

Sequences in Mozart's Piano Sonata, K. 280/I

Stephen Slottow

Abstract

According to Heinrich Schenker, musical "... content is rooted in the voice-leading transformations and linear progressions whose unity allows no segmentation or names of segments." Schenker therefore does not allow sequences any place in his theoretical system.

Sequences are fundamentally linear progressions indeed, but there is no need to deny sequences autonomous existence because they function as linear progressions. Rather, they function as linear progressions because they are sequences. Moreover, because sequences are always elaborated, they not only operate within the large voice-leading/harmonic structure, but also have their own internal subsidiary harmonic/voice-leading structures. This article explores how sequences operate within a single sonata movement, Mozart's F major Piano Sonata, K. 280/I, drawing principally on authors analyses, but also referring to analyses by David Beach, Charles Burkhart, and Edward Laufer. Most of the four sequences (mm. 17–22, 35–43, 67–78, 117–123), appear in both the exposition and the recapitulation. All of them utilize register transfer in some manner. Thus the ancient and venerable technique of sequences is not a misunderstanding or a delusion, but rather a specific subtype of linear progression.