

Rhetorical Influence on Sonata Form in Beethoven’s Op. 27 No. 2

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: February 26, 2020

Accepted: March 5, 2020

Published: March 16, 2020

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48293/IJMSTA-56>

Keywords:

Beethoven

Music and rhetoric

Music theory

Sonata form

ABSTRACT

Ludwig Van Beethoven is an influential composer in the history of Western European music, who has had a significant artistic impact on both Classical and Romantic periods. Some of his many compositional achievements include a set of thirty-two piano sonatas. Theorists standardized the notion of sonata form to define such works from the perspective of musical construction and structure, seen through the research of Rosen (1988), Caplin (2000), and Hepokoski & Darcy (2006). From a theoretical standpoint, sonata theory is one of the more popular approaches to dissect the form of these works. However, while the notion of sonata form defines the organicist nature of Beethoven's sonatas, such theory does not produce much insight on interpretational approaches to viewing the composer's music. This research dissects an analytical perspective of sonata form and its integration with comprehension of music through rhetoric in the context of modern performance practice of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 27 No. 2 in C# minor.

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1 Introduction

The history of music theory spreads and evolves across various musical epochs, styles, and genres. There have been numerous theorists who presented their views and interpretations of compositions through the use of different methods. As such, analysts often trace the development of a piece of music through the four compositional elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, and form [1]. Based on the particular stylistic characterization of a musical work, some elements are more prominent in the music's theoretical readings than others. One of the significant aspects of form in the Classical era is the sonata form – seen in the rise of classical piano sonatas by Joseph Haydn (1732-1809), Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791), and Ludwig Van Beethoven (1770-1827) – the representatives of the First Viennese School [2].

Sonata form transforms as composers' works evolve, conforming to the organicist view of music [3, 4]. The notion of form associates with the stylistics of musical rhetoric. Both rhetoric and the sonata form can provide prominent analytical readings of compositions that integrate into the modern-day performance practice traditions. The analytical view of a composer's sonata from the standpoint of sonata and rhetoric forms present a practical perspective that unites with the current pedagogical performance philosophies. Furthermore, the theories of form and rhetoric enhance the listener's and performer's interpretation and assessment of a particular piece of music [5].

Rhetoric in music has a history of being associated with rhetoric that one finds in a language [6, 7]. Rhetoric provides us with a way to conceptualize and organize a musical thought, allowing a composer or a performer to be more effective in expressing their art [8]. Rhetoric is likewise a method in which one can interpret the structure of the work or the central musical semiotics that the piece of music carries within itself. Throughout history, theorists, such as Christoph Bernhard (1628-1692), Johann Mattheson (1681-1764), and Ebenezer Prout (1835-1909), have reflected on their interpretations of rhetoric and how it applies to our understanding of music [9-11]. In particular, each theorist focused on rhetorically-emphasized components of music analysis.

Alternative approaches to theoretical readings of prominent works are essential in the expansion of music analysis to complement musicology and performance practice traditions of music that falls into the scope of the Western canon [12, 13]. The studies of rhetoric have played an influential role in the theory of sonata form and its development. An alternative path to view

a sonata is through the lenses of tonality and rhetoric, as both methods present analytical data that extends beyond the study of form. The movements among a variety of tonal regions produce a series of significant relationships between larger sections of sonata form, while the notion of rhetoric emphasizes on the representations of musical ideas inside the sonata.

A sonata's exposition is one of such examples. The tonal form of an exposition outlines the movement of the work's tonality between tonic and a secondary key. On the contrary, the variety of musical topics, the textual layout, and different musical punctuations that a composer may use in order to emphasize his/her harmony is an example of the rhetorical form [14]. By understanding the rhetoric and its influence on the sonata form, one can enhance their performance of a particular work or interpretation of a piece of music. Multiple creative and innovative stylistic interpretations arise by dissecting the rhetoric and the form of a sonata.

The first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14, Op. 27 No. 2 in C# minor, known as *Moonlight*, will be used for analytical purposes [15]. The sonata form analysis, as well as Bernhard's rhetorical understanding of both pieces, will be shown. Furthermore, these analytical theories will be applied to the performance practice of Op. 27 No. 2.

2 The Development of Sonata Form

While theoretical reasoning behind understanding the form exists in composition, this is not evident if one merely listens to a piece of music, as the scope of the form solely becomes apparent after a detailed analysis. A musical structure is a concept that most works have, yet it is unique in each particular piece – a concept known as "paradox of musical form," hence why such a musical form in a composition is merely an abstraction [16]. How one represents the abstraction of the form will influence the type of interpretation of a work. Sonata form is a historically-established theoretical tool, developed and refined through multiple epochs of Western music history; the evolution of the sonata form occurs at the same time as the expansion of classical repertoire. As per *Sonata Form* by C. Rosen, "the development of the sonata form was accompanied by the growing establishments of the public concerts" [17].

Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas, stretched among his three stylistic periods, are significant works in the Western repertoire and serve as a significant source of influence on composers in the future epochs. The history of the sonata form generates a plethora of analytical discussions among theorists with regard to the following statements. [18-20].

- The piano sonatas of Beethoven's compositional oeuvre contain the necessary groundwork for one to approach such pieces with sonata-form analysis.
- All the piano sonatas that Beethoven composed in his career can undergo deconstruction for understanding the basics behind the composer's musical ideas.
- The theory of sonata allows one to understand the "compositional zones" and the functions that such zones hold in the more expansive structure of each work.
- The sonata form allows one to uncover the basic features and the building blocks that serve as essential parts of each work as a whole.
- The sonata form aims to "re-energize the latent drama, power, wit, and wonder within individual composition."
- The dissection of Beethoven's sonatas by using this analytical approach allows one to see the way music moves from the very first chord towards the final cadence – its ultimate goal.

3 Rhetoric and Its Association with Sonata Form

The rhetoric theories of Johann Mattheson (1681-1764) laid the fundamentals for eighteenth-century musical form. Mattheson associated rhetoric with a work's compositional approach; such an application allows one to map rhetoric onto music [21]. While rhetoric does not necessarily outline the form of music, as mentioned previously, it, nevertheless, influences it. For Mattheson, the purpose of music is to express feelings and emotions. In his philosophical view, Mattheson compares music with the rhetoric of the language arts, rather than with objective sciences, focusing on melodic development and progressively shifting to identify the form [22]. Rhetoric allows one to use particular musical nomenclature to framework theoretical compositional elements in a given composition. One of the examples of analysis that combines the analytical and rhetorical understandings of a piece of music was attempted by Christoph Bernhard, who mapped rhetorical methodology onto a piece of music. Joachim Burmeister's music-rhetorical research, which is covered extensively in *Hypomnematum Musicae Poeticae* (1599) and *Musica Autoschediastike* (1601), precedes Christopher Bernhard's treatises [23-25]. Figure 1 presents some of the terminologies from Bernhard's works [26].

The importance of a work's rhetorical style lies in its sentence structure [27]. The sentences in music represent musical ideas that contain motives and thematic material, on which a piece is structured; such sentences are combined to create larger phrases, sections, and groups [28]. A piece of music, similar to poetry, signifies a composer's musical thoughts – only with notes instead of words. Therefore, an artist must carefully plan his/her composition to contain a coherent rhetorical style; a logical and rational

rhetorical style translates into a comprehensible form that allows one to see and understand the meaning behind the composer's choice of the musical sentences. The acknowledgment of rhetoric in a piece of music allows for consistency and clarity of form.

<i>Stylus gravis</i>	
transitus	passing tone on weak beat
quasi-transitus	passing tone on strong beat
syncopatio (ligatura)	suspension
quasi-syncopatio	note repeated on strong beat
<i>Stylus luxurians communis</i>	
superjectio	upper neighbor
anticipatio notae	anticipation
subsumptio	lower escape tone
variatio	long note decorated with several shorter notes <i>(passaggio)</i>
multiplicatio	repetition of a dissonant note
prolongatio	figure in which a dissonance has a longer duration than the preceding note
syncopatio catachrestica	ornamented resolution of suspension
passus duriusculus	rise of fall of a (chromatic) semitone
saltus duriusculus	use of large or dissonant leaps not used in <i>stylus gravis</i>
mutatio toni	mixing of modes, either with authentic and plagal in the same voice, or going from one mode to another in composition
inchoatio imperfecta	beginning a composition with a dissonant interval
longinqua distantia	wide separation of one voice from another
quaestitio notae	cutting of the end of a note in order to seek the next note from a lower neighbor
cadentiae duriusculae	"strange dissonances" before final two notes of a cadence

Figure 1. Bernhard's rhetoric with analytical interpretation.

4 Sonata Form Analysis

Beethoven composed a total of thirty-two piano sonatas in his life between 1795 and 1822. These multi-movement works combine to represent the composer's ability to produce Classical and Romantic keyboard music, allowing one to view and interpret his compositional approaches and artistic thoughts. There is no evidence that Beethoven viewed these sonatas as a single cycle, and there is no evidence that the composer proposed a performance order for these works. Nevertheless, the thirty-two piano sonatas define Beethoven's compositional style from a musicological perspective; these sonatas are musically significant and formulate an essential part of a pianists' repertoire. Indeed, these in-depth compositions present music both for music enthusiasts and for professional artists. Beethoven's thirty-two piano sonatas are designed to enhance one's artistic and technical capabilities at the keyboard from the pedagogical standpoint and serve the function of concert performance music.

The musical influences that these sonatas have left are the reasons why performers, theorists, and musicologists have been discussing these Beethovenian works and will continue to do so for a long time [29].

The first movement of Op. 27 No. 2 begins with a brief introduction before the P-theme initializes at m. 5. The P-theme (mm. 5-10) presents the main motive of the sonata, beginning in tonic and modulating to minor mediant (iii). The transition (mm. 10-14) prepares for the entrance of the S-theme. The first rotation of exposition ends with a medial caesura, seen at the end of m. 14, gesturing to the beginning of the second rotation. The S-theme occurs at mm. 15-23.1, ending with a perfect authentic cadence at the essential expositional closure ($C\sharp^7$ to $F\sharp$). For this analysis, a decimal point represents a beat at which a phrase or a section begins or ends. In this instance, the medial caesura occurs at the second and the third beats of m. 15 while the S-theme finalizes on the first beat of m. 23.

In the development, Beethoven expands the exposition's first theme. The development section bifurcates in two phrases, with the first phrase divided into two smaller ideas of four measures. The first part of the first phrase at mm. 23-28.1 reinstates the material from the P-theme. The $G\sharp$ pedal point emphasizes the second part of the first phrase at mm. 28-32.1. The second phrase of the development section at mm. 32-42.1 functions as a preparation to enter the recapitulation. The P-theme of recapitulation, found in mm. 42-46, is identical to the one seen in the exposition. The transition of the recapitulation that occurs in mm. 46-50 is in E major, preparing to enter the S-theme in $C\sharp$ minor tonality. The S-theme completes at m. 60 with an essential structural closure on a perfect authentic cadence ($G\sharp^7$ to $C\sharp$). The sonata ends with a coda in m. 60-69.

There are two major unusual characteristics in this movement, not usually seen in minor-key sonatas. First, the first movement is slow (*Adagio sostenuto*), containing pianissimo dynamics for the majority of the piece. The usual path for a sonata-form composition is to begin with a fast opening movement and follow up with a slow one. Beethoven, on the contrary, begins with a slow movement, which are followed by two fast movements. According to Czerny, the sonata resembles a "nocturnal scene, in which a mournful ghostly voice sounds from the distance" [30].

Second, the S-theme of the exposition contains a tonicization of B major tonality (VII). The sonata form analysis of the first movement can be seen in Figure 2, where *P* = P-theme, *TR* = transition, *MC* = medial caesura, *S* = S-theme, *EEC* = essential expositional closure, and *ESC* = essential structural closure.

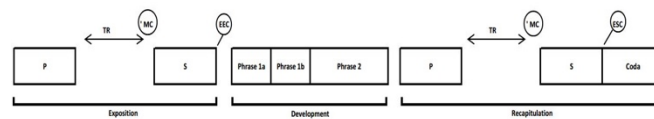


Figure 2. The analytical structure of the sonata form.

The exposition consists of an introduction in mm. 1-5.1, P-theme in mm. 5-10, transition in mm. 10-14, and S-theme in mm. 15-23.1. The development consists of phrase 1a in mm. 23-28.1, phrase 1b in mm. 28-32.1, and phrase 2 in mm. 32-42.1. The recapitulation consists of P-theme in mm. 42-46, transition in mm. 46-50, S-theme in mm. 51-60, and coda in mm. 60-69.

5 Rhetoric Analysis

The eight elements of Bernhard's rhetorical analysis are as follows:

- No. 1. *Quasi-transitus*;
- No. 2. *Transitus*;
- No. 3. *Quasi-syncopatio*;
- No. 4. *Multiplication*;
- No. 5. *Prolongation*;
- No. 6. *Saltus duriusculus*;
- No. 7. *Longinqua distantia*;
- No. 8. *Abruptio*.

Figure 3 shows the location of the rhetorical elements in the context of the first movement of Op. 27 No. 2. Beethoven announces the very first rhetorical element in m. 2 of the introduction, where the passing tone B occurs on the strong beat leading to the subsequent pitch A in the next measure. The form of the introduction can be defined by a bass line in the left hand, accompanied by perpetuum mobile triplets in the right hand. The main melody of the work only arises in the first theme in m. 5. In m. 6, an example of *quasi-syncopatio* can be seen with the repeated $G\sharp$. Similarly, *quasi-syncopatio* occurs with pitches G and $F\sharp$, creating a chromatic descend on these rhetorically important notes.

A prominent rhetorical alteration in the development section occurs in Beethoven's choice of register transferring. First, *saltus duriusculus* can be seen in m. 32 and m. 33 between pitches E and B \sharp , creating a downward dissonant leap of an augmented fifth. Second, *longinqua distantia* can be traced in m. 28 and m. 30, where a wide separation between two distinct voices can be observed. Third, *abruptio* occurs on the very final note of m. 32. The B \sharp is expected to resolve into the upcoming C \sharp ; instead, the B \sharp descends towards pitch E. While the C \sharp minor tonality is preserved, the voice leading is abruptly. The rhetorical elements of recapitulation are similar to these of exposition section, as Beethoven preserves similar thematic material. However, another example of *quasi-syncope* can be seen in the coda in mm. 61-66, where the G \sharp is reinstated, although this time – as a motive in the left hand.

These rhetorical labels allow one to see the prominent passages in the sonata. The composer presents pianists with various opportunities for change in interpretation through the inclusion of a variety of passing tones, neighbouring notes, musical abruptions, note repetitions, dissonance, and other theoretical elements, as defined by the rhetoric of Beethoven's music. The rhetoric found behind the Moonlight sonata reflects on the way one would view and understand the work. Furthermore, the rhetorical analysis provides essential information for moments of musical emphasis, which includes elements of performance, such as the contrast in dynamics and alteration in tempo.

Adagio sostenuto

The image shows a musical score for the first system of Beethoven's Op. 27 No. 2, marked "Adagio sostenuto" and "pp". The score consists of six systems of piano and bass staves. Red circles highlight specific notes: m. 32 (B sharp), m. 33 (E), m. 28 (B sharp), m. 30 (B sharp), m. 32 (B sharp), m. 33 (E), m. 34 (C sharp), m. 35 (C sharp), m. 36 (C sharp), m. 37 (C sharp), m. 38 (C sharp), m. 39 (C sharp), m. 40 (C sharp), m. 41 (C sharp), m. 42 (C sharp), m. 43 (C sharp), m. 44 (C sharp), m. 45 (C sharp), m. 46 (C sharp), m. 47 (C sharp), m. 48 (C sharp), m. 49 (C sharp), m. 50 (C sharp), m. 51 (C sharp), m. 52 (C sharp), m. 53 (C sharp), m. 54 (C sharp), m. 55 (C sharp), m. 56 (C sharp), m. 57 (C sharp), m. 58 (C sharp), m. 59 (C sharp), m. 60 (C sharp), m. 61 (G sharp), m. 62 (G sharp), m. 63 (G sharp), m. 64 (G sharp), m. 65 (G sharp), m. 66 (G sharp). The score is in G major and 3/4 time.

24 3 3
cresc. 2
decresc.

28 p 7 7

32 8 6 8

36

39 6
decresc.

42 pp 3 3

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is for a piano piece in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of six systems of music. The first system (measures 24-27) shows a right-hand melody with a triplet of eighth notes circled in red at measures 24 and 25, and a bass line with a circled note at measure 25. Dynamics include 'cresc.' and 'decresc.'. The second system (measures 28-31) features a right-hand melody with red arrows pointing to the 7th fingerings in both hands. The third system (measures 32-35) has red arrows pointing to the 8th and 6th fingerings in the right hand. The fourth system (measures 36-38) continues the right-hand melody. The fifth system (measures 39-41) shows a right-hand melody with a circled note at measure 39 and a 'decresc.' dynamic. The sixth system (measures 42-45) features a right-hand melody with circled triplet notes at measures 42 and 43, and a 'pp' dynamic.

The image displays a musical score for the first movement of Beethoven's Op. 27 No. 2, consisting of six systems of piano and bass staves. The score is annotated with red circles and numbers (2, 3, 5) highlighting specific notes and fingerings. The first system (measures 46-53) features a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes circled and labeled '3', and a bass staff with a circled note labeled '2'. The second system (measures 50-53) has a circled note in the treble staff labeled '5'. The third system (measures 54-56) has a circled note in the treble staff labeled '5'. The fourth system (measures 57-60) includes a circled note in the bass staff labeled '3'. The fifth system (measures 61-64) has four circled notes in the bass staff, each labeled '3'. The sixth system (measures 65-68) has two circled notes in the bass staff, each labeled '3'. Dynamics markings include *cresc.*, *p*, and *pp*.

Figure 3. Rhetoric analysis of the first movement of Op. 27 No. 2, as per Bernhard's theory.

6 Conclusion

The close connections between rhetoric and form in music allow for more accurate readings of a work. The rhetoric behind a composer's artistic choice reflects on the form that a particular piece will comprise. Unlike the sonata form, the rhetorical interpretation of a composition concentrates on specific aspects, such as a note, a chord, or a small motive. Nonetheless, these details are crucial when it comes to structuring the sonata form, as the small changes in rhetoric will affect the larger structure of the work's form. Furthermore, it is essential to note that rhetoric can be applied in order to enhance performances. The unique details which rhetoric carries that are not shown in the sonata form can be emphasized as part of individual interpretation of a

piece of music. An example can be seen in the development section with *saltus duriusculus*, *longinqua distantia*, and *abruptio* serving as prominent rhetorical elements of the development section. The musical meaning of a work can be looked at through performer's interpretation that balances out the theoretical concepts of rhetoric and form. The following example presents three ways of how a pianist may view the *saltus duriusculus* found at mm. 32-33 between pitches B \sharp and E and the *abruptio* found at mm. 32 and 34 at pitches B \sharp and A \sharp .

- (i) *Interpretation No. 1*: Beginning with *p* (or *pp*) at m. 32, the dynamic level can increase to *mp* or *mf* with a special emphasis made at B \sharp . The sudden drop to pitch E of m. 33 can be emphasized with an unexpected dynamic change (returning to *p* or *pp*). Similar interpretation can be applied at mm. 34-35.
- (ii) *Interpretation No. 2*: Beginning with *p* (or *pp*) at m. 32, the dynamic level and the tempo can increase with an accent made on the final note (B \sharp). Diminuendo can be applied at m. 33 and crescendo can be applied in m. 34, once again with an accent made on the final note (A \sharp). This interpretation specifically outlines both the *saltus duriusculus* and *abruptio*.
- (iii) *Interpretation No. 3*: The first part of the initial ascend at m. 32 can be brought out musically, with a steady diminuendo at the end of the run, in order to hide the dissonance between the B \sharp and E. The G \sharp in the left hand can be played louder to create a larger support, on which the broken arpeggio is based on.

Rhetoric's association with the performer's perspective is a vital tool for pianists to utilize to improve their interpretations. There are multiple approaches to musically construe rhetorical elements in a given work, all leading to specific readings of various themes and sections, creating subtle differences in understanding of a composition as a whole. The rhetorical language in a piece of music allows one to pin emphasis on important musical ideas and themes. A performer's interpretation is an individualized reading of a musical work that denotes the rhetorical connotations of musical elements.

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