

MUSICMAP NOTES

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Beethoven's Violin Sonata No. 5 in F Major ("Spring"), Op. 24 – 1801

One of the best known of ALL violin sonatas. Same key as Pastoral Symphony.

Movement I – Sonata form, Allegro, 4/4, F major

"Lyrical, yet rhythmically powerful"

Exposition:

Main theme: "Gently undulating, effortlessly spontaneous" opening theme (yet fruit of much labor in sketches). Vocal in style, evocative of birdsong (hence "spring"). Alberti bass adds to lyrical feel of theme.

Statement – Violin melody, irregular 10 bars (4+6). Small motive 'X' will be utilized in development and coda. Gradually descending motion of antecedent countered by ascending progress of consequent, with quick descent after climax. Longer consequent lends expansive feeling to theme. Unusual melodic structure avoids root notes of chords until end, with shades of minor in harmony and expressive appoggiaturas. High note finally reached (C) is delayed dominant, after which melody can sink to rest.

Counter-statement – Rising scale lead-in gracefully anticipates counter-statement, with final quintuplet gently suggesting momentum of cresting wave. Parts switch, piano lead decorated...ornamentations further vocal style. New ornamental runs contain triplet and sextuplets, again freedom and impetuosity of wave motion. Violin now has Alberti bass. Ending altered and extended an additional six bars. Lively extension crescendos to a strong, clear **sf** ending. Extension of theme actually modulates and firmly establishes C-major as a bridge passage would...does this take the place of bridge? No...

Bridge: ...because what follows is clearly much more of a bridge passage than a subordinate theme; contradicts the sense of C-major. Strong dynamic contrasts throughout.

Part I – All piano solo. Starts with **ff** bold unison, jarring note harmonically, "in your face." Following descent is also in unison octaves.

Part II – Soft question & answer, mildly plaintive. Bit of a red herring...suggests theme that doesn't materialize.

Part III – Contrapuntal elaboration of Part I. Harsh dynamics, descending 16th-note scales, ending on dominant of new key (G).

Subordinate theme: After lyrical style main theme, more instrumental style sub-theme; reversal of typical pattern. C-major, expected dominant.

Statement – Long theme in two parts, 8(4+4)+8. Part I (first 8 bars) starts with 4-bar exuberant,

boisterous idea...jumps for joy followed by firm arpeggio descent. Rising tonic, dominant 7th descending. Second 4 bars are literal repeat of first four. Violin has lead throughout. Part II (second 8 bars) has surprising shift to C minor (passing rain shower?). Ominous figure in bass, pattern incrementally descends. Chattering dialogue between violin and R.H. (ornithic), pattern anticipated in bridge dialogue. At the end, shifts back to major...happy dance, not to worry.

Counter-statement –Another 16 bars, Part I now has melody in R.H. New staccato violin part based on earlier R.H. accompaniment. Shift to minor occurs earlier this time, in second 4 bars of Part I.

Part II continues in minor, with chattering dialogue swapped. Back to major ending, extended 2 extra bars now.

Closing material: Part I – 16th note figuration style theme, violin 4 bars, repeated and extended by piano (4+5). *sf* crests of waves. R.H. repeats 16th note figures in last 5 bars, up an octave. Violin part from earlier R.H. accompaniment, now brought to prominence.

Part II more of an actual theme now, 8 bars (2+2+4), “ready, set, go” design. Violin leads with melodic trilling figure. Piano accompaniment counters with 16th-note rising wave idea from Part I, versus slower-moving, chromatically descending bass. Interaction of violin and R.H. suggests dialogue passage from bridge. Instead of clean closing chords, there is a seamless flow into repeat of exposition.

Development:

As with exposition repeat, seamless flow into development.

Brief intro: Based on short main theme motive...brief reappearance of ‘X.’

Part I: Sub-theme developed. Full statement of 8-bar Part I in sub-dominant (B-flat), counter-statement scoring with switch minor.

Part II: Swiftly modulating repetitive pattern combines elements from both parts of theme. Descending arpeggio motive from Part I starts in piano, then trades to violin. Meanwhile, roiling triplets are explosive transformation of “chattering” idea from Part II. Downward sequencing of pattern also echoes Part II. End of this section shortens pattern into brief rising fragment, repeated in quick succession against strident double-stops from the violin. Much intensity generated at climax of development, with powerful *sf* dynamics.

Part III: Retransition. Ominous low trills (thunder?)...typical of Beethoven to exploit extreme range of contemporary pianos. Atmospheric passage contrasts high and low trills. Nervous, expectant mood, continually quieting.

Recapitulation:

Starts with piano’s decorated counter-statement version of theme, however bass preserves lighter feeling of statement. Violin then has counter-statement, including lead-in scale (nice touch!). After regular start, major harmonic change (starting in accompaniment in 4th measure) lends surprise and new interest. New imitations follow in the L.H. Melody briefly rights itself 7th bar, then veers off again into instability. Melody still extended, but new version in minor mode.

Bridge: Hews closely to original version, but transposed to new keys.

Sub-theme: In home key now as expected, placed in the upper octave.

Rest of recap very regular, including all closing material.

Coda:

Almost like second development section.

Part I: Opening *f* chord echoes start of development, followed by expanded, elaborated version of intro based on motive 'X.' Modulates until chromatic rise leads to...

Part II: Contrary motion scales – contrapuntal effect. Contrasting interlude until shrill “call to order” sets up...

Part III: “Peroration.” Motive 'X' turned into new statement, almost like strange new 8-bar theme...”ready, set, go” pattern again. Gentle triplets mark contrast to violent development triplets. L.H. and violin dialogue 'X' at extreme registers, echoing retransition trills. Final 8 bars start like counter-statement, with voices swapped, until new continuation starting at bar 4. Crescendos to rousing, concluding version of end of statement.

Movement II – Very simple Rondo design: A-B-A-C-A', Adagio molto espressivo, 3/4, B-flat major (expected subdominant)

“Continuous pastoral mood, perhaps foreshadows 6th Symphony’s ‘Scene by the Brook.’”

Rondo theme (A): Very lyrical theme - idealized operatic aria.

Statement – Regular 8 bars (4+4), opens with measure of accompaniment typical of opera style. L.H. Alberti bass continues throughout theme, associated with vocal-styled material. Piano R.H. sings theme first (balances violin lead in Movt. I). Brief 2-note sighs from violin subtly ornament theme, help mask decay of long notes in piano. Theme quite ornamented, even in initial form (operatic style again). Consequent gently contrasting shape.

Counter-statement – Violin lead, sighs now omitted, still regular 8 bars (4+4). Very faithful to original – color change provides contrast. Same style accompaniment, but enhanced by both hands in octaves. Majority of movement will be dominated by this “oscillating 16th-note pattern...will provide a constantly undulating, vibrant floor upon which the superstructure of the movement will float.” (Abram Loft) New continuation of Alberti bass makes transition to...

Episode I (B): More fragmentary and unpredictable in contrast to theme.

Part I: As expected, goes to dominant (F). Halt to Alberti pattern sets off episode. Lyrical elements hint at theme, but never really gel into one. *sf* and surprising harmony.

Part II: Another surprise *sf* sets off bold and assertive new idea. Brings episode to a close and puts return of rondo theme in relief. Repeated dominant 7th descending arpeggio may relate to motive from antecedent of Movt. I sub-theme. Brings us back to home key (B-flat).

Rondo return:

Shortened to just piano statement - more elaborately ornamented, as with operatic reprise. Melodic ornaments incorporate new playful triplet pattern and cadenza-like passage. Violin sighs return, ornamented as well. L.H. accompaniment unchanged.

Episode II (C): “Development” section - immediately minor.

Accompaniment provides continuity of mood. Starts like violin counter-statement, but soon veers off into modulations and free development of theme. “Modulatory technique foreshadows Schubert” (William Drabkin) Magical mood with constant key shifts.

Coda: Freely based on Rondo theme, back in B-flat.

Part I: 8 bars. New 4-bar melody in piano forged from opening motive of theme. Alberti pattern now in violin for first time. Second 4 bars, Alberti bass back in L.H. and new theme repeats between violin and R.H. *f* in final bar represents dynamic peak of movement, followed by new continuation leading to...

Part II: Slowed-down, harmonized trills used in various ways convey gentle hovering mood. We feel absence of Alberti bass, which will not return this movement.

Part III: Movement ends with quiet reverie, trading initial motive of theme.

Overall movement emphasizes emotion over structure, and radically truncates more typical Rondo design. Ambiguous form could also be seen as free aria fantasy. “...to hear sensitively played...is to undergo one of the most moving experiences in music making. Tears come to the eyes of the most hardened music veterans when confronted with the devastating simplicity and directness of these lines.” (Loft)

Movement III – Scherzo (Scherzo & Trio design), Allegro molto, 3/4, back to F major

Almost humorously short, like an astringent sorbet to cleanse the palette before the Rondo.

Scherzo:

Expected rounded binary form (though decorated repeat of Part I). Somewhat unusually, both parts equal length – 8 bars (4+4)

Part I (a): Very regular, dance-like rhythmical pattern, first time piano solo. Decorated repeat, piano unchanged with violin added. New syncopation as violin finds itself 1 beat behind.

Part II: First 4 bars contrasting *b* (2+2) with brief modulation. *a'* 4 bars, back to tonic with offbeat violin again. Literal repeat of part II, but with extended second ending.

Trio:

Again rounded binary form, both parts 8 bars (4+4). Each part crescendos from piano to forte. C Major (dominant).

Part I (c): Violin and R.H. rising, then falling staccato 8th notes, harmonizing in 3rds. L.H. bass also 8th notes – C pedal, up-and-down octaves throughout.

Part II: First 4 bars contrasting *d* – new longer-note descent in violin provides contrasting effect. Piano continues staccato 8ths, with L.H. now duplicating R.H. down an octave. Final 4 bars (*c'*), violin returns to 8th, while L.H. takes over long notes from violin. Ends with bold octave As.

Da Capo:

Atypically, no repeats omitted.

Movement IV – Rondo: A-B-A-C-A-B'-A-Coda, Allegro ma non troppo, Cut-time, F major
“almost Mozartian,” “warmly lyrical,” “suave and nonchalant” (Loft)

Rondo theme (A):

Solo piano introduces theme, 8 bars (2+2+4 – “ready, set, go” again). Second two bars sequence melody down a step...final four bars start by sequencing down another step, but new “throw” is extended rise. Ends with downward scale. Theme contains motive ‘X’, which reappears in episodes – two repeated quarter-note As in last half of measure. This motive crops up so frequently in movement that it becomes a strong unifying device in somewhat sprawling rondo, its use often signaling the start of new thematic ideas. A is the major third of F, and it was also given prominence as the long opening note at the start of the entire piece. L.H. accompaniment has graceful 8th-note legato broken chord pattern.

Counter-statement – Violin sings theme up an octave, L.H. accompaniment is down an octave...richer sound as range expanded. Broken chord pattern now in both hands. This time, in sixth bar the “throw” idea is repeated into a new two bar extension. Entire Rondo theme starts *p*, quite delicately, then gradually crescendos in dynamics and richer scoring.

Episode I (B):

Launched immediately by motive ‘X.’ New 8-bar theme (2+2/2+2), version I still in tonic key. First 4 bars contain 2+2 contrast (relating this theme to the Movt. I sub-theme) - lyrical opening vs. jaunty, trilling idea with om-pah bass line. Violin lead, but only in antecedent. Next four bars (consequent) practically identical - R.H. takes lead in upper octave, L.H. accompaniment in upper octave as well.

Counter-statement – Violin lead again, with first two bars decorated with staccato triplets.

Accompaniment more regular. Added *sf*s provide dynamic contrast. Consequent has same scoring changes as statement. New continuation leads to extension into transition - acts like little modulatory bridge. R.H. lead throughout...happy prancing.

B-theme, version II, also 8 bars (2+2/2+2), new key C minor/major - expected dominant, but start in minor is nice surprise. Will have no counter-statement...this time low-register violin retains lead throughout. Legato antecedent is a smoothed-out, minor take on first two-bar idea. Second two bars closer to original trilling bit, major again. Consequent back to minor, varied with new duplet pattern. Pivot back to major is up an octave, but same trilling idea. This is extended an extra 2 bars, leading to a lengthy free transition/tease. This gradually moves us back to the home key for...

Rondo return:

Faithful presentation of entire theme, though violin adds subtle comment to piano's statement.

"Central" Episode II (C):

As is common for central episodes, this is in minor and more dramatic in style. The key is A minor, the tonic 3rd, with the emphasis on As again. Beethoven's more stormy attitude puts in an appearance here.

Motive 'X' launches 8-bar C-theme, version I - continuous statement, doesn't break into smaller ideas. Staggered, off-beat dialogue between both piano hands against furious *f* triplet accompaniment in violin - wild, boisterous mood. Triplets and intensity relate back to Part II of Movt. I's development.

Counter-statement – Violin and R.H. trade parts, with violin an octave higher.

Motive 'X' again launches C-theme, version II, 8 bars (now 2+2+4 – “ready, set, go”). Piano hands trade phrases, violin back to original triplet accompaniment. Off-beat *sf*s lend strong dynamic contrast.

Counter-statement – Preserves scoring changes from version I counter-statement. Upper-octave violin lead again, trading phrases with L.H. R.H. back to triplets. Altered, definitive close. After an unusually regular 32 bars, we now have a freer transition leading to a long teasing trill that coaxes the Rondo theme back, but...

False return in distant key (D major) - still transitional. Violin gently caresses theme. Normal shape at first, but then harmony starts to shift as we grope our way back home.

True Rondo return (Recap.): Home key of F major.

Piano statement is up an octave, with multi-stop pizzicato accompaniment from the violin. Counter-statement very regular except for new triplets in R.H. Violin back down to original octave.

Episode I (B) return:

Statement totally literal, including home key. However, this entire B-episode has some surprising harmonic excursions that flout the expected recap of the sub-theme in the tonic F. Instead, Beethoven leads us into A-flat, E-flat minor, and E-flat major. Counter-statement is therefore recomposed, with antecedent now in minor. Consequent back to major and modulating. Bridge idea now recomposed to lead to different minor key. B-theme, version II, also recomposed to allow for substantial modulation. Sets up smooth extension into long transitional passage. Becomes almost fugue-like...a glimpse of the ghost of Bach? Trilling climax leads to shift to new section. Quieter, alternating passage leads into 4-bar tease of...

Rondo return: Final, most varied version, back to tonic.

Statement has ornamented melody in offbeat triplet feel. Two-note slurs in R.H. play against running triplets in L.H. Violin softly sustains double-stops, then switches to lively new pizzicato accompaniment at end.

Counter-statement – Expected violin lead with yet another version of theme - playful and climactic, with skipping dotted rhythms. Piano accompaniment has new rising triplet pattern

across both hands. In extension, violin takes on triplets for final flourish.

Coda:

Part I: Mood of dramatic culmination. Starts with 10 bars (3+7) of stormy interplay between piano and violin. Seems to suggest irregularly phrased theme - evokes melodic sense of B-episode, and also Movt. I coda. Running triplets carry over from Rondo. Passage repeats with instruments trading parts.

Part II: Motive 'X' launches piano solo - gentle variation of B-theme, version II. Island of calm before end. Violin repeats up an octave and extends considerably into...

Part III: Pretty regular 8-bar structure (4+4). Two instruments trade final, excited triplet gestures to effect grand finish!