

Tertian relations in the Mendelssohn violin concerto

YIQUN CUI

EASTMAN COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL

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Thesis

The interval of the third is a unifying musical element with thematic significance in Felix Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op. 64.

Overview¹

- I. Analysis of musical surface gestures
- II. Analysis of underlying harmonic framework
- III. Analysis of larger key area relations
- IV. Acknowledgement of potential counterarguments

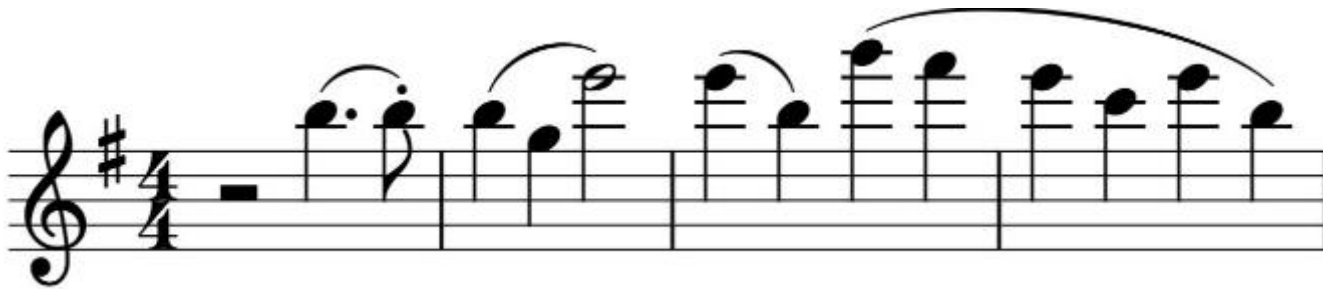
¹ All examples based on the International Music Company (IMC) Edition (ed. Francescatti)

MUSICAL SURFACE ANALYSIS

SECTION I

Fig. 1a: Theme 1.1²

mvt. 1: mm. 2-5



² All themes are indicated in format of [movement].[number]; Theme 1.1 designates theme 1 of movement 1

Fig. 1b: Melodic reduction of Theme 1.1

mvt. 1: mm. 2-4

leaps of a sixth

dotted rhythm

violin melody

melodic reduction

E minor chord

The image displays two staves of music in 4/4 time, key of E major (indicated by a sharp on the F line). The top staff, labeled 'violin melody', contains the following notes: a whole rest in the first measure, a dotted quarter note E4 in the second measure (circled in red), a quarter note G#4 in the second measure, a quarter note A4 in the third measure, a quarter note B4 in the third measure, a quarter note C#5 in the fourth measure, a quarter note D5 in the fourth measure, a quarter note E5 in the fifth measure, and a quarter note F#5 in the fifth measure. The bottom staff, labeled 'melodic reduction', shows the harmonic structure: a whole rest in the first measure, a half note E4 in the second measure, a half note G#4 in the second measure, a half note A4 in the third measure, a half note B4 in the third measure, a half note C#5 in the fourth measure, a half note D5 in the fourth measure, a half note E5 in the fifth measure, and a half note F#5 in the fifth measure. A blue bracket under the bottom staff from the second to the fifth measure is labeled 'E minor chord'. Two black boxes on the violin melody staff, one around the A4-B4 pair and another around the C#5-D5 pair, are labeled 'leaps of a sixth'.

Fig. 1c: Instances of Theme 1.1

mvt. 1: various

III = G major
mm. 168-170

derived from $\text{vii}^{\text{o}7}/\text{E}$ minor
mm. 211-213

I = E major
mm. 262-264

The figure displays three musical staves, each representing a different instance of Theme 1.1. Each staff begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff is labeled 'III = G major mm. 168-170'. The second staff is labeled 'derived from vii^o7/E minor mm. 211-213'. The third staff is labeled 'I = E major mm. 262-264'. In each staff, the first measure contains a half note G4 and a half note E5, which are circled in red. The subsequent measures of each staff contain various musical notations, including eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, some of which are enclosed in black rectangular boxes. The notation for the second staff includes a sharp sign (#) on the F# line, indicating the key signature.

Fig. 1d: Themes 1.1A and 1.1

mvt. 1: mm. 76-78 (1.1A), mm. 2-4 (1.1)

	Theme 1.1A	Theme 1.1
violin melody		
melodic reduction		
	E minor chord	E minor chord

Fig. 2a: Theme 1.2 and reduction

mvt. 1: mm. 139-144

repeated notes
+ weak beat

violin melody

melodic reduction

B minor chord

The image displays a musical score for Theme 1.2, measures 139-144. The top staff, labeled 'violin melody', is in 4/4 time and key of D major. It shows a sequence of notes with repeated notes on the weak beat, highlighted by a green circle and two red circles. The bottom staff, labeled 'melodic reduction', shows the B minor chord (B, D, F) sustained across the measures. A blue bracket under the reduction is labeled 'B minor chord'.

Fig. 2b: Instances of Theme 1.2

mvt. 1: various

Theme 1.2
mm. 139-140

Transition
mm. 166-167

Recapitulation
mm. 321-322

Coda
mm. 380-381

The figure displays four musical staves, each representing a different instance of Theme 1.2. The staves are arranged vertically. Each staff is in treble clef and 4/4 time. The first staff, 'Theme 1.2 mm. 139-140', is in G major (one sharp). The second staff, 'Transition mm. 166-167', is in G major and includes an 8-measure rest at the beginning. The third staff, 'Recapitulation mm. 321-322', is in A major (two sharps). The fourth staff, 'Coda mm. 380-381', is in G major. In each staff, a green circle highlights the first four notes (quarter notes), and a red circle highlights the last two notes (quarter and eighth notes). The notes in the green circles are G4, A4, B4, and C5. The notes in the red circles are B4 and A4.

Fig. 3: Theme 2.1

mvt. 2: mm. 9-12

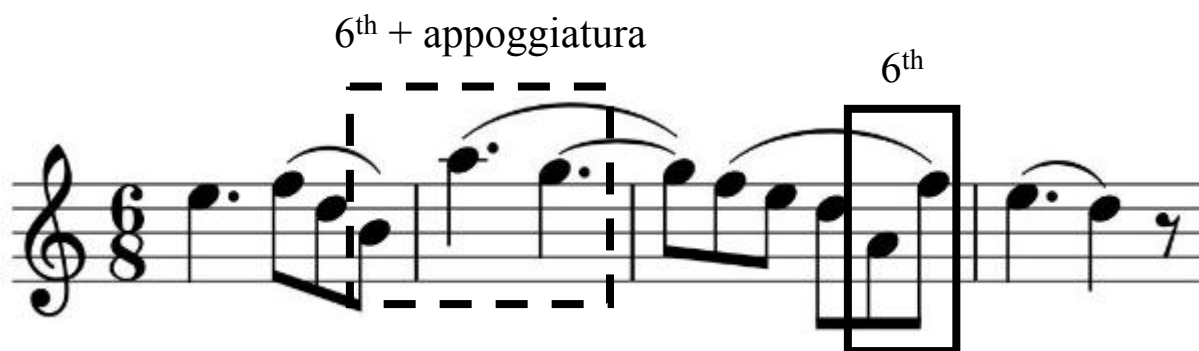


Fig. 4: Themes 2.1A and 2.1

mvt. 2: mm. 21-23 (2.1A), mm. 9-11 (2.1)



Fig. 5: Theme 3.1

mvt. 3: mm. 22-25

E major slurred

E major spiccato

B major


B major

E major

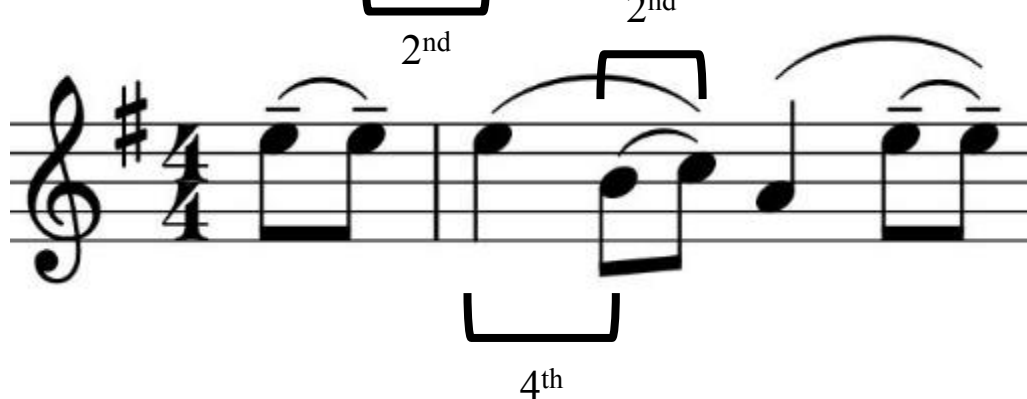
Fig. 6: Theme 3.2

mvt. 3: mm. 69-70 (3.2), mm. 1 (Transition)

Theme 3.2



Transition theme



HARMONIC FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS

SECTION II

Fig. 7: Melodic and harmonic reductions

mvt. 1: mm. 25-36

25

melody

melodic reduction

bass line

E minor triad

30

melody

melodic reduction

bass line

A minor triad

34

melody

melodic reduction

bass line

C major triad

Fig. 8a: Reduction of mm. 238-244

mvt. 1: mm. 238-244

238 $D^7 = V^7/G$ G major

melody

melodic reduction

bass line

242

melody

melodic reduction

bass line

$B^7 = V^7/E$

The image displays a musical score reduction for measures 238-244, organized into two systems. Each system consists of three staves: melody, melodic reduction, and bass line. The first system (measures 238-241) is labeled $D^7 = V^7/G$ and G major. The second system (measures 242-244) is labeled $B^7 = V^7/E$. Purple circles highlight specific notes in the melody and bass line. The melodic reduction staves show a simplified version of the melody, with notes connected by lines to indicate phrasing. The bass line staves show the harmonic support, with notes connected by lines to indicate phrasing.

Fig. 8: Approaching dominant by thirds

mvt. 1: mm. 238-255

The musical score consists of three staves in 4/4 time, key of D major. The notes are as follows:

- Staff 1 (measures 238-243):
 - Measure 238: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 239: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 240: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 241: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 242: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 243: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
- Staff 2 (measures 244-249):
 - Measure 244: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 245: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 246: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 247: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 248: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 249: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
- Staff 3 (measures 250-255):
 - Measure 250: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 251: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 252: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 253: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 254: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).
 - Measure 255: D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C#5 (quarter), D5 (quarter).

Chord labels and functions:

- Measure 238: $D^7 = V^7/G$
- Measure 240: G Major
- Measure 243: $B^7 = V^7/E$
- Measure 246: E minor
- Measure 247: $G^7 = V^7/C$
- Measure 249: C Major
- Measure 250: $E^7 = V^7/A$
- Measure 252: A minor
- Measure 255: $B^7 = V^7/E \rightarrow E \text{ Major}$

Harmonic progression diagram:

$$D \rightarrow G \rightarrow B \rightarrow E \rightarrow G \rightarrow C \rightarrow E \rightarrow A \rightarrow B = V^7$$

Fig. 9: Implied resolutions and $V_5^6 \frac{4}{3}$

mvt. 1: mm. 113-120

The figure displays a musical score for measures 113-120, illustrating implied resolutions and figured bass notation. The score is organized into two systems, each with three staves: melody, melodic reduction, and harmonic reduction.

System 1 (Measures 113-116):

- Melody:** Shows a melodic line starting at measure 113. A blue box highlights measures 114-115.
- Melodic Reduction:** Shows the reduction of the melody. A blue box highlights measures 114-115.
- Harmonic Reduction:** Shows the harmonic structure. A blue box highlights measures 114-115.
- Annotations:** Above the melodic reduction, "B ♭ Major: I_4^6 " is written for measures 114-115, and "D minor: vii_2^{04} " is written for measure 116.

System 2 (Measures 117-120):

- Melody:** Shows a melodic line starting at measure 117. A blue box highlights measures 118-119.
- Melodic Reduction:** Shows the reduction of the melody. A blue box highlights measures 118-119.
- Harmonic Reduction:** Shows the harmonic structure. A blue box highlights measures 118-119.
- Annotations:** Above the melodic reduction, "B ♭ Major: V_5^7 " is written for measures 118-119, and "G Major: V_5^6 " is written for measure 120.

Equation: Below the first system, the text "= $V_5^6 \frac{4}{3}$ in B ♭ major" is written, indicating the figured bass notation for the implied resolution.

Fig. 10: Interlocking thirds

mvt. 1: mm. 181-183

melody

upper set reduction

lower set reduction

harmonic reduction

The image displays a musical score for a section of music, specifically measures 181-183 of the first movement. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is composed of eighth notes, with some measures containing triplets. The upper set reduction consists of single notes, while the lower set reduction consists of single notes, some of which are circled in red. The harmonic reduction shows the underlying chord structure, with some chords being triads and others being dyads. The interlocking thirds are highlighted by the red circles in the lower set reduction and the blue circles in the upper set reduction.

LARGER KEY AREA RELATIONS

SECTION III

Fig. 11: Key Diagram, Mvt. 1

mvt. 1: Allegro, molto appassionato

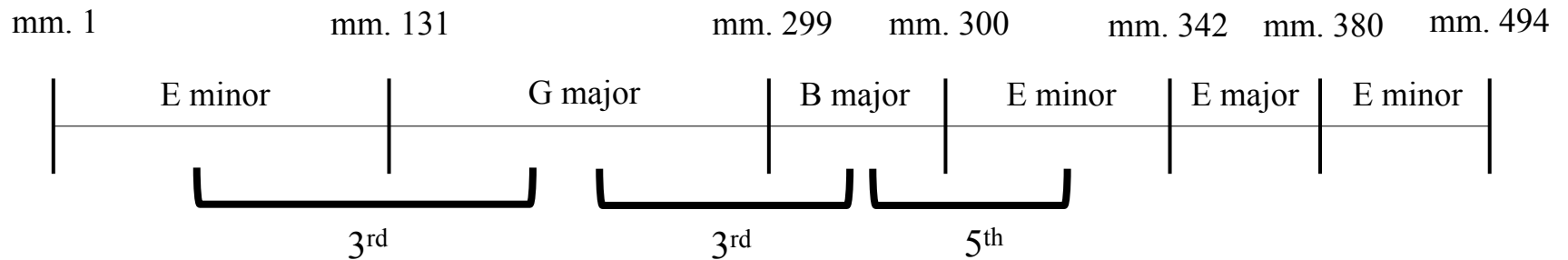


Fig. 8: Approaching dominant by thirds

mvt. 1: mm. 238-255

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of three staves of music, with measures 238, 244, and 250 marked at the beginning of each staff. The music is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. Above the staff, there are labels for the chords: D7 = V7/G, G Major, B7 = V7/E, E minor, G7 = V7/C, C Major, E7 = V7/A, A minor, and B7 = V7/E → E Major. The notes are written in a way that shows the approach of the dominant chord by thirds.

238 D7 = V7/G G Major B7 = V7/E

244 E minor G7 = V7/C C Major

250 E7 = V7/A A minor B7 = V7/E → E Major

D → G → B → E → G → C → E → A → B = V7

Fig. 11: Key Diagram, Mvt. 1

mvt. 1: Allegro, molto appassionato

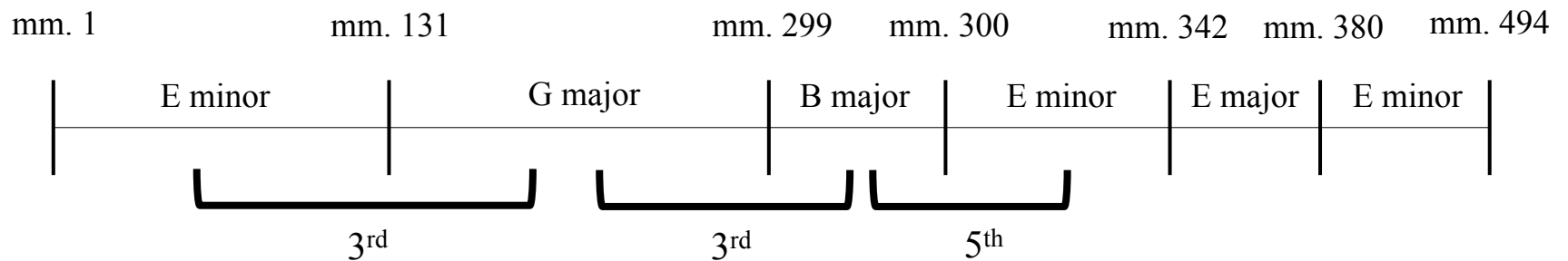


Fig. 12: Key Diagram, Mvt. 3

mvt. 3: Allegretto non troppo / Allegro molto vivace

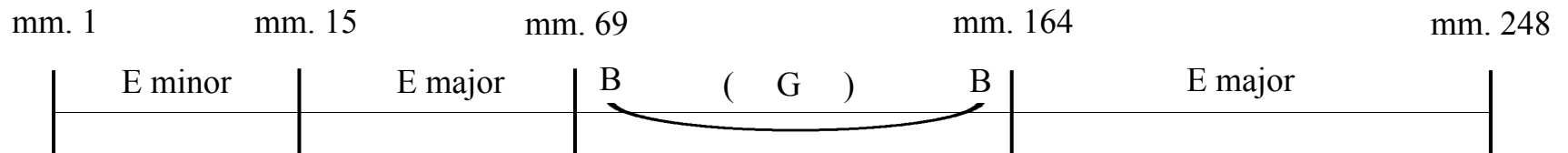
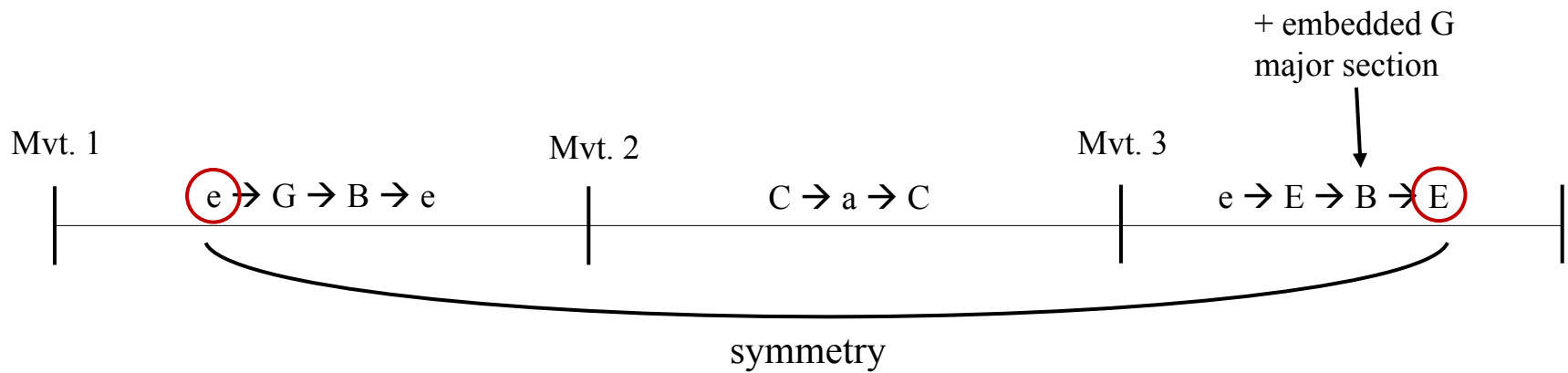


Fig. 13: Key Diagram, concerto



Series of keys (when stacked): A, C, E, G, B

COUNTERARGUMENTS

SECTION IV

Counterarguments

- I. Passages for virtuosic purposes
 - the fact that these surface figures were used indicates importance of third

- II. Coincidental use; arpeggios used to indicate chordal harmonies
 - this purpose is not mutually exclusive with thesis
 - presence of third in every level of analysis indicate importance of third

Fig. 6: Harmonic decorations and chords

mvt. 3: mm. 69-70 (3.2), mm. 1 (Transition)

Theme 3.2

E major chord

Transition theme

A minor chord

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff, labeled 'Theme 3.2', is in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, some with slurs. A bracket above the staff spans the first two measures, with the label 'E major chord' positioned above it. The bottom staff, labeled 'Transition theme', is also in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It shows a melodic line with eighth and quarter notes, some with slurs. A bracket below the staff spans the last two measures, with the label 'A minor chord' positioned below it.

Counterarguments

- I. Passages for virtuosic purposes
 - the fact that these surface figures were used indicates importance of third

- II. Coincidental use; arpeggios used to indicate chordal harmonies
 - this purpose is not mutually exclusive with thesis
 - presence of third in every level of analysis indicate importance of third

- III. Tertian key relations in the musical language of the Romantic Era
 - degree of prevalence of interval of third demonstrates significance

Conclusion

- Prevailing harmonic language of the Romantic Era
- Thematic significance
- Degree of prevalence within the concerto
- The third is a unifying element of this work

Bibliography

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Questions
