

Brahms - Rhapsodie Op 79 No 1 - Quick Structural Analysis

Rhapsodies were usually compositions in one movement, often built on national melodies. Brahms used this term 'rhapsody' differently - used as a solo piano work.

Key: G minor

Form: Sonata Form

Compositional devices worth further exploration: Brahms's use of inversions - tonic/root note is used, but chord above it turns the bass note into an inversion of harmony.

Exposition

1st Subject

Begins with upbeat dominant to G in bass but harmony above is actually Eb major - ambiguous. Remains unstable in inversions with deceptive harmony. Ends in B major.

Bridge (bar 9)

Opens with E minor to G major chord (tonic major) modulates to G minor (tonic). All in basically root position. Ends on A major chord (dominant of D minor)

2nd Subject (bar 14)

Begins in enharmonic Bb7 chord but has D in the bass, so is harmonically deceptive. Hint of G minor at bar 16. Then uses a lot of A major/D minor. Ends on A major arpeggio.

Codetta (bar 21)

Begins in D minor - all static harmonically in D minor, closes in D minor.

Development

Opening melody (crossing hands motif) used, as well as codetta rhythm.

Bar 33 - C minor (Eb in bass)

Bar 34 - F major

Bar 36 - Bb major

Bar 37 to 40 - Bb7 (dominant of Eb major)

Bar 41 - E major (chromatic modulation from Eb major)

Bar 42 - C# major

Bar 44 - F# major

Bar 45 to 42 - dominant pedal point on F#

Bar 48 - B major

Codetta idea begins bar 53

Bar 54 - B minor

Bar 57 - A major

Bar 58 - G major

Bar 59 - Eb major

Bar 60 - G minor

Bar 77 - G major

Bar 79 - E7 dominant seventh

Bar 80 - D minor

Bar 83 - G minor

Ends in G minor

Recapitulation

Bar 86 - D major dominant to G bass but Eb major 1st inv

Bridge - bar 98 - ends on D7 - dominant of G minor

2nd subject - Eb7 - moves between G minor and F - tone/semitone idea in bass

Codetta - G minor - almost the most stable section of the work.

R.Hocking. NB these notes to be later expanded