

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF BEETHOVEN'S PIANO CONCERTO NO.5

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A Doctoral Essay

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Music

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

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By

Yan Shen

May, 2015

NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF BEETHOVEN'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 5

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Piano Concerto in E-flat Major, op.73, completed in 1811, represents Beethoven's fifth and final contribution to this genre. This paper investigates the first movement of the Fifth Piano Concerto in light of the heroic style premise. To do this, I draw on the recent narrative theories of Byron Almén, the semiotics of topic by Leonard Ratner and Raymond Monelle, Robert Hatten's method of discovering music meaning, and lastly, James Hepokoski's and Warren Darcy's work in formal analysis. Following a brief account of the historical background of the concerto and a survey of the literature, the essay discusses narrativity and topic combined with sonata theory in greater detail.

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## **Introduction**

The *Piano Concerto in E-flat Major*, op.73, completed in 1811, represents Beethoven's fifth and final contribution to this genre. That it bears the nickname “*Emperor*” suggests that it joins other masterworks composed in the decade following the Heiligenstadt Testament (1802), including the *Third* (1804) and *Fifth* (1808) Symphonies, the opera *Fidelio* (1805), and the *Coriolian* (1807) and *Egmont* (1810) overtures, that portray the struggle of a heroic human spirit in the face of adversity. The main body of this paper will investigate the first movement of the Fifth Piano Concerto in light of this premise. To do this, I draw on the recent narrative theories of Byron Almén, the semiotics of topic by Leonard Ratner and Raymond Monelle, Robert Hatten’s method of discovering music meaning, and lastly, James Hepokoski’s and Warren Darcy’s work in formal analysis. Following a brief account of the historical background of the concerto and a survey of the literature, I will discuss narrativity and topic combined with sonata theory in greater detail.

## **Literature Review**

Geo-political conflicts were brewing at the time this piece was written. In the year that Beethoven was composing the concerto, 1809, Napoleon conquered Austria, and this music may have been a response to the tide of this conquest. However, much like many other Europeans who embraced the liberal influences of the time, Beethoven’s “Napoleonic Complex” was rather ambivalent and complicated. Beethoven was actually uncertain about his views on Napoleon: was Napoleon a “...liberator bearing gifts of equality and freedom born of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution? Or was he an imperialist pure and simple intent upon brute conquest

and power?”<sup>1</sup> It is certain that Austria’s defeat caused Beethoven anxiety about his financial situation due to the negative impact Napoleon’s victory had on his Austrian benefactors.

Consequently, the nickname of the “Emperor” Concerto raises an ambiguous point and still raises historical suspicions—was it meant to be Napoleon, was it meant to be a representational figure of Beethoven’s life interconnected with historical events during his lifetime, was it meant as a reference to Rudolf, Beethoven’s patron and the heir apparent to the Austrian throne, or was it meant as the idealistic hero in Beethoven’s mind, or even possibly a general reference to the human spirit? Current historical research does not offer a specific answer to these questions. The fact is, as many musicologist agree, Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No.5 may not have any perceptible association with any of the emperors. But it is certain that the work is identifiable as being in the “heroic style” due to its military topicality and its symbolism in celebrating the heroic spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Although many scholars have devoted significant energy in studying Beethoven’s heroic compositional style, not enough research has been completed on the “Emperor” Concerto, aside from general historical study and theoretical analysis. Further, abundant research about this style has been conducted on numerous of Beethoven’s other major works. The “Eroica” Symphony obviously receives the most attention from critics due to its significant status as being emblematic of his stylistic transition, along with other symphonies, sonatas and concertos during this heroic decade. Musicologists and theorists often examine this style by applying the programmatic method, which discovers the “story” of musical meaning behind absolute music by the association of the characteristics of musical elements to human actions. In considering the merits of the programmatic method, it is worth bearing in mind that this analytical approach is

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Plantinga, *Beethoven’s Concertos* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), 252.

<sup>2</sup> Plantinga, 256.

generally based on nineteenth-century aesthetics. Scott Burnham's book, *Beethoven Hero*, is one of the outstanding writings that fall into this category of the programmatic study of Beethoven's heroic style.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to the discovery of the musical meaning of the heroic style in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5, it is crucial to employ the study of topic theory. The semiotic of "topic" in this context is a musical sign that evokes an expressive meaning for the listener. Leonard Ratner's *Classic Music* launched an inquiry into topics in music of the classical period. In Ratner's view, topics are subjects for musical discourse, and labeled as "types" and "styles".<sup>4</sup> Subsequent work, including that of Wye Allenbrook and Raymond Monelle, has advanced our understanding of the expressive efficacy of topics. According to Monelle, the process of defining the expressive topics begin with a "signifier" that suggests one or more meanings (signifieds), followed by historic investigation on the origins of each type of topic. The understanding of the topic concept offers the basis for a motivic and thematic analysis of the piano concerto, where the signifiers of heroism and their signifieds are expected to play an important role in discovering musical meaning of Beethoven's Concerto No. 5.

Robert Hatten, in combining topic theory, semiotics, music theory and music history, creates an innovative approach to meaning in Beethoven's music. In his *Musical Meaning in Beethoven*, Hatten analyses Beethoven's late piano sonatas as well as string quartets and focuses on exploring how music has expressive meaning and not merely what that meaning might be.<sup>5</sup> In order to discover musical meaning, Hatten analyses the characters of markedness (Hatten's term for compositional constructive strategy), topics, expressive genres, as well as investigates

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<sup>3</sup> Scott Burnham, *Beethoven Hero* (New Jersey, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form and Style* (New York, Schirmer Books, 1980), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Robert S. Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994),



them by expanding the concept of troping (Hatten's term for the way the figurative interactions between meanings can occur and bring disparate meanings together in a coherent way).<sup>6</sup> Hatten posited that, "[a]s an interpretive competency, style also goes beyond the bald generative capacities of a role-based grammar....while style constrains expectancies, it must also provide room for unique strategies of realization."<sup>7</sup> Hatten's study presents a compelling example of revealing the work's expressive meaning by integrating different musical aspects.

Almén's musical narrative theory is another analytical methodology that applies literature narrative concept to explore musical meaning. Similar in general approach to Hatten's compound methodology, Almén's methodology combines an original synthesis of various approaches to musical narrative. Almén's approach borrows from other fields, including literary criticism, semiotics, musicology and music theory. Almén's approach also associates musical narrative with literature narrative history and myth, as well as the corollary cultural relationships. This theory also offers systematic categories for different types of narrativity, as well as an advanced methodology that will allow for the investigation of the heroic narrative of the "Emperor" Concerto.

Almén understands narrative analysis as a three-step process—the agential, actantial, and narrative. The agential level identifies the narrative's musical agents, describes their properties, determines their formal and structural functions, and the meanings of their musical character into three stages of analysis: morphological, syntactic, and sematic. This level also corresponds to Hatten's theory of musical markedness, which Hatten defines as the structural and thematic strategy level of the music. The comprehensive formal analysis offers the basis of this first level of narrative analysis. The study of topic analysis on motive and themes will be employed into

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<sup>6</sup> Hatten, 168.

<sup>7</sup> Hatten, 10-11.

this level. In chapter 5 of his *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, Almén observes that the integration of topic and narrative analysis and the interactions between the two could affect the trajectory of narrativity of the work. He states that topic is expressively static, whereas narrative is expressively dynamic.<sup>8</sup> Almén also embraces Hatten’s description of expressive genre into this chapter.

In Almen’s second level of narrative analysis, the “actantial” level (derived from the word “act”) the action essentially represents the “discourse” of the music. This level is truly the narrative activity. At this level, music reveals the interactions between units, the strategies of the network of the work. We also seek to explain the meanings of the musical events happening in a different context, or in a different transformation; and we describe the process of the transformation or simply how it occurs. Furthermore, one also needs to discover the details of the transformation of those events, such as the changes of duration, speed, order of the musical elements.<sup>9</sup> This level also has significant similarities to Hatten’s concept of “music troping”, which Hatten explains as the discovery of musical meaning in much the same way that metaphor yields meaning in language.<sup>10</sup>

Almen’s third level of analysis, the narrative level, is for the purpose of “classify[ing] the coordinated effect of transvaluation on a cultural hierarchy in terms of overall effect.”<sup>11</sup> Almén adopts the four narrative archetypes described by American semiotician James Jakób Liszka—romance, tragedy, irony, and comedy, in which Liszka developed these archetypes from the literary theorist Northrop Frye. Liszka bases his taxonomy of narrative types on two criteria: first, an outcome of victory versus an outcome of defeat; and second, the sympathies of the

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<sup>8</sup> Byron Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative* (Bloomington: Indiana University Pres, 2008), 75.

<sup>9</sup> Almén, 101.

<sup>10</sup> Hatten, 161-74.

<sup>11</sup> Almén, 65.

analyst for the order-imposing hierarchy or for the transgressor.

Emphasis on victory:

Romance: the victory of the order-imposing hierarchy over its transgressor; sympathies with the order-imposing hierarchy.

Comedy: victory of the transgressor over the order-imposing hierarchy; sympathies with the transgressor.

Emphasis on defeat:

Tragedy: defeat of a transgressor by the order-imposing hierarchy; sympathies with the transgressor;

Irony: defeat of the order-imposing hierarchy by the transgressor; sympathies with the order-imposing hierarchy.<sup>12</sup>

Agential and actantial levels together describe the details of a narrative transvaluation and “the initial hierarchical relations between units undergo a series of changes as these units interact.”<sup>13</sup>

In the next part of the essay, I will employ Almén’s three levels of analysis as a structural basis for my analysis of the first movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5. In addition, my analysis will employ topic theory as developed by Monelle and Ratner, as well as Hatten’s conception of music markedness and troping at agential and actantial levels. The narrative level analysis will strictly follow Almén’s methodology. Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata theory serves as an authoritative resource in determining formal and structural functions in the concerto. Beethoven’s concertos follow the routine of a standard Mozart concerto, which is categorized as the Type 5 sonata according to Hepokoski.<sup>14</sup> The terminology in the following formal analysis follows that of Hepokoski and Darcy in their chapters on the Type 5 sonata form. They discuss examples from different Mozart concertos, categorizing them as normative or as deformation. In the “Emperor” Concerto, although Beethoven followed the Type 5 sonata form, he did not

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<sup>12</sup> Almén, “Narrative Archetypes: A Critique, Theory, and Method of Narrative Analysis,” *Journal of Music Theory* 47, no.1 (Spring 2003): 18.

<sup>13</sup> Almén, *A Theory of Musical Narrative*, 57.

<sup>14</sup> James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 430.

completely follow the norm. As we will see in the analysis that follows, Beethoven's deviations from the Type 5 norm may reveal particular narrative meaning and insight.

## **I. Agential level:**

### **1. Morphological — Motives and Themes:**

#### **P theme: Military**

The first four motives that form the primary theme (P) of Ritornello 1 (R1, mm. 11-23) are the core of this movement, as they present the most essential signifiers for the heroic topics as well as offer the prototype of other modified motives and themes (see Appendix 1).<sup>15</sup> The very first melodic line (mm.11-12), which is constructed by motives 1 and 2, presents the military fanfare: the three structural notes, E-flat—G—E-flat, outline a bugle-like military signal tune. The strong dynamic and the heavy tremolos in the strings create a bustling atmosphere and emphasize the theme as being in a military style. The sixteenth-note triplet's gesture in motive 1 is suggestive of the sound of the snare drum in a military troop. Motive 3, the dotted-eighth-notes gesture, is obviously a symbol of a military drum: it is performed by horn—a military instrument according to Ratner<sup>16</sup>; the rhythmic feature is derived from the drum; and the V-I harmonic adds an affirmative motion. Motive 4, the stepwise gesture, is a marching military unit: steady and regulated rhythm, along with the ascending motion is a striding forward image of the soldiers' troop.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> List of motives are found in Appendix 1; formal and narrative summaries are found in Appendix 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ratner, 19.

<sup>17</sup> Raymond Monelle, "Part Three: Soldiers," *The Musical Topic: Hunt, Military and Pastoral* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 113-33.

### **S theme: Military transforms to Pastoral and brilliant style:**

The secondary themes (S) of this movement are constructed as a multi-modular section. In R1 the S theme forms as a two-module structure. The first module, S<sup>1</sup> (mm.41-48) is in a light marching style (including motive 7 &8). In the first part of S<sup>2</sup> (mm.49-56), the melody in the horn section is marked as signing style on its surface, but the underlining walking gesture in the timpani plus the horn sound maintains a marching background image. Consequently, this section remains in the military topic. The second part of S<sup>2</sup> (mm. 57-61) as a transitional section, recalls the military snare drum-like motivic material (motive 1) from the P theme, as well as bringing back the E-flat major key by maintaining on its dominant pedal. Even though both the P theme and the S theme in R1 are in the same military topic, the rather light dynamic *pp* to *p*, along with the minor key in the S<sup>1</sup> module, E-flat minor, the soft version of the military topic of S is in quiet contrast to the strong military topic of the P theme.

However, this military S theme in R1 does not maintain the same role in the Solo 1—the first presentation or the exposition of the piano solo. In this section, S becomes a three-module block: S<sup>1</sup> (mm.151-157), S<sup>2</sup> (mm.158-166), S<sup>3</sup> (virtuosic display episode) (mm.184-227).<sup>18</sup> These three modules apply the same motivic material from the R1 - S1:\S<sup>1</sup> material is from R1:\S<sup>1</sup>; S1:\S<sup>2</sup> melodic is from the horn melody of R1:\S<sup>2</sup>; S1:\S<sup>3</sup> starts with the same primary thematic motive as in the second half of R1:\S<sup>2</sup>. However, as we will see below, the topic is transformed between R1 and S1 from military to pastoral due to Beethoven's disparate treatment of the same musical elements.

In the first module of the S theme in Solo 1, the light march motive forms a constant triplet's contour, the vague outline of melodic notes replaces the clear and crisp rhythmic point on each beat as in R1:\S<sup>1</sup>. The lyric melody in continuous triplets above the extremely light

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<sup>18</sup> Note: mm. 167-174 is a tutti interjection, mm.175-183 is a section of solo fill.

accompaniment (the *pp* in the left hand with the walking motive as well as the occasional pizzicato in strings), corresponds to the features of pastoral topic. According to Monelle, 12/8—the underlying meter here, is one of the preferred meters of pastoral style. In addition, the lyrical treatment, soft dynamic, minor key, stable harmony and attenuated rhythmic motion are signifiers of the pastoral topic.<sup>19</sup> In the second module, S1:\S<sup>2</sup> the repeated non-legato eighth-note pattern of the melodic line loses rhythmic stress and energy. Additionally, the harmony lacks development as it only has a simple tonic to dominant progression. These features also correspond to the pastoral style.<sup>20</sup> The third module of the secondary theme in Solo 1, the display episode—the distinct feature of the Type 5 sonata, starts with the strong affirmative fanfare motive of the P theme, then develops into a virtuosic passage with a repeating sequence of fast running gesture which corresponds to the brilliant style. According to Ratner, the brilliant style refers to rapid passages for virtuoso performance that are normally codified by systematic repetitions and intense sequences.<sup>21</sup>

### **Non- thematic areas: Cadenza, Development and Transition Passages**

The two long cadenzas before the primary theme in this movement, at the very beginning and before the recapitulation (m.372), as well as between R4<sup>1</sup> and R4<sup>2</sup> (m. 496) manifest the fantasia style.<sup>22</sup> The elaborate figuration, shifting harmonic language, loose structural and disembodied melodic character impart an improvisational character that corresponds with the fantasia style according to Ratner's writing.<sup>23</sup>

Most of the development area as well as the transitional materials, such as the third

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<sup>19</sup> Monelle, 237-45.

<sup>20</sup> Monelle, 220.

<sup>21</sup> Ratner, 19

<sup>22</sup> In his "Fantasia and Sensibility", Matthew Head argues that Ratner blurs the boundary between fantasia style and fantasia topic. In this essay, I apply this fantasia style into the thematic topic argument by stressing that it is a style with topical function.

<sup>23</sup> Ratner, 24.

transition module before the S theme in Solo 1: S1:\TR<sup>1.3</sup> (mm.144-150), and the solo fill before the display episode (mm.175-183), present the sequential pattern with fast virtuosic runs are in the brilliant style as discussed previously.

By identifying all of the motivic appearances evident in the first movement, it is apparent that it is a P-based work due to the fact that the initiation of almost all motives is from the first four core motives in P theme discovered above. The first appearance of the eleven motives of the entire movement are listed in Appendix 1. The transformations of the four core motives occur through changes in dynamics, rhythm or tonality and these transformations appear in the transition, secondary theme, and closure area, as well as the development section. Further, these motivic transformations occur in different themes and topics. The following are examples of the foregoing assertion: the light walking march (motive 7) in the first module of the secondary theme in R1 (mm. 41-48) is the inversion of motive 4; the horn melody of the second module (mm. 49-56) (motive 9) applies the melodic material from motive 4 as well, but transforms it into a signing style; motive 10 which first appears in the closure space of R1 applies the interval of fourth and the stepwise motion from motive 1 and 2; motive 11, also in closure space, selects the broken chord of a third from motive 2 as its frame. However, the original format of the core four motives appears more frequently, particularly noticeable at the beginning of the climax of solo presentation—the display episode in Solo1 (mm. 184-194) and Solo 3 (mm. 441-451), as well as the first module of closure space in Ritornello 1: R1:\C<sup>1.1</sup> (mm.63-77). The P-based scenario, symbolizes the fully rotational process of the sonata principle, as well as signifies this piece as one of Beethoven’s “self-conscious ‘symphonic’ concerti”.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Hepokoski, 570.

## **2. Syntactic—formal strategy**

Hepokoski and Darcy undertook a comprehensive analysis of Mozart's entire concerti repertoire, which resulted in the theory of the Type 5 sonata. The first movement of Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 5 generally follows the routine of the Type 5 sonata theory. However, deviations and deformations happen at several places in this movement, which cause tension and inspire further narrative analysis.

### **The Themes**

In the first presentation of the primary theme in Ritornello 1 (mm. 11-22), the phrase structure is constructed with two repeated sentences, and each sentence contains six measures. According to the classical era concept of phrase construction, the most normal phrase frames are four-bars (2+2 bars) or eight-bars (4+4). Each sentence of the primary theme here appears as a 2 bars + 2 bars + 2 bars structure, which is not unusual either. The first four bars are a repeating two-bar pattern, which probably could be regarded as an "antecedent," while the last two bars could be considered as a "consequent" due to its harmonic progress V7-I. The frame of this 6-bar phrase has a rather simple presentation due to the lack of dramatic change on its homophonic music texture: single first violin takes charge of the melody of the simple fanfare tune; horn and bass join in the dotted eighth notes military drum; other strings play tremolo as a passionate and energetic background. The harmony also lacks complexity: tonal function is stated solely with a progression of I-V-I.

In Solo1, this primary theme transforms into an improvisational, cadenza-like passage without phrase structure, which unfolds as a fantasia style based on the fanfare tune (mm. 111-112). The dotted rhythm march of motive 3 also morphs into a lyrical gesture (mm. 115-116). Finally, the last five chords, affirmatively show the march motive, which concludes the



presentation of the theme as a rather fragmented structural design (mm. 125-126).

In Solo 3, actually a R3=>S3 merger opening,<sup>25</sup> the orchestra repeats the first six bars of the primary theme as in Ritornello 1, but the cadence is suspended in the last two bars march gesture that takes on another form as a soft lyrical pastoral figure (mm. 372-379). Then the solo repeats this alternated figure before the transition arrives (mm. 380-381). The third presentation of the primary theme presents 4 bars (twice repeating the “antecedent”) + 6 bars (three times repeating “consequence”) structure thus reveals the fragmented motion in terms of phrase construction. This fragmentation of the phrase structure in the latter of the two primary themes (in S1 and S3) may shed light on further narrative implications in the work.

In the secondary theme areas, on the other hand, the most distinct feature is the deviation of its tonal design. With a normal harmonic concept from the Classical period, the tonal organization of the S theme area is typically formed as follows: Ritornello 1 is presented in tonic, the S theme changes to dominant or closely related key in Solo1 and then the S theme goes back to tonic in Solo 3. In the three presentations of the secondary theme in this movement, the endings all follow the normal tonal design, but the beginnings are not presented in the expected center of the tonality or mode, particularly in Solo 1 and Solo 3.

In Ritornello 1, the S theme starts in E-flat minor and forms a light march gesture, and then reverts to the original (major) mode in the subsequent lyrical fanfare tune (mm. 41-61). In Solo 1 and Solo 3, however, the case becomes more complicated. In Solo 1, the theme starts in B minor pastoral topic (mm. 151-158). This is followed by another pastoral gesture afterwards, the second phrase of the theme, which is in C-flat major (mm. 159-166). And then the tutti interjection plays the march gesture with strong dynamic and comes back to the B-flat major (mm. 167-174). Through this triple key change (from B minor to C-flat major then to B-flat

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<sup>25</sup> Hepokoski, 585.

major), one can discover the inner chromatic relationship between these three keys and their connection to the tonic. D major, which is the relative major key of B minor at the beginning of the theme, is a half-step lower than the tonic E-flat major; C-flat major is a half-step lower than C minor, which is the relative minor of E-flat major; and finally, C-flat major is half step higher than B-flat major, which is the dominant key of the tonic key. The same process happens in Solo 3, from C-sharp minor to D-flat major and ends in tonic E-flat major; and the interweaved chromatic tonal relation appears as well.

### **Relationship between solo and orchestra**

Aside from the issues within the themes discussed above, other deviations happen in the relationship between the solo and orchestra. According to Classical era tradition, the first orchestral presentation, Ritornello 1, starts at the very beginning of the piece. The cadenza, as the virtuoso “solo-performative event”,<sup>26</sup> is normally located after trill with the harmonic progress V7-I in Ritornello 4 space. In this movement, however, the cadenza appears as an introduction before Ritornello 1 (mm. 1-10) as well as before the Recapitulation, Solo 3 (mm. 362-371). This three-part cadenza introduction starts right after the orchestra plays one chord on I, IV, and V of the tonic key; and the piano solo plays the improvisation-like flourished fantasia passage. Through this process, the piano solo makes a statement at the very beginning, and occupies the area that usually belongs to the orchestra. The other written out cadenza section at the end (mm. 496-515), on the other hand, reinforces both primary and secondary themes on the normative location of the classical cadenza: between two parts of Ritornello 4. Even though Hepokoski claims that the cadenza remains a free space within a concerto structure, he found that Mozart’s concerti strictly follow the classical norm, with only a few exceptions in his later concerti.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Hepokoski, 600.

<sup>27</sup> Hepokoski, 602.

Following the discussion above, Ritornello 4 is usually divided into two parts by a solo cadenza, and only the orchestra performs these passages according to Hepokoski's research. In this movement, however, Beethoven broke the routine that he always followed from Mozart's compositions, and put the solo in a large portion of Ritornello 4's orchestra space. In this two-part section, the orchestra keeps repeating the fragmented thematic motives. In Ritornello 4<sup>1</sup> the orchestra revokes the P theme material (mm. 484-495); whereas in Ritornello 4<sup>2</sup> it combines with the closing material from the first orchestral exposition (mm. 542-553). At the same time, the solo performs the virtuosic passages on the top of these thematic melodies. These displacements between solo and orchestra, cause tension; and along with other deviations from Mozart's work shed light on the following actantial level analysis as well as highlighting the strong narrativity of the movement.

### **3. Semantic: military topic dominant**

According to the analysis above, the theme and topic as well as the relationship between solo and orchestra form the essential argument of this P-based movement. The three main topical elements within thematic sections form the semantic components of this movement: military, pastoral, fantasia.

The military topic manifests an implication of the heroic style: the march, troop, soldier, hero. Beethoven chose E-flat major which is a heroic key - the key also used for the "Eroica" Symphony that is the magnum opus of the style. The first appearance of the fanfare and march topics dominate this movement, and occupy the entire primary themes. This bugle-tune fanfare announces, as well as signifies, that something important is about to happen, usually the appearance of someone significant. In the three types of march topics—the strong dynamic

dotted overture drum-like rhythm (motive 2) and the heavy walking gesture (motive 4), as well as the steady short eighth notes pattern from the secondary theme (motive 7), the former two signify the war-like scene; the latter one suggests a steady but light walking motion. Both fanfare and march feature the military topic that is categorized as sub-topics of the heroic style,<sup>28</sup> and this military topic is the governing “expressive genre” of the entire movement according to Hatten’s theory.<sup>29</sup>

The secondary category of topic, the pastoral that transformed from the military style and first appears in the secondary theme of Solo 1, forms a scene that is based on the previous march and fanfare tune but not in the real world. Monelle also suggests that the pastoral signifies or implies a kind of illusion, which could be an Arcadia, a hymn of love, or an innocent and happy idyll.<sup>30</sup> The “fantasia” style, is the third category of topics that dominates the cadenza sections. This improvisational style implicates a freedom of spirit that evokes the supernatural, according to Ratner.

By applying Hatten’s concept of music “markedness”—the strategic level of a work, I suggest the following list as a conclusion of the previous analysis of this movement:

1. Marked thematic relationships: three topics juxtaposed (military, pastoral, fantasia), with military as the dominant style.
2. Marked tonal relationships: the oppositional keys in secondary theme area , B minor—C-flat minor—B-flat major in Solo 1, as well as C-sharp minor—D-flat major—E-flat major in Solo 3.
3. Marked unusual structure: fragmental phrase structure of the primary themes.
4. Marked relationship between solo and orchestra: cadenzas’ unusual relocation.

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<sup>28</sup> Monelle, 143-59.

<sup>29</sup> Hatten, 74-75.

<sup>30</sup> Monelle, 185-206.

This list presents the markedness of Beethoven's structural and thematic strategy. These deformed relationships imply heroic action, which is the next level of meaning to be divined in Beethoven's work. In the following section, we will discover this new dimension of inferred action via an analysis at the actantial level as Beethoven's drama unfolds.

## **II. Actantial level: Beethoven's unfolding drama**

### **1. The thematic areas: primary themes, secondary themes, and the last cadenza**

#### **Primary themes:**

The primary theme in R1 (m. 11) asserts a heroic tone with military topic. The first 6-bar phrase commences with a military fanfare and the march with dotted rhythm makes a strong statement at the beginning of Ritornello 1 suggestive of a military or war-like scene (motives 1, 2, 3, 4). In addition to the simple phrase structure, as evidenced in the syntactic stage, the homophonic and persistent music texture combined with the lack of harmonic complexity creates a section that is focused on establishing heroic agency and military topicality.

The melodic contour of this first phrase displays a gesture that implies struggle. The first two bars, affirm the tonic of E-flat with a half note, followed by a wavering gesture (motive 1), a descending third line (motive 2), and an ascending motion from B-flat to E-flat (motive 3). The next two bars repeat this up and down contour. The last two bars of the first phrase present an ascending line with an affirmative steady walking pace (motive 4), which implies marching toward victory. But the end of the phrase (mm.16-17) is a falling gesture that starts from A-flat on the third beat of measure 16 to F, then to E-flat in measure 17, which may imply resistance. These wavering motions within the phrase together with the military style project conflict and a struggle for victory. The final falling gesture, however, implies the difficulties of achieving

victory, which is the essential point of a military action.

In the second presentation of the primary theme, which occurs in Solo 1, the military topic mutates to a form of fantasia style that evokes a sense of a free, supernatural, fantasy-like scene (mm.111-125).<sup>31</sup> Representing the protagonist, the hero, the solo piano does not repeat the military pattern as in Ritornello 1, but rather presents a spiritual, unrestricted imaginative world. At the end of this primary theme section, however, the affirmative five eighth-note chords (mm.125-126), after the brilliant run passage, seem to announce that the protagonist, now spiritually renewed, will rejoin the military struggle.

In the third appearance of the primary theme, which occurs in Solo 3, the three repetitions of the “marching towards victory” material (motive 4) presents a change of action in the unfolding drama: the first presentation is with strong affirmative non-legato chords played by full orchestra; the second presentation is in a soft dynamic with a legato line only in the woodwinds; the third presentation is by solo piano with a soft, legato line with added trill ornamentation, leading the theme into a transitional singing style passage (m.382). These three gestures present a continuously falling motion, via the dynamic level related to the music texture that seems to amplify doubt about the presumed victory. We can also infer that perhaps the protagonist seeks to leave the struggle and escape to Arcadia.

It seems like the fragmented phrase structure of the primary themes discussed in the previous analysis at the agential level implies the narrative trajectory of the music, which integrates heroic effort, struggle, and spiritual growth.

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<sup>31</sup> Matthew Head, “Fantasia and Sensibility,” *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, ed. Danuta Mirka (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 259-63.

### **S theme: transformation to an unreal world—a hero's escape**

The new pastoral topic, which appears as the secondary theme in Solo 1 and Solo 3, changes the drama from the extroverted military action of the primary theme to an internalized imaginative scene. As previously discussed, a pastoral topic may indicate an Arcadia or idyll. This sharp contrast between the war scene and Arcadia may indicate escape from the reality of fighting to an idealized world. In the first module of the theme in Solo 1 (mm.151-157), the triplets' gesture that is based on the light march theme of R1:/S<sup>1</sup> (mm.41-48), seems like a mirage of the faraway marching as the melodic line is spread out within the continuous eighth-note triplets. The *pianissimo* dynamic marking, extremely light accompaniment of the orchestra, and pizzicato articulation all suggest that this is a dream-like scene. The overly simple harmony in the second module of Solo 1 (C-flat major, I-V7) (mm.158-166), with a graceful melody in a particularly high register represents a cheerful ethereal image. But in the last measure of this module, the unexpected falling melodic line with *marcato* markings and a sudden *crescendo*, as well as the sudden harmonic shift to the dominant key of B-flat major, seems like a fall from heaven or an awakening from a dream.

The following tutti interjection after the two modules affirmatively presents the marching theme (mm.167-174) so as to awaken and invite the hero back to the war. The solo fill afterwards (mm.175-183), reflects the two stages of inner action of the protagonist: hesitating—a sequence that is repeated three times with an up and down motion of broken chords and arpeggios; and, confirmation—the two strong tonic octave chords in the upper register (m.180). The third module, the display episode that is the climax of this solo presentation, starts with the heavy fanfare tune bringing the drama back to the military scene, and then gradually increases in force. This might imply the hero's final affirmation to leave the pastoral fantasy world to join in the

final battle.

The hero's inner conflict between staying in Arcadia or returning to be a warrior is intensified by the modulatory scheme. As we discovered at the syntactic stage of the agential level, the modulations from B minor—C-flat major—B-flat major in Solo 1, C-sharp minor—D-flat major—E-flat major in Solo 3, contain the discordant chromatic relationships with the tonic key (B minor's relative major, D major is a half-step lower than the tonic, E-flat major; C-flat is a half-step lower than B-flat major, which is the dominant of the tonic key, etc.). These chromatic interactions with the tonic key possibly symbolize the hero's struggle, which may be his doubt or intransigence between reality and fantasy.

### **Last Cadenza**

Another thematic area, the third cadenza at the end (mm. 495-515) presents a conclusion of the themes from the solo presentations. It starts with chromatic sequences based on the first military fanfare of the primary theme; the light march that is from the first module of the secondary theme in Ritornello 1 appears in m.508; the lyrical style passage in m. 516 is the transformation from the second module of the secondary theme in solo presentations. These three thematic blocks are connected through fantasia style passage-work with fast runs and trills. The chromatic ascending gesture at the beginning keeps rising to the climax point at F, then falls two octaves to the lower F, then jumps from the F one octave above to B-flat with a trill ornamentation. These gestures, like the up and down gestures previously discussed, symbolize heroic struggle. The following sudden change to the light march and lyrical pastoral tune suggests escape to an ideal world that may signify the hero's inner sensitivity. But the strong tutti recurrence of the primary theme at measure 529 affirms the hero's final choice—a return to continuation of the noble fight. This conclusive cadenza outlines the trajectory of the hero's



growing maturity and resolve in overcoming weakness or uncertainty.

The previous thematic conclusion in the agential level (in the semantic stage) reflects Hatten's theory of "thematic integration" which Hatten says is "used to describe the bringing together of previously opposed thematic material in a single context."<sup>32</sup> Additionally, a further analysis of the thematic implications in this actantial level corresponds with Hatten's idea of the "music trope", which is the discovering of the music's thematic meaning. Hatten considers that music trope is beyond the syntactic formal level. The first level of trope reveals the meaning of each thematic topic element, whereas the second level of the trope forms the interaction of each of the topics, which is reflected in this movement by the collisions of meaning between military and pastoral.

## **2. Solo and orchestra: the relationship between protagonist and authority**

According to Hepokoski and Darcy, citing Koch, classical concerto form is "a passionate dialogue between the concerto player and the accompanying orchestra." In agreement with this idea, Simon P. Keefe describes the first solo entrance after Ritornello 1 as follows: "Starting with the initial solo entry, this dialogue can range from various degrees of mutual support and reactive affirmation to more self-assertive or tense exchanges, featuring interruptions, moments of submission before authority, dissolutions of texture, and the like."<sup>33</sup> In this movement of the Emperor Concerto, Beethoven reversed the ordering of that "dialogue," implying a change of relationship between the protagonist and authority.

Applying the concept set out above, the orchestra may represent the persona of the public or governmental authority while the soloist represents the protagonist—the hero. As previously

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<sup>32</sup> Hatten, 170.

<sup>33</sup> Hepokoski, 497.

discussed, the first cadenza at the beginning is formed as an introduction before the first presentation of the orchestra, which breaks with the tradition of the classical concerto, which Beethoven adhered to in his Fourth Piano Concerto. This displacement of dialogue in the Emperor Concerto is, however, still in the form of a dialogue: three solo passages, each of which occur after a chord by the orchestra. Following the traditional construction of concerti, the orchestra plays first, and the single opening chord is an announcement of a “call to attention.” But the proportionally large solo cadenza, as well as its sudden interference right after the one chord, creates a sense of an impatient interruption and the protagonist’s dominant status in this conversation. It seems like the hero cannot wait to challenge the authorities or make a strong statement in front of the public.

The markedly active interaction of the dialogue between solo and orchestra is maintained throughout the entire movement. The solo-fills and tutti interjections break the conventional block-like image of either solo or orchestral presentations. This phenomenon is particularly expanded in the Ritornello 4 area. In R4<sup>1</sup>, the orchestra stops twice (m.490 and m.493) to give the space to the fast running solo passage. In R4<sup>2</sup>, conventionally, the orchestra is supposed to complete “whatever leftover modular- rotational business that remains to be addressed.”<sup>34</sup> But in the R4<sup>2</sup> (mm. 529-581) of this movement, the music starts with a conversation between orchestra and soloist: the orchestra starts with a two bars affirmative fanfare, followed by a brilliant style two-bar passage from the soloist. After two of these conversations, the orchestra softens its motion from the fanfare to a stepwise questioning gesture, which is underneath the soloist’s brilliant passage (mm.529-541). This change to a weakened orchestra, like the lyrical primary theme of the solo entry right after the powerful military presentation of Ritornello 1, may imply a submission to authority. The difference here, however, is a shift in the dialogue, with the heroic

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<sup>34</sup> Hepokoski, 596.

agency of the soloist asserting dominance.

In the following closure space, the soloist and orchestra finally join together. At the first section, mm. 542-553, the soloist plays accompaniment above the orchestra's singing fanfare tune that is originally from the second module of the secondary theme of R1. In the second division, the roles reverse as the soloist becomes the leader via a one bar solo presentation of the same fanfare tune and the marching drum tune on octave chords (m.554), and the orchestra responds to the soloist's lead with the same drum tune, as the public or the basic soldier taking orders. Following this, the soloist's cadenza-like *pianissimo* passage, seems to revoke the previous dream-like scene. In the last section, from m.569, the soloist starts in the low register, then climbs and crescendos with brilliant runs on the top of the repeated drum tune in the orchestra, and ends together with the orchestra in three tonic chords in the upper register. This whole process of the final closure area after the cadenza, the R4<sup>2</sup>, is the procedure of the soloist taking over the power from the public persona: from conversation to taking control.

### **3. The Triumph**

Analysis of the actantial level reveals that there is a final triumph at the end of the movement: the individualized hero finally takes leadership after many episodes of back and forth submissions, conversations, and dialogues with the authority represented in the public persona of the orchestral music. This victory generally happens within the discourses between our protagonist and the public, but there is also another layer of the triumph that happens within the hero's inner struggle.

We can track this victory from the first presentation of the soloist, the cadenza in the beginning. The fantasia style, which is symbolized as spiritual freedom, interprets the hero's

personality as a free-spirited personality who does not want to be controlled. The primary theme of Solo 1 keeps this unconstrained style. The first two pastoral modules of the secondary theme in both Solo 1 and Solo 2 that we previously qualified as the hero's escape, signify uncertainty or weakness in the hero's resolve. But the endings of each block, the cadenzas, the primary theme of Solo 1, the third module of the secondary themes in both Solo 1 and Solo 3, and the affirmative musical gestures therein, all manifest the hero's success in overcoming resistance.

### **III. Narrative level -Romance Archetype**

The detailed discussion above unfolds Beethoven's drama of the entire movement, projected as conflict both within the hero and between the hero and collective authority. These actions also shed light on the trajectory of categorizing this movement as the romance archetype. According to Almén's conclusion, the romance archetype must have a hero who is the idealized character. In addition, romance is the archetype of wish fulfillment in which the dynamics imply a potentially endless series of confrontations with those elements that threaten the dominant hierarchy. Furthermore, romance functions "to realize and to articulate the desirable."<sup>35</sup> In romance literature the story frequently involves "idealized, mythic, psychologically potent, and fantastic elements that have more to do with the imagination than with current cultural conditions."<sup>36</sup>

From the beginning of the movement, the introduction's syntactic position already implies the hierarchy to the listeners, and leads them to wait for the exposition for the symphony's initial evaluation of hierarchy. Just as literary romances frequently settle on the birth and coming-to-power of the hero, so it is for the rather unambiguous musical narrative of this

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<sup>35</sup> Rober Foulke and Paul Smith. *An Anatomy of Literature*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 47

<sup>36</sup> Almén, 97-98.

movement which emphasis the initial formation of value over its transvaluation, in other words, the order over the transgressor.

From its thematic interactions, this movement also shares common characteristics of the romance archetype—the idealized character, the hero, the military, the endless struggling, the two categories of victory, the pastoral theme that signifies the fantastic Arcadia. Further, the pastoral may not be the only fantasy; the struggle may not be a real war or even a real fight. More likely, this is an interior “human” kind of fight, and offers a metaphor for the struggle of the human spirit, which requires idealized personal heroism.

### **Conclusion**

The foregoing process of analysis of the first movement of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 5 is based on Almén’s three levels of musical narrative analysis. The first level, agential, is a procedure that evidences the thematic elements and distinct structural construction. The second level, actantial, is used to discover the interactions between the themes, the interactions between the soloist and orchestra, as well as to examine the musical metaphor—musical trope established through the musical markedness. The last level, narrative level, is used to categorize this movement as a romance archetype based the pattering of the narrative trajectory.

This study has explored musical topics and narrativity in the Emperor Concerto, showing how Beethoven’s dramatic evocation of the heroic spirit was not dependent on any extra-musical program. As Leonard Plantiga stated:

The truth, of course, is that this concerto has no identifiable connection with any emperor. And though it fairly bristles with musical topoi of a military cast and with modes of expression we easily identify as “heroic,” one can hardly imagine that Beethoven, fed up with all the “drums, cannons, and human misery” on all sides, could have intended this piece as a celebration of any military hero or anyone’s victory in war. Symbolism here, as usual in music of substance, is

far subtler, at once richer and more diffuse than the mere property of being “about” an emperor, an army, a battle, or even battles or military action in general. Any invocation of such things in this music we should think of as metaphorical: thoughts of the military, that constant presence in Beethoven’s world, may have reminded him (and now us) of a generalized human struggle, and its heroic gestures pointed to a nobility of character required to prevail.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Plantinga, 256.

## APPENDIX 1

Example 1. Beethoven, Piano Concerto No.5, mvt. I, Motives and Topics in Ritornello 1.

Fanfare:

Motive 1, m.11



Motive 2, m.12



March:

Motive 3, mm.12-13



Motive 4, mm. 15-16



Motive 5, m. 30



Motive 6, m. 37



Motive 7, mm. 41-42



Motive 8, m.41



Pastoral:

Motive 9, mm. 49-50



Motive 10, m. 78



Motive 11, mm. 97-99





Table 1

## Beethoven, Piano Concerto No. 5, mvt. I. Formal and Narrative Summary

Measure Number	1-11	11-23	23-28	29-37	37-40	41-61
Motives (Signifiers)	Improvisational Cadenza	1 ( VI I, Clar) 2 (VI I, Clar) 3 (Cor, Tutti)	2 (Cor, Trb) 2* ( VI I)	4* (Wind, VI I) 5 (VI II, Vio)	6 ( VI I, II)	7 (VI I, II) 8( Wind, Vio, Cel)
Narrative Content	fantasia	military fanfare & march	fanfare	fast march		walking-pace march (minor)
Key	E <sup>b</sup>				V/e <sup>b</sup>	e <sup>b</sup>
Type5 Sonata Form	Solo instoduction	Ritornello1 R1:\P Orchestral Exposition	R1:\TR <sup>1.1</sup>	R1:\TR <sup>1.2</sup>	MC-fill	R1:\S <sup>1.1</sup>

\* reversion

Measure Number	49-62	62-77	78-90	90-110	111-126
Motives (Signifiers)	9 (Cor.) 1 (VI I, Cel) Chromatic	1 (VI I, II) 2 (VI I, wind)	10(wind) 8 (string, wind)	11(string, wind) 3(tutti) 1 (low string)	1 & 3 & 9 & improvisational lyrical flourish
Narrative Content	pastoral unstable fanfare	fanfare	pastoral fast march	pastoral fanfare march	fanfare pastoral march
Key	E <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>			
Type5 Sonata Form	R1:\S <sup>1.2</sup>	R1:\C <sup>1.1</sup> P-based	R1:\C <sup>1.2</sup>	R1:\C <sup>1.3</sup>	Solo 1:\P corresponds with R1:\P Solo Exposition

Measure Number	126-129	130-135	136-143	144-150	151-158	159-166
Motives (Signifiers)	2 (Brass, VI. I) 2(reversion)(VI. I)	2 (solo)	flourish (solo) & 4, 8 (wind)	6 (solo cadenza)	7 (triplets) 8	9
Narrative Content	fanfare	pastoral lyrical	fast & light march(orchestra)	brilliant	minor pastoral & march	pastoral lyrical
Key	E <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	V/b	vi (e <sup>b</sup> ): b	VI: C <sup>b</sup>
Type5 Sonata Form	S1:\TR <sup>1.1</sup> tutti interjection cor. R1:\TR <sup>1.1</sup>	S1:\TR <sup>1.2</sup> modulation of R1:\TR <sup>1.1</sup>	S1:\TR <sup>1.3</sup> cor. R1:\TR <sup>1.2</sup>	MC-fill	S1:\S <sup>1</sup> cor. R1:\S <sup>1</sup>	S1:\S <sup>2</sup> cor. R1:\S <sup>2</sup>

Measure Number	167-174	174-183	184-227	227-268
Motives (Signifiers)	7 (tutti)	flourish solo sequential	flourish solo, & 1, 4, 10 (wind)	1(VI. I, tutti) 2 (tutti) 9(wind) 8 (string, wind) 3 (brass) 10 (VI. I)
Narrative Content	heavy march		fanfare & march	fanfare & march & pastoral
Key	V: B <sup>b</sup>		B <sup>b</sup>	
Type5 Sonata Form	tutti interjection cor: R1:\S <sup>1</sup>	solo fill	S1:\DE DE(virtuosic display episode) climax of S1	Ritornello 2 cor: R1:\C <sup>1.3</sup>

Measure Number	264-275	276-304	304-332	333-356	356-361
Motives (Signifiers)	sequential	2 (reversion, solo) 1, 2 (wind)	3 (wind & brass & solo) 8 (heavy solo display) 8 (light string)	11 (solo display) 1, 11 (light string & wind) sequential	1(tutti)
Narrative Content		minor & lyrical fanfare (orchestra)	heavy march (solo)	lyrical pastoral (solo) lyrical fanfare (orchestra)	fanfare
Key	G-c	c-g-f	modulation block	G-D <sup>b</sup> -vii <sup>7</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>	vii <sup>7</sup> -V <sup>7</sup> /E <sup>b</sup>
Type5 Sonata Form	solo fill	S2 <sup>1</sup> Development	S2 <sup>2</sup> climax of the movt.	S2 <sup>3</sup>	tutti interjection

Measure Number	362-372	372-379	380-381	382-392	393-400
Motives (Signifiers)	improvisational cadenza	1, 2 (tutti)		1, 2 (solo) 3 (wind)	4, 8 (horn, wind) & flourished solo
Narrative Content		fanfare & march strong & energetic lyrical pastoral	lyrical pastoral	lyrical pastoral	soft march
Key	E <sup>b</sup>				IV: A <sup>b</sup>
Type5 Sonata Form	solo introduction	R3=>S3 Recapitulation\ P	solo fill	S3: \TR <sup>1.1</sup> P-based	S3: \TR <sup>1.2</sup> cor. S2: \TR <sup>1.3</sup>

Measure Number	401-408	408-415	416-423	424-431	431-440	441-484
Motives (Signifiers)	6 solo cadenza	7	9	7	sequential	flourish solo & 1, 10(wind)
Narrative Content		minor pastoral & march	lyrical pastoral	heavy march		fanfare & march
Key		vi(E): c <sup>#</sup>	VII: D <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>		
Type5 Sonata Form	MC-fill	S3:\S <sup>1</sup> cor. S1:\S <sup>1</sup>	S3:\S <sup>2</sup> cor. S1:\S <sup>2</sup>	tutti interjection	solo fill	S3:\DE cor. S1:\DE

Measure Number	484-496	496-515	516-581
Motives (Signifiers)	1, 2, 3 (tutti) & solo fill	1, 7	9, 1, 2, 11, 3 (tutti) & flourish solo
Narrative Content	strong & heavy fanfare & march	chromatic fanfare light march	fanfare & march & pastoral
Key	E <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup> -e <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>
Type5 Sonata Form	R4 <sup>1</sup>	solo cadenza	R4 <sup>2</sup> dialogue tutti & solo (deformation)



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