

## **THE SONATA CYCLE: PART 2: STANDARD FORM**

### **STANDARD FORM OF THE SONATA CYCLE**

#### **FIRST MOVEMENT**

The first movement starts with an exposition, which introduces the first two themes in their respective themes. The first theme (or theme group), is written in the home key. A bridge or transition follows the first theme, which sets up and modulates for the arrival of the second theme (or theme group). The second theme (or theme group) establishes the contrasting key and is often different in rhythm and mood. The end of the exposition is marked by a codetta, ending in a perfect cadence in the same key as the second theme (or theme group). The exposition is generally repeated.

The development section starts in the same key as the exposition ended, and features many contrasting or foreign keys. Usually the themes that were presented in the exposition are repeated and may include new material or themes. This section varies in length from piece to piece, some being quite long, others very short. The development section generally ends with a greater degree of tonal, harmonic and rhythmic instability than the other sections. This section ends in the dominant key to prepare for the recapitulation section, called the retransition.

The recapitulation is an altered repeat of the exposition. The first theme (theme group) is the same as that of the exposition. The transition section often involves new material, called secondary development. The second theme (theme group) is the same as the exposition, but in the home key.

Some sonatas include a coda after the recapitulation. A coda is a final statement, using material found in the recapitulation, and sometimes adding new material. Usually this coda is the same as the one in the exposition, written in the home key. This coda may be written of any length, but always ends in a perfect cadence (home key).

#### **SECOND MOVEMENT**

The second movement is generally a theme and variations, shortened sonata form, or A-B-A form. It is usually the slow movement of the sonata form, an andante or adagio.

In the theme and variations form, the theme is presented first, followed by variations, which differ from the theme. The variations may differ by melodic, harmonic or rhythmic elements, changing the expressiveness of the main theme. In each variation though, there is at least one feature that is the same as the theme. This type of form was favoured in the nineteenth century.

#### **THIRD MOVEMENT**

In the Classical period, the third movement was a minuet and trio; in the Romantic period, a scherzo.

The minuet had a clear cut structure of four to eight measure phrases and was in 3/4 time. Usually, the minuet was one dance, followed by the trio (originally arranged for three instruments), and a return back to the minuet. This is known as A-B-A, or a symmetrical three-part structure. If the second section brings back the theme of the first section, it is called rounded binary form. Repeat signs are used to indicate repetition but are usually not used when the minuet returns after the trio. A codetta may round off each section.

In the Romantic period, the scherzo replaced the minuet. It is similar to the minuet in that it is usually the third movement and follows a three-part form. It differs in that it is faster paced and vigorous rhythm. The scherzo is more expressive than that of the minuet and includes frequent and sudden changes of mood. For Beethoven, the scherzo became a movement of great rhythmic drive.

## FOURTH MOVEMENT

The fourth movement is usually a rondo. In rondo form, there is one main idea, called the rondo theme, which is altered and reused with contrasting elements. There are many variations of rondo form, the simplest being A-B-A-B-A (an extension of three-part form), or A-B-A-C-A (if there is two contrasting themes). In the Classical period, the rondo took a larger form, often that of A-B-A-C-A-B-A.

### VARIATIONS ON THE STANDARD SONATA FORM

Many variations on the standard sonata form exist.

Monothematic expositions occur when one theme serves to establish the opposition between tonic and dominant keys. In other words, the same theme is used to connect the exposition section with the development section.

Modulation to keys other than the dominant occurred, when the key of the second subject was something other than the dominant or the relative major (or relative minor)

In some works, the exposition was made up of more than two key areas.

Modulations within the first subject group occurred when the first subject group was made up of two or more keys.

### SONATA FORM IN CONCERTI (CONCERTO)

In sonata form for concerto, the exposition is divided by two different but related sections: the 'tutti exposition' and the 'solo exposition'. The 'tutti' exposition features the whole orchestra but does not feature the modulation to the secondary key from the exposition to the development. This is given to the 'solo exposition' for the solo player. Toward the end of the recapitulation of a concerto movement in sonata form, there is usually a cadenza for the soloist alone. This section may or may not be improvised, and usually serves to lengthen the harmonic tension on a dominant-quality chord before the orchestra ends the piece on the tonic.