

Synthesizing the Tonal and Rhetorical Dramas of Franz Clement’s D-minor Violin Concerto (c. 1807)

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Presented 7 November 2020 (Virtual)

1 Introduction

FRANZ CLEMENT IS LIKELY BEST REMEMBERED only as the commissioner, dedicatee, and first performer of Beethoven’s Violin Concerto. His status as a composer is all but lost today, and perhaps for good reason: in an 1809 review, J. F. Reichardt stated that: ►

[Clement’s] modulations are sometimes glaring, bizarre, and often exceedingly forced, which may impress the uninitiated—and perhaps himself as well—with their lack of artistic judgment; but such abrasiveness will never attract the connoisseur, whose pure taste will be offended by such unnatural modulations. Why must *every* performer also be a composer?

► Yet Clement’s work deserves our attention, and precisely for this same reason: these “glaring, bizarre, and often exceedingly forced” modulations wreak havoc on our twenty-first-century understandings of monotonicity and of musical form. In this talk, we show how—despite being stretched to their limits—Sonata Theory and Schenkerian analysis synthesize the dramas of this opening movement from 1807 into a single compelling analysis.

2 Formal and Tonal Issues

► In this D-minor movement, ► a medial caesura in m. 40 on the dominant of F suggests an impending S. And yet, in m. 46, the bass C wrenches up a half step to C \sharp , derailing the music away from the expected key of F and instead to a shocking E major in m. 52.

► This music has all the rhetorical trappings of S; the only problem is its key area: E major in a global D minor. ► Curiously, this same issue returns in the recapitulation: ► following this medial caesura, the music soon veers off track and cadences in C♯ major in m. 431.

► Figure 1 shows the movement at a glance; in addition to the motions towards E and C♯ major, note also the trimodular blocks created by these harmonic shifts and the EEC in B minor in m. 249.

3 Chromatic Inflection and Infection

► The catalyst for Clement's surprising key scheme is the concerto's first chromatic tone, ► the incomplete neighbor G♯ in m. 2. Its immediate function is to dramatize the completion of the unfolding tonic triad on the downbeats of mm. 1–3. G♯ itself radiates dual tendencies. Situated a semitone beneath $\hat{5}$, the peak of the melody's opening melodic arpeggiation, G♯ initially embodies underachievement. Consequently, the eventual keys of E major and C♯ major sag one semitone beneath their conventional tonal stations. Conversely, G♯ underscores the ascent to $\hat{5}$ and ultimately provokes overcompensation; its impulse to rise *infects* the remainder of the movement, which is most clearly seen through the lens of ► large-scale voice leading.

4 Voice-Leading Structure

As shown in our middleground sketch, ► the themes of underachievement and overcompensation—or infection by inflection—motivate Clement's unusual key choices, spawn a competing dialogue between minor and parallel major, create disunity between inner and outer form, and ultimately rob the *Ursatz* of its diatonic clarity. In both branches, the *Urfinie* expresses the key of D minor in a most nebulous way. The fundamental line prioritizes F♯ over F♮, and the bass arpeggiation seems more at home in D major than in D minor. Moreover, G♯ becomes a full-fledged member of the fundamental line. Notice that G♯ in the second branch does not proceed to G♮ as it did in the first branch. Thus, the initially underachieving G♯ has become the movement's ultimate contagion, evolving as much as a chromatic tone could hope for—from a fleeting decoration of the *Ursatz* to an essential component of it, taking structural priority over the diatonic G♮ in the first branch and replacing it altogether in the second.

5 Conclusion

► According to Baudelaire, ► “An artist is an artist only thanks to his exquisite sense of beauty . . . which at the same time entails and contains an equally exquisite sense of all deformity and all

disproportion.” ► The D-minor concerto’s deformed manifestations of its form and tonal structure may delight some musicians, disturb others, or arouse both reactions simultaneously. Even if Clement’s concerto, like the G \sharp in m. 2, falls a step short of its intended goals, in overcompensating for his compositional shortcomings Clement has provided us with a fascinating puzzle piece in our ever-expanding picture of Sonata Theory and tonal discourse.