Balance and motivic unity in the finale of Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata, Op. 11

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Balance and Motivic Unity in the Finale of Robert Schumann's Piano Sonata, Op. 11

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Abstract

Robert Schumann’s first piano sonata, op. 11, is of great importance within his compositional output, but it is faced with undue neglect in performance and in-depth analytical study. Though he has been criticized for his inability to handle large forms, this sonata exemplifies a thorough sense of design, unity, and intricacy in his writing. There exists a considerable dearth of analysis that focuses specifically on the voice-leading structure of this sonata. Such an approach would shed light on the way Schumann engages with larger structures.

The first three movements of this work set a precedent of organic self-awareness in the use of cyclical elements and references to other pieces of music. This paper uses voice-leading analysis to study the inner workings of the Finale and uncovers a parallelism that unifies the movement with the rest of the sonata. This analysis suggests that a hierarchical musical drama is embedded within the tonal design of the Finale, which allows us to consider the question of tonal function within the movement’s structure. The consequences of a potential omission of mm. 213–254 are considered as they relate to this hierarchical design, such that pianists may make more informed decisions in their interpretation of the work.

The aim of this analysis is to strive for a richer appreciation of the structural design of this sonata and to direct attention in analytical and musical environments to the poetic qualities present even in Schumann’s larger works.
Introduction

One of the great tragedies in the standard solo piano repertoire is the general neglect that surrounds Robert Schumann’s piano sonatas as cornerstones of his lifetime of artistry. The three sonatas are works of wonderful eclecticism, virtuosity, intimacy, and grandiosity—intricate in design and rich in romantic sentiment. In *The Sonata Since Beethoven*, William Newman notes that “[...] all too many listeners today cannot help evaluating even Schumann in terms of Beethovenian standards [...and] they still find it difficult to hear and enjoy Schumann’s sonatas on his own Romantic terms.”¹ In 2020, as the world celebrates the 250⁰ birthday of Ludwig van Beethoven, it is not difficult to perceive the insurmountable shadow he cast over his immediate predecessors. Though Beethoven may have defined the art of the sonata, he by no means exhausted it. After his death, there was a significant decline in the composition of sonatas and it was not until 1832 that Schumann began his work on his first piano sonata.² At the time, he spoke excitedly about the form as “embODYING total unification and the organic fusing of form and spirit.”³ Later, Schumann noted at the end of the 1830s that the “sonata had run its course,” and it has been suggested that with his third piano sonata and the Fantasie (Op. 17), Schumann began to reconstruct the sonata form, entirely, building on ideas present in his first two sonatas.⁴

Schumann’s first piano sonata (Op. 11) was of great importance to him and his wife, Clara, who considered it to be one of his finest works. Before the Op. 11, Schumann made a previous attempt at the piano sonata that was later published as a single movement work. From 1834–1836 he worked on the F-sharp minor sonata, and ultimately dedicated it to Clara Wieck

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³ Roesner (1991, 266).
⁴ Ibid. 266.
when he published it under the pseudonyms of Florestan and Eusebius. This sonata has long been understood to be a product of Robert’s romantic involvement with Clara under the shadow of her father, Friedrich Wieck. Many pianists subscribe to a long-standing narrative of unrequited desire and separation as an interpretation that is often associated with the work. Often program notes written for this sonata center on a letter from Robert Schumann to Clara in 1838 in which he stated that the sonata was “one sole outcry of the heart” for her. Ernst Herttrich’s 2009 preface in the G. Henle Verlag Urtext edition of the sonata suggests that the association of this quote with the first sonata is inaccurate, as this work was conceived during a time in which Robert and Clara were at their closest before Friederich Weick separated them in 1836. While there is speculation about the nature of the circumstances surrounding this sonata, there is little doubt that the work is reflective of certain aspects of Robert and Clara’s relationship. Robert and Clara exchanged a variety of musical ideas in the composition of this sonata. It is not known who originally came up with certain ideas, but the two motives present in the first theme of the first movement (discussed in detail later) are also found in Clara’s Le Ballet des Revenants. Robert also references one of his early unpublished songs from 1828, An Anna, which appears excerpted in the introduction and transcribed in the Aria. Clara later used the melody from the slow movement in the Romanze of her piano concerto. Although this work garners little prominence in today’s standard repertoire, it is an essential milestone in Robert's compositional output, and it was of great relevance to his personal life.

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5 Emberley (2013, 2-3).
7 Emberley (2013, 19-20).
Schumann is most respected as a composer of character pieces. Some of his most performed works, such as *Carnaval*, Op. 9, *Fantasiestücke*, Op. 12, or *Kinderszenen*, Op. 15, are collections of short pieces that are written in simple formal structures or free form. Though Schumann has been criticized for formal continuity and coherence in his large-scale works, many of these larger pieces are staples in concert halls today; works like his *Fantasie*, Op. 17, Piano Concerto, Op. 54, and Cello Concerto, Op. 129 receive regular attention. Of the three sonatas, the most performed is the second, which also happens to be the shortest. Even still, the sonatas are relatively overlooked; as these works receive little attention on the stage, it follows that they lack significant analytical study.\(^8\)

Kyoung-Im Kim (1980) notes that those who are interested in Schumann’s sonatas from a research perspective tend to be primarily interested in the historical context of the works.\(^9\) A 2013 dissertation by Stephanie Emberley is one of the few analytical papers focusing solely on the Op. 11 sonata. Even still, she discusses the historical context of the composition and its relationship to motivic use and development in the sonata. This research is driven by a similar impulse as Kim’s. There exists a dearth of analysis that focuses specifically on the voice-leading structure of Schumann’s first piano sonata. Such an approach would allow for deeper conversations about the way Schumann invokes Classical rhetoric with Romantic intent.

Analyses such as Peter Smith’s article in the *Journal of Music Theory* on Schumann’s Cello Concerto, Op. 129 demonstrate the usefulness of Schenkerian analysis to uncover insightful characteristics of a composer’s language, specifically in the manner that Schumann handles sonata form.

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\(^8\) Kim (1980, 3).
\(^9\) Ibid, 3.
Of particular interest is Emiko Sato’s 2015 dissertation on the Finales of the three piano sonatas and Fantasie. Sato focuses on the formal construction of the movements, and argues that they are all linked as distorted parallel forms.\footnote{Sato (2015, 214).} She is particularly interested in Schumann’s large-scale compositions, and considers the sonatas to be prime examples of his capabilities with respect to larger forms. Sato suggests that the Op. 11 sonata is a Rondo in parallel form with two distinct rotations—this will be adopted in my own analysis.\footnote{Ibid, 140.} In the discussion of the tonal structure of this sonata, she notes that there are nine keys clearly established in the movement—F-sharp major/minor, A major/minor, C major/minor, E-flat major/minor, and B-flat minor—and that the octatonic system, beginning on F-sharp, relates these keys, with the exception of B-flat minor.\footnote{Ibid, 143-149.} Additionally, each of these keys are closely related by a series of minor third progressions, creating a fully diminished-seventh chord. Sato places an emphasis on the break in formal symmetry in mm. 213–266, and suggests that the reorganization of thematic elements in this section bears a significant impact on the expressivity of the work.\footnote{Ibid, 156-161.}

As Peter Smith used voice leading analysis in his study on the Cello Concerto, Sato utilizes it in her analyses of the Opp. 14, 17, and 22—not the Op.11. In her analysis of the Op. 14 Finale, Sato demonstrates the prolongation of ˚ across the parallel form, delaying the \textit{Urlinie}’s fall to the tonic until the coda. She also shows in her analysis how competition between pitches interacts with underlying structural motion and creates suspense.\footnote{Ibid, 57.} This notion of competition between pitches on a structural level will reappear in my own discussion later in this paper. In
the analysis of the original Finale of the Op. 22 sonata, she focuses on the chromatic disruptions in the fall of the Urlinie, and the tension between the minor 3 and major 3 that plays an important role in the drama of the work. Similarly, her reading of the Finale of the beginning Fantasie shows how the movement utilizes major third progressions in a hexatonic system to organize the movement. Each of these voice-leading analyses serves to demonstrate how large-scale structural goals are achieved, and each provides valuable insight into how tonality is used to create foundational expressivity and drama.

While Sato offers vital insight into the inherent relatedness of the important keys in the Op. 11, she does not make significant mention of tonal function within the greater context of the form in the same manner that she approached the other works in her analysis. Here, there is an opportunity to further understand the nature of the harmonic material in this work and how it serves a larger structure. I will use several of Sato’s ideas as points of reference in my study, namely: her formal analysis, the fully diminished-seventh chord structure and related octatonic system, and the notion of competition between pitches creating drama on a structural level. This next step in the analytical study of this movement is crucial in understanding how Schumann handles larger forms and the depth that characterizes his writing. While reading Sato’s study, three questions came to mind that later unfurled into my own analysis: how do the relationships of these nine keys contribute to the expressivity embedded in the tonal structure of this work? Why is the use of minor third progressions important in the context of this sonata? How does this Finale function within the context of this sonata as a coherent entity?

My analysis will first examine the primary theme (P) from the first movement and consider the importance of cyclicism present in the first three movements. I will then present my own voice-leading analysis of the Finale, which reveals a potential parallelism with P from the
first movement—providing a crucial link that connects the Finale to the rest of the sonata. I will use this relationship to suggest a hierarchical, or competitive, function of tonality in this work between the pitches A and E-flat, and consider how minor third relationships are used to create drama in the form. Next, I will present alternative readings for each rotation, and examine their individual qualities and why I ultimately chose the reading I did. Lastly, I will consider the implications of my analysis in the potential omission of mm. 213–254, marked in Schumann’s personal copy of the first edition (1836) and the later printing (1840) of the Finale.  

Analysis

Example 1. A simplification of the first movement’s P theme, mm. 53–74

Example 1 presents the two main motives of the first movement’s P theme. The first motive (which I will call the P5 motive) is a repeating descending-fifth gesture with a short tag—the half-step upper-neighbor motion—that places an emphasis on the lower pitch in the interval. The second motive (which I will call the m3 motive) is more melodic in nature. Its basic shape consists of two minor thirds that surround the tonic, F-sharp. That is, the melody first ascends a third from 1 to 3, then falls back to 1 and descends a third to 6. Then, this motion continues downward, through the diatonic 6, toward the dominant. This motion is very prominent as it is repeated eight times over an arpeggiated dominant-seventh chord in mm. 68–72. This dominant reaches its climax with another statement of the P5 motive (m. 73), this time in unison octaves, before returning to the tonic. This structure will later prove to play an integral role in the unification of the Sonata. After P, the piece further develops these two motives, using both ideas in abundance in the development section. For example, the P5 motive is stated four times in mm. 191–199, and the m3 motive is prominently displayed in mm. 221–267. No material from the secondary theme area (S, mm. 146-174), however, is developed. Nearly all the material in the
development is derived from some sort of variation of P or the transitional material (TR) that immediately follows it. While the descending-fifth motive typically appears almost exactly as it was first presented, the m3 motive is preserved primarily using its distinct galloping rhythm. At the center of the development lies a quotation from the introduction in the key of F minor (mm. 268–279). Material from the introduction is not directly used anywhere else in the first movement, except for its descending-fifth structure. This self-reference sets an essential precedent for the structural expressivity of this work, a feature that we will see recur on a deeper level in the fourth movement.

Material from the introduction in mm. 22–38 reappears as the melodic material for the ternary-form second movement’s A (mm. 1–15) and A’ (mm. 27–45) sections. In the third movement, the descending-fifth reappears rhythmically modified in the bass in the B section (mm. 51–66). In the first three movements, then, there are direct, easily observable links between movements that create large-scale structural connections. As I mentioned previously, Emberley’s (2013) analysis of the sonata offers a more exhaustive record of the use of cyclicism in this work.

The fourth movement, however, despite its abundance of thematic material, bears no explicit link to the rest of the sonata. There are no definitive or fragmented statements of the P5 motive as seen in the previous movements, and none of the melodic material is taken from any other part of the piece. On the surface, the only recognizable link is a slight variation of the m3 motive’s rhythm from the first movement: in the fourth movement, it reappears first in mm. 24–32 as a repeated unit of three sixteenth notes followed by a sixteenth rest, which bears an almost identical profile to the m3 motive.

It is tempting to argue that the redistribution of thematic materials in mm. 213–266 creates cyclicism in the Finale. The arrival of unexpected transitional material in E-flat major in
m. 254, along with the expressive markings *un poco piu lento* (a little slower) and *teneramente* (tenderly), almost mimics what happens in the first movement when a deliberate imitation of the introduction’s theme (mm. 1–13) reappears in that movement’s development (mm. 268–279). However, considering the Rondo parallel form, it is difficult to argue that the reappearance of some thematic material—unexpected or not—is an example of cyclicism, uniting the Finale with the previous three movements since we would anticipate recurring thematic material in such a form. In its own context, it makes more sense to consider this episode as a sudden break from the expected formal progression and a skip to different material. Initially, it seems that the sort of organic self-awareness that the first three movements embody is not continued in the fourth movement. This forces us to ask how the fourth movement engages with the cyclicism and self-awareness present in earlier movements. Does it break it, or develop it? A voice-leading analysis of the movement offers insights that suggest possible answers to these questions.

Example 2. A voice-leading graph of the Finale, accompanied by a reduction of the m3 motive.
Adopting the formal structure outlined in Sato’s study, this movement is broken into two rotations, which coincide with the two separate descents from 5 in the Urlinie. The first rotation (R1) encompasses mm. 1–190, and the second rotation (R2) lasts from mm. 191–396. R2 is followed by a Coda that spans mm. 397–462, which is not included in the graph in Example 2. The fourth movement’s Urlinie begins its descent from 5, which appears first in m. 2 of R1. The first thematic section modulates from F-sharp minor to A major, and the Urlinie quickly reaches 3 by measure 16 when it cadences in A major. Through measure 161, 3 is prolonged by an octave descent that begins with an incomplete upper neighbor, B-flat, that then rises to C, where there is another statement of the first theme, in C minor. Here, an inner voice, G, rises to G-sharp (AM: 7) in a temporary tonicization of the movement’s tonic, F-sharp. A cadence in the tonic is eluded here as G-sharp passes through F-sharp (AM: 6) to E (AM: 5) via a descending-fifths sequence. Upon achieving E (AM: 5), the descent accelerates through a series of articulated chords, arriving at a PAC in A major (m. 134) to complete the octave descent that prolongs A. This A rises to C-sharp (m. 161) as the piece returns to F-sharp minor. C-sharp immediately falls back down to A, which in turn falls to 2 (G-sharp), over a dominant pedal (m. 183). This pedal is a back-relating dominant, and it is here that the interruption point is achieved—the 2 does not fall to the tonic, but rather drives back up to 5 (m. 191).

R2 begins similarly as the first. As in R1, the Urlinie quickly descends to 3 (m. 205). Immediately, however, the piece moves in a different direction after reaching this tone. Like how the A in m. 16 rises to an incomplete upper neighbor to C in R1, the A in measure 205 then rises to C before falling back down to A. After a statement of the first theme in this new key, the Urlinie again briefly returns to C (m. 213). Here, there is a stark break as it modulates directly to E-flat major. At this point, the B-flat incomplete neighbor that was previously eluded as A
moved back and forth between C in R2, returns. This section (mm. 213–254) behaves as a local expansion of the A that arrives in m. 205. Though the actual musical material is different, the sudden arrival of B-flat in m. 254 operates in a similar manner to its first appearance. Returning to the octave descent that prolonged A in R1, notice that the line appears to struggle to descend from A to G-sharp; indeed, a great deal of ambiguity surrounds the underlying motion in measures 16–85. In R2, it is as if the E-flat tonality takes advantage of this confusion and asserts itself as the new important key. This sort of competition between A major and E-flat major serves as one of the underlying backbones of musical drama in this work. The significance and formal ambiguity that surrounds this dichotomy will be explored in greater detail later in this paper. When the B-flat in measure 254 arrives, it is not yet understood to be a structurally important note—though the transition is abrupt, the musical material itself is taken from the first appearance of B-flat in R1. With the appearance of new thematic material in measure 262, the B-flat is then understood to begin a 5-line descent that serves as a formal complement to the octave descent in A major in the first rotation. After cadencing in E-flat (m. 324), the music deviates from the model presented in R1, ascending to an F-natural, supported by B-flat minor. This motion towards B-flat at the end of R2 surges toward D-sharp minor (m. 386) for the final recapitulation of the first theme. As the first theme begins its descent from 5, a D-sharp minor tonality supports ž3 (A-sharp). From here, the Urlinie descends to the structural close in F-sharp major in measure 396.

This cadence is followed by the coda (mm. 397–462) that reaffirms this cadence in F-sharp. This section does not explicitly draw from any of the major thematic material in the

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16 As I had mentioned previously, Schumann reportedly penciled in an edit that omitted this section in his personal copy of the work. I have placed a diamond around this section to indicate that it may be removed—I will weigh the consequences of this omission in performance later in this paper.
movement, but it does recapitulate certain defining elements of the movement on the surface. As Example 4 shows, tritones are a core structural feature of the sonata. In mm. 433–437, the music lands on a G₈⁷ chord, and it is voiced such that there is a noticeable emphasis on G-double-sharp and D-sharp, creating a tritone. Rather than resolving this chord, the music begins to ascend chromatically through a series of diminished-seventh chords marked “con passione.” This motion carries the music into its final cadence in F-sharp major, and it is here where the coda confirms the large-scale motion that defines the trajectory of the whole sonata (Example 3). In measures 450–457, there is an emphasis on the movement between A-sharp and A-natural, mirroring the way the motion in the Urlinie in this movement juxtaposes a fall from 5 in minor and major (Example 3). In m. 457, the A-sharp appears to defeat A-natural, as F-sharp major ultimately concludes the work.

Example 3. A basic comparison of the Finale’s Urlinie and the m3 motive

Below the graph of the fourth movement in Example 2 is a reduction of the m3 motive from the first movement. In Example 3, the top line is a reproduction of the Urlinie’s descent in both rotations and the bottom line is a simplification of the m3 motive, shown in Examples 1 and 2. Comparing the motion of the m3 motive to the Urlinie, we can see that it locks into the structural motion and harmonic progression of the Finale.
Complementing the initial fall to the third scale degree in the *Urlinie* (m. 16), the F-sharp in the m3 motive rises to an A. From mm. 16–134, this A is prolonged by an octave descent before returning to F-sharp in m. 161. Here, the lower staff complements this modulation back to the tonic by falling from A to F-sharp. In the graph in Example 2, I have shown that the first rotation ends on 2 as it unfurls straight into the second rotation, evading a PAC. In Example 3, I have elected to break apart the arrival on the tonic at the end of R1 to help demonstrate how the m3 motive locks into the harmonic progression when it is broken into two smaller gestures. That is, the F-sharp at the end of R1 in Example 3 arrives at the same time as the C-sharp that begins R2. My analysis mostly considers this movement in terms of two distinct rotations, however, the interlocked arrival that initiates the second rotation is a continuous phrase. This is an important factor to keep in mind as we consider this parallelism, as the m3 motive itself is a continuous statement.

As the *Urlinie* (Example 2) returns to 5 in m. 191 and descends to 3, the m3 motive in the lower staff begins its descent from F-sharp. After reaching 3, the music fails to settle immediately into this tonality, much like it did in R1. The difference here is interesting, though, because rather than working back towards A, it wanders, and then completely abandons any pursuit of A, continuing onwards with B-flat. Looking at measures 204–253, including the diamond (Example 2), the E in the m3 motive is a chord member of each passing key—E is supported by E major, A major, and C major. For this reason, the E-natural in the m3 motive is harmonically aligned with both 4 and 3 in the *Urlinie*. The sort of tonal wandering in this section foreshadows the dramatic appearance of E-flat soon to come in both lines. Though E-flat is

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17 In Example 2, notice the trouble that A (8) in m. 16 seems to have in reaching the G-sharp (7) in m. 85.
intervallically equivalent to $A$ as it relates to $F$-sharp, the appearance of $E$-flat major in this key is shocking compared to the relative major.\textsuperscript{18} Though $\hat{3}$ has already been achieved in the graph with a cadence in $A$ major (m. 205), it is truly its incomplete upper neighbor, $B$-flat, operating as the fifth in $E$-flat major, that dominates $R_2$ in the same manner that $A$ appeared in $R_1$. This emphasis on $B$-flat (enharmonically equivalent to $A$-sharp) corresponds with the descent to $E$-flat/$D$-sharp in the $m_3$ motive. Like how $A$ was prolonged in $R_1$, $B$-flat appears as the start of a $5$-line descent in $E$-flat major (mm. 254–324). After this descent in $E$-flat, $R_2$ breaks from the model created in $R_1$ with a rise to $B$-flat minor in m. 353, rather than modulating by a minor third as it had done previously. This move to $B$-flat minor returns to $E$-flat.\textsuperscript{19} $B$-flat is retained as the important note in $E$-flat (m. 368), and becomes reinterpreted as $A$-sharp in the key of $D$-sharp minor (m. 386), which is sharp $\hat{3}$ in the $Urlinie$. Here, $E$-flat becomes $D$-sharp, as it is shown in Example 3. As the piece approaches its structural close with the descent from $\hat{3}$, the $m_3$ motive falls from $D$-sharp to $C$-sharp, the dominant, which aligns with $\hat{2}$, before leaping to $F$-sharp, bringing us the final cadence of the piece.

The presence of this underlying parallelism with the primary theme from the first movement may also lead us to make a connection between the fourth movement’s $5$-line $Urlinie$ descent and the $P_5$ motive I discussed earlier in the first movement’s primary theme. Though it is never explicitly present, at least, on the same level as the $m_3$ motive, there is a sort of abstract double parallelism that exists in this work through the simultaneity of a descending-fifth structure and the $m_3$ motive. Though it is not the focus of this paper, there is ample opportunity

\textsuperscript{18} I will discuss some of the difficulties in reading this section later in this paper, with respects to an alternative reading for the rotation and the possible omission of mm. 2213-254.

\textsuperscript{19} The arrival of $B$-flat minor can be understood to function as a tonic-dominant expansion of $E$-flat. Thus, no motion in the $m_3$ motive corresponds with its arrival.
here to relate these structural characteristics to many of the general extra-musical influences that often surround the analysis of Schumann’s music.

Example 4. The general structure of the m3 motive

The formal symmetry and harmonic contrasts between the two rotations imply a certain nuance about how the movement centers itself about the tonic. Example 4 shows how the piece’s F-sharp tonic is balanced by motion up and down by a minor third, creating a tritone that flank’s the piece’s tonal center. As I noted previously, Sato has shown that an F♯⁰⁷ chord governs the structure of the work.²⁰ Example 4 can be modified to display an F♯⁰⁷ chord by simply adding a C. At a deeper level, however, C bears little significance to the structural flow of the movement compared to A and D-sharp/E-flat. It appears relatively frequently, but operates mostly in a passing or elaborative manner—often in service of another key. In the diamond in Example 2, for instance, I show that C appears as an expansion of A, and, in the same way that F-sharp exists as the midpoint between A and D-sharp/E-flat, C operates as a secondary midpoint between these two pitches. It is in this relationship of midpoints that a hierarchy is created between the members of the F-sharp fully diminished-seventh chord.

Figure 1. An illustration of the three hierarchical layers that build the Finale’s tonal structure

Figure 1 shows that F-sharp, the tonic, exists at the top of this hierarchy at the primary level, A and D-sharp/E-flat exist at the secondary level, operating as complementary counterweights to the tonic, and C exists as a midpoint between A and E-flat on the tertiary level. Figure 1’s diamond shape emphasizes that the notes A and D-sharp/E-flat are directly linked to F-sharp, however no direct relationship exists between F-sharp and its subservient tritone counterpart, C. The tiered nuance of this structure helps to clarify the agency of these four important notes in the Finale. Here, Sato’s notion of competition between pitches comes to mind. Considering Figure 1, we can see that E-flat and A are essentially on equal footing. This dichotomy creates balance, embedded expressively in this structure by the dissonant tritone created by E-flat and A.

The relationship illustrated in Figure 1 is a key component of tonal organization in this movement and I considered it heavily in my voice leading analysis. Often, it is possible to interpret the same music in multiple ways, and this was certainly the case in this piece. Though certain details may change, however, the hierarchical structure I have just discussed still appears
prominently in this movement. Now, I will present alternative readings for each rotation and discuss certain characteristics for each—note that, despite the change in the distribution of the *Urlinie*, the competitive element, shown in Example 4 and Figure 1, is always present.

![Example 5](image)

**Example 5. Alternative reading of R1**

Returning to Example 2, one may notice an unusual characteristic present in both rotations: the quick descent to 3 on the deepest level. It would be more typical for the *Urlinie* to descend towards the end of the work, a situation represented by Example 5. Rather than descending to 3 at the beginning of the work and then only temporarily rising back up to 5, Example 5 shows that it is possible to consider the octave prolongation of A from measures 16–161 to be in service of the expansion of the *Kopfton*, 5. Besides the difference regarding when 3 arrives, the reading is the same. This single detail is an important consideration, however, as it concerns the relative weight with which the note A engages with the deep, structural motion of R1: Example 2 argues for an explicit, structural emphasis on 3, which takes up much of the
movement’s space with its prolongation, while Example 5 de-emphasizes 3’s role in the movement in favor of a longer prolongation of 5.

Example 6. Alternative reading of R2

A complication with respect to the reading proposed by Example 5 results when we consider how one might read R2 (Example 6). It is not possible to prolong 5 in R2 (Example 6) in a parallel fashion to the way in which it is prolonged in R1 (Example 5). As I discussed earlier, in m. 353 R2 breaks from R1 by modulating up a fifth to B-flat minor instead of by third to F-sharp minor. This shift prevents the reappearance of 5 and 4. The absence of 5 presents an inconsistency with respect to how 5 descends to 4 between the rotations. Additionally, this absence makes it difficult to argue that the extensive prolongation of E-flat is any sort of chromatic expansion of 5. Of greater consequence, however, is the absence of 4. Enharmonically, 4 appears prominently in measure 364 as C-flat, or the root of the Neapolitan in B-flat minor. Though its arrival is experientially significant, it possesses a predominant function in B-flat minor that is reduced out of the reading at deeper levels. To argue that this C-flat
operates as 4 at the deepest level would create an inconsistency in its structural depth and function. Besides this enharmonic appearance, 4 also appears at the beginning of R2, immediately after 5 in measure 204. Since this is the only instance where 4 appears with structural significance, choosing to read R2 in a manner like the R1 reading proposed in Example 5 would force this 4 to become a part of the Urlinie, which would mean that 4 receives an extensive prolongation in R2 that it did not receive in R1. Another tempting alternative reading would be to view the Urlinie as a 3-line rather than as a 5-line, where 5 would operate as a cover tone. This would enable the descent to be delayed until the very end of the movement, and in terms of both R1 and R2, it would support the argument that there is a significant structural emphasis on 3. However, this perspective does not account for the clear way 5 descends to 3 in R1. That is, 5 really does begin the motion of the work, not 3. Moreover, the descent from 5 to 3 is supported rather typically in the bass.

The reading I propose in Example 2, then, attempts to accommodate the individual nuances of each rotation, while preserving structural symmetry in the distribution of the Urlinie across the work. If R1 existed as its own entity, without the context of R2, the alternative reading proposed in Example 5 falls closer in line with what one might typically expect of a 5-line structure. However, as shown above, it is not possible to overlay this same structure on R2. Though it is unusual, the quick descent to 3 can be overlaid onto R1 (as shown in example 2) and creates symmetry between the rotations.
Application

As previously noted, Schumann penciled an omission of mm. 213–254 in the Finale into his personal copies of the first edition (1836) and the later reprinting (1840) of the sonata.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, Ernst Herttrich suggests that this edit was “known and obvious to those close to him,” as the edit also appears in a copy of the sonata in Elise Schumann’s estate.\textsuperscript{22} This edit is not adopted by most pianists while performing this work, and it is interesting to consider the consequences of including this omission in their performance, as it is such a large chunk of the movement. Since the edit never appeared in any of the published editions of the sonata—including Clara Schumann’s edition—it is impossible to know if this was Schumann’s ultimate intention for the work, or if it was only under temporary consideration. Nevertheless, this potential omission has consequences on the overall design of the Finale—it is impossible to ignore in the discussion of the tonal framework of the Finale and how it fits into the sonata.

Earlier, I had stated that it appears that the Finale lacks the same organic self-awareness that defines the cyclicism present in the first three movements. Considering my voice leading analysis, we can see that this is not true—though little appears on the surface, the Finale is deeply engaged with this pattern. One may notice that in Emiko Sato’s dissertation and my own study, there is a particular focus on mm. 213-254. Considering my reading of the movement, this direct modulation to E-flat major (m. 254) operates in a manner that reinforces the structural importance of E-flat in the work, solidifying it as the true secondary key of R2. This places it in direct juxtaposition to A-major, and supports my suggestion that these two keys exist on the same secondary level as shown in Figure 1. The proposed edit in Schumann’s copies appears to

\textsuperscript{21} Schumann, ed. Herttrich (2009, 60-63).
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, (2009, 60-63)
dismantle or weaken this structure in some ways. To better understand the nature of this omission, we should examine the consequences of its inclusion in the performance of the work.

Perhaps the most obvious consequence of this omission is that it makes the movement shorter. In the context of the *Urlinie*, it effectively accelerates the descent to the tonic in R2. While this may appear to diminish the importance of E-flat as the rotation in which it is prolonged is shortened, it serves to create a closer link between F-sharp and E-flat. When mm. 213–254 are removed from R2, it highlights the structural dichotomy between A and E-flat. Looking at the diamond in Example 2, one may notice that this section is effectively expanding A in R2, before E-flat breaks through in m. 254. If the omission is adopted, this expansion of A is lost and an almost direct contact between F-sharp and E-flat is created. This is important as R1 places F-sharp and A in this same relationship. As can be seen in R2 from mm. 191–205, the first theme modulates from F-sharp minor to A major and there is still a layer of separation present between the tonic and E-flat. However, the preservation of the minor third progression in the first theme (F-sharp $\rightarrow$ A) is essential to the architecture of the movement, as when the first theme appears in E-flat/D-sharp minor, it can then modulate up a minor third to F-sharp major, concluding the work. Thus, the separation of F-sharp and E-flat by A in the beginning of R2 is crucial, as it enables E-flat to directly relate to F-sharp. While this still occurs when the piece is played as written, it is more prominent as it places E-flat in direct juxtaposition to the structure that relates F-sharp upwards to A.

As the omission enhances the visibility, so to say, of E-flat in R2, it also serves to increase the sense of tonal hierarchy that I have illustrated in Figure 1. The expansion of A in the diamond in Example 2 is accomplished by modulating to and from C major, which consequently also places an emphasis on C in this section. Other than here, C only appears as an important
note in the middleground level in R1 when the key of C minor appears in m. 49. Even still, this C functions as an embellishment of $\hat{8}$ in the octave descent from A in R1. In R2, C is used as an embellishment of E-flat in mm. 262–274, and then C minor is implied from mm. 275–287 with a dominant pedal, however the key is never established as it moves into a descending-fifths sequence (m. 288) rather than reaching a cadence. On the surface, C does not even appear on the same level as E-flat as it is only implied by the prolongation of its dominant. Here, we can see a surface level actualization of the hierarchical difference between the secondary and tertiary levels expressed in Figure 1. Considering the appearance of C in R1 and R2, it can be seen, then, that C functions exclusively to expand A or E-flat, with little manifestation on the middleground level. When mm. 213–254 are omitted from a performance, it does not cause this hierarchical distinction to occur, but makes it more prominent.

As it relates to the m3 motive in the Finale, this section, mm. 213–254, has an interesting consequence on the manifestation of this parallelism. As I had mentioned before, when the m3 motive descends to E in R2 (looking back at Example 2), there is a slight hesitation on this passing tone as the music appears to pivot across E, passing through E major, A minor, and C major, as the Urlinie descends through $\hat{4}$ and $\hat{3}$. Considering the economic way the Urlinie and its harmonic support passes through each important note in the m3 motive—note the quick descent to $\hat{3}$ as the m3 motive ascends to A, almost mimicking the motive’s original rhythm—it is strange how there is such a delay on the passing tone E in the m3 motive. If the omission is adopted, this hesitation is removed. As this back and forth motion between A minor and C major is no longer present, the unprecedented expansion of the E passing tone in the m3 motive is reduced, regaining its likeness to its original function. This allows E to pass through to E-flat in a
more efficient manner. Including this edit in a performance causes the profile of the m3 motive to become more distinct, bringing it closer to the surface of the musical experience.

Of course, by eliminating a significant section of the form, something is to be lost in the piece. As written, mm. 213–254 creates a sense of formal symmetry between the rotations, at least until it is interrupted in m. 254. Even still, with this interruption, the transition in mm. 254–261 is the same length as the complementary transition in R1 from mm. 65–72. Though the transitional material in R2 is different, it still has the same formal function and equivalent length. The omission takes away this sense of symmetry, but, almost paradoxically, creates greater coherence in R2 as it preserves the thematic sequence that occurs at the beginning of R1. The skip to new material, then, occurs with the register change in m. 265, which is the same subtle shift that differentiates the two chorale-like sections in R1 (mm. 32–38 and mm. 73–85). This small change enables the music to shift forward in the form without much notice. Even though it appears smooth on the surface, forty-one measures are still lost from R2. This causes the form to become unbalanced, where R1 is 190 measures and R2 is 167 measures in total.

The decision to include this omission in the performance of this sonata is purely subject to one’s own artistic inclinations. The intention of my study is not to campaign for the use of the edit, but rather to provide an analytical perspective that allows performers to make an informed decision. Many questions should be asked by the performer as they interpret this movement: what is the meaning of this parallelism in the context of the form? Is formal asymmetry distracting or enhancing to the expressivity of the m3 motive? Should the m3 motive be preserved as it appears in the first movement, or manipulated as it is in mm. 213–254? Perhaps

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23 As a pianist who plays this sonata, I am obliged to acknowledge my curiosity about including this omission, which may show as a bias in my language.
the most significant element of my analysis is the way mm. 213–254 impact the unfolding of the m3 motive across the form. This parallelism is responsible for uniting the Finale with the rest of the sonata and it is a defining element of the expressive foundation on which it is built.
Conclusion

Many pianists and musicians alike would agree that there is an inherent poetic quality that defines Schumann’s music. So often, we discuss the influence that Schumann’s favorite writers and literary trends had on his compositional style. I hope, as it is so apparent to me, that the general audience may see the poetic depth still present even in Schumann’s larger scale works. This Finale stirs up a mirage of wildly unique sounds and elements that, despite their own individuality, serve to establish unity and finality. There is a transcendental quality that transforms surface-level objects to the architectural in the Finale, marking this sonata with an undeniable sense of narrative coherence and development.

It is critical that musicians are aware of the undercurrents within a piece of music that govern its structure and imbue it with expression. This is certainly the case in this sonata, as without this depth of understanding a great deal of intense meaning is nearly lost. The parallelism present in the tonal structure allows us to recognize the transformations that define this sonata. Though this perception may not directly impact the interpretive decisions one makes in performance, it does affect the way we all appreciate its message. Here, this is accomplished not by relating themes by their motivic content, but rather through the abstraction of musical ideas to various levels of depth in the form. It would be highly presumptuous to suggest that this parallelism is aurally perceptible when one listens to this work. I would like to argue, however, that the cognitive awareness of this design allows us to appreciate this sonata in a new light. This is not only the case with this sonata—consider how important the technical perspective is in the appreciation of motivic development in Brahms’ F minor piano sonata or thematic transformation in Liszt’s transcendental B minor sonata. Returning to the “Beethovenian” standard I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, I would suggest that the rich depth of study in many
disciplines that surrounds Beethoven’s piano sonatas has allowed us to continue discovering new pleasures and meanings in his music today, 193 years after his death.

Concerning the criticism that befalls much of Schumann’s larger works, I would submit this work as a counterargument to such claims. With his first undertaking in what is arguably the most lauded compositional form in the western canon, Schumann puts forth a work that is engaged deeply with the ideas of thematic development and unity on multiple layers of the form. As has been the case with the other composers I have just mentioned, more time must be spent examining Schumann’s larger works from various analytical perspectives. As shown here, voice leading analysis is useful in initiating discussions about coherence in this sonata, and its applications to other works within his output may yield promising discoveries. In a future study, one might combine the voice-leading work I have presented here with aspects of a narrative analysis that considers the dialogue between thematic elements within the overarching structure that governs them.

Though we only know little of Schumann’s personal circumstances that surround this work, it is important to acknowledge that relationships and interpersonal connections heavily influenced it. There is an intense intimacy to this music that is captured by the interplay of individual musical elements and the larger structure. This sonata is a testimony to the joys of companionship and the need of mankind to connect with one another. In these trying times as we face this global health crisis, many of us are left feeling alone and stranded. This sonata serves as a triumphant reminder that we will soon be reunited with our loved ones and places, and most importantly that we are all a part of something bigger than ourselves.
Bibliography


