

Abstract

Many musicians and scholars have studied the complex relationship between words and music. Matt BaileyShea's recent book pays close attention to the close analysis of the words. BaileyShea shows how the best poets provide composers with various artistic devices. Composers transform features of the poem by drawing on a variety of musical elements: melodies, harmonies, rhythms, musical texture, etc. Drawing on insights from BaileyShea's poetic analysis, this research conducts a close analysis of the sound patterns in the Inkermann's poem before exploring Brahms's musical response. Johannes Brahms composed "An die Heimat" in 1863, in response to a poem by C.O. Sternau (1822-1862) and this composition, the first of three vocal quartets published as Opus. 64, presents a compelling case study for choral musicians.

The researcher's analysis aims to highlight important details of both the words and music. The analysis provides subtleties of the Inkermann's poem and Brahms's sensitive musical response to many of the poetic features, with special attention to how Brahms incorporates the sounds of the words into his music. By highlighting Brahms's intentional differentiation in the sounds of vowels and his use of contrasting musical components, the research offers practical strategies and advice that draws on insight from vocal pedagogy and voice science for choral conductors.

The researcher finds Brahms employs chromaticism, the most essential and pervasive element, throughout the entire piece, in response to the complex rhyming patterns of the poem. He uses the constant movement of the triplet rhythms in response to the percussive rhyming consonants of the poem to express confusion about finding a home. He also utilizes tonal confusion, modal mixture, and many strange dissonances to intensify even more disoriented feelings for a distant home.

This research has often noticed that Brahms differentiates the [a] and [i] vowels of the poem with contrasting musical elements. He usually associates the [a] vowel with diatonicism and the [i] vowel with restless chromaticism. Knowing this, the choral conductor should aim for contrasting *chiaroscuro* timbres for the two vowels.

Considerations for the balance between the chorus and the piano part are addressed, with a special attention to the pianist's role in expressing subtle nuances of the wandering search for the homeland emphasizing chromaticism. The choral conductor should help the singers and the pianist to realize how their expressive relationship shifts over the course of the piece.

Overall, this research offers many valuable insights derived from a close analysis of the individual sounds of the words, as well as the interrelationships of those sounds across the poem. By examining the subtle details of the sound patterns in the poem, that kind of poetic analysis deepens our understanding of Brahms's musical response while providing practical guidance for choral interpretation and performance. The strategies illustrated here can serve as models for the other two quartets in Op. 64, but they should also prove to be useful in approaching a broad range of other choral repertoire.