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Four Semiotic Approaches to Musical Meaning: Markedness, Topics, Tropes, and Gesture

Štirje semiotični pristopi h glasbenemu pomenu: zaznamovanost, topičnost, tropiranje in gestičnost

Ključne besede: stil, zaznamovanost, topičnost, tropiranje, gestičnost, Beethoven, Schubert

POVZETEK

Po kratkem pregledu razvoja glasbene semiotike v Združenih državah Amerike so predstavljeni štirje med seboj povezani pristopi, ki so rezultat mojega lastnega dela. *Glasbeni pomen pri Beethovnu: zaznamovanost, korelacija in interpretacija (1994)* pomeni nov pristop h razumevanju sistematske narave koreliranja med zvokom in pomenom, ki sloni na konceptu ***glasbenega stila***, kakor sta ga izoblikovala Rosen (1972) in Meyer (1980, 1989) in kakor ga je razširil Hatten (1982). *Zaznamovanost* je koristno orodje za razlago asimetričnega vrednotenja glasbenih nasprotij in načinov njihovega prenosa na področje kulturnih nasprotij. Ta process ***koreliranja***, ki je sicer zakodiran v stilu, je možno razvijati naprej po Pierceovih smernicah, in sicer z *interpretacijo*, kakor je v razpravi hermenevtično razloženo. Pri *topičnosti*, kakor jo je razdelal Rattner (1980) in so jo naprej razvili Allanbrook (1983), Agawu (1991) in Monelle (2000), gre za večje stilne tipe s stabilnimi korelacijami in fleksibilnimi interpretativnimi

Keywords: style, markedness, topic, trope, gesture, Beethoven, Schubert

SUMMARY

After a brief survey of music semiotic developments in the United States, I present four interrelated approaches based on my own work. *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (1994) presents a new approach to understanding the systematic nature of correlation between sound and meaning, based on a concept of *musical style* drawn from Rosen (1972) and Meyer (1980, 1989), and expanded in Hatten (1982). *Markedness* is a useful tool for explaining the asymmetrical valuation of musical oppositions and their mapping onto cultural oppositions. This process of *correlation* as encoded in the style is further developed, along Peircean lines, by *interpretation*, as hermeneutically revealed in the work. *Topics*, elaborated by Ratner (1980) and developed by Allanbrook (1983), Agawu (1991), and Monelle (2000), are larger style types with stable correlations and flexible interpretive ranges. I extend topical analysis to the level of *expressive genres*, coordinated by marked oppositions. I also

dometi. Topična analiza je razširjena na raven *izrazitih žanrov*, ki jih koordinirajo zaznamovana nasprotja. Prav tako je ilustrirano, kako lahko kombinacije znotraj topičnosti pripeljejo do osupljivo novih pomenov, podobnih metaforam v jeziku, pri čemer je ta in tak proces poimenovan s pojmom *tropiranja*. *Interpretacija glasbene gestičnosti, topičnosti in tropiranja: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert (2004)* razširja uporabo teh konceptov in v semiotiko uvaja teorijo glasbene gestičnosti, ki jo je razumeti kot značilno in časovno pogojeno oblikotvornost. Vsi ti semiotični pristopi so ilustrativni s primeri iz Beethovna in Schuberta.

illustrate how topics may be combined to produce striking new meanings akin to metaphor in language, a process I call musical *troping*. *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (2004) expands the application of these concepts, and introduces a semiotic theory musical gesture, understood as significant energetic shaping through time. I illustrate these semiotic approaches with examples from Beethoven and Schubert.

1. Background to Music Semiotic Approaches in the United States

1.1. Wilson Coker

A brief history of semiotic approaches to music in the United States[1] might begin with an early book by Wilson Coker entitled *Music and Meaning: A Theoretical Introduction to Musical Aesthetics* (1972).[2] Here we find an introduction to the Peircean categories of *icon*, *index*, and *symbol*, as filtered through the work of Charles Morris (1946, 1964).[3] Morris expands Peirce's triadic conception of the sign process–sign vehicle, object, and interpretant–into five relationships betraying a somewhat behavioralist slant: sign (stimulus), interpreter (organism), interpretant (disposition to respond), signification (object or event), and context (conditions). Coker coins the terms *congeneric* and *extrageneric* to distinguish "internal" music-structural meaning from "external" music-cultural meaning, but he offers little explanation of the mediation between the two. His usage thus parallels Roman Jakobson's opposition between *introversive* and *extroversive* meaning, which would later be adopted by V. Kofi Agawu in his blending of introversive Schenkerian voice-leading with extroversive topical identification, in *Playing with Signs* (1990).[4] Interestingly, Coker places his semiosis within the framework of a musical gesture, as inspired by the ideas of social scientist George Mead on gestural communication in society.[5] But despite the ambition of his theoretical scope, Coker's application to musical examples is somewhat disappointing, amounting to isolated exemplifications of each type of sign. In going against the prevailing tide of formalism in American music analysis in the early seventies, Coker's innovative work made little impression.

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[1] For a broader overview of developments in music semiotics through the mid-nineties, see Hatten, "Music Theory and General Semiotics: A Creative Interaction," in *Hi-Fives: A Trip to Semiotics*, ed. Roberta Kevelson (New York and Bern: Peter Lang, 1998), 71-84.

[2] New York: Free Press.

[3] Morris, *Signs, Language, and Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1946), and *Signification and Significance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1964); Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vols. 1-6, Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, eds.; vols. 7-8, Arthur W. Burks, ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931 and 1960). A new critical edition of Peirce is in progress under the guidance of Nathan Houser at Indiana University/Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI).

[4] Jakobson, "Language in Relation to Other Communication Systems," in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 2 (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 704-5, cited in Agawu, *Playing with Signs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 23.

[5] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934), and *The Philosophy of the Act*, ed. Charles W. Morris, et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938).

1.2. Jean-Jacques Nattiez

Three years after Coker's book, the French-Canadian Jean-Jacques Nattiez's *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* (1975) offered a semiotic approach based on an outdated linguistic model (both taxonomic and distributional) that featured structuralist (paradigmatic and syntagmatic) analysis of a so-called neutral level, to insure rigor and objectivity prior to interpretation of meaning for composer (*poïetique*) or listener (*esthésique*).[6] This value-neutral analytical approach was critiqued by David Lidov and myself, among others, and although a later version attempted to move beyond the bald proposal of a neutral level, Nattiez's analytical methods did not have as significant an impact in the United States as it would several years later in England.[7]

1.3. Raymond Monelle

In 1992 Raymond Monelle's *Linguistics and Semiotics in Music* was the first book-length English language survey of international developments, but it was not until the publication by Princeton University Press of *The Sense of Music* in 1999 that Monelle's historically grounded yet theoretically postmodern theories became better known.[8] Monelle critiques Leonard Ratner's (1980) inventory 18th-century topics, urging further historical research into each topic.[9] As for interpreting topics (which was largely missing in Agawu's account), Monelle emphasizes the indexicality of the icon–in order words, the cultural connotations of objects that are represented in music by similarity (e.g., a fanfare, a march). Monelle also offers a more deconstructive approach to interpreting narrative and genre, going beyond the groundbreaking proto-semiotic work of Anthony Newcomb in the American journal *19th-Century Music*.[10] I should also mention Carolyn Abbate's well-known critique of narrativity in *Unsung Voices* (1991).[11]

1.4. David Lidov

Meanwhile, David Lidov, an American who adopted Canadian citizenship early in his career, was steadily publishing brilliant theoretical ideas in semiotic journals, and his occasional presentations at the Society for Music Theory were always well-received. In 1999 his *Elements of Semiotics* appeared, and although it primarily offers a philosophical perspective on semiotic theory, two late chapters are dedicated to music and musical gesture.[12] The recent publication of Lidov's collected essays, *Is Language a Music?* (2005) should enable a better appreciation of his extensive contributions to music semiotic theory and interpretation, including musical gesture.[13]

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[6] Nattiez, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique* (Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1975).

[7] Lidov, Nattiez's Semiotics of Music," *The Canadian Journal of Research in Semiotics* 5 (1978), 13-54; Hatten, Review of Nattiez, *Fondements d'une sémiologie de la musique*, Semiotica 31 (1980), 139-55; Nattiez, *Musicologie générale et sémiologie* (Paris: Bourgeois, 1987), rev. as *Music and Discourse: Towards a Semiology of Music*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990). The British journal *Music Analysis* launched its first volume in 1982 with a translation of Nattiez's lengthy article, "Varese's 'Density 21.5': A Study in Semiological Analysis" (*Music Analysis* 1, 243-340).

[8] Monelle, *The Sense of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

[9] Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer, 1980).

[10] Newcomb, "Once More 'Between Absolute and Program Music': Schumann's Second Symphony," *19th-Century Music* 7:3 (1984), 233-50, and "Schumann and Late Eighteenth-Century Narrative Strategies," *19th-Century Music* 11:2 (1987), 164-74.

[11] Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[12] Lidov, *Elements of Semiotics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

1.5. Eero Tarasti

The Finnish musicologist Eero Tarasti's English-language dissertation, published as *Myth and Music* (1978) received some early notice, and his tireless organization of international conferences would eventually make its mark in the United States, especially after the publication of his major theoretical statement, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* in 1994.[14] Tarasti's (and Márta Grabócz's) approach to meaning and narrativity draws on the structural semantics of Greimas, whose semiotic square and modalities still confuse music theorists in the United States, despite a helpful account in English by David Lidov.[15] A forthcoming book by Byron Almén on narrativity in music fully credits Tarasti's contribution, and further draws on interdisciplinary inspiration–the four narrative archetypes of Northrop Frye (Romance, Tragedy, Irony, Comedy)–and myth–here, the notion of a basic order upset by transgression and leading to alternate outcomes, as developed by James Jakób Liszka.[16]

1.6. Robert S. Hatten

My own *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* (1994) appeared the same year as Tarasti's A *Theory of Musical Semiotics*, and in the same series, "Advances in Semiotics," edited by Thomas A. Sebeok at Indiana University Press. Although it was well-received, much of my work prior to that date languished in semiotic publications that were not generally read by American theorists. Slow publication schedules further delayed its reception. For example, I first enunciated my theory of musical troping at the 1988 musical signification conference in Helsinki, but the subsequent article appeared only seven years later, in 1995.[17]

The year 2004 marked the launch of my new book series, "Musical Meaning and Interpretation," at Indiana University Press. This series recaptures the momentum of Sebeok's "Advances in Semiotics," which had issued the late Australian musicologist Naomi Cumming's *The Sonic Self* (2000) before closing down a year prior to Sebeok's own death in 2001.[18] *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, which had just gone out of print, was reissued in paperback to accompany publication of my new book, *Interpreting Musical Gesture, Topics, and Tropes* (2004).[19]

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[13] Lidov, *Is Language a Music?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). David Lidov, Bill Dougherty, and I formed the nucleus of music semioticians presenting at yearly meetings of the Semiotic Society of America in the 80s and 90s, with Gayle Henrotte and David Schwarz also contributing early on. This interdisciplinary society provided an important outlet until the (American) Society for Music Theory began accepting more music semiotic papers in the 90s. Michael Shapiro also conducted an NEH summer seminar in Peircean theory that included music theorists and led to five volumes of *The Peirce Seminar Papers*. See, for example, William P. Dougherty, "The Play of Interpretants: A Peircean Approach to Beethoven's Lieder," *The Peirce Seminar Papers: An Annual of Semiotic Analysis* 1 (Providence, R.I., and Oxford: Berg, 1993), 67-95.

[14] Tarasti, *Myth and Music: A Semiotic Approach to the Aesthetics of Myth in Music, especially that of Wagner, Sibelius and Stravinsky* (Helsinki: Suomen Musiikkitieteellinen Seura, 1978); Hatten, "Myth in Music: Deep Structure or Surface Evocation?" [review-article, Tarasti, *Myth and Music*], Semiotica 30: 3/4 (1980), 345-58; Tarasti, A Theory of Musical Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994). Prof. Tarasti received an honorary doctorate from Indiana University in 1999, where his work was also studied by my colleagues Profs. Lewis Rowell and Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, who have also traveled to lecture in Finland.

[15] Grabócz, *Morphologie des oeuvres pour piano de Liszt: Influence du programme sur l'évolution des formes instrumentales*, preface by Charles Rosen (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1996; first edition, Budapest: MTA Zenetudományi Intézet, 1986); Lidov, "Musical Semiotics–Science, Letters, or Art?" [review-article, Tarasti (1994), Grabócz (1996), and Monelle (an early version of 2000), *Intégral* 10 (1996), 125-53.

[16] Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (to appear, Indiana University Press); Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Liszka, *The Semiotic of Myth: A Critical Study of the Symbol* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

[17] Hatten, "Metaphor *in* Music," in *Musical Signification: Essays in the Semiotic Theory and Analysis of Music*, ed. Eero Tarasti (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1995), 373-91.

[18] Cumming, *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

1.7. Music semiotics and postmodern musicology

Interest among American musicologists as well as theorists has grown enormously in the past decade, which suggests that the field of musical meaning–not limited to music semiotics–is finally on everyone's map in the United States. Given the new-musicological "revolution," which has paralleled the growth of music semiotics (see especially the work of Susan McClary, Carolyn Abbate, and Lawrence Kramer), this is not surprising. Indeed, there is considerable overlap today between American musicologists and theorists interested in problems of meaning and interpretation.[20] Two of the books to appear in my book series are by musicologists (as opposed to music theorists), and new-musicological concerns such as gender are being addressed.[21] Popular music has enriched the series, as well, with a recent book on Neil Young by one of Lidov's former students, William Echard (2005).[22] His study draws on Lidov's and my own approaches to gesture, and echoes new-musicological concerns with embodiment. One might conclude that music semiotics is becoming known at the same time it is being assimilated into a richer scholarly mainstream, and purely semiotic methods have been enriched by a wide range of approaches.

2. Hatten's Theories of Musical Meaning (1982-2004)

2.1. Toward a concept of musical style

My dissertation, "Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music" (1982)[23] was inspired in part by the model of Rosen's *The Classical Style* (1972)[24] and partly influenced by Leonard B. Meyer's own ground-breaking work on the problem of style (1979, 1989).[25] A difficult problem in recuperating style was the negative connotation attached to "style analysis." Style analysis at that time emphasized mere labeling or comparison according to common "stylistic traits," instead of probing into the unique character and formal/expressive strategies of a work. With Joseph Kerman's (1965) promotion of criticism, style analysis appeared out of fashion as mere comparative or taxonomic analysis.[26] It was important to reconceive an approach to reconstructing styles as *competencies*, akin to the competency of a grammar, but including a poetics, as well. My more flexible model of style, exemplified to some degree by Charles Rosen, would enable the theorist to explain a unique event as perhaps atypical, but not necessarily anomalous, since it could be understood as a unique realization of a shared stylistic principle. Thus, a concept of style could embrace the full range of artistic creativity, without being relegated to mere inventory. The emphasis on rules and constraints could be balanced with hierarchical and strategic potential, including Meyer's insight into implications that might be delayed, deferred, and only distantly realized.

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[19] Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[20] McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991; reprinted with a new introduction, 2001); Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800-1900*, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge*; and *Musical Meaning: Toward a Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990, 1995, and 2002, respectively).

[21] See Naomi André, *Voicing Gender: Castrati, Travesti, and the Second Woman in Early Nineteenth-Century Italian Opera* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, to appear, 2006).

[22] Echard, *Neil Young and the Poetics of Energy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

[23] Hatten, "Toward a Semiotic Model of Style in Music: Epistemological and Methodological Bases," unpub. Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1982.

[24] Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972).

[25] Meyer, "Toward a Theory of Style," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979, 3-44), which became the first chapter of *Style and Music: Theory, History, and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

[26] Kerman, "A Profile for American Musicology," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 18 (19965), 61-69, reprinted in *Write All these Down: Essays on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 3-11.

2.2. Marked musical oppositions

2.2.1. A lengthy footnote in chapter 6 of my dissertation was devoted to the concept of *markedness*, a concept applied to phonology by Nicholas Trubetzkoy, to linguistic case structure by Roman Jakobson, and to poetics by my own mentor, Michael Shapiro.[27] This

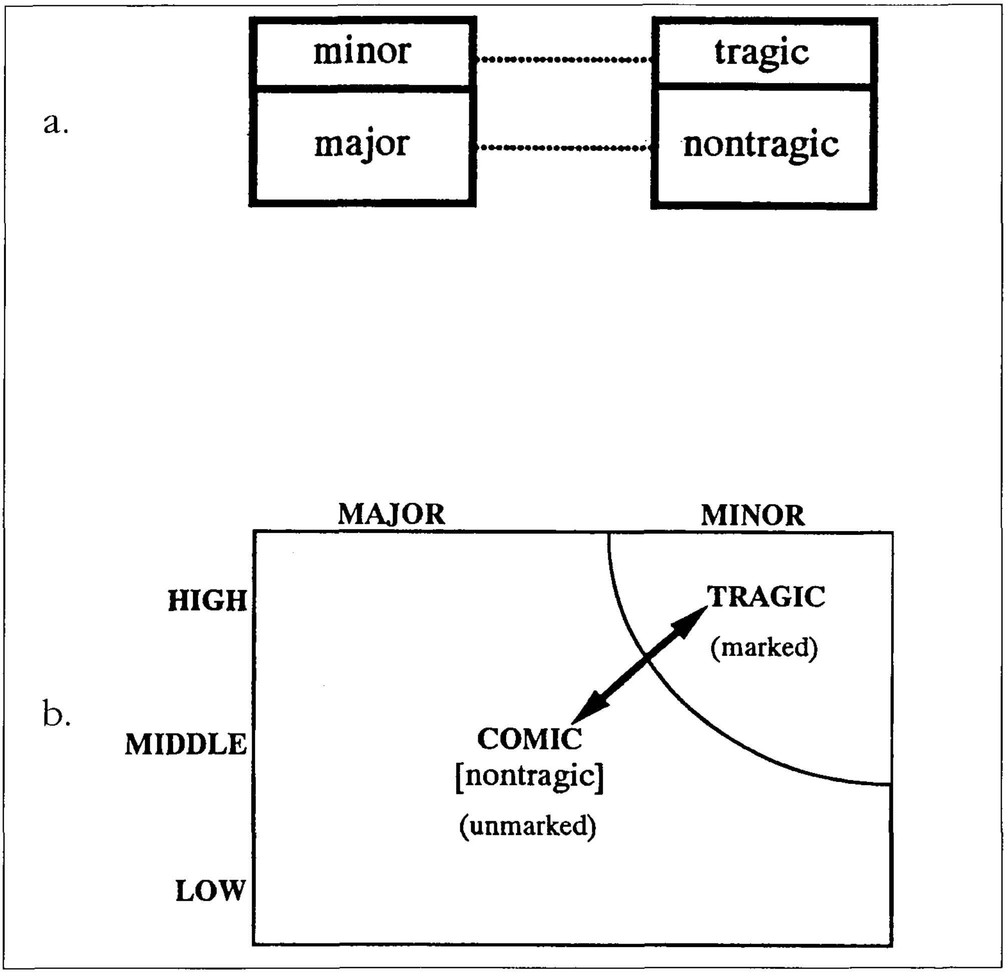

Figure 1a. Correlation (literal mapping of signification).
Figure 1b. Expressive oppositional field as defined by a matrix of structural oppositions for the Classical style.

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[27] Trubetzkoy, *Principles of Phonology*, trans. Christine A. M. Baltaxe (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969 [1939]); Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Minuit, 1963); Shapiro, *Asymmetry: An Inquiry into the Linguistic Sturcture of Poetry* (Amsterdam: North Holland, 1976), and *The Sense of Grammar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983).

concept was the seed leading to *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, and it enabled me to move from my dissertation's more conservative orientation toward "meaningful syntax" to a more fully committed semiotic approach to expressive meaning. Markedness theory could explain how oppositions in musical structure, when incorporated into a musical style, were asymmetrical–one term marked and the other unmarked–and how marked oppositions could not only help account for the structure of meaning, but also its growth or development in a style.

2.2.2. As an example, consider the use of minor mode in the Classical style (see **Figure 1**). Minor is marked with respect to major, hence (1) it has a smaller distribution, (2) it has a narrower range of meaning, and (3) the marked-unmarked opposition in structure maps onto a similarly marked opposition in the realm of cultural meaning. Thus, minor mode works (1) occur less frequently than major mode works, (2) map onto a more specific realm of meaning–"tragic," as opposed to the unmarked major's wider range of meaning–"non-tragic," which embraces the heroic, the comic, and the pastoral. Furthermore, (3) this meaning is systematically motivated by the *correlation* between two oppositions–i.e., the mapping shares similar structure (it is isomorphic, or what the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce termed *diagrammatic*). And (4) the process by which meaning grows (and thus style grows) follows markedness principles, in that new meaning is "carved out" of old categories by the creation of a new oppositional distinction. This new feature may subdivide, or further "articulate," a previously marked category into another marked-unmarked pair, by asymmetrically opposing those members possessing that feature with those lacking it. In **Figure 2** we see how Beethoven further articulates the meaning of a final major tonic triad, based on unique doubling with extra thirds and no fifths. The marked ("atypical") doubling has the effect of a "sweeter" close than the unmarked ("normal") doubling, akin to a Picardy-third effect in the major mode.

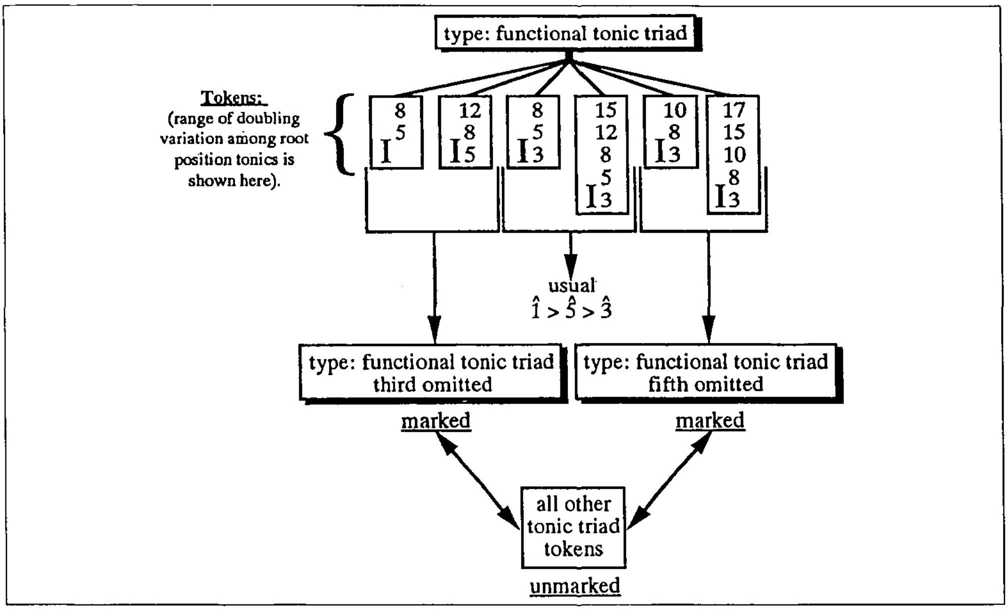

type: functional tonic triad
Tokens:
(range of doubling variation among root position tonics is shown here).
8 5 I
12 8 I5
8 5 I3
15 12 8 5 I3
10 8 I3
17 15 10 8 I3
usual
1̂ > 5̂ > 3̂
type: functional tonic triad third omitted
marked
type: functional tonic triad fifth omitted
marked
all other tonic triad tokens
unmarked

Figure 2. Derivation of new style types based on oppositionally marked doublings of tonic triad in final cadence.

2.3. Expressive genres

Another contribution of *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* was to explore oppositions at all levels of structure, including *expressive genres*, which I defined as those dramatic trajectories that encompass changes of expressive state, and which are not limited to a single formal genre. For example, Beethoven might use the tragic-to-transcendent expressive genre for a single sonata-form movement (the slow movement of the "Hammerklavier," Op. 106), a fugue (the first movement of Op. 131), a pair of movements (Op. 111), or an alternating arioso and fugal movement (the finale of Op. 110). How might these broader fields of meaning be oppositionally defined? A simple matrix of major vs. minor mode, cross-referenced against high vs. middle vs. low style, is sufficient to differentiate several of the broader fields such expressive genres might traverse (see **Figure 3**). And not surprisingly, those fields are clearly affiliated with topics, which provide further characteristic specificity.

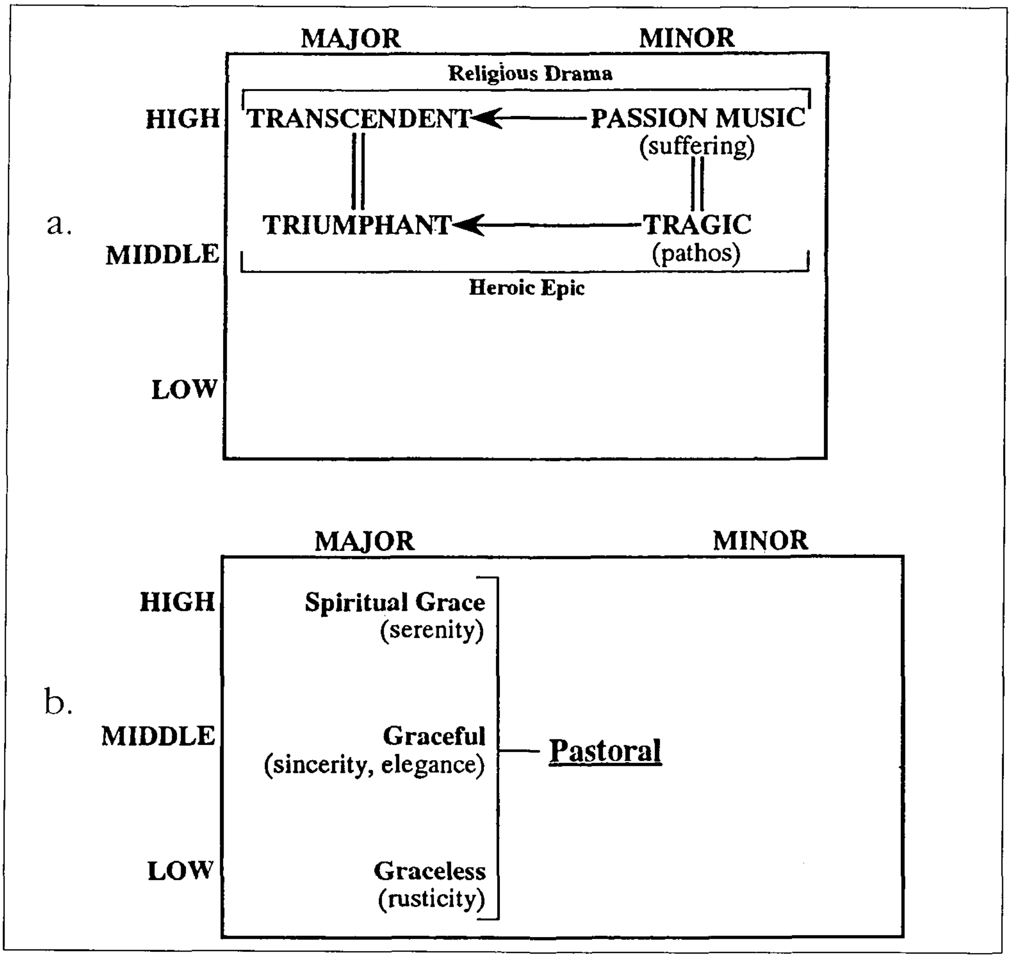

a.
MAJOR
MINOR
HIGH
MIDDLE
LOW
Religious Drama
TRANSCENDENT
PASSION MUSIC
(suffering)
TRIUMPHANT
TRAGIC
(pathos)
Heroic Epic
b.
MAJOR
MINOR
HIGH
MIDDLE
LOW
Spiritual Grace
(serenity)
Graceful
(sincerity, elegance)
Graceless
(rusticity)
Pastoral

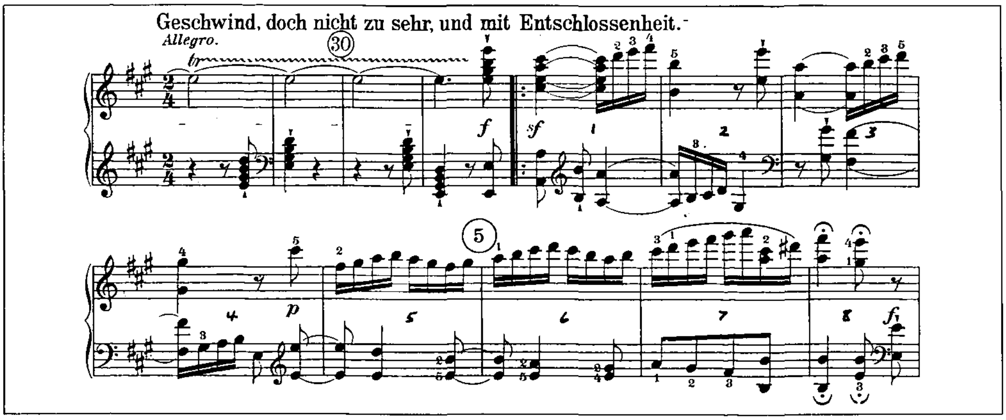
Figure 3a. Archetypal expressive genres and their relative stylistic registers.
Figure 3b. The pastoral as interpreted in high, middle, and low styles.

2.4. Topics

Topics, introduced by Leonard Ratner (1980) and further developed by Allanbrook (1983, 1992), Agawu (1991), and Monelle (2000), as well as in my own work (1994, 2004) are larger style types with stable correlations and flexible interpretive ranges.[28] They consist of not just one but typically a bundle of oppositional distinctions. Manifestations of topics–their compositional *tokens*–need not include all the characteristic features defined by the *type*, but they must at least contain features that are sufficiently distinctive to cue recognition of the type. As Wittgenstein argued, concepts such as "game" lack a single feature common to all instances, but games can be recognized according to certain "family resemblances" which are not clearly defined.[29] A similar flexibility can be claimed for music; my interest at this point, however, was in clarifying the oppositional structure that kept my broad topical fields distinct–in other words, explaining the coherence of the signifying system.

2.5. Troping

Although markedness provided an effective explanation for one type of growth in meaning, that by which a given category is further articulated, I was also intrigued by the possibility that something like *metaphor* might be operative in music. In *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* I was concerned to explain an indigenous form of metaphor, achieved by musical means, which could then be opposed to more literal correlations between sound and meaning. Links between sound and cultural meaning have been considered by cognitive theorists as metaphors since they involved a mapping between two domains. In common linguistic usage, however, the term metaphor is generally reserved for those figural uses of language that have creative power, that create a new fusion of meaning, and that require interpretive unpacking, not merely recognition, as in the case of familiar topics and their correlations. In my 1988 paper (Hatten 1995) I specified ways in which the merging of two musical topics could aspire to the condition of inherently musical metaphor, as one species of *troping*. **Example 1** illustrates how, in the



Example 1. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in A Major, Op. 101, finale, opening theme.

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[28] Allanbrook, *Rhythmic Gesture in Mozart*: Le Nozze di Figaro *and* Don Giovanni (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1983; "Two Threads through the Labyrinth: Topic and Process in the First Movements of K. 332 and K. 333," in *Convention in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Music: Essays in Honor of Leonard G. Ratner*, ed. Wye J. Allanbrook, Janet M. Levy, and William P. Mahrt (Stuyvesant, N.Y.: Prendragon Press, 1992), 125-71.

[29] Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960 [1933-35]).

opening theme of the finale of Op. 101, Beethoven tropes on the three topics of fanfare and learned style (simultaneously in bars 1-4) with a pastoral musette (successively in bars 5-8). I noted (Hatten 1994: 171) that the juxtaposition of these topics yields an emergent meaning along the lines of heroic (fanfare) affirmation (the authoritative learned style) raised to a higher spiritual level (the connotations of the pastoral for Beethoven)–hence, "a definitive inner victory of the spirit."

2.6. Musical Gesture

2.6.1. Approaches to musical gesture

After laying out a semiotic theory of stylistic correlations and their strategic interpretations, and demonstrating the role of markedness, topics, and tropes in explaining and interpreting musical expressive meaning in late Beethoven, I turned to a missing element in my theory–*musical gesture*. Here I was inspired by the theoretical work of David Lidov ("Mind and Body in Music," 1987) and the practical discoveries of Alexandra Pierce (best summarized to date in "Developing Schenkerian Hearing and Performance," 1994).[30] Naomi Cumming was simultaneously pursuing gesture as part of her more philosophical approach to musical meaning; the third chapter of *The Sonic Self* (2000) addresses important aspects of gesture, including its emergent meaning. During the ten years leading to my second book, *Interpreting Music Gestures, Topics, and Tropes* (2004), I expanded the range of my inquiry to include Mozart and Schubert, as well as Beethoven. And in that decade I also wrote an extensive article applying ideas from my first book to the music of Bruckner (2001).[31] Although topics and tropes were quite easily found throughout the nineteenth century, and I drew extensively on them in my teaching of twentieth-century repertoire, I was concerned that my oppositional approach was still too analytic or systematic to capture the more synthetic character of music, which could only be adequately addressed by developing a comprehensive theory of musical gesture–one that more fully explored what had been a rather *unmarked* term throughout music history.

2.6.2. Interdisciplinary principles of human gesture

From my interdisciplinary research on human gesture, which I defined very broadly as significant (communicative) energetic shaping through time, I extracted several key features (see **Figure 4**). Gesture is *intermodal*, or *crossmodal*, in its appearance throughout the sensorimotor system. We *synthesize* information from all of our senses and muscles in achieving the *functional coherence* of movements as events, and in interpreting their *emergent* meanings. Gestural events are *affectively loaded*, providing information about the gesturer (whether witting or unwitting) and they typically appear in response to the demands of human *intersubjectivity*, which begins developmentally with the interactive exchanges of infants and caregivers attempting to communicate. Finally, the interpretation of prototypical gestures, those taking place within the two-second boundary of the perceptual present, is enhanced by the close interchange between *imagistic* and *temporal gestalts or perceptual modes*. Given the combined strength and flexibility we bring to any interpretation of energetic shaping through time, meaningful gestural interpretations can seem inevitable–if only at a basic or default level.

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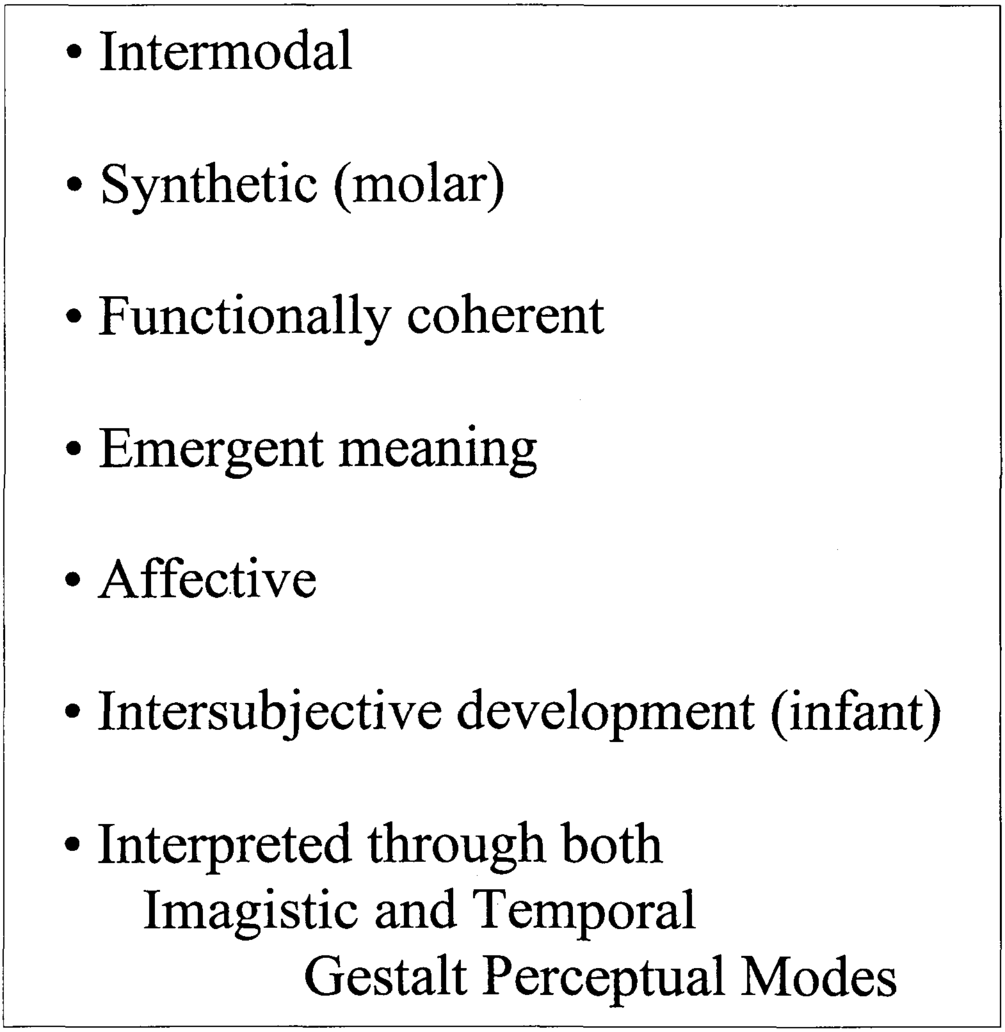
[30] Lidov, "Mind and Body in Music," *Semiotica* 66: 1/3 (1987), 69-97; Pierce, "Developing Schenkerian Hearing and Performing," *Intégral* 8 (1994), 51-123.

[31] Hatten, "The Expressive Role of Disjunction: A Semiotic Approach to Form and Meaning in Bruckner's Fourth and Fifth Symphonies, in Perspectives on Anton Bruckner, ed. Paul Hawkshaw, Crawford Howie, and Timothy L. Jackson (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2001), 145-84.



- Intermodal
- Synthetic (molar)
- Functionally coherent
- Emergent meaning
- Affective
- Intersubjective development (infant)
- Interpreted through both
  Imagistic and Temporal
  Gestalt Perceptual Modes

Figure 4. Aspects of human gesture.

2.6.3. Marked gestural types

Gestures, however, translate into music as more than energetic shaping through time, and more than the energy it takes a performer to produce sound. In many styles, oppositionally *marked gestural types*, such as grief vs. elation, may be correlated with structural oppositions among musical elements, along the lines of the model I had developed in my first book. Such oppositional categorization could create a more systematic, *stylistic*, or (in the terminology of Charles S. Peirce) *symbolic* level of meaning for gestures.

2.6.4. Motivations for musical gestural meaning

One typically finds intuitively satisfying motivations, however, for what may have developed into conventional symbolic representations. For example, grief would most naturally be expressed in terms of downward and heavy gestures, and elation by means of upward and light gestures. In Western musical styles a kind of *virtual gravitational field* or *vectoral space* provides an analogue to the forces working on the human body in physical space, enabling the motivated opposition of downward grief vs. upward elation. These fields or spaces provide comparable environmental constraints against which freely willing, energetic musical gestures can begin to feel like gestures of the body. As soon as that happens, we can speak of a kind of *agency*, especially when a series of gestures appear to cohere as an intentional or goal-directed sequence, progression, or discourse.

2.6.5. Virtual gravitational or dynamic force fields

In Western tonal music, these dynamic fields are created by two primary frames. The first is meter–conceived not as a static grid for quantitative measurement, but as an active, qualitative field that provides virtual orientation with respect to up vs. down and to a sense of relative weight–not unlike the gravitational field we experience every day. [32] The second organizing frame is tonality–a complex, stylistic achievement that contributes its own conventionalized forces, as Steve Larson (1993, 1997-8), Candace Brower (2000), and Fred Lerdahl (2002) have variously demonstrated.[33] Together, metric and tonal forces constitute what I call a *virtual environment* in which we can trace the presence of an animating force (implying an independent agent) by the constraints that weigh in on (deflect, deform, or resolve) otherwise freely motivated energetic movement. Thus, we access the bodily (as gestures of a free agent) in music through the implied effort required to overcome environmental forces (or, conversely, the acquiescence that yields to those forces), and further, through an analogy with the effort of our own bodies to overcome physical (or other) forces on earth in order to achieve an intention.

2.6.6. Icon, index, symbol

The basic or default level of gestural interpretation in music is semiotically motivated by both *indexical* (dynamic, association by contiguity or connection) and *iconic* (imagistic,

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[32] The metric orientation up vs. down, however, does not always map in the most obvious ways onto culturally conventionalized dance steps. Meredith Little and Natalie Jenne note that in the noble French style of Baroque dance, the "plié" (sink)–a downward motion involving bending of the knees–is performed on the upbeat of the music, whereas the "élevé"–an upward motion to the balls of the feet–is performed on the downbeat (*Dance and the Music of J. S. Bach* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991], 21.

[33] With respect to diatonic tonal space, Steve Larson has defined three forces that constitute what I would characterize as *virtual environmental forces*: gravity (the tendency of tones to descend toward a pitch considered as a base, such as a tonic), magnetism (the attraction of tones toward more stable tones, which becomes stronger as the interval to the stable tone gets smaller), and inertia (the tendency of a pattern of motion to continue in the same way, even past a point of stability). See Larson, "Scale Degree Function: A Theory of Expressive Meaning and Its Application to Aural-Skills Pedagogy," *Journal of Music Theory Pedagogy* 7 (1993), 69-84, and "Musical Forces and Melodic Patterns, *Theory and Practice* 22/23 (1997-98), 55-71. In considering these musical forces as environmental, I mean to suggest that Larson's model could be usefully complemented with the addition of a perceived or implied *source* of gestural energy–in many cases, the motivating force of an implied *musical agent*. A spontaneous or "willed" individual gesture may be understood as being subject to various forces as it traverses tonal and metric fields, conceived as environmental forces which act upon it in various ways. The gesture may be deflected from its energetic direction, or it may be fulfilled by reaching a point of stability within the operative fields of tonality and meter.

Candace Brower ("A Cognitive Theory of Musical Meaning," *Journal of Music Theory* 44: 2 [2000], 323-79) and Fred Lerdahl (*Tonal Pitch Space* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2002]) have also incorporated these attractions into their distinctive models of tonal pitch space. Brower relates these forces to the conceptual image schemas of Mark Johnson (*The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Reason and Imagination* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987]). The sense of tonal gravity thus draws on a CENTER-VERTICALITY-BALANCE schema, and the sense of tonal motion on a SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. Interestingly, one of the entailments of the latter schema is the "motion is carried out by an agent who wills the motion to take place" Brower, 2000: 331). Brower also provides increasingly comprehensive models of pitch space that incorporate the three levels of tones, triads, and regions. Her interpretive approach includes a pattern-matching component that compares paradigmatic phrase structures and their variants, and a larger narrative component that integrates the implied dramatic trajectory of a work's hierarchical pitch structures.

Lerdahl explores still further the multi-tiered modeling of tonal spaces, including chromatic as well as diatonic. He quantifies musical attractions based on the (cognitive) distance each tonal progression traces in its respective tonal space, factored with its hierarchical status and stability, as determined through the rule-system of his generative theory (Lerdahl and Jackendoff, A Generative Theory of Tonal Music [Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983]). Lerdahl (2002: 285-92) also explores the analogy of metric spaces, based on a grid concept of meter; this part of the theory is only lightly sketched, and Lerdahl points out the need to incorporate the influence of grouping structure on metric structure. Otherwise, the primary metric attraction is conceived as the tendency of a weak beat to progress toward a strong one (as Hugo Riemann claimed).

A. Immediate (basic, default level)

- Iconic: imagistic
  qualitative
- Indexical: dynamic
  temporal continuity

B. Mediated (*via* conventions of style)

- Symbolic: systematic,
  marked oppositions
  +
  creative,
  tropological

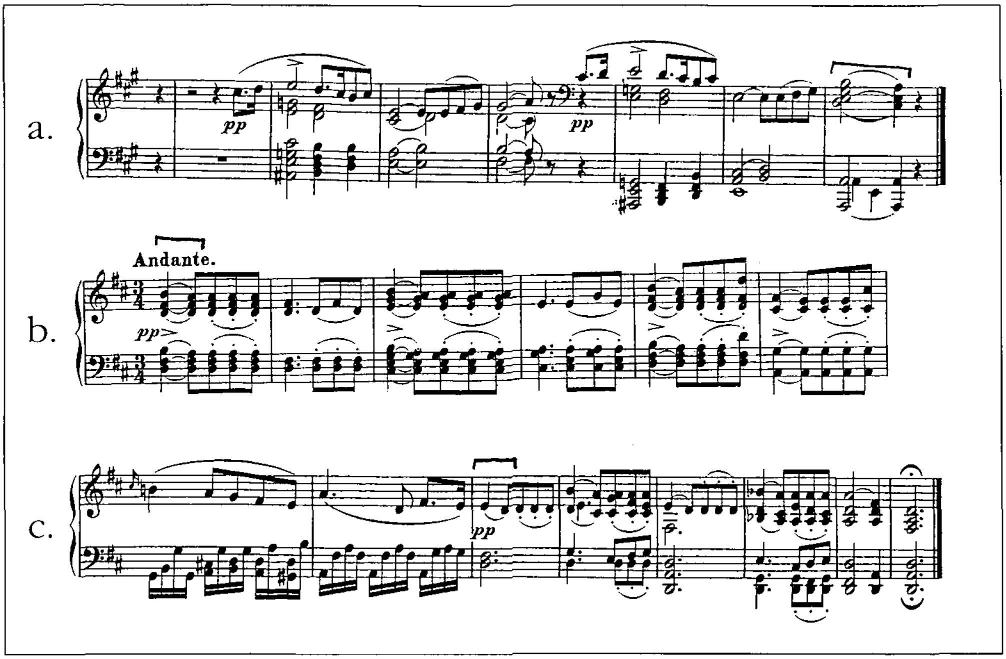
Figure 5. Levels of gestural interpretation.

association by similarity of properties or structures) correlations with gestures in other modalities (see **Figure 5**). The more *symbolic* level is kept coherent by a musical style; in Classical music a complex tonal syntax obviously places further demands on listeners' interpretive competencies. Musical gestures may be *multiply motivated*, however, and it is the interaction of indexical and iconic motivations with syntactic and symbolic ones that makes the study of gesture so rewarding for performing styles such as the Viennese Classical. This style draws upon very sophisticated perceptual and cognitive competencies in proposing analogous energetic shapings through time. Based on the competencies implies by a musical style, we can define stylistic types of gestures; new tokens of types, and indeed, new types, will reflect the growth of that stylistic competency.

2.6.7. Interpreting a stylistic gestural type: empfindsamer 'sigh' or galant gesture?

Stylistic types of gestures must nevertheless be realized individually in musical works. In the Classical style, a familiar gestural type is the two-note stepwise slur moving from strong to weaker metric location. In fact, this slur is affiliated with two distinct style types–the *empfindsamer* 'sigh' gesture, whose expressive significance ranges from grieving lament to poignant inflection, and the *galant* gesture of 'graciousness,' analogous to formalized social bows (as in the French, "*faire une reverence*"), and appearing formulaically in the *galant* or appoggiatura cadence. Manifestations of style types may be more or less original, but each is understood as a *strategic token* of its corresponding type. Beyond the features that cue affiliation with a type, however, further distinctive qualities of a token may be interpreted as significant, especially from a gestural perspective.

Overuse of the *galant* gesture in conventionalized cadences, often with suspension of the dominant-seventh chord in the upper voices over tonic resolution on the downbeat in the bass, made it less expressively focal and hence unmarked stylistically. But an example from Schubert illustrates how a figure which is stylistically unmarked may be strategically marked by thematic foregrounding.[34] In opening the second movement of his Sonata in A Major, D. 664 (1819), Schubert echoes the *galant*, appoggiatura cadence of the first movement (**Examples 2a & 2b**). When late in the second movement Schubert elects a similar appoggiatura cadence (b. 70), the elision with the head motive of this theme reinforces the motive's original derivation (**Example 2c**).



Example 2. Schubert, Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 664.

a. *First movement, closing.*

b. *Second movement, opening.*

c. *Second movement, closing.*

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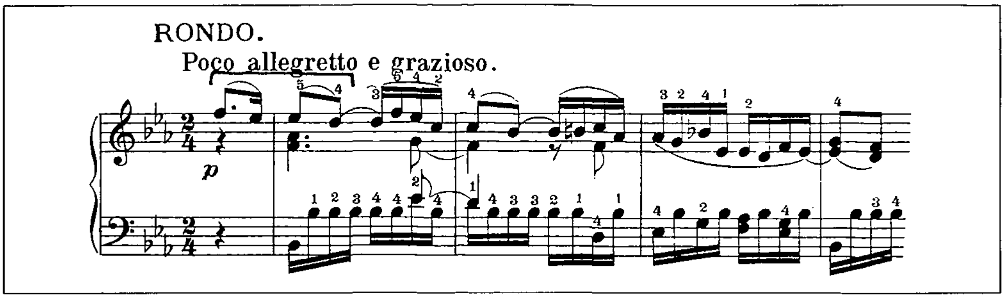
[34] For more on the concept of markedness, see Hatten (1994: 34-56).



Example 3. Beethoven, Piano Sonata in Eb Major, Op. 7, finale, opening theme.

The two-note stepwise slur may be extended to include increasingly larger motivic units, and the same gestural shape is applied to its more extended instances: light initiatory accent, smooth follow-through, and unaccented release. The "sigh" motive is extended into a more elaborate *galant* gesture in the rondo theme from the finale of Op. 7 (**Example 3**), which features an anacrustic, anticipatory sigh before the initiating sigh on the downbeat, thus doubling the expressive effect. Here, the two-note gesture combines *galant* graciousness with the sigh, troping the two gestural meanings to yield an effect that is neither superficial in its conventional graciousness nor tragic in its emotional context. Expansive, gracious, and with a touch of poignant longing, the Romantic effect of this gesture emerges from the strategic treatment of a Classical style type, exploiting its potential for further interpretation.

2.6.8. Strategic functions of musical gestures

Among various strategic adaptations of stylistic gestures (see **Figure 6**) we find *spontaneous* expression, motivic or *thematic* foregrounding and development, *dialogical* interplay, *rhetorical* marking of dramatic shifts or swerves in the ongoing discourse, and *troping*, (as in the creative juxtaposition and implied figurative interaction of two gestures). The category of the *spontaneous* may seem a bit ephemeral, since even the most original of gestures will quickly be interpreted as strategic for the work, and such spontaneous gestures are often *thematically* marked, both by their salience and their subsequent development. Nevertheless, the spontaneous translation of gesture to music is an avenue by which composers can introduce individual and often personal affective character without falling back on conventionalized formulae. The subsequent negotiation of a spontaneous gesture within the

Spontaneous

Thematic

Dialogical

Rhetorical

Tropological

Figure 6. Strategic functions of musical gesture.

syntax of a style–the attempt to rein in an unruly gesture, for example–is a premise that may foster greater creativity in its working out.

The *dialogical* function of gesture, grounded in the intersubjective development of human gesture, is reflected in Haydn's oft-noted "conversational" style in the string quartets[35] and Mozart's dialectical oppositions in his opening themes, which suggest two competing agencies. The dialogical convention is also implicit in the concerto, or more generally, the concertato principle that stems from Baroque practices.[36]

Rhetorical gestures include the expressive fermata in a slow movement, or the cadential 6/4 that marks the break for cadenza in a concerto, but such conventional gestures lack the force of strategic gestures that create rhetorical reversals, undercuttings, or shifts in level of discourse, such as the ones I have explored for Beethoven's Andante from the String Quartet in Bb, Op. 130.[37] At first I conceived of rhetorical gestures as limited to marking dramatic turns or shifts at the level of form (or expressive genre), but it soon became clear that the rhetorical, at least for the Classical style and beyond, is best defined as that which *marks a disruption in the unmarked flow of events at any level of the musical discourse.*[38] What constitutes the unmarked flow is of course subject to varying interpretations, and habit or convention is constantly adding to the fund of expected functional events in a style. Hence, as a result of the pressure of style growth, rhetorical gestures often become more extreme in order to mark fresh emphases, especially if a style has come to embrace oscillations in intensity as part of its normative or unmarked flow.

Gestural *troping*, along the lines of the troping of topics, is another possible strategic function. The possibilities that emerge from a creative fusion of different gestures would appear to be endless, but a note of caution is in order. Gestures are already such distinctive syntheses that in order to interpret a gestural trope as an amalgam of two separate (and presumably contrasting) gestures, the gestures in question must already possess established (stylistic or culturally immediate) expressive correlations, or else be (strategically) familiarized as thematic, before they are combined. Another criterion might be that each can be heard as making its own contribution to the expressive meaning that emerges from their synthesis or fusion.

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[35] Mara Parker analyzes four kinds of what I would term *dialogical* relationships in the string quartet from 1750-1797: the "lecture," the "polite conversation," the "debate," and the "conversation" (*The String Quartet, 1750-1797: Four Types of Musical Conversation* [Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002]).

[36] For a spectacular example involving troping, consider the "Echo" that concludes Bach's Overture in B Minor. This binary dance movement tropes on both concerto form and concertato style, as can be inferred from an elegant analysis by Laurence Dreyfus (*Bach and the Patterns of Invention* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1996], 224-32).

[37] Hatten, "Plenitude as Fulfillment: The Third Movement of Beethoven's String Quartet in Bb, Op. 130," to appear in *The Beethoven String Quartets*, collected essays edited by William Kinderman, University of Illinois Press, and *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes* (2004), chapter 2.

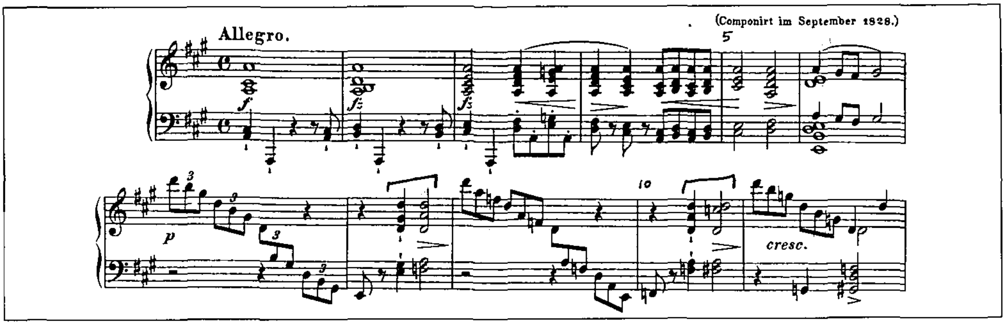
[38] Patrick McCreless's important article, "Music and Rhetoric" (*The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], 847-79), focuses on the German musical rhetorical tradition from roughly 1550 to 1800, during which time rhetoric encompassed many of the elements of structure that were eventually treated less metaphorically and more analytically: formal functions and their sequence, and musical figures, many of which were merely labels for techniques of motivic development. As McCreless summarizes, upon the development of specifically musical theories of melody and form for instrumental music this application of rhetoric was subsumed under structure (876). However, the rhetorical takes on a fresh meaning similar to the one I intend in the comments of Schindler and Czerny on Beethoven's rhetorical caesurae and dramatic pauses, and one could perhaps trace this tendency in discussions of performance and performance practice from the time of Koch. Indeed, McCreless notes the applicability even of Scheibe's oratorical figures (interrogation, repetition, gradation, dubitation, exclamation, etc.) to our understanding of the finale of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in D Major, Op. 10, no. 3.
Mark Evan Bonds (*Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration*. Cambrirdge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991) provides a broader historical overview that also addresses the continuity of rhetoric in the first half of the nineteenth century (132ff.), during the transition from a metaphor of the musical work as an oration to that of a biological organism. Elaine Sisman has applied traditional rhetorical concepts (along with a sensitivity to gesture and topic) in her insightful interpretations of Mozart's *Prague* Symphony ("Genre, Gesture, and Meaning in Mozart's 'Prague' Symphony, in *Mozart Studies II*, ed. Cliff Eisen [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997], 27-84) and Beethoven's *Pathétique* Sonata, Op. 13 ("Pathos and the Pathétique: Rhetorical Stance in Beethoven's C-minor Sonata, Op. 13," *Beethoven Forum* 3 [1994], 81-106).

2.6.9. Thematic musical gestures

Perhaps the most important function of gesture, however, comes from its thematization as motivic idea. A gesture becomes *thematic* when it is (a) *foregrounded as significant*, thereby gaining *identity* as a potential thematic entity, and then (b) *used consistently*, typically as the *subject of a musical discourse.* In a coherent musical discourse, the gesture may be varied without losing its affiliation to the original form (its identity, perhaps generalized as a schema), as long as the stages of its evolution are (a) progressive (i.e., no huge differences in shape between developmental forms or variants) and (b) temporally associable (no huge gaps in time between instances of the gesture).[39]

A thematic gesture is typically designed so as to encapsulate the expressive tone and character of the work or movement; thus, its expressive properties help the listener understand and interpret musical meaning at higher levels, as well. What might otherwise appear accessory–the articulations, dynamics, and temporal character of a motive–are potentially structural in that, by their embodiment in thematic gestures, they contribute to the shaping of an emerging expressive trajectory. As will be seen, unusual features of the resulting forms may be expressively motivated by the progressive evolution of thematic gestures.

Inevitably, *thematic gestures* (the focus of my analyses here) result from the compositional attention musical gestures receive as basic-level carriers of emotional force. Thematic gestures, like motives, are *further* marked as significant parts of the discourse of a movement, and they play a structural as well as expressive role in the unfolding form and expressive genre of a movement or work. Thematic gestures are not necessarily tied to one pitch structure, or even one metric identity, since on the one hand similarity of gestural shape may relate different pitch shapes, and on the other hand, gestures themselves may be subjected to developing variation as part of a coherent musical discourse. Furthermore, the continuity of a gesture does not demand unbroken continuity of sound, as in a legato group of pitches; continuity of gesture binds even separately articulated notes. Consider, as illustration of these first few points, a significant thematic gesture for Schubert's Piano Sonata in A major, D. 959 (**Example 4a**), which I have written about elsewhere.[40] It is developmentally varied in the continuation



Example 4. Schubert, Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 959. Developing variation of the bracketed thematic gesture.
a. First movement, contrasting first themes (b. 1-6 and 7ff.)

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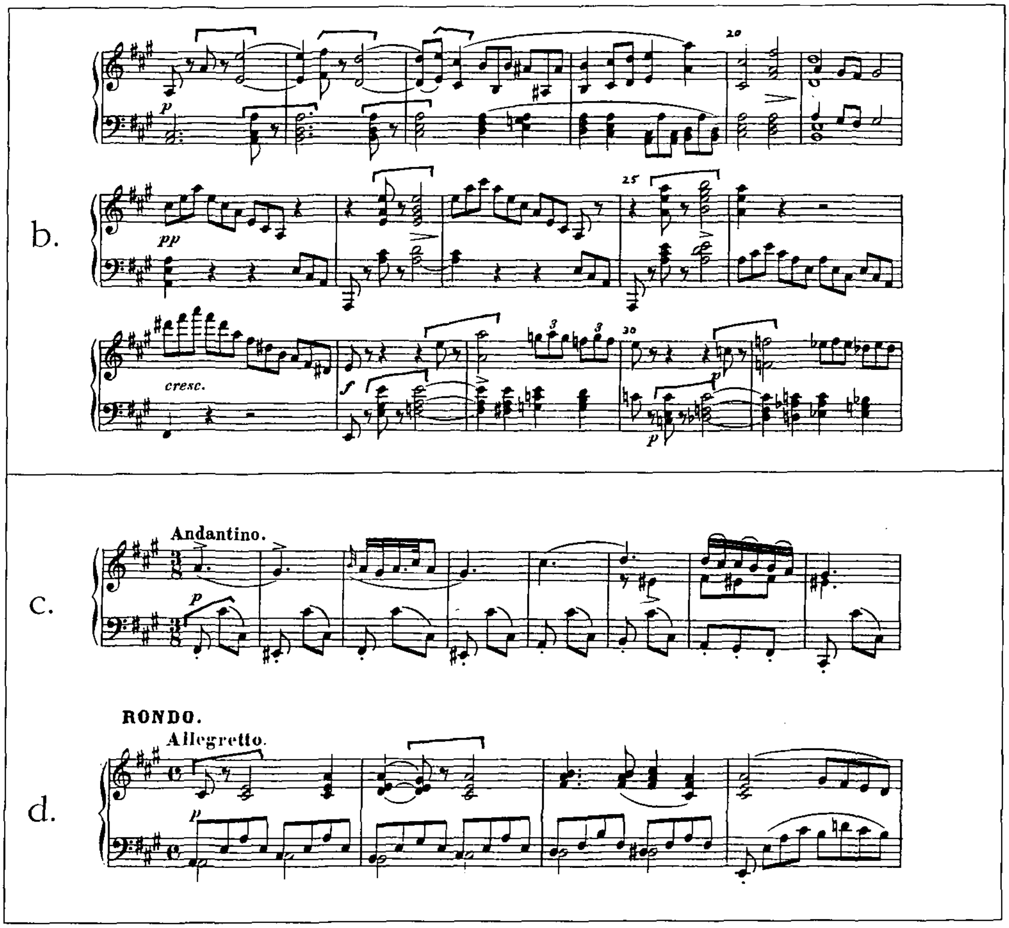
[39] Meyer discusses the constraints on our interpretation of "conformant relationships" (thematic schemata that may include motives or entire melodies). His helpful formula for perceived conformance, expressed as an equation, pits regularity of pattern, individuality of profile, and similarity of patterning against variety of intervening events and temporal distance between events. See *Explaining Music: Essays and Explorations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 49. Schoenberg's important concept of developing variation (to be addressed below) may be refined for analytical purposes by consideration of these cognitive constraints.

[40] For further evidence of the thematic significance of this gesture, which appeared in the compositional draft of the first movement before the left hand's articulated gestures in mm. 1-2, see Hatten, "Schubert the Progressive: The Role of Resonance and Gesture in the Piano Sonata in A, D. 959," *Intégral* 7 (1993), 38-81.



Example 4. Schubert, Piano Sonata in A Major, D. 959. Developing variation of the bracketed thematic gesture.

- *b. First movement, integrative counterstatement (b. 16-21), closing (b. 22-26), and transition (b. 27ff.)*
- *c. Second movement, opening theme (excerpt).*
- *d. Finale, opening theme (excerpt).*

(**Example 4b**). And in the second movement it is metrically shifted and relegated to a haunting ostinato gestural pattern in the left hand (**Example 4c**). In the finale, it is found in both metrical locations in the first two bars (**Example 4d**).

2.6.10. Gestural agency

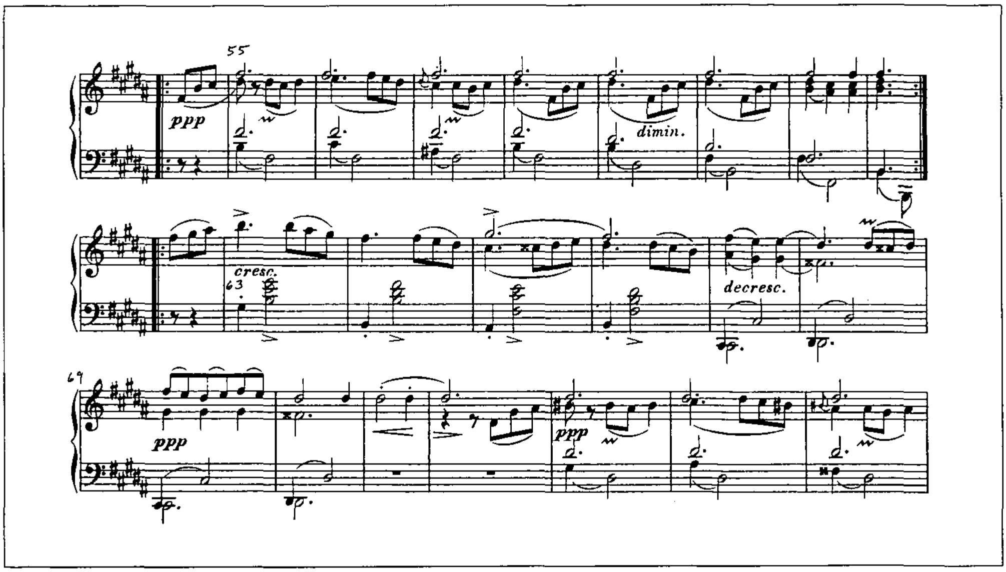
Gesture also implies agency–the gesturer, if you will–and the specific characteristics of an agent, in terms of expressive modality. A gesture may thus evolve from having a character to "being" a character in a thematic musical discourse. Manfred Clynes's (1977) work reveals the biologically universal modes of motor production and sensory perception that create and categorize basic emotion types as expressed gesturally. His "gesture hypothesis," as David Lidov (1999) describes it, also speaks to the precision with which we access subtle nuances of expressive gesture.

2.6.11. The interaction of gesture, topic, and trope

Because of its characteristic shaping and shading, *gesture may help define a topic*, as for example the funeral march topic in the opening theme of Schubert's Piano Sonata in A minor, D. 784, with its grieving gestural ostinato suggestive of a cortège (see below **Example 8, b. 9ff.**). Such thematic gestures may also be troped, perhaps in conjunction with topical troping.

Expressive interpretation is enhanced by integrating the analysis of topics and tropes with gesture. For example, how might topics be selected for their *gestural associations* as well as their *tropological potential?* An interesting example is found in Schubert's Piano Sonata in G major, D. 894 (Hatten 2003). In the trio of the Menuetto (**Example 5**) the mode shifts from B minor to B major for an exquisite troping of *Ländler* and musette. Both topics are already pastoral, so the trope is neither surprising nor problematic for the interpreter. The musette is more static, and the phrase structure of the first eight bars reinforces the stasis–the last four bars simply fade away in a reverberation of tonic harmony. The triple pedals and triple piano together provide a dream-like web within which the *Ländler's* gentle lifts and burbling ornaments are given an almost visionary quality–the special remove of idealized and idyllic pastoral space, whether understood as "wistful recall of lost innocence" or "dreamy yearning for an idealized future state."

In the second strain the gentle musette-*Ländler* is displaced by a waltz with a more active gestural character; the waltz measures are more strongly articulated, louder, and more forcefully expressive. How might we interpret the shift? The waltz is more sophisticated than the lower-style *Ländler*, and gesturally more individualized, which suggests the emergence of a stance, perhaps projected into a more social sphere. Thus, we might contrast the non-dynamic "being"



Example 5. Schubert, Piano Sonata in G Major, D. 894, third movement, trio, first and second strains (b. 55-62, b. 63-70).

of the musette-*Ländler* phrase with the dynamic "doing" of the waltz phase, to apply Eero Tarasti's (1994) Greimassian modalities.

Compare now the first movement's two main themes. The pastorally serene stasis of the opening theme (**Example 6**) features slow harmonic rhythm, an initial move to the subdominant, and compound meter. The second theme (**Example** 7, beginning in m. 27) features a waltz topic troped with pastoral features–most notably, pedal point and slow harmonic rhythm. Its additive motivic structure (sounding like 40 measures of 3/8) obscures an underlying *Satz* structure with a 2-bar extension (8+2 measures of 12/8). The troping of waltz and pastoral creates an emergent expressive meaning that I would characterize as "timeless ecstatic transport." An immediate variation of the 10-bar theme further underlines the progressively transcendent character of this topical trope, through such features as continuous sixteenths and use of higher register (mm. 37ff.), leading to a sense of spiritual exaltation.

2.6.12. An extended example: Schubert's Piano Sonata, D. 784, first movement

2.6.12.1. The principal thematic gesture

Schubert's Piano Sonata in A minor, D. 784, offers a compelling example of how gesture, topic, and trope can combine forces to create powerful new expressive meanings. A grieving gesture (bracketed in b. 9 and 10 of **Example 8**) does more than support the funeral cortège topic. It appears to be a thematic gesture, characterized by its expressive shape, and thematized by its prominent role in the discourse, beginning with the initial eighth-note releases in bars 2 and 4. The two pitch events are encompassed by a single gesture, in which the second event is an abrupt release of the first. The attempt to reject, or shrug off, a grief that is too great to bear, is captured in this evocative gesture.

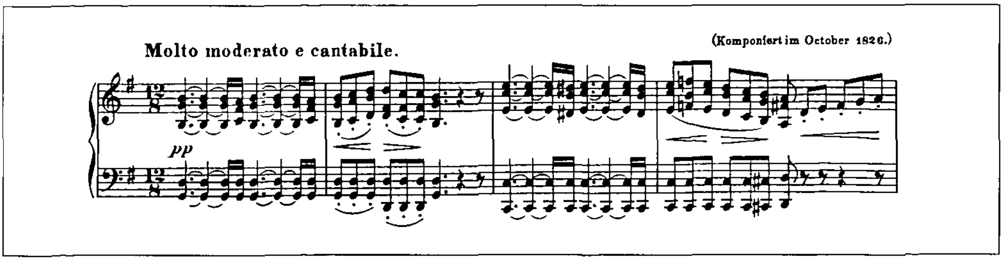
2.6.12.2. Emergence of the principal thematic gesture in the second theme

The major mode second theme (**Example 8**, b. 61ff.) provides, or at least attempts to provide, relief from the obsessively tragic first theme group. This theme presents a trope of topics: hymn-like texture and range is combined with pastoral pedal point, harmonic rhythm, and emphasis on the subdominant harmony. Interpreting this trope in its dramatic context is not difficult at this stage–"an idyllic realm of spiritual consolation," for example. But what makes this theme so incredibly poignant is a further trope, involving the lurking echo of the earlier grieving gesture, as implied by the accentual structure of the two half-note chords in every other measure. The gesture's strangely cortège-like quality persists in this more serene theme and triggers a chain of interrelated meanings, from the vulnerability of a theme that cannot fully displace grief, to the poignancy that is this vulnerable theme's emotional interpretant. Indeed, the fragile visionary character of this theme is ultimately shattered, and poignancy leads to emotional devastation when, after first breaking up the phrasing registrally and mixturally, the tragic gesture delivers its stunning blows of negation.

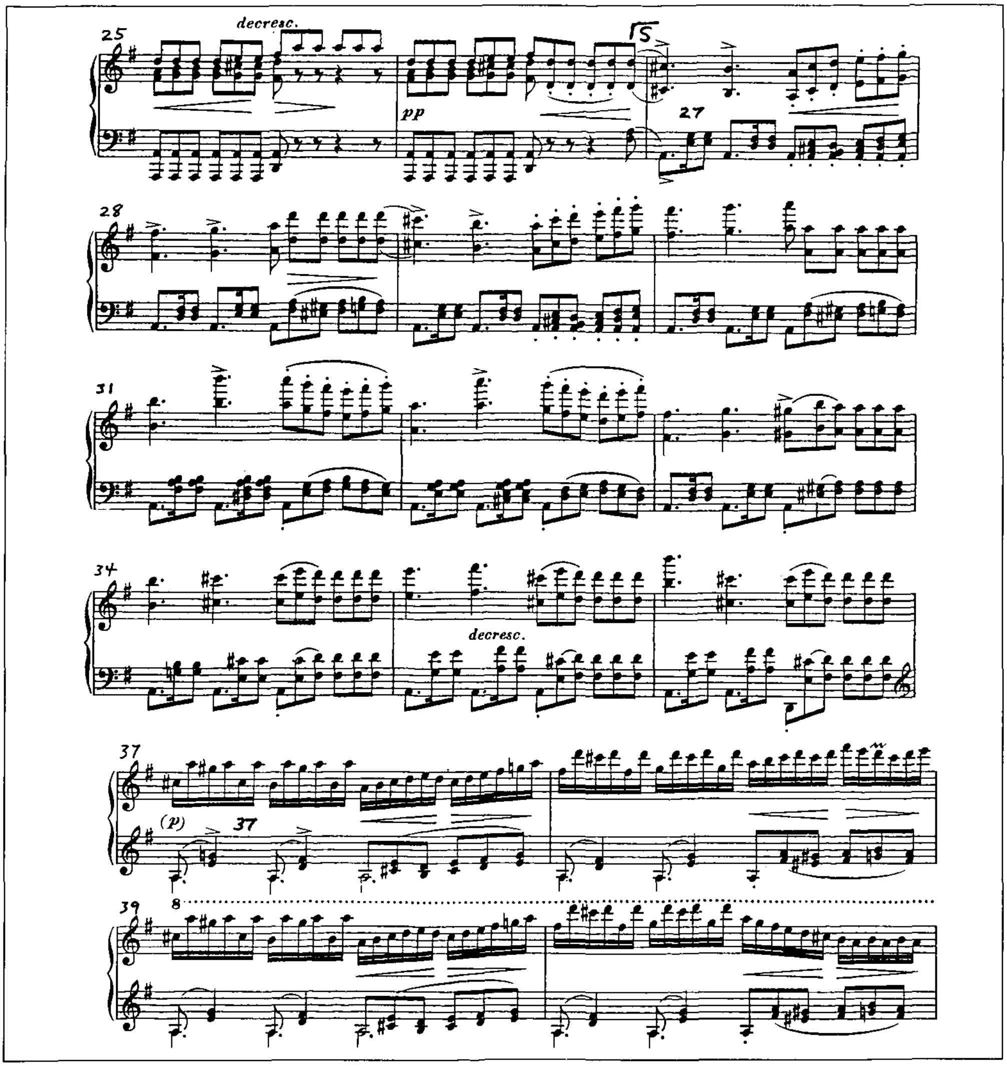
2.6.12.3. Interaction with tonal structure

Having demonstrated how gesture, topic, and trope can be integrated, I turn to their interaction with tonal structure, first by examining expressive motivations for unusual tonal design in the exposition of this sonata. The counterstatement of the main theme (**Example 8**, b. 26ff.) begins to lead transitionally away from the tonic, but in the wrong direction (b. 30ff.). Harmonically, the funeral march emphasizes plagal harmonic motion; grief appears to motivate analogous tonal motion into the subdominant region: from A minor to the key of D minor and its own minor subdominant.

Although mm. 42-46 imply a turn back to A minor, a subito pianissimo in m. 47 drops the descending-third motivic version of the gesture down a whole-step to Bb-G, echoing the


Molto moderato e cantabile.
(Komponiert im October 1826.)
pp

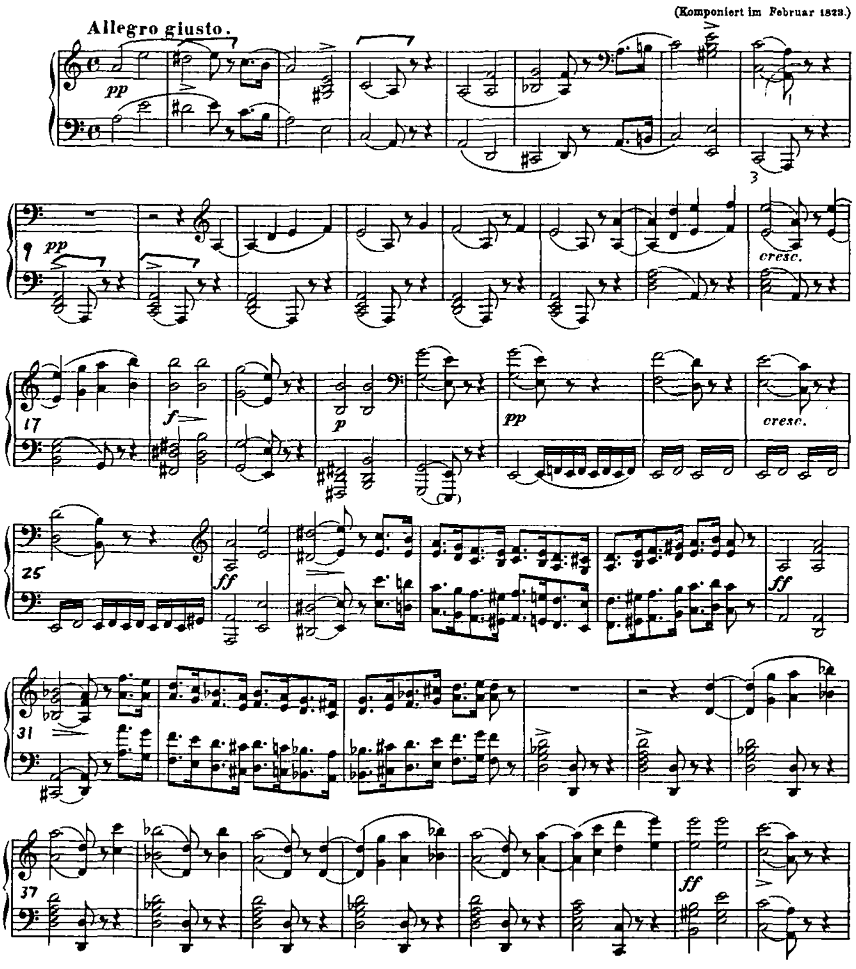
Example 6. Schubert, D. 894, first movement, opening theme (excerpt).


25
decresc.
pp
S
27
28
31
34
decresc.
37
(p)
37
39
8

Example 7. Schubert, D. 894, first movement, second theme (excerpt, b. 27ff).

subdominant of the subdominant. From this dark impasse of an emotionally failed transition, we are suddenly thrust up a half step with a forte tremolo and fortissimo fanfare in E major. The *deus ex machina* reversal is signaled by the use of a fanfare topic, suggesting victory, and strong dynamic gestures, implying a self-willed projection of heroic force. But note the persistence of the grieving gesture in b. 53-4, which is repressed by an even more forceful diminution in b. 57-8.

Stylistically, we might have expected the minor dominant at this point, as substitute for the relative major; Beethoven in his tragic piano sonata movements often uses the minor dominant for his second theme–for examples, the first and third movements of the *Tempest*, op. 31, no.

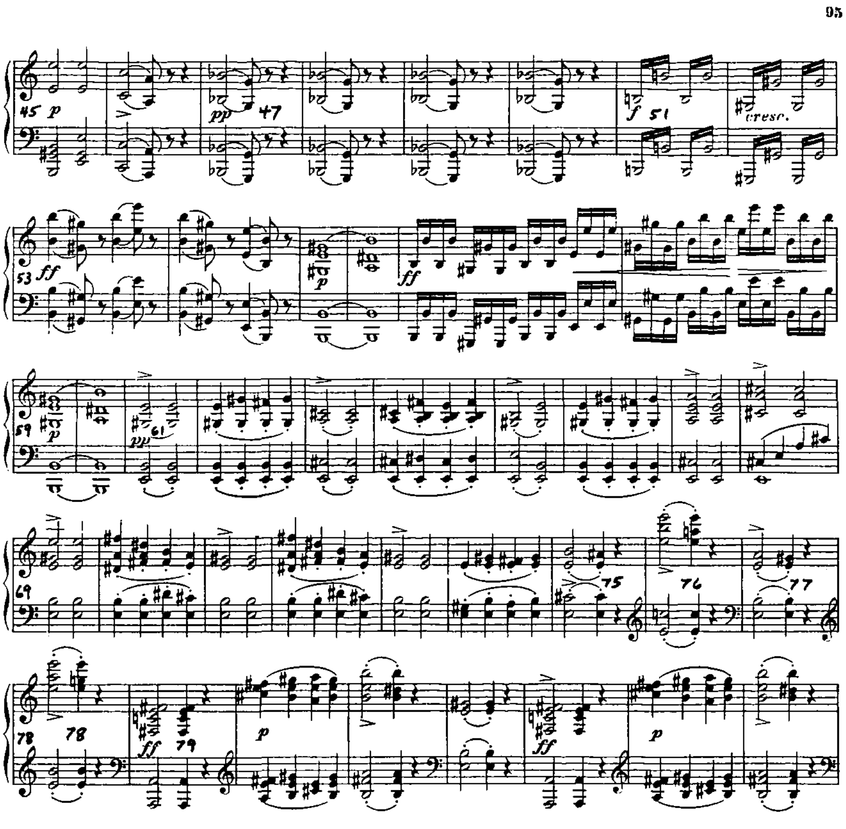


Example 8. Schubert, Piano Sonata in A Minor, D. 784, first movement, exposition (excerpt).

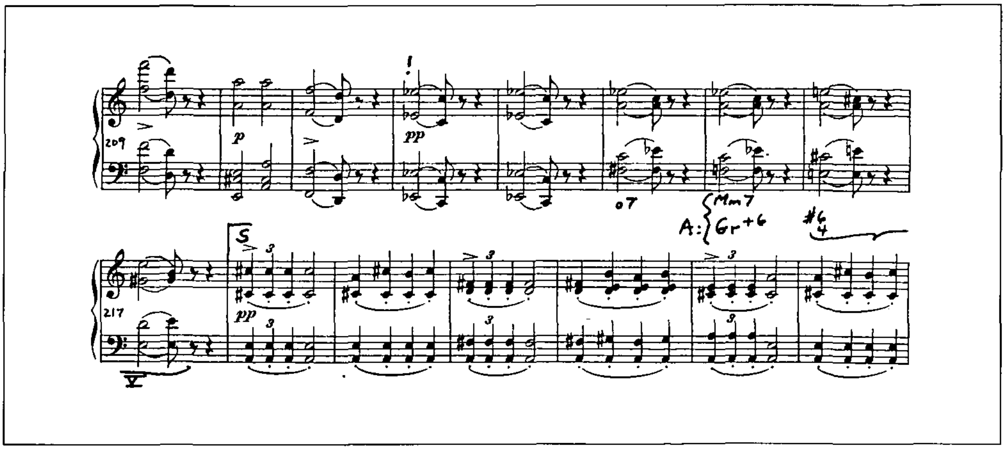
2, and the last movement of the *Appassionata*, op. 57. The major dominant is not coherent in a Classically-conceived sonata form; thus, we must consider its use here as associational and dramatically oppositional. As a mutation of the minor dominant, E major is an explicit reversal of the tragic obsessiveness that would have persisted had the minor dominant been selected. Here we have a good example of how expressive and dramatic gestural and topical meaning can motivate style change in the realm of tonal structure.

2.6.12.4. Topical and gestural reworking of the recapitulation

Compare the transition and second theme in the recapitulation (**Example 9**). No heroic outburst this time; instead, an enharmonic German augmented sixth chord in b. 215 mystically transforms the depressed state of the falling third motive to a very positive state, as signaled by an A major arrival 6/4 in b. 216. Dynamically, this transformational transition never breaks the soft surface. The truncation of the fanfare section is not motivated by a need to stay in the tonic key; Schubert had already rewritten the earlier part of the transition to keep it down a fifth, and the Eb-C depressed third could thus have been reversed by a heroic E-C# outburst, exactly parallel to the exposition. Instead, the expressive role of this compressed return is dramatically



Example 8. Schubert, Piano Sonata in A Minor, D. 784, first movement, exposition (excerpt).



Example 9. Schubert, D. 784, first movement, recapitulation. Transition and return of the second theme (excerpt).

to oppose the corresponding move in the exposition. This time, it is not heroic effort of the will, but transcendent grace or, more secularly, sudden illumination that accomplishes the transition, without requiring a blustery show of strength.

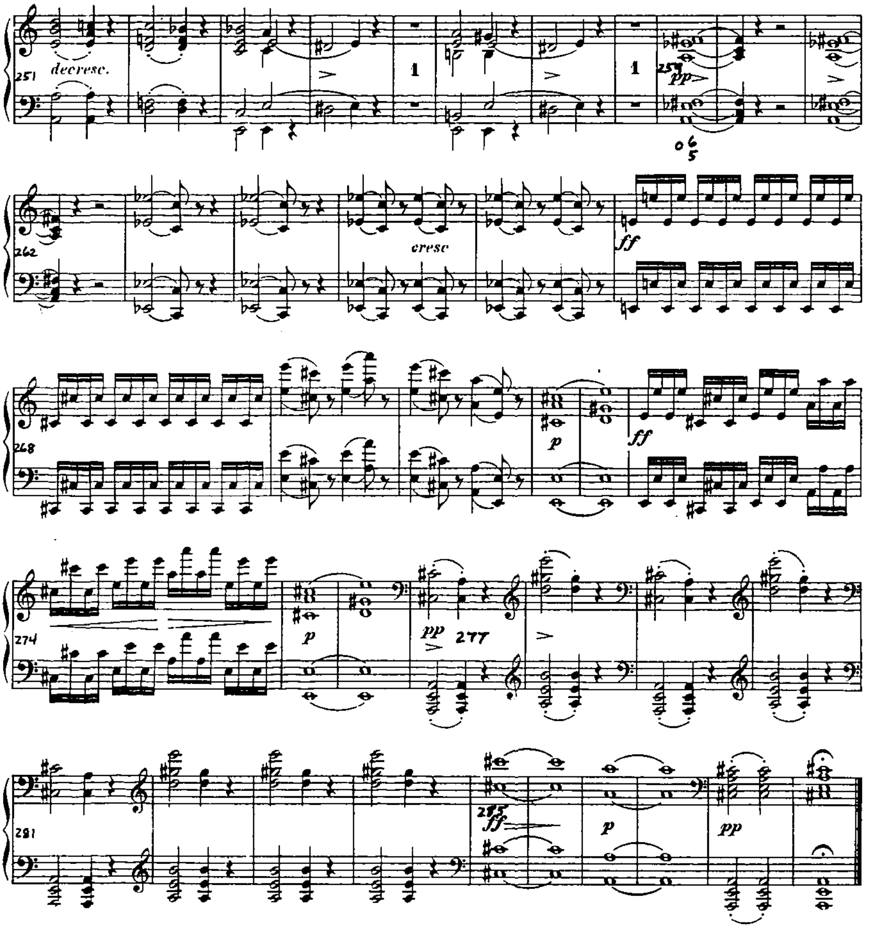
Notice how gesture contributes to this interpretation, since the second theme is not only tonally resolved to A major, but gesturally ameliorated with a softening agent–the triplet reverberation that fractions the disruptive force of the tragic gesture's subversiveness. Gestural meaning is reinforced by the doubling, as well. A doubled third increases the "sweetness" of the major tonic, which marks this variant of the theme as even more serene than in its first visionary appearance–an important achievement, if the recapitulation is not to sound anticlimactic.

2.6.12.5. Further transformation in the coda

The fanfare reversal that was omitted in the recapitulation returns in the coda, and a further, furious diminution of the reversed grief gesture suggests that even more power is required to overcome the relentlessness of a primal grief, expressed this time with a descent to a dark diminished-seventh chord (**Example 10**, b. 258). But the energy of the heroic fanfare is dissipated by the second theme's condensation to a bell-like benediction (b. 277ff.). This benediction is hauntingly framed in the very articulatory shape of the grief gesture that it had been at pains to disguise–by means of hymn-like and pastoral continuities in the exposition, and ameliorative triplets in the recapitulation. Even the stark *subito fortissimo* disruption by the descending-third motive in sustained and augmented form (b. 285) sounds more threatening than resolutional. The implied transcendent close is thus undermined, and the overall expressive genre will move inexorably to a tragic peroration in the finale.

3. Conclusion

I have throughout alluded to the synthetic character of not only gestures, but topics and tropes. I think the investigation of these three categories comprises part of a larger "Theory of the Synthetic" (not to be confused with the artificial) that is a much needed complement for all that music theory has so successfully accomplished in the realm of the analytic. Such a theory



Example 10. Schubert, D. 784, first movement, coda (b. 258-end).

must address the following characteristics of the synthetic, which are not always amenable to traditional analytical approaches: (a) continuity, (b) integration, (c) intermodality, (d) multifunctionality, (e) multiple motivations, (f) multiple levels, with respect to such continua as immediacy vs. mediacy, and (g) the relationship of cognition to rich perception.

Seen from this perspective, the interpretation of musical meaning I have pursued here today is not something that needs to be circumscribed in dealing with what Peter Kivy calls *Music Alone* (1990), in deference to the concept of "purely musical" meaning that he defends for so-called absolute works.[41] Nor should my approach be dismissed as betraying the uniqueness of expression, as when Roger Scruton, echoing Benedetto Croce and Richard Wollheim, reminds us that expression is intransitive, and thus not amenable to simplistic, code-like semiotic mappings.[42] The immediacy of musical gesture provides direct biological as well as cultural access from the outset; and the practiced mediacy of stylistic conventions such as gestural types, topics, and expressive genres reinforce the modalities of gesture with oppositionally secured realms of expressive meaning. With so much redundancy of mutually supporting cultural and stylistic meaning, any reasonably competent listener is well-positioned to embark upon the elusive, further interpretation of those unique features, contexts, and potential tropes that constitute the creative wonder of late Beethoven and late Schubert.

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[41] Kivy, *Music Alone* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

[42] Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding* (London: Methuen, 1983), 99; Croce, *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale* (Palermo, 1902); Wollheim, *Art and Its Objects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).