Robert Schuman "Novellette in F Major", Opus. 21 no. 1 (Part 1)
Composition Analysis
Novellette in F Major, Op. 21 no. 1
Composer: Robert Schumann
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Musical Form

To begin this analysis of Schumann’s Novellette in F Major, Op. 21 no. 1 I will look at the form of the composition which will help to explain the organization of the music. I have counted seven sections or parts to this extended rondo form. Each section is in a different related key and uses motive, rhythmic and harmonic elements true to the classical rondo form although some sections are used as extensions or transitions.

In addition, there are many ambiguities that I will discuss including rhythmic patterns, chromatic phrases, harmonic treatment of internal sections and shifting tonal centers that could be considered unusual for the typical rondo form of the period (1838) and Schumann exploited these elements to create his musical story.

Example #1
(Form & Key Analysis)

The seven primary sections that make-up this rondo form are: ABACABA

A in the Key of F&A (mm. 1-20), B in the Key of F (mm. 21-48), A in the Key of F (mm. 49-60), C in the Key of Db (mm. 61-81), A in the Key of Db (mm. 82-85), B in the Key of A (mm. 86-113), A in the Key of F (mm. 114-137).

The keys presented, F Major, Db Major and A Major are spaced in thirds around the tonic key of F Major. These chromatic mediant key relationships provide a contrast between the seven sections in this rondo. All seven sections begin and cadence on the related key of which they start. The sections are closed harmonically and finish in the same key. The exception to this is the first A section (mm.1-20) that begins in F Major
and ends in A Major (m. 20).

In comparing the other A sections to the first, I find them to be diminished in length. For example, the second A (refrain) is 12 measures long (mm. 49-60), the third A (refrain) is four measures long (mm. 82-85) and the last A (refrain) is 12 measures long (mm. 114-125). Schumann developed the exposition of the first A section into 20 measures. I believe the third A refrain section (mm. 82-85) is only transitional material to the second trio mm. 86-113. After the C section (mm. 61-81) Schumann could have ended and returned to the final A section (mm. 114-125) but may have wanted to reiterate his thematic material in yet another key so he extended this rondo form to fit his musical thoughts.

The B section appears twice. The first time it is in F Major (mm. 21-48) and the second time (mm. 86-113) A Major. Both sections end in their respective keys. The music is a contrast to all other sections and is written in a lyrical style. Schumann’s change of character in thematic materials, phrasing and arpeggiated rhythms create two trio sections that are easy to listen to. These trio sections are built in two measure phrases that are smooth and flow into one another. The contours of the melodic and bass lines are easy to define and the motif rhythms are strong and stable. Example #2 shows the outside (top, bottom) lines moving in opposite directions (contrary motion).

(Contour example #2, mm. 37-40)
measures. This material is similar to the trio sections only in melodic style and contour. The motives, harmonic motion and rhythm are completely different from any other part of this movement. I believe this material will be used again in other parts of the Novellette. The thematic line continually moves from treble clef to bass clef in phrases every three measures and does so in four short eighth note patterns that stretto one upon another. The tonal center is unstable as harmonic motion and modulations occur throughout this section. The opening three measure motive in mm. 61-63 is repeated in mm. 64-66 and mm. 73-75. The contour is smooth and is in contrary motion at times (mm. 65-66, example #3). There is little direction as to where the section is headed or will end. A ritard occurs at the end of the three measure phrases four times and each time the music repeats material or modulates. The entire section is in the middle and lower tessitura. Combined with the key of Db, the music sounds dark. Ambiguity in rhythm makes it hard to feel a beat pattern while combined with the four ritards leaves little sense of meter. This section begins with an anacrusis into measure 61 and is used to begin each new phrase. Schumann cleverly disguises each phrase entrance by using elisions to end and begin phrases (m. 63, 66, 75 beat 4).

Example #3, (mm. 65-68, contour, ambiguity)
A refrain of the A section in Db Major (mm. 82-85) occurs before the second trio B returns at mm. 86-113. The return of B has modulated to A major. The first B section was in F.

Before moving to the coda, Schumann concludes with a final A section using material from the exposition (motive, rhythms) which is in the same key, F major. In this paper, I do not include or count the coda as part of the seven sections of the form (ABACABA) and consider it to be a final state which stands on its own using materials from earlier sections to conclude the music.

The coda begins in measure 126 using familiar rhythms, quarter note and triplet motives from the exposition. The contours of the melodic lines move into the upper tessitura (mm. 132-133) for the first time since the beginning section (mm. 9-11) and descend two octaves into the bass clef in the final three measures (example #4).

Example #4 (mm. 133-137)

Schumann begins the work is F major and ends the introduction with a (PAC) perfect authentic cadence in measure 4. From there, the music takes many turns harmonically
in the first A section. Schumann uses the circle of fifths to modulation from measure to
measure as the harmonic rhythm increases and he skillfully employs or hints at eleven
different keys in the A section (mm. 1-20). For example, from measures 5 through 8, I
find four key changes (g, c, f, b) in minor that are connected through the circle of fifths.
Schumann uses the same thematic material and minor harmonic progressions a major
third lower in measures 13-16 (eb, ab, db, gb). This progression takes us to the final key
of A major instead of F where we began. The number of key changes in such a short
time (mm.1-20) makes this section harmonically unstable.

The first trio section B (mm. 21-48) is entirely in F Major. The harmonic rhythm is this
section is slower and revolves around tonic. There are two chords that head toward
possible modulation that I considered to be a tonicization. The first is a Neapolitan chord
in measure 35 that is a Gb Major chord. The second occurs in measure 45 on a Db
Major chord (Db, F, Ab). This is a related third or submediant chord to tonic Bb.

The surface design of the trio is much different in character in the melodic theme and
lyrical style than the A sections. Dynamically are marked p, the register expands
outward but basically remains in the same level throughout where other sections move
higher and lower. Harmonic rhythm remains the same as well which make the trio much
more stable. The texture is thinner with flowing polyphonic lines that stretto. Finally,
these sections do not modulate into related keys, both trio sections stay in their
respected tonal centers (Law, Deanna Rae).

The refrain of the A section (mm. 49-60) begins with a IV, V, I progression in m 49
(Ex. 5). The section is in F Major and Schumann uses the circle of fifths as he did in the
first A section. This section is only twelve measures in length and is unstable
harmonically like the first A section. Schumann ends the section with a PAC I-V7-I in measure 60 (Ex. 6).

(Ex. #5, m. 49) (Ex. #6, m. 60)

The C section modulates and remains in Db throughout. The harmonic rhythm is slightly quicker than the trio section in parts and Schumann does not modulate to other keys. He uses progressions within Db such as the V-V7 chord (Ab, m. 71, b. 1-3) which moves to a b♭ minor chord (vi) on beat four m. 71. This section is also built on the circle of fifths. For example, within the first measure (61) the entrance of each sequence progression moves from e♭, A♭, to d♭. This idea is used throughout the section. To extend material, Schumann recapitulates three measure phrases. Measures 61-63 are repeated at measures 73-75 and another phrase using an anacrusis into measures 67-72 is repeated from mm. 76 through beat three of m. 81. I do not find the motives or other materials in this section to be part of other sections in the Novellette Op. 21 no. 1. Schumann does not close the section with a cadence at m. 81 but continues in Db for another four measures which become the third refrain of A.

A short refrain to the A section for four measures (mm. 82-85) is used as transitional
material taking us to the second trio (B). A perfect V-I cadence is used (Ab-Db) on beats 2 and 3 in measure 85. A pivot chord is used on beat 4 to modulate to A Major at the trio. The Cb pivot chord functions as a vii of Db and a ii in the new key of A.

The refrain of the trio section (B) is in A Major. The first trio was in F Major, again related keys of a third occur. There is a Neapolitan chord at measure 100 (Bb, D, F) and a submediant chord (F, A, C) in measure 110. A PAC in measure 113 (I-V-I) ends the section. This refrain is identical to the first trio in motive, harmony and all other materials. Only a major third from F to A has occurred. The change back to F Major occurs at m. 114. The motive and progression (m. 114) is identical to example #5, m. 49 which shows Schumann’s use of recapitulated material to move from one key related section to another.

The final A refrain (mm. 114-125) is short. It begins almost identical to the introduction (mm. 1-4) in every way without staccato and dynamic markings. In addition, this section is an identical recapitulation to the second (A) refrain (mm. 49-60). The march-like style is heard for the last time in the original key (F) and ends as Schumann always does in this piece with a PAC (m. 125).

The coda is as unstable harmonically as each of the A sections because harmonic motion increases as does motive activity. Schumann uses texturally dense chords that sound full, heavy and forceful. There is no contrast between the coda and the other A sections as materials such as motives, harmonic rhythm and contour are similar. The coda is in F Major although Gb is hinted at in 126. A chromatic note from A (b. 4, m. 125) to the Gb in measure 126 is a smooth but unusual change. It is unusual because the progression did not move in a circle of fifths or standard progression such as (IV-V-
IV6-viio7-I etc.). The coda ends with a PAC and the tonic notes (F, A, C) are played four times bringing tonality to rest.

**Motives**

There are four motives that make up a theme pattern throughout this No. 1 movement. The opening motive consists of three quarter notes (Ex. 7) in a harmonic progression of iv-V-I. Because the motive moves upward for only three beats, it sounds as though the first two notes are anacrusis. The combination of chord progressions and harmonic rhythms (2 quarter notes) create an ambiguity because the ear cannot find a meter (Law, Deanna Rae). The listener believes the first two notes are anacrusis instead of a complete 4/4 measure (Ex. 7). In addition, the harmonic motion accelerates in the first two measures. The three note tonicization motive in the first measure becomes a two note motive in the second measure because the triples have moved to beat three. In the third measure a reprise of measure one occurs slowing the harmonic motion. The four measure (mm. 1-4) introduction remains unstable as is the remainder of the A section that uses this motive.

The second motive is made up of triplet patterns (Ex. 8). This triplet pattern occurs one time in selected measures on beats 2, 3 and 4 and in only the A sections and coda. The triplet is never on beat one and shifts to different beats per measure as the composition progresses. Just as example #7 can be heard as being anacrusis in measure one, the triple figure can be heard as anacrusis into measure two. This ambiguity of where the downbeat is creates an unclear view throughout the first three measures because the triplet occurs on different beats in the second and third
The third motive (Ex. 9, m. 14) is written in stepwise descent and is used throughout all A sections. This rhythmic pattern is the most effective and important motive in this piece. It has long and short note values that always ascend. Schumann uses it to complete the end of a phrase before the same motive is repeated a major 2\textsuperscript{nd} down each time. These motives are chromatically related to each other and always end a half step down in the melodic line (Ex. 9).

The motive in the trio section is lyrical and could be used as also being a part of the accompaniment (Ex. #10). The phrases are in two measure segments and contour outward as mentioned earlier (Section B, Ex. #2). The motive consists of five quarter notes, a dotted eight-sixteenth and two quarter notes. I consider the melody quarter notes to be part of the arpeggio so the motive is also included in the accompaniment.
Both trio sections are identical except for the keys. The only similarities between the trio and A sections is the melodic contour and rhythmic characters. For example, measures 5-6, 7-8, 13-4, 15-16 have similar contour to measure 21-22, 25-26, 29-30, 37-38 etc… of the trio. The second measure of each of these in the trio has a quarter note, dotted eighth and sixteenth followed by two quarter notes. This motivic idea (Ex. 10, m. 22) is similar to that of example #9.

There are two possibilities for the beginning of the coda (m.118 or m. 126). The source I mentioned earlier (Law, Deanna Rae) suggests the coda begins in measure 118 after the double bar. I disagree with her finding and chose measure 126 because there is a perfect authentic cadence in measure 125 that concludes the final A refrain and the motives, harmonic rhythms and other elements in the coda are all barrowed from materials in earlier sections. For example, the triplet patterns are repeated in every measure of the coda except the last two. Schumann uses the three quarter note motives from the A sections (Ex. #11 and Ex. #5).

(Ex. #11, from Coda, m. 129)  
IV-V-I  
(Ex. #5, m. 49)

Also, the triplet figure has changed in that it only occurs on beats two and four in the coda instead of beats three and four in earlier sections. The three quarter note motive that began the piece also finishes the piece. The ambiguity of the anacrusis metric
pattern mentioned earlier in measure one is put to rest in the last measure as there are only two beats in it. This unusual metric pattern is not practiced and was not employed much in 1838. The traditional PAC takes place to end this marvelous piano work.

Summary of key relationships
Major/minor keys

The seven primary sections that make-up this rondo form are: ABACABA

Section: A in the Key of F&A (mm. 1-20)
F, (g, c, f, bb), Db (bb, eb, ab, db, ab) A

B Trio in the Key of F (mm. 21-48)
F (Gb ), F, (Db ) F

A Refrain in the Key of F (mm. 49-60)
F, (d, g, c, f) F

C in the Key of Db (mm. 61-81)
Db

A in the Key of Db (mm. 82-85)
Db

B Trio in the Key of A (mm. 86-113)
A (Bb) A (F) A

A Refrain in the Key of F (mm. 114-137)
F (d, g, c, f) F

Coda (mm. 126-137)
F (Gb) F

Reference: