

The Remarkable Journey of E-flat:  
Approaching Brahms' Op. 120 No. 2 Viola Sonata in Eb Major

*I. Allegro amabile*

Movement I -Sonata Form Structure

Exposition	m. 1-55
Development	m. 56-102
Recapitulation	m. 103-153
Coda	m. 154-173

The story of E-flat begins with a warm embrace of piano arpeggiations establishing the key of Eb Major, like a gentle hug from grandparents. Such an elegant entrance sets the underlying calm yet flowing texture for *Theme 1*. E-flat continues to diverge into different personas altering the mood. A new character, B-flat, a close dominant friend of E-flat, takes a turn in describing the tale (*Theme 2*) -- though B-flat is sweet and soft-spoken by nature. Each thematic development presents a new point of view from the narrators of this story.

Whether the theme becomes augmented, transposed, or goes through diminution, these processes introduce new thoughts and perspectives. Even contours through travelling registers depict tones of voices, whether it's a small voice in your head, a shy uncertain thought, or an assertive idea, the idea is that every individual has a colorful palette of senses. Each passionate harmony and dissonance brought out through the collaboration of viola and piano comes with certain techniques for each respective voice. The counterpoint of voices in opposing directions are synonymous to two individuals arguing head-on or an attempt at compromise. Similarly, immediate interruptions or outbursts from each voice can be approached in specific speech articulations transferred to the instrument itself. The concept of chromaticism winding back down into the home key represents a scene from an adventure film where the characters are heading back home, or to their final destination after a long day.

*II. Appassionato, ma non troppo Allegro*

Movement II -Scherzo Structure

A	m. 1-80
B	m. 81-138
C	m. 139-223

With a peaceful cadence from the first movement, a new day has begun as E-flat awakens to start the day. Alarmingly, the mood is serious, as if waking up from a bad dream. E-flat starts the day in a minor mood, trying to retain a sense of resistance from the escalating darkness. Something feels off putting, as E-flat disproportionately expresses a simple meter feel in cut time through a compound meter. The result is a persistent instability of time. As if from a scene change in a play, a calm and

bright day after a thunderstorm is presented. As all good dreams come to an end, an ominously pedal of Bb lingers. The piano reaches for its last breath with ascending quarter notes to the final Eb minor cadence, ending yet another eventful day. E-flat returns from the B Major dream, back to the dark mood from the morning. Constant eerie thoughts interrupt E-flat's minor demeanor. The day is finally over, as E-flat takes one last sigh, ending yet another strenuous day.

*III. Andante con moto — Allegro*

Movement III -Theme and Variations

Theme	m. 1-14	EbM
Variation I	m. 15-28	EbM
Variation II	m. 29-42	EbM
Variation III	m. 43-56	EbM
Variation IV	m. 57-70	EbM
Variation V	m. 71-97	ebm
Coda	m. 98-153	EbM

The final movement, *Andante con moto — Allegro*, displays a structure of theme and variations. E-flat wakes up in a major mood and temporarily forgets the darkness from the previous day. Opening in a peaceful and carefree manner, a sense of warm friendship between all thoughts welcomes E-flat. As writers play around with words and ideas in a variety of methods, E-flat ventures into the unknown world of thought. Altering ideas in innovative yet semi familiar manners. Although successfully obliterating yesterday's dark mood, some things are only out of mind temporarily. E-flat unconsciously recalls the minor mood of the second movement and relapses into a minor and vigorous temper. Several thoughts interject, and gradually alter the menacing energy into a joyous celebration of life's adventures, and triumphantly cadences back to E-flat's welcoming home after a long journey.

\*\*\*Having an analysis of the presented themes allows musicians to formulate strong personal opinions on how to present ideas and for what purpose. The following consists of each presented theme throughout the Op. 120 No. 2 sonata. With this information, observe how often certain themes are modified and in what way and what elements bring the piece together. These subtle alterations will assist in a new artistic perspective of this masterpiece.

References

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