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A Sonata-Theory Analysis of Mozart's Piano Sonata in B-flat, K. 333, I. Allegro

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SAMPLE ANALYSIS

The first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata in B-flat, K. 333, has proven in my experience to be an ideal "first piece" on sonata form for undergraduates. It has clearly defined cadences and key areas, and exhibits all of the most typical traits referred to in any theory of sonata form. My analysis of this movement is based on Sonata Theory, which is fully explained in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, by Warren Darcy and James Hepokoski. Although it is relatively new, Sonata Theory has been deeply influential in professional level analysis, though it has made its way into the undergraduate classroom somewhat more slowly.

In addition to my analysis, I have also included the handout I provide my students on Sonata Theory. None of the major textbooks cover this topic yet, and it is not reasonable to expect students to buy an expensive scholarly monograph for a three-week portion of one class, so I have been able to make do with these two pages.

Seth Monahan's article, "Sonata Theory in The Undergraduate Classroom," provides an excellent resource for anyone who has yet to explore pedagogical applications of Sonata Theory. Containing both a brief explanation of the theory itself and an annotated list of movements that are appropriate introductions to various topics that are raised within the theory. In perusing Monahan's list of movements for use, however, I did not see the first movement of K. 333, which prompted me to submit this analysis. Not only is it a highly typical sonata form, and therefore ideally suited for beginners, but it is also available in Burkhardt, *Anthology for Musical Analysis* (6th and 7th editions), which is one of the more commonly used anthologies (not to mention IMSLP).

The graph itself is the product of a somewhat idiosyncratic system I've developed over the years. For me, the first step in the analysis of form is always the identification of cadences because they define phrases and reveal the important key areas. With that in mind I always begin with the arcs, each of which stand for one phrase that ends in a cadence. Each cadence in the graph includes both its location, given in a measure number, and its identity (e.g., PAC, IAC, or HC). Melodic material is identified with small letters above the arcs and the sections that are labeled according to Sonata Theory terms are in boxes.

My analysis of the development departs from the "arcs and cadences" model because phrase structure in development sections tends to be less stable and to have fewer cadences. My practice is to identify the three main phases of the development, which differs slightly from that of Hepokoski & Darcy. Whereas they assert four phases in a development, the first of which is optional, I prefer to leave the optional first phase out of it for beginners and to assert just three: presentation of the Primary theme in the new key, the main action space, and the dominant lock.

I do not use this graph in the classroom. Rather, I have students listen to the piece twice while taking notes in the score. We talk in advance about what things they should be listening and looking for and then I let them work. After they have listened to it, I encourage them to talk to their neighbors about their choices and then I lead the whole class in a discussion. The discussion begins with the identification of the global key and the three large sections of the

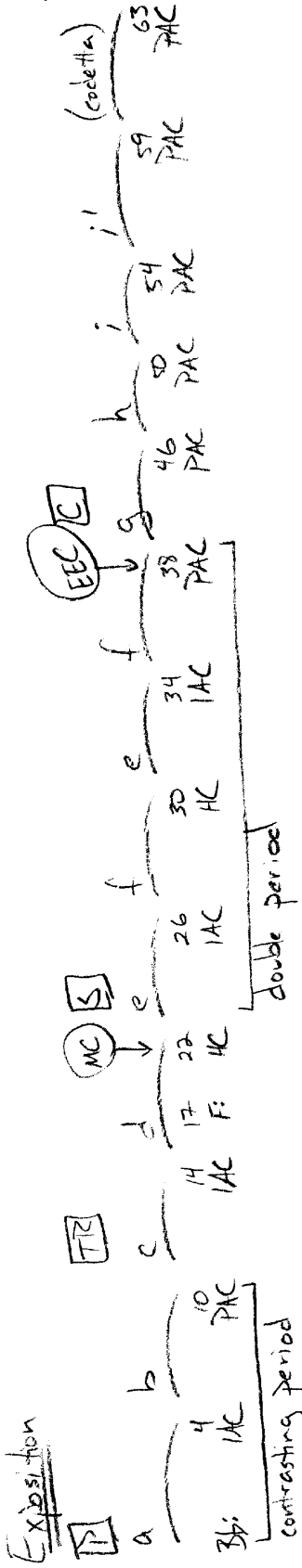
form. We then begin an analysis of the exposition by identifying the location of the MC. I do this both because the MC is usually obvious and because its central position within the exposition provides a means of looking both forward and backward, which gets students out of the habit of thinking too linearly about music (this happens, then this happens, then this happens, etc.). I catalog the various choices class members have made, then consider each one in turn, showing how it fits all, some, or none of the requirements for an MC. This process is repeated until it eventually results in a complete analysis of the form.

Having used this movement as a “first piece” seven times now, the primary analytical difficulty one is likely to encounter is the location of the EEC/ESC. Beginners tend to be dazzled by the trill in m. 58, thinking that because it draws so much attention it must be important and is therefore the EEC. Sonata Theory, however, is very clear about “The First-PAC Rule,” which is stated as follows: “One central feature of Sonata Theory is its emphasis, after the onset of the secondary theme, on the attainment of the first satisfactory perfect authentic cadence that proceeds onward to differing material.” (p. 120) A strict reading of this piece therefore has the EEC occurring in m. 38. I hasten to add that, when it occurs, this point of tension between what a student hears and what a theory requires opens up the possibility of some critical thinking regarding analysis itself. Various questions are appropriate, including “From whence does this rule derive?” “What purpose does it serve?” and “What happens if one ‘disobeys’ the rule?” Furthermore, I think it is vital to ask whether or not one might perform the work differently based on how one interprets the trill in m. 58. In other words, the EEC question provides a limited but rich opportunity to begin working towards a more mature mode of analysis, one that transcends labeling and thoughtfully considers the issues involved in the interpretation of music.

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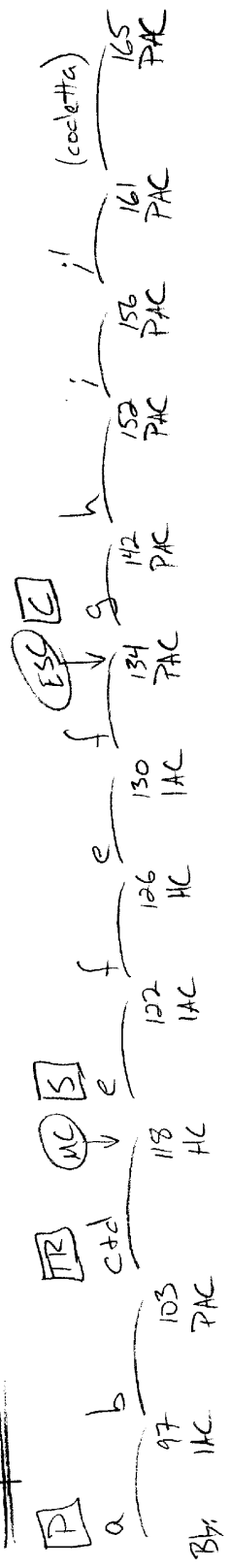
Mozart: Piano Sonata in B \flat major, K. 333, I. Allegro



Development

- ① mm. 64-71
F-based, in F:
- ② 71-88
fragmentation + modulation
c: @ 72, B \flat : @ 75, g: @ 79, B \flat : @ 87
- ③ 88-93
"Dominant lock"
B \flat : I pedal →

Recapitulation



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Hepokoski, James, and Warren Darcy. *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

TERMS AND CONCEPTS OF SONATA THEORY

Closing Space (C): follows the first satisfactory PAC in the new key and serves to confirm the new key, typically via multiple PACs

Coda: an optional (para-generic) space after the Recapitulation; can be brief or quite lengthy

Codetta: as I use it, this term refers to spin-off from the last emphatic PAC of the closing section

Development: the second “action space,” characterized by fragmentation of themes heard in the Exposition and multiple modulations; typically ends with a prolongation of dominant harmony in the home key to set up the Recapitulation

Dominant lock: an extended period of music that anticipates the arrival of tonic harmony along with the beginning of a new section, such as the Recapitulation

Essential Expositional Closure (EEC): in the Exposition, the first satisfactory PAC within the secondary key that goes on to differing material

Essential Structural Closure (ESC): in the Recapitulation, the cadence analogous to the EEC; the tonal goal of the entire sonata form

Exposition: the first of three large “action spaces” in which the tonal problem is presented; consists of P, transition, S, and C

Introduction: an optional (para-generic) space before the Exposition; typically slow

MC Fill: optional music that fills the conceptual gap left vacant by the MC

Medial Caesura (MC): a cadence that is the goal of the Transition and articulates the mid-way point of the exposition; the default cadences are V:HC, I:HC, V:PAC, and I:PAC, presented in order of importance/frequency

Primary theme zone (P): usually the first theme you hear, presented in the tonic key

Recapitulation: the third “action space,” which is a restatement of the Exposition with the tonal problem resolved; begins when P returns in the home key; does not modulate

Secondary theme zone (S): follows the MC and drives toward a satisfactory PAC in the new key

Sonata form: a “grand binary” of which the first half is called the Exposition and the second half is comprised of the Development and the Recapitulation; the first half is frequently repeated, but the second half is repeated less often.

Transition: follows P and effects the modulation from the home key to the contrasting key

Sonata form *à la* Sonata Theory

(Introduction)

Exposition

P

TR → MC

S → EEC

C

NB! Typical modulations are

from I → V

from i → III

from i → v

Development

1. P in the new key
2. fragmentation, sequences, modulations
3. Dominant (V) lock

Recapitulation

P

TR → MC

S → ESC

C

(Coda)