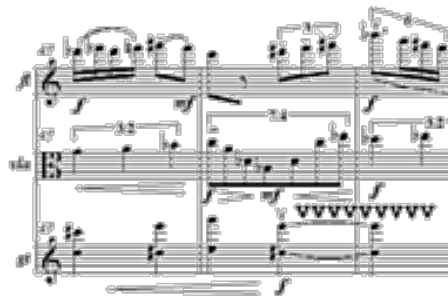


Brahms on Composition



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MUSICAL COMPOSITION

1. When you study music, the most important thing to learn is Strict Counterpoint.
2. Writing variations is something good for the beginner.
3. Usually the best ideas flow from the hand or mind without any particular effort, these are the ideas that will endure in your compositions.
4. Never begin working the out of a composition before the whole thing has taken definite form as an outline either on paper or in your head. When ideas come to you, go for a walk, then you will discover that the thing you thought was a complete thought, was actually only the beginning of one.
5. In the sonata form, the piece must have a logical structure. It is not enough to have a good idea here and there. The sonata is not when one has merely combined several ideas through the outward form of the sonata, but that, on the contrary, the sonata form must emerge of necessity from the idea.
6. When you are composing a piece, your bass should be vibrant, not sleepy or lazy. Your harmonies should sing and not be weak.
7. Harmony should not only be the accompaniment of the piece, but help and allow the idea to develop, so to speak, to help it emerge clearly and powerfully.
8. In regular composition, and song writing, the determining role of the melody and of clearly perceived basses created in good counterpoint should be a must.
9. When you examine a piece, read only the vocal line separately and or the bass separately, so this way you can see if your melody is dreary or your bass boring. The determining role of the melody and of clearly perceived basses created in good counterpoint should be a requirement. The accompaniment should be a equal, even independent, element and sometimes to move it canonically in relation to the voice. The canonic form never develops into the controlling element, but only as a means of increasing the charm of the vocal melody. And the melody will always break the form when its powerful and sublime flow so dictates.
10. Combining variety (diversity) with unity can be difficult. It is accomplished by transforming the basic motive more or less recognizably through rhythmic alterations; through displacement into other chordal inversions, and through exact or retrograde inversions, thereby you create themes and melodies of the most extreme contrast.

11. Extension of the subsidiary motives can be done by means of augmentation.

12. To compose a long adagio is the most difficult of all.

13. Unified modulation does not in any way preclude the use of even the most distant keys. Quite the contrary these keys become distant only by virtue of the fact that another key governs; this is what gives them their expressive power. They say something different; they are like the colors of a painting that contrast with the background color and are simultaneously contained and intensified by it.

14. To learn modulation imitate the masters. If Beethoven, Mozart or Haydn go from C Major to E Major, you do the same. In regard to the overall course of the modulation, with the exception of the individual divergences, the guiding principle is "The straight path is the best path".

15. You must learn how to work. You must write a lot, day after day, and not think that what you are writing always has to be something significant. As far as songs go, you will write many songs before a usable one emerges.

16. It is rare that a piece, once it has been completed, becomes better through revision; usually it gets worse.

17. You should not always trust your ideas. The pen is not only for writing, but also for deleting. But be very cautious. Once something has been written down it is hard to get rid of. But if you have come to the conclusion that it will not do; even if it's good in itself- then don't think about it for long; simply strike it out! How often one attempts to save such a passage and thus ruins the entire thing, not to mention becoming a slave to the idea instead of being the master. Sometimes passages like this also serve to conceal the troublemaking elements whose presence you might have intuited but would have not looked for it there at all. Corrections usually should have to do with particular details of the composition.

18. Clearly imitation is the best way to understand how music is written and structured. A beginning composer should follow the methods of composition which are set by the masters like Brahms, Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn, etc.,. This way you can understand the structure and apply this to your own work. Every composer takes ideas from other composers, its not that your going to use that idea note for note in your piece. On the contrary, it's the way you manipulate or change the idea and develop it, which reveals the genius in a composer and his composition. When you compose, it is good for a beginner to copy or follow a particular structure of a piece or a style of a composer; this way you can discover how a composition is created or constructed and apply this to your own ideas. By doing this you will eventually break out of that mold and with a clear understanding develop your own style of composition or a ingenious variation of an older one with unprecedented new insight.

SONG-WRITING

1. In song writing, the first thing to be examined should be whether the musical form fully corresponds to the text. Mistakes along these lines should be avoided. In general, if the text allows treatment in strophes, then that should be utilized. On which texts should be treated in strophes and which not, a close study of the songs of Franz Schubert will prove invaluable.

2. When a composer attempts to write songs, he should know his text precisely. Which also includes, the construction and meter of the poem should be thoroughly clear to him. Before you compose it, you should carry the poem around with you in your head for a long time and should frequently recite it out loud to yourself, paying close attention to everything, especially the declamation. Also mark the pauses especially and follow these later when you work.

3. The pauses in a song, should be often a echo of what precedes them, often a preparation for what follows. The rhythm should undergo an artistic development and the accompaniment should be raised to a factor that has it's own independent influence. It should create freedom and assurance.

4. Once the song's structure has been examined from all these angles, then follows a consideration of it's individual parts. At those points where language inserts punctuation, the musical phrase has cadences; and just as the poet, in his purposeful construction, ties sentences more or less closely together using commas, semicolons, periods, etc., as his external signs, so the musician, similarly, has at his disposal, perfect and imperfect cadences in a variety of forms to indicate the greater or lesser degree of coherence of his musical phrases. The importance of the cadence is evident, for it is through them that both the construction and proportion of the various parts are determined.

5. Here the main thing was to understand the combination and opposition of the three great factors in music-rhythm, melody and harmony; to understand, for example, that the cadence that is harmonically and melodically perfect will have a weaker effect if it does not occur simultaneously with the rhythmic cadence; that such an occurrence may, in one instance, be a grievous error, in another an effective means of joining the phrases together: that the weaker cadence must precede the stronger; and finally that the proportion of the various parts must correspond to the text. In some cases a six-four chord can sometimes resolve the situation; A CADENTIAL SIX-FOUR.

6. The location and form of the cadences is linked in the closest possible manner with the course of the modulation. Even in the case of a very long song whose subsidiary phrases were extended and internally consistent, the principal key always has to be clearly articulated and its dominance over the secondary keys maintained by means of clear relationships, so that, so to speak, the sum of all the keys utilized in the piece combines to create an image of the tonic key in its activity. That precisely the lack of clear identification of a key, even the tonic, can serve as an excellent means of expression, is in the nature of the matter.

7. The canonic form when used in accompaniment should never develop into the controlling element, but should serve on the contrary, only as a means of increasing the charm of the vocal melody. And the melody will always and unhesitatingly break the form whenever its powerful and sublime flow so dictates.

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INSPIRATION AND CREATIVITY

1. All truly inspired ideas come from God, and the consciousness of being inspired by him. Your religiosity will make you more conscious and aware of that fact, and of the fact that God is nearer to you than others in your craft, and that you can consort with him without fear.

2. The contact of inspiration though God cannot be done merely by will power working through the conscious mind, which is an evolutionary product of the physical realm and perishes with the body. It can only be accomplished by the soul-powers within - the real ego that survives bodily death. Those powers are quiescent to the conscious mind unless illumined by Spirit.

3. To realize that we are one with the Creator, as Beethoven did, is a wonderful and awe-inspiring experience. Very few human beings ever come into that realization and that is why there are so few great composers or creative geniuses in any line of human endeavor. All this should always be contemplated before commencing to compose. This is the first step.

4. When the urge to compose is present, appeal directly to the Maker and ask Him three most important questions pertaining to our life here in this world - whence, wherefore, whither [woher, warum, wohin]? This appeal will immediately manifest feelings of vibrations that will thrill your whole being. These are the Spirit illuminating the soul-power within, and in this exalted state, you can clearly see what is obscure in your ordinary moods; then you feel capable of drawing inspiration from above, as Beethoven did. These vibrations assume the forms of distinct mental images, after you have formulated your desire and resolve in regard to what you want - namely, to be inspired so that you can compose something that will uplift and benefit humanity - something of permanent value. Straightaway the ideas will flow upon you, directly from God, and not only should you see distinct themes in you mind's eye, but they also will be clothed in the right forms, harmonies and orchestration. Only with divine inspiration will finished product be revealed to you, measure by measure.

5. Most of the time you have to be or will be in a semi-trance condition to get such results - a condition when the conscious mind is in temporary abeyance and the subconscious mind, which is part of Omnipotence, that the inspiration comes; and to be careful, however, not to lose consciousness, otherwise the ideas will fade away. That is the way Mozart composed, and when asked what the process was with him while composing, he replied: "The process with me is like a vivid dream". He then went on and described how ideas, clothed in the proper musical setting, streamed down upon him. God and His Omnipotence, His awe-inspiring grandeur, His glory, and above all his closeness to you are things that should be pondered on just before commencing to compose. It is most stimulating and inspiring process to think along those lines before entering that trance-like state in which inspirations come.

6. The dream-like state is like entering a trance-like condition - hovering between being asleep and awake; you are still conscious but right on the border of losing consciousness, and it is at such moments that inspired ideas come. Then it is of the utmost importance to put the ideas down on paper immediately. Then they are fixed and cannot escape; and when you look at them again, they conjure up that same mood that gave them birth. This is a very important law. Themes that occur this way usually are the ones that will endure.

7. Spirit is the light of the soul. Spirit is universal. Spirit is the creative energy of the Cosmos. The soul of man is not conscious of its powers until it is enlightened by Spirit. Therefore, to evolve and grow, man must learn how to use and develop his own soul forces. All great creative geniuses do this, although some of them do not seem to be as conscious of the process as others. Beethoven was aware of the fact that he was inspired and he left records to that effect.

8. All true inspiration emanates from God, and can reveal Himself through that spark of divinity within - through that psychologists call the subconscious mind. Any composer capable of entering into that state can create immortal works, only in believing in which no less an authority than Jesus, Himself, says, in John 14:10 "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works, and in the 12th Verse of the same chapter, He adds, "He that believeth Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do". All these things mentioned here have a direct bearing on the mental, psychic and spiritual processes when attempting to compose. The powers from which all truly great composers like Mozart, Schubert, Bach and Beethoven drew their inspirations is the same powers that enabled Jesus to perform His miracles. We call it God, Omnipotence, Divinity, the Creator, etc. It is a power of All that created our earth and the whole universe, and Jesus taught us that we can appropriate it for our own upbuilding right here and now and also earn Eternal Life. Jesus is very explicit in Matthew 7:7, saying, "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you". There would not be so much good music paper wasted in fruitless attempts to compose if those great precepts were better understood. That is why atheists works are utterly lacking in inspiration. Their works are purely cerebral. The great Nazarene knew that law also, and He proclaimed it in John 15:4, "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine." No atheist has ever been or will be a great composer. Jesus taught us that there is true supreme hope for all. He came not as the great exception, but as the great example for us to emulate. Adherence to can create nothing but divine values and an alliance with the

Creator, that is capable of a life on earth full of inspiration and masterpieces of music to accompany that life for others to witness. This is the secret of inspiration; which is the ability to synchronize the conscious and subconscious minds, just as Jesus did, but on a much higher level.

9. Inspiration is of such importance in composing, but by no means all that there is to it. Structure is just as consequential, for without craftsmanship, inspiration is a 'mere reed shaken in the wind' or 'sounding brass or tinkling cymbals'. Great compositions are not the fruits of inspiration alone, but of severe, laborious and painstaking toil. No composition will live long unless it has both inspiration and craftsmanship, which Beethoven had to a superlative degree. There also must be in relation, with inspiration and craftsmanship, a natural aptitude, where ideas come to you with more or less no conscious effort, with a sense of comfort and relative ease, like an aspiration being fulfilled. But parallel to that, as seen in Beethoven's sketchbooks, comes the proof that he toiled incessantly in order to leave us such masterpieces. Only with your religiosity, God's inspiration, and the utilization of all three, can one achieve mastery of classical music composition and achieve true fame and immortality, which is what oblivion constantly tries to challenge. This is the proven universal formula for success in music and any and all other endeavors of human life.

10. Another aspect of this art which is extremely vital and demands great emphasis, is privacy. It should be unthinkable of attempting to compose unless you are sure you will not be interrupted or disturbed. The Muse is a very jealous entity, and she will fly away on the slightest provocation.

11. A composer who wishes to write worth-while music must devote his whole time and energy to that one occupation.

12. A composer in order to study, learn and absorb all that the masters have to offer, and put to use that knowledge in his own works, must have the capacity to judge objectively an individuality that differs from his own.

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