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MUTH 5360: Analytical Techniques II

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Leonard Meyer claims that "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 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 (Meyer 60)."

On this paper I will focus on the piano sonata Op. 111, exploring the slow introduction's repercussions on important moments of the next allegro and on its influence on the design of the second movement's theme. I will start by first describing the proportions of the 3 opening gestures of the introduction's beginning exploring why, besides its evident harmonic instability with a clear direction towards the dominant of the piece (G major m. 11), I hear them as producing a sensation of uncertainty and tension which has direct implications on the proportions and design of important sections of the allegro and adagio.

The introduction starts with 3 strong gestures which, after stating the dominant key of G major in the first inversion (m. 2, 3rd beat), continue expanding leading the opening into instability,

tension, and uncertainty when the pattern breaks and a structural gap (Meyer 44, 130) is exposed in the third gesture of the opening adagio, measures 5-6. I hear this gap as breaking the pattern in two different ways; in terms of its harmonic content and on the comparative proportions regarding the two previous opening gestures, see example 1.

Example 1:

Maestoso.

Sonate N° 32.

Gesture 1, 7 beats + 1/4 (8 beats)

Componiert im Januar 1822.

Gesture 2 (8 beats)

Gesture 2* (7 beats) Breaks the pattern (contracts)

Fully diminish chord, G-H

Bb minor harmony

p

dimin.

pp

sempre pp

As shown on the previous example the two first strong gestures produce a pattern; both are 7 beats long plus a quarter note silence, and the first measure of both gestures is built over a fully diminish chord (mm. 1 and 3). The pattern is achieved by an exact transposition of the first gesture to a 4th up (mm. 3-4). The 3rd gesture starts also by continuing the transposition and expansion to a 4th up, but a structural gap is produced by breaking the expectations of the harmonic content of the 3rd gesture and by reducing its length in comparative proportion with

the two previous ones. The harmonic content changes in the 2nd beat of measure 5 when instead of keeping the fully diminished sonority of the first measure – as in the previous 2 gestures – the harmony moves to a b flat minor chord (m.5, beat 2), changing the harmonic direction of the third gesture and leading it into uncertainty. This uncertainty produced by the changing of the harmonic content is reinforced by a reduction on the comparative proportions of length of this gesture; at this instance the gesture consists of only 7 beats, which I hear as proportionally contrasting with the 8 beats length (7 beats of sound plus 1 of silence) of the 2 previous gestures.

As exposed on the previous paragraph I hear this opening segment as creating a pattern of 3 gestures which break the expectations on the 3rd one by altering its proportion and changing its harmonic direction, creating in this fashion variety, uncertainty and continuity of thought. This has direct implications on many different segments of the impending allegro, but it is most clearly exposed on the exposition's closing segment design (mm. 58-69) and on the beginning of the development (mm. 72- 76), see example 2.

Example 2:

Handwritten musical score for Example 2, measures 56-69. The score is written for piano (piano) and includes the following annotations:

- Measure 56: *non legato*
- Measure 57: *p cresc.*
- Measure 58: *ff*
- Measure 59: *sf*
- Measure 60: *ff*
- Measure 61: *sf*
- Measure 62: *ff*
- Measure 63: *sf*
- Measure 64: *ff*
- Measure 65: *sf*
- Measure 66: *ff*
- Measure 67: *sf*
- Measure 68: *ff*
- Measure 69: *sf*

Handwritten annotations include:

- "Gesture 1 (4 beats)" written above measures 58-61.
- "Similar Metrical accentuation with Gesture 2:" written below measures 62-69.

Pattern of 3 gestures

59 Gesture 2 (4 beats) Gesture 3 (6 beats) Breaks the pattern (Expands) Pattern of 3 gestures

Similar to Gesture 1

62 Gesture 1 (4 beats) Gesture 2 (4 beats) Gesture 3 (6 beats) Breaks Pattern (Expands) Pattern of 3 gestures Gesture 1 (3 1/2 beats)

65 Gesture 2 (3 1/2 beats) Gesture 3 (2 beats) Break pattern (contracts) Closing gesture

68

72 Pattern of 3 gestures Gesture 1 (4 beats) Gesture 2 (4 beats) Gesture 3 (8 beats) Breaks pattern (Expands)

cresc. sf p sempre piano

As marked on example 2 the pattern breaks on its third gesture. In this regard I would like to clarify that the pattern between measures 58 to 61 (2nd beat) and measures 61 (3rd beat) to 64

(3rd beat) doesn't follow exactly the design of the opening pattern of the introduction. The 2nd gesture of both passages is not an exact transposition of its previous one; nevertheless I hear it as a pattern because of its similarity in regards of their proportions and metrical accentuation with respect to its previous gesture (m. 58 to m.59, and m. 61 (3rd beat) to m. 63 (2nd beat)).

After establishing a pattern based on the proportions of length and metrical stress (each one of 4 beats) I hear the pattern breaking by the appearance of what I could expect as a metrical continuation of the pattern, but instead this third gesture expands in terms of its proportion (6 beats) exposing a structural gap between m. 60 and m. 61 (2nd beat). The same can be said regarding the next 3 gestures between measures 61 (3rd beat) and 64 (2nd beat); a structural gap is exposed when the metrical pattern breaks featuring a third gesture which length (6 beats) shows an expansion of 2 beats with relation to its previous ones (4 beats each), this gap occurs between m. 63 (3rd beat) and m. 64 (2nd beat). Following, between measures 64 (3rd beat) to measure 66 (4th beat), I hear another group of 3 gestures on which the second one, measure 65 (3rd beat) to measure 66 (2nd beat) is a direct repetition of the first one, creating a pattern of repetition. Each one of these 2 gestures consists of 3 ½ beats, and a structural gap is exposed when the metrical expectations of the expected 3rd gesture break in measure 66 (3rd and 4th beats). This 3rd gesture contracts its proportions in length (it is only 2 beats long) and forcefully leads the closing section of the exposition to a strong closure in A flat (m. 67 to 2nd beat of m.69).

Continuing with the explanation of example two I would like to comment about the similar proportional characteristics of the opening gestures of the development between m. 72 (3rd beat) and m.76 (2nd beat). These 3 gestures follow more closely the model of the opening

gestures of the introduction. In this case the second gesture (3rd beat of m. 73 to 2nd beat of m. 74) is proportional in length to the previous one (3rd beat of m. 72 to 2nd beat of m. 73), both consisting of 4 beats of length. Also, the second one is a direct transposition of the first gesture down to a major second, which produces a pattern. This pattern breaks when the expected 3rd gesture, which starts as expected a major second below the previous one, expands its length to 8 beats producing an audible structural gap.

Following I will describe the influence of the opening 3 gestures of the slow introduction to the allegro on the design of the theme of the Arietta. I hear the Arietta theme as a transformation in character of the opening 3 gestures of the slow introduction, transformation which I hear has been achieved by the coda of the allegro (mm. 150-158). I hear the coda as a group of 3 gestures, gestures which have their genesis on the opening 3 gestures of the introduction. The gestures at the coda transform the meaning of the opening strong dramatically uncertain gestures into a group of still uncertain gestures, but at this instance featuring a complete different harmonic direction (towards the major tonic, C major), character and atmosphere than those of the opening. The transformation achieved in the coda, besides creating a strong expectation by leading the movement to end up on an unexpected C major on a PP color, awakes a strong expectation on my ear for the upcoming movement, expectation which is fulfill after hearing the Arietta's theme an uncover its proportional and melodic expansive design, which I hear as having its genesis on the 2 mentioned passages of the first movement, see example 3a, 3b, 3c.

Example 3a:

Sonate N° 32. *Maestoso.* *Componirt im Januar 1822.*

Gesture 1 (8 beats)

Gesture 2 (8 beats)

Gesture 3 (7 beats) Breaks pattern (Contracts)

Example 3b:

Gesture 1 (8 beats) Melodic design (C-D-E)

Gesture 2 (8 beats) M.D. (C-F-G) (Expands)

Gesture 3 (18 beats) M.D. (C-B-C) (Expands) Metrically breaks the pattern

8

| Gesture 1 (3 beats) M.D. (C-G) | Gesture 2 (3 beats) M.D. (D-G) (Expands) | Gesture 3 (7 beats) (Expands) M.D. (G-E) Different metrical placement of the Melodic interval Expands, breaks the pattern |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Example 3c: | | |

ARIETTA.
Adagio molto semplice e cantabile.

As shown in example 3b, these 3 gestures of the closing segment of the allegro reveal a pattern structure, evidenced by the appearance of the second gesture between m. 152 (3rd beat) and m. 154 (2nd beat). Measures 150 (3rd beat) to 152 (2nd beat) feature the first gesture of the pattern which proportion is of 8 beats long exposing a melodic design of an ascending major third (pitches C-D-E). Measures 152 (3rd beat) to 154 (2nd beat) feature the second gesture of the pattern which proportion is also 8 beats long, featuring an expanding melodic design of an ascending fifth with respect to its predecessor (pitches C-F-G). Measures 154 (3rd beat) to the end of the movement present the third gesture of the pattern. This last gesture breaks the pattern in terms of its proportion (18 beats) and in terms of the metrical placing of its melodic content, exposing a structural gap. In terms of its proportion this last gesture considerably expands its length. In terms of its melodic content it keeps expanding, as expected, featuring a melodic design of an ascending octave (pitches C-B-C), but the metrical placing between the

last two pitches (B and C) is proportionally longer than the placing of the last two pitches of its two predecessors. In the case of its two predecessors this distance is of an 8th note value in time, dramatically contrasting with the 4 full beats distance between the last two pitches of this 3rd gesture, breaking my expectations and therefore exposing a final structural gap for the movement.

Example 3c evidences the expanding melodic design of the theme of the Arietta. I hear the architecture of this theme as having been anticipated by example 3b, which is a masterful transformation of example 3a. As shown in example 3c the 4 first measures of the Arietta's theme evidence a pattern of 3 gestures. The upbeat of measure 1 to the second beat of the same measure - I am considering each beat as having three 16th notes - features the first gesture of the pattern, which proportion is of 3 beats and its melodic design features a descending fourth interval (pitches C-G). The upbeat of measure 2 to the second beat of m. 2 present the second gesture of the pattern, which proportion is also of three beats and its melodic design reveals an expansion featuring a descending fifth interval (pitches D-G). The upbeat of measure 3 to the 3rd beat of m. 4 features the 3rd gesture of the pattern, which proportion expands its length to 7 beats. This last gesture continues the expected melodic expansion, but at this time it expands with an ascending interval of a sixth (pitches G-E), which contrast with previous melodic expansion achieved by descending motion. The change of the direction of the melodic expansion combined with the metrical placement of the expanding melodic interval - 1st beat of m.3 instead of been at the expected upbeat of m.3-, and reinforced with its proportional expansion in length break the expectations and expose the first structural gap of the movement.