

Beethoven's *Seventh* and *Eighth* Symphonies: Dualistic Polarity and Eventual Unity

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In the years 1811–1812¹ Beethoven sketched and completed two of his most significant symphonic creations: the *Seventh Symphony in A-major*, Op. 92 and the *Eighth Symphony in F-major*, Op. 93. Many of their stylistic traits already point to Beethoven's third compositional period of 1815–1826, such as the comprehensive tonal architecture and the extensive cyclical relationships between the corner movements. Already the *7th Symphony* initially stresses A-major's mediant c♯ and submediant f♯ in its opening oboe cantilena:

Example 1 Modal centers in 1st movement of 7th Symphony, measures 1–2 (Oboe I)



This clear accentuation of c♯ and f♯ will later be repeated at the close of the Finale's exposition in the form of two modulations to f♯ and c♯ minor. The emphatic c♯ eventually is transformed into the weaker mediant of the tonic A-major in the recapitulation, measure 291f:

¹ Joseph Kerman, Alan Tyson, Scott Burnham, Douglas Johnson and William Drabkin. "Beethoven, Ludwig van," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 3, ed. by Stanley Sadie (New York: Grove's Dictionaries Inc., 2001), 102f, and Thomas Day, "Beethoven's Seventh Symphony: Character and Motion Pattern," *The Beethoven Journal* 33 (2018): 13–25. Beethoven himself repeatedly valued the 8th Symphony more highly than the contemporaneous 7th Symphony. Cf. Anthony Hopkins, *The Nine Symphonies of Beethoven* (London: Heinemann, 1981), 220.

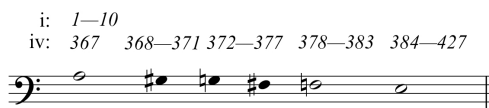
Example 2 Modal centers in Finale, 5–6 (Violin I)²



This central $c\sharp$ often vacillates with its neighboring c , as in the slow introduction to the first movement, measures 22–32 and 40–42. This chromatic tendency is continued during i 's ensuing exposition (Vivace, 6/8), where the bass line typically moves from $c\sharp$ to $c(-B)^3$, as in mm. 109–124+128–129(–141). This C-elongation in 136–141 also prepares the glorious C-major episode at the outset of the development, 177–210. These modal colorings on the upper mediant C are frequently linked to the following (and weaker) F-major modulations⁴ (A 's submediant), as in 33₁+42–52 and 221–224, as well as 348–353 (reprise). The $C\sharp/C$ - and F-centers are fused with falling and rising bass lines⁵ that are reminiscent of Beethoven's contemporary *Piano Sonata in E \flat major*, Op. 81a (*Les Adieux*):

Example 3 Bass lines

(a) 1st movement, 1–10 (cf. iv, 367–427), 43–53 (cf. iii/iv)



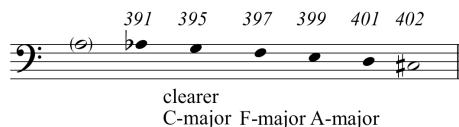
² This Finale passage utilizes the Irish folk song *Nora Creina*, whose coloristic modal hues apparently attracted Beethoven. See Day, "Beethoven's Seventh," 24.

³ For further comments on these reiterated chromatic bass lines in the first movement of the *7th Symphony*, see Robert Gauldin, *Beethoven's Interrupted Tetrachord and the Seventh Symphony*, *Intégral* 5 (1991): 78f, notes 5 and 6.

⁴ This key pairing of C- and F-major is—according to Oliver Korte, *Beethovens Orchestermusik und Konzerte* (Laaber-Verlag, 2013), 186—a significant tonal foundation of the *7th Symphony*. Much the same is true of the later *String Quartet in a-minor*, Op. 132 (1825).

⁵ Analogous descending bass lines are often encountered in Baroque music, as in the *Crucifixus* from Bach's *B-minor Mass*, BWV 232, see Korte, *Beethovens Orchestermusik*, 182).

(b) 1st movement, Coda



The remaining movements of the *7th Symphony* vary the linear tendencies of the opening movement. Thus the second variations movement (*Allegretto*) also begins with a descending bass on *a-g#-g-e*,⁶ which is immediately answered by a complementary clarinet theme in 101–103f. (cf. i, 1–2):

Example 4 Clarinet theme in 2nd movement, 101–104 (cf. Ex. 1)

Here, too, ii's central modulation on F–C in 134–138 is prepared by a descending bass line on *d-c#/c-f* (cf. i, 218–224, varied in the Coda, 397–422). Moreover, the lyrical viola countersubject in ii, 27–50 may be interpreted as a variation of the expressive secondary theme in the 1st movement, oboes, 23–29. Both melodies are based on a vacillating minor second (*f-e*, *bb-a*):

Example 5 Related melodies with minor seconds.

(a) i, Introduction, 23–24, Oboe I



⁶ According to Korte (cf. his facsimile edition of Beethoven's autograph full score of the *7th Symphony* in the Biblioteka Jagiellońska, Kraków, published by Laaber/Figaro, 2017, preface, 20) the introductory theme in the slow movement is based on a sketch for the *String Quartet* Op. 59 No. 3 (1806). Moreover, Korte (2013, 191) suggests that this subject was influenced by the *Folia d'espagna*. As a final note, the fugato of the slow movement, m. 183f, was originally noted in the Pettersche Skizzenbuch in the key of f-minor instead of the final a-minor.

(b) ii, 27–31, Viola + Violoncello



This idea recurs in the Trio of the Scherzo (*d-c#-d*) and the closing theme of the Finale, 74–78 (*e-d#-c#-b#-c#*), where it also incorporates the descending bass line on *d-c#/c-f* from the first two movements. Indeed, the two transitions in the third movement (223–236f) and Finale (104–130) are so strikingly similar that one may speak of a cyclical cadential relationship:

Example 6 Recurring cadence on D–C#/C–F (reductions)

(a) i, 218–222



(b) ii, 134–138



(c) iii, Transition in 231–236



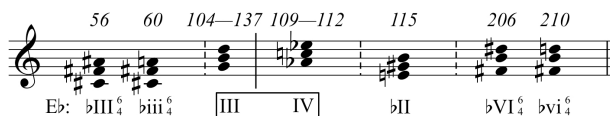
(d) iv, Transition in 79–165



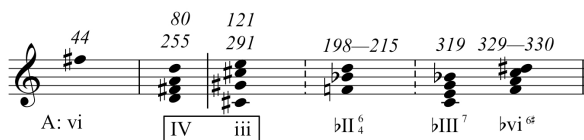
The same structural situation prevails in the Finale's development, 121–220, which is centered on the pitches *c#-F-C-F-d-Bb-F*. The latter section returns to the central tonal climaxes of the 1st movement, including the accented d-minor from 254–257 and D major/d minor in 300–308.⁷ In general, the tonal organization of Beethoven's Finale also appears to be modelled on the last movement of Mozart's *Eb Symphony* K. 543 (1788), in particular the initial tonal vacillations between *c#* and *d* in Beethoven (*g/ab* in Mozart) and the false recapitulation with the Neapolitan *Bb* in Beethoven's 198–215 (in contrast to Mozart's development, 115f):

Example 7 Harmonic parallels between Mozart's *Eb Symphony* K. 543:iv and Beethoven's *7th Symphony*:iv

(7a) Mozart



(7b) Beethoven



⁷ This passage in D-major/d-minor (i, 300–308) is still lacking in the Pettersche Skizzenbuch, fol. 26r–25v. Moreover, the Pettersche transition to m. 323 is thirteen measures shorter than the final version. Indeed, the entire recapitulation was reworked several times in the Kraków autograph. For example, mm. 322f, 345f, 358–363, 379 and also (Coda:) 446 display indications for latter changes or additions.

(7c) Mozart



(7d) Beethoven



In conclusion, we may observe that Beethoven's *7th Symphony* treats its two corner movements as related harmonic blocks, with a consistent stress on its modal third spirals on $a-c\sharp/c$ and $a-f$. In addition, Beethoven sets various chromatic basses on $(d-)-db/c\sharp-c-f$ in motion, which are also led up to a resplendent climax in the dynamic Finale. Moreover, the Finale's tonal organization also affects a harmonic resolution of the preceding linear conflicts. Thus the final movement begins with two E-dominant sevenths like the second movement, and the former's secondary keys F-major (127f+166f) und d-minor (255f) clearly recall the first movement (221f+254f) as well as the Scherzo. The repeated cadences on F–E (A:vi–V) between the last three movements also point to the slow introduction in the first movement.

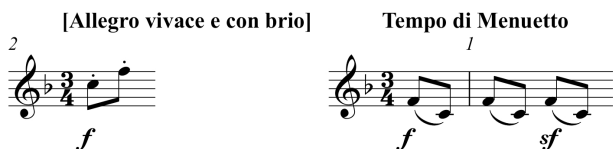
A stylistic comparison with the contemporaneous *8th Symphony* reveals that the latter work utilizes a freer total structure with stable and related formal pillars in the first and third movements (both cast in F-major and set in 3/4):

Example 8 Related themes at outset of 1st and 3rd movements of *8th Symphony*

(a) Initial third intonation of Violin I on c^3+a^2 (i, 1+iii, 3–4)



(b) Fourth upbeat on $c-f$ i, 2+iii, 1–3+45–46, Violin I/Horn I



(c) Closing cadence i, 5–6, Clarinet I, and iii, 6–7, Violin I

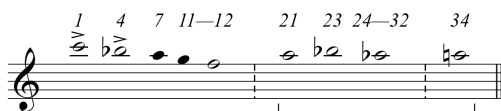


Likewise, the tonal organization of the first and third movements in the *8th Symphony* is strikingly similar. Both sections introduce the tonic reprise (cf. i, 190 and iii, 29/30) with a plagal episode on Bb–F (i, 124–128+172–175; iii, 23–29). Moreover, the related submediant Db's emphasis from i, 168–171+304–312 (Coda) is again reflected in the Trio, 58–60.

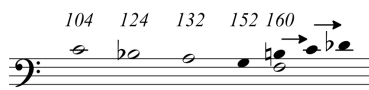
The plagal subdominant Bb major does not merely buttress the modal centers of Db and Ab, but also engenders several linear passages on $(c-)bb-a-g-f$ that consistently permeate the entire first movement:

Example 9 Fifth and fourth passages on $bb-a-g-f$ in the 1st movement of the *8th Symphony*

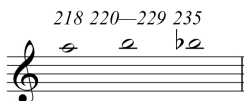
(a) Exposition



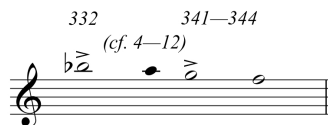
(b) Development



(c) Reprise



(d) Coda



Here the second intervals on $bb-a$ and $g-f$ are accentuated, although it is clear that both bb and a display modulatory tendencies towards $bb-bb$ (219–230) and $a-ab$ (21–32). In the second and fourth movements these intervallic metamorphoses are transformed into a new motivic complex, namely, $f-e-g-f$ and $a-g-bb-a$, which is often interpreted as a derivation from Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* K. 551 (1788) und Haydn's *G major Symphony* Hob.I:88 (1787).⁸ Another possible relationship might also be a subliminal reminiscence of the B–A–C–H motive:

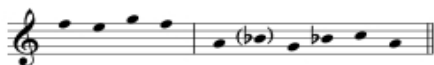
Example 10 Principal motive $a-g-bb-a$

(a) Line on $bb-a-g-f$, i, 4–12



⁸ Haydn's influence on his former pupil Beethoven is often observable in the *7th Symphony*. This the double variation in the second movement recalls Haydn's *Symphony No. 103*:ii, and the rising, triadic Scherzo theme is probably modelled on the Minuet from Haydn's *Symphony No. 102*.

(b) New principal motive *f-e-g-f*(ii) and *a-g-bb-a* (iv)⁹



(c) Mozart, Jupiter Symphony, 3rd and 4th movements



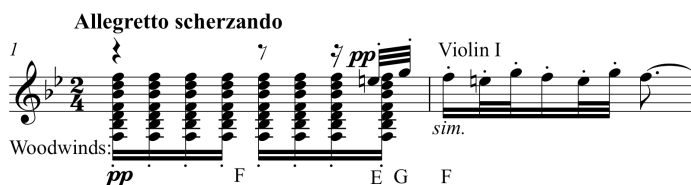
(d) Haydn, Symphony No. 88, i, 16–20



The latter principal motive on *a-g-bb-a* is also introduced throughout the second and fourth movement, including the closing part of the Finale's exposition (69–85) and reprise (245–261):

Example 11 Beethoven's original principal motive

(a) ii, 1–2, Woodwinds



⁹ Already Peter Gülke (... *immer das Ganze vor Augen. Zum Allegretto der achten Sinfonie*, [Weimar/Stuttgart, Metzler/Bärenreiter, 2000], 206) stresses the possibilities for retrograde and inversion transformations inherent in this theme, as well as the related cyclical connections between the second and fourth movements.

(b) iv, 1–5, Violins



The latter elongated metamorphosis of the principal motive recalls the analogous cyclical variations of the same theme in the 1st movement, 267–290 (in F-major, cf. also the exposition in C-major, 70–93)¹⁰:

Example 12 Metrical developments of the principal motive.

(a) iv, 245–250, Flute I (cf. iv, 1–5)



(b) i, 267–268, Violin I



(c) i, 287–289, Violin I



¹⁰ See Federica Rovelli, “Revisionsprozesse in Beethovens Niederschriften der achten Symphonie op. 93,” *Editio* 31 (2017): 90–116, where the author reproduces a principal soprano line for the (originally not sketched) measures 70–89 of the first movement.

These emphatic repetitions of the principal motive on $a-g-bb-a$ indicate that Beethoven initially wished to highlight this gesture. Moreover, the related, scherzo-like second movement may also be viewed as part of the work's total variational structure. For instance, the third sequences of the principal motive (see example 11) on f^2-d^2 , eb^2-c^2 and d^2-bb^1 are also employed for the ensuing secondary theme in 19–29+50–62. Even the closing motive on $c^2-f^2-e^2-d^2-c^2-b^2-a^2-g^2-f^2$ is based on the first movement's opening cadence in 2–4. Finally, we encounter a repetition of the principal motive in the climactic fioriture of the first violin in ii, 79:

Example 13 The 2nd movement as static reprise of Beethoven's original theme.

(a) Secondary theme in ii, 29–30, Oboe I



(b) Initial theme in i, 2–4, Oboe II



(c) Repetition of principal theme in ii, 79, Violin I



In keeping with these repetitive notivc styles, the harmonic structure of the second movement and also the following Minuet is extremely static. The recurring tonalities of Bb- and F-major again recall the first movement and will also play an important role in the Finale.

In addition, the Finale also emphatically returns to the modal timbres of A \flat and D \flat that we have observed in the first (168–171+304–312), third (58–60) and fourth movements (49–69+225–245).

The final confirmation of these modal tendencies occurs in the two developments of the Finale, 89–158+265–352/392. Here 118–121 and 346–350 stress D-major (with pronounced upper *f* \sharp !)—a quasi-Phrygian variant of the second scalar degree of F-major, which is stressed even more highly during the false reprise in *f* \sharp -minor in 380–392. Moreover, both developments accentuate B \flat major/minor, or F's plagal subdominant in 129–130 and 265–341 (cf. also the preceding three movements). In this manner Beethoven achieves a harmonic transition to F's lowered submediant D \flat /C \sharp in 323 and 373–380: two parallel passages to the related episodes in D \flat -b \flat /B \flat from the first movement (cf. the end of the latter's development, 168–175 and the beginning of the Coda, 304–314).

Example 14 Two developments in the Finale

(a) 1st development 89–158

89 105 114 120 122 123 125 127 129

VI. I F:IV

131 133 135 137 138 139

Trp. d

141 142 143 147 149 158

F

(b) 2nd development 265–352

265 280–294 297+302 306 309 313

F: IV d

318 319 323 327 331 337 341 346

F: iv D♭ C F: IV d F: IV

352 373 375 380 392

F: I D♭ / C♯ F♯ F

False recapitulation Genuine recapitulation

A critical comparison of the 7th and 8th *Symphonies* reveals that both compositions are very intervallically conceived. In the 7th Symphony the modal centers of c♯/C and f♯/F are frequently highlighted, particularly so in the cyclically related corner movements. Moreover, Beethoven constructs similar descending bass lines in the first, second and (end of) fourth movements, with a special emphasis accorded the minor second, *e-f-e*. As the work progresses, Beethoven also derives a cadential ornament on *D–D♭/C♯–C–F* from these bass progressions. These waxing metamorphoses and motivic expansions create the impression of an ever-growing organism, which reaches its jubilant apotheosis in the triumphant Finale.

In contrast, the contemporaneous 8th *Symphony* resembles a gradually unfolding, stepwise improvisation. In this work the first and third movements are tightly interwoven (see example 8). As a parallel development, Beethoven sets up the closing passage of the first movement's exposition—namely, the recurring motive *a–g–bb–a*—as a musical reminiscence of Haydn's *Symphony No. 88* and Mozart's *Jupiter Symphony* (as well as the *B–A–C–H* subject). A closer examination of this theme shows that this gesture may also derive from the melodic pitches (*c*)–*bb–a–g–f* of the opening melody in the first movement, 1–12. Indeed, the close correlation between soprano melodies and (harmonic) bass structure is especially noticeable in this highly progressive work of 1812.

If the first and third movements appear to be closely related, the same is true of the second and fourth movements. To be sure, the Finale also includes several motivic reminiscences from the Trio (as the triplet motive) and the closing passage of the first movement's exposition. In this manner the modal D♭ and A♭ colorings from these sections help to create an even more climactic apotheosis

in the Finale, which already adumbrates the monumental Finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (1824).

The impressive tonal unity of the *7th* and *8th Symphonies* is also encountered—in an even more developed manner—in his highly symphonic *Hammerklavier Sonata*, Op. 106 (1817–1818). As in the *7th Symphony* Beethoven starts with diatonic third scaffolds, as Bb–D–F in the first movement, 1–4. These tertial patterns are then systematically expanded in all four movements, although Beethoven also inverts the third intervals and thus produces descending figurations, as F–D–Bb–G–Eb–C (–F–Bb) in ii, or Bb–G–Eb–C(–F–Bb) in the Finale-fugue (a similar situation prevails in the third movement, with its opening theme on c#–a–f#). In this manner the central third on D–Bb is strongly accentuated, as the beginning of i, 1–4ff, 17–22, 34–59, (Reprise:) 226–231, (Coda:) 386–405; and also iv, 16–41ff (in Bb), 161–201+246–277 (D), 280–366+389–400 (Bb).

The upper third on Bb – D is also intensified by its chromatic neighbor-tone Eb (cf. i, 1, 6 and 19ff), which reaches a climax in i's development during the subdominant passage in i, 130–190 and eventually is transformed into a poetic d# (over a B# background) in 200–212. Likewise, the Coda in 363–371 also retains the plagal eb/Eb (Bb:iv/IV) as a strong cadential articulation. As might be expected, Beethoven's fugal Finale returns to the incisive expressivity of the Eb-dominant during the eb-minor Tutti outbursts in 96–109 and (Coda:) 368–376.

We have observed that Bb's upper third on D is increasingly transformed into the more chromatic Eb/D#. Much the same is true of the *tonic* Bb, which is frequently converted into the higher, quasi-Neapolitan B#, as in i, 121–122, 200–201ff and 266–269, and iv, 149–159. In i's development, 121–131 the suave B# gracefully introduces an important transition on Bb–G–c–Bb–Eb, a passage that is further developed during the recapitulation in 266–283. Similar modulations will later occur in ii, 19–31 (g–c–F–Bb) and iii, 154–158 (B#–G). That B# can often act as a temporary tonic substitute for Bb may also be seen in the turbulent clashes between Bb and B# at the close of ii, 161–173. Frequently Beethoven prepares these B-passages with preceding F#/Gb-introductions (B:V), as in i, 240–267 (Gb/F#–b); ii, 19–20+133–134; iii, 117–130 (b–F#), 153–155 (F#–b), 174–177 (again F#–b); and iv, 1–2 (F–Gb–Cb/B), 147–149 (Gb–b).

In conclusion, it becomes clear that Beethoven's intervallic relationships in his *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies* had an enormous stylistic impact on his later compositions.

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Beethoven's Seventh and Eighth Symphonies: Dualistic Polarity and Eventual Unity

Abstract

Beethoven's *Seventh* and *Eighth Symphonies* already forecast the integrated tonal architecture and cyclical structures of his third stylistic period (1815–1826). In particular, the composer highlights descending bass lines and third-related pitch centers, such as C and C#. As a result the linear movements in all four movements of each work are intricately interwoven. In addition, the Finale of Mozart's Eb Symphony K.543 apparently influenced the harmonic organization of the Finale in Beethoven's *Seventh*. Whereas Beethoven's *Seventh* accentuates the stylistic links between its outer movements (i and iv), his *Eighth* stresses connections between its first and third movements. As Beethoven's work on the *Eighth* progressed, certain second intervals as f–e and g–f, in addition to a–bb and bb–c–a gained increasing prominence, culminating in the metamorphoses of Haydn's Symphony No. 88 in the Finale.

Beethovenova *Sedmá* a *Osmá symfonie*: dualistická polarita a konečná jednota

Abstrakt

Beethovenova *Sedmá* a *Osmá symfonie* již předznamenávají ucelenou tonální architekturu a cyklické struktury jeho třetího stylového období (1815–1826). Skladatel vyzdvihuje zejména sestupné basové linky a terciově příbuzná výšková centra, jako jsou C a C#. V důsledku toho jsou lineární pohyby ve všech čtyřech částech každého díla složitě provázány. Finále Mozartovy Symfonie Es dur K.543 navíc zřejmě ovlivnilo harmonickou organizaci finále Beethovenovy *Sedmé symfonie*. Zatímco Beethovenova *Sedmá* klade důraz na stylové vazby mezi krajními větami (i a iv), jeho *Osmá* klade důraz na vazby mezi první a třetí větou. S postupem Beethovenovy práce na Osmé získávaly vedle a-b a b-c-a stále větší význam některé sekundové intervaly jako f-e a g-f, což vyvrcholilo v metamorfózách Haydnovy Symfonie č. 88 ve Finále.

Keywords

Beethoven; 7th and 8th symphony; tonal architecture; harmonic organization; polarity and unity; classical symphonic structure

Klíčová slova

Beethoven; 7. a 8. symfonie; tonální architektura; harmonická organizace; polarita a jednota; klasická symfonická struktura

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