Process and Symmetry in Schubert’s Expanded Type 1 Sonatas

Schubert had a life-long interest in what Sonata Theory calls birotational sonata forms, those forms such as overtures and slow movements that trace two, rather than three, paths through their thematic material (Hepokoski and Darcy). He composed pieces in this form from his very first essays (D.2) until his very last (D.960), in movements of different speed and disposition within the sonata cycle, and across genres. Later in life, Schubert cultivated a taste for birotational forms whose second rotations (recapitulations) feature a developmental bulge or interpolation—a layout Sonata Theory calls the Expanded Type 1 sonata. But Schubert’s individualized response to this particular formal strategy—the ways in which he made this form his own—has typically been overshadowed by scholarly interest in what he learned from Mozart, how he influenced Brahms, or the perennially insoluble question whether this abstract form is best understood as Rondo or Sonata (Tovey, Chusid, Pascall, Daverio, Galand).

This presentation focuses instead on articulating a set of features that characterize Schubert’s personalized appropriation of the Expanded Type 1 layout. I provide analyses of four pieces Schubert composed in this idiosyncratic form—the finales of the Rosamunde Quartet, the Cello Quintet, and the last Piano Sonata, and the Overture im italienischen Stil, D.590— with the goal of bringing to light a compositional approach that is common to all of them.

Immediately apparent is a preoccupation with symmetry between halves: all three finales feature large expansions in recapitulatory P- or TR-space, but then “compensate” for these enlargements, in stages, by deleting several sets of later referential modules.
For instance, after shoehorning a 47-bar developmental interpolation into the recapitulatory P-space of the Rosamunde Quartet, Schubert cuts 27 bars from TR, 8 bars from $S^1$, and 8 more bars from $S^2$, resulting ultimately in a form whose second half is only four measures larger than its referential first half. The other finales behave similarly.

The way Schubert deletes is also important: in every case some continuity (registral, thematic, voice-leading) is preserved across the seam, even as the recapitulatory fabric is being riven. Keeping with Rosamunde, Example 1 shows that a registral connection between the $S$-themes’ outer modules ($S^1$ and $S^{2\text{rep}}$) motivates the deletion: cutting the inner modules thus reveals a registral connection as well as symmetrizes the large-scale form.

A counterexample is found in the Overture. Here Schubert, imitating Rossini’s truncated recapitulations, composes a set of *deletions* into recapitulatory TR-space (Example 2). Curious about this behavior is that a “compensation” here, beyond being decisively un-Rossinian, would involve *adding* measures to $S$—in Sonata Theory an extreme deformation. Nevertheless, as summarized in Example 3, Schubert’s maulding recapitulatory $S$-space makes up for these early cuts by ballooning outwards, thereby re-achieving a rough symmetry between halves.

These Schubertian “compensations,” which work in service of a broad-level symmetry, afford a perception of these movements in terms of a quest narrative, the compositional staging of a loss, followed by a re-achievement of, symmetry. This seems to be one hallmark of Schubert’s birotational form.
**Example 1:** D. 804, iv. Deletion of two S modules (in parentheses) reveals a registral connection among outer, as well as inner, constituents.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
S^1 & S^{1\text{rep}} & S^2 & S^{2\text{rep}} \\
72 & 80 & 88 & 96 \\
254 & & & 262 \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Example 2: Reduced score with annotations shows cuts in recapitulatory TR-space in D. 590.}
\end{array}
\]
Example 3: Highly deformational expansion of recapitulatory S modules in D. 590 compensates for cuts in TR.

Required Equipment

LCD projector with Mac laptop connection
1/8-inch audio input (from laptop)
Works Cited


Tovey, Donald Francis. The Forms of Music: Music Articles in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Edited by Hubert J. Foss. London: Oxford University Press, 1957.
