

HKDSE Music – Listening (Form 4)
Week 5 – Classical String Quartets

🎵 Beethoven, String Quartet No. 4 in C minor, Op. 18 No. 4

First Movement – Sonata Form

Exposition

First theme

Allegro ma non tanto

First theme (bars 1–13)

The first violin plays the **principal/main melody**; the cello provides a **pedal point** over the tonic in repeated quaver notes.

- Mood: agitated, anxious, impulsive, disquieting
- Dynamics: punctuated by *sforzando*, which emphasizes the dissonant **diminished seventh chord** in bars 2 & 4
- Melodic contour: gradually **ascending**, Violin I moves from the middle to a high **register**; a wide **registral range**

Transition

Transition (bars 13–33)

Begins with a series of **blocks chords** in *fortissimo*, punctuated by rests

- Performance technique: Violin II plays in **triple stops** (three notes at the same time); Viola plays in **double stops** (two notes at the same time)
- (bars 20–25) A **dominant pedal** (i.e. a pedal point over the dominant note) performed with the same **repeated-note** accompaniment pattern as the beginning, leading to a **general pause** (i.e. a pause across all the instruments of the ensemble; sometimes composers may add the indication **G. P.** to emphasis the dramatic pause); tonality remains in the **tonic key / home key** (C minor).

24

sf *sf* *ff* *fp*

sf *sf* *ff* *fp*

sf *sf* *ff* *fp*

sf *sf* *ff* *fp*

C minor *ff* *fp* Ab major

- An unexpected **resolution** of the dominant to the submediant (VI), bringing about a **modulation** to the submediant key of Ab major; this short tonal excursion destabilizes the tonic key and leads ultimately to the onset of the second theme.

Second theme 1

p

cresc. *p*

Second theme 1 (bars 33–52)

The second violin plays the main melody, which is then repeated by the first violin and viola doubling in octaves

- Mood: lyrical, expressive, graceful, elegant, light-hearted
- Ornament: a **turn** figure embellishing the main melody, adding to its gracefulness

- Articulation: **legato** in the main melody; **staccato** in the quaver-note accompaniment (viola, then cello)
- The second theme is repeated, and the main melody is now played by the first violin and viola moving in parallel octaves

Second theme 2



Second theme 2 (bars 53–70)

The first violin plays the main melody; the texture is **chordal**, with all four instruments playing in the same rhythm most of the time; the theme ultimately ends on a **perfect cadence** (**perfect authentic cadence**) in the **secondary key** area of Eb major – the **relative major** key of C minor – on the downbeat of bar 70.

- Mood: assertive, decisive, energetic
- Dynamics: frequent use of **sforzando** on the **off-beats**, emphasizing the **syncopated** notes

Codetta



Codetta (bars 70–77)

A short passage that prolongs the ending tonic chord of Eb major and rearticulates the perfect cadence. During the **first repeat**, the key reverts back to C minor in preparation for the repeat of the first theme.

Development

Material from the first theme



(First theme)

the development section begins with a developed version of the first theme in G minor (dominant minor), with a much denser accompaniment made by repeated quaver chords in lower strings.



- Call and response between the cello and the first violin; development based on the head motif of the first theme

Material from the second theme



F major

(Second theme)

Restatement of the second theme in the F major (**subdominant major**), beginning with the main melody in the cello.

A musical score for five staves, likely representing different instruments. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), indicating F major or D minor. The first staff begins with a melodic line marked *(p)*. The second staff has a rhythmic accompaniment marked *(p)*. The third staff has a melodic line marked *(p)*. The fourth staff has a melodic line marked *(p)*. The fifth staff has a melodic line marked *(p)*. All staves show a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking in the later measures.

- when the theme is repeated, the key changes from F major to F minor – its **parallel minor** key.

A musical score for five staves, likely representing different instruments. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), indicating F minor. The first staff begins with a melodic line marked *pp*. The second staff has a rhythmic accompaniment marked *pp*. The third staff has a melodic line marked *pp*. The fourth staff has a melodic line marked *pp*. The fifth staff has a melodic line marked *pp*. All staves show a *cresc.* (crescendo) marking in the later measures.

- A **pedal point** over the dominant (i.e. **dominant pedal**) of the tonic key occurs in bars 128–135.

Recapitulation

First theme

A musical score for five staves, likely representing different instruments. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), indicating F major. The first staff begins with a melodic line marked *fp*. The second staff has a rhythmic accompaniment marked *fp*. The third staff has a melodic line marked *fp*. The fourth staff has a melodic line marked *fp*. The fifth staff has a melodic line marked *fp*. All staves show a *sf* (sforzando) marking in the later measures.

First theme

The first theme is brought back to the **tonic key** of C minor, with added accompaniment figurations in second violin and viola (such as the **syncopated attacks** in bars 136 and 138).

The frequent use of **accents** further dramatizes this return of the first theme.

Transition

This section is altered and extended, such that the second theme can reappear in the tonic key within the recapitulation.

Second theme 1

158

This musical score segment contains measures 158 through 161. It features four staves: a vocal line (soprano), a piano accompaniment (right hand), a bass line (left hand), and a double bass line (bass). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' (piano). The vocal line begins with a 'p' marking. The piano accompaniment starts with a 'p' marking. The bass line begins with a 'p' marking. The double bass line starts with a 'p' marking. The score is written in a standard musical notation style with a common time signature.

C major

Second theme 1

The second theme 1 returns in the **tonic major key** (C major).

Second theme 2

177

p sf *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *cresc.* *p sf*

p sf *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *cresc.* *(p) sf*

p sf *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *cresc.* *p sf*

p sf *sf* *sf* *sf* *sf* *cresc.* *p sf*

Second theme 2

The second theme 2 is also brought back to the **tonic major key** (C major).

Codetta

The first time in C major, then repeated in C minor.

Coda

Coda



The coda picks up from where the recapitulation ends, similar to the beginning of the development; it begins in a highly unusual key of Db major (lowered supertonic, bII), which is then followed by an increasingly agitated **ascending sequence**.



- *Sforzandos* become prevalent during the coda. They **accentuate** the weak beats and thereby heighten the **musical tension**.