A Form Analysis of Schubert's Octet in F Major, Final Movement

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Franz Schubert's Octet in F Major (D. 803) is a six movement work of chamber music which utilizes strong formal functions throughout. The final movement is no exception. While displaying unique characteristics in form and motivic development, movement six relies heavily upon principles of sonata form to drive its thematic content forward towards its finish. Principles of sonata form are illustrated in the presentation of a first thematic complex in the tonic key, a second thematic complex in the dominant, a development section based upon these themes, and a recapitulation of the major themes in the tonic. Of particular interest in this octet is the use of an introduction which is repeated near the end of the piece – an atypical occurrence in this context – as well as the masterful use of motives throughout the movement.

Schubert begins the movement with an Andante Molto section in F minor, which serves as an introduction to the movement. An expectant texture is created through the use of tremolos and long tones in the low strings. Slow dotted rhythms dominate the opening bars, and become the basis for dotted rhythmic figures in the main themes of the piece. See figure 1 below:

Figure 1: dotted rhythmic motif in opening bars (mm. 1-4)



Another feature of the 5 bar phrases which make up the introduction is the descending quarter note also shown above, which is present in the major themes that follow the introduction. This introduction ends with dominant arpeggios at soft dynamic levels, punctuated by a final dotted statement in the strings.

The next section presents our first theme of the first thematic complex. The key is F major, as expected in the final movement of an F major Octet. Theme is shown below in Figure 2:

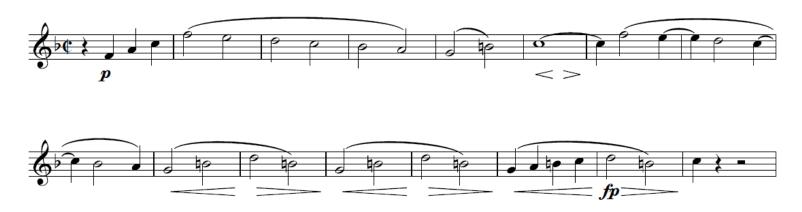
Figure 2: The first theme of the first thematic complex (mm. 18-33)





This first theme is repeated in the same key, before another more lyrical theme is presented in the tonic key. The second theme of the first thematic complex is shown below in figure 3:

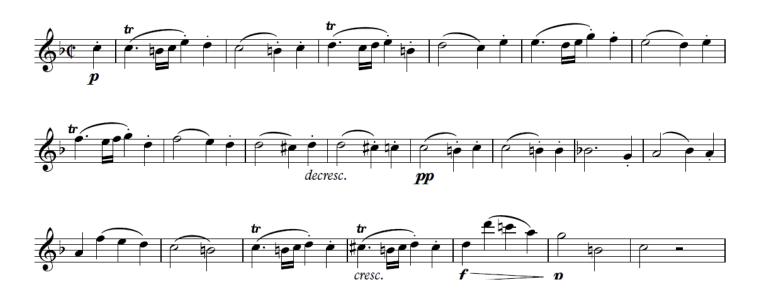
Figure 3: Second theme of the first thematic complex (mm. 58-73)



Schubert then begins to obscure tonic through the use of an F#, moving toward a G. While he doesn't firmly tonicize G, he hints towards it with this chromatic alteration, and by emphasizing what would be the dominant, D. Schubert eventually half cadences on G, thus ending the first thematic complex.

After two bars of complete silence, the viola enters on a lone G, prepared from the half cadence two bars before. The bass enters after two more bars, alternating between a C and G, firmly establishing a tonality of C major. The winds state the first theme of the second thematic complex above this G pedal tone, and the C and G bass line. This theme is as follows in figure 4 below:

Figure 4: The first theme of the second thematic complex (mm. 94-113)



This theme is elaborated upon in the following bars (mm. 114-161), and repeated in different tonalities. Indeed, a brief level of development of this theme occurs, as it passes through different voicings, and from C major through weakly established tonalities of D minor, G minor,

progressing towards a strong cadence on C major. I do not suggest that this is a development section, but rather I simply want to point out that we begin to see a rapid progression through different tonalities through constant chromatic alteration, suggesting to the ear a level of development. After replenishing the orientation of C major as our key for this thematic complex, Schubert leads us through weakly tonicized Eb major (an example of his use of chromatic median relationships), before strongly cadencing again on C major in measures 160-161.

At this point, we begin a clearly delineated development section. Schubert, after strongly tonicizing C major, launches into Ab major, another chromatic mediant of C major, and then the subdominant of Ab major, Db major, which is not a chromatic median of C major, but it is a chromatic median of F major, our original key for this movement's first themes. A primary motif of the development section is found below in figure 5:

Figure 5: Neighbor-tone dotted motif (quoted here from Clarinet, mm. 162-165)



This motif is derived from the falling pitches in the opening motif of the Andante Molto introduction. The falling pitches from Eb to Bb are repeated (although in a different key) in the falling line contained in the motif in figure 5. At measure 179, this motif is again found, but transposed down a half step. The development continues through a half cadence on E major, prepared by a cadential six-four chord, and after a pause reminiscent of the cadence and pause before the second thematic complex, we are met with a lone E natural from the viola. This leads

us into the closing section of the development as Schubert moves towards a C pedal tone, establishing C as a dominant of F major. All the while we are met with a variation of the descending dotted rhythm motif.

After a full 18 measures of a pedal C, we are given a cadence on F major at measure 242, also coinciding with a restatement of our first main theme. This marks the beginning of the recapitulation. We hear the first thematic complex again in F major, and the second thematic complex is restated in F major as well. Triplet figures introduced in the development section are used as accompaniment as the neighbor-tone dotted motif is exchanged between voices in this section.

We are given a strong F major cadence in measures 366-367, after which we are into another Andante Molto section, which is based upon the Neapolitan chord of F major, Gb major – but it used weakly in second inversion. We are given an ascending arpeggiated line in the violins during this slow section which is reminiscent of the closing theme to the first thematic complex. Compare in the Figures 6 and 7 below:

Figure 6: Ascending portion of closing theme from first thematic complex (mm. 74-77)



Figure 7: Ascending motif from second Andante Molto section (m. 371)



Schubert moves from a bass note of Bb (the fifth of the Neapolitan chord) to C, which acts as the bass note first to an Ab chord in first inversion, which is another example of Schubert's use of chromatic mediants throughout this piece. Then this same bass note of C is used as the foundation of cadential six-four chord in F major. Shortened ascending arpeggios are placed in the violins over the top of these sustained F major six-four chords. The restatement of the introductory material is a unique aspect of form in this movement. While the motivic content varies in this second slow section from the introduction, the similarity in tempo, dotted rhythms, and harmonic devices with the introduction are undeniable. This restatement of the introduction also ends with a C major arpeggio to lead us into a strongly tonicized F major coda.

The Coda utilizes the neighbor tone dotted motif throughout, and serves the purpose of expanding and emphasizing the dominant to tonic relationship until we reach three final F major chords at the end. I argue that the restatement of the introductory material is not a part of the coda due to its strong relation to the introduction, and its obscuring nature in terms of tonality. One's ear is not urged towards a strong grasp of tonic – the effect is the opposite. It is not only until the Allegro molto is reached after the second Andante molto that we resume a strong sense of F major tonality. It is fitting that this second Andante Molto be labeled as part of the recapitulation because it serves as an effective review of the introduction.

Due to the reasons which I have discussed, I offer the following form diagram as a summary of my discussion. I contend that due the reasons I have discussed, this piece employs sonata principle, but does not strictly follow sonata form. The primary reason is due to the review of the introduction after the recapitulation of the first and second thematic complexes in tonic, and before the coda. This restatement of the introduction does not strictly adhere to the harmonic pattern laid out in the original statement at the beginning of the piece, which adds to the unusual nature of its repetition being so close to the ending of piece, and after the major themes have all been recapitulated. Despite this oddity, this movement is clearly still in sonata form.

Figure 8: Form Diagram of Schubert Octet (D. 803), VI. Andante Molte – Allegro – Andante Molto – Allegro Molto

Introduction (mm. 1-17) F: i, N, V	First theme (mm. 18-33)	First Thematic Complex — First theme restatement (mm. 34-57)		Second theme (mm. 58-73)		
Second Thematic Complex						
Transition Theme			Closing Theme		Neighbor dotted motif	
(mm. 73-90)	(mm. 91-134)		(mm. 134-161)		(mm. 162-172)	
I - V	V		V	Ab, D		•
Development						
Ascending 8ths	Build to E cadence (mm. 192-199)			Push to C Pedal (mm. 202-223)		C Pedal
(mm. 173-191)						(mm. 224-241)
	E Maj			$E, F\sharp, D, B\flat, C$		C (V, I 6/4)
The work of March 16	_Recapitulation		D			Cala
Thematic Material from both Complexes			Review of Introduction		Coda	
(mm. 242-369)			(mm. 370-376)		l	(mm. 377-424)
1			Neapolitan, V		1	