

TITLE:

Hybrid analysis interprets multi-transformational form in Brahms's *Wir Wandelten*

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ABSTRACT:

Like so many works by Brahms, the song *Wir wandelten* woos the listener through its richness of melody, harmony, and texture. These seemingly generic facets relate very specifically to the form and text-setting of this song, not in any single musical dimension, but rather through a multivalent coordination that is unusually nuanced—so much so, that its analysis demands a synthesis of diverse analytical tools: a hybrid analysis. Such a hybrid analysis shows how the song's form is richly developmental, not merely sectional. Aspects of this development suggest metaphorical interpretations of the music that are supported by the content of the poem.

Both the structure and content of the song's text suggest a developmental setting in the music: the topic is "wandering" and the punctuation delineates a three-stage trajectory of introspection. Brahms's musical setting also has a trajectory—a long range developmental trajectory significant enough to color the song's form. Simple but diverse transformations underlie the development. Call it *multi-transformational* developmental form.

Hybrid analysis: Three strains of music theory propel the interpretation of the song's *multi-transformational* development. (1) Schoenberg's *Grundgestalt* theory provides the framework for interpreting the motivic melodic material. (A contextual transformational network also plays a role here.) (2) Hauptmann-derived harmonic functional dualism, as renewed by Harrison, provides the framework for interpreting harmonic substitutions between each half of the song. (3) Rudimentary concepts of meter (beat vs. offbeat) and voice-leading together with basic notions of metaphor and gender provide ample basis for interpreting a rhythmic-submetric transformation that occurs between the two halves of the song. Furthermore, a downward perpetual canon, which features a Plagal horn call, emerges in the thematic and tonal reprise of the song. Derivational and metaphorical implications of the canon and the other transformations are discussed, as they contribute to reading of the song as Romantic expression.