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MULTIPLY DIRECTED MOMENTS IN A BRAHMS SONG:

“SCHÖN WAR, DAS ICH DIR WEIHTE” (OP. 95, NO. 7)*

MELISSA HOAG

“**S**chön war, das ich dir weihte,” op. 95/7, is a melancholy setting of a poem by Georg Friederich Daumer. Though Brahms frequently set poetry by Daumer (for instance, the eight songs of op. 95 are all settings of Daumer texts), no. 7 is the only Daumer setting in op. 95.¹ “Schön war” begins with a sparse piano accompaniment featuring a syncopated bass line that permeates the musical landscape, creating an uneasy mood.

Several melodic events, termed “melodic disjunctions,” play a significant role in “Schön war.”² Melodic disjunctions are prominent melodic constructions (frequently occurring near the beginning of a piece), in which there are seemingly anomalous leaps or gaps, often involving unresolved tendency tones, dissonant leaps, or other unusual but expressive contrapuntal con-

* I wish to thank Frank Samarotto, Robert Hatten, Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, and Janet Schmalfeldt for their valuable feedback on previous versions of this essay, as well as the anonymous readers for *Gamut*, who contributed many helpful remarks.

¹ Op. 95 is united not by a common author, but by similarity in poetic voice: as noted by Heather Platt and Inge van Rij, all of the poems seem to be from the point of view of young women (see Platt, “7 Lieder, Op. 95,” in *The Compleat Brahms: A Guide to the Musical Works of Johannes Brahms*, ed. Leon Botstein [New York: W. W. Norton, 1999], 287; and Rij, *Brahms’s Song Collections* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006], 175). Songs 1 and 5 originate in Siegfried Kapper’s *Gesänge der Serben*; Song 6 is a translation of an Italian poem by Paul Heyse; Songs 2–4 set poems by Friederich Halm. Song 7, the subject of this essay, originates in Georg Friederich Daumer’s collection *Polydora, ein weltpoetisches Liederbuch* (Frankfurt am Main, 1855). Combining various poetic sources to create a song “bouquet”—as Brahms called his song collections—is commonplace in his song *oeuvre*, and has been discussed by many authors, including Imogen Fellingner (“Cyclic Tendencies in Brahms’s Song Collections,” in *Brahms Studies: Analytical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Georges Bozarth [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990], 379–388), Inge van Rij (*Brahms’s Song Collections*), and Daniel Stevens (“Brahms’s Song Collections: Rethinking a Genre,” Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Michigan, 2008).

² For another example of how melodic disjunction occurs within the context of a Brahms song, see Hoag, “Brahms’s ‘Great Tragic Opera’: Melodic Drama in ‘Ach, wende diesen Blick’ (Op. 57, No. 4),” *Music Theory Online* 17/1 (2011), <<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.11.17.1/mto.11.17.1.hoag.html>>; and my dissertation, “Multiply-Directed Moments in the Music of Brahms” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana Univ., 2008), in which the theory of melodic disjunction is most fully explained.

structions. While these melodic disjunctions may, at some level, be explainable through traditional theoretical descriptions (e.g., as products of superposition or compound melody), technical terminology often proves inadequate in clarifying the expressive nature of these events. This is particularly the case when the resolution of a disjunction is either delayed or avoided throughout an entire composition; although melodic disjunctions often immediately resolve, they may be more meaningful for analytical purposes when they do not.³ Although Schenkerian analysis is taken as a starting point in this essay, I have resisted the common analytical tendency to explain the disjunctive moments occurring throughout “Schön war” as “simply” one or another voice leading technique, precisely so that the lack of resolution can be appreciated as a central part of the song’s meaning.

The “multiply directed moment” mentioned in the title of this study is principally characterized by the presence of a prominent, unresolved melodic disjunction; however, the multiply directed moment is more than simply a melodic event.⁴ It is compounded by ambiguity among

³ Because a melodic event is unlikely to be considered a disjunction unless it somehow challenges a listener’s expectation for the direction of a melodic line, I will take this opportunity to clarify the relationship between the concept of the melodic disjunction and Leonard B. Meyer’s theory of implication-realization, which is most fully explicated in Meyer, *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1973), 114–130. (See also Eugene Narmour, *The Analysis and Cognition of Basic Melodic Structures: The Implication-Realization Model* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990].) In “Schön war,” melodic disjunctions thwart expectations by either delaying resolution of strong tendency tones, or altogether failing to resolve them (this will especially be the case with Disjunction no. 2, which presents an unresolved leading tone—arguably the strongest of all tendency tones, and considered an important event in tonal analysis in general). A comparable avoidance of resolution occurs in Brahms’s song op. 57/4, in which the tendency tone $\hat{6}$ purposefully avoids resolution to $\hat{5}$ (see Hoag, “Brahms’s ‘Great Tragic Opera,’” in which I offer a similar comparison with implication-realization theory). For a theoretical perspective on a related melodic issue, see also Frank Samarotto, “‘Plays of Opposing Motion’: Contra-Structural Melodic Impulses in Voice-Leading Analysis,” *Music Theory Online* 15/2 (2009), <<http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.09.15.2/mto.09.15.2.samarotto.html>>. Samarotto focuses on two parameters, directionality and ambitus, to explain what he calls “contra-structural melodic impulses.”

⁴ The phrase “multiply directed moment” (originally introduced in Hoag, “Multiply-Directed Moments in the Music of Brahms”) calls to mind Jonathan Kramer’s *The Time of Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1988). Kramer defines two principal types of time: linear and nonlinear. Linearity is defined as “the determination of some characteristic(s) of music in accordance with implications that arise from earlier events of the piece,” and “multiply-directed time” is one type of linearity in music (20). Pieces in multiply-directed time are described by Kramer as “pieces in which the direction of motion is so frequently interrupted by discontinuities, in which the music goes so

other parameters—including harmony, rhythm, and meter—thereby creating a larger network of ambiguity in the region of the melodic disjunction. The word “moment” captures the sense that one’s understanding of the music changes when one of these moments arises in a composition. What might previously have been comprehended as a straightforward melodic line becomes, at the multiply directed moment, imbued with either doubt or possibility, depending on other circumstances in the music. The listener is aware of myriad possibilities for continuation, and the realization of the multiple possibilities brought on by the multiply directed moment colors the perception of the rest of the composition. In “Schön war,” the multiply directed moment shapes the dramatic course of the entire song.

Of course, “Schön war” is technically a closed work. It begins and ends in the same key, and there is an *Urlinie* descent and a final cadence. Through the use of Schenkerian voice-leading analysis, and the explication of several prominent melodic disjunctions, this essay offers a detailed analysis of “Schön war, das ich dir weihte” that strives to be sensitive to degrees of closure and potential analytical gaps in order to maintain a sense of possibility as one hears through the song, and in order to highlight the lack of closure present in the text and in the music. The idea that some melodic disjunctions (and some multiply directed moments) may *not* achieve resolution is a central facet of the following analysis.⁵

often to unexpected places, that the linearity, though still a potent structural force, seems reordered” (46). Although the present study does not focus solely on pacing or temporal relationships, Kramer’s description of multiply directed linear time resonates with what is being illustrated in this analysis (although “Schön war” proceeds in a more subtle manner than is implied by Kramer’s description).

⁵ Walter Everett also embraces degrees of resolution within standard tonal frameworks, in particular in the genre of the nineteenth-century art song (see Everett, “Deep-Level Portrayals of Directed and Misdirected Motions in Nineteenth-Century Lyric Song,” *Journal of Music Theory* 48/1 [2004]: 25–68). His central philosophy may be best summed up in his assertion that “we have to understand that, in the nineteenth-century artwork, everything is not intended to ‘work’ all of the time. Crises of passion occur and are left unresolved, unbalanced situations are not always wrapped up neatly and tidily, and audiences are often left to supply their own resolutions—or not, as they so choose” (29). See also my discussion of the importance of unresolved musical gestures in Hoag, “Brahms’s ‘Great Tragic Opera,’” 4–5.

A score of “Schön war” is included in the Appendix, and for reference, a sketch of the A section is included as Figure 1. Daumer’s original text follows with English translation (Brahms’s added text repetitions are in italics):⁶

Schön war, das ich dir weihte,
Das goldene Geschmeide;
Süs war der Laute Ton,
Die ich die auserlesen;
Das Herze, das sie beide
Darbrachte, wert gewesen, *wert gewesen,*
Wär’s zu empfangen einen bessern Lohn.
wert gewesen, wert gewesen,
Wär’s zu empfangen einen bessern Lohn.

Beautiful was the golden jewelry I solemnly gave to you;
Sweet was the note of the lute that I chose for you;
the heart that offered them both up to you,
would have been worthy to receive a better reward.

The song’s opening can more accurately be described as “emerging,” rather than “beginning.” The piano’s initial Cs, which throb repeatedly on the offbeats, impart a retrospective mood to the opening measures; even before the text reveals its place in time, one senses that the music is past tense.⁷ The entrance of the voice, also on C, provides only a tentative clue to the

⁶ This translation is based on Stanley Applebaum’s translation, in *Johannes Brahms: Complete Songs for Voice and Piano*, Series III (New York: Dover, 1980), xvii. I have not altered Applebaum’s English word choices, but I have re-arranged the word order of the opening two lines of the translation to retain the poetic inversion in Daumer’s original poem.

⁷ For more on music’s ability to portray a “tense,” see Carolyn Abbate, “What the Sorcerer Said,” *19th-Century Music* 12/3 (1989): 221–230. She summarizes: “Perhaps musical works have no ability to narrate in the most basic literary sense; that is, to posit a narrating survivor of the tale who speaks of it in the past tense” (230). I make no theoretical claims about music’s general ability to specifically denote a past tense, but I hear the music’s fading-in quality at the beginning of “Schön war” as implying a past tense. This is soon confirmed by use of the past tense in the song’s text: “Schön war, das ich dir weihte, das Goldene geschmeide” (“Beautiful was the golden jewelry I gave to you”).

FIGURE 1. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: voice-leading sketch of A section

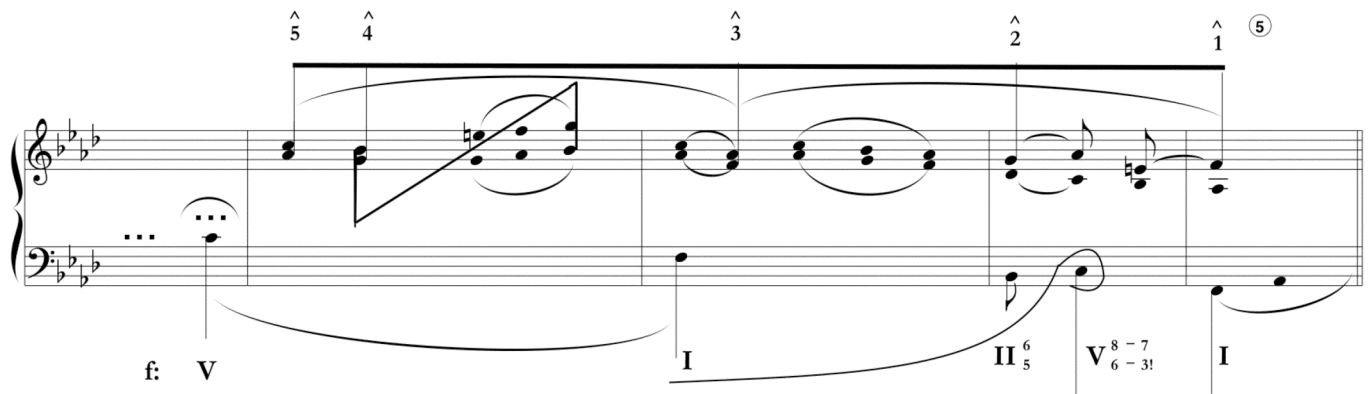


FIGURE 2. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: Melodic Disjunction #1, mm. 2 and 6



FIGURE 3. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: resolution of Melodic Disjunction #1



FIGURE 4. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: Melodic Disjunction #2, mm. 2–3 and 6–7



song's tonality. As the music comes into focus, conflicts become apparent. The voice begins a slow descent, and ushers in the first of several melodic disjunctions, shown in Figure 2.⁸

The first two notes of the melody, $\hat{5}$ (C) and $\hat{4}$ (B $\flat$) imply a resolution to $\hat{3}$ (A $\flat$), due to B $\flat$'s role as chordal seventh above the bass note C. Instead of fulfilling this goal, however, the implied resolution to $\hat{3}$ (A $\flat$) is abandoned, and the melody changes direction. It moves not to $\hat{3}$ but to $\hat{7}$ (E $\flat$), and from this point it continues upward in a stepwise fashion, prolonging the dominant harmony implied by the first two notes of the melody. Because the specific implication of $\hat{4}$ (B $\flat$) is not immediately fulfilled, the initial break between the lower and upper branches of the melody can be described as a melodic disjunction. Of course, the delay of resolution caused by this initial disjunction is only temporary; it resolves in m. 3 as the melodic line returns to $\hat{5}$ (C), and fulfills the implication from m. 2 by descending to $\hat{3}$ (A $\flat$) (Figure 3). This slight delay of resolution is not uncommon, and it is something that most listeners accommodate easily.

Whereas the first melodic disjunction resolves after a brief delay, the disjunction created when the ascending gesture $\hat{7}-\hat{1}-\hat{2}$ (E-F-G) is abandoned raises other melodic issues (Figure 4). The melodic disjunction shown in Figure 4 is a good example of a melodic event that may, at the most basic level, be described using traditional theoretical terminology, but for which traditional terminology does not fully capture what is occurring in the music. Specifically, the $\hat{7}-\hat{1}-\hat{2}$ (E-F-G) in m. 2 may be described as the upper branch of a compound melody.⁹ The term "compound

⁸ Heather Platt has remarked that the melodic structure of the opening measures sounds as if "the distressed speaker cannot complete a full sentence without breaking down" ("7 Lieder, Op. 95," 284). Also, for an uncanny echo of these opening measures, see Schoenberg's *Book of the Hanging Gardens*, op. 15/5: "Saget mir."

⁹ One might reasonably object that the ascending gesture $\hat{7}-\hat{1}-\hat{2}$ (E-F-G) is too short to be considered part of a compound melody, and that the gesture can be explained more simply as a superposition. I would argue, however, that at the very least we are led to expect that a compound melody is going to emerge, because the gesture so strongly implies resolution in its own register. Hearing the ascending gesture as the upper branch of a nascent compound melody, and experiencing the abandonment of this gesture, strengthens the lack of resolution felt when the lower portion of the melody resumes. As will be demonstrated later in the essay, the notion of unfulfilled expectations—both musical and emotional—is one of the song's central features.

melody” sufficiently describes the disjunction leading into this upper branch (Figure 2), because the descent from $\hat{5}$ (C) to $\hat{4}$ ($B\flat$) is resolved in m. 3. The tendency tone (the chordal seventh $B\flat$), left “hanging” at the end of the first part of the compound melody, resolves; so there is no need to further qualify this melodic activity. The second disjunction, which occurs when the lower branch of the melody resumes (Figure 4), is not resolved in the traditional contrapuntal sense; a more detailed explanation is needed to capture the effect of this disjunction on the song’s opening.

Explaining that the dissonant leaps in this melody result from a “compound melody” would insufficiently describe the melodic events immediately following the first melodic disjunction. The $\hat{7}$ (E5) that initiates the ascending gesture finds only temporary resolution in the passing $\hat{1}$ (F5) that immediately follows, and the subsequent $\hat{2}$ (G5) simply prolongs the residual tendency of the leading tone as part of the dominant harmony. Instead of resolving, the upper branch of the melody breaks off, abandoning its own trajectory; this results in two leaps in the same direction that do not outline a triad but instead outline a major seventh. The lack of leading-tone resolution in the ascending upper gesture, which remains isolated for the duration of the A section, imparts a subtle emptiness on the opening measures of the song that impacts how the text is interpreted in the first nine measures. Simply affixing the label “compound melody” to these measures would not adequately portray the avoidance of melodic resolution that characterizes the passage; one needs to take into account the purposeful lack of resolution of the second melodic disjunction.

A third melodic disjunction occurs after the aforementioned descent to $\hat{3}$ ($A\flat$) in m. 3 (Figure 5): a descent to $\hat{2}$ (G) in m. 4 is followed by the leap of a diminished fourth between $\hat{3}$ ($A\flat$) and $\hat{7}$ ($E\flat$) on beats 3 and 4. If it were not for the two disjunctions occurring earlier in the

FIGURE 5. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: Melodic Disjunction #3, mm. 4 and 8

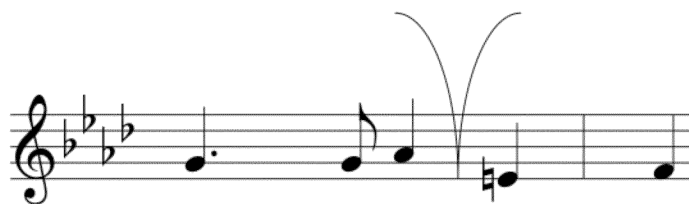


FIGURE 6. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: recompositions of mm. 2–5

Original version



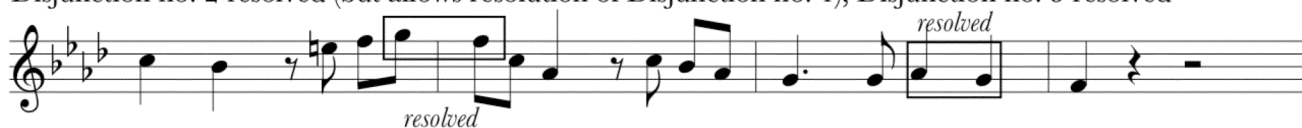
Disjunction no. 3 resolved



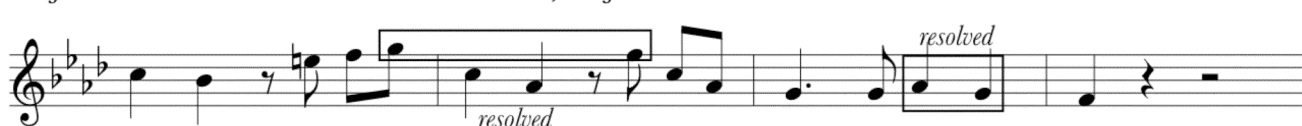
Disjunction nos. 2 and 3 resolved (but at the expense of the resolution of Disjunction no. 1)



Disjunction no. 2 resolved (but allows resolution of Disjunction no. 1); Disjunction no. 3 resolved



Disjunction no. 2 resolved later in measure 2; Disjunction no. 3 resolved



Melodic contour adjusted to avoid Disjunction nos. 1 and 2; Disjunction no. 3 resolved



phrase, this melodic event would admittedly attract little analytical attention; the leap of a diminished fourth can be explained simply enough, as resulting from the leading tone substituting for the $\hat{2}$ (G) that would normally occur between $\hat{3}$ (A^b) and $\hat{1}$ (F). Because of the close proximity of the previous two disjunctions, however, this diminished fourth intensifies the cumulative disjunctive effect of the opening passage.

Now that these local disjunctions have been explicated in detail, it is worth exploring how else Brahms might have composed this opening passage (taking as possibilities only changes in pitch, not harmony or rhythm). Figure 6 provides several recompositions of the opening melody to show how easily Brahms might have avoided these disjunctions, which one might otherwise be tempted to dismiss. I argue that Brahms included these disjunctions to paint Daumer's text more deeply, to foreshadow later events in the song, and to express more fully the somewhat restrained emotional content of the poetry. Figure 6 begins with the least intrusive resolution, that of Disjunction no. 3, and then provides a series of possible resolutions of Disjunction no. 2. (Recall that Disjunction no. 1 was resolved in the original melody, as shown in Figure 3.) The last recomposition in Figure 6 is the most distant from the original, as all three of the original disjunctions have not only been resolved, but avoided entirely. The sense of emptiness portrayed in the original version of Brahms's melody is nowhere to be found in these recompositions, especially the final, most distant recomposition. Although these versions "work" in many ways (i.e., harmonically, contrapuntally, rhythmically), they do not work *musically*, and taken as a group, they form a strong case for directing detailed analytical attention toward Brahms's angular melodic setting of the opening measures.

The relatively frequent disjunctions impart an uneasy mood to the first nine measures of the song (taking into account the repetition of the first phrase, six disjunctions occur over nine

measures).¹⁰ The culmination of these disjunctive melodic moments, in combination with the ambiguous rhythmic and harmonic identity of the song's opening, creates a larger web of ambiguity: a multiply directed moment, the crux of which is the unresolved melodic disjunction in Figure 3. This disjunction sets up specific opportunities for resolution, yet purposefully withholds them. It is this lack of resolution, compounded by ambiguity in other parameters, that crystallizes the text's meaning, which so far has remained fairly neutral: its emphasis has been on gifts that the protagonist has, at some time in the past, given to someone. That is all we know based on the text, although a close reading of the music shows that it is anything but neutral.



The music of the B section is less obviously “past tense” than in the song's beginning. In this passage, the protagonist seems to be physically in the present, but contemplating past events, as he utters the most emotionally revealing words in the poem: “Das Herze, das sie beide darbrachte, wert gewesen, wär's zu empfangen einen bessern Lohn” (“The heart that offered them both up to you, would have been worthy to receive a better reward”). A sketch of the B section is provided in Figure 7. The main support for this section comes from $\hat{6}$ ($D\flat$) in the bass, and the main upper note is also $\hat{6}$ ($D\flat$), which acts as a neighbor to the main upper note in the A section, $\hat{5}$ (C). The passage begins with an emphasis on local $\hat{5}$ ($A\flat$) in the upper voice. The line reaches over, and $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) in the key of $D\flat$ major emerges in the uppermost voice in m. 12, which then traverses a chromatic descending fourth to $\hat{5}$ ($A\flat$).

¹⁰ I am not the first to comment upon the unusually disjunct nature of this song's melodic structure, nor on its oddly persistent syncopations. Virginia Hancock remarks that the “persistent left-hand syncopation, [and] augmented- and diminished-fourth leaps in the vocal line” result in a “sense of urgency and imbalance” (“Johannes Brahms: ‘Volkslied/Kunstlied,’” in *German Lieder in the Nineteenth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. Rufus Hallmark [New York: Routledge, 2010], 168). Platt comments similarly on the syncopation, and refers to the unresolved $G\flat$ in m. 10 (a transposition of the Disjunction no. 1 cited in this article and shown in Figures 1 and 2) as having broken off without resolving (“7 Lieder, Op. 95,” 284).

FIGURE 7. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: voice-leading sketch of B section

Figure 7 is a voice-leading sketch of the B section of "Schön War," op. 95/7. The sketch is written for piano, showing both treble and bass staves. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The music is in 3/4 time. The sketch includes various annotations: "3-zug" (three-part setting) at the beginning, "out-of-context resolution of melodic disjunction #2" at measure 15, "out-of-context filling in of the diminished-fourth gap presented in melodic disjunction #3" at measure 10, "leading 3-zug" at the end, and "following 3-zug" at the end. The sketch also includes a "Schön war" vocal line starting at measure 15. The piano part features chords like Ab-Gb and F, and a bass line with notes like Db, V, I, and V. The sketch is divided into measures 10, 15, and 20.

The phrase structure of the B section may also be described as multiply directed, but in a somewhat different sense than the melodic material of the A section. It is commonplace, to be sure, for the middle section of a nineteenth-century art song to exhibit asymmetrical phrase structure and increased chromaticism. In some ways, however, the beginning of the B section behaves in a more stable manner than the A section. Several factors in particular contribute to this relative stability: the use of a thicker texture; the addition of downbeat bass notes to the syncopated rhythm of the A section, which contributes a measure of metric stability and regularity to the passage; and a transposition of the unresolved melodic disjunction from the A section in mm. 10–11 (Figure 4), which *does* achieve resolution in the B section.

The relative stability established at the beginning of the B section proves temporary, however, as the phrase structure takes the first of several unexpected turns. Figures 8–13 each present a segment of the B section, followed by a projected continuation of the passage.¹¹ (This

¹¹ I would be remiss if I did not cite David Lewin's seminal article, "Music Theory, Phenomenology, and Modes of Perception," *Music Perception* 3/4 (1986): 327–392. To be clear, I make no claim that my reworkings of the B section are phenomenological; that is, I don't believe that every listener specifically "expects" these particular continuations, nor that one would be able to hear all of these alternate continuations as the song unfolds in time. My claim is simply that my alternate continuations are more basic versions of Brahms's original. One might think of my analysis of this passage as recompositional: the reworkings are intended to dismantle the structure of the B section

projection is intended to be a more basic version of Brahms's own setting; its purpose is to show the innovation and novelty of Brahms's actual continuation, and is admittedly not the *only* possible projection.)¹² The original version is shown immediately below the projected continuation.

Given the arrival of $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) in m. 12, which resolves the transposed disjunction in mm. 10–11, and the two-measure groupings that have been maintained throughout the song so far, the phrase might continue as follows: with a diatonic descent from $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) over a span of two measures, followed by a parallel consequent phrase (as shown on the top staff of Figure 8a). This would preserve the two-measure groupings, as well as the entirely diatonic nature of the music up to this point. Of course, this is not what happens; instead, $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) is followed by $\flat\hat{7}$ ($C\flat$), the first instance of chromaticism in the song (Figure 8b).¹³

Given the introduction of mode mixture in m. 12, the phrase might continue with a chromatic descent from $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) to $\hat{5}$ ($A\flat$), as shown in Figure 9a. As shown in Figure 9b, what actually happens is a chromatic descent from $\hat{1}$ ($D\flat$) to $\hat{5}$ ($A\flat$), rhythmically augmented to last *three*, not two, measures. Given the regular two- and four-measure blocks that have comprised the song so

on a step-by-step basis, for the purpose of yielding greater analytical insight. However, I do feel a particular connection with Lewin's statement that music students frequently think of music as "something 'given' and 'there,'" as well as his dissatisfaction with his students' tendency to "freeze" when asked to explore—Lewin uses the verb "fool around" with—a given piece of music or an analysis at the piano (378–379). Experimenting with (or "fooling around" with) recompositions that are suggested by the music on a moment-to-moment basis is one way to resist such a static view; and I believe it encourages a much richer hearing of the music. This is particularly true of the B section of "Schön war," as I will consider later in the essay.

¹² Regarding the role of text in my projected continuations: these continuations—again, one might almost think of them as recompositions rather than projections—are intended to be theoretical, idealized versions of Brahms's original setting, not actual performable alternatives to the original; thus I have decided not to take possible text underlay into account. Because the recompositions occur on a step-by-step basis, the music following the recomposition is unknown. The text underlay might occur in a number of ways, or text might be repeated to accommodate these hypothetical continuations. Also, it is my conviction that Brahms would have made the text fit the music if he desired more predictable, obvious continuations such as the ones I offer throughout Figure 7. For text-painting reasons, however, I believe that Brahms expressly avoided the predictable in this passage, although several moments in the B section seem to imply such predictability simply for the sake of thwarting the expectations of the listener.

¹³ Of course, $C\flat$ is the first instance of chromaticism outside a prevailing key area; the $G\flat$ s introduced in m. 10, while foreign to the original key of F minor, are diatonic to the new key of $D\flat$ major.

FIGURE 8. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: projection based on $D\flat$ in m. 12

m. 10

a

Projection

Consequent phrase?

Gr+6

Return to A section

b

Actual continuation

FIGURE 9. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: new projection based on introduction of $C\flat$

m. 10

a

Projection

Actual continuation

b

FIGURE 10. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: new projection based on Figure 9

10

a

Projection

Consequent?

Actual continuation

b

far, this three-measure span is especially unanticipated; it delays the half cadence for a full measure, creating a five-measure phrase.

While the poem itself is characterized by the subjunctive mood, because it is consumed with wishing that circumstances could be different than they actually are, the text that begins these measures is the first that is actually in the grammatical subjunctive mood: “Das Herze, das sie beide darbrachte, wert gewesen, wär’s zu empfangen einen bessern Lohn” (“The heart that offered them both up to you *would have been worthy to receive* a better reward”—emphasis mine). The expanded chromatic descent, with its marked mode mixture and unexpected three-measure length, occurs as the protagonist longingly sings aloud for the first time that he wishes things had turned out differently.¹⁴

Given the three-measure chromatic descent, a plausible continuation might look like Figure 10a, where the five-measure phrase ends in a clear half cadence. One might then project a parallel consequent phrase. As Figure 10b shows, however, an elaborate cadential decoration occurs, expanding the dominant portion of the phrase two measures beyond the original five-measure length.¹⁵ Figure 11a shows a projection based on the half cadence that finally occurs in m. 16: a consequent phrase, parallel to the phrase beginning in m. 10, that finally closes with an authentic cadence in the key of D $\flat$ major. Here, the preparation for a return to the original key and melody is shown via an augmented-sixth modulation.

¹⁴ Additionally, $\flat\hat{6}-\hat{5}$, and the descending Phrygian tetrachord (occurring in “Schön war” as D $\flat$ –C $\flat$ –B $\flat$ –B $\flat\flat$ –A $\flat$), have frequently been associated with musical depictions of grief. These make the regret and sadness revealed by the protagonist in this passage even more musically apparent. Heather Platt presents several examples of the descending Phrygian fourth as a marker for grief in Brahms’s song “In Waldeinsamkeit” (“Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants,” *Intégral* 7 [1993]: 119–148). See also William Kimmel, “The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music,” *College Music Symposium* 20/2 (1980): 42–76.

¹⁵ The elaborate cadential decoration in m. 14 is the only melisma occurring in the whole song; as noted by Platt (“7 Lieder, Op. 95,” 284), it occurs, meaningfully, on the word “empfangen” (to receive).

FIGURE 11. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: projection based on cadence in m. 16

a

m. 15

Projection

Consequent?

Gr+6

Return to A section

b

Actual event continuation

“Schön war”

!

FIGURE 12. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: projection based on “Schön war” motive

a

m. 15

Projection

elision?

“Schön war”

Actual event continuation

b

→

“Schön war”

“Schön war”

!

FIGURE 13. “Schön War,” op. 95/7: metrically shifted continuation of m. 16

a

m. 15

Projection

elision?

“Schön war”

“Schön war”

Actual continuation

b

→

“Schön war”

“Schön war”

!

What occurs in the actual song is several steps removed from this hypothetical continuation. The motive from m. 10 returns in the right hand of the piano part in m. 16, submerged beneath the descending fourth in the voice part. Given this appearance of the motive, we might understand the event as a simple phrase elision (albeit with the melodic line in the piano part), and project a return of the material from mm. 10–11 in m. 16, as shown in Figure 12a. (This continuation would allow duple hypermeter to continue throughout the B section.)

However, the “Schön war” motive is immediately repeated in its original register—as if it might not have been heard the first time—and over the same inverted dominant sonority that occurred in m. 10 (Figure 12b).¹⁶ This repetition again implies an impending return of the material originally presented in mm. 10–11, but because the motive repeats immediately, it occurs on the wrong beat. Figure 13 shows the awkward projection resulting from a potential consequent phrase beginning on beat three instead of beat one. The misguided attempts of the melody from mm. 10–11 to return in m. 16 are not successful: the introduction of another C $\flat$ in m. 17, shown in Figure 13b, initiates a chromatic 5–6 sequence that stops short on an inverted dominant in F minor, ushering in a tragic return of the opening measures.

Although an acculturated listener surely expects the middle section of an art song to be modulatory and relatively aperiodic compared to the conventionally more stable outer sections of a song in ABA form, I argue that making an effort to hear implication and direction in this passage allows one to experience the song from the protagonist’s point of view: to expect something in return for what is given, and to experience disappointment when that return does

¹⁶ Both repetitions of the “Schön war” motive (A $\flat$ –G $\flat$) are set off with *fp* markings followed by *decrescendos* in the piano part, a fact that leads me to believe that Brahms did not want us to miss this motivic repetition. These repetitions, along with the repeated attempts of the phrase structure in the B section to achieve a half cadence in the key of A $\flat$, create a strong implication of an impending return. It is for these reasons (as well as for the interpretive reasons cited in the main body of the essay) that I think it is valuable to hear this passage as having such implications, despite its place as the middle section of an art song.

not materialize. The B section in “Schön war” starts out as relatively more stable in some ways than the A section (for reasons cited previously). This relative stability might influence the listener’s expectation for the phrase structure of such a passage. Also, in several places, the phrase structure of the B section attempts a half cadence, but it is delayed at the last moment. Finally, in several places the phrase structure suggests the impending arrival of a parallel consequent phrase; this implication is particularly strong in m. 16, where the melodic motive from m. 10 actually repeats twice in the piano part. At all turns, the phrase structure refuses to conform to such predictability; it is as though subtle expectations are set up, just so they can be subtly thwarted.

The discursive quality of the B section results in a mood of yearning and disappointment that is not unlike that portrayed in the A section, where the prominent melodic disjunction shown in Figure 3 remains unresolved. A quick perusal of the A' section shows that no resolution of this melodic disjunction appears. The only plausible resolution note in the entire song occurs in m. 15, in the heart of the B section, where F5 is taken completely out of the original context of the melodic disjunction and, of course, is not recognized as a resolution. (See my annotation on the voice-leading sketch of Figure 7.)

The diminished fourth ($\hat{3}-\hat{7}-\hat{1}$, or $A\flat-E-F$) of the third melodic disjunction (Figure 5) does not demand the sort of specific resolution that is implied by the second melodic disjunction. However, the gap of a diminished fourth does imply the need for a stepwise descent between $A\flat$ and F, after two repetitions of this figure within the first nine measures of the song. Like the out-of-context resolution of the second melodic disjunction, the most obvious potential filling-in of this gap takes place in the B section. (See the annotations on the sketch of Figure 7.) The aforementioned third progression $A\flat-G\flat-F$ (mm. 10–11) offers an alternate descent between $A\flat$ and

F, although it is, again, re-contextualized; it is in a new key, and so, instead of $G\sharp$, $G\flat$ is used to link the two passages together.

Earlier, a connection was made between the poetic subjunctive and Brahms's musical setting of the subjunctive. Now, a more global connection between the poetic and musical subjunctives may be made: while the F in m. 15 offers a satisfactory melodic resolution to the disjunction in mm. 2–3, it is wrong in every other way: contextually, metrically, and formally. Similarly, the $G\flat$ in m. 10 functions to fill in the gap presented in mm. 5 and 9, but it too is wrong in almost every way: it is a $G\flat$, not a $G\sharp$; and, like the F, it too is contextually, metrically, and formally wrong. The possibility for resolution is proffered and refused at the same time. This ambiguous realm of possibility and reality, which is represented grammatically in the text by the subjunctive mood, is reflected musically in the B section's roaming phrase structure and indecisive path. Like the grammatical subjunctive, the pitches F and $G\flat$ state a possibility which is contrary to the reality of fact: they are, while theoretical possibilities for resolution, contrary to the facts of their contexts. In this way, Brahms has created a musical subjunctive mood that characterizes the song as a whole.



Many facets of Brahms's setting have now been revealed; only the A' section remains (m. 19*ff.*). In the original A section, the music underlined the drama in the text by refusing to resolve the melodic disjunction in mm. 2–3 (Figure 4). The upper branch of the opening melody remained isolated from the rest of the melody. In the A' section, the music is basically unaltered, although there are a few changes: it has been shortened to one phrase instead of two, and a coda has been added; it sets new text; and the rhythm of m. 21 is modified. However, the A' section presents no resolution to the melodic disjunction in Figure 4, which further underscores the pro-

tagonist's disappointment that her gifts were not satisfactorily accepted.

The return of the A material in m. 19 is approached by an inverted dominant in F minor, thus creating a harmonic syncopation across a major formal division in the song. Because this inverted dominant is approached by a harmonic and melodic sequence, it arrives surreptitiously; it is quite possible that the last harmony in m. 18 is not heard as the dominant of F minor until we find ourselves in the midst of the return. (The vocal line, in fact, anticipates the $D\flat-C-B\flat$ that leads into the return just before m. 19, which also helps to obscure the approach of the return.) We are abruptly jolted into the present, not realizing until the moment of arrival that we are, in fact, wide-awake and in the here-and-now.¹⁷

The change to (musical) present tense occurring in m. 19 is further underscored by the fact that the original text does not return along with the original music from the A section. Instead, part of the second stanza of the poem, originally heard in the B section, is repeated: “Wär's zu empfangen einen bessern Lohn” (“would have been worthy to receive a better reward”). The song thus ends with the protagonist's bitter ruminations, first whispered in the B section and now spoken more loudly in the reprise, and set to music that originally accompanied a much more neutral text. The repetition of the original music (and, consequently, the repetition of the original unresolved melodic disjunction and multiply-directed moment) highlights the fact that no resolution has come for the protagonist.

Only one other change occurs in the A' section: in m. 21, a rest occurs on the downbeat, and the eighth-note motion, constant throughout the song up to this point, halts abruptly. This shift occurs as the protagonist sings—softly now, and for the last time—“einen bessern Lohn”

¹⁷ The “jolt” into the present that occurs at the point of melodic return is aided by a *forte* dynamic marking, the loudest in the song thus far.

(“a better reward”). The straightforwardness of the rhythmic gesture suggests her ultimate willingness to accept that there will be no better reward in return for her gifts.



Now that these various analytical threads have been explicated, an overriding theme emerges. It is not only the actual melodic disjunctions presented at the beginning of the song that imply multiple directions; the song itself is multiply directed. In the case of the melodic disjunctions, implied continuations are denied as a way of making more specific the subtleties of Daumer’s text; the phrase structure of the B section suggests various subtle continuations, yet purposefully avoids fulfilling these continuations. Even the music from the opening of the song assumes a different meaning upon its return in m. 19. Every parameter and time point in this song is multiply directed; a spectrum of possible continuations or meanings is presented at every turn. The constant multiple implications set in motion by various events in the song form an appropriate backdrop to the events outlined in the text: “Schön war” is a song about expectation. Specifically, it is a song about expectation that is met with pain and disappointment, and the musical details deepen the sense of pain and disappointment painted by Daumer’s text.¹⁸ Brahms’s setting thus focuses our attention on the multiply directed moments in the song by meeting our expectations with various levels of denial or surprise. By directing our listening in such a way, we are attuned to the multiply directed moments in “Schön war,” and therefore to those moments in which the central issues of the song are ultimately crystallized.

¹⁸ For another study about musical renderings of unmet expectations (specifically, unrequited love) in Brahms’s art songs, see Platt, “Unrequited Love and Unrealized Dominants.”

APPENDIX

BRAHMS, "SCHÖN WAR," OP. 95/7

Einfach

Singstimme

Pianoforte

p

più p

pp

1

4

7

10

Schön war, das ich dir weih - te, das gol-de -

ne Ge - schmei - de; süß war der Lau - te

Ton, die ich dir aus - er - le - - sen; das

Her - ze, das sie bei - de darbrach - te, wert ge-we - sen

13
wärs zu emp - fan - - - gen ei - nen bes - sern

16
Lohn, — wert ge - we - sen, wert ge - we - sen

19
wärs — zu — emp - fan - gen ei - nen bes - sern

22
Lohn.

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ABSTRACT

Brahms's song "*Schön war, das ich dir weihte*," op. 95/7, offers a melancholy setting of a brief text by Georg Friederich Daumer. Several melodic disjunctions figure prominently in Brahms's setting of the poem; in treating these disjunctions, normative voice-leading expectations are thwarted in ways that never meet satisfactory resolutions. Around these violations are crystallized the central expressive issues of the song, involving ambiguities not only in the domain of melody, but also of harmony, phrase structure, and form; this web of ambiguity is termed a "multiply directed moment." Other issues in the song include the discursive phrase structure in the B section, as well as Brahms's musical treatment of the subjunctive mood.

Schenkerian analysis is used to explicate the unique melodic processes at work in Brahms's setting, and the relationship of these melodic processes to Daumer's text. The complex phrase structure of the middle section is also examined using a recompositional approach, which yields yet another level of interpretive insight. Nearly every parameter and time point in the song can be identified as multiply-directed; a spectrum of possible continuations or meanings is presented at every turn. Brahms's setting thus focuses our attention on the multiply-directed moments in the song by meeting expectations with various levels of denial or surprise.

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