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SCHENKER AND IMPROVISATION

John Rink

This article has two sections. Part I investigates Heinrich Schenker's theoretical notion of improvisation and assesses its historical context. Part II contains three analytical case-studies designed to evaluate Schenker's ideas on this subject.

I. Schenker's Notion of "Improvisation"

> I would not presume to say how inspiration comes upon the genius, to declare with any certainty which part of the middleground or foreground first presents itself to his imagination: the ultimate secrets will always remain inaccessible to us. (Schenker 1979, 9)[1]
>
> Creation may have its origin anywhere, in any suitable voice-leading level or tone-succession; the seed, by the grace of God, remains inaccessible even to metaphysics. (Ibid., 18)

Schenker's theoretical works contain numerous passages such as these which reveal his passionate interest in the nature of compositional conception and the "mystery of the creative moment [*Geheimnis des Schöpfungsaugenblickes*]" (1925, 102–3). Although unable to explain precisely how the great masters conceived their music, Schenker nevertheless claims that the act of tonal composition depends on the composer's sense of the fundamental structure, which is "ever present" in the creative process, accompanying "each transformation in the

middleground and foreground, as a guardian angel watches over a child" (1979, 18). As if to answer the question asked by some critics—"But did the masters also know about all this?" (see Schenker 1979, xxii)—he states: "The secret of balance in music ultimately lies in the constant awareness of the transformation levels and the motion from foreground to background or the reverse. This awareness accompanies the composer constantly; without it, every foreground would degenerate into chaos" (1979, 18).

Schenker employs numerous metaphors to capture the "mystery" of compositional conception. He frequently alludes to the "organic" character of great music, which "grows outward from within" like the human body (1979, 6). "Aural flight [*fliegend Ohr*]" enables composers to conceive extended musical spans as unified compositional statements, as does their "remarkable improvisatory long-range vision [*genial improvisierende Weitsicht*]" (1979, 6). With regard to sonata form, Schenker observes:

> The masters were blessed with the ability constantly to live and move within the realm of prolongation of the formal division. Thus they were able to traverse the path of the exposition with giant strides, as if improvising, creating thereby the effect of a dramatic course of action. (1979, 136)

The link in this passage between compositional unity and improvisation indicates the extraordinary significance Schenker attaches to the latter in many of his publications, as his reference to "improvisatory long-range vision" also demonstrates. Even a cursory glance at his writings—particularly later ones like *Das Meisterwerk,* where he claims that "only what is composed with the sweep of improvisation [*aus dem Stegreif*] guarantees unity in a composition" (1977, 39),[2] and *Der freie Satz,* where he defines "genius" as "the gift of improvisation and long-range hearing [*Weithören*]" (1979, 18)—reveals the frequency and conviction with which Schenker uses the term to describe the act of composition and to define musical structure.

Although the importance of "improvisation" in Schenkerian theory cannot be more evident, it is not clear—nor has it ever been fully established—how literally Schenker used the term, what specific connection he saw between the act of improvisation and the act of composition, and whether or not he intended to relate his theoretical notion to historical practices. That Schenker's conception of the term evolved in the thirty-one years spanning his first major work, *Ein Beitrag zur Ornamentik,* and *Der freie Satz* makes it especially difficult to grasp.

The 1904 ornamentation essay (revised and reissued in 1908) attempts above all to "rehabilitate" the music of C. P. E. Bach, under-

valued at the time because of changes in taste and performance practice, but Schenker also attacks contemporary theorists who regard music exclusively in terms of its form and who claim that even the great masters composed according to preconceived formal principles.

> We perceive that any kind of schematic formula is foreign to their genius and that a natural spontaneity characterizes their creative activity. . . . The music of these geniuses is unconfined, and is but lightly chained to the eternal laws of nature [*nur sanft an ewige, ihnen unbewußte Gesetze der Natur gekettet*]. (1976, 34)

He specifically cites the freedom with which C. P. E. Bach composed:

> What first strikes one about Bach's compositional technique is the absence of any kind of schematic formula, whether in regard to form, idea, or harmony. To invent something in advance, in isolation and out of context, only to insert it into a strained patchwork later on—this does not lie in his nature. Instead, everything—at its inception as well as during its successive development—exists by grace of an improvisatory imagination [*improvisierende Phantasie*]. (1976, 27)

He also praises the "richness of ideas" that bestows on Bach's works "the gift of sounding spontaneous—eternally improvised [*das Ewig-Improvisierte*]" (1976, 33).

A passing observation reveals that Schenker interprets "improvisation" in this early essay not only as a metaphor for spontaneity, compositional freedom, and abundant ideas, but also in a distinctly historical context: citing Bach's advice to performers unable to "introduce elaborations" of fermatas and cadences, he comments, "I fear that this passage is even more appropriate today, since improvisatory playing has seen more decline than improvement since Bach's time" (1976, 49).[3] His remark implies that the demise of improvisation in the nineteenth century precipitated a decline in compositional technique, that is, the ability to compose not according to form but spontaneously, and to effect a synthesis.

In *Harmonielehre,* published in 1906, Schenker again relates improvisation to composition. The book ends with a discussion of two improvisatory traditions—modulating and preluding—in which Schenker criticizes theorists who represent modulations and preludes as simple, unrealized harmonies, as "the empty shells of the tones [*leere Tonhülsen*]" (1954, 337). "A real modulation looks somewhat different" (1954, 338):

> modulating and preluding—even in the most primitive case of a study example!—should show all the characteristics of a free composition, viz., a freely invented motif, free and variegated rhythm, as well as the

harmonic tools offered by the diatonic system, the principle of combination, chromatic change and alteration, and, finally, free step progression, with its inherent peculiar psychology. (1954, 336)[4]

Even though a simple progression may serve as the harmonic foundation of an improvised modulation or prelude, in itself it lacks musical meaning: only elaboration according to compositional principles will transform it into music.

In an important comment on compositional process, Schenker suggests that the great masters conceived and realized similar harmonic skeletons in the act of composition:

> It may not be useless, therefore, to keep present good examples when we elaborate plans for modulating and preluding [*Modulations- oder Präludienpläne*]—especially with regard to motif and rhythm. Such examples abound in the works of our masters, even if the composer's intention may not have been that of setting an example. (1954, 338–39)

To support his claim, he cites passages from the works of J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, and Mozart, speculating,

> Who knows, furthermore, whether the method of modulating and preluding as I conceive it would not incite the student's imagination, rendering it both more fluid and more self-reliant; who knows whether the general use of this method, extended to all students, would not create a situation where the artist would be able to improvise freely, as he was wont to do in other times. I, for one, do not have the slightest doubt that the security of the composer's technique would stand to gain by this method. (1954, 338; compare Schenker 1912, xxxv)

Herein lies the connection Schenker sees between composition and improvisation: both require the elaboration of harmonic "plans." Good compositional technique *presupposes* the ability to realize such "plans" as if through improvisation.

Schenker's references to compositional "plans" in his 1910 edition of J. S. Bach's Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue have somewhat different implications. Here he states that

> Bach wrote only a few fantasias; their form, while it tended to differ from work to work, was always well defined. Later, C. P. E. Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven often used a certain plan [*Hauptform*] to great advantage: they wrote fantasias in which short, homophonic segments—self-contained and nicely rounded off—alternated with transitional passage work or preluding material. (1984, 23)

Although these comments seem to contradict the 1904 essay on ornamentation (where Schenker asserts that the masters followed no pre-

conceived compositional plans or forms), this apparent discrepancy reveals an evolution in Schenker's thoughts on improvisation. Whereas before he attributed to the "improvisatory imagination" of the masters their freedom from formal constraint, he now acknowledges that these composers followed a "well-defined" form, a "certain plan," even in writing improvisatory works such as fantasias.

At the start of the edition, Schenker analyzes the Fantasy's harmonic structure and suggests that Bach might have employed this as a compositional model. Noting that "the inherent characteristics of passage work and recitative writing" could have led to "aimless and irrational" tonal procedures (1984, 23), he explains that Bach achieves tonal coherence in the Fantasy by frequent and judicious references to the dominant harmony, as well as to the tonic and subdominant.[5] Subtle statements of D minor's principal harmonies act as structural pillars that support "the boldest feats of modulation" (Spitta's phrase) in a work "that seems (but only *seems*) to be entirely chromatic and even atonal" (1984, 24). By attributing such importance to these harmonies, Schenker defines an essential element of what he would later have called the Fantasy's background structure.[6] Although significantly different from the *Ursatz* of mature Schenkerian theory, this "background" is elaborated by Bach according to certain principles that foreshadow the technique of *Auskomponierung*.[7]

In *Der Tonwille,* Schenker more closely links the plans of improvisatory compositions such as this to the background structure of his mature theory, although as yet his consideration of the relationship between improvisation and composition is neither exhaustive nor systematic. In a 1921 article, "Der Urlinie: Eine Vorbemerkung," he discusses the fundamental line (at this stage, only vaguely like the *Urlinie* as later defined) for the first time. He attributes to it the "whole inspiration" of a work: "It is the muse that inspires all improvisatory creation and all synthesis" (1921, 23; translation from Jonas 1982, 131). In a later issue, he writes that only "the feeling of the fundamental line" enabled the great masters to base their art of *Auskomponierung* and synthesis—as well as "the consistent logic in the transformation of their prolongations"—on improvisation.[8]

In other *Tonwille* articles, Schenker cites examples of the way "improvisatory inspiration" ensures the structural integrity of a work, showing how a remote structure, specifically the fundamental line, shapes more immediate events in the music. Referring to Haydn's Sonata in E♭ major, H.XVI:52, he writes that the *Urlinie*'s motion transcends the "storm" of activity generated by a thirty-second–note run: "The boldness of such improvisation results in great organic power!"[9] He identifies a similar connection in Beethoven's Op. 2, No. 1 and enthuses about the "improvisatory art of the young master."[10]

Although his references to improvisation in *Der Tonwille* mostly concern the improvisatory connection of the remote and the immediate through the fundamental line (which acts as a work's structural skeleton), Schenker again employs the term with specific historical resonances, suggesting a literal interpretation of what might otherwise have appeared merely as abstraction. In a 1923 essay he observes:

> the improvisatory nature of [J. S.] Bach's music is totally and fundamentally in contradiction with the over-fast tempos in vogue today. Can it not be said that virtually all of Bach's music relies on improvisatory creation? Obviously the current inability to improvise handicaps the modern musician in his attempt even to approach the unprecedented improvisatory art of a Bach. . . .[11]

In another article from 1923, Schenker discusses Beethoven's metronome markings and again relates historical traditions of improvisation to his apparently "theoretical" concept (1923b, 53; see also 1922b, 3, 10, 11; 1923b, 55).

Schenker thoroughly defines his notion of improvisation for the first time in his 1925 essay "Die Kunst der Improvisation," from the first *Meisterwerk* yearbook. He studies the final chapter ("Von der freyen Fantasie") in C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen,* and then analyzes the free fantasy at the close of the *Versuch,* as well as two works by Handel. Schenker concludes his essay with the comment:

> The conscious awareness with which our geniuses mastered tonal material in this manner enabled them to create comprehensive syntheses. Their works are not merely pieced together, but are sketched out instantaneously like the free fantasy and are developed from a mysterious fundamental source [*Urgrund*].[12]

Schenker makes two important points in this essay. First, even works as improvisatory in character as the free fantasy can have a comprehensible structure, for the great masters improvised with a "basic plan" in mind which helped them achieve coherence. A feature not only of improvisation but also of composition, that plan—"instantaneously sketched out" by a composer—comprises something like a background or middleground structure (specifically, an "*Urgrund*"), whose integrity and "sureness of course [*Sicherheit des Weges*]" (1925, 32) derive entirely from the fundamental line. (In his analysis of the C. P. E. Bach Fantasy, Schenker relates to an *Urlinie* the *partimento*-like plan specified by Bach as the "skeleton" [*das Gerippe*] of the work, which the composer fleshes out according to the principles of thoroughbass, thereby creating an apparently "free" but nonetheless logical composition.)[13]

Second, the "realization [*Ausführung*]" of the "basic plan" takes place through diminution, which Schenker calls "the principal means of the free fantasy."[14] He relates improvisation and composition by implying the importance of diminution as the latter's "basic law [*Grundgesetz*]" (1925, 11). Just as the art of diminution influences the improvisatory embellishment of fermatas and cadences, and just as diminution shapes the realization of a "basic plan" in more extensive improvised works, so, too, does it guide the unfolding of a *composition* from a remote structure. Diminution thus serves as the "principal means" of composition and improvisation alike. Schenker highlights numerous diminutions in the three works he analyzes, demonstrating the connection between remote and immediate levels that they effect. He writes with particular enthusiasm about the Bach Fantasy:

> The beauty of the realization [of Bach's plan] thus lies in the "adherence" to a smaller arpeggiation-motive within the large arpeggiation, and in the concealment of this connection by a run which pretends to be wandering aimlessly [in keeping with the improvisatory nature of the free fantasy] but nevertheless achieves a specific goal.[15]

In "Vom Organischen der Sonatenform," from the second *Meisterwerk* yearbook, Schenker reiterates and expands on these points, as well as ideas from earlier essays. The "basic plan" derived from improvisation now embraces both the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation—in other words, the entire *Ursatz,* which ensures compositional unity through the "sweep of improvisation." Reviving a topic broached in *Ein Beitrag zur Ornamentik,* he proposes in a savage attack on proponents of sonata form that improvisation alone endows composers with the freedom to create organic structures: "the whole must be discovered through improvisation if the piece is to be more than a collection of individual parts and motives in the sense of a schema" (1977, 39).

Finally, Schenker addresses an issue raised in "Die Kunst der Improvisation," where he stated that the masters "instantaneously sketched out" their compositions. Referring to remote connections created by concealed arpeggiations in Haydn's Sonata in G minor, H.XVI:44, he now writes: "Would it have been possible for Haydn to compose both arpeggiations in such a manner if the sweep of improvisation [*Stegreifwurf*] had not shown him the way? . . . Surely this idea must have necessarily been present from the first" (1977, 43).[16] In other words, at the very inception of the composition, Haydn's improvisatory inspiration would have defined the remote structure of the entire work, if not its immediate realization.

In *Der freie Satz,* Schenker elaborates this notion of "improvisatory inspiration" and once again disparages sonata-form theorists for

ignoring truly organic connection. Having noted the "giant strides" with which the masters could "traverse the path of the exposition . . . as if improvising," he writes:

> The quality of improvisation evident in the works of the great masters makes it impossible to conceive of an intellectual and chronological separation between a so-called first and second theme. All of the examples I have shown clearly demonstrate the organic process and the breadth of scope inherent in the initial concept. (1979, 138).

To support his claim that the masters conceived their works as compositional entities from the start, he cites relevant testimonies of C. P. E. Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Brahms, indicating more precisely than in earlier essays how improvisatory expertise enhances compositional technique: "The great masters took the background as their source of memory. Improvisation certainly gave their memory greater strength, but the ability to improvise depends, to a great extent, upon memory," that is, upon the background (1979, 128). Furthermore, "the ability in which all creativity begins—the ability to compose extempore [*Stegreifkomposition*], to improvise fantasies and preludes—lies only in a feeling for the background, middleground, and foreground" (1979, 6).[17]

* * *

This survey of Schenker's writings reveals that his notion of improvisation rests upon two principles: first, like composition itself, the act of improvisation involves the prolongation of a remote structure—a "basic plan" or model—which is linked directly to the middleground or background; second, the prolongation of that structure in improvisation takes place through diminution, specifically, diminution of the fundamental line.

The two principles—and indeed all of Schenker's ideas on the subject—presuppose certain characteristics of improvisation that should be carefully assessed. Can it be assumed that his understanding of improvisation as practiced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was accurate? It is odd, and not altogether convincing, that Schenker should attribute powers of synthesis to improvisation, when all evidence suggests that it permitted an audacious flouting of compositional "rules" and even thrived on harmonic and formal license. One has only to look at accounts of improvisation in the early nineteenth century to discover what Robert Wangermée (1950, 230) calls the "lack of perfect logic," the "rapid abandonment of certain ideas for

the sake of new and contrasting ones," and the "absence of internal structure" that apparently prevailed.

In the early nineteenth century, improvisation suffered an "apotheosis of bad taste."[18] Extemporaneous performances were marked by abrupt, often exaggerated changes in key, tempo, mood, and thematic material, which, used for dramatic effects of an "immediate" nature, would have been wholly inappropriate in compositions.[19] Furthermore, players arbitrarily interrupted "serious" works with meretricious virtuosic displays, as Liszt confesses in an eloquent mea culpa about his early career:

> I then frequently performed . . . the works of Beethoven, Weber and Hummel, and I confess to my shame that in order to compel the bravos of an audience always slow to grasp beautiful things in their august simplicity, I had no scruples against changing their tempos and intentions; I even went so far as insolently to add to them a host of passages and cadenzas. . . . ([1837] 1980, 9:49)

Improvisation in the mid- to late eighteenth century also relied on formal freedom and the element of surprise, as Peter Schleuning (1971; 1973) discerns from numerous improvisatory works from the period. He catalogs characteristic features such as the "extreme modulations" effected by blocks of arpeggios in "composed improvisations" by Johann Ludwig Krebs, C. P. E. Bach, Ernst Wilhelm Wolf, Johann Christoph Kellner, and Christian Gottlob Neefe; sudden shifts to "very distant keys" (Kellner and Johann Christian Kittel); unexpected interrupted cadences (Mozart); and, above all, enharmonic changes (Kellner, Johann Wilhelm Hässler, and C. P. E. Bach). Yet, despite these "original and suitably novel harmonic traits" (1971, 2:11) and the *appearance* of disorder, much of the improvisatory music from the period seems to have obeyed the fundamental principles of tonal "logic" and "grammar" embodied in thoroughbass practice. Schleuning emphasizes the balance between order and disorder implicit in C. P. E. Bach's term *vernünftige Betrügerey,* or "rational deception," employed in the final chapter of the *Versuch.*[20]

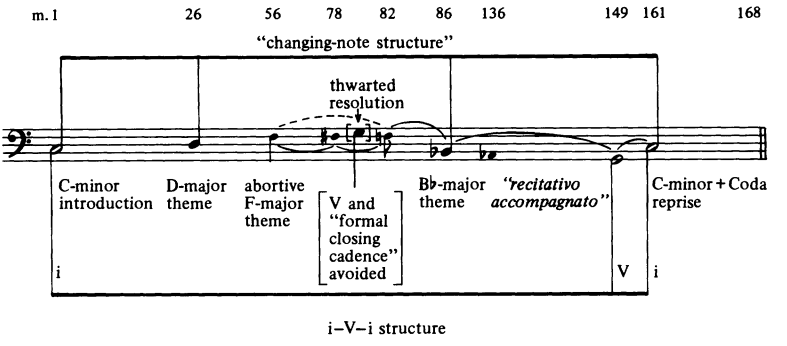
The extent to which *vernünftige Betrügereyen* shape eighteenth-century improvisatory works is evident in Mozart's Fantasy in C minor, K. 475, which Schleuning calls a "masterwork of formal 'deception' " (1971, 2:13). The piece starts with a descending sequence typical of the genre, except that its goal—the dominant—is unexpectedly avoided: the descent is reversed in m. 8, and it is not until m. 14 that V^7 appears, although even here the chromatic motion in the bass carries on to G♭ so that a definitive statement of the dominant is denied. Later, the G major of mm. 18–21 functions contextually not as

V but as the submediant of B minor, again frustrating the listener's expectations.

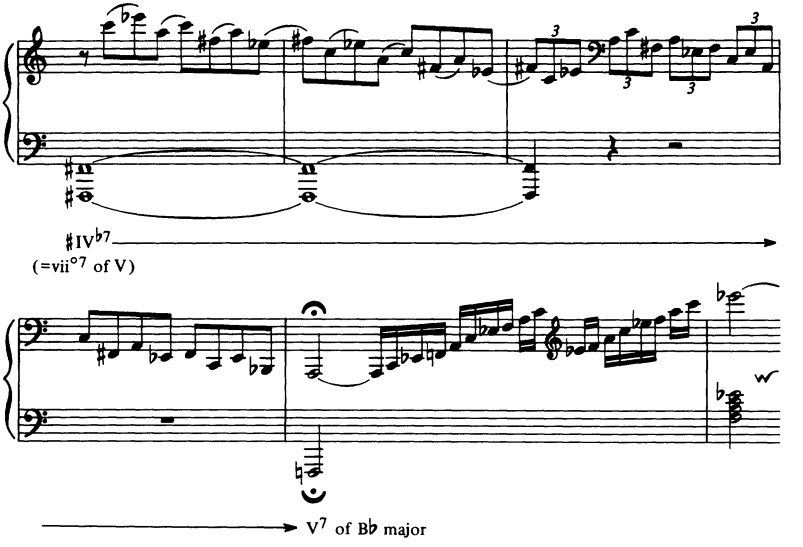
The unfulfilled drive toward the dominant,[21] which achieves its goal only near the end of the work during the dramatic "*recitativo accompagnato*" that begins twenty measures before the *Tempo primo* (appropriately, this is the work's emotional crux—compare the recitative in J. S. Bach's Chromatic Fantasy [see also Bach 1949, 153]), effectively subordinates what might otherwise seem the two most harmonically stable passages in the piece: the D-major section (mm. 26ff.) and the *Andantino,* in B♭ major. Despite the superficial appearance of a "changing-note" harmonic structure—C minor → D major → B♭ major → C minor (see ex. 1)—the Fantasy depends for coherence on the more fundamental motion from tonic to dominant transcending the "changing-note" progression. Mozart exploits the effects of this large-scale "rational deception" throughout the Fantasy: much of the work's drama derives from the withholding of V in several significant passages and at different structural levels. In mm. 78–81, for instance, one expects the sustained diminished chord on F♯ to resolve to V, thus articulating the "formal closing cadence" on the dominant or other principal harmony normally found in the middle of eighteenth-century free fantasies (see Bach 1949, 434). Such a resolution would dissipate the underlying tension caused by the delay of the dominant earlier in the piece (see exx. 1 and 2). Instead, however, the diminished harmony moves in m. 82 to V^7 of B♭ major, and although this prepares for the *Andantino* (at the same time closing the harmonic gap left by the abortive F-major theme in mm. 56ff.), the listener must wait even longer for the dominant. This makes the arrival on V all the more powerful when it finally occurs in the "recitative."

In K. 475's balance between superficial disorder and a concealed but nonetheless rational structure lies not only an important principle of improvisation as practiced by Mozart and other eighteenth-century composers, but also the key to understanding "improvisation" in Schenkerian theory. That Schenker grasped *vernünftige Betrügerey* as a central principle of improvisation is clear from the first *Meisterwerk* yearbook, where he marvels at C. P. E. Bach's "bold tricks [*verwegene Künste*]" and writes: "Bach insists on the most precise order even in the diminution of a free fantasy, but conceals this order under the appearance of disorder purely for the sake of the fantasy. . . ."[22]

On the strength of these comments, the *Meisterwerk* study in general, and the two principles of improvisation articulated in nearly all his works, one inevitably reaches the conclusion that Schenker derived his notion of improvisation largely, if not entirely, from C. P. E. Bach, in other words, from an eighteenth-century tradition rooted in thoroughbass practice. His references in *Ein Beitrag zur Ornamentik*



Example 1. Mozart, Fantasy in C minor, K. 475. "Changing-note" and i–V–i structures.



Example 2. Mozart, Fantasy in C minor, K. 475, mm. 78–83.

and the Ninth Symphony monograph to the decline of improvisation since Bach's time offer further evidence that nineteenth-century traditions contributed little, if anything, to his understanding of improvisation.

The virtually exclusive nature of Schenker's reliance on the *Versuch* means that one must consider (if only briefly in this context)

whether Bach accurately represents the eighteenth-century tradition of improvisation in the final chapter of his Essay,[23] in order to gauge the general validity of Schenker's two principles and their relevance to the works of other composers. Most German treatises contemporary with the *Versuch* adopt thoroughbass methods similar to Bach's for the instruction of improvisation. For instance, in his *Anleitung zur practischen Musik,* Johann Petri assigns to thoroughbass the role of compositional "etymology" and (to some extent) "syntax,"[24] adducing "the most common" figured progressions[25] to be realized by the student as the plans of improvised preludes and transitions between works in different keys. Treatises by Jacob Adlung (1758), Georg Sorge ([1767]), August Kollmann (1792), Johann Vierling (1794), and others[26] also stress that the rules of thoroughbass should be upheld in improvisation, and furthermore that the extemporaneous realization of a figured bass line should prominently feature imitation (or "diminution", to use Schenker's term) in order to effect coherence. Finally, just as C. P. E. Bach (and, for that matter, Schenker) claimed, improvisation should satisfy the requirements of order and logic implicit in good compositional technique. On the whole, however, these authors do not provide the "basic plans" of fully worked-out free fantasies as Bach does in the *Versuch:* they concentrate instead on short modulatory passages and preludes, typically offering only rudimentary improvisatory models like ascending or descending scales.[27] One must look outside Germany for traditions of improvising complete pieces analogous to C. P. E. Bach's.[28]

Although performance treatises in the first part of the nineteenth century (like their eighteenth-century precursors) link improvisation to composition and stress the importance of imitation, other features denote fundamental changes in improvisatory practice.[29] In his *Systematische Anleitung zum Fantasieren auf dem Pianoforte,* published c.1830, Carl Czerny likens "a fantasy well done . . . to a beautiful English garden, seemingly irregular, but full of surprising variety, and executed rationally, meaningfully, and according to plan" (1983, 2). Although Czerny implies that nineteenth-century *preludes* still rely on the principles of thoroughbass,[30] the "plan" referred to here—that is, the "plan" of a *fantasy*—significantly differs from the thoroughbass outlines that served as the basis of much eighteenth-century improvisation; moreover, it has little relation to Schenker's *Urgrund* (that is, a background or middleground structure). Czerny's comments indicate that after 1820 or so, the improvisation of large-scale genres such as fantasies depended primarily on *thematic* models, in other words, preconceived *formal* schemes—rondo form, polonaise form, and sonata form, to name but a few of those cited in the treatise—either used

singly or successively juxtaposed within a fantasy to form the whole (see Carew 1981, 1:209ff.). That these thematic constructs assumed such importance in nineteenth-century improvisation lends greater credence to Schenker's view of music history: as Schleuning demonstrates in a detailed study of the free fantasy (1973; see especially pp. 350–68), the reliance on form in improvisation effectively shackled creative freedom, precipitated the disappearance of the free fantasy, and hastened the decline of improvisation in general.[31] Without the inherently musical logic of thoroughbass-derived syntax, improvisation—as well as composition—lost its capacity for "rational deception": the extreme contrasts which in an earlier era had had such effect became little more than musical solecisms devoid of dramatic power.

In view of the significant gulf between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century improvisatory traditions, it is tempting to take up the challenge Schenker poses in *Der freie Satz,* where he comments, "it would be of [the] greatest importance today to study thoroughly the fantasies, preludes, cadenzas, and similar embellishment which the great composers have left to us" (1979, 7). Schenker's writings reveal that his notion of improvisation derives from an eighteenth-century practice—that is, from the work of C. P. E. Bach. But if the masters of composition are "lightly chained to the eternal laws of nature," then their improvisatory works, no matter when they were written, should in some way reflect Schenker's two principles of improvisation, and more generally his principles of free composition. An important analytical undertaking would be to determine whether the composed improvisations of *nineteenth*-century masters were "organically" conceived despite the widespread influence of formal models on improvisatory works during this period. If they can be shown to possess integrated background, middleground, and foreground structures, then "improvisation" in Schenkerian theory will clearly have more comprehensive meaning than its eighteenth-century origins suggest.

II. Analytical Case-Studies: Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin

However valiant one's desire "to study the fantasies, preludes, cadenzas, and similar embellishment" of the great masters, it is by no means easy to identify an appropriate body of repertoire for an evaluation of Schenker's principles of improvisation, given the degree to which improvisatory practices changed in the early nineteenth century. As the free fantasy lost its central role in extemporaneous music-making, to be replaced by improvisation based (in Vanhulst's words)

on "the strictest forms of musical composition,"[32] the stylistic implications of the generic title "fantasy" paradoxically grew less precise: the genre became remarkably permeable, encompassing such disparate phenomena as opera potpourris and sonatas. It is important, therefore, to ensure that any works studied here are genuine "composed improvisations" and not fantasies in name only: that is, they should be either notated improvisations (as contemporary critics regarded the first work to be analyzed, Beethoven's Op. 77) or based largely on stylistic features—for instance, unorthodox tonal relationships and abrupt foreground contrasts—closely approximating those of actual improvisations (the Schubert and Chopin fantasies under consideration fall into this category). Furthermore, to test Schenker's principles, which are of course the very basis of his theory of musical structure, virtually requires one to limit the analytical sample to works by nineteenth-century composers *within* the Schenkerian canon—Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms. Only the first three wrote improvisatory pieces suitable for our study, as the fantasies of the remaining trio are perhaps too "compositional" in nature to warrant investigation into the presence of an "improvisatory" genesis, or structure, or both. A final issue concerns the existence of sketches, which could shed light on the music's inception and allow us to judge whether or not the "improvisatory long-range vision" hailed by Schenker actually shaped the compositional process. Therefore, Part II is based principally on works for which at least some sketch material survives: Beethoven's Op. 77, Schubert's Fantasy in F minor, D. 940, and Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. I also discuss Schubert's "Wanderer" Fantasy, D. 760 and, briefly, Chopin's *Barcarolle,* Op. 60. In each of the case-studies, I propose hypothetical "improvisatory" models and provide more or less detailed background or middleground graphs of the finished compositions. The *Polonaise-Fantasy* sketches are discussed at length, as these reveal a multiplicity of "basic plans" that might have guided Chopin at different stages in writing the piece.

A. Beethoven: Fantasy, Op. 77

By all accounts, Beethoven possessed extraordinary powers as an improviser: the impact of his improvisations seems to have been profound, even overwhelming. Czerny's detailed descriptions of Beethoven's extemporaneous playing are unusually insightful. His comments, which betray the "formal" musical thought discussed in Part I, also allude to the influence improvisation had on Beethoven's compositions.

Beethoven could improvise in several ways, whether on a theme of his own choosing or on a suggested theme.

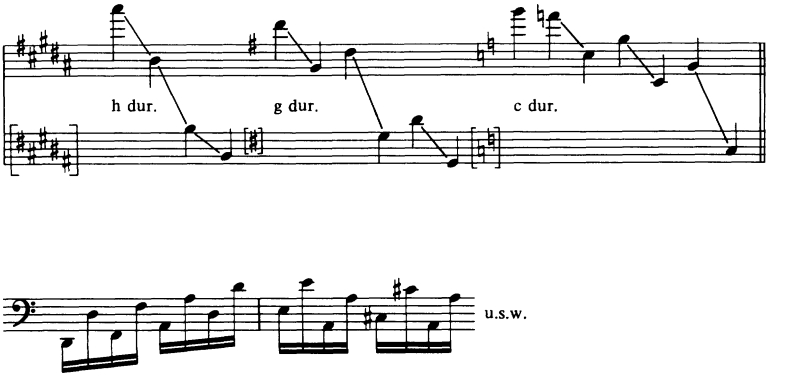
1. In the form of a first movement or rondo Finale of a Sonata. He would play a normal first section, introducing a second melody, etc., in a related key. In the second section, however, he gave full rein to his inspiration, while retaining the original motive, which he used in all possible ways. Allegros were enlivened by bravura passages, many of which were even more difficult than those found in his sonatas.

2. In free variation forms somewhat like the Choral Fantasy Op. 80 or the choral Finale of the Ninth Symphony; both those pieces give a true picture of his improvising in this manner.

3. In a mixed form, one idea following the other as in a potpourri, like his Solo Fantasy Op. 77. (1970, 15)

Published in 1810, Op. 77 might well have been based on the piano fantasy Beethoven improvised at his celebrated concert on December 22, 1808 (see Cooper 1990, 13),[33] where the "Choral Fantasy," Op. 80 was premiered with Beethoven improvising the piano introduction. Whether or not it derived from an actual improvisation, Beethoven made sketches of the eventual Op. 77 before notating it in full. Only some of these survive—specifically, two pages in the sketchbook "Landsberg 5" (Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin). Additional leaves from Landsberg 5 might also have been devoted to Op. 77, but these, along with the so-called Petter bifolium (which also contained sketches of the Fantasy: see Johnson, Tyson, and Winter 1985, 180–94), are now lost. Transcriptions of the bifolium do exist, however: published by J. S. Shedlock in 1909, they are reproduced in ex. 3, along with Nottebohm's transcription (1887, 274) of some of the Landsberg 5 material.

Although only fragmentary, the sketched passages offer useful insight into Op. 77's genesis. The scales reproduced in ex. 3a are like those in m. 221 of the finished composition (with only slight discrepancies), and the broken octaves appear in mm. 62–63. In Shedlock's transcription (ex. 3b), similar broken octaves (from mm. 39–40) are depicted, along with scales plus a final cadence (which differs from that of the published work). There are also broken chords like those in m. 90 and a version of the B-major theme first heard in mm. 157–60 (possibly related to its final statement, in mm. 238–41). Of paramount importance, however, are the direction-changing chords from m. 37 (given in outline) and from m. 78, which, according to Shedlock, follow "soon after" one another, perhaps indicating long-range structural planning on Beethoven's part: as we shall see, these are of considerable significance in the finished composition.

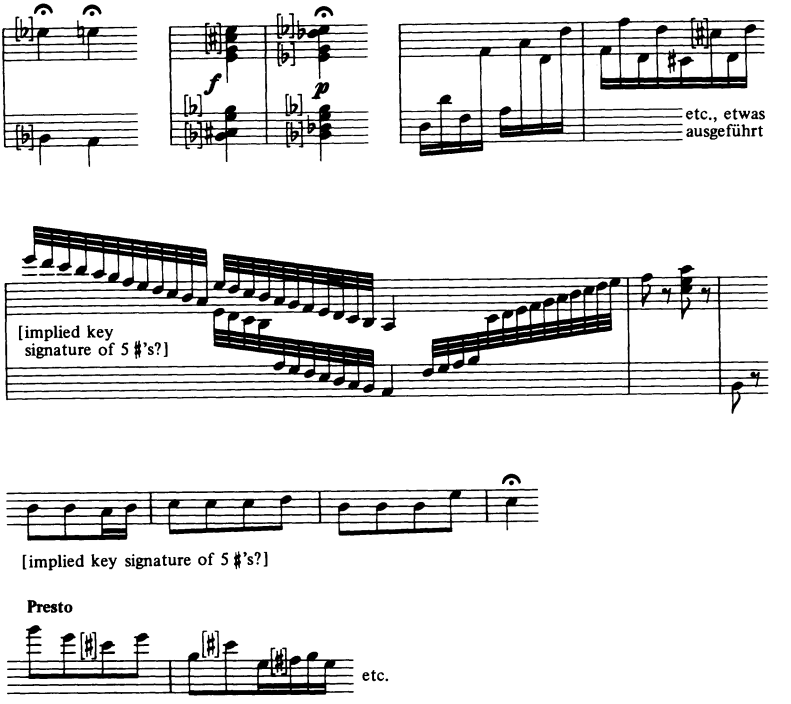


Example 3a: Beethoven, Fantasy, Op. 77. Transcription of sketches: Nottebohm 1887, 274.

The literature on Op. 77 reveals a wide range of critical opinion. Hugo Riemann (1910, 22) describes the piece as "die Fixierung einer freien Improvisation," while Jürgen Oppen (1971) rather dismisses it as a "joke." Other authors strive to show the work's fundamental integrity, despite its surface vagaries and sharp contrasts. For instance, Jürgen Uhde treats Op. 77 as a "carefully planned unity [*sorgfältig geplante Zusammenhang*]" (1968, 1:115) and demonstrates subtle motivic connections that extend throughout, although he acknowledges that the key scheme, given as "g–f–Des–B–d–As–b–h–H" (1968, 1:114), is "keine Systematik": indeed, he exclaims, the piece even lacks a central tonality (see Cooper 1990, 25).[34]

Hugh Macdonald expresses a contrary, iconoclastic opinion in a diatribe against studies like those of Uhde and Bekker[35] which consecrate anachronistic notions of unity as an analytical premise. He appeals instead for an "authentic criticism" that reconstructs "the attitudes and assumptions against which the composer was writing" (1978, 149):

> The only workable interpretation, it seems to me, is to regard the piece's disunity, diversity, illogicality, inconsistencies and contradictions as themselves the principal idea of the piece. . . . Here Beethoven is taking a particular principle—the principle of disunity—to an extreme, and would surely smile at our well-meaning attempts to find the structural point of the work and our absurd talk of "progressive tonality", "inner unity" and the even more absurd search for structural seconds and structural thirds. The point of the work is that it has no structural point. (1978, 145)



Example 3b: Beethoven, Fantasy, Op. 77. Transcription of sketches: Shedlock 1909, 712–13.

While efforts to demonstrate "organic" motivic unity may be unconvincing, the above conclusions seem equally implausible. Macdonald fails to differentiate between "unity" and "coherence,"[36] a subtle distinction vital to the understanding of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century improvisatory music. Whether "organically" *unified* or not, Beethoven's Fantasy, Op. 77 is *coherent* in that it "hangs together," its constituent parts do not "destroy or contradict the rest," and it is perfectly intelligible. In short, it *contrives* to work as a whole. This is hardly surprising: there is no reason why Beethoven would deliberately have improvised haphazardly (all accounts suggest the contrary) or have published an incomprehensible work without any "structural point." Regarding the Fantasy as coherent rather than organically unified liberates the analyst from having defensively to justify the role of its more unorthodox features in a compositional "organism," allowing one to focus instead on determining its unique

musical logic, which, though grammatically solecistic vis-à-vis those architectonic norms embodied in contemporary *compositions,* nevertheless stems from a well-established *improvisatory* tradition. If, as Macdonald suggests (1978, 150), Beethoven is "deliberately deceiving us," we must consider whether it is "*rational* deception" that lies at the heart of the work—in other words, whether for all its idiosyncracies the work relies upon those principles of tonal "grammar" and "syntax" that informed C. P. E. Bach's free fantasies and that would eventually influence Schenker's notion of improvisation. Answering this question is one of the main goals of the following analysis.

A potentially fruitful analytical approach would be to pinpoint major "landmarks," for particularly striking features could well have structural importance: presumably Beethoven intended contemporary auditors to seize upon them first and foremost. The rapid *scales* that open the work and recur in numerous contexts are a prominent[37] call to attention, especially when, as in only two places (before the B♭ theme and the C-major variation), they occur in both directions—down and up—in an obvious clue to the listener that something significant follows. As in K. 475, relatively *stable areas*—of which there are three—constitute another set of landmarks. At first the B♭ theme (mm. 15ff.) sounds like the beginning of the piece proper, following a fourteen-bar introduction. Ushered in by the descending/ascending scales, the theme gets "stuck" in the E♭ chords in mm. 25–28, and in m. 37 there is an abrupt change of direction, so that the initially stable "main theme" is retrospectively understood as only a transient parenthesis in a much larger "capriccio." A second area of stability comes with the lengthy, climactic build-up in V of B minor (mm. 90–156) followed by the most stable part of the work: the theme and variations in the tonic B major, which, as Jonas observes, is the main section (*Hauptteil*) of the piece. A third stable area occurs within this "Hauptteil": the C-major variation in mm. 222–5. Although an interpolation, this contains the work's most expressive music (in contrast to the romping finale that follows, which is typical of the buoyant conclusions found in many early–nineteenth–century fantasies). Heralded by the brief cadenza in m. 221 (in which the descending/ascending scales occur for only the second time), the C-major passage also stands out as the only non-diatonic writing in the latter half of the work.

On the basis of these "landmarks," two formal scenarios can be inferred, the second superseding the first as the piece unfolds. Initially Op. 77 appears to be in B♭ major: a short prelude leading through vi, v, and ♭III of B♭ reaches the "tonic" in m. 15, whereupon one expects a continuation in B♭. The chordal interruption in m. 37, the brilliant passagework in m. 38, and the D-minor *Allegro con brio* in mm. 39–77 raise doubts about what will follow (such uncertainty being consistent

SCENARIO 1

Section:	Prelude	→	"Main Body," in "tonic" B♭ major	→	"Interruption"
Measures:	1–14		15ff.		37

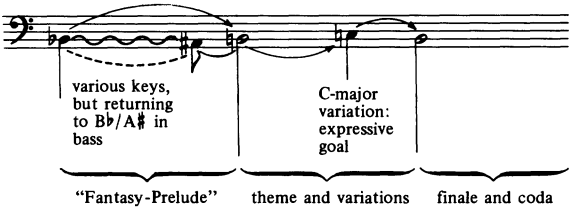
SCENARIO 2 (with retrospective reinterpretation of mm. 1–15ff.)

Section:	"Fantasy-Prelude"	→	Main Body: Theme and Variations in tonic B major	→	Finale + Coda	
Measures:	1–156		157–228		229–38	238–45

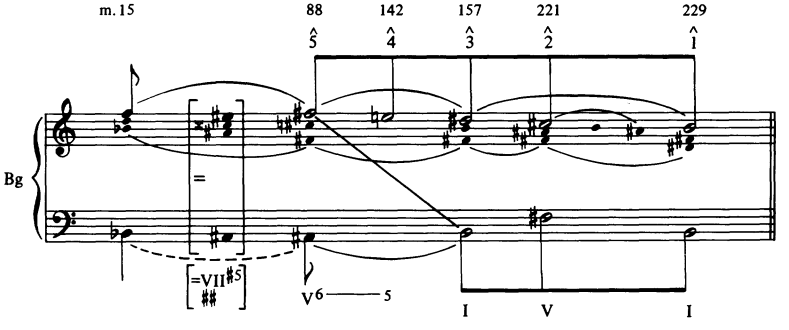
Figure 1. Beethoven, Fantasy, Op. 77. Two formal scenarios.

with the fantasy genre). Although the D-minor episode could fit into a large-scale I–iii–V pattern in B♭ major (whereupon a section in the "dominant" F major would likely come next), the chords in m. 78 (analogous to those in m. 37) suspend any identifiable tonal allegiance, and at m. 90, when the *Presto* begins, B♭ major's status as tonic is completely undermined. One's first impressions of the work—that it begins with a brief prelude followed by the main body in B♭ major—are thus supplanted by a second scenario, in which a substantial "Fantasy-Prelude" leads to the "Hauptteil": the B-major theme and variations (with C-major interpolation), finale, and coda. (See fig. 1.) Beethoven therefore bases the work on both a *formal* deception (what is the main theme?) and a *structural* deception (what is the key?).

It is entirely possible that the two formal scenarios worked in conjunction with the most significant tonal landmarks to constitute Beethoven's "basic" plan in improvising (or composing) this piece. Given that the stable tonal regions are B♭ major, B major, and C major, and that the formal design is "Fantasy-Prelude" → theme and variations → finale/coda, then a hypothetical improvisatory model like the one in ex. 4 can be inferred, in which the motion from B♭ to B major is balanced by the C-major inflection. The quasi-symmetrical turning-figure structure, which recalls K. 475's "changing-note" scheme (although here B♭ major and C major lack the diatonically justifiable function that D major [V/V] and B♭ major [IV/IV] possess in Mozart's Fantasy), is fleshed out by means of the two principal unifying motives: the repeated-note figure (see note 37) and the all-important scales (which, as mentioned earlier, Beethoven reserves to highlight both the source of large-scale formal deception and the most expressive music—respectively, the B♭-major "main theme" and the C-major variation).[38]



Example 4. Beethoven, Fantasy, Op. 77. Hypothetical improvisatory model, with principal tonal and formal areas.



Example 5. Beethoven, Fantasy, Op. 77. Background structure.

Just as background and middleground structures can be derived from C. P. E. Bach's D-major Fantasy in the *Versuch* and the "basic plan" on which it was constructed (see Schenker 1925, 21–30), it is possible to analyze Op. 77 and ex. 4's hypothetical improvisatory model in conventional hierarchical terms. The background structure[39] shown in ex. 5 is unorthodox in only a few respects: the head note $\hat{5}$ enters in m. 88 long before the tonic harmony (which accompanies the D♯ $\hat{3}$ at the start of an essentially self-contained descent through a third); the $\hat{4}$ is harmonically unsupported, although in the piece Beethoven takes such pains to stress and prolong it that it can be viewed as a composed-out structural pitch; and the background-level semitonal relationship between the "harmonic appoggiatura" B♭ major (enharmonically $\text{VII}^{\sharp 5}_{\sharp}$) and B major is radical (but by no means atypical of nineteenth-century improvisatory repertoire, as we shall see in studying the Schubert and Chopin fantasies). In other respects, however, an uncomplicated tonal structure operates in Op. 77, and

the fact that the fundamental line spans so much of the piece enhances synthesis. Beethoven's control of even the boldest improvisatory features via the hypothetical "basic plan" and the background structure implicit therein is remarkable: his "improvisatory long-range vision" results in a perfectly coherent—if not organically unified—"Fantasy-Prelude" plus theme and variations.

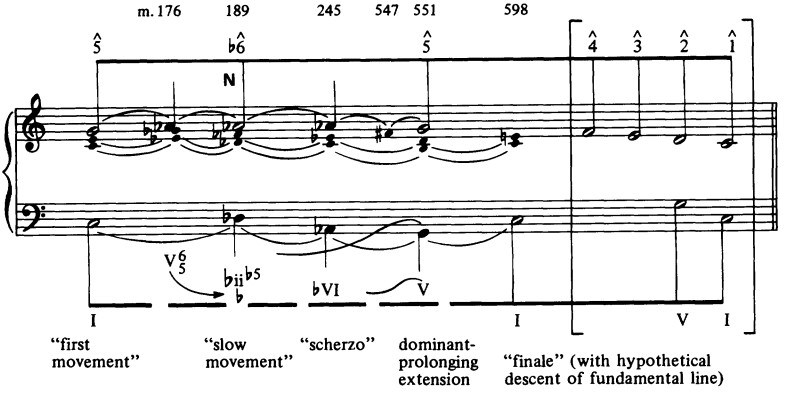
B. Schubert: "Wanderer" Fantasy, D. 760 and Fantasy in F minor, D. 940

Schubert wrote at least eight fantasies, including the early piano duets D. 1, 9, and 48 (1810–13); the solo Fantasy, D. 2e (which, composed in 1811, betrays a debt to Mozart's K. 475); the "Grazer" Fantasy, D. 605a (attributed to Schubert, although its provenance is uncertain); the "Wanderer," D. 760 (1822); the Fantasy for Violin and Piano, D. 934 (1827); and the Fantasy in F minor for Piano Duet, D. 940 (1828).[40] The three mature works are of particular relevance to our evaluation of Schenker's principles of improvisation, especially D. 760 and 940. All three invoke the sonata principle within the fantasy genre, this generic mix constituting what Arthur Godel (1979) calls the "unique law [*Eigengesetz*]" of Schubert's fantasies. Describing the three works as "cyclical fantasy-sonatas [*zyklische Fantasiesonaten*]" (1979, 199) based on a process of thematic variation, Godel links them with Beethoven's two Sonatas *quasi una fantasia,* Op. 27, which, as Peter Schleuning has shown (1973, 356ff.), heralded the end of the free fantasy by establishing between sonata form and the fantasy style an intimate bond that was exploited in the "improvisatory" works of both contemporary and later composers, to the detriment of improvisation in general (see the discussion at the end of Part I). Godel comments that the "fantastic" in these mature Schubert pieces derives as much from the poetic-associative dimension as from the musical material per se: indeed, from the standpoint of syntax and harmony, there exists hardly any difference between these fantasies and contemporaneous sonatas.[41] Such an observation is of course consistent with the interpenetration of compositional and improvisatory stylistic features that characterized the music of the time (see Wangermée 1950, 252–53).

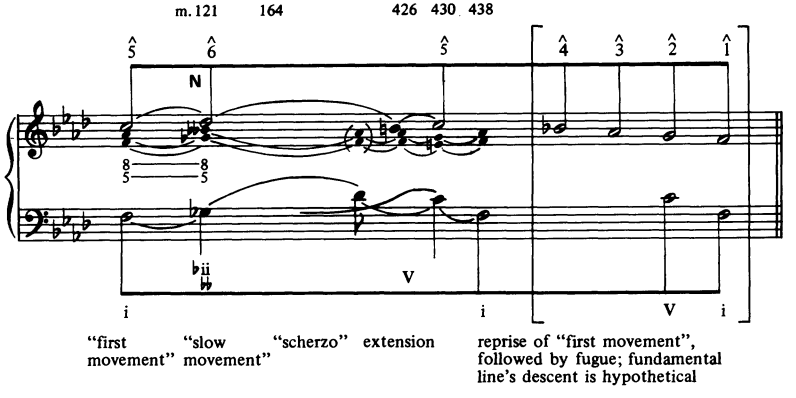
In D. 760 and 940, several subordinate formal patterns and/or genres are integrated into the overall "cyclical fantasy-sonata" plan: for instance, three-part song form in the F-minor;[42] theme and variations in D. 760's "slow movement"; scherzo-trio-scherzo in both works; fugal writing in the two finales, where "strict" and "free" styles

are united; and, in the sketches of the F-minor,[43] a march (*Tempo di Marcia*) in the trio rather than the familiar *con delicatezza* section. The sketches of the later Fantasy (discussed in detail below) suggest that these various formal and generic elements were part of Schubert's original conception; the extent to which "improvisatory" principles of tonal structure also informed the compositional procedure is perhaps less immediately obvious, although, as we shall observe, relevant information about tonal design can be gleaned from the sketch material. In the case of D. 760, for which no sketches survive, determining how the music was conceived is considerably more difficult.

Analytical comparison of the "Wanderer" and the F-minor helps to shed some light on this issue, which is central to the present investigation. In both works, Schubert exploits Neapolitan relationships at a structural level, assigning to D. 760's four "movements" the keys C major, C♯ minor (enharmonically equivalent to ♭ii♮5), A♭ major (♭VI), and C major, while D. 940 is arranged symmetrically—F minor, F♯ minor (that is, ♭ii♮), and F minor—whereby the bold tonal juxtapositions between movements in Haydn's Sonata in E♭ major, H.XVI:52 operate within a single piece. In an admittedly crude sense, these key schemes could be regarded as Schubert's "basic plan" in composing the two fantasies, in conjunction with the formal layouts described above. Examples 6 and 7 depict background-level tonal and formal relationships in D. 760 and 940 respectively, showing hypothetical descents of the fundamental line within each finale. (In both works, the structural close is handled fairly conventionally; detailed middleground graphs are thus not provided.) Note that in the "Wanderer" Schubert softens the progression from I to ♭ii♮5 by means of an applied V^6_5 chord, while the F-minor Fantasy boasts an altogether more daring harmonic juxtaposition at this level. Brown describes the transition from the "first movement" to the *Largo* as "abrupt, almost gauche," and he claims that the scherzo and reprise are "simply pasted together"—a "scissors-and-paste join" (1966, 91 and 95). No matter how stark these juxtapositions seem in the background, however, Schubert carefully prepares for them at lower structural levels, creating a web of harmonic parallelisms to ensure coherence and comprehensibility. Example 8 depicts the more prominent of these—specifically, the C-major–D♭-minor and E-major–F-minor progressions in mm. 64–65 and 90–91 respectively, which clearly anticipate the F-major–F♯-minor motion in mm. 119–21 (the most shocking aspect of which is not that it happens *per se,* but that it is the *third* such progression within a single "movement"). Similarly abrupt Neapolitan relationships appear throughout, in some cases reiterating the symmetrical structural motion (as in the coda, mm. 559–61; see also the scherzo, mm. 172 *et seq.*).

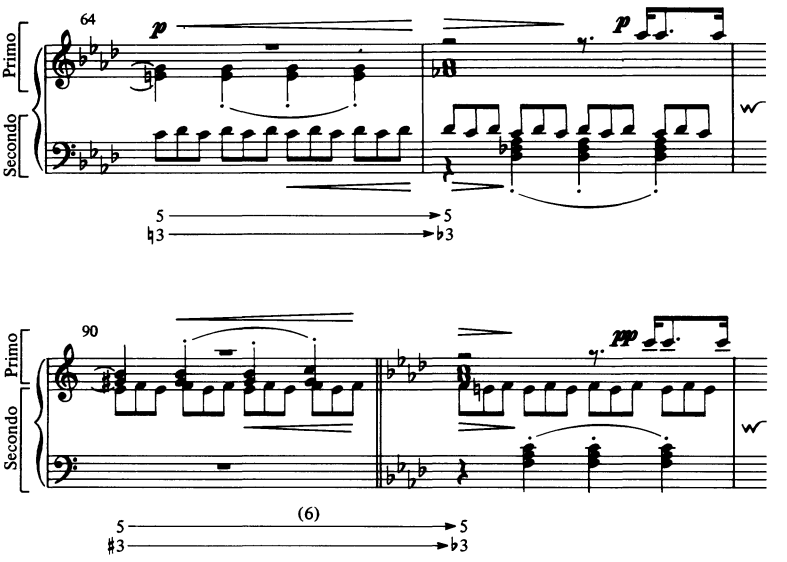


Example 6: Schubert, Fantasy, D. 760. Background-level tonal and formal relationships.



Example 7: Schubert, Fantasy, D. 940. Background-level tonal and formal relationships.

A complementary nexus of *motivic* parallelisms operates in both the F-minor Fantasy and the "Wanderer." The structural neighbor-note motion in D. 940—C–D♭–C—appears throughout the piece at all hierarchical levels (William Kinderman, for instance, emphasizes "the crucial D♭–C semitone" at the end of the Fantasy [1986, 79]), just as Schubert motivically exploits the structural G–A♭–G motion in D. 760, restating it in innumerable contexts. Godel's term for the network of motivic relationships in D. 940—*Erinnerungsstruktur* (1979,



Example 8: Schubert, Fantasy, D. 940. "Parallel" harmonic progressions, mm. 64–65 and 90–91.

203)—indicates the unifying role played by "thematische Arbeit" in this Fantasy: indeed, the "organic" unity that results from the many harmonic and motivic cross-references lends the work a profoundly "compositional"—as opposed to "improvisatory"—quality, at least relative to Beethoven's Op. 77 and other early-nineteenth-century fantasies.[44] This is equally true of the "Wanderer," although in D. 760 Schubert appears intentionally to undermine unity by favoring asymmetrical periodic structures (a factor at least as important as the harmonic treatment in creating the work's fantasy-like character), in contrast to the altogether more balanced D. 940.

The "compositional" rather than "improvisatory" nature of these two fantasies might even call into question their suitability for a case-study such as this: although both demonstrate an important feature of early-nineteenth-century music—the assimilation of several forms and genres into a single fantasy (this is also characteristic of Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61, studied below, as well as his "F-minor" Fantasy, Op. 49)—they are perhaps too painstakingly worked-out and "organically" unified to be of relevance. Nevertheless, two factors justify their inclusion in this investigation (even if they are studied rather more cursorily than Beethoven's Op. 77 or Chopin's Op. 61): the ex-

istence of sketches for D. 940, and the impressive background-level and formal similarities between the two works. These allow us to draw conclusions about Schubert's "improvisatory long-range vision" in writing his music, a feature of the composer's style noted in somewhat different terms by other authors such as Thom Lipiczky: "the astonishing speed at which Schubert 'composed' indicates a level of spontaneity akin to 'improvisations' regardless of the fact that he notated his ideas. Schubert had thoroughly internalized the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic formulas of his style" (1985, 157–58).

Such a view is fully supported by the sketches for the Fantasy in F minor, which are lengthily described in Brown 1961 and 1966 and Reed 1972. These consist of ten leaves dated January 1828, which constitute an "outline sketch" up to m. 438 of the published version, that is, the reprise of the opening melody, plus two remaining leaves from a later date, which depict the final seventy or so measures. Sketches of the intervening material, made on an additional leaf (pp. 21–22 of the twenty-six-sided manuscript), are lost. According to Reed (1972, 180–81), "The first two movements are all there, in outline"; furthermore, "apart from some filling out of the climax, [the last movement] is identical with the final version." It is "with the scherzo [that] Schubert seems to have run into difficulty, particularly over the middle section," where the "longish" march referred to earlier appears instead of the *con delicatezza* melody (the theme of which was added later on blank staves beneath the march).

Brown's analysis of the sketches focuses exclusively on the thematic component: for instance, we read, "the indications are almost entirely melodic, that is, the whole of the music springs, as it were, from a melodic conception" (1966, 97). This statement is misleading, as it neglects aspects of the tonal organization or at least implicitly relegates them to a much inferior role. In fact, the essentially complete nature of the sketches indicates that the key scheme of the *final* version was present at the *inception* of the work (assuming, that is, that the sketches do represent the initial stages of composition, which Schubert's normal compositional procedure would suggest): in other words, the tonal plan depicted in ex. 7 seems to have guided Schubert from the start. The rejected march, like the *con delicatezza* section that would ultimately replace it, is in D major, thus articulating the same tonal motion, i–VI–i in F♯ minor, as the scherzo in its published version. Interestingly, as Brown observes (1966, 98), "The only idea in the sketched march that [Schubert] used was the sustained C sharp; this, becoming enharmonically a D flat, still serves as the link between the scherzo, in F sharp minor, and the closing section in F minor."[45] Thus, even important motivic/harmonic parallelisms echoing the structural progression in the final version appear at incipient stages.

If, as Brown surmises (1966, 99), the music, "still hazy in details, [was] there in [the composer's] mind" from early on, then perhaps it was Schubert's conscious or unconscious use of a "basic" plan like the one in ex. 7 that allowed him confidently to write out the work in such a finished state.

The striking structural resemblances between this Fantasy and the "Wanderer" equally suggest that such a "basic plan" directed the compositional process. To the extent that D. 760's structure was innovatory for Schubert (one must take into account his "extreme fondness for shifts into keys a semitone above or below his tonic key" [Brown 1951, 542]), it is entirely possible that in writing the Fantasy in F minor, the composer deliberately returned to a successful "improvisatory" background-level model—that of the "Wanderer"—which would be similarly realized in the middleground and foreground to create a network of harmonic/motivic parallelisms. That the fundamental line is treated in such a straightforward manner in both works further supports the hypothesis that a "basic plan" guided Schubert: as in Beethoven's Op. 77, instability deriving from bold structural progressions is offset by a conventional tonal close. To paraphrase Schenker (1979, 18), the "secret of balance" in this music likely originated in the composer's "constant awareness" of the underlying structure: without it, the foreground could well have "degenerated into chaos."

C. Chopin: *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61

Chopin composed two mature fantasies: the "F-minor," Op. 49 and the *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. The former, analyzed in detail by Carl Schachter (1988), was one of the last large-scale works Chopin wrote before undertaking a fundamental stylistic reassessment, which began around 1841 with a study of counterpoint treatises by Cherubini and Kastner and experimentation with contrapuntal procedures such as canon and fugue (as in the Fugue in A minor, KK 1242). The legacy of this period of reevaluation is manifest not only in the highly contrapuntal textures of certain late works—among them the Nocturne in E major, Op. 62, No. 2 and the Mazurka in C♯ minor, Op. 63, No. 3—but also, as Jeffrey Kallberg observes, in a more restrained use of ornamentation, the use of nonpitched elements to define form, and the exploitation of rhythm "to increase tension over entire sections of pieces." In this "last style,"

> harmony transcended the high sophistication of earlier works, either by probing more chromatic reaches, or by repeating, as a unifying device,

the same chordal progressions throughout a work. New genres were essayed, and old ones recharged by the admixture of elements from other forms. (1985, 226)

The work discussed in this section—the *Polonaise-Fantasy* (which was composed in 1845–46 along with the *Barcarolle,* Op. 60 and the Nocturnes Op. 62)—offers a particularly apt example of Chopin's innovative approach to genre: like the Polonaise in F♯ minor, Op. 44, the *Polonaise-Fantasy* fuses at least two genres used earlier by the composer. By analyzing the work, comparing it with the *Barcarolle,* and taking into account the sketches for Op. 61 (which offer relevant insights into Chopin's compositional method), it is possible to show both the close link between improvisation and composition in Chopin's music, and the applicability of Schenker's notion of improvisation to Op. 61 despite the apparent challenges posed by the sketches.

Opus 61 presents the analyst with a host of difficult issues. To what end does the introduction return late in the work, followed by a fragment from the central section and then, after a turbulent transition, an apotheosis of the principal themes? How should one interpret the "parallel" progression toward the middle of the piece, from A♭ minor (m. 108) through B♭ major (m. 116, first stated in second inversion) to B minor/major (mm. 132/148)? Why should Chopin so avidly withhold closure throughout the work, arriving at a full cadence in only a few places? And what structural principles prevail in a piece noteworthy (in Jim Samson's words) for its "apparent profligacy"?[46]

Numerous writers have grappled with the *Polonaise-Fantasy* in an effort to answer questions such as these, among them Liszt (who, as Paul Hamburger writes [1966, 105 n. 12], "had oddly prim reservations even about the content of the music" [see Liszt 1852, 45]), Hugo Leichtentritt (1921, 1:110–21), Lew Mazel (1965), Zofia Lissa (1963), and Eero Tarasti (1984). Most have explained the work as an amalgam of forms and genres—sonata form, theme and variations, ballade, concerto, and (not surprisingly) polonaise and fantasy. But, as Kallberg points out, "while all of these writers responded to a significant aspect of Chopin's late style—generic borrowing—most advanced inordinately complex models that little touch the auditory experience of the work." Kallberg proposes instead that the piece should be thought of rather more simply "as an alloy of the two genres in its title" (1985, 274 n. 21), a view he supports by examining the broad traditions—in particular the formal archetypes—behind each genre, and by studying Chopin's sketches for Op. 61.

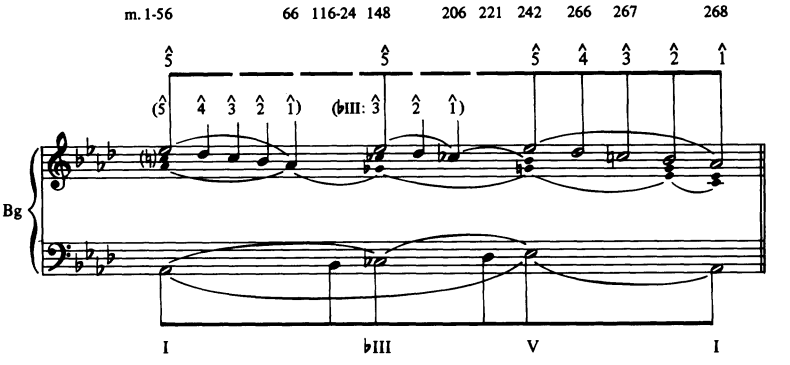
Other authors—for instance, Felix Salzer, Nicholas Cook, and Jim Samson—have approached the work using Schenkerian methods, with

Measures	Theme/Section	Tonal Region
1–23	Introduction	i (A♭ minor) → V
24–66	Polonaise Theme (with development)	I
66–107	Developmental Episode	I–III♮–♭VI–♭vii–i V (---) V
108–15	First Transformation of Polonaise Theme	i → ii
116–47	First Nocturne, then Transition	II♮ → "♭iii♭♭" (i.e., B minor)
148–81	Slow Section	"♭III" (i.e., B major)
182–205	Second Nocturne	vi/"♭III" → "♭III"
206–13	Slow Section resumed	"♭III"
214–15	Introduction returns	(various)
216–25	Second Nocturne returns	vi → I
226–41	Transition	(various)
242–53	Apotheosis of Polonaise Theme	V^6_4
254–68	Apotheosis of Slow Section	V^{6-5}_{4-3} → I
268–88	Coda	I

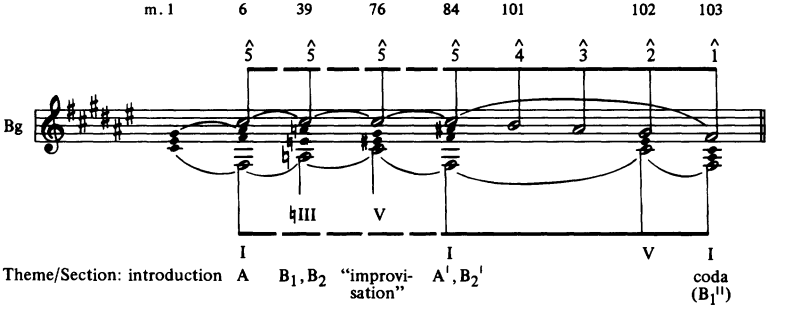
Figure 2: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Principal themes and tonal regions (cf. Samson 1988, 52).

varying degrees of success. Salzer (1962, ex. 409) focuses on only the first nineteen bars of the piece, whereas Cook's analysis of the entire work consists of "two quite independent fundamental structures embedded one within the other, each in a different key" (1987, 340).[47] Although provocative, this interpretation essentially denies the underlying structural unity of the piece, which has in fact been clearly demonstrated by Samson (1988), whose middle- and background graphs (presented in a study of Chopin's "composition-draft") are altogether more cogent, although it remains unclear how the pitches in Samson's structural octave descent are prolonged in the music.

Despite the extensive treatment given to the work in the literature, the *Polonaise-Fantasy* warrants further analytical examination, not only to describe its structure in greater detail, but also to investigate the relation between Schenker's principles of improvisation and this extraordinary "improvisatory" work.[48] Figure 2 summarizes Op. 61 according to its principal tonal regions and themes (most defined as in Samson 1988, 52; cf. Abraham 1939, 110), and ex. 9 presents the work's background structure. As in the *Barcarolle,* Op. 60 (of which



Example 9. Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Background structure.



Example 10. Chopin, *Barcarolle,* Op. 60. Background structure.

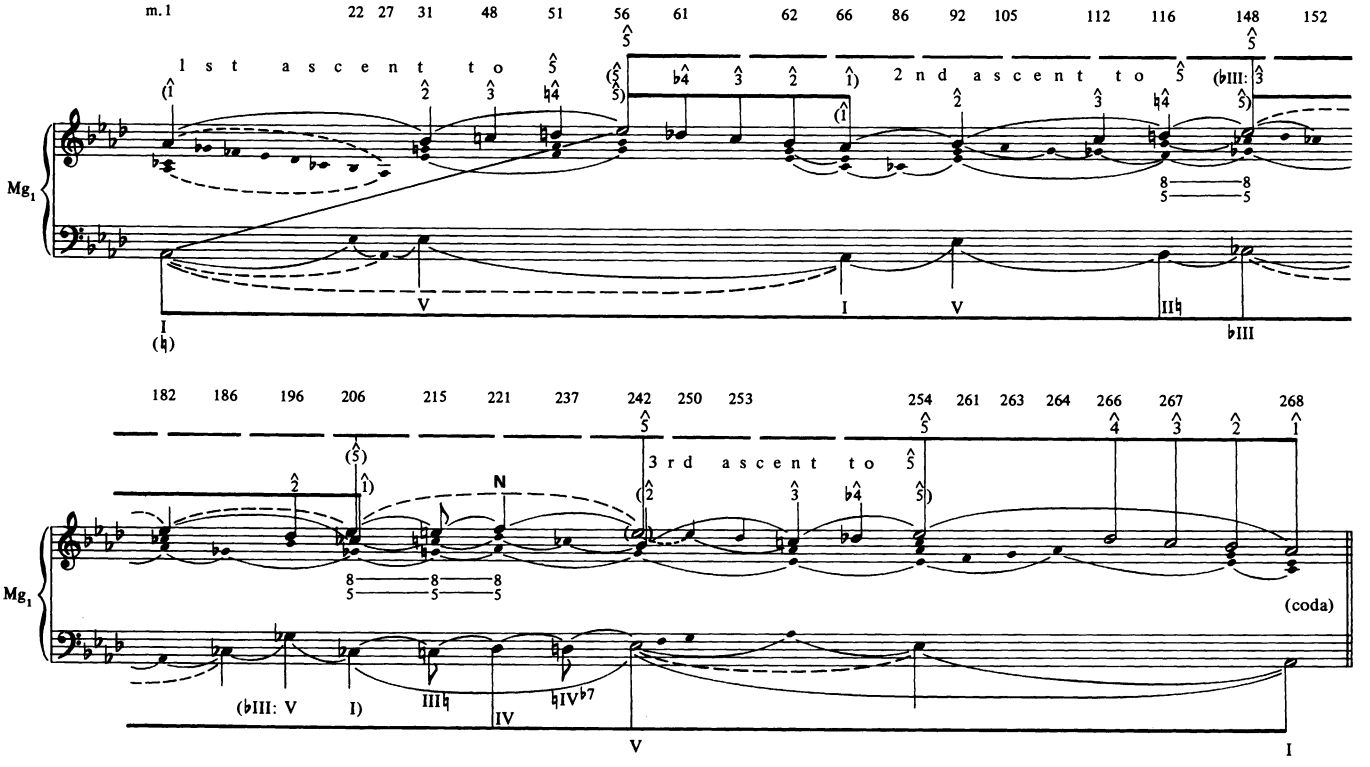
ex. 10 presents the background),[49] this is based on a "dynamic" underlying progression I–♭III–V–I (whereas earlier polonaises tend to have closed, symmetrical structures—for instance, i–I–i or I–vi–I—lacking in "structural momentum"),[50] which prolongs the head note $\hat{5}$ throughout the piece (compare Op. 60). Subsidiary descents in I and ♭III[51] appear in the treble, and in the bass Chopin connects the main harmonies with a rising linear motion, assigning important formal functions to each of the passing tones, the first of them (B♭) supporting the "first nocturne," and the second (d♭), the transition leading to the apotheoses of the polonaise theme and slow section. The major/minor opposition between the bass ascent (in A♭ minor) and the

fundamental line (in A♭ major) extends to all structural levels in the piece (see Samson 1988, 49–50).

The middleground graph in ex. 11 reveals an important structural motive—a five-note linear ascent from a♭¹ to the head note, e♭²—which is related to the fundamental line and which occurs three times in the work, in each case directly preceding a structural descent. The first of these, in mm. 1–56, establishes the primary melodic tone $\hat{5}$ after climbing through the chromatically altered $\hat{4}$ in m. 51. Although it traverses the same pitches as the first ascent, the second ascent uses its raised $\hat{4}$ in conjunction with the bass passing tone in m. 116 (124) to create the B♭-major harmony on which the "first nocturne" is based. Toward the end of the piece, the third and final ascent links the apotheosis of the polonaise theme with that of the slow section, diatonically reaching $\hat{5}$ twelve measures before the fundamental line descends.

Other noteworthy features at the middleground level include the use of parallel harmonic progressions (for instance, between the "first nocturne" and the slow section [mm. 116–48], and between the slow section and the apotheosis [mm. 206–21]—compare Schubert's Fantasy in F minor), which enhance the work's "improvisatory" character; neighbor-note motions (N.B. the f² in m. 221, which forms IV along with the bass passing tone d♭); the octave descent in the introduction, which embellishes the first pitch in the initial ascent to $\hat{5}$; and the appearance of the tonic in other harmonic contexts (for instance, as vi/♭III in m. 182). It is significant that Chopin avoids closure at the end of the slow section: although the subsidiary descent in ♭III reaches its goal—"c♭²"—in m. 206, the "e♭²" above it keeps the section open and facilitates the ensuing parallel progression through C major to IV. Earlier in the piece, closure is withheld when the introduction overlaps with the polonaise theme, the first four bars of the latter (mm. 24–27) completing the introductory octave-progression.

Avoidance of closure to heighten "structural momentum"—one of many "rational deceptions"—works alongside the seemingly random arrangement of themes and thematic reminiscences and the parallel structural progressions to provide Op. 61 with its "improvisatory" character. Coherence is enhanced, however, by the many motivic parallelisms found at all structural levels (among them the five-note ascents to $\hat{5}$ and the fourth-progressions in the bass [mm. 242–53] and "alto" [mm. 254–64]), and as in the *Barcarolle* and other large-scale works by Chopin, structural weight is channelled toward the end of the piece, where the principal themes are transformed in a powerful apotheosis highlighting the fundamental line's descent. All in all, therefore, the *Polonaise-Fantasy* testifies to Chopin's "improvisatory long-range vision" at this late stage in his composi-



Example 11. Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Middleground structure.

tional career: even an apparently disordered work such as this relies on principles of tonal design consistent with those later articulated by Schenker.

* * *

It must be stressed that the analytical conclusions reached here pertain to the *Polonaise-Fantasy* as published, not as first conceived. The sketches of the work reveal that Chopin's original conception radically differed from the final version: he began the piece not in A♭ minor but in C minor, then changing to F minor (he decided on A♭ minor only later), and he drafted the "first nocturne" and slow section—about a third of the piece—a semitone higher than in the printed version. These profound differences in the work's tonal scheme raise serious doubts about the validity of Schenker's notion of improvisation: whereas Schenker maintained that the great masters "instantaneously sketched out" a basic plan—that is, something akin to a background or middleground structure—to guide them in improvising and in composing, Chopin was clearly quite content, in Samson's words (1988, 51), to "shift a pre-composed paragraph from one tonal platform to another" without undue concern for the overall harmonic design of the work.

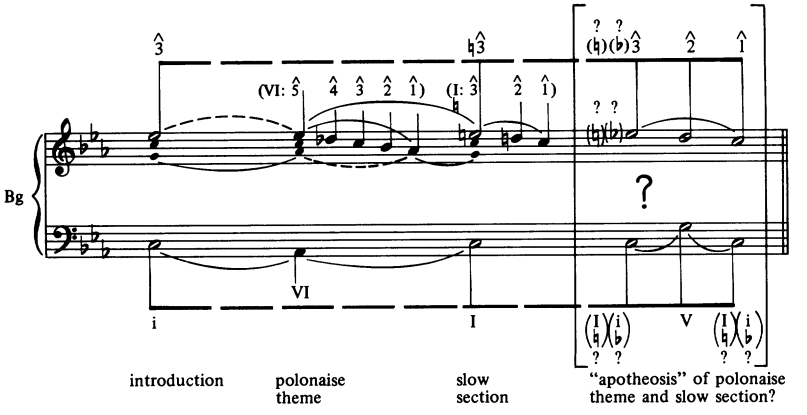
Despite this evidence, however, it would be wrong to dismiss Schenker's principles as irrelevant to the *Polonaise-Fantasy* without having first gained a broader understanding of what the sketches reveal about Chopin's compositional process. First of all, the sketched material[52] was not drafted linearly (that is, in the order of the final version): Chopin notated the work in large, continuous sections—"continuity-drafts"—and in numerous shorter segments scattered throughout. The introduction, initial statement of the polonaise theme, developmental episode up to m. 92, slow section, apotheosis, and coda were written out without apparent difficulty, whereas Chopin agonized over what would eventually become mm. 92–117 and 193–205, working and reworking these passages to join the continuously drafted passages more smoothly.

It might be that Chopin's confidence in the larger sections resulted from his clear understanding of their formal function in the generic hybrid of polonaise and fantasy (as Kallberg concludes),[53] but his assurance in these passages could also indicate conscious or unconscious[54] reference to a comprehensive tonal plan—or, rather, one of *several* tonal plans—which, although different from that of the final version, would have acted like background or middleground structures *at each successive stage of the work's evolution.* These "basic

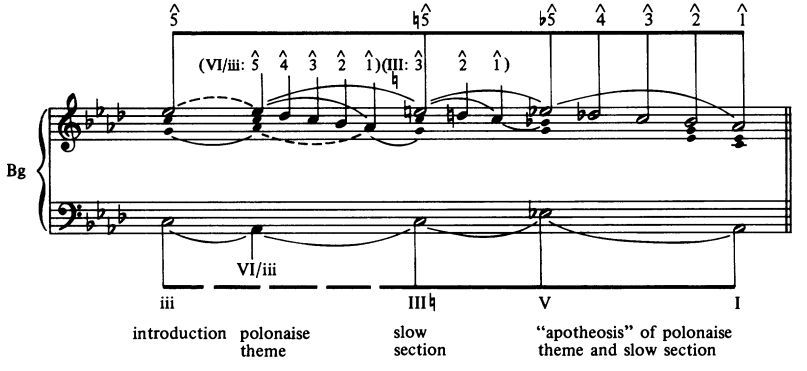
plans"—which would have varied according to the harmony at the beginning, but which would all have had the polonaise theme in A♭ major and the slow section in C major (both Kallberg [1985] and Samson [1988] indicate the constancy of these two features in the sketches)—would have been based on the principal harmonies corresponding to the tonal regions of the music that Chopin sketched without difficulty. It was the passages *between* the structural "pillars" that caused problems—passages whose tonal function had not been clearly conceptualized in advance. Schenker's principles of improvisation therefore might not be wholly inapplicable to the *Polonaise-Fantasy:* reference to a number of tonal outlines in sketching the piece could have enabled Chopin to write out the continuity-drafts in the "sweep of improvisation" that Schenker would later claim to be implicit in the composition of masterpieces.

Although highly conjectural, this interpretation of the sketches and of Chopin's compositional process in general can be justified at least in part if the successive tonal structures that might have served the composer as "basic plans" are extrapolated from the draft and compared to the rest of his music. The background graphs presented in exx. 12–14 reflect Chopin's use of the three different harmonies at the start of the introduction while retaining the A♭-major polonaise theme and the C-major slow section as constants. Example 12a treats C minor as the tonic (in keeping with the key signature of three flats that appears at the beginning of the sketch). Although this results in a convincing tonal plan similar to that of numerous works by Chopin, doubts about the major or minor quality of the recapitulated material make this hypothetical model less plausible than that in ex. 12b, where C minor/major initiates a progression from iii and III♮ through V to I (rather like the III–V–i structure in Brahms's Op. 118, No. 1: see Schenker 1979, fig. 110d[3]), with a "neighbor-note" motion in the fundamental line. That A♭ major is first heard as VI/iii—not as the tonic—in the initial statement of the polonaise theme creates an effective "rational deception," making this structure seem all the more credible as Chopin's first "basic plan."

Example 13 contains two graphs starting with the F-minor harmony that Chopin turned to next (marking *F mol* [*sic*] above the first system, implying a key signature of four flats, and drafting an alternative opening in this key later in the sketches). Treating F minor as the tonic while retaining A♭ major for the polonaise theme and C major for the slow section results in the hypothetical structure in ex. 13a, which, unlike that in ex. 12b, is based on an underlying progression similar to countless others used by Chopin—i–III–V—with considerable momentum generated in the drive to the dominant. Once again, however, it is the recapitulation that casts doubt on this structural

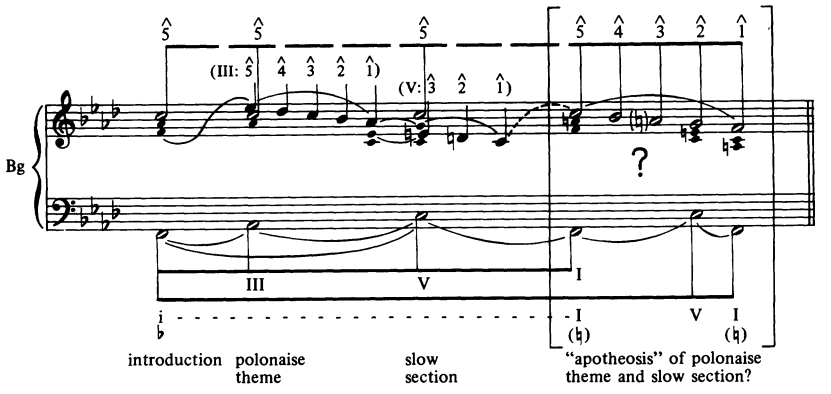


Example 12a: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical background structure. Opening in C minor; tonic = C minor/major.

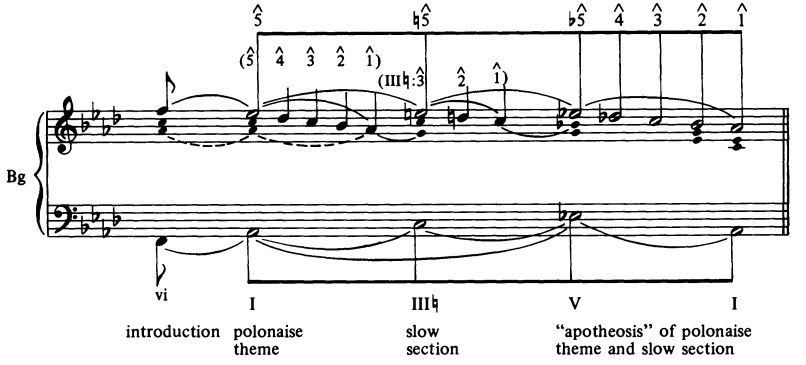


Example 12b: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical background structure. Opening in C minor; tonic = A♭ major.

scenario, thus suggesting ex. 13b as the outline Chopin probably envisaged when starting the work in F minor. Here, the introduction acts as a large-scale "harmonic appoggiatura" based on vi, resolving to I (A♭ major) with the start of the polonaise theme. The progression that follows—I–III♮–V–I—is typical of Chopin's music; the chromatic embellishment of the head note—$\hat{5}$–♮$\hat{5}$–♭$\hat{5}$—is less characteristic. This



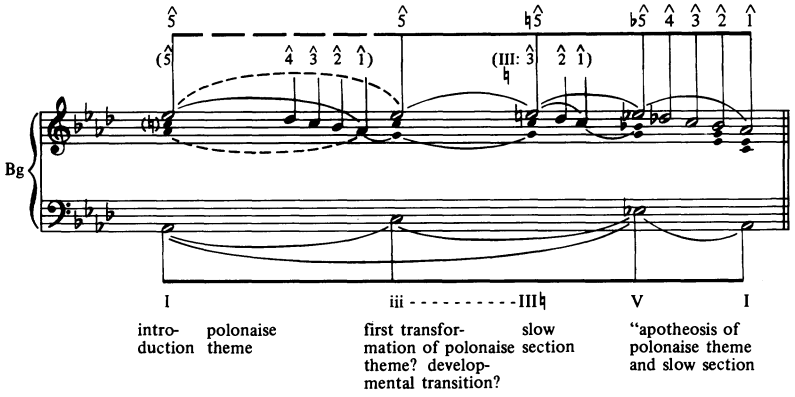
Example 13a: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical background structure. Opening in F minor; tonic = F minor/major.



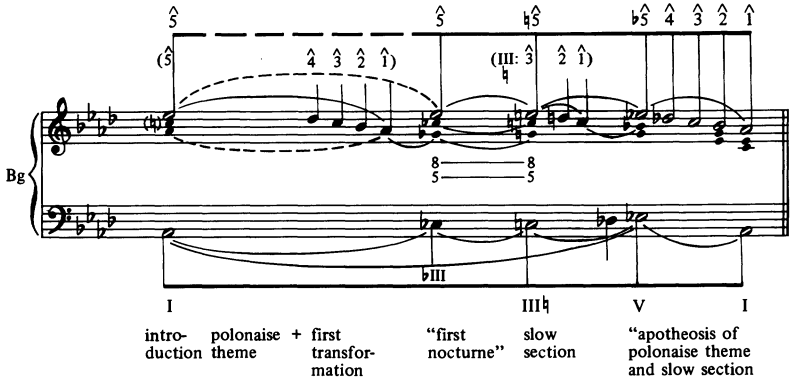
Example 13b: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical background structure. Opening in F minor; tonic = A♭ major.

structure, which is an entirely plausible "basic plan," has much in common with the underlying vi–V–I progression of the Fantasy, Op. 49, particularly at the middleground level (see Schachter 1988).

The hypothetical structures shown in exx. 14a and 14b are the last Chopin might have considered before altering the slow section's tonal setting to B major ("♭III"), a decision implemented at a very late



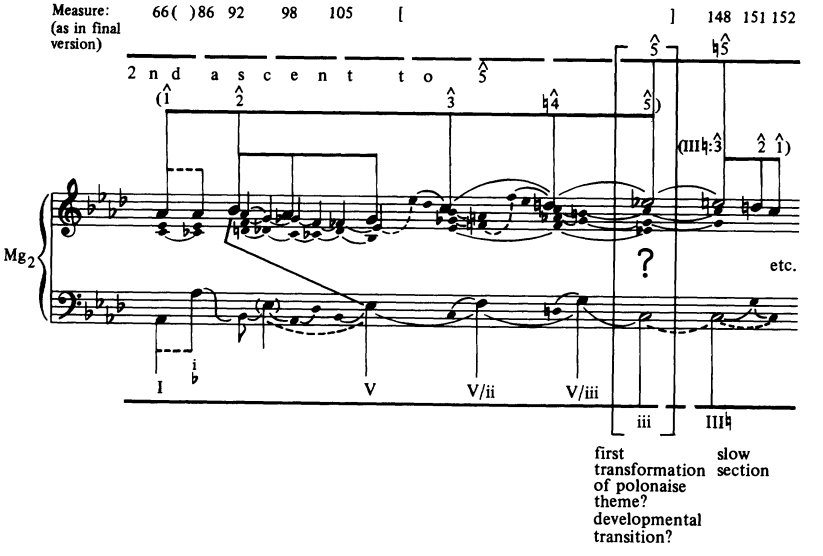
(See ex. 15a for middleground graph of mm. 66-152.)



(See ex. 15b for middleground graph of mm. 66-148.)

Example 14: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical background structures. Opening in A♭ minor; tonic = A♭ major.

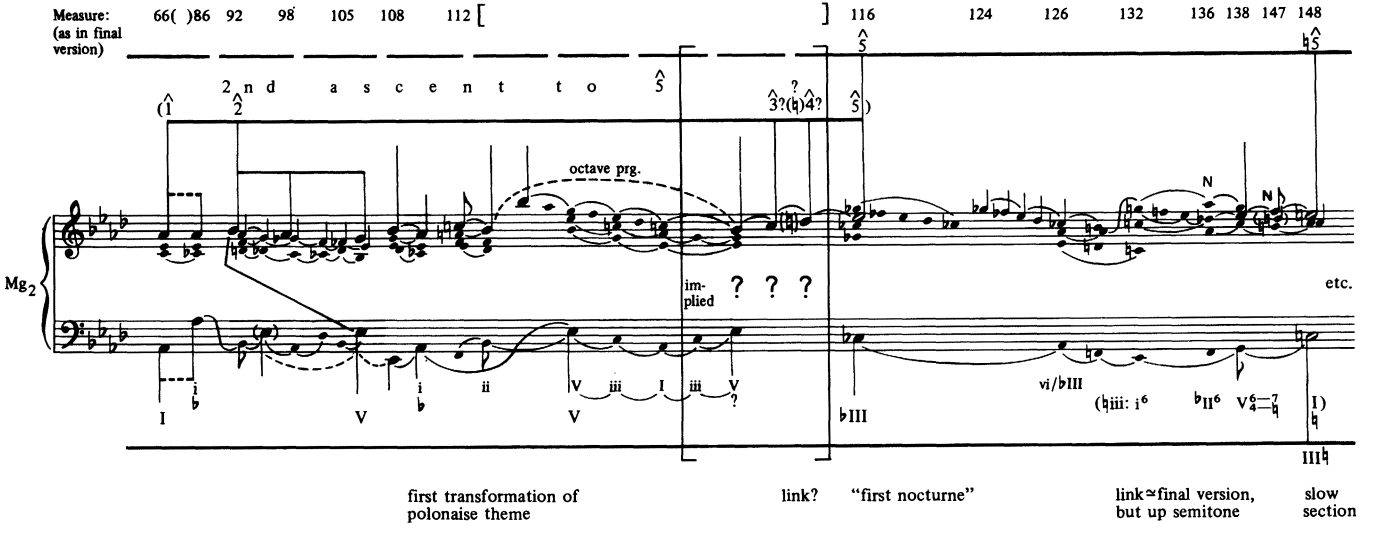
stage of sketching. Here, as in the final version, the work begins with A♭ minor/major as the tonic, moves through III♮ in the slow section and V in the apotheosis, and reaches I after the descent of the fundamental line. Different transitions from I to III♮ distinguish the two graphs, reflecting the difficulty Chopin experienced in effecting this connection. Initially he appears to have forseen C minor as the har-



Example 15a: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Reconstruction from sketches: mm. 105–48 (cf. ex. 14a).

monic goal of the developmental episode, most likely planning to transpose the polonaise theme to iii for its "first transformation," or possibly intending simply to continue the development of the theme's principal motives until the slow section began (nowhere in the sketches do we find the "first transformation" notated in C minor). Irrespective of the passage's *thematic* goal, transcriptions (for instance, Kallberg 1985, 288–90, exx. 4 and 5) show that Chopin made at least four attempts to steer the music toward iii, and ex. 14a represents the background structure that he might have envisaged when using C minor to connect I and III♮. Example 15a's middleground graph reveals that the drafts of this passage are based on a structure almost identical to that of the final version—namely, a linear ascent from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{5}$ via the raised fourth d♮^{2}—although the harmonization is different, continuing the progression started in mm. 92–105. That the structural basis of this passage was retained in the final version,[55] even though C minor was ultimately abandoned, supports the view that Chopin relied at least intuitively on some sort of outline or plan in sketching the work.

Dissatisfaction with C minor as temporary goal led to the revision shown in ex. 14b, in which A♭ minor/major prevails until the "first

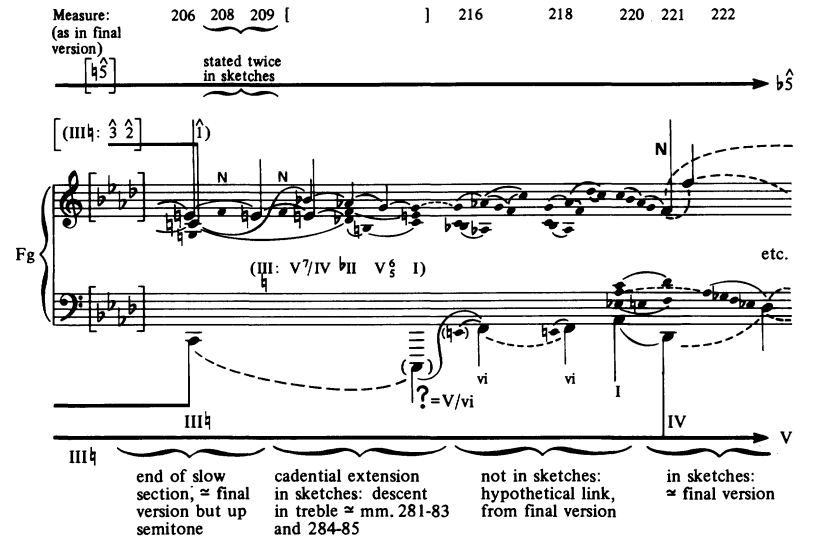


Example 15b: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy*, Op. 61. Reconstruction from sketches: mm. 112–16 (cf. ex. 14b).

nocturne" begins in "♭III" (that is, B major). At this stage, Chopin evidently planned to retain the tonic for the polonaise theme's "first transformation," but in drafting the passage he ran into difficulty, abandoning the texturally enriched repetition (which starts like mm. 108–14 of the final version but then continues as in the *first* statement of the theme, whereas in the published version Chopin interrupts the repeat with the sudden one-measure link to the "first nocturne") upon reaching the counterpart to m. 34. Here, about to cadence on iii, he arrived at the end of the page and stopped sketching (see Kallberg 1985, 290–92 for a transcription of the relevant passage). It is obvious that at this point Chopin had not fully devised the means of connecting A♭ minor/major and B major at the *foreground* level: only after rethinking the entire background structure and lowering the key of the slow section could he return to this passage and harmonically realign it as in the final version. The middleground graph shown in ex. 15b represents the passage at this stage of the work's evolution, suggesting some of the structural problems implicit in Chopin's more or less literal repetition of the polonaise theme: namely, how to link i and ♭III, and how to harmonize the five-note structural ascent that might have been carried over from the earlier version of the section.

One last question remains about the hypothetical models in exx. 14a and 14b: how did Chopin intend to connect the C-major slow section to the apotheosis at the middle- and foreground levels? Although firm conclusions remain elusive (mm. 214–20 are omitted from the sketch), Chopin might have planned to return to both the introduction and the "second nocturne" as in the final version, but this is improbable, as harmonically the two do not mesh when the repeated introduction starts in C major. (That the slow section ended firmly in C was clearly Chopin's intention: the sketches contain a much extended version of 206–13, with eight additional measures to reinforce III♮.)[56] A more likely—if entirely conjectural—possibility is that from this lengthy cadence in C major the music moved directly to the "second nocturne," that is, to m. 216, as the graph in ex. 16 represents. The connection is harmonically convincing, although it lacks the full mystery of the final version.[57]

What Chopin had in mind at this point will never be known for sure, but it is less difficult to imagine why he might have altered the tonal setting of the "first nocturne" and slow section. Samson proposes various factors, among them the "associations of stillness and serenity which the key of B major carried" for Chopin, the "more congenial lie of the hand for the legato melody of the slow section" when in B rather than C, and Chopin's recognition of the "potential of his opening chords as a means of signalling the larger tonal movement of the piece" (1988, 54–57).[58]



Example 16: Chopin, *Polonaise-Fantasy,* Op. 61. Hypothetical link, mm. 206–16ff., derived from sketches.

Another factor concerns the stylistic reassessment occurring when Chopin composed Op. 61, which, as we have seen, resulted in a new approach to ornamentation, rhythm, harmony, and genre. From the analysis presented here, it is clear that this reappraisal extended even to the level of tonal structure in the composer's late music. Although the tonal scheme of the published piece has obvious advantages over the three essayed in the sketches, it would have been far more consistent with Chopin's style as established in the 1820s and 1830s had the final version adhered to the I–III♮–V–I progression shown in exx. 14a and 14b, which had been used in numerous earlier works and which was therefore an entirely logical tonal foundation for Chopin to have employed in drafting the *Polonaise-Fantasy.* Various authors have remarked that the use of C major (III♮) in the sketches is "surprising," but it is more striking that the familiar underlying progression was abandoned in favor of a new one—I–♭III–V–I—which has a structural function nowhere else in Chopin's music *except* in the contemporaneous *Barcarolle,* where the same harmonic succession appears in the background.

In composing these extended works at a time of profound stylistic change, Chopin thus turned to a new tonal progression which, despite

its superficial resemblance to other more characteristic structures, was nevertheless unique. The similarity of the "basic plans" used in these two pieces, in addition to the many other structural characteristics they share, highlights the close relation between improvisation and composition in Chopin's music, and even more importantly the use of a common set of structural principles—in other words, *a stylistic use of structure*[59]—in works belonging to very different genres. Although their tonal schemes reveal that Chopin's approach to structure was capable of change even at this late date, the *Barcarolle* and the *Polonaise-Fantasy* essentially remain faithful to principles established much earlier in the composer's career, when he developed the "improvisatory long-range vision" that would eventually guide him even in writing complex compositions such as these.

NOTES

1. Throughout this article, published translations are used when available; all other translations are mine. In the notes to Part I, quotations from Schenker and other authors are provided in the original language if no published translation exists.
2. Schenker employs several expressions to refer to improvisation: for instance, *Improvisation, fantasieren, in extempore,* and *aus dem Stegreif,* literally "out of the stirrup" ("wie ein Reiter, der etwas erledigt, ohne abzusitzen," according to the Kluge *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache,* 19th edn. [Berlin, 1963], 743).
3. Note the similarity of these remarks to Schenker 1912, xxxv:

   > Ist nicht seitdem auch die Kunst des Improvisierens erloschen? (Den historischen Berichten zufolge vermute ich, daß Mendelssohn wohl der letzte gewesen, der diese Kunst noch besaß; ob auch Brahms sie besessen, ist mindestens nicht bekannt geworden!) Und wer weiß, ob nicht gerade mit jener Kunst des Improvisierens der selbst noch im Pathos anmutig gebliebene Charakter der Empfindung zusammenhing . . . ?

4. In excerpts from Schenker 1954 and 1984, "preludizing" has been streamlined to "preluding."
5. In *Ein Beitrag zur Ornamentik,* Schenker claims that tonal references such as these enhance unity by means of "group formation [*Gruppenbildung*]" (1976, 28). Compare Schenker 1954, §§129ff.
6. See Rink 1988a and 1989 for further discussion of the Chromatic Fantasy's structure, especially that of mm. 49–70.
7. These "principles" are discussed in Rink 1988a. Further mention of compositional "plans" can be found *passim* in Schenker 1912, 1913, 1914, and 1915.
8. Nun wird man mich, hoffe ich, verstehen, wenn ich sage, daß wie einerseits nur das Gefühl der Urlinie den Meistern die Fähigkeit zur Improvisation als dem Urgrund auch ihrer Auskomponierungs- und Synthese-Kunst, so wie im engeren dann auch die Folgerichtigkeit in der Verwandlung der Prolongationen eintrug, es anderseits den nicht wahrhaft Berufenen an Improvisation, Auskomponierung, Synthese, Prolongationskunst fehlen muß, weil ihnen das sichere Gefühl für die Urlinie versagt ist, aus der allein alle diese Fähigkeiten und Künste erwachsen. (1923b, 46)
9. "Überwältigend ist der Eindruck des 32^{tel}-Laufes in T. 9–10, der den Zug der Urlinie ($\hat{6}$) $\hat{5}$–$\hat{1}$, (c^3) b^1–Es, im Sturm durchmißt. . . . Bei solcher Kühnheit der Improvisation welche Kraft des Organischen!" (1922b, 4–5).
10. "Was für Improvisationskunst des jungen Meisters!" (1922a, 35).
11. Auch stellt sich einem überschnellen Vortrag, wie er heute im Schwange ist, schon das Improvisatorische bei Bach von vornherein innerlich in Widerspruch—und stand nicht bei ihm fast alles auf dem Stehgreif-Schaffen? Offenbar ist die Unfähigkeit zu improvisieren heute zum Hindernis geworden, die nie dagawesene Stehgreif-Kunst eines Bach auch nur nachzuhören —wie denn stets der eine Mangel den andern nach sich zu ziehen pflegt. (1923a, 26)
12. Die Geistesgegenwart, mit der unsere Genies den Tonstoff in solcher Art meisterten, hat ihnen ja erst möglich gemacht, weit ausholende Synthesen

zu schaffen. Ihre Werke sind eben nicht zusammengeklaubt, sondern nach Art der freien Fantasie sofort umrissen und aus einem geheimen Urgrund herausgeführt. (1925, 40)

This translation is partly based on Ian Bent's (1986, 131).

13. This fantasy demonstrates that "freie" and "gebundene" improvisation in the eighteenth century were not as distinct as some authors maintain. (For instance, see Vanhulst 1971, 142–53.)
14. "Ich will nur einen bescheidenen Beitrag zur Kunst der Diminution bringen, die das Hauptmittel der freien Fantasie ist . . . " (1925, 12). See the extended discussion of diminution in §§251ff. of *Der freie Satz,* where Schenker writes: "It is clear that the thorough study of such art of embellishment must necessarily give insight into the art of improvisation" (1979, 97).
15. "Die Schönheit der Ausführung liegt also in dem Festhalten sozusagen eines kleineren Brechungsmotivs innerhalb der großen Brechung und im Verhüllen dieses Zusammenhangs durch ein Laufwerk, das bei bestimmter Erfüllung eines Zieles gleichwohl ein ziellos Irrendes vortäuscht" (1925, 28).
16. This essay is filled with numerous additional references to improvisation, of which the following is perhaps the most significant: "We see that the diminutions could not possibly blossom into such unity—the unity and synthesis of the whole which flows from the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation—were it not for the miracle of improvisation!" (1977, 48). See also Schenker 1977, 45, 48, and 50–53.
17. Schenker also writes: "Without improvisational gift, that is, without the ability to connect the composition to the middleground and background, no good fugue can ever be written" (1979, 144). Other references to improvisation occur on pp. 9 and 142.
18. Discussing improvisation in the hands of the Romantic virtuoso, Wangermée writes: "on lui a souvent fait le reproche d'être l'apothéose du mauvais goût" (1950, 244).
19. Accounts of Hummel's extemporaneous performances indicate the eclectic nature of some early–nineteenth–century improvisatory music: see *The Athenaeum* (15 May 1830): 301; also, Louis Spohr, *Selbstbiographie,* 2 vols. (Cassel, 1860), 1:206. Compare Fétis's description of an improvisation by Ignaz Moscheles, quoted in Wangermée 1970, 17–18. For further information on early–nineteenth–century improvisation, see Wangermée 1950 and 1970; Schleuning 1971 and 1973; Suttoni 1973; Poniatowska 1980; and Carew 1981.
20. Note for instance the following passages:

> It is one of the beauties of improvisation to feign modulation to a new key through a formal cadence and then move off in another direction. This and other rational deceptions [*vernünftige Betrügereyen*] make a fantasia attractive; but they must not be excessively used, or natural relationships will become hopelessly buried beneath them. (1949, 434)
>
> Those who are capable will do well when they depart from a too natural use of harmony to introduce an occasional deception [*sondern das Ohr zuweilen betrüget*]. . . . (1949, 439)
>
> So-called deceptive progressions [*Die sogenannten Betrügereyen*] are also brought out markedly to complement their function. (1949, 163)

21. Oswald Jonas writes of K. 475:

> The [descending] path to the dominant is so strongly rooted in our consciousness that when the bass begins a descent from the fundamental, the maximum opportunity to generate tension by means of expansion is open to the composer. The release of such tension can even become the content of an entire piece. . . . In this way *the plan for an entire composition—the plan of this Fantasy*—grows out of the sense of tonal space, the obligation set up by the composing-out of a fourth-progression [from c to G]. (1982, 73; emphasis added)

Compare Edward Laufer's comments (1988, 99–100, 113):

> for the classical composers, the term *fantasy* often denotes a work of improvisatory character, as if without clear direction, in which the composer seemingly loses his way, goes astray, and returns to the crossroads . . . to try again. This procedure may be expressed through a kind of motto, or middleground motive, which, restated and transformed, is the carrier of the musical dénouement.
>
> . . . the opening section [of Mozart's Fantasy in C major, K. 394] becomes a model which the rest of the piece strives to emulate. In a broad sense, this opening Adagio having expressed a I–V motion, the Fantasy as a whole not only tries to restate the same progression, but . . . gives the illusion of going astray many times before finally attaining this goal.

For further discussion of K. 475, see Salzer 1962, 1:251–53; Schleuning 1971, 2:13–14; Rosen 1972, 91–93; and Schleuning 1973, 332–49. The measure numberings adopted here are those of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe.*

See Salzer 1976 for discussion of the role of *vernünftige Betrügerey* in eighteenth-century music, and especially in Haydn's Fantasia from Op. 76, No. 6.

22. "Daß Bach auch in der Diminution einer freien Fantasie auf einer genauesten Ordnung besteht und sie nur eben der Fantasie halber hinter dem Schein von Unordnung verbirgt, macht das Unnachahmliche seiner Kunst aus" (1925, 28).

Note also Schenker's remarks in the Chromatic Fantasy edition: "This skillful and extremely important artistic technique [*Kunstgriff*] of creating harmonic connections even across interpolated passages is one of the hidden features of [J. S.] Bach's consummate writing" (1984, 35). Although translated here as "artistic technique," *Kunstgriff* could be interpreted more literally, in the sense of "trick" or "artifice." Perhaps even the title of Schenker's essay "Die Kunst der Improvisation" should be understood not only in the sense of the *art* of improvisation (as it is normally translated), but also the *artifice* thereof.

23. William Mitchell observes that the Fantasy at the end of the *Versuch*—on which Schenker bases much of his *Meisterwerk* study—only hints at the true nature of Bach's improvisatory technique; nevertheless, "for all its circumscribed, unassuming modesty, [the work] breathes the same atmosphere as the famous final piece of the *Probestücke,* also a free fantasia" (Bach 1949, 22).

Reliance on principles of good tonal "grammar" seems to have characterized Bach's improvisations: see Vrieslander 1925, 268ff.; Schleuning 1973, 146–283; and Ottenberg 1987, 78–85 and 167–71.

24. Die Kentnis der Noten, Pausen, Zeichen, Manieren, Taktarten etc. ist die Orthographie. Der Generalbaß und die Lehre von der Verwandschaft der Töne ist die Etymologie. Nun fehlt ja noch die Prosodie und der Syntax. Denn obgleich im Generalbasse etwas weniges vom Syntax angebracht ist, so hilft dis doch nur in einzelen Fällen. Der musikalische Syntax fordert mehr, er verlangt Erfindung und Zusammensetzung zugleich, er ist Syntax, Rhetorik und Oratorie. ([1782], 265)
25. "Wir wollen durch ein Schema der gewöhnlichsten Uebergänge und Ausweichungen dergleichen Anfängern zu Hülfe kommen" ([1767], 148).
26. See Vanhulst 1971, 111–14 and Jenkins 1976, vol. 2 for detailed lists of other late-eighteenth-century keyboard tutors.
27. Perhaps it is partly for this reason that Bach disparaged most contemporary treatises. See his letter dated January 11, 1773 to the *Hamburger unpartheiischer Correspondent,* translated in Bach 1949, 4 (see also pp. 8–9).

    Vanhulst (1971, 142–53) compares Bach's *Versuch* with the treatises of other eighteenth-century writers, which he finds universally wanting: intended for amateurs and beginners, they treat improvisation as a functional rather than artistic activity, concentrating on "gebundene" improvisation in a "strict" style on the organ.
28. The *partimento* tradition, established in southern Italy by the mid-eighteenth century, was one such practice providing models for improvising entire keyboard works. The *Riemann Lexikon* defines the *partimento*—literally, "division"—as

    > die Skizze eines polyphonen Satzes in einer fortlaufenden Stimme, die bei häufigen Schlüsselwechsel teils aus bezifferten Generalbass-Partien, teils aus thematischen Linienzügen besteht und als Vorlage für eine weitgehend improvisatorische Ausführung des skizzierten Satzes auf dem Tasteninstrument diente. ([Riemann] 1967, 707)

    Although the *partimento* gradually lost its significance as a model for improvisers, becoming simply a tool for composition teaching, the tradition penetrated northern Europe before its demise in the early nineteenth century. Two contemporary works formerly attributed to J. S. Bach—BWV 907 and 908—are akin to *partimenti* (see [Riemann] 1967, 707), as is the plan at the end of C. P. E. Bach's *Versuch* and some of Handel's exercises (see Christensen 1992). Rudolf Quoika (1958) describes a similar tradition fostered in Prague by Jozef Seger (1716–82), citing Carl Franz Pitsch's 1834 edition (published in Prague by Marco Berra) of the thoroughbass models used by Seger in improvisation: *J. Segers bezifferte Bässe in zwei Notensystemen vierstimmig und mit Beziehung auf harmonische Zergliederung durch Angabe des Hauptklanges.* Detailed accounts of the *partimento*'s history can be found in Fellerer 1931, 1932, 1939, and 1940; see also Christensen 1992, Ferand 1961, 19, and Lester 1992, *passim.* Fellerer 1940 and de Nardis 1933 reproduce numerous *partimenti.*
29. Note that this polarity between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century improvisatory practices only hints at the complex "evolution" from C. P. E. Bach's *freie Fantasie* to the virtuoso tradition of Hummel and others.

    See Jenkins 1976, vol. 2 for a handlist of early–nineteenth–century treatises.

30. Nevertheless, Wangermée (1950, 242) claims that by 1830, when Czerny published his treatise, virtually nothing was left of the preluding tradition described by C. P. E. Bach and perpetuated by composers like Mozart.

    For further discussion of Czerny's treatise, see Wangermée 1950, 234ff.; Schleuning 1973, 350–51; Poniatowska 1980, 11ff.; and Carew 1981, 1:210. Compare Czerny [1848], 1:82–89.

31. Other factors contributing to the demise of improvisation included the replacement of the salon (where improvisatory practices thrived) by larger and more formal concerts in which extemporaneous music-making was deemed inappropriate, and greater differentiation between composition and improvisation, resulting from the general trend toward specialization during this period. (See Ferand 1938, 18.) Additional factors are discussed in Schleuning 1973, 350–68 and Dahlhaus 1979, 20–21. In particular, Dahlhaus blames the decline of improvisation on the replacement of *Gerüsttechnik* (which all but guaranteed a logical structure for improvised music) by thematically based procedures which, as Czerny's treatise demonstrates, grew more widespread in the early nineteenth century:

    > Entscheidend ist offenbar nicht, daß die Talente und das Interesse abstarben und die institutionellen Fundamente zerbröckelten, sondern daß die Grundform kompositorischen Denkens seit Haydn und Beethoven, die Idee des Thematischen, zur Improvisation in einem verqueren Verhältnis stand. (1979, 21)

    See Jeffrey Kallberg, "Small 'forms': in defence of the prelude," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin,* ed. Jim Samson (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 124–31 for discussion of how the concept of musical form evolved in the 1830s and 1840s.

32. "Après C. P. E. Bach, les oeuvres entièrement improvisées essaient d'imiter autant que possible les formes les plus sévères de la composition musicale" (1971, 152).

33. Czerny provides a more colorful account of Op. 77's origins:

    > A foreign pianist once, in a mixed company, ended with begging his auditors to give him a theme to extemporize upon. Beethoven, who was always merry and mischievous in company, went to the piano and ran up the scale through the several octaves, and sat down again, laughing. The stranger asked again for a theme. "I have given you the theme already," said Beethoven. "What, is that to be the theme!" "Certainly—and a very good one, too." The puzzled artist was obliged to improvise as well as he could. Shortly afterwards, the Fantasia, Op. 77, of Beethoven appeared, which is founded on such a scale, and is merely the fruit of Beethoven's humorous fancies. (1852, 65)

34. Lack of a closed tonal frame was by no means unusual in early–nineteenth–century improvisations (and in contemporary compositions like Chopin's notorious "two-key" pieces). For instance, note Czerny's instructions (1983, 11) concerning "Preludes and Short Fantasies"—"it is not necessary to begin in the same key in which one must conclude"—which he repeats with regard to "Preludes of a Longer and More Elaborate Type" (p. 19).

In his 1972 edition of Schenker 1914, Oswald Jonas rectifies a general misconception that the Fantasy, Op. 77 is in G minor (for instance, *New Grove* [2:400] gives "g/B♭" as the key):

> Korrekterweise sollte es heißen: Fantasie in H dur, entsprechend dem Hauptteil, nämlich dem Thema und Variationen. Die Suche nach dem Thema ist ja der Inhalt des improvisatorischen Teiles der Fantasie. Dafür spricht auch eine Skizze dieses Werkes, die mit Läufen in H dur beginnt. (p. 61n)

35. "Despite its multiplicity of theme-materials the Fantasia possesses an inner unity and displays a readily recognizable and highly poetic sequence of thought throughout" (Bekker 1925, 92).
36. The *OED* defines unity (in the sense of literary or artistic quality) as "agreement of the various parts of which something is composed so as to form a whole which exhibits singleness of design or effect; combination or arrangement which produces this, or the effect so produced" (1989, 19:81). Its definition of coherence is far less restrictive: "harmonious connexion of the several parts, so that the whole 'hangs together' " (3:449). Note also Dr. Johnson's definitions of unity ("The state of being one. Concord; conjunction. Agreement; uniformity . . .") and coherence ("Consistency in reasoning, or relating, so that one part of the discourse does not destroy or contradict the rest") (1755, n.p.).
37. Czerny's anecdote, quoted in note 33, reveals the original significance of the scales.

    Another prominent motive in Op. 77 is the repeated-note figure on which the B-major theme is based, which also appears in the B♭ melody, in mm. 79–82 and 84–88, etc. Both this pattern and the scale motive are present in the sketches.
38. It is striking that the only elements of the sketches concerned with harmonic (as opposed to melodic) details feature a B♭ in the bass (mm. 37 and 78) or are in the key of C major, both being important components of ex. 4's hypothetical improvisatory model.
39. Although in a strict sense this graph depicts a first-level middleground structure, I refer to it (and to others like it in the article) as a *background* in part to suggest its close relation to the "background" improvisatory model on which the piece might have been based. Any anomalies that may result should be viewed accordingly. A true middleground graph of Op. 77 appears in Rink 1992b, 316–17.

    Edward Laufer (1988, 124–32) proposes a fundamentally different reading of the first part of Op. 77, which he sees as prolonging a i–III–v progression in G minor. The bass G eventually resolves as an upper neighbor to F♯ (root of V of B minor/major), above which B♭ becomes the leading tone, A♯. In his analysis, the first 156 measures do not participate in the fundamental structure: they are simply a "long upbeat reaching for the B-major arrival" (p. 124), whereupon a $\hat{3}$–$\hat{2}$–$\hat{1}$ descent guides the theme and variations to the coda at m. 229.

    While many details of Laufer's analysis are elegant and persuasive, his attribution of a temporary tonic status to G minor is dubious, given the fleeting appearance of G minor itself (as we have seen, fantasies often begin in keys other than the tonic) and the B♭ theme's important "deceptive" formal

function. Moreover, I am not convinced that the "improvisatory model" constructed by Laufer could realistically have been employed by Beethoven, whereas the "basic plan" shown in ex. 4 is not only like those used in many forms of improvisation (see Clarke 1988 and Pressing 1988) but also touches more closely upon the reality of the Fantasy as published and, more to the point, as aurally perceived. (I am grateful to Joel Galand for drawing Laufer's article to my attention.)

40. Information on Schubert's fantasies can be found in Brown 1951 and 1966, 85–100; Weekley 1968; Dürr 1969; Vogel 1971; Sams 1976; Godel 1979; Kinderman 1986, 75–82; and Rast 1988.
41. Note, however, that an 1823 critic of the "Wanderer" Fantasy censured Schubert for having "gone too far here and there in the matter of chord progressions [those in mm. 8, 10, and 88–95], all of which may not be found tolerable by every ear" (Deutsch 1946, 278).
42. "Sonatenform und Liedform kommen überein, lyrisches und dramatisches Gesetz halten sich in gegenseitiger Balance" (Godel 1979, 203).
43. Held by the Morgan Library, the sketches are published in facsimile along with the fair copy (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek): *Fantasie in f-Moll D 940: Faksimile-Ausgabe,* ed. Hans-Joachim Hinrichsen (Tutzing, 1991).
44. See Dahlhaus's comments in note 31 on how the proliferation of thematic procedures—"die Idee des Thematischen"—contributed to the decline of improvisation.
45. "Unlike the present Trio, which replaced it, the march was to have made a second appearance after the recapitulation of the Scherzo" (Brown 1966, 98). The end of the *march* (in D major), rather than the *scherzo* (which closes in F♯ major), would therefore have led to the opening melody's reprise in F minor. This is the only difference in tonal organization between the sketched and final versions, although, as noted above, the C♯–C♮ parallelism appears in both at more immediate structural levels.
46. "Like an inspired improvisation, [the *Polonaise-Fantasy*] embraces a wide range of characters—slow introduction, dance elements, sonata-like development, nocturne-like ornamental melody, 'slow movement'—and all within a design of apparent profligacy" (1985, 201).
47. Cook adds: "In terms of Schenkerian aesthetics that would mean that [the *Polonaise-Fantasy*] really consists of two separate pieces, which seems quite a reasonable conclusion since this is merely a translation to background level of what Chopin did in his Polonaise, Op. 44, which has a complete Mazurka for its middle section."
48. Other analysts (e.g., Hamburger 1966, 107ff.; Samson 1985, 200–211; and Cook 1987, 336ff.) discuss features of the *Polonaise-Fantasy* that cannot be treated here at length. Samson for instance emphasizes the importance of "thematic recall" in the piece (1985, 201), noting the numerous motivic connections extending throughout (some of which feature in the graphs in exx. 9 and 11–16).

    "Thematic recall" works in conjunction with "tonal recall" to enhance the sense of coherence. Chopin continually returns to the tonic harmony, often disguising it by variations in spelling and "quality" (e.g., mm. 17–22, 86–87, and

182–85 are written in G♯ minor, not A♭ minor) as well as in function (in the "second nocturne," for instance, G♯ minor acts not as i but as vi of B major). Although these abundant references to "one, central tonality of A flat major" balance and control the "relatively free succession of events" (Whittall 1987, 77), temporary confusion often results from the different functions assumed by A♭ major/G♯ minor, which enhances the effect of *vernünftige Betrügerey*. (Compare the similar use of F♯ major/minor in mm. 46–50 and 57–61 of the *Barcarolle,* discussed in Rink 1988b, 201.)

49. Chopin's *Barcarolle* has three themes: the first (A), in the tonic F♯ major, enters after a short introduction based on the dominant; the second, B_1, is in A major (♮III), as is the third, B_2. The improvisatory transition that follows, over a dominant pedal, leads to a return of A, then B_2' (now in the tonic and much expanded in an exciting apotheosis), and finally, in the coda, B_1'', grounded in the tonic by an F♯ pedal note but otherwise harmonically discursive. Shown at the background level in ex. 10, the tonal structure of the work—which is implicit in the arrangement of the three themes—is thus based on the underlying progression I–♮III–V–I, which prolongs the primary melodic tone $\hat{5}$ throughout the piece. This progression has special significance in Chopin's music, as analysis of the *Polonaise-Fantasy* will reveal. (Rink 1988b provides a more detailed study of Op. 60.)

50. This is but one of the differences between Op. 61 and Chopin's other polonaises, differences that might be attributed to the generic hybrid of polonaise and fantasy. The polonaise genre seems in any case not to have influenced Chopin's original conception of the work: the characteristic dance rhythms in the piece as published appeared late in the sketching process, belonging not to the original layer but to a subsequent one. (See Kallberg 1985, 282.)

    See Rink 1989 and 1992a for discussion of Chopin's early polonaises and the emergence of "structural momentum" and "dynamic" background structures as features of the composer's mature style.

51. This is the enharmonic function of B major, as it appears in the score. Although Cook and Samson treat B major literally, the enharmonic equivalent is used here in keeping with Chopin's own orthographic flexibility, revealed in both the sketches (e.g., m. 56) and the Brandus *Stichvorlage* (mm. 231 and 249). Why Chopin chose to write the slow section in B major rather than C♭ major is unclear; possibly he did so to simplify the key signature (but note the awkward inflection to A♯ major—not B♭ major—that results in 160–6), or even to "disguise" the true structural function of the section for the sake of "rational deception."

52. The sketches (discussed at length in Kallberg 1985, Samson 1985 and 1988, and Nowik 1978, 231–70) comprise eight leaves of fourteen-staff manuscript paper (KK 815) which are in an unknown private collection, and a single page (KK 816) held in Warsaw by the Towarzystwo imienia Fryderyka Chopina. Other primary sources for Op. 61 include the two *Stichvorlagen* prepared for Brandus and for Breitkopf und Härtel. The former (KK 818), part of a private Paris collection, is published in facsimile (Frédéric Chopin *Deux Nocturnes op. 48, Polonaise-Fantaisie op. 61,* ed. Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger [Yverdon-les-Bains,

1986]). This manuscript was used to make the Wessel copy (now lost), which in turn served as the basis for the Breitkopf *Stichvorlage* (KK 817; see Eigeldinger 1984, 166). The latter is held by the Biblioteka Narodowa in Warsaw.

53. Included among the passages that flowed most freely from Chopin's pen are exactly those that constitute the most significant points of overlap between the genres of polonaise and fantasy: the long introduction and the lyrical middle section. The formal basis of the generic hybrid was therefore well established even before Chopin began sketching. . . . (1985, 283)
54. In discussing Op. 61's genesis, Samson considers "the projection of . . . codified perceptual structures into the realm of compositional strategies, even if these are regarded as subliminal. Such a projection is explicit in Schenker himself and implicit in the work of many Schenkerians. At the very least it would be argued that Chopin proceeded from an *intuition* of the *Ursatz*" (1988, 58; cf. Schmalfeldt 1990, 265).
55. This carry-over of a structural feature from sketches to final version recalls Schubert's draft of the Fantasy in F minor—specifically, the preservation of the structural C♯/D♭–C♮ motion joining the end of the march to the reprise, which, despite a different tonal context, functions in the published version as the link between scherzo and finale.
56. This extension was originally six measures long, but Chopin added two more bars to emphasize III♮ even further.
57. Note in ex. 16 that the harmonic progression after mm. 208–9 outlines a descent in the soprano foreshadowing the inner-voice melody at the end of the piece, in mm. 281–83 and 284–85.
58. Note also the motivic parallelism that results from transposing the slow section to B major: the *melodic* ascent from b♮ through c to d♭ in mm. 226–27 imitates the *harmonic* motion from the end of the slow section up to this point, i.e., B major → C major → D♭ major.

    See Jean-Jacques Eigeldinger, *Chopin: pianist and teacher—as seen by his pupils,* trans. Naomi Shohet with Krysia Osostowicz and Roy Howat, ed. Roy Howat (Cambridge, 1986) for discussion of Chopin's preference for B major rather than the more usual C major in his piano teaching and in the exercises he drafted for his unfinished keyboard treatise.
59. See Rink 1989 for further consideration of Chopin's "structural style" and its relation to improvisation.

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