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A Comparison/Contrast of  
Two Beethoven Piano  
Sonata Movements

In a simple-minded attempt to compare/contrast the two slow movements from Beethoven's Op 7 and Op 10 no 3 piano sonatas, a separate analysis of each piece seems appropriate before connections can be made. Therefore:

The opening eight bars of Beethoven's op. 7 Largo constitute his first sentence in this piece. Starting in C-major, Beethoven moves from I through V back to I. Bars 1-8 can be subdivided into two four bar phrases and further subdivided into units of two measures each. Beethoven's main theme appears in the first two bars: a double neighbor progression in the soprano around I. Bars 3-4 are an extension of this theme (continued rhythmically in the soprano) over a move to V4-2. Beethoven closes his first sentence with typical cadential harmonies in bars 5-8. A voice exchange in bar 5 outlines I6, which moves to ii6, then to V, and finally to a close in bar 8 back on I. Suspensions in bars 5 and 8 increase the forward momentum of these bars.

The following eight bars form a consequent phrase to the opening sentence. Like most consequent phrases, these eight bars use applied chords to V for the impression of a larger scale I-V-I. Here again, 2 measure subdivisions seem apparent. Bars 9-10 and bars 11-12 are copies of one another, both decorating V with a simple applied chord. In bar 13 Beethoven makes his move back I. He feigns a repeat of bars 9 or 11 but reintroduces the f-natural in the alto to bring the music back home to I. The a-flat in bar 13 helps to obscure V as real tonal region in the move back to I. This move back to I is punctuated by a restatement of the opening double neighbor theme. This recurrence of the opening may be seen as the beginning of a new phrase instead of the close of an old, but nevertheless, a subtle shift in the harmonic rhythm has occurred.

The next eight bars show Beethoven's desire to quickly obscure the tonic through increased harmonic complexity. A rising chromatic bass pattern controls bars 17-19, outlining the progression ii-IV-viio/V-V with applied diminished seventh chords. Bars 20-23 seem to merely extend the harmonic material of the preceding bars to a final close on I in bar 24. Notice bar 20's chords all relate to ii; bar 21 leads to IV; and bar 23 embellishes V with a applied chord. So far, the first 24 bars constitute the A section of this piece, firmly in C-major, I.

The recapitulation of the opening theme comes in bar 51, so logically, the next section of the piece spans bars 25-50. This new section starts off with simple four bar phrases. Not so

simple are the key areas which this developmental section explores. Beethoven jumps immediately into a-flat major in bar 25 (bVI of C major). This a-flat was subtly foreshadowed by Beethoven, however, in the bass motion of bar 13. The seemingly new melodic material in bars 25-28, complicated by the figuration, also finds its roots in previous material. Beethoven uses the same rhythmic pacing for the suspension of bars 7-8 as he does for bars 25-26. Also, the rising bass figure which drives the four bar phrase of bars 25-28 relates back to the rising bass motion which drove bars 17-19. As a completion of an eight bar phrase, bars 29-32 move from V to I. These bars, however, are in the new tonal region of f-minor. The melodic material and bass figuration are similar to bars 25-28, showing Beethoven's use of semi-sequential writing when moving quickly through key areas.

Bars 33-36 show a transposition of bars 25-28 into d-flat major. Beethoven could have moved to B-flat minor in bar 37 as a sequential extension of bars 33-36, but for variety and practicality's sake, he uses the V of d-flat major as an augmented sixth chord to our original tonic, C-major. Bars 36-50 are functionally just an extension of the dominant, very similar to a dominant pedal in a sonata's first movement. But Beethoven is a little more delicate with this slow movement. He touches on a bVII version of the opening theme in bars 42-43, maybe in an effort to give the feel of a minor I. Afterwards, he spends much time arpeggiating the diminished seventh of V with neighbor notes before he finally lands on the functional V

in bar 50. On a large scale, therefore, bars 25-50 serve as Beethoven's B section, an area of relative tonal ambiguity (although functionally serving as V and its precursors) which contrasts section A.

Beethoven writes a standard recapitulation in bars 51-74 with a few small changes. The consequent phrase of bars 59-66 is recomposed with some superficial neighbor notes. Bar 73 is recomposed with a stroke-of-genius passing a-flat in the bass which relates back to bar 63 and the B section. The last bar of the eight bar phrase starting in measure 67, though, starts a new "phrasette". This juxtaposition of the beginning of a phrase with the end of another is a second example of a shift in the harmonic rhythm like 65-66. Bars 74-78 recall the B section with the melody in the bass. Beethoven's codetta lasts from bar 79 to the end. Most harmonic motion is static, as in most codas. The articulation of chromaticism from a-natural through a-flat to g-natural in bar 83 is another motivic recall, proving the importance of this particular motive. Bars 87-88 use this motivic a-a flat-g motion to re-harmonize the opening theme for a final close, V-I, in bar 90.

Opus 10 no. 3 starts as well with an eight bar phrase, but in d minor. The first two bars expose Beethoven's main theme, characterized by a neighbor note figure in the soprano. The following two bars make use of this c-sharp lower neighbor in the bass to extend the progression. Notice the two voice exchanges between soprano and bass in bar 3 and beginning of bar 4 (disregarding the ornamental f-sharps). Bar 5 comes to a rest

on iv, after which the bass continues upward to the dominant for a close back on i in bar 9. In fact, these opening eight bars are controlled by a rising bass: d-e-f sharp-g-g sharp-a.

Beethoven starts afresh in d minor for his next eight bar phrase. He introduces a new sixteenth note figuration in the bass, presumably to increase the rhythmic dynamic of the piece in such an early stage. The neighbor figure appears in the bass of bars 9-10, but now with a new melody above. Beethoven begins a repeat of bars 9-10 in bars 11-12, but rewrites the last chord to bring him to C major in bar 13. The next four bars act as cadence in C major. Like the previous four bars, these four bars can be split into two harmonically similar two bar pieces. The harmonies run I-V/V-V and back to I in C major in bar 17. The melodic content of bars 13-16 is related to bars 9-12: Notice the descending figure in the second half of bar 14 and bar 9. A shift in its placement within the phrase has occurred, however, adding variety to the phrase structure. Also notice the double neighbor figure in the melody of bar 14, first 3 beats. This motive will appear in later sections of the piece.

Beethoven's touch on C major was not a true move to a new key area. He uses this C major chord as a pivot to his next goal, a minor (v of the original tonic, d minor). This a minor lasts from bar 17 to 29. A four bar phrase in bars 17-20 exposes the first cadence in this new key. An applied chord to V followed by V appears in bar 17 and is repeated in bar 18. Is the descending melodic motive here, over the dominant's dominant, a reference to the descending melodic motive in bar 9?

Possibly. Bars 19-20 flesh out a full cadence in a minor. This four bar phrase is repeated in bars 21-25 with the melody now in the tenor. Bar 24 is an extension of the phrase through diminished chords--an extension made possible by the ambiguity of such chords. This extension of the phrase gives another shift in the harmonic rhythm of the piece. Bars 26-29 recall various qualities of bars 9-16, using the double neighbor note figure for the melody and the lower neighbor figure for the bass. Thus far, Beethoven has exposed the A section of this movement.

In moving to a minor, Beethoven has gone astray of the expected harmonic goals of a movement. He needs to move to A major to bring him back for a return to the A section in d minor. No problem; III, the typical way-station in the move from i to V lies close to v (F major is VI of a minor). So Beethoven, in bar 30, jumps immediately into F major. He incorporates that double neighbor figure into the melody of bar 31 to keep things organic. Then he incorporates the double neighbor figure into the bass for bars 32-33 to extend this F major. Of course, the double neighbor figure remains persistent in the melody, too: it appears in the first three beats of bar 33 (now, however, an incomplete double neighbor). Bar 34 is back on F major. Beethoven, though, needs to move to A major since F major was merely a way station. A simple rising bass through bars 36-38 will easily accomplish this move. The double neighbor (incomplete) keeps appearing in the melody, as in the beginning of bars 35 and 37. Bar 36 sees the introduction of a

new theme, the melodic content of which, however, is loosely based on the melodic ideas put forth in the first eight bars. A dominant pedal supports this new idea for bars 38-43, bringing the piece back to the A section in bar 44 and thus ending a brief middle section.

The first four bars of the recapitulation are harmonically untouched. A little recomposition never hurts, of course. Bars 49-51, however, where in the first A section, Beethoven moved from iv back to i, show no ultimate harmonic motion. The chords center around iv, g minor. This lack of harmonic motion allows Beethoven to use the g minor chord in bar 52 as pivot as vi of B-flat major, VI of our tonic, d minor. Beethoven does not need the modulatory bars 9-12, so he leaves them out. Through a bit of recomposition, therefore, bars 52-55 resemble most closely 13-16, bringing Beethoven to a cadence in B-flat in bar 56. Bar 56 is interesting, because through exact recapitulation, bar 56 should lead Beethoven to g minor, which is not where he wants to be. For a recapitulation, a composer generally wants to stay close to the opening tonic. And as we see, bars 56-64 are in d minor as they should be. Why then the move to B-flat in bar 56 instead of F major for a true recapitulation? Possibly because III is a strong tonal area, so strong that Beethoven does not want to diminish the tonicity of d minor with the pull of the relative major. III also has a tendency to move forward, and in this stage of the movement, Beethoven does not want any real movement from the tonic.

Beethoven adopts a textbook recapitulation for bars 56-64, simply transposing material in a minor to d minor. Presumably, however, Beethoven does not think it is time yet for the coda. He needs to offset the time spent on bridge material in the first half of the piece with something in the second half of the piece. Bars 65-75 are that something. Beethoven throws the opening theme into the bass with elaborate figuration in the soprano. The bass in bar 68 then begins a chromatic rise to a dominant pedal in bars 72-75, bringing the piece to a strong cadence in bar 76. Now Beethoven can tack on his coda to slow the harmonic rhythm for the end of the piece. A little bit of motivic play appears, such as the incomplete double neighbor figure in at the end of bar 80. He strips down the opening theme in bars 76-87 from a three note figure to a two note figure in bare 81 to the final single note in bar 87 to close the movement.

Now what comparisons/contrasts can be drawn between these movements? Their form is essentially the same. A simple ternary (A-B-A) skeleton holds both pieces together. The A section begins in the tonic and is recapitulated in the tonic, and the B section moves through various precadential keys before landing on the dominant. Opus 7's A section seems a little more straightforward, though. Three phrases, one an antecedent and one a consequent phrase, comprise this section. And none of the phrases move very far away from the tonic. Op 10 no. 3's A section, however, while basically consisting of three phrases, appears more complicated. Beethoven obscures the tonic rather

quickly and has an off-tonic close for the A section. In this sense, Op 10 seems more organic: one section, because of the quick progression of key areas, leads necessarily to the next. Op 7, rather, has a self-contained A section. Both pieces recall motives from the B section (now in the tonic) after the recapitulation, similar to the process of sonata form. And both pieces end with a motive-saturated coda.

Many of the techniques of voice leading are the same in both movements, too. Neighbor progressions usually prolong a chord or key area. Quick cadences with a bass motion of 3-4-5-I also often extend a key area. When Beethoven needs to move from one tonic to another, he almost surely uses a chromatic rising bass to drive this movement. Also, a strong dominant (usually a dominant pedal) almost always precedes the recapitulation. And thematically, Beethoven often derives his melodic material from preceding motives or melodic fragments, giving these movements their organic nature. Many aspects of each movement, therefore, resemble the same techniques Beethoven uses in the sonata form of his first movements. The most obvious and basic relation is the simple definition of a tonality, the conflict of this tonality with an opposing key (the dominant), and the return to the original tonic. This plan, of course, is the basis for almost all Western music.