

Beethoven, *Sonate Opus 10 Number 1*
Analysis by David Mitchell

This subordinate theme is a perfect example of his mastery of compositional technique. He uses only two thematic ideas to compose this entire subordinate theme section. Everything is based on related material. The only exception is measure eighty-six to eighty-nine, where he borrowed from the main theme. Reading the Rufer excerpt helps us see the similarity of thematic material that gives this loose knit subordinate theme its structure. Like Rufer says, Beethoven is using repetition with variation to give the subordinate theme continuity. The structure is not readily apparent until you look closely at the thematic material.

In measure forty-nine, Beethoven introduces the first theme in quarter notes supported by dominant prolongation. Measures forty-nine to fifty are the basic idea that features a suspension that is prominent throughout the main theme and subordinate theme. What follows this basic idea is a tight knit sentence that ends with an imperfect authentic cadence in measure fifty-six. This measure also marks the beginning of the second theme, so there is elision of the first and second themes. The first theme returns in the closing section (measure ninety-five). This return is tonally adjusted to emphasize the tonic, but the suspension on count one is still present. The closing section material is entirely, first theme basic idea material.

Cadentially, Beethoven loosens the structure by avoiding a perfect authentic cadence throughout the subordinate theme. The first perfect authentic cadence comes in measure ninety-four. And it is weakened by continued motion in the accompaniment. The final P.A.C. in measure 105 is interesting because Beethoven suspends a dominant over the tonic for two beats.

The second theme is a sentence structure that starts in measure fifty-six with a four measure basic idea. That is repeated three times. The first repetition is at the dominant starting in measure sixty. The second repetition is embellished and expanded with an eighth note staccato scale. The third repetition is at the dominant and starts with another eighth note staccato scale. The underlying harmony from measure fifty-six to measure sixty-three and measure sixty-four to measure seventy is the same. It is one long section of tonic prolongation in the key of Eb. The harmonic structure and motivic similarity makes this section an expanded presentation phrase featuring the loosening technique of repetition of the basic idea.

The continuation=cadential phrase starts at measure seventy-one and features harmonic acceleration and fragmentation that is all supported by an extended cadential progression. This continuation is repeated with variation starting in measure seventy-eight. The evidence for this repetition of the continuation is the G, Ab, A, Bb chromatic motive from measure seventy-one to seventy-four. It is repeated and sequenced starting with measure seventy-nine and ending in measure eighty-six. This is an example of Beethoven's genius. The pedal Eb and the neighboring and substitute chord harmonies make this entire section and the return of the main theme basic idea in measure eighty-six, one long tonic prolongation that ends in measure ninety-four with the perfect authentic cadence. Wow!

A fragment of the main theme returns in measures eighty-six to eighty-nine. It is supported by tonic prolongation. There is a diminished seventh neighboring chord borrowed from G minor. This is a purely contrapuntal chord progression that continues the tonic prolongation that was started in measure seventy-eight.

This whole subordinate theme is an amazing use of compositional techniques. One could talk about this subordinate in greater detail, but it would require an extended paper.

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