TRANSTIONAL STYLE TRAITS IN BEETHOVEN’S SONATA NO. 5 IN F MAJOR

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Transitional style traits in Beethoven's Sonata No. 5 in F Major

Beethoven’s Sonata No. 5 in F major for Violin and Piano, Op. 24, also entitled later as the “Spring” sonata, was composed in the transitional time between his early and middle periods of composition in 1800-1801, and was dedicated to Count Moritz Von Fries. Although some scholars are uncertain as to the origins of the nickname “Spring,” Lewis Lockwood, Fanny Peabody Research Professor of Music, Harvard University, suggests that this nickname was in use by 1860, showing that audiences were seeking an appropriate name to describe the sonata’s special features, such as its melodic elegance and pleasing musical qualities.¹

As proposed by Beethoven’s biographer, Wilhelm von Lenz, Beethoven’s output can be divided into three periods. The first period began in 1794 when he completed the Three Trios for Piano, Violin, and Cello, Opus 1, and ended around 1800, when he had the first public performance of the First Symphony. The second period was from 1801 to 1814, from the Piano Sonata in C# minor (Moonlight Sonata) to the Piano Sonata in E minor, Op. 90. The last period was from 1814 to 1827.² In the works of the first period, the influences of Mozart and Haydn, in terms of musical forms, harmony and key relationship, were apparent. In fact, Beethoven even wrote a note in his own sketch book somewhat sarcastically stating that he felt his work was stolen from the Mozart Symphony in C. Barry Cooper, Music Professor at Manchester University, also noticed that Beethoven's quintet for piano and winds bears a strong resemblance to Mozart's

work. Beethoven could have been dissatisfied and seeking a breakthrough to distinguish himself from Mozart and Haydn in the later stage of his first period. In his second period, he developed his own style and character, and his approaches to musical composition introduced some unconventional components. For example, he replaced the old third movement minuet of the symphony with a dramatic rapid movement, called Scherzo. Because the “Spring” Sonata, Op. 24, No. 5 was composed in 1801, the time of transition between the first and second periods, it is truly a representative piece for this transition, which clearly consists of the Mozart style as well as new components created by Beethoven.

Unlike Mozart, whose finances were highly dependent on royalty to pay his wages, Beethoven supported himself by writing music for both the public and nobles; therefore, he may have had more room for self-expression. For example, during his lifetime, he experienced the French Revolution, and he was originally inspired to write his third symphony in dedication to Napoleon, inspired by ideas of freedom and equality, but later decided to remove the dedication after Napoleon declared himself emperor of France.

As aesthetics emerged as a branch of philosophy in the eighteenth century, Beethoven’s “Spring”, Op. 24, and sixth symphony (“The Pastoral”) (1808), are examples of his response to the beauty of nature and countryside. Like the Pastoral Symphony, in the first movement of “Spring” Beethoven uses the key of F major to depict the countryside in spring time. Lewis Lockwood notes that, in his early sonatas,

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4 Lewis Lockwood and Mark Kroll, 24.
the keyboard takes on a heavier role melodically, as can be seen in Op. 23. However, Op. 24 contains an absolute thematic balance between the instruments that creates an equality of functions, including melodic or figurational roles between the violin and piano. This sets a precedent for his later works, such as the C-minor Violin Sonata, Op. 30, No. 2 and the A-major Cello Sonata, Op. 69.

First Movement

In the first movement of Op.24, the exposition is from m. 1 to m. 86. The first main theme in mm. 1-10 presents the bright register of the violin putting forth a spring-like quality in the major mode, which is in contrast with its companion, the eccentric Sonata in A minor, Op. 23. Among his violin and piano sonatas, Op. 24 is the first in which Beethoven used the violin to begin the opening theme. Also, this work is notable for its long and lyrical melody. The opening theme does not fit precisely into any “period” or “sentence” phrase structure category. Beethoven breaks from tradition and creates a longer and more lyrical phrase as a $2 + 4 + 4$ design. From a melodic perspective, mm. 1 and 2 are comprised of a basic idea, while mm. 3 and 4 present a contrasting idea. If we presumed this to be a period structure, we would expect a half cadence in the fourth measure. Instead, Beethoven crafted a phrase that uses the ii (“two”) chord of F major in m. 4, and that maintains the supertonic function into the next bar. Thus, it does not fit the period structure. In fact, it gives the impression that we are in the middle of a longer phrase (Example 1).
In mm. 5 to 7, Beethoven uses a sequence to extend the length of the second phrase. There is no sense of cadence until the phrase is completed in bar ten, which ends in a perfect authentic cadence. According to William E. Caplin, Professor of Music Theory at McGill University, one can classify this longer, lyrical melody as a hybrid phrase. Specifically, it is a compound basic idea joined with a continuation phrase, what Caplin calls his “Hybrid 3.” Caplin explains that the compound basic idea is essentially an antecedent phrase without its weak cadence.⁵ Beethoven’s earlier string quartet Op.18, No. 3—a piece with a similarly long and lyrical melody, begins with two long notes followed by stepwise motion (Example 2), which is very similar to the opening theme of Op. 24, No. 5.

Adopting a concept of pianist and music scholar Alfred Brendel, this is what he would call a “foreshortening” of harmonic progression here in this opening theme of Op. 24, No.5. The bass line starts with whole notes for six bars, and then it compresses to half notes and quarter notes for four bars. Comparing this with Op. 18, No. 3, Beethoven also uses a similar slow accompaniment chord progression in the opening theme. More specifically, we can note a broad I-vi-ii-V motion in mm. 1-8, followed by a “foreshortening” of that same progression in faster harmonic rhythm in mm. 8-10 (Example 1). Compressing the length of the notes in the bass line makes the harmony move faster.

Throughout much of the exposition, the articulation is kept very legato in order to underscore the work’s lyrical quality. The piano accompanies the violin with whole notes in the left hand and eighth notes in the right hand. From m. 11 to m. 25, the theme is presented by the piano with extended measures by staying on the dominant pedal and by sounding a repetition of a concluding melodic pattern in mm. 20-25. Adding to the lyrical quality of the work, we note the piano’s addition of figuration in the form of faster triplet and sextuplet divisions that provide additional connectivity to the melody.
At mm. 19 and 20, however, the phrase does not end like it did in the first main theme statement. Instead, there is a phrase elision, and a new phrase starts. More importantly, there is a half cadence in m. 20 followed by a stand on the dominant, in contrast to the perfect authentic cadence heard in m. 10.

It is at this point that the listener may begin hearing a possibility that mm. 20 to 25 are part of a harmonically transitional section to the next theme in the key of the dominant—from m. 26 to 38, this transition is made clear. It features a surprising direct modulation to $A^b$ major. As the move is from a C major in m. 25 to an $A^b$ in m. 26, this forms a chromatic mediant relationship. The use of such a relationship is another clue that this is a middle-period work of Beethoven. This last chord of m. 25 may either be heard as an extended dominant arrival in F major, or as a new tonic, C. In either case, it shares the common tone of C with the tonic of $A^b$ major.

The $A^b$-major scale flourish in mm. 26-27 leads by descending half step to a descending chromatic scale centered on G in mm. 30-31. There is a dialogue between violin and piano from mm. 29 to 33. The violin starts a descending line in m.29, followed by the piano answering with an ascending arpeggio in m. 30 with a start at the last note of the violin’s phrase from m. 29. As the C minor arrival is heard in m. 32, we hear, in hindsight, that the move from $A^b$ to G and then to C minor forms a VI-V-i progression in the key of C minor. There is an augmented-sixth chord in m. 33 that further emphasizes the pitch of $A^b$ functioning in a C-minor context. As expected, this moves to a half cadence in m. 34, followed by a dominant arrival through m. 37. After a two-measure descending line from mm. 34 to 35 by the piano, the violin and piano are for the first time doubling a descending scale to connect to the subdominant theme.
Beethoven uses the parallel key of C minor and a series of chromatic scales, and then shifts its mode to C major in the subordinate theme, which makes the C-major tonality sound very fresh and bright.

In Beethoven’s music, I would suggest that the performer could vary the tempo slightly based on different melodic characters. The subordinate theme is from m. 38 to m. 70, and the tempo here could be slightly faster than the first main theme since the character changes (Example 3). If the first theme is drawing a picture of the beautiful view of spring, then the second theme is showing the energetic spirit of spring and the birds singing. Its thirty-two measures are made up of a sixteen-measure phrase group that is stated twice, featuring the violin in the first statement and the piano in the second. The basic ideas are four measures long each, and the continuation phrase is eight measures long. Thus, we hear “real measures” in quadruple time that use the half-note as the beat instead of the quarter note. The first is a sixteen-measure sentence structure, from m. 38 to the first beat of m. 54. According to Caplin, the presentation phrase includes two two-measure basic ideas. But in this piece, the presentation phrase is from m. 38 to m. 45, and it includes two four-measure basic ideas, as mentioned. Measures 38 to 39 sound the tonic of C major, while mm. 40 to 41 sound the dominant. It repeats again from m. 42 to m. 45.

Measures 46, 48, and 50 repeat eighth notes to imitate birdlike sounds. According to William Kinderman, Professor of Musicology at the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, Beethoven later uses similar elements from the “Pastoral” symphony to

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The continuation again shifts mode to C minor. Beethoven uses three sequences in the violin and piano parts. It sounds as if the music is looking for direction, and is momentarily lost. In m. 51, however, he uses two different spellings of what would traditionally be heard as a vii\(^7\)/V. He begins the measure using the E\(^b\) spelling from C minor, but ends the measure using the D\(^\#\) spelling on beat 4. This shifts the chromatic pitch from the role of being potentially tragic (as a lowered scale-degree 3 in the minor mode) to that of being a light-hearted chromatic embellishment (as a raised \(^\wedge\)2 in the major mode). In m. 52, the F\(^\#\) bass resolves into the tonic “six-four” chord to harmonize that arrival a half-step up from D\(^\#\) to E, which signals another change of mode from C
minor to C major. Thus, after the three sequences head in mm. 46-51, it finally finds its path to C major, which makes the music sound brighter. Robert S. Hatten, Professor of Music Theory in the Indiana University of School of Music, discusses a similar situation in Beethoven’s *Ghost Trio*, where he notes “the positive Picardy-third effect of this resolution also enhances the relative stability of the subsequent measures.” He also notes that an event like this can be heard as a “Salvation” six-four, a term coined by Richard Cohn to describe this shift from dark to light. In this case, the arrival of the six-four restores the major mode and leads to a cadence, rather than to an extended theme as it did in the *Ghost Trio*, but the dark-to-light effect is nonetheless similar. This harmony is the shifting point, from tragic back to the light-hearted topic of spring. It ends in a perfect authentic cadence in the first beat of m. 54.

The subordinate theme uses grace-note decorations, and then *staccato* quarter notes as melody by the violin along with eighth notes as accompanying texture by the piano. This sentence appears again from mm. 54 to 69. The articulation contrasts with the first main theme. Furthermore, there are some dynamic dialogues interacting between instruments. In m. 40, the piano plays *sforzando* in the first eighth note and then *subito piano*, and the violin interrupts with *sforzando* at the second beat. In the second statement, instead of the violin, the piano takes the role of playing the melody. At m. 56, they interrupt each other in the same manner as before.

The first codetta occurs at m. 70, which ends on a perfect authentic cadence. It is a tonal prolongation that starts in m. 70 and continues through m. 77. The second codetta

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starts in m. 78 and continues to m. 86. The pedal C is the tonic of C major and also the
dominant of F major. Since there is a repeat back to the beginning, the pedal C
retrospectively makes the second codetta a turnaround. The second chord of m. 85 is a
dominant of F major, and in the second ending of codetta, which leads us into the
development, modulates to A major, which shares one common tone with the dominant
of F major. This is also a chromatic mediant relationship.

Thus, we note a number of chromatic mediant relationships in this work so far.

Beethoven uses F major as the main theme, followed by an A\textsuperscript{b}-major scale from m. 26 to
m. 27 to modulate to the subordinate theme, which is in C major in m. 38. The
relationship of the key modulation is F - A\textsuperscript{b} - C, which forms chromatic-third
relationships. From m. 48 to m. 51, there is another modulation to C minor, which is the
parallel key of C major.

The development is from m. 86 to m. 123, and starts with this dramatic shift from
the “turnaround” (which we hear as going back to F) to the new arrival of this A-major
harmony in the second ending. It sounds the A-major tonality very simply in a series of
three scalar runs from dominant to tonic in mm. 87-89. In m. 90, there is another
dramatic shift up a half-step to B\textsuperscript{b} major. According to Caplin, the “sequence” is a
repetition of the “model.”\textsuperscript{8} Each one of these sequences is usually in a different key than
the “model.” The “model”, from a thematic perspective, extends from mm. 98 to 101
and features a move from B\textsuperscript{b} minor to the dominant of F minor. The melody and
accompaniment alternates between the violin and the piano. The first sequence is from m.
102 to m. 105 on F-minor harmony leading to the dominant of C minor. The second

\textsuperscript{8} Caplin, 142-144.
sequence is from m. 106 to m.109 on C-minor harmony leading to the dominant of G minor. The third is from mm. 110 to m.113 on G-minor harmony leading to the dominant of D minor. From m. 114 to m. 115 is an extension of the third sequence to reach the dominant arrival in this important development in D minor, the relative minor in m. 116. In the section from mm. 98 to 115, the character is more aggressive and energetic, since Beethoven, for the first time, uses triplets as accompaniment. So the tempo and motion could be even a step faster and more intense than before. The violin and piano take turns playing the melody and accompaniment in every other two measures. Therefore, performers should listen carefully when they take turn to play these triplets. The rhythm should connect between instruments perfectly and precisely.

From m. 116 to m. 123, we hear the dominant prolongation that is traditionally referred to as the retransition, which stands on the dominant of D minor. In the model and sequences, which modulate from B♭ minor to D minor, from mm. 98-112, there is a circle-of-fifths key relationship. The last chord of the development, A major, which is the dominant of D minor, shares the common tone A with the first chord of the recapitulation in F major—again, a chromatic mediant relationship.

The recapitulation starts with the main theme from m. 124 to m. 210. Three measures before the recapitulation, the violin and piano play the same notes with minor seconds as sixteenth notes to reach the main theme. He labeled two measures with crescendo and then one measure with decrescendo, which demand the performers to work together in dynamic perfection. It offers room for rubato at the last beat before the recapitulation. The structure of the recapitulation is very similar to that of the exposition, with predictable adjustments made in order for the subordinate key to remain in the tonic
key. Of interest is the coda, which begins in m. 210. Similar to the beginning of the development in m. 87, the tonal center moves to a chromatic-third related harmony, except now the modulation occurs a fifth lower—from F to D instead of from C to A. D major is briefly established in mm. 210–213, and then begins an interesting chromatic ascent from E⁶ in m. 213 up to A in m. 218. This reminds us of the A that began the development. At m. 218, the chromatic line moves much faster, now in a quick ascending chromatic scale all the way up to a high D in m. 222 that ends up finally cadencing with a bold perfect authentic cadence in m. 232. The music that follows remains securely in F in a series of codettas that takes us to the end. During this passage, we note how Beethoven has incorporated the triplet figurations from the development and has combined them with the opening theme.

Second Movement

The second movement is in B⁶ major, the sub-dominant key of the first movement. It starts with the sixteenth notes in the left hand of piano. The piano also starts the melody from mm. 2 to 9—a sentence structure that includes two basic ideas and a continuation phrase (Example 4). Beethoven uses slow harmonic motion for the presentation of main melody—the first four measures stay in the tonic. It reaches and stays on the dominant from mm. 5 to 8, then finishes on the tonic at m. 9. When the piano presents the melody, the violin accompanies with the simple rhythmic pattern and notes derived from the chords.

When the piano restates the main melody from mm. 30 to 37, Beethoven adds more ornaments to make the melody more elegantly enriched when the violin states the melody in the parallel-minor mode at measure 38 (Example 5). Again Beethoven uses the parallel keys to change different mood and color.

In m. 46, the tonality shifts to F♯ minor (enharmonic for G♭ minor). In the last beat of m. 47, it changes to D major, and then it shifts to the parallel key in D minor in m. 50, from B♭ major to F♯ minor, and then goes to D major, D minor, and then finally back to B♭ major. It is a major-third interval cycle of key relationships. Each minor triad moves to its bVI chord, which then parallel shifts to minor, and then the pattern repeats again. At m. 66 there is a thirty-second note figuration in thirds—Beethoven later uses this same figuration in the second and fifth movements of the Pastoral Symphony (Example 6).
Third Movement

The third movement is a Scherzo that is filled with a sense of humor. Among all of his violin and piano sonatas, this is the only time in which a short Scherzo is added between the second and last movements. This quick and playful movement is in F major and in an ABA form. Most articulations in this movement are short and staccato, which is in contrast with the second movement. The descending staccato eighth notes from mm. 1 to 27, mimic the sound of birds singing (Example 7). The first section contains two parts—in the first section, the violin is always one beat later than the piano. In terms of musical dialogue, it sounds like the violin is always on the offbeat to create a sense of humor. Yet playing such an offbeat pace between the violin and piano parts is challenging for performers.

Example 7 – Beethoven Op. 24, No.5, third mvt., mm. 7-20.
Although the third movement of String Quartet Op. 18, No. 3 (Example 8) does not exhibit this offbeat feature and was not identified as Scherzo at that time, Beethoven creates a sense of humor using *sforzando* unconventionally on the third beat in mm. 16-19 to produce a similar effect of offbeat accentuation observed in the third movement of Op. 24.

Example 8 – Beethoven Op. 18, No.3, 3rd mvt., mm.146-156.

Kinderman also observes that such elements of humor and parody are not unusual for Beethoven, and they can be found in pieces ranging from Piano Sonatas Op. 10, No. 2 and Op. 54 to the Eighth Symphony and String Quartet Op. 135.⁹ As the second part of the first section starts at m. 17, Beethoven modulates to A major, sharing a common tone with F major, which makes the music suddenly become brighter. This A-major chord sounds strangely like it is supposed to be the V chord of D minor, the relative of F major. However D minor appears, leaving only the chromatic-mediant effect between F and A. In m. 21, Beethoven again uses the same chromatic-mediant key relationship, switching back to F major again.

In the middle trio section, the violin and piano unite in a homorhythmic texture and with dramatic dynamics (Example 9). Beethoven uses eighth-note scales with

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⁹ Kinderman, p. 124.
staccato to create an atmosphere of playfulness and humor. In the last four measures of the trio, he uses a circle-of-fifths progression: $V^7/\text{ii} - \text{ii} - V - I$, to establish a cadence, followed by *Da capo* to the first section.

Example 9 – Beethoven Op. 24, No.5, 3rd mvt., mm. 28- 43.

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Fourth Movement

The fourth movement is also in the home key, F major. Instead of a traditional rondo form ABACABA coda, which can be divided into three parts, this rondo is ABACABAD. It is in a cut time, and the main melody is in the rhythm of a courtly dance, the Bourrée (Example 10), which is very elegant and graceful. A similar reference to French dance styles was also applied later in the final movement of the Pastoral Symphony, in which Beethoven employs a waltz rhythm (a folkdance) in 6/8 to match the title of the symphony.
In the A sections, the refrain, the melody is stated by the piano and then followed by the violin. The accompaniment is varied each time. We find the first episode from mm. 18 to 55. Beethoven takes an element of the second measure of the refrain, two quarter notes, and develops the first episode. After the theme of the first episode is presented by violin and piano for the second time, Beethoven uses triplets to vary the main melody. The second episode is from mm. 73 to 111. In the piano figure, Beethoven again uses the two-quarter-note element (m. 73). In the accompaniment, he takes the rhythm of triplets from the second statement of the first episode. The third statement of the refrain is in D major and the accompaniment has changed. In the second statement the melody, it changes back to F major. Beethoven adds *pizzicato* in the violin accompaniment when piano states the main melody to create a fresh sound. Later, when the violin plays the melody, the accompaniment changes to triplets, which add excitement. The third episode uses the same material as the first episode. However, in the second statement, it shifts to the parallel key of F minor. In the final refrain from mm. 197 to 205, Beethoven changes the rhythm of the melody from eighth notes to dotted notes and some ornaments to the passing phrase. The fourth episode could be considered as an extended coda from m. 206 to the end. He introduces new melodic material, but keeps
the triplets as accompaniment. At m. 224, he uses the material from the first episode.

From m. 236 to the end, the violin and piano are playing triplets. Such dialogue induces the interactions between violin and piano to form a kind of “call-and-response” texture.

Beethoven's Sonata No. 5 in F major for violin and piano exhibits the influences of Mozart and Haydn on the musical form, texture, key relationships, and the ways in which violin and piano interact with each other, yet he introduces many new ideas. In terms of the musical form, he added a short and playful third movement, so called “Scherzo”. In the last movement “Rondo,” Beethoven adds a coda to the end of the traditional rondo form. In terms of texture, he introduced a unique offbeat pace between the violin and piano part, which creates a sense of humor. In the first movement, he used a lot of chromatic-mediant key relationships to connect different sections. Using parallel key relationships is also not uncommon to Beethoven’s works. He used a lot of dramatic dynamics, such as *sforzando* and *fortepiano*. In terms of dialogue, both instruments play equal functions, including melodic or figurational roles. These new ideas together with the influences of Mozart and Haydn exhibited in Op. 24, truly indicates that Beethoven was in an important stage of his musical metamorphosis, in which he developed his own style and character. His new approaches for music composition have pivotal roles for his later works.
**Bibliography**


