

Structural Innovations in the First Movement of Beethoven's Sonata W. O. O. 47 No. 2 in F minor *Kurfürsten* (1783)

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Abstract: *The article discusses the use of original compositional methods in the first movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Sonata W. O. O. 47 No. 2 in F minor "Kurfürsten", adopted to innovate the sonata on a structural level, but also to offer it a greater variety of characters. The alternation of slow sections with fast ones within the movement, the opening of the work with a slow introduction, repeated in the recapitulation, which was first used by the composer at the age of 13, as an absolute premiere in music history, gave rise, years later, to a masterpiece of the 18th century, the Sonata Op. 13 in C minor "Pathétique", one of the best known, innovative and impressive works written by him, but also to another important and creative work from the beginning of the 19th century, the Sonata Op. 31 No. 2 in D minor "Tempest".*

Key-words: *works without opus number, Kurfürsten-Sonaten, innovative structure, variety of musical characters*

1. Introduction

I chose to bring to the readers' attention this less-known sonata to both academics and music lovers because I considered it to be a chronological and musical landmark of the masterpieces that will consecrate the composer as the last of the most important representatives of the classical style and the first representative of the new romantic style brought about by the change of the century. Although many analysts and performers considered the composer's countless works without an opus number (*Werke ohne Opuszahl*) to be conventional, imitative, uninteresting, and childish, they were only partially correct because the works contain numerous innovations and seeds of ideas to which the composer would later return to create the masterpieces that we all admire. Avoiding the exposure

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of these works in concerts or public recitals by performers has caused them to become mostly unknown by music lovers, even though they are valuable works that have the potential to please any audience fully. Johann Baptist Cramer did not exaggerate when he noted the creative potential of young Beethoven, stating about the *Kurfürsten* Sonatas in *Magazin der Musik* in 1783 that they are "*an excellent composition of a young genius*" (Mauser, 2015, 18-21) and that they are worth placing next to the works of great masters such as Haydn and Mozart, his later musical masterpieces proving that he belongs to the universal compositional elite.

In his early sonatas, also known as *Kurfürsten-Sonaten*, after their dedicator, Maximilian Friedrich, the Prince-elector of Cologne, written probably during the years spent in Bonn (1782-1783), Haydn's influence is not yet traceable. On the contrary, it is to be assumed that these works were under the influence of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, passed through Beethoven's teacher, Christian Gottlob Neefe (who in 1773 had already dedicated twelve piano sonatas to Bach) but also to the members of the Mannheim School, in particular Johann Stamitz. His preference for themes formed by broken chords in the opening of Sonata No. 2 in F minor, W. O. O. 47, voice-leading in parallel motion by thirds or sixths, and sudden dynamic changes from *forte* to *piano* within the themes are frequently found in the composer's symphonies. (Mauser, 2015, 18-21)

The tempo, key signature, and meter of this sonata are as follows:

Sonata No. 2 in F minor

Larghetto maestoso/Allegro assai	F minor	4/4 / 4/4
Andante	A flat major	2/4
Presto	F minor	2/4

A common structural feature of the movements in this sonata is the kinship with the dance form from the Baroque suite, from which they distance themselves through the individualisation of the two themes and the apparent differences in character (Mauser 2015, 18-21). The first movement of this work is in sonata form with a well-defined and vigorous first theme in F minor with its characteristic dynamic swings, above mentioned, and a second cantabile theme placed in the relative major; towards the end of the exposition, a short codetta is written which closes the section, containing numerous musical figurations and sequences, with a transitional role. The development is concise and does not become a space for intense thematic labour or the kind of drama the composer got us accustomed to in his mature works. Still, numerous dynamic and character swings offer the

listener a unique experience, very different from the common practice of the time within this musical genre. The recapitulation repeats the exposition in the primary key and brings to it a short transition before the coda that concludes the first movement of this sonata.

2. Objectives

The article is aimed at discussing the structural use of a slow introduction inside the sonata form within the first movement of Beethoven's Sonata No. 2 in F minor W. O. O. 47 in a completely innovative and original way and its unexpected reappearance in the recapitulation, a practice generally associated with symphonic works and not solo piano ones. The composer's innovation consists in bringing back the slow introduction from the debut of the sonata movement at the beginning of the recapitulation in the form of a recitative. The alternation between slow and fast characterises this sonata movement, with its diversity of musical characters, which visibly distances itself from the works of its predecessors and opens the compositional path to its future masterpieces. Although the composer was only 13 years old in 1783 when he first used this structural integration, he would return to it in his first period of Viennese glory, in 1799, when he published the Sonata Op. 13 in C minor, *Pathétique* in which he masterfully developed a brilliant combination of slow and fast sections, building very diverse musical characters, but also numerous musical contrasts that highlight the characteristic Beethoven imprint. The composer will resume his idea of alternating sections in different tempi in his Sonata Op. 31, No. 2 in D minor, *Tempest*, of 1801-1802, a period in which he begins his great compositional experiments at the keyboard and his works distance themselves from the common practice of the classical era which further individualises his music and directs it to the new romantic aesthetic that began at the dawn of the new century.

He would use for the first time the concept of free improvisation highlighted using recitatives in his Sonata Op. 31, No. 2 in D minor, *Tempest*, which earned the work its association with the play of the great English playwright, William Shakespeare. (Rosen 2002, 164-178)

3. Content

The first movement of the composition is written in sonata form, where the exposition and the recapitulation are almost identical in length – the exposition has

36 bars, and the recapitulation in the primary key has 37 bars. There are many similarities between these two sections. The recapitulation (except for the recurring slow introductory section and the final coda) is identical to the exposition from a structural point of view. The slow section from the recapitulation is slightly extended, further developing the musical material from the exposition, thus offering a greater variety of characters and key changes.

The slow introduction at the beginning of the exposition brings key changes between the tonic, dominant, and subdominant and is ended with an expectant perfect cadence. Interesting to note here is the fabric of the musical writing that perfectly resembles orchestral sonorities through the presence of four-note chords and of double intervals such as thirds, respectively sixths, which are formed between the two melodic exponents. Also, the symbolic congestion of musical writing is continued in the second motif of the introduction through the double octave interval placed in the right-hand melody under a fast-paced Alberti bass formula of semiquavers, brought by the left-hand accompaniment.

N^o 2.
Larghetto maestoso. Componirt im Aller von 11 Jahren.

Sonate N^o 34.

Allegro assai.

Fig. 1. L. V. Beethoven – “Sonata No. 2 in F minor W. O. O. 47 “Kurfürsten,” first movement”, bars 1-4 and 8-12

The first theme begins forcefully in a loud dynamic, *forte*, with a vigorous downward formula in the primary key of F minor, in rapid motion, and achieves an extreme contrast of character between it and the previous musical material of the slow introduction. The first theme is theatrical and evokes anger and restlessness. It consists of a musical period of two phrases and has a length of eight bars that are perfectly symmetrical.

I note the lack of a bridge/transition section between the two main themes, its function being taken over by a quaver rest with an elliptical role on the last beat of bar 17, which also marks the beginning of the second theme.

The second theme brings different musical ideas from the ones presented in the first theme in the key of the relative major, A flat, adhering to the common practice. It evokes a gentle character and a suggestion of cantabile. It consists of a slightly longer phrase of ten bars in which symmetry is preserved. I also take note of the typical dynamic contrasts brought through the subito technique *f-pp*.



Fig. 2. L. V. Beethoven – “Sonata No. 2 in F minor W. O. O. 47 *Kurfürsten*”, first movement, bars 18-25

The conclusion of the exposition brings a rhythmic acceleration of the melodic line and an increase in tension with this musical process, but also another suggestion of orchestral sounds coming from the piano by introducing the tremolo formulas of semiquavers in the right hand, which resemble typical figuration of the string section. The exposition is concluded, adhering to the common practice, in the key of A flat major, the relative of F minor.



Fig. 3. L. V. Beethoven – “Sonata No. 2 in F minor W. O. O. 47” *Kurfürsten*”, first movement”, bars 33-36

Although the development section is concise, compared to Beethoven's usual sonata form middle sections, of only nine bars, it is made up of musical elements from both themes; it has a solid dramatic effect through its melodic outline and its ending in the key of F major, the homonym of F minor. The recapitulation repeats the exposition in the home key, with minor changes, all of them mentioned above.

Bar number	Large sections	Themes	Periods/ Stanzas	Phrases/ Sentences	Motifs/ Cells	Tonality (Modal structure)
1	Exposition (36 bars)	Slow Introduction I1(9)	P1(9)	F1(9)	4(2+2) + 4(2+2) + 1	F minor/ C major 7 B flat major/ C major 7 Cadenza
10 13 16		First Theme T1(8)	P2(8)	F2(8)	3(1+2) + 3(1+1+1) + 2(1+1)	F minor/ C major 9/ F minor/ C major 9
18 22 26		Second Theme T2(10)	P3(10)	F3(10)	4(2+2) + 4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	A b major/ E b major 7/ A b major/ E b major 7/ A b major
28 31 35		Conclusion C1(9)	P4(9)	F4(9)	3(2+1) + 4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	A b major/ Modulating/ C minor A b major/ F minor/ Modulating/ A b maj. 9/ E b major/ A b major
37 41 45	Development (9 bars)	Development theme D1(9) (T1+T2)	P5(9)	F5(9)	4(2+2) + 4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	A b major/ Modulating/ B b major/ F major
47 51 55	Recapitulation (37 bars)	Slow Introduction I2(10) with a developing character	P6(10)	F6(10)	4(2+2) + 4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	B b major/ F major/ B b major/ Modulating/ E b major/ Modulating/ C major
57 60 63		First Theme T1(8)	P7(8)	F7(8)	3(1+2) + 3(1+1+1) + 2(1+1)	F minor/ C major 9/ F minor/ C major 9

Bar number	Large sections	Themes	Periods/ Stanzas	Phrases/ Sen- tences	Motifs/ Cells	Tonality (Modal structure)
65 69 73		Second Theme T2(10)	P8(10)	F8(10)	4(2+2) + 4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	F minor/ C major 7/ F minor/ C major 7/ F minor
75		Transition (Bridge) T1v(3)	P9(9)	F9(3)	3(2+1)	A \flat major/ B \flat major/ F minor
78 82/83	Coda (6 bars)	Coda C2(6)		F10(6)	4(2+2) + 2(1+1)	F minor/ B \flat major/ C major/ F minor

Table 1. *Structural scheme of the first movement (macro-structural analysis)*
(Ştefan, 2021, Vol. 1, 69-74)

The surprising integration of a slow introduction within the first movement in sonata form inside the exposition becomes extremely interesting from the analyst's point of view and the listeners. The slow introduction thus becomes an integral structural element of the exposition. It would then be brought inside the recapitulation - an innovative concept that would be used by the composer many years later in his first movement of the Op. 13 *Pathétique* Sonata, composed between 1797-1798, published in 1799 and dedicated to Prince Lichnowsky. This became his first sonata with an opus number in which he uses a slow introduction, inspired by orchestral works, such as the symphony, and his 1793 sonata, but at the same time by J. S. Bach's music by directly quoting aspects of melody, harmony, rhythm, and polyphony of the first movement, *Sinfonia*, from Partita No. 2 in C minor, B.W.V. 826 of the great master from the Baroque.

Beethoven returned to Baroque music later in his life by writing fugues of great lengths within his piano sonatas Op. 101, Op. 106, and Op. 110, but also in his string quartets, such as *The Great Fugue*, Op. 133. Integrating slow sections within the fast ones dramatically increases the tension of the musical discourse and offers a much greater variety of characters within the sonata movement. (See Figure 1)

Komponiert 1798/99 Opus 13

Grave

147

⑪ **Allegro di molto e con brio**

Fig. 4. L. V. Beethoven – “Sonata No. 8, op. 13 in C minor “Pathétique,” first movement”, bars 1-2, 11-17

Grave. Adagio.

Sinfonia.

Fig. 5. J. S. Bach – “Partita no. 2, B.W.V. in C minor, Sinfonia”, bars 1-4

Integrating a slow introduction inside a fast movement within the sonata form is associated with orchestral works of the time rather than piano solo ones. Mozart did not use this procedure in any of his piano sonatas. He used a version of a Fantasy in a slow tempo that precedes the sonata itself in his work K 457 in C minor.

Likewise, Haydn did not use this technique in his piano sonatas. There are exceptions, however, and precedents, such as the first movement of Sonata Hob. XVI:30 in A major, in two movements, where the composer structurally integrates a slow ending section marked *Adagio*, reminiscent of the Baroque style, dating back to 1776. The introduction functions as a slow movement of the sonata or a short

improvisation, which is intended to prepare the Theme with Variations in *Tempo di Menuetto* of its second movement, and the last, which could also be viewed as a third movement, in my opinion.

Haydn's concept is not new; it was used in a well-known ensemble work by J. S. Bach, namely the Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 in G major B.W.V. 1048. Here, between the two fast movements of the work, he writes a bar with *Adagio* with two minims, the last of which has a pause above it. These minims sound A minor in first inversion and B major in root position and imply to both the conductor and performers the realisation of a short transient improvisation towards the new rapid movement, adhering to the common practice of the time, and of a different character that separates the musical expositions of the two main movements.

A similar example of an ending of a sonata movement we can find in the first movement of Haydn's Sonata Hob. XVI:16 in E flat major (a divertimento), dating from the 1750s, where, after an *Andante* section, the movement is ended in a fast tempo through an alert coda, which also functions as a transition section to the next movement.

4. Conclusion

The effect of using original compositional methods, inside the first movement of the Piano Sonata W. O. O. 47 No. 2 in F minor *Kurfürsten* by Ludwig van Beethoven brought about innovation to the sonata form and gave it greater variety of characters. The usage of this procedure for the first time in solo piano music by Beethoven at the age of 13 gave birth, years later, to a masterpiece of the 18th century, the Sonata Op. 13 in C minor *Pathétique*, one of his most famous, innovative, and impressive works, but also the remarkable work from the beginning of the 19th century, the Sonata Op. 31 No. 2 in D minor *Tempest*.

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