

“A Piece Just About the Logic and Not the Beauty and Warmth:” Thomas Adès’s Anti-Homage *Brahms*, op. 21

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Wenn nachts das Gespenst erscheint
und sich ums Klavier herumtreibt
dann wissen wir
Brahms ist gekommen
Das wäre weiter nicht schlimm
wenn nicht dieser Zigarrengeruch
das Musikzimmer tagelang verpesten würde
Schlimmer noch
ist allerdings sein Klavierspiel
Dieses Gewühl durch Akkorde und Doppeloktaven
weckt sogar die Kinder aus ihrem Tiefschlaf
Schon wieder Brahms
heuten sie
und halten sich die Ohren zu
Verstimmt und rauchend
steht des Flügel da
wenn Brahms sich erhebt
Brahms
sagt er mehrmals
mit klagender Tenorstimme
bevor er verschwindet

When at dead of night the ghost appears
and starts prowling round the piano
then we know
Brahms has arrived
It wouldn't be quite so bad
if his cigar smell
didn't stink out the music room for days on end
Even worse though
is his piano playing
This wading through chords and double octaves
wakes even the children from their deep sleep
Not Brahms again
they wail
and block their ears
Out of tune and smoking
the piano stands there
when Brahms gets up
Brahms
he says several times
in a plaintive tenor
before leaving through the kitchen door

Alfred Brendel

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Allegro non troppo, mm. 1-8

IV., mm. 233-236

Figure 1. adapted from Schoenberg’s analyses of Brahms’s Symphony no. 4; see Arnold Schoenberg, “Brahms the Progressive,” in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 406, and Schoenberg, *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, ed. Gerald Strang and Leonard Stein (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), 9, 11.

Poco scorrevole, mesto, molto misterioso ($\text{♩} = 68$)

analysis

analysis

pp

8vb...1

Figure 2. Thomas Adès, *Brahms*, op. 21, mm. 1-8.

f ben marc.

5 3 2 1

5 3 2 1

2 3 4 5

Figure 3. Johannes Brahms, *Capriccio*, op. 116, no. 7, mm. 1-4.

die - ser Zi - gar - ren - ge - ruch

8va

32

Figure 4. Thomas Adès, *Brahms*, op. 21, mm. 30-6.

34

Das Musik

Figure 4. (cont'd)

analysis

Figure 5. Thomas Adès, *The Origin of the Harp*, op. 13, mm. 57-60, 1st Viola part.

1 2 3

O Tod, o Tod, wie bit - ter,

4 5 6

wie bit - - ter bist du, wenn an dich ge - den-ket ein

analysis

Figure 6. adapted from Schoenberg's analyses of Brahms's *O Tod, wie bitter bist du!*, op. 121, no. 3; see Arnold Schoenberg, "Brahms the Progressive," in *Style and Idea*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Black (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 432-4.

7 Mensch, gedenket ein Mensch, der gu - te Tage und genug hat und oh - ne Sor - ge le - bet

10 und dem es wohl geht in al - len Din - gen und noch wohl es - sen mag!

31 O Tod, o Tod wie wohl tust du;

analysis

Figure 6. (cont'd)

Maid as R'neck. They're not like us. They're not like us.

ic1 cycle ic1 cycle

ic2 cycle ic2 cycle

Elec. as R'neck.

Figure 7. Thomas Adès, *Powder Her Face*, op. 14, scene 6, mm. 37-41.

analysis

• = ic1 cycle
○ = ic2 cycle

Baritone: stimme be - - vor er ver - - schwin - - det.

ic5 cycle

Figure 8. Thomas Adès, *Brahms*, op. 21, closing bars.

prime form: (05) (015) (025) (025) (015) (05) (05) (016) (027) (037) (037) (027) (016) (05)

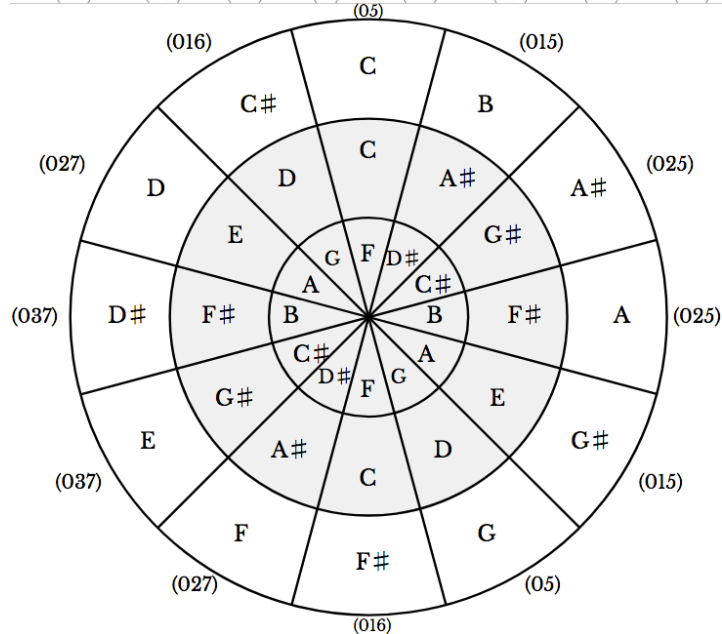


Figure 9. (ic1 + ic2 + ic2) Aligned cycle configuration.

analysis

'Ah, my dear, my son, Ah, my dear, my son, Ah, my dear, my son, Ah, my dear son,' said

Figure 10. Thomas Adès, *Fayrfax Carol*, opening measures.

Judge: She is a beast to an excep - tional degree. She is a Don Juan

8va

Orch.

p *ppp* *ff* *p* *f* *ff*

analysis

among w w w w w w women. She is in - sa - tia - ble, unna - tural.

293

Orch.

pp *mf* *ppp* *f* *p* *ff*

analysis

Figure 11. Thomas Adès, *Powder Her Face*, op. 14, scene 6, mm. 289-95.

analysis

• = ic1 cycle
○ = ic2 cycle

Figure 12. Thomas Adès, *Brahms*, op. 21, mm. 29-31.