

Brahms 4 Excerpt Practice Tips

1. Intonation Practice - Get the key in your ear by first practicing an E-minor scale, then take small sections and isolate the notes that are within the key. This helps get the harmonic structure in your ear so that the chromatic notes fit better. This exercise can be applied to the entire excerpt if you know how the keys change throughout, but even if you only do the following exercise it really helps. (This is exactly what I do when I practice this excerpt!)

Example 1:



Translates to:



All of the circled 8th notes are played as quarter notes and all of the dotted quarter notes are played as half notes. Notice how the melody rises to a moment of intensity by getting higher and higher, and then it loses steam by falling back down the E minor arpeggio by the end of the line. This section is so incredible because of the way that Brahms does not allow the melody to reach a climax-it keeps rising and falling right back down to start over from new lows.

2. Rhythm Practice -There are some complex rhythm variations throughout, so practice breaking the rhythm down by playing a section with the smallest subdivision of rhythm-in this example that is 16th notes:

Example 2:



Translates to:



This excerpt presents many challenges-intonation and rhythm only scratch the surface of the depth you can go to learn this, but it is crucial to start here so you've got a great foundation as you start learning the piece. These practice tips represent some of the ways that I do focused work on a piece, and it does take a lot of focus-if at first you don't feel successful, try and try again! The more we practice with great discipline the faster we grow as musicians, so let us practice this music to continue our growth into the next level of mastery!