

# Cubic Deviations

from Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel*

## For Piano Quintet



Bill Robinson

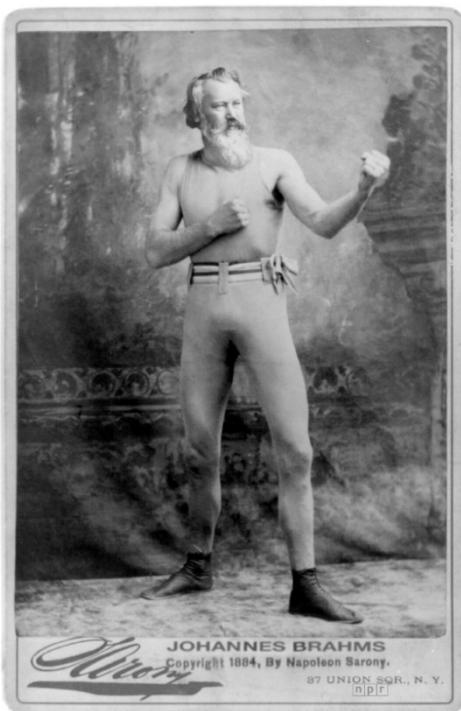
# Cubic Deviations

## from Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel* for Piano Quintet

Duration: about 28 minutes

October 24, 2022—April 1, 2023

for Eric Pritchard



I finished *Violin Concerto No. 2* for Eric Pritchard in 2018, and then a little cello quartet. After that, I found myself mysteriously unable to compose anything for four years. My muse up and left me, and I assumed that I had retired for good. In spring 2022, I started several months of revising old scores, and had three performances of older chamber music. This got me back in the groove, and in October 2022 I started up again, choosing the ensemble that is easiest for me to write for, piano quintet, and the easiest format, a variation on an existing piece. I've done such a variation twice before, for Beethoven's *Grosse Fuge* and for Vivaldi/Bach *Concerto for Four Violins/Harpsichords* (first movement only). This time I picked Brahms' *Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel* for piano. That means that this work is *variations on variations on variations*, hence the title *Cubic Deviations*. This piano quintet is the basis of a version for full orchestra.

Handel was in his twenties when he wrote his original theme for harpsichord, and Brahms was 28. I am

68, and find it handy to borrow the youthful energy in my dotage.

There is a delicate balance in a process like this, where the composition can't be too close to the original, because then it's just a transcription and arrangement, but can't be too far away, because then what's the point? This piece follows the format of the Brahms original, although I have skipped three of the 25 variations. The initial statement of the theme is very close to Handel's original, with a few curve balls, and may deceive the audience into thinking this is a retrograde exercise in nostalgia. The first deviation should dispel that notion. This is a work of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, written in my own style.

String parts are available in two versions; for printing on paper, or use with electronic music readers. Accidentals hold through the measure and not beyond, and do not apply to other octaves.

**Bill Robinson**

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*Cover art by Joseph Groupy, 1743*    *Pugilist Brahms by NPR*    [billrobinsonmusic.com](http://billrobinsonmusic.com)

# Cubic Deviations

[corrected to 7/21/2023]

Bill Robinson

Violin I      *Aria* (♩ = 74)

Violin II

Viola

Cello      *mp*

Piano *mp*

5      *pizz.*

*pizz.* *mp*

*pizz.* *mp*

*pizz.*

5

9 *mf*

*mf*

*mf*

*mf*

9 *mf*

## Cubic Deviations

2

13

13

Deviation 1 ( $\text{♩} = 84$ )

17

17 Deviation 1 ( $\text{♩} = 84$ )

20

20

22

22

24

24 (8va) -

26

26

## Cubic Deviations

4

29

29

31

*f cresc.*

*ff*

*p*

*f+*

*ff*

*p*

*f cresc.*

*ff*

*p*

*Dev. 2 (♩ = 66)*

31

*tenuto*

*cresc.*

*ff*

*Dev. 2 (♩ = 66)*

*v*

35

*rit.*

*cresc.*

*mf*

*cresc.*

*mf*

*cresc.*

*mf*

*p*

35

*rit.*

*3*

*3*

## Cubic Deviations

5

41 *a tempo*

41 *a tempo*

45 *rit.* ----- *a tempo*

45 *rit.* 8va ----- *a tempo*

50 *rit.* -----

(♩ = 82) Dev. 3 risoluto

50 8va ----- rit. -----

Dev. 3 risoluto (♩ = 82)

## Cubic Deviations

6

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 55, measures 1-2. The score consists of four staves. The top staff is for the piano, featuring a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains sixteenth-note patterns with dynamic markings 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The second staff is for the first violin, also in treble clef and common time, with sixteenth-note patterns and dynamic markings 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The third staff is for the second violin, in bass clef and common time, with sixteenth-note patterns and dynamic markings 'cresc.' and 'ff'. The bottom staff is for the cello, in bass clef and common time, with sixteenth-note patterns and dynamic markings 'ff' and 'p'.

55

55

*cresc.*

*ff*

*f*

59

1

59

A musical score page showing two staves. The top staff is for the orchestra, featuring multiple parts with various clefs (G, C, F) and key signatures. The bottom staff is for the piano, with a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. Measure 11 ends with a dynamic instruction "cresc." followed by a dashed line. Measure 12 begins with a dynamic "ff". The score is in common time.

62

Musical score for orchestra, page 10, measures 11-12. The score consists of six staves. Measures 11 and 12 begin with rests. Measure 11 ends with a dynamic *f*. Measure 12 begins with a dynamic *ff*, followed by *p*, then *f*. The strings play eighth-note patterns, while woodwind instruments play sixteenth-note patterns. Dynamics include *cresc.* (Measure 12).

62

Musical score for piano, page 12, measures 11-12. The score consists of two staves. The top staff uses a treble clef and 2/4 time signature, starting with a key signature of one flat. It features a bassoon-like line with eighth-note chords and a piano line with sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 11 ends with a fermata over the piano part. Measure 12 begins with a dynamic of *f*. The bottom staff uses a bass clef and 2/4 time signature, starting with a key signature of one flat. It shows a continuous bass line with eighth-note chords. Measures 11 and 12 end with a dynamic of *cresc.*

## Cubic Deviations

7

66

*non stacc.*

*ff*

*non stacc.*

*ff*

*non stacc.*

*ff* *non stacc.*

*ff*

*ff*

*p*

*f*

*f*

66

*non stacc.*

*f*

70

*cresc.*

*ff* *non stacc.*

*cresc.*

*ff* *non stacc.*

*cresc.*

*ff* *non stacc.*

*cresc.*

*ff*

(♩ = 60)

Dev. 4 espressivo

p

p

p

p

(♩ = 60)

Dev. 4 espressivo

Musical score for orchestra, page 74, measures 1-4. The score consists of four staves: Violin I (top), Violin II, Cello, and Double Bass. The key signature changes from A major (no sharps or flats) to B major (one sharp) at the beginning of measure 4. Measure 1: Violin I plays eighth-note pairs. Measure 2: Violin I continues eighth-note pairs; Violin II enters with eighth-note pairs. Measure 3: Both violins play eighth-note pairs. Measure 4: Violin I continues eighth-note pairs; Violin II continues eighth-note pairs; Cello and Double Bass enter with eighth-note pairs. Measure 5: Violin I begins a sustained note. Measure 6: Violin I continues sustained note; Violin II begins eighth-note pairs. Measure 7: Violin I continues sustained note; Violin II continues eighth-note pairs; Cello and Double Bass continue eighth-note pairs. Measure 8: Violin I begins eighth-note pairs; Violin II continues eighth-note pairs; Cello and Double Bass continue eighth-note pairs.

74

*p*

*g* *pa-*  
*re.*

*cresc.*

## Cubic Deviations

8

77

77

81

cresc. p. a. p.

(mp)

rit.

(♩ = 80)  
Dev. 5 legato

cresc. p. a. p.

(mp)

mf

pp

p

rit.

(♩ = 80)  
Dev. 5 legato

87

p

mp

mp

mp

87

legato

mp

## Cubic Deviations

9

91

91

95

95

102 (♩ = 96)  
Dev. 6 con vivacita

102 (♩ = 96)  
Dev. 6 con vivacita ben marcato

## Cubic Deviations

10

107

107

*ben marcato*

*ff*

*III*

109

*f*

*cresc.*

110

*f*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

115

111

*ff*

112

*ff*

115

113

*ff*

114

*ff*

*8va*

## Cubic Deviations

11

119

Dev. 7

119 <sup>8va</sup>-

<sup>8va</sup> - Dev. 7

123

<sup>8va</sup> -

dim.

dim.

123

*Reo.*

## Cubic Deviations

12

128

*mf* *cresc.*

*f*

*non stacc.*

*ff*

*non stacc.*

*f*

*non stacc.*

*ff*

*ff*

128

*(mf)*

*f*

*ff*

*p*

131

*ff* | *p*

*p*

*p*

131

*ff* | *p*

134

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

*ff*

134

*ff*

*ff*

## Cubic Deviations

13

Cubic Deviations

(♩ = 60) Poco sostenuto

Dev. 8

137

ff dim. p ff

137 ff poco sostenuto Dev. 8 ff legato dim. p ff

146

(mp)

(p)

pp

(mp)

(p)

pp

(mp)

(p)

pp

146

(mp)

(p)

pp

ff

## Cubic Deviations

14

151

dim. p. a.p. (mf)

dim. p. a.p. (mf)

dim. p. a.p. (mf)

151

8va-----

8va-----

8va-----

dim. p. a.p. (mf)

152

8va-----

8va-----

8va-----

rit.

155

(mp)

(mp)

(mp)

(mp)

(p)

pp

pp

pp

rit.

8va-----

155

b. 8va-----

rit.

8va-----

(♩=114)

160 Dev. 9 energetico

f

f

mp

f

p

f

160 Dev. 9 energetico

(♩=114)

f

p

f

## Cubic Deviations

15

This page contains six staves of musical notation for orchestra and piano. The top four staves represent the orchestra, with parts for Violin I, Violin II, Cello, and Double Bass. The bottom two staves represent the piano. Measure 164 starts with dynamic *f*. Measures 165 and 166 show complex rhythmic patterns with sixteenth-note figures. Measure 167 begins with dynamic *ff*, followed by *ff* and *f*. Measure 168 shows a continuation of the rhythmic patterns. Measure 169 is a repeat of measure 168, indicated by a '2.' above the staff. Measure 170 starts with dynamic *p* and includes performance instructions: 'Con sord.', 'p', and 'p'. The tempo is marked as  $(\text{♩} = 56)$ . Measure 171 continues with dynamic *p* and performance instruction 'Con sord.'. Measure 172 concludes with dynamic *p* and performance instruction 'p'.

## Cubic Deviations

16

174

Con sord.

*p*

174

*p*

*Reo.*

\*

176

*Con sord.*

176

*cresc.* - - -

178

*mf*

*mp*

*mf*

*mp*

*mf*

*mp*

178

*mf*

*mp*

*Reo.*

\*

*Reo.*

\*

## Cubic Deviations

17

181

181

*p*

*rit.*

*Senza sord.*

*p*

*rit.*

184

*a tempo*

*Senza sord.*

*p*

*Senza sord.*

*p*

*rit.*

184

*a tempo*

187

*Dev. 11 soave*

*p*

*mp*

*rit.*

187

*Dev. 11 soave*

*mp*

## Cubic Deviations

18

191

191

192

193

193

194

195

196

197

197

201

202

rit.

203

203

## Cubic Deviations

19

(♩ = 56)

207 Dev. 12 Largamente, ma non piu

*f* *espress.*

207 Dev. 12 Largamente, ma non piu

(♩ = 56)

*f* *espress.*

*8va-*1      5

211

211

*non arpeg.*

*3*      5      3

215

215

*f* *dim.*

## Cubic Deviations

20

220

mp | f

cresc.

6 6 6

6 6 6

6 6 6

ff dim.

mp f

cresc.

ff dim.

ff dim.

ff dim.

ff dim.

220

b9. mp f

cresc.

ff dim.

8va-

225

f (mf) (mp) (p) pp

(mf) (mp) (p) pp

(mf) (mp) (p) pp

(mf) (mp) (p) pp

rit.

225

f (mf) (mp) (p) pp

rit.

Dev. 13 (♩ = 92)

230 ff sciolto

ff sciolto

ff sciolto

Dev. 13 (♩ = 92)

ff sciolto

## Cubic Deviations

21

233

233

ff

234

235

236

v

Dev. 14

239

ff

ff

ff

ff

Dev. 14

239

ff

## Cubic Deviations

22

242

242va-

246

246va-

250

250va-

## Cubic Deviations

23

254

Dev. 15

254

Dev. 15

258

258

262

*Qua*

## Cubic Deviations

24

Musical score for orchestra and piano, pages 266-276. The score consists of six systems of music, each with multiple staves for different instruments (Violin I, Violin II, Cello, Double Bass, Piano). The key signature varies throughout the score, including G major, A major, B major, and E major. The time signature also changes frequently, including measures in 2/4, 3/4, and 4/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf*, *dim.*, *legato dim.*, *p*, *mf*, *pizz.*, and *cresc. p. a. p.*. Measure numbers 266, 271, and 276 are indicated at the beginning of several systems. The piano part features complex chords and arpeggiated patterns. The overall style is highly rhythmic and harmonic, typical of late 20th-century classical music.

280

280

(mf) (f) dim. p. a.p. (mf) (mp)

(mf) (f) (mf) (mp)

286

*p* cresc. *p. a.p.* (mp) (mf) *f* dim. (mf)

*p* cresc. *p. a.p.* (mp) (mf) *f* dim. *p. a.p.* (mf)

*p* cresc. *p. a.p.* (mp) (mf) *f* dim. *p. a.p.* (mf)

*p* cresc. *p. a.p.* (mp) (mf) *f* dim. *p. a.p.* (mf)

286

*tenuto*

*p* cresc. *p. a.p.* (mp) (mf) *f* dim. *p. a.p.* (mf)

*8va*

*8va*

*8va*

*8va*

Rondo.

## Cubic Deviations

297 (♩ = 80) Dev. 17 grazioso

arcu

Dev. 17 grazioso (♩ = 80)

8va----- Reo. \*

8va----- Reo. \*

300

300

8va----- Reo. \*

302

302

8va----- Reo. Reo. Reo. \*

8va----- Reo. \*

305

305

307

307 8va-----, Reo. \* Reo. Reo. \*

309 8va-----, 8va-----,

## Cubic Deviations

28

312 *rit.*

**Dev. 18** ( $\text{d} = 68$ )

312 *rit.*

**Dev. 18** ( $\text{d} = 68$ )

317

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 317. The score shows five staves for the orchestra (two violins, cello, bassoon, and piano) and two staves for the piano. The piano part features sustained chords with dynamic markings 'mf' and 'f'. The score includes measure numbers 317-318.

320

Musical score for strings and woodwind section, page 10, measures 11-12. The score consists of four staves: Violin 1 (top), Violin 2, Cello, and Bass. The key signature is A major (no sharps or flats). Measure 11 starts with a dynamic of *mp*, followed by *cresc. p. a. p.*. The first two measures of the woodwind section begin with *mf*. Measure 12 starts with *mf*, followed by *f*. The woodwind section concludes with *f*.

320

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 10, measures 520-525. The score consists of two systems of music. The top system is for the orchestra, featuring strings, woodwinds, and brass. The bottom system is for the piano. Measure 520 starts with a forte dynamic. Measure 521 begins with a piano dynamic, followed by a crescendo to piano. Measure 522 starts with a piano dynamic. Measure 523 begins with a piano dynamic. Measure 524 starts with a piano dynamic. Measure 525 begins with a piano dynamic.

## Cubic Deviations

Musical score for orchestra and piano, pages 323-328. The score consists of eight staves, each with a treble or bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The instrumentation includes strings (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello), double bass, and piano. The score features dynamic markings such as *ff*, *mf*, *mp*, *dim.*, and *Leo.* Measure 323 starts with a forte dynamic in the strings and piano. Measure 324 begins with a piano dynamic of *ff*. Measure 325 shows complex rhythmic patterns with eighth-note figures. Measure 326 continues the rhythmic patterns. Measure 327 shows a transition with dynamics *ff*, *mf*, *ff*, *mp*, *ff*, *mp*, *ff*, *mp dim.*. Measure 328 concludes with a piano dynamic of *ff* followed by *Leo.*, *ff*, *Leo.*, *ff*, *Leo.*, *ff*, *Leo.*, *ff*, *mp dim.*.

## Cubic Deviations

30

331

rit.

*p*

*pp+*

*p*

*rit.*

331

(*p*)

*pp*

*mf*

*pizz.*

335 Dev. 19 ( $\text{♩} = 68$ )

*arco*

*pizz.*

*pp*

*cresc. p. a. p.*

*pp*

*cresc. p. a. p.*

*pp*

*cresc. p. a. p.*

*mp*

*mp*

*mp*

335 Dev. 19

( $\text{♩} = 68$ ) *pp cresc. p. a. p.*

*mp*

339

*arco*

*pizz.*

*(mf)*

*ff*

*dim.*

*mf*

*ff*

*dim.*

*ff*

*dim.*

*ff*

*dim.*

339

*(mf)*

*f*

*dim.*

*Reo.*

*\**

*3*

This image shows a page from a musical score, likely for orchestra and piano. The score is divided into several systems by brace lines. Each system contains multiple staves, each with a different instrument's part. The instruments include strings (violin, viola, cello, double bass), woodwinds (oboe, bassoon), brass (trumpet, tuba), and percussion (timpani). The music is written in common time, with various key signatures (e.g., C major, G major, E minor) indicated by sharps and flats. Dynamics are marked throughout the score, such as *mp*, *cresc. p. a. p.*, *(mf)*, *f*, *ff*, *p*, and *mf*. Articulation marks like *sva-* (sforzando) and *arco* are also present. Measure numbers 343, 346, and 349 are visible at the top of each system. The bottom right corner of the page includes performance instructions: "Dev. 20 (♩=106)" and "Dev. 20 (♩=106)".

## Cubic Deviations

32

352

352

356

356

360

360

## Cubic Deviations

33

364

*mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Dev. 21 (as fast as possible)  
(♩ = 85-100)

364

*mf* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

Dev. 21 (as fast as possible)  
(♩ = 85-100)

*tenuto* *mf* *mf*

*p*

368

*mf* *f* *f* *ff*

368

*f* *f* *mf* *f* *ff*

371

*mf* *f* *ff* *f*

371

*mf* *f* *ff* *mf* *f*

## Cubic Deviations

34

A page from a musical score featuring five staves of music for orchestra and piano. The top three staves represent the orchestra, and the bottom two staves represent the piano. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Measure numbers 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, and 379 are visible on the left side of the page. The music includes various dynamic markings such as ff (fortissimo), f (forte), mf (mezzo-forte), and sforzando (sf). The piano part features complex chords and rhythmic patterns, often consisting of eighth-note or sixteenth-note figures. The orchestra part includes woodwind instruments like flutes and oboes, and brass instruments like trumpets and tubas. The overall style is highly expressive and technical, typical of a classical or romantic era composition.

## Cubic Deviations

35

382

Dev. 22 (♩ = 90)

382 *gva-*

Dev. 22 (♩ = 90)

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 10, measures 384-385. The score consists of five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Cello, Double Bass, and Piano. The Violins play eighth-note patterns with grace notes. The Cello and Double Bass provide harmonic support. The piano part features complex chords and sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 384 ends with a forte dynamic. Measure 385 begins with a piano dynamic and continues the rhythmic patterns established in measure 384.

Musical score for orchestra and piano, page 10, system 1. The score consists of five staves: Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is indicated as Allegro. The measure numbers 386 and 387 are shown at the top left. Measure 386 starts with a dynamic of  $\text{f}$ . Measure 387 begins with a dynamic of  $\text{ff}$ .

## Cubic Deviations

36

389

392

394

394

## Cubic Deviations

37

397

poco rit.

Fugue (♩ = 80)

397

poco rit.

Fugue (♩ = 80)

401

mp

mp

mp

401

mp

405

mf cresc.

f

mf cresc.

f

mf cresc.

f

405

mf cresc.

f

## Cubic Deviations

38

Musical score for orchestra and piano, pages 408-415.

**Page 408:** Measures 408-410. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *cresc.*, *ff*, *cresc.*, *ff*, *cresc.*, *ff*. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *cresc.* markings.

**Page 409:** Measures 408-410. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *cresc.*, *ff*, *cresc.*, *ff*, *cresc.*, *ff*. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *cresc.* markings.

**Page 410:** Measures 411-415. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *ff*, *ff*, *p*, *ff*, *ff*, *mp*. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *\** markings.

**Page 411:** Measures 411-415. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *ff*, *ff*, *p*, *ff*, *ff*, *\**. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *ff*, *\** markings.

**Page 415:** Measures 415-416. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *p*, *cresc. p. a.p.*, *(mf)*. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *p*, *cresc. p. a.p.*, *(mf)* markings.

**Page 416:** Measures 415-416. The score consists of six staves. The top three staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola) play eighth-note patterns with dynamic markings: *legato*, *p*, *cresc. p. a.p.*, *(mf)*. The bottom three staves (Cello, Double Bass, Piano) play eighth-note patterns with *legato*, *p*, *cresc. p. a.p.*, *(mf)* markings.

## Cubic Deviations

A detailed musical score for orchestra and piano, spanning pages 417 through 423. The score is arranged in four systems, each with multiple staves for different instruments. The top system (measures 417-418) features woodwind and brass parts with dynamic markings like ff and f. The second system (measures 417-418) includes a bassoon part with a melodic line and dynamic ff. The third system (measures 420-421) shows a transition with crescendo markings and dynamic ff. The fourth system (measures 423-424) concludes with a forte dynamic ff. The score is filled with complex rhythmic patterns and harmonic changes, typical of a late 19th-century symphonic work.

## Cubic Deviations

40

426 427

426 427

427

431

431

437

435

437

438

438

441

441

444

444

## Cubic Deviations

42

447

447

452

452

459

461

459

461

459

461

464

464

468

471

471

## Cubic Deviations

44

473 474

473 474

477

477

481 482

481 482

486

486

490

490

492

492