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Maverick Harrold

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UNO Honors Program Capstone Project

Maverick Harrold

Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor Op. 58: A Structural Analysis

This project has been over two years in the making. Since I first began working on this sonata in the spring of 2021, I never knew how far it would take me. Turns out, I would play this piece in multiple competitions, in multiple recitals, and culminating in the entire performance of this work to complete my senior degree recital. I will always remember the thousands of hours of work and preparation to play this sonata, and it was well worth it.

This project will provide a background to the composition of this piece, and a brief history of the composer, as well as a short history and study of sonata allegro form. The main goal of this project is to look in-depth at the structural analysis of Sonata No. 3 as a whole and its four distinct movements, and to discover all the unique and musically interesting components.

Frédéric François Chopin was a renowned Polish composer and pianist of the Romantic era, known for his innovative and emotional compositions for solo piano. Born on March 1st, 1810, in Żelazowa Wola, Poland, Chopin began his musical education at a young age with his mother and later enrolled at the Warsaw Conservatory of Music. He quickly gained a reputation as a prodigious talent and began giving public performances in his teenage years.

In 1830, Chopin left his homeland due to political turmoil and settled in Paris, which became his new home for the rest of his life. Paris proved to be fertile ground for Chopin's creativity, as he composed some of his most iconic works during this time, such as his Preludes, Mazurkas, and Nocturnes. He also gained a following among the Parisian elite, who appreciated

his refined and elegant playing style. Unfortunately, Chopin's health began to decline due to tuberculosis, which ultimately led to his untimely death at the age of 39 in 1849. Despite his short life, Chopin's music has had a lasting impact on the world of classical music.

Frédéric Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, is one of the composer's most compelling and technically demanding works for piano. Composed in 1844, the sonata is evidence of Chopin's mastery of the piano and his innovative approach to musical structure and form.

The sonata is comprised of four movements, each with its distinct character and mood. The first movement, marked *Allegro maestoso*, begins with a solemn and grandiose introduction that sets the tone for the rest of the piece. This movement is in Sonata Allegro Form and cycles through many different emotions and motifs. The second movement, marked *Scherzo*, is in ternary form (ABA) and is a lively and playful dance that showcases Chopin's virtuosic pianism. The “B” section is a more introspective and somber contrast to the dazzling runs in the “A” sections. The third movement, marked *Largo*, is a mournful and introspective nocturne that explores the expressive possibilities of the piano's sonorities. The final movement, a Rondo (ABABA), marked *Presto non tanto*, is a thrilling and dramatic display of Chopin's technical prowess, featuring fast runs, intricate arpeggios, and powerful chords.

When Chopin's Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, premiered in Paris in 1845, it received a mixed response from critics. Some found the work to be too unconventional and lacking in clear structure, while others praised its originality and emotional depth. The sonata's complex and innovative approach to form and harmony challenged the conventions of the time and made it difficult for some listeners to appreciate.

However, despite the initial mixed reception, the Piano Sonata No. 3 in B minor, Op. 58, has since become recognized as one of Chopin's most significant and influential works. Its unconventional structure and harmonies influenced generations of composers, including Johannes Brahms and Sergei Rachmaninoff. The sonata remains a staple of the piano repertoire and continues to be celebrated for its originality, technical brilliance, and emotional expressiveness.

The sonata premiered in Paris on February 26, 1845, with Chopin himself performing. It was one of his last public performances in Paris before his health began to decline. He dedicated it to his former student and close friend, the pianist Countess Elise de Perthis.

Movement #1: *Allegro maestoso*

Part 1.) Structural Analysis:

Form: (Sonata Allegro)

Sonata allegro form is a musical structure that emerged in the Classical period and became a standard form for instrumental music, especially for symphonies, sonatas, and concertos. The structure consists of three main sections: the exposition, the development, and the recapitulation. It is a complex and dynamic form that allows composers to explore a variety of musical ideas and themes while maintaining a cohesive overall structure.

The exposition is the first section of the sonata allegro form and introduces the main musical themes of the piece. It typically consists of two contrasting themes, known as the primary theme and the secondary theme, and is often followed by a closing or transition theme.

The exposition establishes the tonal center of the piece and creates a sense of tension and expectation that is later expanded upon in the development and revisited and resolved in the recapitulation.

The development section is the second part of the sonata allegro form and is where the themes introduced in the exposition are explored and expounded upon.. This section is often characterized by its harmonic instability and motivic unpredictability, as the composer can modulate to different keys, fragment musical themes, and experiment with new textures and harmonies. The development creates a sense of tension and complexity that heightens the listener's engagement with the music and prepares for the resolution of the recapitulation.

The recapitulation is the third and final section of the sonata allegro form and restates the themes and tonal structure established in the exposition. The recapitulation is often in a different key than the exposition, and often includes some variations or modifications from the exposition. The recapitulation also serves as the conclusion of the piece, providing a sense of resolution and closure to the work.

The sonata allegro form is an important compositional structure that has been used by countless composers throughout history. Its clear structure and harmonic development have allowed composers to create works that are both musically complex and emotionally expressive. To this day, an enormous number of pieces composed and performed are in sonata allegro form, and is considered to be one of the most important compositional devices in musicology.

Here in this first movement, Chopin masterfully weaves together fresh ideas and unique musical takes on the sonata allegro form. There are some key differences between this sonata and the common sonata allegro, and the starkest difference is that the first theme is completely

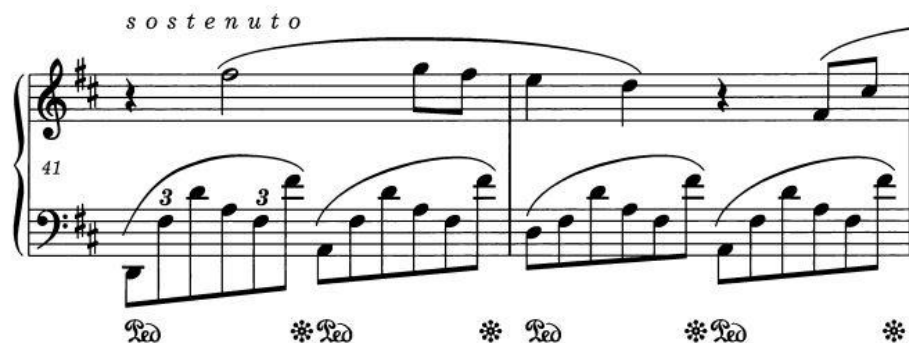
omitted from the recapitulation which is a strange choice to make considering how important that first theme is to setting the *maestoso* mood.



Opening line of mvmt No. 1

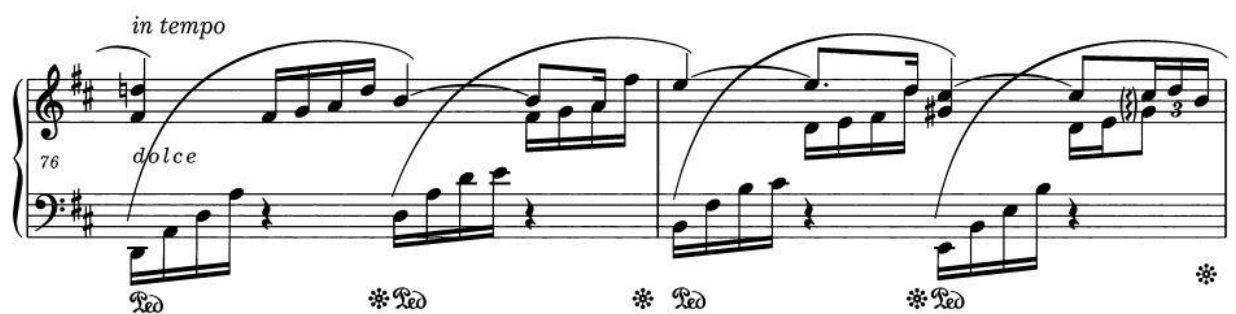
An interesting fact about this movement is that Chopin indicates a repeat of the exposition. So, there is an opportunity to revisit this first theme on the repeat, however this repeat is seldom taken by performers because a performance of this movement even without the repeat approaches 15 minutes in length.

The first theme of the exposition and its subsequent lengthy transition period is all rooted in B minor, and at measure 41 the *sostenuto* section in D major brings the 2nd theme groups into the light.



The beginning of the 2nd theme group marked *sostenuto*

While not traditionally a component of sonata allegro form, there is a clear third theme at the end of both the exposition and recapitulation, which we will call the “closing theme” marked *dolce* and this occurs after a short transition from measures 72-75. The exposition ends at measure 90 where the performer is left with the option to take the repeat, or continue to the development, which in most cases, the latter is chosen.



Closing theme of the exposition marked dolce

The development is an incredible technical and musical feat to learn and perform. The mood and themes of this section are very reminiscent of the first theme and subsequent transition before the 2nd theme groups, and in some ways fills in for the lack of 1st theme material in the recapitulation. The texture of this section is extremely fugal with many independent voices interwoven together by ties spanning bar lines and an enormous amount of harmonic change and progression. A separate paper could be written on the complexity and genius of Chopin’s handiwork here in the development, but suffice to say, it develops the first theme at first in a unique and fugue-like manner but settles into a more straightforward approach to this material at measure 115.



An example of the fugal texture of the opening bars of the development

Many of the themes and ideas of the exposition are repeated in the development in different keys but with very little textural change; For that reason, I argue that the development does the work of the recapitulation where it is lacking the motivic material from the 1st theme.

The recapitulation begins at measure 149 with a restatement of the *sostenuto* theme group but this time in B major. This section is very straight forward and basically identical to the exposition's second section save a few small textural changes and the new key center. Where the transition of the exposition led to the development, now the transition section at the end of the recapitulation leads into a small "codetta" finishing off the piece. The movement began in B minor and ends in a triumphant and resounding B major cadence which is a sign of things to come. This technique will be revisited by Chopin in the final movement of this work.



The final bars of the first movement

Structural Format:

Exposition (1st theme group): mm. 1-40 | b minor

Exposition (2nd theme group): mm. 41-71 | D major

Exposition (transition): mm. 72-75 | D major

Exposition (closing theme): mm. 76-92 | D major

Development (fugal section): mm. 93-114 | (b minor)*

Development (restatement of exposition material): mm. 115-149 | (b minor)*

Recapitulation (2nd theme group): mm. 93-114 | B major

Recapitulation (transition): mm. 180-183 | B major

Recapitulation (closing theme): mm. 184-195 | B major

Recapitulation (codetta): mm. 196-202 | B major

**Although the key signature is marked b minor and there are many strong indications of this, there are so many harmonic progressions and modulations, and restatements in different keys, as well as an enormous number of accidentals, that it is hard to indicate these sections by any one tonal center.*

Part 2.) Structural Phenomena:

Cadences: This piece is characterized by many “surprises” in terms of cadential moments. Many instances where a cadence is expected there is a sudden change in tonality, and it may be better described as an “arrival point” rather than a cadence. This technique provides tension and instability to the movement and allows for extended phrases. Some of the true V - I moments are underplayed and hidden among the moving texture. The ending of the piece by contrast is a very tonal and predictable ending in a **vi - V - I (V-I)** cadence in B major

Tonality: This movement is extremely tonally complex but follows loosely the structure Exposition = B minor / D major | Development = B minor | Recapitulation = B major
As discussed above however, there are an extreme amount of unexpected arrival points and tonality changes. In fact, one of the starkest contrasts between Chopin’s take on the sonata allegro form, and his predecessors, is the unique and forward-thinking harmonies and progressions.

Tempo: Marked *Allegro Maestoso* translated: fast and majestic. This movement is usually performed between 90-110 bpm. Generally, this tempo remains constant save a few *ritenuto* markings in the transition sections. It can be interpreted that the *sostenuto* sections may require a slight tempo shift slower, but not by much.

Meter: Written in common time (4/4) this piece has a very rhythmic and natural feel. Many times, the meter can be felt over longer periods when dealing with multi-measure phrases but is very easy to understand. The time signature remains throughout the movement.

Rhythm: The exposition relies very heavily on straight rhythms of 16ths, 8ths, quarter notes and half notes to convey the music especially in the 1st theme group save a few 8th note triplets. The *sostenuto* section is 8th note triplets grouped in 6 in the LH and a cantabile melody of mostly 8th notes in the RH, with a few dotted rhythms, and after that, back to mostly straight rhythms in both hands, with a few flourishes and alterations of dotted 8th notes and 16th note triplets sprinkled in. The development fugal section is extremely straight forward rhythmically with an underlying 16th note pulse driven often by the LH. The latter part of the development is rhythmically identical to the exposition as well as the recapitulation and codetta.

Dynamics: There is an incredible amount of dynamic variance and range in this movement. Very often the texture and style of certain sections change and almost demand a dynamic shift, yet Chopin doesn't give any indications. Crescendo and diminuendo markings and additional language such as *sostenuto*, or *leggiero* provide plenty of material for the performer to draw inspiration from. The pure dynamic indications range from forte in the exposition, to pianissimo in the development, to ending with fortissimo in the codetta.

Density: The density of this piece is constantly shifting and consists of sparse and ethereal sections as well as thundering sonorities and full rolled chords in both hands. Chopin clearly marked many pedal indications, and the density and thick harmonies of this piece closely tie into the performers use of pedal.

Timbre: From sparkling brilliance, to brooding chromaticism, to resolute harmonic power, this movement has it all. One of the main difficulties of performing this piece is shifting between all the different moods and timbres yet keeping a cohesive thought and story throughout the performance. Completing this is quite an elusive feat. The descriptions of different timbres of this piece are as follows: *Allegro Maestoso*, *Sostenuto*, *Leggiero*, *Tenuto*, *Dolce*, *Sempre Forte*, *Legato*

Register: This piece spans essentially the entire register of the piano's range in Chopin's time. Within the first few bars, the LH hits the low C# which would be just one half-step above the low C which was the lowest note. The RH in many cases reaches far into the sparkling range of the high treble to provide a stunning brilliance to many passages. In many cases, especially in the *sostenuto* sections, many ranges are implemented

simultaneously as the LH dips to hit a low bass note while quickly returning to play a texture in the middle register as the RH sings in the higher treble range.

Texture: Closely tied to the wide range of timbres, the range of textures is also immense. The LH often is more densely packed and provides a harmonic support to more defined and sparse RH textures. This range of textures also adds another layer of difficulty to the performing of this work.

Motive: There are many repeated motives and ideas which is generally a key attribute of sonata allegro form. Many times, the motives return in a different key but slightly altered, other times the motives return basically identical, but in a different key. There are a few instances where motives are repeated in four different keys and have alterations over the span of the piece which provides another layer of complexity and difficulty when memorizing and performing this movement.

Part 3.) Function of the sections

The function of the sections within this piece is very straightforward and has already been discussed at length. The exposition serves an expository function exposing the 1st theme and the 2nd theme grouping. The development section is mostly developmental, but also exposes a few new ideas. The recapitulation is fully developmental, save a few transitory phrases, and the terminative codetta.

In summary:

Exposition: Expository

Development: Developmental / Expository

Recapitulation: Developmental

(Codetta): Terminative

Movement #2 Scherzo (*Molto vivace*)

Part 1.) Structural Analysis:

Form: Ternary (ABA)

In the distant key of E-flat Major, this sparkling scherzo emerges. However, the studious musicologist will take note of the fact that if looked at in the enharmonic equivalent key of D# major, this movement is a 3rd apart from the first movement which could easily be interpreted as an homage to Beethoven, who often implemented this compositional technique in his sonatas. While potentially following Beethoven's choice of keys in a veiled manner, Chopin clearly breaks tradition by placing a Scherzo as the 2nd movement of the sonata rather than the 3rd movement, (which he also implemented in his 2nd piano sonata in b-flat minor Op. 35).



The opening bars of the second movement

This movement is written in strict ternary form (ABA). The A section (Scherzo) is characterized by blisteringly fast runs in the RH accompanied by a sparse harmonic and melodic support by the LH. This scherzo is in a somewhat binary configuration with two identical beginning phrases but slight differences in ending. After the first beginning phrases, there is a double bar line that indicates a structural shift, and indeed, the harmonic texture of the right hand first plays a g minor then an f minor configuration ending with a *poco ritenuto* marking and returning to a repetition of the beginning phrase to start the next “section”. The second section of

the scherzo ends with both hands playing in unison marching down the keyboard and increasing in intensity before ending with a resolute E flat major chord and low E flat octaves hammered into the keyboard.

The B section (Trio) is in stark contrast to the brilliant and dazzling scherzo. Returning to the distant yet familiar key of B major, this middle section has seemingly no connection whatsoever to the scherzo and is ethereal and longing, with moments of seriousness and wonder. At the end of the trio section, there is a surprising moment that catapults the listener back to the rollercoaster ride of the scherzo. Both times the scherzo is played, it is identical, save in the second and final statement, where in the very last measure, the lowest E flat is added for finality.



An excerpt from the B section

Structural Format:

Scherzo: mm. 1-60 | Eb Major

Trio: mm. 60-156 | B Major

Scherzo: mm. 157-216 | Eb Major

Part 2.) Structural Phenomena:

Cadences: As in the case of the first movement, this piece has many surprises and “arrival points” rather than recognizable cadences, especially in the scherzo section. A common arrival point that happens four times in the piece is **vi – ii – III** With the III chord being G major, and suddenly returning to **I** (E flat Major). There are some

authentic cadences interwoven throughout the texture of the scherzo, but are largely masked by the speed at which they are passed over by the right hand. In the trio section there is a more recognizable harmonic progression and a few very important **V – I** cadential moments.

Tonality: In the Scherzo sections, the tonality is very much centered around E-flat, but with not many intricacies of harmony or depth of progression. The star of the show here is the dazzling RH arpeggios and runs, and that masks much of the underlying tonality. A good performance of this movement doesn't allow the RH to completely overtake the LH but rather allows the LH to project the sparse harmonic and melodic content. The Trio section is in stark contrast to the scherzo in terms of tonality. This section is lush and warm with complex harmonies and a clear harmonic progression in many instances. This middle section is characterized by sustained and overlapping chords and harmonies.

Tempo: The tempo of this piece is marked *Molto Vivace* translated: very lively. It is common practice to perform this movement as fast as possible. There is a performance problem taking this approach however. The accomplished pianist will be able to perform the scherzo section of this piece at a stunning speed, yet when applied to the middle section would gloss over and muddy the texture. Some performers opt to slow the middle section slightly to compensate for this, and others will perform the scherzo at a slower speed but keep the integrity of the tempo steady for the middle section. I place myself in the former category and find that a slower tempo in the trio even though not marked, is implied.

Meter: Although written in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, both the scherzo and the trio section are felt in 1. One beat per measure.

Rhythm: Although felt in 1, the rhythm of the scherzo section is driven by extremely fast 8th notes. The trio section is again felt in one, but the pulse is halved by giving the value to three quarter notes per measure.

Dynamics: Interestingly, there is no dynamic marking to start the piece, only the *leggiero* marking is given. At the end of the scherzo section there is a crescendo marking, then forte, then fortissimo to finish the section. The trio is marked piano and remains so except for two extremely short sections marked forte. The second statement of the scherzo is dynamically identical.

Density: The density of the scherzo is generally very sparse and consists of extremely fast 8th notes in the RH and a few fill-ins by the LH. At the end of the scherzo, the LH joins the RH in playing 8th notes. The density of the trio section is also generally sparse, but with significantly more pedaling and sustained notes in both hands.

Timbre: The timbre of the scherzo is bright, brilliant, and sparkling; marked *leggiero* with extremely quick runs in the RH as the focus. The timbre of the Trio section is much warmer and sustained, with a few darker moments in the LH marked forte.

Register: The range of the RH runs in the scherzo span over three treble octaves, and the LH adds harmonic and melodic content in the upper bass clef. The trio section is very much in the middle register, with a few lower LH octaves.

Texture: The texture of the RH in the scherzo section is generally arpeggiated run comprised of chromatic turns, repeated notes, and a few turns in the figuration. LH texture is very sparse, just a few notes outlining a chordal inversion. The texture in the trio section is very similar in both hands, very chordal and sustained.

Motive: Motivically, the scherzo and trio are not related. The main motif in the scherzo is the RH 3 octave run figuration, and the main motif in the Trio is a sustained chordal texture with a top primary melody and inner counter melodies.

Part 3.) Function of the sections

The function of these sections is not as clearly defined as in sonata allegro form, and because the sections that return are identical, it is hard to define the purpose of the restatements. Also, the trio section doesn't really develop anything in the scherzo because they are so far apart in terms of tonality and texture and share no motives. Even though it is identical to the first statement, the performer will probably interpret the second statement of the scherzo in subtly different ways.

In summary:

Scherzo: Expository

Trio: Expository

Scherzo: Developmental / Terminative

Movement #3: *Largo*

Part 1.) Structural Analysis:

Form: Ternary (ABA)

The third movement marked *Largo* is a masterpiece of lush sonorities and deep emotive composition. Chopin begins this movement with the enharmonic equivalent of the ending of the previous scherzo (**E_b – D_#**) and the listener is taken aback by the intense and booming introduction.



The opening bars of the third movement

This nocturnelike piece is composed in B major with an extensive and wandering middle section in the related key of E major, and returns to B major to resolve the piece. This piece can be described as a long poetic monologue, weaving through various textures and harmonies to produce a glorious soundscape. The main theme of the piece resembles the ticking of a clock, the dotted rhythms holding the performer in the steadiness of that pulse. It is a beautiful and serene piece that rivals even the first movement in harmonic complexity and innovation.



An excerpt of the main theme

Structurally this piece can be divided loosely into Ternary form (ABA) However, although having plenty of unique motivic material, the B section also derives content from the A section and expands upon it. Not unlike the first movement, in the last iteration of the A section, there is also attached a “codetta” in B major.

Structural Format:

A: mm. 1-28 | B Major

B: mm. 29-98 | E major

A: mm. 99-112 | B major

A (Codetta): mm. 113-120 | B major

Part 2.) Structural Phenomena:

Cadences: Cadential moments in this piece are largely **V-I** and very distinguishable. There are not many deceptive moments in this piece and is easy to hear the ebb and flow of the harmony. There is one specifically important plagal cadence in the main theme of the B section: In E Major **IV - I**

Tonality: Although defined quite clearly by the A sections being in B Major and the B section being in E major, there are also definite departures from those key centers. Most notably in the B section at measure 68 there is a **V - I** cadence in G# major, and in measures 72-78 the key signature is changed to four flats (f minor). There is also a significant amount of chromaticism and sustained harmonies in the final bars.

Tempo: The tempo of this should be slow, but not plodding, and the middle section being quite lengthy can not drag. A measured amount of rubato and general adherence to the tempo will create an enjoyable listening experience.

Meter: Written in common time (4/4), this piece is very much in a duple time, and metrically very simple.

Rhythm: The A section is rooted in dotted rhythms keeping the tempo steady. There can be a propensity to elongate the dotted 1/8th / 1/16th note pairs into a sort of triplet rhythm which should be avoided. The B section is rooted in the repetition of 1/8th note sextuplets whether in the right or left hand.

Dynamics: The introduction of this movement is a fiery and passionate fortissimo, but subsides quickly to piano. The piano dynamic is the primary tone this piece is characterized by, however, there are a few exclamatory forte moments and also some hushed pianissimo sections.

Density: The piece is characterized by either the LH playing bass notes and chords in a dotted rhythm accompanying a RH melody, or running 1/8th note sextuplets in the RH with melodic and harmonic content in the LH. There are a few sparse moments where a single extended line emerges from the texture unaccompanied.

Timbre: This piece is mostly soft and introspective, however there are some moments where some sharpness and passion are expressed. The introduction is marked forte with double-dotted rhythms and provides a huge anticipatory mood that is resolved by falling into the piano dynamic ushered in by the main theme. The main theme is marked *cantabile* and has a pensive melody in the RH over chords in the LH. The B section begins with the *sostenuto* indication, and is a glorious wash of harmonious sound. The smooth and chocolatey timbre continues through most of the B section with a few more intense moments.

Register: RH stays mostly reserved and confined to the Treble clef, and the LH reaches down into the bottom of the bass clef, but only for depth and harmonic support.

Texture: The texture of this piece has been discussed in the density section above, but also worth mentioning are the various trills and runs that exist outside of the normal rhythms of the piece that provide some unique moments throughout.

Motive: There are two distinct motives that occupy the A sections. In the last A section there is a sort of codetta like in the first movement. In the B section there is one unifying idea which is: running 1/8th note sextuplets, and although it goes through various transformations and key centers, this main rhythmic idea stays consistent throughout the entire section.

Part 3.) Function of the sections

The function of the sections is quite easy to understand, the A section is as usual expository. The B section is expository as well bringing many new themes and ideas to light. The B section also brings back motives from the A section and so also serves a developmental purpose. The final A section is texturally different but motivically the same as the first time, and also signals the end of the piece and so it serves both a developmental and terminative purpose.

In summary:

A: Expository

B: Expository / Developmental

A: Developmental / Terminative

(Codetta): Terminative

Movement #4: *Finale (Presto non tanto)*

Part 1.) Structural Analysis:

Form: (Rondo ABABA)

In simple terms, this Rondo in b minor (ABABA) is bookended by an introduction and a coda. The A section has a clear delineation every iteration: First the line is played, then it is repeated an octave higher after a cadence. It is my opinion that there is a good amount of evidence and structural phenomena to suggest a potential “form-within-a-form” idea here. However, because the motivic material is identical, I do not believe that delineation can be made. This along with the fact that both parts of the A section are very extended chain phrases, it is more logical to think of the A section as a type of antecedent / consequent rather than separate sections within itself.

FINALE
Presto non tanto

The image shows the opening bars of the final movement, 'Finale', in b minor, 'Presto non tanto'. It is a piano score for two staves. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 6/8. The music begins with a forte (f) dynamic and a crescendo (cresc.) marking. The first staff (treble clef) contains a series of chords and single notes, with a first ending bracket over the final two measures. The second staff (bass clef) contains a series of chords and single notes. Below the staves, there are several asterisks and the word 'Ped' (pedal) indicating where to use the sustain pedal.

Opening bars of the final movement

The B section by contrast has two motivically and structurally unique parts that are very distinct from each other separated by modulations. and for that reason, I propose that the B section is a simple Binary form: AB.

Between the A and B sections both times there is no transition, however between B and A there is a transitional section, the second being far more extended than the first, but sharing similar motivic material.

The first iteration of the B section the "A" portion

There is a transitional section between the final iteration of the A section and the coda. There are basically no structural phenomena to demarcate it as a transitional section, but there are two factors that make it very clear. Firstly, measure 250 is the point at which every other time the A section moved immediately to the B section. Now, instead of moving to the B section, we remain texturally and rhythmically identical, which brings us to the second factor: The harmonic progression is something completely new in the piece and is reminiscent of a singular unique progression like the introduction. This along with a diminuendo previously and a crescendo throughout this transition thrusting the music into the B major Coda, I consider this a transitional moment outside the framework of A, even though it is similar in many ways and not structurally different. The Coda itself is clearly through composed with no material previously found in the piece.

The opening bars of the B major coda

Structural Format:

Intro: mm. 1-8 | b minor

A: mm. 9-51 | b minor

B(a): mm. 52-59 | B major

Transition: mm. 60-67 | D# major / d# minor

B(a): mm. 68-75 | d# minor

B(b): mm. 76-89 | F# major / B major

Transition to A: mm. 90-99 | B major

A: mm. 100-142 | e minor

B(a): mm. 143-150 | Eb major

Transition: mm. 151-158 | G major / c minor

B(a): mm. 159-166 | c minor

B(b) mm. 167-182 | Eb major / Ab major

Transition to A: mm 183-206 | N.C.*

A: mm. 207-249 | b minor

Transition to Coda: mm. 250-254 | b minor

Coda: mm. 254-285 | B major

**The N.C. indication means that there is no harmonic center for this section because of the sheer volume of modulations and key changes.*

Part 2) Structural Phenomena:

Cadences: Every cadential moment in this piece is an authentic cadence. This piece relies very heavily on the V - I harmonic motion to progress the phrases and the structure.

Tonality: The introduction is extremely short and contains harmonic material not to be seen again in this piece. This short introductory section ends with a resounding F# V6/5 chord held by the sustain pedal and a fermata on the bar line, which provides a dramatic transition to the A section. The A section the first time is in the tonic key of b minor with little deviation. The B(a) section is introduced in the key of B major, then quickly modulates to a D# major / D# minor transition into the B(b) section in F# major. The B(b) section then modulates to B major and then has an extended transition period where the right hand plays a C## major/D# dim. figuration in a descending pattern of minor thirds: C##, B, G#, E#. This figuration settles into a pedal tone of B which is then transformed into a V - I cadential moment leading the piece into the key of e minor for the next iteration of the A section. Once again, the A section stays true to the key with only slight deviations. It is worth noting that throughout the A section and the piece in general there are many instances of passing chords and V/V chords, and even chains of V chords: V/V/V etc... Although these are technically outside of the key area, their function always leads back to and resolves back to the tonic. The second iteration of the A section in e minor closely mirrors the first section harmonically with a few notable variations, keeping the melodic line intact, but adjusting the harmony and bassline in a few places. The A section this time does NOT end in a cadence. This is a notable place in the piece. Where before there was a V - I cadence into the parallel major key, now there is an extremely sudden modulation to E flat major. Although it is not a cadence, (supported by the continuing motion, sudden modulation, and crescendo leading into it), it is still clearly a structural divide. This B(a) section is almost identical to the first iteration, save the fact that it is in a different key area (E flat major), and quickly modulates to a G major / C minor transition section. The B(b) section this second time is also basically identical except now is in the key areas of E flat major and A flat major. The transition between the 2nd B section and the final iteration of the A section is much more extensive, lasting a full page of material. This transition moves from the key areas of A flat major, A major, and F# major, before returning to the previous transition material: (major/dim. figuration in descending minor thirds). This time the pattern is: F#, D#, B#, A. This transition finally levels out and settles into a pedal tone of F# which is then transformed into a V- I cadential moment leading the piece finally back to the home key of B minor. This final

iteration of the A section is again harmonically very similar. The structure is also basically identical, except for where before the A section transitioned into the B section, it now has a short transition into the coda. This transition uses augmented chords and Major/minor 7th tones in tandem to produce a striking modulation to the parallel key of B Major. This is significant because usually in a rondo or sonata rondo, the final A section AND the Coda are both in the home key. Here, Chopin proves his genius by ending this piece of struggle and constant motion, rooted in the triumphant timbre of the parallel Major. The coda itself is harmonically interesting and has some odd choices of figuration. There are two sections where the right hand follows a chromatic pattern up, and later a chromatic pattern down, while the left hand provides the melody. The last few bars are essentially just embellished V-I figurations over and over serving a very clear terminative function. The final chord is a B major chord in root position (bass note held over with the pedal) with the melody note being the tonic.

Tempo: The tempo of the piece is marked *Presto non tanto*. Translated: “at a rapid tempo, but not too much”. This tempo marking remains true throughout the piece and there are no significant tempo changes anywhere.

Meter: The time signature of the piece is 6/8 and is almost exclusively felt as a duple. (ONE, two three, FOUR, five, six). There are no significant meter shifts or changes, and the piece is written completely in 6/8

Rhythm: The introduction is written in dotted quarter notes, which sets the groundwork for the 6/8 duple meter throughout the piece. The A section the first time is just eighth notes in both hands. The B(a) section is predominantly 16th notes runs in the right hand against a dotted quarter accompaniment in the left hand. The transition section within the B section first quarter note and eighth notes in a duple meter, then is similar to the B(a) section (16th notes against a dotted quarter accompaniment. The B(b) section is similar to the first as well but this time the accompaniment consists of eighth notes in the left hand against 16th notes in the right hand. The transition between the B and A sections the first time is primarily just 16th notes in a duple feel. The return of the A section in e minor has an interesting rhythmic twist: Right hand remains playing eighth notes in a duple meter, but now the left hand plays quadruplets also in a duple meter! This creates a 3 against 4 rhythm and is the primary developmental factor in the return of the A section the first time. The B(a), the transition with the B section, and B(b) are identical both metrically and rhythmically. The transition between the A and B sections the second time is far more extensive but employs similar rhythmic writing. With the exception of a short section of both hands playing a 16th note duple pattern simultaneously. The A section the third and final time has the right hand again playing eighth notes in a duple feel, but this time the left hand plays 16th notes against the right hand. This is another extremely

important developmental function within this iteration of the A section. The short transition to the coda is rhythmically identical to the A section. The coda is characterized primarily by 16th note runs in the right hand with varying accompaniment pattern in the left hand either dotted quarter notes or eighth notes primarily. At the very end, the rhythm is extended across multiple bars to extenuate the finality.

Dynamics: This piece is dynamically relatively flat. All sections are either forte or fortissimo except for the first iteration of the A section (marked piano). There are plenty of marked crescendos and diminuendos that either give hints to the structure of phrases or the structure of larger sections.

Density: In general, this piece has a relatively constant density. The only major exception is the progressively thicker texture of the A section.

Timbre: There are a few notable markings instructing the performer on timbre. The A section in the beginning is marked piano with an added instruction of *agitato* which is a discernable difference than the rest of the piece. The other important factor when considering the timbre of this piece is the marking *leggiero*. Because of the general timbre of this piece, and the steady rhythmic drive, most notes and runs should be played with metronomic accuracy and clear accents in the duple meter. However, the B(b) section has 16th note runs marked *leggiero* which should be played with a different timbre than the other runs and should be ever so slightly rhythmically loose. The special case of the coda being in the parallel major key calls for a triumphant timbre that towers over the rest of the piece in victory. Where before was sharp, harsh, and accusatorial, now is resounding and final.

Register: Every time the A section is played, there is a first section in the middle register, and then a second section that is an octave higher. This piece has many leaps, jumps, and runs, that move the hands all over the keyboard. The discussion of Register is a very interesting discussion among musicologists and performers for this reason: The piano in Chopin's time only went down to a C1, and there are many places that a solid argument could be made for a lower B flat octave or lower B octave. As it is written, the lowest point of the piece is in the transition section in the B section the second time (a C octave accompanied by a c minor chord) A strong moment for sure, but what about the beginning of the B section the second time? the cadence at the beginning of the final A section? Anywhere in the coda? Purists say don't touch it, others say there is license to add octaves where needed for the effect the performer is seeking to convey.

Texture: The texture of this piece is generally the same throughout, with the exceptions and examples already discussed above regarding meter and rhythm. The section that has the most textural transformations is without a doubt the A section.

Motive: This piece is motivically very separate between the sections, and there is little to no motivic development. The primary development used to advance the motive is in the key and harmony changes / accompaniment changes in the A section. Other than that, it

is very motorically static. The intro material is only heard once, The coda provides a few of its own new motives, but nothing from before.

Part 3: Function of the sections

The introduction serves no developmental purpose. It is the only time that motive and harmony is found in the piece. If anything, it could be said that it is expository in the sense that it is “exposing” the mood and the pulse of the upcoming A section and the piece as a whole.

The A section after the initial exposition is primarily developmental. The first phrase of the A section serves an expository function, the second phrase builds upon the first in a developmental way. In the big picture, each iteration of the A section is developmental when contrasted with the first statement of the A section, the primary developmental tool used is a different rhythm: (3 against 3, then 3 against 4, then 3 against 6). In addition, there are subtle harmonic developments that add to the progression of the A section.

The B section is primarily transitional. Within itself, there are not many significant developmental areas except for the key areas. Within the B(a) section, the modulatory section serves a transitional function between the two parts of the larger section. The B(b) section the second iteration does serve a developmental function by expanding upon and embellishing the first iteration’s RH melody.

Each transitional section obviously serves a transitional function, and this is strengthened by the fact that each transitional section does not have previous material from either A or B. Within each transitional section there is overlap and some development, especially in the transitions between B and A.

The transition from A to the coda is primarily transitional, but also somewhat developmental because of the similar texture and style to the A section.

The Coda is strictly terminative, which makes sense. No material in the coda was presented previously, and everything in the coda is through composed, save an identical copy of the first phrase. (Not developmental because it is identical).

In summary:

Introduction: Expository

A: Expository / Developmental

B: Transitional / Developmental

Transitions: Transitional / Developmental

Coda: Terminative