

Mozart's Clarinet Quintet in A Major, K. 581 iv.  
By David Mitchell

The formal functions of this period by Mozart are quite conventional, but there are some subtle motivic ideas that create a sense of opening up in the antecedent phrase and closing down in the consequent phrase.

Harmonically, the structure is simple. There is a minor third substitute chord to open the basic idea. Measure two uses minor second and dominant prolongational chords. Measure three features a neighboring first inversion dominant. The fourth measure is where things get tricky. There is a half cadence on count three, but the predominant is missing. In place of the predominant, Mozart uses a trill and increase rhythmic activity to help build the sense of a cadence. He also reinforces the sense of a cadence by having the ensemble arrive together on a half note dominant. All rhythmic activity stops.

The consequent phrase begins with a repetition of the basic idea, but measure seven begins with a minor six chord that serves as a substitute for the tonic. This minor six chord could almost be interpreted as a deceptive cadence. But in this case I believe it is merely a tonic substitution chord. Besides the minor six, the cadential harmony is a two six, dominant and tonic for a clear P.A.C.

The motive of the basic idea is the first measure quarter note descending third pattern. The second measure is a repetition of the motive a step lower. But there is a leap up to the f sharp and increased rhythmic activity to create a sense of opening up. The rhythm of the contrasting idea parallels the basic idea, but there is a dramatic leap of a fifth in the clarinet to further the sense of opening up. The contrasting idea in the

consequent phrase has a sense of closing down because the clarinet's motive is lowered by a fifth. But if you listen to this piece the first violin plays it motive an octave higher, so at the same time there is a sense of opening up in the string parts. Despite the P.A.C. this period feels like it ends with moment that is propelling it into the next section.

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