

Assignment 18: Sonata Exposition

Compose the exposition of a piece in sonata form, using the first movement of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4*, as a model.

The exposition may be preceded by an introduction, but it is probably a good strategy to wait until you have sketched the first and second themes before writing this. The purpose of the introduction is to prepare for the main body of the piece, by placing the exposition in an appropriate context. It may also introduce aspects of the piece, such as thematic details or keys that foreshadow later developments.

Sonatas are usually in duple meter. The main parts of the exposition are the **First Theme**, **Bridge**, **Second Theme** and **Concluding Section**. Each of these is an extended section consisting of multiple phrases.

1. First Theme

The First Theme should have a distinct character, based on a motive or melodic detail that appears in several measures. It may consist of two or more contrasting phrases, bracketed by passages that prepare for the tonic (dominant prolongations). It should clearly state the tonic key.

The first theme should be repeated at least once or twice in the course of the overall section. Between these statements, extended passages that confirm the tonic should occur.

The first theme section should end with a passage that modulates to a new key, which will be the opening key of the bridge.

2. Bridge

The Bridge is an extended passage of several phrases that may modulate through several different keys but which will end in the key of the second theme, usually the dominant for a piece in major or the relative major for a piece in minor.

The bridge may introduce new themes, which can be related to the first or second themes or incorporate elements of them. These themes should not be as definitive as the first or second themes, but they may incorporate materials that can be used in the development.

3. Second Theme

The Second Theme should have a different, contrasting character to the first theme. Like the first theme, it may consist of a motive which is repeated or developed by sequence to extend over several measures.

The second theme should be stated prominently at least twice, optimally between extended dominant passages. It may also be extended by sequences, much in the same way that it was introduced.

4. Concluding Passage

The exposition should end with a strong concluding passage that affirms the new tonic key. This could simply be an extended cadence, but it may also pick up some of the thematic elements introduced before.

The concluding passage should end with a first and second ending. The first ending leads back to a repeat of the exposition, and may repeat the ending of the introduction in doing this. The second ending leads to the development. It may end in the key of the concluding passage or begin a modulation to a new key, which will be used at the start of the development.

5. Sketches

Writing a work like this is a project that will take an extended effort. Rather than attempt to compose the whole thing, it would be a good idea to sketch out the themes and write down just the melodies of the phrases you are thinking about incorporating in your sonata. You may turn those in for comments before developing the piece in more detail.