

In this seminar, I present my analysis of Anton Rubenstein's second piano sonata. More specifically, I analyze this piece using Carl Czerny's model described in chapter 6 of his composition primer *School of Practical Composition*. The text was published originally in 1846. Rubenstein was a contemporary of Czerny. I am curious about whether or not Czerny's model provides any new insight to the form that has not been described by his predecessors. Koch, an earlier theorist, had already modeled his *Sonatenform* which is closer to our contemporary model of sonata form, being that it is viewed as being ternary in structure. Czerny is particular in saying that the first movement of a sonata is a two part form, which could suggest that Czerny's understanding of the sonata may be too antiquated to analyze a middle, or late, Romantic sonata due to their increasing formal complexities.

The first movement consists of two parts, the first of which is repeated. Czerny uses general but definite language when explaining that the first part *must* contain:

- The principal subject
- Its continuation/amplification, together with a modulation into the nearest related key.
- The middle subject in this new key.
- A new continuation of this middle subject.
- A final melody, after which the first part thus closes in the new key, in order that the repetition of the same may follow unconstrainedly.

Czerny suggests that the first part of the sonata consists of two subjects, each of which is followed by supplementary material. The first part is concluded in the key that is modulated to during the passage bridging the principal subject and the middle subject.

Czerny's observations suggest that every first part must contain these sections, however by stating the essential first part components, he does not specify whether or not that this is exclusively what the first part must be composed of. Czerny is less definite about the second part. It consists of:

- A development of an existing idea, or a new idea, passing through several keys and eventually returning to the original key.
- The principal subject and its supplementary material in an abridged shape and so modulating in such that the middle subject reappears in the tonic key.
- The section retains its tonic characteristic and then closes.

Czerny suggests, “Like as in a romance, a novel, or a dramatic poem, if the entire work shall be successful and preserve its unity, the necessary component parts are: first, and exposition of the principal idea and of the different characters, then the protracted complication of events, and lastly the surprising catastrophe and the satisfactory conclusion: -- even so, the first part of the sonata-movement forms the exposition, the second part the complication, and the return of the first part into the original key produces, lastly, that perfect satisfaction which is justly expected from every work of art. This property it is, which so highly distinguishes this form of composition above all others at present existing, and in which all genuine master-pieces of modern instrumental music...”(34).

Although my original hypothesis suggested that Czerny’s binary understanding of sonata form may appear to be dated in comparison to Marx’s, and our contemporary, model, Czerny uses key vocabulary to suggest the opposite. The first of the sections is referred to by Czerny as the *exposition*. The beginning of the second part is referred to by Czerny as a *development*. Czerny’s synthesis of the sonata model is focused on its function as a balanced body of art, rather than a highly developed binary form.

Czerny’s discussion of the principal motive is brief. According to Czerny, the material can vary in its emotional content: from mild to energetic. It can consist of developable material in the form of a melody, short figure, or series of chords. This could be Czerny attempting to generalize not just principal motives, but all introductory material heard in sonata form;

including both slow introductions and sonatas that begin with the principal motive. This sonata begins with the principal subject. Rubenstein, however, presents the principal subject in a way that ambiguates how much of the presented material is the principal motive. The first cadence takes place in measure eight. It is a half cadence, which proposes the idea that the subject is an idea that is not complete, and is in need of development. The left hand figuration, however, is present until measure forty. I postulate that the principal subject is the first eight measures of the piece because of its reintroduction following the modulatory section. Rubenstein, however, reuses the left hand figure consistently for the next thirty-two bars while varying the right hand material to create the amplified effect suggested by Czerny.

Harmonically, these measures utilize primarily tonic and dominant functioning chords. The piece begins to modulate to E-flat major, which is the expected tonal destination at measure twenty-five. The piece unexpectedly returns to C minor in measure thirty-two where material from the principal subject is accompanied by a static c minor sonority in the right hand. Another unexpected event takes place in measure forty-one when the piece modulates to D flat major. What, at first glance, appears to be a Neapolitan sonority is actually an extended focus on D flat. C minor modulated to for a third time in measure forty-seven where a string of passing chords follows. Bars forty-nine and fifty include two unusual chords: A major progressing to Bb major. I believe Rubenstein is continuing to use half step chromaticism to articulate his unique harmonic vocabulary, however the choice of A major could allude to a Neapolitan relationship that is audible at various points during the piece. A unique half cadence concludes this portion of the first part: A diminished to G major.

Czerny speaks briefly about the role and what one should expect from a middle subject. The middle subject should consist of a new idea which consists of “moving or brilliant figures” that end with a cadence (34). The middle subject presents a unique contrast to what one would expect from a second sonata theme. One would expect a second theme to exhibit gentler qualities when compared to the first theme; however, after abruptly modulating from C minor to the relative Eb major, the middle subject consists of rising chords with an initial forte marking. Although the focus on a major key does convey an objectively more pleasant sound when compared to the principal subject, the middle subject compensates in strength by means of its dynamic value. The middle subject is also rather brief in comparison to the amplified material, lasting only eight measures of the fifty-six total measures of this section. The chorale texture, which provides a stark contrast when compared to the arpeggiated and rapid scalar material related to the principal subject, comprises the entirety of this section.

The harmony begins to broaden at this point of the piece. Mediant and submediant passing chords begin to emerge as a vehicle that maintains the forward trajectory of the piece. Rubenstein experiments with unresolved secondary harmonies as well. In more of a varied harmonic scheme is more essential in this section of the piece due to the largely static rhythmic planning of the chorale. The harmony, nevertheless, stays grounded in E-flat major which is expected of this part of the form. The middle subject and its supplemental material come to a close in a submediant to dominant half cadence in bar 121, which parallels the cadence found at the end of the principal subjects amplification. Overall, the middle subject consists of equal parts expected and unexpected material. While presenting a contrasting idea, both in terms of its texture and sonorities, it does not contain any brilliant passages that are typical of a middle

subject according to Czerny. It does however present a familiar submediant to dominant half cadence which also marked the end of the principal subject's supplementary material.

The final melody may be the most interesting component of the first part. Czerny suggests that the final melody should conclude the first part in the relative key and prepare the section for its final cadence and a repeat to the beginning of the form (34). The first observation one might make when listening to the piece is that it does not repeat any of its parts. This is a deviation from Czerny's model. The final melody does function typically, however, due to its cadence in E-flat major, the relative key to C minor and the tonal center that began this leg of the first part. The length of the final melody, however, is remarkably short in comparison to what is expected of a sonata's closing material. The length of this section could be argued to start in a number of places, however I identified the final melody to be located at measure 122. This suggests that the final melody is only seven measures in length. In the case of this particular sonata, I find that both the continuation of the middle subject and the final melody display qualities expected of a final melody, and that the entire section functions as closing material. Czerny's first part model consists of five individual components, which splits what is contemporarily referred to as the closing section into two parts, forcing the analysis into labeling a final melody. In reality, the final melody is a continuation of the same chorale texture that was introduced in the second part. Until its truncation, it is an exact textural, and nearly harmonic, copy of the material found in measure ninety through ninety-eight.

Czerny provides a less rigid model for the second part of the piece. Czerny uses the term "development," which would later become a term used in the widely accepted contemporary sonata model. Czerny's expectations of a development section are nebulous: sometimes the piece

will revisit previously stated themes, and other times the piece will explore a new theme (34). Rubenstein begins the second part in the parallel E-flat minor, where the principal subject is reintroduced. The material used from the principal subject navigates through a rapid progression of tonal centers over the course of measures 129 through 160: E-flat minor, G-flat major, B-flat minor, B minor, C minor, D-flat major, D major, E-flat major, and C-minor to conclude the use of principal subject material. Rubenstein initially sets the expectation for modulation by thirds, chromatic or otherwise. The modulations, however, begin to display a half step relationship leading up until the original C-minor which ushers in the next portion of the second part.

The next material used, which occurs from measures 161 through 192, is first introduced as an amplification of the principal subject. This section consists of zig-zagging arpeggios that emphasize tonic and dominant chords over a sometimes deceptive bass. This section shares the same quality of abrupt modulations as the previous section: C minor, F minor, D-flat major, and D-flat minor before the first new idea in the development is introduced. The progression of modulations does not have as clear of a trajectory as the first section, however Rubenstein establishes more of a sense of stability due to the extended nature of each modulation when compared to the previous section.

Following this section is the first new idea introduced since the first part. Lasting from measure 193 until 208. It vaguely resembles the preceding material, however its rhythmic profile and unique parallelisms between both hands constitutes its identity as a unique idea. It quickly modulates to A-flat minor in a series of descending dominant and tonic arpeggios. This section appears to be a logical successor to the amplification of the principal subject because of its

function as a means of slowing the harmonic rhythm and overall pacing of the piece: almost like a gradient to smooth the transition into the following material.

The middle subject makes a reappearance from measure 209 until 256. Unlike the principal subject's development, which is followed by its amplification, the middle subject does not include its supplementary material. In comparison to the business of the preceding material, the relative sparseness of this section provides a natural contrast. This section explores half step modulations similarly to the principal subject. It begins in A-flat minor as an extension of the previous material. It then modulates to A major, then A minor. The A minor tonal center continues into the following passage.

Rubenstein introduces the second new idea of the development section from measures 257 until 268. This section is uniquely marked by a change from triple to duple meter. Surprisingly, because of the chorale phrasing, this metric change does not seem abrupt. An extended emphasis on B dominant hints at the idea of modulating to E, one of the two key centers Rubenstein had not explored over the course of the piece thus far. This new idea elides with material that appears to be a variation of the middle subject which has been repurposed to function as a transitional passage reintroducing C minor. Rubenstein follows the B dominant sonority with a B fully diminished chord, directing the tonality of the piece back toward C minor. This section continues with a series of cadenza like dominant arpeggios.

Czerny makes a special effort to talk about modulations in the development of the second part. He writes, "But he must, to a certain extent, avoid the original key of the piece, and that of its dominant, so as not to dwell in them for any length of time, or to employ them for any considerable idea, because they have been sufficiently used in the first part" (36). Rubenstein not

only avoids the dominant, but demonstrates his understanding of the dominant's power over the tonality of the piece, according to Czerny. Rubenstein Modulates to virtually every possible tonal center. The only two that he avoids are E and G. In the chaos of this section, Rubenstein takes special care to not undermine the impact of the return to C minor by means of mentioning the dominant.

This, however, is somewhat voided by the recurrence of C minor in this section. During the development of the principal subject, which begins in E-flat minor, Rubenstein uses a chain of third and half step related modulations which eventually end on C minor. The C minor tonal center, albeit brief, is longer in comparison to its preceding key centers. Perhaps Rubenstein was also aware of this and reintroduced C minor as a purposeful deviation. The use of C minor in this section is not as impactful in this section, however, because of the preceding rapid modulations. It is a deformation, nonetheless.

It is at this point that the principal subject returns in the tonic key of C minor. A common theme amongst reintroduced elements in this section, however, is a non-verbatim restatement of their original state. Although similar, Rubenstein includes a spacious C minor drone that changes the lonely quality of the original statement of the principal subject. Bearing this in mind, this piece takes a somewhat *ritornello* approach to this portion. Themes are introduced in a recognizable enough fashion, however they are practically always varied and seldom stated in proportion to their occurrence in the first part. In this case, the principal subject is modified to include an extended passage of barely functioning chords. Dominants of Bb, Eb, C, F, A, and D are strung together in an *unorthodox* fashion. I suspect this is a reflection of his identity as a Russian composer, despite his heavy German influence.

The first reappearance of the amplification of the principal subject follows for just four bars. Interestingly, it strongly emphasizes F minor. One could make the argument that the piece does, in fact, modulate to F minor here because of the use of D-flats in measure 345 and E naturals in measure 350. One counter to that argument is the C minor arpeggios in the preceding measures. E naturals would be expected in the event of a true modulation, however a minor five to one cadence could be a reflection of the modal influence of Russian music.

Truncating the previous material is an entirely new idea. To the ear, its function appears to be a means of building a unique sense of tension. Its harmony consists of an F-sharp fully diminished seventh chord followed by C minor. F-sharp does imply G strongly enough to lack the resolution, however the tritone relationship between F-sharp and C is particularly striking. This section could, perhaps, be interpreted as a variation of the first new idea introduced in the development. This hypothesis is further strengthened by the secondary dominant to tonic chord progressions throughout this section. However, I committed to giving this section its only label due to its unique rhythmic profile.

The middle subject's next appearance follows. It and its supplementary material return in a ritornello style fashion, where the theme is reintroduced, but the supplement is significantly shortened. The most striking atypical quality of this section is its abrupt shift to C major. Rubenstein has proven his treatment of interchangeable minor and major, however a modulation in this portion of the piece, according to Czerny, is not expected. The middle subject first appears in E-flat major, and minor sonatas have a strong shift of emotion when the second theme returns in the tonic. Rubenstein deprives the listener of this effect and, instead, opts to restate the theme in a major key, which has a similar effect to its original statement. The final melody, as discussed

earlier, blends into the middle subject group and cadences in preparation for the following material.

Although all of the components of the first part have been stated, Rubenstein reintroduces the amplification of the principal subject in the recently established key of C major. This has a similar effect as the transition into the second part due to the reintroduction of material in the parallel mode. In this case, C major is the tonal center of material that was originally in C minor. In the development, E-flat minor was the tonal center of the preceding E-flat major. The C major tonality is short lived in this section, lasting only three of this part's thirty-two measures. Rubenstein varies the rhythm in this section by opting to use triplets for its beginning. It does, however, transition back into the material first heard in measure forty-nine. The harmony returns intact where we see the reappearance of the peculiar passing chords that, on the page, appear as tertiary dominants. This section prepares the piece for its final cadence by reiterating tonic and dominant seventh sonorities.

Unexpectedly, the piece returns back to the second new idea from the development that introduced a meter change. In this context, the section functions as a cadenza that provides a textural contrast to the rapidly moving material before it. This section spends its entire lifespan in a dominant sonority. Interestingly, the cadenza ends with a chord spelled F, B natural, and Eb. If respelled, this chord could be interpreted as a number of sonorities. A B major triad with a flatted fifth, a rootless G diminished chord with a flatted thirteenth, or an F half diminished seventh without its third just to name the most likely chords. It is interesting to see this chord without any contextual resolution. I suspect it to be a B triad with a major third and diminished fifth as a stylistic substitution for a traditional diminished seventh.

The final cadence, marked presto, has striking similarities to the new idea first heard in measure 353. It has the descending passing arpeggios that point in the direction of the dominant in preparation for the final cadence. The strength of the cadence in this piece, however, is not achieved by its harmony, but rather by its volume. There are dominant sonorities audible throughout this section, however, the penultimate and antepenultimate measures emphasize the tonic exclusively. One, at the point of the final cadence, would expect a dominant sonority preceding the final tonic. Rubenstein omits this and ends the piece with double forte dynamics. I do not find the cadence any less effective because of this, which brings into question the idea of factors that are more important than harmony in constructing a cadence using common practice period principles.