

Composing Music



in Sonata Form

An Intermediate Guide to Composing

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Composing Music in Sonata Form: **An Intermediate Guide to Composing**

by Jon Brantingham

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A Composer's **Manifesto**

I will finish every composition that I start (except the 9th Symphony. In fact, just stop at the 8th).

I will not bask in the glory of my finished composition - that is what amateurs do. I am a professional.

I will find something good in every composition I listen to. All composers have something to teach us.

I will be compassionate with other composer's compositions, and uncompromising with my own.

I understand that I must deliberately practice my composing.

I do not choose if anything I write will be a masterpiece. I just compose what I need to compose, and leave it at that.

I will give myself over to a higher power when I compose.

Introduction: Composing as a Set of Options

Thank You

Thank you for purchasing this book. Whether you've been composing for a while and you want to expand your horizon, or you've just gone through my beginner's course, I think you'll find this book helpful in many respects.

Website

This book has an accompanying website, with musical examples, and links to various other resources. Please check it out at:

<http://www.artofcomposing.com/sonata-form>

If you are reading this on your computer, you should be able to click on any of the example titles, and they will take you to the musical examples online.

The Genesis of this Book

When I finally sat down to write this book, I had been thinking about writing a book for a long time. I wanted to create something that my audience from *artofcomposing.com* would find useful. My original idea was to create a book on chromatic harmony. The problem with that book, was the lack of practicality. The problem in dealing with harmony is that it requires lots and lots of theoretical assignments that are separate from composing, because you need to get down the skills of voice leading, as well as knowing progressions. Going in depth about chromatic harmony would have created a monster volume, and more than likely, it wouldn't have been what people were looking for, so I abandoned that idea.

Next came a follow up to my beginner's course, in which I went into more depth on each topic covered. That was 8 lessons; each about the basic idea, harmony, sentence, period, and small ternary form, as well as additional details like dynamics, articulation, and gestalt, or the feeling of wholeness to a piece. But as I was creating that book, I realized that most of the information needed was already in the free course.

When I sat down and thought about it, the original idea for the course came from what I had learned, and I thought others might want to learn

this too. I spend a lot of time reading music theory books, combing the local college libraries for gems. Most of the time, this search is tedious, and not very fruitful. Music theoreticians, while often brilliant thinkers , tend to speak in a language foreign to most. So my goal was to take the golden nuggets I found, and translate them into useful - and more importantly - actionable and practical information. Something you could immediately use in your own composing... right now.

The thing that really interested me recently was composing in sonata form. I had read descriptions of sonata form, and had made attempts at composing a sonata. I thought I knew what went on: an exposition, with a main theme in tonic and a subordinate theme in dominant. This is followed by the development, where you basically are free to go wherever you want, but which then leads back to the recapitulation, staying in the tonic key throughout. But, as you may have guessed, this leaves a lot of questions.

What keys should I explore in the development?

Is dominant the subordinate key?

Can I use other subordinate keys?

How long should each section be?

Is the subordinate theme built the same way as the main theme?

So I decided that I would put together a sort of road map for myself to compose in sonata form.

So ultimately, this book became a mix of the second idea (an expansion on the basic course) plus the main focus, which is composing in sonata form. The goal is to cement the ideas from the basic course, expand a few more ideas, tackle a larger work, and to give a clear guide to writing in sonata form.

The Path of the Composer

I want to make my belief clear right from the beginning. Becoming a great composer is a life-long process. If you have read the Composer's Manifesto, then you realize I am from the "school" or belief that being able to compose is a direct reflection of the amount of work put in.

Ten thousand hours is what it is estimated that needs to be put in to become an expert in anything. That means 10,000 hours of composing.

That is a lot of hours. But not just any hours; these are dedicated, deliberate practice hours.

Deliberate Practice

Deliberate practice is all about improving specific aspects of any set of skills you want to learn. You have to be able to identify your weaknesses, and then target those weaknesses.

Specific

Deliberate practice is specific. When you know you have a weakness, you must practice the tasks that improve those weaknesses. It doesn't help to attempt to write a symphony if you have trouble creating good chord progressions. You'll just end up being overwhelmed and not improving either.

Repeatable

Deliberate practice tends to be short tasks that are repeatable. This repeatability is helpful, because it allows you to ingrain the correct way of doing a task. If it is not repeatable, then you cannot legitimately practice it. Short in this case is also relative concept. If you are a beginner, short may be a single phrase. If you are Mahler, short is a ten minute symphony movement.

Mentally Tiring

When you are working on something that you are not very good at, having to repeat it over and over, this can be very mentally tiring. There is a limit to what most people can do, when deliberately practicing. This is usually around two hours.

Inherently, Not Very Fun

With things like "mentally tiring," and "repeatable," deliberate practice tends to not be as fun as unfocused work. This doesn't mean it won't be any fun, but at a certain point, you'll probably have the desire to move on to something else. This is where you must have the **drive** to continue learning and pushing yourself. Work hard now and enjoy the benefits later.

Not all of Your Composing Is Deliberate Practice

But some of it definitely should be. Noodling every once in a while is okay, but if at least some of your composing is geared towards learning specific

tasks or skills, then you will see improvements. Your enjoyment of composing will improve with more effort put towards learning the craft. What should you be improving though?

The Skills of a Composer

As a composer, there are certain things that you can improve directly, and certain things that you cannot.

The things you cannot directly improve: *the mystery (see afterword)*.

That's it. Everything else is up to you.

Focus

Your ability to focus is probably the most important factor. It has repercussions through all of your composing related activities. This includes actual composing, working out exercises, analyzing music, listening to music, meditation; they are all affected directly by your ability to focus.

How do you improve your focus? Sounds a little like circular reasoning but you improve focus by practicing focus. The best thing to do is be 100% committed to anything you are doing, while you are doing it.

There are some other things you can do as well.

1. Make sure you complete one thing before you start the next. Not just composing itself. Make sure, when you are doing your taxes, or cleaning the dishes or whatever, that you complete the task. If not, it will be gnawing on your mind when you are doing something else; and you will not be able to focus.
2. Set up a reward system for yourself. If you do a good job focusing, treat yourself to some regeneration time (watching TV or additional sleep).

One of the easiest ways to lose focus is not writing down your music while you compose. Most people noodle. On whatever instrument they use, they noodle around too much. You may write a bar, then play for about 10 minutes, saying "oooo, that's good," but then you look back at the page, and you still only have 1 bar. Make sure you write. Write, write, write! If it's not good, you can scratch it out, or erase it.

Forcing yourself to write is a skill in itself.

Active Listening

Your ability to listen will improve with your growing understanding of the music. After a while, you will start to notice things in the music that you didn't hear before.

The Fundamentals

While this book goes over a good bit of music theory, it is not in itself specifically a music theory book. Theory is difficult to teach yourself. I recommend taking some college courses or finding a private teacher to teach you harmony, voice leading, counterpoint and orchestration. These four are really tricky to learn on your own.

I plan on putting together a full course online covering those topics. As of writing this book, all of these topics are not yet completed, but continue to check out www.artofcomposing.com as they may be put up online while you are reading this.

Checking Your Ego at the Door

This is a tough one. I have always been sensitive to criticism, and most people with an artistic side are the same. Let me be frank - not everyone is going to like your music. Some people may hate it. Some will let you know, and they won't be nice about it either.

Remember in the manifesto:

I will be compassionate with other composer's compositions, and uncompromising with my own.

Go into the ring with the expectation of being hit. The thing about it is, you have to put your music out there... You have to be willing to back up what you write.

Many composers of the past were treated like garbage because of what they wrote.

Mahler's first Symphony was a resounding flop at its premiere.

A reviewer of Beethoven's Grosse Fugue wrote it is “as incomprehensible as Chinese.”¹

Don’t be dissuaded from following your dream. Everyone gets bad reviews. You just need to “get back up on your feet,” and continue composing!

Composing Is All About Options

The process of creation is a mix of intellect, sweat, and luck. But what it really comes down to is options. When you sit down and stare at a blank piece of staff paper or a blank screen on your favorite notation software or sequencer, you have many, many options. With every constraint you put on yourself, either through decisions made away from the paper like, “I am going to compose in Sonata Form, in A minor, 4/4 time signature or, I would like the piece to last at least 3 minutes, and have a tempo of 100 beats per minute (bpm),” or, if end a phrase deceptive cadence, these are the myriad options and choices that face you.. **the key is knowing the options in the first place.** Knowing what is stylistically normal, what is adventurous, and what is completely out of the norm, you can decide how you want your music to develop, and ultimately be perceived.

If you know all of your options, you are in a much better position to make a better choice; the right choice. That may sound very absolute, but when you really get down to it, and you listen to the music that you love, you cannot imagine it written any other way. It would just be... wrong.

I am going to take a guess and say that you’ve also listened to music, and heard things that you weren’t anticipating, and thought had it been your composition, you would have written it differently. That composer probably knew the options, and decided to write something different, or possibly stayed “within bounds,” where you would have gone “out of bounds”.

Know your options.

¹ "Grosse Fuge." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 05 Sept. 2012. Web. 30 May 2012. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grosse_Fuge>.

Free Beginner's Composing Course

One last note. If you have not been through my free beginner's course, and this book looks a little daunting, I recommend you check it out. Go to <http://www.artofcomposing.com/academy/how-to-compose-music-101> and sign up for the course. Once again, it's absolutely free, and will give you a great foundation for tackling a larger work like sonata form.



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank William Caplin for writing his inspiring book on classical form, it has truly changed the way I look at, and think about form when composing. Most of the ideas in this book stem directly from his work, and I do not want to take credit for them. I cannot stress how important it is, if you want to learn to compose in the classical style, to buy and read his book.

I would like to thank Carolina Gale, my high school music teacher, for supporting my composing.

I would like to thank my Dad for teaching me about real music and taking the time to proof this book. I know I would not be the composer I am today without his influence.

I would like to thank my Mom for not letting me quit trumpet when I was 12, and having the idea to bribe me with a skateboard. Fortunately, the music stuck, and not the skateboarding.

Most of all, I would like to thank my wife and my son, for giving me the drive... and time to write this.

To everyone else not listed... you know if you deserve an acknowledgement. So if you do, give yourself a pat on the back. If not... well, sorry.

1: Melody and the **Basic Idea**

The Basic Idea

The basic idea is the foundation of your melody. The term “basic idea” was coined by William Caplin in his book [Classical Form](#), in which he states, “The basic idea is small enough to group with other ideas into phrases and themes, but large enough to be broken down (fragmented) in order to develop its constituent motives.”²

Sometimes creating the basic idea can be the hardest part, because it is usually characteristic of your piece, and not conventional. Something that is characteristic, by definition, *defines the character of your piece*.

For example, this basic idea from Mozart is very characteristic.

[Example 1.1 - Rondo Alla Turca](#)

The musical score for Example 1.1, Rondo Alla Turca, is in Allegretto tempo. It features two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff begins with a dynamic of *p* and shows a melodic line with eighth-note patterns. The bass staff provides harmonic support with eighth-note chords. The music is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

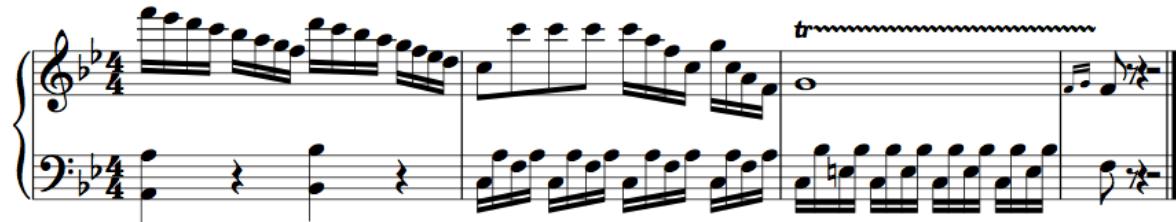
I have no doubt that you could instantly identify it when heard.

Conventional melody is something that is usually more “cookie cutter,” like a descending melodic line at a cadence, trills or what is termed passage work, with arpeggiation and dramatic virtuosic writing.

This example is more along the lines of conventional melody.

² Caplin, William Earl. "Basic Idea." *Classical Form: A Theory of Formal Functions for the Instrumental Music of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven*. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. 37. Print.

Example 1.2 - Conventional Melody



Keep in mind that conventional is not necessarily bad, but you need a good mix of characteristic and conventional melody to create interest.

Basic Idea vs Contrasting Idea vs Random Music

When I say basic idea, I am specifically talking about writing the two bar segment of music, that has an initiating or beginning function, and is found in the antecedent phrase or presentation phrase. But the things that go into a basic idea, harmonic clarity, shape, characteristic ideas - they all transfer to other parts of your composing. If you can write a good basic idea, you can write a good contrasting idea. If you can write a good basic idea, you can handle writing a good continuation phrase or consequent. The process is the same. The labels are specific.

Sometimes, when I say basic idea, I probably mean “idea” which is a general two-bar phrase, not specifically the opening phrase that prolongs tonic. Just look at the context, and I apologize up front, if I misuse the term.

The most important result from practicing basic ideas is improving your sense of balance, clarity and conciseness. You have to be clear about what you want to convey to your listener, because you only have two bars to do it. This also helps to get yourself out of, what someone called in an online forum that I like to visit, “The Ostinato Habit.” The ostinato habit is really noodling at the keyboard, with a pattern, and then playing random stuff on top. Sometimes, if you are really going for that minimalist sound, this can be good, but done too much it ends up being a copout. So practice developing good basic ideas, and all of your composing will improve.

Melodic Shape of the Basic Idea

The basic idea is what opens up your piece, so it is very common to have a rising melody, also called a melodic opening up, but this by no means is absolutely necessary. In fact, you can create any kind of melodic shape.

A good exercise is to trace out the melodic shape of basic ideas written by composers that you admire, and then work within that shape, creating your own new basic ideas.

Here are a few examples. These examples are all from public domain scores on <http://imslp.org/wiki/>. IMSLP is a public domain musical score library online. It is one of the greatest resources ever created for composers. What gives it that power, is your ability to look up a score, even multiple versions of the same score, and then jump over to youtube, to listen to ten different versions of that score. Invaluable.

Example 1.3 - Mozart K.331

Andante



Example 1.4 - Mozart K.283

Allegro



Example 1.5 - Mozart K.283

Andante



Example 1.6 - Mozart K.283

Musical score for Example 1.6, featuring two staves in 3/8 time. The top staff is in G major (two sharps) and the bottom staff is in A minor (no sharps or flats). Dynamics include *f* (fortissimo) and *tr* (trill).

Example 1.7 - Haydn Sonata No. 28 in Eb Major

Allegro

Musical score for Example 1.7, featuring two staves in 3/4 time. The top staff is in E-flat major (one flat) and the bottom staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). Dynamics include *f* (fortissimo).

Example 1.8 - Mahler Symphony No. 6, III

Andante $\text{♩} = 40$

Musical score for Example 1.8, featuring four staves: Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is in 4/4 time and E-flat major. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (pianissimo).

Example 1.9 - Mahler Symphony No. 2, II

Musical score for Example 1.9, featuring four staves: Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. The score is in 3/8 time and E-flat major. Dynamics include *p* (pianissimo).

Example 1.10 - Ravel String Quartet in F Major, I

Accompaniment

Don't just stick to block chords. Look through some scores on <http://imslp.org/wiki/> and find some interesting accompanimental patterns. The key is balancing variety with continuity. Use different accompanimental patterns for different sections of your sonata form movement. For instance, in my piece (later on in the book), I use a "stabbing" staccato rhythm for the main theme, and then an "alberti" bass for the subordinate theme.

If it helps, you can initially write using block chords for ease of understanding and playing, but go back afterwards and play around with different accompaniment patterns.

One of the easiest things you can do, is reduce the number of accompanimental voices, to just one or two. This works especially well, if you stick to the 3rds and 7ths of chords, because those notes tend to outline the harmony better than any others, sometimes even better than roots.

Different Types of Repetition

One of the strengths of the basic idea is its ability to be repeated, broken down, expanded, extended, and just generally modified for different purposes. Particularly, repetition is useful and easy to do. Especially in the sentence, but also in other theme types, repetition and fragmentation of the basic idea is **the defining feature**. When I talk about repetition, I am

primarily referring to harmonic repetition. This is because the harmony, more than anything else, is what defines the form.

Exact Repetition

Exact repetition means to repeat the same harmony. That means if your basic idea has the harmony of I to V, then your repetition of the basic idea should also have I to V.

But it can be a little bit more complicated than that. For instance, you can change the melody by jumping up a chord tone, and repeating the melody there. Listen to this example.

Example 1.11 - Exact Repetition

Statement-Response

Statement response repetition involves the quintessential question and answer. The most common pattern to use is tonic for the first basic idea and then dominant for the repetition, but there are a few other schemes. Arnold Schoenberg in his book, *The Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, calls this kind of repetition, “Complementary Repetition,”

which, I think sums it up pretty nicely. The first basic idea or “question” is complemented by the change or “answer” in the second.

Table 1.1 Statement-Response Chord Schemes

Tonic	Dominant
I	V
I - V	V - I
I - V - I	V - I - V
I - IV	V - I
I - ii	V - I

Model-Sequence

Model sequence repetition can be a little more complicated. The initial idea creates the model, or the thing that will be sequenced (a series of similar ideas derived from the model). From there, you can use any number of sequences. These are classified and based on root movement. The key to sequences is that they are voice-leading based, and not necessarily connected directly to chord function. This gives them substantial power to modulate.

Sequences are grouped by root movement, either ascending or descending.

There are basically six:

1. Ascending 4ths/Descending 5ths
2. Ascending 5ths
3. Descending 3rds
4. Ascending 3rds
5. Descending 2nds
6. Ascending 2nds

Basic Idea Practice

So let's get some helpful practice at writing "basic ideas". Sometimes it helps to be nudged in a certain direction to open up the possibilities in your imagination. To do this, I am going to suggest some harmonic progressions that you can use to create interesting basic ideas. These are going to be written in Roman numeral form so they can be printed out and practiced in all keys. Writing in as many keys as possible is always a good thing because it allows you to modulate and get your ideas down "on paper" much easier. It also helps with analysis.

Basic idea progressions are located in Appendix 1, table 1.

2: The Main Theme Types

Learning to compose using the main theme types is absolutely essential. The sentence, period, small ternary and small binary forms all create the building blocks for the sonata form. Learning where these blocks stay the same and where they differ is essentially what you need to know. It is a little more complicated than that but, the essence is in knowing when to make your themes tight-knit or loose.

Sentence

The sentence is an eight measure theme that consists of two different phrases. Each phrase accomplishes different formal functions. The overall purpose of a sentence is to help establish the tonality and to present the basic material that a composition is made of. The music sentence is a vehicle for presenting your ideas. It accomplishes the formal functions of presentation (beginning), continuation (middle) and the cadential (end).

The archetypal sentence consists of two four-bar phrases. These are the presentation phrase and continuation phrase. Encompassed within the continuation phrase is the cadence.

The Presentation Phrase

The presentation phrase normally establishes the tonic, or the home key. It states a basic idea. After the basic idea is stated, it is normally repeated using any of the different types of repetition discussed in chapter 1.

Continuation Phrase

After the presentation phrase, we follow up the sentence with a continuation phrase. The continuation phrase can have the same types of repetition as the presentation phrase, but it also has some other unique characteristics. These are: Harmonic Acceleration, Fragmentation, Liquidation and a Cadential Idea.

Harmonic Acceleration

Harmonic acceleration is shortening the time between changes in harmony. If the presentation phrase has one chord per bar, then the continuation phrase probably will have two chords per bar.

Fragmentation

Fragmentation is breaking up the basic idea into smaller fragments, usually one of the unique motives. It's also very common to use this as the model for "model-sequence" repetition.

Liquidation

Liquidation is "stripping away" the uniqueness of the melody and simplifying it.

Cadential Idea

This is fundamentally how you end your theme with a cadence (or resolution). I will not go into cadences, because they are covered in the beginner's course. If you haven't signed up for the beginner's course I recommend you do so now. Much of these early chapters will become easier to understand, and it will be vital for comprehending later chapters.

Period

The period is similar to the sentence, but is more balanced. Like the sentence, the period is eight bars, divided into two four-bar phrases.

Antecedent

The antecedent consists of a basic idea, followed by a contrasting idea. The contrasting idea is constructed just like any other basic idea. The bottom line criteria for a contrasting idea is that it must not be the same as the initial basic idea.

The antecedent phrase ends with a weak cadence. This tends to normally be a half-cadence, but could also be an imperfect authentic cadence, as long as the final cadence is a perfect authentic cadence.

Consequent

The consequent offers a rounded, symmetrical ending to the period. This symmetry is found through an exact repetition of the basic idea. The first two bars repeat exactly (usually there is no change, or just ornamental change in the melody as well). The next two bars move into a cadential idea. This final cadence must be stronger than the previous cadence, at the end of the antecedent.

Small Ternary

The small ternary form is a three part theme. It is commonly written as A-B-A', and has three formal functions.

1. Exposition (A)
2. Contrasting Middle (B)
3. Recapitulation (A')

This mirrors sonata form, but has some significant differences.

The Exposition

The exposition in small ternary form is normally made up of a sentence or period. Typically, these two theme types appear in their basic form, or a hybrid form (next chapter). When they are eight bars, and contain all of their basic formal functions they are known as **tight-knit** themes (See chapter 4).

The Contrasting Middle

The contrasting middle section in small ternary form gets its *contrast* mostly by harmonic means. The harmonic goal for the contrasting middle section is almost always dominant harmony (V). This could be through a half-cadence in the home key, or an authentic cadence in dominant. The contrasting middle has a few different characteristics from the exposition as well:

1. Tends to be much looser in organization
2. Creates instability (mostly harmonic instability)
3. Frequently changes texture

Recapitulation

The recapitulation is the final part of the small ternary form. It is called the recapitulation because it brings back the material from the exposition. It also commonly gets rid of redundant material, like repetitions of basic ideas, or contrasting ideas.

You can just as easily expand it with the devices mentioned earlier, as well as adding a codetta, which is like adding multiple cadences after each other, helping to dissipate the tension built up during the phrase.

Small Binary

Before I get into the specifics of the small binary, I want to take a moment and talk about some confusing terminology. You may have heard the term rounded binary form and thought that it sounds a lot like the small ternary. That's because technically... it pretty much is. But the reason I like the term small ternary, is because you can easily see the recapitulation as a third part, instead of a continuation of the second part that is being repeated.

Rounded Binary Form vs Small Ternary Form

A small ternary form can be called rounded binary form. Because the exposition repeats itself, and then the contrasting middle and recapitulation repeat **together**.

Small binary has one small difference. Sometimes, the original theme is not brought back directly in the recapitulation section. This would mean that it is not accomplishing the formal function of recapitulation which requires a restatement of the basic idea in tonic. If you don't bring back the basic idea, you cannot definitively say there are three parts (or that there is a ternary form). Because of this, we really can't call it recapitulation at all. So this creates the need for the distinction between small ternary and small binary.

The small binary form can be split up into two parts. Hence - the name binary. It is most frequently found as 16 measures, with both parts being made up of 8 bar themes. Because its functions are not quite as distinct as the small ternary form, we just label the two parts, first part and second part.

The First Part

The first part is normally a typical 8 bar theme, like the sentence or period. It can also end in any cadence, although half-cadences and perfect authentic cadences are the most common.

The Second Part

The second part of the small binary form is also usually a typical 8 bar theme. It can present a new musical idea, just as in the contrasting middle section of ternary form. Frequently, it keeps the melodic-motivic characteristics of the first part.

To truly distinguish itself as a binary form, it must not have the formal function of recapitulation. The small binary satisfies this because it does not restate the basic idea in tonic. Note that this is different from just keeping melodic-motivic characteristics.

You can see why there are debates about the terminology here. It can get confusing and ultimately is not that important. What you need to take away from this is how to use it for yourself.

3: Thematic **Hybrids**

I am going to go over a few other things before we get onto the main section of the book. One important concept is the idea of theme hybrids. You see (similar to so much else in the real world and life) not all themes that have been composed fit nicely or easily into “a category”. The sentence and period, while they explain a lot, don’t explain everything. Themes fall into three main categories.

Theme Categories

1. Main Theme Types

The main theme types are the sentence, period, small ternary and small binary. These four theme types, in their normal form are what we call “tight-knit”. This just means they give a beginning, middle, and end, in a succinct, relatively straightforward fashion.

Each one of these themes can be used as the “main theme” in a sonata form movement, and have special but obvious characteristics that make them useful for other parts of a sonata as well.

The great thing about the main theme types is they are so common you can develop a lot of your initial composition skills by just learning to use and perfect these themes.

2. Hybrid and Compound Theme Types

Hybrid themes are a mixture of the main theme types. There are four hybrids, and two compound theme types. We’ll get into those in just a little bit. Like the main theme types, these are frequently found as the main theme to sonata form movements, but they give you other options for composing. And as I stated earlier, composing is all about knowing your options. If you know your main theme types, particularly the sentence and period, you may pick these up quickly. Just remember, *the point of the themes* is to put across the formal functions of beginning, middle and end. Not all mixtures can do this, and that is why there are only four hybrids.

Example 3.1 - Hybrid Theme 1: Antecedent + Continuation

In hybrid theme 1, the antecedent is like any other normal antecedent. It starts with a basic idea, and is followed by a contrasting idea. But instead of leading to a consequent, it is followed directly with a continuation phrase. The key here, is that you do not need to repeat the basic idea again, like in a consequent. The continuation phrase has enough forward movement to push through and give the medial and ending functions.

(Basic Idea + Contrasting Idea + Weak Cadence) + (Continuation + Cadence)

Hybrid Theme 1 - Antecedent + Continuation

Example 3.2 - Hybrid Theme 2: Antecedent + Cadential

This differs from Hybrid Theme 1, because instead of leading to a continuation phrase, which has fragmentation, and an increase in harmonic rhythm, it instead has an extended cadential progression.

(Basic Idea + Contrasting Idea + Weak Cadence) + (Expanded Cadential Progression)

Hybrid Theme 2 - Antecedent + Cadential

Example 3.3 - Hybrid Theme 3: Compound Basic Idea + Continuation

The only difference between this theme and hybrid theme 1 is the lack of a weak cadence at the end of the first phrase. If it had a weak cadence, it would be considered an antecedent, but without it, it's as if you are just putting together two different basic ideas. This has sufficient weight to have a "beginning" function, and so works as a theme.

(Basic Idea + Contrasting Idea (no weak cadence)) + (Continuation + Cadential)

17 Hybrid Theme 3 - Compound Basic Idea + Continuation

Example 3.4 - Hybrid Theme 4: Compound Basic Idea + Consequent

This is almost exactly like a period, minus the weak cadence in the antecedent phrase. That is why, once again, we call it a compound basic idea instead of an antecedent.

(Basic Idea + Contrasting Idea (no weak cadence)) + (Consequent)

25 Hybrid Theme 4 - Compound Basic Idea + Consequent

Compound Themes

Compound themes are basically long versions of the regular period and sentence. There is a 16 measure period, which consists of an 8 measure antecedent and an 8 measure consequent. There is also a 16 measure sentence that consists of an 8 measure presentation and an 8 measure continuation. But they have differing versions within those 8 measure phrases.

16 Measure Period

The antecedent of the 16 measure period is usually built like a sentence or hybrids 3 and 1. Normally there is a presentation phrase + continuation phrase, or compound basic idea + continuation phrase, or antecedent + continuation phrase. The thing that makes this an antecedent is that it has the first eight bars end in a **weak cadence**. This means normally it would end in a half cadence although, it could also end in a imperfect authentic cadence.

The consequent phrase is built the same way as the antecedent phrase, except with a stronger cadence at the end, normally a perfect authentic cadence.

Using standard 8 measure periods to build a 16 measure period is usually avoided. You could try it out if you want... just remember... **you've been warned.**

16 Measure Sentence

The sixteen measure sentence, isn't quite built the same way as the 16 measure period, with smaller phrases as building blocks. Instead, it has a more expanded feel, like you are just taking a normal sentence, and adding extra bars in between the original basic idea, repetition, and so on.

You start with a compound basic idea, immediately repeat it (this could be exact, statement-response, or sequential) and then follow it up with an 8 measure continuation phrase, usually with extensive fragmentation and an expanded cadence.

You can play around with it a little by compressing the continuation using fewer bars, but for the most part that's all there is to the 16 measure sentence.

Using the Hybrid and Compound Themes

These themes are used in exactly the same way as the simpler main theme types, the sentence and the period.

What they offer, once again are choices and a little more ambiguity in your composition. Is it a sentence? Is it a period? This kind of ambiguity may be what you are after. The important thing is, that you internalize the forms and make them a part of your kit bag to use when the moment strikes.

4: Loosening Techniques

Before we get into the sonata form, I have to talk about loosening your themes. The tight-knit themes, period, sentence, small ternary, small binary, hybrids, and compound themes, all share something in common. They use economy of means to convey the formal functions of beginning, middle and end. They do this very well. But sometimes, you as the composer may creatively want to make things a little less clear and concise. You want to extend the tension, or add more material to help build up energy. Or maybe you want to shorten a phrase, “get to the point”, and even obscure the actual function of a phrase so it may convey beginning and middle at the same time.

This, as you hopefully have guessed by now, is also something that can be practiced using specific techniques. These techniques are:

1. Extension
2. Expansion
3. Compression
4. Interpolation
5. Fusion
6. Asymmetrical grouping
7. Functional redundancy
8. Harmonic Instability

Extension

If you think of your experiences with anything that is an extension, it is a supplementary addition to something that is complete within itself. Adding an extension to a house, is adding a new room, not making a current room wider.

The same goes for extension in music. If you have a contrasting idea that moves to a half cadence in the second measure, you could continue the dominant harmony for another bar, possibly repeating the entire bar. That function of the contrasting idea is complete, but you just extend it a little by adding on some more material at the end.

Example 4.1 - Extension

$\text{♩} = 120$

Extension

Another common way to extend is through sequencing. This will become important for our transition and development stages of the sonata.

Example 4.2 - Sequencing (Extension)

$\text{♩} = 120$

Sequencing (Extension)

Expansion

Expansion on the other hand happens *prior* to the function being fulfilled. For instance, one of the most common is: the expanded cadential progression. Here, you could have a cadence complete within two measures: in the first measure, ii^6 to V^7 , and the second measure, back to I. But instead, to expand the cadence, you make ii^6 last for a measure, V^7 last for a measure, and I last for a measure. This helps to build more energy and tension. This works on any of the functional units.

Example 4.3 - Expansion

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The score begins with a dynamic of p . The first measure contains eighth-note chords in the bass and sixteenth-note patterns in the treble. The second measure continues with similar patterns. A bracket labeled "Expansion" covers both measures. The third measure begins with a dynamic of p and features a melodic line with eighth-note pairs. The fourth measure concludes with a half note. The bass staff provides harmonic support with sustained notes and chordal patterns.

Compression

Compression is the opposition of expansion. Where something might take two bars to write, try writing it in one. This has a great destabilizing effect, which becomes important in subordinate themes.

Example 4.4 - Compression

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The score begins with a dynamic of p . The first measure contains eighth-note chords in the bass and sixteenth-note patterns in the treble. The second measure continues with similar patterns. A bracket labeled "Compression" covers both measures. The third measure begins with a dynamic of p and features a melodic line with eighth-note pairs. The fourth measure concludes with a half note. The bass staff provides harmonic support with sustained notes and chordal patterns.

Interpolation

Interpolation is inserting unrelated material between two functional units. A good example of this is the literary use of a non-sequitur, or musically such as adding in a new or different “basic idea” unrelated to the previous or following music it is inserted between.

Example 4.5 - Interpolation

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The top staff shows a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, starting with a dynamic *p*. The middle staff shows harmonic bass notes. The bottom staff shows rhythmic patterns. A bracket labeled "Interpolation" spans across all three staves, indicating a section where the harmonic progression changes abruptly from a simple bass line to a more complex, sixteenth-note pattern.

Fusion

Fusion is most commonly seen in the continuation→cadential function, found in sentences. This is basically where you have fragmentation within a cadential progression that lasts for four measures.

Example 4.6 - Fusion

Once again, as a matter of practice, you should experiment with fusion of different formal functions. Anything that has a formal function of a “beginning”, try fusing with the middle function. And the same goes for “middle” and “end”.

Asymmetrical Grouping

When you master the first five loosening techniques, you will have asymmetrical grouping in the bag. All this means is that you may have in a period, a three measure basic idea, followed by a two measure contrasting idea. This would then carry over into the consequent, once again having a three measure basic idea.

Functional Redundancy

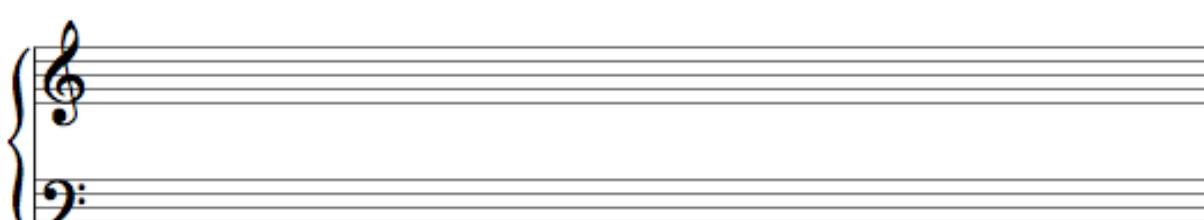
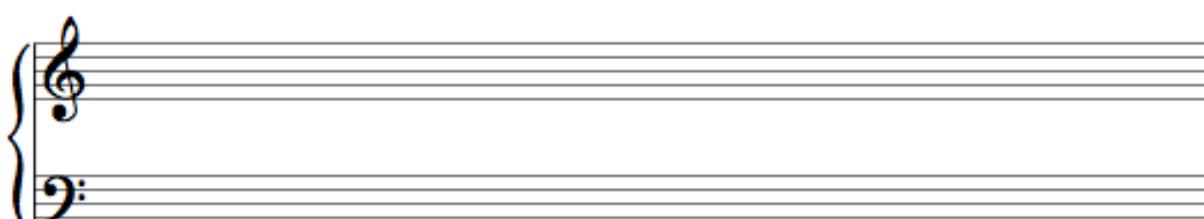
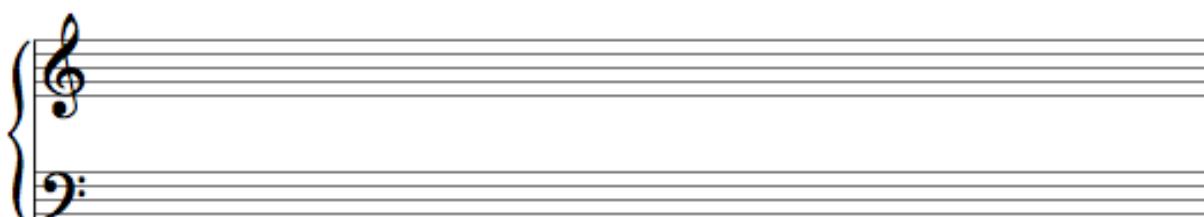
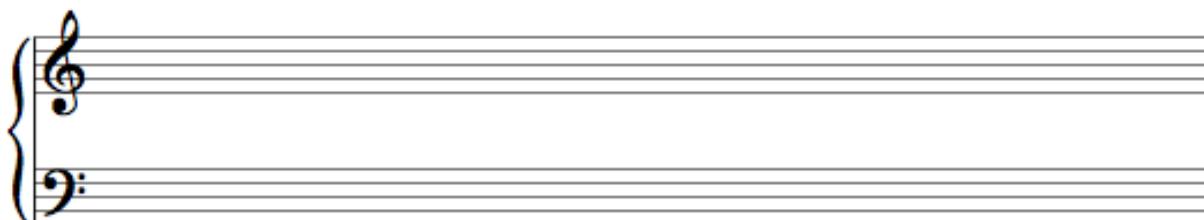
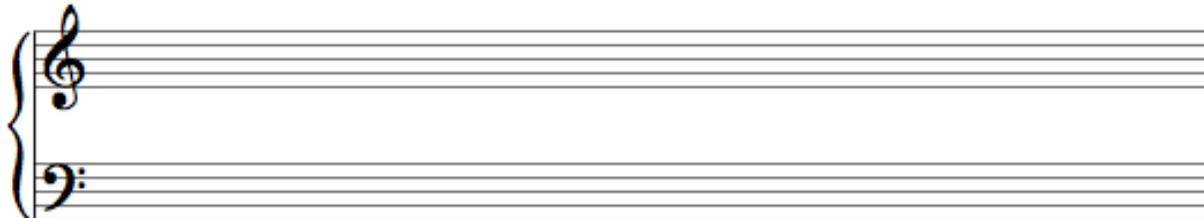
This is a relatively easy loosening technique. You basically just repeat an idea, or phrase. For instance, you may have a basic idea, then a repetition of that basic idea in ii^6 , and then another repetition of that basic idea in V^7 . The presentation phrase would be complete with the repetition in ii^6 , but the added V^7 repetition just adds a little redundancy and lengthens the presentation phrase.

Harmonic Instability

Adding chromaticism always increases tension, and can be used to loosen simpler themes.

Exercises

1. Take an old sentence or period that you have composed and use some of the loosening devices listed above.
2. Write a sentence with an extended cadential section.



5: Overview of **Sonata Form**

Finally, we have arrived! Sonata form! What is it? What is this mysterious thing we've heard so much about?

The sonata form, or the sonata-allegro form as it is commonly called, is a single movement form, normally found at the beginning of instrumental works from about 1750 through to today.

You may hear in certain circles, that the form is outdated, and that we shouldn't try to compose like Mozart, or Beethoven... or Mahler, Strauss, Prokofiev, Haydn, Schubert, Liszt, Brahms.... well, I think you get the point. There is nothing wrong or bad with composing in a classical style or using classical or even earlier forms. But there is currently the idea with some that "you have to be innovative or else you're just copying." This was the same attitude and belief that J.S. Bach had to go against to continue composing as he did in his lifetime. Most people during Bach's own time period seemed to suggest (some stated outright) J.S. Bach's music was outdated and old fashioned. He didn't care. It is what he thought he needed to compose, so he did... and well, what more need be said?...

"I want nothing better, more flexible or more complete than the sonata form, which contains everything necessary for my structural purposes."

Sergei Prokofiev

But, I digress. Let's get on with it.

Sonata form, much like many of the other things we've talked about follows a scheme of beginning, middle, and end. There are also two additions to this, before-the-beginning, and after-the end. So let's look at the scheme.

Table 5.1 Sonata Form Formal Functions

Function	Section
Before-the-beginning	Slow Introduction
Beginning	Exposition
Middle	Development
End	Recapitulation
After-the-end	Coda

Ah, if only it were that simple. The point of sonata form, if form can have a point, is it gives you a sort of musical narrative. You take a journey. This journey starts at home (slow introduction and main theme) goes through foreign lands (subordinate theme) encounters weird and interesting people (development) but ultimately, you end up back home, changed by your journey (recapitulation).

One of the primary features of sonata form is its treatment of tonality. On a primary level, it is a juxtaposition of two competing key areas, a primary key and a subordinate key.

The primary key is confirmed in the main theme through a cadence, but not necessarily a perfect authentic cadence. It can be confirmed by an imperfect authentic cadence, or even a half-cadence.

The subordinate key is confirmed in the subordinate theme or theme-group, always through a perfect authentic cadence, to give it the weight necessary to vie for supremacy over the primary key.

After this, you have several development keys that can be explored in the development section, with one being the **main development key**.

Depending on whether you are in major or minor, you have the choice of several different main development keys (this is the “norm”, in reality, you can move to whatever development key you want).

Table 5.2 - Most Common Development Keys

Major	Minor
vi (Submediant minor)	\flat VI (Submediant major)
iii (Mediant minor)	\flat III (Mediant major)
ii (Super-tonic minor)	v (Dominant minor)
\flat VI (Submediant major)*	
\flat III (Mediant major)*	
v (Dominant minor)*	

*modal borrowing

Ultimately, you end up back at the original primary key in the recapitulation, and instead of modulating to the subordinate key in the subordinate theme, the subordinate theme stays in the primary key.

You end with a coda, which allows you to add some more material after the subordinate theme.

Each section can be further sub-divided into smaller and smaller sections all the way down to ideas.

Slow Introduction

The slow introduction is placed just before the main theme, and is normally harmonically based, meaning it does not have characteristic melodies. The point of the slow introduction is to prepare for the main theme, possibly by building tension, or ambiguity. The introduction is also a great place to hint at some of the unusual things that may be coming down the road in your movement, so I like to compose the introduction last. That is why it is the last chapter of this book.

Exposition

The exposition is the structural beginning of your movement. This is where you introduce your main theme, transition through to the subordinate theme, and then prepare for the development.

Main Theme

The main theme is the first theme in your piece. It is normally a tight-knit theme, and most importantly, establishes tonic.

Transition

The transition is there to destabilize the tonic harmony that is established in the main theme. It effectively leads us to the subordinate theme, and sets us up for the subordinate key.

Subordinate Theme

The subordinate theme normally contrasts with the main theme. It is a looser theme, meaning that it is not built in a tight-knit fashion. The primary purpose of the subordinate theme is to confirm the subordinate key with a perfect authentic cadence.

Retransition

The exposition is normally ended with several codettas, which normally circle around the harmony that was confirmed in the cadence. The final codetta frequently is considered a retransition because it leads back to the tonic key, usually to the dominant chord. The entire exposition is then repeated.

Development

The development is the middle section of the sonata form. This section tends to be much looser than the exposition. The development, instead of focusing on one subordinate key, moves into several **development keys**. There is normally one primary development key, and several secondary development keys. Beyond this, there are usually many different tonicizations of different tonal regions that are not confirmed by cadence.

The development moves through something called the pre-core and core areas, having significant fragmentation and changes of key, ultimately leading to the dominant of the primary key, in preparation for the recapitulation.

Pre-Core

The pre-core is sort of an introduction to the core. It sets up the heightened emotional material and fragmentation of the core. The pre-core can take many shapes, but we are going to focus on the pre-core as a

transition to the core. It can start in the subordinate key, and modulate to the development key, or it can start off directly in the next development key.

Core

The core is where most of the modulation and tonal upset occurs. It is set up with a large model, usually a **theme-like** unit (which does not require a cadence), and then subsequently is fragmented to smaller and smaller units as you modulate, normally ending up on the dominant harmony of the primary key. It is normally followed with extensive standing on the dominant, where you write material that focuses on the dominant harmony.

While the pre-core/core technique is not the only way to write a development section, it is a very common way, and very useful for bringing in a lot of tension and drama into your music. Just remember that you have a lot of freedom when you compose, and most of the time the plan that you start with ends up getting changed along the way, sometimes significantly. The key is start with a plan and don't get wrapped around the "axel" if you change it.

Recapitulation

The recapitulation is the formal end to your sonata form movement. It brings back the material from the exposition, but normally with modification, particularly in dynamics, and feel. Just as in small ternary form, the recapitulation tends to eliminate redundant material. It also allows you to develop earlier material that may not have been developed.

Most changes are ornamental, but you can also have major structural changes, by changing tonal organization and melodic material.

Main Theme

The main theme is brought back, but this time to show that we have returned. Its main goal is to resolve the dominant that we ended the development with.

Because of this, the main theme may see deletion of thematic material, like repetitions of basic ideas or cadences. There may also be model-sequence technique used to prepare for the transition to the subordinate theme.

Transition

The transition is there to destabilize the main theme again, but this time to make the subordinate theme sound new in the primary key. Remember in the exposition, the transition moves us towards the subordinate key. This time, the transition has to keep us in the primary key.

Subordinate Theme

The main change to the subordinate theme is being in the primary key, rather than the subordinate key. It's also common to expand the cadential section giving it more energy.

Coda

The coda is an after-the-end functional unit that a composer places where needed to deal with compositional issues that were not fully developed or dealt with, like undeveloped themes in the exposition or development. The coda is optional, but found in many sonatas.

Using a Model

This may all seem a bit theoretical right now, which it is. But we are going to do something very helpful. We are going to use a model to compose. We are going to use Beethoven's first piano sonata, Sonata No. 1 in F minor, Opus 2. This is probably one of the most frequently cited pieces of music, because of its easy to understand main theme. But we are going to take it a step further, using it as a model to compose our entire sonata form movement.

If it helps, look at this bit of music that you are about to write as a "student piece". You are learning the aspects of sonata form and compositional technique. Don't be afraid to learn from the masters. Trust me, they have done the same things you are doing right now.

It also helps to not get tied up with the theoretical side of things too much. Sometimes, you may disagree with a statement, because it doesn't match up with recent changes in the world of music theory. We are not concerned about that right now. What we are concerned with is using theory to help us accomplish compositional goals. As long as the end product is satisfactory, then the theory is good enough.

Go to the website to listen to Sonata No. 1 by Beethoven. Become familiar with it. Learn how the different sections sound. It will help your composing. Appendix 2 has an annotated version of the score.

<http://www.artofcomposing.com/academy/composing-in-sonata-form-musical-examples>

Finally, remember this is just one model. There are many variations on sonata form, and you can look at Mozart, Haydn, Schubert, Mahler or anyone else you admire for other ways of cracking this nut. If anything, sonata form is about exploring your capabilities as a composer, and nothing more.

Now is a good time to print off Appendix 1, which are the worksheets you will need and use to compose.

6: Composing Your **Basic Ideas**

Day 1 Worksheets

So now that we have all of the explanations of sonata form out of the way, let's get on to composing. The process that we will use is not what you'd think. This is not going to be a straight linear composition. You may eventually move to that, but because of the extended length of sonata form, it's easy to get lost, and lose scope of the overall scheme of your piece.

Instead we are going to identify where we will need new thematic material and where that material needs to be located. This will help you to see the overall ideas clearer, and to hopefully take away any fears you may have towards composing this piece.

You do not have to compose in the same key that Beethoven is using, and in fact, I recommend using a different key. The reason is, you will find it much easier to not copy Beethoven exactly. We do not want that, what we want is to use Beethoven's Sonata as a guide. But ultimately, this is your piece, not his. Feel free to change things around how you see fit. For instance, Beethoven *does not* have a slow introduction in his piece - mine does.

Basic Idea #1 - Main Theme

This basic idea should be strong and capture everyone's attention. Listen to what Beethoven did.

Example 6.1 - Beethoven Main Theme Basic Idea

A musical score for Beethoven's Main Theme. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, G clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef, F clef. Both staves are in common time. The key signature is three flats. The music begins with a dynamic 'p' (pianissimo). The melody starts with a dotted half note followed by a quarter note, then a dotted half note followed by a quarter note. There is a fermata over the second quarter note. The right hand then plays a series of eighth notes: a sharp, a natural, another sharp, another natural, another sharp, another natural. The left hand provides harmonic support with sustained notes. The measure ends with a fermata over the last note. The measure number '3' is written above the staff.

Now compose a basic idea that you feel captures that main theme feel. Obviously you don't want to outright copy Beethoven. Just use his music as a guide. For more ideas, go back to the basic idea chapter, or check out <http://imslp.org/wiki/> as well.

This is my basic idea #1, it is in B minor, even though you can't see the key signature.

Example 6.2 - Brantingham Main Theme Basic Idea

Musical score for Example 6.2. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, G major (one sharp), and common time. The bottom staff is in bass clef, D major (two sharps). Measure 9 starts with a dynamic **p**. The melody consists of eighth-note patterns, and the bass provides harmonic support with eighth-note chords.

Basic Idea #2 - Subordinate Theme

This basic idea should contrast with main theme in some way. In Beethoven's example, he basically flips around the basic idea from the main theme and adds an active bass pedal. This gives good contrast while maintaining continuity. The main difference with this theme is that it starts in the dominant harmony of the sub-mediant subordinate key and then moves to I (A♭ major). In minor mode sonata form, the subordinate key tends to be VI rather than V.

Example 6.3 - Beethoven Subordinate Theme Basic Idea

Musical score for Example 6.3. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, E♭ major (two flats), and common time. The bottom staff is in bass clef, C major (no sharps or flats). Measure 20 starts with a bass note followed by a melodic line. The bass continues with a steady eighth-note pattern, providing harmonic support throughout the measure.

This is my basic idea #2.

Example 6.4 - Brantingham Subordinate Theme Basic Idea

A musical score for piano in G major (two sharps) and common time. The treble clef is on the top line, and the bass clef is on the bottom line. The key signature is two sharps. Measure 20 begins with a forte dynamic (mf). The melody consists of eighth-note patterns in the treble clef and sixteenth-note patterns in the bass clef. A trill is indicated over the first note of the treble clef's eighth-note pattern. The bass clef's sixteenth-note pattern continues through the end of the measure. The letter 'I' is written below the bass clef staff.

Believe it or not, that is the extent of “basic ideas” that Beethoven has in this piece. From there, you will see how he builds on these ideas. Those are the seeds that lead to everything else. There is some other new material that comes about, but it is actually a response and not new basic ideas. So make sure you really like your basic ideas.

7: Fleshing Out Your Themes

Day 2 Worksheets

Now that we have the basic ideas down, let's listen to Beethoven's themes.

Both the main theme and the subordinate theme are sentences, which gives this Sonata a lot of forward drive.

The Main Theme

The main theme is a very standard sentence.

Example 7.1 - Beethoven Main Theme

The image shows two staves of musical notation in common time. The top staff is in G major (one sharp) and the bottom staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). Both staves begin with a dynamic of *p*. The first measure consists of a single note followed by a rest. The second measure contains a eighth-note followed by a sixteenth-note. The third measure begins with a bass note followed by a treble note, both with grace notes. Measures 4 and 5 show similar patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes. Measure 6 starts with a bass note followed by a treble note, with a dynamic of *ff*. Measure 7 ends with a bass note followed by a treble note, with a dynamic of *p*. Measure 8 begins with a bass note followed by a treble note, with a dynamic of *p*.

The harmony is about as simple as it gets, $\text{II} \mid \text{I} \mid \text{V} \mid \text{i} - \text{V} \mid \text{i}^6 - \text{ii}^6 \mid \text{V} \mid \text{II}$. This one ends on a half-cadence.

So now, compose your sentence. You do not have to stick to the same harmonic scheme, but for this one, just make sure you end in a half-cadence. This will make sure we are all on the same path, and no one is veering off course.

Here is my main theme:

Example 7.2 - Brantingham Main Theme

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is in G major (two sharps) and the bottom staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). Measure 9 starts with a piano dynamic (p) in G major. Measure 13 begins with a forte dynamic (f) in C major, followed by a piano dynamic (p) in G major.

The Subordinate Theme

The subordinate theme is also a sentence, but it is much looser in form. Once again, the main difference is that it resides in the dominant harmony. If we look at Beethoven's theme, its presentation repeats the basic idea twice. This gives significant loosening. This is followed by a continuation with fragmentation and model-sequence technique, and then in bar 28, it reaches the dominant harmony. From here Beethoven uses extensive standing on the dominant to prepare for and develop an even longer cadential section. All this added time to the subordinate theme allows the subordinate key to take precedence over the original primary key.

Example 7.3 - Beethoven Subordinate Theme

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is in E-flat major (three flats) and the bottom staff is in C major (no sharps or flats). Measure 21 starts with a melodic line in E-flat major, followed by a harmonic line in C major.

Musical score for piano in sonata form, showing staves for treble and bass clef, dynamic markings, and performance instructions like PAC and rit.

Measures 25 - 33: Treble staff starts with a sixteenth-note pattern. Bass staff has eighth-note patterns. Measure 33 includes dynamics: *f*, *p*, *sf*.

Measures 37 - 41: Treble staff starts with a sixteenth-note pattern. Bass staff has eighth-note patterns. Measure 41 includes dynamics: *f*, *p*, *sf*. A bracket labeled [PAC] is above the treble staff.

Measure 46: Treble staff starts with a sixteenth-note pattern. Bass staff has eighth-note patterns. Dynamic markings: *ff* (fortissimo) followed by a crescendo arrow to *p* (pianissimo). Performance instruction: *rit.* (ritardando).

Beethoven does not end his subordinate theme with a retransition, instead choosing to just start straight from the basic idea of the main theme. Sounds good to me!

Here is my subordinate theme. You'll notice that it is significantly longer and looser. I find composing a simple theme, in sentence form, period form, or any of the other hybrids helps first, and then I can find places that I can expand or loosen the form in other ways.

In my theme, which is sentential in structure, I start with a basic idea in D major, the relative major of B minor, but I then repeat the basic idea in D minor. This would not normally happen in a main theme, but because it is a looser subordinate theme, I can do this.

This leads to a continuation phrase that has an extended model-sequence progression lasting three bars. This is followed by a six bar, cadential section, and then a small codetta.

Presentation Phrase

Example 7.4 - Brantingham Subordinate Theme Presentation Phrase



Sequence

Example 7.5 - Brantingham Subordinate Theme Continuation Phrase



From bars 24 to 26, I follow a very standard sequence of descending 2nds. This is common in many classical pieces and has a very calming type of sound. Sometimes it is difficult to find a good pattern that seems

to fit well. Remember, the pattern repeats every two chords, not every chord, so write your melody that way. I call this the “*birdie theme*” because my two year old son said “birdie” when he was listening to it. I thought it fit pretty well.

Cadential

Example 7.6 - Brantingham Subordinate Theme Continuation Phrase

The musical score consists of three staves of music. The top staff shows a melodic line starting at measure 27, featuring eighth-note patterns that repeat every two measures. The middle staff shows harmonic support with eighth-note chords. The bottom staff shows a bass line with eighth-note patterns. Measures 27 through 30 are shown, followed by a repeat sign and measures 31 through 32. Measure 32 concludes with a cadence, indicated by a fermata over the melody and a double bar line with repeat dots.

8: The Transition

Day 3 Worksheets

The transition is the first point where your compositional skill will really start to come out, or if not, where you really struggle and start to improve your skills. This is because you have to within a short period of time, write something that both connects with the main theme, while moving the harmonic “ball” to the subordinate key, and preparing for the energy or calmness of the subordinate theme. In this case, the subordinate theme is very energetic, while the main theme is reserved. Let’s look at Beethoven’s example.

Example 8.1 - Beethoven Transition

The musical score consists of three staves of music. Staff 1 (top) starts with a rest, followed by a melodic line in G minor (B-flat major). Staff 2 (middle) starts with a rest, followed by a melodic line in G minor (B-flat major). Staff 3 (bottom) starts with a rest, followed by a melodic line in G minor (B-flat major). Measure 9: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 10: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 11: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 12: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 13: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 14: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 15: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 16: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 17: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Measure 18: Staff 1: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 2: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G. Staff 3: Rest, then eighth note B-flat, sixteenth note A, eighth note G.

Here, Beethoven does something that immediately catches the ear. He starts the transition in dominant, but instead of being in the major mode, it is in the minor mode. This immediately destabilizes the home key, because there is no leading tone. It also sets him up for a nice modulation using a relatively simple sequence (ascending fourths/descending fifths) to the subordinate key of Ab major.

When you compose your transition, you do not have to use the same scheme, but remember, there is no shame in doing that. A chord progression is a chord progression is a chord progression. Just do a search on youtube for “Pachelbel Rant,” and you’ll see what I mean.

Finally, he ends with several half-cadences leading to a short standing on the dominant.

Example 8.2 - Beethoven Standing on the Dominant (Transition)

Here is my transition. To transition to D major, first I move to the iv chord of B minor, which is E minor. This chord is shared by B minor and D major. I then use the chord E major, to tonicize the dominant of D major.

Example 8.3 - Brantingham Transition

The transition is called “theme-like” because it tends to resemble themes, but does not have to end in a cadence. Because of its relative looseness, you can leave out any function you want. Let me explain a little further.

When we are talking about functions, we are saying that something defines a clear, before-the-beginning, beginning, middle, end or after-the-end. Having a looser construction, we can decide to start a phrase with a function that indicates “we’re in the middle of a phrase”. The reason it

works like that is because we are basically conditioned through all of our lives hearing these functions in western music. Most songs start on tonic. Most of the time, dominant leads back to tonic. These are fundamental, and can be heard from Bach to Beethoven to the Beatles.

Because these functions are so prevalent, you can start a phrase, for instance on a pre-dominant harmony, and it will sound like we are in the middle of the phrase, or possibly at the antecedent or continuation. This of course, is predicated on the tonic being established before-hand. One of the keys to showing your skill as a composer is how you work with these ingrained, almost instinctual functions, to bring about certain reactions. This is especially important for composing film music, as you sometimes have a short time to make a large impression.

As you can see the transition doesn't have to be very long. There are three types of transitions. The modulating and non-modulating, and the two-part transition, which is a combination of both.

Modulating Transition

The modulating transition is the most common. With this transition, you lead to the dominant of the subordinate key. In our case, the subordinate key is D major (the relative major to B minor), and so we lead to its dominant (A major). It is also very common to tonicize this dominant, so before hand, I have a V/V.

Non-Modulating

The non-modulating transition is not as common. With this, the final chord of the transition is the dominant of the primary key. You tend to find it in major mode works more often, because the subordinate key is normally the dominant. It then leads directly to the subordinate theme, which starts off in the new harmony.

Two-Part Transition

This is just a combination of a non-modulating and modulating transition. The first part is non-modulating, and tends to also be more tight-knit than the second part, which modulates to the subordinate key.

Composing the Transition

Composing the transition can be difficult. I find the best way is to work backwards. You should know what chord you want to end on, depending on the type of transition you choose (non-modulating, modulating, or two-part). First you write this chord, then maybe a V/V behind it, find a shared chord from the two keys, and then maybe a sequence that leads to that chord. It can be tricky.

The best advice is to look at transitions from great composers, like Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn. They knew what they were doing.

9: The Development

Day 4 Worksheets

The development will be the most complicated part to compose, simply because of all the different tonicized areas and fragmentation. But in reality, there is not a lot of new material. First listen to Beethoven's entire development section.

Instead of copying down the entire development section from Beethoven's Sonata, I will refer you to Appendix 2, which has an annotated print out. This saves a little more room.

[Example 9.1 - Beethoven Pre-Core](#)

[Example 9.2 - Beethoven Core](#)

The development section is probably the most difficult to nail down. This is because even though we can classify the keys (primary development, secondary development, and tonicized regions) the areas (pre-core and core), and other features, there are so many directions in which you may go. So for this I am just going to give you some ideas to explore.

Pre-core

Remember, the pre-core sets the stage for the agitated core. But this doesn't necessarily mean the pre-core is going to be a bel canto (singing, beautiful) type melody. In my pre-core, I really just transition directly into the core. It is a sharp change to the development key. I start in the dominant of the development key, and then do a scale, down to the tonic of the development key, F# minor.

[Example 9.3 - Brantingham Pre-Core](#)



Core

The core starts off with a variation on the main theme. The theme is not a traditional main theme type though. It is a basic idea, with tonic prolongation. But in what would be the consequent phrase, instead of fragmenting it, I modulate to the next development key, C major. There is not a real grand scheme for this modulation, I thought it just sounded interesting.

Example 9.4 - Brantingham Core 1

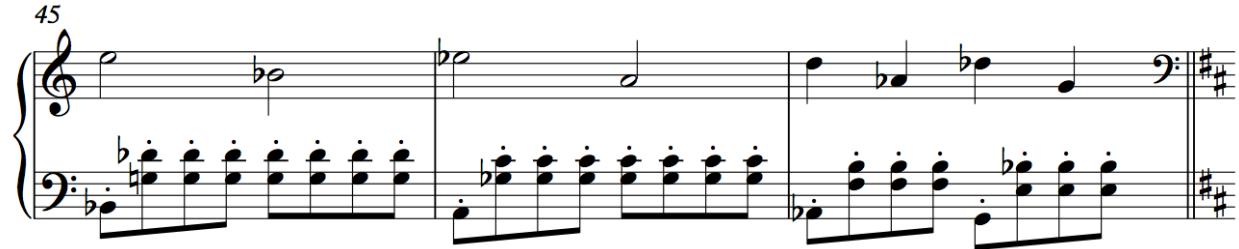
After the first modulation, the presentation phrase gets expanded. Bar 42 actually becomes the idea that I repeat and fragment. At first, the idea is over a IV 6/4 chord. However, in bar 44, I change this to a fully diminished 7th chord.

The cool thing is you can basically follow a diminished, with another diminished, which gives you the ability to easily sequence the progression.

Example 9.5 - Brantingham Core 1

Diminished Chords

Diminished chords can be found all over development sections. The reason is, because of their relatively rare status of **equally dividing the octave**, they are very ambiguous as to where they are supposed to resolve. Check out artofcomposing.com for posts about diminished chords, and their capabilities. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at what you can do. Also check out **augmented** chords for the same type of ideas.



Standing on the Dominant

The last part of the development section is an extended standing on the dominant. This basically means you are prolonging the dominant harmony instead of the tonic or pre-dominant harmony. This is done through a dominant pedal in the base. As is standard with standing on the dominant, it is mostly “passage work” and not reflecting the characteristic melodies of my piece. This dominant is the dominant of the primary key, and leads back to the recapitulation.

Example 9.6 - Brantingham Core 3 (Standing on the Dominant)

The musical score consists of six staves of music, numbered 48 through 58. The music is written for two voices (treble and bass) and a piano. The key signature changes from G major (two sharps) to F# major (one sharp) at measure 56. The time signature is common time throughout. Measure 48: Both voices play eighth-note patterns (G-A-B-C-D-E-F-G) over a harmonic bass line. Measure 50: The bass line becomes more active with eighth-note chords. Measures 52-54: The bass line continues with eighth-note chords, while the voices play eighth-note patterns. Measure 56: The key changes to F# major. The bass line has sixteenth-note patterns, and the voices play eighth-note patterns. Measure 58: The bass line has sixteenth-note patterns, and the voices play eighth-note patterns.

10: The Recapitulation

Day 5 Worksheets

The recapitulation is relatively easy to compose, because at its heart, it is a restatement of the exposition. The main difference is that the subordinate theme remains in the primary key. This means that it must be modified, as well as the transition (unless the transition was non-modulating).

Listen to Beethoven's recapitulation. As in the development, I am not going to post the entire recapitulation section to save space, but you can go to Appendix 2 for the print out.

There are a few things that can help you to differentiate your recapitulation from your exposition.

Changes

There are basically two types of changes that you can make. First would be ornamental changes, and second would be structural. I like to add a little bit of both to my recapitulations

Ornamental Changes

These are surface changes: accompanimental rhythms, textures, dynamics and articulations. If you notice in Beethoven's recapitulation, he slightly modifies the main theme by changing where the left hand chords are placed in the bar. This is a stronger statement of the harmony, compared to the original statement of the main theme.

Original

Example 10.1 - Beethoven Original Continuation Phrase

A musical score for piano featuring two staves. The top staff is for the treble clef (G-clef) and the bottom staff is for the bass clef (F-clef). The key signature is four flats. Measure 5 begins with a dynamic 'sf' (fortissimo) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of eighth-note patterns in the treble staff, while the bass staff provides harmonic support with sustained notes and chords. Measure 6 continues with a similar pattern, followed by measure 7 which features a dynamic 'ff' (fortissimo). Measure 8 concludes with a dynamic 'p' (pianissimo) and a 'rit.' (ritardando) instruction above the staff. The score uses standard musical notation including stems, beams, and rests.

Recapitulation

Example 10.2 - Beethoven Recapitulation Continuation Phrase

For my main theme, I make a few ornamental changes. First, I change the accompaniment to be more active. It has more energy and I feel ends the piece a little better. Instead of short staccato notes, I have the pedal down, and it blends the sound together. I also add a little string of grace notes leading up to a very high note at the end of each idea.

Example 10.3 - Brantingham Recapitulation Main Theme

Structural Changes

You can also make more striking changes, like adding repetitions of basic ideas, or adding entire sections. I chose not to do this for the most part. I did however expand the “birdie theme” from the subordinate theme. I start in the modulated minor version, but I work in the original major version and then quickly move back into the minor. I think it works.

Example 10.4 - Brantingham “Birdie” Theme

Musical score showing two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in G major (two sharps). The measure number 79 is at the top left. The music consists of eighth-note patterns.

Beethoven decides to add a three bar additional standing on the dominant, after the transition, just to help cement that the key has not in fact changed to the subordinate key, but instead has remained in the primary key.

Example 10.5 - Beethoven Additional Standing on the Dominant

Musical score showing two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in F major (one sharp). The measure number 115 is at the top left. The music consists of eighth-note patterns.

Codetta

Finally, I end my piece with an additional codetta. A codetta is not the same as a coda, which is explained in the next chapter. Instead, a codetta is really post-cadential material that prolongs tonic, usually restating the cadence in different ways.

Example 10.6 - Brantingham Recapitulation Codetta

Musical score showing two staves of music. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves are in G major (two sharps). The measure number 87 is at the top left. The music consists of eighth-note patterns. The measure number 89 is at the top left of the second staff. Dynamics include (tr) (trill), pp (pianissimo), ff (fortissimo), and v.v. (ritardando).

11: The Coda

Day 6 Worksheets

The coda is the after-the-end functional unit. It says what couldn't be said in the recapitulation. For instance, you may develop ideas brought about in the main theme that were never developed. Or maybe even advance ideas from the development section, that only now can be brought to a proper close. Beethoven doesn't have a coda in his sonata, so I'll just discuss some of the characteristics of codas.

After-The-End

By definition of being "after the end", the coda is optional. Your piece already technically has an ending. But, by "ending" I mean that you have brought large scale closure to your piece, *not* that it has to be the last notes of the piece.

Closure, in the classical sense comes through cadential confirmation of the primary key, in the subordinate theme. Once this happens, you can pack up your bags and go. You're done... unless you decide to stay one more night.

Because the recapitulation tends to reflect small ternary form, meaning you can get rid of redundant material, the coda gives you an option to throw that back in the mix. For instance, if you got rid of say, a repetition of the basic idea, or fragmentation within the main theme, you could bring back the main theme again but this time almost treating it like a development, with sequencing and additional repetition.

If you do have a complete theme, try to approach it as you would your subordinate theme, with loosening techniques. It is also customary to end the coda, with smaller codettas. Once again, codettas are just material that reaffirms the cadence.

What to Avoid

Really, you want to avoid adding new material. This is because it leaves things open. And the coda is all about tying up loose ends. A new theme for instance would cause all sorts of compositional problems that would

have to be answered. For our purposes, composition of a simple sonata form piece, we are going to therefore use old or previous material.

12: The Slow Introduction

It may seem counterintuitive to talk about the slow introduction last, but I have good reason. I like to think of the introduction almost like a trailer for your piece. It's the teaser that whets the appetite. This means that you can use it to hint at themes, or harmonies, or other ideas that are found in your piece.

The slow introduction is a before-the-beginning function, and I feel that you cannot really know what to put before the beginning - *before you have a beginning*. That is why I normally compose this last.

Beethoven does not have an introduction at the beginning of his piece, so let's just look at the characteristics.

Characteristics

Harmonically Based

Introductions tend to be harmonically based. As you see in my introduction I don't really have a melody, it's just some loud notes and louder chords (...really makes me sound like a *genius* the way I described that).

Emphasizes Dominant Harmony

In preparation for the main theme, slow introductions tend to stay away from tonic. Mine leads to a strong half-cadence.

Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Slow introductions tend to be uncertain sounding, ambiguous, and ultimately build up tension, prior to the main theme.

Example 12.1 - Brantingham Slow Introduction

Allegro

5

Appendix 1: The Worksheets

These worksheets are designed to allow you, step by step to compose your piece. The goal is to help you break up the form into easily digestible parts so you do not get overwhelmed. They give you certain tasks that when followed will move you closer and closer to finishing an entire movement in sonata form. Feel free to continue if you complete these quickly, the days are just a minimum, you can always do more.

Make sure to check back occasionally on the website for updates. I plan on posting more models for composing, including different plans for sonata form, and possibly other forms as well. I plan eventually in the future to create a paid membership site, that is a much larger expansion on the topic of composing, but that is going to take a long time. Keep checking back on the website for more news about that.

Here is the schedule for composing your piece in sonata form:

Table A.1

Day	Part Composed
1	Basic Ideas
2	Main Theme and Subordinate Theme
3	Transition
4	Development
5	Recapitulation
6	Coda and Completion

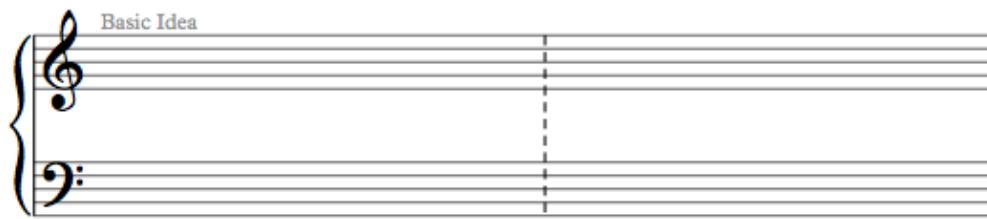
Day 1: Basic Ideas

The goal here is to compose some basic ideas that will be potentials for your themes. Try to compose at least 5 different basic ideas. Below are some harmonic schemes you can try out.

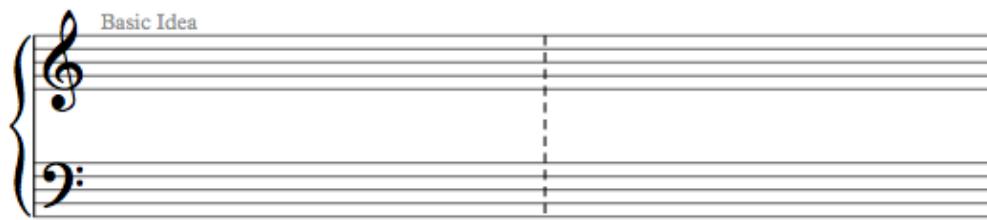
Table A.2

Measure 1		Measure 2
I		V
I		vi
I		IV
I		iv
I		iii
I		III
I		♭VI
I		VI♯
I		vii°
I	V	I
I	vii⁶°	I
I	IV	I
I	vi	V
I	vi	I⁶
I	vi	IV
I	iv	I
I	IV⁶	ii⁶
I	ii⁶	V
I	V	vi
I	III♯	vi
I	iii	vi
I	II♯	IV
I	VI♯	ii⁶
I	♭VII	I
I	vii°	III♯

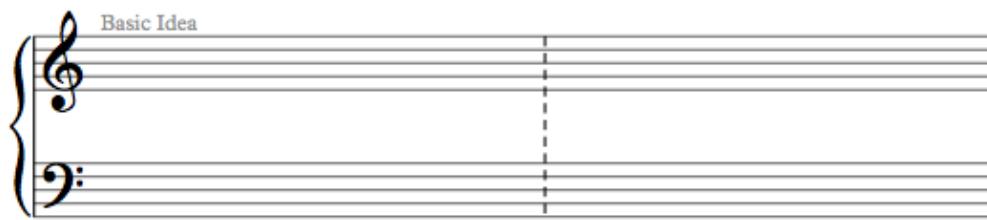
Basic Idea #1



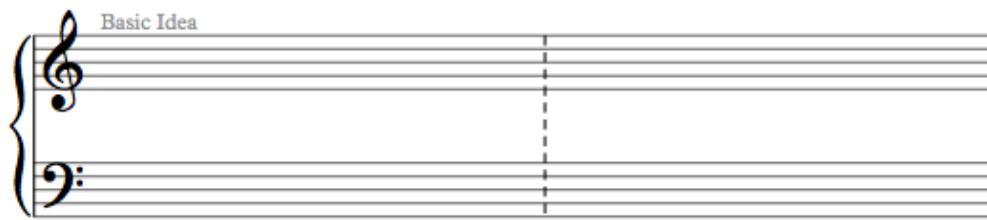
Basic Idea #2



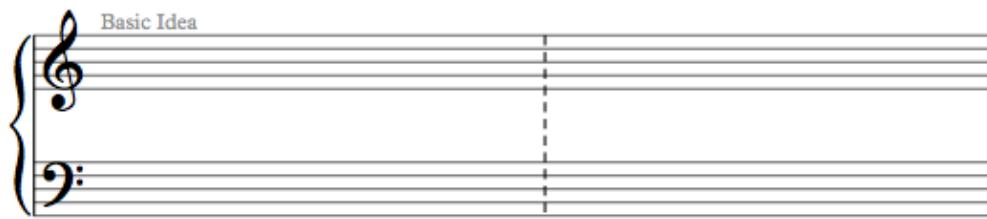
Basic Idea #3



Basic Idea #4



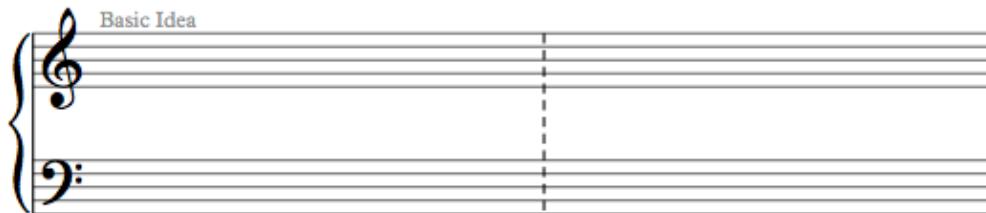
Basic Idea #5



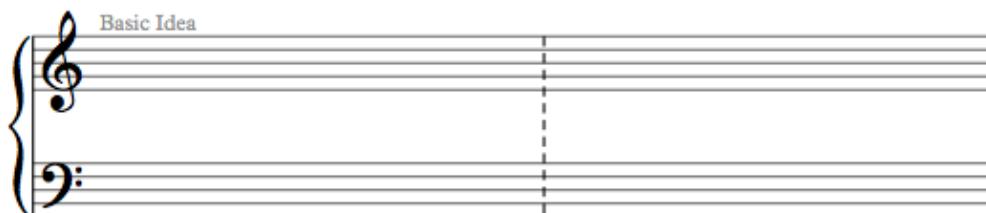
Day 2: Pick Your Main Theme and Subordinate Theme Basic Ideas, and Compose Your Themes

Now decide, out of all your basic ideas, which ones you think are the best, and have the most potential. Once you have chosen, compose your main theme and subordinate theme.

Main Theme Basic Idea



Subordinate Theme Basic Idea



Main Theme

I apologize for the small staff, it doesn't quite fit on this page properly. If it is too small, I recommend moving to regular staff paper, which is available on the companion website.

A musical staff divided into four equal-width sections by vertical dashed lines. The first section is labeled "Basic Idea". The second section is labeled "Repetition". The third section is labeled "Continuation" and is numbered "5" above the staff. The fourth section is labeled "Fragmentation", "Harmonic Acceleration", "Liquidation", and "Cadential".

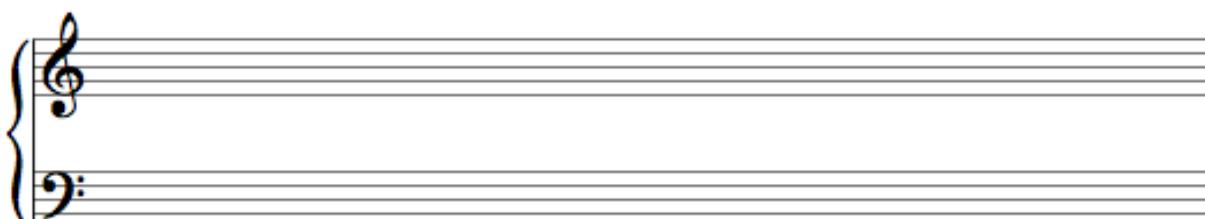
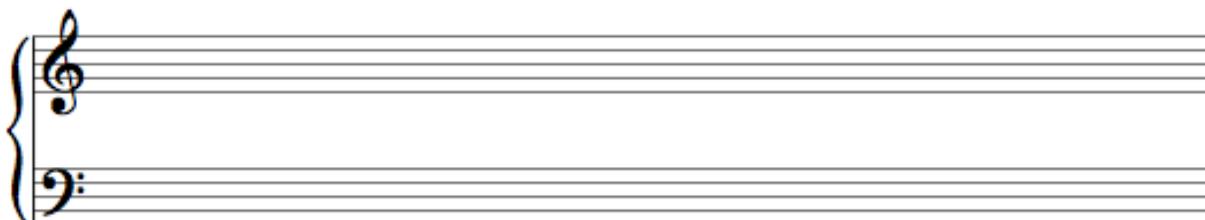
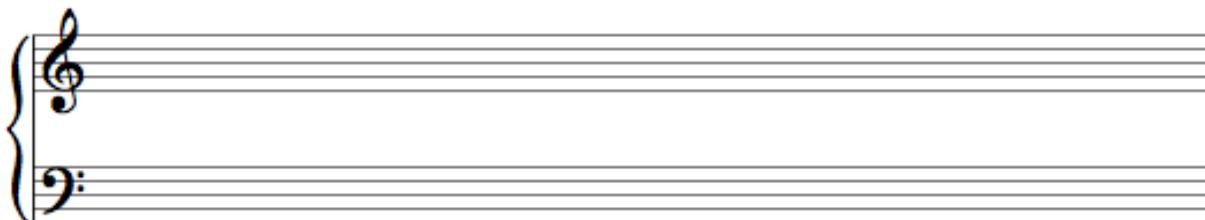
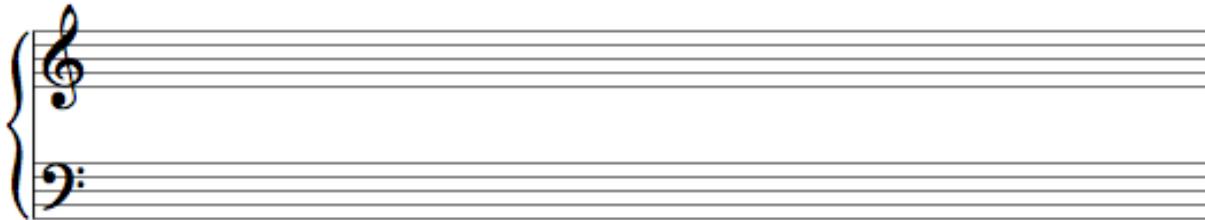
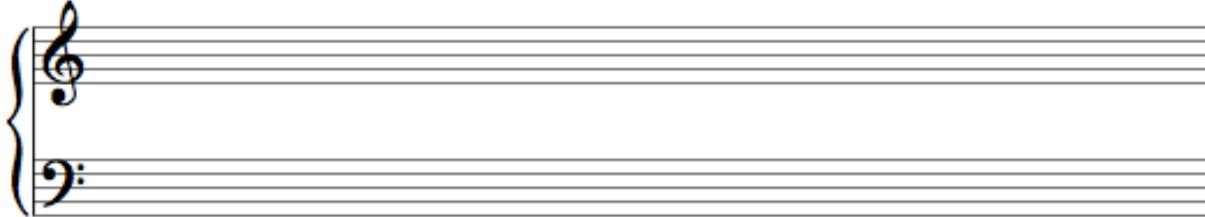
Subordinate Theme

While the subordinate theme will probably not fit into the cookie cutter sentence, you can use the sentence structure to guide you. Get your general ideas down, and then transfer them to staff paper. Remember to use expansion, sequencing, additional repetition, extension, interpolation, or any other loosening devices.

The image shows two staves of music staff paper. The top staff is labeled "Basic Idea" and the bottom staff is labeled "Continuation". Both staves have a treble clef, a bass clef, and a common time signature. The top staff has four measures, and the bottom staff has five measures. The first measure of each staff contains a single note. The second measure of each staff is empty. The third measure of each staff contains a single note. The fourth measure of each staff is empty. The fifth measure of the bottom staff is also empty. Above the top staff, the word "Basic Idea" is written above the first measure. Above the bottom staff, the number "5" is written above the first measure, and the word "Continuation" is written below it. To the right of the top staff, the words "Repetition", "Fragmentation", "Harmonic Acceleration", "Liquidation", and "Cadential" are listed vertically, corresponding to the four measures of the basic idea and the five measures of the continuation respectively.

Day 3: Compose Your Transition

This doesn't have to be very long, but spend some time trying out different ideas. I recommend trying out a modulating transition, as it leads very naturally to subordinate keys for both major and minor sonata forms. I am not going to give you a set amount of bars, just some blank grand staff paper.



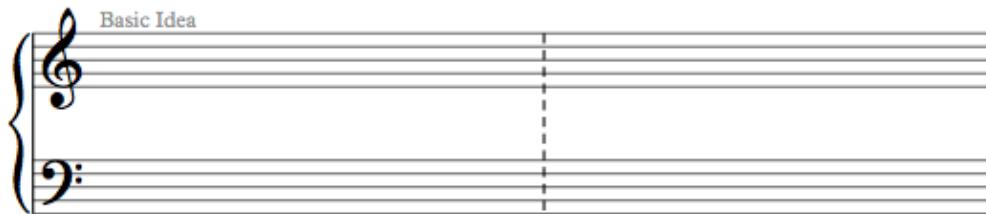
Day 4: Write Your Development

Hopefully by now, you have completed your exposition. Don't worry about fine tuning every little detail - there will be time for that later. Now we want to move on to the development. I want you to be methodical about this, so we are going to approach it like we would if it were the main theme or subordinate theme.

Choose Your Basic Idea

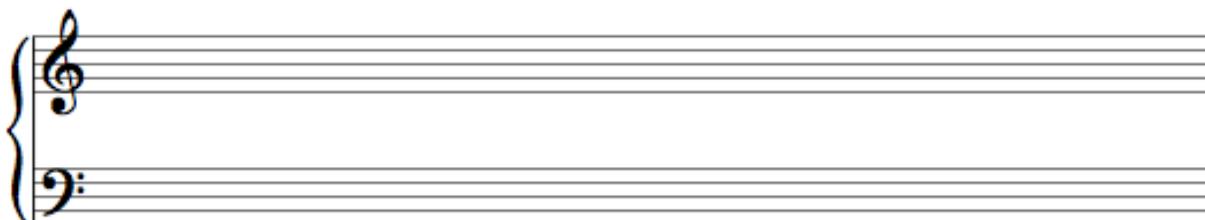
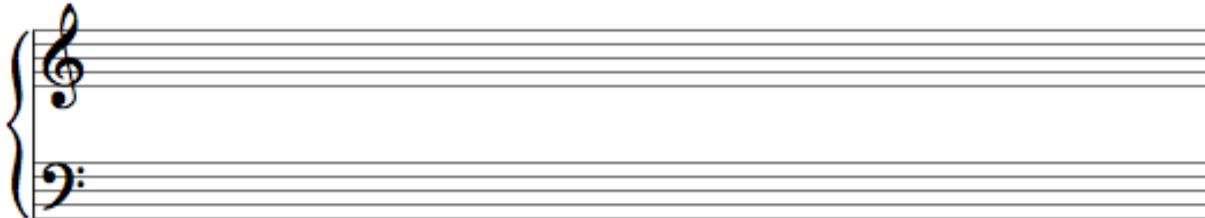
I want you to take one of the basic ideas you composed on day 1, or modify one (maybe the main theme basic idea like mine) and extend it to a theme like unit. You can write down that basic idea below for reference.

Development Basic Idea



Create Your Theme Like Unit

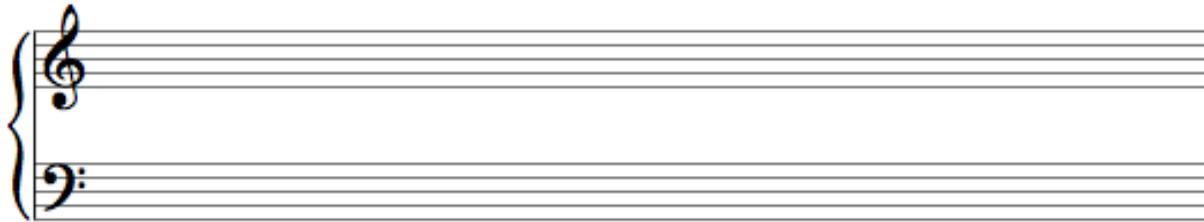
Take that basic idea, and turn it into a theme-like unit. Remember, you can use any of the loosening techniques found in chapter 4.



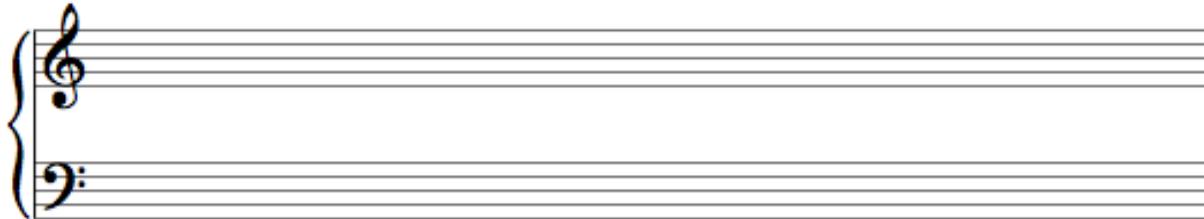
Fragment Your Theme-Like Unit

Continue your theme, by fragmenting down. Probably the easiest way is to repeat the entire theme-like unit in a different key. Modulate through a pivot chord. After you have repeated the entire unit then, repeat half of the unit once or twice, then - a quarter of the unit. Keep doing this until you feel you have reached a point of turmoil. Don't forget, if you find yourself stuck just move to a diminished chord, and fragment away!

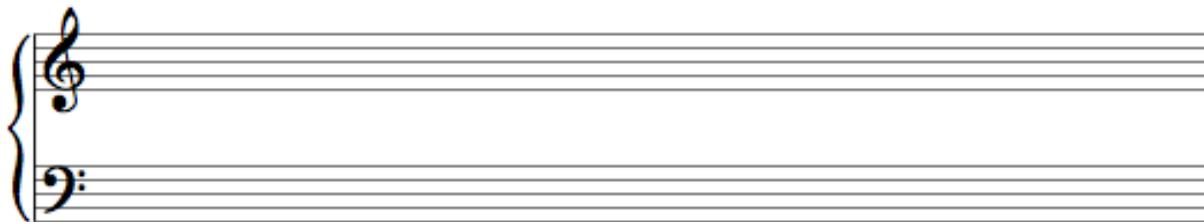
Repetition 1: Entire theme-like unit



Repetition 2: Two or more repetitions of half of the theme-like unit

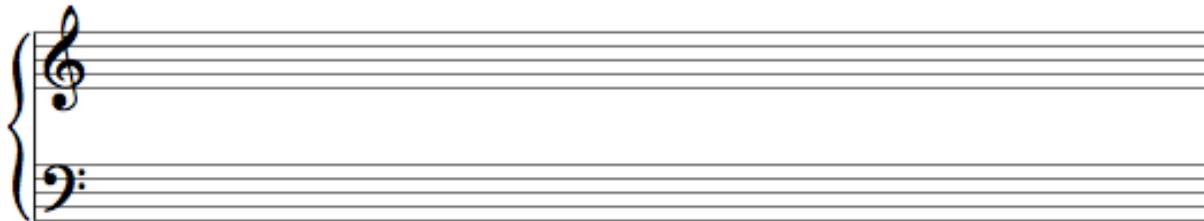


Repetition 3: A few repetitions of a small portion of the theme-like unit (1 measure, 1/2 measure, etc.)



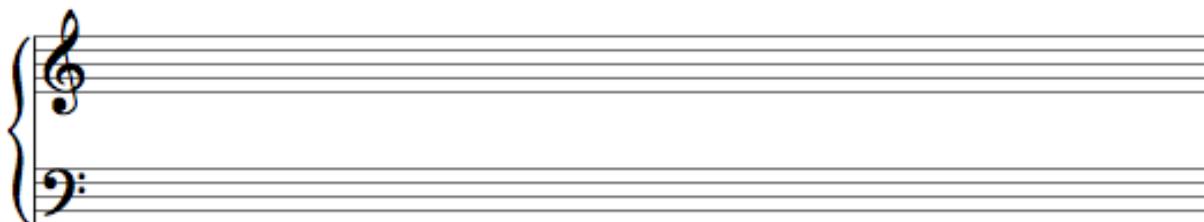
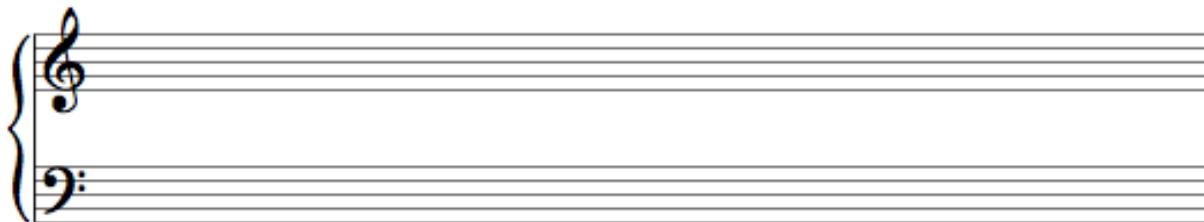
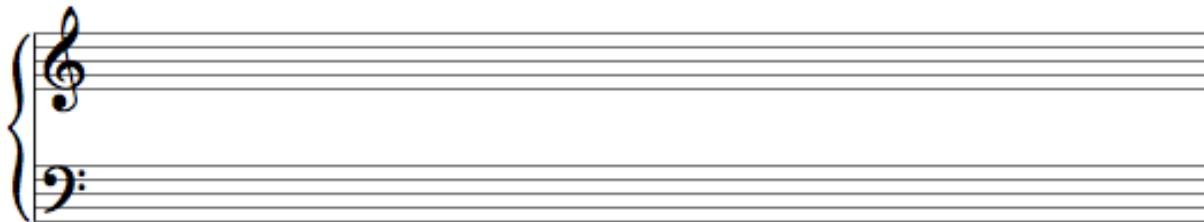
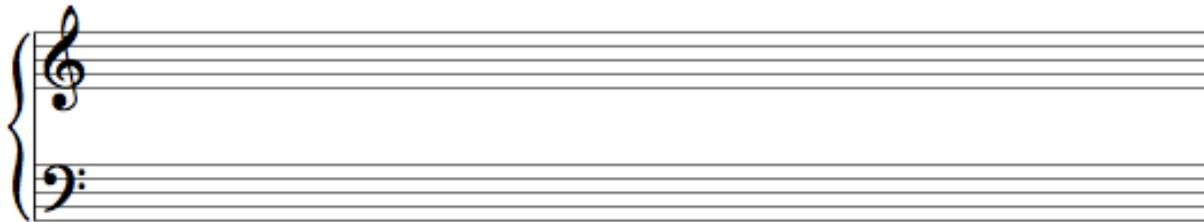
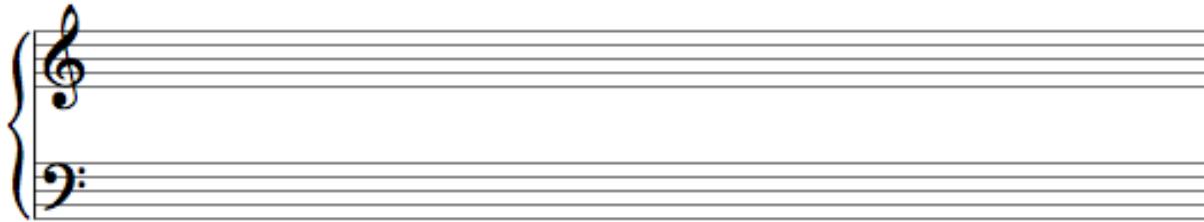
Standing on the Dominant

End it with a standing on the dominant.



Day 5: Recapitulation

This part is generally pretty easy. You take your main theme, and you restate it. You can change around surface things like dynamics, articulation, or accompaniment, or you can even make it even a looser construction. Add any of the loosening techniques discussed in chapter 4. The main difference here is that you need to change your subordinate theme, to remain in the primary key. This primarily happens through the transition being modified.

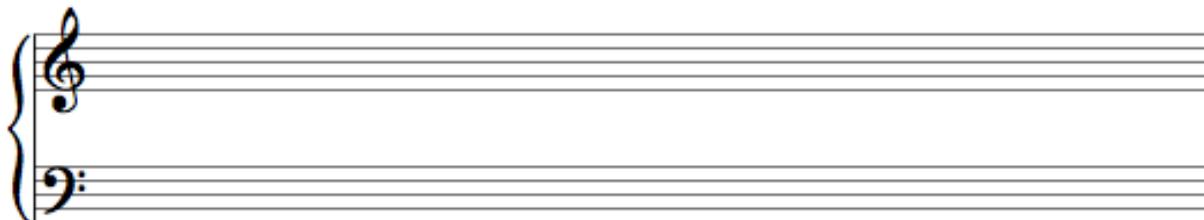
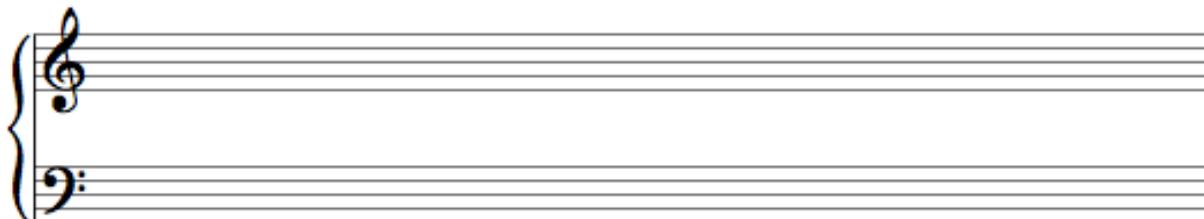
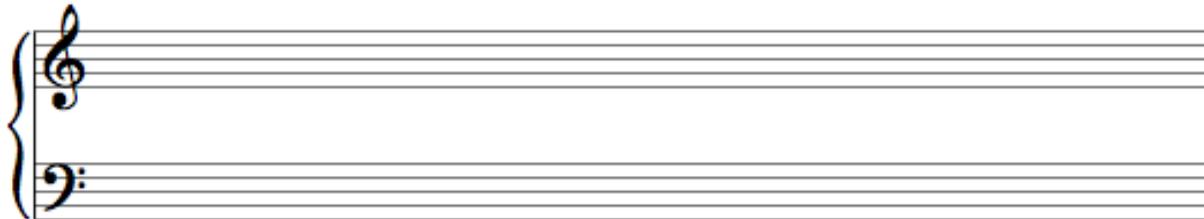


Day 6: Coda and Completion

Congratulations if you've made it this far. Writing extended works in sonata form is a great way to strengthen your skills as a composer. But you're not quite done yet. There is one last section to compose, and then some tips for tying it all together.

The Coda

I do not have a coda in my piece, simply because I felt I stated everything that I needed to by the time it ended. But this does not mean you shouldn't have a coda either. Just remember, the coda is an after-the-end function. So if you wanted to develop some more material, say -you wanted to close with the development theme, you could do that with the Coda! I'll post some additional staves below so you can use them if you'd like. If you are going to do anything, just make sure you end in a cadence, if not, it will feel incomplete. But then again, maybe that's what you're going after, so do whatever you want.



Completion

So now what? You've written all of your music, what do you do now? Well, I recommend transferring it to a notation program, if you haven't been writing it there anyway. This gives you an easy way to hear the big picture,

as well as to make quick modifications. I am not a piano master by any means, so I like to knock out the general ideas, and then flesh it out on the computer. I guess it's just the way I grew up composing.

Notation Software

There is no perfect notation software out there, but my personal choice is [Sibelius](#). It is very capable, and will allow you to do just about anything. It does come with a price tag though.

[Musescore](#) is a great free option, and as of writing this, they are working on version 2.0, which looks to be pretty awesome. I used Musescore for a long time before making the jump to Sibelius, so give it a shot.

Zoom Out

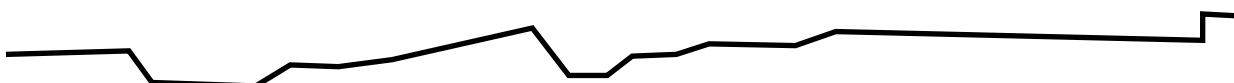
One of the cool things about notation programs is that you can zoom out, and you can also set how many bars are on each line. This can give you a great view of your piece, so you can see each section separately, as it develops. I don't recommend squeezing too much together, but as long as the notation looks okay, try it out.

Dynamic Curve

Your piece by now should have a definite dynamic curve. What I recommend is enhancing that with your dynamics and articulations. Every instrument usually has a wealth of sounds that you can get from it. Even the piano sounds drastically different, depending on how hard or soft you hit the keys, or short or long, or whether the pedal is pressed or released.

I recommend tracing out your dynamic curve over the scheme of your sonata. Use the example below to guide you. Once you do this, you can decide if your dynamics are reaching this goal. Remember, you can also do this for individual phrases, and even bars, so don't let this limit you too much.

My dynamic curve:



Intro	Exposition			Development		Recapitulation			Coda
Intro	MT	TR	ST	PC	C	MT	TR	ST	Coda

Draw your dynamic curve:

Intro	Exposition			Development		Recapitulation			Coda
Intro	MT	TR	ST	PC	C	MT	TR	ST	Coda

Appendix 2: Beethoven, Sonata No. 1

Sonata

Op. 2, No. 1

Allegro $\text{♩} = 170$

Ludwig Van Beethoven

Main Theme - Sentence

Musical score for the Main Theme - Sentence section. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, G major, and the bottom staff is in bass clef, C major. The key signature is one flat. The tempo is Allegro with a quarter note equal to 170. The section starts with a dynamic of p . The first measure shows a single eighth note followed by a sixteenth-note pattern. Measures 2-3 show a similar pattern with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 4-5 show another pattern with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 6-7 show a final pattern with a three-measure repeat sign.

Continuation of the musical score for the Main Theme - Sentence section. The score continues from the previous section, maintaining the same key signature and tempo. The dynamics sf , ff , and p are used. A ritardando (rit.) is indicated in measure 7. The score consists of two staves: treble and bass.

Musical score for the Transition - Sentential section. The score consists of two staves. The key signature changes to one flat. The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 170$. The section starts with a dynamic of p . Measures 9-10 show a melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 11-12 show another melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 13-14 show a final melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign.

Musical score for the Extended Cadential section. The score consists of two staves. The key signature changes to one flat. The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 170$. The section starts with a dynamic of p . Measures 15-16 show a melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 17-18 show another melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 19-20 show a final melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign.

Musical score for the Subordinate Theme - Sentential section. The score consists of two staves. The key signature changes to one flat. The tempo is indicated as $\text{♩} = 170$. The section starts with a dynamic of p . Measures 21-22 show a melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 23-24 show another melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign. Measures 25-26 show a final melodic line with a three-measure repeat sign.

2

26

30

Extended Cadential

33

Extended Cadential

37

Codetta

41 PAC

46 rit.

Pre-core

3

ff = p

51 3 3 3

Core

Model

55 sf fp

59 sf

Sequence

63 sf fp

The musical score consists of five staves of piano music. Staff 1 (treble clef) starts with a dynamic of **ff** followed by **p**. Staff 2 (bass clef) has a dynamic of **ff** followed by **p**. Staff 3 (treble clef) has a dynamic of **p**. Staff 4 (bass clef) has a dynamic of **p**. Staff 5 (treble clef) has a dynamic of **p**. Measure 46 starts with a dynamic of **ff** followed by **p**. Measure 51 has a dynamic of **p**. Measure 55 has a dynamic of **sf**. Measure 59 has a dynamic of **sf**. Measure 63 has a dynamic of **sf**.

4

67

Sequence Sequence

71

75

79

Extended Standing on the Dominant

83

Recapitulation - Main Theme

87

91

96

100

105

6

110

115

Subordinate Theme in Primary Key

120

124

128

Musical score for piano in 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. The score consists of two staves. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **ff**, **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and **p**. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and **p**. Measures 132-135 feature eighth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano in 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **ff**, **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and **pp**. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and a fermata over the last measure. Measures 136-139 feature eighth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano in 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and a fermata over the last measure. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and a fermata over the last measure. Measures 140-143 feature eighth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano in 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **ff**, **ff**, **ff**, and **ff**. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **ff**, **ff**, **ff**, and **ff**. Measures 145-148 feature eighth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano in 2/4 time, key signature of three flats. The top staff shows a treble clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and **ff**. The bottom staff shows a bass clef, a key signature of three flats, and dynamic markings: **sf**, **sf**, **sf**, and **ff**. Measures 149-152 feature eighth-note patterns.

Appendix 3: Brantingham, Sonata No. 1

Piano Sonata No. 1

"Birdie"

Jon Brantingham

Allegro

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17

V iv V/V V

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2

Musical score for piano (two staves). Measure 20: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs followed by sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff has eighth-note pairs. Dynamics: *mf*. Measure 21: Treble staff has sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff has eighth-note pairs. Dynamics: *pp*. Measure 21 ends with a fermata over the bass staff.

Musical score for piano (two staves). Measure 24: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs followed by sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff has eighth-note pairs. Dynamics: *mf*. Measure 25: Treble staff has sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff has eighth-note pairs.

Musical score for piano (two staves). Measure 27: Treble staff has eighth-note pairs followed by sixteenth-note patterns. Bass staff has eighth-note pairs. Measure 28: Treble staff rests. Bass staff has sixteenth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano (two staves). Measure 30: Treble staff rests. Bass staff has sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 31: Treble staff rests. Bass staff has sixteenth-note patterns.

Musical score for piano (two staves). Measure 32: Treble staff rests. Bass staff has sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 33: Treble staff rests. Bass staff has sixteenth-note patterns.

A musical score for piano, consisting of four staves, showing measures 34 through 48. The score is in common time and uses a key signature of two sharps (F major). The top staff (treble clef) starts with a rest followed by eighth-note chords. The second staff (bass clef) has a continuous eighth-note bass line. Measure 34 ends with a repeat sign and a first ending. Measure 35 begins with a bass note followed by eighth-note chords. Measure 36 starts with a forte dynamic (F) and eighth-note chords. Measure 37 shows a transition with eighth-note chords and a change in key signature to one sharp (G major). Measure 38 features eighth-note chords. Measure 39 shows a transition with eighth-note chords and a change in key signature back to two sharps. Measure 40 begins with eighth-note chords. Measures 41-42 show a continuation of eighth-note chords. Measure 43 begins with eighth-note chords. Measures 44-45 show a continuation of eighth-note chords. Measure 46 begins with eighth-note chords. Measures 47-48 show a continuation of eighth-note chords.

4

50

52

54

56

58

60

mf

Bd.

62

p *sf*

Bd. Bd. Bd.

65

p *sf*

Bd. Bd.

68

f

72

pp

f

6

This musical score for piano consists of two staves. The top staff uses the treble clef and the bottom staff uses the bass clef. Both staves are in common time and key signature of two sharps. Measure 76 starts with eighth-note pairs in the treble and sixteenth-note pairs in the bass. Measure 77 continues with eighth-note pairs in both staves. Measures 78 and 79 show more complex patterns, including sixteenth-note groups and eighth-note pairs. Measure 80 begins with a bass line consisting of eighth-note pairs. Measures 81 and 82 feature sixteenth-note patterns in both staves. Measure 83 is a dynamic section starting with a forte dynamic (F) and ending with a piano dynamic (P). Measures 84 and 85 continue with sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 86 features a dynamic section starting with a piano dynamic (pp) and ending with a forte dynamic (ff). Measures 87 and 88 conclude the section with sixteenth-note patterns.

76

77

78

79

80

81

82

83

84

85

86

87

88

Afterword: The Mystery

Composing is all about choices. You, as a composer are given a task of wresting from your soul, a new creation. This is no small order.

But composing is not *completely* mysterious. Composers throughout all time have faced the same sorts of questions for everything they wrote. We all have to develop ideas and make them fit together.

There is, to be sure, a part of it that cannot be explained. You can analyze the harmony, the shape of the melody, the harmonic rhythm, timbres and texture... but can you say why Rachmaninoff's Adagio from his 2nd Piano Concerto is haunting and beautiful? Or why Mozart can reach perfection with the same notes I use to make "occasional garbage"? The answer is, no, you can't.

But here is the secret. The mystery is not unattainable. The mystery comes out with hard work. With studying the music of the past, trying to grapple with it, and developing your own style: practice...

The mystery will reveal itself to you; not consciously, but subconsciously. You may have already felt it. In something you wrote. You had that feeling on the inside that something special was occurring or had occurred. You may have been using the same notes and chords as usual but something was different.

The main difference between a great composer and a mediocre one is the ability to take what is given to you at that moment and fully realize it. If you have not put in the work before hand, then you will squander the gift and your music will be forgotten.

So here is your charge. Compose! Compose a lot! Everyday! Write and write and write! You cannot write enough. But make sure you are fully "there", while you are composing. Don't cheat. Don't just throw up notes on the page, and say "it's good". You know when it is and when it isn't good. You know when you've pushed your limits and when you haven't. Struggle through the pain now, and it will come.

Never quit.

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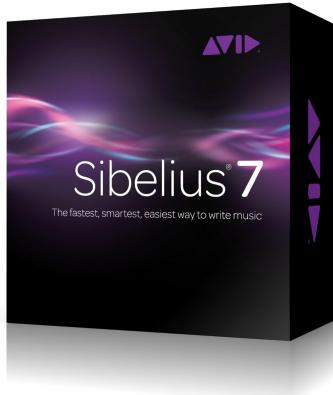
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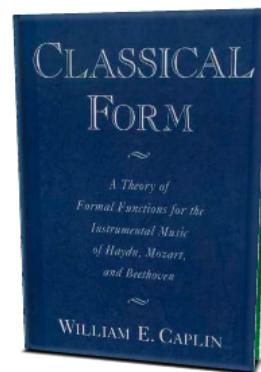
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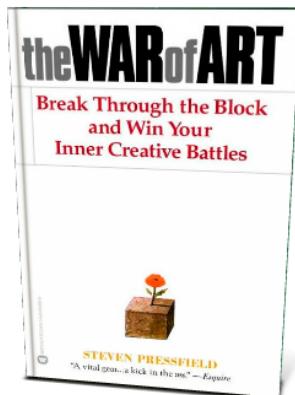
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