

Analysis on beethoven' s piano sonata no3, op 2

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Analysis on Beethoven's Piano Sonata No 3, op. 2, Allegro con brio

Composers since the early classical era have used sonata form to express through music ideas which are at once complex and unified. This form contains a variety of themes and permutations of these themes, but is brought together into a comprehensible whole when these excerpts reappear. Beethoven, in the first movement of his Piano Sonata Opus 2 Number 3 utilizes this form to its full potential, modifying the typical structure in his characteristic way.

The sonata begins softly but with unmistakable energy. The trill like sixteenth notes on the third beat of this motif surge the piece forward into the next bar. The two bar motif appears again, and is then varied and expanded upon for four bars, revealing a sentence. A short tag draws attention to itself with the opening motif in the bass as well as *szforzando* hits and driving syncopation. By measure 13 the principal theme has already passed and the sonata rushes ahead with sixteenth note arpeggios and alternating octaves.

The transition at measure thirteen is the first curiosity of Beethoven's handiwork. The first eight bars go by the book, quite unmemorable and making a clear modulation to G Major. At measure 21 the listener hears a melody high in the register which returns again later in the development, and no longer modulates. At first this may appear as a new section of the piece, but the discriminating listener will hear that this theme is in the dominant, ruling it out as a second principal theme inserted after the transition. This melody ends with a long fall down two octaves to a strong cadence in G, followed by a pause; the medial caesura in the dominant.

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Although typically the medial caesura would cadence on V of the dominant, this cadence is the most common stray from the norm that Beethoven uses in this work. A striking shift in dynamics marks the flowing subordinate theme at measure 27. This piano section begins in g minor but quickly begins to modulate, a very unusual technique to incorporate in this part of the form. He passes through the key of d minor and as the subordinate comes to a close it leads us into a minor and the most curious section of the exposition. The music following the first subordinate theme is loud, rapid, and sequential, moving briefly into both flat and sharp keys and cadencing firmly on a V of V followed by a break in harmonic rhythm; another medial caesura. These attributes do not leave any doubt that this is a second transition, followed by an even stronger medial caesura than that which followed the first transition.

This is an extremely odd addition to a sonata form that few before Beethoven would even contemplate. Convention is returned to as this transition section is trailed correctly once again by a second subordinate theme. Beginning in G major, the second subordinate theme is ornamented by turns, trills, and mordents and is marked “ dolce. ” The right hand continues the running eighth note texture similar to the first subordinate theme, but the left hand plays longer note durations, specifically whole notes in most measures. This subordinate theme modulates also, moving to D major, and finally to a V7 of C before the next segment.

The music of measure 61 allows a variety of options for analysis. It can be considered a subordinate theme or even a transition due to its similarity to mm. 13 and its modulating harmony. However, the forte dynamic and rapid

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sixteenths contrast sharply with the dolce section preceding, making it apparent that the closing themes have begun. This theme begins on a C major chord, but it is soon heard that this is only a IV chord and the section is in G. The alternating octave sixteenth notes on the second and fourth beats of these measures remind the listener of the sixteenths in the opening statement of the sonata stretched to extremes.

The syncopated material in the last four bars of the first closing theme show a clear parallel to the end of the principal theme, another tell of the definition of this material. The music from this section onward is firmly in G major as the exposition nears its close. The dynamic increases to fortissimo at mm. 73 as the texture thins and harmony becomes very clear for a brief section. In this second closing theme G major, G augmented, and E minor⁷ in the bass are strongly arpeggiated before four octaves of C, D and G quickly reaffirm the key of G.

This cadential crash is followed by some of the softest and lightest material of the whole movement, which due to the surrounding measures is proved to still be part of the second closing theme. The exposition is finally completed with a third closing theme. Thundering octaves of scalar G major material with a variety of applied harmonies lead us to the final PAC of the exposition. Beethoven would have surely failed his part-writing test on this last cadence on four counts of parallel fifths and two counts of parallel octaves, with doubled leading tones. After a repeat of the exposition, the performance moves on to the development with the soft material from the second half of closing theme two.

It begins a whole step higher than its first appearance and immediately begins to modulate. Eight bars later new arpeggiated material enters on a Bb7 chord, beginning a twelve bar chromatic bass line moving to C# right before measure 109. Here the opening theme enters, similarly a whole step higher than at the beginning. Hearing the principal theme in the wrong key is a sure sign of a false recapitulation, and the P theme is tossed around the piano for 20 measures, until it latches on to the dominant at the retransition. This dependent retransition leads the listener to fortissimo alterations of the P theme over a pedal G7, and finally to the delicate, racing principal theme at the recapitulation.

Much of Beethoven's recapitulation in Opus 2 Number 3 goes by the book. Most of the structure remains the same and themes which were in the dominant previously return (correctly) transposed into the tonic key. Despite this, a variety of changes and additions don't let us forget Beethoven's musical eccentricities for too long. Just eight bars into the recap new material is heard. The beginning of this transition is not taken from the exposition, but the high melody which ends the first transition in the exposition returns to finish the transition here. Beginning with the recap of the first subordinate theme, nearly sixty bars are by-the-book sonata form, until right before the final closing theme is expected.

The music crashes shockingly into a flowing, rubato-like section starting in the distantly related key of Ab major. This begins a section of music so unclassifiable that it is best referred to as an insert of music breaking this movements flow into the final closing theme. The first four bars of this insert at measure 218 slightly resemble the new material at measure 97 in the <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-on-beethoven-s-piano-sonata-no3-op-2/>

development, but soon break away from all convention as eighth note and triplet phrases are stated and then repeated transposed by whole steps and then half steps at a time. This astonishing section leads into a held C major chord at measure 232 and finally a cadenza that reestablishes the tonic. Just four bars of the principal theme are stated before one last section of new material at mm. 237 is heard.

This idea would serve as fine closing material, and makes it as far as the subdominant of what could be a final cadence before its dynamic drops to piano on the dominant and pianissimo as the bass note moves to ' la' rather than ' do'; a deceptive cadence. Finally the third closing theme appears and concludes the work. Beethoven incorporates mixture to a large degree in order to intensify the expressive qualities of this piece. The first use of the minor mode appears at the subordinate theme, which begins in g minor. Mm. 41 of the transition following this section also clearly shows g minor measures shortly after B and E naturals are played. C minor is suggested for parts of this theme, as well as when this transition reappears in the retransition. Mixture finishes the first two phrases of the development. The first phrase ends on c minor. The next phrase, transposed up a fourth arrives on an f minor chord.

A flats and E flats linger throughout the development, and the Bb major chord at mm. 97 is a mixture chord in either C or G, the primary keys of this piece. The new material following the recapitulation of the principle theme utilizes B flats while ascending chromatically from A to B, suggesting that Beethoven had a minor seventh in mind rather than an applied harmony.

Beethoven's most startling use of mixture is clearly in the "insert" section. The first chord borrows both Ab and Eb from C minor, and this fp Ab Major section comes without any hints before its presence. Beethoven uses a series of very striking modulations through a variety of keys.

The first four bars of measure 218 are in Ab major, as well as bars 222 and 223. For the next two measures Beethoven moves the material from 222 to E diminished with Bb in the bass, and then slides every note up a major second for the two bars immediately after, into F# diminished with C in the bass. In measure 228 a new triplet theme enters on a diminished chord rooted by D, and again every note rises by a whole step in mm. 229. This material is then transposed up by half step for two succeeding measures, until a fermata on a C major 6/4 is held.

This creates an interesting bass line of Ab, Bb, C, D, E, F, F# and G. The augmented chord created by Ab (G#), C and E appears in measure 208, but otherwise the origin of this material is mysterious. Another curiosity in this work is how Beethoven uses just the ends of sections as stand alone ideas later in the work. The end of the first transition reappears without the beginning of this part at measure 155 in the development, although this material is still in the right place (in the first transition in the exposition and then the recapitulation) but the transition in the recapitulation has changed. The soft theme in measure 77 appears there as a closing theme, and also begins the recapitulation. Finally, Beethoven isn't bashful about putting chords in closed position very low in the register.

The measures from 97 to 108 are a prime example of this, as well as the closing cadences of both the exposition and the recapitulation.