

Beethoven's piano  
concerto no.3 in c  
minor, op. 37 essay  
sample



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a)The " Beethoven Concerto" s and Op. 37's Placement in the Genre and as a continuation of Mozart's Style

b)Reception of the concerto-specifics of the concerto in a broad view

c)Formal and musical analysis with respect to the Concerto Form in the Classical Style (As a precursor of Romantic Age)

d)Conclusions

a)Beethoven Concertos

According to commonly agreed placement of this concerto among others, the way

that it still carries features of a classical concerto-but with a few innovations that look forward and that will be influential, this concerto is a " middle period" Beethoven work. This is also somehow supported by the fact that it lies in the middle of the other two that precede and postlude this one. The composer is still in his " modeling" phase, where he is hearing and thinking about how to modify, and bearing in mind the vast innovations the concertos No. 4 and 5 will bring, this concerto is rightly called as a middle period work.

As it will be discussed more extensively, the formal layout of the 3 movements, as well as the specific techniques used throughout (i. e. placement of figurations, arrivals- wrong keys but eventually right solutions/as false recaps) signify a Mozart model in Beethoven's mind, with a few exciting additional ideas on top of the expectations. It is even more exciting to see that Beethoven will follow this pursuit by thwarting and

changing the set rules and regulations nurtured by those expectations (e. g. the resolution of the cadenza).

#### b) Reception-Historical Details and a musical overview

According to Leon Plantiga's detailed account on the origins of the concerto, this

piece had been long planned in Beethoven's head, as a potential piece to portray his pianistic features. It was Beethoven's custom to play new pieces for each of his performances, as to "promote" his new compositions, and he had needed a piece like this for a performance in 1802, which didn't take place by misfortune. The details of when the sketches were started exactly is a fairly complicated issue that had to be resolved through a rigorous analysis of the staff papers used in different circumstances by Beethoven (namely rastrology that studies the staff lining of staff papers). The only thing that we know is that the sketchbook from 1803 being discovered that bears evidence that in the previous sketchbooks, there has to be lost pages that were sketches of this work.

The first performance took place in 1803, where the piece didn't get too much attention, and was even named as a piece that didn't almost reflect the pianistic abilities that Beethoven had built up as an expectation among his listeners. 1

There is also evidence that Beethoven modeled his thinking on the C minor concerto (the only one in that key) by Mozart, and developed his ideas for the long strained-for concerto.

The first two piano concertos were composed when the composer was in his twenties- described possibly as "innocent and unenterprising." 2 The third piano concerto, constitutes a great advance over the preceding two, that even Beethoven was very proudly acknowledging in his letters to his editors. Especially, the symphonic idiom that he would adopt can be traced through how he treats this piano concerto's first theme-looking forward to the Eroica Symphony a few years later.

This concerto, also important because it is the only minor mode concerto of Beethoven, has got its expressiveness Don Giovanni and D minor Concerto of Mozart-that Beethoven regarded very highly. C Minor first movement in concerto form, will be followed by a E Major largo-a prosodic style, with a solo first, and then the chorus, as it could possibly be thought of. If we follow the thread of a parallelism between verse and the second movement, we have to see the "humor" in the third movement, Rondo. There are interesting references that we will shortly mention: the "Hungarian" element (that the two previous concertos already seem to have in them) and the cadenza's being resolved to a "major" "6/8" version of the primary theme, in a rhythmically shifted-displaced version.

### c) Formal Analysis

#### First Movement

Although a typical first movement form has features that are very close to a sonata form, the analysis shown in Appendix traces through the keys and theme areas with respect to the necessary T1, S1 etc terminology that

invokes the "1st movement form" which is an extended version of a da capo <https://assignbuster.com/beethovens-piano-concerto-no3-in-c-minor-op-37-essay-sample/>

aria-or a rounded binary form. However, presented below, is a rough guideline for seeing which measures would correspond to a sonata form outline:

T1-S1-T2: 1-111-227

“ Exposition”

S2: 249

“ Development”

(288-308 as re-transition)

T3-S3-T4 (first section up to the cadence): 309-318-403

“ Recapitulation”

(Cadenza)

T4: 417

“ Coda”

Theme-wise, the first movement is mostly based itself on the opposition of two themes, one “ military” in character (denoted hereafter by a and its variants a1, a2 a3 etc)

and another lyrical theme, (denoted hereafter by b). It is clear when one looks at the outline of the themes with respect to their placement, theme “ a” is transformed into 8 different versions throughout the composition's first

movement, and an additional type, that we will call (a) which utilizes C-G-C-G-C timpani-like motive. This one, namely (a) and a derivative called a6 will play primary roles in identifying and linking structurally important keys and harmonic motions related to changes into different subsections (eg. Timpani theme appears from 288-295 into T3/S3 on minor v, arriving at V at 308; likewise a6 and timpani theme have important roles at the end of S3 section.)

Appendix 2 attempts to show the clear-cut parallelisms between sections T1 and S1/T2. Except for the key changes in the closing areas, it is possible to match them up and compare how the primary tonal area, transition, second tonal area, figuration/closing sections can be imposed on two sections in quite a similar fashion. A closer look will reveal that in the "Primary tonal" areas, themes a1-a4 are used. The first presentation of the theme by the orchestra in an expected 8+8 structure, is followed by an extension that helps to start in a new key, namely Bb as a "tonicizer" to lead into Eb. This, we will call as an "extension", and expect to see the same procedure take place in S1. Likewise, a transition section of about equally length in T1 and S1/T2 (about 25 measures) will lead us into the secondary tonal area (III) where the b theme appears in only one shape, without going through many different transformations like the military theme "a" goes through. This is mostly due to the nature of the themes, that it is possible to use the "a" theme as a fragment to convey different uses in different contexts, whereas the lyrical theme is suited to portray a contrast, and does not need to be transformed.

In the opening tutti, all the ideas are presented, and the piano entrance, except for the c minor melodic scales, has no difference whatsoever from the opening tutti. The similarities are making the bond very strong, so that the formal ideas invoked make us hear the whole first movement hear as a closely "Mozartian" piece. In other words, we build certain expectations- most of them would be "attacked" by Beethoven in the Cadenza, where he has certain innovations to present us.

Procedurally, this movement has both innovative features and stylistically "Mozartian" features, one of which is the very familiar trills from the figuration sections- namely at the end of S1 into T2, and at the end of S3 preceding T4's appearance before the cadenza. Musically, one can still make a logic out of the formal events, and say for instance the S2, which also corresponds to the "development" has a restless character, because it is acting as an "agent" between T1/S1/T2 bundle and the T3 bundle (namely acting as a development in a sonata form idea). Besides, the octave runs in the second presentation of the ideas make the dynamism of this part more evident (specifically mm. 294-307). The beginning of the coda, after the cadenza, is particularly striking- not only because of its key- and was highly praised by the contemporaries; arpeggios on the piano carry on a dialogue with the still active motive that is derived from the first theme- the timpani theme- carried out very pianissimo, and in the background mysteriously.

#### Cadenza to 1st movement

This cadenza is one more example of Beethoven's innovative nature, that transforms set norms by shaping and molding them according to his

intentions: his model still being the Mozart concerto style and the specific rules adhered to the sections of a " prototypical" concerto have been kept. 3

The expected flow of this Beethoven cadenza would be in the Mozartian tradition (the placement of trills, and the general structure)- except for two very important structurally affective changes that play on the listener's expectations:

1) Its point of arrival: the cadence " resolves" to V7/IV instead of the " would-be expected" I (mm. 417).

2)The key scheme in the cadence- following the initial sequences, we arrive at a brief " tonicization" of D (which can be thought of as V/V in relation to the C tonic) in the middle section, followed by a presentation of the (second) theme in G Major, instead of an expected I- a procedure much like the widely analyzed " false recapitulations" 4 of Beethoven in his Sonata Form pieces, where he uses a similar procedure.

These are very big changes that create a lot of harmonic fluctuation in a solo passage. Except this rapid fluctuation and surprising key procedures, the cadenza more or less sticks to the general structural norms set to practice by Mozart. For an overview of the structure of the cadenza, and a comparison between a " prototypical" Mozart cadenza and this one, please refer to Figure 1-B and 1-C.

The cadenza can be thought of roughly in three distinct sections through over 3 minutes of playing: Part one carries us from the V6/4, towards a

structurally important neopolitan chord (at poco meno allegro risoluto), <https://assignbuster.com/beethovens-piano-concerto-no3-in-c-minor-op-37-essay-sample/>



thorough sequences that go up the c minor tonality diatonically-c (i), d(ii), E7 (V42 of iv), which is followed by another sequence that now traces down bb (E7) , ab (ab6) , gb (g6) versions of the “ transformed” a theme (the military theme) in the left hand. (see the figure below-the upper notes denote the surface features that bring out the contrary motion and the “ borrowed 5 note figures” from the main military theme-in a backward fashion).

The neopolitan chord at the end of the measure above (reinterpreted as III of bb, one of the local keys) is followed by a falling (F-Eb-Db-Cb, Bb)- a motivic expression borrowed from the main military theme. This bass progression, that traces all the way down to A (Gb6-gb minor ^ enharmonically transformed into f# minor 6, then to A7), brings us to the figuration section in D, which is aimed towards resolving to G (V/V to V of our tonic c) by adding a C natural. This whole section and the description, makes my part 1 in my analysis of the cadenza. Note again that it ends in a V/V resolving to V, rather than V to one like in an expected fashion of a prototypical harmonic progression of a “ Mozartian” cadence (even though there are exceptions to this rule regarding the keys, even in Mozart's own cadenzas)5

The following section-denoted as part 2- will be compared and contrasted to the second prototypical part of a Mozartian cadence, where we expect a “ legal” and open re-occurrence (rather than small-scale motivic references) of thematic material in tonic key, and a typical figuration section that gets us to the final destination, V, through some kind of tonicization of V and the trill just before the arrival to I for the tutti. Let us first look at how the theme (namely the second lyrical theme-b) comes to our attention in this section,

both in the surprising “ false” destination G, and afterwards, c:

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The listener is lead into G, and the theme carries on for 8 measures for its entirety, while in its second presentation, F natural will be added to stress G7 and we hear c for a short time. This will be followed again by tonicization of iv-V, and another rising sequence of C-D-Eb-F-G in the bass that traces a part of the "military theme" sequentially now, instead of the procedure that was used in part 1, to take us away from the c minor key. In my diagram, the borderline between part 2 and 3 is not very clear, on purpose-since these sections are carried through the use of similar sequential patterns.

The surprising thing is that, the same procedure, the falling trills, used in measures 336-339 and also mm 48-50 which was presented without the piano trill there initially- is used to get into this G area; it can basically be described by another motivic expression that is very structurally used throughout the concerto, and specifically at the end of the cadenza (there, only two steps are used from D-D# to E which supports the surprising effect of the key arrival): a falling third filled in by half step motions (or a rising one at the end of the cadence again). These are all musical evidence that supports the strength of the "false" key hearing, from an expected listener's point of view.

The importance of thirds mentioned above-whether they are filled in by half step, carried on through by a double trill (end of cadence) is even more clearer because of the way it is being contrasted by the 5 note falling motive at the very end. The simultaneous occurrence of these two important ideas capture the climax moment, and bring us to the rising trills, namely D, D#, E.

## Second Movement

Quite remote from the tonic of the first movement, the Largo is in E Major. Bar Form reflects the song-like qualities well. The lively figurations on the piano lie side by side with the "radiant" calmness of Beethoven- here is an account on Beethoven's playing for this movement<sup>6</sup> given to us by Czerny: "Beethoven in fact held the pedal (*senza sordino*) during the whole entire statement". This is clearly an indication of how much distance he wishes to put between the two movements, namely the 1st and 2nd tonally- a war-like, energetic piece and a calm song.

The familiar skeleton of a "slow movement form"<sup>7</sup> can be traced in my appendix 1-back side-: a movement to the dominant, transition and a recapitulation that stays in the tonic. As a listener, I agree with Plantiga when he finds the transition-esp the keys and the format of the transition passage- quite surprising; starting out in G Major, and to start from there, Beethoven writes a little transition (to) the transition (mm. 37-38). The key of G major, right at the beginning of the first statement (mm9-11), was already referenced; now we realize it as a structurally important point.

The expansion of the transition that follows, gives a life or a character of its own among the second movement. This can also be tied to the argument, that since Beethoven is trying to "unify" the form- in other words, trying to build explicit continuities with especially the finales of his -especially late- piano concertos generally, he was explicitly using key relations that need transitions of more subtle but complicated and packed nature-similar to his first movements. The third movement, that followed, after all would typically, be a "merry" one, following the stylistic "brooding" music presented.

Musically, the ornamental figurations that already start out in a quite complicated fashion, put Beethoven in a troubled spot to keep it up, especially by mm. 29 (into the 64 sextets) and then the 124s (mm. 31) that derive from the celestial wind tremolo of mm. 11. The other interesting dilemma Beethoven seems to have had is the sharing of the thematic material between the orchestra and the solo at the beginning of the recap (53-60). Piano still has to "comment" very detailistically over an orchestra carrying an important bulk of the theme-a renewal of the primary treatment for the theme. The following codetta, compare mm17-24 with mm. 69 -75) gains richness in its expressivity by upward scales, with a momentum to reach the cadential stop point of 6/4 in mm 81 (between 75-81 is a passage in upward scales, but shifted in its tonal consideration, to arrive at 6/4 in other words). The cadenza figuration is then followed by the echo and an interplay between the orchestra and solo which brings us to an end.

### Rondo-Third movement

Quite typically, and expectedly, the rondo theme in Beethoven's concerto finales, constitutes a genuine ritornello- (R for refrain, E for Episode is used in the chart at Appendix 1). There are two surprising features Beethoven likes to use for his Rondos: the first is the predictability of the music itself (since it has to behave in a set fashion in a rondo form, episodes cutting in-between the refrains) but the unpredictability of "Who plays that music" at that point. In other words, we don't know if the orchestra or the solo would pick the theme. The second surprise comes as a "rule", where Mozart is less strict in his recapitulation- he may or may not have a "double return" (simultaneous

visits of the key and main theme both)- however, we will expect a Beethoven recap- namely the third ritornello, to recap both the key and the main theme.

Again, formally, the key areas that are journeyed through the finale section, make us think of allusions to the sonata form-Beethoven's choice of keys in the ritornellos make us think of an exposition-development-recap type of structure, that may be a bit puzzling. This is actually supportive of the fact that Beethoven might be thinking of unifying the movements of the concerto, by sticking as best as he can, to the key structure (here I consider the sonata form on the basis of its key and related motivic treatment, not as a real alternate solution) of a sonata form. However, the idea of rondo is supposed to invoke and stress juxtaposition, as opposed to "flow and continuity" which is more likely to be attributed to sonata form.

Very broadly, a head motive characterizes the ritornello and an expansive, 55 measure rounded binary, introduces the possibility of "internal returns" in its nested structure-that supports the whole "rondo" idea. The other major structural member of the movement, the episode, is also a large rounded binary, with repeats, and it is highly periodized in 8 measure chunks. The surprises of this movement, do not come from unexpected changes in the placement of these sections-i. e. a false key, or a false placement of them, but from the way Beethoven carries out the ritornello's material and varies it.

If we compare the 4 ritornellos, and how Beethoven varies the coming of the theme, first of all he does not let us hear the theme in its entirety until mm 127 in second ritornello, and "recapitulates" the theme by a more

extravagant cadenza. The third ritornello will cut out material- previously 55 now into 20 measures, and present the theme in minor mode in the orchestra repetition (compare 306-m mode- and 169-M mode)

The fourth ritornello, instead of coming with a final expected finishing by the last presentation, transforms the theme (as discussed above) into a presto, Major, 6/8 version. The coda is said to have the traits that is in-between the D minor and the C minor concertos' codas: it still has a motivic integrity to it, but manages to leave behind a heavy C minor gravity by introducing a new theme in sixth degree, A natural. Followed by the cadential passages of the piano, and two motivic instances from previous ritornellos (b2 from mm 83, b1 from mm 68) at mm. 443, Beethoven will dynamically keep the unity of the whole movement and still sound like he has a coda to a recapped material, just like the continuity of a sonata form piece.

## Conclusion

Beethoven is a clear hallmark of "innovated" Mozart concertos, and he lies in-between the classical tradition and the romantic "wanderings" after him. The classical solo concerto scheme, of a first fast movement in concerto form (that has similar attributes to the sonata form), a slow movement in 3 part-song form, and a fast rondo as a finale, is the route that Beethoven follows for his Third Concerto. The innovative features, described above, mark his individuality, as well as his differences in his expressivity and the motivic use of the themes he has-namely, Mozart's tunes as opposed to Beethoven, are always quoted as more "melodious, lyrical and continuous by its own" Whereas Beethoven uses square, rhythmical, short motivic ideas and

develops them. The way he uses counterparts of his military theme, and the way he fits them motivically into the first movement, and his understanding of “ extended” key areas for the slow movement, followed by a close adherence to exposition-development-recap idea in terms of the key structure in the third movement, are the vital characteristics that have to be mentioned as a result of this paper's scope of analysis.

## References

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## Footnotes:

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1 Plantiga, p. 114. He gives an account of the whole concert, where the first two symphonies, of which the second one would be premiered, as well as an oratorio (Christus am Oelberge) and the Third Piano concerto. The piece wasn't even mentioned in some of the critics: "Reviews of the concert were mixed: The Freimutige reported 'The symphonies and single passages in the oratorio were beautiful, but the work in its entirety was too long..' As for the concerto, neither the composition nor Beethoven's playing of the solo part got much attention from the press... 'Less successful was the following concerto in C minor, that Hr. v. Beethoven, otherwise known as an excellent pianist, performed not completely to the public's satisfaction'"

2 Veinus, 134.

3 "... Beethoven was surely motivated to match or exceed the artistic and popular triumphs of Mozart's concertos of the later 1780s.. a degree of "model composition" was an acceptable procedure at that time, and there are other cases in which he seems to have turned to Mozart's music as models for his own work" Plantiga, 142-in that same section, Plantiga also talks about the chronological possibilities of whether specific Mozart concertos were available to Beethoven at that time or not. He concludes for the affirmative, that Beethoven must have had taken a look at the C minor of Mozart, and then put his long-waiting (since mid 1790s) plans of writing a C-minor concerto, in the light of that as a model.

4 The relationship mentioned here is not very direct-however, it is just intuitional and has arisen during my thinking-cooking phase of my ideas for the paper. For further reference: Burnstein, L. Poundie "Beethoven's False

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Retransitions”, paper read at SMT 2002. Even from the early piano sonatas (the Op. 10 number 1 which is also in C minor has such a false recap in the first movement), on to the much later developed era works like Piano Sonata in Eb (Op. 81 a)- not to mention quartets (Op. 18 no. 2), symphonies (Second Symphony, op. 36-retransition of both first movement and finale), trios for strings (op. 9 no. 3 and Op. 70 no. 2) and sonata for cello and piano (Op. 5 No. 1)- this is a valid procedure that hallmarks Beethoven: false arrivals by surprising key relationships (usually foreign relationships like tonicizing half-one step above the tonic) and then “correcting” his “mistake” by bringing the theme in the correct key.

5 K. 488 in A Major behaves in this exceptional manner, to count one among others, arriving at a ii6 instead of a more usual I, over which closing theme(s) appear covering for the “thematic” material need in this section, which takes us back to V through bVI. (Gauldin, class notes)

6 Plantiga, 144.

7 Plantiga 145-borrowed from Rosen's terminology