

The Finale of Mozart's
Oboe Quartet, K. 370:
A Reductive Analysis

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One often hears oboists complain of the dearth of good oboe literature from the classic and romantic masters. The oboe repertoire is indeed quite ample from the Baroque period and the twentieth century, but contains relatively little from the intervening periods. During the Baroque the oboe was a very popular solo instrument, but it lost favor in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in comparison to the transverse flute and clarinet, which were perfected mechanically more quickly than the oboe. It was not until the twentieth century that composers again began to write extensively for solo oboe. As a result, every piece for solo oboe written by a major composer of the classic and romantic periods is well-known to oboists and is often performed, although it may remain relatively unknown to non-oboists. Such a piece is Mozart's Quartet in F Major for oboe, violin, viola, and cello, K. 370 (368b). It is in three movements: an opening sonata-allegro, a poignant slow movement in the relative minor, and a light-hearted finale in 6/8 meter, marked "rondo," that is the subject for analysis in this study. The virtuosic style of the solo part and the somewhat irregular rondo form of the movement should provide interesting challenges for Schenkerian analysis.

Mozart wrote the Oboe Quartet in Munich during the early months of 1781 after the success of his opera Idomeneo. Otto Jahn informs us that:

as long as Mozart was engaged on the composition and study of his opera he had no time for recreation, and his visits were confined to the Cannabich family. After the performance he refreshed himself by entering with his father and sister into the Carnival gaieties, and by cheerful intercourse with his friends. But the latter did not allow him to remain long in idleness. To please his good friend Ramm he wrote a quartet for oboe, violin, tenor, and violoncello.¹

It was probably in the household of Christian Cannabich that Mozart had previously met Ramm, who was a famous oboe soloist and a member of the electoral orchestra in Munich. It was for Ramm that Mozart also wrote the Oboe Concerto in C Major, K. 314.²

Because the quartet was written for an excellent player, the writing for the oboe is quite virtuosic, especially in the rondo finale. The best known example of this virtuosity comes at m. 95 in the finale where the oboe breaks into common time (4/4) against the compound duple accompaniment and executes a long flourish of sixteenth notes:

¹Otto Jahn, The Life of Mozart, trans. Pauline O. Townsend, 3 vols. (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1970), 2:168.

²Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 5th. ed., s.v. "Oboe," by Philip Bate.

Example 1. Mozart, Oboe Quartet, III, mm. 103-8.

The elaborate style of the oboe part presents numerous difficulties in reductive analysis. In many of the ornamented passages of the finale that will be analyzed here, it is difficult to determine the underlying voice leading due to the profusion of leaps and runs in the solo part, as well as register changes in the accompaniment. Consider, for example, mm. 44-51, the measures leading up to a cadence at the end of the first episode:

Example 2. Mozart, Oboe Quartet, III, mm. 44-51.

The voice leading in this excerpt can only be interpreted in the context of events at a deeper structural level. The large leaps of the oboe represent motion between structural and inner voices, as well as register transfer of inner voices above the structural voice. By making the essential octave corrections, the passage can be reduced to a descending middleground five-line (as shown in Example 3). As will be seen in the course of this paper, such voice leading is typical of the movement, particularly of pre-cadential passages.

The formal plan of the rondo finale is rather unusual. The movement consists of six sections, A B A C A B', forming what would be a seven-part rondo but for the lack of a final statement of the main theme. The only other rondo movement by Mozart known to the author that has this shortened form is the final movement of the Piano Sonata in A Minor, K. 310 (300d).

The foreground and middleground of the main theme, constituting the A section (mm. 1-22), are presented in Example 4. Since the A section is harmonically closed (as is typical for an opening rondo theme), it is no surprise that the principal structural motion is a middleground five-line

Example 3. Middleground Five-line, mm. 43-51.

descending from the first structural pitch c^3 ($=\hat{5}$).

An interesting aspect of prolongation of the structural pitch 5 can be observed by comparing mm. 5 and 13 (see Example 5). In the earlier measure, c^3 is implied but not actually sounded; in m. 13, the corresponding place in the parallel phrase structure, c^3 is actually sounded. It is as if the earlier, more subtle voice leading were being clarified the second time.

Another noteworthy voice leading feature can be seen in the foreground graph (Example 4) at m. 18. The a^2 is approached through voice leading at two distinct structural levels. A foreground three-line ($f-g(g)a$) rises in a structural alto voice, and as part of the middleground five-line, the a^2 is approached from b^{b2} .

The first episode begins in m. 23 with an Anstieg-like arpeggiation pattern similar to the one found at the beginning of the main theme. The foreground and middleground graphs of this section (mm. 22-51) are shown in Example 6. The overall structure at the middleground is a fairly straightforward prolongation of 5 under which a five-line descends in the structural alto from g^2 to c^2 in mm. 45-51.

The passagework in the solo line in this section can be interpreted in several ways (as shown in the foreground graph from m. 27 to m. 32). The runs in mm. 27-28 can be interpreted first as a register transfer from f^2 to e^1 and then as the unfolding e^2-g^2 . The ornamental figure in m. 30 is reduced to an unfolding f^2-a^2 . In mm. 31-32 the large leaps of the solo part must be interpreted as motions from

Example 4. Foreground and Middleground, mm. 1-22.

an upper voice into and out of an inner part; the octaves have been corrected even in the foreground graph to produce more lucid voice leading (i.e., to reveal the underlying patterns).

In m. 39-43 there is an extended register transfer over a C pedal leading to the passage of rather complex voice leading (mm. 43-51) cited earlier. In these measures numerous octave corrections must be made so that the important descending five-line can be made clear, as has been done in the foreground graph.

The presence of c^3 , d^3 , and e^b3 as isolated notes in the oboe leaps in these measures is significant. They have been

Example 5. Mm. 3-6, 11-14.

flagged in the graph as "interesting notes" because they hint of the prolongation of 5 at a deeper level than the middleground five-line. The presence of c^3 as a foreground event in the short codetta that follows the cadence in m. 51 also reinforces the effect of this hint of 5 at a deeper level.

Example 7 presents the foreground and middleground graphs of the codetta to the first episode (mm. 51-59) and the retransition to the main theme (mm. 59-63). These measures serve to prepare the repetition of the Anstieg to 5 at the return of the main theme (m. 64). The V^7 chord is arpeggiated upwards and a tritone unfolding (e^2-b^b2) resolves into the notes of the Anstieg pattern.

The second A section in mm. 65-86 is an exact repetition of the main theme and has been graphed at a deeper middleground level even in the foreground graph (see Example 8). At the conclusion of the section in m. 86, there is a three-measure bridge (a foreground six-line) to the beginning of the second episode, which begins in the subdominant with the opening Anstieg pattern of the main theme. The Anstieg, however, does not stop at f^2 (which would be 5 in B-flat major), but continues upwards to b^b3 , which begins the

Example 6. Foreground and Middleground, mm. 22-51.

The image displays a musical score for Example 6, covering measures 22 to 51. It is organized into two systems, each with a foreground staff (top) and a middleground staff (bottom). The foreground staff uses a treble clef, and the middleground staff uses a bass clef. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The score includes various musical notations and annotations:

- Measures 22-31:** The foreground staff features an arpeggiated pattern labeled "arp." and a melodic line with a slur. The middleground staff has a similar arpeggiated pattern. A circled measure number "22" is at the start.
- Measures 32-42:** The foreground staff has a melodic line with a slur and a circled measure number "32". The middleground staff has a melodic line with a slur. A circled measure number "35" is at the start of this section.
- Measures 43-45:** The foreground staff has a melodic line with a slur and a circled measure number "43". The middleground staff has a melodic line with a slur. A circled measure number "45" is at the start of this section.
- Measures 46-51:** The foreground staff has a melodic line with a slur and a circled measure number "51". The middleground staff has a melodic line with a slur. A circled measure number "51" is at the end of this section.

Annotations include "arp." (arpeggiated), "reg." (register), "div." (division), and "500" (likely a tempo or performance instruction). The score is divided into sections labeled "I" and "V".

Example 7. Foreground and Middleground, mm. 51-65.

descent from c^3 ($\hat{5}$) to the interruption at m. 112 (see again Example 8).

The use of the principal theme at the beginning of the second episode gives this section the character of a development section. Although no real development of earlier themes takes place beyond the opening four or five bars, the entire second episode has an elaborate, virtuosic character, most especially in the previously cited polymetric section in mm. 95-108. The relatively greater tonal instability of the second episode also contributes to its developmental nature; IV, v, vi, and ii are all briefly tonicized.

From the subdominant chord that forms the harmonic support for $\hat{4}$, the bass moves to c , reaching the leading tone seventh chord of vi, which follows quite naturally and sup-

Example 8. Foreground and Middleground, mm. 65-112.

The musical score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a foreground staff (top) and a middleground staff (bottom). The foreground staff is marked with measure numbers 65, 85, 94, 100, and 112. It contains melodic lines with various ornaments and dynamics such as *sr*, *arp*, *6r*, *6-5*, *4-3*, and *div.*. The middleground staff shows chord symbols: I, V I, IV, VI, I, II, I, and V. The second system also has a foreground staff (top) and a middleground staff (bottom). The foreground staff has measure numbers 3 and 7. It contains melodic lines with ornaments and dynamics like *sr*, *arp*, and *N*. The middleground staff shows chord symbols: I, IV, and I. A bracket labeled '8' spans across the middleground staff of the second system.

ports $\hat{3}$. After a descending foreground five-line that prolongs $\hat{3}$ (supported by vi), a series of runs appears in the solo oboe. This passagework can be well represented at the foreground as a series of unfoldings leading through the circle of fifths to the dominant preparation and then the interruption itself at m. 112.

As can be seen in Example 9, the structural $\hat{5}$ is regained immediately after the interruption over dominant harmony. The c^3 has a dual function at the foreground at the point it appears in m. 114. Not only does it represent the regaining of $\hat{5}$, but it is also the first note in a four-line (transferred upward out of an inner part) that ascends to the first note of the Anstieg at the beginning of the A section in m. 118. Thus the structural $\hat{5}$ is reached at m. 118 by two means simultaneously: through the familiar arpeggiation (though in this case a longer pattern starting on c^2) and as a prolongation of the c^3 in m. 113. The arpeggiation lies at a level nearer the surface, however. This will be seen later in the middleground and background graphs of Example 11.

The repetition of the A section in mm. 118-139 requires no additional comment. The B' section beginning in m. 139 is of considerable interest, however, because it contains the final descent of the Urlinie. This is unusual, of course, because in a normal seven-part rondo with a typically closed A section, the final descent would come in the final statement of the main theme. Had Mozart completed the seven-part rondo form in this movement, the middleground five-line of the principal theme would have been reinterpreted as the final descent.

Perhaps as a result of its new structural meaning, and also because it is now in the tonic key, the B' section is quite different from the original first episode. The opening phrase of the first episode (mm. 23-24) is entirely missing in the B' section, which seems to indicate that it was a short transition to the first B section. Lacking this transitional material, the B' section begins with the sixteenth note pattern of m. 35 that forms a foreground neighbor note pattern. The descent begins quite early in the section with $\hat{4}$ entering in m. 142 and $\hat{3}$ in m. 143. The a^2 is prolonged and transferred downwards by means of a contrapuntal pattern moving through the circle of fifths. In m. 147 the voice leading is obscured once again by the large leaps and runs in the solo oboe, but it can be reduced by octave corrections to the simpler form found in the foreground graph. A middleground three-line descends from $\hat{3}$ (a^2) to a cadence in m. 151. This cannot be interpreted as the final descent of the Urlinie for several reasons. There is another similar but more extensively ornamented cadence following immediately afterward (m. 164). (This cadence and the conclusion of the movement are shown in the graphs of

Example 10.) Furthermore, from a thematic standpoint, the B' section has not come to its conclusion in m. 151. In a somewhat varied form the sixteenth note patterns of m. 139 continue after the cadence. After the second cadence (m. 164), however, the codetta that concluded the first B section appears, and with the addition of some material derived from the first retransition, it forms the coda that concludes the movement. Harmonically, the codetta beginning in m. 165 also reinforces the cadence in m. 164 as the final descent, because it begins with a four-measure tonic pedal.

It will be noted that the same techniques used to simplify the voice leading at other cadential areas of the movement have been applied to the final cadential material leading up to m. 164. One significant feature of both the cadence there and at m. 151 is the tenacious reappearance of c^3 over $\hat{3}$, almost as a reminder of its extensive prolongation throughout most of the movement. It is seen again in the coda and rises to f^3 on the final chord.

Having surveyed the foreground graphs of the various sections of the movement, we can now turn our attention to the completed middleground and background graphs (see Example 11) and perhaps draw some conclusions about the larger structural and formal aspects of the piece. First, however, it might be helpful to look to Schenker's writings to find out just what sort of underlying structure one would expect in a rondo form. In Free Composition under the heading "Distinction between the Rondo and Other Forms," Schenker informs us that the "significant difference between the rondo and the sonata form lies in the fact that the latter involves a forward thrust to 2 (where an interruption in the sense of the structural division occurs); this motion is not present in the rondo."³ The rondo forms graphed by Schenker in Free Composition conform to this statement; they do not contain interruptions. In the graph of Beethoven's Sonata Op. 10, no. 3, IV, for example, Schenker shows the structural divisions of the A B A C A D A form through neighbor notes and mixture (chromatic inflection) by which 3 is prolonged until the final descent in the last A section.⁴

In view of Schenker's strong statement that an interruption is not present in the rondo form, the interruption in the middleground and background structures shown in Example 11 is rather surprising. Either this rondo movement does not conform to Schenker's prescription, or the interpretation including an interruption is not correct.

In Structural Hearing Felix Salzer does not deem it necessary to discuss the rondo form as a separate entity.

³Heinrich Schenker, Free Composition, trans. Ernst Oster, 2 vols. (New York: Longman, 1979), 1:142.

⁴Ibid., vol. 2, fig. 155:2.

Example 10. Foreground and Middleground, mm. 151-end.

The image displays a musical score for Example 10, consisting of two systems of staves. The top system includes a foreground staff (treble clef) and a middleground staff (bass clef). The bottom system also includes a foreground staff (treble clef) and a middleground staff (bass clef). The score is annotated with circled numbers (151), (158), (164), (168), and (172) indicating specific measures. Roman numerals V and I are placed below the middleground staves to denote chord functions. The text "Same as mm. 164-68" is written above the middleground staff in the first system. The word "div." (division) is written below the middleground staff in both systems. The foreground staff in the first system contains notes with stems and beams, some with accidentals (sharps and flats). The middleground staff in the first system contains notes with stems and beams, some with accidentals (sharps and flats). The foreground staff in the second system contains notes with stems and beams, some with accidentals (sharps and flats). The middleground staff in the second system contains notes with stems and beams, some with accidentals (sharps and flats). The score is written in a standard musical notation style.

Example 11. Middleground and Background Graph.

The image displays a musical score for Mozart's Oboe Quartet, K. 370, specifically focusing on the middleground and background graphs. The score is organized into two systems, each containing five measures. The first system includes measures 22, 51, 65, 89, 117, 118, and 144. The second system includes measures 145, 146, 147, 148, and 149. The notation features notes, rests, and performance markings such as 'div.', 'arp.', '5fl.', and '3fl.'. Fingerings and breath marks are indicated above the notes. The background graph shows fingering patterns for each instrument, labeled with Roman numerals I through VI. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The background graph includes fingering patterns for each instrument, labeled with Roman numerals I through VI. The score is written in a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a common time signature (C). The background graph includes fingering patterns for each instrument, labeled with Roman numerals I through VI.

He asserts that the seven-part rondo constitutes a three-part form as follows:⁵

A	B	A	C	A	B	A
	A		B		A	

Salzer classifies three-part forms into four groups: 1) three-part structure form originating in interruption (including mainly sonata movements in the minor mode); 2) three-part prolongation form originating in interruption (including major-mode sonata forms and some other variants); 3) genuine three-part prolongation form; and 4) three-part prolongation form with contrapuntal structure (applied by Salzer to several twentieth-century compositions).⁶ All of the rondo forms graphed by Schenker in Free Composition fit very neatly into Salzer's genuine three-part prolongation form, in which the first structural pitch is prolonged without an interruption throughout the first two sections of the piece, and the final descent appears in the third section. The Mozart rondo with which we are dealing does not; it fits into the second category because of the prolongation of $\hat{5}$ through the A B A section and the interruption in the C section. Salzer does not cite any rondo movements as examples of this structural form, but he graphs a Mazurka (Op. 17, no. 2) by Chopin that has the interruption in the middle section.⁷

One might wonder if the atypical underlying structure of the Mozart rondo is connected in some way with its "clipped" form. The rondo from Mozart's Sonata, K. 310, which has the same A B A C A B form, does not share the same underlying structure, however. In it the central episode is a harmonically closed and self-contained section in the relative major, producing an overall "genuine three-part prolongation form" for the movement. At the background level (see Example 12) its structure contains only a prolongation of $3.(c^2)$, which is chromatically inflected in the central episode, and the final descent.

The key to understanding the interruption in the Quartet is in the character of the C section in which it occurs. As was mentioned above, the section contains developmental elements and has a virtuosic, almost improvisatory character. It is plainly not the typical independent second episode of a seven-part rondo, but the development of a sonata rondo. According to Douglass Green, the essence of the sonata rondo

⁵Felix Salzer, Structural Hearing, 2 vols. (New York: Dover Publications, 1962), 1:250.

⁶Ibid., 1:242-50.

⁷Ibid., 2:291.

Example 12. Mozart, Sonata, K. 310, IV,
Background graph.

form is the addition of a development section in place of the independent second episode.⁸ Charles Rosen, however, insists that:

the sonata rondo was not a fixed form for Mozart: it may have a development section, or a subdominant episode, or both—or neither: the finale of the *Sinfonie Concertante* for Violin and Viola, K. 364, of 1779 is clearly a rondo in character with no development and no central episode in the subdominant or in any other key, but the recapitulation does begin in the subdominant.⁹

Rosen regards the sonata rondo form as "an idiosyncratic version" of what he terms "finale sonata form." It is "perhaps the most efficient pattern evolved to that end." He continues,

It is not the result of blending two independent preexisting forms, but the stylistic inflection and transformation of one preexistent form, the rondo, remarkable for the aptness with which it fulfilled the late eighteenth century's requirements for a concluding movement.¹⁰

⁸Douglass M. Green, Form in Tonal Music (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1965), p. 223.

⁹Charles Rosen, Sonata Forms (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1980), p. 121.

Rosen describes the requirements satisfied by the sonata rondo that make it the most efficient type of sonata finale form.

What is essential is a squareness and clarity of rhythm and phrasing, and generally an emphasis on the subdominant as well as a broad use of the tonic. . . . The first theme is generally rounded off by a full cadence on the tonic.¹¹

There seems to be no question that the Mozart K. 370 finale is indeed a sonata rondo form. Not only does it contain developmental elements in the central episode, but the section begins in the subdominant, which supports 4, the first descending note in the interruption pattern. The presence of the interruption itself in the central section further emphasizes the mutation of rondo form towards sonata form. Finally, the concluding AB section without the expected final A section takes on the character of a sonata recapitulation.

The question naturally arises whether the interruption can be found in other sonata rondo forms. Is it possible that it might be a characteristic structural feature of this variable, mutant form? A brief look at the corresponding second episode in the finale of Mozart's Piano Sonata, K. 333, dispels this notion. The finale is a rather complex sonata rondo form in which the central episode contains both new material as well as development of previous themes. In the movement there is no clear descent from the first structural pitch f^2 (5) down to an interruption at the arrival of the dominant at m. 103, the point that marks the beginning of the retransition back to the third statement of the A section (m. 112). It seems that the interruption in the K. 370 rondo is a feature peculiar to the piece, and does not represent a general principle that applies to other sonata rondo forms. Nevertheless, in analyzing the finale of the Oboe Quartet the presence of the interruption certainly aids in the decision to regard the form as sonata rondo rather than simple rondo. Although the relationship between the underlying structure of a piece as revealed by Schenkerian analysis and its conventional formal structure has yet to be fully defined, there seems to be a close correlation between them in this delightful Mozart finale.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 126.

¹¹Ibid., p. 118.