

5 Phrase, period, theme

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Perceptive musicians of the early nineteenth century, like many listeners today, admired the originality of Beethoven's musical ideas and his imaginative ways of developing them. For example, in an 1813 review of the Piano Trio in D major op. 70 no. 1, the writer, composer, and music critic E. T. A. Hoffmann wrote that the finale begins with "a short, original theme, that appears again and again throughout the movement in many changes and ingenious allusions, in alternation with various figures."¹ Hoffmann also singled out the way in which Beethoven's openings create tension and expectation. In a 1812 review of the *Coriolan* Overture, he observed that the "principal theme of the Allegro has a character of irresistible restlessness, of unquenchable longing . . . the transposition of this theme a tone lower is unexpected and increases the tension which was already felt in the opening measures . . . Everything combines . . . [to create] the highest pitch of expectation for that which the rise of the mysterious curtain will reveal."² Later in the nineteenth century, Beethoven's themes became models for students of composition. In the early 1890s, for example, Brahms advised his student Gustav Jenner "to make a diligent study of Beethoven's sonata themes and to observe their influence on the structure of the movement . . ."³

To provide a background for my discussion of Beethoven's themes, I begin with a brief introduction to Classical *phrase rhythm*, a term referring both to phrase structure and the metrical grouping of measures.⁴ I discuss some of the ways in which phrases are paired to form periods, and how phrases are connected and expanded, using passages from Beethoven's works as examples.

Eighteenth-century theorists often made analogies between segmentation in language and music.⁵ In 1771, Johann Philipp Kirnberger wrote that "just as a paragraph in speech consists of segments, phrases, and sentences that are marked by various punctuation symbols such as the comma (,), semicolon (;), colon (:), and period (.), the harmonic [equivalent of the paragraph] can also consist of several segments, phrases, and periods."⁶ A phrase may be defined as a group of measures containing a tonal motion to a cadential goal.⁷ Phrases of four or eight bars occur most frequently, but other phrase-lengths are also common (see, for example,

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Example 5.1 Piano Sonata op. 53, “Waldstein,” mvt. 1, mm. 35–43

the ten-bar phrases opening the Sonata for Piano and Violin in F major op. 24 [“Spring”] and the Piano Sonata in D major op. 28).

Two or more phrases can form a musical unit called a *period*. Often, the period includes two phrases, the second of which ends with a more conclusive cadence than the first. The second phrase of a period may be a varied repetition of the first or have a different motivic content. An important type of formal organization in Classical music is the *parallel period*, consisting of an antecedent phrase ending with a half cadence, and a *consequent* phrase beginning like the antecedent but ending with a full cadence. This full cadence resolves the tonal and melodic tension produced by the half cadence of the antecedent. Example 5.1 shows the eight-bar parallel period initiating the second theme group of the Allegro con brio from Beethoven’s Piano Sonata in C major op. 53 (“Waldstein”). The pianist, composer, and theorist Carl Czerny, who had studied with Beethoven, described this theme in the early 1830s as “the beautiful choral-like middle subject in E major, which, *like so many of Beethoven’s ideas*, derives its melody from the simple diatonic scale . . .”⁸ Typically, each four-bar phrase of the period subdivides into two-bar units called *subphrases* (indicated by dotted slurs in Example 5.1). As Czerny observed, these subphrases are made up of segments of the E major scale.

In musical periods, alternate bars or groups of bars are often perceived as metrically strong and weak, analogous to beats within a measure. In

Example 5.2 Sonata for Piano and Violin op. 96, Scherzo, mm. 1–8 (piano only)

Example 5.1, mm. 1, 3, 5, and 7 are metrically stronger than 2, 4, 6, and 8. Therefore, mm. 1–2, 3–4, 5–6, and 7–8 form two-bar groups known as *hypermeasures*. Various verbal indications by Beethoven suggest his awareness of *hypermeter* – the presence of recurring groups of strong and weak bars. In the scores of several works, for example, he writes *ritmo di due battute*, *ritmo di tre battute* or *ritmo di quattro battute* (“rhythm of two beats [measures],” “rhythm of three beats [measures],” or “rhythm of four beats [measures]”).⁹

Many classical themes include a type of phrase known as a *sentence* (Example 5.2). The typical sentence is eight or sixteen bars in length and can be outlined as $(2 + 2) + (1 + 1 + 2)$ or $(4 + 4) + (2 + 2 + 4)$. As Rothstein has observed, “the distinguishing feature of a sentence is the immediate repetition, often transposed or otherwise varied, of the initial melodic segment. Thus, if the sentence is eight measures long, mm. 3–4 will be a repetition or closely related variant of mm. 1–2 (the initial segment), while mm. 5–8 contain more distantly related variants. These later variants tend to diminish progressively in length, as parts of the initial segment are omitted or compressed. This process of progressive shortening obviously produces an acceleration or ‘drive to the cadence’ . . .”¹⁰ In Example 5.2, the opening two-bar segment on V is presented in a varied repetition in mm. 3–4 that moves from V to I. The second half of the sentence begins with a fragmentation of the opening segment into one-bar units (mm. 5 and 6) and concludes with a cadence to the minor V (D minor). Beethoven often creates momentum in such themes by this kind of progressive contraction or acceleration of motivic units, a process also referred to as *motivic foreshortening*.

Like Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven was a master at linking successive

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Example 5.3 Symphony no. 2 op. 36, Finale, mm. 1–14

subphrases or phrases. His themes often have expansive melodic lines that call for performance as though they were sung on a single breath or played in a single bow. In these melodic lines, subtle links between successive subphrases or phrases achieve a feeling of almost unbroken flow.¹¹ To create continuity between successive subphrases or phrases Beethoven uses a wide range of techniques. For example, successive phrases can be linked by a *lead-in*, a continuous rhythmic motion in the melody or accompaniment. In Example 5.1, the antecedent and consequent phrases are linked by the lead-in B–A–G#, from the inner voice of m. 38 to the top voice of m. 39. In m. 42, a lead-in of triplet eighths continues the stepwise ascent B–C#–D#–E of m. 41 and connects the end of this period with the following varied repetition.

Often, the end of one phrase overlaps with the beginning of the next, so that the ending note of one phrase simultaneously functions as the beginning note of the next. An instance of this technique appears in the finale of the Second Symphony, which begins with six-bar antecedent and consequent phrases (Example 5.3). Here the melodic pitch D and the tonic chord end the consequent on the downbeat of m. 12 and simultaneously initiate a new phrase. Such phrase overlap sometimes brings metrical reinterpretation as well. In Example 5.3, for instance, each phrase divides into three two-bar hypermeasures. Because of the sudden *forte* and downbeat motivic idea in m. 12., the listener reinterprets the “weak”

Example 5.4 Piano Sonata op. 13, *Pathétique*, mvt. 2, mm. 1–8

Adagio cantabile

I

II V⁷ I

second bar of a hypermeasure as the “strong” first bar of a new hypermeasure. Such metrical reinterpretation results in the “stifling or suppression of a measure,” in the words of the eighteenth-century theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch.¹² Koch explains that “the measure which now contains both the caesura of the first phrase and the beginning of the following phrase must be doubly taken into account with respect to the rhythmic relations of phrases: namely, one as the measure with which the first phrase ends, and secondly as the first measure with which the second phrase begins.”¹³

Along with continuous rhythmic motion, phrase overlap, and metrical reinterpretation, Classical composers use weak and deceptive cadences, contrapuntal imitation, and harmonic, motivic, or voice-leading connections to link the end of one unit and the beginning of the next. The refrain of the *Adagio cantabile* of the Piano Sonata in C minor op. 13 illustrates Beethoven’s mastery of phrase linkage (Example 5.4).

The extraordinarily lyrical theme of this rondo movement (mm. 1–8, repeated an octave higher in mm. 9–16) is a duet between the top voice and the bass with an accompaniment in steady sixteenth notes in the inner part. Though divided into two thematically differentiated phrases (mm. 1–4, 5–8), the theme creates the effect of a seamless melodic flow

spanning eight bars. Motivic and tonal links between the two phrases of the theme are integral to the continuity. For instance, the $E\flat$ that ends the first segment of the melody (downbeat of m. 4) is connected to the beginning of the next segment by the slurs in the outer voices, by the continuous motion of the accompaniment, and by the chromatic passing tone $E\sharp$ in the top voice (last eighth note of m. 4). The $E\sharp$ functions as a lead-in to the F that begins the second subphrase.¹⁴ What makes this passing tone so essential to the magic and rhythmic flow of the melody? In part, it parallels the rhythmic pattern of the chromatic ascent $E\flat-E\sharp-F$ of mm. 4–5 and that of the descent $E\flat-D\flat-C$ of mm. 2–3. More importantly, the ascent $E\flat-E\sharp-F$ (m. 4) grows out of the preceding ascent $A\flat-B\flat-C-D-E\flat$ in the “accompaniment” of mm. 3–4 (see the letter names in Example 5.4).

In the second phrase of the theme, the concealed inner-voice motion $A\flat-A\sharp-B\flat$ in mm. 6–7 subtly echoes the ascent $E\flat-E\sharp-F$ of mm. 4–5. The descending fifth $B\flat-E\flat$ in the top part of mm. 3–4 – an inversion of the ascending fourths $B\flat-E\flat$ and $E\flat-A\flat$ of mm. 1–3 (see the brackets in Example 5.4) – initiates another motivic link that bridges the first and second subphrases. This descending fifth generates no fewer than three descending fifths in mm. 5–7: $F-B\flat$, $E\flat-A\sharp$, $D\flat-G$. In m. 7, the $D\flat-G$ is rhythmically expanded and varied by the descending arpeggiation $D\flat-B\flat-G$.

The descending motion of the bass line, which moves stepwise from the $A\flat$ of the I in m. 3 to the $B\flat$ of the II in m. 7, also contributes to the continuity between the two segments of the theme. The series of ascending and descending octave leaps which begins in m. 3 and extends through m. 5 reinforces this feeling of continuity in the bass. Notice also the progressive augmentation of rhythmic values in the pitch classes of the stepwise bass descent of mm. 3–7: from eighth notes ($A\flat-G$, m. 3), to a quarter note (F , m. 3), to half notes ($E\flat-D\flat-C-B\flat$, mm. 4–7). There is a beautiful augmentation in the top voice as well: the descending third progression $F-E\flat-D\flat$ of mm. 5–7 responds to the more rapid ascending third progression $C-D\sharp-E\flat$ in mm. 3–4 (see the letter names above the staff in Example 5.4).

Like Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven uses a variety of techniques to expand phrases. He may introduce a phrase with a *prefix* or extend a phrase by means of a *suffix*. Prefixes and suffixes are highly variable in length, ranging from one to many bars. A brief prefix and several brief suffixes appear in the opening theme of the Adagio molto e cantabile of the Ninth Symphony, the beginning of which is shown in Example 5.5. Observe that the opening four notes of the prefix anticipate the counter-melody in the second violins and violas, second half of m. 6 (see the letter

Example 5.5 Symphony no. 9 op. 125, mvt. 3, mm. 1–7

The musical score for Example 5.5 is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled 'prefix', covers measures 1 through 6. It features a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major) and a time signature of 6/4. The instrumentation includes clarinets, bassoons, and strings. The clarinets and bassoons play a melodic line starting with a quarter rest, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes. The strings play a harmonic accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is present. The second system, labeled 'suffix', covers measure 7. It features a treble clef with the same key signature and time signature. The instrumentation includes winds and strings. The winds play a melodic line that echoes the opening phrase. The strings play a harmonic accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *p* is also present. Below the first system, the key signature is indicated as Bb A G F and the time signature as 6/4. Below the second system, the key signature is indicated as Bb A G F.

names in mm. 1 and 6). Beethoven blurs the boundary between the prefix and opening phrase with an anticipatory tonic 6/4 (last eighth note of m. 2), a characteristic procedure in his late works. The chorale-like texture of the opening phrase is typical of Beethoven slow-movement themes of all periods. Beethoven expands the opening phrase with a suffix in the winds (m. 7) that poignantly echoes the preceding half cadence in the strings.¹⁵

Classical composers also expand phrases from within by means of a variety of techniques including motivic repetition. An internal expansion by motivic repetition together with a large suffix appears in the opening theme of the String Quartet in F major op. 18 no. 1 (Example 5.6). The theme begins with a parallel period composed of an eight-bar antecedent and a twelve-bar consequent (mm. 9–20). The consequent is expanded internally by the sequential repetition of mm. 13–14. How much this expansion contributes to the tension of the consequent is demonstrated by the abridged recomposition shown in Example 5.7. The consequent is externally extended by a long suffix, a recomposed transposition of the second part of the consequent, in which the first violin line of mm. 13–18 appears in the second violin.

Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven also extend phrases from within by lengthening one or more melodic tones or harmonies. Heinrich Schenker has pointed out the fermata-like nature of this technique, which is used at

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Example 5.6 String Quartet op. 18 no. 1, mvt. 1, mm. 1–29

antecedent

① ② ③ ④ ① ② ③ ④

Allegro con brio

p

consequent

① ② ③ ④ ① ② ③ ④

9

f

expansion

p *p*

p *p*

p *p*

p *p*

dim. 7th dim. 7th

suffix

① ② ③ ④ ① ② ③ ④

17

cresc. *p* *sf* *sf*

cresc. *p* *sf* *sf*

cresc. *p* *sf* *sf*

cresc. *p* *sf* *sf*

① ②=① ② ③ ④

25

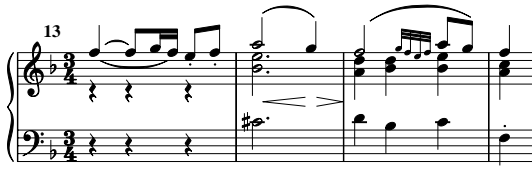
sf *sf* *f* *p*

sf *sf* *f* *p*

sf *sf* *f* *p*

sf *sf* *f* *p*

Example 5.7 Condensed recomposition of Example 5.6, mm. 13–20



the beginning, middle, or ending of phrases.¹⁶ Sometimes a group of measures in which the tone or harmony is extended is perceived as a metrical expansion of an analogous measure in a preceding phrase. This procedure frequently heightens the tension before the final cadence of a period. A striking instance appears near the end of the second theme group of the finale of the Piano Sonata in C# minor op. 27 no. 2 (Example 5.8). The entire second theme group (mm. 21–43) falls into the following thematic units: a (mm. 21–24) a' (mm. 25–28) b (mm. 29–32) c (mm. 33–36) c' (mm. 37–43). Beginning in m. 21, Beethoven establishes four-bar hypermeasures as the norm for the second group. The deceptive cadence to VI ending unit c (m. 37) motivates unit c'. It is at this point that the established hypermetrical structure changes. The preceding four-bar group expands to six bars with the phrase closing on the downbeat of the seventh bar. The expansion (mm. 40–41) stretches the third bar of unit c (m. 35) to a length of three bars.

Having considered several techniques of Classical phrase rhythm, I now turn to characteristic features of Beethoven's themes, beginning with their individuality. As an initial illustration of this individuality, let us consider Beethoven's innovative approaches to one of the conventions of Classical style, the unison opening of a movement.¹⁷ Typically, unison openings clearly establish the basic tonality and meter. They stress the tonic note and include the fifth and – usually – the third degrees of the tonic scale (think of the first movements of Haydn's Symphony no. 97 in C major, Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik* K. 525, or Beethoven's Piano Concerto no. 2 in B \flat major). Unison openings often include octave doubling in which each line is separated from its registral neighbor by the interval of a single octave.

Beethoven's unison openings sometimes deviate dramatically from these conventions. The jolting opening of the finale of the Second Symphony, for example, arpeggiates the dominant-seventh chord, not the tonic triad of D major (Example 5.3). Beethoven heightens the abruptness of this non-tonic beginning by the registral peak on G – the seventh of the V⁷ – and by the rapid downward leap of a diminished twelfth to C#. This tonal instability is coupled with rhythmic tension, created by the *sf* on the second (weak) beat of m. 1 and the stressed off-beat (second

Example 5.8 Piano Sonata op. 27 no. 2, mvt. 3, mm. 33–43

33 C ① ② ③

ff *p* *cresc.*

bII^6

36 ④ *tr* C' ① ②

p *ff* *p*

V_4^6 $\frac{7}{5}$ VI bII^6

39 ③ expanded

cresc. *f* *f*

42 ④ ①

f *f*

quarter note) of m. 2. The unison opening of the Fifth Symphony generates even more power and aggression: its rapid repeated eighth notes G and F contrast dramatically with the long E \flat and D, both extended by fermatas. Beethoven creates metrical ambiguity by means of the fermatas and the eighth-note rests preceding the repeated eighth notes. The opening conveys tonal ambiguity as well, because Beethoven omits the tonic note C. For E. T. A. Hoffmann, up to the appearance of the bass tone C in m. 7, “the key is still not well defined: the listener presumes E \flat major.”¹⁸ Heinrich Schenker hears the unison melodic line within V of C minor, interpreting the E \flat as an appoggiatura resolving to D over an implied G in the bass.¹⁹ Through a distinctive texture or dynamic level, Beethoven generates tension even within tonally stable unison openings. The opening (mm. 1–2) of the Piano Sonata in F minor op. 57, for example, sounds hollow and suspenseful because of the unusual *pp*

indication and because the right and left hand parts are two octaves apart, not one.

Beethoven's thematic statements often grow out of their initial musical idea, which appears repeatedly in diverse melodic and rhythmic transformations and in changing harmonic contexts. The initial idea itself is sometimes made up of smaller motivic elements that Beethoven subsequently develops. The motivic relationships between the initial idea and later parts of the theme are usually quite easily heard, as in the opening theme of the String Quartet in F major op. 18 no. 1 (Example 5.6), where the initial turn-motive appears in almost every bar. Even the decorative turn in m. 19 derives from this motive. Typically, the opening figure also recurs in later sections of the movement in many different transformations. Some of these transformations are shown in Example 5.9a–f. In addition to these melodic transformations Beethoven also includes expansions of striking harmonies in the theme. The two diminished seventh chords of mm. 14–15 and 16–17 give rise to an expansion of these harmonies in the development section (mm. 129–40).

Beethoven's themes often combine easily heard motivic connections with more subtle motivic transformations. A case in point is the lyrical opening of the Piano Trio in B \flat major op. 97 ("Archduke"), where mm. 5 and 6 introduce obvious motivic contractions of mm. 3–4 (Example 5.10). A more concealed motivic connection appears in mm. 7–8, when the melodic climax is approached by a rising sixth that rhythmically enlarges the ascending sixth of mm. 2–3, on a higher pitch level (see the upper brackets in Example 5.10).²⁰

Central to many Beethoven themes are the techniques of registral expansion and gradual registral ascent. Perhaps even more consistently than Mozart or Haydn, Beethoven coordinates these procedures with other modes of intensification such as rhythmic acceleration, motivic foreshortening, crescendo, addition of voices, or arrival at a dissonant chord, all in the service of creating a particular expressive effect. For instance, registral expansion or gradual registral ascent in a theme often increases momentum toward a powerful goal or climax. The opening theme of op. 18 no. 1 (Example 5.6) expands registally from one octave in the relatively soft opening bar to four octaves (F to f³) at the powerful concluding cadence in m. 29. About seven years after op. 18 no. 1, Beethoven used the same registral expansion within the opening theme (mm. 1–19) of his next string quartet in F major, op. 59 no. 1.²¹

The intensity of Beethoven's themes results largely from their rhythmic momentum, subtlety, and complexity.²² Contemporaries such as Anton Schindler – a violinist and Beethoven's unpaid secretary in the 1820s – singled out Beethoven's rhythm for special praise. In his biogra-

Example 5.9 Transformations of turn motive in String Quartet op. 18 no. 1, mvt. 1

(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)



(f)



phy of the composer, Schindler wrote that “as for the rhythm in general, it constitutes one of the particular attractions of Beethoven’s music. What delightful handling of rhythm we find, for instance, in the first movement of the C minor symphony! What a wealth of variety in the rhythmic patterns throughout the whole work! And yet this variety is far surpassed in several of the sonatas for piano solo.”²³ The piano music, observed Schindler, is characterized by the “rhetorical pause and caesura,” which “have the effect of heightening the expressiveness of what follows.”²⁴

E. T. A. Hoffmann, in a review of the Fifth Symphony published in 1810, admired Beethoven’s ability to connect different themes through

Example 5.10 Piano Trio op. 97, mvt. 1, mm. 1–8

common rhythmic ideas. Concerning the first movement, Hoffmann wrote that “with great admiration, one becomes aware that Beethoven knew how to relate all secondary ideas and all transition passages through the rhythm of that simple [opening] motive [mm. 1–2] . . .”²⁵ He also observed that though the phrases of the movement are short, their effect is not fragmentary, as one might expect. “Instead, it is precisely the ordering of the whole and the constant succession of the repetitions of short phrases and individual chords that holds the heart firmly in unspeakable longing.”²⁶ Carl Czerny also praised the phrase rhythm of Beethoven’s music in his *School of Practical Composition*, published in London around 1848. Czerny comments that composers who seek originality through asymmetrical phrase structure usually do so “at the expense of what is pleasing and intelligible. But that originality can exist within the bounds of regular [phrase] rhythm, has been proved by many great composers, and particularly by Beethoven.”²⁷

Gradual acceleration of note-values – also called rhythmic acceleration, or progressive diminution – is a basic technique of intensification in works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.²⁸ In a passage of increasing animation, each rhythm tends to be twice as fast as the preceding one, moving, for example, from quarter notes, to eighths to sixteenths. Charles Rosen points out that “the movement from one rhythm to another is felt as a transition not as a contrast.”²⁹ The overall effect, then, is of gradually increasing tension to a climax.

Progressive diminution appears in virtually every type of music in the Classical era, and is particularly prominent in theme and variations movements, where the use of ever-shorter note values in successive variations contributes to a sense of directionality and larger formal organiza-

tion. In theme and variations movements, Beethoven often created a unique sense of directionality by combining progressive diminution with other techniques of intensification such as registral ascent and syncopated rhythms. Surface rhythmic acceleration also occurs frequently in expositions of Classical sonata-form movements, where it helps to create momentum within the first theme and bridge, or within the second theme group.

In Beethoven's music, progressive rhythmic animation sometimes appears on a larger scale than in music of Haydn and Mozart. Moreover, he coordinates it even more consistently with other techniques of intensification such as crescendo, registral expansion, motivic foreshortening, and increased syncopation. A case in point is the second theme group of the first movement of the Sonata in C major op. 53 ("Waldstein"), where rhythmic acceleration, motivic foreshortening and syncopation combine to produce an extraordinary, gradual progression from serene lyricism to pulsating energy. The second theme group consists of two sections: (1) an eight-bar chorale-like parallel period (mm. 35–42, shown as Example 5.1) with a varied repetition (mm. 43–50), and (2) an enormously expanded phrase of twenty-five bars (mm. 50–74). The surface rhythmic motion of the second theme group accelerates from half notes and quarter notes in the opening chorale (mm. 35–42), to triplet eighths in the varied repetition of the chorale and the opening of the second section (mm. 43–57), to sixteenth notes in the remainder of this section (mm. 58–74) and finally to the unusually high left-hand trill (mm. 72–73) at the cadence.

Syncopation – produced by rhythmic stress on off-beats or weak beats – is crucial to the rhythmic vitality and energy of Beethoven's themes. Many bars in succession include one or more stressed weak beats or off-beats. Moreover, Beethoven often increases momentum by accelerating and intensifying the stresses on off-beats and weak beats. For example, a stressed weak beat will first appear every other bar and then in successive bars, as in the opening of the Sonata for Piano and Violin in G major op. 96 (Example 5.2, mm. 1–4 and 5–7). Typically, this acceleration of weak-beat stresses begins when Beethoven compresses the opening two-bar motive to a single bar.

Beethoven often heightens tension before a cadence by combining accelerated syncopations with metrical expansion. This procedure may be observed at the end of the second theme group of the finale of the Piano Sonata in C# minor op. 27 no. 2 (Example 5.8). The musical segment (mm. 33–36) preceding the metrical expansion is unsyncopated but includes a surface rhythmic acceleration in the left hand (a single attack in m. 33, two in 34, four in 35) that heightens the tension of the

prolonged \flat II⁶. The deceptive cadence to VI in m. 37 motivates the varied and expanded repetition (mm. 37–42) in which syncopations accelerate from one to four per bar (mm. 37–39). These exciting accelerated syncopations apparently resulted from Beethoven's revisions in the autograph manuscript. At one stage, m. 38 was simply a repetition of m. 34 an octave lower.³⁰

Like stressed weak beats and off-beats, stressed weak measures – usually the second or fourth bar of a four-bar group – are an important feature of Beethoven's rhythmic style. This procedure is particularly important in scherzo or scherzo-like movements, where an entire bar is often felt as a beat. In such cases, Beethoven often progressively intensifies the stress on weak bars. This technique contributes to the growing intensity of the opening theme of the String Quartet in F major op. 18 no. 1, which divides into four-bar hypermeasures (Example 5.6). The C and D on the first beats of mm. 2 and 4 are stressed through length – essentially they last the whole bar – and by the eighth notes and leaps preceding them. In the lyrical transformation of the turn motive in mm. 5–6, the weak sixth bar is emphasized more strongly by the crescendo, half note and melodic peak. In the second part of the consequent, weak mm. 14 and 16 receive even greater stress because of diminished-seventh chords, dissonant appoggiaturas and $\langle \rangle$ indications. In the varied repetition of the second part of the consequent, the metrically weak mm. 22 and 24 are emphasized still more strongly by *sf* indications and by the interjections of the turn motive in violin 1. This process culminates in mm. 26–27, when sequential repetition of the turn motive in the first violin causes the weak second bar of a hypermeasure (m. 26) to be metrically reinterpreted as the first bar of a new hypermeasure.

In Beethoven's music, stresses sometimes appear first on weak bars and then on weak beats. (Occasionally, the acceleration continues to a stress on an off-beat.)³¹ Beethoven uses this procedure with great subtlety in the opening theme of the Piano Trio in B \flat major op. 97 in combination with intensified stresses on metrically weak bars (Example 5.10). A dotted half note emphasizes the beginning of m. 2 and the *sfp* and higher pitch (G) in the melody give an increased stress to the beginning of m. 4. In mm. 5 and 6 *sfp* indications and local melodic apices highlight the second quarter note, while half notes stress the second half of the bar. Finally, Beethoven creates a climax in m. 8 with the melodic peak on f^2 , the crescendo to *f*, and the arrival at V in root position. The hemiola (3×2 quarter notes) created by the rising sixth of mm. 7–8 heightens the stress on the climactic f^2 .

Sometimes a succession of emphasized weak bars results in a "shadow" hypermetrical pattern that competes with the main one.³² Such shadow

Example 5.11 Piano Sonata op. 27, no. 2, mvt. 2, mm. 1–8

shadow: ① ② ③ ④ ① ② ③

Allegretto
La prima parte solamente una volta

hypermeter: ① ② ③ ④ ① ② ③ ④

hypermeters occur in many kinds of music but are particularly frequent and prominent in scherzo or scherzo-like movements made up of four-bar phrases subdivided 2 + 2. Typically, the basic four-bar hypermeter coincides with the four-bar melodic units. However, melodic apices, chord changes, or cadences may emphasize even-numbered bars, sometimes creating a certain degree of ambiguity in the hypermetrical structure. The *Allegretto* of the Sonata in C# minor op. 27 no. 2 is a case in point (Example 5.11). According to Tovey, Beethoven composed metrical ambiguity into this movement because either odd bars or even bars can be perceived as strong. Tovey argues that “to play the movement in such a way as to compel the listener to recognize only one accentuation is to miss the point altogether. Beethoven chooses short bars in order to equalize the accents.”³³ Rothstein agrees with Tovey that there is real ambiguity, but he decides in favor of strong odd-numbered bars in the main section because the trio opens with an unequivocally strong bar.³⁴

In my view, the hypermeter of the main section is less ambiguous since even-numbered bars are not stressed quite as strongly as odd-numbered bars. For example, though the $e\flat^2$ of m. 2 (and analogous tones in the second bars of subsequent four-bar units) is indeed a melodic apex, it comes at the end of a slur, which normally indicates a light, unaccented release. In addition, the $e\flat^2$ is lightly supported by a 6/3 chord, whereas the c^2 of m. 1 is more strongly emphasized by a 6/4 chord. It is the dissonance of the 6/4 chord – specifically, the suspended fourth in the alto – that suggests metrical accents on mm. 1 and 5. (In mm. 3 and 7, the fourths are only implicitly prepared.) Consequently, in performance, I would gently highlight the hypermeter beginning with m. 1, a suggestion also made by Rothstein.³⁵

Beethoven’s opening themes frequently generate enormous tension and expectation. Of course, Haydn and Mozart also wrote opening themes that create rhythmic and tonal instability or ambiguity. Haydn, especially, often opened a movement with a “gesture of destabilization,” as

James Webster has observed.³⁶ Yet, Beethoven's opening gestures tend to be more extreme in this respect. Beethoven often uses chromatic inflection to build instability, tension, or tentativeness directly into opening themes. For example, he introduces prominent chromatic tones such as the C# in m. 7 of the *Eroica* Symphony, the D# in m. 10 of the Violin Concerto, the F# in mm. 5–6 of the Piano Trio in D major op. 70 no. 1, and the C# in m. 17 of the finale of the Eighth Symphony. Starting in 1802, Beethoven also tonicizes such chromatic chords as ♭VII, ♭II, and III# within the opening theme. In three movements in major, for example, he sequentially repeats an opening unit in I a step lower in ♭VII (opening movements of Piano Sonatas in G major op. 31 no. 1 and C major op. 53 and the second movement of the String Quartet in F major op. 59 no. 1). As we have seen, E. T. A. Hoffmann singled out Beethoven's use of this procedure in a minor-mode movement as well, the *Coriolan* Overture. In four movements in minor, Beethoven sequentially repeats an opening unit in I a half-step higher in ♭II (the opening movement and finale of the Piano Sonata in F minor op. 57 and the opening movements of the String Quartets in E minor op. 59 no. 2 and F minor op. 95). A tonicized III# (B major) is introduced by the orchestra, playing *piano*, in the Piano Concerto no. 4 in G major as a magical reharmonization of the opening melodic tone, B. Another tonicized III# (F# major), in the finale of the Piano Trio in D major op. 70 no. 1, sounds like a comic intrusion.

In the diatonic context of an opening theme these chromatic events are “marked for memory” and are reflected in later themes of the exposition as well as in large-scale tonal motions or key successions.³⁷ Musical analysts have investigated the relationship between detail and large-scale plan in the works of many composers, including Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.³⁸ As Charles Rosen has observed, Haydn was a pioneer in “making us hear the directional force implicit in a musical idea.” In his works, “the primary directional element is generally a dissonance which, strengthened and properly reinforced, leads to a modulation.”³⁹

The relationship between chromatic or motivic detail and tonal structure is particularly close in Beethoven's music. We have already seen how two diminished seventh chords in the opening theme of op. 18 no. 1 generate prolonged diminished sevenths in the development section. A better-known instance appears in the first movement of the *Eroica* Symphony, where the unexpected C# at the beginning of the exposition (m. 7) is enharmonically transformed into a D♭ that ushers in a tonicization of II (F major) at the beginning of the recapitulation (mm. 402–12). Because of the thematic parallelism between these passages, our recognition of this enharmonic transformation is not inhibited by the intervention of almost four hundred bars. Finally, at the beginning of the coda

(mm. 555–76), D \flat leads down to a tonicization of VI (C major) that functions as a way station to II and V.

Beethoven also builds instability into the opening theme with an initial tonic harmony that is relatively unstable or fleeting, delaying the arrival of a strong, root-position chord. A well-known instance is the opening of the String Quartet in F major op. 59 no. 1, where the $\frac{6}{4}$ position of the initial tonic harmony is emphasized in mm. 1–4 and a strongly articulated tonic chord is postponed until the end of the opening theme (m. 19).

Finally, Beethoven creates tension or tentativeness within the opening theme by means of non-tonic beginnings, as we have seen in the startling arpeggiation of V⁷ that initiates the finale of the Second Symphony (Example 5.3). Other non-tonic opening harmonies include V, V⁶, V⁹, II, II $\frac{6}{5}$ (or IV with added sixth), IV, VI, and augmented sixth, diminished seventh, and applied dominant chords.⁴⁰ The second movements of two piano sonatas begin with a four-bar phrase in V that is immediately repeated in I (Piano Sonatas in A \flat major op. 26, and C \sharp minor op. 27 no. 2). In the fantasy-like opening theme of the Sonata in D minor op. 31 no. 2 (“Tempest”), Beethoven resolves the opening V⁶ chord to a fleeting tonic, building a powerful momentum by postponing arrival points, delaying the fulfillment of expectations, and throwing the weight of resolution ever forward.⁴¹ Initially, the opening twenty bars sound more like an improvised introduction than a first theme. The Largo arpeggiated V⁶ chord (mm. 1–2) seems intended to introduce a recitative. Before the “singer” can begin, however, an Allegro phrase rushes breathlessly through the I of mm. 3–4, only to come up short against the Adagio of m. 6, which introduces a semicadence on V. Our expectation of the tonic is then frustrated by the return of the opening Largo, transposed to a startling C major chord (mm. 7–8). The subsequent Allegro seems to search for a way to the tonic and, after a long, agitated prolongation of V, cadences strongly on I (m. 21). Here, at last, seems a true beginning, as an assertive transformation of the Largo motive in the bass, appearing successively on I, V $\frac{4}{3}$, and I⁶ (mm. 21–30), reinforces the tonic. However, the accelerated ascent of the bass to the V of V minor (mm. 29–41) reveals that this section is in fact a bridge. In retrospect, the opening twenty-one measures constitute a first theme, but it is a theme so unstable in tonality and surface design that the weight of resolution is thrown forward into the bridge.

In Beethoven’s sonata-form movements, the opening of the second theme group often introduces a lyrical contrast to vigorous, driving, or dramatic first theme. Carl Czerny recognized this when he wrote (around 1848) that a good second theme “is much more difficult to invent than the

Example 5.12 Bass of auxiliary cadence in second theme group of Piano Sonata op. 31 no. 2, mvt. 1, mm. 41–63

commencement: for *first*, it must possess a new and more pleasing melody than all which precedes; and *secondly*, it must be very different from the foregoing, but yet, according to its character, so well suited thereto, that it may appear like the object or result of all the preceding ideas, modulations or passages.”⁴²

However, Beethoven frequently departs from this pattern of thematic contrast. For example, a cantabile opening theme may be followed by a second theme that is assertive, dancelike or lyrical, as, respectively, in the opening movements of the Sonata in F major for Violin and Piano op. 24, the Piano Trio in B \flat major op. 97, and the Piano Sonata in F \sharp major op. 78. Moreover, Beethoven’s second themes are sometimes developmental in character. In the opening movements of the Piano Sonatas in A major op. 2 no. 2 and C minor op. 13, for example, the second theme group begins with a minor-mode coloration, and includes sequential repetition, foreshortening, and the tonicization of several different tonal degrees including chromatic ones.

Particularly characteristic of Beethoven are second theme groups in which a strong arrival at the goal key of the exposition is delayed, a procedure also fairly common in works by C. P. E. Bach and Haydn.⁴³ Typically, such a second theme group begins with a prolongation of V of the new key. There follows a unit articulating an “auxiliary cadence” to the new key, one in which the harmonies preceding the strong entrance of the new tonic in root position are subordinate to the preceding V of the new key.⁴⁴ If, as is common, the auxiliary cadence is made up of the progression I⁶–V–I in the new key, the I⁶ is understood as an anticipation of the goal harmony. An auxiliary cadence appears in our concluding illustration, the expansive second theme group (mm. 41–87) of the Piano Sonata in D minor op. 31 no. 2, opening movement (Example 5.12). The beginning of the second theme group overlaps with the V/V that concludes the bridge (m. 41). In this second theme group, Beethoven welds together several distinct thematic ideas by delaying the conclusive arrival of minor V. These thematic ideas will be referred to as units a (mm.

41–55), b (mm. 55–63), b' (mm. 63–74), and c (mm. 75–87). An extended pedal point on V^7 of the goal key (unit a) is followed by an auxiliary cadence theme beginning with I^6 of the goal key (unit b). Even this auxiliary cadence theme does not lead to a strong cadence in the goal key. Instead, the closure of the cadence to minor V in m. 63 is weakened because there is no linear descent to \hat{I} (A) in the top voice and because unit b' begins as a variation of unit b, with the melody shifted to the bass. A modal shift from A minor to A major – which almost sounds like the V of D minor – also weakens the tonal stability of unit b'. The fleeting tonization of III of minor V (m. 70) and the extended V of A minor within unit c that is not completely resolved until m. 87 sustain the tonal tension until the closing measures of the exposition.

Beethoven used techniques of Classical phrase rhythm and motivic elaboration to forge thematic statements of striking individuality. His late works include themes that push beyond Classical norms in a number of ways. The openings of the String Quartets opp. 127, 130, and 132, for example, flexibly integrate highly contrasting adagio and allegro passages. The Adagio espressivo second theme (mm. 9–15) of the Vivace in the Piano Sonata in E major op. 109 creates the novel effect of a fantasy or improvisation by introducing a change of tempo and meter, cadenza-like arpeggiation, and unexpected harmonic shifts. The Allegretto ma non troppo of the Piano Sonata in A Major op. 101 provides a final example of Beethoven's departures from convention in late works. The extraordinarily compressed opening theme (mm. 1–4) evokes a sense of yearning: it begins and ends on the V of the tonic key, A major, and does not include an emphasized tonic chord in root position. The absence of such a root-position tonic chord constitutes a major deviation from tonal norms in Classical opening themes. (One might object that a root-position A major harmony – decorated by a 6/4 chord – does in fact appear in the second half of m. 3. But the high register and relatively weak metrical position of the bottom voice A (m. 3) make this tone subordinate to the low $C\#$ that immediately follows on the downbeat of m. 4. The $C\#$ supports a I^6 harmony that has more structural weight than the preceding A major 5/3 chord. In effect, the “bass” A of m. 3 functions as the tenor voice of the following I^6 harmony (m. 4).) Remarkably, a stable-root-position tonic triad does not appear in the Allegretto until near the end of the recapitulation (m. 77), possibly a unique instance in Beethoven's works. The enormous tension, instability, and excitement of the themes Beethoven composed throughout his career were to have a profound influence on composers of the Romantic period.