

### **Music Appraisal – Classical Waltzes**

Piece 1 – Waltz in B Minor F. CHOPIN, Op. 69, NO.2

Piece 2 – Waltz in C# Minor J. BRAHMS, Op. 39, NO.7

Piece 3 – Je Te Veux ERIK SATIE

My chosen three pieces are all waltzes in  $\frac{3}{4}$ . They each maintain the feeling of a traditional waltz, conjured up by the chord movements in the bass clef. Furthermore, each work is composed for piano.

#### **Piece 1 – Waltz in B Minor F. CHOPIN, Op. 69, NO.2**

This piece was published after Chopin's death and is one of a pair with Waltz in Ab Major. It has a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  and should be played moderately fast. The music is in B Minor but also modulates into B Major giving the sudden peak of happiness in the middle of the piece. The use of chromatic scales is also apparent; they generally give a sense of falling back in to the main rhythm as they are used just before a section of flowing melody. Block chords are applied in the left hand; with a strong first beat on the bass note just before, to give structure to the piece and possibly to dancers. This is covered by the right hand with the main swaying rhythm. Dynamics of this piece often relate to the phrases and cadences, if the rhythm begins to increase in pitch then the dynamics tend also to increase and vice versa so that it gives the feeling of a strong uprising in the melody, even building towards the B major section. Some phrases have an accent on their first note as if to fall on to the note then play flowingly through the phrase. When the key change is brought about, a thicker richer texture is introduced bringing harmony to the section.

The structure to the piece is quite simplistic: A A' B A'' B A'' /C C'/ A B A'' Though the piece uses 3 major sections, which are changed slightly when repeated, it keeps the piece together as a whole linking back to other first sections. For instance the end is A'' which relates back to the beginning, the A section.

Overall the impression of the piece is one of movement, with a strong bass to keep the feeling of a waltz while the melody moves freely, but well structured, on top. Different musical aspects are included to help build up to the central key change then, in the original key, fading or dying away at the end.

#### **Piece 2 – Waltz in C# Minor J. BRAHMS, Op. 39, NO.7**

Similarly to the first waltz this piece has a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  but in contrast, it should be played 'Poco più Andante,' a little more of a walking speed. This work should be performed 'dolce' and 'ben legato' in parts, this helps smooth out the block chords of the melody and also holds the piece together. The score is in C# Minor but modulates several times in to its relative key, E Major; changes the mood of the waltz to a lively effective dance. Modulating from C# Minor to C# Major is a feature common in both this piece and Chopin's Waltz in B Minor. The latter of which, modulates from B Minor to B Major.

Unlike piece 1 this waltz, in the first section, uses block chords to form the melody but also are included in the bass. This provides a constant thick texture to the listener, whereas the first piece varied much more in the changing of texture. Although, in the bass clef an ardent pulse, which falls on the first beat of each bar, is apparent alike to the first score. This attribute keeps the structure and the characteristics of a waltz which, in turn, contributes to the feeling and movement of a typical waltz. The chords in the melody are generally based around octave chords.

During the middle section Brahms composes the structure by choosing a chord then immediately following it by another chord, either slightly higher or lower than the first. This is then followed by the original chord. This feature is present in sections B and C.

On the surface of these two pieces their main structures seem to be very different in the number of sections and the length of each. However, the similar properties include the repetition of sections and the layout of the structure. This piece has a structure of A A' / B C D / B C D' both compositions have identical beginnings, A A'. The second section is without a doubt different but notice how both pieces repeat this small section. Linking to a previous section is common to each piece; holding the entire composition together. Dynamic changes are one of the main features in this piece, crescendos and diminuendos are employed almost constantly - especially to give emphasis to the bass rhythm, held in the left hand. This forces the listener to notice not only the powerful melody but the structured beat moving steadily beneath.

Finally, this piece gives a feeling of power, conveyed by the vast chord movements which are unlike Chopin's more elegant moving piece. Nevertheless, the idea of a strong ardent bass is incorporated in the foundations of each waltz. This short but expressive work uses many musical traits which are twisted together to form a firm waltz with a dominant melody.

### Piece 3 – Je Te Veux ERIK SATIE

This final waltz is similar to former pieces in many ways but also carries its own unique characteristics. This work is French with a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  matching the former pieces. It should be played moderately fast throughout, similar to Chopin's waltz. However, this piece should be performed 'ralentir' and 'retenir' near the end of most sections to give a respite to the listener or even the dancer. Yet, these performance directions would not be suitable for a dancer because these short stops would repeatedly disrupt the dance.

The rhythm is also moderate in the sense that only crotchets and quavers are implemented in the main sections and are always falling on a beat. An exception to this is section C as it uses a lot of quavers and semi-quavers. Nevertheless, both of the other waltzes incorporate the different duration of a note throughout their piece, while Satie structures his to certain sections and keys.

The tonality varies throughout the waltz as different key signatures are used for each new section. Although, I would say this piece was in C Major as the first and main section is composed in C Major. The structure of this piece is: ABA' / CDC / ABA''. As I said section A is in C Major, section B is in G Major, section C is in F Major but modulates twice into Eb Major and section D is in Bb Major. This waltz has no apparent structure to tonality unlike the other two pieces. The structure has much repeating of the main 'section A' but also integrates new ideas with in each larger section i.e. ABA'. This feature is common to all three waltzes giving an interest to the waltz thus, giving a sensation of wholeness and relation to a previous section.

Texture is not altered very often but when it is it does not last very long. Generally, the texture is, to an extent, thick with octave chords which are prominent in all parts; this is similar to Brahms' Waltz. These chords are used in both clefs but primarily in the bass clef and which fall on the first beat of each bar. This device is applied to sustain the sensation of a typical waltz.

The unique feature this composition possesses over the previous waltzes is that the style of a waltz, the 1, 2, 3 step, is shared in both hands. Satie applies this aspect to generate a more lightly feel and to establish the waltz sound of a intense but pollyannaish dance, quite unlike Chopin's fast flowing waltz or Brahms' deep textured waltz.

Phrasing is highly used in this waltz sustaining the airy and cloud type feeling Satie aims to achieve. The phrasing and dynamics interlace to conform and emphasis the certain dance steps in a French waltz, just as Chopin's waltz may have done. As a new phrase begins a crescendo is used and similarly when a phrase comes to a close a diminuendo is used. This feature is exact to parts in Chopin's Waltz. However, Section D, in the middle of Je Te Veux, is modified. The dynamics now tie themselves to two phrases, a phrase begins to develop in volume then finishes and the next phrase begins at the forte the former phrase experienced. The second phrase then begins to diminuendo and this process is repeated all though section D.

In conclusion, each waltz has its own distinct characteristic which constructs and defines that particular piece. Yet, each piece shares numerous features with one another and as much they are different on the surface, underneath they are the same in regards to the structure of a waltz.

### **Performance Appraisal**

My performance was on F. Chopin's Waltz in B Minor, I performed up till the Major section. I ensured the beginnings of certain phrases were accented to give a balance from the legato sections. These accents also developed the feeling of the music which led to the middle section. I heavily used legato when needed to adhere to Chopin's ideology of a flowing waltz. However, I tried not to slur the bass chords with too much legato or pedalling but instead, held the chords securely while maintaining a steady speed.

I used the aspect of pedalling to add a positive effect to my performance. For the first section I used pedalling to aid the flowing melody. However, when I came to the second lighter section I removed my pedalling and then consolidated the main melodic line. This gave a clear contrast to the beginning section which I wanted to achieve, resulting in a softer but clearer feeling. This supplied a rest from the original legato start although, I did return to the fluid flowing melody later in the piece. This aspect showed a contrast and allowed the listener to really understand the piece and be absorbed by it.

I decided on the articulation from section A into section B to be legato, establishing the effect of a flowing theme consistent to the melody.

Overall, I believe my performance portrayed Chopin's piece in a slightly different light while maintaining the main character of his work.

### **Composition Brief**

I want my composition to have some of the musical aspects which are featured in:  
F. Chopin's Waltz in D Minor.

- Be composed in D Minor, but modulate into D Major in the middle section.
- Have a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$  and to be played moderately fast.
- A strong pulse on the first beat of each bar to give structure to my piece, an aspect that Chopin has applied.
- I wish to include chord progression and block chords in the left hand to hold the feeling of a traditional waltz.
- To accent the first note in a phrase then lead flowingly through the phrase.
- Chromatic scales will be introduced to incorporate the sense of falling back in to the main melody, as in Chopin's Waltz.
- My piece will try to maintain the Chopin's structure: A A' B A'' B A'' /C C'/ A B A''
- I shall use F. Chopin's idea of a flowing melody which runs beside the structured bass rhythm.
- My dynamics shall relate to and interlace with the phrases and cadences to produce the same feeling of Chopin's work.
- A thick texture will be applied to the middle major part to bring harmony to the section.

**Composition Appraisal**

In this appraisal I will comment on the specifications, set in my composition brief, that I fulfilled and those which I changed or developed.

- My waltz composition is in D Minor and modulates into D Major and has a time signature of  $\frac{3}{4}$ .
- The piece is generally to be played moderately fast although, I developed my specification above and included ritardando's in some parts to enhance the feeling of phrases.
- I continued Chopin's feature of the strong pulse on the first beat of each bar, to secure that the piece had a structure of a waltz.
- I used chord progression, in the bass, in the Minor section to conform to a traditional waltz.
- I decided not to accent the first note of a phrase as I thought it overpowered the rest of the piece. However, I accented the first note in the last section as an accent was suitable here, as it led to the end of my piece.
- I included chromatic scales in my composition, though not as many as seen in Chopin's Waltz in B Minor. The chromatic scales did give a sense of falling back into the main melody thus, achieving what I hoped.
- As my composition was not as long as Chopin's I had to condense his structure and apply it to my work. I keep the idea of 3 main sections. The structure to my waltz is: A A' B A'' / C D C / A' B A'' This is a slight variation of the structure I wished to follow: A A' B A'' B A'' / C C' / A B A'
- I applied the idea of a flowing melody alongside a structure bass rhythm and I believe it worked rather well.
- I interlaced most of the dynamic changes to suit the phrases and sections in my piece.
- For the middle section I did the opposite to my set specification, which was to have a thick texture for the middle section. I decided I would have a thinner texture than the first section. This worked and allowed my entire composition to be balanced.