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Musical analysis, lesson 8: The compound forms

The simple song forms (Binary and Ternary) are frequently compounded. A familiar use of this is found in the Minuetto and Trio, the Scherzo and Trio, and like movements of the Sonata, as well as in independent forms.

These compound forms are ternary, taken as a whole. This fact is illustrated in the sketch that follows:

Minuetto−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−Trio−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−−Minuetto

Part I Part II Part I −−−−−−−−−−−−−−−Part I Part II −−−−−−−−−−−−−−−Part I Part II Part I

A simple Ternary −−−−−−−−−−−−A simple Binary −−−−−−−−−−−−−−A simple Ternary

A B A

In this instance, two independent forms are present (Minuetto and Trio), but when played as directed by the D.C. mark at the end of the Trio (Da Capo = from the beginning), the first form is repeated and the effect becomes that of three forms. The fact that Nos. One and Three are alike, and that they are separated by the presence of the second, or middle form, produces the Ternary, or three−part structure.

The student should examine all the Minuetto and Trio movements (or their equivalents) in the Sonatas of Beethoven, to gain a clear idea of the total effect of the compound form. Frequently, after the repeat of the first form, for example the Minuetto, a free Coda is added to round out the conclusion and to prevent the identical effect in conclusion that has already been used. In this case, the sequence of the parts becomes, for example:

Minuetto − Trio − Minuetto (repeated) − Coda

The presence of the Coda does not add a fourth independent part, but merely prolongs, or amplifies, the movement of which it forms an integral portion.

At this point, the natural growth of the forms may be reviewed. Beginning with the Phrase, we have, so far as practical music is concerned, an incomplete structure. By the unison of two, sometimes of three, phrases, the Period is produced. This constitutes in many folk songs, the complete form.

The Period (like the Phrase) constitutes the next higher form by groupings of twos or of threes.

a. The two period group results in the Binary form.

b. The three period group, in the Ternary.

The binary and ternary forms are called the simple song forms. They, in turn, may be combined again to produce the compound form, and these combinations are possible:

1. Ternary Ternary Ternary
2. Ternary Binary Ternary
3. Binary Binary Binary
4. Binary Ternary Binary

Four of these forms, the Period (or Unitary Form), the Binary, the Ternary, and the Compound Ternary are found as complete and independent pieces. But some of these have other uses, as we shall see, later. Thus, in the Rondo, any form, except a compound ternary, may appear as an independent subject. In the Sonata, the large phrase and period forms are used as subjects and are joined with episodical matter. In certain other forms, for example, a set of waltzes, each independent number is a song form, and the group may take on the unity of a higher (compound) form, or the separate numbers may follow without further inherent relationship.

An illustration of the Compound Ternary will be found in the Mozart Sonata in E flat major (score is printed at the end of this text), and consists of a Minuetto I and Minuetto II with the repeat of Minuetto I as third part (Menuetto I, D.C.).

Analyze the first form independently, then the second. Note the irregularity in structure as to the number of measures in each part, but also note the perfect ternary balance when the entire work is performed.

Questions

1. In the Minuetto I, how many measures in the first period ?
2. Is this literally repeated, as second period?
3. What is the length of the second part?
4. Is the motive structure of the second part of new or of old material ?
5. Minuetto II, first period: Is this a small or a large period? Regular or irregular?
6. Compare it with the third period, stating all points of similarity and of dissimilarity.
7. Middle part (or period): Is it a period? What is the length?

Process of Analysis

Properly to carry out to the full the analysis of a musical composition the student should be able to determine the form by discovering the relationship of periods and of their component phrases. But beyond this there should be included in all adequate musical analysis a careful study of the way in which the composer carries forward the significant motives introduced into the initial period; how these motives are varied; how they are given emphasis as the movement proceeds by union with other, primarily entirely new, motives.

All caesural resting points and all cadences should be marked. And beyond this, the modulatory or nonmodulatory effect of every foreign tone should be fully determined. In the works already referred to, it will be found that the modulatory plan is invariably natural and simple. For this reason the works of the great masters of the Classic and Romantic schools are ideal material for the beginning of the study of music form.

The teacher should make it a part of every instrumental or vocal lesson given to indicate clearly to a pupil the exact form outline of every piece of music studied. It is even advisable to draw in simple lines a sketch of it. This impresses the relation and sequence of the parts upon the mind, and is the basis of a cultivated musical memory. It serves to impress the pupil with the fact that music is an orderly presentation of ideas, definitely expressed, and definitely interrelated.

Many a struggle with music, in the first year or two of piano study particularly, can be lightened or avoided by the help that the knowledge of Form on the teacher's part will afford. The careful teacher will never attempt to teach a composition, however simple, without having first subjected it to a thorough analysis on the basis of its formal, harmonic and rhythmic structure. So much is revealed by this comparatively simple method that it saves to the learner a great amount of struggle, confusion and misunderstanding that are easily cleared up, to the immense simplification of the whole matter.

begintext justify

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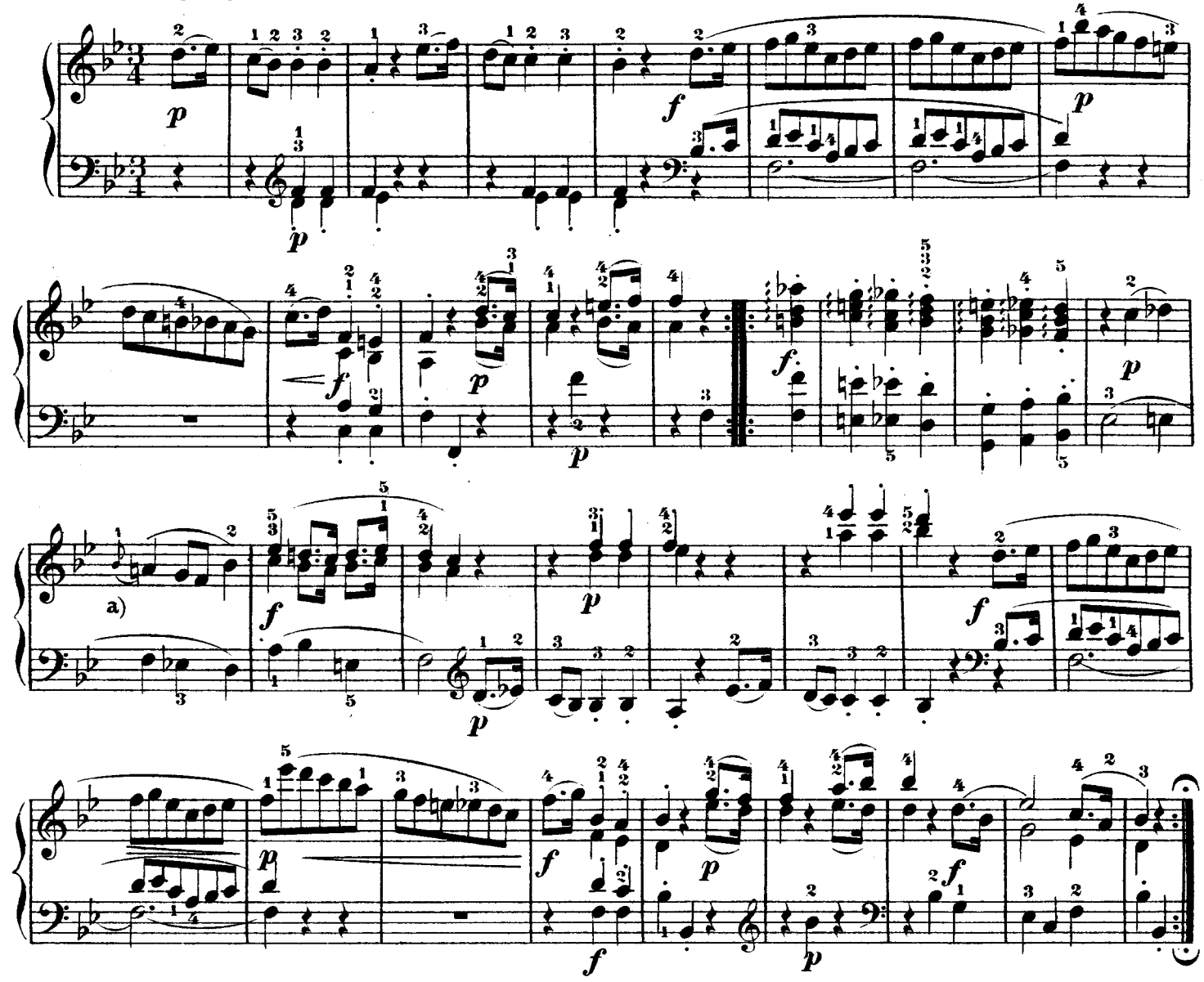
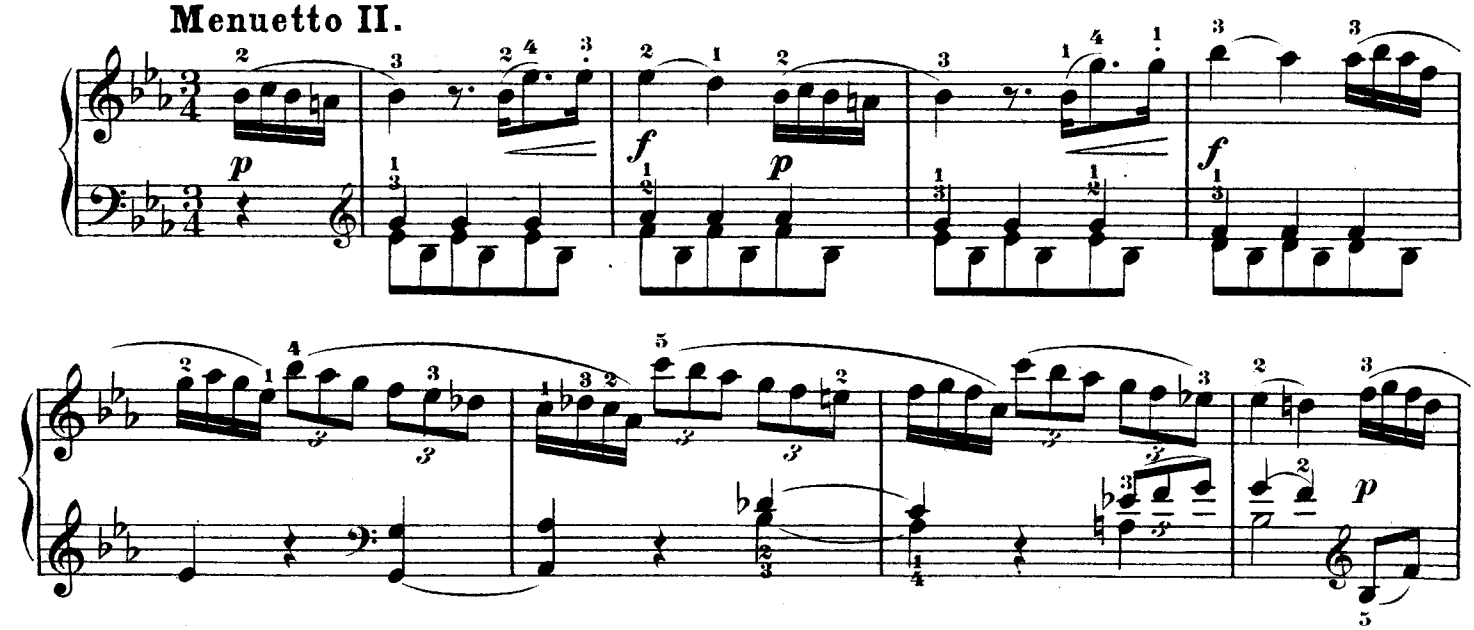
This lesson is a modification of Tapper's First Year Analysis −Musical Form− and has been typeset with MC Musiceditor 6.0.8 (www.mcmusiceditor.com − www.bestmusicteacher.com)

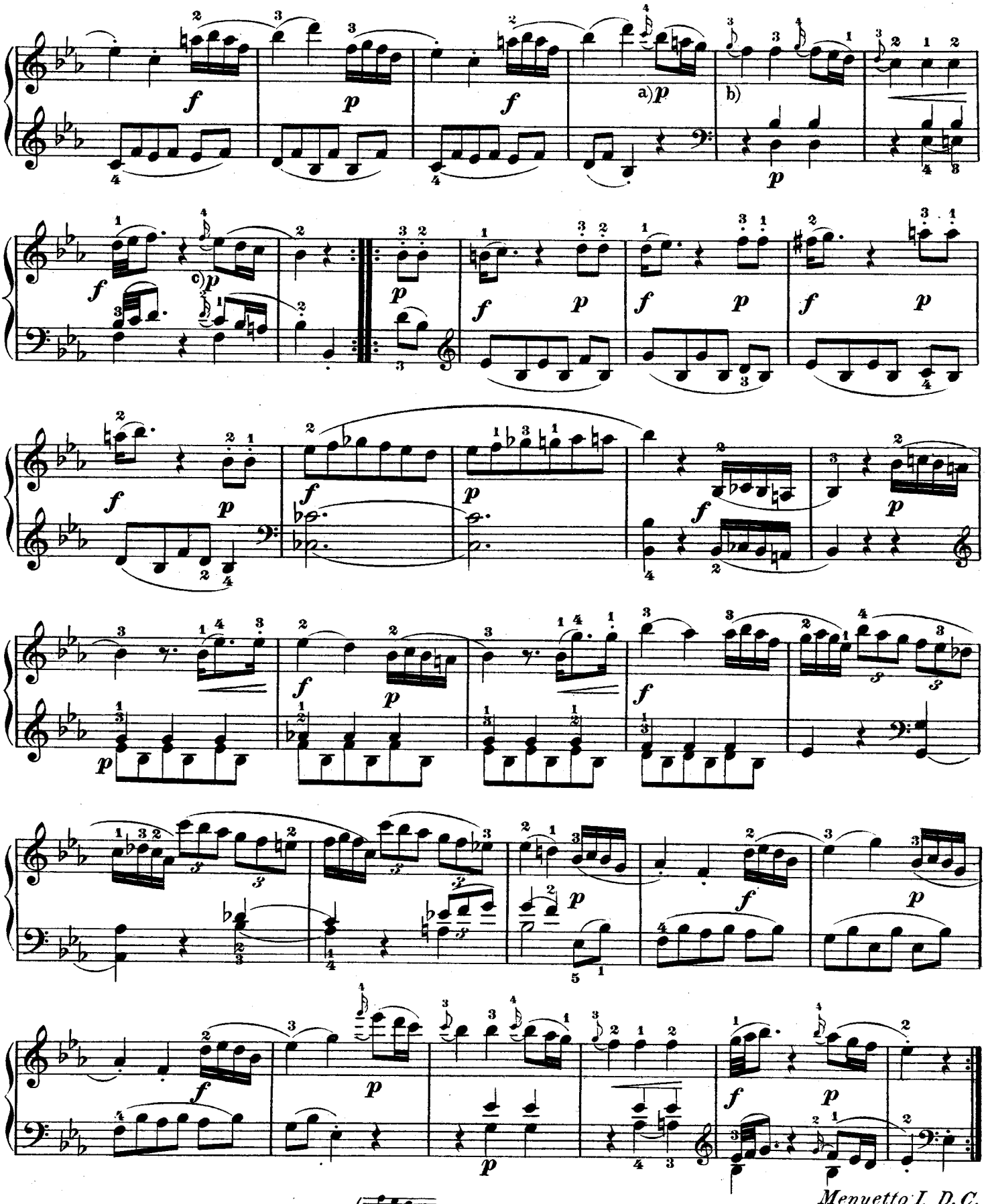
Menuetto I.



Menuetto II.



a)


a)
b)
c)
Menuetto I, D.C.