

SUBDOMINANT TENDENCIES IN THE FIRST MOVEMENT OF BEETHOVEN'S STRING QUARTET IN B FLAT, OP. 130

In a discussion regarding musical expectation, Leonard Meyer argues that: "Revision of opinion [...] is [...] important in the perception of form. [...]the listener often finds it necessary to revise his opinions of what is still to come in the light of an unexpected present. Thus the meaning and significance of the slow introduction to a sonata form movement will depend in part upon later developments which may take place in the allegro. The significance of the slow introduction to Beethoven's Piano Sonata, Op. 111 is quite different from that of the introduction to his String Quartet, Op. 130. The Sonata creates strong tension and suspense relative to the impending allegro which, because of what we know about sonata form in the classical style, is expected. The [introduction to the] Quartet creates much less tension but serves as a source for many later developments as well as a factor in the articulation of events within the allegro proper. These differences become clearer and more specific as each work unfolds (Meyer 60)."

By contrasting these two excellently chosen examples of sonata movements that begin with a slow introduction, Meyer demonstrates one of the many ways in which memory conditions the present perception of musical structure. In the case of Op. 111, a long and dramatic *maestoso* opening leads into the allegro, which is then free to develop along its own lines. The introduction is therefore remembered as an intense yet predictable structural feature. In a very different manner, the relaxed *adagio* that introduces the quartet is neither long nor dramatic, yet its reappearance at several key places within the movement requires that the listener continuously 'revise' their perception of the meaning of the introductory material. Given that the *adagio* plays such an important structural role in the movement as a whole, it may become inappropriate to refer to it as an introduction at all.

