

MELODY

The main themes in the piece are the **first and second themes**, plus the six note rising idea from the **introduction**. The first theme (or subject) is a **rising, scalar theme**. The second theme (or subject) features a theme which **risers then falls**, including use of **ornaments**.

There are a number of scalar passages in the piece, including the **descending chromatic** scale at the end of the introduction. Other melodic ideas include **arpeggios and broken chords**.

Ornaments are an important part of the melody, including **acciaccaturas and mordents** in theme 2, and **trills** just before the recapitulation.

The development uses ideas from the first theme in lots of different keys. It uses **sequences**.

THEME TWO

The second subject begins in the **unexpected key of Eb minor**. The theme features a distinctive **acciaccatura ornament and handcrossing technique**, where the right hand moves down over the left hand to play four staccato notes, before returning. The theme continues with a **stepwise descending phrase** featuring **mordents**. A new theme begins in bar 89 in the relative major key of Eb. It has a new **broken chord texture**. There is a **crescendo** while the hands move in **contrary motion**.

STRUCTURE

The piece is in **sonata form**

Sonata form consists of an **introduction** then the main sections: **exposition, development, and recapitulation**.

In the exposition **two themes** are introduced. In the development the themes are altered by **changing key lots**. The recapitulation is the same as the exposition, but with the two themes **now in the same key**.

The piece finishes with a **coda**.

The themes in the exposition are linked by **transitions (or bridges)**. There is a **codetta** at the end of the exposition, then the whole exposition is **repeated**.

Beethoven uses some techniques which are **unusual for sonata** form:

- The second theme starts in **Eb minor** instead of the expected Eb major. It moves to Eb major at bar 89.
- The development begins with **4 bars from the introduction**—this is very unusual! When the development returns to the allegro tempo it is in the **unrelated key** of E minor.
- In the recapitulation the second theme starts in the key of **F minor** instead of the expected C minor. It then moves to C minor.
- The coda starts with **4 bars of the introduction** again.

DYNAMICS

This piece has a wide range of dynamics, from **very quiet (pp)** to **very loud (ff)**

There are **crescendos (getting louder)** and **decrescendos (getting quieter)**

The intro uses **fp (fortepiano)** markings, meaning loud then immediately soft).

It also uses **sf (sforzando)** markings, meaning a sudden loud accent.

Dynamics markings in the piece are used **expressively**, showing Beethoven anticipating romantic era music

THEME ONE

The first subject theme in C minor (tonic key of the piece) rises mainly **scalically** a distance of **two octaves** – over a tonic pedal in the bass. The music is marked with **staccato** – meaning detached (separate) notes. A second melodic idea begins at bar 27 and features **sforzandos and descending arpeggios**. A transition based on the main theme – using sequences begins at bar 35 and modulates towards the expected key of Eb major through a dominant note (Bb) in the bass (dominant preparation)



BEETHOVEN—SONATA No. 8 IN C MINOR (PATHETIQUE) MOVEMENT 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is a piece of music from the **classical era**. Classical music has **clear, catchy melodies** and **homophonic textures**.

A piano sonata is a piece for solo piano. It has several movements—we are studying movement 1.

Beethoven was a forward thinking composer, and this piece shows signs of the **romantic era**.

This piece was composed between 1796 and 1799.

Romantic music is all about expressing emotions. It does this through more **dramatic use of dynamics**, use of the **sustain pedal** on the piano, more complex, **chromatic harmony**, and more **complex, altered structures** (like how Beethoven alters sonata form in this piece).

HARMONY

The harmony is mainly **diatonic**, and mainly uses **standard chords** of the time.

There are also some more **dissonant**, complicated chords.

There are some more complicated, **chromatic** chords used, including a **diminished seventh** at the start of bar 2. This is the most **dissonant** chord available to Beethoven at the time.

Perfect cadences announce the ends of sections and changes of key. This is called **functional harmony**. There are big perfect cadences at the end of the piece.

There are **pedal notes**, like the **dominant pedal** at the end of the development section (dominant preparation).

There is an **interrupted cadence** in the introduction at bar 9

The harmony uses **standard chords** of the time (mainly chords I, IV and V, with occasional use of ii and vi)

The harmony uses mainly **root position** and **first inversion** chords.

There are **dominant 7th** chords at cadences.

There are occasional **suspensions** (including 9-8 suspensions)

There is a **circle of fifths progression** in bars 244-249.

Another chromatic chord used is the **augmented sixth** chord, used in bar 30.

SONORITY/INSTRUMENTS

This piece is written for the **piano**.

Unlike a harpsichord, the piano can play both **loud and soft**.

Although it is not written in the score, Beethoven would have use the **sustain pedal** for greater expression.

The piano allowed Beethoven to make extensive use of all kinds of **dynamic possibilities**. This sonata has lots of **crescendos, diminuendos** and lots of other dynamic markings.

This piece was written for the **fortepiano**, which came before the more modern **pianoforte**. It had a smaller range and was not capable of as much dynamic contrast as a modern piano.

TONALITY

The piece is in the key of **C minor** (as mentioned in the title of the piece!)

The music **modulates** to different keys in the development section

The **first subject is in C minor**. The second subject starts in the **unexpected key of Eb minor**, then moves to the **expected key of Eb major** (the **relative major** of C minor) In the development the piece modulates to many different keys, including **distant, unrelated** keys such as E minor (at the start of the development) In the recapitulation the **first subject is back in C minor**. The second subject initially plays in the unexpected **key of F minor**, then moves to the **expected key of C minor** (to match the key of the first subject)

F minor is the **subdominant** of C minor.

Perfect cadences confirm changes of key throughout.

RHYTHM, TEMPO and METRE

The introduction is **grave** (very slow), and the metre is **4/4** (common time)

The main tempo for the rest of the piece is **very fast**.

The main tempo for the piece is **allegro di molto e con brio** (very fast with vigour), and is written in **2/2** (cut common time, also known as **alla breve**)

There are some very **rapid notes** (short note values)

There are some very rapid notes (short note values), including **septuplets** and **1/128th notes** in bar 10

TEXTURE

The texture is mainly **homophonic**

There is a **monophonic section** with a long descending scale leading into the recapitulation

The right hand plays in **octaves** half way through the introduction

The intro is homophonic with all the notes playing together in chords. This is known as a **homophonic chordal texture**.

There is a **two part texture** with melody and broken chords in the second (Eb major) idea of the second subject (bar 93)

KEY

3 Grade 5 Grade 8 Grade