

# **THE SONATA CYCLE: PART 1: INTRODUCTION**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The sonata cycle is an important part of Classical music, setting the basic form or pattern of each movement in multi-movement works. Form is one of the most important elements of this type of music (generally referred to as absolute or pure music) being that there is no story or texts which holds the music together. Shaping the work as a whole (all 4 movements) is just as important as shaping the individual movements on their own. Each section of each movement lends itself to the movement as a whole, as does each movement to the entire work. Most sonatas follow this cycle strictly, but not all; Haydn and Mozart are two composers who often alter this format in their sonatas.

## **DEFINING SONATA FORM**

According to the Grove Dictionary of Music, sonata form is “the most important principle of musical form, or formal type, from the Classical period well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century”. Generally speaking, the first movement of a multi-movement sonata work is written in sonata-form. Sonata form is also referred to as sonata-allegro form, due to the fact that the first movement in the sonata cycle is written allegro (or faster) tempo. Sonata form generally consists of an exposition, development, and recapitulation, with an optional introduction before the exposition, and an optional coda after the recapitulation.

It is important to note that sonata form does not refer to the actual “sonata.” The sonata refers to the whole work; sonata-form refers to the form or structure of an individual movement. This is crucial when referred to in terms of musical elements between the Baroque and Classical eras. The originator of the term “sonata form” is not known.

## **IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS RELATING TO THE SONATA CYCLE**

**Theme:** An important musical idea used in a composition, for which the composition is based on

**Thematic Development:** The expansion of a theme

**Motive:** The smallest melodic unit of a single theme

**Ostinato:** A short, repeating musical pattern