

A  
SONATA  
THEORY  
HANDBOOK



JAMES HEPOKOSKI

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JAMES HEPOKOSKI

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What the naïve, uninstructed, childlike, or illusion-ridden viewer accepts as “real” a more knowledgeable and emancipated one sees to be a carefully planned show, and planned within the framework of a . . . convention.

—Northrop Frye<sup>1</sup>

The aesthetic attitude demands that the distanced object be not merely contemplated disinterestedly, the viewer should also participate in producing it as an imaginary object—like the world of play into which one enters as a fellow player.

—Hans Robert Jauss.<sup>2</sup>

Rather than looking behind the text—for its hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives—we might place ourselves in front of the text, reflecting on what it unfurls, calls forth, makes possible . . . the text’s status as coactor: as something that makes a difference, that helps make things happen . . . reading as a coproduction between actors [the reader and the text] rather than an unraveling of manifest meaning, a form of making rather than unmaking.

—Rita Felski<sup>3</sup>

Thought’s depth depends on how deeply it penetrates its object, not on the extent to which it reduces it to something else.

—Theodor W. Adorno<sup>4</sup>



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## Acknowledgments

Most readers will recognize this book as a follow-up, some 15 years later, to the 2006 publication of *Elements of Sonata Theory*, which I coauthored with Warren Darcy. But what kind of follow-up is it? And was a follow-up needed? For the first decade after the book's publication, I resisted the idea, determined to let the *Elements* stand as is. Above all, I resisted, and continue to resist, the idea of producing an undergraduate-classroom textbook that simplifies and regularizes Sonata Theory with step-by-step, dutiful, rule-bound exercises. Such a book would run counter to the spirit of the theory, which thrives on analytical nuance, historical understanding, and a commitment to blend the practicalities of analysis with responsible hermeneutic interpretation.

And yet a great deal of cardinal importance within form theory emerged after 2006—along with other trends and concerns in the protean and fast-moving world of musical scholarship. By 2015 or 2016 it was becoming clear that a broad, varied, and sometimes surprising wake of reception had become part of what that book was. It was time to revisit the basics of Sonata Theory—better, to re-present those basics—in a different way from that found in the earlier book, one also attuned, I hoped, to where the field was at present. And so, encouraged by the able Suzanne Ryan of Oxford University Press (thank you, Suzanne!), in late 2015 I found myself setting aside other plans and drifting toward the writing of another Sonata Theory-centered book, a second, updated run at laying out this interpretive approach.

My ideas for the book ran along two complementary lines. In the first, I decided to draw on my experience of introducing Sonata Theory in my own classes at Yale University—most obviously in my regularly offered graduate and undergraduate seminars on it but also in those on Late Beethoven, on late-nineteenth-century symphonic nationalism, and on the historical movement of “early modernism,” Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss. The intention was to write a book that replicated, to the extent possible in such a different format, how I introduced Sonata Theory in my seminars—which is to say, through neither abstract principles nor a lockstep marching through the *Elements* but rather through an ordered showing of how the method worked through the analysis of multiple, complete movements, one after another, growing in complexity, each with its own challenges. First and foremost, then, I am grateful to the many students in those seminars over the years, who not only consistently helped me to find ever clearer ways to present the theory but also taught me time and again what “worked” pedagogically and what didn’t.

Complementary to this was the rapidly changing, highly charged world of music scholarship with which I found myself immediately engaged. I am indebted to the

several invitations to present workshops and papers on Sonata Theory and to participate in often-robust panel discussions or round tables on issues and problems within current views of musical form. In the past dozen or more years, new ideas and theories, challenging views and concepts, have been cropping up on all sides. Many of these were deeply relevant to my own concerns, on the one hand inviting enhancements to the Sonata Theory project, broadening it, I hope, to a more generous inclusivity, and, on the other hand, showing me the areas in it—soft spots or blind spots (all theories have them)—that would profit by clarification or correction. I have learned much from my professional colleagues within the larger field, not least from those whose approach to sonata form differs from that of mine.

Over the past several years many individual conversations with colleagues, perhaps even the most casual conversations, have also left their mark on this book. I think first of my faculty colleagues and friends at Yale, and particularly my fellow Long Branchians, Patrick McCreless, Daniel Harrison, Ian Quinn, Richard Cohn, Brian Kane, Gary Tomlinson, Gundula Kreuzer, and Anna Zayaruznaya. In the early years of the writing of this book, I sent drafts of the first two or three chapters to Sumanth Gopinath (University of Minnesota) and Vasili Byros (Northwestern University) for use in their own graduate seminars. The resulting feedback from each of them, and from their students, was enormously helpful.

In such an analytically detailed book as this one, the risk for errors or oversights, unintended misrepresentations or simplifications of other points of view, and issues of tone and presentation is large. I owe huge debts of thanks to Andrew Schartmann, Liam Hynes, and Ethan Edl, each of whom read carefully through the entire book in its penultimate version and provided me with helpful commentary and advice from three different readers' perspectives. I am also grateful for the responses of the two anonymous readers for Oxford University Press, whose insightful comments and suggestions spurred me into an eleventh-hour, multi-month flurry of tweakings and expansions of the final version. The book's figures (diagrams and musical examples) and tables were prepared by Kai Yin Lo at the University of Minnesota, and shepherding me through the publication process was Sean Decker of Oxford University Press. While one's work along these lines is never done, at some point one can only draw the line, cross one's fingers, publish the book, and hope for the best.

Finally, I thank my wife, Barbara, for her unflagging support and encouragement. As I finished out my years at Yale, it was she who made this book possible in so many ways. In that effort she and I were happily bolstered by our two daughters, Joanna Wing and Laura Nirider, and their families. Writing now in the onslaught of the 2020 pandemic, family is more important than ever.

# Overture

## Sonata form and “the new *Formenlehre*”

This is a book about sonata form, particularly as treated in the half-century of canonically foundational works by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert, though its final chapter is devoted to Brahms. It provides an updated *entrée* to many of the central features of Sonata Theory, and it does so largely through close readings of individual works, illustrating that approach’s procedures and principles in analytical practice.

Readers of this book will already have general ideas, perhaps even very specific ones, about the workings of sonata form. Those ideas usually result from having adopted or having been taught a particular way of approaching sonatas, whether through the generalized blends typical of undergraduate classroom instruction or through the more individualized, if diverging, approaches explored by writers on musical form. These latter include the Tovey/Rosen “classical-style” view of sonata form; the Schoenberg/Réti/Dahlhaus “generative-processual” view; the Schenker long-range *Ursatz* view; the Ratner “historical-theorist” view; and Caplin’s more recent “form-functional” view. These varied approaches are *hermeneutic genres*: contrasting styles and modes of professional-discipline analysis and explication. Sonata Theory is another, and it has a number of methodological differences specific to itself.

Sonata Theory is a participant in “the new form theory” (“the new *Formenlehre*”) that arose within the Anglophone academy in the later 1990s and early 2000s. This was a discipline-wide rekindling of interest in matters of musical form after several decades of relative neglect. Warren Darcy and I devised this new approach during those years, and we laid out our summary of how far we had gotten into that inquiry in our book from 2006, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (referred to throughout this book as the *Elements* or abbreviated as *EST*). Sonata Theory’s capital letters are not intended to single out this approach for special merit but only to identify it as a particular analytical style within an array of contrasting though often complementary “sonata theories.”

The *Elements* is a large volume addressed to music theorists, musicologists, and graduate students in music. That said, Darcy and I—and others—have used parts or all of it in undergraduate classes or seminars, typically by helping students to cut through the book’s technical underbrush to emphasize its main lines of thought, largely through close analyses of individual works. Now, more than a dozen years after the publication of the *Elements*, it seems appropriate to provide an updated

review and reframing of its leading ideas, along with extended illustrations of the analytical practice in action.

### The book's aims

While the points foregrounded here are treated in greater detail in *EST*, the present book has three main goals. First, it hopes to demonstrate how a Sonata Theory analysis can illuminate not only individual sections of works but also entire movements, with the hope of making evident the analytical style's conceptual and hermeneutic payoff. Second, through clarification and occasional emendation along the way, it responds to some concerns and misunderstandings that have arisen upon the earlier book's publication. Third, in both the analyses and the more generalized chapters it updates some of the ideas in *EST* by integrating the ideas advanced by a number of form-theory and related studies that have emerged since 2006, including some of the language and insights of cognitive research into music perception and the more generalized concerns of conceptual metaphor theory. While this book provides a review of many of Sonata Theory's mainsprings, it aspires to be more than a repackaging of earlier ideas. Combining aspects of an introduction, a synopsis, and a supplement to the *Elements*, it hopes to move the conceptual ball forward.

What follows is not a beginner's book about sonata form. Instead, it's an upper-level handbook offered to students of musical form and to those who teach and write professionally about sonata analysis. Some readers of this book may already be familiar with Sonata Theory through its presentation in the *Elements*. For those readers my intention is to review and exemplify much of it from refreshed, more inclusive angles. I do this both to convey how my own thought about Sonata Theory has advanced since 2006 and to show what kinds of close readings this method, blended with features of other new or revitalized approaches, makes possible. For those who have little or no prior acquaintance with Sonata Theory, I hope that the book provides a comprehensible sample of its tone and feel.

### A seminar in Sonata Theory

In this book I have tried to present Sonata Theory's core principles in a way that resembles how I have dealt with them in seminars. Sonata Theory's strengths and flexibilities are most productively absorbed through concrete examples of its application in practice—close analytical discussions of complete pieces. In fact, that is the purpose of the theory: the explication and interpretation of entire pieces as wholes (or large sections of them), not merely as brief extracts.

With that in mind I have given over the lion's share of chapters to close analyses of individual sonata-form movements from the classical and romantic eras. Eight

of the chapters (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12) provide readings of eight movements: two each by Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven and one each by Schubert and Brahms. The first four of these composers furnished the most influential models for later generations, and before long the study and perpetuation of their works became normative practice in nineteenth- and twentieth-century conservatories and universities. As has been shown in separate studies, many of Sonata Theory's principles for the high-classical and early-romantic eras are extendable, albeit with appropriate modifications and nuances (see the end of chapter 11 and the initial sections of chapter 12), to later composers working in the self-conscious, historicist wake of that earlier tradition: Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, Wagner, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Bruckner, Strauss, Mahler, Sibelius, Elgar, Rachmaninoff, and others, including several twentieth-century composers who blazed trails in more modernist styles.

Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms are five very different composers, uncommonly gifted adepts projecting five distinct musical personalities. Each was schooled in the prototypical conventions of his place and time but realized them in individualized ways—and for different kinds of audiences. As a group they represent successive generations of Austro-Germanic sonata composition. Each came of age in a different cultural, political, and musical milieu: Haydn was born in 1732; Mozart in 1756; Beethoven in 1770; Schubert in 1797; Brahms in 1833. (That Mozart is treated first in this book—chapters 2 and 3—is a matter of analytical convenience. His works, and certainly the ones chosen here, are the most symmetrically lucid with regard to sonata-form prototypes, and I have written both chapters as step-by-step introductions to the Sonata Theory system for those who have had little or no experience with it.) Following the Mozart chapters, the two Haydn chapters, 5 and 6, deal with works composed after Mozart's death in 1791 and wade into more analytically complex issues, as do the later chapters. Each later-generation master was aware of the achievements of his chronologically overlapping predecessors, not so much through an anxiety of influence—though the pressure must have been intense—but through the sheer fact of being woven into an honorific and competitive dialogue with a musical tradition that each was embodying and extending. Viewed as a group, these five composers' sonata movements are sufficiently alike in their awareness of the prototypical but ever-advancing norms of their respective eras. Yet in their individualized particularities (one might even say eccentricities), their differences also loom large and must never be minimized.

Along the way these analytical chapters introduce, reintroduce, and reinforce most of Sonata Theory's basic concepts. At the same time they show, when such questions arise, how it deals with challenging or potentially ambiguous situations, approaching the problems *as problems*, then showing what it can mean to think our way through them. Since scores of these eight pieces are readily available online and elsewhere, I have not included them here, though a few music examples do appear in the book to call attention to specific issues in particular passages. As will be

apparent, however, none of these chapters will be comprehensible without a score (with numbered measures) in hand.

As complements to the analytical chapters, four others (1, 4, 8, and 11) zoom out to provide generalized considerations of Sonata Theory's conceptual terrain and interests, particularly as viewed now, a decade or two after its initial conceptualization. Chapter 1, a broad portal, introduces the concepts and style of thought specific to Sonata Theory and the methodological inclusivity that it encourages. (Some readers might prefer to start with chapter 2—the Mozart analysis—before launching into the more conceptual chapter 1, sampling Sonata Theory first through a concrete analysis that provides a preliminary feel for the system and defines many of its basic terms. My ordering of those first two chapters—both of them introductory, though in different ways—has switched back and forth in response to differing suggestions of early readers.) The nuts-and-bolts chapter 4 lays out many of the technical fundamentals of this approach to sonata form. Chapter 8 zeroes in on issues specific to the minor-mode sonata and responds to Matthew Riley's monograph, *The Viennese Minor-Key Symphony in the Age of Haydn and Mozart* (2014). Chapter 11 revisits what Sonata Theory designates as the Type 2 sonata—by 1800 a far less frequent but by no means obsolete format, and one that has sometimes been misconstrued by analysts of form. A brief appendix glances at two other sonata types: Type 4 (sonata-rondo) and Type 5 (concerto-sonata).

As one moves through the 12 chapters, Sonata Theory's interpretive aspects are increasingly underscored, for at bottom this is a hermeneutic project in pursuit of issues of musical and cultural meaning. For the most part I have tried to keep the text as free as possible from diversions into the weeds of current analytical debates, though from time to time it has been necessary to reply to specific, individual controversies that have arisen with regard to certain features of Sonata Theory as laid out in 2006. More advanced commentary is confined to the endnotes, which are addressed to specialist readers.

With all this in mind—let's begin!

# 1

## What Is Sonata Theory?

Sonata Theory is a twenty-first-century approach to understanding how individual sonata-form compositions work. While grounded in “the classical style,” the general approach, suitably nuanced, is extendable beyond the music of that era. Its central concern is the analytical interpretation of movements as wholes: close readings of entire pieces or at least substantial sections of them. Flexible, musically intuitive, and historically sensitive, it can enable listeners, performers, and commentators to come to more robust interpretations of an individual piece’s particulars. Its hope is to awaken such pieces from their slumbers, to recognize living tissue within pieces deadened to us through the numbing familiarity of their rote-rehearsal and repetition. It seeks to recognize and hear once again their surprises, their unusual twists and turns, their bold strokes, their audacious moves—and also, just as often, to register the pleasure of experiencing their capable fashionings of generic normalities.

Sonata Theory sports a generous number of its own ways of framing analytical issues, fortified by an arsenal of freshly devised, method-specific terms and technical concepts. And yet it is characterized by openness and eclecticism, a willingness to integrate insights from other analytical methods and fields of study. Above all, it seeks to combine the mechanisms of text-adequate form analysis with the aesthetic feel of personal experience with the music as music. This latter falls into the domain of what cognitive theorists and philosophers of mind call phenomenological *qualia*, an individual’s immediate, subjective responses of feeling and affect to the world of sensory experience, which includes music’s most basic attributes: contours, colors, rhythms, syntax, dynamics, and the like. Shuttling between individualized response and technical observation, then trying to fuse them, this aspect of Sonata Theory is easier to convey in public presentations than it is through the distanced mediation of written words or diagrams, which can settle into entrenched patterns of neutralized abstraction.

Analysis and interpretation are acts of personal commitment. “You are the music / While the music lasts,” wrote T. S. Eliot in “The Dry Salvages” from *Four Quartets*. This is a much-cited line among music-cognition specialists, and as their research into musical perception and embodied cognition has shown, musical immersion—attending aesthetically to music—is accompanied by the psychological impression of identifying subjectively with it, that is, through what Hatten (2018) elaborates as an “imaginatively interactive participation” with the “virtual agency” implicit in the music and in the backdrop of musical force fields within which an individual piece is carried out. It is as if we ourselves are enacting the music, moving with it in

“mimetic engagement” (Cox 2016), or that, conversely, it is enacting us, shaping us in its ways. In a very real sense, the bodies and minds of both receptively engaged and casual listeners are being “played by the music” (Margulis 2014).<sup>1</sup> This is an automatic process, much of which is carried out at our brain’s deepest levels, below the threshold of consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Acknowledging all this, Sonata Theory is open to personalized description and imaginative metaphor. To write about music is to write of our own experiences with it. Even while the end products of such analyses are objectively grounded in close attention to the pieces’ structural facts, in the end they remain individualized readings of works. Rather than brandishing any claim to being definitive solutions, such readings are no more—and no less—than offerings of how the writer hears and processes what he or she has heard, offerings recounted, one hopes, in historically plausible, musically inviting ways. This chapter is devoted to some of the conceptual wellsprings of Sonata Theory, those that distinguish it from other, more traditional approaches.

## Dialogic form

Sonata Theory’s core concept is that of *dialogic form*. This means that each sonata movement that we encounter (most likely a piece from the post-1750 past that has persisted as part of the standard performing repertory) can be grasped as having been set by the composer into a dialogue with the contextually relevant, normative expectations of a once-in-place, taken-for-granted genre. From the complementary standpoint of the present-day analyst this can be restated as: “For the purposes of structural analysis [a piece of music] exists most substantially in the ongoing dialogue that it may be understood to pursue with its stated or implied genre—a dialogue that may be recreated (more accurately, proposed as a reading) in the mind of the informed listener. . . . Therefore the central task of analysis is to reanimate this implicit dialogue in a way that is historically and musically sensitive” (EST, 605).

A genre is a complex set of ever-ready possibilities or flexible guidelines for the production of individual works, a constellation of norms and traditions that may be regarded as historically fluid conceptual forces that are culturally situated “social actions,” systems-in-motion (Artemeva 2004). An essential aspect of all genres is that each of its exemplars is a token of a general type, just as each individual detective story or game of chess, no matter how eccentric or unusual, is a token of its genre. To draw on Wittgenstein’s construal of such issues, however much individual tokens might differ from each other in their particulars, they still share certain overlapping “family resemblances” or “family likenesses” that enable them to be grasped under a set of flexible yet describable regulative guidelines.

As cultural constructions, genres are shot through with social implications, riddled with the aspirations, complicities, and problematic social tensions of their eras. They arise and flourish because of the cultural work that they do within the

production/reception systems of their historical moments. As such, genres, qua genres, are open to broader questions of analysis and critique, and we may wish to pursue questions about their embeddedness within once-taken-for-granted worldviews, about the way, for instance, that their drives toward containment and resolution might resonate with aspects of then-existing social power and/or exclusion.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, perhaps most, those force-fields of cultural authority will differ from those that we imagine to be in play in our own world.

Yet when we attend to any of a genre's exemplars as a singularity—*that* particular detective story; *that* particular chess game—our interest can shift to the aesthetic. Each invites us to become attentive to the sway of that specific realization: the expertise of its “madeness” or *poiesis*.<sup>4</sup> This is why it is reductive to suppose that an individual exemplar's meaning should be diagnosed primarily as a symptom of the historically compromised genre or worldview in which it participates.<sup>5</sup> Even so, what remains culturally telling in each are its entanglements both with the complex social world that initially gave rise to its broader genre and with the ever-changing reception worlds that continued to sustain it until that singularity arrives at our own culturally fraught doorstep, tugging at our sleeves to beckon for attention.

From this perspective, any individual work is shot through with two aspects: the expectations of its genre and the internal realization of that genre as an aesthetic or presentational singularity, a quality of individual craft or expertise. As it is put in *Elements of Sonata Theory* (EST, 607),

Beethoven was by no means the only composer of the *Eroica*: he cannot lay exclusive claim to the totality of the work's implications. Many of the compositional features of that piece are more accurately regarded as dramatized affirmations of (or dialogues with) pre-existing, culturally produced norms that were external to Beethoven. . . . Because the tacit societal aspects inscribed within a genre-constellation were also given and accepted as self-evident, they cannot be made subject to an act of personal intentionality.

Our discussions of those works depend on which aspect we foreground and for which purposes we do so.

No matter the sonata type at hand (chapters 4, 11, and the appendix), as a genre it sets the terms under which the piece asks us to register what happens, dialogically, inside it. Under these terms there is an implicit generic contract between the composer and the implied listener or performer.<sup>6</sup> Cognizant of the wide range of normative options within that genre (knowing how to write that detective story or how to play chess), the master composer rings changes on those conventions to fashion an individualized work. Reciprocally, text-adequate listeners are invited to use their knowledge of the genre to interpret that musical message. We should not seek to grasp an individual work on its internal terms alone, as though the work were autonomously self-generated. To be sure, considering the internal coherence and

ongoing implications within an individual piece is a vital thing to do, but it is also important to compare what happens moment by moment (or sometimes what does *not* happen) with our generically conditioned expectations of how sonatas in that period and by that composer generally behave.

As a genre, sonata form is a socially shared, historically grounded complex of commonly understood guidelines. We might regard sonata form, as grasped by any knowledgeable group or person in his or her historical setting, as an inductively learned *schema*, a quasi-standardized mode of organizing certain kinds of musical space. For the listener this corresponds (from the field of cognitive theory) to Huron's description of a schema as "an expectational 'set.' A schema provides an encapsulated behavioral or perceptual model that pertains to some situation or context" (2006, 204). The appropriate model is psychologically triggered within the experienced and participatory listener who has learned to frame what he or she hears on the basis of the music's "context cueing" (204) interacting with his or her anticipation of what sorts of things are most likely to happen next, grounded in an internalized sense of probabilities. An informed listener proceeds through a temporally flowing work with an ongoing schematic expectation (225) that the music will proceed to satisfy, delay, thwart, or undermine. This idea, also explored by Byros (2009, 2012, 2015), corresponds well with Sonata Theory's point of view.<sup>7</sup> Any single work traces out an individualized path through a culturally given schematic space, one that we now call sonata form.

Alternatively, we might construe the schema of sonata form from the perspective of *prototype theory*, whereby a set of ready-to-hand illustrations—prototypes—can provide tacit guidelines for how the most normative sonata-form compositions are typically constructed. This model is not a set of stringent rules demanding that all composers treat sonata form in the same way. Quite the opposite: built into it—one of the attractions of the sonata game—is the freedom, within some limits, to alter individual aspects of the sonata. The strongest composers customized for themselves the socially shared genre's guidelines, the most normative things to do, in order to fashion a personalized style, an arresting manner of tracing engaging pathways through the schema.<sup>8</sup>

For some composers that drive toward individual adaptation was uncommonly strong. A classic case is the ever-inventive Haydn, who delighted in the unpredictable, turning virtually each of his sonata forms into a unique yet internally coherent product. Thus Haydn's often-quoted remark to Griesinger, his biographer, concerning the isolation of his decades-long employment at Esterháza: "As head of an orchestra I was able to make experiments, observe what makes a [good] effect and what weakens it, and thus revise, expand, cut, take chances; I was cut off from the world, nobody around me could upset my self-confidence, and so I had to become original" (as quoted in Webster 2005a, 36). Paradoxically, Haydn adopted the non-normative principles of ongoing idiosyncrasy and unpredictable exceptionality to become his own norm, one also driven by his superior mastery of technique vis-à-vis his 1760s and 1770s contemporaries.

To adapt Waltham-Smith's recent (2017) construction of this aspect of Haydn, the composer's often-playful originality not infrequently relies on the treating of socially shared, conventional figures and formal structures in unexpected, unaccustomed, or purposefully "misused" ways. (Well-known, highly localized instances of such "misuses" include the opening of the quartet, op. 33 no. 5, with a two-bar closing figure and the non-motivated *forte* chord, the "surprise," in the second movement of Symphony No. 94.) Haydn often writes into his music unusual, pointedly asymmetrical, or seemingly misplaced features, whose intended effects must presuppose the likely communities of listeners' ability to perceive such moments as deviant from their shared understanding of the normative high-galant (or classical) style. "This music is from the outset oriented outward, composed to have a calculated effect on its listeners. . . . This music anticipates its listener in its own composition" (16).<sup>9</sup>

Thus while Haydn's mature works certainly invite consideration under the terms of the individualized style that he had customized for himself (his "surprises" are less surprising when assessed only within the norms of his own practice, concerned with crafting singular coherences and internal relationships within each work), he did not devise that style out of nothing, siloed away from the relatively more orthodox practice of his contemporaries. Even such customizations as we find in Haydn are to be understood as personalized figures against the larger background of the socially shared genre—or, if one prefers, as ever more habitualized, personalized swerves away from the established genre's less adventurous prototypes. Relishable in themselves, Haydn's "experiments" are set in highest relief when understood as interactions with the more typical, more commonly shared expectations of the time, the very existence of which permits the composer's originality to be perceived as such. Conversely, Haydn's penchant for frequent, whimsical deviations from more prototypical phrase shapes and sonata practices can project into high relief the evaded regularities themselves: those normative aspects that he does not realize in standardized ways.

We should not confuse any set of generalized guidelines with the individualities of actual practice. Sonata Theory would never wish to collapse the delicious particularities of a work's microworld into a neutralized, exchangeable token of its genre, nor to reduce it to only a symptom of the social conflicts of its era. It bears repeating: composers place each of their works into a dialogue with the wide range of the options and expectations offered by its genre. As a distinctive singularity, no individual work is under any obligation to fit all of the generalities of this or that generic or prototypical norm, nor are we under any obligation to make it fit in order to suit our theories. To try to do so would miss the point of dialogic form. We value individual sonatas because of the unique realizations that they present, even as each remains in dialogue with the normative practice of its specific place and era. The freedom of the generic principle encourages the creation of particularized exemplars that modify, refashion, or even violate the more commonly accepted norms of this or that portion of the genre in which they participate.

Sonata form is no static, unmodifiable thing at all times and in all places. While the core of its mid- and late-eighteenth-century guidelines remained in place as a pedagogical regulative idea for well over a century, as the decades progressed it accrued a number of on-the-ground modifications, new options, and localized updates, and composers treated it with increasing expansiveness and freedom. Many of the compositional practices that had been statistically normative for Mozart or relatable late-eighteenth-century composers were regularly transgressed or overridden in later decades in order to produce dramatic or distinctively personalized effects—as we find already in early Beethoven. Nonetheless, as I treat at more length at the end of chapter 11 and in chapter 12, its status as a high-prestige cluster of referential norms and options lingered throughout nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century art music as a persistent yet malleable prototype with which individualized compositions were set into dialogue—something along the lines of a culturally shared conceptual backdrop or interpretive code. Keeping the classical prototypes in mind is the best facilitator of locating and interpreting difference in later compositions.

Sonata Theory lays out the set of norms and types—and their flexibilities—implicit in the sonata-form genre, particularly as evidenced in or contextually inferable from the works, here, of Haydn, Mozart, and early-to-middle-period Beethoven, with whom we see, from the very start, the impulse to tweak traditional sonata practices with non-generic swerves in order to produce quirky or dramatic effects. (Obviously, the dozens or hundreds of lesser masters of the period introduced or favored their own personal variants, but the more general guidelines of the current approach still seem sturdy.) The usual compositional options within the various points of the late-eighteenth-century sonata are called the normative *default procedures*. Even in those decades these defaults were not ironclad rules that had to be obeyed. Even the strongest of them were only the customary choices, the modes of procedure most immediately offered by the genre at this or that compositional moment. Exceptions could abound.

While composers produced creative realizations of the familiar defaults in the course of a sonata—standardized theme types and textural signs, generically normative cadences, and the like—from time to time they overrode customary procedures for special, individualized effects. As performers or listeners, we want to perceive when something exceptional is happening. Extraordinary effects, purposeful distortions, or uncommonly staged sonata events sometimes fall into the subjective category called *deformations*. One should not misunderstand this term. In this limited, form-technical context it is never intended to carry any connotation of the unpleasantly misshapen or ugly. Nor is it meant to suggest the projection of a disability. It means not only that the composer has chosen not to do any of the normative things at that moment of the piece but also that what the composer has done at musical point X is extravagantly uncommon, something strikingly unusual that we as listeners should attend to and interpret with particular care. To lessen the risk of a potentially negative connotation, in proper Sonata Theory parlance we do not

say that this or that event is “deformed” but rather that “it has been subjected to a deformation” (*EST*, 614–21).

Any piece or section thereof will provide evidence of an answer to any question that we might wish to ask of it. More adequate questions draw forth more adequate answers. The trick is to learn how to ask more productive questions. Sonata Theory is not a system that claims, once its analytical apparatus has processed an individual work’s formal layout, that that work’s content has been fully grasped. That apparatus is better understood as a particularized but flexible way of thinking that can help us to ask better questions of that layout.

When confronted with an unusual or idiosyncratic work, for instance, it is an error to ask the reductive question, “Is this piece in sonata form?” expecting to get a simple yes or no answer that puts the matter to rest. Rather, as I have suggested elsewhere (2009a, 71–75), the proper question is, “Does this piece invite us to use the normative or prototypical guidelines of sonata form in order to understand the composer’s moment-to-moment, phrase-to-phrase choices within it?” In most cases this question is easy to answer, as with most of the Allegro first movements (and often some subsequent movements) of later-eighteenth-century sonatas, chamber music, symphonies, concertos, and with many overtures as well. To come to an understanding with any individual composition is to make a connection with the way in which that exemplar activates or modifies the normative expectations of the historical state of its genre in its own time and place. The critical question: Why and to what expressive effect did the composer choose to situate *that* musical module *there*?

### **Successive action zones within a musically narrative journey**

We are all familiar with the larger sectional divisions of the most common types of sonata form, those sections that English speakers call the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation. Sonata Theory regards these as broad *action zones* (or *action spaces*) within which certain generically expected thematic and tonal things are supposed to happen—and in a certain order. More often, though, we use the term *action zone* to refer to subdivisions within the larger zones, especially to those smaller, successive zones that build up the exposition and the corresponding recapitulation. In the most common format for expositions (the two-part format, in which the two parts are separated by an important break or gap called the *medial caesura*) we encounter four action spaces that are usually closed off with terminal (structural) cadences. These are:

- the *primary-theme zone* (P), beginning the sonata process;
- the *transition zone* (TR), accepting P and proceeding further into the process, normatively ending with a reinforced, breath-like break, the *medial caesura* (MC), concluding part 1;

- a newly launched *secondary-theme zone* (S), which opens part 2 and drives toward a cadential close in the new key (the point of *essential expositional closure* or EEC);
- and the *closing zone* (C)—if one is present at all—which houses any differing, additional material following the EEC, material that serves to confirm the new key and expand or round off the whole. (As will be noted in chapters 2 and 4, the thematic materials of S and C can also be grouped together as an *S/C thematic complex*, a coherent “narrative” or rhetorical succession in its own right, extending beyond the EEC that closes S space.)

In Sonata Theory’s shorthand, the expositional action-zone succession is indicated by P TR ’ S / C, in which P TR ’ comprises part 1 and S / C comprises part 2. The apostrophe, or breath mark, represents the MC, the medial caesura separating the exposition’s two parts; the slash (/) represents the EEC, the cadential point of essential expositional closure. The most elementary steps in understanding an ongoing sonata form are, first, to realize which action zone is currently being set into motion and, second, to compare what one is hearing with what kinds of activity—thematic, textural, rhetorical, and cadential—are generically expected to be carried out within that zone. A closer outline of the compositional options within zones of the two-part exposition is provided in chapter 4.

While the flow of music is temporal, a forward-moving stream in ongoing, linear time, the effect of the successive action zones can be metaphorically spatial, as each zone is progressively filled, sealed off, and experienced as a conceptual CONTAINER.<sup>10</sup> Still, even while conceptualized spatially (“from the top down”), each zone is to be filled (“from the bottom up”) with propulsive, bar-to-bar musical material vectored toward an expected cadence. The composer’s task was to move through the successive action zones, filling each with ingenious and engaging realizations of the familiar, ready-to-hand schemata (standardized voice-leading patterns appropriate for various phases of the composition), topics, styles, poses, and affects. In the mid-eighteenth century the modest goal was to do this in tasteful, galant, entertaining ways. As the decades advanced into the late eighteenth century and beyond, the task was being modified into that of realizing the action zones in more original, complex, dramatic, or deeply moving ways: the stylistic norms and options were becoming less schematic, more open to personalized variants and enrichments.

To feel this music musically—to identify with this music as music—is to monitor the moment-to-moment tensions of the drives toward the succession of boundary cadences. Each action space has a different functional role to play. The effect of moving through a sonata is like coursing one’s way through a pre-planned relay or like that of building a bridge, girder by girder, a bridge thrown out into time and musical space until it securely reaches the other side—the end of the piece or movement. As it is put in *EST*, “In the hands of most composers, constructing a

sonata-form movement was a task of *modular assembly*: the forging of a succession of short, section-specific musical units [action spaces] linked together into an ongoing linear chain—pressing down and connecting one appropriately stylized musical tile after another” (15–16).

This is not to say that a composer could not simultaneously seek to provide the impression of a process of motivic growth and networked diversification as one action zone gives way to another. The separate zones can be and not infrequently are musically interrelated, as if the one zone grows into the next in an ongoing process of elaboration. This can create the complementary but no less important impression of an internally generative form, of form as process or quasi-organic growth, even at the moment-to-moment level, as is frequently the case in Haydn and Beethoven (think of the Fifth Symphony).

Within Germanic scholarship, as James Webster reminds us (2009, 123), distinctions have been made between the concepts of *Form* and *Formung*: “between form-as-shape (balance, symmetry, proportions, architecture), and form-as-process (the dynamic development of musical ideas through time).” The idea is easily clarified if one imagines parallel instances in literature. Sonnet form, for example, prescribes 14 poetic lines grouped and rhymed in specific ways. On the other hand, each individual sonnet pursues and intensifies its own trajectories of thought from line 1 into line 2, then into line 3, and so on, through line 14—and even in prescribed line-groupings of, say, 8+6 (Petrarchan) or 4+4+4+2 (in either the Spenserian or Shakespearean formats). As each of its lines proceeds to the next through idea-patterns also swayed by convention, one could say, from a certain perspective, that any individual poem’s language and imagery can also be construed as its personalized internal “form.” One understands the point at once, though it entails a different construal of the word “form,” perhaps a metaphorical construal, since the internal process works itself out in a dialogic interaction with the pre-given expectations of “what a sonnet is.”

Claims on behalf of musical form as most essentially a process of becoming have been especially marked in discussions of Haydn and Beethoven. Among the latter’s achievements, in Dahlhaus’s carefully worded assessment (1991, 41), is to have invited his listeners to understand “form” also, or perhaps even centrally, as “an aesthetic process” rather than as a schematic arrangement. “Aesthetically, the decisive factor is the outcome of the process that works itself out in the form.” Dahlhaus’s remark, in which the term “aesthetically” is the key qualifier, was also relayed by Schmalfeldt (2011, 34), whose book explores music “in the process of becoming” and devotes sustained chapters to the historical course of “the Beethoven-Hegelian tradition” and “the processual legacy of the late eighteenth century.”

This impression of processual form is carried out with admirable single-mindedness in many sonata movements, and in subsequent chapters I appeal to it especially in my discussions of Haydn, Beethoven, and Brahms. Still, notwithstanding its presence within this or that sonata, the boundaries of the underlying

action zones (P TR' S / C) are nearly always apparent. More than that, they are compositionally prior as generic givens, conceptually present before the act of composition starts. Even when the music that fills and connects them is emphatically processual, as it often is, they still mark the pre-established succession of generically prescribed CONTAINERS that the composer is treating in a certain way. By these lights, the generative aspects of the musical contents are secondary to the de facto roles of the action zones, though in another sense they are crucially important to the creative work that turns each piece into a dramatized singularity. In short, a work's internal musical process does not "create the form" in the normative sense of that phrase—or at least not in Sonata Theory's way of using it—but rather fashions the particulars of the piece's content to articulate its progress along a pre-established set of stations of departure and arrival.<sup>11</sup>

One final caveat: as Schmalfeldt has also noted (2011, 9 and *passim*), expositions that actively pursue "the process of [a continuous] becoming" can sometimes occasion us, *en route*, to revise our initial sense of where we are in the action-zone succession. What we might first have taken to be an onset of TR, for instance, might subsequently be shown to be incorporated into a broader P space, occasioning us to revise our initial impression (TR? ==> still P!). Such reassessments are common in the listening experience and nearly always help us to interpret the musical point of what is happening in this or that work. Far from undermining the centrality of the generic action zones, perceiving any such localized ambiguity is possible only when one has an awareness of the expectations associated with what turn out to be imaginatively bounded action spaces.

### Trajectories toward generically normative cadences (cadential spans)

"At the heart of [Sonata Theory] is the recognition and interpretation of *expressive/dramatic trajectories toward generically obligatory cadences*" (EST, 13). Because a composer can soften or even withhold the realizations of certain moments of cadential closure, I have altered the wording in the preceding heading to "*generically normative cadences*." But the concept remains: any sonata form consists of a succession of *cadential spans*, and the various action zones of a sonata are traversed through in order to attain and articulate their appropriate cadences before proceeding to the next zone.

In order of increasing closural strength, the available structural cadences—those most capable of closing off an action zone—are the half cadence (HC), the imperfect authentic cadence (IAC, with scale degree  $\hat{3}$  or  $\hat{5}$  in the upper voice), and the perfect authentic cadence (PAC, with  $\hat{1}$  or  $\hat{8}$  in the upper voice). That said, one should be aware that the historical concept of what qualifies as a cadence is a complicated issue that has been the topic of much recent historical and theoretical work. What had

seemed clear in recent decades—that to qualify as a genuine “authentic cadence,” for instance, one needs to be dealing with root-position chords, not inversions—has been unsettled by historical research into eighteenth-century (and earlier) theoretical treatises, which are more flexible with regard to various degrees of cadential strength and classification.<sup>12</sup> While at deeper levels of inquiry these scholarly investigations are of prime importance, warning us away from inordinately rigid cadential pronouncements, their pursuit here would lead us down a slippery slope of harmonic and voice-leading gradations that would be counterproductive in the present volume. In analysis of the classical and romantic repertoires, the pragmatic solution is the most workable one. Thus within Sonata Theory the term “cadence” normally implies one of the three structural-cadence types (or terminal-cadence types) mentioned earlier: these are the HC (ending on V in root position) and the two root-position-oriented authentic cadences (V-I, often concluding a more complete cadential progression of tonic, predominant, dominant, and tonic), the IAC and the PAC.<sup>13</sup>

In the later eighteenth century the theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch, describing smaller binary-format works from earlier decades, outlined what we now call a major-key sonata’s exposition as a harmonic journey that touches, in order, on four cadential stations (“resting points of the spirit”): an authentic cadence in the tonic (I:AC), a half cadence in the tonic (I:HC), a half cadence in the dominant (V:HC), and an authentic cadence in the dominant (V:AC, usually a V:PAC), which may or may not be followed by an “appendix” or “clarifying period” to further ground the dominant key.<sup>14</sup> Koch was not writing in terms of what we now hear as action spaces, and his view allows more flexibility than it might initially seem, but from our vantage point it is clear that by the 1750s or 1760s the generic, *de facto* spatial zones (P TR ’ S / C) succeeded each other in order to articulate, even dramatically enhance, such harmonic journeys.

A cadential span covers the trajectory of any passage of music that leads immediately upon or just after the previous cadence (or its cadential extension) to the next one. Cadential spans may be brief, such as a four-bar antecedent or consequent, or quite lengthy, as when expected cadences are avoided or undermined throughout an extended section of music. One of the first tasks of analysis is to identify where and in which key the successive cadences occur. In the majority of cases no action zone should be regarded as beginning in the middle of a cadential span. In turn this means that the analyst must have a clear conception of both what a cadence is and the varieties of their realizations—a seemingly elementary matter that in recent decades, as noted above has been the subject of much debate. This is particularly the case with regard to the half cadence, some potential instances of which form-functional theory has persuasively downgraded into a structurally significant but non-cadential *dominant arrival*—a simple landing on an active V chord that nonetheless concludes its preceding phrase. Nonetheless, for most practical sonata-form analyses, the usual definitions of the various cadence types will suffice.

## Keys, tonal layout, and tonal confirmation

Consider the most commonly encountered situation in high-galant sonata forms: those with two-part/four-zone expositions and corresponding, full recapitulations beginning with P in the tonic key. In that situation the strong norm is that all or most of the post-medial-caesura material in the exposition (S/C, presented and cadentially confirmed in a non-tonic key) will reappear in the tonic key (“be resolved”) in the recapitulation. This has been dubbed the “sonata principle,” though in the past that principle was often overstated. Exceptions to expansive versions of it are not difficult to find, especially in Haydn’s works with their often substantially recrafted recapitulations. Even so, the norm is that the exposition’s out-of-tonic S and C modules (or their similarly situated equivalents in continuous expositions) will return in the tonic, usually in full, in the recapitulation. This creates a complementary, symmetrical balance with their expositional appearance: historically understood, a prolonged, extended end-rhyme with the later blocks of the exposition (Greenberg 2017). Sonata Theory calls this later tonic-centering of the once-off-tonic S/C zones the *tonal resolution*. (Anticipating a later discussion, I note that while one of the five sonata types, the Type 2 sonata, does not have what Sonata Theory calls a recapitulation, it most definitely features a tonal resolution: see chapter 11. And the overview of recapitulatory practice in chapter 4 will look at non-normative situations in which the tonal resolution either deviates from the proper key or fails to achieve decisive closure with a cadence.)

One should distinguish between keys that are cadentially confirmed with an IAC or PAC and those that are not. Keys confirmed with only an HC are established as governing keys but are not yet fully secured, remaining open until closed with an authentic cadence. One can seem to be obviously “in” a key at a thematic or modular outset, but that key is present only as a local, tonal promise or proposition to be ratified and secured with an authentic cadence; in fact, it may fail to be ratified, moving on instead to a different key. This issue can emerge with the exposition’s P-theme. How grounded is that tonic? Does it present us only with a I:HC (or perhaps not even that) before moving elsewhere? Is it fully secured with a I:PAC before moving on to the perhaps-elided TR action zone? Or does it give us two or more different ideas each of which ends with a I:PAC, in which case, P is *tonally overdetermined*? Or consider the situation within developments, where instability of key is the norm, the shifting from one *tonal color* to another. The larger question is: in the developmental process which of these tonal colors is cadentially secured? When an implicit, localized new key is secured with a cadence, we can speak appropriately of a modulation to that key; short of that, a non-confirmed tonal color is a tonicization. To this one might add the fundamental importance of the affectively different colors (the *qualia*) of the major and minor modes—a vitally important modal dualism, analogous to light and shadow, that runs through the entire repertoire. I deal with specific issues surrounding the minor mode in chapter 8.

## Themes and their ordered successions: rotations

Quite differently from most form-theory orthodoxies in recent memory, Sonata Theory restores attention to the structural importance and local characters of musical themes and especially to the order in which they are presented in the various phases of the composition. Themes matter: this is one of the cardinal features of the approach. In the past half-century or more there has been a downplaying of the structural roles of themes within sonatas, subordinating these foregrounded ideas and their topical or gestural implications to background harmonic or contrapuntal processes. In some respects this is understandable, especially within current academic contexts: Koch's late-eighteenth-century outline of an exposition's typical cadential journey could also be adduced as a reinforcement of such a view, and no one would think of downplaying the central role that tonal and harmonic processes have within sonata form.

Nonetheless, it is the striking, moment-to-moment immediacy of the thematic material—the sounding surface of music as it being played or listened to—that beguiles us and captures our attention. And there can be no doubt that the creation of enticing sonic surfaces and their subsequent entailments, elaborations, and contrasts was a front-and-center concern for the composer. To make a mark, one had to craft successions of compelling musical ideas. As I hope will be clear from the analysis chapters that follow, while by no means steering clear of longer-range goals within the music (most especially, trajectories toward generically normative cadences), Sonata Theory encourages close attentiveness to the affective, topical, and gestural connotations of themes at the moments in which they are experienced. These are not mere sonic markers to be passed through in search of deep-structural processes or other, less audible implications that are then presented to us as what should be the central items for our attention. This aspect of Sonata Theory can be understood as participating in the *restoration of the surface* called for in some recent musical (and literary) quarters: a rebalancing of conceptual, longer-range generic goals with the claims of the immediate—what one is literally apprehending in the here and now.<sup>15</sup>

What Sonata Theory challenges are the claims that a piece's "real form" is (take your choice) strictly harmonic, or the cumulative outcome of only "local harmonic progression[s]," or most essentially the product of a generative process of sub-thematic, motivic-cellular development, or the result of long-range, background, coherence-governing middle-ground contrapuntal arcs, while the themes on the audible surface and the manner in which they are arrayed are devalued to the lower-rung status of "design" or incidental "arrangement." While much attention has been paid in the past half-century to the local implications of commonly encountered thematic styles and shapes, that attention has been mostly relevant to what I call these themes' *vertical* or on-the-spot implications (how the themes might be characterized in isolation or in the abstract), regardless of where and to what larger

end they are situated *horizontally* within the linear-structural flow. Here one thinks of such things as:

- *topic theory*, grounded in common thematic stylizations of the era, pointing semiotically toward external social or natural-world implications (march, ga-votte, minuet, fanfare, hunt, pastoral, battle, storm, ombra, learned style, bells, clockwork, flowing water, sunrises, birdsong, and the like);<sup>16</sup>
- *rhetoric theory*, comparing the postures and placements of themes to long-established manners of classical rhetorical delivery (*exordium*, *antithesis*, *anaphora*, *circumlocutio*, *apostrophe*, *aposiopesis*, *peroratio*, and so on);
- *form-functional theory*'s classifications of common thematic shapes (sentence and period, along with various compound-enlargements and hybrids of the two).

Still, such important work has not restored a large-scale *structural* role to themes *per se*. Sonata Theory does not privilege thematic presentation and ordering above harmonic process. Rather, it considers the two as equal partners working together, thereby generating a synoptic view of a piece's structure: its "real form."<sup>17</sup>

This is most evident in Sonata Theory's concept of musical *rotations*: the compositional tendency to lay out an ordered succession of musical units (or *modules*)—like modules A, B, C, D, and so on—and then to return to that ordering or parts thereof to alter, expand, or treat it once again, perhaps quite differently, in the next rotational cycle (EST, 611–14). The metaphor called upon here is that of a circular motion or cycle, like that traversed by a 12-hour clock. At 11:59:59 the clock hands' next move is to return to the beginning, 12:00:00 (or 0:00:00), and to start the round once again. To illustrate: all strophic songs are rotational, with each stanza comprising one rotation. The last bar of each stanza is followed by the first bar of the next. The same is true of compositions over ostinato basses, from folias, passacaglias, and chaconnes to the blues, in which cases, of course, it is the bassline or recurring harmonic pattern, not the ever-varied upper-voice melodic material, that generates the rotations.

Typically, returning to the initial module of a cycle—a *rotation initiator*—after one has gone elsewhere is the signal that a new rotation is beginning: a new, probably modified trip through the cycle. In a baroque concerto each statement of a ritornello or tutti head-motive could be heard as starting a new rotation, one usually spinning off into its own unique direction. The same might be said of fugues. In sonata form the P-idea is the normative rotation initiator. Rotation patterns sometimes also feature a final module capable of serving as the most definitive *rotation concluder*.

Sonata form is grounded in the principle of thematic/modular rotation (a flexible concept of ordered modular recurrence) that works in tandem with but on another axis of meaning from that of tonality. Since rotations are only about thematic/modular ordering, issues of harmony, key, and tonality are irrelevant from the rotational

point of view. Most obviously, the recapitulation is another, somewhat varied rotation of the musical modules arrayed in the exposition. As such, the recapitulation may also be called the *recapitulatory rotation*. Developments also often have important rotational or half-rotational implications in the ordered selection of modules that are being treated. While this is by no means invariable, developments most frequently begin with an off-tonic sounding of at least the incipit of P, the rotation initiator, a feature that we also find in extended codas.

The expositional ordering of its parts is the *referential layout* for the selection and appearance of the thematic modules in all the subsequent rotations. This means that as the exposition passes through its normative action zones, P TR ' S / C, it also establishes a fixed order of thematic/modular events to which later sections of music are to be compared. Whenever a subsequent main section begins (a development, a recapitulation, or a coda), if P material appears at all, it is normally to be treated before TR material, TR before S, and S before C. In a development section the composer need not allude to all of the action zones; it can suffice to select only one or two of them. One might find workings-out of only P and C, for example, or even S and C, but the norm still remains to treat them in rotational order. As with all generic norms, exceptions can occur—non-rotational developments—and they should be noted as such.

As we shall see in the next chapter with Mozart, K. 333/i, the expositional rotation is sometimes divisible into *subrotations*: smaller varied cycles within the larger, referential cycle. If TR starts off with the P-idea, for instance, it can be heard as launching a *subrotation* of P. Analogously, Haydn's attraction to beginning many of his S zones with the basic idea or incipit of P, the rotation initiator (resulting in a "P-based S"), divides the exposition into two differing *subrotations* at the point of the medial caesura that precedes S. The same principle applies to our understanding of the materials presented in the development or recapitulation.

To observe the rotational principle at work in sonata form—its thematically cyclical aspect—is not to reduce that structure to one of reiterative stasis, in the manner, say, of the circular recurrences of mythical time. Other aspects of sonata form are emphatically linear, vectored; they push forward in our linear-temporal imaginations toward specific generic signposts and specific tonal goals. What we find in sonatas are variable applications of the rotational principle, operating at overlapping levels of structure, counterpointed against the nonrepeatable linear flow of time and goal-oriented tonal process. Just as one does not step twice into the same river, as Heraclitus famously insisted, even the most literal recurrence of a thematic rotation—the repeat of the exposition—is conceptually non-identical to its first sounding for at least three reasons: (1) it occupies a different space of onward-flowing linear time; (2) it should be contextualized as retracing something already heard, therefore construed in relation to our memory of what we have just experienced; and (3) it is a commonly encountered feature of the genre—indeed, we may have been predicting its appearance during the first presentation of the exposition—which means that as we hear the repeat we situate its formal meaning

in terms of its role in the succession of the larger action spaces (exposition, development, recapitulation) regulated by the relevant generic norms.

### Sonata Theory and other analytical or descriptive methodologies

Rather than closing other interpretive doors, Sonata Theory aims to make available another one that can be uncommonly rich, opening new encounters with freshly defamiliarized musical worlds. What has become evident by now is that no single analytical or descriptive methodology can claim—or (thankfully) will ever be able to claim—an exclusive purchase on the study of this repertory. The daunting nature of the analytical enterprise must be admitted from the start. It is a humbling truth that “texts always take place on the level of their reader’s abilities.”<sup>18</sup> At each point in its history sonata composition was entangled in a web of concerns and interests, a network of subsystems that a composer was obliged to coordinate, however habitually or intuitively: generic/technical norms, cultural functions, acceptable manipulations of the quasi-formulaic musical topics or tropes of the era, anticipated interactions with historically specific audiences’ expectations, self-placement and presentation within the state of the historical tradition and its arbiters of success or failure, and all the rest. No analytical or descriptive method can deal with all of these at the same time.

We, too, are caught up in our own webs, swept up in the blinding contextual flow of our own present. At stake, then, is the larger issue: how might we come to an understanding with the language of this endlessly varied and complex music from the past, music that comes to us like a precious historical gift, an undeserved inheritance, from a horizon of social practices different from those of our own? How can we come to recognize yet somehow also come to terms with the strangeness of it all?

Such questions can be addressed from multiple directions. Some of the most promising work today is integrative, selecting and blending the interests of the varied practices found in the current toolbox of analytical approaches. This is not to take the benign position that all methodologies are always and everywhere compatible, much less that anything goes and that as a consequence debates about subjective readings are futile. There are differences among them in important points and emphases. Still, sharply different readings of individual works can help to deepen our sense of the challenges with which these works confront us—how they can say such different things to different persons, how this feature of it, or now that one, or perhaps still another, might be drawn forth for hitherto unnoticed attention, thereby altering our perception of how that display object now appears to us.

All form theories are encouragements to adjust our perceptions of works in order to privilege certain features within them. As Wittgenstein put it in the *Philosophical Investigations*, when a new aspect of something is presented to us, or even occurs

to us, “I see that [that thing or object] has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience ‘noticing an aspect.’”<sup>19</sup> This act of *seeing-as* or *seeing-in* (to use art historian Richard Wollheim’s much-noted term) is of course subject to the potentials opened up or closed in any historically specific time and place.<sup>20</sup> But in the analysis of musical form the relevant point is that becoming attuned to other methods’ or other eras’ differences of aspect-perception can be a productive thing. Absorbing those differences in good faith can deepen the questions and responses that each of us has when engaging with this music.

So let’s be clear on this point. To become engaged with Sonata Theory does not mean to shrug off other modes of inquiry. Three of the most recent and influential form-analytical methods, all of which make appearances in this book, are:

1. *Form-functional theory*, as laid out in 1998 in William E. Caplin’s *Classical Form* and in his subsequent textbook from 2013, *Analyzing Classical Form: An Approach for the Classroom*. Both books are indispensable contributions to the new *Formenlehre*. Since much of what follows is devoted to close analyses, the reader will come across frequent identifications of the formal structures of individual themes: often *sentences* or *periods* of different sizes or occasional *hybrids* thereof. (Sonata Theory’s distinctiveness, recall, lies in its theory of larger, action-zone or rotational norms, not of the structures of their smaller thematic constituents.) The analytical challenge is that, valorizing different criteria, diverse analytical traditions have characterized the familiar thematic shapes in differing ways. As Brody has reminded us (2016, 97–102)—and he is by no means alone—there has been little consensus among theorists with regard, for instance, to how strenuously, or how flexibly, to define a thematic period, which in turn depends on definitions of its two constituent parts, an *antecedent* and a *consequent*. This is not a simple matter. It involves decisions about foundational matters, debates that to this day are not settled, particularly those concerning the question of what is and what is not to be considered a cadence in the era(s) under consideration.

And yet consistency demands that we base our descriptions in something. In this book I not only ground my phrase descriptions in Caplin’s terminology but I also assume an awareness of that terminology, along with his distinctions among the various types of cadences. Caplin’s taxonomic categories have the advantage of obliging us to look at themes in a fine-grained way, charging us to examine the constituent parts and harmonic actions of music’s smallest building-blocks—often two-, four-, and eight-bar units—with rigorously defined terms. The relevant classifications are to be made by parsing a theme’s internal *formal functions*, including but not limited to beginning, middle, and ending functions.<sup>21</sup> While I sometimes adapt or modify some of Caplin’s concepts and terminology, I generally adhere to them, and in seminars I ask that students become versed in them, realizing also that some thematic configurations can ask us to apply them more flexibly.

What is most often at issue is the classification of individual themes that divide into two distinct halves, with the sense that the second half responds to, continues, or completes the first.<sup>22</sup> (Not all “classical” themes are divisible in this manner, though a great number of them are.) For purposes of classification we regard the normative length for such a two-part, short theme to be eight measures long and subdivisible into two parts, 4+4. The first part may or may not end with a cadence, strictly considered; the second part, however, will: it may be a half cadence (HC), an imperfect authentic cadence (IAC), or a perfect authentic cadence (PAC)—listed here in ascending order of closural strength. Moreover, the second part may or may not be similar in content to the first part. As a whole, the theme may either prolong the initial tonic (ending, for example, I:PAC), or it may modulate to a different key, as in a modulatory period or a modulatory sentence.

While frequently modified in the repertory, this 4+4 norm serves best as a ready-to-hand prototype with which most encountered exemplars may be set into dialogue. In practice the normative length is often altered by *compression*, *expansion*, or *extension*—or by the visual effect of the notation or literal barring of the passage. Thus the 4+4 norm is not always embraced, and one commonly finds asymmetrical or irregular variants (4+6, 5+6, and the like). Nonetheless, the 4+4 norm is heuristically useful in classification schemes, suggesting as it does the two parts of the theme in question, each of which has a different functional role to play.

In brief, within form-functional theory the standard options are:

- The normative eight-bar *period*, consisting of an antecedent and a non-elided, parallel consequent. Each of these, antecedent and consequent, usually houses a smaller, two-bar *basic idea* followed by a two-bar *contrasting idea* (b.i. + c.i.) that *ends with a cadence*. To qualify as an antecedent, its cadence must be lighter (or “weaker,” less fully closed: an HC or an IAC) than that of the consequent, which will end with an IAC or, more often, a PAC. (If both similar phrases end with a PAC, what we have is not a period but rather a repeated phrase adopting the statement-response “feel” of a period.)<sup>23</sup> To qualify as a period the consequent must start with either the same basic idea as the antecedent or a closely related variant of it. Within form-functional theory, if what might seem to be a potential antecedent of a period does not end with a half cadence or imperfect authentic cadence, strictly considered—and this is not always an easy call—then it is regarded not as an antecedent but rather as a *compound basic idea* (still b.i. + c.i.), and the larger 4+4 structure is no longer regarded as a period. Under that condition, as noted below, the whole is classified as a hybrid.
- The normative eight-bar *sentence*, constructed as an aab or aa'b structure. In its short and simplest realizations we find four bars of *presentation*, 2+2 (aa or aa', that is, a two-bar basic idea [b.i.] and its repetition or complementary recasting), and four more of *continuation* (b), ending with a cadence

(HC, IAC, or PAC).<sup>24</sup> A postulate of form-functional theory is that, by definition, the first part of such a theme, the 2+2, b.i. + b.i.' presentation, should not be construed as ending with a cadence, even if mm. 3 and 4, for instance, provide us with a root-position dominant-to-tonic motion. In part, this is because these presentational bars stake out the propositional beginning of something larger—the whole sentence—not an initial musical passage that itself executes an ending function. The structural cadence and the thematic closure that it connotes are thus postponed until the completion of the entire sentence, and they are triggered by the ending-function music most immediately leading up to that completion.

While all of this seems clear enough, it bears observing that orthodox form-functional theory holds that a prototypical continuation combines (or sometimes fuses) a *continuation function* (the destabilizing role of “being-in-the-middle” through fragmentation, harmonic acceleration, faster surface rhythm, and harmonic sequence [Caplin 1998, 41–42; 2013, 705]) with a *cadential function*. Notice, then, the misunderstanding that can arise: the term “continuation” can apply not only to the entire post-presentation unit (Caplin’s “continuation phrase”), but also to only the first of its potential subparts, the passage of “continuation function” preceding the onset of a cadential idea. In what follows, the reader will note that, departing somewhat from strict form-functional usage, my shorthand use of the term “continuation” sometimes refers only to the “continuation-function” portion of the post-presentation material, the whole of which is now construed as “continuation + cadence.” Moreover, my own preference is to label the parts of the sentence not as aab or aa'b but as  $\alpha\alpha\beta$  or  $\alpha\alpha'\beta$  (alpha, alpha-prime, beta), reserving Greek letters as indications of sentential subparts. In addition, following my previous caveat, in some continuations—especially ones longer than four bars and in which the “continuation function” and cadential idea are clearly distinguishable—I find it clarifying to subdivide  $\beta$ , form-functional theory’s more generalized “continuation phrase,” into  $\beta + \gamma$  (beta-plus-gamma), thereby distinguishing the continuation function proper from the cadential unit. (In even longer continuations, one might extend this into  $\beta + \gamma + \delta$ , in which the cadential unit is signified by  $\delta$ , delta.)

- Any of four *hybrids* related to the preceding options. Hybrids 1 and 2 are the categories in which an antecedent (b.i. + c.i., ending with an HC or an IAC) is not responded to with a parallel consequent (beginning with the same or similar b.i.). Instead, the response begins with a musical idea different from that of the antecedent. (These are situations that other systems have referred to as contrasting periods.) Hybrids 1 and 2 are similar, the distinction being that the first is an antecedent plus a *continuation* (which latter comprises a middle function followed by a cadential function), while the second is an antecedent plus a *cadence* (in which the entire second part

is occupied by an elaborated cadential formula, such as a *complete* or *expanded cadential progression*, prototypically a  $\hat{3}-\hat{4}-\hat{5}-\hat{1}$  motion in the bass supporting a I<sup>6</sup>-IV [or ii<sup>6</sup>]-V-I succession). Hybrids 3 and 4 are reserved for situations in which the first four bars are parsed as b.i. + c.i. (that is, not as a presentational b.i. + b.i.') but do not end with a cadence. Denied antecedent status on these grounds, the first four bars are then regarded as a *compound basic idea* (*c.b.i.*). Hybrid 3—the loosest of the categories—covers themes in which a *c.b.i.* is followed by a *continuation*, that is, by differing music that soon leads to a cadence. Hybrid 4 covers themes in which a *c.b.i.* is followed by a parallel *consequent* (beginning with the same b.i.). In other words, Hybrid 4 can also be thought of as a period in which the “antecedent’s” music does not end with what form-functional theory considers to be a cadence: it is neither an HC nor an IAC, strictly considered. Hybrid 4 cases, for instance, would cover situations in which the first phrase, b.i. + c.i., might end with a V<sup>6</sup> chord, which that theory would not regard as sufficiently cadential. Such a phrase would be in obvious dialogue with the prototypical antecedent but would not fully articulate its more common, root-position dominant ending.

- And the larger, sixteen or more-bar *compound* expansions of these basic types: *compound sentence*, *compound period*, and so on. Consider the case of the larger, 8+8 compound period. Here we find an eight-bar *compound antecedent* and an eight-bar *compound consequent* that, to be a true consequent, must begin as had the antecedent. Each eight-bar unit is subdivisible into 4+4. Thus the prototypical sixteen bars subdivide as (4+4) + (4+4). To qualify as a compound antecedent the first 4+4 complex must end with a weak cadence (an HC or IAC, as form-functional theory defines them), and the second 4+4 with a stronger one (nearly always a PAC). (In this respect the sixteen-bar compound period is similar to what has traditionally been called the “double period,” a term that form-functional theory avoids.) We then ask, do the compound antecedent’s first four bars also end with a cadence or not—creating an *en route*, internal cadence at the end of the fourth bar on the way to the more decisive structural cadence in the eighth bar? It may be that they do not. In that situation it is often the case that the composer has built that 4+4 compound antecedent as a sentence (2+2+4, b.i. + b.i. + continuation): this is the commonly encountered *sentential antecedent*. In other cases, the compound antecedent might have been built differently. Each case merits individual examination and assessment.
- 2. *Schema theory*, identifying formulaic, eighteenth-century voice-leading patterns, as introduced in Robert O. Gjerdingen’s *Music in the Galant Style* (2007). It is possible and often instructive to provide any movement with a succession of schema-labels, but that is not my goal here. In this handbook, references to Gjerdingen’s work are sporadic and limited mostly to

observations that help to reinforce a particular passage's identity or function through a specific catchphrase or now-standard label. In my analytical work I am particularly interested in noting:

- various “opening-gambit” schemata (DO-RE-MI, SOL-FA-MI, ROMANESCA, and a few others), when recognizing them can reinforce the identification of an initiatory function;
- prototypes and variants of the (continuation-function) MONTE schema: the familiar ascending 5–6 sequence, especially when chromatically intensified (effecting the “lift,” for example, of the two-event chord-succession, G [or G<sup>6</sup>], C – A [or A<sup>6</sup>], d);
- prototypes and variants of the FONTE schema, a chromatically inflected descending-fifth sequence alternating root positions and first inversions.
- schemata that characterize stylized authentic or half-cadence realizations (“galant cadence,” “converging half cadence”);
- and the frequently encountered, versatile, and immediately recognizable QUIESCENZA figure (rotary linear motion away from the tonic and back to it, sounding a melodic figure, 8- $\hat{7}$ -6- $\hat{7}$ -8, often against a tonic pedal).

Sonata Theory takes an expansive view of such schemata, noting instances of their deviations from their prototypical patterns. In general, the individual patterns are better regarded as flexible *schema families*, the background voice-leading ideas of which can inform non-standard realizations. A recognizable use of the MONTE family, for example, might not support a standard sequential replication of the melody in its second event-pair. Perhaps most frequently, I invoke a broadly inclusive QUIESCENZA family whose various instantiations—including fully harmonized and considerably expanded ones, dispensing with the tonic pedal—can play ingenious roles.<sup>25</sup>

3. The *process theory* elaborated in Janet Schmalfeldt’s *In the Process of Becoming* (2011): a construal of “form” as an ongoing process of self-generation. As mentioned earlier, one of Schmalfeldt’s many useful observations has to do with the phenomenology of the on-the-spot assessments of the music’s process as it flows past us. It sometimes happens that, on the basis of the evidence that we have been hearing thus far, we might initially interpret a passage to be accomplishing one functional role (“I think that this must be the transition”) only retrospectively, as the music proceeds further along, to revise our understanding (“Oh, I see: it’s still part of the primary theme”). Such revised assessments are common features of the music in question here, and as such this book calls attention to them more than once. It is worth reminding ourselves that, following Schmalfeldt (9), the analytical symbol for this *en route* interpretive revision is the symbol ==>, meaning “becomes” or, more specifically, “retrospectively reinterpreted as.” The symbol for the preceding reassessment, for instance, a presumed transition that we later realize is still housed within the primary-theme action zone, is either TR==>P<sup>2</sup> or TR?==>P<sup>2</sup>.