

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT: SELECTED LATE-PERIOD PIANO SONATAS

Sean Carmichael, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2017

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The piano sonata genre sits at the apex of formal experimentation and expression within the solo piano repertoire. Since its introduction, the term ‘sonata’ has represented short instrumental pieces in binary form, pieces containing fantasy elements and multi-movement dance suites in the same key, to name a few. The modern definition of a sonata ultimately emerged as a work containing three or four movements: a sonata-allegro movement, a scherzo or minuet and trio, a slow cantabile movement, and an upbeat [typically] rondo finale. Following Beethoven’s piano sonatas, numerous composers have contributed to the genre in novel ways; however, none have produced an output of any comparable magnitude. This may be due in part to a sentiment felt by his contemporaries and expressed by Schubert, who commented, “Secretly, in my heart of hearts, I hope to make something of myself, but who can do anything after Beethoven?” While Beethoven and Schubert’s nearly coterminous deaths marked the end of the Viennese classical sonata, the passing of Beethoven in 1827 undoubtedly alleviated some pressure for Schubert as an instrumental composer. Composing a total of twenty-two

piano sonatas (albeit some remaining incomplete), it was in this year that Schubert composed his final three, D. 958, 959 and 960.

In this dissertation, I will examine four late-period sonatas of Beethoven and Schubert, exploring their influences and the characteristics that position them between the classical and romantic eras. The sonatas examined are Beethoven's Op. 101 in A major and Op. 110 in A-flat major and Schubert's D. 959 in A major and D. 960 in B-flat major. The dissertation was recorded by Antonino d'Urzo in the DeKelboum Concert Hall at the School of Music, University of Maryland and edited by Sean Carmichael. These recordings can be found in the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

**BEETHOVEN AND SCHUBERT: SELECTED  
LATE-PERIOD PIANO SONATAS**

by

Sean Anthony Carmichael

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**RECORDING TRACK LISTING.....1**

**PROGRAM NOTES.....3**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.....33**

**RECORDING TRACK LISTING****CD-1****Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)****Sonata No. 28 in A major, Op. 101**

[CD 1, Track 1] Etwas lebhaft und mit der innigsten Empfindung (Allegretto ma non troppo)

[CD 1, Track 2] Lebhaft, marschmäßig (Vivace alla Marcia)

[CD 1, Track 3] Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll (Adagio, ma non troppo, con affetto)

[CD 1, Track 4] Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr und mit Entschlossen (Allegro)

**Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110**

[CD 1, Track 1] Moderato cantabile molto espressivo

[CD 1, Track 2] Allegro molto

[CD 1, Track 3] Adagio & Fuga

**RECORDING TRACK LISTING****CD-2****Franz Schubert (1797-1828)****Sonata No. 20 in A major, D. 959**

[CD 2, Track 1] Allegro

[CD 2, Track 2] Andantino

[CD 2, Track 3] Scherzo (Allegro vivace)

[CD 2, Track 4] Rondo (Allegretto)

**Sonata No. 21 in B-flat major, D. 960**

[CD 2, Track 5] Molto moderato

[CD 2, Track 6] Andante sostenuto

[CD 2, Track 7] Scherzo (Allegro vivace con delicatezza)

[CD 2, Track 8] Allegro, ma non troppo

## Introduction

The piano sonata genre sits at the apex of formal experimentation and expression within the solo piano repertoire. Since its introduction, the term ‘sonata’ has represented short instrumental pieces in binary form, pieces containing fantasy elements and multi-movement dance suites in the same key, to name a few. The modern definition of a sonata ultimately emerged as a work containing three or four movements: a sonata-allegro movement, a scherzo or minuet and trio, a slow cantabile movement, and an upbeat [typically] rondo finale. Following Beethoven’s piano sonatas, numerous composers have contributed to the genre in novel ways; however, none have produced an output of any comparable magnitude. This may be due in part to a sentiment felt by his contemporaries and expressed by Schubert, who commented, “Secretly, in my heart of hearts, I hope to make something of myself, but who can do anything after Beethoven?”<sup>1</sup>

Beethoven’s 32 piano sonatas demonstrate extensive experimentation, evolution and mastery of the genre, inspiring the conductor and pianist Hans von Bülow to refer to them as the ‘New testament’ in contrast to the ‘Old testament’: J. S. Bach’s Well-Tempered Clavier.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Beethoven’s sonatas were composed in his early and middle periods and as expected in the works of younger composers, the style of the earlier sonatas are reminiscent of his predecessors, Haydn and Mozart, both in their restraint and clarity. These works, however, are already early examples of Beethoven adapting the structure of the sonata by writing half of them in four movements, which outside of symphonic writing, was atypical in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. His middle period

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<sup>1</sup> Piero Weiss and Richard Taruskin. *Music in the Western World: A history in documents*. CENGAGE Learning, 2008, 288.

<sup>2</sup> J.S. Bach. *The Well-Tempered Clavier, Teil II*. Release Notes. München: G. Henle Verlag, 2007, XV.



sees continued modification of sonata form by linking movements, reducing the number of movements (such as in Op. 54) and composing sonatas “*Quasi una fantasia*,” (in the style of a fantasy). The thematic material is often dominated by drama and virtuosity, invoking the early romantic ideals of struggle, triumph and heroism, as exemplified in the opening of Op. 57, ‘Appassionata’. Conversely, the late period sonatas lend more towards introspective qualities, pastoral themes, and significant transfigurations of sonata form via unexpected harmonic structures and the integration of extensive fugal sections.

Schubert’s first sonatas were composed in 1815, one year prior to Beethoven’s first late-period sonata, Op. 101. Although he composed a total of 22 sonatas, nine remained incomplete and only three were published during his lifetime. Similar to Beethoven in a number of his early sonatas, Schubert displayed a preference for the four-movement format, with the exceptions of D. 459 in five movements and D. 784 in three movements. Schubert’s innovation within the sonata lies less in his treatment of form and compositional procedures and more in his ability to seamlessly modulate his lyrical themes to distant keys, often weakening the tonic-dominant relationship; a defining characteristic of the classical sonata.<sup>3</sup> His earliest sonatas evoke the style of Mozart, in that they are galant-like and do not incorporate the brilliance or bravura of the Beethoven sonatas, possibly because Schubert’s ability at the piano was somewhat limited. In 1817, Schubert begins to incorporate some of the characteristic Beethovenian drama from Op. 57 in the opening of his own Sonata in F minor, D. 625, a trend that continues into his later works. Similar instances of Beethoven’s influence appear in a number of Schubert’s

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<sup>3</sup> Frank Kirby and Maurice Hinson. *Music for Piano: A Short History*. Amadeus, 1997, 143.

works, including the Wanderer Fantasie, Impromptu D. 935, No. 2 and Piano Sonatas D. 959 and D. 960.

While their nearly coterminous deaths marked the end of the Viennese classical sonata, the passing of Beethoven in 1827 undoubtedly alleviated some pressure for Schubert as an instrumental composer. Participating as a torchbearer at Beethoven's funeral, it is fitting that Schubert already had aims to carry on the legacy of his predecessor in the larger instrumental forms. In a letter from 1824, Schubert wrote to his friend Leopold Kupelwieser:

*Of songs I have not written many new ones, but I have tried my hand at several instrumental things, for I wrote two string quartets and an octet, and I want to write another quartet; in fact, I intend to pave the way towards a grand symphony in this manner. The latest in Vienna is that Beethoven is to give a concert at which he is to produce his new symphony, three movements from the new Mass, and a new Overture. God willing, I too am thinking of giving a similar concert next year...<sup>4</sup>*

In addition to two symphonies, a mass, a string quintet, and a fantasia for four-hands, it was during this final year in Schubert's life that he composed his last three piano sonatas.

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<sup>4</sup> John Michael Gingerich. *Schubert's Beethoven Project*. Cambridge University Press, 2016, 42.

## A Brief History of the Sonata

As with the growth of many genres, the implications of the term “sonata” changed over time. In 1753, French organist and composer Michel Corrette defined it as “a suite of 3 or 4 pieces in the same key” while the German theorist Albrecht observed that its various movements often resembled the allemande, courante, and gigue. Rousseau defined the sonata as “an instrumental piece consisting of three or four consecutive movements of different character. The sonata is to instruments about what the cantata is to voices.”<sup>5</sup> By 1775, the standard reference became an article by J.A.P. Schulz stating that a sonata is “an instrumental piece consisting of two, three, or four successive movements of different character, which has one or more melody parts [within a movement].”<sup>6</sup>

The first sonatas for keyboard are credited to Johann Kuhnau and Domenico Scarlatti. Kuhnau, the predecessor of J.S. Bach, is known for writing a set of programmatic works known as the “Biblical Sonatas,” each depicting a different biblical story in a series of contrasting movements. Scarlatti composed over 555 sonatas, with the majority of them set in a one movement binary form. These works were followed by contributions from C.P.E. Bach, Haydn and Mozart, the first of whom influenced the sonata’s development by incorporating the harmonic language developed by his father, J.S. Bach, and shortening themes into motives for developmental purposes. William S. Newman summarizes the classical sonata as “a solo or chamber instrumental cycle of

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<sup>5</sup> William S. Newman. *A history of the sonata idea*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963, 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

aesthetic or diversional purpose, consisting of several contrasting movements that are based on relatively extended designs in ‘absolute’ music.”<sup>7</sup>

Classical sonatas are currently recalled as having three (fast-slow-fast) or four (fast-slow-fast-fast or fast-fast-slow-fast) movements. Within this scheme is a movement referred to as the “sonata-allegro” movement. Characterized by specific formal procedures, the sonata-allegro movement begins with an exposition, which contains themes one and two in tonic and dominant keys, respectively. In the following development section, the themes undergo a series of transformations and modulations that lead into a recapitulation of the opening themes in the tonic key. The movement may conclude with a coda. The late sonatas of Beethoven and Schubert, however, present a dismantling of classical conventions in regards to form and harmony.

### **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Similar to the future concert etudes of Chopin and Liszt, the piano sonata served as the primary vehicle through which Beethoven was able to display his technique as a virtuoso pianist and exercise his compositional creativity simultaneously, effectively championing the genre. By examining his 32 sonatas that span 28 years, theorists are able to observe and chart Beethoven’s growth as a composer over the course of a significant portion of his career. It is useful to remember that although Beethoven’s musical output is conventionally broken into three periods, characteristics that are considered distinct in one period often bleed into those that are adjacent.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Charles Rosen. *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*. Faber and Faber, 2005, 389.

Classical sonata form is characterized harmonically by its tonic-dominant relationship and as Charles Rosen notes, “Beethoven does, indeed, go to the dominant by the end of the exposition of his early sonatas, but often before doing so, he establishes a more remote key first: in Op. 2 No. 3, the dominant minor; in Op. 10 No. 3, the submediant minor.” While Beethoven was an early pioneer in exploring remote keys, he rarely ends up in any place other than the dominant, in contrast to Schubert, who blurred the lines between subdominant and dominant relationships with tonic. Regarding Beethoven’s harmonic language, Rosen goes on to say:

*His expansion of the large-scale harmonic range took place within the limits of the classical language, and never infringed on the tonic-dominant polarity or the classical movement towards a greater tension away from the tonic. These secondary tonalities to his work, mediant and submediants, function within the large structure as true dominants. They create a long-range dissonance against the tonic and so provide the necessary tension for a move towards a central climax.<sup>9</sup>*

Although Beethoven pushes harmonic boundaries in many of his works, his true experimentation lies in his development of both thematic material and formal structures. Beethoven relied heavily on the framework presented by Mozart and Haydn’s use of short motifs to enlarge the structures, more so than could be done with a typical melodic line. From the start, he alternated between the number of movements in his sonatas, until a drastic change at the turn of the century. In 1801, Beethoven completed two sonatas, Op. 27 nos. 1 and No. 2 “*Quasi una fantasia.*” These works are some of the first

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 384.

examples of the genre to deconstruct the standard form of a sonata cycle. In order to explore new alternatives to the traditional sonata cycle, Beethoven abandoned the fast-slow-fast pattern in his Op. 27 sonatas. Both begin with slow first movements, as opposed to the standard sonata-allegro movement, and the climax is reserved for the end of the work. This change in practice leads to a form that closely resembles the fantasy, with contrasting sections now juxtaposed and connected.<sup>10</sup> Saving the sonata-form movement for last, Beethoven sets the stage for future compositions to employ the sonata-allegro movement as a means of the sonatas formal conclusion. He also uses cyclic techniques to unify the movements thematically, as he does in op. 27 no. 1, and later in Op. 101 and Op. 110.

*Sonata No. 28 in A major, Op. 101*

Marked by the loss of his brother in November of 1815 as well as legal struggles involving the guardianship of his nephew that stretched from 1816-1820, Beethoven's late period saw a significant reduction in musical output. Despite great personal distress, he completed his Sonata Op. 101 in A major in November of 1816. Eventually, he ended up selling the rights to the local Viennese publisher, Sigmund Anton Steiner, who published the work in February 1817.<sup>11</sup>

The sonata is dedicated to the pianist, Baroness Dorothea von Ertmann, the wife of an Austrian infantry officer and pupil of Beethoven. She was recognized as a supreme interpreter of Beethoven's works, an opinion that he also shared, as is displayed in a note

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<sup>10</sup> Aida Marc. "Analysis of expressive elements in the Dante Sonata." D.M. Diss., University of Alabama, 2010, 48.

<sup>11</sup> Elliot Forbes, ed. *Thayer's Life of Beethoven*. Rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973, 692.

to her: “Please accept now what was often intended for you and what may be to you a proof of my devotion both to your artistic aspirations and to your person. That I could not hear you play at Cz[erny]’s recently was due to an indisposition which at last seems to be yielding to my healthy constitution—I hope to hear from you soon ... ”<sup>12</sup>

Beethoven did not label any of the late sonatas, “quasi una fantasia,” however it seems that the fantasy sonata appears to serve as the underlying formal structure of Op. 101.<sup>13</sup> Just as Beethoven shows interest in joining together the movements of his Op. 27 sonatas, he shows a similar interest in Op. 101 and 109-111, connecting smaller movements to create larger structures, often reserving the climax for the end of the work.<sup>14</sup>

The first movement of Op. 101, notably the shortest first movement of Beethoven’s piano sonatas, is characterized by a supreme intimacy and seemingly unending lyricism. This is further enforced with Beethoven’s indication to the performer, “Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung,” meaning, “somewhat lively, and with the inner most sensitivity.” Although its length is significantly diminished in comparison to the first movements of other works, it adheres to sonata form. Perhaps the most interesting feature of this movement is that it does not arrive on the tonic until measure 77, with its conclusion at measure 102. The movement begins on the dominant

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<sup>12</sup> Kenneth Drake. "A Study of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas in the Light of Evidence Provided by Beethoven's Pupils" Dissertation, University of Illinois, 1970, 51-2. 67.

<sup>13</sup> Marta Schermerhorn. “An historical and analytical study of Beethoven’s Fortepiano Sonata in A major, Opus 101: A performance practice perspective.” MA Thesis, San Jose State University, 1992. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Wei-Chun Bernadette Lo. “The Piano Sonata in the Musical Life of the Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.” D.M. Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004. 120.

chord and continues to elude the tonic for the duration of the exposition and development. Texturally, it is comprised of four voices moving contrapuntally.

Another trope in Beethoven's late-period music is the juxtaposition of polar opposite moods, typified by the comical second movement of Op. 110. The second movement of Op. 101 is marked "Lebhaft, Marschmassig" (lively march). It is essentially a scherzo and trio, insofar as the scherzo has been infused with the character of a march. The movement has a somewhat bombastic nature, characterized by a flurry of dotted rhythms and sforzandi and *fp* indications, a substantial contrast to the first movement. It is also in the distant key of F major, which functions as a lowered VI in relation to the key of A major. The trio moves to B-flat major, and presents contrapuntal material in a stately and academic manner before returning to the march.

The construction of the third movement is considerably interesting in that it, too, begins on an E major chord in the Adagio, although it is in the parallel minor (A minor), and serves as a prelude to the sonata-allegro finale. In addition to the Adagio section which briefly recalls the harmonic postponement of the first movement, Beethoven interjects a quotation directly from the opening bars of the first movement that serves as a bridge to the finale. Up until this point, examples of explicit cyclicism are relatively unknown in Beethoven's works. (A similar quotation appears in Schubert's D. 959, with the opening phrase of the first movement appearing at the end of the fourth movement.) After a succession of trills, the finale proceeds through the exposition in a fashion one would expect from Beethoven, until the arrival of the development. The most defining aspect of this movement is that the development appears for the first time in Beethoven's sonatas as a fugue. As thematic development is considered a primary feature of



Beethoven's genius, one might view the installation of the fugue as a culmination of his ability. Given his new concept of harmonic deferral in the sonata's first movement, it makes sense that the opening of the fugue (which replaces the development section) remains in the tonic minor key. By devoiding the development of much of its typical harmonic tension, he delays our expectations for the true tonic. According to Rosen, "This is a way of evading classical tension (harmonically here) and reaching the relaxed expansion of large Romantic forms."<sup>15</sup>

*Sonata No. 31 in A-flat major, Op. 110*

Completed by December 25, 1821, Beethoven's penultimate Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110 appeals to many of the same sensibilities as Op. 101. The first movement begins with four voices, processing with a sweet, reflective hymn-like quality. The second movement follows with a contrasting scherzo and trio, which leads into a third movement containing two alternating arioso and fugue sections. Considered by pianists as one of the most sensitive and introspective works in the piano repertoire, Rosen states:

*throughout Op. 110 the most traditional elements of music are remolded in order to produce a work in which neither the formal structure nor the emotional expression has a parallel or analogue elsewhere, even in Beethoven's own work. The conventionality of the development section in the first movement is disconcerting. At the same time, there is nothing like it.<sup>16</sup>*

According to William Kinderman, Beethoven began composing Op. 110 between the summer and fall of 1821, after recovering from jaundice, which eventually took his life.

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<sup>15</sup> Rosen, 403.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 488.

During this time he was also working on his *Missa solemnis*, leaving its Agnus Dei, Dona Nobis Pacem and Credo excerpts intermingled with sketches for the sonata.<sup>17</sup>

This provides a reasonable context for the tender and reverent nature of Op. 110.

As in Op. 101, where Beethoven restates the first movement's opening theme immediately after the adagio, a similar cyclic invention is employed in Op. 110 albeit in a more obscure fashion. For example, disguised in the melodic contour of the first movements' opening measures is an outline of the theme in the fugue. After the first C in the top voice, the Ab—Db—Bb—Eb and F—Eb—Db—C clearly form the basis for the fugal theme.



Figure 1. Beethoven's Op. 110, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-4



Figure 2 Beethoven's Op. 110, Mvt. 3, mm.1-4 of the fugue

Either subconsciously or intentionally, Beethoven appears to reference the “Largo” from Haydn’s Symphony No. 88 in the measures that follow. As Philip Radcliffe

<sup>17</sup> William Kinderman. “Integration and narrative design.” *Beethoven Forum*, Vol. 1. Eds. C. Reynolds, L. Lockwood, and J. Webster. University of Nebraska Press (Nov. 1, 1992): 116.

points out, there is an obvious resemblance between the first 8 measures of Haydn's Symphony No. 88 and mm. 5-12 in the first movement of Op. 110.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 3 Op. 110, Mvt. 1, mm. 5-12

<sup>18</sup> Philip Radcliffe. *Beethoven's String Quartets*, 38.

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**Largo.**

Flauto.

Oboi.

Fagotti.

Corni in D. \*

Trombe in D. \*

Timpani in D.A.

Violino I.

Violino II.

Viola.

Violoncello.

Basso.

The image displays a page of a musical score for the second movement of Haydn's Symphony No. 88, titled "Largo". The score is written for a full orchestra and includes parts for Flute, Oboe, Bassoon, Horns in D, Trumpets in D, Timpani in D, Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Bass. A Solo Cello part is also indicated. The tempo is marked "Largo". The score shows the first few measures of the movement, with various dynamics such as *p*, *p dolce*, *sf*, and *pizz.* (pizzicato) used throughout. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

Figure 4 "Largo" from Haydn's Symphony No. 88

The second movement is a comical scherzo and trio. Upon first glance, Beethoven again juxtaposes two greatly contrasting moods, but in fact he takes it a step further by placing the reverent, hymn-like first movement next to one built from folk-song

quotations concerning untidiness and cats. The two folk songs referenced here are “Unsa kätz häd kaz'ln g'habt,” (Our cat has had kittens) and “Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich,” (I’m a slob, you’re a slob).

The third movement of Op. 110 is certainly the most innovative movement of the sonata in terms of structure. The movement alternates between Arioso and fugue sections in an ABAB fashion. The Arioso has an operatic and distressed character with the indications at the beginning of each section stating “klagender gesang” (tearful song), and even moreso, “ermattet gesang” (exhausted song) at the G minor return of the Arioso. This is the first time Beethoven separates the keys of adjacent sections by semi-tones, A-flat minor-major, G minor-major, and A-flat major. The only previous example in the keyboard repertoire appears in the second movement of Haydn’s Sonata No. 52 in E-flat major.<sup>19</sup> (In both Schubert’s D. 959 and D. 960 a similar use of semi-tone modulations appears.)

### **Franz Schubert (1797-1828)**

Schubert attained contemporary notoriety through his art songs, which comprise the bulk of his compositional output. Composing over 600 lieder, it is no wonder that he excelled in smaller forms. Numerous dances, ecossaises, ländler, minuets, variations, waltzes, and impromptus can be found interspersed throughout the composition of his twenty-two piano sonatas. Although he contributed a substantial number to the piano sonata repertoire, composing large-scale works did not come easily for him, which is clear from his initial forays in the genre. Schubert began composing his first piano

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<sup>19</sup> Wei-Ya Lai. “Beethoven’s Late Style in His Last Five Piano Sonatas.” April 15, 2009. Dissertation: University of Cincinnati, 57.

sonatas in 1815, one year before the beginning of Beethoven's "late period." The first two sonatas, D. 157 in E major and D. 279 in C major, both remained incomplete, eventually joining a sum total of nine sonatas with missing movements. Nonetheless, Schubert remained determined to carve a space for himself in the tradition of large-scale instrumental composers, which was primarily occupied by Beethoven.

Schubert's compositional output is not as easily divided as Beethoven's, primarily because his life was cut short at the age of 31. Still, there is a clear distinction between the final sonatas and those that precede them. With Beethoven's passing in 1827, Schubert's aspirations to carry on his predecessor's legacy continued with great progress. In addition to two vocal works, *Schwanengesang*, D. 957 and *Shepherd on the Rock*, D. 965, his commitment to large form compositions yielded the creation of two symphonies, a mass, a string quintet, a fantasia for four-hands, and three piano sonatas of monumental proportions. Schubert's last three sonatas were written between late 1827 and 1828, with their completion date reading September 26, 1828. The original dedicatee of the sonata set was supposed to be Johann Nepomuk Hummel, however by the time of their publication (1838), he had died, inspiring the publisher to reassign the dedication to Robert Schumann.<sup>20</sup>

Schubert's keyboard music is firmly rooted between the classic and romantic traditions. He tends to rely heavily on the classical formal structures of Mozart and early Beethoven. However, he generally prefers expanded melody in lieu of motivic development, creating interest and tension by modulating to distant keys: a departure

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher Gibbs. *The Life of Schubert*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 162.

from the classical tradition. In addition, Schubert often uses development sections in the sonata-allegro movements to present new material, rather than develop the pre-existing themes. In the sonata-allegro movements of D. 959 and D. 960 however, this conclusion appears at odds with itself. As expected, long lyrical lines, pastoral themes and distant modulations (already occurring within the first theme of the exposition) characterize the opening movement of D. 960. On the other hand, the first movement of D. 959 embodies the musical character of Beethoven, including sudden dynamic shifts, vertically oriented piano writing and the development of short motivic ideas. Although Schubert maintains his own lyrical and modulatory voice, the date of D. 959's composition may provide insight into Schubert's intentions regarding his incorporation of Beethovenian characteristics.

After conducting paper studies of Schubert's manuscripts, Robert Winter suggested that the composition of D. 960 likely began prior to the other two sonatas, since the paper for D. 960 matches the paper used by Schubert towards the end of 1827. The dating results further indicate that Schubert alternated between the composition of D. 960 and D. 958 throughout late 1827 and early 1828, finally beginning his work on D.959 in the spring of 1828.<sup>21</sup> If true, and given Schubert's failing health, certain aspects of D. 959 which appear to pay homage to Beethoven indeed become more noteworthy; just as Beethoven incorporates fugues in his Op. 101 and Op. 110 paying silent tribute to Bach, Schubert may have felt a similar sense of urgency or opportunity to incorporate rhythmic motives and cyclic techniques used in Op. 101, in D. 959. Beyond references to past

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Winter. "Paper studies and the Future of Schubert Research." *Schubert Studies: Problems of Style and Chronology*. Eds. E. Badura-Skoda and P. Branscombe. Cambridge University Press, 1982, 209-275.

composers, his sonatas contain experimental tonal relationships, quotes of his earlier works, song forms and cyclic elements.

*Sonata in A major, D. 959*

The Sonata in A major, D. 959, sits in the middle of Schubert's last three piano sonatas. The first movement is a sonata-allegro in A major. The opening phrase (mm. 1-6) is presented rhetorically and serves as the source from which all subsequent ideas germinate. Existing within mm. 1-6 is an upbeat-downbeat trope similar to Op. 101's finale, a rhythmic motive derived from Schubert's song "Der Atlas," and the rhythmic template for the second theme.

The gesture launching the first phrase of D. 959 is quite similar to the opening motive of Beethoven's sonata-allegro finale in Op. 101.<sup>22</sup> In mm. 1-3 of D. 959 (Fig. 5), an anacrusis leads to the downbeat of mm. 2 and 3. There is a similar rhythmic motion in the left hand of Op. 101 (Fig. 6).



Figure 5 Schubert's D. 959, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-6

<sup>22</sup> Robert S. Hatten. *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes: Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004, 223.





Figure 6 Op. 101, Mvt. 3 Finale (Allegro), mm. 29-32

The similarities between these movements are intensified in Fig. 7 when Schubert elaborates on the upbeat-downbeat rhythm in much the same way as Beethoven.



Figure 7 D. 959, Mvt. 1, mm. 16-19

Stripping away the sixteenth notes in Op. 101 reveals the same underlying rhythmic exchange between the hands (Fig. 8). The right hand leads the dialogue in both instances.



Figure 8 Op. 101, Mvt. 3 (Allegro), mm. 33-36

Godel and Koltzsch have identified the same material in the left hand of mm. 1-2 (Fig. 5) as a motive derived from “Der Atlas,” from Schwanengesang, D. 957. The motive is rhythmically defined as two quarter-note beats, a rest, and an anacrusis that leads into the motive’s repetition in the following measure. In the text (by H. Heine), the narrator deals with the rejection of love, struggling to carry the crushing weight of the world. In

fantastic contrast, the opening of D. 959 maintains a feeling of triumph and serenity, in both the first and second themes respectively. Interestingly, the rhythmic idea coined as “Der Atlas” motive also appears in the earlier published Kyrie from Schubert’s Mass in E-flat major, D. 950, the opening of his Sonata in C minor, D.958, and the second movement of his Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960. As mentioned earlier, Schubert had been working on a handful of large-scale compositions during 1828, with significant overlap regarding their beginning and completions dates.

Schubert presents the second theme in E major (Fig. 9). This theme appears to utilize the right hand material in mm. 3-5 (Fig. 5) as a reversed rhythmic palindrome. The following example (Fig. 9) contains the section of material outsourced from the opening phrase. Tracing the melodic rhythm backwards (Fig. 5) from the first half note of m. 5 to the beginning of m. 3, we can observe its nearly identical replication in the second theme, mm. 55-57 (Fig.9).



Figure 9 D. 959, Mvt. 1, mm. 55-57

In the development section, Schubert writes new melodies derived from motives in the exposition’s first theme. Beginning in the distant key of C major, Schubert oscillates between C major and B major four times before moving to B minor, C major, C minor and A minor. This alternation between harmonies results in a lack of harmonic tension, further distancing the sonata’s musical trajectory from a desire towards tonic. (A

similar method is applied in D. 960.)<sup>23</sup> The movement ends with an inverted restatement of the descending arpeggios from the opening (first presented in m. 7). Cyclic techniques tie the first and final movements together, when an expanded version of the first movement's opening theme appears as the sonata's final statement.

The second movement is in an ABA form, demonstrating Schubert's typical song-like style, with a simple melody hovering over a repetitive accompanimental figure. The recitative-like 'A' section is a barcarolle that leads into an explosive chromatic 'B' section, foreshadowing Lisztian-style passage work characteristic of the romantic era. Albert Einstein draws a relationship between this movement and "Pilgerweise" (Pilgrim's song) D. 789, although the only correlation appears to be in the accompaniment.<sup>24</sup> It is worthy to note that Schubert often achieves homogeneity via repetitive accompanying figures over which he can create a singing line. This is also found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement of D. 960. The final seven measures of this movement show more resemblance to the opening material of the third movement than to what precedes it. A succession of rolled chords concludes the movement, creating a fluid transition to the rolled chords of the next.

The third movement is a scherzo and trio. The scherzo appears as a dance, a typical compositional form for Schubert. It has a bright mood, which is a departure from the preceding movement. Elements of cyclicism are present in this movement, further unifying the work. In m. 34, material in the key of C major is violently interrupted by a descending C-sharp minor scale, which first appeared in the improvisatory middle section

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<sup>23</sup> Charles Rosen. *Sonata Forms*. Ontario, Canada: Penguin Books, 1988, 362.

<sup>24</sup> Albert Einstein. *Schubert: A Musical Portrait*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, 286.

of Mvt. 2. In the scherzo, the descending scale leads into a melodic fragment also borrowed from the second movement. This fragment is repeated for 12 measures before returning to the light-hearted scherzo dance. The scherzo ends with descending arpeggiated A-major figures, which creates an indistinct link with the opening of the fourth movement, whose melody ascends with C#-E-A.

The fourth movement is a rondo, containing self-referential material and outside influences, the first of which extends from Schubert's own Sonata in A minor, D. 537. The second movement in E major presents melodic material nearly identical to the opening 16 measures of D. 959's fourth movement (Fig. 10 and Fig. 11). In a number of instances it remains unclear as to whether borrowing or re-contextualization of a musical idea is unintentional, but in this example it is difficult to doubt its deliberateness.



Figure 10 D. 537 Mvt. 2, mm. 1-16

Rondo  
Allegretto

Figure 11 D. 959, Mvt. 4, mm. 1-19

The structural blueprint of this movement is modeled after Beethoven's Op. 31 No. 1, with a key similarity lying in the coda. Beethoven indicates Adagio, Tempo I, Adagio, Tempo I and Presto, in the coda of Op. 31 No. 1, and in D. 959 Mvt. 4 Schubert does the same with a Ritard, Tempo I, Ritard, Tempo I, and finally, Presto.<sup>25</sup> The sonata concludes with an expanded restatement of the opening theme from movement one. Utilizing Beethovenian models as well as similar cyclic tools, Schubert creates a higher form of unity in his work, while straying from classical harmonic norms through his ventures in distant keys.

<sup>25</sup> Natalia Gardner. "Schubert: The Musical Poet, D. 959 and its pianistic challenges." M.M. thesis: University of Denver, 2016, 10.

*Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960*

The Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960 is the last of Schubert's piano sonatas. As mentioned earlier, there is reason to believe that its composition began prior to both D. 958 and D. 959 sonatas. In that light, it may seem that Schubert felt a special affinity for D. 960, viewing it as a conclusion rather than a beginning. In contrast to the Beethovenian character of D. 959, D. 960 exhibits pure Schubertian style. Long lyrical lines, balanced phrases, distant key modulations, and the application of modulation as a tool for melodic development fit within his compositional stereotype. The sonata consists of four movements: a sonata-allegro, a ternary slow second movement, a scherzo and trio, and a rondo finale. Self-referential material, cyclicism and influences from Beethoven appear throughout the sonata.

The exposition of the first movement is categorized as a three-key exposition and contains remarkable key relationships. A three-key exposition has an unexpected middle tonality with its own defining thematic material positioned between tonic and dominant theme areas.<sup>26</sup> Beginning in B-flat major, Schubert prepares a modulation to G-flat major (and later F-sharp minor) by incorporating an ominous whole-step trill on Gb in the left hand bass. In m. 19 he repeats the trill, this time as a half-step trill from Bb, which descends chromatically into the flat submediant, G-flat major. Soon after, he uses an augmented 6<sup>th</sup> chord with a Gb in the bass to lead into a second inversion tonic chord, concluding his first ternary theme area: B-flat major-G-flat major-B-flat major. The arrival in the key of F-sharp minor marks the beginning of the second theme area. This key would appear distant to the ear, if it were not for the first theme's excursion into the

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<sup>26</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 246.

enharmonic major. Schubert continues by moving a half-step down to the dominant, F major, concluding the sonata's three-key exposition: B-flat major, F-sharp minor, F major.<sup>27</sup>

The thematic material of D. 960's opening is a chorale that draws from Beethoven's Archduke trio in B-flat major, Op. 97, by showing resemblances in key, texture and rhythm.

The image shows a musical score for the first four measures of the first movement of Beethoven's Archduke Trio in B-flat major, Op. 97. The score is arranged in three systems. The top system is for Violine (Violin) and Violoncello (Cello), both in B-flat major and 3/4 time. The middle system is for Klavier (Piano), also in B-flat major and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The piano part features a continuous succession of eighth notes in the left hand, while the right hand has a melodic line with some stasis in measures 2 and 4. Dynamics include 'p dolce' and 'rfz'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major).

Figure 12 Beethoven's Archduke Trio in B-flat major, Op. 97, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-4

In both Fig. 12 and Fig. 13, the defining parallel aesthetic is the rhythmic melodic motion in mm. 1 and 3, followed by melodic stasis in mm. 2 and 4, above a continuous succession of eighth notes.

The image shows the first four measures of the first movement of Schubert's Sonata in B-flat major, D. 960. The score is for Klavier (Piano) in B-flat major and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked 'Molto moderato'. The music features a rhythmic melodic motion in measures 1 and 3, followed by melodic stasis in measures 2 and 4, above a continuous succession of eighth notes in the left hand. Dynamics include 'pp ligato'. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The word '(Com)' is written in the top right corner.

Figure 13 Schubert, D. 960, Mvt. 1, mm. 1-4

<sup>27</sup> Rosen, *Sonata Forms*, 258.

In the beginning of the development, material from both the first and second theme areas is presented in the key of C-sharp minor. In m. 131 Schubert re-appropriates the rhythm from the chords in the F major second theme (Fig. 14) to introduce a new theme reminiscent of “Der Wanderer” (Fig. 15).



Figure 14 Schubert's D. 960, Mvt. 1, mm. 80-83

Sehr langsam. ♩ = 63.

Singstimme.

Pianoforte.

Figure 15. "Der Wanderer" motive, from Der Wanderer, mm. 1-2

The left hand motive in the first two measures of Fig. 15 “Der Wanderer” is incorporated into D. 960 Mvt. 1 as seen in Fig. 16. It eventually appears in its truest form in Fig. 17 with the accompanying repeated notes that are distinctive to “Der Wanderer.”





Figure 16 D. 960, Mvt. 1, mm. 131-133



Figure 17 D. 960, Mvt. 1, mm. 151-152

The second movement of D. 960 is a ternary song form in the key of C-sharp minor. Schubert creates homogeneity through his repetitive accompaniment in the A section while discreetly incorporating the rhythmic element of the “Der Atlas” motive. The middle section contains a pastoral theme in the key of A major, reminiscent of Beethoven’s Sonata Op. 2, No. 2, Mvt. 2. In Fig. 18 and Fig. 19, we observe textural similarities. Later, the accompaniments of both pieces are developed by the introduction of triplet figures.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Elliot J. Prescott. “A Study, Analysis and Recital of the Last Two Piano Sonatas of Franz Schubert: A Major (D. 959): B Flat Major (D. 960).” (D.M. diss., Columbia University Teachers College, 1976): 13.



Figure 18 Beethoven's Op. 2 No. 2, Mvt. 2, mm. 1-2



Figure 19 Schubert's D. 960, Mvt. 2, m. 43

The third movement of D. 960 is a scherzo and trio, this time drawing from Haydn's Fantasia in C major.<sup>29</sup> In the scherzo, the accompanimental figure paired with the contour of the melody is analogous to mm. 254-258 of Haydn's Fantasia. In both Fig. 20 and Fig. 21, the harmonic progression is I-IV-I-V(V7) and the greatest melodic motion occurs in the middle measures of each phrase.



Figure 20 Haydn's Fantasia in C major, mm. 254-258

<sup>29</sup> Prescott, 11.



Figure 21 Schubert's D. 960, Mvt. 3, mm. 1-4

D. 960 concludes with a rondo finale. Beginning in a key that appears to be C minor, the broken G octaves and fleeting character of the melody show remarkable similarity to the last movement of Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 130.<sup>30</sup> In the third measure of each movement, interjections on the weak-beat break up the repetition of the alternating G eighth notes. Harmonically, each movement uses C minor as a deceptive tonality before establishing B-flat major.

Figure 22 Beethoven's String Quartet, Op. 130, Mvt. 6, mm. 1-8

<sup>30</sup> Prescott, 16.



Figure 23 Schubert's D. 960, Mvt. 4, mm. 1-6

The fourth movement unfolds in an ABABA pattern, in which each A section contains two themes. In another instance of cyclicism, the second theme (Fig. 24) is derived from the soprano voice melodic contour in mm. 103-106 of the second movement (Fig. 25).



Figure 24 Schubert D. 960, Mvt. 4, mm. 86-88



Figure 25 Schubert D. 960, Mvt. 2, mm. 103-106

The B-flat major sonata exhibits a quality of lyricism and introspection unparalleled in the sonata repertoire. While its movements are not cyclically unified to the extent of D. 959, it incorporates a wealth of external material. Drawing from his own works, as well as those of Haydn and Beethoven, he creates a work of an undefined higher order.

The sonatas of Schubert are generally considered inferior to those of Beethoven in terms of structure and development. However, it is clear that both the sonatas of Beethoven and Schubert are rich with experimentation and inspiration. While Beethoven pushes the boundaries of harmonic development, he reliably remains a classicist in this arena. Where he truly creates a bridge to the romantic era is in his amalgamation of formal structures. By eliding and cyclically unifying movements, he creates something new in the process. Although Schubert's last sonatas contain cyclic elements and instances of borrowing, he remains a formal classicist, namely due to his adherence to the four movement format and the sonata-allegro structure. On the other hand, Schubert's harmonic language and preference for melodic over motivic development cement him as one of the first true romantic voices of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The final works of both composers have etched out a special place in the annals of western classical music and will continue to provide generations of musicians the opportunity to reflect upon and reinterpret their spirit and meaning.

This project was recorded by Antonino d'Urzo and edited by myself, Sean Carmichael. Since it is somewhat uncommon for the performer to also have the ability to edit audio, I would like to briefly detail how I navigated through the editing process and what was learned from the experience. Throughout the last few years, I became

acquainted with Apple's 'Logic Pro' recording and editing software, to help realize my original compositions (an entirely amateur endeavor). My depth of knowledge compared to the software's potential is somewhat limited; however, after briefly discussing the editing process with the engineer, I thought it might be interesting to attempt editing on my own. As any musician (who has gone through a recording process with aspirations of a commercial release) knows, there are many decisions to be made by the performer before any editing takes place. Depending on how many recording 'takes' exist for each piece, one can easily spend hours comparing recordings to determine which version stands above the rest. Often times, the best product exists between multiple takes, requiring the engineer to splice them together by fading or crossfading the audio files. Typically, the performer indicates the measures in which they would like the recording to switch to the next take by marking up a score to send to the engineer. In this case, all of my decisions were made within Logic Pro, with each recording take stacked vertically on a screen in front of me. Since I had prior experience working within Logic, the learning curve for this specific project was negligible. What I found most challenging and time consuming was the process of listening for changes in ambience, which in certain instances required listening through different sound systems to detect. In a few cases, I discovered that takes which I originally preferred did not match in sound to those surrounding them. These instances illuminated the importance of one's ability to recreate the same spirit and vision at every turn, multiple times, throughout the recording process. Although a great deal of time was spent in preparation for this recording project, being in full control on the editing side of the curtain provided me rare insight into how to proceed in the future.

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