
Over the past three years, pianist Emil Gryesten and Thomas Solak, Associate Professor of Music Theory, have been exploring the potential of applying Schenkerian analysis to the interpretation and performance of Beethoven's late piano sonatas.

*The first phase of the work took place in a preliminary project entitled *Klingende Teori* (*Sounding Theory*), while the second phase consisted of a comprehensive artistic development project, "Beethoven Reconstructed". The results of these studies have been expressed through a series of concert lectures, workshops for students, a CD recording and several articles.*

In this conversation, which took place in June 2023, Emil Gryesten (EG) and Thomas Solak (TS) take stock of their past three years' study of Heinrich Schenker (1868-1935) and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827).

When music theory becomes art

Part one – acid trip and organicism

EG

In recent weeks, during which I've been working intensively on the final three sonatas, which I will be recording later this summer, I've found myself to be much more clarified in my interpretation of these sonatas than was the case in the past. I think this is due to the intense work we've been doing on op.101 and, especially, op.106 during the past winter and spring.

Op.106, the *Hammerklavier*, is simply so massive a work that it cannot help but quite radically affect the pianist who studies it. The insights and transformations that arise through an intense struggle with opus 106 are a prerequisite for obtaining full access to the final three sonatas. One must first of all traverse the mountain massif created by the extremely challenging sonatas op. 101 and 106, then the landscape of the final three sonatas lies open. On the other hand, these three sonatas, which in many respects possess the character of a coherent sequence, reveal themselves without resistance once the pianistic and spiritual trials of the preceding sonatas have been overcome.

Many pianists, such as Barenboim and Schiff, emphasise the importance of pianists immersing themselves in all 32 sonatas in order to adequately relate to the late sonatas. I was never really convinced by this attitude, which I sometimes interpreted as a form of arrogance, but in fact one might say that through the intense struggle in this project with the final five sonatas, I have actually reached a point where I am inclined to draw similar conclusions.

TS

From an analytical point of view, I don't have a clear sense that the five sonatas stand alone, but they may mark some advances that are products of Beethoven's earlier works. The sonata movement form can be regarded as like a field of research, in which the composers examine how a form principle can be expressed in a distinctive, concrete form, and the five sonatas may thus just represent some very different further steps.

In my other article from the project, I describe sonata op. 101 as "peaceful" and at the same time as the

harvest of the best fruits of the developments before and around the turn of the 18th century: a concluded, harmonious whole.

EG

Seen in the context of the other sonatas, I think that in a sense op. 101 may be regarded as a prelude to 106. The playing difficulty resembles that of op. 106; the music is just not as heavy and comprehensive in nature.

TS

Are there also musical challenges in op. 101 that correspond to those of 106? Our analyses don't really point in that direction. I think, for example, that I've succeeded very well with a Schenkerian description of op. 101, considered as a cycle. It would be a great deal harder to do with op. 106.

EG

The music seems relaxed and certainly not earthbound – I view this as an expression of the fact that the spiritual dimensions of Beethoven's music are already rising in relation to the middle sonatas. So I see this sonata as the beginning of the incredibly fascinating spiritual journey that reaches its final destination in the final bars of the final sonata's adagio. The difficulties of op. 101 are of a more material nature – technically, the sonata is extremely challenging and almost anti-pianistic.

TS

The harmonic complexity that arises when the tonic sense is evaded in the first movement, and which disarms the sonata drama, is of course evident. But it's far from as complicated as in op. 106.

EG

It's undeniable that the complexity of the great Hammerklavier sonata op. 106 is in a class of its own. In fact, just yesterday, I finished editing a recording of the Hammerklavier sonata's enormous final fugue, together with our producer Federico Mattioli. It took two half-day sessions in the editing studio to listen to and pick out the single best take out of 5-10 takes of each section of the fugue.

During this work, I had the distinct feeling that, if you were to drop into the middle of the fugue – without the surrounding musical context – then Beethoven's fugue texture would appear completely insane, like a kind of musical gibberish. But when we reached the end of the fugue, it really felt like a homecoming after a long and exhausting journey.

TS

The fugue in op. 106 is very unusual, almost a completely new form of expression in its time – and maybe even afterwards, too. If you go into any Bach fugue, you are in no doubt as to its origin. In some sense it will represent a general expression of the high Baroque. Beethoven brings his special courage to the struggle with this, and writes something that has no counterpart. Theoretically, the fugue is of course also something of an advance, so there our experiences correspond completely.

EG

The near-nonsense of the fugue is really the last devilishly dangerous cliff face to be overcome in the mountain ascent of embarking on the Hammerklavier sonata. It feels like risking your life.

TS

And from a theoretical point of view, the fugue's use of the theme in retrograde produces both melodic,

harmonic, and rhythmic gibberish, which then becomes part of the advance.

EG

In the struggle with this fugue, the process of analytical work has been an invaluable tool for finding one's way through this seemingly chaotic landscape. Each step in the analytical process has been more or less crucial, from the initial work on continuo reduction to our experiments in playing the graph on the organ at the same time as the musical surface.

TS

And this work has revealed, amongst other things, the nonsensical aspects. The harmonic logic of the theme, for example, which is simply reproduced backwards in the restructuring, creates a kind of reversed word order that sounds very modern.

EG

Actually, I think that our experiment in which you, Thomas, played the graph on the organ while I played the movement on the piano, has been really interesting in terms of experiencing the structure in a clear and audible manner. It is fairly clear that one can train oneself to perceive Schenkerian structures, even in such complicated and apparently chaotic material as we are dealing with here.

TS

To find the reduction behind a Bach fugue is probably always straightforward, irrespective of the analytical approach. In Beethoven's late fugues it may not be as obvious, but the Schenkerian analytical tradition suggests this as a first step. And that reveals, amongst other things, the interesting phenomena I mentioned earlier. Can you describe in more detail how you "hear" structure?

EG

Schenker speaks of *Fernhören* ('remote hearing') – the fact that you can hear musical elements as belonging together, even across extended periods of time. A tension-filled harmony can coexist in the background of a long passage, expressing its own local narrative, and only be resolved at a later time. I think that many great musicians sense these processes intuitively, which contributes to creating coherence on the formal level.

In this fugue, which on the surface seems so extremely chaotic, it is essential that superficial phenomena must be understood in the context of the movement's deeper layers. If, in your analysis and listening, you try to "arrange" the dissonances in relation to the underlying chords, you obtain an understanding of the special nature of the complexity.

TS

So, as a theoretically underpinned exploration of Beethoven's "new" tonal language? Similar to the way in which we can perceive different – and seemingly independent – lines in Bach and feel taken by the hand when we know and understand that at some point they will meet in a common harmonic goal.

EG

In Beethoven, there are far more accidental dissonances than previously in the history of music – it is appoggiatura on top of appoggiatura ... and this extra layer of contrapuntal complexity amplifies the experience of something chaotic, with the result that, even for modern listeners, the music can sound strange. To some extent, however, the feeling of nonsense is only apparent. If you go a little deeper, most of it actually makes sense – although there is no doubt that we are dealing with extremely complicated

music, which still sounds unfamiliar to our modern ears.

TS

Could we perhaps say that since after these sonatas, no subsequent works were written “in that style”, the style appears to have remained unexplored afterwards?

EG

A path that music history hasn't really followed yet...

TS

Yes, because Beethoven doesn't write any more of these, so it's not followed up. In that light, could we understand the late sonatas, not as the completion of something, but as a breakthrough that was never really completed? It is perhaps the climax of an artistic career that provided the basis for future developments and advances – not personal or eccentric experiments, which were the last by the artist.

EG

I believe that in the context of Beethoven's other work, op. 106 can be understood as a form of conceptual art. Beethoven knew that the level of difficulty was off the scale. Perhaps the sonata was not meant to be played at all in the usual sense! The Hammerklavier sonata may have been intended to be an intractable riddle for music nerds, and for pianists the unconquerable Mount Everest, looking both alluring and intimidating, with peaks that for most mortals are an unrealistic goal. The Hammerklavier sonata was not played in public until several decades after its composition, by Franz Liszt. “This will keep them busy,” Beethoven is reputed to have said of it.

TS

What about *Fernhören*, then, in the wider perspective? How do you experience this phenomenon in relation to the first movement?

EG

In the first movement, *Fernhören* is a prerequisite for being able to accommodate its gigantic structure. The scale of the movement is enormous – and the complexity of the tonal organization is extreme.

TS

And our analysis has already pointed out how this *Fernhören* could be arranged – for example sections that you to a greater extent “pass through” rather than “settle on”.

EG

An understanding of the background structure, whether intentionally and analytically or more intuitively, helps us to sense which sections are complete in themselves and which sections contain a tension that must be resolved. There are also sections that are so unstable that we have described them as illusory on the harmonic level – representing the most ephemeral and unrooted thoughts and feelings. Such observations can be translated directly into the performance.

The first movement is the first part of the journey up this mountain ... the dimensions are vast, but the form of the movement is actually fairly clear. It is interesting how the Schenkerian graph indicates that the sonata form is undermined by harmonic movements in the background. In the movement, on the other hand, we find alternative forms of musical logic.

Right from the start of our work with this sonata, we had an intuitive feeling that the music here expresses a kind of acid trip, in which the colours and forms move in and out of each other in a psychedelic, kaleidoscopic experience. As in an imaginary trip, the usual laws of nature are suspended – such as the tonic-dominant relationship or traditional principles of form. It is quite remarkable that Schenkerian analysis has been able to confirm and explain these intuitive feelings.

TS

We worked for example with different weighting points in relation to the recapitulation, in particular, where different analytical interpretations revealed different ways in which the movement was out of sync with the traditional institution of the sonata movement dynamic.

EG

The traditional tension between tonic and dominant seems to be shattered at the overall form level – instead, there is a harmonic movement to mediant keys or chromatic ... the secondary theme in G major in the exposition, for example, and the series of keys we pass through in the development part is absolutely incredible!

TS

And at the same time, as far as the harmonic motion is concerned, the secondary theme of the movement is underemphasised, as merely a prolongation of the dominant. This made sense in the new interpretation, which was based more on our graph than on application of the traditional form approach.

EG

An example of how a common interpretation which makes this passage too heavy and rooted does not seem convincing. The music is unstable here and on its way to a later resolution. The performances of many pianists possess insufficient momentum to hold the structure together.

TS

And the subsequent theme (bar 63), which in that connection I was prepared to identify as the actual secondary theme, may merely act as an epilogue that further postpones the resolution.

Here I would like to jump back to sonata op. 101, where, as I said, I have the feeling that something completely different is going on. For example, I don't see this discrepancy between the institution of the sonata movement and the actual expression of the movement. The graph that I ended up with for the whole cycle could be drawn up without any significant resistance. It would have been completely different with op.106. In my other article, I've focused on the organicistic aspects of the Schenkerian universe with op. 101 as the object. How does that resonate with you as a performer?

EG

I very much experience op.101 as an essential prelude to the final sonatas. The clarification of form and harmonic language that Beethoven arrives at here is a prerequisite for the wild ride that we embark on in the subsequent sonatas.

Op. 101 thus marks both a conclusion and a summary of the foregoing development, and provides the starting-point for the late Beethoven, where the tone language goes beyond the scope of what was possible in the previous style, and the spiritual content of the music transcends what was previously capable of being expressed or thought out in advance.

TS

And that corresponds very well with my analysis, which, incidentally, points out many cyclical connections and material bonds. Are these observations important to you in terms of performance, or are they just arguments for why we experience the sonata to be an organic whole?

EG

It is essential that all four movements are performed in a natural and effortless manner. I've been playing this sonata for many years, and I've always felt that there is something water-like about the music – the musical element is simply water, which is also the essential element of life, and it is this kind of natural movement that the performer must reproduce.

The tensions are of an organic nature – not mechanical or logical. The performance should be characterised by soft transitions and a rubato that is never stiff or angular. Having an ear for the overall development – *Fernhören* – is essential to be able to resolve this integrated character in the sonata, in which the whole sequence grows forth, as it were, from seeds sown in the first movement.

TS

Such as when the opening is quoted, just before the final movement begins? This is something that all pianists have probably related to in one way or another. The point of my analysis is, amongst other things, that there is an issue which, on the basis of a seed planted at the beginning of the first movement, is only resolved with the first chord of the final movement, which has the third as its top note.

EG

The quote is a reminder of an unresolved potential that reaches its resolution here – an illustration of the temporal aspect of the organic, the way that things grow in a temporal sequence, and of how organic creations carry both a past and a future within them.

TS

So a sense of temporal resolution is created in this way – the ultimate artistic take on one of the basic conditions of music?

EG

You could say that. Schenkerian analysis is also a look at musical time, in which the process is viewed from the outside – the elaboration is precisely the expression in time of elements which, from a global or atemporal perspective, belong together.

TS

Or are the same organism, which can also be understood or perceived outside of time. In this way (as at many other times in the project), the Schenkerian analysis supported an intuition that one or both of us already had.

EG

Another word for time is rhythm – and it is precisely the rhythmic play of the surface that is the most vital expression of the possibilities offered by the musical material.

In this way Schenker provides a coherent picture of music as a phenomenon, and op. 101 is a really good illustration of these principles. Organicism, which was Schenker's fundamental idea, is precisely this sonata's most important principle.

TS

That is exactly my experience: There was very little “resistance” to the organicist angle and the work of analysing the whole and the details.

EG

The sonatas that follow op. 101 possess resistance on a number of levels – here Beethoven is probably moving beyond organicism. Many people have talked about him journeying to distant galaxies or to the hereafter, so it would make sense that organicism is transcended in the development that follows.

Part two: Revelation. On the final sonatas

EG

The final three sonatas are often played together in a single concert. This often feels unresolved, as though it is not possible in the hour that the music lasts to penetrate this special universe at all. Op. 109-111 are in fact the revelation that appears when we have climbed the colossal mountain that is the Hammerklavier sonata – with op. 101 as the prelude.

Seen in context, the final five sonatas make a huge amount of sense. The expression is so dense and intense that you cannot just sit down and listen to them and expect to be able to penetrate very deeply into the music.

Op. 109 is a very short sonata – the exposition of the first movement takes up just a single page in the score. It is in other words the sonata form boiled down to a highly concentrated distillate.

TS

Isn't there a tendency in these sonatas for the emphasis not to be on the classic first movement, but rather that they seek to speak a different language?

EG

It's clear in the final three sonatas that the greatest drama plays out later in the course of the piece – in op. 109 in the contrast between the violent, nightmarish second movement and the pure, peaceful final movement. In op. 110, the central action unfolds in the long third movement, which is a continuous sequence of recitative, arioso, fugue, and the concluding apotheosis.

TS

Yes, that's what I meant: In the first movement of op. 110, for example, we have a completely disarmed development section.

EG

In general, the first movement of op. 110 is characterised by a delicate fervour, in which Beethoven says something very big with very few notes. I have sometimes performed op. 110 at a concert following the song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte*, and it struck me how the sonata grows naturally out of the tonal language of the songs. The music is simply made from the same kind of molecules. It seems likely that the love theme of the songs also characterises the op. 110 sonata – at least in the first movement!

The first movement of op. 110 was one of the works that we studied in-depth in workshops with students

at both RDAM and the Royal Academy of Music Aarhus. We discovered that it had quite a lot of implications for the performance whether you experienced the movement as starting from *Kopfton* 3̂ or 5̂. What can we conclude in relation to the structure of the exposition?

TS

Well, both analyses were more or less convincing and useful in terms of interpretation. The main difference was probably where in the form the fundamental line's 2̂ is reached in the two versions. This naturally has a major influence on the organisation of energy when you are playing. In the first version, you have to get to bar 54 before we reach 2̂, because there is a lot of energy to dissipate along the way, while in the second version, with *Kopfton* 3̂, 3̂ is more clearly prolonged until bar 21, which in turn must weight the second bar of the secondary theme structurally (bar 21).

EG

Right from the first chord, this is for me a crucial point in the interpretation – should the chord be “born” as a 3̂, with the full potential energy to unfold to a whole movement – or are we heading in a crescendo to the actual centre of gravity in a 5̂ in the third bar, where we start with a small lead-in?

TS

It is interesting that it is perhaps not only the circumstances or the organicist aspect of these bars that determine this. The rest of the movement takes shape accordingly, so it could just as well be the consequences of a choice that confirms the choice or rejects it.

For example, in version 2, the arpeggio passages in the exposition and recapitulation receive a completely different weight: While the first must prolong the energy of the *Kopfton*, it is completely relaxed in the end, because the fundamental line has been brought to its conclusion at that time. While traditional form theory might perhaps equate the two points, the second version of our analysis points towards a completely different emphasis and performance.

EG

For me, the two apparently parallel arpeggio passages illustrate a subtle difference between music that is in motion, moving towards a particular goal, and music that expresses a calm sense of resting in itself. As a performer, can one ask, how do these conditions feel in the body? Motion can be expressed through a slightly accelerating beat or a more flickering form of timing, while the expression in the quiet section must be characterised by a somewhat laid-back pulse and perhaps a slight, almost imperceptible emphasis on the resting points of the music: the bass line and the first beat of the bar.

TS

And here you touch upon another of the main questions of the project: How is analytical understanding implemented in practice, how is the graph metaphorically translated, or how can I put it?

EG

One of the most fruitful paths we've been pursuing in order to answer this question has been to interpret the analysis using different metaphors that can be expressed directly in performance – quite often, it's a question of understanding music as the expression of bodily feelings or gestures. In this example, it applies to the difference between forward motion and resting in oneself, “to have come home”, and a performer can simply feel in the body how this should be played.

TS

And the metaphor is important as a mediator that creates the bodily feeling that you play from?

EG

Yes, we had to look for some kind of transformer between analysis and performance – two fundamentally different domains, for which it is not at all clear how they can be brought into dialogue. This particular question is one of the basic research questions in the project.

Interpreting music metaphorically is a subject that has been thoroughly addressed by theorists and philosophers in many different contexts. Nevertheless, the realisation arose – and for us, quite spontaneously – that we had got hold of an important tool here. We discovered that when you conveyed the analysis through expressions like ‘an illusory key’ or ‘a sick linear progression’ it was suddenly very clear to me how I would play it.

TS

I am also reminded of another point in op.110, in the first movement, where one could speculate a lot about the meaning, and that is the rapid and slightly skewed modulation before the secondary theme arrives, equalised in terms of key in the recapitulation. It is hard in itself to make this place sound natural, but if what precedes this is understood as an insert – what we have previously called an illusory key area – then the theme’s initial note resumes the position that we left 16 bars earlier. The graph shows that these bars do not resolve any energy, and the feeling of an insert and its execution means that one does not need to account for the bold and slightly angular modulation.

EG

As a performer, I have a fairly good idea of how to convey the illusory nature of the music pianistically – with a light and slightly fragile sound, left pedal, and very little gravity in the bass – like images in a vision that are fleeting and lack roots. Playing this passage with a normal, healthy piano sound could potentially create a feeling of discomfort or of something wrong – because the illusory comes to resemble reality too much – a dream that becomes too true to life! In this context, it’s the light and fleeting that makes most sense in the overall narrative of the movement.

TS

And I’m thinking that the results of the analysis give you the support to actually play it this way – they support your intuition?

EG

That is the case here. In other ways, the analysis has actually encouraged me to hear the music differently from my first intuition. The secondary theme is an excellent example of that. At first glance, it looks like we have an emphasised beginning of a theme in bar 20 – there is a new legato arc that begins, and we see a falling movement. However, it is quite clear that Schenkerian analysis says something else about the structural significance of this theme.

TS

Yes, there it is precisely a consequence of the choice of *Kopfton* 3̂, which we talked about earlier. If it makes sense in the context of the whole, that choice can remain. If it becomes too inorganic to play because of the legato arc, that might support the other interpretation. The question also points to something else that we have also worked on: Structure and the awareness of it does not necessarily mean that, as a performer, you have to “paint it out”, but that there are different ways of using it?

EG

Just hearing a particular structure in your inner ear will often be enough to enable you to shape it convincingly in the performance.

I have always felt that there was something a little mysterious about this theme's beginning – starting with the emphasis on the subdominant brings the theme out of balance and, moreover, helps to create uncertainty about the key situation in this passage. Now it seems quite natural to me to start the theme with a bar's anacrusis – with just a touch of emphasis on the tonic sixth chord in the second bar. It is really enough just to hear it, then the performance comes by itself.

This passage is moreover very similar to the beginning of the sixth song in *An die ferne Geliebte*, which, as mentioned, I perceive to be closely related to this movement. The emphasis in the text *Nimm sie hin den, diese Lieder* also suggests that the second beat is probably the heaviest.

TS

Yes, in the interpretation of the illusory above you will need the second way of playing it, as the emphasis here, the second time the secondary theme appears, must be on its first bar. In fact, the Schenkerian analysis is rather special and liberating, because it can relate in different ways to points with the same material.

What I have otherwise found most fascinating about Schenkerian analysis is its ability to embrace larger sections, movements and even the sequence of movements. In the remaining three sonatas we have also used it to examine in more detail some simple symmetrical movement structures, such as the two variation themes in op. 109 and op. 111, respectively. I was surprised, especially in op. 109, at how many questions the analysis could pose about the simple 8 + 8 bar structure, and how many interpretative results it produced.

EG

The analysis was extremely useful in finding answers to the basic questions in the performance of such themes – first and foremost the length of the phrases, and where the dynamic culminations should lie.

But once again, it turned out that the analysis was in itself an interpretation – you can hear the structure in several different ways.

TS

Yes, the first question must be whether $\hat{3}$ or $\hat{5}$ is the *Kopftön*? If you start with the emphasis on $\hat{3}$, you have to wait a very long time before you can connect it with $\hat{2}$. This means that one must be able to understand the intervening 13 bars as a long prolongation of $\hat{3}$, and play it like that.

EG

The opening slightly resembles the beginning of op. 110, which also starts with a tonic chord in the third position, which then ascends to the fourth within a few bars.

In this case, unlike in op. 110, we ended up hearing the opening as an initial ascent. Then it's crucial that the phrase continues towards bar 5 and is not interrupted at the semi-conclusion in bar $\hat{4}$.

TS

And it's also crucial that there is time to tame the energy that lies in *Kopftön* $\hat{5}$ in bar 5. The second part is a foretaste of this, with the sequential fall, which is subject to the sustained B in the tenor voice, while the actual $\hat{4}$ is not reached until bar 13, where we are, as it were, torn out of the seduction of the sequence

and brought back into the path of the main key.

EG

The parenthetical character of bars 9-12 can certainly be performed as a more floating and less targeted idea. This creates a resting point in the structure that balances the general expression, which must both encompass clarity and something more immaterial and dreaming.

TS

That's what I mean: The B mentioned is directed downwards at the end of the sequence, but is altered to A sharp, and thus belongs to another world. So it feels as though we're torn out of this world when the real $\hat{4}$, A, appears in the upper voice of bar 13.

EG

I suppose it's another example of the organicism that Schenker finds in Beethoven – that the part and the whole often resemble one another?

TS

Precisely: the maintained tenor B, which in the overall structure still prolongs $\hat{5}$, but due to the modulation alters $\hat{4}$ and is thus unable to complete the structure of the main key, instead becomes in its own universe a local fundamental line, $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ in G sharp minor.

EG

One of the things that springs to mind on first acquaintance with this theme is that Beethoven decorates certain chords with arpeggiation. I find it extremely interesting how the analysis indicates that the arpeggiated chords have a special significance in linking the structure together – for example, the connection from *Kopftön* $\hat{5}$ in bar 5 to the $\hat{4}$ in bar 13.

TS

And the fact that you can understand the fundamental line as spread out and more evenly distributed across all 16 bars also makes it clearer when you play the movement without repeats – which is a major question that one quite often struggles with in such forms: How should one deal with repetition marks in the rendering of an overall structure?

EG

I think it makes very good sense to try to highlight the long structure that extends through all 16 bars. It occurs in full in the second playing of the first part into the second part. In this interpretation, it is possible to hear the first playthrough of the opening phrase as a prelude, a preliminary attempt that must start again – and the repetition in the second part as a kind of echo. In this way, a very beautiful symmetrical structure arises.

TS

And as at many other times, Schenkerian analysis thereby helps us to understand and play the whole meaningfully – it places harmonic observations into the context of the whole movement, which is what you must relate to as a performer.

EG

We've been able to apply a similar way of approaching the material to another sonata, which also contains

a large movement consisting of theme and variations, namely the final sonata, op. 111. Here we also find a theme of 16 bars with repetitions, which in this case forms the starting-point for one of the most remarkable variation movements in the whole history of music.

TS

Our work with this movement was actually based on $\hat{5}$ as the *Kopftön*, and thus a long initial ascent. Here it was our 'playing' dialogue which revealed that this was difficult to get to work. It seemed almost like overdoing things to maintain the ascent until bar 6, and it was subsequently made more difficult by the fact that step $\hat{4}$ is weakly represented. I had to go back to the workshop to see if it would make sense to create a Schenkerian graph with scale degree $\hat{3}$ as the starting-point. The result turned out to be much more obvious to perform.

EG

The situation in this theme is actually surprisingly complex, given its simple and calm nature. There are several registers and voices in play that create a great deal of movement in the surface.

A decisive moment seems to be the movement into A minor in bar 9, introduced by the unison E, which deviates from the otherwise more rounded texture. The cold, pure timbre of the unison marks a significant shift in the expression.

TS

In the light of the $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ structure, this point comes to act as an interruption, and the fundamental line as a whole is resumed and thereby resolved in bars 14-16. So our second interpretation supports that perception in this respect, too.

EG

The situation here is thus similar to the corresponding passage in op. 109, which also has the character of an insert – albeit a highly significant one. It is as though we glimpse a world that lies outside of the immediate musical context. In op. 111, the A minor passage is unfolded in the variations in a magical manner. I think that this is where many people have perceived associations with distant, icy galaxies and the hereafter.

TS

And a point here is that, as in op. 109, this world is actually consolidated by its own fundamental line. In op. 109 it was local $\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$, here it is local $\hat{5}-\hat{4}-\hat{3}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$ in A minor, bars 11-12. In the same way, I often have the feeling that such fairly simple background observations from the Schenkerian universe provide the same kind of clarification, but always on the premises of the relevant music.

EG

So the intuitive feeling that we're viewing a kind of parallel world here is actually quite convincingly supported by the analysis.

TS

Yes, it is in fact 'its own world', by virtue of the fact that there is a local fundamental structure in both cases. It is not a detached or incomplete quote of anything, but a slice of a whole into which we are looking.

EG

One of the aspects of the Schenkerian analysis that appears very convincing to me is the presence of motivic parallels at several levels of the music. A form of hidden organicism that composers probably didn't consciously think about, but which may have arisen through their talent... or genius, as they would have called it in the old days.

TS

It is at any rate Schenker's conviction that the composers intuitively possessed this insight – but does it really matter how the structure arises, as long as we can see it is there, and can make use of it as performers?

EG

It's quite fascinating how the same patterns are found everywhere in such completely different musical contexts as we find in these works.

TS

Precisely, and my experience as an analyst is that although we use the same simple tools to describe these structures, this is always done in the context of the work – not as a rigid way of imposing a structure on the music.

EG

For Schenker, this was something beautiful, and proof of the universal laws under which the music operated. But that's also one of the more controversial sides of Schenker.

TS

However, whether or not you agree with this aphorism, it is difficult in practice – especially after having worked with this kind of analysis – to disagree with his motto:

Semper idem sed non eodem modo (Always the same, but not in the same way).

EG

I interpret Schenker as showing how composers, using quite simple – and according to Schenker, naturally inherent – building blocks created an absolutely incredible wealth of musical diversity. It seems quite miraculous that out of such relatively simple musical scales, whole universes of sound can appear.

TS

Or in Schenker's own image: An *Urklang* that enters time through elaboration – prolonged, so that it can be experienced in time. It is the nature and form of this prolongation that the analysis describes.