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MUTH 3510

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July 1, 2010

"The greatest creative benefactor of all time," Ludwig van Beethoven's mastery of the sonata form has infatuated musicologists for years.¹ In his *Ninth Symphony*, Beethoven breaks from the traditional form while still weaving together a cohesive movement. From the first note the controversy begins. It is not common to include a slow introduction to the first theme and restate both the slow introduction with each occurrence of the main theme. In what other ways does Beethoven break from tradition?

The transition (see Ex. 1, next page) moves down a minor third from the original key of d minor to Bb major. Although the main theme (mm. 17-20) is repeated in the transition, it is not in the tonic key of d minor. Instead, Beethoven presents the main theme in the key of the second area, Bb major (see Ex. 2). This altered theme leaves a subconscious wanting for resolution. The timpani is pounding away on D, simply refusing to move to the new key.

Ex 2

51 52 53 54

Tmp.

d: V⁶ 6 4 5 3 V⁷/V

D4 is the chord member
3rd of Bb
though,
right?

→ a hair misleading; there's
no D4 sounding against
the V⁷/Bb.

¹ Scherman, Thomas. *The Beethoven Companion*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1972, xi.

10/2/2015

$$\frac{\Delta}{n}$$
 $\frac{1}{2}$

IV/15

a good start, turn major script
and add a script for minor
motion

7th 11th 15th
in the
bass

2nd level length 2

Although the piece is still in d minor, the ear hears Bb major. An auditory hesitation is created from the timpani playing the 3rd. Therefore, the key of Bb major is not rooted this early. Looking back, the absence of the major third in measure 78 prolongs the anticipation of a full Bb major sonority. Since Bb major theme remains unfulfilled, Beethoven cannot dare give a full V7 of Bb yet. In measure 73, an F7 chord holds the key of Bb major in place until measure 80, where the second theme begins (see Ex. 3). The two key areas, d minor and Bb major, are linked by the V/III chord, measure 72, by moving G to Gb to F (see Ex. 4).

Ex. 3

V^b

*I'd
back
this
up to
m. 72
which
(you're right about
the 6th)*

*sounds like and to
chord; we'd call it
a F7 + 6*

Fr.

*1st ulu.
b = 1
sta
4, 1 2nd ulu.
b = 1
celli
Bb: F7 + 6 to U*

Ex. 5

315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326

sf

d:

I⁷/N

327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338

I⁶

I⁷ not root !

339 340 341 342 343 344 345

I⁷

I

*I suspect there's
long range voice-
leading over the
turn on the pedal.*



Ex. 4

3

ah, here it is!

The same cannot be said for the recapitulation of the first theme moving to the second theme (see Ex. 5, next page). The main theme, which appears in the transition in Bb major, is now firmly in the tonic key of d minor (see. Ex. 6). With the timpani pounding away on d, this time with support from the cello, bass, and brass, the energy is much greater. Instead of emphasizing instability, as in example 2, Beethoven employs one of the oldest tricks in the book, tonic overload. In case there is any chance that the



this sentence got chopped off.

Restating the main theme in d minor, as expected in the recapitulation, although at a fortissimo dynamic, allows Beethoven to completely eliminate the transition where so much work was necessary to reach the second theme in Bb major of the exposition (see

Ex. 5). Since the main theme is self-sufficient, and the second theme will remain in d minor, the bombastic recap simply diminuendos into a V7 chord in measure 339 (see Ex. 7). This is the perfect setup for the second theme. Beethoven simply slides the V7 into first inversion which functions as a leading tone to d minor. Again he supports the V7 with tradeoffs of A between brass/timpani and strings (see Ex. 7).

Ex 7

Using the same style voice-leading as in Example 4, Beethoven creates tension and release along with melodic excitement with step-wise motion. In measure 331, the B natural moves by half-step to Bb, while the G moves to F natural (see Ex. 8).

Ex. 8

These moves are found all over the recapitulation. In measure 324-325, by simply inverting the V7/iv, step-wise motion is created by moving from A to G (see Ex. 9).

Ex. 9

In a broader view, Beethoven moves us from the chord qualifier, F – F# – G – A – G – F, all within the confines of the formidable d from timpani/brass and strings (see Ex. 10).

Ex. 10

very good!
the idea is
better than the
example that
blows it
out

This amount of simple step-wise motion gives Beethoven the opportunity to create humongous amounts of interest with minimal work; an opportunity he does not waste.

Therefore, Beethoven makes his biggest moves with the smallest amount of motion. Using step-wise motion, he takes us through unexpected keys and even breaks away from traditional sonata form. Even great composers would miss the opportunity for a “triumphant D major long withheld.”² Since the fortissimo D minor theme succeeds in the recapitulation, (remember the instability of the Bb major in first inversion in the exposition) by way of the V7 sliding right to D major (Ex. 7), Beethoven flaunts his mastery of harmony and form.