

The Lyrical Themes of Neukomm's Piano Sonata in G (1819)

Os temas líricos da Sonata para Piano em Sol Maior (1819) de Neukomm

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Abstract: Determining the location of the secondary theme group within a Classical sonata-form exposition relies on taking into account the interplay of disparate musical elements. In situations where these elements do not neatly correlate with each other, analytic disputes can arise concerning the precise location of the secondary theme. Analysis of the first movement of Sigismund Neukomm's Piano Sonata in G helps highlight the issues regarding this matter. Appealing to eighteenth-century approaches to musical form, in conjunction with more modern concepts, sheds light on this movement's form and stylistic context, as well as on the nature of the secondary theme group in general.

Keywords: Sonata form. Secondary theme. Lyrical theme.

Resumo: Ao determinar a localização do grupo temático secundário no âmbito da exposição de uma forma sonata Clássica, deve-se levar em consideração a interação entre elementos musicais díspares. Debates analíticos sobre a localização precisa do tema secundário podem surgir em situações que tais elementos não se correlacionem nitidamente. A análise do primeiro movimento da *Sonata para Piano em Sol Maior* de Sigismund Neukomm nos auxilia a destacar as questões relacionadas a este assunto. Lançando mão de abordagens oitocentistas da forma musical, juntamente com conceitos mais modernos, este trabalho lança luz sobre a forma e o contexto estilístico deste movimento, bem como sobre a natureza do grupo temático secundário em geral.

Palavras-chave: Forma sonata. Tema secundário. Tema lírico.



Where would you locate the secondary theme group in the exposition of Sigismund Neukomm's Piano Sonata in G, first movement?¹ Considering the seemingly straightforward nature of this movement, this is a surprisingly tricky question. As we shall see, exploring the issues involved with locating the secondary theme group in this exposition can help shed light on the concept of the theme grouping in Classical sonata form in general.

Neukomm completed this sonata in 1819 while living in Rio, making it one of the earliest surviving works composed in Brazil that is in sonata form.² Neukomm himself was no newcomer to this form, however, having composed various sonata-form movements before coming to Brazil. Much like his earlier works that he had composed while in Europe, the style of this sonata lies firmly within eighteenth-century Galant practice, its relatively late date notwithstanding. For this reason, it is helpful to explore the form of this movement through the lens of eighteenth-century theories, especially those of Heinrich Christoph Koch and Francesco Galeazzi. After examining the structure of Neukomm's exposition through such means, we will then consider if and to what extent modern concepts of sonata form—including the concept of the secondary theme group—can be applied to it.

Koch's Concepts and Terminology

The ideas of the eighteenth-century theorist Heinrich Christoph Koch offer an especially propitious vantage point for examining the form of Neukomm's Sonata. Of particular importance are Koch's discussions found in the second and third volumes of his celebrated treatise, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1787 and 1793). Since Koch's concepts and terminology might be less familiar to many modern readers, first an overview of his approach is in order.

¹ *Sonate pour le Pianoforté avec accompagnement de violon non obligé*, completed in Rio on 10 September 1819, and dedicated to the Brazilian Princess Marie-Thérèse de Beria (manuscript catalog n° 176). An online recording performed by Rosana Lancelotte may be found [here](#). A score for the exposition is quoted in Ex. 1a below, and the score for the entire movement may be found [here](#). I am grateful to Luciane Beduschi for providing me with a photocopy of the manuscript, from the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* Ms. 7703 (12).

² A biography of Neukomm's life and works may be found in Beduschi 2005 and 2008.

Koch divides a sonata-form movement into a series of what he refers to as “*Hauptperioden*.” A *Hauptperiode* is a large section that comprises multiple phrases and that concludes with a “formal cadence” (*förmliche Cadenz*). A formal cadence almost always takes the form of a perfect authentic cadence, though Koch also suggests that in special cases a deceptive cadence can establish a formal cadence as well.³ Each *Hauptperiode* may be followed by an appendix, and if the appendix is lengthy, it creates what Koch labels as a “*Nebenperiode*” (subsidiary section). Whether short or long, the appendix normally finishes with the same type of cadence heard at the end of the *Hauptperiode* that precedes it. It is also possible, however, for an appendix to entirely avoid a cadence at its conclusion so as to prepare for the entrance of the ensuing *Hauptperiode* in the manner of a transition or retransition.

In a typical major-key movement that involves three *Hauptperioden*, the first *Hauptperiode* ends with a cadence in the key of V; the second *Hauptperiode* ends with a cadence in another related key; and the last *Hauptperiode* ends with a cadence in the home key. As depicted in Fig. 1, the first movement of Neukomm’s Sonata adheres to this standard layout. Also in a manner that is quite normal, the three *Hauptperioden* here (along with their appendices) line up with the modern notions of exposition, development, and recapitulation.

m.1	27	:	44	(85)	93
<i>Hauptperiode</i> 1	<i>Nebenperiode</i>		<i>Hauptperiode</i> 2	appendix	<i>Hauptperiode</i> 3
Starts with main theme in home key, ends with PAC in key of V.	Appendix to <i>Hauptperiode</i> 1; starts in V, ends with PAC in V.		Starts with main theme in iii, ends with deceptive cadence in parallel minor of home key,followed by short appendix/retransition, ends on V of home key.	Starts with main theme in home key, ends with PAC in home key, followed by appendix in mm. 121–140.
(=exposition			development		recapitulation)

Figure 1: Chart of *Hauptperioden* in Sigismund Neukomm, Sonata in G (N.B.: bar numbers in parentheses indicates phrase elision)

Each *Hauptperiode* is composed of a series of phrases, which Koch refers to as “*Sätze*” (singular = “*Satz*”). Koch insists that a *Satz* must be at least four measures long, though he also notes that a *Satz* may be greatly expanded through

³ See analysis in Koch (1793, p. 188 and p. 312) of the middle *Hauptperiode* of Joseph Haydn, Symphony No. 42/II. As we shall see, the possibility of a *Hauptperiode* concluding with a deceptive cadence is particularly relevant to Neukomm’s Sonata.

insertions, repetitions, and other such devices.⁴ A *Satz* that ends in the middle of a *Hauptperiode* is known as an *Absatz*, and each *Absatz* is classified by the harmony at its conclusion. Thus, the term “*Grundabsatz*” refers to an *Absatz* that ends over a tonic triad (usually forming what modern terminology calls an authentic cadence). Likewise, a “*Quintabsatz*” is an *Absatz* that ends with a dominant triad (a half cadence). The *Satz* that leads to the formal cadence at the end of a *Hauptperiode* is known as a “*Schlußsatz*.” In many cases, the *Schlußsatz* is greatly expanded, and thus a *Schlußsatz* typically is much longer than any of the *Absätze* that precede it. Koch also uses special terms to describe phrases according to their affective character or other qualities. For instance, he refers to the phrase that introduces the main theme at the start of a *Hauptperiode* as a “*Hauptsatz*”; and he describes a lyrical phrase as “cantabile” and an energetic phrase as “*rauschend*.” Table 1 summarizes these and some other terms used by Koch.

Terminology for *Perioden*

<i>Hauptperiode</i>	Large, multi-phrase section that concludes with a perfect authentic cadence (or, more rarely, with a deceptive cadence).
<i>Nebenperiode</i>	Large, multi-phrase appendix to a <i>Hauptperiode</i> that concludes with a perfect authentic cadence (which echoes the cadence at the end of the <i>Hauptperiode</i>).

Terminology for phrase according to melodic/harmonic structure

<i>Satz</i>	Phrase that is at least four measures long and involves at least two contrasting ideas.
<i>Absatz</i>	<i>Satz</i> that concludes in the middle of a <i>Hauptperiode</i> .
<i>Grundabsatz</i>	<i>Absatz</i> that ends with a tonic triad.
<i>Quintabsatz</i>	<i>Absatz</i> that ends with a dominant triad.
<i>Schlußsatz</i>	<i>Satz</i> that ends with a formal cadence (i.e., a grand, perfect authentic cadence).

Terminology for phrase according to affective characters or other qualities

<i>Hauptsatz</i>	Passage that presents the main theme.
<i>rauschend</i>	Active, energetic passage.
cantabile	Lyrical, tuneful passage.
<i>Verbindungssatz</i>	“Connecting” passage, which seems to lead between two relatively stable passages.

Table 1: Table of selected terminology used by Heinrich Christoph Koch

⁴ More specifically, Koch claims that a *Satz* must comprise at least four “*einfache Takte*” (simple measures), which equal either four measures in a simple meter (such as 2/4 or 2/2) or two measures in a compound meter (such as 4/4 or 6/8); see Mirka 2009 and Zenck 2001. Regarding the expansion of *Sätze*, see Sisman 1982.

Galeazzi's Concepts and Terminology

Until the last few decades of the eighteenth century, a cantabile passage could be expected to appear almost anywhere within the middle of a sonata-form exposition. This is reflected in the writings of Koch, which display much flexibility regarding the possible locations of cantabile themes.⁵ As the century progressed, however, it became increasingly common for a prominent cantabile passage to appear at a specific location within the exposition: namely, at the spot that modern terminology labels as the start of the second theme group. This practice eventually became recognized in theoretical writings, an early instance which may be found in a treatise by Francesco Galeazzi published in 1796.

In a celebrated passage from this treatise, Galeazzi labels a movement's segments not merely by their melodic and harmonic features, but also by their affective qualities, along with their specific locations. Accordingly, he describes the segments of a movement's first part (that is, what today is known as the exposition) as follows:⁶

1. The *Motivo principale* introduces the movement's main theme and main key at the outset. This is followed by the [...]
2. [...] *Secondo Motivo*, an optional passage that counterbalances the *Motivo principale*. The *Secondo Motivo* connects with an ensuing [...]
3. [...] *Uscita a' Toni più analoghi* (departure toward a closely related key), which destabilizes the main key and ends with a conspicuously demarcated half cadence. This half cadence is followed by a [...]
4. [...] *Passo di Mezzo* (intermediary passage), otherwise known as a *Passo caratteristico* (characteristic passage). Galeazzi notes that the *Passo di mezzo* is an optional passage that begins in the secondary key and is typically "gentle, expressive, tender." The *Passo di Mezzo* in turn connects with the [...]
5. [...] *Periodo di Cadenza*, a lively, "bravura" passage that leads to a formal cadence ("*cadenza finale*").

⁵ See discussion in Burstein 2020, p. 83–87.

⁶ Galeazzi 1796, p. 253–260. Galeazzi's description of what is now known as sonata form was anticipated in certain ways in an unpublished, unfinished treatise penned by Franz Christoph Neubauer, written around 1783; see discussion in Burstein 2020, p. 91–103.

6. The *Periodo di Cadenza* optionally may be followed by an appendix known as the *Coda*, which wraps up the movement's first part.

Fig. 2 presents this layout in chart format. Fig. 2a depicts an exposition that includes the optional *Passo di Mezzo*. Fig. 2b depicts an alternate possibility described by Galeazzi in which the *Passo di Mezzo* is omitted, so that the *Uscita* is followed directly by the *Periodo di Cadenza*. In such a scenario, an active transitional passage leads directly to an active cadential passage, with no intervening cantabile segment.

Possible layouts for expositions described by Galeazzi

<i>Motivo principale</i>	<i>Secondo Motivo</i> (optional)	<i>Uscita a' Toni</i> <i>più analoghi</i>	<i>Passo di Mezzo</i> (optional)	<i>Periodo di Cadenza</i>	<i>Coda</i> (optional)
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Figure 2a: Exposition that includes a *Passo di Mezzo*

<i>Motivo principale</i>	<i>Secondo Motivo</i> (optional)	<i>Uscita a' Toni</i> <i>più analoghi</i>	<i>Periodo di Cadenza</i>	<i>Coda</i> (optional)
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When the optional *Passo di Mezzo* is omitted, the active transitional passage (the *Uscita*) is followed directly by an active cadential passage (*Periodo di Cadenza*).

Figure 2b: Exposition that does not include the (optional) *Passo di Mezzo*

In many cases, the sections mentioned by Galeazzi correspond to the thematic groupings described by modern terminology. For instance, the *Motivo principale* usually is equivalent to what modern terminology calls the first theme; the *Second Motivo* + *Uscita* to the transition; the *Passo di Mezzo* + *Periodo di Cadenza* to the secondary theme; and the *Coda* to the closing section. However, one cannot automatically assume such correlations between Galeazzi's concepts and modern terminology. In particular, sometimes what Galeazzi would label as the *Coda* presents a lyrical passage that is so substantial that it arguably could serve as what modern terminology would regard as the secondary theme. Furthermore, when the *Passo di Mezzo* is omitted (as in the layout of Example 2b), what modern terminology refers to as the secondary theme could consist of the *Periodo di Cadenza* alone.

It should be underlined that contrary to what is often wrongly assumed, what Galeazzi calls the *Passo di Mezzo* is *not* the same as the entire secondary

theme group. Rather, the *Passo di Mezzo* normally corresponds only to the first segment of what modern terminology regards as the secondary theme group. Nor was Galeazzi alone in dividing what now is called the secondary theme group into two separate sections, consisting of a lyrical passage followed by a cadential passage. Indeed, as suggested by the chart in Table 2, most music theorists prior to 1850 likewise tended to parse what is now called the secondary theme of a sonata exposition into two distinct segments.⁷

modern terminology	first theme (or primary theme, or main theme)	transition	secondary theme (or subordinate theme).	
			(lyrical part of secondary theme)	(active, cadential part of secondary theme)
Neubauer (c. 1783)	<i>Thema</i>	<i>Transition</i>	<i>Haupt Gedanke</i>	<i>Beschluß</i>
Galeazzi (1796)	<i>Motivo principale</i>	<i>Secondo Motivo + Uscita</i>	<i>Passo di Mezzo</i>	<i>Periodo di Cadenza</i>
Momigny (1806)	1 ^{re} période	2 ^e période	3 ^e période	4 ^e période
Reicha (1824)	<i>Motif</i>	<i>Pont</i>	<i>Seconde idée mère</i>	<i>Idées accessoires</i>
Birnbach (1827)	<i>Thema</i>	(weiter zu gehen)	<i>zweiter Thema</i>	<i>Durchzug</i>
Marx (1837–1847)	<i>Satz</i>	<i>Gang-like Satz</i>	<i>Seitensatz</i>	<i>Gang</i>
Czerny (1839, 1848)	principal subject	continuation	middle subject	continuation
Lobe (1850)	<i>Themagruppe</i>	<i>Uebergangsgruppe</i>	<i>Gesanggruppe</i>	<i>Schlussgruppe</i>

Table 2: Chart comparing terminology for parsing sonata-form expositions used by theorists prior to 1850

⁷ With some of these theorists, the section depicted in the final column of Table 2 is followed by an appended passage that is usually equivalent to what many today would label as the “closing section.” For instance, as noted above, Galeazzi refers to such a passage as a *Coda*. Others of these theorists, on the other hand, combine this appendix and the preceding cadential passage within a single section; for instance, what Lobe calls the *Schlussgruppe* embraces what in modern terminology would be called the end of the secondary theme + closing section.

Incidentally, the “lyrical” passage (i.e., what is analogous to the *Passo di Mezzo*) need not always be soft and gentle. For instance, this passage at times instead might be coy, playful, somber, serious, or impetuous. In almost all cases, however, this passage conveys sentiments that could be understood as somewhat more personal and intimate than what is found in the energetic passages that surround it.

Neukomm's Exposition

Let's now consider how the notions of Koch and Galeazzi could be applied to the exposition of Neukomm's Sonata. Ex. 1 parses this exposition using Koch's concepts and terminology (Ex. 1a provides an annotated score, and Ex. 1b presents a chart of the from).⁸ As depicted here, the *Hauptperiode* (mm. 1–26) that opens the exposition involves a succession of a *Grundabsatz*, a *Quintabsatz*, a *Quintabsatz* in the key of V, and finally a greatly expanded *Schlußsatz*. Such a *Satz* succession was mentioned by Koch as standard for a movement's first *Hauptperiode*. The *Hauptperiode* is then followed by a lengthy *Nebenperiode* (mm. 27–43), which opens with two lyrical *Sätze* that together form a parallel period (mm. 27–34). The ending of this lyrical parallel period overlaps with an energetic appendix (mm. 34–43) that wraps up the exposition.

Exposition (mm. 1–42) from Neukomm, Sonata in G

Hauptperiode 1

Grundabsatz (phrase that ends on I in mid-section)
Hauptsatz
f (opening arpeggio) *dolce*

Quintabsatz (phrase that ends on V)
rauschend, Verbindungssatz
 5 (Prinner, leading to HC) *f* *p*
 V

⁸ The annotations in parentheses in the middle of the staves in Ex. 1a indicate use of some of the standard Galant schemata. Regarding these schemata, see Gjerdingen 2007; Rice 2014; and Hartmann 2018a and b.

Quintabsatz in V (phrase that ends on V/V)

cantabile

Schlußsatz (phrase that ends with PAC, greatly expanded)

rauschend

PAC in V

Nebenperiode

Quintabsatz in V

cantabile

Schlußsatz

V/V

appendix
rauschend

f f (*Quietenza*)

PAC in V

8va
cresc.

8va

Example 1a: Annotated quotation (piano part only)

m. 1	5	9	13	27	31	(34)
HAUPTPERIODE				NEBENPERIODE		
Grundabsatz	Quintabsatz	Quintabsatz in V	Schlußsatz	Grundabsatz	Schlußsatz	appendix
Hauptsatz	rauschend Verbindungssatz	cantabile	rauschend	cantabile		rauschend

The Satz-succession within this *Hauptperiode* follows the standard layout described by Koch.

Example 1b: Chart parsing the form using Koch’s terminology

The charts of Fig. 3 parse this exposition according to Galeazzi’s concepts and terminology. As suggested here, there are two plausible ways of interpreting

the passage of mm. 9–12. In one sense, this *dolce* passage could be understood as a *Passo di mezzo* that begins (if somewhat tentatively) in the key of V and then links to the ensuing *Periodo di Cadenza* (Fig. 3a). On the other hand, notice that the passage of mm. 9–12 is harmonically unstable, moving through a harmonic progression based on a *fonte* (see Ex. 1a above) before settling in the key of D. As a result, this passage arguably lies in the middle of a larger motion to the key of V, so that the dominant key does not firmly arrive until m. 13. Accordingly, mm. 9–12 might be better understood as an *Uscita*—a departure toward a closely related key—ending with a half-cadential break that is followed immediately by a *Periodo di Cadenza* (Fig. 3b). Again, since the *Passo di Mezzo* is optional, it is quite possible for the *Uscita* to be followed directly by a *Periodo di Cadenza*, as proposed by this alternate parsing (cf. Fig. 2b above).

Charts proposing parsings based on Galeazzi's terminology

m. 1	5	9	13	27
Motivo principale	Secondo Motivo + Uscita di a' Toni più analoghi	Passo di Mezzo	Periodo di cadenza	Coda

Figure 3a: Parsing in which *Passo di Mezzo* enters in m. 9 (cf. Fig. 2a)

m. 1	5	9	13	27
Motivo principale	Secondo Motivo	Uscita di a' Toni più analoghi	Periodo di cadenza (optional <i>Passo di Mezzo</i> omitted)	Coda

The lyrical—but harmonically unstable—passage of mm. 9–12 could be interpreted either as a *Passo di Mezzo* or as an *Uscita*.

Figure 3b: Parsing in which optional *Passo di Mezzo* is omitted (cf. Fig. 2b)

The Secondary Theme

The elements of cadence, key, affect, and texture are conjoined in modern approaches to sonata form so as to posit separate theme zones. It is these theme zones, rather than the disparate elements that give rise to them, that tend to be regarded by modern approaches to sonata form as the fundamental building blocks of the structure. The criteria typically used in determining the secondary theme group within an exposition could be summarized as follows:

1. The secondary theme group consists of a clearly defined segment that appears in the secondary key and that leads to a grand perfect authentic cadence in this key.⁹
2. This theme group is preceded by a textural demarcation that separates it from the preceding transition section. Ideally, this demarcation involves a medial caesura—that is, a short pause in the melody, accompaniment, or both that follows a cadence. The cadence that comes before the medial caesura normally is a half cadence, though in special circumstances it may also appear in the guise of an authentic cadence (providing that this authentic cadence is less powerful than the one that appears at the end of the secondary theme).
3. The secondary theme group usually begins in a relatively “tuneful” manner, which ideally contrasts with the transition that precedes it as well as with the movement’s opening theme.

There is a general agreement that these factors listed above help establish the presence and location of a secondary theme group. Yet there is less consensus regarding which of these factors are essential to defining a passage as a secondary theme and which are optional, or how these factors should be weighted or interpreted. This in turn often leads to analytic disputes regarding the location of the secondary theme.

For instance, music theorists frequently differ over whether the presence of a medial caesura is required for a secondary theme to be established, or whether a weaker demarcation would suffice.¹⁰ And if an exposition includes multiple half-cadential breaks, each followed by a theme in the secondary key, which half-cadential break should be interpreted as the true medial caesura?

⁹ This perfect authentic cadence is equivalent to what many people today call the “EEC” (Essential Expositional Closure); see Hepokoski; Darcy 1997 and 2006; and Hepokoski 2021.

¹⁰ Disagreements regarding the necessity of a medial caesura for establishing a secondary theme group have been a particular source of contention between the form-function theory advocated by William Caplin and the Sonata Theory developed by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy; see, for instance, discussions in Caplin, Martin 2016 and Hepokoski 2016. Although the onset of what formal-function theory labels as the “subordinate theme function” is always somehow demarcated, the degree of textural demarcation required for establishing the onset of the subordinate theme is substantially less than what is tolerated according to Sonata Theory; see also discussion in Burstein 2020, p. 116.

Likewise, although most people agree that during the exposition the secondary theme group must appear in the secondary key, it is not always so clear what counts as being “in” this key. For instance, what if a demarcated passage begins in a harmonically unstable manner, but then concludes firmly in the secondary key? Should such a passage be regarded as modulating toward the secondary key in the manner of a transition, or as beginning in the secondary key in the manner of a secondary theme? Disagreements also might arise regarding whether its tuneful, contrasting nature should either be privileged or be considered entirely optional when determining the presence of a secondary theme, and if the former, whether a specific passage is sufficiently tuneful or contrasting for what is expected of a secondary theme.

These and similar issues have a bearing on trying to determine the location of the secondary theme within the exposition of Neukomm’s Sonata. Fig. 4 proposes one reasonable way to parse this exposition. According to this parsing, the energetic passage of mm. 5–8 serves as transition that ends with a half-cadential caesura marked by V of the home key, thereby forming a “second-level default medial caesura.”¹¹ This is followed by a large antecedent-plus-continuation in mm. 9–26. Note that this antecedent-plus-continuation meets most of the criteria mentioned above for establishing a secondary theme: it follows a transition that concludes with a medial caesura; it could be understood as beginning in the secondary key and ultimately leading to a perfect authentic cadence in this key; and it begins in a tuneful manner whose character contrasts with that of the main theme as well as with the active transition that immediately precedes it.

A potential objection to this parsing relates to an issue mentioned in relation to Fig. 3b above. Namely, since the passage of mm. 9–12 is harmonically unstable and modulatory, one could argue that this passage has not yet fully arrived at the secondary key of D major. As such, these measures might be better understood as concluding with what is known as a “medial caesura declined.”¹²

¹¹ A “first-level default medial caesura” is a cadential break that within the exposition follows a half cadence in the secondary key; a “second-level default medial caesura” follows a half cadence in the home key; and a “third-level default medial caesura” follows a (relatively weak) perfect authentic cadence in the secondary key. These categories are explained at length in Hepokoski; Darcy 2006.

¹² Regarding the medial caesura declined, see Hepokoski; Darcy 2006, p. 45–47.

With a medial caesura declined, a potential medial caesura is followed not by the secondary theme as expected. Instead, it is followed by a continuation of the transition, leading to what is ultimately understood as the actual medial caesura.

m. 1	5	9	13	27	31	34
<i>Grundabsatz</i>	<i>Quintabsatz</i>	<i>Quintabsatz in V + Schlußsatz</i>		<i>Grundabsatz + Schlußsatz, appendix</i>		
main theme	transition energetic	secondary theme lyrical, energetic		closing section lyrical, energetic		
		MC	PAC		PAC	

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering with a lyrical (but harmonically unstable) passage in the dominant key, following a half-cadential break on V of the home key (= 2nd-level default MC).

Figure 4: Parsing of exposition in which secondary theme enters in m. 9, after a second-level default MC (MC = medial caesura; PAC = perfect authentic cadence)

A reading that interprets the appearance of a medial caesura declined is presented in Fig. 5. According to this interpretation, mm. 9–12 continue the modulation toward the dominant key area. This modulatory phrase concludes with a half cadence in the key of V followed by a brief pause, thereby creating a “first-level default medial caesura.” The onset of the secondary theme thus would coincide with the energetic cadential passage that arrives in m. 13. As suggested above, a cantabile opening for a secondary theme group is regarded by many musicians as optional (much as Galeazzi noted that a *Passo di mezzo* is optional). As such, it would be plausible to consider the secondary theme here as beginning with an energetic cadential passage, much as is depicted in Fig. 5 (cf. Fig. 3b above).

m. 1	5	9	13	27	31	(34)
<i>Grundabsatz</i>	<i>Quintabsatz</i> + <i>Quintabsatz in V</i>	<i>Schlußsatz</i>		<i>Grundabsatz + Schlußsatz, appendix</i>		
main theme	transition energetic, lyrical but unstable	secondary theme energetic		closing section lyrical, energetic		
	(MC declined!)	MC	PAC		PAC	

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering with an energetic passage in the dominant key, following a half-cadential break on V of the secondary key (= 1st-level default MC).

Figure 5: Parsing of exposition in which secondary theme enters in m. 13, after a first-level default MC

On the other hand, those who do feel that its contrasting, lyrical nature is the most important feature of a secondary theme group might instead prefer to read this exposition in the manner parsed in Fig. 6. With this proposed reading, the medial caesura is preceded by a perfect authentic cadence, thereby yielding a “third-level default medial caesura.”¹³ In support of this interpretation, notice that the harmonically stable, cantabile passage of mm. 27–34 is far longer and more substantial than the previous cantabile passage of mm. 9–12, and it serves as a much more convincing counterweight to the main theme.¹⁴

m. 1	5	9	13	27	31	(34)
<i>Grundabsatz</i>	<i>Quintabsatz</i>	<i>Quintabsatz</i> in V + <i>Schlußsatz</i>		<i>Grundabsatz</i> + <i>Schlußsatz</i> , appendix		
main theme		transition lyrical but unstable, energetic		secondary theme lyrical, energetic		
PAC/MC				PAC		

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering with substantial, harmonically stable lyrical passage in the dominant key, following a perfect authentic cadence (= 3rd-level default MC).

Figure 6: Parsing of exposition in which secondary theme enters in m. 27, after a third-level default MC

Beethoven's *Eroica*

The issues involved with locating the secondary theme group within the exposition from Neukomm's Sonata in G are by no means unique. I close by examining a more famous work in which the location of the secondary theme has long been the source of contention among music theorists: namely, the first

¹³ Regarding the third-level default medial caesura, see footnote 11 above. See also Hepokoski; Darcy 2006, p. 27–28, and Burstein 2010. Note that with the parsing presented in Fig. 6, what is labeled as the secondary theme corresponds with what in Koch's terminology would be regarded as a *Nebenperiode* and in what Galeazzi's terminology would be regarded as the *Coda* (cf. Ex. 1 and Fig. 3). Again, although this is less typical, it is certainly possible, as explained earlier.

¹⁴ Incidentally, with all of the parsings of Figs. 4–6, what is labeled as the secondary theme in the exposition does not reappear during the recapitulation: other than the main theme, the only earlier material that reappears (albeit transposed) during the recapitulation is from the retransition at the end of the development (cf. mm. 85–90 and 131–135) and the final cadential flourish at the end of the exposition (cf. mm. 38–43 and 135–140). Thus, comparing the exposition to the recapitulation in Neukomm's Sonata would not help clarify the location of its secondary theme group.

movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony.¹⁵ Published discussions identify the secondary theme in the exposition of Beethoven's movement as arising in one of three different places. Curiously, these three different readings are similar in significant ways to the three parsings of Neukomm's Sonata depicted in Figs. 4–6 above.

Figs. 7a–c present these three possible parsings of Beethoven's exposition. The reading shown in Fig. 7a in many ways is parallel to that of Fig. 4 of the Neukomm Sonata. That is, much like in Fig. 4, what is labeled as the secondary theme in Fig. 7a begins in a lyrical manner; follows what could fairly be regarded as a medial caesura; and leads to a firm perfect authentic cadence in the key of V.¹⁶ Also like what is labeled as the secondary theme in Fig. 4, what is labeled as the secondary theme in Fig. 7a begins in a harmonically unstable manner.

Owing to its harmonic instability, it may be argued that the passage of mm. 45–56 from the Beethoven is thus better understood as continuation of the transition—that is, as a caesura fill—with the entrance of the actual secondary theme delayed until m. 57, as is depicted in Figure 7b.¹⁷ Notice that in a manner similar to what is shown in the reading of Fig. 5 above, with the reading of Fig. 7b the secondary theme begins immediately with an energetic cadential passage. In other words, in the parsing of Fig. 7b, the secondary theme lacks the lyrical opening that many music theorists regard as a decidedly ancillary, optional feature of a second theme group (much as Galeazzi regarded the *Passo di Mezzo* as optional).

¹⁵ The conflicting readings of the placement of the secondary theme within the exposition of this movement are examined in Horne 2006; and Drabkin 2020, p. 82–86.

¹⁶ Among those who favor a reading of the secondary theme group as entering (if somewhat tentatively) in m. 45 of Beethoven's movement are Hepokoski; Darcy 2006, p. 143—who read mm. 46–57 as "S"⁰—and Horne 2006, p. 142–144.

¹⁷ Among those who favor a reading of the secondary theme group as entering in m. 57 are Tovey 1944, p. 222; Webster 2001; and Caplin 1991, p. 37–41. Regarding the concept of the caesura fill, see Hepokoski; Darcy 2006, p. 40–45, especially regarding what they call the "caesura-fill of the 'juggernaut' type."

*Three possible parsings of exposition from Ludwig van Beethoven's
Symphony in E-flat ("Eroica"), Op. 55/I*

m. 3	37	45	57	83	99
main theme	transition energetic	secondary theme lyrical (but unstable), energetic	closing section lyrical, energetic		
	MC		PAC		PAC

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering with a lyrical (but harmonically unstable) passage in the dominant key, following a half-cadential break.

Figure 7a: Parsing of exposition in which lyrical but unstable secondary theme enters in m. 45 (cf. Fig. 4)

m. 3	37	45	57	83	99
main theme	transition energetic, lyrical but unstable (caesura fill)	secondary theme energetic	closing section lyrical, energetic		
	MC		PAC		PAC

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering in a harmonically stable manner with an energetic passage in the dominant key, following a half-cadential break that is extended via a caesura fill.

Figure 7b: Parsing of exposition in which energetic secondary theme enters in m. 45, caesura fill (cf. Fig. 5)

m. 3	37	45	57	83	99	145
main theme	transition energetic, lyrical but unstable, energetic	secondary theme lyrical, energetic	closing section/ retransition			
	PAC/MC			PAC		

Secondary theme group interpreted as entering with substantial, harmonically stable lyrical passage in the dominant key, following a perfect authentic cadence.

Figure 7c: Parsing of exposition in which secondary theme enters in m. 45, after third-level default MC (cf. Fig. 6)

On the other hand, those who feel that a lyrical opening is a crucial distinguishing feature of a secondary theme might instead prefer the parsing depicted in Fig. 7c. According to this reading, what is interpreted as the secondary theme follows a third-level default medial caesura—that is, a caesura preceded by a perfect authentic cadence in the secondary key (cf. Fig. 6 above). In support of this interpretation, note that the passage that begins in m. 83

presents the most extended lyrical passage of the exposition, one that could be understood to provide a counterweight to the movement's main theme.¹⁸

In all, with the exposition from the first movement of Beethoven's *Eroica*, as well as with the one from the Neukomm Sonata movement, the features that establish what modern terminology labels as the secondary theme group seem spread out, rather than being isolated within a single passage. Attempting to locate a secondary theme group in these expositions nonetheless can be helpful to the extent that they promote sensitivity to features that lie at the heart of the dramatic dialectic that frames these expositions. On the other hand, a potential risk that accompanies such an attempt is that it might discourage recognizing alternate viable groupings, while downplaying musical features that work against the proposed grouping.

To be sure, you might personally strongly favor one of the parsings shown in Figs. 4–6 or shown in Figs. 7a–c. But even if you feel that one of these readings is preferable, can you nonetheless see how the others are at least plausible? Too stringently insisting on just one of the possible parsings here might unduly limit the interpretive possibilities. Once one examines the various features that support the reading of a secondary theme group in one place or the other, the attempt to locate the secondary theme group has served its heuristic purpose. After this, arguably little if any further benefit attaches to making a final decision regarding this theme group's precise location.

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¹⁸ Analyses that suggest the secondary theme group Beethoven's movement enters in m. 83 may be found in Kretzschmar 1890, p. 83; Reizler 1938, p. 255–258; Sipe 1998, p. 97; and many writings of popular musicology, such as James 2018.

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