

The Artistic Features of Brahms' Sonata No. 1 in E minor for Cello and Piano

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Abstract:

Brahms was a famous German musician of the Romantic period and an influential classical composer in the history of music. The Sonata in e minor is one of the masterpieces of his chamber music repertoire and is a classic in the cello repertoire. Through a detailed study of the background of the sonata, its composition and harmonic structure, together with practical performance methods and experiences, we will gain a deeper understanding of the artistic characteristics of this work in order to be able to perform it better in the future.

Keywords:

Brahms, Sonata No. 1 In e Minor, Artistic Features

1. Introduction

Johannes Brahms, one of the most representative German composers of the 19th century. Also the last classical composer in the history of European music. He was once named 3B with Bach and Beethoven. On December 28th, 1853, Robert Schumann published an article called "Neue Bahnen" on his "Neue Zeitschrift für Musik". On the last music review, Schumann gave high evaluation and encouragement to Brahms, he said, "There came a figure who idealised the spirit of the age" "There he was, a young man by the name of Johannes Brahms". By means of Schumann's authoritative recommendation, young Brahms ascended the music scene smoothly. Brahms is a worshipper of Schumann and also the main successor of Schumann's music. He paid attention to the inheritance and development of German classical music tradition in his creation, pursued and approached the rigor and logical integrity of Beethoven's music structure at the same time. Brahms was a musician who established a truly symphonic mind. He wrote in a wide range of genres, including classical and romantic, covering symphonic, vocal, piano and chamber music [6]. And he rarely using programs in his works. Johannes Brahms did not face the future like Franz Liszt or Richard Wagner but to the past like Felix Mendelssohn. He closely allied with the classical tradition, expressed his character in a carefully chosen and very simple and very precise language. That is to say, compared with Mendelssohn, this language has a completely different meaning and originality. The diversity of his repertoire, in particular, has greatly enhanced his status among

German and Austrian composers in the field of chamber music. Cello Sonata No. 1 in e minor for cello and piano is his masterpiece in the field of chamber music, a work of complete form and richness that has had a profound influence on the composition of chamber music in later times.

2. Background of the Composition

Brahms's Sonata No. 1 for cello and piano, op. 38, was composed in 1865 and dedicated to his friend singer and cellist Josef Gensbach. It was written at a time when Romanticism was the dominant trend in European musical history. Influenced by Romanticism, the music industry in Germany formed two different genres of music, "Neudeutsche Schule" represented by Wagner and the Conservatism represented by Brahms. These two groups hold completely opposite views and opinions respectively. Brahms insisted on the use of the established order of music creation and advocated the preservation of traditional German and Austrian classical music. Although Brahms consciously kept the characteristic of classical music in his compositions, it is impossible for anyone not to be influenced by his own era. Hesitancy, frustration and ambivalence are reflected in his works. In 1862 Brahms moved to Vienna and began writing his first Sonata for cello and piano in e minor. At this time Brahms's creation has tended to mature, ushered in the flourishing and brilliant period of his life creation. He was invited to become music director of the Vienna Opera in 1863. In the middle of writing the first two movements he abandoned the Adagio and stopped writing. The deep, rich tone of the cello was so in tune with Brahms's introverted nature that he chose the cello for the first of a series of duo sonatas he composed, and when Brahms composed Symphony No. 1 in 1865, at the age of 33, he was facing the loss of his mother, but her death also spurred Brahms on to complete a number of important works in the course of a year. [5] He completed a number of important works in the course of a year, including this one, which Brahms had shelved for three years before finally completing. This e minor piece sounds very bleak, as if it has a cold northern feel to it. This is also due to Brahms' attempt to blend the counterpoint of the Bach era with the balanced aesthetic of the 18th century. The whole work is full of moving emotions and a strong ethnic style, with long melodic lines, broad breaths, desolate moods and a simple and moving feeling of deep melancholy. [11]

3. Analysis of the Structure of the Piece

The whole piece is divided into three movements and every movement is minor, in an allegro type of rhythm and tempo, with the first movement being euphonious and sob-like like a ballad. The theme melody is mainly presented in the bass region of the cello. Tempo and speed belong to Allegro type and there is no Adagio. The second movement is a minuet, elegant and serene, and the final movement is a moody Allegro in full swing, lasting approximately 26 minutes.

Table 1. First movement (Allegro non troppo) in sonata form.

Sonata Form		
Exposition	Development	Recapitulation
Main theme (1-33) e minor Transition (34-57) Second theme (58-77) b minor Closed (78-92) e minor	Introduire (93-127) g minor Main passage (128-142) f minor To connect (143-163) Preparation (151-163) b minor	Main theme (164-196) e minor Transition (197-220) Second theme (221-240) e minor Closed (241-281) E major

The first movement (Allegro non troppo) is a sonata in 4/4 , in the key of e minor.

The first movement is Allegro non troppo, first by the cello in C string played a smooth and low melody line, gives a kind of depressive and repressive emotional experience. Then transferred to A string playing, slow rising and falling and in contrast with the first sentence and then began the theme tune by the piano, playing a very harmonious cooperation with the cello. The whole movement is revealing a euphemistic mood like an elegy sung as if infatuation. The first theme is full, deep and slightly poignant. The cello first states it on the C string, as if whimpering. It then moves to a bright high register with a light touch accompaniment by the piano; the piano then repeats the first theme. After a triplet transition, the cello plays a slightly faster and more agitated second theme, which unfolds in the key of A minor, written in the style of a canon, with the cello and piano chasing each other, as if trying to find hope but never catching each other. The third theme is a gentle, mysterious phrase in a major key, an unattainable ideal. This concludes the introduction with a double introduction to the opening section. [12]

The spread rises progressively from static to dynamic, gradually increasing in intensity from the original one piano, until the two 'forte', the cello is melodic, echoing the piano with strength and perseverance. The tonality develops and changes from g minor - f minor - b minor. The second theme is enthusiastically presented by the piano, the melody is modulated in the piano part, the cello plays a sharp motive as if in answer to the first theme, written in canonic and scale progressions, showing the piano and cello in a delicate dialogue, then the volume decreases and the third theme is presented in a minor key and then transitions to the recapitulation. After the melody has climbed upwards and developed, the performer is compelled to stimulate the whole body and bring the piece to a climax [9].

The recapitulation section reproduces the content of the presentation section, and the piece returns to the key of e minor, with the cello part easing down from its intense mood and the piano adopting a disintegrating chord pattern that echoes the melody of the theme, matching the quietness of the cello part. The finale shifts in key from the preceding e minor to the same dominant E major, with a brighter and warmer melody, gently stated by the cello and evocatively set off by the empty silence of the piano.

Table 2. *Allegretto quasi Menuetto in the second movement, in compound trio.*

Ternary Form		
A	B	A
(Single Trilogy 1-76) First period (1-28) Second period (29-58) Repeat period (59-76) a minor To connect (77-78)	(Trio 79-126) First period (79-88) Second period (89-126) #f minor	Recapitulation

The second movement, Allegretto quasi Menuetto, in compound triad, in a minor, in 3/4 time.

The second movement is a menuet with light melody. It starts with piano and then the cello enters with the strength mark “piano”. The piano and cello perform the rhythm in a neat and unified manner, reflecting the style characteristics of Vienna dance music. This movement is quiet and elegant, intriguing, light and noble. The overall feeling is relaxed and soothing, with many notes marked with spiccato. The effect is more a portato than a staccato or spiccato. This is undoubtedly a challenge of

the cellist's right hand bow control. The bow hairs never leave the string. Relax the shoulders and feel the power transmitted from the upper arm to the fingertips and then to the strings. The right arm is always relaxed and the four fingers of the right hand, especially the index finger, are used to play the sound effect of portato.

The whole movement is not high range and there is no too much difficulty in playing skills. The first part of the A section begins in the key of A minor, introduced by the piano and entered by the cello with a weak start, the beat follows the strong-weak-weak character of the dance, both rhythms are neat and elegant, then the piano repeats the theme melody of the previous cello. Call and response between the cello and the piano.

Part B is a three-voice middle section, beginning in #f minor, in the Legato style, with the piano and cello playing the same theme, a lyrical melody for the ensemble, with a hint of anguish floating around in the low, dark tones towards the end. Unlike the other sonatas, the second movement of sonata for cello and piano in e minor op.38 is not a slow movement but a menuet. Moreover, the structure of this menuet is typical of a classical menuet with its easy speed, transparent accompaniment and elegant atmosphere. Highlight the dignified and rigorous classical style and it shows Brahms unremitting feelings.

The third part is an exact reproduction of the first part.

Table 3. *Allegro in the third movement, in fugue form.*

Fugue					
A	B	/A/	B1	A	Coda
Binary form (1-52) e-B-e-g-e	Episode (53-75) G major	A Development (76-121)	Episode 2 (123-131) B major	Recapitulation (132-174) e- g-e	Epilogue 175- 198 e minor

The third movement Allegro, in fugue form, in e minor, in 4/4 time.

The third movement is the Allegro with bright emotions, full of passion and the top of the whole song and constantly pushing out the depressed emotions together. Behind this seems to be a kind of venting, the listener still feels a deep sigh. Especially the left hand part of the piano. While playing the tone pattern of the touch, there is a kind of carpet progressive feeling. Pay attention to the clarity of the right hand on the cello and don't leave the bow of the string. Don't pull faster and faster just because the rhythm is tight. And also remember to maintaining the quality of your pronunciation and full mood. In this movement, the cello part and the piano part are more often in a counterpoint position, so the importance of listening to and cooperating with each other is particularly prominent.

The extremely dynamic first theme is first played by the piano in e minor, bringing out the sharp triplets and the gorgeous graininess. Four bars later the cello enters and continues to repeat the melody of the theme, the two instruments chasing each other and working closely together in a stormy and stirring fugue [10].

The second theme is slightly more subdued than the first, but the busy rhythmic patterns still shine through in the lyrical melody. The interlude unfolds in the key of G major, with changing harmonies and a two-on-three pattern for cello and piano, making for a continuous cascade of melodies and a full intensification of the first theme, the atmosphere intensifying and fiercely expressed as the waves of the sea roll in and out. The second theme appears, but is fleeting.

The recapitulation section unfolds in the key of B major, briefly recapitulating the two previous themes. This is followed by different transpositions and imitations of the theme in each of the e-g-e minor keys.

The coda tempo uses the Piu presto sharps to reproduce the melody of the theme, the cello and piano remain in a two against three rhythmic pattern, and the theme travels from the lower voices all the way to the upper voices for a glorious conclusion.

The length of this movement is very long, and the rhythm of cello and piano often appears in the form of two against three, which is not easy to grasp in coordination. Therefore, whether piano or cello, should play the rhythm of tercet with absolute accuracy and the whole third movement is enthusiastic and full swing.

At the end of this movement the speed should be steady, not faster and faster. Although the speed of the bow is fast but not leave the string. The cello part and the piano part should maintain due clarity. not because of exertion exertion and loose strength, and always pay attention to listen to each other. Cellists should not relax their strength just because performance is physically exhausting and always listen to each other. The brilliant end of the third movement is in sharp contrast to the theme of the first movement and it can be said that this is a final release, which contains Brahms's pain like an elegy. At the end, the close combination of the two parts and the pursuit of one another reflects a positive spirit of striving to catch each other. It can be seen that no matter how frustrating and painful the darkness is, the composer still left a trace of hope at the end.

4. The Artistic Value of the Music

Romanticism was the dominant musical genre in Europe in the 19th century. Although Romanticism is a departure from the development of classicism, it is not unrelated. Some contents of romantic music originally exist in classical music but in some aspects to emphasize and give its new meaning and function.

Although Brahms advocated the return to classicism in his compositions, especially the creation style of Bach and Schumann, he did not simply imitate. At that time, he was influenced by the popularity of romanticism. He made some innovations on the basis of classicism and perfectly integrated classical music with romantic music and forming his own unique creative style.

Brahms's disposition deep and introverted so will pursue inherent rational thinking in the creation. He adores Beethoven and on the compositions from the features of the classical music of Beethoven, strictly follow the classical music elements. He also in the basis of classical essence of innovation to add the romantic. His works are full of emotional expression and thought-provoking.

Brahms' work is one of the most important masterpieces in the genre of sonatas for piano and cello, using a classical structure combined with some Romantic lyricism and a personal approach to harmony and counterpoint that makes the piece rich in emotion. This lyrical aspect of the cello has been brought to the forefront, making it a firm favourite with many cello players today, both musically and technically. Brahms is a very special figure in the flood of romanticism in the 19th century. He maintains and defends the essence of German classical music since Bach with almost stubborn single-handedness. The second half of the 19th century as a whole was a flood of radical romanticism, but in this flood Brahms was a conservative, reconstructing the tradition of classical music and at the same time he was not a complete reversionist,

he drew from the romantic lyrical tradition since Schubert with unique eyes. He was still a romantic, and he combined the two to forge Brahms's quaint musical style and to the extreme, the deep meaning and the nostalgia [13].

5. Conclusions

Brahms not only inherited the classical music tradition in music creation, but also was influenced by the literature and environment of the Romantic period, which made his works show unique characteristics. He lived in the middle period of Romanticism, which was the zenith of Romanticism. No matter in literature, music or painting, he showed strong romantic characteristics and advocated the expression of human's emotions without any restrictions and the pursuit of freedom. In addition, Brahms did not follow the development trend in his creation. He inherits the classical works of rigorous style. In the aspects of melody, tonality layout characteristics follow the classical music. He also influenced by the environment and also pay attention to the expression of personal feelings but is affected by their own personality. In the emotional expression of the time but will carry in some deliberate suppression. His creative manner was unique in the Romantic period at that time and he was called "conservative romantic".

Although the ending of this piece of music is brilliant, the feeling left to the audience is the composer's painful emotion, so that brilliance can also express pain, sometimes gentle melody can also express joy, in the second creation of the performance of the work will directly affect the feelings of the listener. This requires us, as a performer, not only to understand the music, but also to conduct necessary study and background analysis of the composer. For works created by composers with profound knowledge and rich ideological world like Brahms, as a performer, it is necessary and obligation to maximize the original creative intention of the composer.

No other composer's life has been so dear to us as Brahms. He was not born with a golden spoon like Mendelssohn, but neither was he in the position of Schubert. He did not have the talent of Mozart, and all his achievements came from his own struggle and hard work. As a young man he fell in love with a reckless and reckless man, and then pulled out early to find a goal that he could work towards for the rest of his life. Since becoming self-sufficient, he never ran out of money, except that he was not a spendthrift like Wagner who was keen to show off his wealth. He spent most of his income on collecting rare and good books, and of course on travel and fine dining.

He held fast to his beliefs and never compromised on them. In his later years, he did not care what others thought of him, and his wealth and fame were nothing more than a passing flicker in his eyes. His belongings consisted of a bed, a writing desk, a few bundles of letters, countless books and a bust of Beethoven. But the spiritual treasures he left to time are uncountable. More than any other artist, his life was so ordinary that in every stage of his life we can find ourselves, to a greater or lesser extent, in his own shadow.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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