CHAPTER 14

TOPICS AND HARMONIC SCHEMATA

A Case from Beethoven

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Example 14.1 displays three different realizations of the harmonic and scale-degree schema that Leonard Meyer (1973; 1980; 1989) termed the 1–7, 2–1. The pattern is one among several types of “changing-note schemata,” which are united by a shared, underlying harmonic statement–response parallelism of I–V, V–I, and a rhyming scale-degree progression in the top-voice: 1–7, 2–1; 1–7, 4–3; 3–2, 4–3, and so forth. Frequently used as the presentation phrase of a “sentence” (Caplin 1998), the 1–7, 2–1 is treated identically in these three excerpts from Meyer’s Style and Music (1989), with respect to syntax, structure, and formal function. And yet, their expression could not be more disparate. The Haydn symphony example is a siciliano with an overall pastoral sentiment; the Mozart quartet a bourrée, with march and fantasia characteristics, and Sturm und Drang in affect; and the Beethoven trio a sarabande in the Romanza style. In none of these cases is the affective reference necessary for an understanding of the 1–7, 2–1 syntax on its own terms: as grammar. Nor, the other way round, is the stylistic and generic expression or affect of each theme contingent on the underlying harmonic syntax in any way. Much like the relations between topics and formal functions (Caplin 2005; this volume), topics and harmonic schemata do not significantly correlate in absolute terms, insofar as a given schema does not require a particular topical realization and vice versa. Examples of this topical variability of schemata (and the schematic variability of topics) are readily available in music of the later eighteenth century.

The relative autonomy of the two domains is reflective of a broader conceptual independence of musical syntax from musical semantics. Kofi Agawu (1991) articulated this distinction between music’s intrareferential and extrareferential stylistic symbols—following the linguistic and literary theorist Roman Jakobson (1971)—in terms of “introversive” versus “extroversive semiosis.” This relative autonomy notwithstanding, neither schemata nor topics remain ends unto themselves, insofar as both domains equally figure in the late eighteenth-century communicative channel (Mirka 2008). Topics and harmonic schemata are assemblies of musical style symbols that interact in
EXAMPLE 14.1  Three topically differentiated versions of the 1–7, 2–1 schema from Meyer, Style and Music (1989), 3 (ex. 1.1a), 4 (ex. 1.1b), and 53 (ex. 2.2f): (a) Haydn, Symphony No. 46 in B major, ii, mm. 1–4; (b) Mozart, Piano Quartet in G minor, K. 478/i, mm. 1–8; (c) Beethoven, Trio for Clarinet, Cello, and Piano in B flat major, Op. 11/ii, mm. 1–8.

both syntactic (sequentially structured) and semantic (referentially structured) dimensions to some communicative and expressive end. There exist no sharp boundaries between them, either in categorial or pragmatic terms. That is, in respect to both categorization and language use, syntax and semantics interface in what cognitive linguists call a syntax-lexicon continuum—“a continuum of symbolic structures” (Langacker 1987: 1991; see also Zbikowski 2001: 138).

My contribution in this chapter illustrates that, in the case of Beethoven, the musical equivalent of this continuum enables the communication of a powerful philosophical message in the “Eroica” Symphony, Op. 55 (1803–4), one that involves the spiritual consequences of suffering, self-sacrifice, and death. “Dies ist Symphonik als Drama,” says Roger Norrington, in a Konzerteinführung for a series of performances with the Radio-Symphonieorchester Stuttgart (2002). A specific interfacing of topics and harmonic schemata provides the structural and expressive basis for communicating a cultural unit of “abnegation,” with its connotations of “religious drama” (Hatten 1994). The nature of this interfacing involves, on the one hand, the musical equivalent of form–meaning pairs: in cognitive linguistics all grammatical constructions are conceived as amalgams of form and content that vary in terms of their lexical

The le–sol–fi–sol is an instance of harmonic grammar that intersects the semantic world of the ombra topic (Ratner 1980; McClelland 2012), with its mortal, funereal, and sacrificial connotations. Its extramusical references are not inherent, however, but rather emerge under specific contextual and deictic conditions. The compositional strategies that produce these conditions involve musical realizations of the principle of “markedness” first outlined in Michael Shapiro’s The Sense of Grammar (1983) and adapted in Robert Hatten’s Musical Meaning in Beethoven (1994). The extroversive semiosis of musical grammar is affordant, emerging from its marked use in compositional context. In this way, the syntactic and semantic characteristics of schemata and topics not only interface within hybrid structures that shade into both categories (categorial), but through their relative independence they also powerfully interact in the communicative channel (pragmatic) to produce numerous “correlations,” both positive and negative, between structure/form and expression/content (Hatten 1994; adapted from Eco 1976).

In the “Eroica,” the correlations produced by the schema–topic interface are the basis for communicating what Hatten (1994) calls a “tragic-to-transcendent” expressive genre characteristic of music-spiritual drama.

The drama begins with a modulation to G minor that transpires in mm. 6–9 of the opening theme. This modulation was the centerpiece of an earlier case study on the historical perception of tonality, which drew on certain aspects of the symphony’s abstract structure and their reception history (Byros 2012; 2009). The le–sol–fi–sol is the cause of the modulation. This pattern features a distinctive chromatic turn of phrase in the bass oriented around the dominant, $b6–5–\#4–5$, with reiterations of scale degrees 1 and 3 in the upper voices. Example 14.2 shows an abstract representation of its most common form: as seen, the first three stages result in a chromatic expansion of predominant harmony, with a composing-out of an augmented sixth as a diminished third in the bass, $b6–5–\#4$, which resolves inwardly onto the dominant. The diminished third in the bass renders the schema a chromaticized variant of what Italian musicians in the eighteenth century called a cadenza lunga (“long cadence”), whose bass often traverses a 6–4–5 scale-degree progression as part a perfect authentic or half cadence (Sanguinetti 2012: 107–10). As a closing device, the le–sol–fi–sol figures among what Heinrich Christoph Koch described as “punctuation formulas” (interpunctischen Formeln), “punctuation figures” (interpunctische Figuren), or “punctuation marks” (interpunctische Zeichen) for realizing one of several “principal resting points of the mind” (Hauptruhepunkte des Geistes). In a sonata- or concerto-form context this often
involves what Koch detailed as the *Halbcadenz* and *Cadenz*. These are structurally weighted caesuras that respectively correspond to what James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy (2006) call the “medial caesura” half cadence of a transition, and the perfect authentic cadence that closes the second theme: the cadence of “essential exositional closure” (EEC) in the exposition, and the cadence of “essential structural closure” (ESC) in the recapitulation. Example 14.3a represents a typical *Halbcadenz* usage of the *le–sol–fi–sol* in the first movement of Haydn’s “Clock” Symphony (1793–94), specifically at the medial caesura of its recapitulation. Example 14.3b illustrates its *Cadenz* usage in Haydn’s String Quartet in D major, Op. 50 No. 6 (1787). This quartet passage also exemplifies a central harmonic and tonal feature of the schema, namely its frequent use to effect a modulation up a major third. Haydn’s *Cadenz* in D major is preceded by a brief episode in B flat at mm. 140–44, which issues from an earlier deceptive cadence onto bVI at m. 139. Following several exchanges with its own dominant, B flat is reinterpreted from a tonic to a submediant where the *le–sol–fi–sol* begins its semitonal descent. Because of its ability to efficiently produce such a modulation, the schema often appears in structurally and expressively significant modulating contexts, both in sonata- and concerto-form environments (see Byros 2012: 301–5; Byros 2009: 166–69, 292–96).

Analysis of the *le–sol–fi–sol* in a musical corpus of roughly three thousand musical works composed between 1720–1840 revealed a population of 550 instances that...
historically peaks in the 1790s, the decade immediately preceding Beethoven’s composition of the “Eroica” Symphony (Byros 2012: 311–13). These details suggest that a contemporary listener would be prompted to hear a G-minor modulation in mm. 6–9 of the opening theme on account of perceiving these bars as yet another instance of the harmonic schema (Example 14.4a). The le–sol–fi–sol is evidently the generic stylistic context and grammatical symbol in the communicative channel that caused Friedrich Rochlitz, the editor of the Leipzig Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung, to momentarily hear the “Eroica” as a G-minor symphony that begins in medias res. In a review of the symphony from
Rochlitz's expectation from m. 9 is realized in Example 14.4b, which gives a hypothetical continuation of the symphony's opening theme that completes the le–sol–fi–sol in G minor. The $\frac{4}{5}$ chord resolves normatively to a dominant seventh in G minor at m. 10, which continues to a full close with a PAC at m. 13. This cadence is suggested by Rochlitz's use of the qualifying adverb förmlich, likely an implicit or explicit reference to Koch's förmliche Ausweichung, or "formal modulation," which specifies a modulation by way of a cadence and formal phrase ending (Koch 1787: 188). A digital sampling of the recomposition for four-hand piano is realized in Web Example 14.1.

In the context of the symphony's opening theme, G minor of course never fully materializes by way of a formal cadential close. But the key returns in several dramatic and strategically located G-minor episodes throughout the symphony (Byros 2012: 305–7; 2009: 18–22). Among them is a grand perfect authentic cadence in G minor as the goal of the fugal episode (mm. 114–54) in the Funeral March (Example 14.5). An augmented-sixth variant of the le–sol–fi–sol returns in this episode to realize the implications it first laid down in the symphony's opening theme with a PAC in G minor at m. 154. This cadence is preceded by a lengthy dominant expansion, what Robert Gjerdingen would call a "Stabat Mater Prinner" (2007: 442–48): a dominant pedal with braided 2–3 suspensions beginning on scale degrees 5 and 6 in the upper voices, and a 1–2, 7–1, 6–7, 1 countermelody. This schema occupies a unique place in Gjerdingen's typology, as it is the only phrase-level type whose name implicative a distinct genre, named after Giovanni Pergolesi's Stabat Mater (1736), which features the schema prominently in its closing fugal Amen (Example 14.6). On the whole, Gjerdingen's galant schemata are abstract forms of scale degree syntax and voice leading with no generic affiliations—"a particular repertory of stock musical phrases" that transcends semantic
EXAMPLE 14.4 Beethoven, Symphony No. 3 in E flat major, Op. 55, “Eroica,” i: (a) mm. 1–11 with the le–sol–fi–sol schema; (b) hypothetical recomposition in G minor from mm. 6–9.

(a)

LE–SOL–FI–SOL [modulating]

Allegro con brio

(b)

LE–SOL–FI–SOL [modulating]

Allegro con brio

(i: PAC)

(FUGATO)

distinctions such as “light/heavy, comic/serious, sensitive/bravura” (2007: 6). And still, both Gjerdingen (2007: 439) and Roman Ivanovitch (2011: 20), who traced Mozart’s usage of the schema as a retransitional device, hear associations of “high church music” in this grammatical structure. To that end, Ivanovitch cites another prominent sacred-music example in the Credo of Mozart’s Great Mass in C minor, K. 427, specifically the “Et incarnatus est” (Ivanovitch 2011: 22–24). The implication is that the Stabat Mater Prinner is a cross between schema and topic, or that its grammar is imbued with residues of church music, and therefore affords lexical and/or indexical significance.

Indeed Pergolesi’s example is a token of a more general sacred music style type: what Gjerdingen calls a Stabat Mater Prinner is a voice-leading detail of a larger harmonic schema and syntactic process discussed in eighteenth-century Satzlehre, treatises, and dictionaries as an Orgelpunkt or point d’orgue, used to suspend the final close of a fugue or fugato in the church style. In his Handwörterbuch of 1807, Koch describes the Orgelpunkt as a “sustained cadence,” which “is really a delaying of the final Cadenz in fugues or fugal compositions.” Johann Georg Sulzer’s earlier entry in the Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste similarly describes it “as a delaying of the conclusion” of “polyphonic churchmusic,” which in general involves the “final cadence” of fugues, “but it can be used for other church matters.” And Friedrich Wilhelm Marpurg, in the Abhandlung von der Fugue of 1753, also defines the Orgelpunkt as the “fourth and last part of the fugue” (vierte und letzte Theil der Fugue; 1753: 152). In terms of its structure, the pedal point is defined as a sustained bass, normally the dominant (but can also be the tonic) scale degree, with various contrapuntal processes in the upper voices. In Der General-Bass in der Composition of 1728, Johann David Heinichen discusses these contrapuntal procedures in terms of numerous “variations and foreign syncopations” (Variationes und frembde Syncopationes) in the organ manuals (1728: 948), such as the upper-voice 2–3 suspensions of the Stabat Mater Prinner. The entire process is aptly summarized in Daniel Gottlob Türk’s Anweisung zum Generalbaßspielen from 1800: the “bass… holds the dominant while many sorts of contrapuntal arts begin in the upper voices” (1800: 321). The harmonic schema is illustrated via several examples from Eberlin, Emanuel Bach, and of Türk’s own composition, numbered 1 to 3 in Example 14.7, respectively. The last of these, his own contribution, features the same voice leading of the Stabat Mater Prinner (the last two stages of the schema are implied by the figures in Türk’s example, and have been realized here in Web Example 14.2).

Türk’s grouping of the Stabat Mater Prinner’s voice leading within the larger category of Orgelpunkte explicitly identifies the pattern as a token of this more general church-style type. Descending 2–3 (or 7–6) suspensions over a dominant pedal are in fact distinctive features of the Orgelpunkt style. Koch’s own example in the Handwörterbuch pairs only the 2–3 suspensions with a more complex imitative texture, where imitated 7–1–2 trichords take the place of the Stabat Mater Prinner’s inner-voice countermelody (Example 14.8a; Web Example 14.3). In the “Coronation” Mass in C major, K. 317 (1779), Mozart uses this Orgelpunkt on three occasions, once again in the Credo, and in each case the suspensions seen in the Stabat Mater Prinner, now realized as 7–6, are but part of a larger fauxbourdon process over a dominant pedal (mm. 18–22,
EXAMPLE 14.7  Orgelpunkt from Türk, Anweisung zum Generalbassspielen (1800), 322–23.
"Et in unum Dominum"; mm. 85–89, “cum gloria judicare”; mm. 122–28, “Et exspecto resurrectionem mortuorum”). The fauxbourdon voice leading in the third of these, shown in Example 14.8b, traverses a complete octave descent in the upper voices (F–F♯, A♮–A♮), creating a nested predominant expansion (within the dominant prolongation) that concludes with a le–sol–fi–sol in the upper voice. The same Orgelpunkt variant, without the countermelody, appears in the Stabat Mater of Girolamo Abos (1750) and that of Giovanni Gualberto Brunetti (1764). The concluding Orgelpunkt in Antonio Caldara’s Stabat Mater (c. 1725) makes imitative use of the 2–3 suspensions themselves. And the same fugal usage of the pattern seen in Pergolesi, Abos, Brunetti, and Caldara, finally, is replicated in the closing Amen of Haydn’s own Stabat Mater from 1767 (Example 14.9).

Here again, the voice-leading and scale-degree content of the Stabat Mater Prinner are part of a larger Orgelpunkt and a complete octave descent in the top voice. The Stabat Mater Prinner is thus not a harmonic schema as such, but a topical voice-leading characteristic of the church style within a broader network or chain of indexical significations, hence the “high church music” designations in Gjerdingen and Ivanovitch. As both Monelle and Hatten have maintained, “certain topics represent whole genres” (Monelle 2006: 23; Hatten 1994). The representation here involves a chain of significations: 2–3 (or 7–6) suspensions over a dominant pedal are a signifier of the Orgelpunkt, which signifies a fugue/fugato, which signifies a Stabat Mater (or even a “Credo”), which itself is a signifier of the church/sacred style.

Beethoven would certainly have been familiar with the Orgelpunkt style type and its various contexts. The treatises of Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Beethoven’s teacher in Vienna, display copious examples of sacred music from Allegri, Bach, Caldara, Carissimi, Fux, Handel, Kirnberger, Lassus, Palestrina, and Peri (Wyn Jones 1998: 36). The second page of the Kurzgefasste Methode den Generalbass zu erlernen from 1791 even contains an example of the same Orgelpunkt harmonic schema that Beethoven uses in the Funeral March of the “Eroica” Symphony (1791: 2). Perhaps more importantly, Beethoven’s own Materialen zum Generalbass (Nottebohm 1872) include paraphrased and copied passages from the treatises of C. P. E. Bach, Albrechtsberger, and Türk, including a citation of Bach’s discussion of the Orgelpunkt, specifically paragraphs 1, 3, 4, and 6 from Chapter 24 of Part Two of the Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen (1762), which also describes the pattern as “appear[ing] generally in learned things, especially fugues, near the end over the dominant” (Bach 1949: 319). Among the examples Bach provides is the Orgelpunkt in Example 14.10, which once again shows the 2–3 suspensions of the Stabat Mater Prinner as part of a larger dominant pedal, and here also with a chromatic version of uppermost line: b6–5–b4–4–b3–3–2. And so, Beethoven’s use of this church-style type in the context of a symphonic slow movement (Example 14.5), one designated Funeral March at that, becomes a question of “topic” in the deeper sense of the term: as Hatten (this volume, page 514) puts it, “a familiar style type only becomes topical when it is imported” into a larger or foreign context or, as Mirka has it in the introduction (page 2), topics are “musical styles and genres taken out of their proper context and used in another one.” The funereal and mortal significations of the Orgelpunkt in the Funeral March are thus not inherent, but emergent, arising from the pattern’s migration.

(a) Fig. 93.
TOPICS AND HARMONIC SCHEMATA: A CASE FROM BEETHOVEN


from the sacred style into a symphonic context. The intended meaning of the importation is to semantically charge the key of G minor with connotations of the mortal and funereal specifically in a sacred context. By staging the Orgelpunkt as the conclusion of a fugato (double fugue) in a Funeral March, this pedal point, as a form–meaning pair or schema–topic amalgam, functions as a signifier that brings the mortal, the funereal, the sacred/spiritual, and the key of G minor into a constellated semantic orbit.

This signification is further highlighted by a merging or "troping of topics" in Hatten's terms (1994, 2004, and this volume). The Orgelpunkt combines a motive-form derived from the fugue (eighth-and-two-sixteenths pattern), as is common practice, with triplet sixteenths and tremolandi in the first violins that derive from the movement's opening funeral march material (Example 14.5). In a minor-mode and flat-key context, tremolandi and triplet rhythms are common characteristics of the ombra style, which Clive McClelland (2012), following the work of Leonard Ratner (1980) and Wye J. Allanbrook (1983), has recently surveyed in a large-scale study dedicated to the subject and further discusses in this volume. Both in theatrical- and sacred-style genres, ombra music is used to depict mortal and funereal scenes, or more generally involves death, burial, the afterlife, the supernatural, ghosts, spirits, furies, and so forth. Indeed the texture of Beethoven's passage (Example 14.5) resembles Gluck's setting of Alceste's arrival to the Underworld, cited in McClelland (2012: 125), which features tremolandi sextuplet sixteenths, and in the same key of G minor. Beethoven's example also introduces the more plaintive, lowered form of the supertonic scale degree at mm. 144 (A♭), Neapolitan harmony (here over a dominant pedal) being another characteristic of the ombra style. As the tonal and harmonic goal of the fugato, the Orgelpunkt and its ombra features render G minor a representation of the mortal and funereal in a spiritual context. But these connotations do not begin here.

The sacred-music and funereal resonances of G minor are already intimated by the symphony's opening theme: in the Funeral March, the actual G minor cadence is articulated not by the Orgelpunkt but by the le–sol–fi–sol. This harmonic schema is not only a grammatical structure and punctuation formula but also a characteristic of the ombra style. The le–sol–fi–sol articulates the very first cadence in the opening tenor solo of Haydn's Stabat Mater: a half cadence in D minor on "lacrymosa," shown in Example 14.11. In the Funeral March, the schema continues the ombra texture of the preceding
Orgelpunkt, with its diminished seventh harmony and angular chromaticism in the bass. In the symphony’s opening, it serves to introduce mortal and funereal themes in a G minor context with the very first harmonic motion of the movement (Byros 2012: 305). In texted compositions, the le–sol–fi–sol is consistently used to represent mortal, funereal, and supernatural qualities and scenes, both in theatrical and sacred music environments. Mozart employs the schema in such a way as early as 1767, in the Grabmusik, K. 42 to depict “roaring thunder, lightning, and flames” (“Brüllt, ihr Donner, Blitz und Flammen,” mm. 141–51; Byros 2009: 464, ex. 3.51). And the pattern’s ombra characteristics are treated thematically later in Don Giovanni (1787). For example, the le–sol–fi–sol stages the very moment that the Commendatore is fatally wounded by Don Giovanni (“Il commendatore mortalmente ferito,” Act 1, No. 1, mm. 174–76), and again later in the “O statua gentilissima” Duet of Act 2, where the Commendatore returns to life in ghost form, Mozart uses several variants of the schema (mm. 30–32, 44–46; see also the Finale, mm. 502–3). In the later Requiem, K. 626 (1791), the le–sol–fi–sol is used to represent eternal life: “Et lux perpetua luceat eis” (And let eternal light shine upon them, mm. 43–46; Byros 2012: 292, ex. 4a). These powerful examples from early and late Mozart are representative of the schema’s general ombra usage in the theatrical and sacred-style examples outlined in my corpus study of the pattern (Byros 2009,
Appendix B). But the le–sol–fi–sol also appears to have had a more specific and circumscribed use in church music. Namely, it is regularly encountered in the Credo of a Mass, notably in the “Et incarnatus est.” The schema is frequently set to the text “et homo factus est” (and he became man), “Crucifixus etiam pro nobis” (crucified for us), and “passus et sepultus est” (suffered and was buried). Example 14.12 shows the “passus et sepultus est” from Mozart’s Missa solemnis in C minor, K. 139 (1769). McClelland’s own illustrations of ombra in a sacred-music context show the same usage of the le–sol–fi–sol in the “Et incarnatus est” of (the younger) Georg Reutter’s Missa Sancti Caroli from 1734 (McClelland 2012: 176, ex. 7.7, mm. 17–19). And Jasmin Cameron’s analytic study of the Crucifixion in Music (2006: 90–91, fig. 5.7, mm. 6–7) cites a “Crucifixus” setting of the schema in a Mass for four voices by Caldara (c. 1720).

The le–sol–fi–sol was something of a trope of the Credo of a Mass that expresses the theme of sacrificial death. Table 14.1 profiles a selection of examples from the long eighteenth century (c. 1720–1823): the list includes several variants of the le–sol–fi–sol in the Credo of a Mass, and other related sacred music contexts expressing sacrificial death. As a recurrent theme or motive in the “Et incarnatus est,” the le–sol–fi–sol is a musical equivalent of what cognitive linguists term a “collostruction.” As seen above, all grammar is said to consist of form–meaning pairs, but the pairing varies by specificity and level of abstraction. A “collostruction” refers to a frequent co-occurrence of certain lexical and syntactic symbols, or to a consistent and specific form–meaning pair (e.g. Stefanowitsch and Gries 2003). This is one means by which grammatical structure acquires semantic meaning, and an aspect of the syntax–lexicon continuum that

is perhaps all the more consequential for musical symbols: a grammatical construction may retain the significance of its collostructural lexical pairs even in their absence. The le–sol–fi–sol, specifically, affords the connotations of sacrificial death expressed by the text of the “Et incarnatus est” in its absence. A second means by which grammar inherits meaning is via image schemata: syntax relies on “prelinguistic” structures such as “source–path–goal,” “center–periphery,” “attraction,” and many others (Johnson 1987;
These image schemas relate to embodied experiences that inform the structure of language and consequently charge grammar with signification. “Axis balance” is one such image schema, and it underlies the radial structure of the le–sol–fi–sol. Cameron discusses several representations of the cross in terms of musical symbolism: among these symbols is a “zig-zag arrangement of notes” (2006: 57) shown in Example 14.13a. They display melodic profiles very similar in concept to what Leonard Meyer called “axial” melodies (Meyer 1973; 1989). The le–sol–fi–sol is precisely such a pattern, with its axial symmetry around scale degree 5 (Example 14.13b). The “image schema” of “axis balance,” as a characteristic feature of the schema–topic amalgam, further affords semantic meaning in the absence of a specific lexical designation through its musical symbolism—the cross as symbol of sacrificial death.

These sacred-music contexts would likewise have been quite familiar to Beethoven—a Roman Catholic who not only studied a good deal of sacred music with Albrechtsberger (Wyn Jones 1998: 36), but at Bonn was also appointed deputy organist by the elector Maximilian Franz in 1784, and filled in for his teacher and court organist Christian Gottlob Neefe. Beethoven’s importation of the schema into a symphonic context, and specifically one that prompts a modulation in its opening theme, once more becomes a question of topic in the deeper sense of the term. But the topical use of the le–sol–fi–sol differs from that of the Orgelpunkt in terms of the immediacy of its lexical specification—that is, whereas the Orgelpunkt is firmly associated with fugal composition and, by extension, with the church style, the le–sol–fi–sol is a much more transgeneric instance of musical grammar. Its lexical specifications are consequently even less inherent, and therefore require deictic cues to be realized. To that end, the schema is multiply marked in the symphony’s opening through a number of oppositions involving formal function, syntax, tonality, and style types. Hatten (1994: 121) cites the opening of the “Eroica” as an example of a “‘developmental’ unstable theme” type of “strategic markedness” that results from “cross-matching material and locational functions.” This results from Beethoven’s having “fronted” a process-orientated, modulatory and cadential schema—that is, positioned it as the opening gesture of a symphony. Meyer called this compositional strategy “positional migration,” defined as the (re)positioning of process- and closure-oriented
schemata— “punctuation formulas” in Koch’s terms—at the beginning of a work (1989: 124). As seen above, the le–sol–fi–sol was both a common way of producing a modulation up a third and a structurally important cadence—often a Cadenz or Halbcadenz.

The markedness produced by this fronting strategy is augmented by the le–sol–fi–sol’s syntactic disruption at m. 10: after being formally displaced to the opening of a symphony that prompts a modulation to G minor, the dominant of E flat major disrupts the schema’s completion with, as Rochlitz put it, an “unexpected” return to E flat major (compare Examples 14.4a and 14.4b). These oppositions in the formal, tonal, and syntactic domains are combined with another level of asymmetry in the form of topical differentiation. The le–sol–fi–sol introduces textural characteristics of the ombra style: tempestuous syncopations in the first violins (mm. 7–8), along with the tremolandi strings (McClelland 2012: 123–30). Indeed the first violins appear to be lifted straight from Mozart’s first G-minor symphony, perhaps as an intertextual referencing of this tonality. These textural characteristics and the angular chromaticism and diminished-seventh harmony of the le–sol–fi–sol grammar blend into a larger ombra-style topical unit that contrasts with the E-flat major fanfare style of the opening triads and hammer blows in mm. 1–2, and the horn call in the triadic arpeggiation of the cellos in mm. 3–6, which becomes a literal horn call in later restatements and reworkings of the theme. More importantly, the G-minor ombra music of mm. 6–9 occurs against the larger stylistic context of the Ländler: a rural dance widespread in Austria and Germany in the later eighteenth and nineteenth century (see McKee, this volume). Daniel Heartz (2009: 517, 643) has identified this topic and its close relative, the “German dance” (deutsche Tanz or Deutscher), for example, in several works of Haydn and Mozart, including the finale of the Piano Trio in E flat major, Hob. XV: 29, “In the German Style,” the Trio from Mozart’s Symphony No. 39 in E flat major, and the “Drinking Chorus” that ends the “Fall” of Haydn’s Seasons (see also McKee 2012).

The opening theme of the “Eroica” is also broadly cast in the Ländler style, with its characteristic oom-pah | oom-pah | oom-pah-pah | pah rhythmic pattern in mm. 3–6 and 10–15. This is a common feature of the Ländler and German dances of Mozart and Beethoven, and often in combination with tonic pedals and arpeggiation. The Trio of Beethoven’s “German Dance,” WoO 8 No. 3, similarly features a Ländler with a literal horn call. But the most famous use of this Deutscher/Ländler style may be the Intrada to Mozart’s early pastoral Singspiel, Bastien und Bastienne (1768), whose main theme is commonly identified as an anticipation of Beethoven’s opening in the “Eroica” (Example 14.14).

In his Late Beethoven of 2003, Maynard Solomon attributed the affective dissonance of the opening theme to the disruption of a pastoral sentiment caused by the chromatic descent in mm. 6–7. He further highlighted the pastoral tone as a relatively unique instance of this topic in middle-period Beethoven:

On one conspicuous occasion [Beethoven] unveiled a pastoral moment at the very instant of its fracture by disruptive forces. The two crashing chords that open the Eroica Symphony introduce a flowing pastoral negotiation of the common chord [presumably the tonic triad], a shepherd’s yodel or an alpenhorn call that lasts less than
The vague “disruptive forces” of which Solomon speaks are the ombra style communicated by the le–sol–fi–sol, which is syntactically, tonally, formally, and topically marked, and “marked entities have a greater (relative) specificity of meaning than do unmarked entities” (Hatten 1994: 291). The le–sol–fi–sol and G minor thus only acquire mortal and funereal connotations by virtue of their opposition to the preceding E-flat major fanfare, triadic arpeggiation, and the underlying pastoral landscape of the Ländler dance. Their lexical significance arises precisely in their being “disruptive forces.”

As in the Funeral March, Beethoven’s topical use of le–sol–fi–sol is specifically to charge the key of G minor with mortal and funereal connotations in a sacred context, which becomes the symphony’s first lexical reference communicated in strictly musical terms. This strategic positioning of the G-minor ombra music in the opening theme is the means of a larger expressive end. Through their expressive correlates, G minor and the le–sol–fi–sol are structural necessities for communicating a powerful philosophical message that involves the spiritual consequences of death, suffering, and self-sacrifice that is only alluded to in the heroic and memorial themes of the symphony’s quasi-programmatic title Sinfonia eroica . . . composta per festeggiare il sovvenire di un grand Uomo (“Heroic symphony, composed to celebrate the memory of a great man”), but is more explicit in the intertextual contexts that surround the symphony’s composition. The same themes of sacrificial death coded in the le–sol–fi–sol and implied in the symphony’s heroic and memorial epithets are found in Beethoven’s contemporary musical and literary texts. The “Eroica” was composed during a period when Beethoven was “forced to become a philosopher,” as confessed in what Solomon has called the symphony’s “literary prototype”: the Heiligenstadt Testament of 6 and 10 October 1802. The theme of sacrificial death metaphorically runs throughout the testament, particularly in Beethoven’s overt submission to and acceptance of his afflication and fate, which were prompted by the benefits of virtue, and oriented toward the achievement of a higher state of existence, in which music would play an integral part:

I would have ended my life—it was only my art that held me back. Ah, it seemed to me impossible to leave the world until I had brought forth all that I felt was
within me. So I endured this wretched existence—truly wretched for so susceptible a body which can be thrown by a sudden change from the best condition to the very worst.—Patience, they say, is what I must now choose for my guide, and I have done so—I hope my determination will remain firm to endure until it pleases the inexorable Parcae to break the thread.... I am ready.—Forced to become a philosopher.... Divine One, thou seest into my inmost soul, thou knowest that therein dwells the love of mankind and the desire to do good.... Virtue... upheld me in time of misery. Thanks to it and to my art I did not end my life by suicide.... With joy I hasten to meet death—If it comes before I have had the chance to develop all my artistic capacities, it will still be coming too soon despite my harsh fate and I should probably wish it later—yet even so I should be happy.... Come when thou wilt, I shall meet thee bravely. (Forbes 1967, 1: 305)


Both the “Eroica” and the Heiligenstadt Testament are but part of a larger “death of the hero” repertoire from Beethoven's output in the first decade of the nineteenth century, which explored death, suffering, and self-sacrifice as correlates of life, joy, and jubilation. This includes, among others, the slow movement marked “Marcia funebre sulla morte d’un Eroe” (Funeral March on the Death of a Hero) in the Piano Sonata in A flat major, Op. 26; the oratorio Christus am Ölberge (Christ on the Mount of Olives), Op. 85; the opera Fidelio; and the Incidental Music to Goethe’s Egmont, Op. 84 (see also Solomon 1998: 68–73). The most important among these for understanding the expressive significance of Beethoven's use of the le–sol–fi–sol schema-topic in the “Eroica” is the oratorio, which, despite the later opus number, precedes the symphony, written in March of 1803, and performed on 5 April of the same year. Christus am Ölberge is the first large-scale work Beethoven composed since writing the Heiligenstadt Testament, and was done by his own volition—it was not commissioned. The oratorio’s libretto, penned by Franz Xaver Huber, portrays Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gesthemane. Unlike the Passions of the elder Bach, it focuses primarily on Christ's agony, submission to and acceptance of his fate, and an understanding of his sacrifice as purposive, for the salvation of humanity. The details of the oratorio’s compositional history and subject matter indicate that Beethoven saw in Christ a model, as he was struggling with the pragmatic, moral, and philosophical implications of his own suffering and deafness. He said as much in a later conversation book from January 1820: “Socrates and Jesus were exemplars for me.” From his Nachlassverzeichnis, we also know that Beethoven owned and studied several theological and Christian-philosophical works. Among the volumes in his library are, in addition to French and Latin copies of the Bible, the fifteenth-century monastic treatise The Imitation of Christ (c. 1427) by Thomas à Kempis, and Christoph Christian Sturm's
Reflections on the Works of God in the Realm of Nature (1772), which Beethoven allegedly advised clergy to read from the pulpit.\textsuperscript{13}

The themes of self-sacrifice, death, and rebirth that run through the Heiligenstadt Testament, though likely not derived from the pages of these philosophical and theological works, strongly identify with their dominant messages. In Chapter 23 of à Kempis’ treatise, titled “Thoughts on Death,” we read the following: “Be wary and mindful of death. Try to live now in such a manner that at the moment of death you may be glad, rather than fearful. \textit{Learn to die to the world now, that then you may begin to live with Christ}” (Kempis 2004: 27). That such passages and messages were meaningful to Beethoven is evident not only from the similar themes expressed in the Heiligenstadt Testament (“With joy I hasten to meet death”), but also from the many annotations and underlinings that survive in his copy of Sturm’s \textit{Betrachtungen}. Beethoven’s biographer Ludwig Nohl produced a (partially inaccurate) transcription of marked passages in several volumes from Beethoven’s library (Nohl 1870), which also includes works by Shakespeare, Homer, Goethe, Herder, Schiller, and others. Critical English translations of the marked passages in Beethoven’s copy of the \textit{Betrachtungen} have been produced by Charles Witcombe and collaborators (Witcombe 1998, 2003; Witcombe and Portillo 2003; Witcombe et al. 2003). Many of Beethoven’s markings display a man struggling to find meaning and purpose in his affliction. Some of these marked passages reflect the themes of suffering and rebirth directly: “To live eternally one day, to be eternally blessed, to be eternally joyful… [N]ow I have this hope! How insignificant are all the sufferings that I have to endure here. As rough and as long as the winter of my life may be, confidently I wait for spring and the renewal and improvement of my situation in that world” (Witcombe and Portillo 2003: 22). Others reveal Beethoven’s attempts to reconcile his suffering as a means of attaining a higher state of being, or as a necessary resource or path to a higher state of existence and joy: “In order to bring people closer to the feeling of their final purpose, the abhorrence of sin, and the practice of goodness, God turns sometimes to violent and sometimes to gentle means. Occasionally he finds it best to arouse the sinner out of his slumber through powerful jolts, through severe punishments, and through continuous judgment. … Illness and other accidents you imposed on me in order to bring me to contemplate my digressions…. I only ask one thing of you, my God: \textit{do not stop working on my improvement}” (Witcombe et al. 2003: 93, Beethoven’s emphasis). The title of the following passage in Beethoven’s copy was “marked with three emphatic consecutive lines in [the] margin” (Witcombe et al. 2003: 94), and may well be the most illustrative example of Beethoven’s attempts to reconcile and submit to his affliction and fate, by understanding his suffering as part of a larger plan overseen by Divine Providence: “If I know that I remain connected with God and my Savor, then I can also be certain that all future destinies, be they sad or pleasant, will serve me for the best. Is it not my reconciling God who orders all events and reigns over the future? … \textit{What God has chosen for me, That shall and must take place}… I have surrendered myself unto him. \textit{To die and to live}” (Witcombe et al. 2003: 94, my italics).

It is precisely at the moment that depicts this surrender in the \textit{Mount of Olives} oratorio that Beethoven employs a dramatic use of the \textit{le–sol–fi–sol}—that is, precisely at the
moment that Christ submits to his own fate (Example 14.15), and sacrifices himself to die and to live by God’s will. Measures 18–24 present the same *ombra* textural features as the “Eroica,” syncopated and tremolandi strings, with a variant of the *le–sol–fi–sol* textural features in mm. 20–24 that modulates up a fifth, here from E minor to B minor, via a reinterpretation of ♭4 in the bass to a leading tone in B minor (Example 14.15), which I have described as a *le–sol–fi–sol* variant: ♭4 (fi) becomes 7 (ti) by resolving the chord it carries to a minor (and therefore tonic) triad, as opposed to a major (and therefore dominant) triad (Byros, 2009: 305, ex. 5.19, Appendix B). The theme of sacrificial death coded in the *le–sol–fi–sol* is thus identified with Christ’s own submission. The schema represents the emotional turmoil involved in the very act of surrender, as it is only at its completion in m. 26 that Christ sings to his Father: “Doch nicht mein Wille, nein, dein Wille nur geschehe” (But let not my will, no, Thy will only be done). The *le–sol–fi–sol* is thus coextensive with Christ’s agony, his submission to God, and acceptance of his fate, for the purpose of a greater good—in this case, for the salvation of humanity itself.

This powerful example from the *Mount of Olives* suggests that Beethoven conceived of the *le–sol–fi–sol* as a syntactic and semantic musical symbol capable of communicating the submissive and mortal dimensions of his developing hero philosophy or, in Sullivan’s terms, of his “spiritual development.” The oratorio was one of several such philosophical-spiritual exercises that he revisited persistently throughout his
compositional output. The “Eroica” is yet another, early and untexted chapter in what became a life-long narrative, a “long journey” and a “via dolorosa” (Solomon 2003: 164). As a philosophical testament, or treatise, similar in ethos to those of à Kempis and Sturm, the symphony portrays a heroism not of a revolutionary (public) order but, written on the heels of the Heiligenstadt Testament and the Mount of Olives oratorio, of a spiritual (private) order. Sullivan heard the “Eroica” as the “first piece of music [Beethoven] composed that has a really profound and spiritual content.” He continues:

Indeed, the difference from the earlier [presumably instrumental] music is so startling that it points to an almost catastrophic change, or extremely rapid acceleration, in his spiritual development. We have found that such a change is witnessed to by the Heiligenstadt Testament, and we shall see that the Eroica symphony is an amazingly realized and co-ordinated expression of the spiritual experience that underlay that document. The ostensible occasion of the symphony appears to have been the career of Napoleon Bonaparte, but no amount of brooding over Napoleon’s career could have given Beethoven his realization of what we may call the life-history of heroic achievement as exemplified in the Eroica. This is obviously a transcription of personal experience… Heroism, for him, was not merely a name descriptive of a quality of certain acts, but a sort of principle manifesting itself in life. (Sullivan 1927: 90, 95)

Much of Beethoven’s so-called “heroic period” has been characterized by a “tragic-to-triumphant schema” of expression exemplified in the Fifth Symphony (Hatten 1994: 79), in which Beethoven externalized and defeated his menace: Fate, personified in C minor, and overcome by C major (Sullivan 1927: 95). And much of the music of the period certainly falls into this generic expressive category. But the “Eroica” is more characteristic of what Hatten identified as the “cultural unit” of “abnegation[, which] is related to Christian notions of sacrifice and spiritual surrender” (Hatten 1994: 281): the “willed resignation and spiritual acceptance of a (tragic) situation that leads to a positive inner state” (1994: 298). The hero philosophy that persists throughout Beethoven’s lifetime is not overcoming suffering, but its endurance.

In the very opening entry of his Tagebuch (1812), Beethoven inscribes the following article of faith: “Submission, deepest submission to your fate, only this can give you the sacrifices…. You must not be a human being, not for yourself, but only for others: for you there is no longer any happiness except within yourself, in your art. O God! give me strength to conquer myself, nothing at all must fetter me to life” (Solomon 2003: 164). And again, in a sketchbook from 1816: “Submission—submission! Thus may we win something even in the deepest misery, and make ourselves worthy to have God forgive our shortcomings. Fate, show your force! We are not lords over ourselves. What is determined must be, and so let it be!” (Schauffler 1929: 358). Submission was the basis for the Christian-philosophical tenet that, in Beethoven’s words, one achieves joy through suffering: in a letter to the Countess Anna Marie Erdödy from Vienna, dated 19 October 1815, he writes: “We finite beings, who are the embodiment of an infinite spirit, are born to suffer both pain and joy; and one might almost say that the best of us obtain joy through suffering” (Anderson 1961: 527, Letter No. 563).
Not only joy, but endurance through suffering leads to a higher state of being; again to the Countess, in a letter dated 15 May 1816, Beethoven writes: “Man cannot avoid suffering; and in this respect his strength must stand the test, that is to say, he must endure without complaining and feel his worthlessness and then again achieve his perfection, that perfection which the Almighty will then bestow upon him” (Anderson 1961: 578, Letter No. 633). The first explicit documentation of this spiritual conversion is the literary prototype of the “Eroica,” the Heiligenstadt Testament: what Beethoven realized, in Sullivan’s words, was that a “rigid strained defiance was no longer necessary. What he came to see as his most urgent task, for his future spiritual development, was submission. He had to accept his suffering as in some mysterious way necessary” (Sullivan 1927: 78).

The le–sol–fi–sol is a schema–topic amalgam that semantically charges G minor in the “Eroica” as the musical representation of this necessity. The communicative significance of G minor lies in its structural and expressive opposition to E flat major, as a musical representation of the spiritual transcendence enabled by suffering and sacrifice. G minor and the le–sol–fi–sol are a means of musically realizing this philosophical concept of abnegation through what Hatten termed a “tragic-to-transcendent” expressive genre (1994: 28, 281–86), which is akin to religious drama: “tragedy that is transcended through sacrifice at a spiritual level. The pathos of the tragic may be understood as stemming from a kind of Passion music, depicting a personal, spiritual struggle; and the triumph is no longer a publicly heroic ‘victory’ but a transcendence or acceptance” (79). The le–sol–fi–sol is the musical impetus for realizing this expressive genre, as it initiates a number of “correlations of oppositions” (Hatten 1994: 292) in the structural and expressive domains that semantically charge E flat major and G minor as respective representations of life, joy, and perfection, on the one hand, and death, suffering, and self-sacrifice on the other. The major and minor modes are of course among the most readily available oppositions in the classical style, which Hatten aligns with the generic cultural oppositions of “non-tragic” and “tragic.” In sacred music the specific relationship between G minor and E flat major in the “Eroica”—down a major third—is explicitly associated with death and resurrection. In his monumental study of the concerted Viennese Mass, Bruce MacIntyre illustrates that the “tonic of the Mass opens the Credo and almost always returns for the ‘Et resurrexit’” (MacIntyre 1986: 322). The contrasting tonality for the intervening “Et incarnatus est” section, which profiles Christ’s incarnation, crucifixion, suffering, and death, is often the minor-mode mediant, resulting in precisely the key relationship in the opening theme of the “Eroica.” The progression iii–I is among the three most common tonal transitions between the “Et incarnatus est” and the “Et resurrexit” (MacIntyre 1986: 325). For example, Caldara’s Mass in G minor pursues the following tonal scheme: “Credo” (G major), “Et incarnatus est”—“Crucifixus” (B major–B minor), “Et resurrexit” (G major). In the context of a Mass, the life-death duality expressed by the tonal relationship is of course explicitly communicated by the text. Sacrifice (“homo factus est. Crucifixus etiam pro nobis”), suffering (“passus”), death (“sepultus”), and resurrection (“resurrexit”) are literally inscribed into the musical work. In addition to the specificity of natural language, the correlation between
structure and expression is supplied by the Church as a social and pragmatic context for the expression.

In the “Eroica,” the correlation rests on the affordant meaning of the le–sol–fi–sol grammar, as it is responsible for introducing the symphony’s first lexical reference. As a form–meaning pair in the communicative channel, the harmonic schema achieves a syntactic and semantic function in one gesture: it produces a modulation to G minor while introducing a sacred-music reference of sacrificial death, thereby marking the mortal, funereal, sacrificial, and submissive connotations of G minor. The specificity of the schema’s meaning enabled by its markedness provides a context for a reciprocal semantic charging of E flat major with its fanfare, horn call, and Ländler topics. Through their opposition to the G-minor ombra music of mm. 6–9, the pastoral and ceremonial lexical significations of these topics become metaphoric representations of life, joy, and jubilation. Dance becomes a metaphor for life.

The same correlation between structure and expression returns in a magnified and powerful restatement of the G-minor–E-flat-major opposition at the very end of the symphony’s finale, where it is once more highlighted by a discrete shift in topical discourse (Example 14.16). The finale’s theme and variations effectively ends at m. 398, which immediately leads to a “discursive coda” (Hepokoski and Darcy 2006: 284–88) and developmental episode. This episode closes with an imposing perfect authentic cadence in G minor at m. 422, extended via its own codetta in mm. 422–33, before it gives way to a second, fanfare-based coda in E flat major at m. 437. This G-minor episode literally brings back the music of the Funeral March: mm. 419–22 revisit the same shimmering triplet sixteenths and tremolo violins from the Orgelpunkt and G-minor cadence in the Funeral March, before giving way to its march-like, processional rhythms in mm. 422–32 (compare Examples 14.5 and 14.16). This intermovement revisitation “topicalizes” the Funeral March itself: imported into the coda of a theme and variations, it becomes marked by its relocation along with the key of G minor. Its ombra connotations are further communicated by an ascending chromatic line in the bass that precedes the cadence, which results from sequential repetitions of a le–sol–fi–sol variant: its inverse, fi–sol–le (♯4–5–♭6). In the “Crucifixus” of a Mass, ascending chromatic bass lines are typically used to represent Christ’s via dolorosa, as in the “Crucifixus” of Mozart’s “Coronation” Mass and of Haydn’s “Harmony” Mass in B flat major. These ascending chromatic basses often include inverted le–sol–fi progressions, as in Haydn’s “Theresa” Mass from 1799 (Example 14.17). The instrumentation following the G-minor cadence at m. 422—flutes, bassoons, and strings—is also a typical characteristic of ombra music (McClelland 2012: 134–36). The E-flat-major music that follows the G-minor codetta of this episode is an elaborate fanfare in the military genre, which, through its “connect[ions] with literature, reflect[s] the classical image of the hero” (Monelle 2006: 5–6). The end-result is a bifocal G-minor–E-flat-major ending that mirrors the symphony’s similarly bifocal tonal and topical opening: E-flat Ländler and fanfare (mm. 1–6) followed by G-minor ombra (mm. 6–9).

The symphony’s conclusion thus presents a magnified mirror image of the tonal and topical confrontation between E flat major and G minor from its very opening gestures.

(FUNERAL MARCH, OMBRA)

(VIA DOLOROSA/FL-SOL-LE)

(g: PAC)

(FUNERAL MARCH/OMBRA) (FANFARE)
TOPICS AND HARMONIC SCHEMATA: A CASE FROM BEETHOVEN

And, as in the opening theme, the competing tonalities are never reconciled to one another. The conclusiveness of the G-minor *ombra* episode creates an impression of two independent tonal endings for the symphony. G minor is not resolved into the following E-flat-major music so much as merged with or confronted by it: the abrupt changes in tempo (to Presto) and dynamics (to *ff*) enforce a nearly direct modulation in mm. 434–36 that transforms the G octaves of m. 433 from scale degree 1 to scale degree 3.

There is no progression to E flat major as a resolution, but a rupture. The militaristic E-flat-major fanfare from m. 437 to the symphony’s conclusion is thus not a representation of a public victory, but, bursting, as it does, from the preceding G-minor *ombra* music, it becomes a metaphor for rebirth, joy, spiritual perfection, and personal victory. The two tonalities are kept in abeyance, or held in suspension. As is characteristic of “religious drama” in general, there is no musical resolution. G minor and E flat major represent inner states only reconciled within the self: the “conflicting elements [of assertion and submission] are...both located within the soul itself” (Sullivan 1927: 96). Joy (E flat major) is achieved through suffering (G minor). This synthesis of assertion and submission, or abnegation, results in a higher state of existence, which, “for Beethoven, [generally]...meant the serene transcendence of a spiritual victory, won not only through heroic striving...but through profound abnegation in the face of a tragic reality that cannot be cancelled” (Hatten 1994: 286). Nor is G minor cancelled or overcome. Its “transcendence or acceptance goes beyond the conflicts of the work (after having fully faced them)” (Hatten 1994: 79).

The earliest sketches for the “Eroica” in the Wielhorsky sketchbook of 1802–3 suggest that an opposition between E flat major and G minor was in Beethoven’s thinking from the symphony’s inception (Byros 2012: 305; 2009: 43–47). Among these sketches are drafts for a third-movement Menuetto serioso in E flat major with a G-minor Trio. In the final version the opposition is not only the central tonal subject of its opening theme, but, as seen, it frames the entire symphony: E flat major (i, mm. 1–6)–G minor (i, mm. 6–9)–G minor (iv, mm. 419–33)–E flat major (iv, mm. 433–end). Web Example 14.4 provides a summary of this bifocal tonal frame. Through the expressive correlates of these tonalities, brought on by the several correlations of marked oppositions in the syntactic and topical domains, the bifocal tonal frame becomes a means...
of communicating a “tragic-to-transcendent” expressive genre for the entire symphony, and thus expressing a philosophical topic or cultural unit of abnegation. As Nicholas Cook paraphrases Hatten’s concept, “expressive genres function rather like the key of a sonata”—not as a continuous expression of the same tonality “in any literal sense, but the overall key coordinates the diverse tonal contents for the music and so provides a means for interpreting them” (Cook 1996: 108). In other words, the expressive genre casts an expressive affect, mood, or theme over the entire drama and its subplots: “Once a genre is recognized or provisionally invoked, it guides the listener in the interpretation of particular features . . . that can help flesh out a dramatic or expressive scenario” (Hatten 1994: 89). The tonal opposition thus becomes the basis for what Hatten termed a “high-level trope”: “The opposition may also initiate an ongoing dramatic conflict of characters or agents, perhaps suggesting a dramatic program. In addition, the contrast may lead to tropological interpretation that goes beyond the opposed correlations” (Hatten 1994: 169).

The complexity of the communicative utterances, drawing, as they do, on the syntactic and semantic properties of the le–sol–fi–sol as their basis, is conceivably among the characteristics of the “Eroica” Symphony that elicited its contemporary aesthetic judgments as a “serious” and “sublime” composition. In his review of the symphony from 1807, Rochlitz makes clear that he intends to write primarily on technical and less on aesthetic matters. But at the same time, he cautions the readers of the Leipzig Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung that, on account of its “elevated, abstract subject matter,” the “Eroica” requires a “thoughtful listener,” “an audience that at least pays serious attention and can maintain its serious attentiveness” (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 30, 24). Beethoven’s complex manipulations of both syntactic and semantic symbols in the schema–topic continuum undoubtedly figured among those aspects of the symphony requiring serious attention. An earlier review from 1805 in Der Freymüthige attributed its “true originality” to marked oppositions in both syntactic and semantic domains: “Strange modulations and violent transitions, . . . placing together the most heterogeneous things, as when for example a pastorale is played through in the grandest style” (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 15). Because of its complexity, audiences had to be prepared in advance. For a performance in Leipzig, reported in the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung on 29 April 1807, “the audience had been made attentive and, as far as possible, prepared to expect exactly what was offered, not only by means of a special announcement on the customary concert program, but also by a short characterization of each movement, particularly in regard to the composer’s intended effect upon the feelings. In both regards, the purpose was achieved completely. . . . a truly solemn attentiveness and deathlike silence reigned and was sustained not only throughout the whole . . . first performance, but also during the second and third, which . . . followed within a few weeks” (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 33). Throughout several reviews by Beethoven’s German contemporaries is replicated both the theme of technical and aesthetic difficulty, as well as the requirement of an audience “who listened with heightened attention” (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 38). A reviewer of the Zeitung für die elegante Welt counted the “Eroica” “among those few symphonies that,
with their spirited energy, set the listener’s imagination into a sublime flight and sweep his heart away to powerful emotions. But the connoisseur will only enjoy it as a complete work (and a repeated hearing doubles his spiritual enjoyment) the deeper he penetrates into the technical and aesthetic content of the original work” (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 35).

Like any philosophical treatise, the symphony requires meditation, study, and time for its message to congeal—presumably owing to the complexity of Beethoven’s interactive use of introversion (schemata) and extroversed (topics) musical symbols. For those Kenner who devoted their serious attention, the symphony’s intended spiritual message was evidently not lost: its overarching theme of death and rebirth is explicitly documented in a later review for the Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung from 1814, by one “K. B.,” who begins by citing a funereal poem Das Grab by Johann Gaudenz von Salis-Seewis (Senner, Wallace, and Meredith 2001: 38–39, my italics):

5.
The grave is deep and still
and horrible its brink!

Who has not felt the truth of these words of the poet already in their life? Does not the departure of every citizen from this earth from the “friendly familiarity of being and doing” have in itself something that deeply affects the serious observer? How much more moving is it, then, when an elevated, magnificent spirit departs forever from our midst? In a situation such as this, one should listen to the funeral march from Beethoven’s Eroica Symphony and sense its effect!—Certainly, a magnificent person is here being led to the grave; these tones tell us so in the clearest possible way. All the pain and all the joys of earthly life resound once again in our breast, deep and sweet, but only as the gentle voice of an echo, for already they are gone by, and have now fled irretrievably! Assuredly, the departed one now walks in the kingdom of clarity and light—refreshingly soothing melodies tell us this in the language of heaven perceptibly enough—but we remain abandoned at the grave and look up toward that kingdom’s nocturnal womb…. Only through resignation can we at last tear ourselves from this place in order to plunge into life’s rushing stream and at least to drink forgetfulness from this Lethe!

Notes

1. The relative independence of the two domains can be further seen in the competing syntactocentric and semantocentric viewpoints that inform several strains of topic theory. The former position is summarized by Caplin’s (2005) exploration of the syntax problem in topical analysis, which shows that many efforts to legitimize the enterprise often went hand in hand with attempts to syntactocitize topics—to examine what grammatical and structural features they themselves might possess, or how they might otherwise contribute to expressing syntactic, formal, and structural elements. The consequence, as Nicholas McKay (2007) has argued in a broader, disciplinary study, is a serious undervaluing of the expressive significance of topics. Though Caplin numbers them among music’s
“significant forces for musical expression,” citing recent advances in the topic studies of Raymond Monelle as evidence, their significations operate “quite independently of formal considerations” (Caplin 2005: 124)—so syntax, in a sense, still has the upper hand, whereas topic theory requires a “dialogue” or “balance” between syntax and semantics (McKay 2007; Rumph 2012: 94–95). Monelle (2000) presents a similar cautionary tale from the other, semantocentric side of the platform: we learn from his fictional musicologist, Dr. Strabismus, that attempts to “embrace semantics and syntactics” are destined to fail. “No comprehensive theory was possible for him. Only an overmastering stress on the sense of music, rather than its form or its syntax, united his random thoughts” (Monelle 2000: 4). Among the reasons for “Strabismus’s failure” is, evidently, the semantic autonomy of the topic. Expressive meaning is self-contained in the topic itself, as the signification of a particular “cultural unit” (Monelle 2000: 13; after Eco 1976: 67, citing Schneider 1968: 2; see also Monelle 2006: 10, 29). For Monelle, topical “meanings are inherent significations, not dependent on the listener; they are lexical, or in common language they are 'literal' meanings.” The “primary concern of the topic theorist is to give an account of each topic in global terms, showing how it reflects culture and society” (2006: 10).

2. For an earlier analytic investigation of this interaction, specifically as it applies to the communication of wit and humor in Mozart, see Byros (2013).


4. On the Cadenz, see the Versuch (1787: 419–20; 1793: 342–43) or the English translation (1983: 38–39, 213). In the Versuch, structurally significant half cadences were designated Quintabsätze (V-phrases). But later, in the entry "Quintabsatz" from his Musikalisches Lexikon (1802: cols. 1211–12), Koch would explicitly fix the structural weight of the medial half cadence (Quintabsatz) of the transition relative to the Cadenz of the Schlußsatz (second theme), by designating it a Halbcadenz.

5. Appendix B of my dissertation (Byros 2009) outlines each of these instances, along with several hundred other variants.


8. “Eine solche Stelle wird ein Orgelpunkt genannt, weil die Orgel, welche dabei im Basse blos den Ton aushält einigermaaßen einen Ruhepunkt hat, da die andern Stimmen fortfahren. Er kommt entweder auf der Tonica oder auf der Dominante vor und ist als eine Verzögerung des Schlusses anzusehen… Insgeheim bringt man in Fugen bey dem Haptschluß einen Orgelpunkt so an, daß die verschiedenen Säze und Gegensäze, die in der Fuge vorgekommen auf einen liegendem Basse so weit es angehet, vereiniget werden. Doch wird er auch bey andern Kirchensachen, die nicht als Fugen behandelt werden, angebracht” (Sulzer 1774: 860–61).

9. All of the examples are referenced in Appendix B of my dissertation (Byros 2009).

10. See, for example, K. 536/i, Trio; K. 571/i, iii; K. 600/ii; K. 602/ii, iii; K. 605/i; WoO 8, 11, 15, and WoO 13/i.
11. The sketches for the oratorio are contained in the Wielhorsky sketchbook of 1802–3 (see Johnson 1985). For more on the circumstances of the oratorio’s composition, see also Forbes (1967, 1: 295–96).
14. The Gellert Lieder Op. 48 (1802), which set six religious and spiritual poems of Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715–69), also date from this period.

References


