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BRAHMS AS A VANISHING POINT IN THE MUSIC OF
WOLFGANG RIHM:
REFLECTIONS ON *KLAVIERSTÜCK NR. 6*

NICOLE GRIMES

INTRODUCTION:
BRAHMS AND RIHM – ELECTIVE AFFINITIES

For many years, the composer Wolfgang Rihm has engaged in writing new works in response to the music of Johannes Brahms. There are very good reasons why he might do so. These two German composers, living and writing more than a century apart from one another, share a strong historicist approach to music. Whereas the sphere of Rihm's allusions stretches from Bach to Varèse, and from Gesualdo to Stockhausen, a significant part of his oeuvre responds to a number of prominent German composers from the long-nineteenth century. Amongst them are Schubert, Schumann, and Mahler. Rihm's *Erscheinung: Skizze über Schubert* (1978) for nine string players, *Ländler* (1979) arranged for 13 string players, and his many Goethe-Lieder are strongly evocative of Schubert. "Eine Art Traumbild" from the seventh scene of the chamber opera *Jakob Lenz* (1977/78) responds to Schumann's *Kinderszenen*,¹ whilst the third movement of his Piano Trio *Fremde-Szenen I–III* (1982–84) called "Charakterstück" also conjures up thoughts of Schumann. Rihm's *Abgesang of Morphonie, Sektor IV* for string quartet and orchestra (1972/73), the large orchestral adagios *Dis-Kontur* (1974) and *Sub-Kontur* (1974/75), and Symphony No. 2 (1975) and No. 3 (1976/77) are strongly suggestive of Mahler.²

Rihm's compositions that respond directly to the music of Brahms do so in manifold ways (see Table 1). The title of the 1985 composition *Brahmsliebewalzer* conjures up Brahms's *Liebesliederwalzer*. Written for solo piano, however, Rihm's

1 On Rihm and Schumann, see Alastair Williams: "Swaying with Schumann: Subjectivity and Tradition in Wolfgang Rihm's 'Fremde-Szenen' I–III and Related Scores", *Music & Letters* 87/3 (2006), pp. 379–397. For a description of the seventh scene of *Jakob Lenz*, see Laura Tunbridge: "Deserted Chambers of the Mind (Schumann Memories)", in: *Rethinking Schumann* ed. Roe-Min Kok and Laura Tunbridge. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 395–410, here pp. 403–404.

2 On Rihm and Mahler, see Thomas Schäfer: "anwesend/abgekehrt: Notizen zu Wolfgang Rihm's Komponieren der 1970er Jahre mit Blick auf Gustav Mahler", in: *Wolfgang Rihm*, ed. Ulrich Tadday. Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 2004, pp. 99–108, quoted in Alastair Williams: *Music in Germany Since 1968*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

dance movement is more akin to one of Brahms's *Sixteen Waltzes*, Op. 39, than it is to a work for two pianos with vocalists intoning witty poetry³ *Brahmsliebwalzer* was inspired by Rihm's reading of Richard Heuberger's *Brahms-Erinnerungen*.⁴ Some years later, *Ernster Gesang* was commissioned by Wolfgang Sawallisch and the Philadelphia Orchestra. Responding to his prolonged immersion in Brahms's last published opus, the *Vier ernste Gesänge*, Op. 121, Rihm confessed that the mysteries of those Lieder gradually revealed themselves. This prompted him to prioritize the "primary tone colour of clarinets, horns, and low strings" in *Ernster Gesang* and to explore Brahms's "harmonic constellations". The composer reflects on the ephemeral nature of this Brahmsian enterprise:⁵

As I composed it during the last days of the year 1996 in Badenweiler, I was both filled with and empty of Brahms. The repercussions, the constellations that existed in my memory, disappeared when I wanted to grasp them or force them into a concrete form. Their appearance is thus always their immediate disappearance as well. What remains is an intonation, a turning of events that wavers between arrival and departure.⁶

Table 1: Rihm's Brahms compositions

1977/78*	<i>Klavierstück Nr 6 (Bagatellen)</i> , contains many self-quotations, and allusions to the music of Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms
1985*	<i>Brahmsliebwalzer</i> , an homage to Brahms's late piano pieces
1996	<i>Ernster Gesang</i> , responds to Brahms's <i>Vier ernste Gesänge</i>
2001/2002	<i>Das Lesen der Schrift</i> comprises four pieces for orchestra intended to be incorporated between the movements of <i>Ein deutsches Requiem</i> .
2004/2012	<i>Symphonie "Nähe Fern"</i> , Four orchestral pieces written as pendants to Brahms's four symphonies

3 *Brahmsliebwalzer* was orchestrated in 1988 and included in Rihm, *3 Walzer*, commissioned for the Schleswig-Hollstein-Musikfestival. In this setting, the *Brahmsliebwalzer* is flanked on either side by the *Sehnsuchtswalzer* (1979/1981), a piece that conjures up Schubert, whose piece of the same name is itself nostalgic for an earlier time, and the *Drängender Walzer* (1979/1986) dedicated to Karsten Witt.

4 Rihm, annotation to the score, *Brahmsliebwalzer*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1985. See Richard Heuberger, *Erinnerungen an Johannes Brahms*. Tutzing: Schneider, 1976.

5 On these and other Rihm works, see John Warnaby, "Wolfgang Rihm's Recent Music," *Tempo* 213 (2000), pp. 12–19.

6 Rihm, on the Universal Edition webpage for *Ernster Gesang* <http://www.universaledition.com/composers-and-works/Wolfgang-Rihm/composer/599/work/2335> (last accessed 30 May 2017).

A further Brahmsian work by Rihm ensued in 2012. *Symphonie "Nähe Fern"* is a five-movement work that comprises four orchestral pieces written as pendants to Brahms's Four Symphonies. Between the first and second of these orchestral movements, Rihm interpolates an orchestration of one of his own earlier *Goethe Lieder* composed in 2004, "Dämmerung senkte sich von oben". Taken as a whole, therefore, *Symphonie "Nähe Fern"* includes allusions not only to the artistic output of Brahms but it also enfolds layers of cultural reference to Goethe and, through that poet, glimpses further back to an imaginary realm of the ancient world of China, for which Goethe was inspired by the English translation of Chinese novels.⁷

The multifarious layers of allusion in Rihm's output speak to a preoccupation with art and literature that Rihm shares with Brahms, evident in their diaries and notebooks containing excerpts of favourite passages, or recording their thoughts on artists and writers.⁸ Both composers, moreover, have a propensity toward philosophical reflection in their music, and both were largely preoccupied with the poetry of the New Humanists at the turn of the nineteenth century, that is, Goethe, Schiller, and Hölderlin. Brahms was one of very few musical figures to have set Hölderlin in the nineteenth century, intuiting the complex poetic and philosophical meaning of Hölderlin's *Hyperion* in his 1871 composition *Schicksalslied*, Op. 54.⁹ Brahms's artistic sensitivity to Hölderlin's poetry was not to be equalled until the late twentieth century compositions of Benjamin Britten, Hans Werner Henze, Luigi Nono, and Rihm himself.¹⁰ Amongst Brahms's major pieces for choir and orchestra are his setting of Schiller's poem "Auch das Schöne muß sterben" as *Nänie*, Op. 82, and Goethe's *Harzreise im Winter* as the *Alto Rhapsody*, Op. 53.

7 See U. C. Fischer: "Goethe's 'Chinese-German Book of Seasons and Hours' and World Literature," Oreneta <http://oreneta.com/kalebetul/pics/uploads/600100.pdf> (last accessed 5 January 2016).

8 On Wolfgang Rihm's preoccupation with art, see Ulrich Mosch: "Zur Rolle bildnerischer Vorstellungen im musikalischen Denken und Komponieren Wolfgang Rihms", in: *Musikwissenschaft zwischen Kunst, Ästhetik und Experiment*, ed. Reinhard Kopiez. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1998, pp. 387–392; and Wolfgang Rihm: "Vor Bildern", in: *Intermedialität: Studien zur Wechselwirkung zwischen den Künsten*, ed. Günter Schnitzler and Edelgard Spaude. Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2004, pp. 95–129, in which Ulrich Mosch has collated excerpts from Rihm's diaries concerning art, and argues that art became more and more important for Rihm's output from 1980/81 onward. On Brahms's preoccupation with art, see my forthcoming *Brahms's Elegies: The Poetics of Loss in German Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; Reinhold Brinkmann: "Johannes Brahms und die Maler Feuerbach, Böcklin, Klinger und Menzel", in: *Vom Pfeifen und von alten Dampfmaschine: Essays zur Musik von Beethoven bis Rihm*. Munich: Paul Sölkner Verlag, 2006, pp. 108–39; and Leon Botstein: "Brahms and Nineteenth-Century Painting", *19th-Century Music* 14/2 (1990): pp. 154–68.

9 Although Schumann's original title for *Gesänge der Frühe*, Op. 133, was *An Diotima*, he never set any of Hölderlin's poetry. See Laura Tunbridge: *Schumann's Late Style*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 137–38.

10 See Nicole Grimes: "Brahms's Ascending Circle: Hölderlin, *Schicksalslied*, and the Process of Recollection", *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 11/1 (2014), pp. 1–36.

Rihm also composed a *Harzreise im Winter* in 2012 for baritone and piano as the most extended of his *Goethe Lieder*, along with an array of Lieder after Schiller and Hölderlin, the most extensive of these being the *Hölderlin-Fragmente*.¹¹

Perhaps the strongest affinity between Brahms and Rihm is the degree to which their instrumental music is coded by German literary history. In this respect, Rihm and Brahms join Mahler as composers who have a capacity to entirely reimagine their Lieder in instrumental music (and vice versa). One thinks, for instance, of the new life that Brahms's *Regenlied* and *Nachklang*, Op. 59, are given in the Violin Sonata in G major, Op. 78; or the manner in which his Second Piano Concerto in B-flat Major, Op. 83 has close ties with the songs *Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer*, Op. 105/2 and *Todessehnen*, Op. 86/6.¹²

Rihm's *Klaviersstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*, a piece for solo piano composed in 1977–78, is likewise coded by German literary history. This piece marks the end of an immensely productive period in Rihm's creative output. The years 1976–78 had given rise to the composition of the *Hölderlin-Fragmente* (1976/77) for voice and piano, *Musik für drei Streicher* (1977) for string trio, the second chamber opera *Jakob Lenz* (1977/78), and *Erscheinung: Skizze über Schubert* (1978) for nine string instruments and piano. *Klaviersstück Nr. 6* culminates this period of composition and is replete with references to and recollections of these very works. Through his own self-allusion, Rihm alludes secondarily to the literature on which these compositions are based, that is, the poetic fragments of Hölderlin and the novella *Lenz* by Georg Büchner (1836; published posthumously in 1839).

The realm of allusion in this piece for solo piano also reaches beyond Rihm's own music, extending to Beethoven in the first instance and then to Schubert and Brahms. Schubert is summoned at the very end of the piece when the self-standing piano piece that opens Rihm's *Erscheinung: Skizze über Schubert* (bars 1–36) is quoted verbatim as the final bars of *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 171–208. Beethoven is conjured up in a brief allusion to the String Quartet No. 13 in Bb major, Op. 130 whilst his spirit seems to preside over the large-scale form of *Klavierstück Nr. 6*. Subtitled “bagatelles”, Rihm attributes the inspiration for the large-scale structure of this composition to Beethoven's “associations-technique”, which he defines as a technique in which concentrated fragments form an affinity. By referring to this composition as “cycle of bagatelles”, Rihm allows us to understand a succession of moments as a formal principle, moments that re-use earlier material,

11 Relevant here is also the fact that Rihm has reflected in writing on the poetry of the new Humanists, most prominently in an essay that explicitly evokes Goethe's *Iphigenie*. See Wolfgang Rihm: “Verzweifelt human. Neue Musik und Humanismus?” in Rihm: *Offene Enden: Denkbewegung um und durch Musik*, ed. Ulrich Mosch. Munich: Hanser, 2002, pp. 225–244.

12 On the relationship between Brahms's Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83 and the songs “Immer leiser wird mein Schlummer” and “Todessehnen”, see Julian Horton: *Brahms' Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 83: Analytical and Contextual Studies*. Leuven: Peeters, 2017, pp. 310–313.

offering a renewed gaze on musical matter that has already been formulated, but is now notated “in seismographic fashion”.¹³

Rihm has provided two written commentaries on *Klavierstück Nr. 6*.¹⁴ Of the musical “moments” that he argues comprise this composition, there is one that is not indicated by Rihm in either of these accounts of the piece: the opening gesture of Brahms, Intermezzo in E flat minor, Op. 118/6. Several commentators have referred to the Brahmsian allusion, including Wilhelm Killmayer who notes its presence and traces its significance for what he argues is the motivic coherence of this piece.¹⁵ Assuming the veracity of this allusion, we might understand Rihm’s omission to stem from its ephemeral nature, a fleeting vision that dissolves as soon as it appears. And yet its brevity and effervescence belies its significance for the composition as a whole.

In this chapter, by borrowing a metaphor from the visual arts, I will make the case that this Brahmsian allusion functions as a theoretical vanishing point in *Klavierstück Nr. 6*. In other words, its function is analogous to a representational gap that organizes a visual field, the point where all lines of sight come together at the horizon, and where all things fade into infinity. Acknowledging the presence of a passage from Brahms’s Op. 118/6 in this score does more than enhance our understanding of the repertoire from which Rihm has drawn his musical allusions. It provides a focal point for the German literary allusions and musical historical references that are embedded in this composition. A vanishing point constitutes the background of a dominant image. It is the almost visual material that allows for the foreground in a painting. The visual metaphor also assumes philosophical significance that is relevant to Rihm’s composition: in *Klaveirstück Nr. 6* that which is mostly unseen gives rise to that which is seen, that which is named. In keeping with the aesthetic of allusion in this piece, the vanishing point provides the threshold between the seen and the unseen, between the real and the imagined, the rational and the non-rational. In examining the context of the Brahmsian allusion in particular, and exploring how it acts as a unifying agent in the score, we open up a new perspective on *Klavierstück Nr. 6* and gain new insights into Rihm’s mode of composition. Along with the spirit of Beethoven’s late

13 Wolfgang Rihm: “*Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)* (1977–1978)”, *Ausgesprochen* 2, ed. Ulrich Mosch. Winterthur: Amadeus, 1997, p. 315.

14 Rihm: “*Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)* (1977–1978)”, p. 315; and Rihm: “Tasten”, *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1981), pp. 456–458, here pp. 457–458.

15 Wilhelm Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, in: *Klaviermusik des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Killmayer, Siegfried Mauser und Wolfgang Rihm, *Melos: Jahrbuch für zeitgenössische Musik* 51 (1992), pp. 102–129. See also Wilhelm Killmayer: “Klangstrukturen bei Hölderlin und in Wolfgang Rihms Klavierstück 6 ‘Bagatellen’”, in: *Wolfgang Rihm*, ed. Ulrich Tadday. Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 2004, pp. 51–60. The Brahms allusion is also mentioned in Markus Bellheim: “Das Klavierwerk von Wolfgang Rihm”, sleeve notes in *Wolfgang Rihm, Piano Pieces*, hr2 Kultur NEOS 10717/18 (2007), pp. 3–4.

style, Brahms's intermezzo has a marked presence in this piece's large-scale structure and its expressive trajectory. This amounts to a great deal more than mere quotation. Instead, it is the ineluctable communication of artistic works with one another. In its referential (and self-referential) character, *Klavierstück Nr. 6* is music about music, and it is music about time.

RIHM AND THE LYRICAL IMPULSE

The mere label of piano "bagatelles" as a subtitle for *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, as Reinhold Brinkmann avers, seems inadequate, if not misleading, given that most of these bagatelles have a vocal origin in Rihm's *Hölderlin-Fragmente* and *Jakob Lenz*.¹⁶ They therefore occupy the realm between speech and music. In a study of Rihm's *Hölderlin-Fragmente*, using Hegel's aesthetics of the lyric as a theoretical foundation, Brinkmann has sensitively shown how poetry allows Rihm to develop an intensely lyrical form of musical language. Brinkmann defines the lyric, as distinct from the dramatic or the narrative, as a specific utterance and representation of subjectivity.¹⁷ What delineates its representational character is its inwardness and sense of reflection. The moments of inwardness that Brinkmann observes in the Hölderlin pieces for voice and piano are "virtually equidistant from an imaginary middle point," they are "arranged in a concentric and not a linear manner"¹⁸. As such, "neither the lines of text nor the musical moments use pre-existing forms, rather they justify their respective individual forms by the specific situation, from the lyrical state and its reflection"¹⁹. Brinkmann considers Rihm's *Hölderlin-Fragmente* to exemplify Hegel's conception of lyrical poetry:

There is no naïve immediacy in this self-conscious art, and also nothing fabricated.

The reflexivity brings about the brevity and concentrating awareness of the moment. The "contracted concentration" of Hegel speaks as a sign of the lyrical work of art, it meets precisely the sense of form of Rihm's fragments, the linguistic character of the fragment itself guarantees the shrunken form, the lyrical aphorism, to use a seemingly paradoxical form-

16 Reinhold Brinkmann: "Musikalische Lyrik oder die Realisation von Freiheit. Wolfgang Rihms *Hölderlin-Fragmente*", in: Brinkmann, *Vom Pfeifen und vom alten Dampfmaschinen: Aufsätze zur Musik von Beethoven bis Rihm*. Vienna: Zsolnay, 2006, pp. 273–296, here p. 296.

17 See Brinkmann: "The Lyric as Paradigm: Poetry and the Foundation of Arnold Schoenberg's New Music", in: *German Literature and Music: An Aesthetic Foundation*, ed. Claus Reschke and Howard Pollack. Munich: Fink, 1992, pp. 95–129.

18 Ibidem, p. 288.

19 Ibidem, p. 281.

lation. The aesthetic demands, however, lead consequently to a sequence – the cycle as the binding unit.²⁰

Brinkmann’s analysis of how Rihm’s concentration on lyrical forms (predominantly the Lied) leads to a self-referential musical lyric has implications for the relationship between literature and music in Rihm’s *Klavierstück Nr. 6*. Rihm reflects on his own relationship to the literature of Hölderlin. This has a bearing on the significance of the “lyric as paradigm”²¹ in both the Hölderlin cycle and *Klavierstück Nr. 6* for the degree to which he considers the very essence of these fragments to be musical:

One may consider texts which readily lend themselves to dissolution, extract fragments from these texts and thereby strengthen their adequacy for musical treatment. This process already seems inherent in Hölderlin’s work. The fragments he left us ... appear to stem from larger contexts ... I can speak of a “process of fragments” because to me they are not finished constructions which lack something. Instead it is as if the whole text is in motion but has sporadically lost itself while searching for itself. These Hölderlin fragments allow us to deal with non-literary, musical language.²²

Just like the music of the Hölderlin cycle, the concentrated “moments” in *Klavierstück Nr. 6* do not tell a story, nor are they arranged in linear fashion. Instead, a “musical network-technique” leads to a series of differently outlined states (*Zustände*).²³ This network is closely related to Hegel’s category of *Zuständlichkeit* (‘state’). In Brinkmann’s formulation, “Hegel speaks of ‘internal situations as states’”, in which “neither dramatic development nor epic continuity is declared”, rather an event occurs which signifies “a lyrical pause [or a lyrical linger], the beginning of time, contemplation, thinking ahead (*nachdenken, weiterdenken*)”.²⁴ In drawing on Hegel’s concept of *Zusammengezogenheit* (contracted concentration) as a compositional category to coincide with Rihm’s aphoristic statements, Brink-

20 “Es gibt keine naïve Unmittelbarkeit in dieser sich selbst bewußten Kunst, auch nicht eine fingierte. Und die Reflexivität führt auch die Knappheit und Konzentriertheit der Momente herbei. Die “Zusammengezogenheit” von der Hegel als Signum des lyrischen Kunstwerks spricht, trifft genau den Formsinn der Rihmschen Fragmente, bereits der sprachliche Fragmentcharakter selber garantiert die geschrumpfte Form, den lyrischen Aphorismus, um [289] eine scheinbar paradoxe Formulierung zu gebrauchen. Der ästhetische Anspruch aber führt consequent zur Reihung, zum Zyklus als der verbindlichen Einheit.” Brinkmann: “Musikalische Lyrik oder die Realisation von Freiheit”, pp. 288–289.

21 I borrow this term from Brinkmann: “The Lyric as Paradigm”.

22 Wolfgang Rihm, “... zu wissen”, an interview of 1985 with Rudolf Frisius, in: *Der Komponist Wolfgang Rihm*, ed. Dieter Rexroth. Mainz: Schott, 1985, pp. 17–59, here pp. 55–56, this translation in Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, p. 260.

23 Brinkmann: “Musikalische Lyrik oder die Realisation von Freiheit”, p. 281.

24 Brinkmann: “Musikalische Lyrik oder die Realisation von Freiheit”, p. 287.

mann provides some sense of how these intense moments of inwardness are actually contracted, compressed long ones.

The literature that underpins Rihm's "bagatelles" not only has a propensity toward incompleteness. It is also literature that is concerned with the fracturing of the artistic mind, or, as Carola Nielinger-Vakil observes, literature that is bound up with schizophrenia as a possible force behind artistic creativity.²⁵ A number of recent studies have focused on the space between fantasy and insanity in the music of Rihm, with a principal focus on the relationship between music and madness in Rihm's Schumann- and Hölderlin-related compositions.²⁶ The figures of Brahms and E. T. A. Hoffmann bring a further dimension to this facet of Rihm's output, neither of whom suffered from insanity, but both of whom were concerned with exploring the Romantic concept of madness as an agent for artistic creativity. As with many of his Schumann compositions, Rihm's Brahms compositions inhabit the boundary between the rational and the non-rational. The abstract notion of madness, therefore, serves well as a stimulus for composition in his allusive works.²⁷

Hölderlin, for instance, was largely viewed with scholarly scepticism in the second half of the nineteenth century because of the madness that isolated him from society for the last forty years of his life, until his death in 1843.²⁸ Similarly, the mental condition of the poet J. M. R. Lenz is central to Rihm's *Jakob Lenz*. "Büchner's *Lenz* is a description of states with a random process", Rihm writes. "Moments of disturbance that are already completed, but not yet accepted."²⁹ The events of Lenz's outer world are mere projections of an inner world. It is precisely these "states" that give rise to the expressive ruptures within the chamber opera and, subsequently, to the Lenz scenes in *Klavierstück Nr. 6*. Clarifying the nature of the inspiration behind this choice of text, Rihm states that he came to understand the "historical figure" Lenz as "a cipher of mental disturbance."³⁰ Consideration of

25 Carola Nielinger-Vakil: "Quiet Revolutions: Hölderlin Fragments by Luigi Nono and Wolfgang Rihm", *Music and Letters* 81/2 (2000): pp. 245–274, here p. 267.

26 See, for instance, Laura Tunbridge: "Deserted Chambers of the Mind," and Alastair Williams: *Music in Germany Since 1968*.

27 Ian Pace has questioned whether such a view of Rihm's output serves "to reinforce the neo-romantic conception of the composer", see Ian Pace, Review of Alastair Williams: *Music in Germany Since 1968*, *Tempo* 68/268 (2014): pp. 119–121, here p. 121.

28 Michael Hamburger provides a compassionate account of what he refers to as Hölderlin's "self-alienation" in the "Preface" to Friedrich Hölderlin, *Friedrich Hölderlin, Poems and Fragments*. Fourth Edition. London: Anvil Press Poetry, 2004. See in particular, p.14. A number of recent studies have focused on the space between fantasy and insanity in the music of Rihm, with a principal focus on the relationship between music and madness in Rihm's Schumann- and Hölderlin-related compositions.

29 Wolfgang Rihm: "Chiffren von Verstörung: Anmerkungen zu *Jakob Lenz*", *Ausgesprochen* vol. 2, pp. 314–315, here p. 314.

30 "Die historische Figur trat, je genauer sie datisch und atmosphärisch in meinem Intellekt anwesend

such inwardness, subjectivity, and mental states informs the context and the significance of the Brahms allusion, and its kinship with the other lyrical fragments in Rihm's "bagatelles", that is, the musical moments. I will outline each moment individually before considering how we might understand them in relation to one another and in the context of the work as a whole.

THE MUSICAL MOMENTS OF KLAVIERSTÜCK NR. 6

Rihm's longtime composer friend, Wilhelm Killmayer (b. 1927), undertook a detailed analysis of *Klavierstück Nr. 6* in 1992. His analysis is dense with musical detail, accounting for events at several structural levels, if not providing detailed bar-by-bar insights, and a formal context for the earlier musical material to which Rihm alludes. Killmayer considers the large-scale form to be cyclical, consisting of "six parts, divided by breaks and pauses", framed by a prologue and an epilogue with the main section divided into four parts. Table 2 provides a formal outline of *Klavierstück Nr. 6*.

Table 2: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, Formal Outline³¹

Bar	Large-scale function	Inter-thematic function	Allusion/Quotation
1–29	Framing Function: Prologue	"Gesangsszene"	17–29, Rihm, <i>Jakob Lenz</i> , Scene 12, bars 150–61.
30–46		Transition	
46–85	Main section	1. Allusions Phase I	47– <i>Hölderlin-Fragment 4</i> , "Wie Wolken um die Zeit legt"; 57–60, chorale fragment; 72–73, <i>Musik für drei Streicher</i> ; 76–78, Brahms Op. 118/6
86–125 ³		2. Vibration Phase I	
126–140		3. Allusions Phase II	127–29, <i>Hölderlin-Fragment 2</i> , "Aber nun ruhet er eine Weile"
141–70		4. Vibration Phase II & Transition	
171–208	Framing Function: Epilogue	"Abgesang"	<i>Erscheinung: Skizze über Schubert*</i>

war, aber zurück zugunsten einer Chiffre von Verstörung, als die ich Lenz dann Begriff." Rihm: "Chiffren von Verstörung", p. 314.

31 This table is based on (although it also departs from) the detailed analysis in Killmayer: "Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*" It also draws on Alastair Williams: *Music in Germany since 1968*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, p. 136, for the information in the allusions/quotations column marked with an asterisk.

Given Rihm's preoccupation with the German literary tradition in his musical output, and the degree to which these "bagatelles" are underpinned by both earlier music and a body of literature, one might expect Killmayer's analysis to be carried out in dialogue with Rihm's reflections on the relationship between the music and the text, and to consider the aphoristic nature of these literary allusions. This is not the case, however, with Killmayer instead concentrating on the elements of Rihm's composition that relate directly to the score. We will consider each of these "moments" in turn and, as we do so, observe their relationship with time.

§. Jakob Lenz, "Gesangsszene"

The opening of *Klavierstück Nr 6* comprises an expositional phase (bars 1–16) followed by a "Gesangsszene", containing Rihm's first self-allusion to *Jakob Lenz*. Drawing on Büchner's novella, this chamber opera depicts an incident in the life of Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz (1751–92) – a friend of Goethe's – who suffered a mental breakdown in 1777 and was sent to Johann Friedrich Oberlin's vicarage in the Steintal. The opera is made up of thirteen scenes in which six voices represent the protagonist who moves from being an outsider to a state of psychosis. The libretto mentions "voices that can only be detected by Lenz", which "stand in dialogue with him, [and] represent nature"³². Bars 17–29 of *Klavierstück Nr. 6* are an arrangement of bars 150–61 of Scene 12 of *Jakob Lenz*. By this stage in the chamber opera, the voices in the protagonist's psychotic mind call out the name "Friederike" (that is, Friederike Brion, at once his beloved who he feared might die, and the name of a child who died in a nearby village), whilst the most prominent voice in his mind also laments his own condition, now perilously verging in and out of consciousness: "Eyes bloodshot from being awake, will it never be night? Am I dreaming or am I awake?"³³ In *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, this material is distilled down to a lyrical fragment which observes the rhetoric of classical phrase structure, if not its harmonic language. The cadential points at bars 20 and 24 each bring an incremental degree of closure but, in each case, this is disrupted by accented notes in the left hand that Killmayer conceives of as "disturbances."³⁴ Examples 1a and 1b show the source and site of allusion.

32 "Die Stimmen, die, nur für Lenz erfaßbar, mit ihm im Dialog stehen, stellen die Natur dar." Wolfgang Rihm: *Jakob Lenz*, Kammer Oper Textbuch. Vienna: Universal, 1978, p. 1.

33 "Augen wund gewacht, wird es denn niemals wieder Nacht? Traum ich oder wach' ich? Ich will es untersuchen ..." Rihm: *Jakob Lenz*, p. 22.

34 Killmayer: "Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*", p. 104.

BRAHMS AS A VANISHING POINT IN THE MUSIC OF WOLFGANG RIHM

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes woodwinds: Ob.1, Ob.2, Klar., Fag., Trp., and Pos. The second system includes percussion: Schlagz. (snare drum) and four tom-toms (1-4). The third system includes strings: Lenz (vocal soloist), Vcl. 1, Vcl. 2, and Vcl. 3. The vocal line has lyrics: "Au - gen wund ge - wocht, wird es denn nie - mals wie - der". The woodwinds and strings play melodic lines with various dynamics such as *pp*, *p*, *sfa*, and *pp esp.*. The percussion parts feature rhythmic patterns, with the vocal line providing the primary melodic focus.

Example 1a: Rihm, Jakob Lenz, Zwölftes Bild, bars 150–161

Example 1b: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 17–29

§. “Wie Wolken um die Zeit legte”, *Hölderlin-Fragmente*

When Rihm composed the *Hölderlin-Fragmente*, he chose 9 fragments from the 92 numbered fragments of the Stuttgart edition of Hölderlin’s complete works, selecting only those poems in the most incomplete and fragmentary state and avoiding Hölderlin’s more developed poems. Hölderlin’s Fragment 14 becomes Rihm’s second *Hölderlin-Fragmente*, and the poet’s Fragment 92 becomes Rihm’s fourth fragment, which returns in an altered fashion in the ninth and last fragment in this Hölderlin cycle.³⁵ In *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, this latter fragment, “Wie Wolken um die Zeit legt” (“like clouds wrap around time”), forms Rihm’s second self-allusion which enfolds the expressive meaning of voice and piano into a keyboard texture. Nielinger-Vakil sensitively notes how, in Rihm’s original setting for voice and piano, “time takes on the sound of Db,” for “the pitch Db appears only once in the vocal line, setting the crucial word ‘Zeit’.”³⁶ In revisiting the Hölderlin cycle for piano alone, Rihm’s *Klavierstück Nr. 6* looks to the past (both that of his earlier works, and that of Hölderlin’s time) whilst also intoning the concept of time through the hypnotic repetition of the pitch Db in the piano. (See Examples 2a and 2b)

35 Friedrich Hölderlin: *Friedrich Hölderlin: Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Friedrich Beissner & Adolf Beck, vol. ii/1 Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta’scher Buchhandlung, 1951, pp. 315–341. All of the fragments used in Rihm’s *Hölderlin-Fragmente* are provided in Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, Appendix II, pp. 272–274. The final order for Rihm’s fragments, with reference to the Stuttgart Hölderlin edition, is 57, 92, 19, 14, 27, 17, 38, 22, and 4.

36 Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, p. 263.

Example 2a is a vocal score with piano accompaniment. It consists of four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line (Ges.), and the bottom two are for the piano (Kl.). The music is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of two flats. The lyrics are: "Wie Wolken um die Zeit legt". The piano accompaniment includes a prominent triplet in the right hand and a triplet in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *pppp* and *ppppp*.

Example 2a: Rihm, *Hölderlin-Fragmente*, Fragment 4, “Wie Wolken um die Zeit legt”

Example 2b is a piano score for *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 47–56. It consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppppp*, *ff subito*, *ffz*, and *ffz*. Performance instructions include *leggiere*, *accel.*, and *ffz*. The piece features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and a section with a 3/2 time signature indicated by a dashed line.

Example 2b: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 47–56

§. Beethoven, String Quartet in B flat, Op. 130 and Rihm, *Musik für drei Streicher*

Rihm's *Musik für drei Streicher*, the String Trio of 1977, recalls classical formal models in its instrumentation, yet it opens onto a vast landscape in its scope, which uses reminiscences or particles from late Beethoven for its large-scale form. In this composition, as Seth Brodsky suggests, Rihm "seems to perform an autopsy on the new expressive world opened up by Beethoven's last quartets, especially the obsession with expressive rupture, the notion that the moment of greatest expression is also the moment of tearing, of rip and rift in the musical fabric."³⁷ Bars 72–73 of *Klavierstück Nr. 6* recall *Musik für drei Streicher* and, in doing so, allude further back to the opening of the third movement (Andante con motto, *ma non troppo*) of Beethoven, String Quartet No. 13, Op. 130.³⁸ (See Examples 3a and 3b.)

These two bars of music give way to two bars of silence. It is instructive at this point to consider one of Rihm's written commentaries on this piece:

Klavierstück Nr. 6 is a cycle of bagatelles, movements of already-processed material notated in a seismographic fashion. For four days I was very isolated [...]. With the very constant rhythm of life I was able to work exclusively around material that had for some time been in use and seemed almost haggard: I improvised for hours on the harmonic progressions and melodies from a number of my pieces. The piano movement gained an ever-stronger life of its own. Finally, I succeeded in freely composing a unified piano movement from contemporary influence. I began to write down fragments and also rests. Through ever more exact observation, I finally came to recognize the self-direction of the fragments.³⁹

37 Seth Brodsky: Programme Note for Wolfgang Rihm, *Musik für drei Streicher*, <http://www.all-music.com/composition/music-for-3-strings-for-string-trio-mc0002387942> (last accessed 28 August 2016).

38 Reinhold Brinkmann notes the presence of this Beethoven passage in Rihm's *Musik für drei Streicher*. See Reinhold Brinkmann: "Wirkungen Beethovens in der Kammermusik", in: *Beiträge zu Beethovens Kammermusik: Symposion Bonn 1984*, ed. Sieghard Brandenburg and Helmut Loos. Munich: Henle Verlag, 1987, pp. 81–84, and pp.105–108.

39 "Das *Klavierstück Nr. 6* ist ein Zyklus von Bagatellen, seismographische notierte Bewegungen in bereits verarbeitetem Material. Vier Tage lebte ich sehr isoliert, hatte nur meinem Hund bei mir. Bei sehr konstantem Lebensrhythmus war ich in der Lage, ausschließlich mit dem Material umzugehen, das schon längere Zeit in Gebrauch war beziehungsweise fast schon ausgezehrt schien: Ich improvisierte stundenlang über Harmoniefolgen und Melodien aus verschiedenen meiner Stücke. Der Klaviersatz gewann immer stärkeres Eigenleben; schließlich gelang es mir, vom Einheitsklaviersatz zeitgenössischer Prägung frei zu komponieren. Ich begann, Fragmente aufzuschreiben, auch Pausen. Durch immer genaueres Beobachten kam ich schließlich dazu, die Eigenrichtung der Fragmente zu erkennen. Ich deutete diese Richtungen nur an. Eine große

Example 3a: Beethoven, String Quartet No. 13, Op. 130, Andante con motto ma non troppo, bars 1–2

Example 3b: *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 72–73

Given the significance that Rihm attaches to the fragments *and* the rests pursuing their “self-direction”⁴⁰, we might conceivably perceive the two bars of silence in bars 74–75 – one of many instances of silence in *Klavierstück Nr. 6* – “not as a void, but as a state of saturation”. This would align Rihm with Luigi Nono for whom silence can be “a space where processes, longings and states of anxiety come to an absolute standstill.”⁴¹ Whatever the expressive purpose of these bars of rest, out of this silence emerges the Brahmsian allusion with which we are concerned.

Imaginationshilfe, besonders durch ihre ungeheuer offene und radikale Sehweise, war mir Kurt Kocherscheidts Art zu zeichnen. Ihm ist der kleine Zyklus gewidmet. Für mich bedeuten diese Bagatellen das Schlaglicht auf ein atemlos erschöpftes Aufraffen am Ende eines gewaltigen Productionsschubs.” Wolfgang Rihm: “*Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)* (1977–1978)”, *Ausgesprochen 2*, ed. Ulrich Mosch. Winterthur: Amadeus, 1997, p.315. All translation from the German are my own, unless otherwise noted.

40 Rihm: “*Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)* (1977–1978)”, p. 315.

41 Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, p. 254.

Four of the six sections of *Klavierstück Nr. 6* outlined on Table 2 look to the past by way of the rich network of allusions employed by Rihm. The large-scale form of the composition also accommodates two “Vibration Phases” – (bars 86–125 and 141–70). Neither of these explicitly refers to the music of the past and, in each case, these passages contain the most extreme writing for piano in this composition. These passages seem mechanical by comparison with the “Allusions Phases” of Rihm’s “bagatelles”. The first “Vibration Phase” comprises an extended series of extreme trills and tremolandi marked *feroce, con tutta la Sforza trem.*, reaching a *ffffz* dynamic. Built around Eb and Gb, these trills alternate and resonate with the pitches E and F, before opening up to a wider harmonic texture in bar 117 that reinforces the Eb and Gb in the right hand with D# and F# in the left, whilst adding the pitches G natural, A natural, B natural C natural. From here onward, the same chord is repeated 23 times, acting “as an extremely dense, frenzied repetitions-vibration, which is greatly reduced in tempo and audible in single beats”⁴². Killmayer uses the image of a “clamour beneath glass” to describe the extraordinary effect of this passage.⁴³ Certainly, the repeated activity in the piano gives the impression of the harmonic activity being trapped in time. Having been played 23 times, this chord effectively vanishes, leaving in its wake “the crystallized, prosperous core” Eb–Gb in both hands which now “escapes from the mechanics” and embraces the sarabande rhythm of the chorale section that follows.⁴⁴ (See Example 5.)

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system is marked 'ritardando' and contains two staves. The right staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It features a dense, repetitive chordal texture with many notes beamed together. The left staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It also features a dense, repetitive chordal texture. The dynamic marking 'pppp' is written below the first staff, and 'dim. poss.' is written below the second staff. The second system is marked '= 40' and contains two staves. The right staff has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It features a simplified chordal texture with fewer notes. The left staff has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It also features a simplified chordal texture. The dynamic marking 'ppppp' is written below the first staff, and 'etc.' is written below the second staff.

Example 5: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 118–119

42 “Die folgenden 23 Schläge (ab T. 117) wirken wie eine äußerst dichte, rasende Repetitions-Vibration, die in der Geschwindigkeit stark gesenkt in Einzelanschlägen hörbar wird.” Killmayer: ‘Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*’, p. 111.

43 “Toben hinter Glas”, Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, p. 111.

44 Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, p. 111.

§. “Aber nun ruhet er eine Weile”, *Hölderlin-Fragmente*

Rihm’s *Klavierstück Nr. 6* also alludes to the second of his *Hölderlin-Fragmente* at bar 126. This chorale section from bars 126–140 provides some of the most explicitly tonal music in the entire composition, moving from an Eb major to an Eb minor chord before again embracing dissonance and venturing into non-tonality.⁴⁵ The Hölderlin fragment reads “Aber nun ruhet er eine Weile” (“But now he rests for a while”). (See Examples 6a and 6b.)

Example 6a: Rihm, *Hölderlin-Fragmenten*, Fragment 2, “Aber nun ruhet er eine Weile”

Example 6b: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bars 127–131

45 The question of Rihm’s treatment of tonality is significant, but any attempt to deal with it far exceeds the confines of this chapter. I note in brief that Killmayer suggests that “The classical balance between the horizontal and the vertical in old counterpoint no longer applies, for it assumes a strictly regulated mutual subordination. Rihm always seeks to venture from the beaten path and therefore ‘leads out’ to one in which he shows other locations, but not objectives. In this sense, tonality is open towards non-tonality, and vice versa. This becomes a very un-theoretical matter of course.” Killmayer: ‘Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6* (*Bagatellen*)’, p. 103. Rihm has written on this topic in numerous places, giving it most sustained attention in “Neo-Tonalität?”, in: Wolfgang Rihm: *Ausgesprochen* 1, pp. 185–93. The opening sentence is indicative of the degree of complexity, ambiguity, and intended contradictions in this essay: “Actually there is no tonality. Only harmony. Tonality is an accident, a constellation of harmony”.

These musical “moments” are brought together by what Rihm refers to as Beethoven’s “associations-technique”, from which, he asserts, the large-scale form of *Klavierstück Nr. 6* arises:

Beethoven’s associations-technique also inspired and excited me in *Klavierstück 6*. This piece consists of shorter sections – bagatelles – whose origin refers to later and to earlier pieces. A linking piece, then, in which reflection on that which has just been composed initiates future plans.”⁴⁶

Such temporal designations are typical of Rihm’s writings on his Brahmsian compositions. He asserts that “music answers music”⁴⁷, he speaks of being “filled with and empty of Brahms”⁴⁸, of a “turning of events that wavers between arrival and departure,”⁴⁹ “no quotations, only echoes”, “original configuration[s] reconfigured”, “particles” that appear in his own music which he claims are Brahmsian but have “not yet taken on the shape they will have in Brahms”.⁵⁰ Rihm, therefore, is concerned with the manipulation of memory and the manipulation of time.

The Brahms reference stands apart from the other allusions in *Klavierstück Nr. 6* because it is the only musical reference that does not, either primarily or secondarily, refer to Rihm’s earlier compositions. Yet the Brahms allusion has a singular significance with regard to the musical coherence of the piece as a whole. For Rihm’s “bagatelles” and Brahms’s intermezzo both take an approach to form that is based on the juxtaposition of starkly contrasting materials.⁵¹

Brahms’s intermezzo is widely considered to exemplify the compositional process that Schoenberg described as the principle of developing variation. The entire piece is built upon an obsession with a single motive: the archaic *Dies Irae* melody heard at the outset – inherent in which is a longing for a resolution that would see the F of this melodic motif fall to an E flat above a V–I harmonization, thus fulfilling its role in a perfect authentic cadence. Against the opening *Dies Irae* gesture (itself a lyrical aphorism), Brahms places a sweeping diminished seventh arpeggio in the bass, first heard in bar 3.

46 “Beethoven’s Assoziationstechnik regte mich auch im Klavierstück 6 an und auf. Dieses Stück besteht aus kürzeren Abschnitten – Bagatellen – deren Herkunft auf spätere und frühere Stücke verweist. Ein Nachstück also, in dem Reflexe des gerade Komponierten in zukünftigen Pläne einzucken.” Rihm: “Tasten”, in: *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (1981), pp. 456–458, here pp. 457–458.

47 Wolfgang Rihm in conversation with Tom Service, Rihm Composer in Focus Day, Wigmore Hall, 28 February 2015.

48 Rihm, on the Universal Edition webpage for *Ernster Gesang*. <http://www.universaledition.com/Wolfgang-Rihm/composers-and-works/composer/599/work/2335> (last accessed 16 June 2014).

49 Rihm, on the Universal Edition webpage for *Ernster Gesang*. <http://www.universaledition.com/Wolfgang-Rihm/composers-and-works/composer/599/work/2335> (last accessed 16 June 2014).

50 Wolfgang Rihm, *Symphonie “Nähe Fern,”* Lucerne Symphonieorchester, James Gaffigan (Harmonia Mundi HMC902153, 2012), pp. 5–6, here p. 6.

51 I am not referring here to the counterbalancing duality of tonal music, but rather to the juxtaposition of apparently irreconcilable materials.

Performer and listener alike must continuously readjust their timeframe if they are simultaneously to inhabit the two worlds presented in the temporal, metrical, and expressive oppositions between these two sound worlds in the opening three bars of Op. 118/6. As the piece progresses, Brahms fuses these disparate elements into one, engaging in an elaborate series of evasive tactics to frustrate the sense of harmonic resolution. The effect, as John Rink remarks, is that “the music’s tonal foundations are threatened to the very core”, epitomizing and taking to an extreme the harmonic ambiguity that characterizes Brahms’s late pieces.⁵² Indeed, Rink’s description of Op. 118/6 is also evocative of the larger aesthetic that governs Rihm’s *Klavierstück Nr. 6*: “Past and future are therefore united in this piece, its apparently idiosyncratic audacities part and parcel of the piano style practiced for some fifty years, while paving the way for the revolution in the musical language to come”.⁵³

Brahms’s compositional process, moreover, can also be understood in relation to Hegel’s category of *Zuständlichkeit* (‘states’). Op. 118/6 puts one in mind of the eccentric Kapellmeister Johannes Kreisler of Hoffmann’s *Kater Murr*, Brahms’s alter ego in his youth.⁵⁴ The internal fusing of disparate elements into one novel that characterizes *Kater Murr* provides a compelling model for understanding and interpreting Op. 118/6 with its opening *Dies Irae* pitted against a diminished seventh arpeggio. Moreover, it is redolent of the harmonic ambiguity and the instability by which this intermezzo is characterized. In looking for a possible model for such a literary dimension to Brahms’s intermezzo, we might well consider John Daverio’s writings on Schumann. He makes a convincing case for the influence of the Romantic fragment on Schumann’s larger, more self-contained works, identifying the “Kater Murr principle” – that is, “an organizational mode based entirely on the principle of incompleteness”⁵⁵. This further resonates with the elements of incompleteness of the multi-piece that Jonathan Dunsby discerns in Brahms’s *Seven Fantasien*, Op. 116, elements “that find their completion later in the collection”⁵⁶. Dunsby recognizes this set as “reviving from Brahms’s earlier life the Kreislerian world of the expressively bizarre”.⁵⁷

52 John Rink: “Opposition and Integration in the Piano Music”, in: *Cambridge Companion to Brahms*, ed. Michael Musgrave. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 79–97, here p. 94.

53 Rink: “Opposition and Integration”, p. 94.

54 I have made a similar argument in Nicole Grimes: “Brahms’s Poetic Allusions through Hanslick’s Critical Lens”, in: *American Brahms Society Newsletter* 29/2 (2011), pp. 5–9, here p. 7.

55 John Daverio: *Nineteenth-Century Music and the German Romantic Ideology*. New York: Schirmer, 1993, pp. 61–62.

56 Jonathan Dunsby: “The Multi-piece in Brahms: *Fantasien Op. 116*”, in: *Brahms: Biographical, Documentary and Analytical Studies*, ed. Robert Pascall. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 167–189, here p. 176.

57 Dunsby: “The Multi-Piece in Brahms”, p. 176.

E. T. A. Hoffmann's characters frequently succumb to madness, not least Johannes Kreisler who the author describes as a "maniac"⁵⁸. *Kater Murr*, as Siegfried Kross asserts, is concerned with "a state of stress felt by the artist between an external reality and an inner artistic one"⁵⁹. Daverio goes on to explore the manner in which Hoffmann's tales delve into "the terrors of the divided self" and notes the way in which "quotidian reality can turn, at any moment, into a terrifying, fantastic world". Daverio further notes that Hoffmann "links this contingency directly to the person of the artist, whose access to the darker side of being is more a curse than a blessing, for it can lead, in the most extreme cases, to madness"⁶⁰.

Returning to *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, there is a strong kinship between the musical material of Rihm's self-allusions explored earlier in this chapter and his choice of Brahms's archaic *Dies Irae* melody. For all of this musical material, as I have argued, is coded by German literary history. Each musical moment is a "contracted concentration" of a larger artwork, rendering Rihm's musical allusions pregnant with possibilities for musical development. Each of the musical works to which Rihm alludes, moreover, is related to the fracturing of the artistic mind in literature. This opens out onto further literary kinships, for Hoffmann's spirit realm (*Geisterreich*) is closely related to Hegel's *Zustände* (states) on account of both concepts imbuing literature with poetic depth through inwardness and self-reflection.

In the context of *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, the ethereal Brahmsian quotation becomes an example of what Nielinger-Vakil (paraphrasing Rihm) refers to as the "individual event" that tends to drive Rihm's compositions, the "'self-contained unit which deifies development' which is set free, unleashed and placed in space, it is further regarded as a possible 'core' to what may follow"⁶¹. In this instance, the "individual event" is mostly unseen, and yet it gives rise to that which is seen. This "vanishing point", as I refer to it, is situated along a horizon. That horizon forms a background against which the subject fixes their gaze on the objects in the foreground, with the vanishing point becoming a blur. It is the contents of this blur – the evasive Brahmsian allusion – that provides the threshold between the real and the imagined, the rational and the non-rational, the past and the future. Husserl's writings on the horizon as a representation of phenomenological time illuminate Rihm's *Klavierstück Nr. 6* when considered from the perspective of the Brahmsian allusion:

58 E. T. A. Hoffmann: "The Life and Opinions of Kater Murr", in: *Selected Writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann*, ed. and trans. Leonard J. Kent. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969, p. 114.

59 Siegfried Kross: "Brahms and E. T. A. Hoffmann", *19th-Century Music* 5/3 (1982), pp. 193–200, here at p. 197.

60 John Daverio: *Robert Schumann: Herald of a "New Poetic Age"*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 72.

61 Nielinger-Vakil: "Quiet Revolutions", p. 261.

As it is with the world in its ordered being as a spatial present [...] so likewise is it with the world in respect to its ordered being in the succession of time. This world now present to me, and in every waking “now” obviously so, has its temporal horizon, infinite in both directions, its known and unknown, its intimately alive and its unalive past and future. Moving freely within the moment of experience which brings what is present into my intuitional grasp, I can follow up these connexions of the reality which immediately surrounds me. I can shift my standpoint in space and time, look this way and that, turn temporally forwards and backwards; I can provide for myself constantly new and more or less clear and meaningful perceptions and representations, and images also more or less clear, in which I make intuitable to myself whatever can possibly exist really or supposedly in the steadfast order of space and time.⁶²

The potent Brahms allusion might further be related to the early Romantic notion of the fragment as a seed. Although “the aphoristic seed” would seem to defy systematization,⁶³ and although the musical “moments” in *Klavierstück Nr. 6* are arranged in a concentric rather than a linear fashion, there is a case to be made that the Brahmsian *Dies Irae* melody is the imaginary middle point around which all other lyrical “moments” are arranged. Rihm acknowledges the “self-direction of the fragments”.⁶⁴ Killmayer’s analysis, in turn, speaks to a musical coherence that pervades Rihm’s “bagatelles”. Such coherence in this piece is redolent of a Brahmsian mode of composition.

Killmayer questions how we may categorize the Brahmsian allusion, such is its ethereal nature. “Is this a theme?” he asks, this elegiac figure that results from the improvisatory movement of fingers that “circle three notes within the close proximity of a third”⁶⁵. Despite its seemingly innocuous presence, Killmayer attaches great structural significance to these two bars of music, otherwise consistently referring to it as “the theme”. The basic premise of his analysis is that the interval of a minor third from Eb to Gb that circumscribes Brahms’s circling figure is fundamental to every large-scale function (or “moment”) in the piece. In fact, just like Op. 118/6, we might make the case that Rihm’s entire piece is also built upon an obsession with a single motive.

From the outset, the interval Eb–Gb that marks the boundary of the Brahmsian allusion (alternately spelt enharmonically by Rihm as D#–F#) plays a pivotal role in the structure of the piece, as Killmayer’s analysis outlines. (See Example 7.)

62 Edmund Husserl: *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson, foreword by Dermot Moran. London and New York: Routledge, 2012, pp. 52–53

63 Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, p. 261.

64 Rihm: “*Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)* (1977–1978)”, p. 315.

65 Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, p. 109.

It is heard as early as bar 4 in the expositional material, encircling the tension between the pitches D and Db that pervades the entire work. It remains a constant presence amidst the limited semitone movement of bars 10–11, it forms the basis of the first “disturbance”, the F# in the bass in the antecedent of the *Jakob Lenz* “Gesangsszene” from bars 17–20 (see also Example 1b), and it provides a premonition at bar 42 that prepares the ear for the intervallic content of the *Dies Irae* figure when it emerges as “the theme” after two bars of silence.

Example 7: Killmayer’s summary of the pervasive nature of the E flat–G flat interval in Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6* from the outset until the Brahms quotation at bar 76⁶⁶

Following the prologue, the first “bagatelle” (bars 46–85) begins and ends with significant events that relate to the Brahmsian allusion and to the movement of time. The first of the two *Hölderlin-Fragmente* quotations fuses the contrasting compositional impulses found in the opening of Brahms’s intermezzo. The figure in the right hand is at once a diminished seventh arpeggio and a gesture that encircles the generic Eb–Gb interval.⁶⁷ Rihm then subjects this unified motif to a further degree of opposition by placing a dissonant Db in the left hand – the pitch that, as we recall, intones the concept of time. (See Example 2b.)

It is at the end of this same developmental section that the single Brahms reference in *Klavierstück Nr. 6* occurs. Killmayer refers to this “theme” alternately as “visionary”, and a “dream sequence”, considering its presence to be more “bestowed” on Rihm’s work “than expected”.⁶⁸ This resonates with what Rihm himself categorizes as *Traumlogik* (“dream logic”), material that is (otherwise) distinguished by “a strikingly modern lack of connecting links”.⁶⁹

66 This example is taken verbatim from Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, p. 109.

67 Of course, there are other ways of interpreting this gesture, and certainly the chord C–Eb–Gb–B is an important one for Rihm. Brinkmann, for instance, notes that it is a variant of a reminiscence of Bach from the end of the *St Matthew Passion*, and that of the Webern version of “Ich fühle Luft” from the fourth movement of the String Quartet, Op. 10. See Brinkmann: “Musikalische Lyrik oder die Realisation von Freiheit”, p. 283.

68 Killmayer: “Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*”, p. 109 (and p. 111 for the “dream sequence”).

69 Nielinger-Vakil: “Quiet Revolutions”, p. 260.

Killmayer's analysis highlights the paradoxical nature of Rihm's engagement with Brahms: "This setting and formulation, which is not thought of as historic or literary, represents no quotation in the strict sense", he argues. "It should have been invented here, had it not already been there".⁷⁰ It is out of time, therefore. "Retrieved from memory", he suggests, "it then adapts to a shape, as it has refined in carrying around the theme over time. The theme is discovered here, not quoted".⁷¹



Example 8: Rihm, *Klavierstück Nr. 6*, bar 82

Just as the Brahmsian allusion appeared as a "vision", to recall Killmayer's imagery, immediately after it is heard, it vanishes. Emerging from nothing it returns to nothing. The attempt to recapture it in bar 82 by employing identical pitches shows that "the moment" is no longer within our reach, it is not repeatable.⁷² (See Example 8.) It therefore becomes an illusion, mediating between fantasy and reality, between the rational and the non-rational. When considered from this perspective, it is entirely fitting that Rihm should refrain from noting this allusion in his written reflections on *Klavierstück Nr. 6*. This omission, if anything, heightens the elusive nature of an allusion that resides on the threshold between the seen and the unseen. As is the case in the visual arts with which Rihm is so deeply preoccupied,⁷³ the vanishing point in this collection of bagatelles marks the very site of disappearance and forgetting.

70 "Sicher ist, daß in dieser Setzung und Formulierung, in der es weder historisch noch literarisch gedacht ist, kein Zitat im Eigensinne darstellt; es hätte hier erfunden werden müssen, wäre es nicht schon dagewesen." Killmayer: "Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*", p. 109.

71 "aus der Erinnerung geholt stellt sich dann eine Ausformung ein, wie sie sich im Herumtragen des Themas im Lauf der Zeit gebildet hat. Das Thema ist hier entdeckt, nicht zitiert." Killmayer: "Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*", p. 109.

72 Killmayer, "Zu Wolfgang Rihms *Klavierstück Nr. 6 (Bagatellen)*", p. 110.

73 On Rihm's preoccupation with art, see footnote 8 above.

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