack, what if m. 11 - 13 are instead played rather nondescriptly; using dislocation and rhythmic alterations to 'straighten' out the quarter-eighth note relationships, while rushing into and through the outset of the more lyrical material in m. 15. When this material does arrive, impatiently dislocated bass notes and further rushing then anticipate the *crescendo* of m. 17. Like the A section, these middle measures contain many perilous leaps in both hands, and especially between the third eighth and bass note of the left hand: the latter of which sounds even earlier due to dislocation, thereby constricting the amount of time one has to accomplish the leap. Once stripped of its relative lyricism, regularity and technical security, this B section becomes every bit as elusive, puzzling and risky as its bookends. The resulting subversion of contrast between the sections of this work is also highly reminiscent of Ilona Eibenschütz's approach to both Op. 118 no. 3 and Op. 119 no. 2.

Much like Eibenschütz might do, temporal and tonal intensity is then maintained right through the *dolce* at the outset of the transitional material in m. 25, where left- and right-hand materials become elided through arpeggiation, and where any sense of a clear and regular pulse is lost. These elisions and their resulting ambiguity are then carried right into the outset of the new section at m. 29, with time only being taken after it begins. After this brief statement of the A section material is shaped as before on both a small and large scale, dislocation, arpeggiation and elision are used to delineate inner voices during the final measures of the work, within a rather free time feel. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.2b while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.2b.

5.2.3) *Intermezzo in B Minor* Op. 119 no. 1

a) Contemporary Brahms Style

With this miniature we return to the realm of what might be called 'characteristic' Brahmsian musical materials. As such, modern pianists tend to phrase its A section into two overarching eight-measure phrase groups; taking time at their ends in m. 8 and 16, at the apexes of the expressive hairpins in m. 4 - 5 and 7 - 8, and throughout the rhythmic, textural and articulation details of m. 12 - 13. Some pianists will also emphasize the half-hairpins above m. 1 - 3 and 9 by slightly elongating downbeats. As ever however, tempo is always firmly reasserted after each instance of slowing, a clear sense of the pulse and divisions of the measure are maintained, and notes and rests are given their full and proportional value. In such a succinct work it is also vital that instances of slowing are carried out according to the principles of structural playing; with the most time being taken at the end of the section in m. 16, slightly less at the end of the first phrase group in 8, and even less taken at the apex of the local hairpin in m. 4 - 5. This hierarchical approach to structural slowing and the ever-important reestablishment of tempo afterwards ensures that this A section is ruled by a serious and resigned quality rather than a lamenting, rapturous or wistful one. This characteristic Brahmsian stoicism is further underlined through the maintenance of a consistent approach to tone and attack within a fairly narrow tonal palette, while focusing on the production of a clear and connected upper melodic line.

Contrast is achieved in the B section with pianists adopting a fuller, warmer and more resonant approach to tone and attack while paying more attention to the elucidation of inner melodies, though never to the detriment of the clarity and focus of the upper melodic line. Unnotated time is often taken as early as m. 20 to delineate the start of the *crescendo* in m. 22, as well as at its climax in m. 24; while time is taken into the reprise of the section's primary subject at m. 31 and over the work's climax in m. 37 - 38. To reign in the B section's impassioned climaxes and stormier passages however, between these instances of slowing pianists maintain a strictly regular tempo and avoid rushing at all costs. With the return of the A section in m. 47 pianists tend to thoroughly reset their tonal and temporal palette, rendering its slightly elaborated materials almost exactly as before. Regarding these elaborations, pianists are careful to preserve the triplet - duplet relationship between the descending inner line and the upper soprano line, thereby upholding a regular sense of pulse. Finally, as in m. 12 - 13 pianists will use subtle manipulations of tone and time to shape the textural, rhythmic and articulation details in m. 58 - 64, before bringing the work to a close.

When searching for a representative performance of this work I decided upon a one by Hélène Grimaud. Of the handful of pianists considered to be 'Brahmsians,' Grimaud is perhaps the *only* woman: something that should give us serious pause, given that the majority of pianists in Brahms's life were women. Grimaud's performance of this work however is anything but typical. While it perhaps seems odd to provide an outlying example having just discussed how this work tends to be performed by a majority of pianists today, including Grimaud here is an opportunity to make an important point concerning eccentric contemporary Brahms performance styles. In a review of her 1997

recital at Alice Tully Hall, Allan Kozinn rightly notes Grimaud's impressive technical arsenal, the beauty of her tone and attack in lyrical passages, as well as "the kind of flexibility that allows her to convey the illusion of improvisatory freshness" in her interpretive style. One begins to get the sense that Grimaud is something of an atypical Brahmsian however, when Kozinn notes:

> Brahms's most passionate and tempestuous music, in her readings, evoked the spirit of Chopin more than, say, Beethoven or Schumann, Brahms's closer antecedents. In the abstract, Brahms and Chopin seem a world apart. Miss Grimaud's performances argued persuasively that there are connections. Stranger still, yet equally compelling, was her use of an almost Debussian approach to timbre in the more introspective of the Fantasies and Intermezzos. Impressionistic hues and hazy textures may seem foreign to Brahms, but Miss Grimaud proved that the implications are within the music.[473]

Many elements of Grimaud's approach to this work indeed set her apart. In the A section for example, rather than standing stalwartly upright her tempo leans slightly to the right: both at the level of the measure, where one senses a slight inequality in note values; and at the level of the phrase group, where her tempo modifications include both expressive slowing as well as subtle rushing. She also makes sparing use of dislocation, like at the apex of the hairpin in m. 5, for example. These dislocations become more frequent in the B section however, where she disjoints the hands for emphasis in m. 18 - 20 and 41, and to aid with the voicing of inner lines in m. 31 - 32. Her time feel is again slightly restless here as she stretches some right-hand entries coinciding with hairpins in

[473] Alan Kozinn, "In a Pianist's Brahms, A Chopinesque Esprit," review of Hélène Grimaud (piano), in *The New York Times* (February 19, 1997), accessed August 6, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/1997/02/19/arts/in-a-pianist-s-brahms-a-chopinesque-esprit.html.

m. 17 - 18, before rushing ever so slightly into the *crescendo* in m. 23. Interestingly, at the close of the B section she takes much more unnotated time over the tail end of the hairpin in m. 41 - 42 than she does at the *rit*. indication in m. 45 - 46. Finally, her approach to the A^1 section is very similar to that which came before, only here she uses an Adelina De Lara level of dislocation and arpeggiation in m. 58 - 64 to elucidate the passage's many beautiful complexities.

While these details indeed lend a quality of improvisatory freshness to Grimaud's performance, Kozinn's identification of a Chopinesque or Debussian spirit in her playing is more a testament to the rigidity and specificity of contemporary Brahms performance norms, than to any real eccentricity in Grimaud's style. She is considered to be a Brahmsian pianist precisely because her style conforms with the pillars of contemporary Brahms pianism in that it is literal, detailed, structural, temporally-measured, and expressively and technically controlled. Her phrase groups and sections have clearly defined slower outer edges; she maintains an underlying sense of the pulse and the divisions of measures throughout; downbeats, apexes of hairpins and local complexities are shaped and emphasized by the slight taking of time, with tempo being re-established afterwards; nothing is added, removed or altered, and she is meticulous with regards to articulation markings; and she maintains consistency within and contrast between sections. Her sparing use of dislocation serves to highlight detail, though not to the detriment of structure; while her instances of rushing serve to elucidate structure and create contrast both within and between sections, while never blurring detail.

The point of all this is that in spite of all the beautifully anomalous features of Grimaud's performance, it still sits fairly comfortably with contemporary Brahms

performance norms. This is perhaps something to bear in mind when experimenting with early-recorded style, especially when attempting to problematize our investment in contemporary Brahms style and its underlying ideology. To create performances that do this *at least* as much as those of the Schumann-Brahms pupils, we need to meddle with the beating heart of what it means to be a Brahmsian pianist. You can listen to Hélène Grimaud's performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.3a while following along with Score Ex. 5.2.3a.

b) Recordings-Inspired Brahms Style

As a final comment on what it might take to play Brahms's late piano music in a recordings-inspired way, in this work I was primarily inspired by Ilona Eibenschütz's approach, and in particular by her blurring of the outer boundaries of structures big and small; her tendency to take time after new phrase groups have already begun; her use of rhythmic alterations for emphasis and effect; and her truncation of materials deemed to be superfluous. In the first phrase group, I dislocate almost everywhere and begin to rush almost immediately, with the last sixteenth note of the upper right-hand melody sounding early; and while I take a slight amount of time to emphasize the apex of the local hairpin in m. 5 - 6, I rush right through its end much like Eibenschütz does in the opening measures of Op. 119 no. 2. After again taking time at the apex of the next hairpin in m. 7 - 8, I rush straight through the downbeat of the new phrase group in m. 9, taking time only after it has begun. Instead of taking time to highlight and shape the articulation, rhythmic and textural details of m. 12 - 13 as modern pianists do, I instead continue to

rush; I dislocate most left-hand materials freely; I elide the upbeats to m. 13, 14 and 16 with the downbeats they precede through arpeggiation; and I adopt a casual approach to rest and note values. As such, the details and structure of this section become shifting, restless and hazy, as if furtively remembered rather than pondered.

After ignoring the *rit*. indication in m. 16 and rushing straight through the structural boundary that divides the A and B sections, I again take time only after the latter has begun. For the sake of voicing inner lines I dislocate many lower right-hand notes from their upper counterparts, and in m. 18 - 19 I slightly 'swing' right-hand sixteenth notes, creating a lilting time-feel that is not unlike that of De Lara's performance of the A section materials of Op. 117 no. 1. The cavalier quality conveyed by these rhythmic alterations however soon gives way to wholesale rushing when the left-hand note at 20.3 is sounded early. After playing the climax of the *crescendo* in m. 24 - 26 with arpeggiation, dislocation and disjointedness of the hands, I maintain temporal and tonal intensity right into and through the reprise of the section's main theme in m. 31, again taking time after it has begun.

After using dislocation and more 'swung' sixteenth notes to delineate the right hand's dual melodic lines in m. 31 - 32, I then begin to rush dramatically over the hairpin starting in m. 33; I roll left-hand octaves for extra temporal drive; and as I rush I truncate about a full beat between 34.2 and 35.2. Over the climax of the work in m. 37 - 38 I then play the last two sixteenth notes of each left-hand triplet simultaneously, thereby imitating the arrangement of the right-hand figures; each hand's materials become disjointed through dislocation and further rushing; and I again cut about a full beat between 38.2 and 39.2, thereby firmly and thoroughly negating any sense of an

underlying pulse or logical division of the measure. This combination of rushing, dislocation and truncation thoroughly subverts the rhythmic, melodic, textural and harmonic organization of this work's climax, leading to a feeling of heightened volatility that only reinforces its importance. Indeed, it can be illuminating to observe how the topography of musical works shifts when their climatic materials are 'emphasized' through undercutting rather than through accentuation.

Instead of reducing temporal and tonal intensity in any significant way over the half-hairpins of m. 39 - 42 or even at the *rit*. - *diminuendo* indication in m. 45, I again push right through the return of the A section material, taking time after it as begun. This section then proceeds as before, only with the rhythmic relationship between the triplet and duplet figures of the elaborated main subject becoming blurred through further rushing and rhythmic alteration. In a final nod to Ilona Eibenschütz, I take an enormous amount of time in m. 57, thereby detracting from both the notated slowing in m. 61 and the much more important structural slowing at the work's close. You can hear my performance of this work in Sound Ex. 5.2.3b, while following along with the annotated score in Score Ex. 5.2.3b.