Thematic Form and the Genesis of Schoenberg's D-Minor Quartet, Opus 7*

By WALTER FRISCH

I

The four major works of instrumental music that Arnold Schoenberg composed between 1899 and 1906—*Verklärte Nacht*, Opus 4, *Pelleas und Melisande*, Opus 5, the D-minor String Quartet, Opus 7, and the First Chamber Symphony, Opus 9—differ widely in medium, in length, and in musical style. Yet as has long been recognized, they share certain principles of continuous large-scale form derived from the nineteenth century. In brief, Schoenberg was following in and drawing upon a tradition that included works of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Strauss, and Mahler. In Beethoven's Sonatas, Opus 27, and his C#-minor Quartet, Opus 131, in Schubert's "Wanderer" or F-minor Fantasies (D. 760 and 940), and in Schumann's Fourth Symphony, the traditional movement types, although readily distinguishable, are run together without pause or are connected by transitional passages. In other works, most prominently Liszt's B-minor Sonata, the structural components of an individual sonata form are distributed or superimposed over a larger design that has at least traces of the traditional three or four movements. Similar experiments in design are encountered in certain of Strauss's tone poems of the 1890s. Mahler retains the more conventional separate-movement format in his symphonies, but especially in Nos. 5 and 6 shifts the weight among the different components and seeks to extend sonata-like processes over the larger span of the work.

What all such pieces have in common is an impulse toward thematic unity, toward using the same basic material throughout much of the composition. This material is manipulated either by striking transformation, by which a theme will retain its essential

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intervallic structure and rhythmic proportions but will take on an entirely different mood, or by more sober developing variation, where the basic elements are continuously modified.[1]

In Schoenberg's instrumental works of 1899–1906, these procedures, though clearly derived from the nineteenth century, take on a greater structural role, as the harmonic language becomes more chromatic and tonality begins to lose its power of formal articulation. This is not to say that these works lack a coherent and significant harmonic design; each has a clear tonic that represents a reference point for much of the harmonic activity. But because the musical surface is so highly chromatic, both listener and composer orient themselves more by thematic than harmonic relationships. These are works in which, in Carl Dahlhaus's words, harmony has become "individualized" and thus "relieved of the responsibility for the large-scale formal structures" (Dahlhaus 1980, 74). Or, as Christian Schmidt has put it, "the form is based not on the disposition of harmonic areas. . .but essentially on motivic-thematic relationships" (Schmidt 1978, 182).[2] Charles Rosen notes similarly that in Schoenberg's instrumental works of 1899–1906 "coherence is attained above all by the continuously varying employment of the same motifs. . . . We follow the piece almost entirely by recognizing the motifs and their transformations" (Rosen 1975, 39).

From this point of view, the D-minor String Quartet, Opus 7, composed between the spring of 1904 and the fall of 1905, is one of the most remarkable instrumental structures of the late romantic or early modern period. There is some truth to Adorno's extravagant claim that "down to its last note, [the quartet] created an entirely new level of thematically coherent chamber-music composition" (Adorno 1981, 157).[3] The impetus for the present study was a desire to explore how Schoenberg might have set about planning this ambitious large-scale work, which lasts fifty minutes in performance. The investigation is aided by the extensive sketch materials for Opus 7, of which more survive than for any other early Schoenberg work. These afford us a particularly good opportunity to speculate on Schoenberg's compositional strategies.

[1] On the distinctions between the techniques of transformation and development, with numerous examples, see Frisch 1984, ch. 2, and Friedheim 1963, 13–14.

[2] Schmidt's remark relates specifically to Wagner's *Tristan* Prelude, which he sees as a significant precedessor of the "formal problems" in Schoenberg's early works.

[3] Similar assessments of the work's integrated thematicism are given by Webern and Berg, excerpted in Rauchhaupt 1971, 16 and 20–30.

II

Before considering the disposition of the sketches and their relationship to the finished work, we must examine briefly the thematic and formal processes of the quartet. In Schoenberg's quartet, aspects of sonata form and four-movement form are interwoven perhaps more completely and ingeniously than in any previous such attempt (see Table 1). The following description corresponds closely to Schoenberg's own prose analyses, which, significantly, invoke only the thematic dimension of "sonata form," not the harmonic one.[4]

The first "movement" is comprised of a sonata-form exposition, development, and varied recapitulation. This is followed by a full-fledged scherzo and trio. The varied reprise of the scherzo functions also as a continuation or resumption of the development, which (at letter H) takes up material from the first movement. This development leads into a more literal recapitulation and "liquidation" (to use Schoenberg's term) of the main theme of first group.[5] A long fermata marks the principal large division of the quartet. The tri-partite slow movement opens with new thematic material, which is gradually permeated by recollection of the secondary themes of the first movement. It is followed by a recapitulation of the second group (labeled Recapitulation 3 in Table 1). The A theme of the rondo finale is a transformation of the principal slow movement theme; the contrasting episodes are all built from earlier themes. The coda, based on the opening and transition theme, functions as a conclusion to both

[4] Schoenberg's principal analyses are those that appeared in *Die Musik* in 1907 and in his "Notes on the Four String Quartets" of 1949; both are reprinted in Rauchhaupt 1971, 11–13 and 36–42. (Rauchhaupt gives incorrect dates for these analyses.) My schematic analysis in Table 1 is based closely upon Schoenberg's own, with one important modification: I hear the return of the main theme in C# minor at letter C as a first recapitulation, not as a continuing part of the first development. Although the thematic material is highly varied here, it does in fact return in its original order. I am indebted to Severine Neff (Neff 1984) for suggesting this way of hearing the section from C through D. As Schmidt points out in his article on Schoenberg's commentaries (Schmidt 1984), the composer is not always precise about where the sonata-form sections begin and end; there is even some discrepancy between the analyses of 1907 and 1949.

Throughout the present article I refer to places in the score by means of a rehearsal letter and, when necessary, a subsidiary measure number (which begin again at 1 with each letter), as in the original score (Berlin, 1907) and the widely available reprint by Kalmus. In the new edition of the quartet (Schoenberg 1986, A), continuous measure numbers are used; these are given in parentheses in Table 1.

[5] Liquidation, in Schoenberg's vocabulary, involves "gradually eliminating characteristic features [of a theme], until only uncharacteristic ones remain, which no longer demand a continuation" (Schoenberg 1967, 58).

TABLE 1

Formal Overview of Opus 7

Four-Movement Form	Sonata Form	Starting Measure
I. (Allegro) Nicht zu rasch	*Exposition*	
	first group	1
	transition	A 1 (97)
	second group	A 56 (152)
	Development 1	B 1 (200)
	Recapitulation 1	
	first group	C 1 (301)
	transition	C35 (335)
	second group	C 49 (349)
II. (Scherzo) Kräftig		
Scherzo		E 1 (399)
Trio		F 44 (575)
Scherzo reprise	*Development 2*	G 34 (706)
	(first and second groups)	H 1 (784)
	Recapitulation 2	
	first group	I 38 (909)
III. (Slow movement) Mässig		
A		K 1 (952)
B		K 52 (1003)
A′		L 1 (1031)
	Recapitulation 3	
	second group	L 52 (1082)
IV. (Rondo finale) Mässig		
A		M 1 (1122)
B		M 26 (1147)
A′		M 48 (1169)
C		N 1 (1181)
A″		N 68 (1248)
	Coda	O 1 (1270)

the larger four-movement structure and the individual sonata-form design.

No synoptic formal diagram can do justice to the richness of Opus 7, especially to the interpenetration of the thematic material and to the continuous process that seems to generate the larger structure before our very ears. We can trace this process briefly across the 300-measure segment comprising the transition, second group, first development and recapitulation, and scherzo. The transition is one of the least tonally-oriented passages in the entire quartet. It is almost pure counterpoint, a fugato based on a highly chromatic theme, which is

first stated in full by the second violin. The theme has three related components or motives, labeled a, b, and c in Example 1. (As I shall show shortly, these labels are in fact Schoenberg's own.) Motive b freely inverts the opening leap of a, then continues with a similar ascent through two half steps. Motive c, rhythmically more animated, begins like a diminution of b, with the downward leap of a diminished fifth and ascent of a half step. Its second bar contains what is to become an important syncopated figure oscillating within a half step. The fugato opens with motive b in the first violin; all subsequent entries employ a, b, and c in order.

The main theme of the second group of the exposition (Example 2) is derived directly from the transition material. The principal melodic line, in the first violin, is a rhythmically augmented version of the oscillating, syncopated seconds of motive c. The bottom part, at first played in parallel thirds by the viola and cello, takes over the first four notes and the rhythm of motive b (at a different transposition).

The final part of the first recapitulation is occupied by energetic working of the transition theme and an extraordinary modulation from the dominant of F to that of G♭. From this the scherzo theme emerges as a triumphant transformation of motives a and b (Example 3). It is in a 3/4 meter overlaid by a broad 3/2—a hemiola characteristic of Brahms and early Schoenberg.

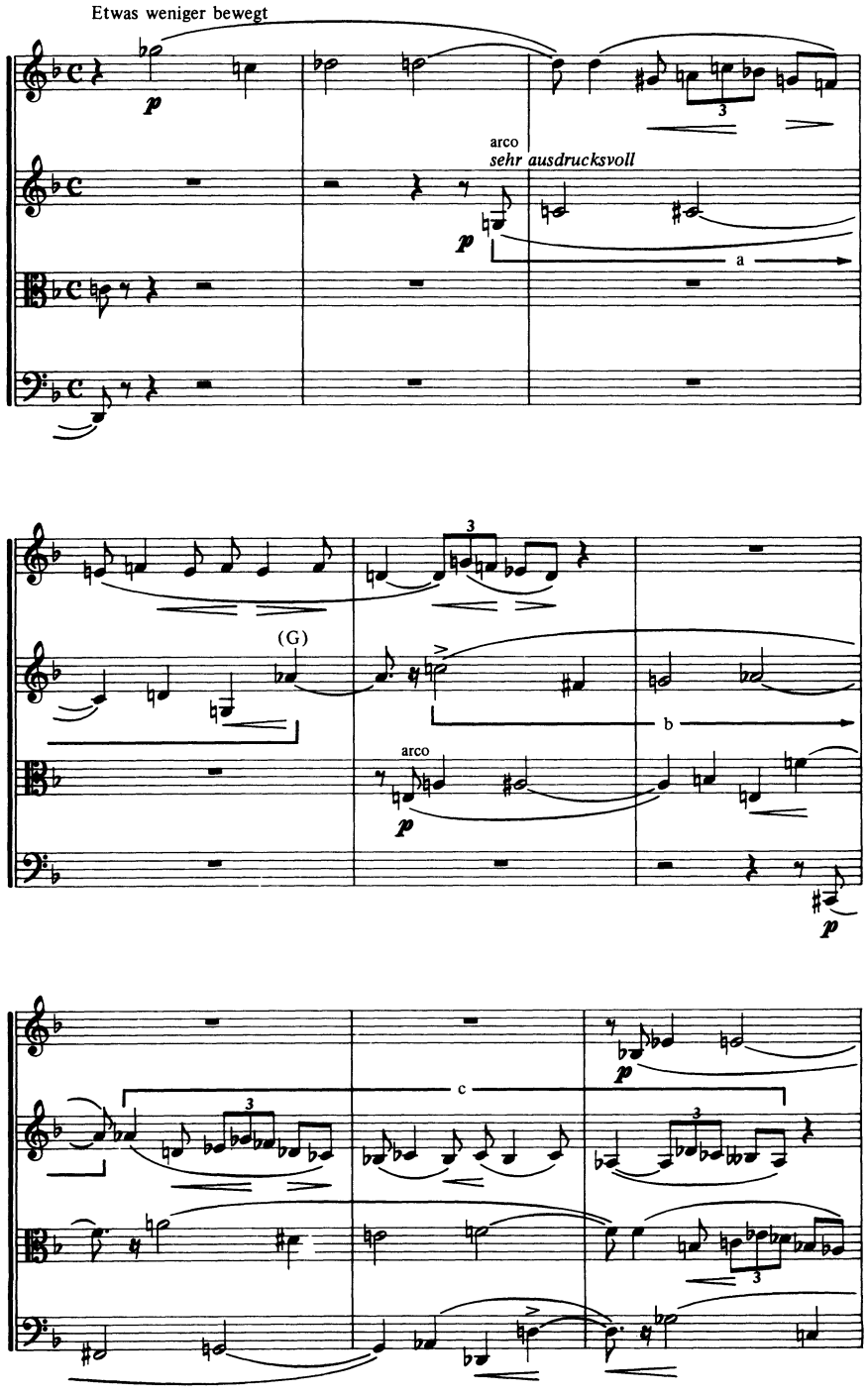
The scherzo emerges as the goal of a long, virtually continuous thematic process extending back some eight minutes in real playing time, to the beginning of the transition. And it is primarily a thematic, not a harmonic process. The arrival at G♭ major is not prepared in any traditional sense; it is not implied in any clearly audible fashion by what has preceded. The larger musical form is made, or heard, to result from a specifically thematic evolution.

III

Made, or heard. Although I implied no real distinction in my last sentence, there is in fact an intriguing difference between the two activities in the case of the D-minor Quartet—between how the composition was apparently worked out and how we as listeners hear it. The sketches for the quartet suggest that the thematic process just analyzed, so seamless and goal-directed in our perception, was the result of, so to speak, a retrograde compositional activity, in which Schoenberg first conceived the diatonic scherzo theme, then gradually "chromaticized" it, initially into the theme of second group, and then to the still more chromatic fugato of the transition. The sketchbooks

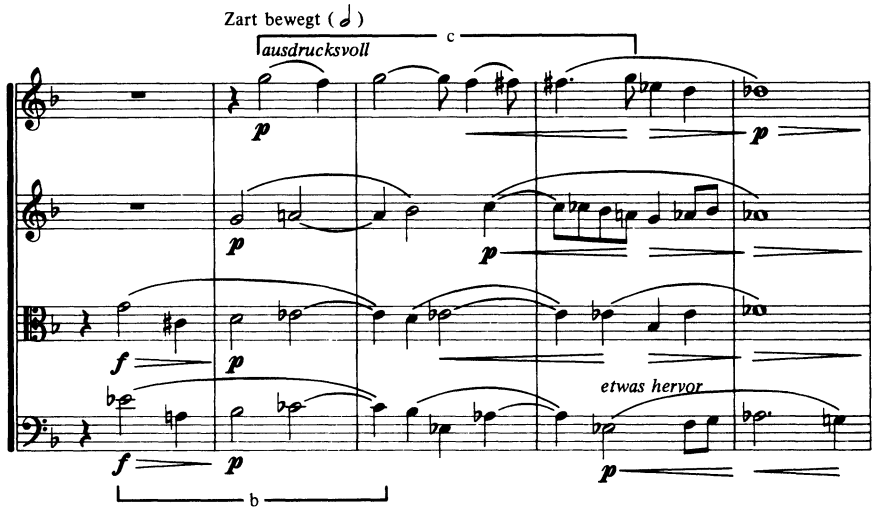
Example 1

Opus 7, Transition Theme



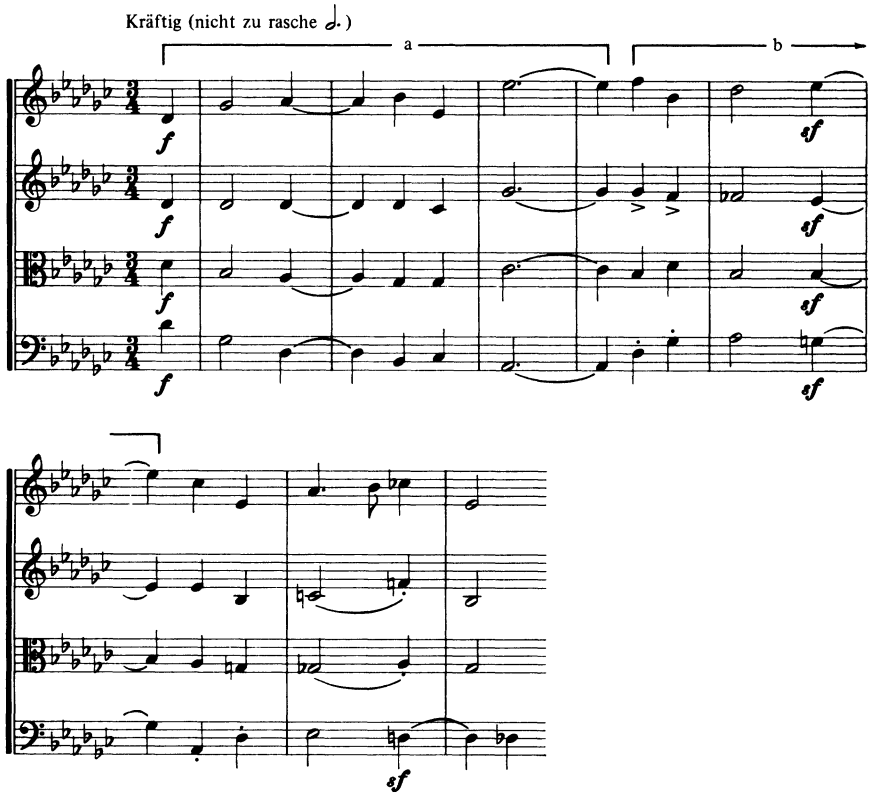
Example 2

Opus 7, Beginning of Second Group



Example 3

Opus 7, Beginning of Scherzo



also reveal Schoenberg grappling with the thematic design of the second half of the quartet, the slow movement and finale.

With the exception of a handful of loose leaves, all the extant preliminary graphic activity for Opus 7 is contained on almost 100 pages in two sketchbooks that Schoenberg used consecutively in the years 1904–06. These sketchbooks, now at the archives of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute in Los Angeles, were first mentioned by Egon Wellesz in his biography of Schoenberg (Wellesz 1925, 19–20). They were described in greater detail in 1959 by Josef Rufer (who called them Sketchbooks I and II, a practice I shall follow here), and in 1972 by Jan Maegaard (Rufer 1962, 126; Maegaard 1972, 1:20–21). The most definitive and complete account, including extensive transcriptions, is that prepared by Christian Schmidt in the critical reports for the new Schoenberg edition.[6]

In the recently published report for the D-minor Quartet, Schmidt divides the material in the sketchbooks into two categories, a "first fair copy" (*erste Niederschrift*) and "sketches" (*Skizzen*). The former constitutes a nearly complete, full-score draft of the work, although not a continuous one, since the music is distributed widely over the sketchbooks and sections are connected by Schoenberg with numerous "VI-DE" cross-references. (The final fair copy of the score, which served as *Stichvorlage*, is a separate autograph at the Library of Congress.) The latter category includes every other kind of musical jotting not part of the first fair copy. Schmidt admits that "the notion of sketch is used broadly and without terminological rigor. Thus I have not distinguished between sketches in the narrower sense and versions of individual measures deleted in connection with fair copies" (Schoenberg 1986, B: x). He transcribes these sketches not in the sequence in which they appear in sketchbooks and loose leaves (although their exact position is given in a tabular summary), but in the order of the finished work. Thus, for example, all the "sketches" for the scherzo theme are placed together.

Schmidt's working conception of sketch and his method of transcription and presentation are serviceable (and, indeed, very generous) for his purpose, which is essentially a documentary one. But independent consultation of the autograph materials for Opus 7 suggests that a greater refinement of the notion of sketch can yield significant aspects of the work's genesis not apparent from the critical report.

[6] Detailed bibliographic descriptions of Sketchbooks I and II are contained, respectively, in Schoenberg 1981, B: 21–23, and Schoenberg 1979, B: 1–5.

On the whole, the sketchbooks bear out Schoenberg's own testimony about the composition of the quartet. In the essay "Heart and Brain in Music" of 1947, he noted, "I personally belong to those who generally write very fast, whether it is 'cerebral' counterpoint or 'spontaneous' melody" (Schoenberg 1975, 55). He implies that this was the case with the composition of the D-minor Quartet: "Some forty years ago I was composing my First String Quartet, Op. 7. Usually taking morning walks, I composed in my mind 40 to 80 measures complete in almost every detail. I needed only two or three hours to copy down these large sections from memory" (Schoenberg 1975, 61).

These "large sections" would correspond to what Schmidt has called the first fair copy (although neither he nor Schoenberg accounts for why these sections appear so scattered, and their sequence so jumbled, in the sketchbooks). But in addition to these segments, the sketchbooks contain several smaller fragments, usually of only a few bars, in which Schoenberg is clearly engaging less in active "composition" than in reflective or exploratory work. Following Alan Tyson's term for certain of Beethoven's similar jottings, we may call these "concept" sketches (Tyson 1970, 68–69), although it is important to note (and it shall be shown) that Schoenberg's concept sketches tend to appear in coherent groups, while Beethoven's are usually more isolated. If we assume that the order of the material as set down in the sketchbooks represents the order in which Schoenberg conceived and/or drafted it—and I think it is reasonable to do so, since the books were bound before any entries were made—then a fascinating sequence of creation emerges.

Table 2 shows the position of these concept sketches within the sketchbooks and their relation to the formal scheme outlined in Table 1.[7] Pages with the most significant concept sketches are indicated in boldface. These represent what I believe to be the "crisis" points in Schoenberg's drafting of the quartet, moments at which the generally smooth flow of composition was interrupted.

After working out much of the first group on I/4–17 (Sketchbook I, pages 4–17), Schoenberg set aside the quartet to work on other

[7] The dates given in Table 2 are taken from Schoenberg's own annotations in the sketchbooks. All transcriptions included in this article are my own. When referring to a particular sketch in the discussion that follows, however, I will for the convenience of the reader provide in parentheses a reference to the transcription by Schmidt (who assigns every sketch an "S" number) and to the page where it appears in the critical report for Opus 7 (Schoenberg 1986, B). My own readings occasionally differ in details from Schmidt's.

TABLE 2

Overview of Sketches for Opus 7 in Sketchbooks I and II

Sketch Pages	Portion of Work Sketched
Sketchbook I (begun March 1904)	
4–17	first group
18–30	other compositions
31	scherzo
32	second group
33	transition
34–60	first group—transition—second group—development 1—recapitulation 1
(Sketchbook completed 20 April 1905)	
Sketchbook II (begun April 1905)	
1–16	scherzo—trio
17–18	scherzo reprise/development 2
19–20	slow movement; finale
21–27	slow movement
29–39	trio—scherzo reprise/development 2—recapitulation 2
39–60	slow movement—recapitulation 3—finale—coda
(Quartet completed 29 September 1905)	

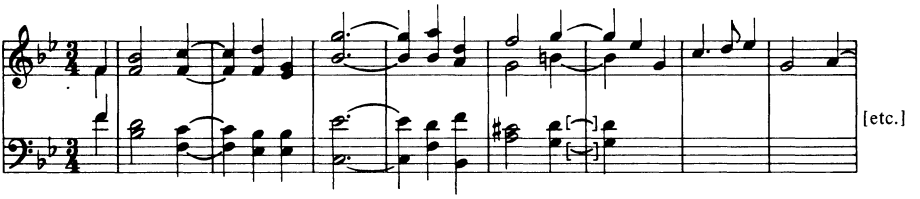
projects, principally the songs that were to become Opus 8.[8] Some fourteen pages later he returned to Opus 7, but did not, as we might expect, pick up where he left off, in the first group. He began instead to sketch the scherzo theme, well in advance of its eventual appearance. The theme appears in short score in the key of B♭ (as transcribed in Example 4; cf. S12, p. 67).[9] Despite its tonality and certain striking differences of harmony and voice leading, the theme is quite close to its final form (cf. Example 3 above). After six measures the sketch trails off to only the top part, and ends altogether after sixteen measures. The rest of the page is occupied by brief sketches of possible developments or continuations of the scherzo.

[8] This would have been in mid-July 1904. In a letter to Oskar Posa written on 13 July, Schoenberg notes that he has begun a new orchestral song and has set aside the quartet for the time being: "Mein Quartett ruht. Vielleicht komme ich aber doch noch dazu." (Cited in Szmolyan 1974, 193.)

[9] Above the first scherzo sketch appears the phrase "Neues leben fühlend." This relates to Schoenberg's private program for Opus 7, which is contained on a handwritten sheet affixed to the back cover of Sketchbook I. The program—really a description of successive emotional states (what Schumann would have called *Seelenzustände*)—is reproduced in Schoenberg 1986, B: 109–10, and also in Schmidt 1986. Its possible role in the genesis of Opus 7 has been discussed by Mark Benson (Benson 1987).

Example 4

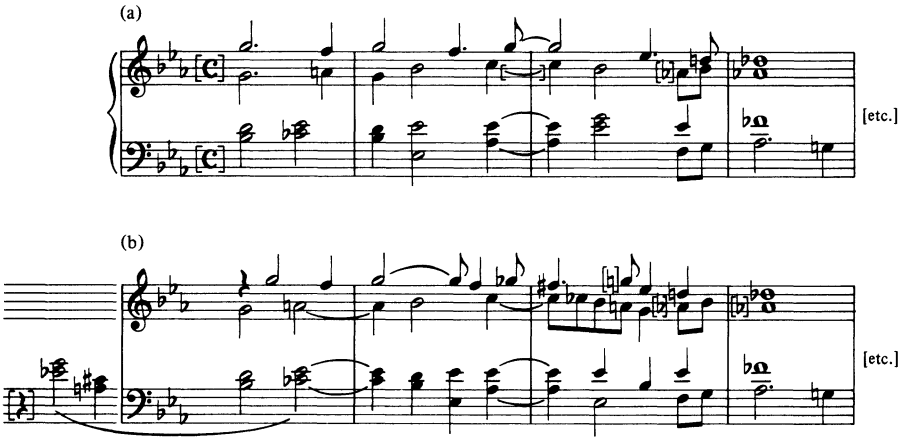
Opus 7, Sketch for Scherzo Theme, from Sketchbook I, page 31



But Schoenberg attempted no larger draft of the scherzo at this point, beginning instead to work immediately on the second group, another step backward to his previous stopping point. The first concept sketches appear in short score on the following page, I/32, which is shown in facsimile in Figure 1.[10] The sketches for the second theme are partially transcribed in Example 5 (cf. S22–23, pp. 52–53).

Example 5

Opus 7, Sketches for Second Group, from Sketchbook I, page 32



In its initial form, Example 5a, the theme makes no apparent reference to motives b and c; the principal melody and the bass part lack the syncopation characteristic of these motives. Schoenberg thus seems to work more from a harmonic skeleton than from a fully thematic conception. Directly beneath this sketch, however, Schoenberg in

[10] The typewritten "Sk" numbers in the upper left-hand corners of Figures 1 and 2 were affixed by Josef Rufer when he sorted the Schoenberg estate in the 1950s. Since he gave the cover of Sketchbook I the number Sk1, Rufer's numbers are off by one from Schoenberg's own page numbers, which appear on the odd pages. (Rufer also numbered the pages continuously through Sketchbooks I and II.) In Table 2 and throughout this article I follow Schoenberg's numbering.

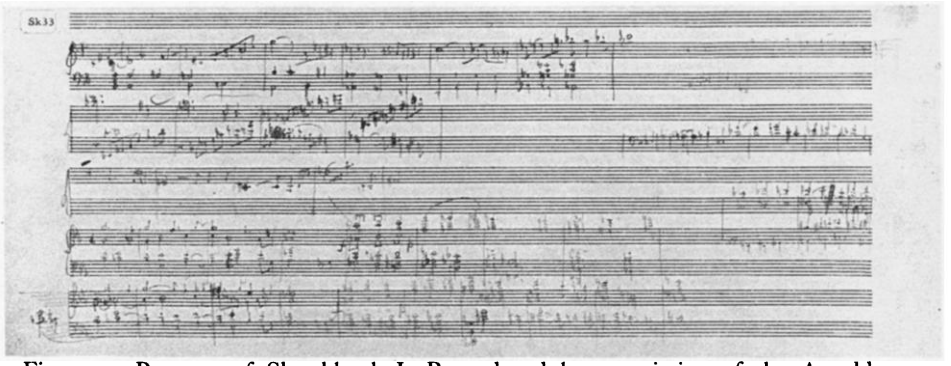


Figure 1. Page 32 of Sketchbook I. Reproduced by permission of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute.

effect "thematicizes" the same passage (Example 5b). The top line is now much closer to c; the bass syncopation, which derives from motive a, is added in the margin of the sketchleaf (as seen in Figure 1); it appears to be an afterthought. I think it was tacked on somewhat later, after Schoenberg had continued his conceptual path back through the exposition of the first movement.[11]

He now abandoned the second group to work on the transition. First, on the far right edge of staves 2 and 3 on the same page (barely visible in Figure 1), Schoenberg jotted down in a very light pencil the scherzo theme itself, in triple meter and still (by implication) in the key of B♭ (S17, p. 44). He probably did this as a reminder to himself.[12] Beneath it, on staff 5, appears the first concept sketch for the transition (Example 6; cf. S19, p. 44), in which Schoenberg recasts the scherzo theme, with both its a and b motives, in quadruple meter and

[11] Schmidt has suggested that the sketch with the G-major key signature on staves 2–3 of page 32 (S16, p. 52; see my Figure 1) is a "Vorentwurf" for the second group. I am not persuaded, since this sketch bears no resemblance to the final form of the theme and no significant trace of motives b or c. (It might be entirely unrelated to Opus 7.) Schmidt's conjecture, however, would support my broader thesis that the idea of thematicizing the second group—and making it relate to the scherzo and transition—did not occur to Schoenberg immediately.

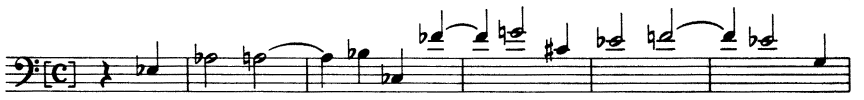
Schmidt has also proposed that the sketch on staves 6–7 (S20, p. 71) is related to the trio of the scherzo. This seems even less likely, since the trio is (like most pieces of the genre) in triple meter and is a transformation of the scherzo. The sketch is clearly in 4/4 and manifests no obvious derivation from the scherzo; it is probably unrelated to Opus 7.

[12] We find a similar phenomenon in the sketches for the First Chamber Symphony, Opus 9, in Sketchbook II. In the midst of sketches for the development section, Schoenberg wrote out the first two measures of the secondary theme of the exposition (mm. 84–85). Schmidt suggests plausibly that this jotting represents an aide-mémoire (*Gedächtnisstütze*), since the head motive of this theme plays an important role in this particular passage of the development. See Schmidt's transcription and commentary in Schoenberg 1979, B: 65.

in something like the chromatic form it will assume in the transition. Motive b, however, still ascends by whole step, *C#-E♭-F* (in mm. 3–4), rather than by semitone.[13]

Example 6

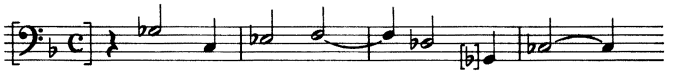
Opus 7, Sketch for Transition Theme, from Sketchbook I, page 32



On the next page of the sketchbook, I/33, Schoenberg began to sketch the transition in earnest by separating and actually labeling the component parts of the transformed scherzo theme, a, b, and c (Figure 2). At the upper left we find motive b isolated (Example 7; cf. S24, p. 44).

Example 7

Opus 7, Sketch for Motive b, from Sketchbook I, page 33



This is very much like the b subject of the actual transition, beginning with the syncopation and the downward leap of a diminished fifth. But the disjunct leaps of the continuation (*F-D♭-G♭-C♭*) still show its immediate derivation from the second half of the scherzo theme and from the transformation of that theme sketched on the preceding page

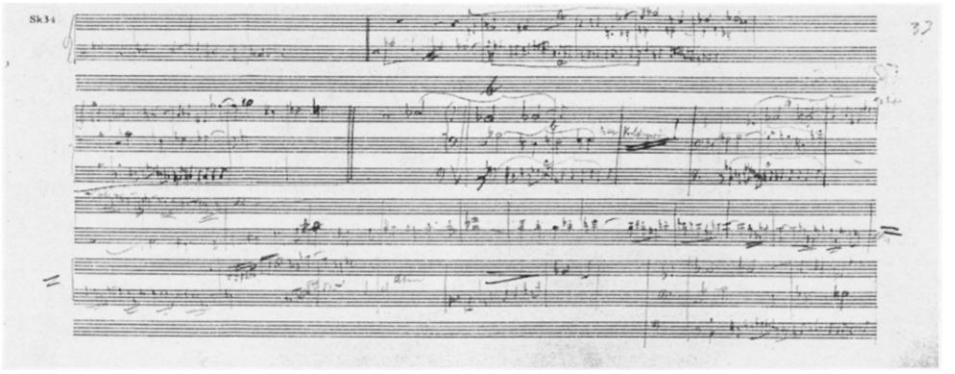
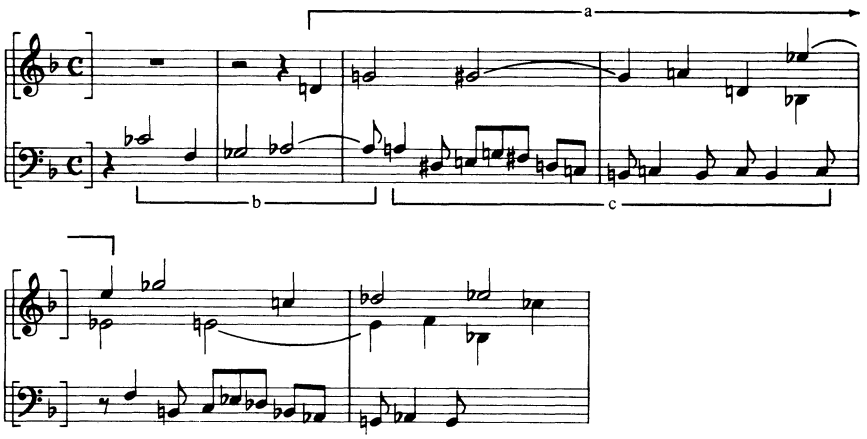


Figure 2. Page 33 of Sketchbook I. Reproduced by permission of the Arnold Schoenberg Institute.

[13] In S19 Schmidt mistakenly interprets the *E* in m. 4 of the sketch as a natural; the accidental preceding it is, I feel, clearly a flat.

Example 8

Opus 7, Sketch for Transition, from Sketchbook I, page 33



(thus Examples 4 and 6, respectively). Beside this fragment, in short score, is a first, six-measure mini-draft of the transition itself (Example 8; cf. S25, p. 46), in which the imitative texture and all the thematic material are present, including a new motive, c, which Schoenberg has derived from the syncopations in the second theme on the previous page (Example 5b). Schoenberg has himself now labeled the motives a, b, and c. Motive b still has a prominent whole step (G♭-A♭, in m. 2); its ascent does not yet consist only of half steps.

On the remainder of this page we see the "cerebral" Schoenberg trying out various three-part combinations of the motives in four more short sketches.[14] The first, at the left, contains a, b, and c. In the middle one the two upper voices present b in imitation over c; at the far right motive a is in the two upper voices, c in the bottom. The last sketch, at the very bottom right of the page, contains all three motives, like the one at the far left. Preceding it, in short score, is a sketch for the passage leading up to the transition and comprising the liquidation of material from the first group. Schoenberg was now beginning to place this transition material into its eventual context.

At some point during, or soon after, his work on this page—that is, after isolating motive b—I believe that Schoenberg turned back to

[14] For transcriptions of these sketches, see Schoenberg 1986, B: 45–48. Related sketching activity for the transition—in which Schoenberg tries out various combinations of the motives labeled a, b, and c—is found on two loose leaves and in a pocket sketchbook, which must have been used concurrently with Sketchbook I. These sketches are transcribed ibid., pp. 44–51. In one sketch (S134, p. 44) Schoenberg wrote out the scherzo theme in its original form, apparently again as an aide-mémoire.

page I/32 and added the syncopated measure in the margin for the bass part of the second theme (see Example 5b and Figure 1 above). He thus tightened still further the net of thematic associations between this theme, the transition, and the scherzo. And he confirmed the final form of motive b, with its ascending semitones (here *C#-D-E♭*, in the viola).

In his critical and theoretical writings Schoenberg often stresses that a motivic or thematic idea must have generative power—that all the events of a piece must be implicit in, or foreseen in, the basic shape or *Grundgestalt* presented at the opening.[15] In some of the exercises in his textbook *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* he shows student composers how to elaborate an initial motive into an entire small work (Schoenberg 1967, 63–67). The transition, second group, development, and scherzo of the D-minor Quartet can be heard as an extremely sophisticated example of this process on a massive scale. But the series of sketch pages we have just examined (I/31–33) suggests that the hearing and the making were hardly as congruent as Schoenberg's textbook (or his own statements on the creative process) might suggest. The "basic shape" from which Schoenberg forged this particular complex of thematic material was the scherzo theme.[16] The compositional process appears to have involved a gradual chromaticization of a diatonic scherzo theme into the transition theme—a process that is then reversed in the actual quartet, where the scherzo is made to serve as the culmination, rather than the germination.

IV

With these three pages of concept sketches Schoenberg resolved many of the problems of creating a thematically integrated and continuous form. He now returned to the first group and, on pages

[15] See, for example, his remarks in the essay "Linear Counterpoint" (Schoenberg 1975, 290), where he postulates: "'Whatever happens in a piece of music is nothing but the endless reshaping of a basic shape.' Or, in other words, there is nothing in a piece of music but what comes from the theme, springs from it and can be traced back to it; to put it still more severely, nothing but the theme itself. Or, all the shapes appearing in a piece of music are *foreseen* in the 'theme'."

[16] I do not deal here with the opening, main theme of the quartet, which in Schoenberg's sense would, of course, contain the ultimate *Grundgestalt* for the work, as is suggested by Severine Neff (1984, 13). Although I am sure that aspects of the scherzo theme could be derived from the main theme by skillful analysis, I am concerned here more with obvious transformations than with what Schoenberg would call "remote developments."

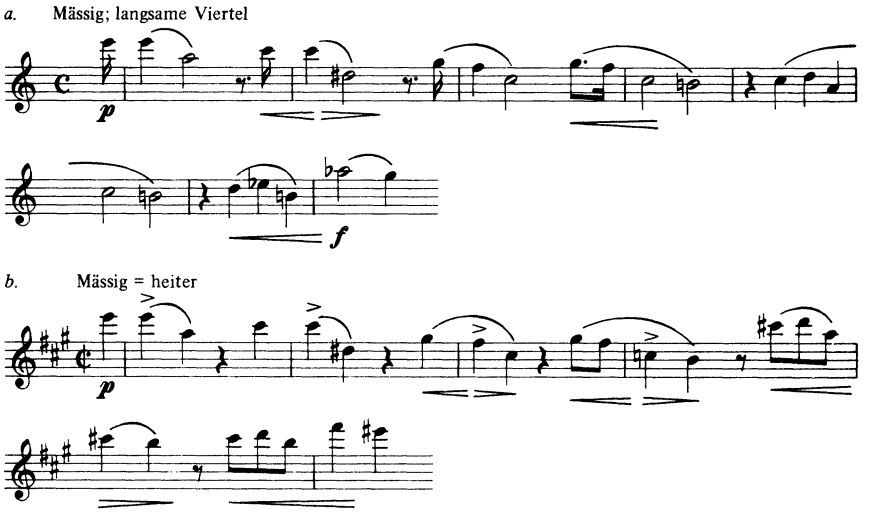
I/34—II/16, wrote out an extensive and more or less continuous draft of the entire first half of the quartet, through the trio. The matter of thematic and formal logic arose again, however, as Schoenberg planned the second half of the quartet. As Table 2 suggests, the steady flow of composition came to a halt on II/16, at the beginning of the passage that was to serve as both scherzo recapitulation and second development. Schoenberg had here to reconcile two demands: that of the larger sonata-form design, which necessitated the further development of earlier material, and that of the individual movement, which required a symmetrical restatement of the scherzo theme.

He also began to think about the shape that the latter part of the quartet would take—or at least set down the first evidence of that thinking. Here, too, there were potentially conflicting demands. A slow movement and finale had to have sufficient independence as movements, yet to fulfill their role in the larger sonata-form design they had also to recapitulate earlier material. Schoenberg's ultimate answer was to fashion the main theme of the slow movement of Opus 7 (Example 9a) as essentially new material. Unlike the scherzo it does not grow out of or emerge from any obvious thematic process. Indeed, the slow movement comes as a distinct contrast or relaxation after the recapitulation and intense liquidation of the first theme. The main theme of the finale is virtually a Lisztian transformation of the slow movement, whose first six measures are taken over note for note (Example 9b). The episodes of the finale serve to recall, if not exactly recapitulate, all previous material.

This ingenious formal and thematic design was anything but obvious to Schoenberg when he was at II/18 of the sketches, when he broke off a tentative attempt at the scherzo recapitulation to draft a slow movement (given as Example 10; cf. S75, pp. 78–80). This fragment, in the key of B♭ minor, extends 39 measures in full score. It has no tempo marking and no label, but I take it (as does Schmidt) to be a first attempt at a slow movement. Unlike the eventual slow movement theme, it is based entirely on material from the second group of the exposition. It begins with eight measures of syncopated chordal accompaniment in which the cello plays the highest part. (This accompaniment pattern, with a characteristic appoggiatura figure, derives from the development section of movement 1; see B 14.) In m. 9 the first violin enters with a melody derived quite clearly from the oscillating syncopated half steps of motive c, as heard in the principal theme of the second group (see Example 2). At m. 23 there is a cadence to B♭ minor. Underneath the sustained *D♭* of the first violin, the lower parts now play the other main theme of the second

Example 9

Opus 7, Themes of Slow Movement (a) and Finale (b)



group, in its original 6/4 meter. As the first violin resumes its melodic status, the lower parts continue in 6/4, with a sighing pulsating figure. After another cadence to B♭ minor in m. 33, and two bars of transition, the second violin begins the original theme, accompanied by a new decorative figure in the first violin.

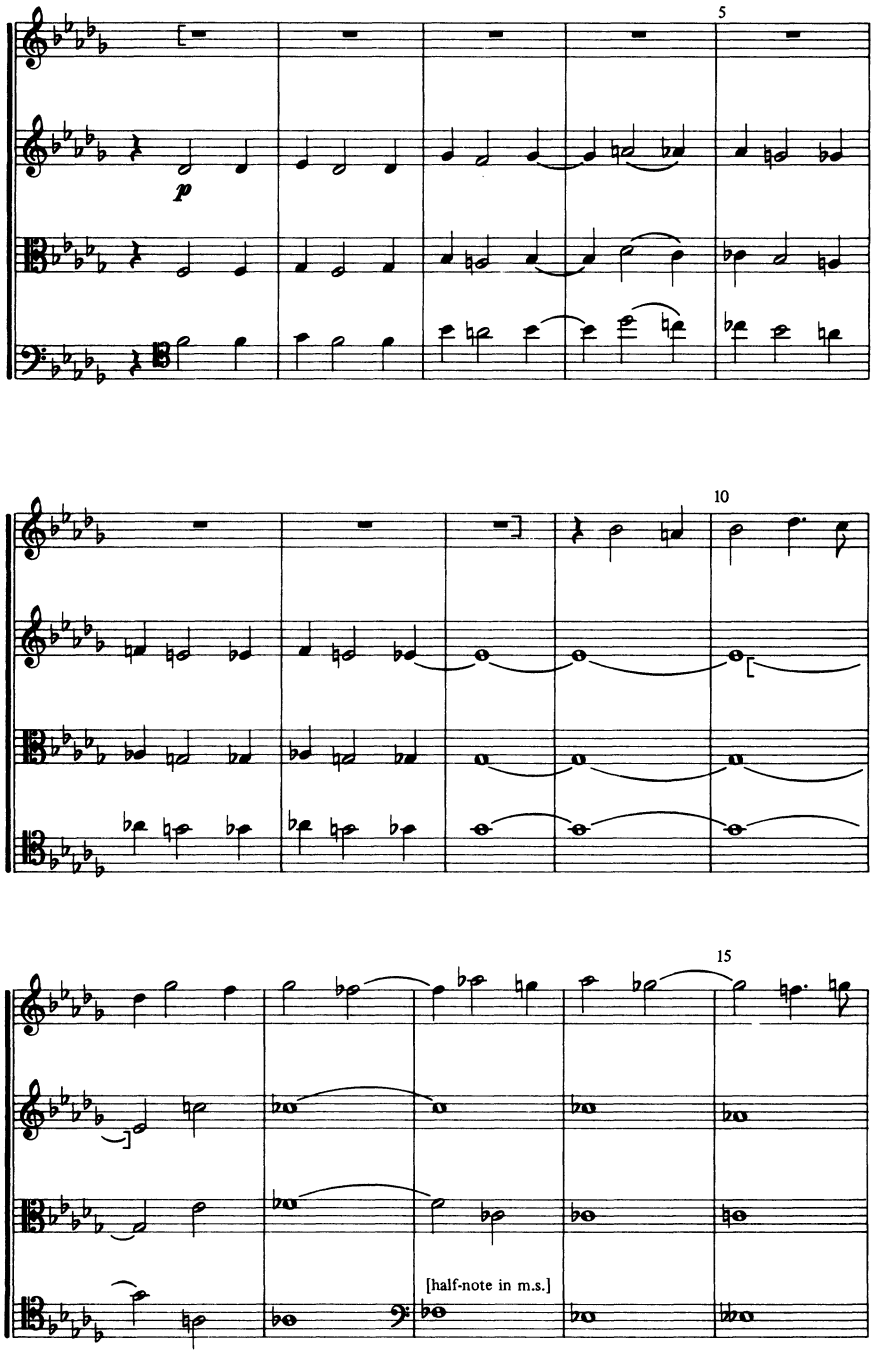
Here the sketch trails off, perhaps because Schoenberg was not satisfied with what he had produced, or perhaps because he had sketched enough to satisfy himself how the movement would go. At any rate, these 39 measures suggest that, like the scherzo recapitulation sketched on the previous pages, the passage was to serve a dual function, as both slow movement and recapitulation of the second group.

Schoenberg's mind turned now to thoughts for the last movement. Directly beneath this slow movement fragment, we find the first sketches for the finale theme. There are three, one above the other (Examples 11a, b, c; cf. S77–79, pp. 87–88). The first, in A major, has lithe, energetic eighth notes. The second, still in A, slows down the motion and eliminates the melodic diminution. The theme now has also the beginnings of an accompaniment. The third sketch transposes the second to D major, the tonic of the work as a whole.

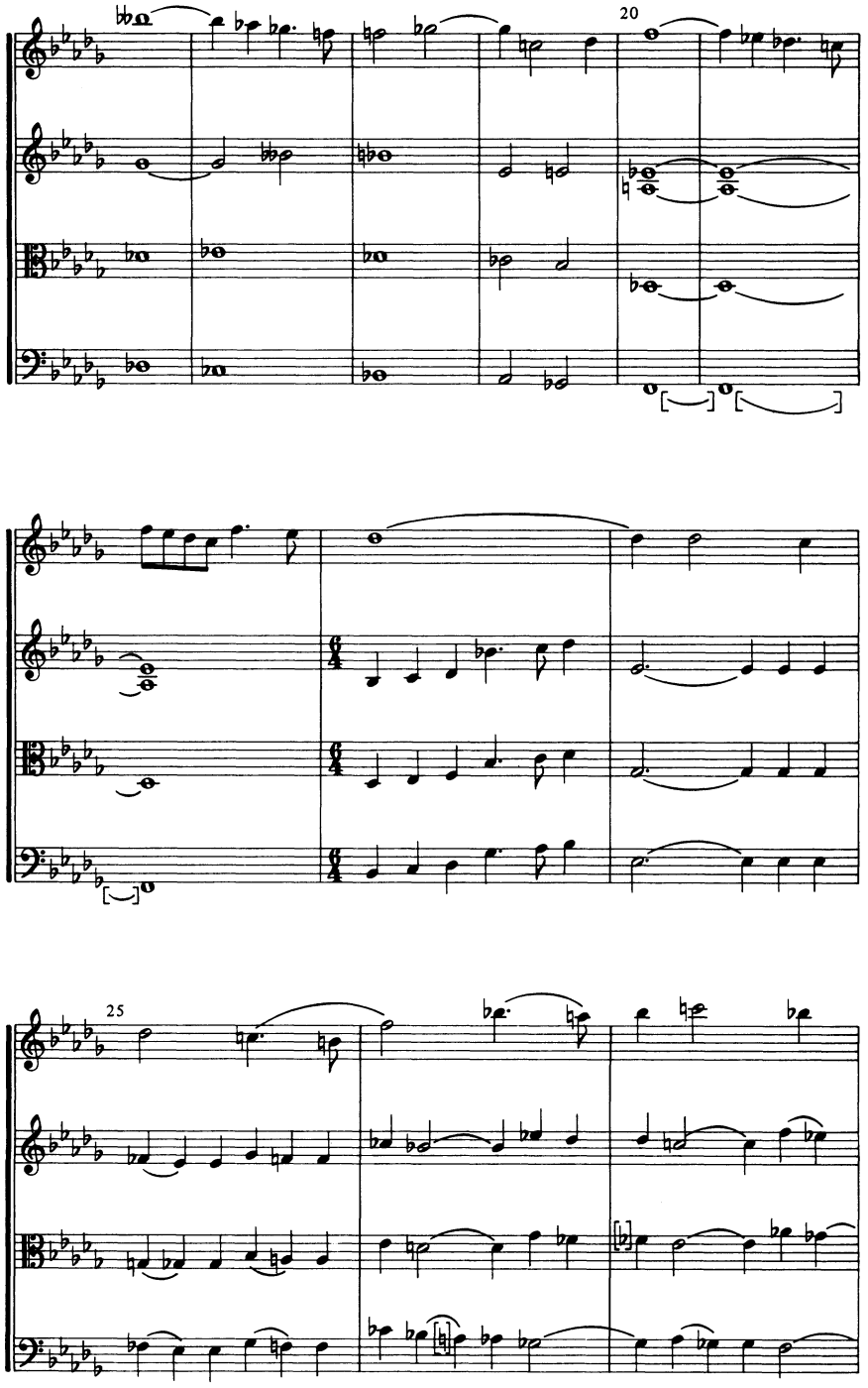
In Examples 11b and c the theme is quite close to its final form (cf. Example 9b), except for the contour of the opening three-note figure, which here is a transformation of motive b, a descending leap followed

Example 10

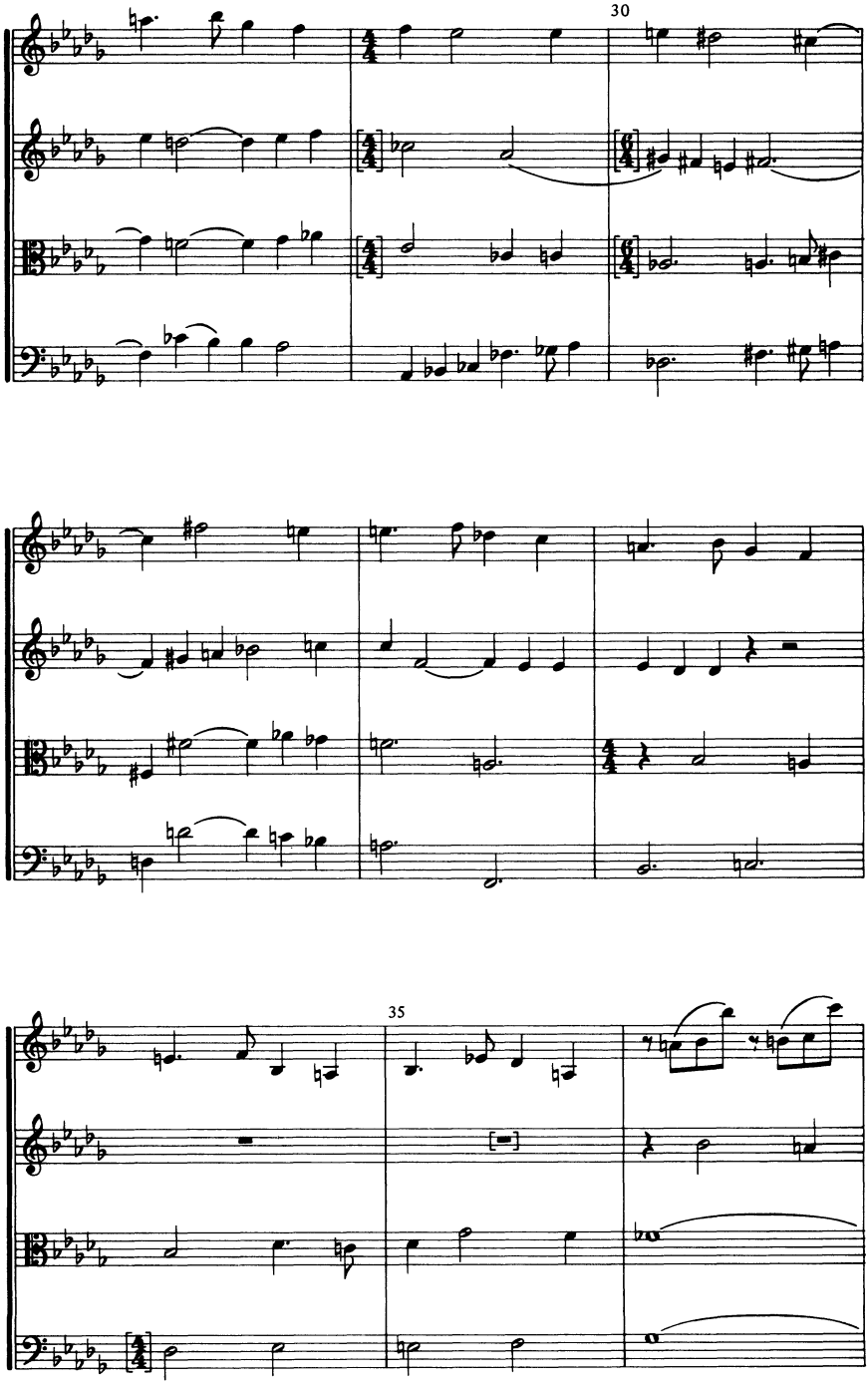
Opus 7, Draft for Slow Movement, from Sketchbook II, pages 19–20



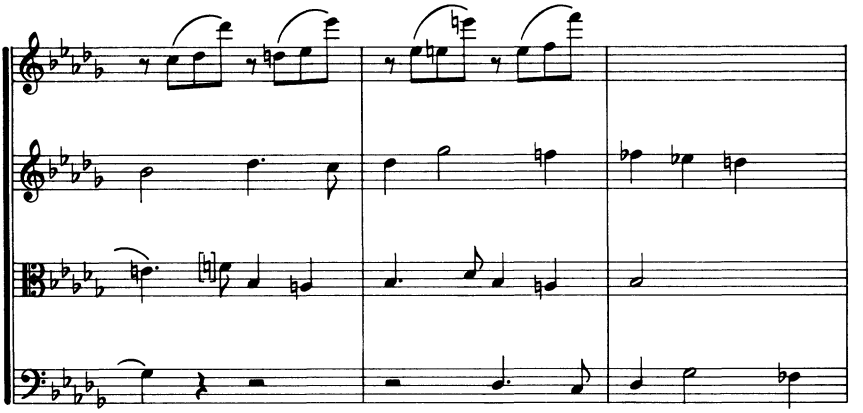
Example 10, continued



Example 10, continued



Example 10, continued



by a chromatic ascent. As in the preceding draft of the slow movement (Example 10), then, Schoenberg was deriving his thematic material exclusively (and audibly) from the first movement of the quartet. But this logical chain of thematic associations did not satisfy him. Indeed, he may have felt that he had linked that chain too tightly, that his quartet lacked enough genuine contrast.

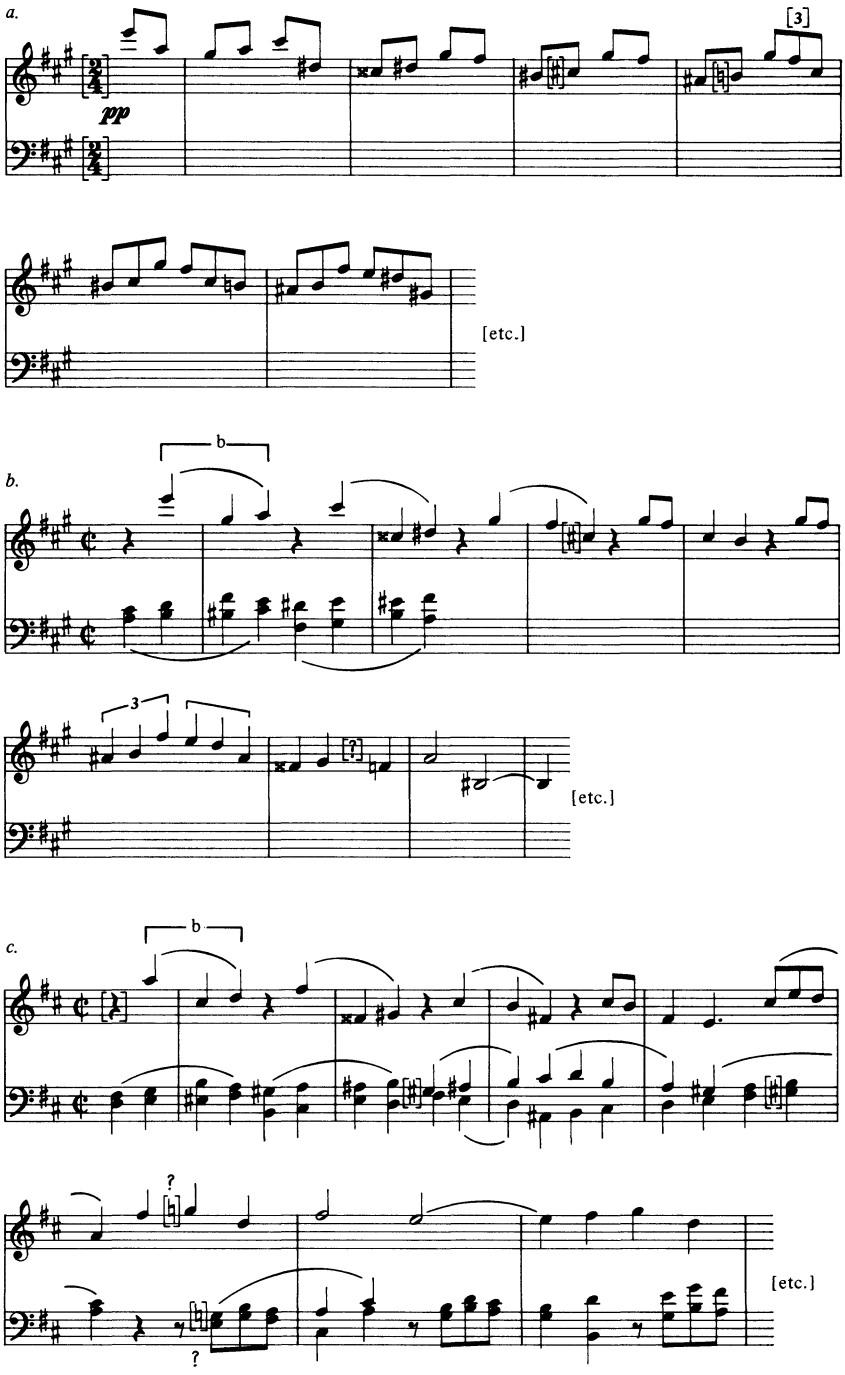
He broke off these concept sketches for the finale, and on the next page, II/21, began a draft in full score of the slow movement as we now know it. Its theme (cf. Example 9a) is clearly related to the finale theme just sketched, but any direct association with motive b has been eliminated. The opening three-note figure now repeats the first note and leaps down a fifth. It is thus essentially new thematic material. When Schoenberg came to write out the draft for the finale, beginning on II/42 (see Table 2), he began to write the theme out as in Example 11c (cf. S94, pp. 89–90), but then crossed out that version and rewrote the theme to bring it into conformity with the slow movement. As already demonstrated in Example 9, the finale became an almost literal transformation of the slow movement.

Establishing this relationship between the two movements was, I believe, the last major conceptual problem Schoenberg encountered in planning the D-minor quartet.[17] He had found a way to give the second half of the quartet (the portion after the fermata) its own thematic integrity or identity without abandoning its purely

[17] The autograph score of the quartet, however, is far from a clean copy. It contains numerous revisions, most notably large cuts in the first development and recapitulation. (See Schoenberg 1986, B: 101–9.)

Example 11

Opus 7, Sketches for Finale Theme, from Sketchbook II, page 20



recapitulatory function in the larger sonata design. Moreover, by beginning the finale in A, instead of in D as in the concept sketch (Example 11c), Schoenberg maintained the dominant tension of the slow movement across a longer span; that tension is released only in the splendid D-major coda.

V

What Adorno and others have claimed for Opus 7 was in fact a concern of Schoenberg's from the outset. The sketches and drafts show in striking fashion that the larger form was to be heard to grow logically, inexorably, out of a continuous thematic process. To accomplish this task on such a massive scale challenged even the normally "spontaneous" Schoenberg, who had to stop at certain crucial junctures to reshape or revise his compositional strategy.

It should not surprise us that even a rapid worker like Schoenberg, who always tried to keep a vision of the entire work in his head (and encouraged his students to do the same), encountered such moments in the composing of a piece as massive as the D-minor Quartet. In one of his most extended statements on his own creative process, made in 1931 in response to a psychologist's questionnaire, he remarked, "With longer works, I often come to a halt once or twice in the middle. This is sometimes because I have 'got on to the wrong track,' but often it may perhaps be slight fatigue, since I seldom need to alter anything when I resume work four or five days later" (Reich 1971, 238). Schoenberg refers here specifically to song composition; the latter part of his remark may reasonably be revised in light of the sketches for Opus 7, where considerable "alteration" was sometimes necessary to get back on the "right track." Another more mundane consideration in the case of Opus 7 is that, unlike a song or even longer works like *Verklärte Nacht* or *Erwartung*, its genesis extended over a considerable period, one in which Schoenberg was busy not only with other compositions, but also with teaching (his first private pupils came to him in the fall of 1904) and concert organization (1904–05 was the first and only season of the *Vereinigung schaffender Tonkünstler*).

Schoenberg was not, of course, the first (or the last) composer to be preoccupied with the most effective way to create a large, interconnected instrumental form. At about the same time Schoenberg was composing Opus 7, Mahler was struggling with similar issues in his Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, especially as regards the ordering, proportions, and thematic relationships among individual move-

ments. There is some evidence that Beethoven encountered very similar problems in planning his C#-minor Quartet—a work that, as Schoenberg himself acknowledged, is one of the most important precursors of his own (see the liner notes cited in Steiner 1978, 132–33). According to Robert Winter, some of the most distinctive portions of the sketch material for the Beethoven quartet consist of "telescoped drafts," pages in which Beethoven momentarily steps back from detailed working sketches and continuity drafts to meditate on the larger design of the work (Winter 1982, 113). Each of the five different telescoped drafts or "tonal overviews" (again Winter's term) for the quartet, which are scattered among the preliminary sketches, consists of possible principal themes and key areas for the different movements.

These overviews seem to me remarkably similar in function to the concept sketches made by Schoenberg at the two "crisis points" I have discussed, where he likewise stops in the middle of things to take an overview of the composition, sketching in close succession the themes for several different movements. Like Schoenberg, Beethoven occasionally engages in a process of retroactive revision, changing an earlier detail in light of a later overview. For example, only when he had plotted a second movement in D major in one of the overviews, did Beethoven apparently go back and change the answer of the opening fugue to the subdominant, in order to emphasize the Neapolitan pitch *D* (Winter 1982, 115). In the finished work this "sore" *D* functions as a harbinger of the key of the succeeding movement.

Since Schoenberg's quartet is written in a style in which harmony no longer plays as significant a role in the articulation of form as in Beethoven (or Mahler), greater structural weight has to fall on large-scale thematic relationships, and it is principally these that he works out in the concept sketches we have examined.

What the documented genesis of Opus 7 reveals above all is Schoenberg's attempt, in the years around 1900, to redefine in his own terms the relationship between thematic content and formal structure. By pushing certain nineteenth-century principles to their limit he sought to impart an unprecedented coherence to large-scale instrumental form and thereby to validate it for the new century.

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Abstract

Schoenberg's D-minor Quartet, Opus 7, is distinctive for fusing elements of sonata and four-movement form into an immense fifty-minute work that coheres primarily by thematic processes and relationships. The numerous sketches for the quartet reveal that the task of achieving both thematic continuity on such a scale and adequate contrast between sections challenged even the normally rapid and "spontaneous" composer, who had to stop at certain points to revise his compositional strategy. Schoenberg resorted at these points to groups of brief concept sketches to work out the thematic associations and their eventual ordering and placement in the larger formal design.