

Brahms Intermezzo in A Major, Op. 118 No. 2

Brahms is often referred to as a *Classical-Romanticist* because his music exemplifies both period styles. He was a traditionalist and an innovator.

Traditional Compositional features in Op. 118, No.2

Motivic Development:

- Opening motive in hemiola (mm. 28-30)



- Opening motive repeated in bass with mode change (mm. 30-34)



- Opening motive in melodic inversion

Opening motive:



Melodic inversion of opening motive:



Occurrence at mm. 34-35



Traditional Compositional Features (cont.)

- Invertible counterpoint (contrapuntal inversion) is when two independent melodies played simultaneously change registral positions later in a passage; that is the higher melody becomes the lower melody and vice versa. The excerpt below demonstrates how it occurs in Op. 118, No. 2: The following two lines of music have the same two melodies playing simultaneously. Notice that on the second line, the melody that was on top is now on the bottom. (Line 1 is mm. 49-56, Line 2 is mm. 65-72):



The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The first staff (mm. 49-56) features a melody in the upper register (treble clef) and a supporting bass line in the lower register (bass clef). The second staff (mm. 65-72) shows the same two melodies, but their registral positions are inverted: the melody that was previously in the upper register is now in the lower register, and the supporting bass line is now in the upper register. This illustrates the concept of invertible counterpoint.

- 4-note canon (mm. 57-64):



The image shows a musical score for a 4-note canon in G major (one sharp). The score is written for piano and consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs). A red box highlights a four-measure phrase in both staves, illustrating the canon. The first measure of the phrase is marked *pp* (pianissimo) and the last measure is marked *rit.* (ritardando). The canon is based on a four-note motif: G4, A4, B4, C5. The second staff's melody is a canon of the first staff's melody, starting one measure later.

Romantic Compositional Features

- Metric displacement – downbeat sounds elsewhere than beat one (e.g., mm. 17-23; 38-45)

38 *cresc. un poco animato* (Hemiola)

43 *rit. - - - più lento*

1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 1 2 1 2

- Cross rhythms – 3:2 (mm. 49-56; 65-72)

49 *in tempo*

3

- Chromatic third relationships (m. 16)

16

p

EM CM6

- Avoidance of tonic chords in root position, especially on strong beats
 - Observe the absence of A major chords in root position on strong beats from mm. 1-49