

THE ROLE OF DELAYING IN SCHUBERT'S *QUARTETTSATZ* IN C MINOR, D. 703

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Abstract

Based on James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's Sonata Theory, this study explores the role of delaying in Schubert's *Quartettsatz* in C minor, D. 703. A detailed formal analysis of the piece identifies three delaying strategies: the use of evaded cadences, the initial absence of TR-activity and the late return of P-module. Utilized as an expressive tool, the evaded cadences present the delaying technique at a lower, more localized level. By postponing expected cadential resolutions, Schubert establishes a closer rhetorical connection between the major and the minor modes. The delay of TR-activity influences the expressive character of the first S-theme and transforms the structure of S to the trimodular block. The late return of P-module defines the sonata type and confirms the fatalistic consequences of the minor key choice.

Keywords: Sonata theory; music analysis; Schenkerian Analysis; Schubert; 19-Century Music.

1 Introduction

The challenges brought to the Classical sonata form by nineteenth century composers have been the subject of much discussion. The shift from a highly articulated conception to a more continuous and expressive one expanded the well-defined structural boundaries of the eighteenth century. According to James Webster, “in Romantic styles, the focus on the explicit ‘contents’ of music, on original themes, on continual thematic transformation, and on dynamic processes inhibited the full integration of complex structures along Classical lines” (WEBSTER, 1978, p. 18). Form was, therefore, not treated as a starting point anymore, but as a result of the composer’s rhetorical choices.

Among the nineteenth century composers closest to the Classical tradition is Franz Schubert. His instrumental music reinterprets aspects of the earlier style, establishing a dialogue with the past. This connection, however, is often affected by a natural lyrical impulse, which enables him to transform the underlying structure of his works. Through thematic material interaction and rhetorical reinterpretation Schubert expands sonata form and defines a new expressive layout.

Composed in a period of crisis, the *Quartettsatz*, in C minor (1820), is a mature work in which Schubert demonstrates his ability to generate the structure of the piece from the interplay of themes and sections¹. The tension generated by this interaction is often reinforced by the way Schubert plays with the listener’s expectations, delaying the arrival of essential structural elements. Through the lens of Sonata Theory, this study will explore the role of delaying in Schubert’s *Quartettsatz* in C minor, D. 703². The paper will be divided in two main parts: the first part will present an overview of expositional and developmental space and the second will discuss the formal and expressive implications of the delay of normative events.

2 Analysis: an overview

a) Exposition

The piece begins with the statement of P (m. 1–13), a turbulent and agitated theme that instantly presents to the listener the darkness of the minor mode.³ P is

1 Martin Chusid briefly discusses this period of crisis in his essay “The Historical Background” (CHUSID, 1971).

2 This paper will adopt Sonata Theory’s terminology. See Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, xxv–xxviii).

3 The rhetorical implications generated by the negativism of the minor mode play an important role during the piece. Its dialogue with the major mode is well defined by Hepokoski and Darcy as “a sign of a troubled condition seeking transformation (emancipation) into the parallel major mode” (HEPOKOSKI; DARCY, 2006, p. 306). For a lengthier discussion on sonata form in minor keys, see Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, ch. 14).

structured as a sentence formed by a four-measure presentation (two measures of basic idea followed by its repetition) and an eight-measure continuation. The basic idea presented by the first violin conducts a crescendo through successive entrances in all four instruments, culminating in a Neapolitan sixth chord (m. 9), which is emphasized by a *sforzando* marking and a sudden change of texture⁴. The appearance of the Neapolitan chord confirms the stormy character of P and reduces any positive expectation that a listener might have at that point. P comes to a PAC in measure 13, eliding with the opening of TR space.

TR (m. 13-27) begins as a dissolving restatement of P. Generic TR activity, however, never materializes, weakening its expression of transitional function. In this case, we could speak of a transition that is functionally present but rhetorically absent. Because of its prolongational character, TR could be regarded as an expansion of P space. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that the section does lead us into S space through a brief and settled modulation: bII6 (m. 23-24) becomes IV6 in the key of Ab major, followed by a dominant seventh chord which leads us into a VI:PAC MC (m. 27) as well as S space. Despite taking us into a new thematic zone, the passage fails to provide any convincing TR-rhetoric.

The major mode arises as a moment of relief, as if it had just been released from the highly oppressive minor mode. However, the choice of a non-normative key and the lack of preparation by a functional transition render the new theme unstable and fragile, susceptible to a collapse at any moment. At this point, one could perhaps argue that, instead of opening S-space, the key of Ab major extends the failed TR giving it a second opportunity to succeed. However, the lyrical “S-ness” of the theme introduced in measure 27 renders this possibility implausible. Therefore, as we will observe below, the S-theme, when considered as a whole, should be interpreted as a trimodular-block⁵.

TM1 (m. 27-61) is structured as a large parallel interrupted period with two nested sentences. Its sentential antecedent (m. 27-38) is formed by a four-measure basic idea, its repetition and an eight-measure continuation leading to a half cadence in

4 On the role of the Neapolitan in Schubert's music, see Webster (1978) and Tovey (1928).

5 The trimodular block (TMB) is usually explained by theorists as a consequence of Schubert's three-key expositions, as defined by Webster: “whenever [...] the second group as whole comprises two tonal areas, usually articulated as separate sections, often with an extended transition between them. The result is a three-key exposition, comprising a first group and a double second group.” (WEBSTER, 1979, p. 26) Sonata Theory not only describes the sequence of events in a “three-key exposition,” but more accurately captures the essence of this procedure by defining the character of each section: “Considered as a whole, the TMB (trimodular block) situation conveys the impression of a flawed or unsatisfactory first S-idea, TM1, followed by some sort of TR-texture-based corrective action, TM2, and a “better” S-idea, TM3” (HEPOKOSKI; DARCY, 2006, p. 172). On the three-key exposition, see Webster (1978 and 1979). On the trimodular block, see Hepokoski and Darcy (2006).

measure 38. After a short caesura-fill, the consequent phrase (m. 39-61) restates the whole antecedent and expands its cadential appendix in order to end with a PAC. The expected cadence is evaded in measure 54 by the return of the cadential appendix. This delay of the arrival of the PAC perhaps also arises from a fear of the imminent return of the minor mode, as if the composer was enjoying his moment of joy and did not want it to end. The major mode cannot stand the pressure and finally collapses into the minor mode (vi:PAC, m. 61).

The minor mode brings back its darkness and storminess, and more importantly belatedly supplies the missing TR-rhetoric, which had been lacking in the first part of the exposition. The P-based TM2 (m. 61-93) destabilizes the key of Ab major established in TM1 and through an ascending second sequence leads us into a i:HC (m. 77) which readily suggests a new MC effect. The possible MC is overridden by a long caesura-fill which initially seems to correct the harmonic course, towards the key of G minor. However, the unexpected e-natural in measure 90 followed by a b-natural in measure 91 bring back the major mode, transforming the predicted minor dominant key into the non-normative major V.

The use of the major dominant as a key in a minor-mode sonata has lately been the focus of some discussion. According to Boyd Pomeroy, “in the nineteenth century, the major mode as a key area emerged as an option, albeit an unorthodox (even deformational) one” (POMEROY, 2011, p. 59). Hepokoski and Darcy interpret the key of the major dominant as “a delusion, a denial, a false major – pathetically seeking to overturn the negative implications of the initial tonic” (HEPOKOSKI; DARCY, 2006, p. 315). In *Quartettsatz* the key of G major emerges as a temporary illusion, constantly under threat of a P-based countersubject and the darkness of the root-position Neapolitan chord. TM3 (m. 93-125) is structured as a large compound sentence: a sentential basic idea (m. 93-99), its repetition (m. 99-105), and a continuation phrase (m. 105-125). The high number of evaded cadences, and the frequent appearance of the Neapolitan, often tonicized by its own dominant, confirm the weakness of the major mode, as if the moment of delusion was about to come. The theme finally achieves the EEC in measure 125, a V:PAC that closes S-space and releases the major mode from the minor mode’s oppression. The closing zone (m. 125-141), of the codetta-module type, confirms the key of G major by a constant V-I alternation. The minor mode is brought back into play in the last two measures of C, when the addition of the minor seventh and minor ninth to the G-major triad transform it into a dominant chord, setting up the repeat of the exposition and the return of C minor.

b) Development

The arpeggiated dominant chord deceptively resolves to Ab major, which is quickly established as a new key by the V-I alternation in the cello. The development section can be divided into two main zones: Zone 1 (m. 141-183) in the form of succession of sequence-blocks, and Zone 2 (m. 183-195) preparing the arrival of the recapitulatory rotation. The first sequence-block of Zone 1 establishes a dialogue between the stormy TM2 tremolo and a new lyrical thematic idea. The juxtaposition of both TR and S-rhetoric mirrors the implacable expressive war between major and minor mode during the piece. In addition, a repetitive C-based motive underlies the whole section as if it were extending C-space into rotation 2. The first melodic idea is structured as a sentence and moves to Bb minor, restating the material just presented in Ab major and establishing an ascending second sequence. The sequence is broken in measure 155, leading us into Db major and introducing a new thematic idea. This new section is structured as a large compound sentence in which the presentation itself consists of a basic idea (m. 157-160), a contrasting idea (m. 161-164), and their respective repetitions. The continuation phrase starts a new sequence-block (mm. 173-191), one of the ascending-second type, which eventually leads to a strong v:HC (m. 191). The dialogue between major and minor mode-rhetoric is maintained through the whole development. At the beginning, both modes share the same metaphorical space; however, as we approach the end of the development, the minor mode's negative character dominates the argumentation leading its major counterpart according to its own will. The German augmented sixth chords in measures 181, 185 and 189 lead to the dominant of v (G minor) injecting a high degree of negativism and leaving no hope for a return of the major mode. Surprisingly, the benevolent character of the caesura-fill acts again in benefit of the major mode and, by extending the note of resolution and the simple addition of the leading-tone, leads us unexpectedly to TM1 in the non-normative key of Bb major (VII).

Having considered the exposition and development, we will now focus our discussion on the formal and expressive implications of Schubert's delaying technique.

3 Delay as the generator of the trimodular block

As stated above, the exposition provides a TR (m. 13-27) that is functionally present but rhetorically absent. It extends P material moving through a quick modulation to TM1 in the key of Ab major. Webster confirms our conclusions: "His [Schubert's] transitions do not comprise a single paragraph which firmly establishes the dominant of this key" (WEBSTER, 1979, p. 22). Even though not specifically discussing the

non-existent TR-activity, Webster accurately observes that the under-emphasized dominant is part of Schubert's style. Example 1 illustrates the formal role of delaying in the exposition. The absence of characteristic transitional activity within TR-space means that TM1 is not adequately prepared. As a result, the "S theme" seems premature and unstable, and proves unable to produce the EEC. The unorthodox key of Ab major (VI) arises as an unprepared dissonance in need of resolution. TR-activity finally arrives with TM2 which opens the possibility of leading us to a more normative key. The key of Ab minor, which we would expect to be followed by either III or v, moves instead to G major (V). The new key provides a more normative middleground bass motion, however the rhetorical implications of the major mode, allied to the problems generated by the addition of the major third, b-natural, do not completely resolve the problem of the unprepared TM1. Despite its modal instability, TM3 succeeds in achieving the EEC, completing its generic task as an S-theme. Hence, we could argue that the delay of TR gives Schubert no option other than the trimodular block. The absence of preceding TR-activity alters the harmonic and thematic plan of TM1, necessitating its reorganization by TM2 and resolution by TM3.

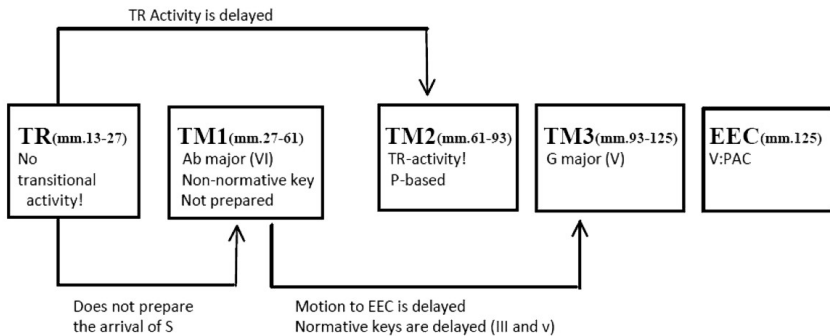


Figure 1 - The delay of TR-activity as the generator of the trimodular block

4) *The tonal resolution delay*

The absence of TR-activity in the first part of the exposition not only determines the structure of S, but also has the effect of postponing the arrival of the tonal resolution. As a Type 2 sonata, the piece should come to a crux at the end of the development; that is, it should lock onto some portion of TR on a bar-by-bar basis preparing the return of S in the tonic key.⁶ However, this usual situation is not an option in the *Quartettsatz*. The absence of TR-rhetoric before TM1 in the exposition cancels

⁶ On the crux, see Hepokosky and Darcy (2006).

any possibility of later using this passage as a crux, forcing Schubert to prepare the return of S in a non-normative fashion. The use of augmented sixth chords in the development's Zone 2 (m. 183-195) refers to the end of TM2, as if the unavailable TR-material were being replaced or "written over" by conspicuous TR-activity. It is as if Schubert was aware of TM1's lack of proper preparation in the exposition and wanted to avoid it happening again. It is important to emphasize that the reference to TM2 at the end of developmental space does not qualify by any means as a crux. The section should be conceived as a deformational retransition, one that "fails" to prepare the arrival of TM1.⁷

The development ends with a v:HC, followed by caesura-fill which manages to escape from the darkness of the minor mode (introduced by the augmented six chords), leading us into the "wrong" key of Bb major. Interestingly, the move from V of G minor to Bb major mirrors the lower-level default substitute for V-I, V/vi – I.

The absence of a crux point and the arrival at a non-normative key generate a high degree of instability. As in the exposition, the lyrical TM1 (m. 195-229) is structured as a large period with two nested sentences. The antecedent phrase leads to a half cadence followed by caesura-fill. Perhaps in an attempt to fix the problematic key of Bb major, the active caesura-fill moves to a different dominant chord, modulating to Eb major (III). If it had occurred in the exposition, this key might have enabled TM1 to attain the EEC. However, its appearance now does not allow TM1 to accomplish its generic task as an S-theme. Mirroring the exposition, the unstable major mode proves unable to withstand the pressure of its opposite mode and collapses into Eb minor. TM2 (m. 229-257) brings back the agitated character of the minor mode and again provides the missing TR-activity. The applied dominant introduced in measure 233 destabilizes the key of Eb minor and leads to an ascending-second sequence (m. 237-240). The sequence is broken at the end of measure 240 taking TM2 to an unorthodox iv:HC followed by caesura-fill. The music following the half cadence seems to confirm the MC effect by prolonging the dominant chord, as if in a sort of reaction to its sudden impact. However, the bVI chord introduced in measure 245 overrides the proposed MC, finally establishing the crux point (m. 245 = m. 81). The remaining caesura-fill compensates for the missing retransition at the end of developmental space, leading us to the correct key and tonal resolution.

Thus, the delay of TR-rhetoric until TM2 postpones the crux and consequently the tonal resolution. Fearing the recurrence of an unprepared TM1, Schubert chooses not to establish a crux point at the end of the development. Instead, he utilizes a TM2 idea that, despite failing to prepare the tonal resolution, succeeds in bringing

⁷ On substitutes for V at the end of the Development, see Hapokosky and Darcy (2006).

back the expected theme. In an attempt to correct the problematic key of Bb major, TM1 modulates to Eb major, which, unable to achieve the ESC, collapses into Eb minor. TM2 restores TR-activity and, after an overridden MC, leads to the crux point which finally sets up the tonal resolution (FIG. 2).

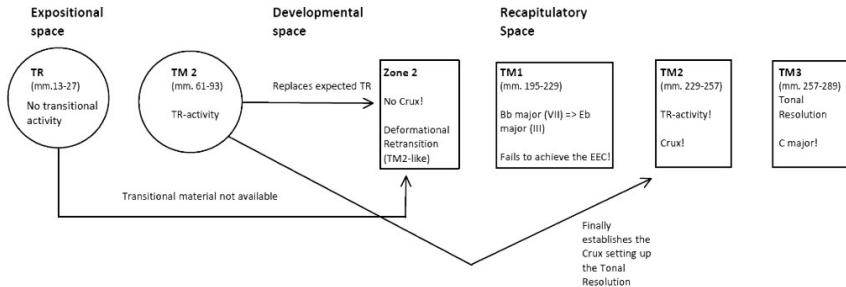


Figure 2 - The tonal resolution delay

5 The delay of P and the Type 2 sonata

The delay of the return of P has generated great confusion among theorists who have analyzed the *Quartettssatz*. Chusid and Webster deny the piece's sonata-form status by favoring the choice of an expanded binary form⁸. Others have described it as a case of the reversed recapitulation variety⁹. Both explanations misinterpret the structure of the Type 2 sonata and the double rotational process as explained in Sonata Theory. In Type 2 sonatas, Rotation 1 constitutes the exposition while Rotation 2 divides its activity between developmental (P and TR) and recapitulatory spaces (S and C)¹⁰. *Quartettssatz* presents a complete Rotation 1 formed by a rhetorically strong P, a problematic but conceptually present TR, a large S area (structured as a trimodular block), and C. The opening of the developmental space initiates Rotation 2 which, on account of the appearance of S and C based-materials, at first suggests rather a Type 3 sonata: a C-based motive seems to extend the exposition's C-space while an agitated TM2-based tremolo establishes a dialogue with a new (but S-like) thematic idea. The interaction between major and minor-mode rhetoric and the absence of a crux at the end of the development do not allow the conversion of the Type 3 into the Type 2 sonata until the return of TM1 in measure 195. Rotation 2 is then completed by the

8 See Chusid (1997) and Webster (1979).

9 On the reversed recapitulation, see Jackson (1996), Rosen (1988) and Hepokosky and Darcy (2006).

10 We understand the inappropriateness of the Term "Recapitulation" when describing the second part of rotation 2 of a Type 2 Sonata. However, the displacement of the tonal resolution (return of the tonic key) in *Quartettssatz* makes the terminology suggested by Sonata Theory confusing and unclear. Hence, for practical purposes, despite acknowledging the function of S and C within rotation 2, we will adopt the term Recapitulation to describe the second part of rotation 2 (S – C). On Tonal Resolution vs. Recapitulation, see Hepokosky and Darcy (2006).

return of S (=TMB) and C within recapitulatory space. The end of Rotation 2 brings the end of sonata space and the beginning of the coda, a parageneric space which by no means alters the formal structure of the piece.¹¹ The reappearance of P raises additional hermeneutic implications in the coda; however, its late return denies the possibility of its participation in the recapitulation. Thus, the delay of P, often misunderstood in terms of a reverse recapitulation or the form's transformation to an expanded binary form, must be interpreted as the generator of a Type 2 sonata (example 3).

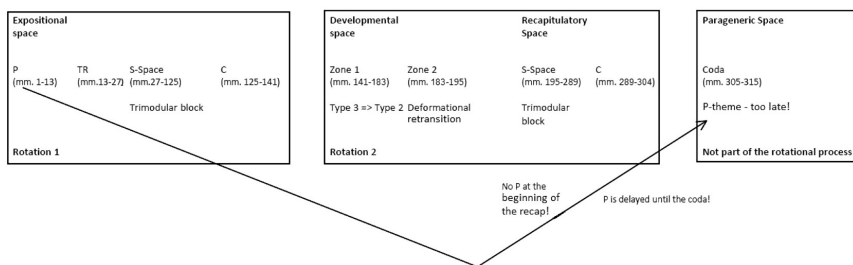


Figure 3 - The delay of P and the Type 2 sonata

6 The delay of P and its expressive implications

The arrival of the major mode with TM3 mirrors the exposition and arises as a pathetic illusion. It manages to survive the constant threats of the minor mode and eventually achieves the ESC, winning the rhetorical battle of the piece. The closing section (m. 289-304) reaffirms the major mode's victory by V-I alternations and fades out in a long decrescendo signaling the end of the piece. But the "joyful" expected ending is soon overtaken by the reappearance of the P-theme (m. 305-315), bringing back the storminess and darkness of the minor mode. Considering the overall harmonic plan of the piece, we could argue that the unorthodox move to the major dominant at the end of the exposition is a variant of the more normative minor-mode choice. As argued above, it arises as an illusion, one that hides but does not solve the problems posed by the temporarily suppressed minor mode. However, the return of P at the end of the piece brings the unavoidable reality and confirms the fatalistic consequences generated by the i-V key choice.¹²

7 Conclusion

This study has explored some of the formal and rhetorical implications of Schubert's delaying tactics in the *Quartettsatz*. The technique not only affects surface expressive

11 For a lengthier discussion on the function of the Coda, see Hepokoski and Darcy (2006).

12 Sonata Theory interprets the i-v option as a "doggedly negative tonal choice", one that "produces a chillingly dark, fatalistic, punishing, or pessimistic referential layout" (HEPOKOSKI; DARCY, 2006).

elements but also transforms the underlying structure of the piece. The attempt to fit the form into a textbook Type 3 sonata has created much confusion in the theory field and often misled analysts into problematic conclusions. Through the lens of Sonata Theory and by a close examination of Schubert's compositional procedures, this paper has attempted to clarify these questions.

Utilized as an expressive strategy, the evaded cadences present the delaying technique at a lower, more localized level. By postponing the expected cadential resolution, Schubert establishes a closer rhetorical connection between the major and the minor modes. The procedure intensifies the inherent conflict between the distinct modal personalities and generates instability by introducing uncertainty as to resolution.

The delay of TR-activity influences the expressive character of the first S-theme and transforms the structure of S to the trimodular block. TR's inability to adequately prepare S-space results in a weak lyrical theme that eventually collapses into real transitional activity. TM2 leads to a new theme (TM3) that accomplishes the task of producing the EEC. The absence of TR-rhetoric in the exposition also has an effect on the deformational character of recapitulatory space. It does not allow for the establishment of a crux point at the end of the development, which, in turn, delays the arrival of the tonal resolution. Therefore, the absence of TR-rhetoric in the first part of the exposition alters the course of the later form, a reaction to earlier deformational compositional choices. The late return of the P-module defines the sonata type and proves the illusory quality of the "false" major mode.

It seems clear that the delaying technique has serious consequences for the form, opening it to hermeneutic interpretations.



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O papel do conceito de atraso na peça *Quartetttsatz* em dó menor de Schubert, D. 703

Resumo:

Baseado na Teoria da Forma Sonata de James Hepokoski e Warren Darcy, esse estudo explora o papel do conceito de atraso na peça *Quartetttsatz* em dó menor, D. 703. Uma análise formal detalhada da peça identifica três estratégias de atraso: o uso de cadências evasivas, a ausência inicial da Atividade-TR (Atividade de Transição) e um retorno atrasado do Módulo-P (Módulo do Tema Primário). Utilizadas como uma ferramenta de expressividade, as cadências

evasivas apresentam uma técnica de atraso em um nível mais localizado. Ao adiar resoluções cadenciais esperadas, Schubert estabelece uma conexão retórica mais próxima entre os modos maior e menor. O atraso da Atividade-TR influencia o caráter expressivo do primeiro Tema-S (Tema Secundário) e transforma a estrutura de S em um bloco trimodular. O retorno atrasado ao Módulo-P define o tipo de sonata e confirma as consequências fatalistas da escolha da tonalidade menor.

Palavras chave: Teoria da Forma Sonata; análise musical; análise schenkeriana; Schubert; música do século XIX.