

The Role of Secondary Parameters in Musical Shaping: Examining Formal Boundaries in Mendelssohn's C minor Piano Trio from the Performer's Point of View

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Abstract

The paper explores ways in which secondary parameters (e.g. dynamics, texture, articulation, register, timbre) affect and shape formal boundaries in the opening sonata-form movement of Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in C minor (Op. 66). The author presents how her piano trio approached the boundaries during rehearsals in the spring of 2013. The analytical discussion includes some general considerations on sonata form, phrase structure and meter, together with dramatic aspects as explained for example by Kofi Agawu and John Rink.

In the first two phrases of the movement especially the dynamics and the slightly ambiguous meter cause delicate tension against the otherwise articulated boundary. Also between transition and the secondary key area Mendelssohn creates formal ambiguity with secondary parameters, which don't change when the new theme enters. The arrival of the new theme is also one of the most important dramatic culmination moments of the entire exposition. Mendelssohn's most original solutions in this work seem to be found in the textural, metrical, dynamic and dramatic layers.