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THE SCHENKERIAN ANALYIS OF W.A. MOZART'S PIANO SONATA K.284 FIRST MOVEMENT

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Abstract

This article presents a musical analysis of the first movement of W.A. Mozart's Piano Sonata K.284, following the Schenkerian analysis approach. Viennese theorist and analyst Heinrich Schenker developed his own method of analysis, bearing his name, to delve deeper into understanding music and uncover its structural features. This analytical method is based on the fundamental structure and tonality of the music. According to Schenker's understanding, every musical composition has a foundational structure represented by the tonic chord at its lowest layer. This foundational structure evolves into a more complex one, incorporating embellishments and harmonic enrichments, to form the composition. Therefore, Schenkerian analysis elucidates the structures of music and their interrelationships. The Schenkerian analysis method is utilized to analyze music from the Baroque period onward, making it applicable to classical and romantic era compositions. The sonata form, due to its structural characteristics, provides a solid foundation for the application of Schenkerian analysis. In this study, the composition subjected to Schenkerian analysis is the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata K.284 in D Major, which has been selected from Mozart's piano sonatas.

Keywords: Schenkerian Analysis, Tonality, Sonata Form, W.A. Mozart.

INTRODUCTION

"The Schenkerian Analysis of Mozart's Piano Sonata K.284 First Movement" is an article that examines the first movement of W.A. Mozart's Sonata K.284 using the Schenkerian analysis method. This method allows for the analysis of tonality in terms of specific musical principles and relationships among structures. The fundamental principles of Schenkerian analysis are explained in detail, with the aim of shedding light on other analyses that can be conducted in this field.

From a Schenkerian perspective, music is entirely based on tonal relationships. Schenkerian analysis aims to uncover the general structures in tonality, thus simplifying music to a minimal level where we can perceive the overarching structures through structural relationships. In this method of analysis, music is dissected into three different layers. The most crucial layer that allows us to observe the coherence of the music in the relationships between layers is the background layer (*Hintergrund*).

The Piano Sonata K. 284 by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, selected for analysis in accordance with Schenkerian analysis, was composed in 1781. It is also known as the "Dürnitz Sonata" because this piece was written for Baron von Dürnitz, one of Mozart's friends in Vienna. K. 284 Piano Sonata consists of three movements:

1. **Allegro:** The first movement starts at a fast tempo and follows a sonata form structure.
2. **Rondeau en Polonaise:** The second movement is in the style of a polonaise and is performed at a slower tempo.
3. **Tema con Variazioni:** The third movement consists of a theme and twelve variations.

K. 284 Piano Sonata is considered one of Mozart's greatest and most recognized works among his piano sonatas. With its rich melodic structure, technical challenges, and considering it was written for some of the leading pianists of its time, it holds a significant place in the piano repertoire. Chosen as the subject of this

study due to its structural features that allow for the demonstration of an applied example of Schenkerian analysis, this piece is regarded as one of the important compositions in the classical music repertoire.

1. Sonata Form

"Sonata" and "Sonata Form" are related but distinct musical concepts. A "sonata" is a type of musical composition typically written for a solo instrument (like a piano or violin) or a small ensemble (such as a piano trio). It can also refer to a genre of music (Usmanbaş, 1974). Sonatas come in various forms, including the sonata-allegro form (common in the first movement of a sonata) and other structures like theme and variations, rondo, or ternary form. Sonatas are complete musical works, usually consisting of multiple movements, each movement having its own form and character. Sonatas can be composed for a wide range of instruments and ensembles and are a significant genre in classical music.

Sonata Form is a specific musical structure or form commonly used in the first movements of many classical compositions, including sonatas, symphonies, and chamber music. It's a particular way of organizing musical material within a single movement (Cangal, 2004).

Sonata Form, also known as the First Movement Form, is a versatile and highly organized musical structure that typically serves as the opening movement in many classical compositions. It is renowned for its ability to create tension, drama, and thematic development within a piece of music. While it has evolved and adapted over time, the core principles of Sonata Form remain a crucial part of classical music theory (Caplin, 1998).

Sonata Form can trace its roots back to the Classical period of music (circa 1750-1820), where composers such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven played a pivotal role in its development. However, its origins can be found even earlier in the Baroque period. Initially, Sonata Form was utilized for solo keyboard music, but it later expanded to be included in orchestral and chamber music.

2. Structure of Sonata Form

Sonata Form consists of three main sections:

Exposition: This is the first section of the form where the primary thematic material is introduced. Typically, there are two contrasting themes presented in this section: the first theme (often in the tonic key) and the second theme (in a related key). The exposition sets the stage for the rest of the movement.

Development: In this section, the composer takes the previously introduced themes and subjects them to various transformations, modulations, and variations. This is where the music explores different keys and introduces tension and complexity.

Recapitulation: The final section of Sonata Form brings back the themes introduced in the exposition. However, unlike the exposition, both themes are usually presented in the tonic key, creating a sense of resolution and stability (Caplin, 1998).

The Sonata Form is not just a structural template but also a vehicle for artistic expression. It allows composers to convey emotion, drama, and narrative within a structured framework. This form's flexibility has made it a favorite among composers for generations, and it continues to be an essential part of classical music composition.

3. The General Overview of Schenkerian Analysis

Schenkerian analysis is a method of musical analysis developed by Viennese music theorist Heinrich Schenker and is used to examine the structures of traditional Western classical music. Schenkerian analysis is employed to understand the complexity of a musical piece and to identify its fundamental structures. It analyzes music through the lens of fundamental tones and the relationships between these tones. Schenkerian analysis emphasizes returning to the fundamental structure of music and highlighting the reiteration of these structures. Schenkerian analysis is crucial for gaining a deeper understanding of music

and uncovering its internal repetitions. The analysis employs reduction and elaboration techniques to reveal the fundamental structure of a musical piece. These techniques aim to simplify complex musical compositions into more accessible and understandable structures.

At the core of Heinrich Schenker's music theory lies the concept of hierarchically organized structural levels, known as "*Schichten*." According to this concept, each level, representing a certain degree of simplification, serves as the foundation for the structure of the next more intricate level, holding a "higher" position in the hierarchy (Burkhart&Schenker, 1978). Schenker acknowledged that tonal compositions are comprised of a continuous series of interconnected structural levels, with each level being rooted in and connected to the others through comparable harmonic and contrapuntal techniques. The primary structure level reveals the majority of the notes from the original music, along with some of the more straightforward non-adjacent tonal relationships, embodying the concepts of the "surface" and "foreground" levels. Foreground (*Vordergrund*) is the structure that forms the surface of the music. It consists of elements such as melody, harmony. Middleground (*Mittelgrund*) that forms the underlying structure of the elements in the foreground. It typically consists of a series of harmonic movements. Background (*Hintergrund*) is the layer that forms the underlying structure of the music. It consists of a fundamental chord and the harmonic movements derived from it. The Background is the deepest level of structural reduction, representing the fundamental harmonic and contrapuntal progression (Cadwallader&Gagné, 1998).

These structural levels help Schenkerian analysts uncover the underlying unity and organization within a piece of music. They provide a framework for understanding how individual notes and voices contribute to the larger tonal and structural relationships in a composition (Agawu, 1989).

Conceptually, the *Ursatz* represents the fundamental melodic and harmonic elements of a tonal composition and, as a result, profoundly influences the manner in which musicians comprehend the fundamental principles of tonality. In the *Ursatz* form, the horizontal representation of the tonic chord creates the fundamental line (*Urlinie*). The *Urlinie*, starting from the tonic chord's triad, fifth, or octave, forms an initial melodic line leading toward the tonic. The bass accomplishes a 'linearization' of the tonic triad by executing a non-continuous arpeggiation, traversing from the root to the upper fifth and returning. Schenker termed this movement as the bass arpeggiation (*Bassbrechung*). (Figure 1)

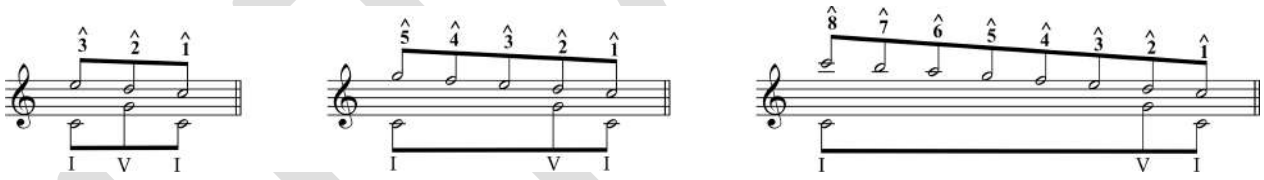

Figure 1. Forms of the Fundamental Structure

The Schenkerian analysis method relies on a distinct graphic notation system. In this system, rhythmic values are not depicted. Note values are used in a hierarchical approach to distinguish the significance levels of notes in the musical composition. Notes belonging to the fundamental line (*Urlinie*) and bass arpeggio in the fundamental structure (*Ursatz*) form are represented by connecting them with a thick stem at half notes. These notes are used to indicate the highest level of the structure. Unstemmed filled noteheads represent notes that are within the immediate musical context but do not belong to the broader structural framework.

Using parentheses around a note signifies a tone that is suggested by a particular context but is not physically present. On occasion, parentheses can also be employed to separate a sounding tone or a sequence of tones that operate independently of the surrounding context.

Beams and slurs combine connected tones, such as arpeggios, linear progressions, and neighboring movements, demonstrating cohesive spans across all levels of structure. Broken slurs (or ties) signify the preservation of a single pitch across a broader range, typically following the presence of other tones. Arrowheads are occasionally included on slurs or lines to denote the direction of a movement. Accented

numerals represent the melodic degrees of a pitch. Roman numerals are used to represent fundamental structural harmonies (Cadwallader & Gagné, 1998).

In the Schenkerian analysis method, the diatonic scale is the primary scale, and chromatic notes are always considered secondary to it. Harmony is tonal, even when constructed with seventh chords; triads are the fixed elements. Fifth intervals are the most significant interval class in harmony (Schenker, 1979).

In Schenkerian analysis, the term "tonicization", which is a form of modulation, refers to the situation where a note other than the tonic temporarily assumes the role of the tonic within the composition. Modulation refers to a tonal change in which a new tonal center is established with a pitch being heard as the tonic. In Schenkerian analysis, modulation is regarded as a temporary tonal change, and traditional tonality concepts such as relative major or minor are rejected. Because the fundamental structure is considered as the diatonic expansion of the tonic chord, modulation is not present. In Schenkerian analyses, the structure of any tonal music piece is diatonic, and modulations are viewed as extensions of diatonic harmonic degrees (Bulur, 2019).

4. Techniqus of Melodic Prolongation

In Schenkerian analysis, the concept of prolongation is fundamental. Prolongation pertains to how a musical element, be it a single note (melodic prolongation) or a chord (harmonic prolongation), maintains its influence without needing explicit representation at every instant. Of the two primary categories of prolongation, harmonic prolongation is the more readily comprehensible. Essentially, a specific harmony endures as long as we sense its authority over a given musical passage (Forte&Gilbert, 1982).

> "There are three main types of melodic prolongation:
> 1. Motion from a given note, normally a descending diatonic scale segment or arpeggiation (where the prolongation follows the note that is prolonged);
> 2. Motion to a given note, normally an ascending diatonic scale segment or arpeggiation (where the prolongation precedes the note that is prolonged);
> 3. Motion about a given note, most frequently by means of upper and/or lower neighboring tones (which may in turn be prolonged themselves)" (Forte&Gilbert, 1982: 143-144).

When Schenker engages in melodic prolongation, he employs the following main techniques:

The initial ascent: This form of linear progression, which Schenker referred to as an 'initial ascent' (*Anstieg*), rises through the notes of the tonic triad, moving from the root to the third or fifth. By its very definition, the term 'initial ascent' always indicates a movement toward the first note of the *Urlinie*.

The Arpeggiated ascent: This technique resembles an initial ascent; however, instead of a gradual stepwise progression, it involves an arpeggiation moving through the tones of the tonic triads towards the first note of the fundamental line.

Unfolding: In polyphonic melodies, two or more voices can be connected through either stepwise motion, leaps, or a combination of both. A specific type of motion between two voices is referred to as "unfolding".

Motion into an inner voice: In Schenkerian analysis, motion into an inner voice of a chord descends to become an inner voice of the next chord.

Motion from an inner voice: In contrast to motion into an inner voice, motion from an inner voice is a type of melodic progression in which a tone from an inner voice ascends to the outer voice.

Voice exchange: Voice exchange is a structural feature that occurs when two voices, exchange their pitch classes across register.

Coupling: Coupling is a structural characteristic that emerges when a linear progression connects two notes located in different registers.

Superposition: One or more tones in the inner voices are raised above the primary top voice line.

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Reaching over: Reaching over is connected to the concept of superposition in that it generally entails elevating inner-voice tones to higher positions (Cadwallader&Gagné, 1998).

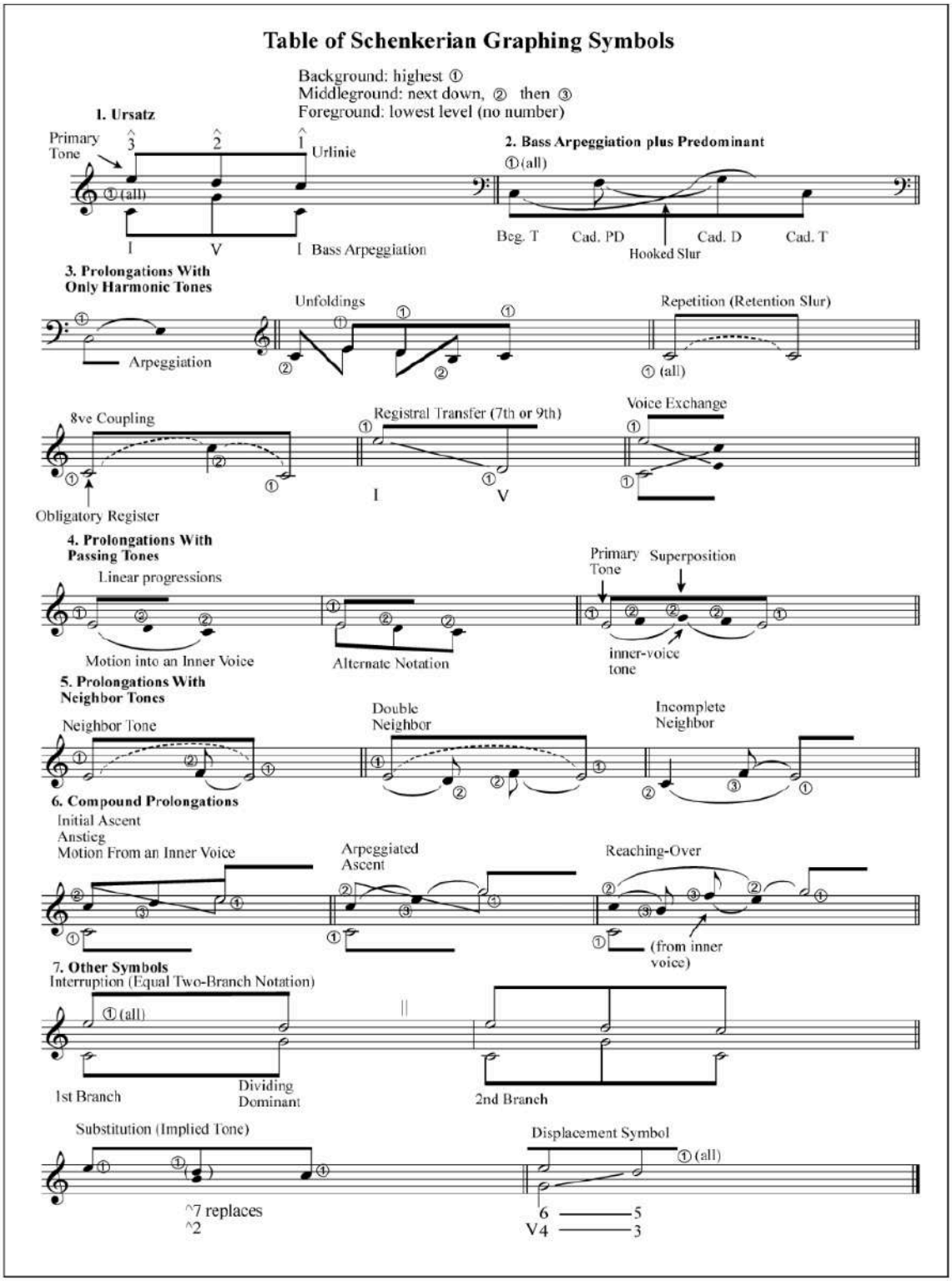

Figure 2. Table of Schenkerian Graphing Symbols (Wadsworth, 2016: 205).

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5. Analysis of W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement in D Major

W.A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata in D Major was written in 1775. First movement of the piece is generally based linear and intervalic progressions and arpeggiations. Primary tone is assigned as A. Exposition is continuing until 52nd measure, development ends at 71 and the recapitulation begins at 72.

The piece is beginning with the tonic broken chord. The primary tone A is heard just at the beginning with the unfolding relationships over the tonic harmony. It is transferred to one octave lower after the unfoldings but under the dominant harmony. Arpegiated ascent begins over the dominant pedal point and converted into the linear progression which first a descending octave and then a descending fifth progression is heard. The tonic harmony comes at the end of the fifth progression where arpeggiations take place and the D becomes a pedal point now. Then we see the reaching over of the pedal point in measure 13 where the A in the upper voice of the previous measure transferred to the bass part as G and ii harmony is formed while the inner voice leaps an octave higher and makes a linear ascending fourth progression. (Figure 3)

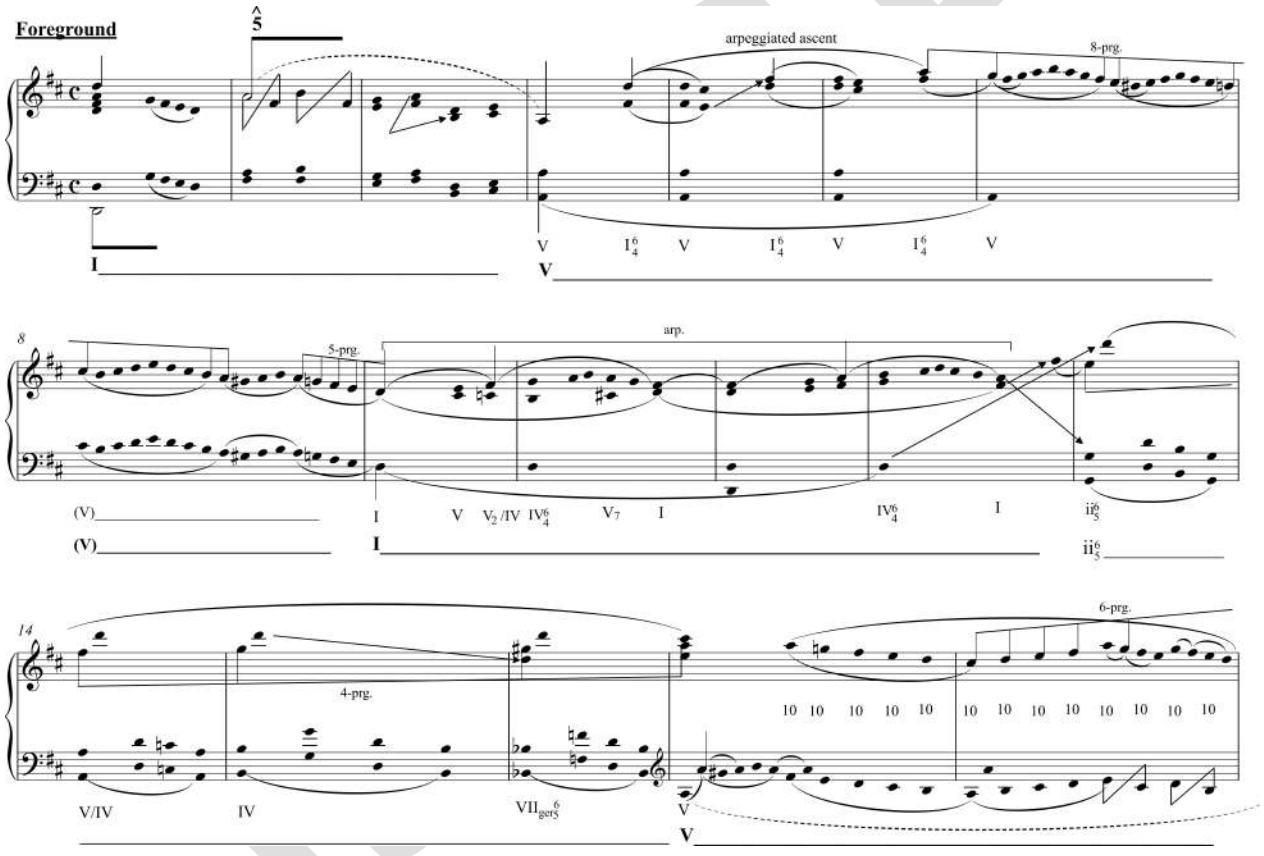

Figure 3. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 1-18

After the 17th measure, the high D is transferred into the inner voice as A and intervallic progressions between the bass and the upper voices by an interval of 10th begin while the soprano is descending and ascending with a 6th progression. In the next two measures these progressions are repeated, and the subordinate theme begins after the dominant harmony arpeggiation. The subordinate theme is constructed on the seperated linear and intervalic progressions where the intervalic progressions come with the 6th and presented by the suspensions and in chromatic character. (Figure 4)

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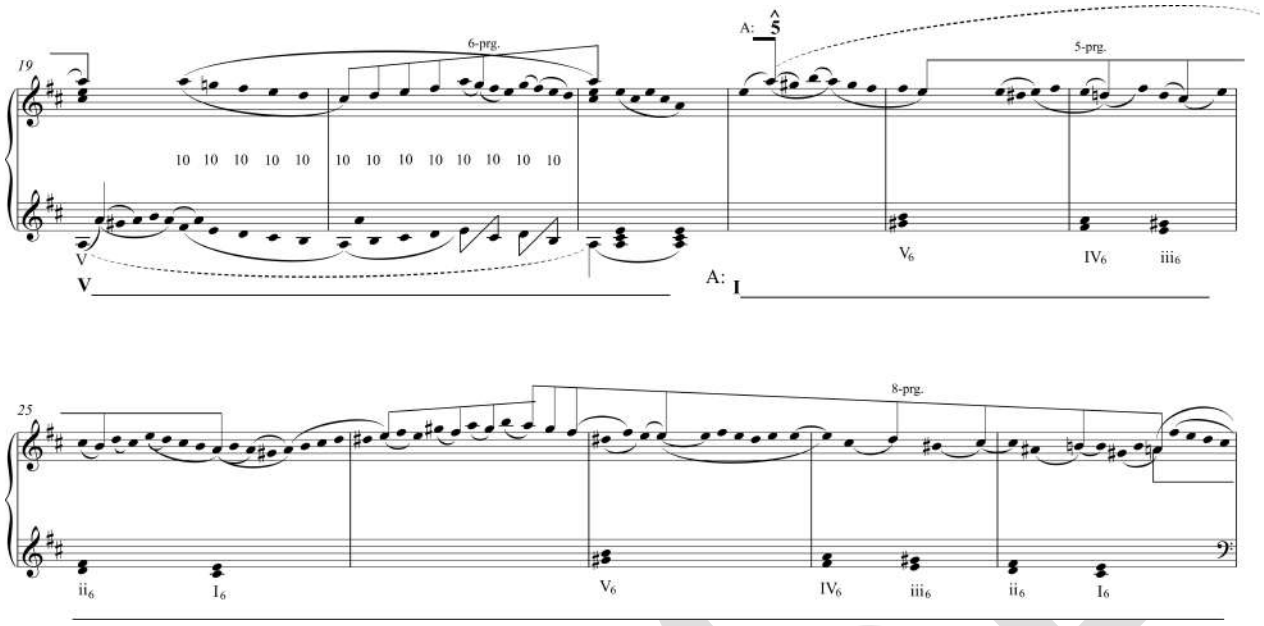
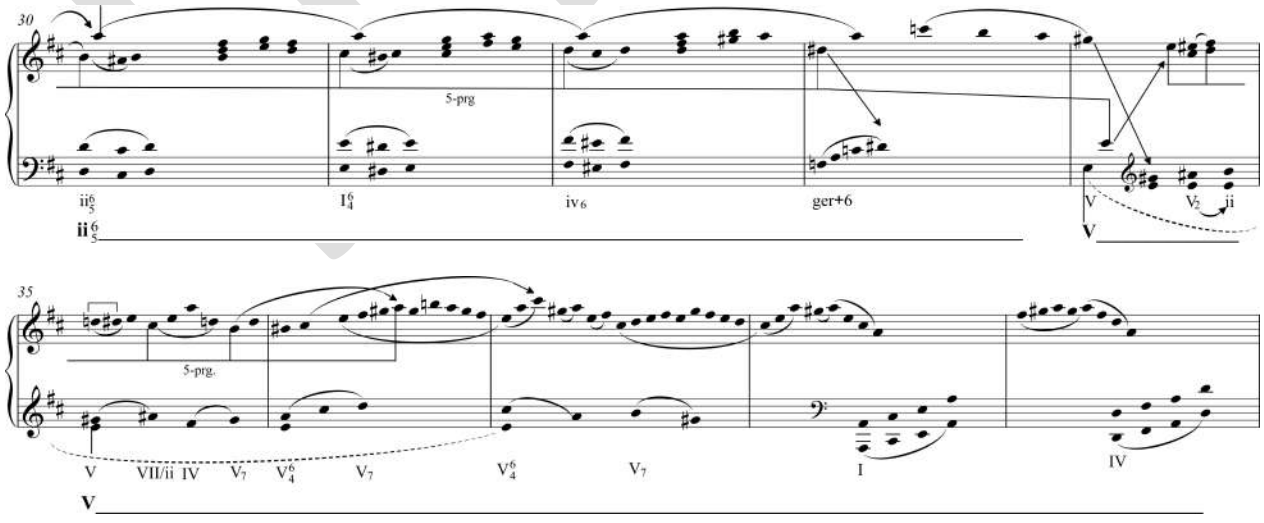


Figure 4. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 19-29

After the 30th measure we hear a sequence of neighbouring relationships in the bass (making a double-neighbour around E-dominant) and the inner voice begins to ascend with a fifth progression. This ascend is transferred one octave lower at the 33rd measure and the A is held until here then both go to E in bar 34. There is a voice exchange and the beginning of a descending fifth progression heard in the chromatic neighbouring relations in this bar. While the dominant harmony is prolonged here, arpeggiations occur in the bass under the tonic and subdominant harmonies. In the 40th measure, we hear a local fifth progression beginning on the fifth of A major, continued with the arpeggiations. The same progression is heard after the arpeggiations. The fourth and the third degree of the transferred *Urlinie* of A major is heard over the tonic and the dominant chords in bar 45, and it arrives to the second degree after some ascending and descending arpeggiations in bar 49 and the first degree in the 50 and is emphasized by a coupling in the measure 51. (Figure 5)



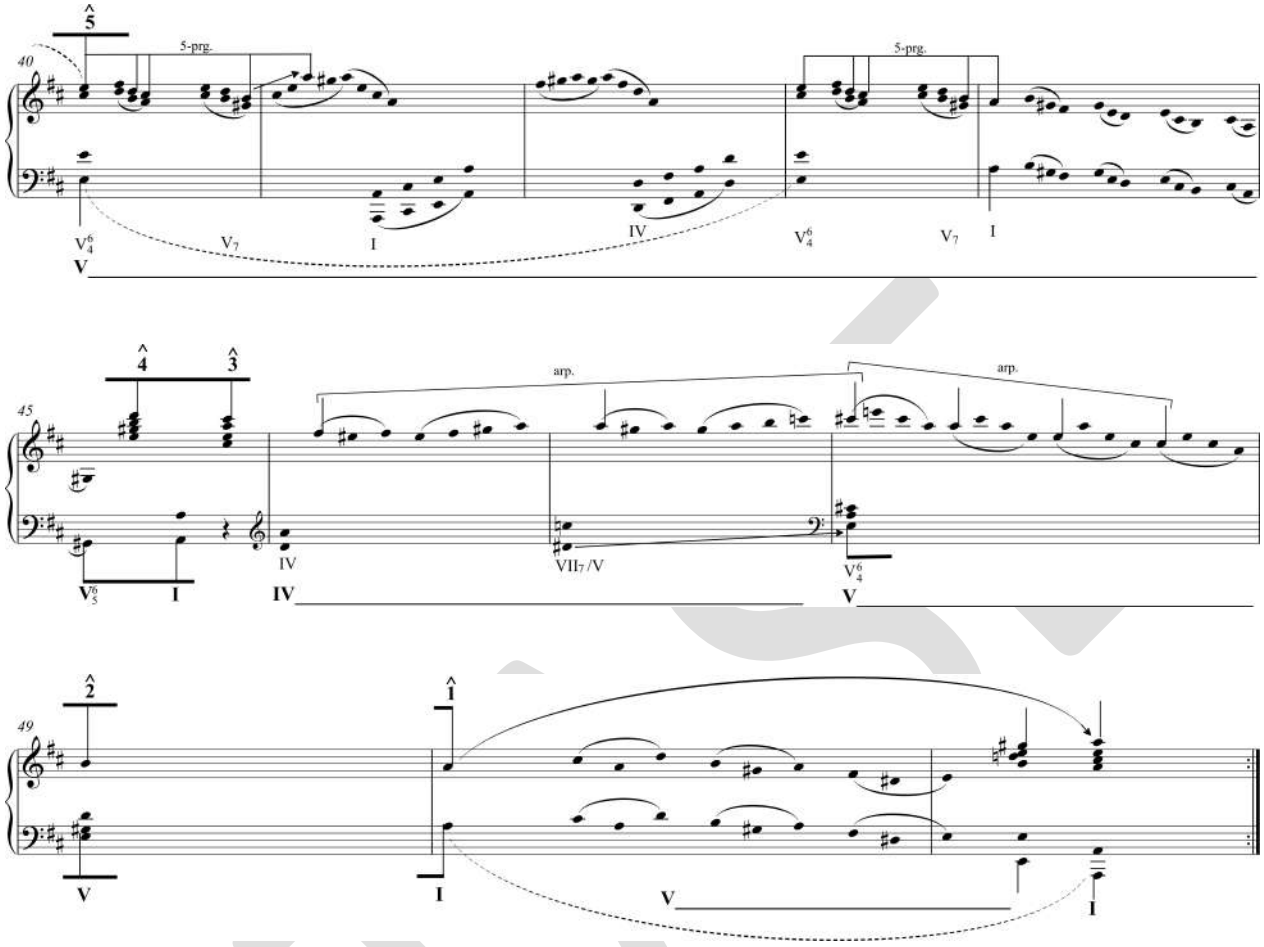


Figure 5. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 30-51

Development is based on the intervallic progressions and question-answer relationships between the right and the left hands over the transient harmonies. The section begins with the a minor and we hear the primary tone (dominant minor) in the first measure (bar 52). The A in the upper voice is transferred to one octave lower and the C in the bass is transferred two octaves higher forming an unfolding with the A in the same register and the intervallic progressions become 3rd here. This action is forming the question and answer relationship. Later the same thing happens in E minor, first appearing over the dominant then tonic; and then over the dominant of b minor. After this we hear f sharp minor, e minor and d minor as transients while there are D, C natural, and B flat in the upper voice. This kind of sequential motions in a development is called a "core" (Caplin, 1998). There is a descending fifth progression starting at the beginning of the development section and lasting until the 66th measure. A descending octave progression starting in the 66th measure leads us to the dominant of D major in bar 70. After some ascending and descending progressions, we arrive the recapitulation in measure 72. (Figure 6)

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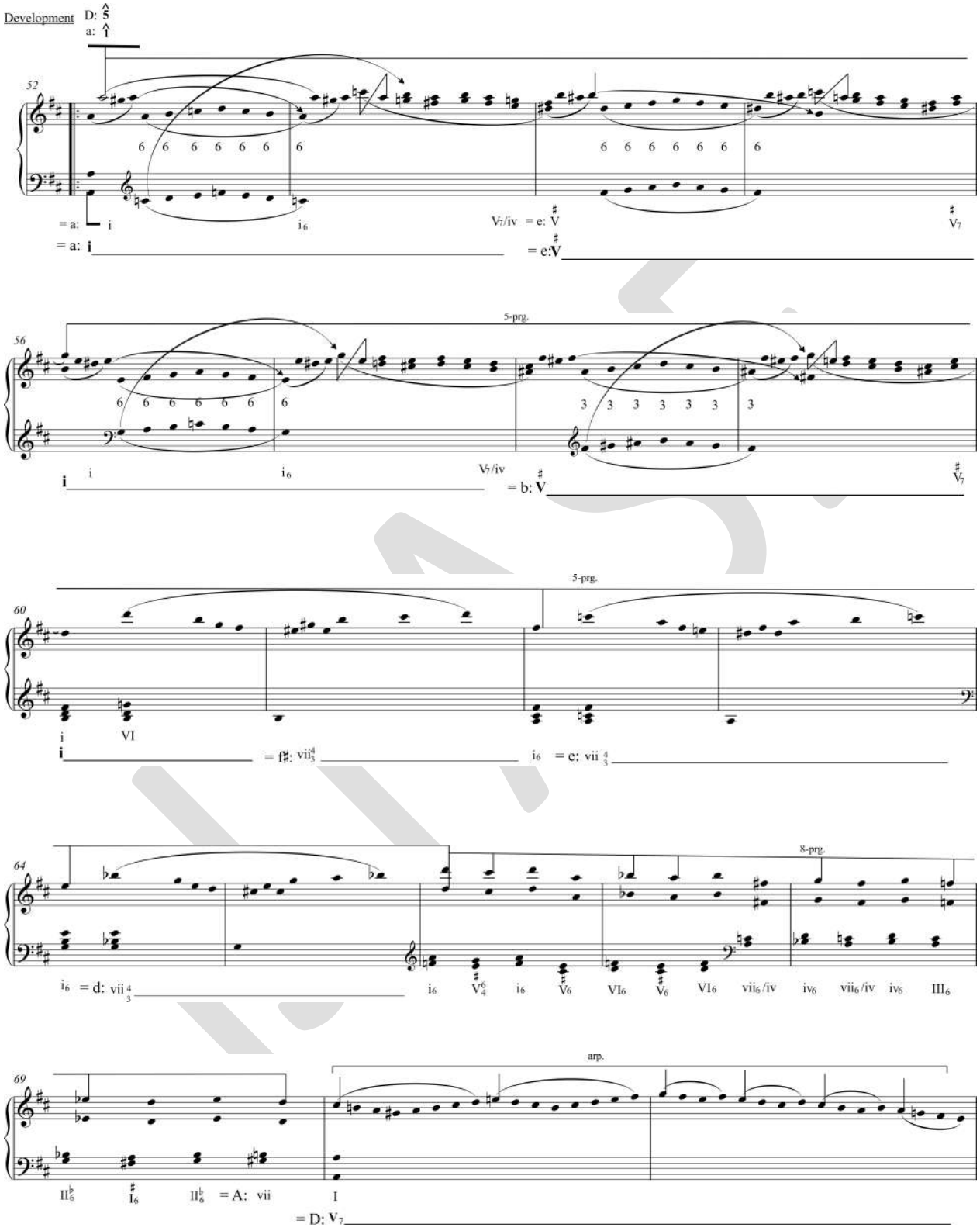

Figure 6. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 52-71

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In the recapitulation, everything is same as the exposition until the subordinate theme. Subordinate theme begins in measure 93 and gives us the suspensions with 6th intervalic progressions twice again. After the 102nd measure we hear the neighbouring relations in the bass and the fifth progression at the inner voice and this lasts until the bar 105 and leads to the 105th measure by octave transfer in 105th measure. (Figure 7)

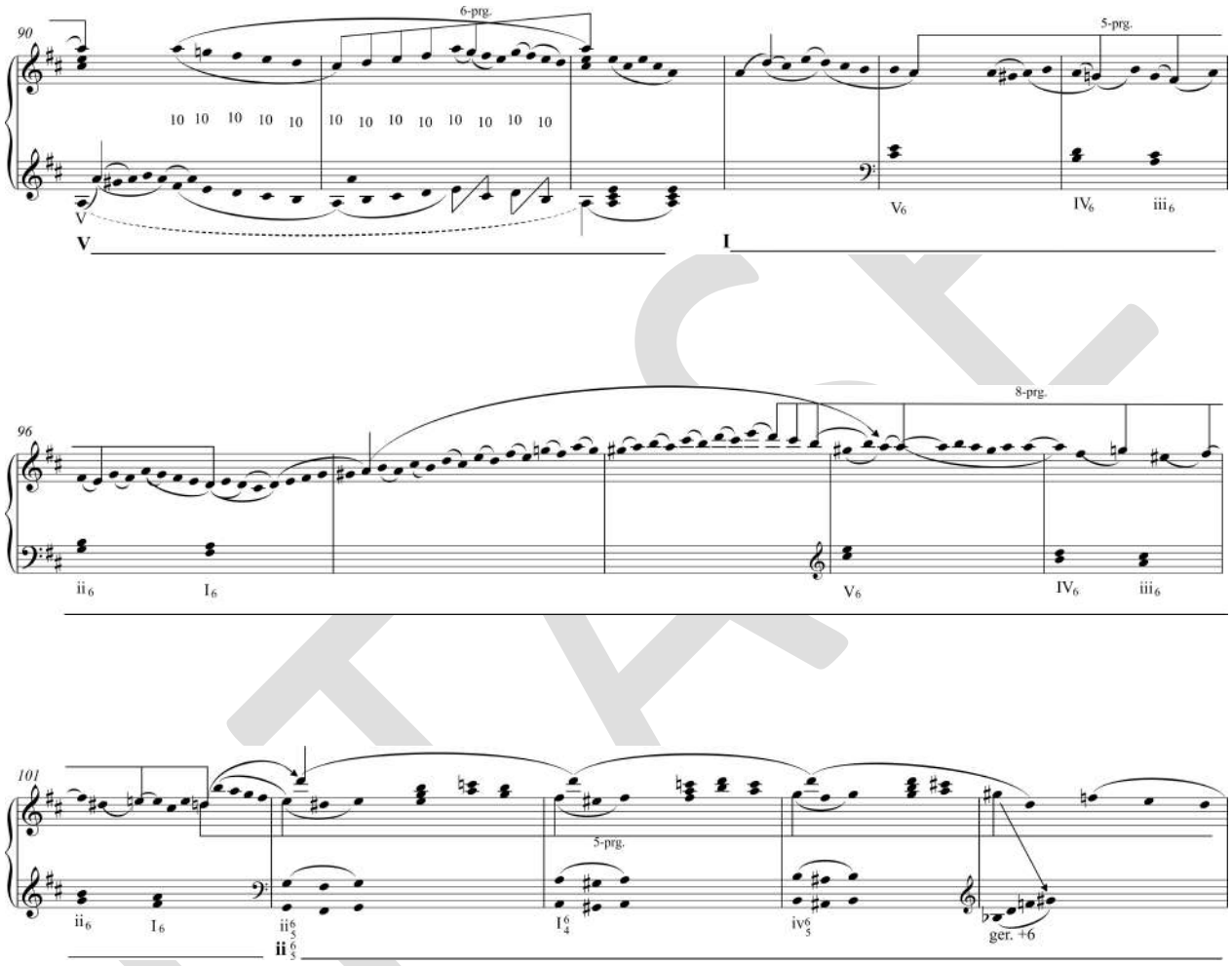

Figure 7. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 90-105

A voice exchange appears in 106th measure and an ascending fifth progression comes over the dominant harmony starting on the exchange voice. Then we hear the tonic and subdominant triad arpeggiations alternating between the right and the left hands and forming a question-answer relationship. Then the dominant chord that we heard as a secondary dominant in the exposition comes as the dominant of the tonic in bar 112. Another fifth progression begins in bar 112 and descends until bar 113 and the previous three measures are repeated by this point. We hear the fourth and the third degree of the *Urlinie* in the 117th measure over the dominant seventh and the tonic harmonies, then the second degree in the 119th measure. Arpeggiations take place for a while and E is prolonged with a progression up to G and then down to E again until 125. In the 126th bar, we hear the same coupling relationship appears at the end of the exposition. (Figure 8)

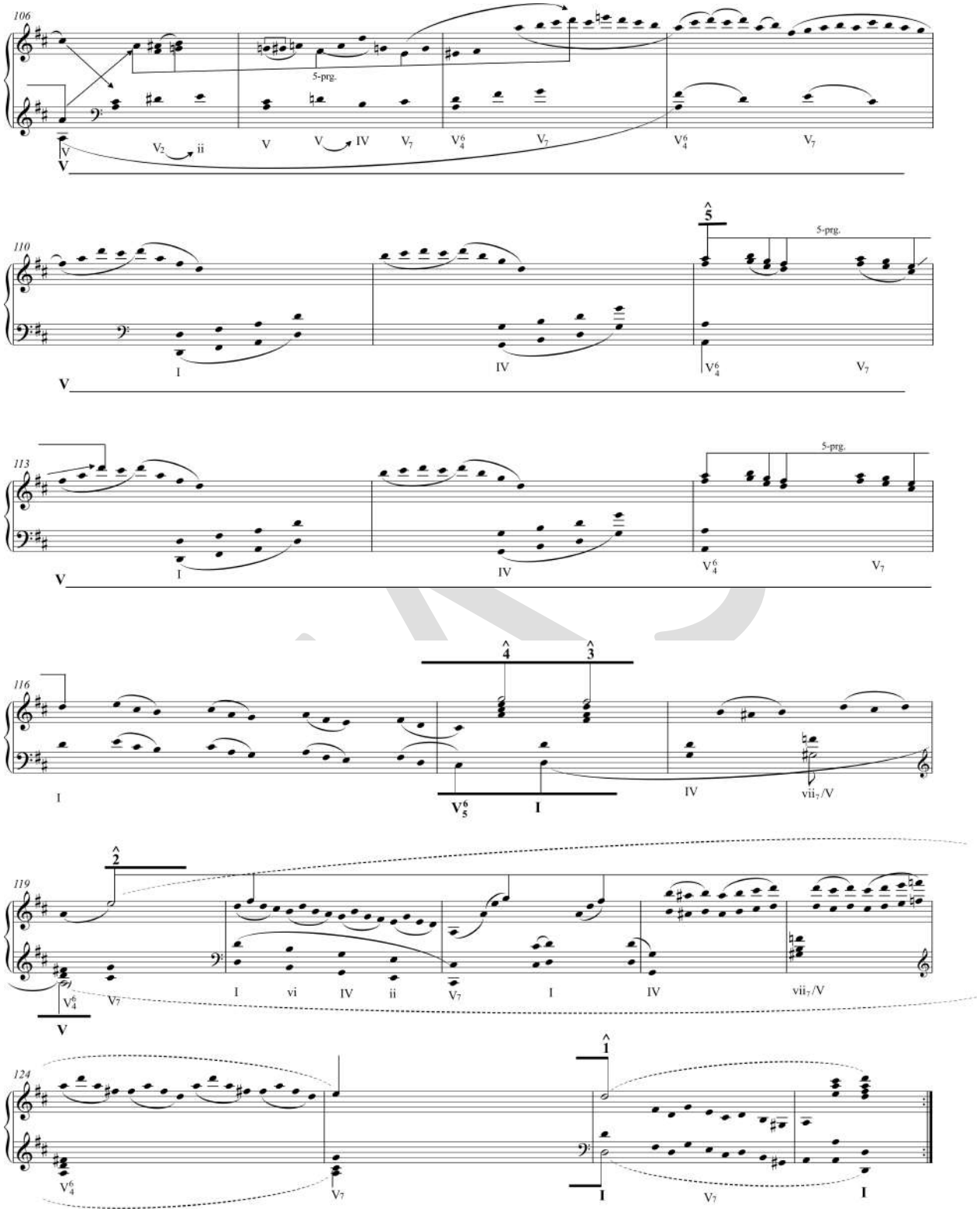

Figure 8. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, m. 106-127

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Displayed below is the composition's Middleground (Figure 9)

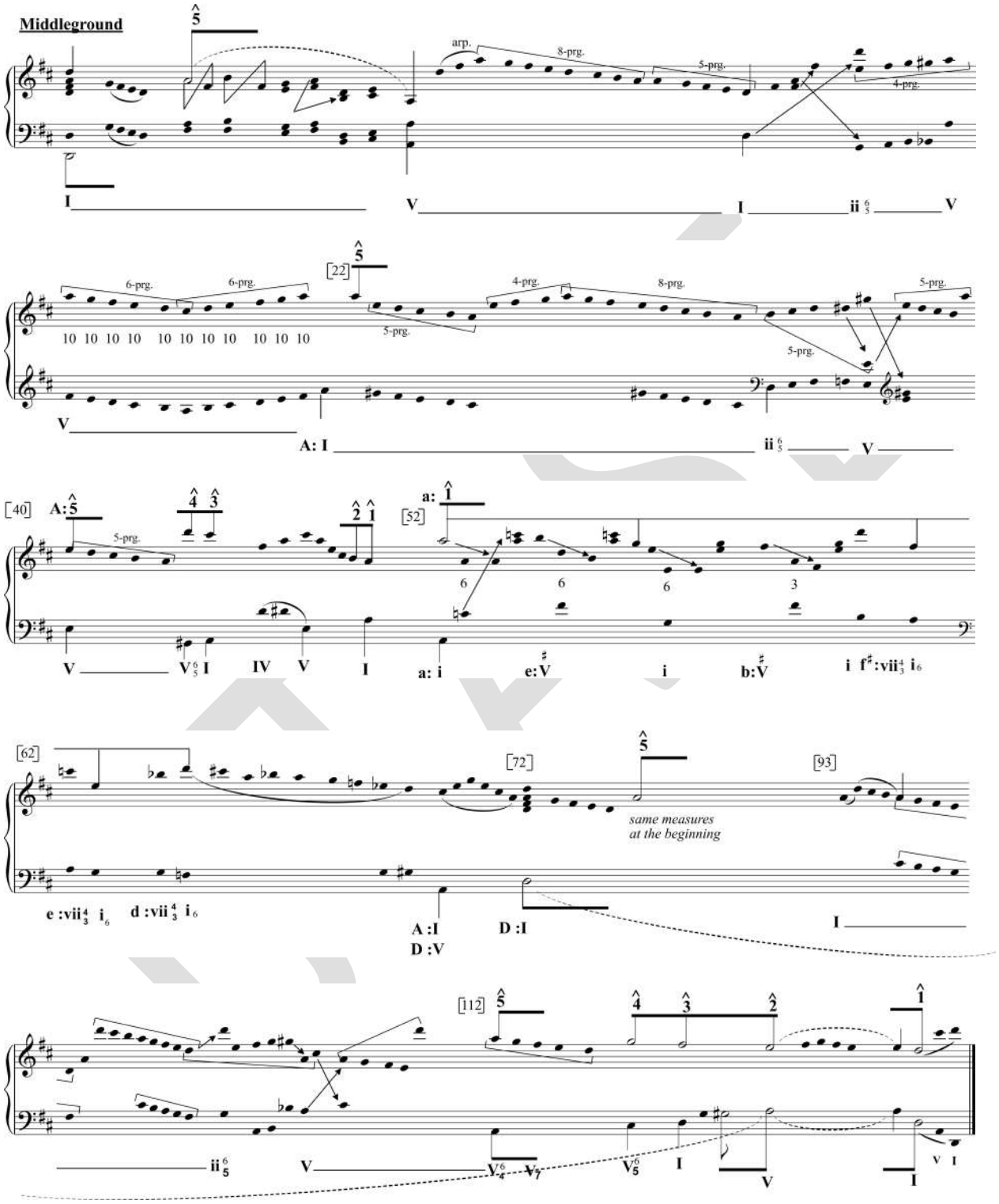

Figure 9. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, Middleground

Displayed below is the composition's Background (Figure 10)

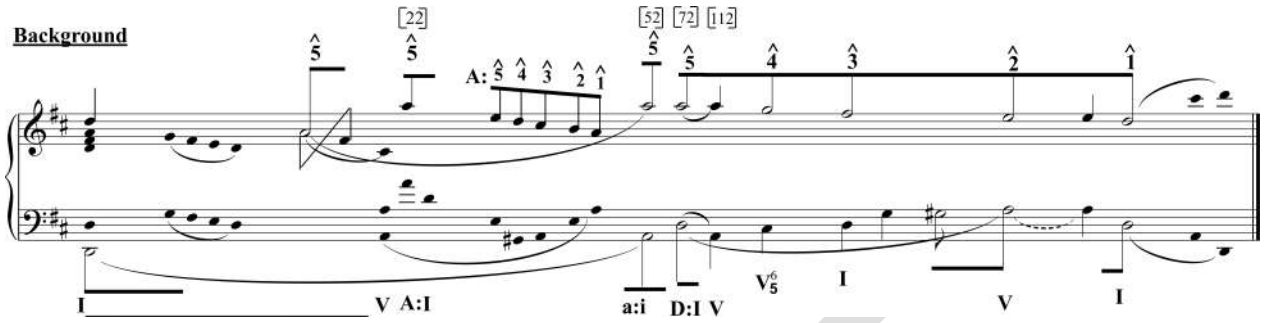

Figure 10. W. A. Mozart's K.284 Piano Sonata First Movement, Background

Conclusion

The article titled "The Schenkerian Analysis of Mozart's Piano Sonata K.284 First Movement" dissects the musical structure of this important work by Mozart, which has been selected for this purpose, by breaking it down into layers and revealing the organic connections among these layers through deductive methods in the background. In this way, it helps us understand the dominant structure in the music by starting from the whole, bringing to light the foundational principles upon which the music is constructed. This analysis aims to elucidate the fundamental building blocks of the composition and its structural features within tonality.

The analysis begins with the opening theme of the sonata's first movement, dissecting the development section and the recapitulation, revealing how the composer organized the music. By examining relationships such as the main theme, subthemes, and their development, it showcases Mozart's musical language within the sonata form.

Schenkerian analysis is just one among several diverse methods used for analyzing music. Each analysis approaches music from a specific perspective, and different analysis methods thus examine music in terms of different structural relationships. In this study, the Schenkerian analysis approach, based on Schenker's own claims and viewpoint, indeed appears to be highly useful for works constructed upon a distinct tonality, such as sonata form. On the other hand, it appears challenging for this analysis method to be equally effective when it comes to musical works where tonality is stretched to its limits or entirely abandoned. Therefore, Schenkerian analysis is much more suitable for analyzing the repertoire from the Baroque, Romantic, and Classical periods rather than music based on atonal forms that began to become prevalent from the early 20th century onwards.

As a result, Schenker analysis has contributed to a better understanding of the musical characteristics of the first movement of W. A. Mozart's Piano Sonata K.284 and has allowed for a more profound exploration of the structural and theoretical aspects of Mozart's music. Such analyses are valuable not only for musicians working in the field of composition but also for musicians in the realm of instrumental education, as they enable us to track and comprehend developments throughout music history. The continuous and repeated application of similar analyses to different pieces of music is extremely important for musicians to grasp structural relationships. This analysis aims to be a resource for music theory students, musicologists, and anyone interested in gaining a better understanding of Mozart's works. Conducting such analyses will be beneficial in order to comprehend the reasons behind Mozart being recognized as one of the leading composers of his era.

Ethics

The author declares that the work is written with due consideration of ethical standards.

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