

# Dialectic process and sonata form in Schubert's A minor String Quartet, D804

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This chapter contributes to the growing number of studies that aim to disabuse Schubertian literature of the myths regarding Schubert's competence in large-scale instrumental forms.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, some relatively recent claims by Stephen Hefling (which will be detailed below) in relation to the A minor String Quartet resonate with more dated approaches to Schubert's output, particularly approaches which readily see deviations from standard norms of form and harmony as compositional failings rather than attempting to understand what inspired those changes.<sup>2</sup> This chapter is concerned with Schubert's approach to sonata form as it appears in the first movement of this string quartet.

First, a note on sonata form in general is warranted. An article by Hali Fieldman demonstrates how sonata form, as we traditionally encounter it in major-key works, is essentially a dialectic played out between the tonic and dominant and, in keeping with the Hegelian notion of dialectic, closure and synthesis are brought about using only the elements that stirred the initial conflict.<sup>3</sup> Fieldman observes that the dialectic function does not apply so well to the traditional tonal plan of

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Engel, 'Schubert's Fame', *The Musical Quarterly*, 14/4 (1928), 457–72 (p. 458). Herbert Antcliffe (1910) cited in L. Michael Griffel, 'A Reappraisal of Schubert's Methods of Composition', *The Musical Quarterly*, 63/2 (1977), 186–210 (p. 187). Arthur Hutchings, *Schubert*, The Master Musicians Series (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1973), p. 88. Samuel Laciár, 'The Chamber-Music of Franz Schubert', *The Musical Quarterly*, 14/4 (1928), 515–38 (p. 537).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen E. Hefling & David S. Tartakoff, 'Schubert's Chamber Music', in *Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music*, ed. by Stephen E. Hefling, Routledge Studies in Musical Genres, gen. ed. R. Larry Todd (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 39–139 (pp. 79–81). Hereafter referred to as Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*.

<sup>3</sup> Hali Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz* and Sonata Form's New Way', *Journal of Musicological Research*, 21 (2002), 99–146 (pp. 106–108). Hereafter referred to as Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz*'.

minor-key sonata forms.<sup>4</sup> In minor-key sonata forms the second key-area is normally the relative major. This key shares the same diatonic pitch collection as the tonic and therefore does not serve as a proper antithesis. The end of the development in a minor-key sonata form tends to use the major dominant to effect closure and so a key-area outside of the two terms of the dialectic is introduced to create synthesis. Schubert's sonata forms in minor-keys, however, manage to conform to the notion of dialectic by making use of a *Grundgestalt*.<sup>5</sup>

Schubert uses the *Grundgestalt* to raise the issue of conflict on a smaller scale rather than the large-scale key-areas of the tonal plan, and yet that small-scale involvement carries with it far reaching repercussions which ultimately influence decisions on the grandest scale. This chapter will examine the first movement of the A minor String Quartet to show how Schubert reconciles the inherent difficulties of dialectic in the large-scale traditional tonal schemata of minor-key forms with the use of a *Grundgestalt* on the small-scale. Furthermore, he overtly makes efforts to highlight where engrained attitudes would lead us to expect rhetorical and tonal events that may not be necessary for the individual dialectic confronted by an individual work, albeit on the global stage of a specific genre. It will be found that acknowledgment of the *Grundgestalt* explains features of the A minor String Quartet that Hefling had difficulty accepting and elements that appear to run contrary to sonata form will be shown to adhere strongly to a dialectic process that is truly at the heart of that form.

Compared with the *Quartettsatz* (D703), the form of the first movement of the A minor String Quartet (D804) appears to be far more conventional. Some elements, however, still stand out as unusual for a sonata form movement and despite the work's lauded quality they have

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<sup>4</sup> Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz*', p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> A *Grundgestalt*, as used in both Fieldman's article and the present chapter, is understood to mean a defining or disruptive 'moment' that sparks off debate and explains the salient features of an entire movement rather than the alternative, more literal interpretation; 'motive'. Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz*', p. 118 footnote 41.

not all escaped criticism.<sup>6</sup> The exposition contains a passage from bar 91 to 96 where the second subject group modulates into A flat major, a key that is far removed from the second key area, C major, and that undermines the tonic (see example 3 below). Stephen Hefling criticizes this passage and the bars leading up to it as an 'evasive shift [at bar 81] to [a] very quiet rehearsal of the pastoral lied [which] remains less than fully persuasive, as does the surprise foil of a variant in flat-VI (mm. 91ff)'.<sup>7</sup> Hefling then notes that following a turn to F minor in the development section the 'cello and first violin become enmeshed in a canonic web of the theme's second phrase leading nowhere but louder'.<sup>8</sup> His appraisal of the recapitulation is even more unforgiving when he claims that it 'alters very little' and 'resolves nothing'.<sup>9</sup> These criticisms, as well as Hefling's description of the piece as a 'fundamentally lyrical work',<sup>10</sup> will be reconsidered below.

### **Unifying devices and identifying the *Grundgestalt***

Hali Fieldman writes that 'in works of Schubert that contain a *Grundgestalt*, the event always stands out in some way, although sometimes it takes a rather close, contextual reading to reveal it fully'.<sup>11</sup> In the A minor String Quartet this *Grundgestalt* is to be found in bar 9 (example 1) but to be recognised as such it must be clearly interpretable as an event marked out by features in the music. The first of these features which singles out bar 9 for interpretation is a French sixth chord in the second half of the bar. It progresses as expected to the chord of V but has several disruptive features which contribute to marking bar 9 as an event. For a start, the French sixth is not a commonly used chord in Schubert; he is much more likely to use a German sixth. The latter chord would not stand out so strongly by virtue of both its commonality in Schubert and its less dissonant make-up (a

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<sup>6</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p.79. In the paragraph which opens his analysis of the A minor Quartet he describes the work as 'extraordinary' and 'cast in a satisfying succession of movements.'

<sup>7</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p.81.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz*', p. 118 footnote 41.

German sixth contains an interval of a perfect fifth in its vertical constitution but a French sixth contains an augmented fourth, here illustrated in example 1 by the F naturals in the lower voices struck against the B naturals in the second violin). A German sixth would normally supersede the B naturals in question with C naturals and it will be of use when examining the course of the movement to note the use of both the pitches C and B in relation to each other and the *Grundgestalt*. The augmented fourth of the French sixth also helps draw our attention to bar 9 as an event even before the obviously chromatic note D sharp enters.

The pitch D sharp draws attention to bar 9 not only for its chromaticism but because of its rhythmic effect on the piece: from the beginning of the exposition the third beat in each bar has been severely undermined until D sharp enters. The lower voices in the first eight bars consistently employ dotted minims for the first three beats in each bar while the first violin line uses a combination of dotted minims, rests, and ties to avoid stressing the third beat. In bar 9 this changes and the first violin plays two minims, the second of which is the chromatic D sharp. The melody thus far has managed to almost give the illusion of being in triple time. Bar 9's undeniable clarification that the piece is indeed in duple time virtually has the effect of syncopation and we hear the D sharp (and by extension bar 9 itself) all the more loudly as an event.

### Example 1. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 5–10

The image shows a musical score for Schubert's String Quartet in A minor I, bars 5-10. The score is in 3/4 time and features four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. A fermata is placed over the first three notes of the Violin I staff in bar 5. In bar 9, the Violin I staff has a chromatic D sharp on the second minim of the bar. The lower voices (Viola and Violoncello) play dotted minims for the first three beats of each bar.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vln), and Violoncello (Vc). The score is divided into three measures. The first measure (bar 6) shows the beginning of a phrase. The second measure (bar 7) is the start of a new hypermetric unit. The third measure (bar 8) is the end of the unit. The score is written in treble clef for Vln I and Vln II, and bass clef for Vln and Vc. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score is marked with a '3' above the first measure, indicating a three-measure unit. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

Hypermetric division in the work begins with two-bar units but at bar 7 the unit is lengthened to a four-bar unit. Bar 9 is the third bar of this new unit (that is, it is the first bar to break the established pattern) and so is burdened with all the attention of this change. The raise in dynamic at bar 8 drives us into bar 9, clarifying the extended phrase length as well as highlighting the bar that contains the foreign pitch. Consequently both dynamic and hypermetric features also draw our attention to the contents of bar 9 as an event and with all these elements put together we can legitimately consider this point a potential *Grundgestalt*.

Perhaps Schubert's goal is not to highlight D sharp itself as much as the major dominant of A minor which, it could be argued, D sharp points to. But as the development of material signals, this is not the case. If the D sharp is there to highlight the dominant pitch E, that end would have been served better by the note B; the first violin's melody from bar 6 through to bar 10 establishes a rising sequence of dropping thirds, but the D sharp clearly interrupts that pattern. The sequence, if left alone, would have had D natural in bar 9 drop to B, which would then proceed to E in bar 10. B, the dominant of the dominant, would have made a more convincing melodic statement of the importance of E (the second violin sounded the D sharp pitch anyway, so the harmonic colour of the French sixth chord could have been maintained). We may ask if the D sharp could be *intended* to emphasize the E anyway but this is not the case. If we look to the same moment in the recapitulation, bar 176 (example 10), where we find Schubert decorating the reappearance of this bar with B quavers between the D and the D sharp, it is demonstrated that he consciously omitted the B from the melody in the exposition. In bar 9 the pitch D

sharp is the focus, not the hint at the dominant and its presence is there to highlight bar 9 as an event that will itself set a dialectic in motion.

The cello and viola lines move in parallel octaves from an E in bar 8 to an F in bar 9 and back to an E in bar 10. This pattern offers the most pronounced example up to this point in the movement of a chromatic neighbour-note motif that is to be found throughout the piece and draws even more attention to these bars, particularly bar 9 in which it provides the F natural that strikes the augmented fourth against B natural in the French sixth.<sup>12</sup> The unexpected F natural in bar 9 is a call to attention in a bar that otherwise suggests it is setting itself up, harmonically, for a move to the dominant. Whether that dominant is major or minor it requires an F sharp in bar 9 to be effective and this, in turn, sets up F natural as a contentious pitch holding us back in the tonic. Recognising a skirmish between F natural and F sharp in this movement will be important to understanding the dialectic at play.

Two more motivic devices which merit comment have appeared in the music by this point. One is the sense of chromatic line which first appears in the first violin in bars 9 and 10 and will prove to be a hugely important device throughout the piece for making connections and resolving conflicts (example 1). The second is the sense of triadic movement, or at least strong arpeggiation; the main theme is highly characterized by descending thirds, often spelling out triads, e.g. see bars 3 and 4 in example 1.

## **Exposition and three consequences of the *Grundgestalt***

### **1. The passage from bar 15 to bar 22**

In bar 15 we are introduced to the chromatic chord II<sup>7</sup>M (example 2) which contains the *Grundgestalt's* D sharp and an F sharp. F sharp here is to be considered a foreign pitch because it does not progress to G sharp as would be expected of the melodic or harmonic conditions associated with that pitch in its present context. II<sup>7</sup>M is an attempt to harness the D sharp of the *Grundgestalt* and correct the F natural of that same moment, pushing both more convincingly toward the

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Graubart, 'Integration in Schubert: Themes & motives 1', *The Musical Times*, 144/1884 (2003), 40–42. Hereafter referred to as Graubart, 'Integration in Schubert'.

dominant. However II7M does not resolve properly here: we expect to hear a chord of V, or a I6-4-V progression, but instead II7M progresses to the chord of I6-3. The French sixth chord of bar 9, note for note, is in fact a II7M chord with a lowered fifth; therefore F natural appears in one and F sharp in the other. The II7M chords from bar 15 on exist solely to balance the F natural of bar 9 but they themselves do not resolve as correctly as the French sixth did.

**Example 2. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 14-22**

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 14-17. The score is in A minor, 3/4 time. The first system (bars 14-15) shows the Violin I part with a melodic line and a fermata over the final note. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns. The second system (bars 16-17) shows the continuation of the melodic line in Violin I and the harmonic support in the other parts. The dynamic marking *fp* (fortissimo piano) is present in the second system.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 18-20. The score continues from the previous system. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a fermata over the final note. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 21-22. The score concludes the passage. The Violin I part has a melodic line with a fermata over the final note. The Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts provide harmonic support with rhythmic patterns.

G sharp is the most notably absent pitch from the chords that succeed the II<sub>7</sub>M chords of bars 15 and 17. G sharp *does* appear in bar 16 in the same voice as the F sharp in bar 15, but it is in the wrong octave and is a non-harmony note. No G sharp appears in bar 18 at all, leaving the second appearance of II<sub>7</sub>M even less resolved than the first. The tension is harnessed by a Neapolitan sixth chord in bar 19, but this arrives all too late at bar 22 where it leads us to A major and not the A minor that would have given the piece more stability.

Between bars 15 and 22 the first notes in the melody on every hypermetric downbeat form an arpeggio linking the foreign pitches of the work with the minor dominant of the home key. The downbeats are marked with *fp* dynamics on bars 15 and 17 cementing a two-bar hypermetric unit. The calculation of the hypermetrically dictated arpeggio operates as follows: F sharp and D sharp are heard together in bar 15. The appeal to hypermetric downbeats suggests that only the F sharp, the note on the first beat of the bar, should be counted toward constructing this alleged arpeggio but the relationship between F sharp and D sharp is repeated verbatim on the next hypermetric downbeat at bar 17 and the notes become audibly inseparable. It is because of this that both pitches will be counted. The next hypermetric downbeat sounds a B flat in the melody (first violin), a note a third down from D sharp and evidently continuing an arpeggio. The accents placed on bar 20 encourage us to seek the next note of the arpeggio in that bar where we will find a G natural (example 2). Whether one hears bar 20 as a new hypermetric downbeat or as hypermetric syncopation will determine whether one considers bar 21 or bar 22 to be the next downbeat. Either way, each bar begins with an E natural, the next note in the arpeggio. The arpeggio thus spelled out runs, from top to bottom, F sharp–D sharp–B flat–G–E or, with their enharmonic equivalents, G flat–E flat–B flat–G–E. It is not clear whether this arpeggio is more closely aligned with E flat or E. The significance of this observation will be revealed below.

## **2. The A flat major passage at bar 91**

At bar 91 five bars of A flat major are inserted into a C major section (example 3). A flat major entirely undermines both tonic and dominant and does so in the immediate presence of the second term of the

dialectic, C, a key that by virtue of its dialectic function in the harmonic plan as an antithesis<sup>13</sup> to the tonic, is our only way back to either the tonic or the dominant of the home key. It is this passage which Stephen Hefling described as a 'less than fully persuasive [...] surprise foil of a variant in flat-VI.'<sup>14</sup>

**Example 3. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 90–97**

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Schubert's String Quartet in A minor, I, bars 90-97. The first system includes parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The second system shows Violin I and Violin II parts. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'pp' and 'tr'.

As stated earlier, the passage at bar 15 was unstable because the II<sup>7</sup>M chords failed to have their F sharps progress to a G sharp. A flat, the key of the passage at bar 91, is the enharmonic equivalent of G sharp and is an attempt to supply that balance. The first three notes of the enharmonic rendition of the arpeggio spelled out by the hypermetric downbeats in the passage from bar 15 to 22 provided the dominant of A flat major (E flat–G flat–B flat). Hefling comments on the passage in A

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<sup>13</sup> How the relative major can serve as an antithesis to the tonic in light of the problems with minor-key dialectics discussed in the opening paragraph will be made clear below.

<sup>14</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p. 81.

flat major as though it were merely a harmonic gimmick employed for no reason other than to show off Schubert's fondness for distant key-relationships.<sup>15</sup> What is more, if one wishes to explain A flat major as the flattened sixth of the second key area (as Hefling does), one should notice that the French sixth that was the *Grundgestalt* was built off the flattened sixth of the first key area, F natural. It is no accident that the A flat music from bar 91 is heard in the recapitulation in F major, as shall be discussed later.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. The second subject

The second subject, which is stated in bar 59 (see example 4), is in the relative major, C major. Where the *Grundgestalt* introduced the foreign pitch D sharp in the melody and the contentious pitch F natural in the harmony, the second subject inverts this, in bar 63, with an F sharp in the melody and a D natural in the harmony. In the same bar Schubert reverses the *Grundgestalt's* chromatic line of D–D sharp–E by drawing a chromatic line from C major's dominant, G, downwards to spell the line G–F sharp–F natural–E. This line, it will be noted, connects the root pitch of the dominant of the second key area, G, to the root pitch of the dominant of the first key area, E.

#### Example 4. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 59–64

<sup>15</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> For an interesting discussion of Schubert's use of the flat–VI consult Peter Pesic, 'Schubert's Dream', *19th-Century Music*, 23/2 (1999), 136–44 (pp. 142–44) and Jeffrey Perry, 'The Wanderer's Many Returns: Schubert's Variations Reconsidered', *The Journal of Musicology*, 19/2 (2002), 374–416 (p. 380).

A musical score for strings, labeled '69' at the top left. It consists of four staves: Vln I (Violin I), Vln II (Violin II), Vla (Viola), and Vc (Violoncello). The Vln I and Vln II parts are in treble clef, while the Vla and Vc parts are in bass clef. The Vc part features a prominent chromatic line starting on D, moving through E, F, G, A, B, C, and D. The other instruments provide harmonic support with various rhythmic patterns.

A chromatic cello line, rising from D, starts at bar 69 (see example 5). That the line starts with D but does not strike a note foreign to the local key area until D moves to E flat may mean that the line does not actually *become* chromatic until bar 70 when E flat is introduced and upsets the C major modality. E flat, which begins the chromatic line, anticipates the key area to follow (A flat major at bar 91). G, the dominant of C, is highlighted in the chromatic line by a change of register in the cello but it is also made significantly more stable by a disruption in the chromatic progression immediately thereafter. The G in the bass rises a major second to A natural rather than the semitone we would have expected; in this way the chromatic line bypasses G sharp (or A flat).

**Example 5. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 68–73**

A musical score for string quartet, labeled '68' at the top left. It consists of four staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The Violin I and Violin II parts are in treble clef, while the Viola and Violoncello parts are in bass clef. The Violoncello part features a prominent chromatic line starting on D, moving through E, F, G, A, B, C, and D. The other instruments provide harmonic support with various rhythmic patterns. Dynamics markings like 'f' and 'tr' are visible.

## Antithesis

We may ask in what way C major, the second key area, can be considered an antithesis to A minor since, as mentioned by Fieldman in her criticism of minor-key sonata form tonal plans, the relative major shares the same diatonic pitch collection as the tonic.<sup>17</sup> Fieldman also, however, proved that Schubert could make a similar key-relationship antithetic in the *Quartettsatz* and we can do likewise here.<sup>18</sup> The fact is that C major negates the *one note* available to A minor that is required to resolve the II<sup>7</sup>M chord that appears in that key: the pitch G sharp. Therefore, Schubert chooses the relative major as the second key area entirely on the basis of what suited his dialectic process. He is constructing the familiar sonata form tonal plan very much from within rather than imposing a predetermined plan on his music.

At bar 75 in the second group, the arrival of D minor sparks a sequence through A minor, E minor and back to the relative major, C. It is significant that the second key area, C, should follow the dominant key area, E, in this passage. It makes a statement against us hearing the second key area of this piece as a tonality *on the way to* the dominant (A through C to E). C is the antithesis in this dialectic, not a path to some yet-to-be-revealed polar extreme.

## Agent of return

Traditionally the major dominant is expected to act as an agent of return at the end of the development section containing, it is expected, all that is required for synthesis. E major certainly does contain the G

<sup>17</sup> Fieldman, 'Schubert's *Quartettsatz*', p. 106.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99–146.

sharp required by the bar 15 passage and it is the dominant of A minor. It can be argued that such a tonal plan detracts from a work as a dialectic when the agent of closure, in this case the dominant, is an element outside of the initial terms of the argument. This criticism does not apply here, however, because the dominant key itself does not introduce any new information to effect this closure. G sharp, the pitch required for synthesis, is already part of the minor scale of the tonic and therefore already existed within the opening terms of the argument. E major is simply a vehicle in which G sharp may be presented formally and the effect of structural closure in this work owes more to the pitch G sharp than to the dominant key. We may wonder if Schubert is paying homage to tradition or if his dialectic is not strong enough to effect closure efficiently without the vehicle of the dominant to afford his argument some gravity. This too will be considered below.

### **Development section**

D minor moves to its minor-mode mediant, F minor, which is the minor submediant of the tonic. Significantly, it becomes minor via the superseding of A natural with A flat, the enharmonic pun on G sharp so important in the exposition. At bar 128 there is a German sixth chord in A flat major. This puts an F sharp into an abbreviated sequence at A flat major (example 6) and fortifies the relationship between the F sharp of the II7M chords and A flat as the enharmonic equivalent of the G sharp discussed earlier.

### **Example 6. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 122–29**

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is for Example 6, Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 122–29. The key signature is one flat (F major/A minor). The score is written in 3/4 time. The first three measures show a sequence of chords and melodic lines. The fourth measure features a German sixth chord in A flat major, which is an enharmonic equivalent of the G sharp discussed in the text. The score includes a 'CROSS' marking in the fourth measure.

Note how the F sharp of bar 128 resolves up to a G natural, not the G sharp we required earlier. At bar 139 a second augmented sixth chord has a G sharp as the upper note of the augmented interval. It is a response to the F sharp of the augmented sixth chord in bar 128 and dramatises the F sharp to G sharp movement missing from the bar 15 passage (example 7).

**Example 7. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 139–42**

At bar 141 the G sharp in the cello is paired, as the root of the diminished seventh chord, with D natural and F natural. This diminished seventh chord, held for several bars, is a halfway point between A minor and C major. If the G sharp bass note drops a semitone we will have the dominant seventh of C major. If the G sharp bass should rise a semitone it will give us the harmonic minor scale of A minor, with which the other voices may fall into line. Schubert takes neither option but surprises us at bar 146 by respelling the G sharp as A

flat, overtly endorsing an analysis of the piece in terms of enharmonic equivalents, and bringing us into E flat major (see example 8). E flat major is the dominant of the A flat episodes and so G sharp, which fundamentally does not change at bar 146, has temporarily won out over D natural and F natural (as opposed to being reconciled with them) and kept the development section in motion.

**Example 8. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 145–60**

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 145-149. The score is in A minor. Violin I has a melodic line with a fermata over the first two bars. Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The key signature changes to E-flat major at bar 146.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 150-154. The score continues in E-flat major. Dynamic markings include *fp* (fortissimo piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The Violoncello part has a fermata over the first two bars.

Musical score for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello, bars 155-159. The score continues in E-flat major. The Violoncello part has a fermata over the first two bars. A *pp* (pianissimo) marking is present at the beginning of the section.

The image shows a musical score snippet for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Cello (Vc.). The score begins at measure 160. The Violin I part has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The Violin II part has a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The Viola part has an alto clef and a key signature of two flats. The Cello part has a bass clef and a key signature of two flats. The Cello part shows a chromatic line starting on G sharp (F#) and moving down to A flat (A natural).

The enharmonic change in the cello from G sharp to A flat gives us a dominant seventh chord that could be the dominant of E flat major or E flat minor. Schubert maximises on this ambiguity by giving us a chord of E flat major in bar 148 and then a chord of E flat minor in bar 149. However, the ambiguity permeates deeper than the question of whether E flat is major or minor to the question: are we in E flat at all? The enharmonic change to A flat is something that can be appreciated on paper but in listening we do not hear the change from G sharp. If the enharmonic change had not taken place the G sharp spelling would have made for an augmented sixth chord still in D minor at bar 146. Regardless of what we hear, Schubert's choice of note spelling clearly intends for us to interpret these chords in accordance with an A flat in the cello. However, even understood as that, bar 146 might be heard as the II<sup>7</sup>M chord in A flat major resolving appropriately to its dominant E flat major. Close consideration shows the passage is indeed in E flat major but the possibility for several interpretations has been enabled. This entire passage is repeated a semitone higher in E major and all the same ambiguities apply. Thus the dominant, while it appears in the place where convention would suppose, is made obscure and played down as an Event.

Curiously, A minor seems to return at bar 165, a few bars before the recapitulation begins at bar 168 (example 9). Admittedly it does not sound like we are in the home key until bar 168, but when we examine the chords in the final three bars of the development we can see that the dominant has already relinquished its role as an agent of closure before the event of the double return. It is, rather, the chromatic line in the second violin that has been in motion since the dominant was established at bar 158 that continues to suspend our sense of arrival

until the double return and constitutes our true last moments in the development. Technically the chromatic movement in the second violin ceases by bar 167 when the B flat we would expect to follow the B of bar 166 does not arrive and the second violin contents itself to remain at B natural for a bar before changing direction and rising a semitone to the third of the tonic in A minor at the recapitulation. The reason is to further highlight how the home key has been reached before bar 168.<sup>19</sup> To maintain the momentum a sustained chromaticism would have afforded this bar, the first violin introduces a chromatic pitch of its own: the leading note of A minor. This G sharp appears between two A naturals and spells out the chromatic neighbour-note motif. Chromatic lines and neighbour-notes, essential elements of the *Grundgestalt*, are the agents of closure and though they achieve this in the context of the dominant, the dominant clearly passes the torch before the recapitulation arrives. Schubert appears to be making a statement: he can use the tonal plans traditionally thought essential for sonata form but he does not need them; it is the fruit of the *Grundgestalt*, the dialectic process, that effects closure here.

**Example 9. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 163–68**

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score is for Example 9, Schubert's String Quartet in A minor I, bars 163-68. The music is in A minor and 3/4 time. The score begins at bar 163 with a 'dim' (diminuendo) marking. The Violin I part features a chromatic line with a G sharp (leading note) between two A naturals. The other parts provide harmonic support with various rhythmic patterns and textures.

<sup>19</sup> B flat or A sharp, since these pitches are not part of the scale of the home key, would have made this less clear.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The score begins at bar 167. The Violin I part has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Violin II part has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The Viola part has an alto clef and a key signature of one sharp. The Violoncello part has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. A dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) is present in the Viola part at bar 170 and in the Violoncello part at bar 171. The score is divided into two systems by a vertical line.

The key areas passed through from bar 135 to the end of the development are worth noting here. The progression of root pitches in these tonalities is the enharmonic equivalent of the D–D sharp–E motif of the *Grundgestalt*. This, combined with the triad-themed inspiration for the third-related modulations and the dialoguing of various contentious pitches against their more innocuous counterparts pool together to create a development section that confronts the issues raised by the exposition, shows the full extent of their disruption on the music, and brings them together into a motivically derived harmonic shift to the dominant. In doing so Schubert has not only furthered the dialectic, he has brought it into line with common views of form, by utilising that form to highlight his own dialectic processes. This understanding of the development as part of the dialectic process surely shows it as something significantly more than a ‘canonic web of the [opening] theme’s second phrase leading nowhere but louder’.<sup>20</sup>

### Recapitulation

Stephen Hefling gives a very harsh summary of the recapitulation: when he states that the reprise ‘alters very little’ and ‘resolves nothing’ he fails to recognize that when Schubert ‘alters very little’ we must pay extra close attention to what alterations he does make.<sup>21</sup> When we do so we will see these alterations go a long way towards disproving Hefling’s opinion that nothing gets resolved.

At bar 176 in the recapitulation we have the equivalent of bar 9 where the *Grundgestalt* appeared and at this point less has been changed than might have been expected. This chapter proposes that

<sup>20</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p.81.

<sup>21</sup> Hefling, *Nineteenth Century*, p.81.

there is only one *Grundgestalt* and that it contains several features which draw attention to it as such. In short, while several disruptive points have been highlighted earlier, they are all contained within bar 9, within one ‘moment’. Thereafter I highlight instances in the music that, though intrusive, are very much results of that one disruptive moment at bar 9 and are dependent on it. Consequently I consider bar 9 and all the harmonic, rhythmic, melodic, and motivic elements definitive of that bar to be one *Grundgestalt*. The line D–D sharp–E in the first violin now contains interjections of B natural (example 10). At bars 177–78 the repeat of the opening theme is omitted, as is the entire passage with the II7M chords, and we skip right to the A major rendition of the theme.

**Example 10. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 175–79**

The image displays a musical score for Schubert's String Quartet in A minor I, bars 175-79. The score is in A major and consists of two systems. The first system covers bars 175-178 and includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The second system covers bars 179-180 and includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score shows a melodic line in Violin I with interjections of B natural, and a rhythmic accompaniment in the other strings. Crescendo markings are present in the second system.

At bar 222 the second subject group returns in the tonic major. At bar 226 the melodic quirk from bar 63 that played on F sharp and F natural as a response to the D natural and D sharp of bar 9, when transposed into the tonic key, uses the pitches D sharp and D natural for that very

same melodic idiosyncrasy, thus pulling a consequence of the *Grundgestalt* into line with the *Grundgestalt* itself.

The first destabilising element in the second group in the exposition was the E flat at bar 70, the dominant of the subsequent A flat passage at bar 91. At bar 233, the equivalent point in the recapitulation of bar 70 in the exposition, a C natural destabilises A major (example 11). C natural is the dominant of F natural (which the major tonality deprived us a proper reprise of) and when the equivalent of bar 91's A flat material comes around at bar 254 it is in F major. This takes care of the problems with F sharp in the exposition's second group and resolves the difficult position of the A flat section in the recapitulation by presenting the A flat section in the submediant of A minor and hence turning the passage towards the tonic's aid.

**Example 11. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 232–34**

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The score covers three measures, numbered 232, 233, and 234. The key signature is one flat (F major), and the time signature is 3/4. The Violin I part features a complex melodic line with triplets and slurs. The other instruments play sustained chords, with the Violoncello part marked with a forte (f) dynamic.

In the exposition Schubert stresses F sharps in the II<sub>7</sub>M chords in bars 15 and 17 to give us what was 'missing' from the *Grundgestalt*. Once either the F natural or its abetting company in the *Grundgestalt* have been resolved or justified the *raison d'être* for the II<sub>7</sub>M chord passage at bar 15 will have been removed. The II<sub>7</sub>M chord passage is a consequence of the *Grundgestalt's* F natural and the A flat passage of bar 91 is a consequence of the II<sub>7</sub>M chord's search for a G sharp. When the recapitulation comes around the II<sub>7</sub>M chord passage is omitted but the A flat passage remains, only this time it is in F major (example 12). Now the chief consequence to the mutiny against bar 9's F natural in the II<sub>7</sub>M chords has sided entirely with the *Grundgestalt*. This explains why the passage containing the II<sub>7</sub>M chords was omitted from the recapitulation; by giving us the A flat major section in F major Schubert

not only takes away the II7M chords' support but converts that support into an affirmative statement of F natural over F sharp undermining the reason for the II7M chords' existence to begin with.

**Example 12. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, bars 253–60**

A difficulty is created by the F major rendition of the exposition's A flat section in that it undermines A major in the recapitulation as the final destination of the piece. However, A major would not work as a final key area anyway because it undermined the second key area of the exposition, C major, rather than absorbing it in any way. C natural is an important pitch in the exposition as it is the root pitch of the second key area and the note that would have changed the *Grundgestalt* from a French sixth to a German sixth, thus mollifying the difficult F natural. Added to this, A major absorbs F sharp but does not truly resolve it. A major can have an F sharp in II7M lead to a G sharp but F sharp is not dissonant in A major. It is no longer the chromatic element in II7M and therefore it does not generate the same tension as it did in its first appearance. Consequently a move to G sharp does not sound so much

like a resolution, more a normal progression. A minor must return to close the piece; even if a C natural leading to a passage in F major did not appear in the recapitulation to undermine the major key.

### ‘Coda’

At bar 275 we appear to come across a coda. The material is essentially the opening music in the opening key but at bar 285, the equivalent moment that had the *Grundgestalt*, Schubert has made some changes (example 13). He avoids the D sharp in the melody (indeed, it is omitted from the harmony) and follows the originally anticipated melodic line discussed earlier by moving to a B instead of creating a chromatic line from D to E. The lower voices are also different. They do not move to F natural, nor do they move to F sharp. Rather, they maintain an E pedal setting us up for a large final cadence. The second violin contains a G sharp which, at every other bar, resolves to an A. Effectively both contentious notes in the *Grundgestalt* have been neutralised and the G sharp that was so important to soothing the damage those notes created has become enmeshed in the resolved music.

### Example 13. Schubert: String Quartet in A minor I, 282–93

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vla), and Violoncello (Vc). The score is divided into two measures, 289 and 290. In measure 289, all instruments play a melodic line starting with a dotted minim followed by a crotchet. The dynamics are marked *ff*. In measure 290, the dynamics change to *pp* for the first half and *ff* for the second half. The violin parts feature trills (*tr*) on the final notes. The viola and cello parts have triplet markings (*3*) over the final notes.

The melodic line continues its ascending pattern past the dominant and further acknowledges the dialectic by peaking at an F natural. At bar 287 the melodic shape is greatly similar to the II7M material from bar 15 but with all diatonic pitches. This melody which echoes the II7M chords is repeated just as they were (although this time highlighting the relationship between F natural and D natural) only it skips the bars that followed each chord with inappropriate resolutions in the exposition. This omission justifies the exercise undertaken earlier in this analysis of using the first notes of every hypermeter strong-beat to identify an arpeggio. The melodic line even descends another third in bar 290 to a B, this time a B natural as opposed to the B flat in bar 19.

The music halts on a diminished seventh chord like the one that was heard halfway through the development (bars 140–45) but this time it is sounded over an E pedal. Consequently we have an extended E major chord, a chord the II7M chords (which have just been mimicked) had longed to resolve to in the exposition. In this form the chord is decorated with a ninth, F natural, which further undermines the II7M chords' existence in the first place. This chord, one will recognize, is also a chromatically normalised version of the arpeggio that was spelled out by the hypermetric downbeats in the bar 15 passage. Even the rhythm of the melody that was interrupted by the *Grundgestalt's* intrusion onto the third beat of the bar has been removed at bar 285 to continue the dotted minims up until the final cadential bars of the movement.

One partially disruptive quality in the *Grundgestalt* has yet to be dealt with: the use of the French sixth. The unusual form of that augmented sixth (for Schubert) is acknowledged and overridden at bar

291 where a German sixth chord is sounded (example 13).<sup>22</sup> It is surrounded by rests so that it is made conspicuous. Where in bar 9 the F natural was dissonant against a B natural it is in bar 291 stabilised by a C natural (the note that was the root of the antithetical key area is again the note that restores order to the thesis).

A German sixth appeared in bar 21 but Graubart regards that chord part of a 'Phrygian cadence employing an augmented sixth [that is] a German sixth with French spice'.<sup>23</sup> Therefore it is a chord that is something of a hybrid between the French sixth that identifies the problematic nature of the *Grundgestalt* and the German sixth that would resolve much of the associated problems therein. This makes bar 21 an interesting dramatisation of the dialectic's struggle. The German sixth in bar 291–92 is an entirely different entity thanks largely to its new context. It is placed in a very different atmosphere, underscored by methods just mentioned and yet to be discussed, and comes at a point when the issues that distracted from its first appearance in bar 21 have been dealt with.

The German sixth at the end of the work reintroduces D sharp to the palette, though in a very different way to D sharp's introduction in the *Grundgestalt*. Where it once was part of a chromatic line causing disunity, it is now part of an arpeggio which strives to show concurrence among various contentious pitches in the dialectic, thereby illustrating how the issues in this work were resolved using material inherent within the original terms of opposition. Furthermore, in this way two of the three motivic elements (chromatic line and arpeggio), identified in this work, are commented on in one move with the use of this chord. We will find, however, that the third motivic element is also present at this moment. When we consider the chords that precede and succeed it we find the bass line spells out a chromatic neighbour-note motif with the notes E–D sharp–E. This virtually unites the three motivic devices that were useful to my interpretation of this work.

The arpeggios in the upper and lower lines of the German sixth of bar 291–92 connect the root pitches of the exposition's two key areas with the pitches that were originally contentious. In the upper voice, C

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<sup>22</sup> Brian Newbould, *Schubert: The Music and the Man* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1997), p. 397 discusses Schubert's preference for the German form.

<sup>23</sup> Graubart, 'Integration in Schubert', p. 41.

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