TEXTURE IN BRAHMS’ OP. 116 WITH AN IDENTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS AND TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Hua Wang:

Texture in Brahms’ Op. 116 with an Identification of Performance Problems and
Teaching Suggestions

J. Muzi Kolar, Chair
School of Music and Dance

Marian Liebowitz
School of Music and Dance

Zhengsheng Zhang
Department of Linguistics and Asian/Middle Eastern Languages

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Approval Date
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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by
Hua Wang
Master of Arts in Music
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This thesis provided an analysis of three types of textures in Op. 116 of Johannes Brahms as well as performance and practice suggestions. Structural analyses were also provided to serve the purpose of the textural analyses. The performance and practice suggestions were developed for advanced students. The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter one is the introduction including the purpose of the thesis, limitations, methodology, definitions, and organization. Chapter two is a review of literature about Brahms’ biography, his piano compositional style, Op. 116 Fantasien, texture, texture of Brahms’ piano works, and texture in piano pedagogy. In chapter three, the analyses of texture and structure are presented. The description of chordal, embedded and polyphonic textures are provided. Music examples which are selected to illustrate each type of texture are analyzed. The problems and difficulties of practicing and performing are discussed. The major problems of performance are balance and voicing of the elements and how to voice them. Practice and teaching suggestions are provided. Chapter four includes a summary of the thesis, conclusions, and recommendations for further study. The thesis concluded that texture is one of several important elements when performing Brahms’ late piano works successfully. The analysis of texture is a necessary step in practicing efficiently and for making a convincing performance.
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I dedicate this thesis to all of them.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a German composer and pianist who inherited the German compositional traditions from J. S. Bach and Ludwig V. Beethoven. James Huneker wrote of Brahms: “He was the greatest contrapuntist after Bach, the greatest architectonist after Beethoven—his contribution to the technics of rhythm is enormous.”¹ Thus, he was grouped with Bach and Beethoven as one of the three B’s in music history. Brahms first performed one of his own compositions at age fourteen. In his twenties, Brahms was introduced to Robert and Clara Schumann. Schumann was impressed by Brahms’ performance and compositions. With Schumann’s recommendation, Brahms’ Scherzo, Op. 4 and three piano sonatas in F-sharp minor, C major, and F minor were published. Brahms maintained a lifelong friendship with the Schumanns, especially with Clara who was the first reader of many of Brahms’ compositions. Their friendship lasted until the death of Clara in 1896. One year later, Brahms died in Vienna.

As a composer, Brahms wrote works for orchestral, chamber ensembles, solo instruments, and voice. Various authors have divided Brahms’ compositional life into three or four periods. One of these authors was Geiringer. In the first compositional period, which included the earliest existing works up to 1855, Brahms composed most of his large-scale piano pieces including the three sonatas Op. 1 (1852-53), 2 (1852), and 5 (1853); four Ballades Op. 10 (1854); variations Op. 9 (1854); and three pairs of Baroque dances WoO 3-5

(1854-55). In this period, Brahms closely followed his predecessors, and his music demonstrated influences from the past. For example, the similarity of rhythmic motive and chord texture between the beginnings of Brahms’ Piano Sonata No.1 in C major and Beethoven’s *Hammerklavier* Sonata were noted (see Figures 1 and 2).

Reflecting his growing friendship with Joachim and his affectionate relations with the Schumanns, Brahms was highly influenced by a romantic nature in this early period. In this period, Brahms showed “the blunt expression and sudden contrasts, and avoided concessions
to mere comprehensibility; nevertheless, his works were imbued with simplicity and a profound tenderness.”

In Brahms’ second compositional period, which started in 1855, he began studies of counterpoint with Joachim. Several people consider this period was a transitional time in Brahms’ compositional style. According to Geiringer, Brahms gradually discarded the violent eruptions of his early music. Geiringer wrote: “Brahms’ ‘twilight’ style, with its peculiar blending of mood, was already in evidence.” The large piano works in this period are Variations Op. 21 (1854), nos. 1 and 2 and Variations and Fugue on a Theme of Handel, Op. 24 (1861).

The German Requiem (1868-69) marked the beginning of Brahms’ third compositional period and also brought fame to Brahms as a composer. Brahms showed his productivity and mature style in this period. All his big orchestral works, such as Symphony No. 1 in C minor (1876), Symphony No. 2 in D major (1877), Symphony No. 3 in F major (1883), and Symphony No. 4 in E minor (1885), and choral works were composed in this period. The large piano works of this period are Variations for Two Pianos on a Theme of Haydn, Op. 56b, Klavierstücke, Op. 76 (1878), and Two Rhapsodies, Op. 79 (1879). The emotion of his music became serious, as Geiringer indicated, “It is characteristic of this period that the joyous and effervescent Scherzo of his youthful works gave away to quieter and serener forms.”

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3 Ibid., 201.
4 Ibid., 203.
In his last period, the main piano works are the four sets of Op. 116-119. These sets essentially reflect the important compositional skills developed by Brahms over many years. Arthur Rubinstein wrote:

> It is with the late piano works, Op. 116 through Op. 119, that we reach Brahms’ most personal music for his chosen instrument. . . Brahms in his final years produced serene and nostalgic music that was ever more inward in mood. . . As his own notations in the score indicate, they are so intensely intimate that one cannot really convey their full substance to a large audience. They should be heard quietly, in a small room, for they are actually works of chamber music for piano.

In these sets, many passages forecasted musical developments of the next century. Walter Frisch wrote: “Though in some senses ‘autumnal,’ the late piano pieces are hardly retrospective. Many passages prefigure significant musical developments in the century that Brahms did not live to see.”

In Brahms’ late collections, he only gave the Fantasien Op. 116 and the Drei Intermezzi Op. 117 collective titles. However, in Op. 117, the collection title of Drei Intermezzi was given because each of the three pieces is an intermezzo. Unlike Op. 117, the seven pieces of Op. 116 are individually named capriccio or intermezzo. Nos. 1, 3, and 7 are named capriccio. Among them, no. 1 and no. 7 are in the same key, D minor; and no. 3 is in G minor. The others (nos. 2, 4, 5, and 6) are intermezzi of which nos. 4 and 6 are in E major, while no. 5 starts with E minor but ends in E major. No. 2 is in A minor. In Frisch’s essay “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,” he wrote:

> Despite the two-part format (of the first edition), Op. 116 has the strongest case among the late collections for being considered as a coherent whole, for which

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reason one critic [Dunsby] has suggested it be taken as a ‘multi-piece.’ . . . The pieces show not only some overall tonal planning but also thematic interrelationships. The most obvious instance is the figure of arpeggiated, descending thirds that opens no. 3 and 7.7

There are many studies on Brahms’ Op. 116. Some of them focus on one type of compositions, such as “The Seven Capriccios of Johannes Brahms: op. 76, nos. 1, 2, 5, 8, and op. 116, nos. 1, 3, 7” written by Bernice Feinstein,8 which reviews the use of term “capriccio” from the Renaissance to the nineteenth-century and provides analyses and performance suggestions for the seven capriccios. Other studies feature historic and theoretic interests, such as Jonathan Dunsby’s essay “The Multi-Piece in Brahms: Fantasien op.116,”9 which presents the relationship of form and tonal and motivic structures between pieces of Op. 116. The most thorough discussion of Op. 116 occurs in Camilla Cai’s dissertation entitled “Brahms’ Short, Late Piano Pieces – Opus Numbers 116-119: a Source Study, an Analysis and Performance Practice.”10 The dissertation provides a description of almost “all surviving sources of Brahms’ late piano works.”11 Additionally, the author offers analyses of several pieces which showed particular compositional principles of Brahms, such as his use of thirds, forms, rhythm, and historical techniques. In the last chapter, the author presents factors which determine the quality of a performance of Brahms.

There are a few studies which have identified performance difficulties of each piece in Op. 116. Although some studies describe the performance difficulties of selected pieces

7 Ibid., 337-38.
within Op. 116, they do not provide practice solutions. There are no studies in the current literature which compare performances of Op. 116. Such comparisons may assist in the identification of major performance problems and guide pedagogical solutions and practice suggestions.

**PURPOSE**

The purposes of the thesis were: (1) to provide an overview of the piano compositional style of Brahms, especially in his late period; (2) to provide the compositional background of his Op. 116; (3) to present structural and textual analyses of the seven pieces of Op. 116; and (4) to provide performance and teaching suggestions that relate to the structure, melody, and texture.

**LIMITATIONS**

The topic was limited to the seven pieces from Brahms’s Op. 116. Since the pieces were written in Brahms’ late compositional period (1891—1897), the thesis focused on Brahms’ late piano compositional style. The analysis of each piece was limited to the structure and texture that were characteristic of Brahms’ later compositional period. The analyses of these two elements supported the interpretation of the music. For study and reference purposes, the G. Henle edition and the R. Sauer edition of musical scores were used. All printing music examples of Brahms in thesis are from Edition Peters which is available at the website of IMSLP/Petrucci Music Library. Other music examples are also from IMSLP website. All scores provided by IMSLP either from public domain or, permission has been granted by the holder of copyright. The teaching suggestions were limited to ideas for the advanced piano student.
PROCEDURES

The biography and compositional style of Brahms were established through bibliographical study. The review of Brahms’ piano literature was also studied through bibliographical research. The seven pieces of Op. 116 were analyzed by examining the forms, harmony progressions, texture, rhythm, and melody as well as bibliographical study. Additionally, personal performance, teaching experience, bibliographical study, and comparison of recorded performances helped to identify performance problems as well as to provide the performance and teaching suggestions.

DEFINITIONS

Grove and Oxford online resource were used as an initial guide in defining the following terms. Texture may apply either to the vertical aspects of a work or passage, or to attributes such as tone color or rhythm, or to characteristics of performance.\(^\text{12}\) Generally, it is categorized into melody and accompaniment, homophonic, and polyphonic.\(^\text{13}\) It produces “an overall effect made by the combination of the different sounds in a particular passage.”\(^\text{14}\)

In this thesis, texture was categorized to three types: chordal, embedded, and polyphonic. In the passage of chordal texture, music can be four parts which move with similar rhythm, or the melodic tones occur as notes of chords. Embedded texture refers to embedded melody. It means the melodic tone is embedded into another line. In embedded texture, the melodic notes can be embedded within arpeggiated accompaniment, or in works from Baroque


period, it can be a polyphonic countermelody of another line. Polyphonic texture refers that there are two or more lines are played relatively independent. Harmony refers to a combination of simultaneously sounded musical notes to produce chords and successively to produce chord progressions\(^{15}\) which creates tension in music. Harmony, as a musical element, contributes to the style of the composer. Melody indicates a succession of notes, varying in pitch, which have an organized and recognizable shape\(^{16}\) to deliver a musical meaning. It includes every aspect of pitch, rhythm, dynamics, and timbre that can be perceived within a single line.\(^{17}\) Rhythm in music is normally felt to embrace everything to do with both time and motion—with the organization of musical events in time, however flexible in meter and tempo, irregular in accent, or free in durational values.\(^{18}\) Rhythm may also contribute to the production of tension and the feeling of calm when the density and pulse are varied. Capriccio refers to a short piano piece that has the humorous and fanciful characters.\(^{19}\) The performance instruction permits a free and rhapsodic approach to tempo and even style.\(^{20}\) Intermezzo refers to a short and independent piece which has light character.\(^{21}\)


\(^{17}\) White, Comprehensive Musical Analysis, 22.


**Organization**

This thesis is organized into four chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction to the topic, its purpose, limitations, procedures, definitions, and organization plan. Chapter two provides a brief biography of the composer and an overview of his piano works. Additionally, contemporary research about Brahms’ Op.116 is discussed. Texture in piano works and piano pedagogy are also discussed. The characteristic textures in Brahms’ piano composition are presented. Chapter three gives the structural analysis and showed how structure relates to the use of texture. In this chapter, chordal texture, polyphonic texture and embedded texture are defined. The examples of the three types of texture are presented. Also, the difficulties are identified and practice suggestions are given after each example. Chapter four summarizes the thesis, presents conclusions, and suggests further studies.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews books, articles and dissertations that discuss Brahms’ biography, his piano compositional style, and Op. 116. Additionally, texture, the texture of Brahms’ piano works, and strategies for teaching texture are discussed.

BRAHMS’ BIOGRAPHY

In 1833, Brahms was born into a musical family in Hamburg. His father was a doublebass player in the Stadttheater and the Philharmonic orchestras. Even though the family had financial difficulties, the parents tried their best to secure a sound education for their children. At age six, Brahms entered the school of Herr Heinrich Voss and later, at age eleven, he was enrolled in the school of Johann Friedrich Hoffmann. Both schools were famous in Hamburg for their educational curriculum. In some biographies, the poor quality of his general education in his youth is the generally accepted story. Karl Geiringer, however, disagreed with this point of view in his book Brahms.22 The curriculum of Herr Hoffman’s school included Latin, French, and English, and the school offered mathematics and natural history.23 Brahms started his formal music lessons at age seven with Otto F. W. Cossel, from whom, Brahms learned that a true musician expresses every phrase with an inward experience. Cossel demanded technical command as well as musical understanding from young Brahms. Under Cossel’s excellent and strict instruction, Brahms made great progress.

22 Geiringer, Brahms, His Life and Work, 15.
23 Ibid., 15
In *Famous Pianists and Their Technique*, Reginald R. Gerig indicated that Brahms was invited to tour America at age ten because of his outstanding performance.\(^{24}\) Meanwhile, he also exhibited talent in composition. Later, Cossel recommended that Brahms study with Eduard Marxsen who had been Cossel’s teacher. Marxsen was a leading music teacher in Hamburg, who had studied with Seyfried, Mozart’s pupil, and with Bocklet, a friend of Beethoven and Schubert.\(^{25}\) Under Marxsen’s instruction, Brahms developed his left-hand technique and the ability to play complicated rhythm.\(^{26}\) Also, Marxsen encouraged Brahms to compose music by giving him regular lessons in music theory and composition. At age fifteen, in 1848, Brahms’ debut included a Bach fugue, the *Waldstein* sonata by Beethoven, and his own compositions.\(^{27}\) A few years later, Brahms’ genius became apparent after a performance tour with Hungarian violinist Eduard Remenyi. After the tour, Marxsen said:

> Brahms’ memory is so amazing that it never occurred to him to take any music with him on his concert tour. When he started out into the world on his first tour, as a young man of twenty, the works of Bach and Beethoven, besides a large number of modern concert-pieces by Thalberg, Liszt, Mendelssohn, and others, were indelibly impressed upon his mind.\(^{28}\)

During the study with Marxsen, Brahms’ family considered the teacher a close friend and the family benefitted from his generosity. After Brahms left Hamburg, they maintained an ongoing correspondence. Brahms dedicated the Piano Concerto in B-flat Major to Marxsen.


\(^{25}\) Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 17.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{27}\) Gerig, *Famous Pianists*, 217.

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 217
In June of 1853, Brahms completed another tour to Weimar with Remenyi. He had a chance to visit Liszt, who was impressed by Brahms’ early sonatas and the Scherzo in E-flat minor. The master was willing to help young Brahms build his career if Brahms would accept the artistic standard that Liszt advocated. Geiringer indicates that Liszt believed that the vigorous and gifted nature of Brahms “would be of the great assistance towards the victory of the so called ‘new German’ school of music.” Brahms admired Liszt as a great pianist, but he neither appreciated Liszt’s compositional style nor his life style. Brahms thought the Neo-German school promoted by Liszt was not true German style. The new school was influenced by the works of Berlioz, and the composers who wrote in this style believed that the content of poetic ideas determine the musical forms. Brahms felt the “new German” music reflected in Liszt’s works was worthless. He remained opposed to Neo-German music for his entire life. Although Brahms needed a patron to promote his musical career, he had no intention of becoming a disciple and follower of Liszt.

When Brahms met Robert and Clara Schumann later in 1853, a lifelong friendship started. After their first meeting, Robert Schumann was impressed by Brahms’ talent, believing that Brahms’ piano sonata seemed to capture the sound of a whole orchestra. Schumann promoted Brahms in his circle of colleagues and recommended Brahms to publishers. Schumann likened Brahms to the ‘young eagle’ in his famous essay Neue Bahnen

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29 Ibid., 218.
30 Geiringer, Brahms, His Life and Work, 30.
31 Ibid., 30.
32 Ibid., 30.
33 Ibid., 30.
34 Ibid., 36.
which was published in the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*. Schumann’s wrote:

“Johannes is the true apostle, and he too will write Revelations, the secret of which many Pharisees will still be unable to unravel even centuries later.”

With Schumann’s recommendation, Breitkpf & Härtel published Brahms’ Scherzo in E-flat Minor and the first sonata. The scherzo was written in 1851 and was Brahms’ earliest work. According to Geiringer, the inclusion of two trios showed the influence of Schumann. After the publication of the two compositions, Brahms sent the royalties back to his family. When Schumann developed mental illness in later years, Brahms and his family grasped the opportunity to repay the Schumanns. Brahms rented an apartment above Clara’s flat in order to care for them easily. During this time, their friendship deepened. Geiringer wrote that “Clara felt that her profound sympathy inspired the young composer, and this was a great consolation to her.”

In 1863, Brahms accepted the leadership position of the *Wiener Singakademie*, a famous choral society, and experienced great success. In 1869, Brahms settled in Vienna. Before he accepted the director position of *Gesellschaft Der Musikfreunde* in the autumn of 1872, Brahms refused various other positions, including one at the Royal Musical College in Berlin which was operated by his friend Joachim. When he finished his directorship of the *Gesellschaft Der Musikfreunde*, Brahms decided not to accept any long-term positions. After

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37 Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 205.
38 Ibid., 39.
39 Ibid., 43.
40 Ibid., 111.
the premier of the *German Requiem*, in 1868, Brahms was steadily growing more famous as a composer. He was internationally renowned and financially secure. He had an increasing number of concert tours, visiting almost all the major cities of Europe. In 1876, Cambridge University offered Brahms an honorary doctoral degree in music for his high service to art. Unfortunately, Brahms had to forfeit the degree because he could not attend the ceremony due to his fear of seasickness.\(^41\) Brahms was on the summit of his life and career.

In his late fifties, Brahms felt that his creativity had diminished. After his fifty-eighth birthday celebrated in Ischl, he told his friend, Eusebius Mandyczewski, that “I have been tormenting myself for a long time with all kinds of things, a symphony, chamber music and other stuff, and nothing will come of it. . . . I’m just not going to do any more. . . . I am going to be good and lazy!”\(^42\) He drew up his will in which he made donations to several charitable musical organizations; in addition, he donated his valuable collection of original manuscripts to the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*.\(^43\) During these years, Brahms mainly revised a collection of canons that he had written during his time with the Hamburg ladies’ choir; and he finished the Vocal Quartets, Op. 112, which he had started to compose in 1888. Geiringer wrote: “it is true that for the time being he undertook only tasks that did not require much creative effort.”\(^44\) According to Geiringer, Brahms’ creativity was reignited after he heard a performance by Richard Mühlfeld, the clarinetist of the Meiningen Orchestra. Brahms felt that the tone of the clarinet was particularly appropriate for the serious mood of his later

\(^{41}\) Ibid., 123.


\(^{43}\) Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 177.

\(^{44}\) Ibid. 177.
compositions.\textsuperscript{45} Mühlfeld’s performance impressed and inspired Brahms deeply. As the result, he wrote the Clarinet Trio in A Minor and the Quintet in B Minor for Clarinet and Strings.\textsuperscript{46} After his fifty-ninth birthday, Brahms decided to compose new pieces. He told Clara that he was composing for himself alone.\textsuperscript{47} In Johannes Brahms, Kalbeck described what he heard and saw one morning in 1892 when he visited Brahms’ home in Ischl. He wrote “the strangest growling, whining, and moaning, which at the height of the musical climax changed into a loud howl.”\textsuperscript{48} It was Brahms who was working on the small piano pieces which later became Op. 116 Fantasien and Op. 117 Intermezzos.\textsuperscript{49} Kalbeck observed that Brahms had tears on his face.\textsuperscript{50} Brahms sent these small piano pieces to Clara before Christmas in 1892. Kalbeck quoted Clara’s journal:

\begin{quote}
\textit{(the pieces) full of poetry, passion, sentiment, emotion, and with the most wonderful effect of tone. . . . In these pieces I at last feel musical life stir again in my soul. . . . How they make one forget much of the suffering he has caused one.} \textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

During 1891-1892, Brahms finished four sets of piano miniatures: Op. 116, 117, 118, and 119. In the summer of 1894, he composed two clarinet sonatas (Op. 120). The works he composed in 1896 included \textit{Vier ernste Gesänge} (Four Serious Songs) and Eleven Organ Chorale Preludes. During the last several year of his life, Brahms suffered considerable pain from the deaths of close friends, including Elisabet von Herzogenberg and Hans von Bülow.

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 178.
\item\textsuperscript{46} Swafford, Johannes Brahms, 573.
\item\textsuperscript{47} Ibid, 578.
\item\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 580.
\item\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 579.
\item\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 580.
\item\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 583.
\end{footnotes}
The great sadness for Brahms was Clara’s death in 1896. After her death, Brahms health became seriously compromised. On April 3, 1897, Brahms breathed his last.

**PIANO COMPOSITIONAL STYLE**

From age ten to his mid-teens, when Brahms studied with Eduard Marxsen, he was rigorously trained in the keyboard compositions of Bach, Beethoven, and the early romantic school.52 The works of these composers established the solid foundation for Brahms’ further development. His early recital program included the virtuosic/salon style which was dominant in the 1830s and 1840s as well as more serious works such as Beethoven’s *Waldstein* Sonata, but, according to Frisch, Brahms chose to align himself with the high-minded traditions of Beethoven,53 which Brahms maintained throughout his life. Because Brahms earned the reputation of a genius pianist, he composed for this instrument throughout his career.

Geiringer divided Brahms’ compositional life into four periods. Almost all the large-scale piano works were written during the first two periods: 1851-1863. The first period includes compositions created prior to 1855, such as the Scherzo in E-flat Minor (1851), the Piano Sonata in F-sharp Minor (1852), the Piano Sonata in C Major (1853), the Piano Sonata in F minor (1853), the Variations on a Hungarian Song, Op. 21, no. 2 (1854), and the Variations on a Theme of Schumann (1854). In this period, Brahms was under the influence of a great romantic nature.54 Frisch comments that Brahms’ early piano pieces display a

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52 Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 18.
54 Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 201.
rhythmic and motivic vitality combined with the piano idiom.\textsuperscript{55} Geiringer says Brahms’ works show a vigorous, virile, and cheerful spirit.\textsuperscript{56} In addition, Brahms’ interest in the art of variations and the influence of his teacher, Marxsen, can also be found in his early works. For example, people may discover a similarity between the themes of Marxsen’s \textit{Characteristic Variations on a Peasant Dance}, Op. 67, no.1 and the theme in Brahms’ Variations Op. 21, no. 2.

Brahms’ preference for German folk songs also appeared in his early piano works. In \textit{Masters of the Keyboard}, Wolff says “Brahms is the first classical composer who studied folk songs seriously.”\textsuperscript{57} Geiringer also indicated that Brahms showed his love of the German folk songs in his youth.\textsuperscript{58} For example, in the Sonata Op. 2, the melody fits to the words of \textit{Mir ist leide}, an old German song. Brahms acknowledged this to his friend.\textsuperscript{59}

Another compositional technique Brahms adopted is the romantic transformation of themes which was a hallmark of the period 1820 to 1850 and was frequently used by Schubert, Liszt, and Chopin. Frisch defined thematic transformation as “the contour, rhythmic proportions, and intervallic structure of a theme remain essentially intact, but the tempo, articulation, and mood are strikingly recast.”\textsuperscript{60} Unlike other composers who created transformations by changing tempo, dynamics, articulations, or mood, Brahms broke the themes into smaller groups and manipulated them separately. This style is more characteristic

\textsuperscript{55} Frisch, “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,” 318.
\textsuperscript{56} Geiringer, \textit{Brahms, His Life and Work}, 205
\textsuperscript{58} Geringer, \textit{Brahms, His Life and Work}, 17.
\textsuperscript{59} Frisch, “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,”321.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 323.
of the Viennese classicists than of romantics. Thus, Brahms is called “a classicist among romantics.”

People often have the impression that Brahms’s early piano pieces have the scope of orchestral music. Geiringer and Frisch made similar comments on the orchestral concepts in Brahms’ piano work. According to Geiringer, the earliest piano composition, Scherzo in E-flat Minor, in which the peculiar style is set just for strings and wind instruments already showed that tendency. The sound of orchestral scope causes the dense texture in Brahms’ piano works, especially in the early period. Brahms’s usage of full chords with many doublings is a well-known technique. He also embedded a melody in chords or presented a melody accompanied in thirds or sixths. Brahms’s favorite device of playing with rhythm is noted by many scholars. The hemiola, two against three, and syncopations are common in his music.

From 1868 to 1890, Brahms reduced his composition of piano works. He was engaged with orchestra pieces, vocal music, and chamber music. In this period, Brahms reached the peak of his career. The German Requiem represents the mature style of the composer, and elevated his name among audiences. Geiringer comment that “in this period, the peculiar ‘Brahmsian’ combination of the spirits of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries reached its highest development.” His previous emotional outbursts and exuberant vigor were gradually replaced by serious emotional content in his works. As Geiringer pointed out, “the joyous and effervescent Scherzo of his youthful works

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61 Ibid., 323.
62 Geiringer, Brahms, His Life and Work, 205.
63 Ibid., 202.
gave away to quieter and serener forms."\textsuperscript{64} In the period from 1878 to 1879, Brahms only wrote two piano sets: Op. 76 and Op. 79. Brahms’ attempt to achieve clarity, severity, and simplicity are reflected by these works.\textsuperscript{65} Geiringer noted that these qualities were lacking in Brahms’ works before his mature period.

At the end of his life, Brahms composed for the piano again. From 1892 to 1893, he produced four sets of short character pieces, Op. 116, 117, 118, and 119. Most are individually named Capriccio and Intermezzo. In this last period, Brahms was more serious, introspective, and natural. Instead of large orchestral works, he preferred chamber music, piano music, and songs. Geiringer thinks that the decrease of scope reflects the concentration of Brahms’ intelligence and technical refinement.\textsuperscript{66} These works show the highest level of simplicity and concentration. Geiringer summarized that Brahms’ later works have more limited modulations, less complicated harmony, and more uniform rhythm.\textsuperscript{67} Brahms kept his feature of thematic transformation, for instance, the similarity between themes of Op. 116, no. 3 and no. 7. The two themes have similar melodic contour, the arpeggiated descending thirds. F. E. Kirby summarized several differences between the later character pieces and the early pieces: (1) that the later pieces have less connection with literary works, and (2) that more virtuoso skills are prominent in the early music, especially in the sonatas.\textsuperscript{68} Brahms adapted the pre-classical stylistic elements in his later pieces, such as the bass

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 219.
\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 220.
subject returned in ostinato manner in Op. 118, no. 5.\textsuperscript{69} He kept the contrapuntal approach and the dense texture which are signatures of his works. All these features make the later Brahms pieces more attractive when listening to them and more challenging when performing them.

**Brahms Op. 116, FantasiEN**

Op. 116, *Fantasien*, was composed in 1892, the late period of Brahms’ life. The collection consists of seven miniatures: three of them are Capricci and four are Intermezzi. No. 4 had the title *notturno* in Brahms’ original holograph. Op. 116 is the first collection of his late piano works. It was also the first that he composed for the piano after he had stopped writing for the instrument about ten years before. These small-scale pieces were a departure from Brahms’ early piano compositional style which featured large scale, virtuosic technique, and brilliant sonority. In *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, Frisch comments that these later pieces require a higher level of musicality rather than demanding techniques. The same comment appears in Clara Schumann’s diary after she received the manuscript from Brahms. She wrote: “As far as demands on the agility of fingers, the Brahms pieces are, except in a few places, not difficult. But the spiritual technique therein demands a delicate understanding. One must entrust oneself completely to Brahms in order to render these piece in the way that he has imagined them.”\textsuperscript{70}

Frisch also gives the historical background of the publication of Op. 116. Originally, there were only five pieces in Op. 116, but no evidence showed which five pieces they were.

\textsuperscript{69} Geiringer, *Brahms, His Life and Work*, 221.

\textsuperscript{70} Frisch, “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,” 338.
At the last moment, Brahms decided to add two more pieces to the two-volume set.71 According to Frisch, the set is considered the most coherent whole among Brahms’ late piano sets. Frisch indicates that Op. 116 shows both the overall tonal plan and thematic interrelationship. The arpeggiated descending thirds figure in the opening of Nos. 3 and 7 is an obvious instance of thematic uniform. In addition, the opening of No. 1 also has the descending thirds. As to artistic achievement, Frisch points out that Op. 116 along with other sets represents the summit of the piano literature of the nineteenth century. The late pieces essentially reflect the most important compositional technique Brahms had developed for many years. These pieces are not retrospective of his career but forecast the musical development in twentieth century.72

A thesis written by Mary Lynn Matthews, “A Study of Formal Structure in Johannes Brahms’ Character Pieces for Solo Piano, Op. 116-119,” focuses on the formal structure of Brahms’ late sets and gives charts to illustrate the structures. In addition, she analyzes the motives, harmonies, and phrases of the four sets. The author also points out the use of “falling third technique”73 which Brahms used to unify the pieces, especially in op. 116.

Bernice Feinstein’s dissertation “The Seven Capriccios of Johannes Brahms: Op. 76, nos. 1, 2, 5, 8 and op. 116, nos. 1, 3, 7” uses Erik Erikson’s theory, which identifies eight ages in the human life cycle, to describe seven capriccios written in different compositional

71 Ibid., 336.
According to Feinstein’s division of Brahms’ life, the four from op. 76 were written at the peak of Brahms’ career and the three from op. 116 were written during his last stage of life. The last stage, in Erikson’s theory, is the individual’s major effort nearing completion, and it is the time for reflection. As she wrote her dissertation in 1972, Feinstein was surprised by the sparse literature written for Brahms’ miniatures. She reports that both teachers and professional pianists pay less attention to these capriccios except the op. 76, no. 2. Even Brahms’ friend, Theodor Billroth, felt these “lesser piano pieces” would never receive the universal affection accorded to those of Schumann and Chopin. Feinstein also analyzes the formal structures, phrases, and motives. She gives suggestions on performance as well. For example, in the analysis of op. 116 no.1, Feinstein suggests that the student needs to keep the steady tempo in order to create a scherzo-like style. In another place, she recommends a light wrist staccato without pedal to clarify the melodic line. In the summary, Feinstein claims that the capriccios present Brahms’ manipulation of compositional procedures, rhythmic invention, contrapuntal skills, and thematic variation. Moreover, she states that these pieces feature the suitable length of teaching. These pieces, according to Feinstein, would be beneficial for intermediate and advanced pianists.

Camilla Cai’s dissertation “Brahms’ Short, Late Piano Pieces Opus Numbers 116-119: A Source Study, An Analysis and Performance Practice” includes many details about the publishing process of Opus 116-119. Chapter four of her dissertation presents the

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74 Feinstein, “The Seven Capriccios of Johannes Brahms,” 7.
75 Ibid., 9.
76 Ibid., 180.
77 Ibid., 226.
historical background of Op. 116 and indicates that the original design of Op. 116 included five pieces and not the seven that Brahms sent to Clara Schumann in 1892. This opinion is held by many other scholars, but there is no evidence to show which five pieces were included in the original design. From the correspondence between Brahms and Clara and from Clara’s comments on the pieces, Cai hypothesizes that the two pieces added were nos. 1 and 7.78 Cai also provides details about how Brahms made changes, such as some tempo marks, to the holograph of Op. 116, and how he altered the title of no. 4 from nocturne to intermezzo before publication. Cai indicates the compositional principles of Opus 116-119, such as the melodic-harmonic thirds and the delineating forms. In Op. 116, she chose to only highlight no. 4, the central or middle piece of the set, to illustrate that there are six possibilities when analyzing the form. Cai writes: “No single, standard formal design can explain this piece, or contribute the tonal overview of the important formal elements.”79

Kirby gives the historic background and compositional features of Brahms’ miniatures in *A Short History of Keyboard Music*. He indicates that Brahms’ early piano music, especially the character pieces, is bounded up with literary works. However, most of the late character pieces do not continue that tendency. Formally, the pieces are based on the old ternary scheme without elaborations. In some piece, Brahms expanded it to five or more sections in a style similar to the rondo.80 Besides the formal homogeneity, the music style also shows the generalization of the late pieces.

78 Cai, “Brahms’ Short, Late Piano Pieces,” 177.
79 Ibid., 324.
80 Kirby, *A Short History of Keyboard Music*, 239.
TEXTURE

Sources of the concise definition of the term “texture” are limited. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* indicates that texture has two aspects: one is horizontal and the other is vertical. The term may also refer to tone color, rhythm, and the characteristics of performance such as articulation and dynamic level. It describes texture as “a woven fabric . . . [that texture in] music consists of horizontal (‘woof’) and vertical (‘warp’) elements.”81 In the horizontal texture, the successive sounds form the melody and the contrapuntal lines or the melody and the accompaniment. The vertical texture combines sound simultaneously that form harmonies.

In *Guideline for Style Analysis*, Jan LaRue indicates that “the vertical texture can be described by using the term thick or thin, simple or doubled, continuous or gapped, alternating or overlapping, balanced or top- (bottom-) heavy, pure or mixed between voices and instruments.”82 He also uses fabric to describe the vertical and horizontal combination of textures.

In *The Analysis of Music*, John D. White explains texture as “when two or more people first tried singing or playing their music together.” He gives three types of texture that include wide spacing, close texture, and open texture.83 He also describes the nature of

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texture as relating to the number and ranges of voices, such as the occurrence of doublings on some voices, or the tessitura of the voices.

Janet M. Levy, in the article “Texture as a Sign in Classic and Early Romantic Music,” describes texture as “the most surface and the most complex . . . its effects are, after all, so immediate and palpable.”⁸⁴ She also indicates that texture is related to the many component parts of music, such as melody, harmony, rhythm. It is also affected by orchestration, register, and others.

In Structural Functions in Music, William Berry considers texture as the following:

He summarizes the two processes of textures: progression and recession. In the progression, more voices are added to the texture or the present voices become independent. The recession happens when the independence decrease between the voices or the voices depart. The progression contributes to the increasing intensity of the music.

Generally, there are three types of textures in music. The first is polyphonic texture or contrapuntal texture in which “each part represents a horizontal line of individual design, connected with the other lines by the (vertical) relationships of consonance or harmony.”⁸⁶ For example, in fugue or canon, in horizontal line the voices imitate each other. When two or more voice parts merge, they create the vertical relationship between the lines and form the

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counterpoint and harmony. The second texture is homophonic texture. The distinction between the melodic part and accompanying part is clear, such as a solo song with a piano accompaniment. The *Harvard Dictionary of Music* defines the third type of texture as the variety of intermediate textures that are between the strictly polyphonic and strictly homophonic textures. This dictionary suggests Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 106 for piano as an example to illustrate the mixture of horizontal and vertical elements which were used commonly in nineteenth-century piano music.

**Texture in Romantic Period**

Texture as an important element in music composition includes aspects of tone color, range, and amount of sound. Texture may also be indicative of stylistic characteristics of an historical period or of an individual composer. Like other musical elements, texture developed or changed from one stylistic period to another. From monophony in the Middle Ages, polyphony in the Baroque period and homophony in the Classical period, textural elements contributed to the characteristics of each epoch. The composers of the Romantic period developed their own textural styles, partially based on past traditions. For example, the polyphonic writing was not dominant in a Romantic composition and also did not follow the strict rules of the Baroque period. Most of time in Romantic piano music, polyphony appears as one type of texture in a work.

In his book *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax*, Leonard G. Ratner summarized four types of textures used in romantic period, which are melody and accompaniment,

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87 Ratner, *Romantic Music: Sound and Syntax*. 
arpeggiation, full chords, and polyphony. These terms only can be generally used to describe texture. As for each composer, the textural writing style was different. Textural writing as an important part of a composition reflects the aesthetics of a composer’s creative ideas. Other composers in the same period as Brahms, such as Chopin and Schumann, had their own style of textural writing.

Schumann has a reputation of featuring different types of texture in his works. In his dissertation *Texture in Robert Schumann’s First-decade Piano Works*, Thomas Sauer reviewed two dissertations about Schumann’s texture written by Germen. Both of the dissertations point out that the chordal texture is a leading feature in Schumann’s texture writing. Sauer points out that Schumann’s preference of fully realized harmonies is the reason people found chordal texture in many of his works. Sauer gives an example from Schumann’s *Davidsbündlertänze*, no. 16, to show that the bass notes below the chords in the treble clef project and support the melody (Figure 3). Unlike the obscure melody in Brahms’ works, melody in Schuman’s texture writing is more clearly shown. Schumann frequently uses another line to support the melody rather than acting as a countermelody. In one such example, “Little Song,” from *Album for the Young*, Op. 67, Schumann writes an embedded texture in the left hand (circled notes) to support and reinforce the right-hand melody (Figure 4). Another example of chordal texture occurs in *Papillons*, Op. 2, no. 8, where Schumann also placed melodic tones in the top notes of the right-hand chords that are supported by the top notes of the left-hand chords (Figure 5).

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88 Ibid., 38.
Lisa Zdechlik reviewed studies that focus on the analysis of texture in piano literature. Zdechlik agrees with another author, Kevin Moore, who concluded that polyphonic texture

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appears frequently in Chopin’s works and that the use of an implied voice is a leading feature in Chopin’s textural writing. In her dissertation, Zdechlik analyzed texture in four nocturnes of Chopin. She analyzed the parametric profile, such as melody, rhythm, and harmony, and she shows the textural types used by Chopin in his nocturnes, such as monophonic, homophonic, chordal, polyphonic, and heterophonic. In the last chapter, Zdechlik summarized that although the homophonic texture is predominant in the nocturnes, other textures, such as polyphonic texture, are used. The example from the B section of Nocturne in C-sharp Minor, Op. 27, no. 1 shows an example of Chopin’s polyphonic writing (Figure 6). The figure presents the imitated two layers of the right hand. Zdechlik also pointed out that the use of monophonic texture for important expressive points is another feature of Chopin’s textural writing. Since each composer had his own approach of textural writing, Brahms’ textural writing in piano music will be discussed in next section.


TEXTURE IN BRAHMS’ PIANO WORKS

The dense texture is a signature of Brahms’ works, something generally recognized among the musicians who study and perform Brahms. Nearly all the books on his life and compositional style have description of his musical texture. In Augustus Arnone’s dissertation “Textural Ambiguity in the Piano of Johannes Brahms,” the entrance of Brahms
Ballade Op. 10 No. 4 is offered as an example to show that Brahms has written a piano indicates that Brahms used the low register overtone effect which creates a kind of sonic fog to interfere with the melodic clarity. Arnone introduces the ambiguity of Brahms’s chamber texture designed in every respect to partially obscure the melodic line. Arnone also music and tells a story that shows Brahms’ intention to cover the sound of cello melody when Brahms was accompanying his F Major Cello Sonata, Op. 99.

In a dissertation entitled “Texture in Selected Solo Piano Works of Brahms and Works for Two Pianos of Johannes Brahms: a Performance Project,” Dimitri Nazarenko claims there is abundant research about the forms, rhythm, thematic development, and harmony in Brahms’ piano works. However, he noted that texture, as a crucial element of a successful performance, is lacking of supporting detail. He also mentions that the understanding of Brahms’ textural complexity will affect the student’s decisions about tempo, dynamic nuance, and touch. Nazarenko writes that one of the significant features is Brahms’ polyphonic thinking. The devices Brahms used frequently are imitation, inversion, augmentation, diminution, pedal point, and ostinato. Even in his homophonic writing, the accompaniment sometimes has the feel of polyphony. Brahms used his favorite two against three rhythms to individualize two equal sounds. The developed counterpoint of the bass line is another aspect of Brahms’ polyphonic writing. Nazarenko quotes Wolff’s comment on Brahms’s polyphonic writing saying that “often the bass pairs with the melody in the way


that the two voices, while clearly individual, can be understood when played together."93

Another means Brahms used to increase the sound density was the low register. He often wrote the melody using the middle register or using the counterpoint line in the middle register against the melody. The last feature of Brahms’s texture is harmonic doubling and melodic doubling. Nazarenko claims that in harmonic doubling Brahms used the third doubling to sharp a chord, and used the fifth doubling to create a feel of “increasing weight.” Brahms used the third and sixth to double the melody.

The third and sixth Brahms used to double the melody and the doubled full chords are described in Kirby’s *Music for Piano: A Short History* as well-known textural features of Brahms’s composition.94 Kirby includes Brahms’s F Minor Sonata for piano, the main theme of the rondo of the Sonata in C major, and the Scherzo and Trio in F-sharp Minor as examples. Besides this two features, Kirby mentions the chordal texture that appears in the beginning of his sonatas as well as the density of texture created by an orchestral effect in the Piano Sonata in F-sharp Minor. A new device Brahms used was to move the melody in the inner voice or bass line. For example, in the Schumann Variation Op. 9, he often put the theme in the bass.95 When presenting the character pieces of the later period of Brahms, Kirby indicates that the tendency of dense texture is more obvious. The chordal melody and arpeggiated melody move in thirds that can be observed in the character pieces. These features appear in the Op. 116, No. 3 and 5.

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93 Nazarenko, “Texture in Selected Solo Piano Works.”
There are numerous descriptions of Brahms’s dense texture. Generally, Brahms used three devices to create dense textures. The first is the chordal melody and doubled full chords. The second is to obscure melody which is embedded into the accompaniment or located in the low register. The third is polyphonic writing. This thesis is based on these three devices to analyze texture in Brahms’s Op. 116.

**Texture in Piano Pedagogy**

When people read a score or listen to music, texture is one of the most obvious features that can be perceived. Since texture is a crucial component of a composition, textural analysis becomes an important part of the musical analysis. Textural analysis can describe the stylistic tendency of a composer. Also, the analysis of texture can help to clarify the structure. Moreover, the characteristics of texture can contribute to the expressive effect of music. Hence, the analysis and the execution of texture cannot be neglected or avoided in a piano lesson or practice, and understanding the texture may lead to a successful performance.

There are numerous books that discuss the importance of texture in teaching, practice, and performance. Some discuss the texture of chords and how to voice them, such as Seymour Bernstein’s book *With Your Own Two Hands* and Walter Gieseking’s and Karl Leimer’s book *Piano Technique*. Bernstein discusses how to voice chords. He claims voicing is a technique which delineates the autonomous properties of a chord through dynamics.\(^96\) Bernstein points out that voicing a chord on piano can provide pleasurable auditory and physical sensations. When voicing a chord, vertical notes need to be treated individually or the pianist needs to imagine they are played by different instruments. In a chordal passage,

the pianist needs to listen and play it like a string quartet or choirs. Bernstein gives step-by-step instruction of how to play a four-note chord. He also emphasizes the importance of listening carefully to the four sounds.

There is a section on playing chords in *Piano Technique*. The authors indicate that separate tones of a chord need different degrees of strength. Gieseking and Limar indicate that voicing a chord is the most difficult technique and demands great concentration and diligence, but it can also be an interesting experience. When playing both melody and accompaniment within one hand, the melody should be two or three degrees stronger in sound than the accompaniment. The accompanying chord should not blur the melody, and it should not be played too soft to be heard. It demands perfect technique and the absolute control of fingers. Gieseking and Leimer also point out that these techniques can only be obtained by carefully training the ear.

In *The Teaching of Artur Schnabel*, Wolff indicates the importance of reading the score, the first step of learning the music. The reading should be an intense artistic activity. If there are two melodies, they must be read as two independent components from the very beginning of sight-reading the music. In the section “Proportions of Sound,” there is a discussion on voicing. Wolff presents Schnabel’s view of voicing, “in a four-part chord in close position, the four notes are sounded as ‘members of family’ with a slight preponderance of first the top, then the bottom note above the rest.”

Schnabel liked to ask students: “What happens here?” in his class. He consistently asked this question because it

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98 Ibid., 56.
refers to what can or needs to be heard in a passage. Schnabel addressed the importance of listening as well.

Heinrich Schenker writes about the importance of bringing out the texture during performance. He wrote: “In order to produce the character of polyphony it frequently is necessary to have different dynamics in different fingers.”

Schenker suggests that the imitated sound or articulations of different orchestra instruments can help to produce the rich texture. He also points out that the basses which occur after the beats need to be played louder than the melody. The example he gives is from Beethoven’s F Minor Piano Sonata, op. 57, second movement. Schenker provides two examples of different textures: octave and rendition of the bass. He emphasizes the importance of a well shaped bass in a successful performance. He writes: “The performer must understand that the bass of the piano should receive as varied a treatment of dynamic nuances as the bass line of the orchestra, which has to follow its own specially described shading.”

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101 Ibid., 16.
CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF TEXTURE IN BRAHMS’ OP. 116
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING

The textures of Brahms’ Op. 116 are analyzed in this chapter. The analysis of textures focuses on the three types of texture, chordal texture, polyphonic texture, and texture with embedded melody. For each type of texture, two or three examples are chosen and analyzed, and practice suggestions are given. Examples are selected from the pieces to facilitate the discussion of voicing problems and to illustrate procedures for practicing textures. The analysis in this study is used as a tool to produce a convincing performance of texture. After analyzing the materials, decisions on how to express the piece need to be made. The execution of textures involves many issues, such as voicing, balance, touch, and most importantly, hearing. To execute these techniques, the student first needs to observe master pianists, who show the technical gestures or movements. Next, the student needs to tackle these technical aspects by studying with a knowledgeable teacher. The concepts of voicing, balance, and touch are too abstract to be described in pedagogical books. These concepts and techniques can more easily be learned through a teacher’s demonstrations that are based on the teacher’s personal performance or experience. Since the technical abilities and styles of students vary, it is difficult to provide detailed instructions that are applicable to all students. The practice exercises and suggestions in this chapter are general guidelines for solving textural problems in performance.
Texture and Structure in Op. 116

In his early piano work, Brahms was fond of large scale forms, such as sonata form or theme and variations. However, he adopted smaller musical forms, such as ternary form and binary form, in his later piano pieces. This later preference is found in Op. 116. Of the seven pieces, five use ternary form. When examining the music, the changes of texture always follow the change of sections within the structure. The following discussion describes how Brahms used different kinds of texture to indicate the changes within the form.

The Capriccio, Op. 116, no.1, is structurally interesting. There are two structural analyses provided by Feinstein in her dissertation “The Seven Capriccios of Johannes Brahms, Op. 76, Nos. 1, 2, 5, 8 and Op. 116, Nos. 1, 3, 7.” First, Feinstein describes a varied sonata-allegro form.102 There are three parts: the exposition (mm. 1-58), development (mm. 59-131), and the recapitulation (mm. 132-207). Although it has three parts of a traditional sonata form, the two themes reversed in the recapitulation where the second theme is repeated before the first theme. Fernstein’s second analysis identifies a form with two alternating sections: A in mm. 1-20 (transition mm. 21-36), B in mm. 37-58, A’ in mm. 59-102, B’ in mm. 103-131 (transition mm. 132-147), B” in mm. 148-175, and A’’ in mm. 176-192 with a coda in mm. 192-207. Based on the analyses of two possible forms, Fernstein’s second analysis is more convincing. The A section in mm. 1-20 uses a chordal texture with syncopated rhythm (Figure 7). The transition (mm. 21-36) combines chordal and polyphonic textures with hemiola (Figure 8). The B section (mm. 37-58) uses polyphonic texture with doubled octaves (Figure 9).

102 Feinstein, “The Seven Capriccios,” 169.
The Intermezzo, Op. 116, no. 2, is a ternary form. The A section (mm. 1-18) combines homophonic texture with contrapuntal texture in the inner voice (Figure 10). The primary melody in the right hand begins with eighth notes while the bass voice of the left hand accompanies with a downbeat triplets. The B section (mm. 19-50) features embedded texture combined with polyphonic texture (Figure 11). The re-transition is from measure...
51-65 which used the material from A section. The A’ section starts at measure 66 with the same texture of the A section.

The third piece of Op. 116 is also a ternary form. The A section falls between measure 1 and measure 34. This section features embedded texture, but there are a few examples of polyphonic texture as well. The direction of the stems in the treble clef or right hand distinguishes the embedded melody (Figure 12) from the accompaniment. The B section (mm. 35-70) uses polyphonic texture (see circled notes in Figure 13) and chordal texture (see boxed notes in Figure 13). The chordal and polyphonic textures project a chorale-feel to the section. The A’ section has the same texture as the A section.
The Intermezzo, no. 4, is ABAB. In the A section (mm. 1-35), polyphonic writing is used melodically as well as rhythmically (Figure 14). In the beginning (measure 1-7), question and answer phrases occur between the left and right hands (Figure 15). In measure 8, a homophonic texture is used with the right hand executing the primary melody. Two measure later (measure 10), Brahms returns to a polyphonic texture. The homophonic texture of the B section (Figure 16) clearly shows a right-hand melody supported by inner thirds and octaves, creating a thicker sound, and a left-hand arpeggiated accompaniment. The A’ section returns at measure 50 and the B’ section begins at measure 60.

The fifth piece of Op. 116 is a rounded binary form. Both A sections combine chordal and polyphonic textures. The opening chords begin a two-note-slur motive, where the alternation of two highest then the two lowest notes of the right hand and the two lowest then the two highest notes of the left hand, that creates the primary melody (Figure 17).


two-note slurs of the right and left hands move in contrary motion. The B section starts at measure 11. The texture in this section is polyphonic (Figure 18). There are three voices in this section. The soprano, stemmed upwards, is the primary melody and middle voice, indicated with the slur between staves, is an imitation of the soprano. The two voices are separated by three eighth notes. The bass voice doubles the soprano and the middle voice in the first three measures. Starting at measure 15, the bass is a repeated, single harmonic tone until the end of B section.


No. 6 reflects another ternary form. Like no. 3 of this collection, Brahms used vertical texture for both A sections and linear texture for the B section. Both A sections combine chordal and polyphonic textures (Figure 19). The right hand plays two melodic lines, which are stemmed in opposite directions in the treble clef. The left hand plays the harmonic bass in octaves. The B section features a melody embedded within broken chords (Figure 20).

The last piece, no. 7, is also a ternary form. Both A sections are embedded melodic and polyphonic textures in simple duple meter. The melody that is indicated by stems and slurs is embedded within the broken chords of the right hand and the left hand (Figure 21). The B section in 6/8 meter (compound duple meter) is homophonic. The syncopated melody, beginning on middle C and indicated by the three-measure slur between staves, switches
between hands (Figure 22). The accompaniment is arpeggiated. The transition from measures 47 to 61 returns to simple duple meter. A monophonic treatment is applied to the motive of the A section, and it is split between two hands (Figure 23). The coda in 3/8 meter begins in measure 74 and uses chordal texture. Brahms uses hemiola at measure 82 where he ties the third beat to the first beat of the next measure to create a duple effect (Figure 24).
CHORDAL TEXTURE

Chordal texture, an important element in Brahms’ piano music, was discussed in the previous chapter. Generally, musicians consider Brahms to be a composer who captured the sound of the entire orchestra when he composed. For this reason, thick texture frequently created by chords covering a wide range of the piano is prominent in his piano works. In his book *A Short History of Keyboard Music*, Kirby indicates that Brahms often used third and
sixth to double the melody and the harmony.\textsuperscript{103} This doubling is one way in which Brahms created a thick, chordal texture.

In many passages of chordal texture within Brahms’ piano compositions, the student must first identify the melodic tone of a chord or the significant melodic line within a phrase. In Brahms’ music, the melody may be accented, doubled stemmed or stemmed by voice, or sometimes indicated with slurs. There are also some phrases without any markings, where the student needs to analyze the voices to identify the possible melodies.

The appropriate strategies for voicing chords were discussed in pedagogical or performance books and articles. In “Playing Chords,”\textsuperscript{104} Leimar and Gieseking suggest that a chord needs to be played with different strengths on each finger to separate the melody and the harmony. Leimar and Gieseking also indicate that the melodic note of the chord should be two to three levels louder than the accompanying tones.

To practice chordal voicing, the student needs to listen carefully, to be self-critical, and to possess great patience. Before practicing, the student should determine a sound concept for each chord that guides the distribution of weight on each note of the chord. To choose an appropriate sound, the student may play the melodic note and the harmonic notes with separate hands since voicing a chord with two hands is easier than using one hand.

After the student decides on an appropriate sound concept, achieving a different weight on each note within one hand is the next difficulty. The practice of weight use within one hand starts with the melodic notes. Since the hand often needs to play an interval or chord, the hand position is stretched and not comfortable when playing a single note. In this

\textsuperscript{103} Kirby, \textit{A Short History of Keyboard Music}, 334.

\textsuperscript{104} Gieseking and Leimar, 56.
practice, the student should maintain a chordal shape in the hand position and should play the melodic note while keeping the harmonic notes silent. Although playing only one melodic tone, the student must hear the harmony in the inner ear, which allows the melodic tone to relate to the overall musical context.

After practicing the melody tones, a similar method can be used to practice the harmonic tones. To practice the harmony, the student may use different articulations to separate the melodic tones and the harmonic tones. The student may practice the melodic tones louder with legato and the harmonic tones with a softer finger staccato. This practice develops better control of the fingers. The distinctive articulation of the two tones may establish the sound concept clearly. The final step is to play the complete chord. If all the fingers produce the sound with a drawing motion, the student will have better control of the distribution of strength. For the melody note, the finger needs to have a stronger drawing motion to create a firmer, deeper sound. The suggestions above can generally be used to play chords in the works of many composers. But, since their music varies, the distribution of finger weight may also vary.

Three passages with chordal texture were selected from Brahms’ Op. 116 and analyzed, and practice suggestions are provided. In the A and A’ sections of no. 5, both hands play a similar motive (see Figure 25, pickup to m. 1) which is a melodic two-note slur using eighth notes combined with an accompanying chord on the first eighth note. Brahms used two-note slurs to show the melody. According to the marks, the outer notes of some chords need to be voiced while other chords require the student to voice the inner

notes. In Figure 18, the first two-note slur is above the notes of the treble clef, the primary melody, and below the secondary bass tones of the bass clef. The second slur is below the notes of the treble clef and above the notes of the secondary line in the bass clef. The placement of the slurs shows the primary melody. This section not only uses chordal texture, but also combines chordal and contrapuntal texture. The two-note slurs of the bass line and the melodic line move in contrary motion. In this section, the two lines may have equal volume. Because of the combination of the two textures, the student may practice them at the same time.

After practice in the voicing of the chords as described earlier in this chapter, the student may practice the melodic lines in each hand with the suggested fingering. Because the two-note slur has a forward momentum that leads to the second note, the first note of the two-note slur cannot be played too heavily. The student should lean into the second note of each two-slu to maintain an equal dynamic rather than the typical loud-soft execution of many two-note slurs. After practicing each hand individually, the student may play the melodic line of the treble clef and the contrary line of the bass clef with hands together to achieve the desired balance. The practice needs to focus on the contrary motion and the balance. The next step is to practice with all the written notes in one hand. In this practice,
the student may use different articulations for the melodic tone and the harmonic tone. This method was mentioned earlier as a general procedure for practicing chord voicing. After practicing hands separately, the student may practice with both hands. In order to achieve lighter harmonic notes and better control of the fingers, the practice may continue to use different articulations. The student always needs to pay attention to the balance between hands. The third step is to play all the notes of the right hand while voicing the melody and balancing with the contrary melodic tones of the left hand. After this, the student may reverse the two hands with the left hand playing all of its notes while the right hand only plays the melodic line. At last, the student may practice with all the written notes in a slow tempo while listening carefully for the melodic lines. Student must remember to employ a drawing motion to play all notes and chords, especially the fingers on the melodic tones.

Some chordal passages do not have markings to identify the primary melody. For this kind of music, a student needs to analyze the score to determine the melodic line. For example in Op. 116, no. 6, the chordal passage in measures 1-8 (see Figure 26), Brahms does not indicate the primary melody. In this passage, the right hand plays two lines that are indicated by the different stem directions and the left hand plays the harmonic bass line. The slurs appear above the treble clef (right hand), but the crescendo and decrescendo below the eighth notes may indicate the primary melody. When examining the score, the first three slurs of the right hand are sequential melodic patterns. The original pattern of three quarter notes, pitches B-B-A stemmed upwards, in the top line continues with the eighth notes of the inner line stemmed downwards in the treble clef. Brahms may have used the dynamic marks to show the primary melody switching to the inner line or voice. Many concert pianists have chosen to project this melodic line in their audio recordings. The first sequence appears
completely in the top line of second phrase. Like the original pattern, the next sequence has three quarter notes in the top line and then is completed in the inner voice. The fourth phrase has slurs above and below notes of the treble clef (see Figure 26), where the music modulates from f-sharp minor to C-sharp major. The inner line of this fourth phrase has more chromatic pitches to facilitate the modulation.

After determining the melodic line, the first step is to play it alone to produce the dolce e ben legato. The purpose of this practice is to establish an appropriate articulated sound for the melody. The next suggestion is to divide the right hand or treble voices between two hands. This practice allows the student to balance the sound when two or more voices appear in one hand. The top notes of the first three chords are the most important. The inner pitches, B-B#-C#, that move contrary to the melodic pitches are less important. The student may isolate and practice the top quarter notes and the middle quarter notes to hear the contrary motion. After these practice steps, the student should have a concept of the balance between the two lines and may play the two lines within one hand. When playing all the
notes of the treble clef with the right hand, the student uses more weight on the fourth and fifth fingers to project the chosen melody. Since the first two melodic notes are repeated, the student needs to use a vertical drawing motion of the wrist to connect them. The melodic passage using eighth notes is easier to play because there are fewer tones played by the right hand, and the stronger fingers play these melodic notes. A wrist rotation may aid the execution of the legato in the latter half of the first phrase. In summary, the repeated melodic notes require a vertical wrist motion and the eighth notes demand a rotating wrist motion. Since the bass line is independent and is in the low register of piano, the student only needs to control the volume to prevent the left hand from overwhelming the right hand.

Another example from Op. 116, no. 1, occurs in measures 21-36. This passage contains two eight-measure phrases (mm. 21-28 and mm. 29-36), and each of them is divided into three phrases (see Figure 27). The first phrase is measure 21-24 where the right hand plays a chordal structure of four tones. Three of the four tones are an octave (C) combined with a second below (B); these chord tones are repeated five times. The inner fourth tone within this repeated chord creates an ascending chromatic voice largely played by the second finger. The student may choose to voice one of two melodies: one is the repeated treble C’s played by the fifth finger of the right hand, another is the inner chromatic line. The higher treble C may be practiced with the octave middle C. The student needs to lean into the fifth finger of the right hand to create more weight on the melodic tone. Since this melody uses a repeated octave, a clockwise wrist motion may provide a smoother sound. After practicing the octaves, the student can add the repeated B’s of the right hand. If voicing the inner chromatic line, the student needs to practice it alone. This ascending inner voice is largely played by the second finger of the right hand. The student may use a clockwise wrist motion
similar to the motion used to produce the legato octaves. After practicing the two individual lines, the student may play them together with different articulations. While the repeated octaves are played legato with a clockwise wrist motion, the ascending chromatic line may be practiced staccato. The articulations may also be reversed. Next, the student practices the two lines legato and applies more weight on the right-hand fingers used to voice the chosen melody. Finally, the student adds the B’s to the practice.

Chordal texture appears frequently in Brahms’ works. Brahms has indicated some of the primary melodic tones with various markings, but in some cases, he does not identify the primary melody. When chordal texture is used, the first task is to determine the primary melody. After determining the melodic line, the student needs to create an appropriate sound concept that dictates the proper distribution of weight on the fingers. The first practice step is to voice the primary melody followed by adding more chord tones on each practice repetition until all textual layers have been included. During the process, listening to oneself is an important element of the practice. To achieve the appropriate sound concept, the student needs to have an expectation of the sound before actually playing. When playing, the student needs to listen carefully to adjust the balance of sound.
**Embedded Texture**

Embedded texture is another feature of Brahms’ piano music. In this texture, the melodic notes are weaved or embedded within another line. This kind of melody also can be called embedded melody. Some of the melodic tones have double stems and some of them do not. The difficulty of playing this texture is to voice the melodic notes. Often, this kind of texture is written with shorter note values, such as eighth or sixteenth notes, and is played in a moderate or fast tempo that makes the voicing technique harder.

The three selected examples of embedded melody occur in the B sections of Op. 116 nos. 2 and 6, and a transition of no. 7. The B section of no. 2 is written in broken octaves of sixteenth notes (see Figure 28). In this section, there are no double stems to show the melody. However, the alternative version (*ossia*) has the higher register notes appearing on the eighth-note pulse and all of them are double stemmed. The alternative version shows Brahms’ desire to emphasize the higher tones. When analyzing the right-hand patterns, the student discovers stepwise two-note groups alternating between the higher and the lower octaves (see the circled and boxed notes in Figure 28). The stepwise motive is also emphasized in the left-hand part of the B section as well as in both clefs of the A section (Figure 29). Moreover, this stepwise motive of two notes is one of the features that unify the seven pieces.

The practice of an embedded melody may start with playing the higher pitches of the treble clef with the right hand and the lower pitches in the same clef with the left hand. Through this practice, the student may hear the music flowing between the two groups like a dialog or conversation, or the two groups of pitches (higher and lower) may function as a call and response. When practicing the two ranges of pitches with the right hand, the student may
use legato for the higher pitches and staccato on the lower pitches in order to distinguish the different lines. The student also needs to pay attention to the combined movements of the arm, the wrist, and the fingers since the right hand is stretched or extended when playing octaves as well as to the fingering (fingers 1-4 and 2-5) to produce a very legato line. Moreover, the finger movements need to be small and close to the keys to produce a soft, even sound. To achieve a soft, legato sound in a fast tempo is impossible without using the wrist and the arm. The rotation of the wrist and arm may improve the legato. First, the
teacher and student need to decide the size of the rotation as well as its direction. Since the higher pitches are the call, they need to be voiced louder than the lower pitches. A clockwise rotation of the wrist and arm may produce a louder sound after the arm is dropped on the first note.

The practice of this rotation may start in a slow tempo that allows the student to observe and think about the motion. Practice should begin with a small section of the music, before practice expands to more phrases or sections. There are successive thumb movements in some places, such as the last note of measure 20 and the first note of measure 21 of Figure 24, where the student needs to have counter-clockwise motion to maintain a legato connection. These examples need to be isolated and practiced.

The second selected example of embedded texture occurs in the B section of Op. 116 no. 6 (Figure 30). In this section, the accompaniment consists of broken chords in triplets. The melodic tones are played by the right hand. Some of the melodic tones are embedded within the accompaniment and appear as the first notes of the triplets, which are also double stemmed. The first practice step is to play the melodic notes alone. Only when the melody is clearly identified and remembered may the student use more weight on the correct fingers. Again, the student may use different articulations to distinguish between the melody and the accompaniment. This practice may also start with the right hand before using both hands. After this step, the student may practice both hands while observing Brahms' articulations.

The third example of an embedded melody using sixteenth notes occurs in a transition of no. 7. The four elements of the transition are drawn from the A section. The first element is the broken seventh chord in sixteenth notes in the treble clef (see Figure 31, m. 1); the second element is the two-note leap, the first and last note of the five-note phrase in the bass
voice (m. 1 to m. 2); the third element features the two stepwise notes, stemmed upwards, in the upper melodic line (m. 1); and the last is the melodic interval of the fourth, stemmed upwards, which alternates with the melodic step or second, and also occurs in the upper melodic line (m. 2). Later in the work, Brahms notated the elements in different ways. In Figure 32, the first element, stemmed upwards, appears in measure 47 with the second element, which is stemmed downwards. The first note of third element has a double stem and an accent mark (m. 48). At the beginning of this section, the stepwise melody appears in every other measure of the right hand (mm. 48, 50), and grows more intense as the dynamics increase in measure 52. From the notation and the frequency of its appearance, the stepwise
motion may be considered a primary element in this section. The student may follow the
general practice steps described for the previous examples, such as using different
articulations for the elements and imagining the elements played by different instruments.

An embedded melody without double stems is easily ignored in a piano work, like the
first and second elements of Figure 28, measure 47. The student needs to carefully analyze
the music to identify the primary melodic notes. If all the notes are played the same way,
there will be no leading and support roles like those in a drama. The listener cannot hear
different colors and lines in the music, which means that the performer and the listener lose
the enjoyment of the thick textures. The performance will be plain and unconvincing. To
identify the primary melody and to practice this melody are the first steps in building a strong
inner hearing of what needs to be projected or voiced. The next step is to add one supporting
line to the primary melody. To separate the two lines between the two hands or to use a
different articulation for each line remain significant steps during the practice. At the same
time, the student needs to listen carefully to the individual lines when playing in order to
distribute the appropriate weight to each finger and to use proper touch.
POLYPHONIC TEXTURE

In polyphonic texture, there are two or more relatively independent melodic lines played simultaneously. Polyphonic texture is significant in Brahms' compositions. His study of counterpoint with Joachim and his knowledge of Baroque music prepared Brahms to compose contrapuntally. He used the elements of the canon and the fugue in some of his compositions, such as the *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*.

In other compositions, the polyphonic texture is an important tool which Brahms used to develop his musical ideas. Auerbach’s article “Tiered Polyphony and Its Determinative Role in the Piano Music of Johannes Brahms” illustrates the importance of tiered polyphony in Brahms’ piano work. His analysis of Brahms’ tiered polyphony provides a unique insight which is not covered by other approaches. Auerbach analyzed the polyphony in Brahms’s piano work Op. 79 by describing the rhythmic/metrical layering which produces metrical dissonance based on three degrees: weak, moderate, or strict. According to Auerbach, the lines with higher metrical dissonance are more independent. An analysis and an awareness of Brahms’ polyphonic texture help the student and the teacher to clarify the obscure and dense lines and to make performance decisions.

This section provides three examples of polyphonic texture in Op. 116. The first example is from Op. 116, no. 1, measures 21-24 (see Figure 33), a hemiola passage in 3/8 where both hands play a quarter-note pulse which creates a metrical feeling of 2/4. The bass line is a chromatic scale in octaves that ascends on the beat. The right-hand chords enter one eighth note after each left-hand octave, or the weaker portion of each beat. The two lines

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occur at different rhythmic points. Brahms marked this section *ben legato* for a very legato sound. If the lines are played legato and independently, the listener may easily hear that there are two lines. However, if the student does not perform the two lines independently, it sounds like one line with alternating low and high sounds. To avoid this kind of problem, the student needs to play the two lines legato and to carefully sustain the octaves of the left hand and the chords of the right hand to form two linear melodic lines.

In the left hand, a legato fingering that alternates 5-1 and 4-1 is helpful in achieving the legato. When playing the second octave in measure 21, the student sustains the fifth finger of the first octave until the fourth finger depresses the lowest note of the next octave. Besides of the finger legato, a slight clockwise wrist motion on each octave assists in creating a smoother sound. If the student has a smaller hand and needs to use fingers 5-1 to play all the left-hand octaves, suggestions may include practicing the movement of thumb or fifth finger also may include practicing the thumb or the fifth and fourth fingers alone. When the same finger moves a half step towards the next note, the wrist rotates clockwise which helps the finger to move smoothly. After practicing with a single finger, the student may practice the legato octaves by connecting two octaves first, then connecting three, and so on. The last step may add the overlapping or syncopated pedal, which can create a more legato sound and sustain the octave longer. Because of the chromatic bass line, the student needs to change the
pedal after each octave. Most of the right hand chords are played by the same fingers, which creates difficulty for the student when attempting to play legato. The wrist may assist the production of a more legato sound. All the octave chords may be played with a clockwise wrist motion.

The second example of polyphonic texture begins in Op. 116, no. 3, measures 35-36. This piece is in 2/2 meter with the half note as the basic pulse (see Figure 34). There are two motives: one is the soprano line of the two measures, and the second motive is the bass line in the same two measures. In most of this section, there are three voices or lines that are written. But at some points, there are only two lines that can be seen and the third line is hidden or embedded within the other two lines, such as measures 41-42 (Figure 35, and Figure 36 where the circled notes are embedded). In some other places, there is a fourth voice (Figure 37). The student needs to find the hidden line and to practice all lines separately. Next, the student may practice the soprano and bass together followed by practice of any other two lines. When finishing this practice of two lines, the student may practice three lines with different dynamics. The line with the primary melody is played louder than the other lines. Although it is a polyphonic texture, the student still needs to choose a primary line and a secondary line according to the importance of the elements. For example, the triplet in the soprano of Figure 35 is an important element from the second motive. When the two triplets in measure 41 lead to climax in measure 42, the soprano is considered the primary melody. The top notes of these right-hand chords need to be voiced. The secondary line includes the circled notes in the left hand (Figure 35), which are an element from the first motive (see Figure 36). This line is embedded in the bass line. When playing the bass,


the student should carefully listen to the secondary line and use the inner ear to guide the hand to connect the two notes (D-G). Since the bass line is relatively independent and low, the student may not need extra effort to voice the line. When there are four voices in the music, the student may follow the same practice suggestions as those suggested for three voices.

The last example of polyphonic texture may be found in Op. 116, no. 4, measures 30-32 which is in 3/4 meter (see Figure 38). The phrases in each hand are indicated with a slur. Brahms created phrases of different lengths in the two hands (see the check marks in Figure 38). The soprano begins with three triplet groups in the first phrase and incorporates hemiola in the second phrase. The middle and bass lines are triplets until measure 31 where the two lines combine with the soprano to create the hemiola. The three measures feature polyphonic melodies and rhythms. The student may practice the three lines separately and lift between the phrases. Next, the student should practice the soprano and bass line together. The third practice step may divide the soprano and middle lines between the two hands before playing these lines with the right hand. Different articulations may be used to separate the two lines. Finally, the student may practice the three lines together. During practice, the student always listens carefully for the polyphonic lines in each step.
The polyphonic texture is a technical and musical element that the student frequently confronts in piano study, requiring decisions about the primary melody and the balance of lines. Sometimes, polyphonic texture includes different melodic lines and poly-rhythms that demand a highly developed independence of the two hands. The student needs to identify and to play each line in the music. After this practice, the student may choose the primary line or one or two lines if there are two equally important lines before playing the lines to achieve the correct balance. During practice, attentive listening is necessary to express the polyphonic lines.

In this chapter, three different types of texture were selected and analyzed: chordal, embedded and polyphonic texture. The practice suggestions were based on the analysis and the different types of texture. Since technical development and musical understanding vary among students, and the practice and learning styles of the students are different, the practice suggestions may only provide a general guide to practice. The two most important steps are to analyze the music and to listen to the sound. These are the essential tools for making the practice efficiently.
CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the thesis and draws conclusions on how to practice and perform the chordal, embedded, and polyphonic textures within Brahms’ late piano work, op. 116. The recommendations for further study are also given in the chapter.

SUMMARY

Brahms, described as “a classicist among romantics”\textsuperscript{106} by Frisch and as “the forerunner of a new approach to musical composition”\textsuperscript{107} by Botstein, was raised in a German family and trained in German musical traditions. His early training in piano made Brahms use this instrument as the central medium of his musical expression, both for solo performance and ensembles. The most frequent forms of Brahms piano music are sonata and variations. The large-scale, virtuoso technique and the orchestral scope are features of his early piano music. Brahms’s later piano works, which were composed after 1890, feature small-scale, simpler forms and fewer technical demands. Op. 116 reflects the changes and represents the style of Brahms’ last compositional period. Brahms had retired from his overwhelming public demands and take off the mask of Beethoven’s heir.\textsuperscript{108} He wrote to Clara that he had started to compose for himself. The works became intimate, introspective,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Frisch, “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,” 323.
  \item Paul Holmes, Brahms: His Life and Times (Southborough: Baton Press, 1984), 143.
\end{itemize}
and less constrained, which reflected the genuine Brahms. However, there are two features maintained from the earlier stages of Brahms’ piano compositions to the late period. One was the dense texture that is the topic of this thesis, and another was the complicated rhythm. In this thesis, the textures of Op. 116 were summarized in three types.

One is chordal texture in which the music consists of successive chords. It can be a passage of four parts music which moves in similar rhythm, or it can be a passage in which melody is thickened by chords. The first kind of chordal texture is typical in both A sections of no. 6. The steady moving chords, combined with polyphony, make the music sounds like a church hymn. In this kind of passage, the student needs to bring out the primary and the secondary melodies in different degree. The second kind of chordal texture can be found in no. 4, the B section, where the right hand chords feature melodic tone on the top accompanied by the left hand arpeggios.

The second texture is embedded texture in which the melodic tone is embedded within the accompaniment. Some passages with embedded texture have indicated melodic tone with marks, such as double stemmed notes in B section of no. 6. In some passages, the student needs to analyze the music in order to find out the melodic tones, such as the B section of no. 2.

The third texture is polyphonic texture in which two or more relatively independent lines move horizontally. In op. 116, polyphonic texture appears by itself only in few places. It is combined with other textures at most of the times. For example, both A sections in no. 5 are a combination of chordal texture and polyphonic texture. The combination of textures increases the degree of musical and technique difficulties.
The chordal texture appears more often in op. 116 than other textures. It is used with large passages or sections. The chordal texture is predominant in no. 1. The other two textures are not used as much as chordal texture. The polyphonic texture is used together with chordal texture most of the time. The embedded texture is used for B section more often. Brahms’ choices of using textures in Op. 116 relate to the plans of structure. The changes of texture consistently coordinate with the changes of structures. When the music goes to the second theme or another section, the texture always changed. There are no two successive sections in Op. 116 using the same texture.

The textural issue is a topic which every piano performer will confront during the study of piano. There are limited sources on how to play and how to teach the textures in a piano work. Some of the books discuss the concept of texture theoretically, and some piano pedagogical books present general methods or suggestions for playing different textures. For many piano compositions, the teacher or student cannot find a single source that analyzes the texture of a work being taught or studied, identifies the difficulties of the texture, and provides creative practice methods and teaching strategies. The third chapter of this thesis combines these three areas: the analysis of three types of texture in Brahms’ Op. 116, the practice processes as well as the teaching points.

The first step is textural analysis which requires thorough and careful examination of the musical score. It is a crucial step for making solid performance decisions. Through analysis, the student would have an overview of the texture. When practicing, the student knows which aspect he/she needs to focus on. The practice needs to focus on the primary part or primary melody. If there is a dilemma in choosing the primary melody, students may base on their preferences or refer to recordings. The melodic tone needs to be practiced first, and
then the student practice other parts or layers. After practicing the layers individually, the next step of practice may combine two of the layers. The practice can be split between hands in order to have well balanced sound even if the two layers need to be played by one hand. After this step, the layers can be played within one hand. When practicing, listen carefully is the key to success. These steps may help student to have efficient practice.

In summary, Brahms’ four sets of piano works Op. 116-119 represent his highly artistic standard. Many musicians compliment that these works are the most artistic works among nineteen century piano literature. Compared with the relatively simple forms and harmony, texture as an important element draws people’s attention. The various and interesting textures make the pieces musically and technically challenging.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Although op. 116 does not feature virtuoso piano techniques, it requires a comprehensive and mature understanding of Brahms’ late style. The pieces are more musically than technically demanding. When choosing to assign the pieces to a student, the teacher needs to consider the musical maturity of the student rather than the technical readiness.

Texture is a performance issue which each performer confronts in Brahms’ piano works. To perform texture well requires a musical understanding of the composer’s style, knowledge about the background of the piece, and an examination of the composer’s expectations in the music. Also, the student needs to voice the multiple layers with fine technical control of tone and timbre. In addition, an analysis of textures is a step that the student must take. The analysis helps the student to examine multiple lines (musical material) clearly. Moreover, inner hearing allows student to have the ideal sound before playing. Inner
hearing should be built through consistent ear training and musical listening and discussion over the years of musical study.

Before the student start to practice details and polish the performance. He/she should be able to present a complete performance with accurate notes and rhythm in a required tempo. The practice of texture always starts with a slow tempo and with a single layer of texture before gradually adding more layers to the practice. Objective listening is crucial to an efficient practice. Recording the performance or the practice is a good way for the student to evaluate the result. The teacher’s role at this level should be an advisor, who guides the student to his/her own musical understanding and performance decisions. Since teachers should have more knowledge and experience, they may provide valuable suggestions for practice and performance.

Before assigning the piece, the teacher may briefly introduce the background of the composer and the piece. After reviewing the score with the student and analyzing the structural form, the student may listen to professional recordings to develop ideas about the work. According to the student’s performance level, the teacher may give a portion of the piece as the first assignment.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY**

Texture plays an important part in Brahms’ piano compositions. This thesis only studied the textures found in the pieces from Op. 116. Further textural study of Op. 117-119 will benefit students. Also, further study may enhance an understanding of Brahms’ textural and overall style. Texture is only part of a performance. There are many other elements that contribute to a successful performance of Brahms. Further study may focus on how rhythm, harmony and expressive marks affect a performance and how to teach these elements.
Further studies may also address teaching strategies for presenting Brahms which give detailed plans for how to select and introduce a piece from Brahms’ late collections to a student and how to help a student to develop a good performance.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


**MUSIC SCORE**


**WORKS CONSULTED**


