

Mozart's Five-Part Rondo
Analysis by David Mitchell

This beautiful adagio movement from Mozart's Piano Sonata K. 570 in Eb major is a five-part rondo. Mozart uses period, sentence, small ternary, and small binary formal functions to give this piece variety and continuity. He also arpeggiates an inversion of an Ab major chord, this is the subdominant of the key of Eb major. This subdominant arpeggiation is consistent with his treatment of the work as a whole. The entire three-movement work is in Bb major and Mozart puts this adagio movement in the key of Eb, this is the subdominant of the tonic key of Bb major.

The first refrain is a small ternary that begins in measure one and finishes at measure twelve. Its A section is a tight-knit period that ends with a perfect authentic cadence in measure four. The B section of this small ternary consists of melodic/motivic material from the contrasting idea of the antecedent (measure 2). Mozart does not use this full refrain again in this movement. Instead, he uses only the A section of this small ternary with a perfect authentic cadence at each return of the refrain.

The first couplet is another small ternary that immediately starts in the key of C minor. The key of Eb has been confirmed by two perfect authentic cadences in the refrain and doesn't need any further elaboration. This small ternary ends at measure twenty-three and it is followed by a second ending retransition to the refrain.

The second couplet is where things get interesting. It starts immediately in the key of Ab major. Its form is small binary and it has development like qualities. Measures thirty-six and thirty-seven could be considered the point of furthest remove. It is very difficult to determine what key Mozart is in at that point. But he clears up this

Ambiguity by measure thirty-nine with a perfect authentic cadence in the key of Ab major. Measures forty to forty-two are retransition back to the key of Eb major and refrain.

The coda is a sentence structure with an abbreviated and embellished presentation section. The continuation is expanded and ends in measure fifty-three beat three with a perfect authentic cadence that is followed by a codetta.

The overall key scheme is an Eb refrain, C minor couplet one, and Ab major couplet two. This is a second inversion Ab major. This is a parallel relationship to a three sonata as a whole because it also emphasizes a Bb to Eb key relationship between movements one, two, and three.

Mozart uses a variety of formal functions and an unusual modulation to the subdominant to give this slow movement variety and tonal interest.

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