

Running Head: BEETHOVEN FORM ANALYSIS

Progressive Style in Classical Form:
An Interpretive Analysis of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 31 in Ab Major, Op. 110

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Abstract

An analysis of the musical form of Beethoven's Piano Sonata no. 31, Op. 110 includes a brief overview of the historical significance of Beethoven as an innovator in formal design and musical texture. The analysis reveals specific indicators and examples of his deviations from traditional forms, which more obviously occur in movements one and three. An in-depth harmonic and motivic study of the third movement fugue and its placement within the last movement exposes further aspects of Beethoven's progressive compositional creativity.

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Introduction

Inherent in every form of artistry is the conflict between creation and imitation, between composition and interpretation, between production and performance. For the pianist considering one of Beethoven's most mature, well-crafted compositions, the interpretive challenge increases exponentially. It becomes necessary for the artist to possess much more than mechanical prowess or theoretical knowledge. The pianist must know the reasons why—not just the what, the how, the when—but why: why a deaf man would arrange notes in such a way, seeming to pour so much of his own emotional experience into re-creatable sound.

The Piano Sonata in Ab Major, Op. 110, undoubtedly requires such in-depth interpretation. Its three movements contain beautiful melody, explosive harmonic movements, and ingenious fugal counterpoint. In his writing, Beethoven pushed the limits of instrumental music by including traditionally vocal components, such as arioso and recitative. He merged two divergent forms into one movement for the lengthy finale, seeking to find innovative expansions of sonata form. The scope of emotion represented in this piece is equally varied, from otherworldly tranquility to capricious joviality to the utter depths of exhausted sorrow. This experience is what the performer must be able to release, to somehow relate to an audience in a way that is meaningful as well as being faithful to its original creator. One scholar emphasized the importance of this process by highlighting the fact that “the works for solo piano, more than any other part of

Beethoven's oeuvre, come closest to being the composer's personal diary. Through them... we come to know the spirit of the man, so that he becomes our sublime and brilliant companion."¹ Since Beethoven himself was a pianist, it follows that he would have naturally expressed his deepest ideals and sympathies upon his instrument of choice. It is the goal of the performer to correctly interpret these expressions and to introduce the audience to the heart of the composer.

Beethoven's Place in Western Music

Beethoven's importance in the development of Western music remains unquestioned by music historians. One of his biographers, principally concerned with the spirituality present in Beethoven's compositions, made this remark: "That Beethoven's music is more beautiful than any other music we are not inclined to assert; that it is greater than any other music has been, on the whole, the general opinion ever since it appeared."² An actual measurement of musical greatness is not easily determined, but the consensus remains that "the great bulk of Beethoven's work is of permanent value."³ Consistently named alongside other undisputed masters of composition—Bach, Mozart, Haydn—Beethoven's legacy perhaps supersedes theirs because of the purity and organic nature of his musical growth throughout his lifetime.

¹ Victor Lederer, *Beethoven's Piano Music: A Listener's Guide* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2011), 154.

² J. W. N. Sullivan, *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1927), 249.

³ *Ibid*, 248.

Bridging Compositional Styles

Beethoven's compositional period "bridged a time of deep stylistic change" in the transition from the Classical Period to the Romantic Period.⁴ Charles Rosen tended to interpret Beethoven's reimagining of classical forms as a mark of developed classicalism and nothing more.⁵ However, Maynard Solomon provided ample evidence of contemporary criticism of late Beethoven that points to his lack of popular reception. "During his own time," Solomon wrote, "Beethoven was widely regarded as a radical modernist, whose modernism was seen to distinguish him sharply from the Classical standards established...by Mozart and Haydn."⁶ Although Beethoven's music often reflects elements of the Classical style, especially in relation to formal structure, his musical output defies singular categorization. Indeed, especially in his later music, Beethoven adroitly combined elements of classical structure with emotional, romantic sensibilities. He employed "a command of structure" borrowed from the classical realm that "allow[ed] him to shape...his own expressive ends, rather than follow rules for their own sake" which rules perhaps limited lesser composers.⁷ Altogether, the way in which Beethoven continued to grow and develop throughout his lifetime led to advances in musical style that have considerably influenced generations of composers and performers.

⁴ Joseph Kerman and Alan Tyson, *The New Grove Beethoven*, ed. Stanley Sadie (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), 121

⁵ Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), 380-387.

⁶ Maynard Solomon, *Late Beethoven: Music, Thought, Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 37.

⁷ Lederer, *Beethoven's Piano Music*, 8.

Beethoven's Musical Periods

Biographers and musicologists alike tend to divide Beethoven's musical production into three distinct periods. The first period, consisting of works from his childhood through 1802, spanned his beginnings as a composer through the production of "a series of increasingly experimental pieces" completed "at high speed."⁸ Following was his middle period, in which Beethoven composed several of his most recognizable pieces: the *Eroica* Symphony, *Fidelio*, and the *Fifth Symphony*, among many others.⁹ Separating this hyper-productive middle period from his late period, in which Beethoven completed several of his most astonishing, original, and definitive works, were the years from about 1812 until 1818. Significantly, during these years, Beethoven mentally wrestled with his own purpose as a creator of music and contributing member of society. A deep realization not only of his mortality, but also of his "essential loneliness" overwhelmed him to a degree that was "terrible and complete" by the time he began to consistently compose once more.¹⁰ Separated by this time from almost all of society by his increasing deafness, yet possessing a constant longing for companionship and relationship, Beethoven had to come to terms with suffering in a way that surpassed the usual human experience.

It is in his most heartfelt, mournful, and yet beautiful expressions of these experiences that the essence of Beethoven's late period is found. The works that Beethoven produced at the end of his life are "in every way the most complex" of his

⁸ Kerman and Tyson, *New Grove Beethoven*, 90-91.

⁹ *Ibid*, 90-91.

¹⁰ Sullivan, *Spiritual Development*, 205.

compositions.¹¹ Encapsulated within this music is the specter of a man who was “reaching for a more direct and intimate mode of communication” than that otherwise afforded by his solitary circumstances.¹² It would seem that Beethoven succeeded in this endeavor, as his music “does not communicate to us his perceptions or his experiences” necessarily, but rather it expounds upon “the attitude based on them,” that gripped Beethoven so profoundly.¹³ The performer, and even the listener, becomes privy to “experiences that very few people can normally possess,” allowing for a vicarious transfusion of Beethoven’s essence.¹⁴ Obviously, both analyzing and performing the works of Beethoven’s late period necessitate an approach that is both technical and expressive.

Formal Analysis

Many of Beethoven’s advanced technical and communicative tendencies are revealed in the complex forms of his writing. His last five piano sonatas are each masterpieces in their own right. Specifically, in the Piano Sonata no. 31 in Ab Major, or Op. 110 as it can more conveniently be referenced, Beethoven wove several seemingly disparate elements together to create a piece resplendent with variety and emotional climaxes. The first movement’s various themes seem to float surreally above the passage of time. Then, he juxtaposes a second movement that is classified as a musical joke with a doleful, exhausted lament. The details of each of these movements, when analyzed for

¹¹ Kerman and Tyson, *New Grove Beethoven*, 91.

¹² *Ibid*, 122.

¹³ Sullivan, *Spiritual Development*, 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 250.

elements of form, significant harmonies, and important melodic ideas, become one of the most apparent guides to the interpretation of this example of Beethoven's compositional genius.

Movement One: Sonata Form

Typically, the first movement of a solo sonata follows what is aptly labeled sonata form. This form developed throughout the end of the seventeenth century and the beginnings of the eighteenth century, most influentially through the works Haydn, who, "if he was not literally its father...was certainly its greatest teacher."¹⁵ Sonata form was, therefore, historically "most evident in the work of Haydn and Mozart."¹⁶ The essential elements of sonata form are threefold: the exposition, development, and recapitulation. In many ways, this form is a hybrid between binary and ternary forms, containing the key relations that are distinctly found in binary as well as three distinct sections. The exposition, beginning in the tonic key, must contain the essential element of a modulation to the dominant key. Conveniently, this harmonic shift breaks the exposition into two large sections. Within each of these sections are one or more specific themes.¹⁷ The exposition "may be followed by an immediate repetition," especially in older works.¹⁸ The inclusion of a repeat, however, is by no means a hard and fast rule. Rosen noted, "some repeats are dispensable, others absolutely necessary;" but they were eventually

¹⁵ Giorgio Pestelli, *The Age of Mozart and Beethoven* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 111-112.

¹⁶ Charles Rosen, *Sonata Forms* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1980), 155.

¹⁷ Rosen, *Classical Style*, 68-71.

¹⁸ Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 2.

only employed to “add significance and weight.”¹⁹ The exposition, whether repeated or not, is typically open-ended, not returning to the tonic key but instead transitioning into the second major section of this form, the development. Key relations are much more nebulous throughout the development, which modulates or at least tonicizes frequently, moving thematic material from the exposition through various permutations at the whim of the composer. The development then transitions into the recapitulation, which necessarily begins with a “double return” of both the tonic key and the first theme from the first section of the exposition.²⁰ Throughout the recapitulation, the material of the exposition is restated, but remains in the tonic key for the duration of the section. The movement may end with the completion of the recapitulation, or with some type of coda.²¹

In the first movement of the Op. 110 sonata, Beethoven wrote within the exoskeleton of traditional form, retaining a clear outline of exposition, development, and recapitulation. However, the arrangement of musical material contained within these sections is anything but expected. As Charles Rosen explained, “The forms of late Beethoven descend clearly and directly from Haydn’s technique” but, “during what is called his ‘third period,’ Beethoven extended this technique far beyond any limits that could previously have been imagined.”²² An analysis of the major sections of the first movement and its main thematic ideas clearly reveals the way in which Beethoven

¹⁹ Rosen, *Classical Style*, 395-396.

²⁰ James Webster. "Sonata Form." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/26197> (accessed January 30, 2013), para. 2.

²¹ *Ibid*, para 2.

²² Rosen, *Classical Style*, 405.

employed the elements of sonata form in a progressive way. The following diagrams, included for ease of reference, provide an outline of the typical sonata form as explained above compared to the specific formal scheme of the first movement of Op. 110 (see fig. 1 and 2).

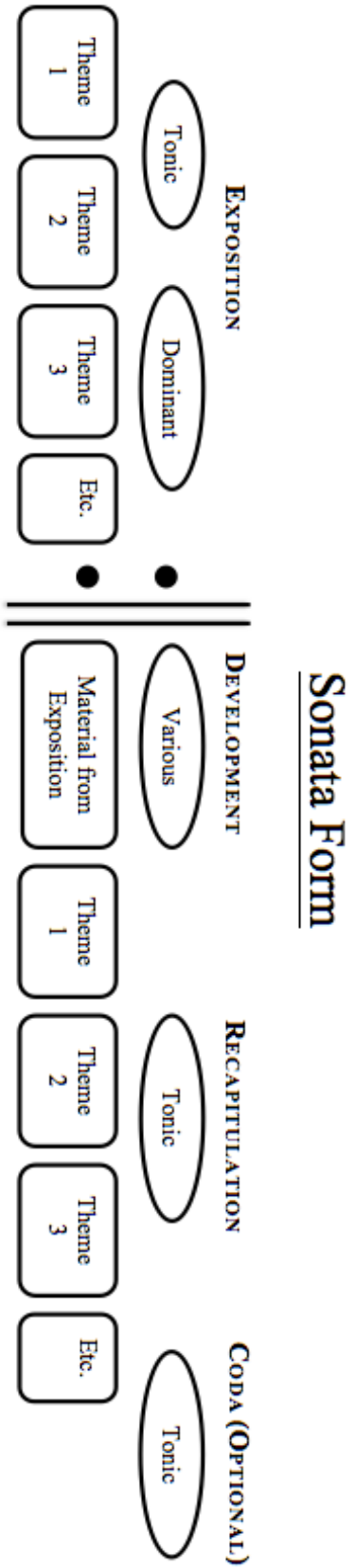


Figure 1. Typical Sonata Form.

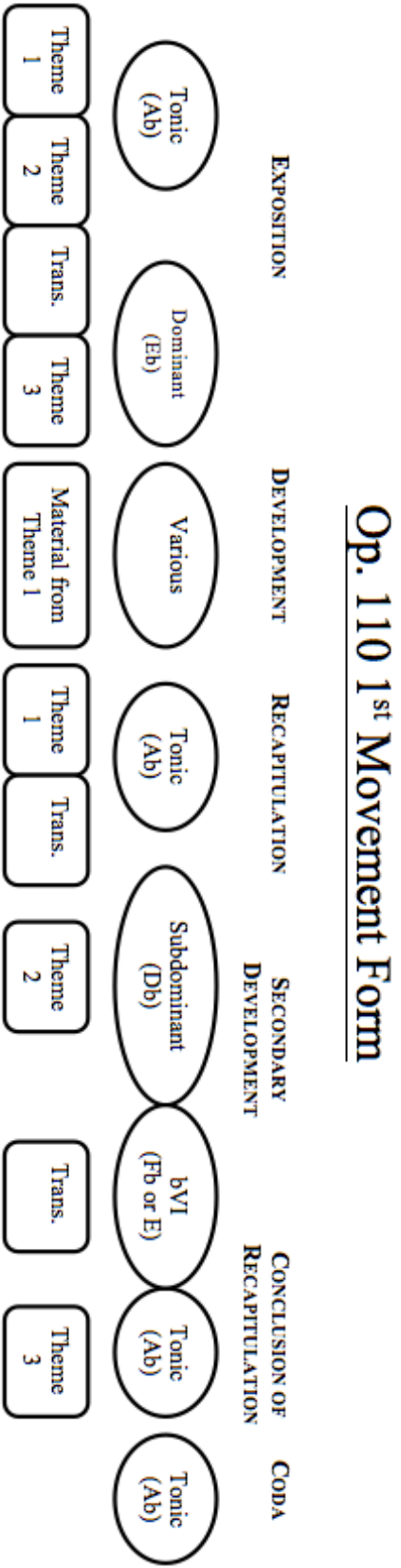
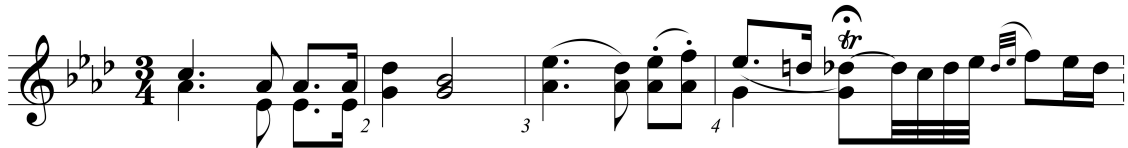


Figure 2. Formal arrangement of Op. 110.

Exposition

The exposition begins somewhat simply and immediately introduces theme one in a short, four-measure passage (see fig. 3).

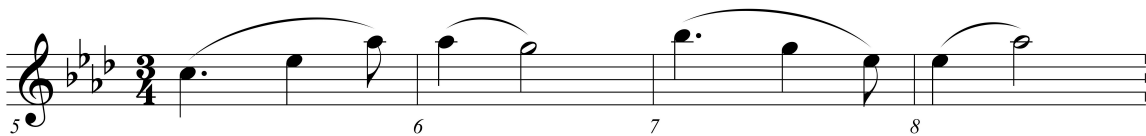
Figure 3. Theme one, measures 1-4.²³



Interestingly, the outline of this theme bears a striking resemblance to the Subject of the fugue to come in the third movement.²⁴ Theme two begins immediately after, containing a “long, sinuous melody” which flows “over the simplest harmonic pulsations.”²⁵

Although Beethoven’s ability to write a beautiful melody is often questioned, this section presents a theme that is both graceful and lyrical (see fig. 4).²⁶

Figure 4. Theme two, measures 5-8.



Like theme one, theme two is succinct, lasting from measure 5 through measure 11. What follows is a transition, the first part of which recurs several times throughout the first movement. Measures 12 through 27 begin with a series of arpeggiated chords presented

²³ Ludwig van Beethoven. *Piano Sonata No. 31, Op. 110*. (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1822). <http://japanese.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/7/77/IMSLP51323-PMLP01488-Op.110.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2013). All musical excerpts are taken from this edition of the score.

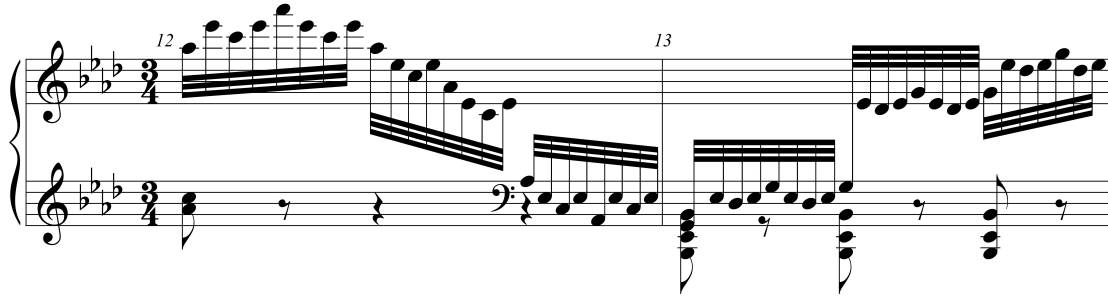
²⁴ Such an outline is indicated within the analysis of the 3rd movement itself.

²⁵ John N. Burk, *The Life and Works of Beethoven* (New York: Random House, 1943), 450.

²⁶ Kerman and Tyson, *New Grove Beethoven*, 121.

in thirty-second note runs in the right hand accompanied by blocked chords in the left hand (see fig. 5).

Figure 5. Transition, measures 12-13.



Measures 18 and 19 feature agitation through the use of a crescendo, quicker harmonic movement, and extremes of range. This abruptly drops off into a section marked both *piano* and *molto legato*, providing a contrasting contour to the material. The transition ends at measure 27, with the modulation to E-flat Major completed at the cadence on the first beat of measure 28.

The second major group of the exposition takes place in E-flat Major, as expected. Rosen explains that within sonata form, at the point of the modulation to the dominant, the new tonality must become incredibly clear though “a pause, a strong cadence, an explosion, a new theme, or anything else that the composer wishes.”²⁷ Beethoven here employed all of these ideas in one way or another—a pause in the movement of the right hand, a strong cadence at the outermost ends of the piano’s range, an explosive change in dynamic, and the beginning of theme three (see fig. 6).

²⁷ Rosen, *Classical Style*, 71.

Figure 6. Modulation to dominant, beginning of theme three, measures 25-28.

The musical score for measures 25-28 is presented in a grand staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 25 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a rising sixteenth-note motif, while the left hand provides harmonic support with chords. A *cresc.* (crescendo) marking is placed between measures 25 and 26. In measure 27, the music modulates to the dominant key of F major (one flat), and the dynamic increases to *sf* (sforzando). The right hand continues with the rising sixteenth-note motif, and the left hand plays a series of chords. In measure 28, the dynamic is marked *f* (forte), and the right hand features a bright and quick descending run. The score ends with a double bar line at the end of measure 28.

This theme spans measures 28 through 38, including moments of dynamic and registrational extreme as well as a few different successions of repeating ideas.

The first of these is a rising sixteenth note movement in the right hand supported by a series of chords in the bass. After a bright and quick descending run, the second idea consists of both hands playing a short pattern harmonized in tenths. The end of measure 35 through measure 37 presents a series of rising thirds over a pedal Eb major chord.

After another Eb cadence in measure 38, measure 39 echoes with successive Dbs, serving as the only harmonic transition into the development section.

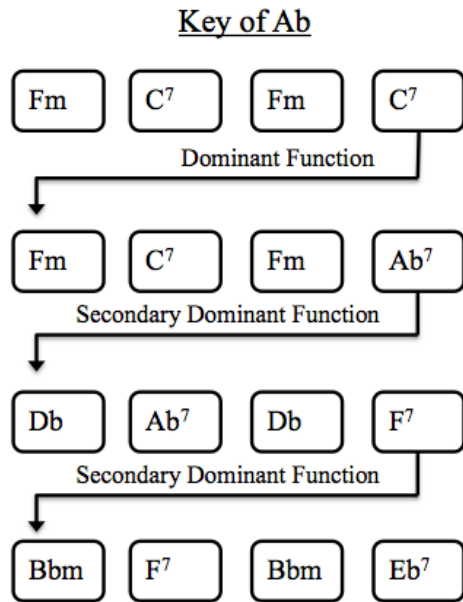
Development

In the music of his late period, Beethoven's sonata developments tended to be both brief and "threadbare" as one critic conveyed.²⁸ The development in Op. 110 certainly fits in this category, though it does involve a fascinating series of continuous sequencing, which can be broken into four sections of four measures each. The only theme that is melodically present in the development is the first two measures of theme

²⁸ Wei-Ya Lai, "Beethoven's Late Style in His Last Five Piano Sonatas" (DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 2009), 45.

one, which goes through several variations of tonality and harmony, as outlined in figure 7.

Figure 7. Harmonic outline of development section, measures 40-55.



This, too, is consistent with Beethoven’s late style in which “the development sections are established by focusing on the harmonic development instead of thematic development.”²⁹ These developments are supported by a varied accompaniment in the left hand (see fig. 8).

Figure 8. Examples of accompaniments in development, measures 40, 44, and 49.



From the beginning of the development to its conclusion, Beethoven slowly and intricately made the harmonic shift that enables the return of the tonic key.

²⁹ Lai, “Beethoven’s Late Style,” 45.

Recapitulation

The recapitulation section opens just as expected: with the double return of both the tonic key and theme one at measure 56. Interestingly, the whole of the preceding section has been devoted to the development of theme one—but now it is begun in the exact range and tonality of the original statement. This decidedly marks the beginning of the recapitulation. As the right hand renders theme one, the left hand accompanies with the familiar thirty-second note arpeggios of the transition. This continues until measure 60, at which point the melody and accompaniment exchange both clefs and hands. Measure 62 is a one-measure transition into the next section of the movement, at which point Beethoven deviated from basic sonata form with the inclusion of a secondary development.

Secondary Development

While a secondary development section is not necessary for sonata form to be complete, it is fairly common. Rosen noted that such a section “can be extensive, and almost always contains a reference to the subdominant,” which this section, in fact, includes.³⁰ Another facet of the secondary development is the use of the device to further clarify and make obvious the return of the tonic key.³¹ Beethoven accomplished this in a peculiar way, wandering to a rather un-related key before resolving back in Ab. Beginning in measure 63, theme two returns in a transposed setting. Since this theme has already been presented in the tonic key in the exposition, it is not necessary for it to

³⁰ Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 104.

³¹ *Ibid.*

remain in the tonic for the recapitulation. As Rosen wrote, “material originally exposed in the dominant must be represented in the tonic fairly completely...only material exposed in the tonic may be omitted.”³² Though Beethoven did not completely omit the original tonic material, he uses it to a compositional advantage by transposing it to the subdominant key. After the melodic phrase of theme two concludes, it extends into an enharmonic modulation which takes the tonality to the key of E Major, or more correctly spelled according to the original key, Fb Major—the bVI of Ab (see fig. 9).

Figure 9. Enharmonic modulation to E Major/Fb Major, measures 66-69.

The musical score for measures 66-69 is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 66 and 67. The second system covers measures 68 and 69. The key signature changes from Ab major (three flats) to E major (no sharps or flats, but spelled as Fb major). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *dim.* and *pp*.

Measure 70 presents the transitional material in the key of E, continuing until measure 77. At this point, Beethoven remarkably modulated back to Ab Major using a series of four octave half-steps from A down to G, then up to Ab (see fig. 10).

³² Rosen, *Classical Style*, 72.

Figure 10. Modulation to Ab Major, measures 77-78.

The image shows a musical score for two measures, 77 and 78. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 77 begins with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps. The melody starts with a half note G#4, followed by a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. Measure 78 shows a modulation to Ab Major, indicated by a bracket labeled 'Modulation' under the first two measures. The melody continues with a half note C5, followed by a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The bass line consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

The transition then continues in the tonic key, presented in almost the exact same way as it previously appeared in the dominant. This section works as bridge between the secondary development and the return of the recapitulation.

Conclusion of Recapitulation

At measure 87, the recapitulation proper picks up again with the entrance of theme three in the tonic key. Other than the difference of key, it is nearly a perfect copy of the first statement of the theme. Measures 96 through 104 constitute an extension of this theme, as the sequence of rising thirds continues much higher, then settles on repeated phrases played over left hand cadential chords that emphasize Eb with the secondary dominant Bb⁷ chord in second inversion. This movement finally leads to a series of simple, quiet, held chords that quickly return the tonality to a definite Ab.

Coda

The concluding twelve measures of the movement, from 105 through 116, comprise the coda. This section is attention-grabbing and suspenseful, rife with dynamic contrast and a few unexpected moments. It begins with the last appearance of the early transition theme from the exposition, which starts in just the same manner as the original but then spins off into differing harmonies. At measure 111, the left hand provides one

last echo of theme one, which is incomplete, breaking off after this one measure. The movement comes to a close with a series of eighth notes outlining the subdominant chord in inversion, followed by the final cadence. The dominant seventh chord with a 9-8 suspension in the middle voice is struck at *forte* and then resolves to two quiet and unassuming Ab Major chords—and thus ends the first movement of this magnificent sonata.

The entirety of the first movement flows together so coherently that the casual listener does not easily become aware of distinct themes or sections.³³ Perhaps this is what caused Victor Lederer to propose that the movement really only has one theme.³⁴ However, this idea is far from being the consensus opinion of scholarly theoreticians. For example, in H. A. Harding's analysis of the movement, he makes clear reference to at least two themes (or subjects, as he terms them), the first of which is divided into two parts.³⁵ Likewise, in Ludwig Misch's exploration of the first movement, he refers explicitly to the multiple themes as well as specific passages of transition used as connections between themes.³⁶ The very distinct changes in tonality, texture, and rhythm throughout the movement clearly indicate a multiplicity of themes, though these themes are intertwined at times. Having at least one theme that contrasts from the first is one of

³³ Burk, *Life and Works*, 451.

³⁴ Lederer, *Beethoven's Piano Music*, 123.

³⁵ H. A. Harding, *Analysis of Form: As Displayed in Beethoven's Thirty-Two Pianoforte Sonatas: With a Description of the Form of Each Movement for the Use of Students*. (London: Novello, 1895), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/miua.1460687.0001.001> (accessed March 26, 2013), 73.

³⁶ Ludwig Misch, "Piano Sonata No. 31 in A Flat, Opus 110," in *The Beethoven Companion*, ed. Thomas K. Scherman and Louis Biancolli (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1972), 1036-1040.

the “most characteristic features” of sonata form.³⁷ Understanding the formal outline of this movement while concurrently experiencing its expressivity allows for a brief glimpse into Beethoven’s late-style innovation.

Movement Two: Scherzo and Trio

Traditionally, a three-movement sonata would basically alternate in tempo, with a fast first movement, slow second movement, and fast third movement. Beethoven, of course, did not follow convention in the writing of this work. The first movement is not exactly fast, nor is it particularly slow—it exists in an ethereal realm in which time occasionally feels suspended. The second movement arrives at a blazing speed, shattering the serenity of the first. The form of this second section of the work is most commonly described as a Scherzo and Trio, a form that Beethoven employed often.³⁸ The basic elements of a Scherzo and Trio are historically part of a Minuet and Trio, a form that originated to accompany dances.³⁹ However, Beethoven replaced the Minuet with a Scherzo—which literally translates to “jest” or “joke.”⁴⁰ Beethoven commonly “took the term literally by giving the movement a light and often humorous tone.”⁴¹ However, at

³⁷ William S. Newman, *The Sonata in the Classic Era* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), 116.

³⁸ Tilden A. Russell and Hugh Macdonald. "Scherzo." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24827> (assessed January 30, 2013), “Haydn, Beethoven,” para. 2.

³⁹ Meredith Ellis Little. "Minuet." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18751> (accessed January 30, 2013).

⁴⁰ "Scherzo." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev.. *Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e9054> (accessed January 30, 2013), para. 1.

⁴¹ Russell and Macdonald, “Scherzo.” *Grove Music Online.* “Haydn, Beethoven,” para 2.

the end of his musical life, Beethoven sometimes modified “the meaning of ‘joke’ in the word scherzo” into a conveyance that included “a sense of something sinister.”⁴² The particular movement at hand includes both joviality and some deceptively aggravating twists. Unsurprisingly for a movement with such a name, Scherzos typically have a quick tempo, and Beethoven’s are no exception.

The Scherzo and Trio together make up a ternary arrangement. As in Minuet and Trio form, the Trio often compliments the Scherzo through contrast in key, thematic material, and texture.⁴³ Though the name Trio originated from a section of music literally scored for three instruments, it came to refer to any contrasting section in a dance-based piece.⁴⁴ While the Minuet, or in this case Scherzo, can be sectioned off into certain repeating elements, the Trio is a cohesive whole sandwiched between the other two sections.

A Section: Scherzo

The A section of the second movement, Scherzo and Trio, of Op. 110 begins in the key of F minor, the relative minor of the original key of Ab Major. It moves at an incredibly quick tempo, with the first section outlining a quiet descending pattern that explodes into a series of C Major chord inversions. These repeating first eight measures demonstrate Beethoven’s tendency to “[invest] his scherzos with elements of surprise or

⁴² Newman, *Classic Era*, 163.

⁴³ Little, “Minuet.” *Grove Music Online*.

⁴⁴ Erich Schwandt. "Trio." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/28376> (accessed January 30, 2013), para. 4.

caprice” due to his “highly sophisticated sense of musical humor.”⁴⁵ After the repeat sign, a series of chords including plenty of chromaticisms leads to a cadence in Ab. This does not last, though, as the final thematic idea of the A section leads back to C Major, then to F minor as the section repeats.

B Section: Trio

The Trio that follows gives a first impression of deceiving simplicity. However, pianists who have attempted to triumph over this single page in the score must realize that this joke is on them. As the off-beat melody played by the left hand climbs up past the constant and chromatic countermelody in the right hand, a musical effect is created that can almost become mesmerizing (see fig. 11).

Figure 11. Trio, measures 40-48.

The musical score for measures 40-48 of the Trio section is presented in a grand staff format. The right hand (treble clef) plays a continuous, chromatic eighth-note line that moves upwards and then downwards. The left hand (bass clef) plays a melody that is off-beat, starting on the second half of the measure. The score includes dynamic markings: *sf* at measure 40, *p* at measure 42, *ff* at measure 47, and *sf* at measure 48. A fermata is placed over the final measure (48). The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 2/4.

Far from being “a decorative Chopinesque figure,” the cascading eighth notes in the right hand provide a “melodic counterpoint” to the bass voice.⁴⁶ The basic idea of the Trio is contorted through a few different renditions, each one a bit more complex and difficult to master than the previous. The Trio winds down with the presentation of a simple,

⁴⁵ Russell and Macdonald, “Scherzo.” *Grove Music Online*. “Haydn, Beethoven,” para 3.

⁴⁶ Russell Bliss, “Otherworldly Sounds Captured By Beethoven’s Sonata, Op. 110,” *Clavier* (December 2002): 29.

repeated four-note pattern that seamlessly leads back into the return of the Scherzo.

A Section: Return of Scherzo

Almost all of the musical content of the second presentation of the Scherzo is directly lifted from the original statement. Beethoven, however, added one more teasing element. A grand ritardando seems to lead to a significant change—and then the exact same C Major phrase used throughout the movement turns the expected answer into a surprise once more. The Scherzo ends with a short coda, comprised of several blocked chords that lead to a dramatic diminuendo and arpeggiated Picardy third ending, placing the conclusion of the movement in F Major.

Interpretive Considerations

This second movement includes many episodes of dynamic extremes. For the contemporary performer, it is necessary to take into account the differences between the piano of Beethoven's day and the modern instrument, especially in regard to dynamic expression. "To say that Beethoven was writing for the modern piano," commented one scholar, "is as relevant to an understanding of his treatment of the piano as it would be to speculate on the outcome of the Revolutionary War had it been fought with modern instruments of warfare."⁴⁷ The type of piano on which Beethoven played and composed possessed a dynamic range as broad as the modern piano, but several degrees quieter throughout. The instrument did not have as much natural presence and tone quality due to "lighter stringing, lower string tension, and smaller hammers" when compared with a

⁴⁷ Kenneth Drake, *The Sonatas of Beethoven As He Played and Taught Them* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 7.

contemporary instrument.⁴⁸ In his day, Beethoven was somewhat infamous for his mistreatment of pianos in his attempts to bring forth the thunderous tones he desired, producing dynamics through absolute excess. This type of playing is no longer needed to attain the same effect because of the generally louder range of pianos. But for Beethoven, it was necessary for him to find ways to compensate for an overall lack of massive tone.

One such method is seen in his tendency in movements like this one to change dynamics very suddenly, using sforzandos, jumping from fortissimo to piano in the space of two hurried beats, and the like. While “Beethoven’s intent must have seemed much larger than his instrument’s capacity to express it” due to his extreme dynamic markings, it is not recommended that the contemporary artist push the modern piano to such a point.⁴⁹ Not only is tone quality greatly diminished, the effort is unnecessary because of the power now inherent in a piano. Beethoven could only wishfully conceive in his mind such potential for powerful dynamics.⁵⁰ Therefore, the modern interpreter of this work, while bearing in mind Beethoven’s original intent, must be careful to balance the contour of sound at the correct point between monotony and distressing loudness. This is most readily accomplished by guaranteeing that the loudest dynamic markings do not actually require the production of the loudest sound possible on the instrument. The dynamic range, then, can be adjusted based upon the correct calibration of the upper extreme. Bearing these thoughts in mind, the pianist can make the best expressive decisions when performing this movement that is simplest in form but complex in technical execution.

Movement Three: Arioso and Fugue

⁴⁸ Drake, *The Sonatas of Beethoven*, 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 82.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 81-82.

Without a question, the third and final movement of this sonata contains a combination of forms that initially seem to be diametrically dissimilar. Within the continuous flow of one movement, Beethoven blended two distinct components that typically would each stand alone. Some debate has historically arisen concerning whether this is actually one or two movements. Carl Czerny, one of Beethoven's own pupils, outlined the sonata as having four total movements in his interpretive writings.⁵¹ This opinion does not hold much weight, however, because evidently Czerny's "commentary to the last two sonatas is, in general, quite inadequate" according to Czerny's own commentator Badura-Skoda.⁵² Another commentator, John Cockshoot, brought clarity by explaining, "the finale of this sonata combines the functions of slow and fast movements in alternation."⁵³ He proposed that Beethoven's goal was to "overcome the inherent division between an Adagio and a Finale and raise them to a powerful unity."⁵⁴ Although it is doubtful that this was the composer's ultimate objective, Beethoven did succeed in creating a cohesive movement containing two very distinct formal textures.

Arioso

⁵¹ Carl Czerny, *On the Proper Performance of All Beethoven's Works for the Piano*, ed. Paul Badura-Skoda (Wein: Universal Edition, 1970), 57.

⁵² Paul Badura-Skoda, *Editor's Commentary included with On the Proper Performance of All Beethoven's Works for the Piano*, (Wein: Universal Edition, 1970), 6.

⁵³ John V. Cockshoot, *The Fugue in Beethoven's Piano Music* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959). 95.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 95.

The first of the two sections of the finale, the Arioso, presents a type of music that typically occurs only in vocal compositions—in fact, the *Oxford Companion to Music* provides three definitions specifically explaining its meaning in the context of vocal writing. The fourth definition actually uses this very movement as an example of the form being used “rarely,” as “an instrumental piece or passage of a lyrical character.”⁵⁵ Perhaps the reason behind Beethoven’s use of this particular setting was his absolute desire to communicate on a deep level with his world. During his late period, Beethoven “appear[ed] to have been reaching for a more direct and intimate mode of communication” through his music, leading to the adoption of vocal styles for instrumental writing.⁵⁶ Whatever his reason, the resulting product carries an expressive gravity that could not be purposelessly created.

A short, three measure introduction opens this movement in the key of Bb minor. This key choice follows logically as a resolution of sorts from the end of the preceding movement in F Major. The material of measures 1 through 3 does not recur anywhere else, and simply serves to provide a harmonic basis for the more significant section to come. The next three measures comprise an instrumental Recitative, marked as such specifically in the score (see fig.12).

⁵⁵ "Arioso." *The Oxford Companion to Music. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e384> (accessed January 30, 2013).

⁵⁶ Kerman and Tyson, *New Grove Beethoven*, 122.

Figure 12. Instrumental recitative, measures 4-8.

Like the Arioso, this term almost always refers to strictly vocal music, in which the performer freely expresses a phrase through “declamatory speech-like singing.”⁵⁷

Beethoven skillfully mimicked the free presentation of a vocal Recitative by writing measures 4 through 6 without any sort of true meter. He even changes the key in the middle of both measures 5 and 6, finally choosing Ab minor, the parallel minor of the key of the piece as a whole. Although the key signature seems to indicate Eb minor, in almost every instance of an F occurring in the Arioso, it is modified with a flat, which is indicative of Ab minor.

⁵⁷ "Recitative." *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev.. Oxford Music Online. Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e8380> (accessed January 30, 2013).

In addition to the unusually free presentation of meter and key in this instrumental Recitative, measure 5 also contains an oft-cited series of rapidly repeated A-natural notes in the top voice. This passage imitates a type of vibrato, called *Bebung*, produced on a clavichord through “alternately increasing and decreasing the pressure of the finger on the key.”⁵⁸ Beethoven employed this technique here, modified for the more developed piano, to imitate vocal vibrato in the most accessible way for the instrument. Though there is no actual wavering of pitch, the way in which the notes are slurred along with the continuous depression of the pedal creates an intriguing tonal effect. The repeated note actually carries the feeling of a single, suspended high point. Rosen referred to Beethoven’s highly developed ability to “suspend motion, seeming to stop the movement of time,” calling it one of his “most personal traits.”⁵⁹ This *Bebung* passage is certainly an instance of this type of almost magical manipulation of musical time, so that the instrumental idea transcends expectation and contains deeply communicative implications.

Following the Recitative is a short transition, which metrically shifts and subtly introduces the repetitive rhythm of accompaniment that is distinctive of Beethoven’s *Arioso* (see fig. 13).

⁵⁸ Edwin M. Ripin and G. Moens-Haenen. "Bebung." *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online.* Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02449> (accessed February 2, 2013), para. 1.

⁵⁹ Rosen, *Classical Style*, 448.

Figure 13. Transition into Arioso, measures 8-10.

The musical score shows three measures of music. Measure 8 is marked 'Adagio ma non troppo' and 'p tutte le corde'. Measure 9 is marked 'cresc.' and 'dim.'. Measure 10 is marked '(Klagender Gesang.) Arioso dolente.' and 'p'. The right hand has a melodic line with a fermata in measure 10, and the left hand has a consistent accompaniment of blocked chords.

At measure 9, the score is marked with instructions in both German and Italian. Each language has its own shade of meaning, but the basic inference is that the music reflects sadness or weariness, a “Song of Lament.”⁶⁰ Throughout the Arioso, the left hand provides a consistent accompaniment of blocked chords. This type of writing is distinctly homophonic, with the right hand providing a beautiful, if labored, melody in the higher range of the piano. Several instances of falling stepwise motion in this melody add to its mournful emotional quality. A climax of range occurs approximately halfway through the section, at the Ab6 in measure 15. From here, the contour falls steadily until finally, at the end of measure 24, both hands quietly outline an Ab minor chord in bass clef octaves.

Fugue

Rising out of the minor cadence, the first section of the finale’s fugue begins in measure 26, transitioning to the parallel major with no apparent modulation. The contrast between this section and the preceding mournful Arioso is immediately apparent through the change not only of tonality, but also of texture, meter, and most importantly the contrast between homophony and polyphony. John Cockshoot provided a convincing

⁶⁰ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, 238.

argument concerning the continuity of the fugue throughout this movement, though it is interrupted by another Arioso. In his understanding, the fugue in many ways undergoes a treatment not unlike the usual elements of sonata form. Though such a form contains three distinct sections, Beethoven divided the fugue into two larger segments, interrupted by the return of the Arioso. “Only Beethoven,” wrote Cockshoot, “with his knowledge of fugue, based rather on deep, personal needs than on text-books, could do this, and still leave it undamaged as a true fugue.”⁶¹

The first section of the fugue is presented in measures 26 through 110. These measures are outlined in figure 15 (next page), showing significant entrances in each of the three voices as well as key relationships. Like a first movement exposition, this section of the fugue begins in the tonic but concludes with the dominant tonality. The musical journey to that point, however, is quite involved. The overall organization of this first section of the fugue follows the general outline of three groups of three entrances, alternating between Subject and Answer. Cockshoot pointed out two essential components of the Subject—the series of ascending intervals of a fourth, and the following stepwise falling motion (see fig. 14).

Figure 14. Subject of fugue in measures 26-30.



⁶¹ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 96.

Measures Soprano Voice Middle Voice Bass Voice Key	26-30	30-35	36-44	45-52	53-61	62-65
	Subject Tonic (Ab)	Answer Countersubject	Subject + Extension Counterpoint	Counterpoint Answer + Extension	Counterpoint Subject + Extension Countersubject	Answer Countersubject
Measures Soprano Voice Middle Voice Bass Voice Key	66-72	73-78	79-81	81-83	83-85	85-87
	Motive and Sequences Countersubject Countersubject	Counterpoint Counterpoint Ascending Fourths	Counterpoint Counterpoint Ascending Steps	Ascending Steps Counterpoint Counterpoint	Counterpoint Counterpoint Ascending Steps	Ascending Steps Counterpoint Counterpoint
Measures Soprano Voice Middle Voice Bass Voice Key	87-90	91-97	98-100	101-105	106-108	109-110
	Counterpoint Subject Counterpoint Subdominant (Db)	Subject + Extension Countersubject Countersubject/Stretto 93-95 Tonic (Ab)	Countersubject Extension Pedal Eb	Counterpoint Counterpoint Answer	Ascending Fourths Moving toward Homophony Ascending Fourths	Cadential Progression Cadential Progression Cadential Progression Dominant (Eb)

Figure 15. Outline of fugue, measures 26-110.

This figure can actually be traced in the opening measures of movement one—it is marked in figure 16 by asterisks above the notes in the soprano voice that contain the pitches of the fugue Subject.⁶²

Figure 16. Fugue Subject contained in Movement 1, measures 1-4.



Beethoven, therefore, “may have had less difficulty” coming up with the Subject for the fugue, because of its close resemblance to Theme 1 of the opening movement.⁶³ In measures 26 through 30, the first statement of the Subject occurs in the bass voice. The entrance of the right hand in measure 30 presents the Subject’s Answer in the middle voice, which is essentially the same pattern beginning on the pitch of Eb instead of Ab, over the Countersubject, a contrapuntal accompaniment based on the interval of a tenth (see fig. 17).

Figure 17. Fugue Countersubject, measures 30-34.



After what Cockshoot referred to as a “codetta,” or what could be thought of as an extension of the second component of the Answer, the soprano voice enters with the restatement of the Subject in measure 36.⁶⁴ The middle and bass voices follow along with

⁶³ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 97.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

counterpoint based on the idea of the Countersubject, but not adhering to it strictly.⁶⁵ At measure 40, the extension of the Subject is presented in an ever-descending echo-like setting, until measure 45 begins with a dramatic trill that leads into the next cycle of entrances.

The second cycle is ordered Answer-Subject-Answer, and begins with the bass voice depicting the Answer in octaves at the end of measure 45. This statement includes the codetta or extension, ending in measure 51. Interestingly, during these measures, the soprano voice sounds below the middle voice due to the fact that “the two outside parts have come so closely together” that “the middle part is temporarily squeezed out and put on top.”⁶⁶ While the middle voice provides counterpoint, the soprano travels in tenths or thirds with the Answer in the bass. The middle voice takes up the Subject in measures 53 through 56, with the extension occurring in sequential fashion, traveling down into the bass clef and closing at measure 61. The bass and soprano voices continue to travel in tenths, voicing the Countersubject together as a counterpoint to the middle voice. At measure 57, the soprano breaks off into a counterpoint that is rhythmically less busy, until measures 59 through 61 in which Beethoven created a quasi-sequence with just enough slight variations to evade that actual title—a solution that “might have eluded a lesser composer.”⁶⁷ The last entrance of the second cycle is the occurrence of the Answer in the soprano beginning in measure 62 and continuing through measure 65. During this statement, the bass and middle voices carry a type of Countersubject that follows the same general outline and texture of the original Countersubject. However, this

⁶⁵ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 96.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 111.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 112.

presentation harmonizes with the Answer using mostly thirteenthths in the low voice instead of tenths. This allows for a nice but unobtrusive harmonic variety in the counterpoint.

From measure 66 through measure 87, the fugue breaks away from its so-far established form and includes an extended series of patterns and sequences. The first of these occurs from measure 66 through measure 74. The stepwise, descending motion appears in the soprano voice in three upward-moving iterations. The distance between the end of the second sequence and the first pitch of the third is a diminished seventh, which creates a great amount of tension, especially as the extension phrase is itself extended for an additional four measures. The middle voice provides a counterpoint, while a chromatically rising pattern is established in the bass.

In measure 73, the bass begins to outline a series of octaves moving in fourths, echoing the basis of the Subject without actually stating it fully. The other voices float above this figure with a sequence of their own that moves fluidly between the middle voice and the soprano. At measure 80, Cockshoot pointed out how the “bass rises a second on each beat, instead of each bar,” which implies yet another sequence, this one made up of four pitches rising in stepwise motion.⁶⁸ Stripped bare of decoration, this sequence occurs in the soprano voice in measure 81 through 83, then again in the bass in 83 to 85, and finally back to the soprano in 85 to 87.

The Subject finally makes a complete appearance again beginning in measure 87—however, it is presented in the subdominant tonality. The middle voice carries the fugue figure, while the soprano again crosses to a lower harmony adding to the “free

⁶⁸ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 113.

counterpoint” of the bass.⁶⁹ Immediately after its conclusion, the Subject appears in the tonic key and in the soprano voice. After two measures, the bass begins to echo the Subject in a stretto passage. The middle voice presents a modified Countersubject which borrows more rhythmically than melodically from the original. At measure 95 and continuing through measure 100, another four-note descending sequence begins in the soprano, moving to the middle voice at measure 98. The bass declares a pedal Eb while this sequence closes. A series of marcato octaves marks the introduction of the last Answer phrase, powerfully presented in the bass. There is another hint of stretto in this passage, with the middle voice echoing the first four pitches of the Answer in measures 103 through 105. The last presentation of the Subject occurs, interestingly enough, in the soprano voice again—no real entrance is given to the middle voice within the last cycle, perhaps because Beethoven employed it to present the subdominant Subject.

In the last measures of this first section of the fugue, Beethoven successfully created an amazing amount of tension through the simple use of extension and diminution. The rising fourths of the Subject keep climbing higher, reaching a high Ab. Beethoven also shortened the rhythm, moving to alternating eighth notes and quarter notes from the previous steady dotted-quarter rhythm (see fig 18).

⁶⁹ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 114.

Figure 18. Diminution of Subject in soprano and bass, measures 105-108.

The musical score for measures 105-108 is presented in a grand staff with two systems. The top system contains the soprano line (treble clef) and the middle voice line (alto clef). The bottom system contains the bass line (bass clef). The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The time signature is 6/8. Measure 105 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The soprano line features a melodic line that is gradually diminished in length over the four measures. The bass line provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Dynamics include *p* in measure 105, *cresc.* in measure 106, and *f* in measure 108. Measure numbers 105, 106, 107, and 108 are indicated below the bass line.

The bass voice finishes the Answer with an extended downward motion, then joins the soprano rhythm in stretto through the first beat of measure 109.

In these last few measures of the fugue, from the second half of 108 through the trilled dominant chord in 110, Beethoven very subtly shifted out of polyphony back into homophony in preparation for the return of the Arioso. There ceases to be much real distinction between soprano and middle voice, and the bass provides a clear harmonic function instead of a contrapuntal melody. Beethoven wrote a cadential progression that moves $E^{o7}-Fm-Db-Bb^7/D$, changing every eighth note and finally resolving to an Eb with a pronounced trill on the uppermost note. Measures 110 through 113 include an extended Eb^7 arpeggio that ends in a blocked chord, dramatically and directly leading back to the Arioso.

Return of the Arioso

Beethoven managed to modulate both the time and the tonality within the space of two measures. He crafted the change from Ab Major to G minor, from 6/8 time to 12/16, and indicated a re-arrival at the original tempo of the Arioso (see fig. 19).

Figure 19. Transition into return of Arioso, measures 113-116.

The musical score for measures 113-116 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 113-114) is in 6/8 time and marked *p*. The second system (measures 115-116) is in 12/8 time and marked *p dolente*. The score includes dynamic markings *cresc.* and *dim.*, and the instruction *L'istesso tempo di Arioso.* above the first system. The instruction *(Ermattet klagend.) Perdendo le forze, dolento.* is placed above the second system. Measure numbers 113, 114, 115, and 116 are indicated below the staff. Asterisks are placed under measures 114 and 116.

The distinct, mournful melody makes its entrance at measure 116. Beethoven wrote above this section in his native language: “Ermattet, klagend” which translates to “weary, lamenting” and signifies “a songfulness, overflowing with longing and often conveying a touch of the spectral.”⁷⁰ Another writer described this section of the movement as “the grievously poignant utterance of a man on the downward slope, deaf, ailing, suspicious, mateless...convinced that all the world was banded against him as a man.”⁷¹ To be certain, Beethoven managed to convey an absolutely uncanny level of heart-wrenching emotion in this second song of lament.

One of the most important factors leading to the expressive quality of the Arioso is Beethoven’s choice to present it in G minor, the key of the leading tone. This unusual key choice functions as a “substitute dominant” which is “harmonically daring.”⁷² However, this choice was not made flippantly, but fulfills its function well by creating “a

⁷⁰ Solomon, *Late Beethoven*, 187.

⁷¹ Robert Haven Schauffler, *Beethoven: The Man Who Freed Music* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1929), 373.

⁷² Rosen, *Classical Style*, 383.

greater tension away from the tonic.”⁷³ Additionally, the half-step distance between G and Ab indicates a contrived inability to return wholly to the original key. Notably, this key of the return is lower than its counterpart in the original presentation. The melody seems to fall short of its intended goal—lacking the energy and motivation to rise in harmonic height. Strong tension is primarily created through this great feeling of depression, as the familiar melody floats just below its previous key.

From a formal aspect, not much changes during this return of the Arioso. The harmonic function and rhythmic textures of the left hand are unaffected. The number of measures for each section is the same, and the range is very similar. However, Beethoven notated some very specific changes in the rhythm of the melody that, in an almost otherworldly way, transform this return to conjure deep and struggling emotion. Pianist Paul Lewis, in the documentary “In Search of Beethoven” explained it thus: “You can see sometimes very obsessive elements in the way he writes... He writes that it has to sound exhausted—it’s like you’re completely spent of energy. And the feeling of trying to catch your breath, the way he actually manages to convey that in his notation is amazing.”⁷⁴ The way that Beethoven notated this exhaustion is through precise rests that interrupt what could be much longer melodic phrases (see fig. 20).

Figure 20. Rests signifying exhaustion, measures 119-121.



⁷³ Rosen, *Classical Style*, 383.

⁷⁴ Phil Grabsky, *In Search of Beethoven*, Netflix, WMV file, directed by Phil Grabsky (Brighton: Seventh Art Productions, 2009), <http://www.netflix.com/> (accessed February 3, 2013).

The result is a disjointed sound, a lack of continuity that manipulates the listener with its perfect brokenness. The *Arioso* gradually becomes quieter and quieter, leading to the *una corda* marked at its conclusion in measure 131.

Transition

The next five measures are simultaneously deceptively simple and psychologically controlling. Beethoven employed a series of unprepared G major chords, ever growing in volume, weight, and number of tones, to transition back into the fugue. These measures are played with both the damper pedal and the quiet pedal depressed, opening up the resonance of the instrument and yet hindering it at the same time. At this point, as Kenneth Drake writes, “the piece is moving from darkness to light, from G minor to G major, and from a thick texture to a lighter one.”⁷⁵ Beethoven transitioned out of homophony back into polyphony by creating an immense build-up of sound, and then suddenly but also subtly dropping back to the use of one note at a time, with a broken chord climbing upward into a seamless connection with the fugal inversion (see fig. 21).

⁷⁵ Drake, *The Sonatas of Beethoven*, 79.

Figure 21. Transition from Arioso to inverted fugue, measures 131-137.

131 *pp* *cresc.*

134 *dim.* 135 136

L'istesso tempo della Fuga.
poi a poi di nuovo vivente
Nach und nach weider auflebend.

sempre una chorda
L'inversione della Fuga.

137

The very specific marking that accompanies the beginning of the fugue, “poi a poi di nuovo vivente,” translates to “little by little with renewed vigor,” and the German marking “weider auflebend” means “again reviving”—these clearly speak to a “gathering of confidence...after despair.”⁷⁶ So, with a slowly reviving spirit, Beethoven continued the masterful fugue in its inverted state. The last section of this movement is outlined in figure 22 for referential purposes, showing main entrances, key relationships, and some points of contrapuntal interest.

⁷⁶ Lai, “Beethoven’s Late Style,” 43.

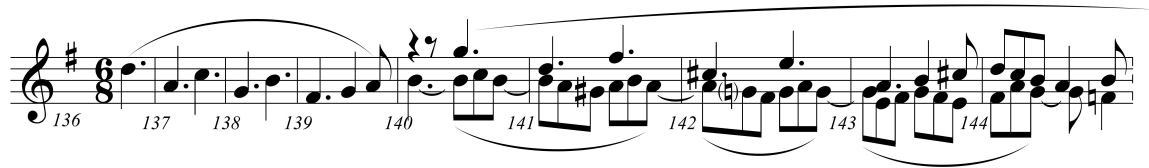
Measures Soprano Voice Middle Voice Bass Voice Key	136-140	141-144	144-147	148-151	151-153	152-160
	Inverted Subject	Inverted Answer Countersubject/Pattern	Counterpoint Pattern	Inverted Answer Counterpoint	Diminished Subject	Augmented Subject Diminished Subject/Answer G minor
Measures Soprano Voice Middle Voice Bass Voice Key	161-168	168-170	170-174	174-178	178-184	184-195
	Diminution of Answer/Counterpoint Harmony Augmented Answer C minor	Double-Diminished Subject Double-Diminished Answer Double-Diminished Answer	Sequential Counterpoint Modified Inverted Subject Sequential Counterpoint	Homophonic Accomp. Subject	Homophonic Accomp. Answer	Subject + Extension Homophonic Accomp.
Measures Homophony Key	196-200	201-208	209-213			
	Cadential Transition	Extensions of Subject	Arpeggiated Chordal Ending			

Figure 22. Outline of fugue, measures 136-213.

Inverted Fugue

The first entrance of the inverted Subject belongs to the middle voice, and is immediately answered by the soprano beginning in measure 140. The middle voice here transitions to a version of the Countersubject that also functions as a slowly descending, repeating pattern (see fig. 23).

Figure 23. Inverted fugue Subject and Countersubject, measures 136-144.



The next entrance of the Subject occurs, unsurprisingly, in the bass, in measures 144 through 147, while the middle voice continues its pattern and the soprano presents a counterpoint. Beethoven places the main entrances of this fugue much closer together in this beginning section, as evidenced by the Answer in the soprano voice entering the measure after the conclusion of the Subject in the bass. A subtle stretto is employed from measures 149 through 151, as the bass outlines the Answer along with a steady stream of decorative eighth notes.

At measure 152, Beethoven's creativity began to overflow, with a modulation to C minor that is prepared beginning in measure 147 by the introduction of Ebs and F naturals. In fact, from measures 147 through 153, the music is presented in C-Dorian. When Beethoven changed the key signature at measure 153, this is actually the key that he indicated by not including the Ab in what would be the key signature of C minor. The reappearance of F#s beginning in measure 154 signify G harmonic minor, which continues through measure 159. After this point, Abs regularly enter the harmonic

texture, which places the music in true C minor until the preparation of the final modulation back to Ab Major in measure 174.

Beethoven also used contrapuntal devices to further these changing harmonic centers. The transposed original Subject in diminution is presented in the bass voice in measures 151 through 153. The Subject, no longer in inversion, sings in the soprano voice in an augmented form, from measure 152 through measure 160. Underneath this augmentation, both the middle voice and the bass contain several diminished versions of the Subject or its Answer that act as “decorative counterpoints” (see fig. 24).⁷⁷

Figure 24. Augmentation and diminution of Subject and variances, measures 152-159.

Augmentation of Subject

The figure displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, starting at measure 152, shows a soprano line with an augmented Subject and a bass line with a diminished Subject. Brackets and labels indicate 'Augmentation of Subject' for the soprano line and 'Diminution' and 'Dim.' for the bass line. The second system, starting at measure 157, shows a soprano line with an augmented Subject and a bass line with a diminished Subject. Brackets and labels indicate 'Dim.' for the bass line.

Not every one of these statements is an exact quote as regards to intervallic relationships, but the implication is very strong that Beethoven intended them to represent the fugal idea. At measure 160, the “roles are reversed” and the bass takes up the augmentation of

⁷⁷ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 116.

the Answer as the diminution moves to the soprano in *stretto*.⁷⁸ The middle voice directly harmonizes with the soprano in measures 160 through 163, in an interesting break from strict polyphony. The rhythm of these voices subtly hints at the rhythmic diminution that is fully manifested beginning five measures later. In measures 164 and 165, the soprano introduces a version of the fugue with expanded intervals. As the bass completes the augmented Answer, the upper voices echo the all-important interval of a fourth.

From Polyphony to Homophony

Corresponding to the marking “Meno allegro. Etwas langsamer,” the fugue undergoes an incredibly significant transition with the introduction of the Subject in the original key, doubly diminished (see fig. 25).

Figure 25. Double diminished Subject, measures 168-170.

The image shows a musical score for measures 168-170. The tempo marking is "Meno allegro. Etwas langsamer." The score is in 6/8 time and features a double diminished Subject and Answer. The Subject is presented in the soprano voice, and the Answer is in the bass voice. The score includes labels for "Double Diminished Subject" and "Double Diminished Answer" in both staves. A "Partial Doub. Dim. Sub." is also indicated in the bass staff. The measures are numbered 168, 169, and 170.

In order to fit a double diminution of the Subject into one half of a measure, Beethoven omitted two notes from the original material. A distinct change in musical texture is felt here, so much so that Cockshoot described it sounding as though “the music seems to burst into flame.”⁷⁹ Quick alternation of the Subject and its Answer are found in each

⁷⁸ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 116.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

voice for the next several measures, as Beethoven moved back into the tonic key completely by measure 174. A brilliant use of stretto occurs in measure 170 between the middle and soprano voices, creating a brief sense of harmony. The middle voice sings out a modified inversion of the Subject from measure 170 through the beginning of 174 as the soprano and bass alternately decorate it with rhythmically repetitive sequences. Cockshoot noted that the repeating bass notes in these measures “[give] the effect of a held note” which prepares the ear for what is to come.⁸⁰

The modulation to Ab major completed at measure 174, Beethoven next released the full force of the Subject in thundering bass octaves. From this point to the end of the piece, the final section of the fugue is presented, which can be compared to the idea of recapitulation in sonata form.⁸¹ The upper voice picks up the idea of the Subject as well, in measure 175, providing yet another example of stretto writing. Interestingly enough, there ceases to be three voices present after the modulation, as Beethoven cleverly wove the music back toward a homophonic sound. The sixteenth notes in the upper voice now function more harmonically than contrapuntally. At measure 178, the Answer enters as the left hand moves to the treble clef (see fig. 26).

Figure 26. Answer against sixteenth-note harmonies, measures 178-182.



⁸⁰ Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 117.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 118.

Measures 182 and 183 contain an almost exact quote of the codetta from the very first soprano entrance of the original fugue.

From here, the accompanying sixteenth notes move to the left hand, and the right hand presents the Subject once more, but in a more fully harmonized version. This is another step toward total homophony, as “four parts are more strongly felt” within the writing.⁸² After the conclusion of the Subject, the sequential idea based on the extension of the Subject returns in full form, rising ever higher and higher with great upward leaps between sequences. Measures 196 through the first part of 200 mark the final transition to homophony, as the sequence idea transforms into a short cadence. From the second half of measure 200 until the end of the piece, homophony reigns supreme. The bass merely functions to decorate and accompany the declamatory Subject melody, with a notable pedal that “remains as the last link with the fugue.”⁸³ The Subject is not presented in its original form, but is extended once again to the very extreme range of Beethoven’s piano in a series of sequential, tension-building phrases. “So very thrilling is the stirring upward of 200²-209¹,” wrote Cockshoot, “and so very occupied with spiritual matters was Beethoven at this time, that one is tempted to put emotion above reason, and wonder if he intended any symbolic illustration here.”⁸⁴ Whether or not he did, the way in which Beethoven modified the Subject in its last iteration “carrie[d] out [its] aspiring nature to its logical and inevitable conclusion,” providing great musical satisfaction.⁸⁵ In measures

⁸² Cockshoot, *Fugue in Beethoven*, 118.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 119.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 120.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 120.

209 through 213 the massive arpeggiated tonic chord seals off the movement, as well as the entire sonata, with a flourishing and dramatic declaration of pianistic power.

Conclusion

Beethoven's level of musical production during his last years exhibits the heart of a genius who seems to transcend the barrier of word-based communication. Although the volume of his output diminished significantly from that of his previous periods, the quality of the works that he did produce are evidence of "the unprecedented creative struggles" that motivated his musicianship.⁸⁶ In the example of this particular sonata, Op. 110, Beethoven's artistic energies are definitively displayed. Throughout the lyrical phrases of the first movement, he wove thematic materials into a progressive interpretation of sonata form. The second movement explodes with vivaciousness and cunning, a short episode of dancing tones in the midst of a composition full of gravity. Finally, the third movement delivers the culmination of emotional release through the intertwined components of Arioso and fugue. When experiencing this piece—either actively as a performer or passively as a listener—it is clear that Beethoven's communicative intensions are fulfilled. So much of the man is contained in his art that the two cannot be completely severed. The images conveyed within the music are outlined with just enough specificity to allow for the marriage of universal experience with personal interpretation. This is, perhaps, where the true greatness of Op. 110 is found—in its complexity, it becomes accessible; and in Beethoven's struggle, his audience finds a sublime release.

⁸⁶ Newman, *Classic Era*, 527.

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