

Sinfonia

Sig^r C. Ph. E. Bach

C.P.E. Bach's Symphonies
and the Composer-Specific
Study of Form



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Outline

- Caplin's formal functions and composer-specific formal universes.
- Bach's symphonies: General features of the first movements.
- Analysis: Symphony in G major, Wq. 182 no. 1.
- Analysis: Symphony in B minor, Wq. 182 no. 5.



Primary Arguments

- Bach's symphony first movements are *not in sonata form*, but use a distinct form that shares features with sonata form (much as concerto and sonata-rondo forms do).
- Bach's first movement form is best described by means of *formal functions* (drawing on Caplin's work).
- The essential distinguishing feature of Bach's first movement form is that the *subordinate theme functions are incomplete*.
- Bach's first movement form involves a function not described by Caplin, which I will call *ritornello function*.

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Formal Functions
and Composer-Specific
Formal Universes





Formal Functions vs. Traditional *Formenlehre*

Traditional *Formenlehre*:

- Normative formal scripts.
- Static relationships between sections (thematic content, key, etc.).

Formal Functions: Characteristic *musical processes* that fulfill characteristic *functions*.

- Functions can be *narrative*: initiating, continuational, cadential.
- They can also be *tonal*: modulation, destabilization, confirmation.



Typical features associated with narrative functions (Harmony, motive, rhythmic organization)

Initiating gestures: *Tonic prolongational* harmony, *new* motives, melodic ideas in *two-measure units*.

Continuational gestures: *Sequential* harmony, *liquidation* of previous motives, *fragmentation* of melodic ideas into smaller units.

Cadential gestures: *Cadential* harmony, absence of characteristic motives.



Formal Functions vs. Traditional *Formenlehre*

In what sense is musical form a **language** in the later 18th century?

Metaphor of a musical “language”:

- Common across all composers, listeners.
- Not under the direct control of the composer.

Formal scripts are *not* a language:

- Scripts vary from composer to composer.
- Scripts vary from piece to piece. (The composer is free to manipulate them.)

Formal functions *are* a language.



Example

Formal Functions in a Standard 8-m. Sentence:

Formal Section	Narrative Function	Tonal Function
Presentation (mm. 1–4)	Initiation	Establish tonic harmony
Continuation (mm. 5–6)	Continuation	
Cadence (mm. 7–8)	Cadential	Confirm tonic key



Example

Formal Functions in a Sonata Exposition:

Formal Section	Narrative Function	Tonal Function
Main theme	Initiation	Establish home key
Transition	Continuation	Destabilize home key
Subordinate theme	Cadential	Confirm subordinate key
Closing section	Post-cadential	



Example

Formal Functions in Bach's Symphony First Movements:

Formal Section	Narrative Function	Tonal Function
Main theme	Initiation	Establish home key
Transition	Continuation	Modulation
Inc. Subord. Theme	Cadence	Confirm subord. key
Ritornello (MT)	Initiation	Confirm subord. key
Transition	Continuation	Modulation

Etc. . . .

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General Features of
First Movements in
Bach's Symphonies





Features of first movements in Bach's 18 Symphonies (Expositions)

- Bach *never* uses **expositional repeats**.
- Second appearance of the MT idea is *always* in the **standard SK**.
- There is *rarely* a **PAC** in the **the SK** before the reappearance of the MT:
 - In three early symphonies there is a PAC immediately before the SK rotation.
 - In all other symphonies, the SK rotation is preceded by a HC in the SK or (more commonly) elides a PAC in the SK.

This means that **the basic point of articulation of sonata form (the end of the exposition)** is absent in Bach's first movement form.



Features of first movements in Bach's 18 Symphonies (Recapitulations)

- Last appearance of the MT (excluding coda) is *usually* (not always) in the HK (e.g., behaves like a **recap.**).
- When the last appearance of the MT is *not* in the HK, it usually appears in the HK **in a coda** (compensatory function).
- Most of the first movements are **run-on** (proceed to the second movement without pause).

Bach's first movement *usually* have recaps, but are **more irregular** than we would expect of ordinary sonata-form practice,



C.P.E. Bach's Symphonies

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Features of first movements in Bach's 18 Symphonies

Symphony	Key	Date	PAC in SK	Elided SK Rotation	Recap. Rotation	M.T. Coda-	Run-on
Wq. 173	G maj.	1741		✓	✓		
Wq. 174	C maj.	1755	✓		✓		
Wq. 175	F maj.	1755	✓		✓		
Wq. 176	D maj.	1755	✓		✓		✓
Wq. 177–78	E min.	1756		✓	(no MT B.I.)	✓	✓
Wq. 179	Eb maj.	1757		✓	✓		✓
Wq. 180	G maj.	1758		✓	✓		✓
Wq. 181	F maj.	1762		✓	✓		✓
Wq. 182 no. 1	G maj.	1773		✓	✓	✓	✓
Wq. 182 no. 2	Bb maj.	1773		✓	✓		
Wq. 182 no. 3	C maj.	1773		✓	Subdom.	✓	✓
Wq. 182 no. 4	A maj.	1773		✓	✓		✓
Wq. 182 no. 5	B min.	1773		✓	Subdom.	✓	✓
Wq. 182 no. 6	E maj.	1773		✓	Subdom.		✓
Wq. 183 no. 1	D maj.	1775–6		✓	✓		✓
Wq. 183 no. 2	Eb maj.	1775–6		✓	✓	Subdom.	✓
Wq. 183 no. 3	F maj.	1775–6		✓	Submed.	✓	✓
Wq. 183 no. 4	G maj.	1775–6		✓	✓	✓	✓



Features of first movements in Bach's 18 Symphonies
("Odd"? "Unorthodox"? "Eccentric"? "Incoherent"?)

James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy on Bach's Symphonies:

They "combine an **oddity of syntax** with the lack of the guidepost of an expositional repeat."

"The manner of approaching [the second rotation] is **extremely unorthodox.**"

"**Eccentrically 'wrong'**" (referring to a moment in Wq. 182 no. 3).

Charles Rosen on Bach (from *The Classical Style*):

"violent, expressive, brilliant, continuously surprising, and **often incoherent.**"

But . . . Bach is **remarkably consistent** in his "unorthodox" formal principles: perhaps the sense of puzzlement comes from our insistence on **shoehorning Bach's forms into the sonata form model.**

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Analysis:
Swieten Symphony
(Wq. 182) no. 1 in G major



Swieten Symphony (Wq. 182) no. 1 in G major

- Written in 1773
- Set of six (Wq. 182) commissioned by Baron van Swieten
- For strings and continuo (no wind parts)

Formal features of the first movement

- The main theme basic idea (MT B.I.) appears five times, in G major, D major, C major, G major, and lastly in G major in a coda.
- There are only two thematic rotations, however, because the MT B.I. appears twice in each rotation.
- The second and fourth appearances of the MT B.I. are set up with a HC. The third and fifth appearances elide a PAC.



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Main Theme -----

Intro -----

C.B.I. -----

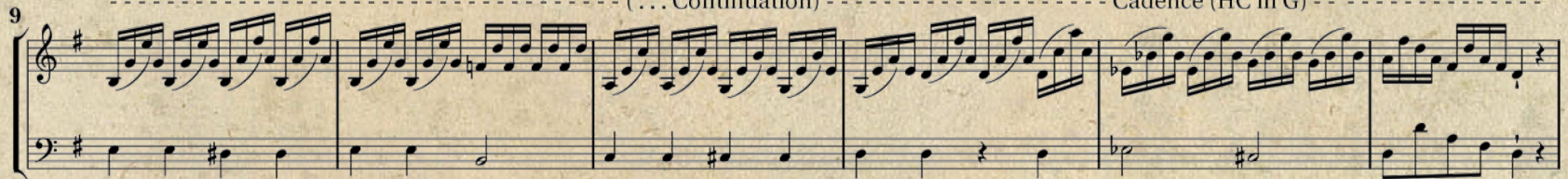
Continuation -----



(... Main Theme) -----

(... Continuation) -----

Cadence (HC in G) -----

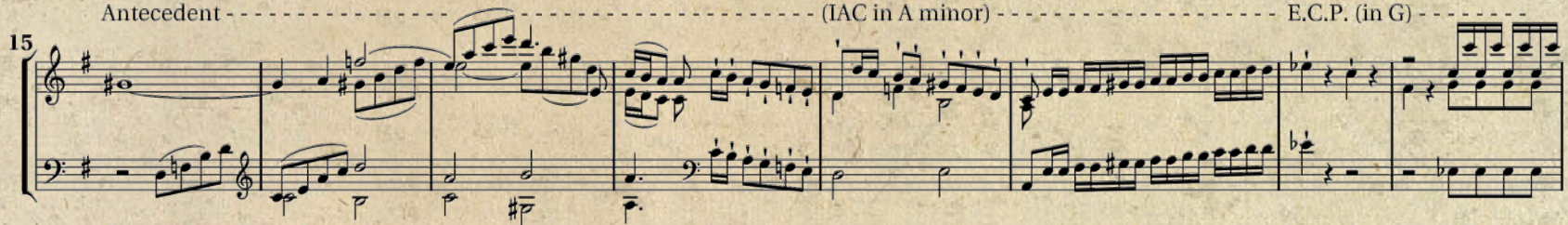


Transition -----

Antecedent -----

(IAC in A minor) -----

E.C.P. (in G) -----



(... Transition) -----

Evaded cadence => Continuation (mod. to D) -----

Cadence (HC in D) -----



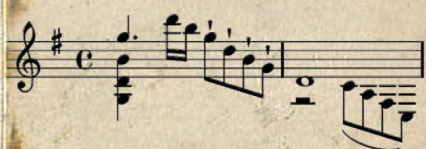


**Swieten Symphony no. 1 (G major):
Formal features of the first movement**

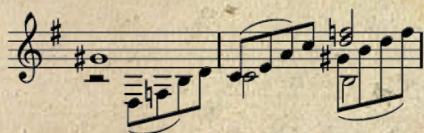
- The **first rotation** includes the main theme twice, in the **HK** and **SK**
Following the HK appearance there is a characteristic **transition**
(featuring inversion of the primary motive of the MT).
Following the SK appearance Bach introduces a characteristic
incomplete subordinate theme (featuring a **contrasting, lyrical**
melodic idea).
- The **second rotation** follows the exact same pattern, except that the
main theme appears first in the **subdominant**, then in the **HK**.

Formal Summary of Swieten Symphony no. 1 (G major)

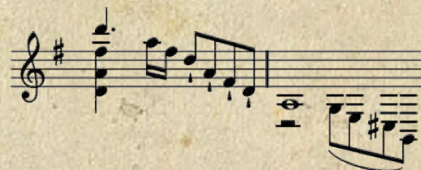
First Rotation:



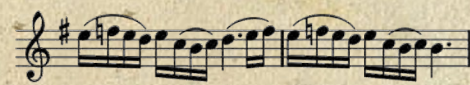
Main Theme
14 mm. (1-14)
HK → HC in HK
C.B.I. + Continuation



Transition
18 mm. (15-32)
A min. → HC in SK
Antecedent + Continuation

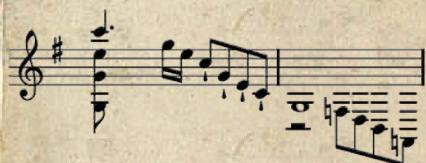


Ritornello (MT)
14 mm. (33-46)
SK → Dom. Arr. in C maj.
C.B.I. + Continuation



Inc. Subord. Theme-like Unit
12 mm. (47-58)
C maj. → Elided PAC in C maj.
Antecedent + Continuation

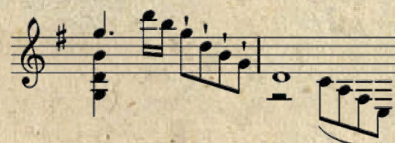
Second Rotation:



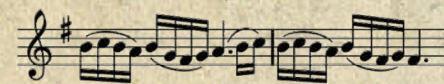
Ritornello (MT)
14 mm. (59-72)
C maj. → HC in HK
C.B.I. + Continuation



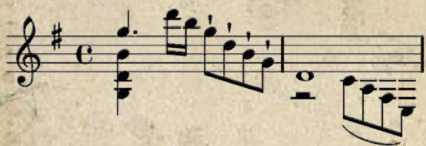
Transition
16 mm. (73-88)
HK (min.) → HC in HK
Antecedent + Continuation



Inc. Ritornello (MT)
6 mm. (89-94)
HK
C.B.I.



Inc. Subord. Theme-like Unit
12 mm. (95-106)
HK → Elided PAC in HK
Antecedent + Continuation



Coda (MT)
8 mm. (107-114)
HK → HC in E minor
C.B.I. + Continuation



**Swieten Symphony no. 1 (G major):
Formal features of the first movement**

Hepokoski and Darcy treat the movement as a sonata form, with the C major ritornello as the recap. This implies that:

- Either (1) the subordinate theme does not appear in the exposition, and is introduced in the development in the subdominant key. (Suchalla analyzes it this way, but puts the recap. halfway through the second rotation).
- Or (2) there is no development, the exposition is monothematic, and the EEC is in the subdominant key. (This seems to be Hepokoski and Darcy's analysis).

Both of these are implausible: there is no reasonable way to fit the movement into the sonata-form model. Nonetheless, it follows the basic procedures common to all of Bach's symphony first movements.



**Swieten Symphony no. 1 (G major):
Formal features of the first movement**

Formal Proportions

A typical feature of Bach's style is the *balance* in the proportions of formal sections. Note here:

- The main theme/ritornello at the beginning of each rotation is the same length (14 mm.)
- The transition is only two measures shorter (16 mm.) in the second rotation.
- The ST-like unit is the same length each time (12 mm.)
- The coda (8 mm.) exactly compensates for the incomplete ritornello in the second rotation (6 mm. instead of 14).

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Analysis:
Swieten Symphony
(Wq. 182) no. 5 in B minor



Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor):
Formal features of the first movement

- The main theme basic idea (MT B.I.) appears **three times**, in B minor (HK), D major (SK), and E minor.
- There is a clear transition and incomplete subordinate theme in the **first rotation**.
- The subordinate theme has a striking **interpolation** in a surprisingly remote key (E^b major). This kind of *harmonically anomalous* passage is a common feature of Bach's work.
- In the second rotation the harmonically anomalous passage interrupts the *transition* and *becomes the presentation* of the subordinate theme area.



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R = $\frac{1}{2}N$

Main theme

C.B.I.

Continuation (E.C.P.)

(HC)



Transition

Presentation

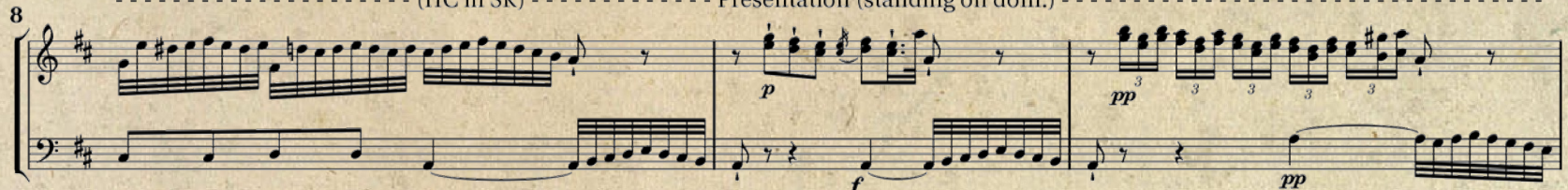
Continuation



Inc. Subord. Theme

(HC in SK)

Presentation (standing on dom.)



(... Inc. Subord. Theme)

Interpolation (harmonic anomaly)

Continuation





Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor):
Formal features of the first movement

—The formal functions of the **first rotation** are laid out clearly and deliberately.

A **thematic correspondence** is built into the first rotation itself, between the *transition* and the *continuation of the subordinate theme*.

—The **second rotation** *modifies the transition idea* (inverting one of the motives) and *substitutes the interpolation idea* for the basic idea of the subordinate theme.



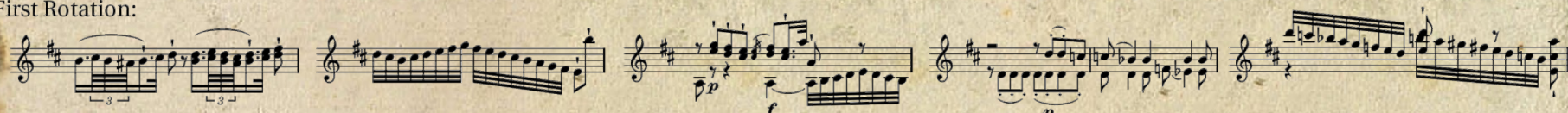
**Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor):
Formal features of the first movement**

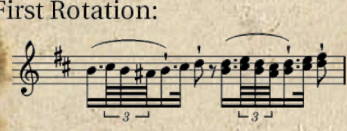
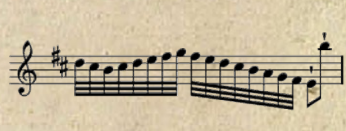

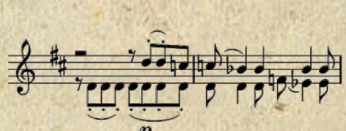
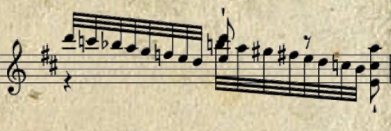
—The second rotation has **many features in common with Bach's sonata developments:**

- Incomplete thematic and sub-thematic functions (such as the transition).
- Fragmentation by means of accelerating sequence (meas. 25–28 and 31–34).
- Sequential restatement resembling the long sequence of a core (the interpolation theme in mm. 24–26 in F[#] minor repeated in mm. 29–30 in A minor)

Formal Summary of Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor)

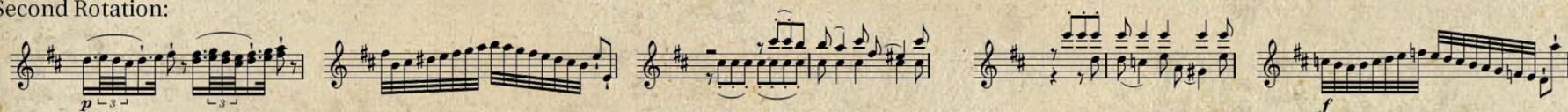
First Rotation:

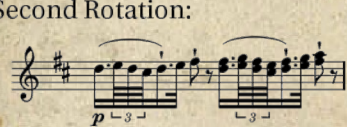
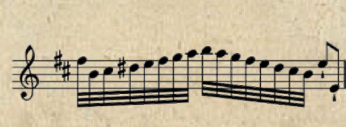
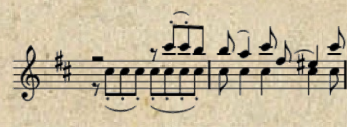
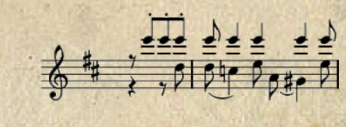
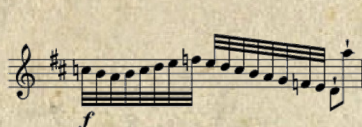


Main Theme 4 mm. (1-4) HK HC in HK C.B.I. + Continuation	Transition 4 mm. (5-8) HK→HC in SK Sentence	Inc. Subord. Theme 9 mm. (9-17) SK → Presentation (2 mm.)	Interpolation (3 mm.)	→ Elided PAC in SK Continuation (4 mm.)
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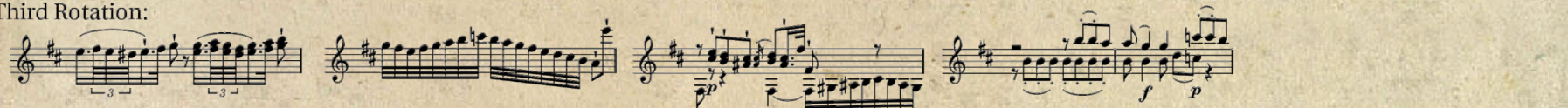
Second Rotation:

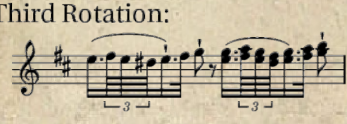







Ritornello (MT) 4 mm. (18-21) SK→HC in HK C.B.I. + Continuation	Inc. Transition 2 mm. (22-23) (Seq.) Presentation	Inc. ST-like Unit 7 mm. (24-30) (F# min. → A min.) Inc. Sentence (5 mm.)	Seq. repetition of presentation (2 mm.)	(Seq.) Continuation (4 mm.)
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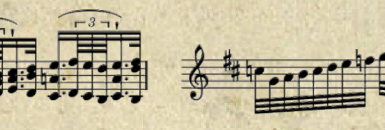
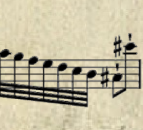
Third Rotation:



Ritornello (MT) 4 mm. (35-38) E min. → HC in E min. C.B.I. + Continuation	Transition 4 mm. (39-42) E min. → HC in HK Sentence	Inc. Subord. Theme 20 mm. (43-52) HK → Presentation (2 mm.)	(Seq.) Continuation #1 (4 mm.)	
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(... Inc. Subord. Theme) A min. → HC in HK Continuation #2 (4 mm.)	→ DC in HK Continuation #3 (5 mm.)	→ IAC in HK (to 2nd mvmt.) Continuation #4 (5 mm.)
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Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor):
Formal features of the first movement

- The **third rotation** restores some of the material eliminated from the second rotation: The transition is complete and the subordinate theme has its original basic idea.
- The **interpolation** from the subordinate theme appears in every rotation, but changes function at each appearance. Bach recomposes it each time to fit the changing functions.
- The third rotation also incorporates some of the **development of material** that occurred in the second rotation into the **long continuation of the subordinate theme**:
 - The sequential repetition of the interpolation idea in A minor.
 - Incorporation of the MT B.I. into a fragmentation phrase based on different material.



**Swieten Symphony no. 5 (B minor):
Formal features of the first movement**

This first movement is **typical** of Bach's symphony first movements in its incorporation of procedures characteristic of Bach's sonata forms:

- There are **three complete rotations**, beginning with (1) MT in HK, (2) Ritornello in SK, and (3) Ritornello in Subdominant or HK.
- The **second rotation** more loosely organized, and adopts form-functional designs characteristic of development section (incomplete thematic functions, core-like use of sequence).
- **However**, the second rotation does *not* confirm a contrasting key through PAC, a typical feature of Bach's sonata-form developments.
- The **third rotation** follows the first more closely (like a **recap.**).

Nonetheless the piece has the essential features unique to his symphony first movement form (incomplete STs and ritornello functions).

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Summary





Summary

- Bach composes his forms in terms of *formal functions*, the common language of the 18th century.
- Bach's symphony first movements, though sharing many of the formal functions of sonata form, are a distinct formal practice:
 - They exhibit *consistent* features that do not belong to the sonata-form model, especially the *incompleteness of subordinate themes* and the use of the *ritornello* function.
 - Some do not fit the sonata-form model at all (Wq. 182 no. 1).
 - Others exhibit a greater frequency of irregularities (subdominant or submediant recaps, recaps without the MT B.I.) and are better accounted for under an alternate formal model.

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Hidden Track:

Analysis of the Berlin Symphony
in E minor, Wq. 178

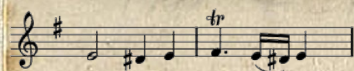


**Berlin Symphony in E minor (Wq. 178):
Formal features of the first movement**

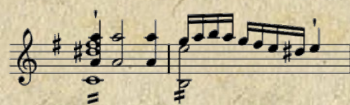
The main theme idea appears **four** times, in E minor, G major, B minor, and again in E minor.

- The last appearance of the MT idea is in a **coda**.
- The second and third appearances of the MT idea are **in the same thematic rotation**, a rotation that features typical development-like features.
- There is a **third rotation**, however, but it begins **midway through the main theme**, eliminating the characteristic MT idea. Otherwise, the third rotation resembles a recap.

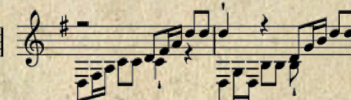
First Rotation:



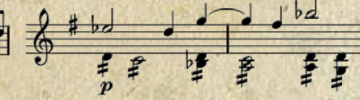
Main Theme
10 mm. (1-10)
HK → HC in HK
C.B.I. + Cont.



Transition
11 mm. (11-21)
HK → Elided HC in SK
Sentence

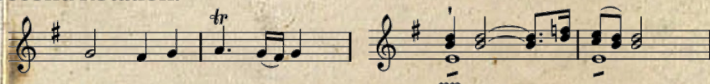


Inc. Subord. Theme
14 mm. (22-25/30-39)
SK → Elided PAC in SK
Sentence



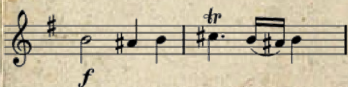
4 mm. (26-29)
(parallel minor)
Interpolation w/in S.T.

Second Rotation:

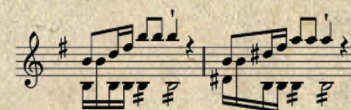


Ritornello (MT)
12 mm. (40-51)
SK → HC in SK → Dom. Arr. in A min.
C.B.I. + Cont.

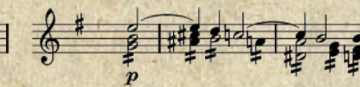
Incomplete Core
10 mm. (52-61)
(Seq)
Long sequence



Ritornello (MT)
8 mm. (62-69)
B min.
C.B.I. + Cont.

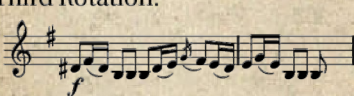


Core
14 mm. (70-83)
B min. →
Long sequence and frag.

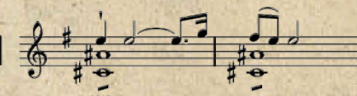


3 mm. (83-86)
→ Elided HC in HK
Interpolation

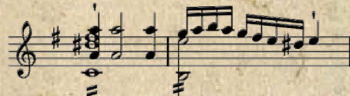
Third Rotation:



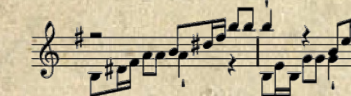
Truncated Ritornello (no C.B.I.)
8 mm. (87-94)
HK → HC in HK
Cont. + Cont.



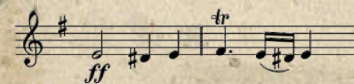
Transition
30 mm. (95-100)
HK
Intro.



(101-124)
HK → Abandoned Cad. → Elided HC in HK
Sentence



Inc. Subord. Theme
7 mm. (125-131)
HK → Elided PAC in HK
Sentence



Ritornello (MT)
6 mm. (132-137)
HK → Abandoned PAC in HK
C.B.I. + Cont.

