

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS WITHIN THE TEXTURE AND FORMAL STRUCTURE OF
ERNST VON DOHNÁNYI'S FOUR RHAPSODIES, OP.11

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Hungarian pianist, composer, conductor, teacher and administrator, Ernst von Dohnányi (Ernö Dohnányi in Hungarian), was considered one of the most versatile musicians and the first architect of Hungary's musical culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.

Dohnányi composed the Four Rhapsodies, op. 11, between 1902 and 1903, and among his many piano compositions, op. 11 are regarded as some of his most substantial works.

Without directly imitating the earlier works of Liszt and Brahms, Dohnányi contributed to the rhapsody tradition with op. 11 by using his own unique stylistic compositional elements in the textural and formal structure. Texture and form are the most indicative characteristics of his rhapsodic language because of the improvisational nature that permeates his compositional style in the rhapsodies.

In this dissertation the works are examined from within its textural and formal structure. Within texture, rhythm and accompanimental figurations are examined. Each rhapsody's structural organization, including references to eighteenth-century forms, and the cyclical elements in the work is analyzed. Background information on Dohnányi and a brief history of the rhapsody in the 19th century is also included.

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INTRODUCTION

The Four Rhapsodies, op. 11 of Ernst von Dohnányi are among his most popular and most highly regarded compositions for the piano. Yet, there have been no serious studies of these pieces, either individually or as a set. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a clear understanding of Dohnányi's unique stylistic compositional elements in these pieces. Texture and form are the most indicative characteristics of his rhapsodic language because of the improvisational nature that permeates his compositional style in the rhapsodies.

Within the chapter on texture, rhythm and accompanimental figurations are examined. The chapter on form focuses on the individual movements of the whole set and then reveals how all four rhapsodies function together as a large-scale work. Each rhapsody's structural organization, including references to eighteenth-century forms, and the cyclical elements in the work are analyzed.

CHAPTER 1

ERNST VON DOHNÁNYI AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RHAPSODY IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Ernst von Dohnányi

Although he was regarded as the most important figure in music in Hungary during his lifetime, Dohnányi is largely forgotten today, and a major portion of his compositional output still remains uninvestigated. The purpose of this chapter is to describe Dohnányi's versatile musicianship, his general compositional characteristics, which are the important features in the Four Rhapsodies, op. 11, and the historical placement of op. 11 in context with composers of his previous generation. Therefore, in order to appreciate fully his contribution within op. 11, it is necessary to include some background information.

Hungarian pianist, composer, conductor, teacher and administrator, Ernst von Dohnányi (Ernö Dohnányi in Hungarian) was born on 27 July 1877, in Pozsony (Pressburg). He was considered one of the most versatile musicians and the first architect of Hungary's musical culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.¹ His first instruction in music came from his father, Frigyes Dohnányi, who was a professor of mathematics at the Pressburg Gymnasium and an outstanding amateur cellist. In 1893, young Dohnányi, at the age of seventeen, enrolled at the National Hungarian Royal Academy of Music in Budapest (later known as the Liszt Academy). There he studied

¹ Bálint Vázsonyi, "Dohnányi, Ernő," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publisher Ltd., 2001), vol.21: 425-427.

piano with Stefan Thomán, a pupil of Liszt, and composition with Hans Koessler, who was a follower of Brahms. In 1897, he studied for a few weeks with another of Liszt's pupils, pianist-composer Eugen d'Albert.

Dohnányi's first published composition, the Quintet in C Minor, op. 1, had been highly praised by Brahms in 1895 and Brahms himself arranged the premiere of this work in Vienna. In 1898, Dohnányi gave a performance of Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 4, op 58, at the "Richter concert" in Queen's Hall, in London. The success of the London performance made Dohnányi's fame grow rapidly. In 1899, Dohnányi's Piano Concerto no. 1 brought him the Bösendorfer prize. By 1900, after having a concert tour of major cities in Europe and America, Dohnányi established himself as the greatest Hungarian pianist and composer after Liszt.²

Dohnányi was invited to teach piano at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin in 1908 with a full professorship and remained in Germany for the next ten years. Returning to Budapest in 1915, Dohnányi taught as the head of the piano and composition classes at the Liszt Academy, which then led him to the prestigious position of the director twice, in 1916-1919 and 1934-1941. As a world-renowned pedagogue, he deeply affected and influenced great musicians such as: Geza Anda, György Cziffra, Annie Fischer, Boris Goldowsky, Edward Kilenyi, Mischa Levitzki, Eugene Ormandy, Fritz Reiner, George Solti and George Szell.³

In the years from 1915 to 1936, Dohnányi's musical activities reached their peak.

² Alan Walker, "Ernst von Dohnányi: A Tribute," *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi*, ed., James A Grymes (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2005), 5.

³ Frank Cooper, "Ernst von Dohnányi, the Man and the Music," *Clavier*, 9:6 (September, 1970): 29.

According to Belá Bartók, the entire musical life of Hungary during these years was summed up in one name: “Dohnányi.”⁴ He gave about 120 concerts each season in Budapest alone;⁵ made an extensive annual American tour; was appointed as the head director for the Budapest Philharmonic in 1919, and conductor of the New York State Symphony Orchestra in 1925. He also served as music director of the Hungarian radio in 1931.

Under the growing force of the Nazis, by 1941, he had resigned his directorial post at the Academy rather than submit to anti-Jewish legislation.⁶ For his lack of support of the Nazi agenda, he was forced to leave Hungary in 1944 and went to Austria. He then went to Argentina in 1948, before finally settling as pianist-and composer-in-residence at Florida State University in Tallahassee in 1949.

During his first years in Florida, Dohnányi was prevented from re-entering the world stage due to the continuing political rumors that he had been a Nazi collaborator.⁷ However, in 1953, at the age of 76, he recovered his international status with a victorious “re-debut” at Carnegie Hall. He made a last appearance at the Edinburgh Festival in 1956, the place where he had astonished the audience as a young prodigy. He continued to play, compose, conduct and teach during the Tallahassee years, where he remained until his death on 2 February 1960. Dohnányi’s music in general has been neglected in part due to the untruthful political accusations that surrounded him. During the 1960s, however,

⁴ Ibid, 7.

⁵ Bálint Vázsonyi, “Dohnányi, Ernő,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publisher Ltd., 2001), vol.21: 425-427.

⁶ Ibid.,

⁷ James A. Grymes, *Ernst von Dohnányi: A Bio-Bibliography* (West Port: Greenwood Press, 2001), 9.

there was a brief revival of interest in Dohnányi's compositions, primarily because former students Edward Kilenyi and Bálint Vázsonyi, and his grandson, the conductor Christoph von Dohnányi, promoted his music.⁸

As a pianist, Dohnányi was compared with his great contemporaries including Rachmaninoff, Paderewski, and Ignaz Friedman.⁹ Lisztian "grand style" characterized Dohnányi's legendary pianism with technical brilliance and flexibility, and his playing contained a wide range of tone color with poetic line.¹⁰ The following newspaper reviews in newspapers described Dohnányi as a consummate performer:

As a pianist, Dohnányi plays in the grand manner, as Liszt and Busoni did...¹¹

Dohnányi's fingers flew like swallows...He is master of every technical device...The crowd went wild over Dohnányi, as well it might...He is a genuinely great man, this snowy-haired Hungarian...Few Dohnányis remain in this weary world.¹²

Detroit had the singular honor this week of being host to one of the last of the great pianists in the romantic tradition – the Hungarian , Ernst von Dohnányi...The silver-haired Titan presented the first American performance of his Piano Concerto in B Minor under the direction of Karl Kreuger. At 71, he has the vigor and the technical mastery of a youth with all his strength unimpaired...¹³

Dohnányi as a composer and pianist was often called as the last of the Romantics.¹⁴ He earned this title because he neither employed "modern" (20th-century or avant-garde) techniques (for his time) such as impressionism, expressionism, atonality or

⁸ Frank Cooper, "Ernst von Dohnányi, the Man and the Music," *Clavier*, 9:6 (September 1970): 29.

⁹ Alan Walker, "Ernst von Dohnányi: A Tribute," *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi*, ed., James A Grymes (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2005), 5.

¹⁰ William Lee Pryor, "Dohnányi at Tallahassee: A Personal Reminiscence," *Perspectives on Ernst von Dohnányi*, ed., James A Grymes (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2005), 220.

¹¹ "Dohnányi Concert," *Boston Globe*, Thursday, Nov. 18, 1948.

¹² Russell McLaughlin, "Von Dohnányi Plays Solo in His Own Work," *Detroit News*, Friday, Nov. 26, 1948.

¹³ Dorsey Callaghan, "Dohnanyi Thrilling in Concerto," *Detroit Free Press*, Saturday, Nov. 27, 1948.

¹⁴ Warren Gerald, "Romantic' Music Period Ends with Death of Great Dohnányi," *Fort Lauderdale News* (11 February 1960): 12 A.

serialism, nor did he cultivate folk music, as did his fellow Hungarians, Belá Bartók and Zoltan Kodály. Dohnányi, rather than attempting new forms, concentrated his efforts on expressing the Romantic heritage in such forms of the eighteenth century as sonata form, scherzo, and variation.¹⁵ He claimed to succeed in blending Brahms' classical formal ideas with Liszt's concept of using "motivic strands" in order to bind together a larger scale work.¹⁶

Dohnányi composed almost every genre of music, including overture, opera, song, choral works, chamber works, concerti, and piano solo works. He composed approximately eighty single pieces for solo piano, more than he composed for any other instrument, including transcriptions of Brahms' waltzes and a cadenza to Beethoven's Concerto no. 4, op. 58, as well as 27 cadenzas to the Mozart piano concertos. Among his many piano compositions, the Four Rhapsodies op. 11 are regarded as some of his most substantial works.

A Brief History of Rhapsody in the 19th Century

In the late nineteenth century, the rhapsody developed a more distinct identity in the piano repertory, as seen in works of Liszt and Brahms. Franz Liszt's rhapsodies have a somewhat "epic" quality that he considered to be central to Hungarian culture.¹⁷ Liszt composed nineteen *Rhapsodies hongroises* (Hungarian Rhapsodies, S. 244); the first fifteen were published in 1853, while the last four were written between 1882 and 1885. Liszt composed these rhapsodies based on his understanding of Hungarian gypsy

¹⁵ Dorothy Packard, "Interview with Bálint Vázsony," *Clavier*, 9:6 (September 1970): 15.

¹⁶ Bálint Vázsony, "Dohnányi, Ernő," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publisher Ltd., 2001), vol.21: 425-427.

¹⁷ F.E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 213.

melodies, by combining these melodies with his own compositional “virtuosity.”¹⁸ In contrast with Liszt’s nationalistic approach, Johannes Brahms’ understanding of “rhapsody” was as a means to indicate a *Stimmung* or mood.¹⁹ Brahms composed two Rhapsodies in G minor and B minor, op. 79 in 1880, and then in 1893 the Rhapsody in E-flat major, op. 119, no. 4. At the turn of the century, Dohnányi, who had heard Liszt play, and who knew Brahms,²⁰ contributed to the rhapsody genre by composing his op. 11.

Dohnányi composed the four rhapsodies, dedicated to his teacher Stefan Thomán, between 1902 and 1903. When he premiered these rhapsodies in a Vienna recital on November 29, 1904, the press and audience alike praised these works, and the pieces became an essential part of the piano repertory.²¹ During Dohnányi’s life, the F-sharp minor, no. 2 and the C major, no. 3 were the most popular in piano recitals and competitions,²² but the composer favored the G minor, no. 1.²³ He regularly included these works in his recital programs, along with some of his other piano works.²⁴

Without directly imitating the earlier works of Liszt and Brahms, Dohnányi contributed to the rhapsody tradition with op. 11 by using his own improvisational techniques as well as certain stylistic elements in textural and formal structure. A distinctive difference between fellow Hungarian Liszt’s and Dohnányi’s rhapsodies is that

¹⁸ Louis Kentner, “Solo Piano Music (1827-61),” 131 in *Franz Liszt*, ed. Alan Walker (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970).

¹⁹ Walter Frisch, “Brahms: From Classical to Modern,” 376 in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New York: Routledge, 2004).

²⁰ Frank Cooper, “Ernst von Dohnányi, the Man and the Music,” *Clavier*, 9:6 (September 1970): 29.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

²² *Ibid.*, 22.

²³ George Mintz, “Dohnányi’s Piano Works,” *Clavier*, 16:2 (February 1977): 22.

²⁴ Marion Ursula Rueth, “The Tallahassee Years of Ernst von Dohnányi,” (M.M. thesis., Florida State University, 1962), 84.

while Liszt elaborated upon gypsy melodies, which he regarded as Hungarian “national” musical heritage,²⁵ Dohnányi’s melodies are all original.²⁶

²⁵ Dolores Pesce, “Expressive Resonance in Liszt’s Piano Music,” 429 in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R Larry Todd (New York: Routledge, 2004).

²⁶ Ilona Von Dohnányi, *A Song of Life*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 51.

CHAPTER 2

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS IN TEXTURE

The discussion in this chapter will focus on the textural patterns, motives and elements in op. 11, and will examine their improvisatory traits. The term “textural elements” used in this study refers to those accompanimental devices that recur with frequent regularity in op.11. Two classifications of textural elements emerge: rhythmic textural devices and accompanimental figurations.

Rhythmic Textural Devices

The quintuplet is the rhythmic pattern that the composer most favored and most consistently used throughout his piano works and it is considered to be one of his compositional trademarks.²⁷ Because of its asymmetric nature, the quintuplet assures the alleviation of squareness and allows great freedom in phrasing.²⁸ This particular characteristic is strongly featured in op. 11, and Dohnányi often uses it with a mixture of other, more symmetrical rhythmic patterns, as shown in Example 1. The resulting sound of the quintuplet accompaniment over the melody is free and flowing.

²⁷ Ibid.,100.

²⁸ Ibid.

Example 1. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 265-268.



Dohnányi's use of the quintuplet with other rhythmic patterns, including groups of four sixteenths, is shown in Example 2.

Example 2. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op.11, no.1, mm. 1-3.



Through this kind of rhythmic mixture, Dohnányi sought to create a sense of *rubato* on the downbeat of each measure by starting with four sixteenth notes followed by quintuplets. The rhythmic mixture is Dohnányi's way of notating rhythmic freedom, which can be regarded as his own method of expressing an improvisatory quality that is manifested throughout op. 11. The formation of the rhythmic mixture is in variable combination of sixteenth note groupings, such as three followed by four or vice versa (Ex. 3) or seven followed by nine (Ex. 4), or four followed by seven (Ex. 5), and is used as a textural device primarily in the left hand.

Example 3. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, mm. 96-97

Musical score for Example 3, Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, mm. 96-97. The score is in G minor and features a piano accompaniment with a 'dim.' marking. The right hand has a complex, arpeggiated texture, while the left hand has a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern.

Example 4. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Minor, op. 11, mm. 68-69

Musical score for Example 4, Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Minor, op. 11, mm. 68-69. The score is in E-flat minor and features a piano accompaniment with a 'dim.' marking. The right hand has a complex, arpeggiated texture, while the left hand has a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern.

Example 5. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 10

Musical score for Example 5, Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 10. The score is in G minor and features a piano accompaniment with a 'dim.' marking. The right hand has a complex, arpeggiated texture, while the left hand has a more rhythmic, eighth-note pattern.

Accompanimental Figurations

The rhapsody is usually described as music with an extravagant effusion of sentiment or feeling.²⁹ Op. 11 is full of sentiment and imbued with a melancholy mood, typical of much rhapsodic music.³⁰ In each section of each rhapsody, Dohnányi presents well-defined and contrastingly characterized themes. He depicts such characterizations by

²⁹ Rink, John, "Rhapsody," *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie (New York: Macmillan Publisher Ltd., 2001), vol. 21. 254-255.

³⁰ George Mintz, "Dohnányi's Piano Works," *Clavier*, 16:2 (February 1977): 22.

using contrasting accompanimental figurations. For instance, in the first theme in the A section (mm. 1-34) of the second rhapsody in F-sharp minor, Dohnányi expresses a melancholy mood by including accompanimental figurations which imitate the cimbalom (a Hungarian dulcimer, frequently associated with gypsies; the instrument's strings are struck by wool-covered mallets for a mellow sound), as shown in Example 6.

Example 6. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 13-17

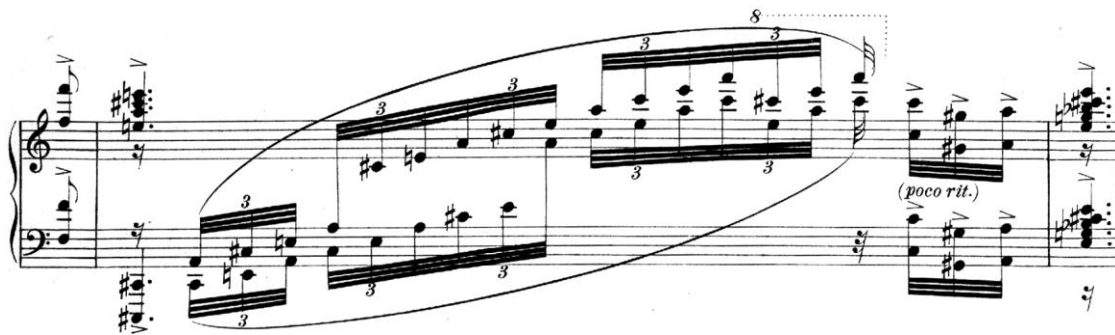
In the return of this first theme in the A¹ section (mm. 82-106), Dohnányi changes the accompaniment to a thicker texture to better match the passionate, temperamental character of the melody, as shown in Example 7.

Example 7. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 89-91

Dohnányi's accompanimental figurations, chords and octaves shown in this passage

resemble an improvisational embellishment between the main melodic notes. In addition, he gives detailed tempo indications within this passage, *più adagio*, *accelerando* and *ritardando*, in order to give a *parlando* style to the melody and to show rhythmic flexibility. The resulting fusion of both styles is *quasi cadenza*. The other shape of embellishing accompaniment that also consistently appears in op. 11, arpeggio figurations, is shown in Example 8.

Example 8. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 97



Several writers offer the opinion that op. 11 is “Hungarian.” Their perspective refers to op. 11’s kinship with gypsy music. As noted earlier, the alteration of contrasting characters in these rhapsodies, melancholic and temperamental, is typical of much gypsy music.³¹ Dr. James Grymes, currently president of the International Dohnányi Research Center, wrote of op. 11: “Dohnányi, in op.11, evoked *style hongrois* in ‘Lisztian’ sense.”³²

It is undeniable that many identify the gypsy influence in music as Lisztian-Hungarian.³³ In addition, the use of a tremolo effect, imitating the cimbalom, is often intended by many composers, including Liszt, to be in the gypsy tradition. In the case of

³¹ George Mintz, “Dohnányi’s Piano Works,” *Clavier*, 16:2 (February 1977): 22.

³² James A. Grymes, Charlotte, NC, electronic mail to Sonia Hwang, Denton, TX, 31 Aug 2009.

³³ “Hungary’s Undying Love,” *The Etude*, 44:4 (April 1926): 253-54.

Liszt's rhapsodies, the transcription of the cimbalom is written in the way shown in Example 9. It is notable that Dohnányi's idiomatic transcription of such an instrument, shown in Example 6, strongly resembles Liszt's writing.

Example 9. Liszt, Hungarian Rhapsody, no. 14, opening idea, mm. 3-6

The image shows a musical score for Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, no. 14, opening idea, mm. 3-6. The score is in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features a 'pesante' marking and a 'tremolando* cresc.' marking. The right hand plays a melodic line with a trill and a tremolo, while the left hand plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

However, Dohnányi states that his op. 11 pieces are not rhapsodies in the sense of the Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies, since all themes are original. Dohnányi wrote of these pieces: "When people find that their [op. 11] style is Hungarian, it is because I am Hungarian."³⁴

³⁴ Ilona von Dohnányi, *A Song of Life*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 51.

CHAPTER 3
STYLISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE FORMAL STRUCTURE OF
THE FOUR RHAPSODIES, OP. 11

Formal Structure of the Four Rhapsodies, op. 11

Dohnányi's rhapsodic compositional style remained in the mainstream of the Liszt-Brahms line. It is between Dohnányi and those two great Romantics' rhapsodies formal structures that one may observe the stylistic relationship. Whereas with Brahms, there is found sonata form in his Rhapsody, op. 79, no. 2, in G minor,³⁵ most of Liszt's rhapsodies follow a sectional stylized design of *verbunkos*, an Hungarian folk dance popularized by gypsy bands, consisting of two or more contrasting sections, slow (*lassú*) and quick (*friss*), as found in Rhapsody no. 13.³⁶ The form of Liszt's rhapsodies is usually loose and involves contrasting sections: a slow, melancholic beginning, often followed by a *grazioso* section, then succeeded by an impassioned recitative, and concluding with a brilliant capriccioso episode that provides a grand finale.³⁷

In the form of Dohnányi's rhapsodies, a kinship with both composers can be noted. Since Dohnányi viewed the rhapsody as a piece of music that has no strict form,³⁸ he composed all four rhapsodies op. 11 in a free sectionalized form, something akin to

³⁵ F. E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 239.

³⁶ Dolores Pesce, "Expressive Resonance in Liszt's Piano Music," 429 in *Nineteenth-Century Piano Music*, ed. R. Larry Todd (New York: Routledge, 2004).

³⁷ F. E. Kirby, *Music for Piano: A Short History* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1995), 214.

³⁸ Myron Henry, "Interview with Composer von Dohnányi Furnishes Interpretation of 'Rhapsody,'" *Ohio University Post* (26 February 1954): 2.

Liszt's works. While op. 11 was constructed in a loose, improvisatory form, one also may find in each rhapsody elements of classical form, following in Brahms' compositional approach. For example, the first op. 11 rhapsody, the G minor, could be viewed as a sonata-allegro form as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structural Organization of Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, no. 1

Section	Measures	Sub-section	Key	Theme
A	1-21		G Minor	Theme I
B	21-50	transition (mm. 37-50)	G Minor	Theme II
C	51-103	c (mm. 50-74) c ₁ (mm. 74-103)	D Major	Theme III
B ¹	104-187	b (mm. 104-124) b ₁ (mm. 124-163)	G Minor	Theme II
		transition (mm. 163-187)		Theme I
C ¹	187-227	c (mm. 187-204) c ₁ (mm.205-227)	G-flat Major	Theme III
Coda	228-250		G Minor	Theme II

The resemblance is created by the key relationship between the three contrasting themes. Beginning in G minor, the piece modulates to the dominant key of D major (Section C, mm. 50 – 103) after presenting the first and second themes. The B¹ section returns to the home key of G minor, and the statement of the modified first theme in the transitional section mm. 163-187, acts as a false recapitulation. Although there is no return of Section A with Theme I and the C¹ section with Theme III is in the distant key of G-flat major, the argument for sonata form is strong.

The two inner rhapsodies also have a classical formal framework. The second rhapsody, in F-sharp minor, is in simple binary form with a coda as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Structural Organization of Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no.2

Section		Measures	Sub-sections	Key	Themes
A	a	1-34		F-sharp Minor	Theme I
	b	35-81	b (mm. 35-58) transition I(mm. 58-81)	F-sharp Major	Theme II
A ¹	a ¹	82-105	a (mm. 82-101) transition II (mm. 101-105)	F-sharp Minor	Theme I <u>Theme I of Rhapsody no. 1</u>
	b ¹	106-121	b (mm. 106-113) b ₁ (mm. 114-121)	G Major F-sharp Major	Theme II
Coda		122-128		F-sharp Minor	Transition material of section A ¹

This rhapsody is divided into two large sections, A (mm. 1-81) and A¹ (mm. 82-121). Since each of the sections consists of two contrasting periods, a and b, this rhapsody gives an impression of being cast in a compound binary form.

The third rhapsody in C major resembles rondo form, as shown in Table 3.

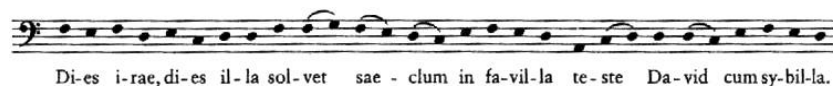
Table 3. Structural Organization of Rhapsody in C Major, op. 11, no. 3

Section	Measures	Sub-sections	Key	Theme
A	1-84	a (mm. 1-34) a ₁ (mm. 35-84)	C Major E Minor	Theme I
B	85-151	b (mm. 85-119) b ₁ (mm. 119-151)	C Major	Theme II
A ¹	152-230	a ₂ (mm. 152-210) a ₃ (mm. 211-230)	G Major	Theme I
C	231-289	c (mm. 231-289)	C Major	<u>Theme I of Rhapsody no. 1</u>
B ¹	290-360	b (mm. 290-324) b ₁ (mm. 324-360)	C Major	Theme II
Coda	361-395		C Major	Theme I

With an omission of the A section in between the C and B¹ sections, this rhapsody does not follow the conventional construction of the rondo form (ABACA), but the link to rondo form is evident.

The fourth rhapsody, in E-flat major, is in a sectionalized ABCA form with elements of theme and a variation. While this movement shows fewer improvisational characteristics than the others, it remains within in Dohnányi’s rhapsodic language. The theme and variation formal structure attracted Dohnányi as much as it attracted Brahms, and it is this form Dohnányi favored and frequently used in many of his piano works such as Variations and Fugue on a Theme of E. G., op. 4 and Variations on a Hungarian Folk Song, op. 29.³⁹ Inclusion of such a formal structure in this particular rhapsody is another example of Dohnányi’s reference to classical form such as is found in the three previous rhapsodies. In this rhapsody, Dohnányi follows an established tradition by adopting the *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath, Example 10) Gregorian chant as theme, as did Liszt and Berlioz in the *Totentanz* and *Symphonie fantastique* respectively.

Example 10. *Dies Irae* Gregorian Chant



There are five variations in the fourth rhapsody, all of which state the theme intact, but with changes in the accompaniment. Dohnányi uses the chant as the theme melody in the A sections (mm. 1-35, and mm. 125-159), and sets variations upon it, as illustrated in the following table.

³⁹ Deborah Kiszley-Papp, “Transcending the Piano: Orchestral and Improvisational Elements in Dohnányi’s Piano Music,” 87.

Table 4. Structural Organization of Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4

Section	Measures	Sub-sections	Key	Theme
A	1-35	Theme (mm. 1-12) var. 1 (mm. 12-23) var. 2 (mm. 23-35)	E-flat (Aeolian)	<i>Dies Irae</i>
B	36-72	b (mm. 36-45) b ₁ (mm. 45-53) b ₂ (mm. 53-60) b ₃ (mm. 61-72)	E-flat Major	<u>Theme I of Rhapsody no. 1</u>
C	72-124	c (mm. 72-101) transition (mm. 101-124)	C Major	<u>Theme II of Rhapsody no.3 + Theme I of Rhapsody no. 1</u> ----- <u>Theme I + Transition I material of Rhapsody no.2</u>
A ¹	125-159	var. 3 (mm. 125-134) var. 4 (mm. 135-145) var. 5 (mm. 145-159)	E-flat (Aeolian)	<i>Dies Irae</i>
Coda	159-178		E-flat Major	<u>Theme I of Rhapsody no. 1</u>

After two measures of introductory material, the *Dies Irae* theme appears and is in the Aeolian mode, setting a somber character for the beginning of the piece. This theme is accompanied by staccato notes and octave leaps, as shown in Example 11. a.

Example 11. a. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 3-6

The musical score for Example 11. a shows the beginning of the *Dies Irae* theme. It is in E-flat Major, 6/8 time, and marked *Andante lugubre*. The right hand plays a melodic line with staccato notes and octave leaps, while the left hand provides a staccato accompaniment. Dynamics include *mp* and *p*. The score is labeled with *(Dies irae)* and *Coda*.

The theme's texture becomes chordal in the first variation (mm. 12-23), accompanied by staccato octaves in the left hand, as shown in Example 11. b.

Example 11. b. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm.14-17

The chordal theme is repeated in the second variation, transposed up a third, retaining the pedal staccato bass octaves, E-flat--B-flat, as shown in the Example 11. c.

Example 11. c. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 25-28

In Variation 3 (mm. 125-134), the accompaniment is an ostinato figure based on an octave and an upper neighboring tone, as shown in the Example 11. d. This figure elaborates upon the theme.

Example 11. d. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 125-127

The musical score for Example 11. d consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked 'Tempo I' and begins with a dynamic marking of *pp*. The right hand features a complex, virtuosic melody with rapid sixteenth-note runs and slurs, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of quarter notes. The second system continues this texture, with the right hand maintaining its intricate melodic line and the left hand providing harmonic support.

The figuration between the melody notes illustrates Dohnányi's characteristic virtuosity as the piece approaches its final climax, shown in the Example 11, e. The interlocking chordal accompaniment of this penultimate variation increases the tension and leads to the final variation as seen in the Example 11, f.

Example 11. e. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 136-138

The musical score for Example 11. e consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked with a dynamic of *f* and features a complex, interlocking chordal accompaniment in both hands, with rapid sixteenth-note runs and slurs. The second system continues this texture, with the right hand maintaining its intricate melodic line and the left hand providing harmonic support.

Example 11. f. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 147-149



The somber Aeolian mode changes to E-flat major in the final variation for the impressive, Liszt- like grand finale.

Perhaps the *Dies Irae* variations in this work are not as extensive as in Liszt's *Totentanz*, but they demonstrate a comparable style in terms of idiomatic piano writing.

Cyclical Elements in the Four Rhapsodies, op.11

Cyclical elements unify the Four Rhapsodies, op. 11, so that the four rhapsodies may be considered a set: beginning with the second rhapsody, each of the rhapsodies quotes themes from the previous ones in the opus. Thus, the whole work becomes a grandiose “cycle.”

First Rhapsody

The first rhapsody's opening theme, shown in Example 12, appears in the right hand after one measure of introduction in the left hand. This theme is comprised of two- measures units, designated “head” (mm. 2-4) and “tail” (mm. 4-6) respectively.

Example 12. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in G Minor, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 1-5

Allegro non troppo, ma agitato.

f

Head

Tail

Second Rhapsody

In the second rhapsody, the first rhapsody's opening theme first appears in the a¹ sub-section (mm. 82-105) (see Table 2) in a transformed form, as shown in the example below (Example 13).

Example 13. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 101-105

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked *a tempo* and shows a right-hand melody with a slur and a left-hand accompaniment of sixteenth notes. The second system continues the piece with a *poco* dynamic marking and a *3* triplet in the right hand. The third system is labeled **improvisatory-like passage** and includes markings for *accel.*, *m.g.*, *dim.*, and *rit.*. A small asterisk is visible at the bottom right of the third system.

The rhythmic mixture of the opening theme’s left hand accompaniment, four sixteenths followed by quintuplets, is transformed into fast arpeggios with groups of eight 64th notes, and the “head” of the right hand melody is now elaborated and extended by an improvisatory-like passage. This five-measure passage (mm. 101-105) functions as the transitional material in this rhapsody’s a¹ sub-section.

Third Rhapsody

The “head” of the first rhapsody’s opening theme returns also in the C section (mm. 231-289) of the third rhapsody (see Table 3), again is transformed. The first three chromatic descending top notes of the opening theme are modified into a simpler melodic line supported by a thinner texture, as shown in the example below (Example 14).

Example 14. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in C Major, op. 11, no. 3, mm. 231-234



The entire C section is based on this motive of the opening theme which now is accompanied by a two-note ostinato in the bass and an ostinato in thirds in the middle voices.

Fourth Rhapsody

Two central sections, B and C, of the fourth rhapsody are based upon the thematic material of the former three rhapsodies, elaborating themes from each of them in the manner of a final summation (see Table 4). In Section B (mm. 36-72), Dohnányi, recalls the first rhapsody's opening theme. The chordal texture of the opening theme is modified into a monophonic melody, now accompanied by irregular rhythms of septuplets in the left hand, as illustrated in Example 15.

Example 15. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 36-44

The musical score for Example 15 consists of four systems of grand staves. The first system is marked 'Poco più mosso.' and 'espress'. The second system is marked 'p'. The third system is marked 'p'. The fourth system is marked 'p'. The music is in E-flat major and 4/4 time. The bass line features arpeggiated chords, and the treble clef contains a melodic line. The score concludes with a final chord in the bass clef.

This theme is used as the material for constructing the whole section and is repeated and transformed through various modulations.

The C section is divided into two sub-sections: sub-section c (mm. 72-101) and the transitional sub-section (mm. 101-124). Sub-section c consists of two fourteen-measure phrases. Each phrase is composed of two thematic ideas: the second theme from the B section of the third rhapsody, Example 16. a, and the opening theme of the first rhapsody.

Example 16. a. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in C Major, op. 11, no. 3, mm. 85-91

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The music is in C major and 3/4 time. The piece is marked *mit Schwung* and *ff*. The score features several triplet markings (indicated by a '3' above the notes) and a large fermata over the first five measures. The right hand plays chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a melodic line with triplets. The piece concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained note in the left hand.

The first half of these phrases presents the second theme from the B section of the third rhapsody, which acts as the “head”. The second half is the “head” of the opening theme with the introductory measure, which now acts as the “tail” of this phrase. Both thematic ideas are transformed into a melodic line and transferred to the left hand, as shown in the Example, 16. b.

Example 16. b. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 73-86

The image displays a musical score for a piano piece, specifically Example 16. b. It consists of four systems of music, each with a right-hand part (treble clef) and a left-hand part (bass clef). The first system includes the annotation 'espress.' in the left hand and 'Head' in the right hand. The second system features a 'pp' dynamic marking in the left hand. The third system is marked 'Tail' in the right hand and 'poco rit...' in the left hand. The fourth system includes an '8va' marking above the right-hand part. The score is written in E-flat major and 3/4 time, with various articulations and dynamics throughout.

In this sub-section c of the fourth rhapsody, can be seen Dohnányi's skill at combining two different previously stated thematic ideas into one phrase.

The transitional sub-section of the fourth rhapsody is made up of two different thematic ideas from the A section (mm. 1-81) of the second rhapsody (see Table 2): the first theme, (mm. 1-34), Example 17. a, and Transition I material, Example 17. b.

Example 17. a. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 1-2

Adagio capriccioso.

Example 17. b. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in F-sharp Minor, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 59-61

This transitional sub-section of the fourth rhapsody begins with the first theme (Ex. 17. a) of the second rhapsody. The ascending leap of the fourth of the first two notes of that theme serves as the motivic idea in this transitional sub-section, shown in Example 17. c.

Example 17.c. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 102-104

The last nine measures (mm.116-124) of the transitional sub-section consist of the Transition I material (Ex.17. b) from the second rhapsody. In contrast to the thirds used in the second rhapsody, this material's monophonic texture is now used and written in a recitative-like manner, as shown in Example 17. d.

Example 17. d. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 116-120



Dohnányi uses the Transition I material from the second rhapsody in the transitional section of the fourth rhapsody. This section is in the key of E-flat melodic minor first and then in E-flat Aeolian. The E-flat Aeolian serves as the transitional key between Sections C and A¹ (*Dies Irae* Variations) in the fourth rhapsody.

Dohnányi concludes the fourth rhapsody with a coda (mm. 159-178), where the last reminiscence of the opening theme of the first rhapsody emerges. He takes the “head” of the opening theme of the first rhapsody and transforms it into a melodic line doubled in both hands, as shown in Example 18.

Example 18. Dohnányi, Rhapsody in E-flat Major, op. 11, no. 4, mm. 159-163



In this way the opening theme is more pronounced and dramatic as the piece finally comes to an end with a *fortississimo* E-flat major chord.

The work as a whole is generally considered a by scholars such as Hallman and Hussey to be a sonata in four movements: the first rhapsody is a sonata-allegro movement; the second is a slow *adagio*, the third is a scherzo movement in 3/4; and the fourth is

theme and variation with a grandioso Lisztian finale.⁴⁰ This perspective offers another unifying element of the work. However, Dohnányi did not agree with this common assessment. He clearly expressed his opinion: “I did not call the work a ‘sonata,’ because its structure is looser and each piece can be performed separately.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Milton Hallman, “Ernő Dohnányi’s Piano Solo Works,” *Journal of the American Liszt Society*, 17 (June 1985): 50.

⁴¹ Ilona von Dohnányi, *A Song of Life* (Bloomington: Indiana university Press, 2002), 51.

CONCLUSION

Dohnányi continued the tradition of rhapsody writing by composing his Four Rhapsodies, op. 11. Although Dohnányi's compositional style is related to two other Romantics, Liszt and Brahms, Dohnányi managed to convey in his intense personal idiom through textural and formal inventiveness in op. 11. Dohnányi's four rhapsodies may be described as a written-out extemporaneous work. This particular characteristic is strongly emphasized by his employment of certain rhythmic patterns such as quintuplets and variable rhythmic mixtures, which concurrently appear with gypsy flavored accompanimental figurations. Dohnányi's improvisatory writing is also evident in op. 11's formal structure. While composing each individual rhapsody in free-sectionalized form within the enclosure of classical formal ideas, op. 11, as a set, is unified by thematic transformation. Thus, his success of developing small ideas into a larger scale work is regarded as a genuine and distinguished rhapsodic idiom.

Through the examination of smaller elements of texture and form, op. 11's rhapsodies are seen as characteristically personal improvisatory works. At the same time, when considered as a whole, these compositions comprise a tightly bound formal structure. The individual forms, together with Dohnányi's spontaneous and virtuosic piano writing, define his unique rhapsodic language. The whole set projects a broad spectrum of rhapsodic divergence that deserves to be examined and performed.

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