

FROM BRAHMS TO THE SECOND VIENNESE SCHOOL

by

Sara Yong Rosado

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2005

Advisory Committee:

Professor Bradford Gowen, Chair
Dr. Peter Beicken
Dr. Suzanne Beicken
Professor Santiago Rodriguez
Professor Rita Sloan

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: FROM BRAHMS TO THE SECOND VIENNESE SCHOOL

Sara Yong Rosado, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2005

Dissertation directed by: Professor Bradford Gowen
School of Music

In the Second Viennese School, Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern led a movement in music which stretched the boundaries of tonality. Seeing themselves as direct heirs of Brahms and his musical legacy, they composed works they perceived as taking the next logical step: exploring atonality and twelve note composition to emancipate pitches from their conventional melodic and harmonic roles in tonal music. Arnold Schoenberg, in *Style and Idea*, referred to Brahms as “the progressive,” the one who began experimenting with daring harmonic and stylistic changes and paved the way for the future of music. In my dissertation, I explore how the changes are reflected in the piano music of these composers; determining the relationships between Brahms’ piano compositions and their execution in a live setting, and those of the Second Viennese School, including the similarities and contrasts within the School itself. Both theoretical and performance aspects are taken into consideration in this study.

The structural form of the pieces by Brahms and Schoenberg are taut, influenced by a high level of motivic development and contrapuntal writing. These elements help to unify individual pieces and give maximum expression within a carefully structured form.

Schoenberg's pupils, Berg and Webern, also employed motivic development and contrapuntal writing-Berg making more use of highly developed motivic writing, and Webern enjoying the manipulation of small cells in contrapuntal writing. These aspects of compositional style produce technical difficulties unique to each composer. Brahms; Schoenberg, and Berg use thick chordal style, sweeping gestures, and difficult leaps integral to their own motivic and contrapuntal writing, whereas Webern utilized a pointillistic style with fast register changes and overlapping hands maximizing the potential of his 12-tone music. The works programmed on the recitals represent significant achievements during the progression of these composers and display in each performance the stylistic range and differences created in a relatively short time period, usually a span of eleven to thirty years.