Music 25100, Analysis of Music of the Classical Period


I would like you to write a 750-1000 word (3-4 page) analytical essay on this movement. Your essay needs to be typed, double-spaced, with musical examples (where necessary) attached on separate pages and clearly identified. Your essay should focus on the form of this movement, with the understanding that form is determined by a confluence of harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic materials.

There is a recording by Richard Goode on reserve; you may also wish to consult the recording by Alfred Brendel available through the online Classical Music Library (you can use the link to the Music Library pages through the Music 25100 home page).

Note the following:

1. Much of the harmonic language in this movement is quite straightforward. At times, however, Beethoven obscures the harmony through non-chord tones—suspensions in particular are important throughout. When trying to read the harmony of a given measure look beyond that measure to the surrounding material, and within the measure to clarify the behavior of the various notes.

2. In a number of places Beethoven makes recourse to pedal tones in the bass. In such cases you may find it useful to distinguish between the pedal and the harmonies above it. One way to do this is through a notation like this:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
I \\
\hline
V \\
\hline
I
\end{array}
\]

Here the roman numerals above the line indicate the harmonic activity above the pedal; inversions of these harmonies could be included where appropriate to clarify voice leading. The roman numeral below the line indicates the function of the pedal.

In some cases—especially where the music moves along pretty quickly—you may find it simpler to interpret “harmonies” above a stationary bass as non-chord tones. Thus in m. 7 the notes on the third beat can be read as neighbor tones to the harmony on the downbeats of mm. 7 and 8. (From this perspective the A4 that is actually on beat 3 of m. 7 would be read as an incomplete neighbor tone—a.k.a., an appoggiatura—to a neighbor tone.)

3. The harmonies in mm. 3-4 and corresponding places may seem difficult to read, but the syntax is actually relatively clear: m. 3 is a VII\(^7\) of V; m. 4 is a VII\(^4/3\) of I. Both of these leading-tone chords are substituting for their respective dominant chords (meaning that the harmonic syntax of mm. 3-4 is functionally a V\(^6/5\) of V followed by a V\(^4/2\)).

4. In mm. 71ff. the texture gets pretty thin. You might find it useful to describe what happens here in terms of the succession of intervals that occur between the two voices that really move, rather than focusing on harmonies as such.
Overview

As you will soon find out, there is a fair amount of material that is repeated in the course of this movement. In your account of the form of this movement you'll need to look beyond these repetitions to consider why Beethoven changes the things he does when he changes them. Being good analysts, you will also want to describe in a bit of detail what he changes. Harmonic reductions can be helpful this purpose; you may want to include some as musical examples. The re-appearance of material (after it has been absent for a bit) is also important; again, you should consider not only why Beethoven brings the material back, but what he does with it once he has done so. Transitions between materials are also important, as are the ways Beethoven closes off material. You need not give detailed accounts of all of the strategies Beethoven uses, but you will want to consider them as you develop your account of the movement as a whole.

In general, I would recommend the following process:

- listen to the movement a few times, and sketch out an analysis using the tools with which you are most comfortable (typically, roman numerals, but don’t disregard melodic motives or rhythmic figuration, even at this preliminary stage)
- sketch out the form of the movement, both on a simple diagram and with a bit of prose
- determine the principal elements that give rise to this formal plan; listen to the piece again to see how Beethoven uses them as form-creating elements
- start drafting your essay by describing the overall form of the piece—this really shouldn’t take more than a page; you may find an example in the form of a formal diagram can make your prose more concise and focused
- expand your essay by describing in more detail those aspects of the music that are most significant in shaping the form of the piece—this should give you another page and a half
- pull together your account of the overall form of the piece and your description of the details; write a short introduction and a short conclusion; write out the musical examples (should you choose to use any); then go back through the whole and tighten up the prose

You can assume that your reader has access to the score, so you do not need to duplicate this in any detail. If, however, you wish to make significant points that are not immediately obvious from the score, provide a musical example or a diagrammatic figure. Do not append a photocopy of the score with your scribbled roman numeral analysis and cosmological reflections, since these, as a rule, are not very useful to the reader.