

# MUSICMAP NOTES

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## **Beethoven's Grand Trio in B-Flat Major for Piano, Clarinet/Violin & Cello, Op. 11 ('Gassenhauer') – 1798**

“Historical facts concerning this trio are hard to come by, although it is generally believed that Beethoven wrote it for the Bohemian clarinet virtuoso, Joseph Beer, probably in 1796, and had it published two years later. In any case, it is a fresh, spontaneous, and charming work, with no illusions about being a serious or profound musical utterance.” (Melvin Berger)

That Op. 11 was published as playable with either clarinet or violin was primarily a commercial consideration. This is clearly music specifically conceived with the sound and technical capabilities of the clarinet in mind. It is the only important piece for the wonderfully effective combination of piano, clarinet, and cello (or viola) to be written between Mozart's K. 498 (Kegelstatt) Trio in E flat major (viola) of 1786 and Brahms's Op. 114 Trio in A minor of 1891. All Beethoven's chamber music with winds tends to be more light and entertaining in style while often suggesting a popular Viennese musical accent. Still, "...the engaged listener will find all sorts of delicious, expressive touches and indications of the youthful Beethoven's compositional sophistication.” (Lois Shapiro)

### **Movement I – Sonata form, Allegro con brio, Common-time, B-flat major**

#### *Exposition:*

Main theme I: This first part of the main theme group is surprisingly free and irregular. It plays with us by teasing, surprising, and misdirecting our expectations. It starts with an arresting 4-bar “motto,” presented *f* in octave unison by the entire trio. This offers in bold relief an idea that will be present in one form or another through much of the movement. This motto breaks down into two shorter motives. The first, ‘X,’ consists of three chromatically rising long notes (two half-notes and a dotted half). With the clarinet most prominent in the upper octave, this initial gesture shrewdly exploits the wind instrument's peculiar timbre and ease of smoothly slipping from note to note. The following motive, ‘Y,’ is in strong contrast to ‘X,’ countering its rise with a descent, its long notes with shorter quarter-notes, its legato with staccato, and its chromatically adjacent tones with more separated pitches that spell out an arpeggio. The chord that makes up this arpeggio is a dominant 7<sup>th</sup>, resolving with a leap upward to the last note of ‘Y,’ our tonic B-flat. Thus, after the ambiguity of ‘X,’ which does not tell us immediately what key we're in, ‘Y’ dutifully establishes the home key. Still, this concluding B-flat is just a single pitch presented in octaves...Beethoven will deliberately delay a full chord of B-flat in root position for some time to come. (Generally elsewhere, ‘Y’ will omit the final upward leap.)

The motto acts as an antecedent to the full statement of the theme. We might reasonably anticipate the ensuing consequent to also be 4 bars and make a neatly balanced classical era period, but Beethoven deliberately plays with this expectation and offers something more unpredictable and interesting. Instead of 4 bars, the consequent actually extends to 7. By starting again with motive 'X,' it suggests something parallel, but the clear emphatic outlines of the motto are now blurred by *p* dynamics, a richly harmonized texture, dialoguing, and a feeling of leisurely expansion. The original pitches of 'X' are heard at the start, low on the keyboard, harmonized by full chords for both hands. This is answered by the clarinet and cello harmonizing a complementary descending idea that could suggest a loose inversion of 'X,' but also references the descending motion of 'Y.' The dialogue between low piano chords and strings is then repeated in freely varied form. Now the R.H. moves up to its regular position on the keyboard and seems to start a third evolution of the pattern, but instead extends into a more flowing and linear continuation.

Quasi-counter-statement – This is preceded by an up-beat lead-in from the clarinet: a staccato rising 8<sup>th</sup>-note scale that beautifully exploits another aspect of the instrument's tone color. For all its attractiveness, this would seem at first to be a not particularly significant conventional gesture, but we will label it motive 'Z' because Beethoven makes more and more use of it, especially in the second half of the movement. It can be viewed as a counterpart to motive 'Y,' as both consist of a straight directional movement in staccato notes of even value. But in this case 'Y's descent, arpeggio movement, and quarter notes are contrasted by 'Z's ascent, stepwise scalar motion, and 8th notes. We then hear 'X' up in the clarinet again, which provides the feeling of a return to the beginning and leads us to believe that we are going to get a counter-statement. However, this turns out to be a foreshortened (7 bars) and very free new exploration of the preceding material. Right behind the clarinet, the cello imitates with a sequenced presentation of 'X,' and it will go on imitating the clarinet as this passage progresses. After 'X,' the clarinet continues the motive's rising motion with a surprisingly new and very lyrical extension. Soon, this transitions to a more descending line that may suggest a faint echo of 'Y.'

Main theme II: After teasing us with the wonderful irregularities and surprises of the first main theme, Beethoven now rewards us with something more reassuringly regular. The arrival of Theme II is anticipated by a new L.H. pattern of oscillating staccato 8<sup>th</sup>-notes. This vocal-style rhythmic accompaniment will continue throughout the following theme and provide a welcome sense of buoyancy and flow. The music has finally settled into a regular groove.

Statement 8 bars (2+2+4... "ready, set, go" pattern). The cello and clarinet now offer us a lyrical duet that is punctuated by playfully rising 16<sup>th</sup>-note runs from the R.H. (a subtle reference to motive 'Z'). The mood is light and ingratiating. Somehow the start of the lyrical phrases seems to evoke 'X,' perhaps in their chromaticism. The cello's initiation of this theme gives us the first indication of the important solo role that it will play in this piece. After the clarinet's answering solo in the next 2 bars, the final 4 bars progress with both instruments together in octave unison. Counter-statement – This is most effectively rescored with the R.H. taking over all the lyrical material in ringing octaves, while the cello provides the staccato accompaniment and the clarinet a simplified version of the rising interjections. Our delight in this is cut short by the theme transitioning after only 6 bars to the busy passagework of the...

Modulating bridge: This is a short and quite conventional-sounding bridge. For 2 bars, the R.H. plays a rising scale in flashy oscillating 16<sup>th</sup>-note octaves, against which the clarinet and cello

offer more gently lyrical contributions. This is grounded in the bass by a descending quarter-note arpeggio that suggests an augmented version of ‘Y.’ The whole 2-bar process is then literally repeated, but this time extending to a clear and emphatic closed cadence in F-major, our expected dominant key for the sub-theme.

Sub-theme introduction: Instead of the expected sub-theme in F, Beethoven throws the biggest shocker of the whole movement at us here. We are presented with a piano solo consisting of a pair of mysterious, hushed fanfares with a slightly ecclesiastical aura. The first in D major is followed, after a brief cello comment, by a repetition in G minor (relative minor of B-flat). The sudden appearance of D major, a key a third away and completely unexpected in this context, is more of a harmonic non sequitur than a modulation. We’ve abruptly been transported to a strange and beautiful alien environment. (“...picks up on the chromatic motion at the beginning (F, F-sharp, G) and takes these pitches to a harmonic level of structure.”) (Shapiro) With all its oddness, however, this remains a balanced period of 4+4. And, just as we are trying to process the meaning of it all, Beethoven effortlessly slips back into F major as if nothing untoward had happened, giving us the actual...

Subordinate theme: This is the most orthodox theme so far, with a regular phrase structure of 8 bars (4+4) that is also preserved in the counter-statement.

Statement – After a graceful clarinet lead-in, this instrument has the sunny and lyrical melody over a bustling staccato 8<sup>th</sup>-note cello accompaniment that almost has the character of a counter-melody. The piano is limited to a few unobtrusive chords. The theme starts with a clear reference to motive ‘X,’ but now modified so that the first interval is a 3<sup>rd</sup>. Still, the motive retains its chromatic character. After the rising motion of ‘X,’ we continue with a graceful 8<sup>th</sup>-note descent. Thus the overall shape of the antecedent clearly refers back to the 4-bar motto. The parallel consequent sequences the material upwards while decorating and extending the rise farther, thus shortening the descent.

Counter-statement – Piano lead with “music-box” scoring. R.H. has melody in octaves, the upper notes sounding above the original clarinet line. The staccato 8<sup>th</sup> notes are now in the L.H., also an octave higher than before. The clarinet and cello are limited to a few telling notes that enrich the tone color.

Closing group: This is a wonderfully spontaneous-sounding mixture of themes, quasi-themes, and busy transitional material.

Part I – 8-bar (4+4) parallel period, plus 5-bar extension. A hip-sounding theme with strong *sf* accents on weak beats. The first half has clarinet lead, with close R.H. imitation. The consequent repeats this material down low with L.H. lead in octaves and the clarinet and cello providing the imitation. A sense of new decoration is provided by R.H. trills and grace notes. The following extension hushes to *p*, and is based on a new rhythmic 8<sup>th</sup>-note idea derived from the last bar of the theme. This is dialogued by the R.H. in 3<sup>rd</sup>s and the clarinet and cello in corresponding 10<sup>ths</sup>. The effect is of a descending transitional line, anchored by quarter-notes in the L.H. bass.

Part II – 6 bars (2+2+2). Now the trio switches to a happy-go-lucky mood, seeming to play a game of tag with a 2-bar phrase that follows a joyful upward leap with a flowing 16<sup>th</sup>-note descent...kind of a distilled echo of the motto’s shape. The effect is sharpened by a staccato launch and *sfp* dynamics. The R.H. starts the game, and it has an octave leap with a grace note

ornament. The clarinet follows with a literal repeat down an octave, except that its initial rise has changed to a 4<sup>th</sup>. This is copied exactly by the cello, yet another octave lower. Part III, 14 bars (6+8), is the freest and least clearly thematic. This is bold, dramatic music that resists easy parsing into clear phrases. It starts with a *f* bar that seamlessly extends the momentum of Part II and features a powerful 8<sup>th</sup>-note stepwise descent in *tutti* octave unison. In the next bar, the unison descent continues, but slowed to staccato quarter-notes. This climaxes with 2 bars of piano solo, a powerfully rhetorical gesture that starts with two emphatic *ff* chords and then, after a pause, four staccato *p* quarter-note chords. This motive is immediately repeated up an octave and scored for the full trio. With reference to the *ff* chords, the descending 3<sup>rd</sup> that these project so vehemently seems to be a reminder of the shocking 3<sup>rd</sup> relationship from the start of the sub-theme intro. The quiet quarter-note chords that follow relate to the unison lead-in just before, but now they move in a pattern based on more 3<sup>rd</sup>s in a jagged descent. The last 8 bars are characterized by a more elaborate texture dominated by tightly undulating, off-beat R.H. 16<sup>th</sup> notes. We also hear the clarinet and cello giving us more stepwise descents, but now staggered and in long notes. An exciting new rising figure soon emerges in the bass, providing contrary motion to all the prevailing downward momentum. This consists of staccato quarter-note arpeggios that suggest an inversion of motive 'Y.' Finally, trills and a flashy R.H. cadenza-like flourish that tears down the keyboard transition us to...

Part IV (Cadence theme) – After the rather disorienting freedom of Part III, Beethoven offers some welcome stability with a regular and accessible final theme. This 8-bar (4+4) parallel period, featuring a catchy tune, is like a surprise little treat to wrap up the exposition. (Shapiro has perceptively noted the relationship between this and the last movement's ditty.) The theme acquires an enhanced character from playful off-beat accents and from the exciting staccato/legato rhythmic pattern of its 8<sup>th</sup>-note accompaniment. The antecedent is *p*, in contrast to the loud and blustery end of Part III. The R.H. has the tune and the cello the chattering accompaniment. The consequent repeats this material with clarinet lead and the 8<sup>th</sup>-note pattern moved up high to ringing R.H. octaves. This time the volume swells with a crescendo that culminates in *ff* *tutti* cadence chords featuring multiple stops from the cello. This emphatic closed cadence in F major provides a clear, straightforward end to the exposition and duly heralds the exposition repeat.

#### *Development:*

Part I: Based quite faithfully on the soft fanfares of the sub-theme introduction. Even the harmonic disorientation of the very beginning, with its startling shift from F major to D-flat major, is analogous to the corresponding effect at the end of the bridge. It's still a juxtaposition of keys related by a 3<sup>rd</sup>, but a major rather than a minor one. The scoring is unchanged, with piano solo and a brief cello interjection. The second fanfare is now in G-flat major instead of G minor. However, in this case, the entire trio then joins for a mellow 2-bar extension.

Part II: This continues the laid-back mood with a marvelously lyrical interpretation of the motto, initiated by the cello and soon joined by the clarinet.

Part III: For this longest passage of the development, we now switch into much more active and exciting music that makes Parts I & II seem almost like an introduction in retrospect. A constant stream of roiling 16<sup>th</sup>s in the R.H. signals the dramatic shift in character. It is now time for

motive 'Y' to shine in the spotlight, presented in a repeated pattern of vigorous imitation rising from L.H. bass up to cello and then to clarinet on top. As we modulate from key to key, the dynamic level stays at *f* and finally reaches *ff* in preparation for...

Part IV: This has the character of a brief and more subdued interlude, offering a contrapuntal development of motive 'X.'

Part V: Closely based on Part III, albeit shorter, with a return to the busy 16<sup>th</sup>s and the prominence of motive 'Y.' This time, however, 'Y' itself is confined just to the L.H. bass, while clarinet and cello offer a new lyrical response, harmonizing together in 10<sup>th</sup>s.

Part VI: Retransition. A 4-bar piano solo that rises up to *ff*. This starts with motive 'Z,' but then continues the scale-wise ascent with 16<sup>th</sup>-note motion in alternating octaves. In fact, this extension is actually an inversion of the flashy piano part from the end of Part III of the closing material.

*Recapitulation:*

Main theme group: This is significantly abbreviated and features some notable recomposition.

Theme I: The motto is unchanged except that now the dynamics are boosted from *f* to *ff*. The consequent starts as before but is shortened to half its original length by means of a recomposed 4<sup>th</sup> bar featuring motive 'Z,' for the first time in the cello. It sounds like the cello is taking the lead of the quasi-counter-statement, but this is also quite shortened and turns out to be majorly rewritten. This time the cello instead presents the entire motto, while at the same time the clarinet echoes it in diminution. After only 4 bars, the piano takes up motive 'Z' in octaves, using it in a new role to launch right into...

Theme II/Bridge: The material of the statement is unchanged, except that it is given a fresh new feeling by being transposed down to the subdominant. The counter-statement slips from there to the relative minor, but after only 4 bars, the theme gives way to brief new material that takes the place of the original bridge.

Sub-theme: The big surprise here is that the mysterious fanfares of the subordinate theme introduction are completely discarded. With this and other omissions and contractions, we have reached this theme much sooner than in the exposition...in fact, in only a bit more than half the original number of measures. As another example of the recent proliferation of motive 'Z,' it is used here as well, for the first time heralding the sub-theme. The cello plays it as a lead-in to its familiar bustling accompaniment. Otherwise, both the statement and counter-statement are virtually unchanged except for the expected transposition to the tonic. In fact, from now on the recapitulation will be much more regular, as is typically the case for sub-theme and closing material.

Closing group:

Part I – All very regular.

Part II – Sounds more altered as the R.H.'s start no longer has an octave leap, and the clarinet's 16<sup>th</sup>-note run is deliciously re-written.

Parts III & IV – Both very regular, though the very end of the cadence theme slightly reshapes the clarinet melody to lend extra brilliance. Again, we end with the emphatic, closed cadence chords, now naturally in the tonic B-flat.

Coda: This brief but enjoyably playful extension somewhat surprisingly completely ignores the motto and its constituent motives. Instead, Beethoven has some clever fun with the cadence chords just heard and with a rising 16<sup>th</sup>-note scale that derives from motive ‘Z’. Offset by repetitions of the cadence chords in shifting, unresolved harmonies, we hear the scale varied in different ways including a rising triplet arpeggio, a legato chromatic scale, the staccato 8<sup>th</sup> notes of motive ‘Z’ itself, and finally a sweeping 16<sup>th</sup>-note scale that is twice as long. Enhancing all of this is a charming new lyrical phrase that is heard twice, first with music-box scoring from the piano and then repeated by clarinet and cello.

## **Movement II - Sonata form, Adagio, 3/4, E-flat major (the expected subdominant)**

“An operatic Adagio movement characterized by grand and noble gestures, is notable for the soloistically expressive treatment of the cello and the florid piano writing and comes at the heart of this otherwise humorous work.” (Shapiro)

### *Exposition:*

Main theme: Statement 8 bars (4+4), contrasting period, *p con espressione* (with expression). Cello lead with piano accompaniment. In addition to giving the cello a wonderful opportunity to solo at some length, this affords our hard-pressed clarinetist a welcome break to catch breath and rest lips. We are treated to a serene and marvelously lyrical melody. The antecedent is based on a repeated short rhythmic motive: long-short-long in dotted rhythm. The motive first leaps up and then is repeated symmetrically traveling partway back down. This whole phrase is then duplicated, but this time reaching higher. The effect of this lilting pattern and the slow 3/4 meter is most soothing, almost like a lullaby. The piano supports this singing line with a very characteristic vocal-style accompaniment: a recurring pattern of a bass note followed by staccato repeated 8<sup>th</sup>-note chords. The contrasting melody of the consequent has a more passionate and unpredictable line, rhythmically varied and ornamented, that seems to soar ever higher before settling back down at the close. The increased intensity is reinforced by a brief crescendo up to a *sf*. The piano part is also correspondingly more complicated with mild syncopation and some contrary motion to the cello’s lead.

Counter-statement – Our clarinetist (hopefully now refreshed) is here given the opportunity to repeat the theme up an octave. During the antecedent, each of the short rhythmic motives is decorated by a new, immediate echo in R.H. octaves. This provides a very effective enrichment of what was so simple before. Things are further enlivened by new legato 8<sup>th</sup>-note cello arpeggios. Now the consequent provides an effective climax to the entire main theme by offering the richest and most ornate scoring so far. The clarinet hews faithfully to the theme at first, but then provides a new take on the last two bars. Meanwhile the cello sings an expressive counter-melody, and the R.H. sparkles with grace notes and an extended trill, leading into a syncopated counter-melody of its own.

Bridge: 5-bar piano solo. Starts with an up-beat lead-in consisting of a rising 16<sup>th</sup>-note staccato arpeggio. As is common for a slow movement bridge, what follows provides very melodic

material that continues the mood of vocal-style lyricism already established. The R.H. sings a free and elegantly ornamented line over a rhythmically supportive L.H. The delicate effect of this modulatory passage is enhanced by “music-box” scoring with both hands high on the keyboard.

Subordinate theme: 4 bars (2+2), plus 2-bar codetta. This is yet another vocal-style theme, but now presented in the form of a duet for cello and clarinet. The cello launches off with a graceful phrase that starts with a staccato 16<sup>th</sup>-note rising scale (perhaps reminiscent of the bridge lead-in), and the clarinet then answers with a long note followed by a complementary stream of its own lyrical 16<sup>th</sup>s. After the clarinet has taken over the lead, the cello still continues with a harmonizing countermelody. The next two bars offer the same material again, but this time with the parts reversed and moved to the instruments’ corresponding octaves. Underlying all of this is the *pp* murmur of a 16<sup>th</sup>-note piano accompaniment in "oom-cha-cha-cha" style.

Codetta – Instead of any real closing material, Beethoven simply extends the sub-theme an extra 2 bars in freer style and embellished with a graceful R.H. run to bring the exposition to a close.

#### *Development:*

This is relatively simple and in just 2 parts, offering more of a dreamy reverie than an intense working-out of thematic material.

Part I: Immediately establishes a contrasting feeling with a plunge into minor and a steady new triplet rhythm that the L.H. will continue throughout. Constantly shifting and surging dynamics enhance the effect of this altered mood. Within this atmospheric setting, the R.H. (in octaves) and clarinet trade off a new lyrical phrase that does not seem clearly related to anything in the exposition. (It does have a dotted rhythm, but different from main theme motive.) After a few exchanges, the R.H. ends this section with a longer free exploration.

Part II: Retransition. This is about the same length as Part I and thus relatively long for a retransition. It has something of the effect of a tease, with the return of the main theme rhythmic motive seeming to anticipate and summons the recapitulation. The sound is clearly differentiated from Part I by a switch to major and sparser texture with both hands of the piano in the treble clef and the absence of the clarinet for the first 6 bars. Also, the continuous triplets have given way to a normal 16<sup>th</sup>-note pulse. Almost plaintively, the cello repeats the short dotted-rhythm motive *pp*, each time followed by gently varied descending R.H. runs. The pattern becomes freer as it proceeds and builds to a mild dynamic climax after the clarinet has rejoined.

#### *Recapitulation:*

Main theme: An effective subtlety here is that the cello starts to sing the theme just a little before we have actually cadenced back home in E-flat major. As is common practice at this point in a slow movement sonata form, the theme now receives an opulently scored presentation, quite in contrast to the opening of the movement.

Antecedent – Despite all the changes, continuity is provided by the cello singing the melody again in its original form. The most striking novelty is the clarinet's response to each of the cello's brief motives; now, instead of an echoing imitation (as in the exposition counter-statement), we get a supple, new motive that answers without duplication. While all this is going

on melodically, the piano provides new rhythmic animation with a wide-ranging, virtuoso alternating 32<sup>nd</sup>-note accompaniment.

Consequent – As the piano continues in the same style, our melody instruments switch to their parts from the counter-statement, with clarinet lead and cello counter-melody. Thus Beethoven gives us, in just one pass through the theme, an abbreviated sense of both the statement and counter-statement.

Fragmentary counter-statement – What follows will take the place of the original bridge, but it is really more in the nature of a partial counter-statement, as it repeats in climactic scoring just the 4-bar consequent of the theme. The R.H. plays the melody either freely decorated (1<sup>st</sup> bar and 4<sup>th</sup> bar) or grandly in octaves. Meanwhile the clarinet and cello move in synchronized 8<sup>th</sup> notes, offering a sinuous new counter-melody that starts in octave unison and then diverges into harmonizing parts.

Sub-theme: Just the 4 bars without the earlier 2-bar codetta. In transposing this to the tonic key, Beethoven is quite faithful to the original material but expands the range by having the cello move downward, while the clarinet shifts higher. It is in bar 4 that some striking harmonic and melody changes are introduced to provide a smooth new segue to the following...

*Coda:*

Part I: This expressive passage starts *p* and then crescendos with some *sfs* up to *ff*, before then dying away to a pregnant pause. The melodic substance is an exchange by all three upper voices of the dotted-rhythm motive, but now tellingly altered through double-dotting.

Throughout, the L.H. subtly reminds us of Part I of the development by means of the same triplet rhythm accompaniment employed there.

Part II: Ends the movement with effective understatement. A sighing phrase from clarinet and cello leads to a staccato R.H. chordal variation. After this, the piano descends through a 3-octave 16<sup>th</sup>-note arpeggio, with the last note just a single *pp*, unharmonized low E-flat.

### **Movement III – Theme and 9 variations with coda, Allegretto, Common-time, B-flat major**

“[The] finale is a set of variations on the aria *Pria ch’io l’impengo* [‘Before what I had intended’] from Joseph Weigl's opera *L’amor marinaro* [‘Maritime Love’], first performed in 1797. The melody gained popularity, which accounts for the “Gassenhauer” nickname that attached itself to the trio: a ‘Gassenhauer’ is simply a popular, or street, song.” (Theodore W. Libbey, Jr.)

(Incidentally, Weigl was Joseph Haydn’s godson and a great favorite of the distinguished composer.)

While it was common for Beethoven to write theme & variations on preexisting melodies by other composers, these are otherwise freestanding sets and not part of multi-movement compositions. Thus the use of Weigl’s theme as the basis of our finale is most unusual. It may be that the tune was suggested to Beethoven by his publisher, and there are accounts that he was upset when he learned of its actual origin and even intended to write a new movement in substitution. Interestingly, “...The frequently hummed melody...was also taken up by Abbé



Gelinek, Joseph Leopold Eybler, Johann Nepomuk Hummel and Paganini. This theme is certainly subjected to a great variety of metamorphoses in these nine variations – in the fourth it is even hidden behind oppressive blocks of chords reminiscent of a funeral march. Thus the decidedly trivial could in Beethoven's hands become the catalyst for the most imaginative art of transformation.” (Hans Christoph Worbs)

“The range of colors, characters, and textures in this relatively short variation set is truly remarkable.” (Shapiro)

Theme:

Weigl's jaunty tune is 16 bars long and breaks down into very regular 4-bar phrases, with a scheme of *a-a-b-a'*. Throughout, it is characterized by an infectious repeated rhythmic pattern that includes persistent off-beat accents.

Phrase *a* can be viewed as a miniature contrasting period of 2+2. The antecedent introduces the characteristic rhythm with a rising shape and then immediately repeats it, slightly varied and descending. Each time the rhythm starts with a staccato up-beat, and then a *sf* accent after the downbeat. The mildly contrasting consequent gives us the rhythm again, but now ending with a dotted figure. This is immediately sequenced down a step to complete the phrase. The first time we hear *a*, it is played by the R.H. over a bouncing cello accompaniment of staccato 8<sup>th</sup> notes. For the repeat of *a* the clarinet, which had been silent, now has the honor of taking over the melody, and the piano gives an enriched version of the lively accompaniment.

Phrase *b*: As is often the case, this contrasting phrase has a strong 2+2 feeling. We still hear the basic rhythm, slightly varied and with a new shape, and then this is immediately repeated. The R.H. plays the idea first, and the repeat is given to the clarinet, thus paralleling in only 4 bars the scoring contrast of the previous 8 bars. We still get off-beat *sf* accents, but now just one in each 2-bar bit. The accompaniment to the R.H. lead, and then to the clarinet, corresponds with the pattern established with *a* and its repeat.

Phrase *a'*: Melodically this is actually identical to the original *a*, but the scoring is the richest so far, with R.H. lead against a new counter-melody harmonized by the clarinet and cello and a new rising arpeggio shape to the L.H. accompaniment.

Unlike many sets of variations in which some of the individual variations seem to be linked by a feeling of incremental change, this movement mostly exploits a strategy of bold contrast and maximum differentiation from one version of the theme to the next. (“And now for something completely different...”)

*Variation 1:*

Piano solo. Beethoven immediately asserts his mastery and sophistication with a virtuoso piano turn that almost completely ignores Weigl's melody while respecting its phrase structure and harmonic scheme. Phrase *a* is a 16<sup>th</sup>-note toccata with the first part rising dramatically up the keyboard and the continuation offering a staccato descent that terminates with chromatic triplets. This balanced rising and falling pattern, enhanced by surging dynamics, could be seen as an elongation of the contrasting motion at the opening of the theme. The repeat of *a* is identical until a slightly varied ending.

The *b*-phrase sounds very different, with a dialogue between rocking L.H. 8<sup>th</sup>-notes and a more animated R.H. response. Again there is a clear sense of 2+2 repetition, with effective ornamentation the second time through.

Phrase *a'*: Instead of replicating what we have already heard, Beethoven takes the opportunity for striking new variation. Though still based largely on 16<sup>th</sup>-note motion, this capricious new passage features more powerful dynamics and a sense of falling and then rising that inverts the original contour.

#### *Variation 2:*

Now the two instruments that have been silent are given a variation to themselves without any piano, creating a striking 2-part texture in vivid contrast to the preceding. The effect is somewhat somber and almost baroque, suggesting a short, imitative two-part invention.

The first time through phrase *a* is given to the cello all alone, *pp*, with a wonderfully lyrical melody whose quarter-notes and 8<sup>th</sup>-notes sound most leisurely after all the recent 16<sup>th</sup>s. Once again we encounter an overall shape that rises and then falls. At the repeat of *a*, the clarinet enters with the melody up an octave, while the cello continues in charming counterpoint.

For contrasting *b*, the first half goes back to cello alone. Then the clarinet enters up an octave with the repetition of the 2-bar bit, while the cello again continues in counterpoint.

The clarinet then proceeds seamlessly into the *a'*, playing a literal repeat of the original *a* melody. The change is that now the cello harmonizes with this melody instead of reverting to its earlier contrapuntal line. Beethoven enjoys what he has created so much that he is reluctant to move on, and instead calls for phrases *b* and *a'* to receive a literal repeat. This is a surprising departure from the phrase structure of the theme, and ends up making this variation into a rounded binary form.

#### *Variation 3:*

This offers another dramatic contrast with the whole trio together for the first time since the presentation of the theme and in a most exuberant mood. The explosive opening seems to release any tension generated during the previous variation, and the melody of *a* finally sounds like an evocation of the original tune, including its staccato up-beat and off-beat *sf*. Triplet rhythm also now becomes a notable feature as the phrase continues. The clarinet has the lead at first, and then this shifts to the cello for the repeat, with an even greater emphasis on triplets. All of this receives a propulsive piano accompaniment of rising and falling R.H. 16<sup>th</sup>-note arpeggios over a climbing, dotted-rhythm bassline.

Phrase *b* is a gentle respite, with rapid trading by the clarinet and cello of short falling and rising 16<sup>th</sup>-note runs. For the second 2 bars, the same material is repeated, but with the instruments elegantly exchanging parts.

*a'* is very similar to the original *a*, but heightened by even stronger scoring. The clarinet plays the familiar melody, but now the cello has very exciting new contributions to the accompaniment, and the triplets become more prominent throughout the whole texture.

#### *Variation 4:*

B-flat minor (parallel minor). This is the “funeral march” variation mentioned in the quotation above. This solemn, hushed transformation of the theme uses a regular pattern of antiphonal contrast between solo piano chords and clarinet/cello responses. The only time all three instruments combine together is at the end of the first 8 bars and again at the end of the second 8

bars. Little of the original melody is present, except a mild suggestion of it in the brief clarinet/cello phrases.

The *b*-phrase is less contrasted than in most of the variations. It is mostly differentiated by new harmonies.

#### *Variation 5:*

This variation returns us to major and emphasizes powerful dynamic contrasts. *a* begins *ff*, with a juxtaposition of both hands sweeping up the keyboard in 16<sup>th</sup>s, against a strident, slower-moving descending line in the clarinet (reinforced by triple-stops from the cello). This emphatic gesture is modestly answered by a brief, quiet, descending piano solo. The repeat of *a* is only slightly varied.

Phrase *b* clearly differentiates itself by *f* dynamics throughout (enhanced by regular *sf*) and by all members of the trio playing continuously. Here the piano's 16<sup>th</sup>-note runs (R.H. only) sweep first up and then down the keyboard, while the cello and clarinet play a longer-note line in canonic imitation. Powerful L.H. octaves reinforce the rhythm of the cello's line.

With the *a'*, we essentially get a repeat of *a*'s second presentation.

#### *Variation 6:*

A quiet, gently playful mood pervades. Phrase *a*, with R.H. lead, uses triplet rhythm for the up-beat, followed by repeated leaping two-note sighs inspired by the theme's rising 4<sup>th</sup>. Each of these is immediately echoed by clarinet & cello in harmony. (A nice touch is that, at first, the clarinet/cello responses are descending sighs that mirror the piano.) The repeat of *a* is cleverly varied by giving the lead sighs this time to the clarinet & cello, but before the end, the R.H. reasserts its dominance and then brings *a* to a close with a little more triplet rhythm.

Phrase *b* is a clever new take on the juxtaposition of an ascending and descending sigh. This time, that is turned into a single 4-note motive which is rapidly imitated by all four voices, descending from the clarinet on top to the L.H. low in the bass. True to the 2+2 tendency of *b*, this pattern is immediately repeated, but with the motive slightly altered.

*a'* offers a subtle new shaping of the familiar material, with R.H. lead throughout and new chromaticism in the clarinet/cello responses.

#### *Variation 7:*

A second excursion into the parallel minor, but this time with a distinctly military air, this offers a brief harbinger of the mood of heroic struggle that would pervade many of Beethoven's middle-period works. For this variation, the division between *a* and its repeat is largely concealed, thus making the 8 bars sound like one continuous sweep that starts *fp* and builds up to *ff*. After a bold launching in the up-beat by solo cello, the piano takes the lead with persistent dotted-rhythm chords, thundered out by both hands playing the same notes in octaves. In alternation, the clarinet and cello add to the excitement with dotted rhythms followed by long, sustained tones. All of this emphasis on dotted rhythm is a clever extrapolation from the brief dotted rhythms toward the end of Weigl's phrase *a*.

The *b*-phrase sustains the established texture, but offers its contrast by way of new harmonies and a clear sense of 2+2.

The biggest change in the *a'* is a heightened, dramatic crescendo combined with more climactic scoring.

*Variation 8:*

Back to major for an impetuously lyrical cello & clarinet duet, with a triplet-based piano accompaniment that is almost manically exuberant (sort of an accelerated “oom-pa-pa” pattern). As with many an operatic duet, the “singing” voices start in alternation and then progress to harmonizing together. The melody of *a* is characterized by full-throated long notes and is presented first by cello, and then repeated by clarinet.

For the *b*-phrase, the cello leads off again with a shortened variant of the lyrical line. This is immediately repeated by clarinet, but this time the cello continues with a counter-melody. Thus, *b* provides the expected 2+2 feeling, while also offering the progression to both voices combining.

It is natural, then, for the following *a'* to now have clarinet and cello throughout, with both instruments harmonizing the familiar tune. As with the other variation that offered especially vocal-style material (No. 2), Beethoven wants to sustain the mood and thus calls for the last 8 bars to be repeated.

*Variation 9:*

Rounds off the movement with the conventional reprise of the original melody of the theme, but this time scored for dramatically heightened effect. The primary novelty is canonic imitation throughout. The first time through, *a* is a piano solo with the R.H. pounding out Weigl's ditty in bold octaves, while the L.H., also in octaves, imitates below. For the repeat of *a*, the imitative voices are switched to clarinet and cello, while the R.H. launches into an insistent trilling.

Further enriching the sound picture is a wide-ranging L.H. playing flashy triplet arpeggios. Once established, this lavish new texture continues unaltered through phrases *b* and *a'*, and the shifting piano trills form an unbroken link to the following...

*Coda:*

“...just when you think he has reached the jubilant, ebullient conclusion and that certainly you have heard enough B-flat harmony to last you a lifetime, Beethoven once more shows how unpredictable his musical choices can be - with a chromatic motion reminiscent of the opening motto of the first movement, a piano trill suddenly sweeps us into the key of G Major for an even livelier finale to the finale!” (Shapiro)

Part I: Transition. A trilling, cadenza-like piano solo ending in a fermata.

Part II: Beethoven has not only modulated from B-flat to G (trading two flats for one sharp), but he also now changes the tempo to allegro and the meter to 6/8. What follows is an uncredited and infectious light-hearted 10<sup>th</sup> variation on the theme in the new key and meter. One final time, we are dutifully lead through the familiar phrase structure, except here at the end the *a'* is repeated, adding an impetuous extra 4 bars. Also, the theme discreetly starts to modulate back to B-flat during the contrasting *b*-phrase. The effect is very light, with *pp* dynamics and piano alone up through the first half of *b*. The piano plays a lilting, syncopated, quite schematic version of the melody over continuous legato 8<sup>th</sup>-note arpeggios. Phrase *b* offers effective variety by shifting the texture to staccato chords. After 2 bars the clarinet enters and will sing the lead from now on in the home key. The cello also resumes, harmonizing below the clarinet. Finishing *b* by playing contrary-motion imitations, the piano accompanies *a'* with a more

elaborate new pattern of “oom-pa-pa” L.H. below virtuoso 16<sup>th</sup>-note R.H. runs. The return to B-flat is also marked by a sudden switch to *f*.

Part III: The effect of headlong momentum created by repeating *a'* is now augmented by an 8-bar (4+4) new codetta to the theme, in which a chirpy R.H. melody with *sf* accents is immediately repeated by the clarinet.

Part IV, in turn, seamlessly extends the codetta with repetitions of a stepwise descent with a distinctive long-short-short-short rhythm, traded between clarinet and R.H. (This figure derives from corresponding descents in the original theme.) With sure dramatic instincts, Beethoven then slows down and evens out the rhythm for a playful solo bow from each of the instruments in turn. After clarinet and piano, the cello charmingly plays its pass using pizzicato for the first time in the entire piece. Its descent is actually extended for an extra 2 bars over a 16<sup>th</sup>-note flourish from the piano that leads us into...

Part V: Right at the end of the movement, the meter reverts to common time for a cute concluding hint of Weigl's theme.