1-25-1951

Analysis of Scherzo - Beethoven's Symphony No. 5

Earl Boyd
Eastern Illinois University

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This movement is in large ternary form, or scherzo and trio form. Beethoven did not mark this movement as scherzo, possibly to avoid the connotation of a light, airy character usually associated with the term scherzo, but merely marked it allegro. The first part has two statements of the first and second themes, with a development section utilizing these themes leading directly into the trio. The trio utilizes the same theme in both sections; the first section is repeated as is, and in the second section, Beethoven deviates from the usual design by repeating the second section with an added coda instead of returning to the first section of the trio. He then returns to the scherzo section with variation in instrumental color and adds a transitional passage which leads directly into the finale movement.

Meas. 1-8 Statement of first theme, which consists of a four measure first phrase in the cello and bass, and an answering four measure phrase in the upper strings and woodwinds. The tonality is C minor.

Meas. 9-18 The same statement repeated, but extended two measures before the four measure answering phrase. Statement again made by cello and bass and answered by upper strings and woodwinds. Statement and answer repeated in same tonality-C minor.

Meas. 19-34 Second theme, stated in horn. Eight measure phrase in C minor, answered by eight measure phrase in related submediant minor, Eb minor. The answer is given in the first violins and woodwinds.
The second theme is derived from the rhythmic material of the opening theme of the first movement.

**Meas. 35-44** Cadential material with reiterated rhythmic pattern, based on dominant chord of Eb minor, a Bb major chord.

**Meas. 45-52.** Statement of first theme in two four measure phrases, same as in first statement. A deceptive change from the Bb major chord into a statement of the theme in Eb minor. Statement again in cello and bass with answer in upper string and woodwinds.

**Meas. 53-56** Statement of theme in Bb minor, four measure phrase in cello and bass.

**Meas. 57-70** Answering phrase altered into sequence of last two measures of first phrase. Leap of the sixth prominent. Rising sequence of quarter note bass figure in bass, cello, and viola leads into second theme. Other instruments mirror quarter note accompanying figure from original statement of second theme.

**Meas.**

**Meas. 71-96** Repetition of second theme, slightly altered from original statement (accompaniment in sustained tones) C minor tonality to F minor, with cadence on dominant of F minor, or C major chord.

**Meas. 97-104** Statement of first theme, with two four measure phrases. Similar modulation to C minor as in first section from Bb major to Bb minor. Answering phrase incorporates rhythmic figure in first violin derived from second theme. Second violin likewise. Cello and bassoon mirror second phrase in contrary motion.

**Meas. 105-140** Development section leading to trio, incorporating elements from both first and second themes with
addition of new material at measure 115.
Trio
Meas. 141-144 Statement of principle theme in bass/in C major.
Skipping figure in succeeding measures is more
a codetta than a continuance of the theme.
Meas. 147-152 Bassoon and viola imitate theme in key of dominant.
Meas. 153-156 Second violin and first violin in stretto
of theme. C major and G major
Meas. 157-161 Cadential material. Section repeats
Meas. 162-172 Bass and cello give "false start" effect before
stating the theme, slightly altered in intervals.
Meas. 170-173 Viola and bassoon state theme in C major
Meas. 174-177 Cello and bass state theme in F major. Clarinet
and viola mirror codetta leaps in inversion
Meas. 178-185 Second violin, first violin, and woodwinds in six
measure stretto, in C major, F major, and C major
Meas. 186-197 Transition/Section on pedal g with cadence in C major
Meas. 198-221 Repeat of second section, with slight variance in
instrumental color. More filler in woodwinds.
Theme statements and strettis remain the same,
with flute stating theme alone instead of with
oboe and bassoon. Tonality remains the same as in
original section.
Meas. 222-235 Coda or transition leading back to scherzo
Meas. 236-244 First theme of scherzo. Note C is lengthened into
dotted half plus quarter. Quarter notes with
quarter rests instead of half notes in first phrase.
Likewise in answer. Tonality C Minor
Meas. 245-254 Cello and bassoon in restatement of first theme,
lengthened as in first section and altered
rhythmically with quarter rests. Answer likewise.
Meas. 255-262  Second theme, stated in clarinet and shifting to first violin. Pizzicato rhythmic accompaniment except for viola and first violin, which alternate.

Meas. 263-270  Second theme repeated, first phrase in oboe, second phrase in first violin. Tonality F minor rather than Eb minor, as in first section. First violin and viola again alternate arco and pizzicato phrase.

Meas. 271-280  Cadential section based on reiterated rhythmic pattern, with quarter notes and rests instead of half notes and quarter notes as in first section of scherzo. Cadence on dominant of F minor, or c major chord.


Meas. 289-323  Development or episodical section utilizing material from second phrase of first theme and material from second theme. First violin also uses material that was new in first section but now changes from eighth note figures to quarter note figures.

Meas. 324-273  Transitional passage leading to finale movement. Timpani patterns derived from second theme, with first violin material derived from first theme.

Additional note in handwriting: Tonic under D major harmony in upper instruments.
The Scherzo and Trio movement is based upon a minimum of material, but Beethoven expands, weaves, and subtly changes this material in such a manner as to create new interest at each recurring statement of the themes and development. Both themes of the scherzo and trio are derived from the first opening motive of the first movement, the three quarter note and half note motive, often called the fate motive by aspiring authors and critics. The first theme in the scherzo is an arpeggio in C minor, in which the first quarter note acts as an introduction to the next three quarter notes and half note, which is the exact rhythm of the opening motive of the first movement, although it is written in eighth notes in two-four time. Also, the second theme, stated in the horn, is again based upon this rhythmic figure.

Beethoven refrains from monotony in repeated phrases by altering the note values, adding one or two measures, or changing from sustained notes to quarter notes with rests and with added variety in instrumental color. The two main themes of this movement are very definite, clear-cut four measure phrases, or rather eight measure phrases, in which the first is a four measure statement and a four measure answer. Beethoven, however, varies each succeeding statement of the theme in some manner to avoid monotony and a too-definite phrase pattern.

An interesting aspect of the scherzo is that the theme is given by the cello and bass, and each time this theme is stated, throughout the entire movement, it is stated pianissimo. The result is a sort of mysterious, ethereal effect which contrasts
with the usual light, gay character of a scherzo. In contrast, the horn theme (second theme) is stated fortissimo, as if it were trying to cast off this spell of forbidding with a triumphant call of joy. Before the trio, the feeling of mystery or forbidding has an equal battle with the horn theme, but after the return to the scherzo (after the trio) the feeling of pathos persists and even encompasses the horn theme so that the second theme is stated pianissimo in the oboe and violin. However, in the transition to the last movement, this feeling is gradually disseminated by a long crescendo passage, and finally there is a burst of light when the finale movement takes up with a rapid, fortissimo entry of its theme. The motive of forbidding has finally been conquered.

In the trio, the cello and bass are again the dominating instruments. They perform this light, cheery theme with a cumbersome effect which reflects their attempts to lose this burdening theme of mystery and break away into a more cheerful mood. They try repeatedly to lead the orchestra into a lighter atmosphere, especially in the second section of the trio, where their false entries give an effect of trying to run away from the orchestra, but the orchestra manages to catch up with them and return them to their opening dirge-like theme of the scherzo. They are finally freed at the advent of the finale movement.

In the trio, Beethoven again defies tradition, and instead of returning to the first section of the trio, repeats the second section with his characteristic methods of alteration, which leads back to the scherzo section.

This movement is probably the first to give the contrabass thematic material of a rapid character.