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THE VIOLIN WORKS OF RUTH SCHONTHAL: A MUSICAL ANALYSIS AND GUIDE TO PERMORMANCE

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THE VIOLIN WORKS OF RUTH SCHONTHAL:
A MUSICAL ANALYSIS AND GUIDE TO PERMORMANCE

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
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Abstract

Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006) achieved a modest level of fame as a composer, pianist, and composition teacher, yet many of her works are not known by a wide audience. Schonthal was one of many twentieth-century composers who characterized their works as neo-romantic, while still maintaining modernist techniques. In this thesis, I will examine Schonthal's entire oeuvre of works for violin and demonstrate how they maintain neo-romantic elements, while simultaneously upholding modernist archetypes. I will examine the following compositions for violin: *Sonata in e* (1961/62), *Ode to a Departing Swan* (1964), *Improvisations* (1994), and finally *Little Suite for 2 Violins* (2002). I will analyze their form, harmonic structure, the use of gesture, and their melodic elements. The paper also will also incorporate a discussion of pertinent technical violinistic considerations.

Chapter One

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the heretofore overlooked violin works of the composer Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006) and to argue that they deserve a rightful place within the canon of the violin repertoire. The four works being considered in this document are *Sonata in e* (1961/62), *Ode to a Departing Swan* (1964), *Improvisations* (1994), and *Little Suite for 2 Violins* (2002). These violin works reflect a career that spanned an incredible six and a half decades. Schonthal had her first composition *Sonatina* published in 1939 when she was just fourteen years old.[1] Within that considerable time frame, Schonthal led a varied career that encompassed three main compositional phases. Schonthal's biographer Martina Helmig outlines the three stylistic periods as roughly these time spans: 1939-1946, 1946-1960 and after 1960.

This paper documents Schonthal's style, by demonstrating how each composition maintains her distinctive character while simultaneously reflecting the evolving traits of her oeuvre. This document aims to bring her four violin works to light and to provide a guide to the performer by discussing the salient musical features and violinistic attributes of each work. Each work will be examined in terms of form, harmonic structure, the use of gesture, and their melodic elements.

[1] Martina Helmig, *Ruth Schonthal: A Composer's Musical Development in Exile*, ed. Adina Mornell, trans. Vanessa Agnew (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 27.

Biography

Ruth Schonthal was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1924 and came to the United States in 1946, having followed a circuitous route from her native country. Her family was forced to flee Berlin in 1938 when the ruling National Socialist Party began persecuting Jews. Her family settled first in Stockholm, Sweden, where Schonthal was accepted into the Royal Academy because of her prodigious talent. She studied theory, composition, ensemble playing, and piano there, but was isolated from her peers because of the language barrier. Nonetheless, she was quite successful and productive during this period and even had her first piece, "Sonatina,"[2] published at just fourteen years old. With the Second World War still raging, the Schonthals were forced to flee yet again. They obtained visas to Mexico and arrived there in 1941 after an arduous two-month journey that took them through Russia and Japan. Schonthal spent the next five years in Mexico, where she studied composition with Manuel Ponce and soon became well known as a pianist and composer. During this period, she also married and gave birth to a son, Benjamin, but the marriage ended in divorce early in 1946. That same year, Schonthal had the opportunity to meet composer Paul Hindemith (1895-1963), as he was on tour in Mexico, and she showed him some of her compositions. He invited her to study with him at Yale University and she enrolled that same year. She was the only female student in her class, and in 1948, she was one of only twelve students to finish her studies with Hindemith, whose teaching methods were so strict that most students gave up. While at Yale, Schonthal met the artist Paul Seckel, a student at Yale Art School and they were married in 1950. Together they had two more sons,

[2] Ruth Schonthal, *Sonatina in A* (Kassel: Furore-Verlag, 1997).

Bernhard and Alfred. Schonthal moved to New Rochelle in Westchester County, New York in 1958 and was to reside there for the rest of her life.[3]

Schonthal was much sought after as a teacher of piano, music theory and composition. She taught privately at her home and also at institutions such as Adelphi University, Westchester Conservatory of Music and New York University. In the 1970's Schonthal joined a number of organizations including the International League of Women Composers, American Women Composers, and American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), that helped her to gradually gain a measure of recognition. Schonthal's music has been recorded on many labels and she received numerous awards for her compositions. The pianist Gary Steigerwalt who Schonthal championed after hearing him perform, recorded many of Schonthal's works for piano. An honor of particular note is Schonthal's nomination in 1978 for the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award for her piece *In Homage of…*(24 Preludes) for piano.

Schonthal first returned to Germany in 1980, forty-two years after she was exiled from the country, marking the start of an uneasy reconciliation with her native country. She found that her compositions received much recognition there and elsewhere in Europe where they are widely performed. In addition, the Akademie der Künste in Berlin established an archive of Schonthal's compositions and papers in 1999. In 1996, the music publisher Furore-Verlag in Kassel, Germany obtained the exclusive rights to Schonthal's works which they continue to catalogue and distribute.[4]

[3] Helmig, 1-26.
[4] Ibid, 22-26.

Literature Review

There are many sources that provide information about Ruth Schonthal. Foremost of these sources is a published biography of the composer entitled *Ruth Schonthal: A Composer's Musical Development in Exile*, written in 2006 by Martina Helmig. There are also several Doctor of Music theses, newspaper and journal articles, and on-line interviews with the composer. Helmig's biography is an invaluable source as it provides the most thorough depiction of Schonthal to date. Written as an outgrowth of her doctoral work, Helmig was granted intimate access to the composer over an extended period of time, and she also had the added advantage of speaking the native language of the composer. For these reasons, Helmig's book has the most thorough information about Schonthal's life and works. The biography was originally written in German, translated into English by Vanessa Agnew and edited by Adina Mornell. Perhaps because of the translation, there are some unclear passages, primarily those that pertain to the musical descriptions and analyses of the pieces. One such example is a passage that reads, "Ruth Schonthal's compositional style tends towards that of chamber music. Important characteristics of her compositional technique, such as elaborating a differentiated network of relationships among the different voices, arise from the techniques of chamber music."[5] Despite its vagueness, there is still much to be gained from the musical analyses in this source, and from the uniquely intimate account of the composer that it provides.

Each of the doctoral theses about Ruth Schonthal focuses on one particular category of Schonthal's compositions. They include Corazon Andres Bisda's 1991 dissertation, "The Piano Works of Ruth Schonthal," Joyce Ford's "The Songs of Ruth Schonthal" written in 2004, the 2011 dissertation by Lauren Cox entitled "The Clarinet Compositions of Ruth Schonthal: A

[5] Ibid, 146.

Performer's Guide," and Jeongin Kim's dissertation from 2014, "Musical Borrowing in Selected Piano Works of Ruth Schonthal." Helmig's research on Ruth Schonthal is the source upon which all of these others rely.

The earliest dissertation following Helmig's work about Schonthal is Corazon Andres Bisda's 1991 thesis "The Piano Works of Ruth Schonthal." It is the only other large scale work written about the composer during her lifetime and like Helmig's work, it was also written in collaboration with the composer herself. Bisda's thesis begins with a chapter devoted to Schonthal's biography. A second chapter details Schonthal's piano works to date, including rare excerpts and analyses of her earliest works as a child prodigy. The third chapter focuses specifically on Schonthal's piano piece *Fragments from a Woman's Diary* (1982) and it includes a detailed musical analysis of each movement, as well as some discussion of the piano techniques involved in the piece and the autobiographical aspects of the work. Since *Fragments from a Woman's Diary* is a such a highly autobiographical work, it serves as a useful guide toward interpreting certain similar musical aspects that appear in Schonthal's other works. The most pertinent section of Bisda's dissertation is Appendix 2, which is an extensive interview she conducted with Ruth Schonthal in January and February of 1991at Schonthal's home in New Rochelle, New York. The interview includes Schonthal's viewpoint of her studies with Hindemith and describes in detail how he influenced her thinking about composition. Schonthal also discusses how other teachers and composers influenced her, including Manuel Ponce, Arnold Schoenberg, and Benjamin Britten. One blaring inconsistency in this source is the date when Schonthal met composer Paul Creston; in the first bibliographic chapter, Bisda states that Creston was Schonthal's teacher of orchestration at Yale University, but later in the same section

she writes that Schonthal met Creston for the first time in New York City in the 1960's.[6] The latter date is consistent with all other sources, whereas the author has found no evidence of Creston having taught at Yale University during his career.

Joyce Ford's dissertation "The Songs of Ruth Schonthal" (2004) focuses on the art songs of Ruth Schonthal and provides an overview of the harmonic devices used in the arts songs and discusses the influences of other composers from the European tradition on Schonthal's music. Ford interprets the harmonies and melodic gestures of Schonthal's works for voice by means of the programmatic traits inherent to the art song. For the purposes of this document, Ford's dissertation does not appear relevant.

Lauren Cox's 2011 doctoral dissertation, "The Clarinet Compositions of Ruth Schonthal: A Performer's Guide," is also an invaluable contribution to the field of scholarship on Schonthal. Cox analyzes and provides interpretations of the clarinet works of Ruth Schonthal. Cox synthesizes many various sources about Schonthal and weaves them into a cohesive account. Much of the superb musical analysis in Cox's dissertation can be applied to the violin works. For example, when discussing Schonthal's work for clarinet Sonata Concertante, Cox writes that "…the work is neo-Romantic with expressive melodies in unexpected harmonic situations. The most striking feature of the work is Schonthal's alteration of traditional forms and harmonies."[7] The clarinet work *Sonata Concertante* is particularly relevant to this document as it written in the same key as that of *Little Suite for 2 Violins* and Schonthal's treatment of the key is the same in both works. Cox writes, 'The first movement is based on linear convergence and divergence

[6] Corazon Andres Bisda, "The Piano Works of Ruth Schonthal" (D.M.A. diss., Manhattan School of Music, 1991), 9 & 11.

[7] Lauren Cox, "The Clarinet Compositions of Ruth Schonthal: A Performer's Guide," (D.M.A. diss., The Florida State University College of Music, 2011), 10.

around the central pitch of D."[8] Aside from her exhaustive musical analysis, Cox's work also offers another singular perspective on the composer through Schonthal's friend and colleague at New York University, clarinetist, Esther Lamneck who was Cox's own teacher.

Jeongin Kim's dissertation from 2014 focuses on the aspect of musical borrowing in Schonthal's piano music and provides many examples from selected pieces in Schonthal's piano repertoire. Kim provides examples from Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Bartók, Scriabin, and Rachmaninoff, all of which reveal Schonthal's pattern of modeling her work on the composers of the European tradition. Schonthal sought to "incorporate and transform borrowed materials"[9] into her own compositional style, and Kim's paper discusses Schonthal's methods and influences. Similar parallels are found in Schonthal's violin music as much of it relies on traditional melodic and harmonic gestures. Kim's dissertation also includes important details of Schonthal's relationship to the composer Paul Creston including his compelling endorsement of Schonthal in the area of pedagogy. Creston wrote that there was no one better suited to writing pedagogical music for the piano than Ruth Schonthal because of her background as an accomplished pianist, composer and teacher.

Other sources about Schonthal include selected interviews with the composer, such as her discussion with Bruce Duffie in 1988 for a radio interview, and an interview conducted in 1994 with Selma Epstein in the journal *International Alliance for Women in Music*. The interviews provide rich information about how Schonthal wished to be viewed as a composer, what she found to inspire her, her thoughts about teaching and what constraints she faced. In one example, Schonthal explained her thoughts on teaching when she said to Duffie,

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[8] Ibid, 10.

[9] Jeongin Kim, "Musical Borrowing in Selected Piano Works of Ruth Schonthal," (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2014), ii.

> "Teaching is necessary. Most people know that you can't live just on being a composer. Very few composers can do that, so there has to be something else. Teaching comes natural to me…I always verbalize everything I think. So to me, teaching is a wonderful outlet. Besides, I'm very interested in how the human mind absorbs and thinks and learns."[10]

Additionally, there are several entries in compendiums of women composers and musicians that provide accounts about the composer. These include *Unsung: A History of Women in American Music* by Christine Ammer and *Women Composers: The Lost Tradition Found* by Diane Peacock Jezic.

Schonthal's former student, the eminent composer Lowell Liebermann, offered a personal and revealing remembrance of his teacher just after her death in 2006 in an article entitled "Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006): A Remembrance." Liebermann summarized Schonthal's compositional style most succinctly when he wrote, "Her music was eclectic in the truest sense: nostalgic snatches of half-remembered tunes would often vie for attention with non-tonal materials, jostling alongside tone clusters or unexpected strumming inside the piano."[11]

These sources all provide valuable insights into Schonthal's other instrumental works and offer many firsthand accounts by the composer herself. Yet, none of the existing sources discuss or analyze Schonthal's works written specifically for the violin. This document seeks to rectify the gap in scholarship regarding Schonthal's works for violin and hopes that their elucidation will lead to informed performances of the works.

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[10] Bruce Duffie, "Ruth Schonthal: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie," last modified, January 2004, accessed November 26, 2012, http://www.bruceduffie.com/schonthal2.html.

[11] Lowell Liebermann, "Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006): A Remembrance," *New Music Box,* accessed November 27, 2012, www.newmusicbox.org/articles/Ruth-Schonthal-19242006-A-Remembrance/.

Chapter Two: *Sonata in e*

INTRODUCTION

Ruth Schonthal composed her *Sonata in e* in 1961/62, which she completed in the same year as several other significant compositions for strings, including her *Serenade for Strings* and *String Quartet no. 1. Sonata in e* emerged alongside a number of other compositions for strings whose titles pertain to form; Schonthal largely abandoned such labels after the mid 1970's.[12] These string compositions were Schonthal's first works after a creative crisis that culminated in the premiere of her *Symphony in b* in Mexico City in 1957 which had not been well received. Schonthal struggled to find her voice in a shifting creative landscape, of which she did not feel a part. Having studied with Hindemith in the late 1940's, she was never fully indoctrinated in the trends of serialism or the twelve-tone style of composition; Hindemith had his own unique method of theory and composition that often left his students feeling isolated.[13] Despite his outsider status, Hindemith had a profound influence on Schonthal's compositional style from 1946 onwards, especially in her treatment of intervals.[14]

While the more general rejection of serialism of the 1960's does not mirror Schonthal's trajectory, the trends of the time fit well with her personal approach to composition and with the creative crisis that occurred after she rejected elements of Hindemith's influence. In retrospect, for Schonthal it was a fitting time for personal artistic upheaval as it coincided with the overall turmoil in the arts that began in the decade of 1960. Mainstream composers of the day began rejecting the limitations of serialism and there were little restrictions on what was permissible in

[12] Cox made this same observation in regard to Schonthal's works for clarinet. See Cox, 10.

[13] Helmig, 20-21.

[14] Ibid, 166.

this new post-serial landscape.[15] During this time, "[t]he fusion of musical approaches and styles and the blurring of many of the boundaries continued to accelerate, even for established figures."[16] Composers increasingly harkened back to using collage and pastiche as was previously done with Neoclassicism in the early part of the 20th-century.[17] Beginning with her earliest compositions in the 1940's, Schonthal had always "experimented with romantic, impressionistic, and some modern compositional techniques."[18] Even twenty years later, Schonthal continued to compose with this same sensibility, and did not think it was necessary to reject the traditional forms of composition entirely. In a conversation with Neil Levin, Schonthal said, "I deliberately combine the good old with the good new, because of my background and because I believe that every revolution throws out the baby with the bathwater."[19] At the time of *Sonata in e,* Schonthal was already midway through her career and had completed her formal studies. Her frame of reference was obviously much broader by the 1960's, despite her outsider musical status, and her isolation as a composer in exile was no longer a main limiting factor in her exposure to trends of the time. By never having gone through the growing pains of rejecting the past, one could argue that she was unintentionally ahead of the serialists in embracing it. Whereas former serialists, such as Berio and Rochberg, reclaimed the past via "collage pieces" as a reaction to the restrictions that serialism imposed, Schonthal's borrowing stems from her pervasive sense of nostalgia.[20] Schonthal readily admitted to her bent for nostalgia in her compositions. Helmig interprets this sensibility as a byproduct of Schonthal's status as an exile

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15 Morgan, 407

16 Taruskin, 850.

17 Ibid, 850.

18 Helmig, 166.

19 Milken Archive of Jewish Music, https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/ruth-schonthal/

20 Metzer, 110.

and attributes it to her longing for a more sentimentalized time. Helmig notes that Schonthal used "stylistic quotations drawn from compositions of centuries past" as an effort to reclaim a past that she could never know.[21] Another example of Schonthal's propensity for borrowing can be found in *String Quartet no. 1* (1962) from this same period. In that work, Schonthal alludes to the great German Romantic tradition by using fragments of melodic material of Franz Schubert and Richard Wagner.[22] In *Sonata in e,* Schonthal borrows from the French Impressionist composers Maurice Ravel and Philippe Gaubert.

Sonata in e is comprised of three movements in the traditional fast-slow-fast progression. The first movement is entitled *Moderato,* the second movement, *Very slowly and with much expression,* and the final movement is *Allegro molto un poco scherzando.* The influence of French Impressionist composers is perhaps the most striking characteristic of the violin sonata. Each movement contains either a direct thematic reference to or quotation of a French Impressionist composer, or else uses techniques evocative of that era. This chapter will show how *Sonata in e* incorporates traditional 18th and 19th-century forms using a 20th-century vernacular, French Impressionism, motivic development and innovative use of meter within the piece.

Form

Each movement of *Sonata in e* is written in a different form. The first movement, *Moderato,* uses sonata form albeit with alterations. The second movement, *Very slowly and with*

[21] Helmig, 256.
[22] Ibid., 93.

much expression, uses a bipartite form consisting of two thematically contrasting sections (A and B) of roughly equal length. The third movement is written in rondo form.

In the first movement, *Moderato,* Schonthal retains enough of the characteristics of sonata form that it is recognizable as such. The *Moderato* contains two contrasting themes, a transition, development and recapitulation. (see Table 2.1) Schonthal diverges most significantly from sonata form harmonically; there is not an established key and the harmonic sign posts characteristic of sonata form are not present. In addition to using unconventional key areas, Schonthal subverts the traditional roles of the sections within sonata form. Within each section of the sonata, Schonthal uses thematic and accompanimental material, motives, tonal centers and meter changes to serve as the main indicators of the form.

Table 2.1: Sonata form in the *Moderato,* mvmt. 1 of *Sonata in e.*

	Theme A	Transition	Theme B	Development	Recapitulation
	mm.1-16	mm.17-32	mm.33.43	mm.44-75	mm.76-112
Tonal Centers	A and E	E/E-flat	E	B	A and E
Meter	$\frac{2}{4}$	Mixed: $\frac{5}{4}, \frac{4}{4}$	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{6}{8}, \frac{7}{8}, \frac{8}{8}$, etc.	$\frac{4}{4}, \frac{3}{2}, \frac{4}{4}, \frac{5}{4}$, etc.

The opening movement of *Sonata in e,* begins with conventional two eight-bar phrases that comprise the first theme. Of particular importance, the opening five-note motive of the sonata is the germ of many of the aforementioned important connections throughout the sonata. Not only do the five opening notes, A_3-$G\#_3$-$F\#_4$-$D\#_4$-E_4, comprise main thematic material, they also allude to a tonal center, form motivic connections throughout the work, and refer to French Impressionism.

Theme A itself is characterized by primarily quarter-note motion in both parts, with the piano providing the accompaniment and the violin the melody. While the violin line is relatively expansive in the opening, the piano part remains confined to an accompanimental role, comprised of a figure of three slurred quarter-notes in each hand; the bass line in the left hand of the piano is unchanging in its rhythmic pattern of three slurred quarter-notes for the first twenty-two measures of the piece. The right hand also has a similar repetitive quarter-note rhythm, but after the first eight bars is allowed a larger range and a more melodic contour that gradually expands into the role of counterpoint to the melody.

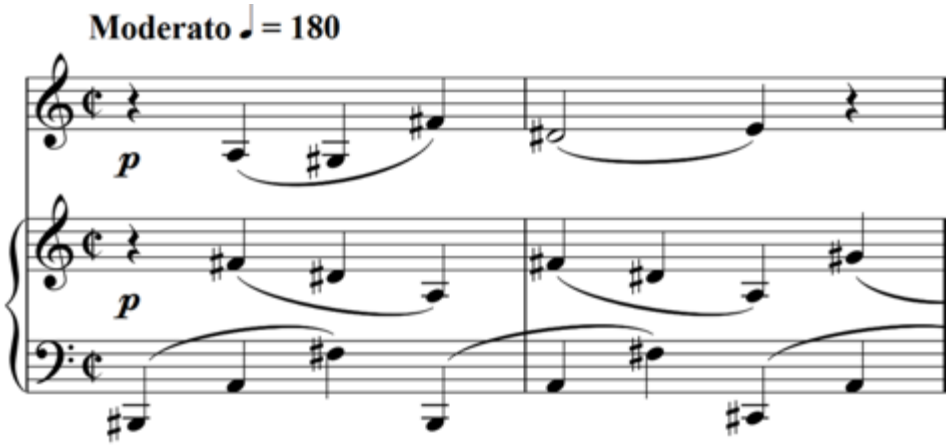
From the beginning of the movement, the groups of three slurred quarter notes in each hand of the piano part are written in contrary motion to each other. However, the two parts begin a beat apart which results in a synchronization that ensures that the lowest note in both hands is arrived at together. Since the lowest note falls on a different beat in each measure, Schonthal avoids the feeling of a stable downbeat and creates an undulating line that provides unsteady footing for the violin melody. The two voices in the piano part finally converge in m. 6 and then remain synchronized for the rest of the first theme; this intervallic and metric convergence helps to indicate the conclusion of the first phrase. In contrast, when the second eight-bar phrase ends the two hands of the piano move apart from each other in range as Schonthal alters the groupings of quarter notes in the right hand. Rather than three notes slurred, she expands the scope of the right hand to five and four quarter note groupings over the three-note slurs of the left hand. In this way, the right hand emerges from the texture to take on a more melodic role alongside the violin line.

Despite the efforts of the left hand to insist on its own metrical accents, the constant flow of quarter notes throughout Theme A would seem to solicit a chordal harmonic analysis.

However, one quickly finds that this is an ineffective route for understanding this movement, as a vertical chordal analysis does not produce any meaningful progressions. While Schonthal does allow for the voices to occasionally converge and form recognizable triads, the steadily and independently moving quarter notes ensure that the ground beneath the melody is ever-shifting. No sooner is a triad heard than the linear voice leading moves away from it. As this document will demonstrate, tonal triadic harmonies receive heightened significance within the context of the tonal centers suggested by the melodic writing and linear voice-leading.

Rather than use traditional tonic and dominant key areas of nineteenth-century sonata form, Schonthal exploits the opposition between the tonal centers E and A. This becomes a defining characteristic of the *Moderato* and remains true even up through the last chord of the movement. More specifically, this conflict is set up at the very opening of the piece with the opening five-note motive. In the first two measures, the violin melody strongly implies an E tonal center because of the half-note $D\#_4$ leading tone before the conclusion to E_4 on the third beat of m.2. Simultaneously, the right hand of the piano reiterates $D\#_4$ three times consecutively in its accompanimental material made up of the quarter-note figure $F\#_4$, $D\#_4$ and A_3, which itself implies the harmony, vii^o of E. While the violin melody concludes on E_4 in m. 2, the bass plays a $C\#_2$ and the middle voice is playing A_3; these notes belong to an A major triad in first inversion. Thus, the convergence of an A major triad within an area of music with an E tonal center is established within the first two measures of the piece and will prove to be a central topic for the movement. The tonal center of E is felt more strongly at this juncture than the A tonality since the linear voice leading coupled with the harmonic implications of the accompaniment supersedes any feeling of A major. (see Example 2.1)

Example 2.1: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 1-2, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



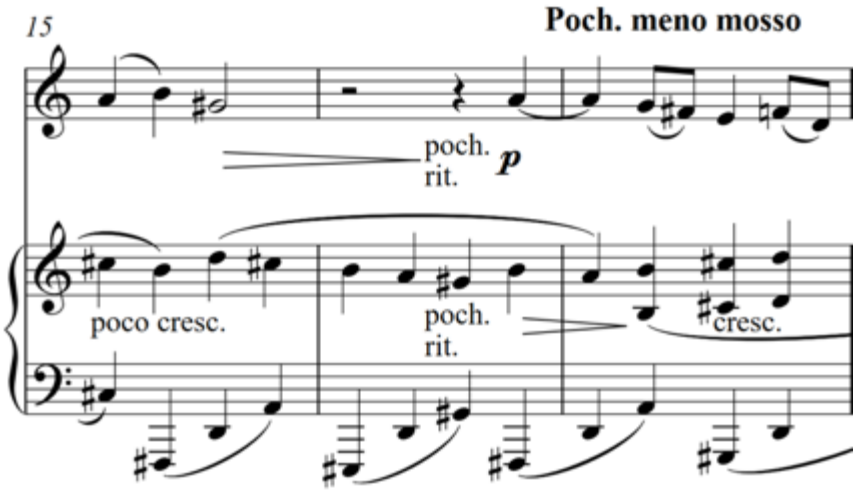
Another chord based on A appears at the end of the first statement of the theme, only this time as a second-inversion A minor chord. In this context, this chord acts like a dominant of E, and thus prepares the entrance of the next phrase. The E tonal center continues to predominate at this point in the first theme.

The second half of the first theme reiterates the tonal center of E even more emphatically than did the first because the melodic line ascends to E_5, which is a whole step higher than in the first phrase. This time the melody repeats the E_5 three separate times, along with three iterations of E_4. However, an essential voice-leading component is missing from this phrase; namely, the disappearance of D#'s after the initial five-note motive. Indeed the tonal center shifts to A temporarily as the music enters the transition section in m.17.

When the first theme ends in m.16, the last three notes of the phrase in m. 15 in the violin part feel less conclusive than did the first phrase. This is because the second phrase ends with a falling minor third from B_4 to $G\#_4$, (see Example 2.2) rather than a rising step-wise motion like the first did at the end of the first eight-bar phrase. Since Schonthal wrote a leap down by a third, the result is an unresolved conclusion, as though the G# has been interrupted on its way to

A. Indeed, the piano part reiterates this G# in a rare confluence between the two hands, on the third beat of m.16. The effect of this lingering G# is to make the next violin entry on the note A at the beginning of the transition all the more significant as a resolution. The pull toward an A tonal center is now felt more strongly and the tonal focus has formally shifted by the beginning of the transition in the next bar.

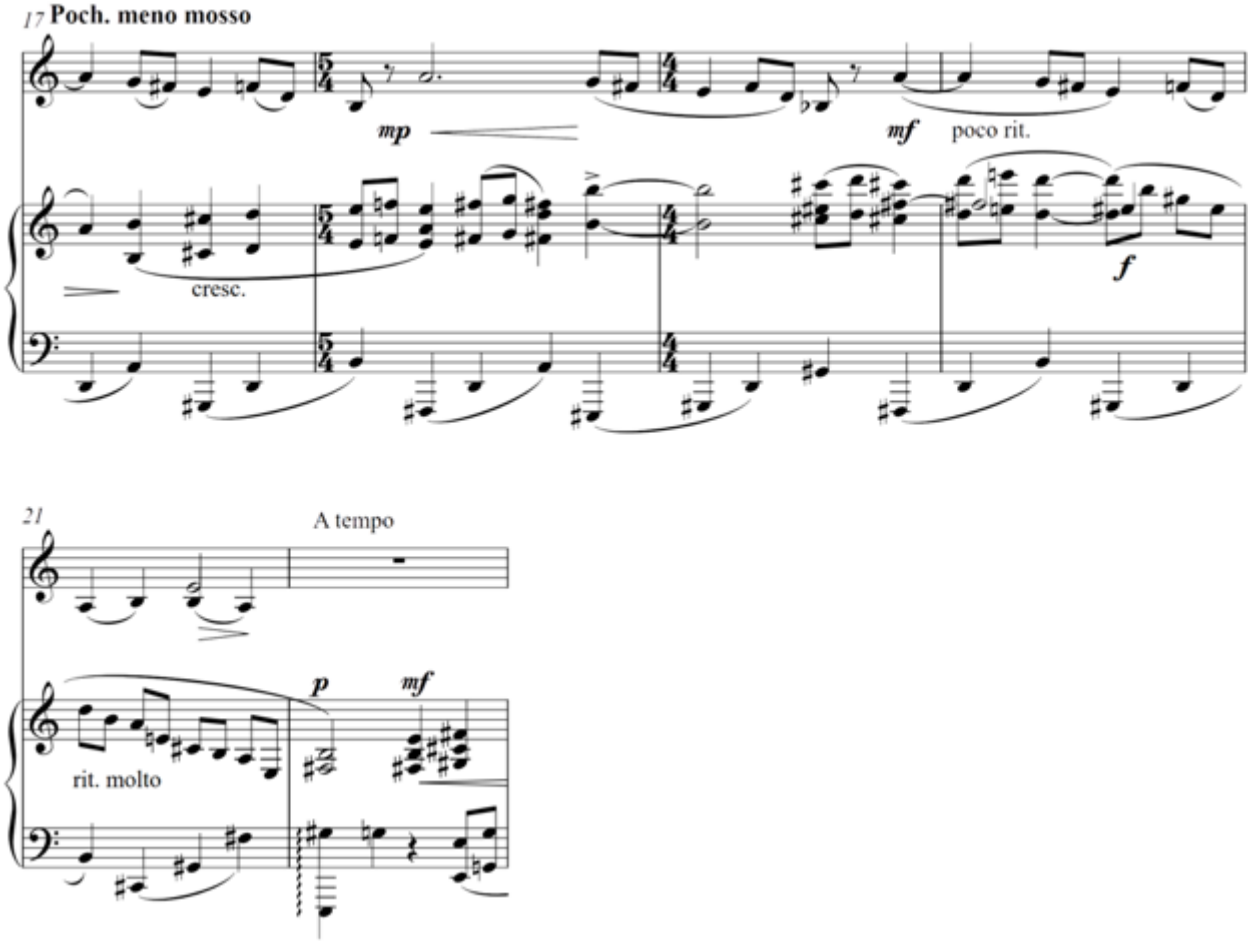
Example 2.2: *Sonata in e, Moderato*, mm. 15-17, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



As the five-note motive from the opening of the piece reappears throughout the first movement, it is sometimes fragmented, transposed, or chromatically altered. The first time Schonthal utilizes a motivic fragment of the first five notes, it appears in the violin line during the transition in mm.17-21. (see Example 2.3) Here the motive is enmeshed in a new rhythmic figure that combines quarter notes and eighth notes. The motive has undergone a register change and slight chromatic alteration. The notes from the first theme (A_3-$G\#_3$-$F\#_3$-$D\#_4$-E_4) appear here as a scale: A_4, G_4, $F\#_4$, E_4. By chromatically altering the G by a half step and omitting the $D\#_4$ leading tone to E_4, Schonthal transforms the motive so that it can propel the motion of the music toward a new harmonic area. The metamorphosized motive repeats three times, each time lowering the goal of the last note by a half step before leading into the cadence at m. 22. This

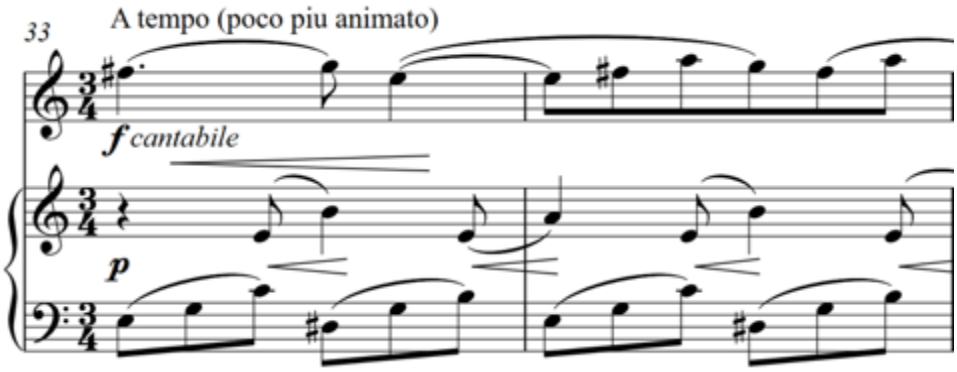
cadence will be discussed in greater detail in the section pertaining to the transitional material of this movement.

Example 2.3: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 17-22, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The same five notes of the motive reappear in the second theme of the *Moderato* in mm. 33-34. Here it appears in a more rhythmically complex form, and the notes are rearranged. (see Example 2.4) The notes from the original motive appear in the melody of the second theme as F#$_5$, G$_5$, E$_5$, F#$_5$, A$_5$. The D# from the original motive appears in the accompaniment part, in the second half of the measure.

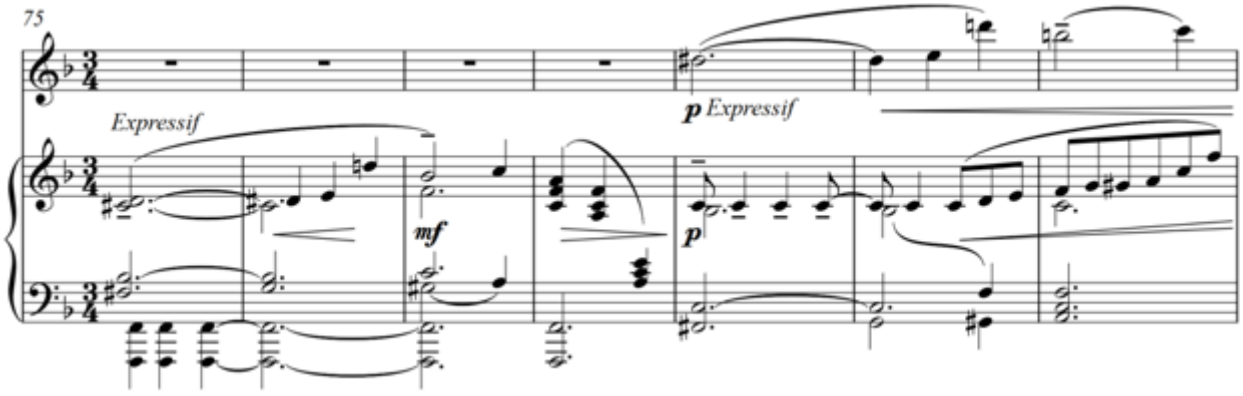
Example 2.4: *Sonata in e, Moderato, mm. 33-34*, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The opening motive is especially significant because it is a direct quotation of thematic material found in the violin sonata of French Impressionist composer, Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941). This somewhat obscure violin sonata was written in 1915, at the height of French Impressionism. Schonthal's propensity for the French Impressionist period has been documented in Helmig's biography when discussing her formative years studying as a child in Sweden. It was there, in the early 1940's, that Schonthal first studied the piano works of Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) and one may presume that she came across other French Impressionist composers during that time.[23] In the first movement of the Gaubert sonata, this five-note motive makes up a significant thematic area. In the Gaubert, it first appears in the right hand of the piano in m.75 right after a key change to F major, and it introduces a new thematic section of the piece. Aside from the obvious transposition of the theme to a different key area, the only slight alteration that Schonthal has made to the Gaubert motive is rhythmic; the first note in the Gaubert is held for four beats rather than Schonthal's one beat. (see Examples 2.1 & 2.5)

[23] Helmig, 27.

Example 2.5: Philippe Gaubert *Violin Sonata no. 1,* mm. 75-81.



It is rather bold of Schonthal to use an exact motive from another composer for the opening of her own violin sonata. It is possible that the motive was in her subconscious, steeped as she was in French Impressionism in her formative years.

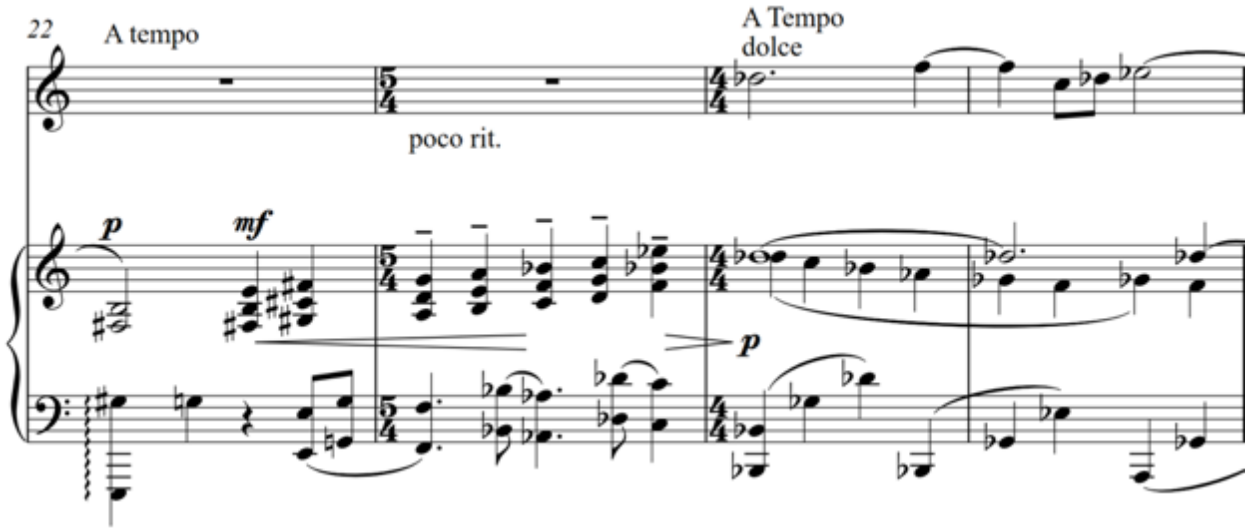
The transitional material in this movement is important in four main ways; it begins to use mixed meter, introduces new thematic material, presents sonorities rooted in French Impressionism, and briefly revolves around a tonal center that has overarching implications for the entire movement.

Given its brevity, the transition is characterized by its frequent and unexpected changes. One of the first signifiers of the end of the first thematic section is the change in meter. While the eighth-notes in the right hand of the piano initially serve to propel the music forward, the static nature of the melodic intervals in these measures keep the music from moving ahead, as do the four *ritardandi* that are inserted throughout the transition. The melodic intervals move primarily by step; Schonthal reiterates a descent three times, from A_4 down to first B_3, then B-flat$_3$, and finally to A_3. The overall stasis of the passage is further reinforced by the unchanging bass line in the piano part which remains unaffected by the motion around it and continues the same pattern as it has from the beginning.

At the start of the transition, Schonthal also indicates a meter changes from $\frac{4}{4}$ to $\frac{5}{4}$ in mm. 18-19. This is the first hint at another one of Schonthal's organizing principles of sonata form. Coupled with the thematic material and tonal centers, meter changes and tempo indications also help denote the different sections of sonata form. The meter changes three more times in the course of the eight bars between mm. 17-22. The lack of a strong metric pulse in these measures aids in the expansive feeling of these measures and is further supported by the three *ritardandi* that are marked in mm. 20, 21, and 23.

Six measures into the transition, in m.22, two significant events occur; the E tonal center from the opening of the piece is briefly re-established, and sonorities reminiscent of French Impressionism appear. Texturally, Schonthal highlights the significance of m.22 by having the violin drop out of the texture for the first time, and the bass line also ceases its constant quarter-note motion for the first time in the piece. The *molto ritardando* in m.21 leads into the half-note chord on the downbeat of m.22. The chord is both temporally and harmonically significant; all of the motion of the piece thus far converges on this half note, and it outlines a chord built on the note E_1. Schonthal has chosen such a low register for the E in the left hand that it would be impossible to ignore its implication as a significant tonal event, even as the other notes above may seem to destabilize it. The other notes above E_1, in order from bottom to top, are $F\#_3$, $G\#_3$, resolving to G-natural$_3$, and B_3.

Example 2.6: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 22-25, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Schonthal implies a tonal center of E, while characteristically adding a dissonant second (F#3) and simultaneously setting up a dichotomy with E minor.

The third quarter note of m. 22 keeps three of the chord tones from the downbeat (F-sharp3, B3 and E4) and then proceeds upwards by step in a series of six parallel chords in the right hand of the piano. In this series of chords, Schonthal uses a technique typical of the French Impressionist composers known as harmonic planing. Here, the use of harmonic planing functions as a modulatory technique to move the music toward the new tonal center of E-flat in m.24. For the next six measures, the music hovers around E-flat, reinforced by the violin part in m. 25. This E-flat tonal center is further underscored by the right hand of the piano which provides a counterpoint that arrives on G-flat with each repetition of the E-flat in the violin part. Each reiteration of the notes leading to the E-flat/G-flat convergence is successively louder, until the end of m. 29 where there is an abrupt break. In retrospect, the emphasis on G-flat causes one to reconsider the dissonant F-sharp from the cadential chord in m.22 as having a foreshadowing significance for the lowered tonal center to come. Additionally, the E-flat tonal center has longer

term implications as the enharmonic equivalent to D# which will eventually serve as a leading tone to E at the conclusion of the movement.

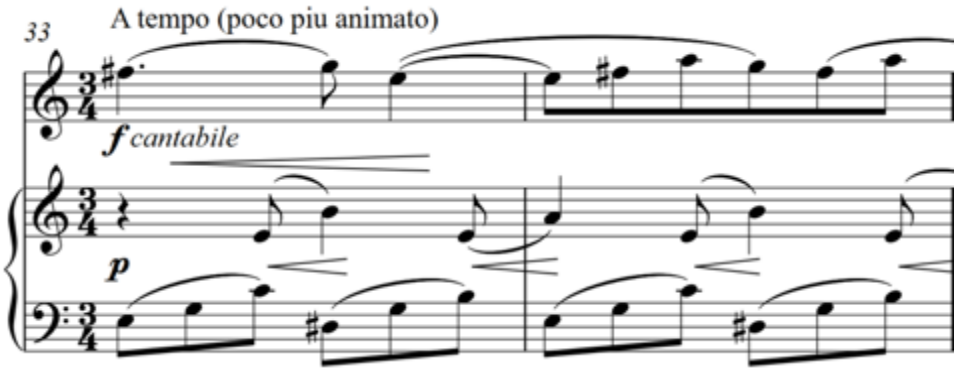
Finally, the last three measures of the transition contain a curious and bizarre new motive. Both the musical material and character of this motive is completely alien to the piece thus far. In addition, these last three measures of the transition show how Schonthal has subverted traditional sonata form by scrambling the order of the appearance of thematic material.

Harmonically, the shift is abrupt; while Schonthal does not use key signatures, there is a sudden change of tonality as the flats disappear after m. 29 and sharps take their place in m. 30. Also in this bar, the left hand plays a *forte* F-sharp on the downbeat of measure 30 for a brief few bars, whereas the right hand remains *piano* and the violin part drops from *forte* to *mezzo piano*. The measures are marked *Piu animato* and the violin part is scherzando-like in character with a buoyant rhythm consisting of eighth notes, two slurred and two staccato, throughout the three bars. It is only later, after the second theme has been established that this motive reappears as a part of the second theme.

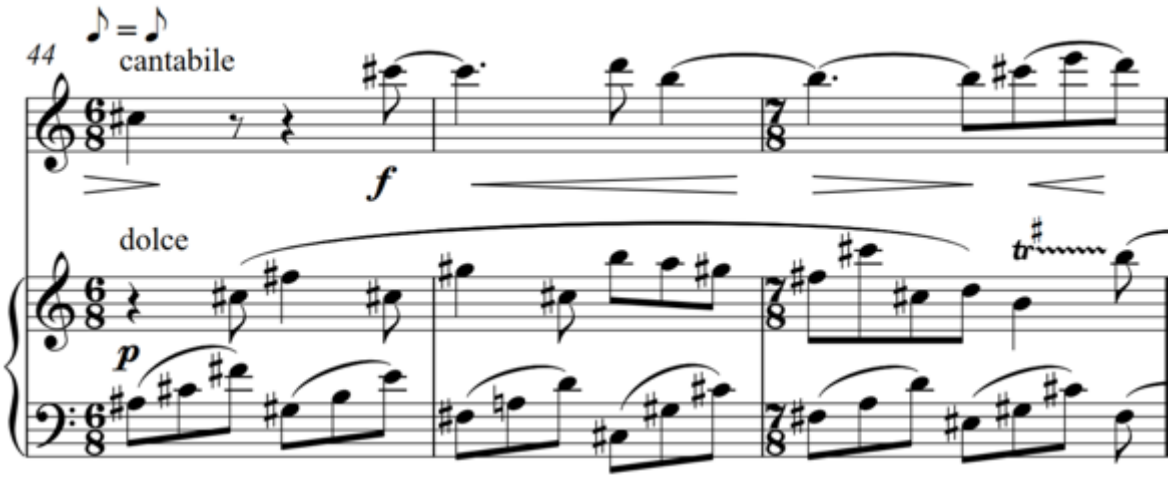
The second theme in m. 33 is set up by a *pochissimo ritardando* in the measure before. The theme begins with a lyrical melody in the violin part that is accompanied by a rapid three-note figure in the bass part. The two most marked indicators of the second theme are the change to a new meter, $\frac{3}{4}$, as well as new thematic material. The tempo indications, *A tempo* and *poco piu animato* at the outset of the second theme also help define this new character. As in the first theme, Schonthal uses metric displacement in the bass part; the slurred eighth-notes in the left hand of the piano appear to be written in $\frac{6}{8}$, while the melody is written in $\frac{3}{4}$. The influence of the opposition of these two interpretations of the time signature is felt most strongly in how the melody is phrased against the piano accompaniment. Because the left hand has the smallest

subdivisions of the measure, and the lowest note of its undulating eighth-notes always fall on the first and fourth eighth-notes of the measure, it results in two metrical accents per bar. The violin part must soar above it and ignore the temporal implications of the left hand, lest there be a false accent in the middle of the melodic line. This is easier to do in the second iteration of the second theme which occurs in the development section that begins in m. 44. In this version of the second theme, Schonthal has rewritten the time signature as $\frac{6}{8}$ as well as metrically shifted the melody five eighth-notes later. By prolonging the first and third notes of the melody, and adding mixed meters, Schonthal aligns the parts so that the accompaniment no longer fights the internal pulse of the melody. This realignment results in the contour of the melody and accompaniment being in synchronization as well, with the outer voices moving in the same direction. (see Examples 2.7 & 2.8)

Example 2.7: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 33-34, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



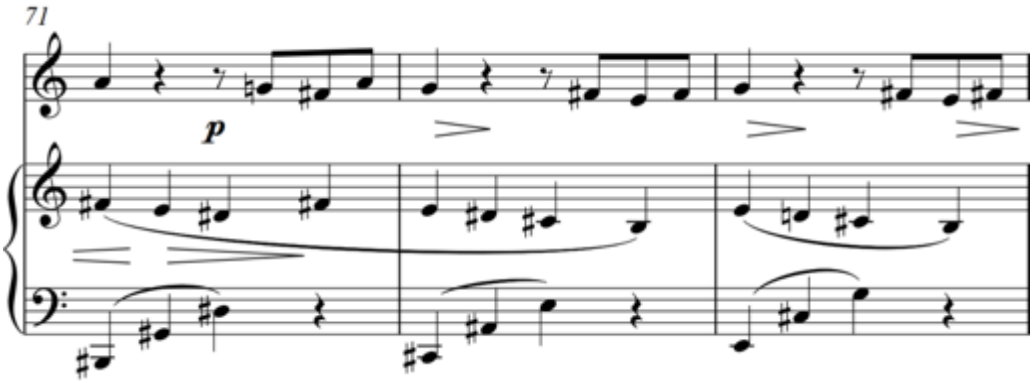
Example 2.8: *Sonata in e, Moderato*, mm. 44-46, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Schonthal immediately develops the second theme without any transitional preparation. With the second iteration of the second theme, transposed up a fifth from its original presentation, the development section has unwittingly begun. The most important feature of the development is the piano cadenza from mm. 57-63. The violin melody veers from its melodic role after m. 47 after restating the first half of the second theme material and begins to repeatedly encircle G# from mm. 48-52. This leads us to a brief tonicization of C# minor in a grand flourish that culminates in the piano cadenza beginning in m. 57. After the flurry of *ff* octaves in the piano during the cadenza, the music returns to its pursuit of its earlier character and tonal center. Schonthal devotes twelve measures to this search; the left hand of the piano presents a version of its opening accompanying figure, only with the wrong chord tones and with rests interrupting each group of three accompanimental quarter notes. The violin part replies to each grouping of the left hand of the piano with a motivic fragments that circle around the notes of the first theme. Because Schonthal has returned to the soft dynamic and octave range of the first theme, even

though the notes are not exactly the same, the sonority of the opening has returned. Both parts search for the theme but only find it once the true recapitulation begins in m. 76.

Example 2.9: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 71-73, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

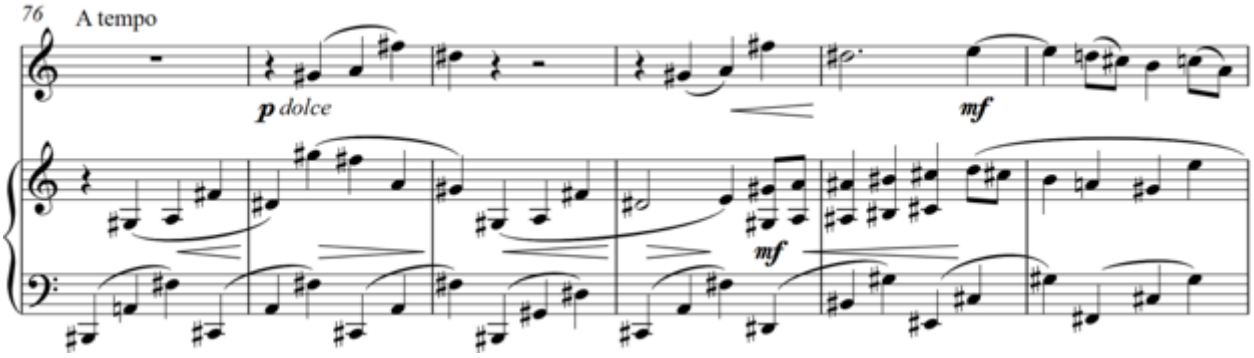


Schonthal's treatment of tonal centers in the recapitulation follows a similar dichotomy as did the exposition, and the predominance of one tonal center over the other is never conclusive, even at the final cadence. When the recapitulation begins in m. 76, Schonthal treats the thematic material differently from the first time in several ways. The theme is fragmented, the rhythm is distorted, and the voicing has been altered. Schonthal uses these methods to further underscore the lack of an overriding tonal center.

The initial arrival of the first theme in m. 76 of the recapitulation is incomplete and appears as a motivic fragment; Schonthal only restates the first four notes of the exposition, ending on an unresolved D#4. This D#4, which was previously a half note in the exposition, now appears in the recapitulation as a quarter note. Additionally, Schonthal indicates a breath mark after the D#4, further emphasizing the motive's truncated form. The motivic fragment first reappears in the right hand of the piano, rather than in the violin as it had in the exposition. When the violin part enters a bar later, it repeats the same four notes, an octave higher than its original presentation and forms a canon with the piano part. The canonic entrance underscores

the searching quality of the incomplete theme that is being passed between the two instruments. The full five notes of the first theme finally appear in the third statement of the theme, in the right hand of the piano, beginning in m.78. (Example 2.10)

Example 2.10: *Sonata in e*, *Moderato*, mm. 76-81, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



When the complete theme finally does arrive, Schonthal emphasizes the leading tone D# by doubling its length in the piano part to a half note, thereby delaying its resolution to E by one beat. When the violin enters with the theme, again in canon, in the middle of the D# in the piano part in m.79, there is yet an additional beat added to the D# before it resolves to E. In other words, Schonthal's emphasis on the D# leading tone is increasingly more obvious as the recapitulation gets underway. It is as though the two parts are competing to outdo one another, distorting the rhythm of the theme to hammer home the leading tone. The fragmented nature of the return of the theme makes the recapitulation difficult to ascertain. Were it not for the confluence of the *A tempo* marking and the return of the opening bass line in m. 76, one might not immediately recognize the recapitulation as such.

Another subtle change in the return of the opening material is a switch in the opening minor second. Rather than begin the theme with A-G# as it first appeared, in the return, the order is reversed to G#-A, which is how it appeared in the second phrase of the first theme. It is

a subtle, if fleeting nod toward the opposing tonal center of A. The melodic lines from mm. 82-87 are also weighted toward an A tonal center. However, from m. 88 to the end of the movement, as Schonthal propels the movement forward with ever more compressed fragments of the prior main themes and motives, the sonata finally seems to coalesce around E. Indeed, for the last eight measures of the piece, the violin part repeats the melodic fragment, E_5, $D\#_5$, $C\#_5$, $D\#_5$, E_5 ending decisively on the note E_5 in the last measure. The piano part has been less clear in its intentions, merely alternating between octaves and fourths in a steady a row of jaunty, eight-note, staccato chords. Bursts of dissonant chords in the piano part try unsuccessfully to dismantle the stability of the tonal center of E. However, the piano has the last say in the piece and concludes with an A major chord one beat after the violin ends on E_5. This surprising ending manages to incorporate E, and yet subordinate it to the A tonal center at the very last minute. It also is possible to interpret the two tonal centers as cohabitant, without emphasizing one over the other. It is as though Schonthal was writing in between two keys by fully exploiting their overlapping tones, and did not let the strictures of tonal harmony hamper her.

MOVEMENT II: *Very slowly with much expression*

The slow inner movement of *Sonata in e* is distinctive from the outer movements because it departs from a traditional formal structure. Rather, Schonthal has chosen a bipartite form comprised of two sections of roughly equal length. The opening A section is comprised of thirty-six measures and the concluding B section is thirty-nine measures long. The sections are contrasting, both thematically and in their respective tempi. (Schonthal specifies that the quarter note is equal to 60 at the beginning, increasing to 100 when the violin melody enters at m.4, and that the ensuing B section is more than twice as fast, with the eighth note equal to 126.). What

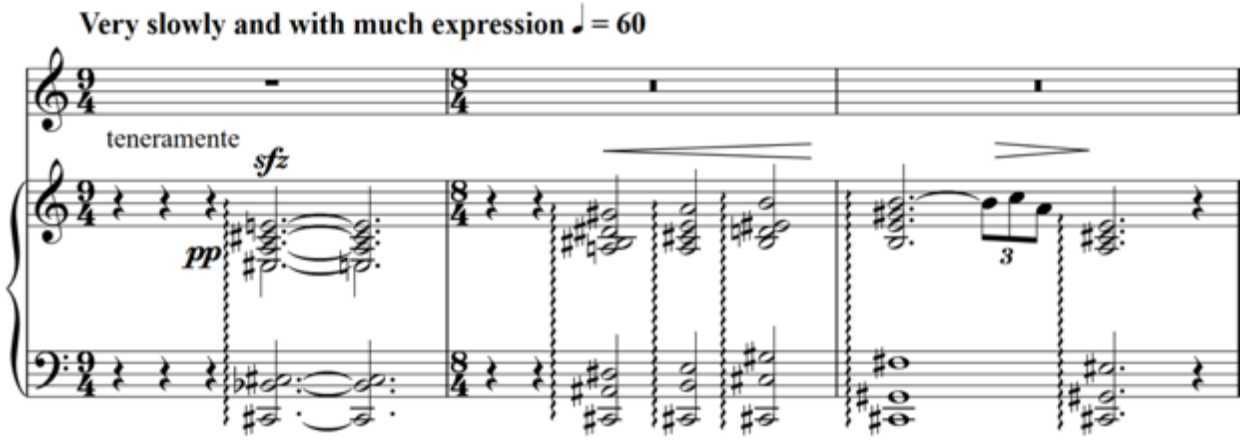
follows will examine the components of the two sections and discuss their respective motivic connections to the first movement. It will also examine Schonthal's use of tonal centers and discuss the appropriation of a quotation from *Boléro* by Maurice Ravel.

The second movement begins with three measures of long *pianissimo* rolled chords in the piano part. The seven introductory chord clusters have two significant functions; they unify the opening around a pedal tone C#2 in the bass and they introduce a fragment of the main motives of the A section in the melodic line at the top of the rolled chords.

Upon closer inspection of the chords in the opening, one finds that within each chord cluster there is always a major triad and sometimes even two major triads that occur simultaneously. For example, A major features prominently at the top of the first chord, yet is destabilized by E# and B-flat underneath it. Schonthal inserts such a dissonance in each of the opening chords and more generally in her music whenever a major chord threatens to eclipse its surroundings. "Characteristic of her style is the shift between chords using the minor third and those using the major third, similarly chords with minor and major sevenths…. The major/minor third or the major/minor seventh often appear together in a chord."[24] Here the chord tones move primarily by step or half step to move to the next cluster above the C# pedal tone. The chord tones that do not move by step either move by fifths or by thirds, causing those leaps to be highlighted. The intervals that are formed when the voices leap are either thirds or fifths, and are confined to three particular notes: C#, E and G#. This outline of a C# minor chord in conjunction with the C# pedal makes the reference to C# minor overpowering. It seems that Schonthal uses the C# as a bridge that connects the A and E tonal centers. (see Example 2.11)

[24] Helmig, 309.

Example 2.11: *Sonata in e, Very slowly and with much expression,* mm. 1-3, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The first and final chords of the opening contain E_4 in the top voice which does not function as part of the melody. However, those two chords cause the opening to circle back on itself as a contained introduction to the movement. The emphasis on E in the top voice implies a tonal center which connects this movement to the rest of the sonata.

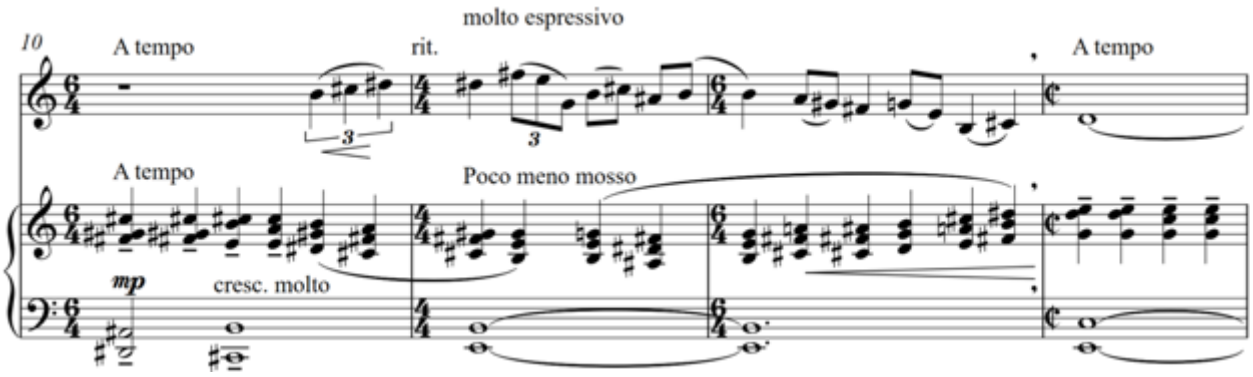
When the first violin enters with the melody in m.4, it begins on the note E_5, taking over last sounding E_4 from the final introductory chord. From there it presents the main melody, which is comprised of two six-bar phrases and made up of the aforementioned motives. The violin melody initially descends stepwise from E_5 to $C\#_5$, seeming to further underline a C# minor sonority. Yet, upon the continuation of the melody, the tonal center shifts to E both melodically and in the accompaniment. Prominent notes of the melody outline an E minor triad, while the piano reenters the texture in m. 6 with a new pedal tone on E_2.

The second movement is rife with motivic connections, both within itself and in relation to the first movement. Within the first six bar phrase in the violin melody, there are as many as four motives combined together. The first two of these motives are presented in the soprano line

of the opening chordal introduction. Beginning with the second chord of the piece in m. 2, the motives outlined consist of the notes G#4, A4, B4, C5, and A4. (see Example 2.11)

In its first presentation, over the opening chords, the first three notes of the motive rise by step (G#4, A4, B4). When the violin first enters in m.4, the motive descends by step (E5, D5, C#5) before concluding with the same melodic fragment (B4, C5, A4) as the first did. Whether rising or falling, Schonthal uses the three-note motive in linear stepwise motion interchangeably. This motive returns four more times in the A section in mm.10-13, 27-28, 30-31, and 32-33 all in slightly varied form. Schonthal fills out some of the motives with additional notes and transposes it each time it reappears. (see Example 2.12)

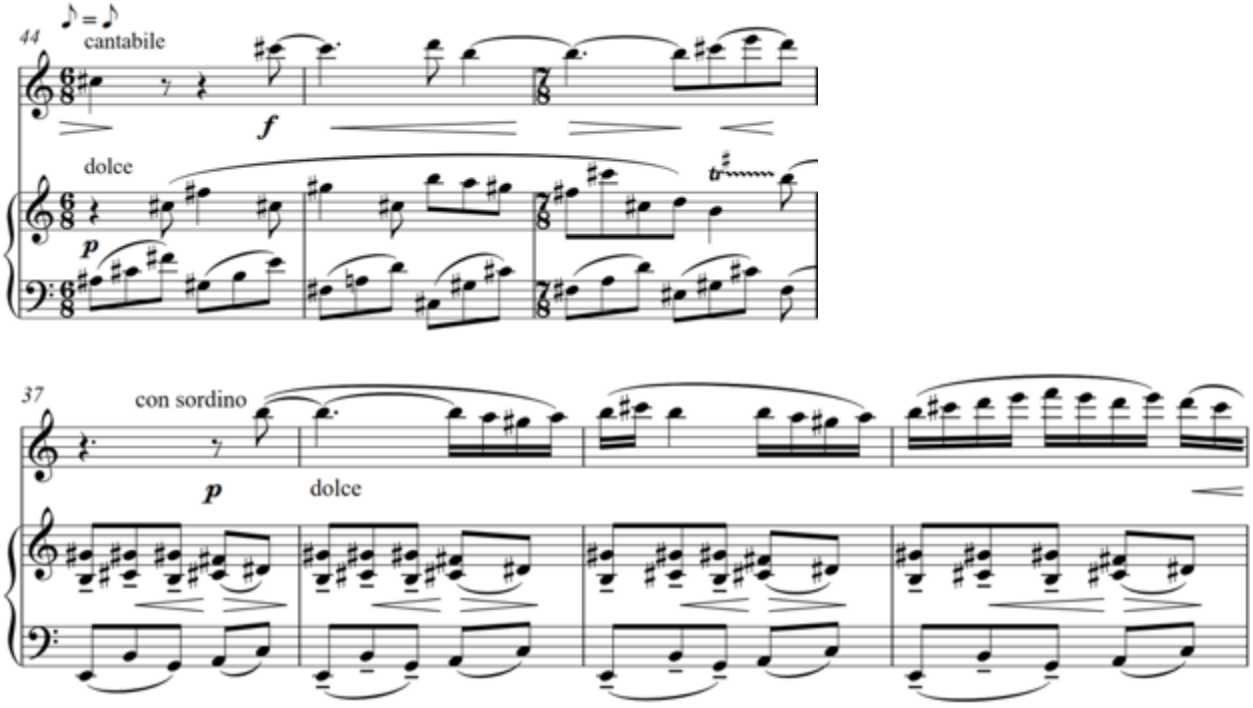
Example 2.12: *Sonata in e, Very slowly and with much expression,* mm. 10-13, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Schonthal also forms a tight connection between the first two movements by sharing motivic elements between the first themes from both. The three-note motive that concludes the first theme of the second movement is the same motive that appeared as the closing material of the first phrase in the first movement of the sonata. This motive is comprised of three rising notes; a whole step followed by a half step. The three notes are instantly recognizable across the two movements. In fact, in the recapitulation of the *Moderato*, these three notes were identical to the three that appear in the first statement of the motive in the second movement: E4, F#4, G4.

When the violin lands on the G_4 at the end of the first phrase in m.6 in the second movement, its significance is heightened in that the note lasts for six beats and coincides with the piano re-entry on the note E_3 in the bass. The next time the violin sustains a long tone in m.8, the note is a B_4 against the continuing E_3 pedal in the bass. Thus, a very strong connection to the tonal center of E has now been established, both motivically and harmonically across two movements. Schonthal continues with the idea of motivic repetition between movements as the second themes of both movements also share many similarities. While the reference is not verbatim, Schonthal utilizes the same range on the violin and the similar spacing of the intervals of the themes. The themes also retain a rhythmic similarity in that the melodic line is alternately active and then comes to rest on a prolonged note. These similarities occur most specifically in the development of the second theme from the first movement, in mm. 44-46, which features the same prominent B_5 in the violin part as the B theme in the second movement, in mm. 37-40. The notes in both themes that surround the B_5 also reach up to a $C\#_6$ and E_6 and thus the differing neighbor and passing tones in the themes do not affect the overall associations of the two melodies. (Example 2.13)

Example 2.13: *Sonata in e, Moderato,* mm. 44-46. & *Very slowly and with much expression,* mm. 37-40, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The other major component of the A section is a segment devoted to a series of cumulative arpeggios in the piano. In what can be interpreted as a small act of rebellion against her teacher, in this section, as in the opening of the second movement, Schonthal "uses broken chords, which Hindemith's theory rejects."[25] In mm. 20-26, the piano plays alone, the meter disappears and it is marked *senza mesura*. In a series of sonorous gestural events, the ascending arpeggios span a huge range, beginning in m. 20 on B-flat1. Additionally, Schonthal indicates that the sustaining pedal of the piano should be employed. Therefore, the culmination of the chord results in a huge tone cluster. A series of leaps that include thirds, fourths and seconds, comprise the arpeggio and the first chord culminates on two simultaneous triads at the end of the measure. Unsurprisingly, the two triads outlined are A major and E major. Schonthal has thus momentarily linked the opposing tonal centers from the first movement here in the middle of the

[25] Helmig, 95.

second. Despite its appearance within a context that Hindemith would not have condoned, the technique of "linking tonal centers in many passages"[26] is indeed something Schonthal might have learned from her teacher. Each chord of this passage closes with an ambiguous tone cluster that juxtaposes competing harmonies. As Helmig goes on to observe, "Above all, the development of Schontal's lines resembles Hindemith's "open tonality" in so far as the tonal levels develop freely out of one another without forming a clear frame of tonal reference."[27] The final tone cluster in m. 26 presents B-flat minor against A major; the A major triad is sounded last, and therefore is heard most clearly. This leads into the return of the first theme which takes the E_5 from the A major chord, transposes it an octave higher, and restarts the melody in the violin part.

The last two measures of the movement merit discussion here as the movement ends with another expansive arpeggio exactly like those in the *senza mesura* section. The final arpeggio of the movement begins on A_1; this note was in the root of the chord in the preceding measure in conjunction with the last note of the violin melody on A_6. Different iterations of a triad based on the notes A, C and E appear consecutively throughout this last arpeggio, despite the intervening dissonances (G#, B#, E, D and F#) that fight it. The A tonal center is especially emphasized by the final three notes which outline a second inversion A-major triad. In addition, Schonthal indicates that the sustaining pedal should be used through to the final note which is a silently pressed A_1. The silent compression of the low piano key has added the effect of emphasizing the overtones of the A string on the piano.

[26] Ibid, 95.
[27] Ibid, 95.

In the B section of the second movement, Schonthal references Maurice Ravel's *Boléro*. This allusion to French Impressionism is the most blatant and extensive of all examples in this sonata. It is not the first time Schonthal used Ravel as a model for her compositions. Schonthal's *Sonatina* was composed in 1939 when she was just fourteen years old, and is one of her earliest published works. In 1941, Schonthal wrote about her own performance of Ravel's *Sonatine* around the same time as her own composition, although the composer later claimed that she only became familiar with that particular Ravel work after having composed her own. Nonetheless, it is presumed that at the very least she was deeply familiar with and influenced by his style of writing at the time.[28]

The usage of a famous Ravel quotation is unmistakably much more deliberate in this work, compared with her earlier juvenile composition. One cannot know exactly why Schonthal was compelled to include this particular reference to Ravel's *Boléro*, but an understanding of the history of the popular art form demonstrates how this choice would appeal to her. Before it was incorporated into other dance forms and into art music, the bolero originated in Spain in the form of a popular dance or song. The bolero contains several distinctive features: it is in triple meter, performed at a moderate tempo and consists of a distinctive rhythmic line that precedes, and then forms the accompaniment to the melody. In its dance form, the bolero was customarily performed by a couple, which in Schonthal's interpretation, is executed by the duo of the violin and piano.

[28] Helmig, 27.

The bolero found its way to places outside of Spain, including Mexico, where Schonthal lived from 1941-1946. While there is not an overt reference to Mexican folk music in the *Sonata in e,* Mexican influences did wend their way into Schonthal's music.[29]

In this section of the violin sonata, Schonthal is able to weave together the influences of her time in Mexico, as well as refer to the great French master Maurice Ravel whom she clearly admired. References to Ravel appear in Martina Helmig's biography of Schonthal from the time when Schonthal lived in Sweden. It was there that she was first exposed to the composer as a young student. As Sweden was slightly isolated from the trends of early twentieth century Europe, Swedish composers had to travel to Europe to be exposed to the latest trends of "expressionism, impressionism, neoclassicism, and the twelve-tone technique."[30] In the 1920's and 1930's, Fylkingen, a concert series devoted to contemporary music, enabled artists such as Maurice Ravel, Paul Hindemith, Béla Bartók and Stravinsky to perform in Sweden. Schonthal's piano studies at this time focused mainly on nineteenth-century German Romantic composers, but they also began to incorporate French Impressionists such as Debussy and Ravel. It was in Sweden that she first heard the music of Ravel and his music clearly impacted her style.[31]

The stark lack of variation in Ravel's *Boléro* in general is one of its hallmarks, and there are many interviews of Ravel speaking about his infamous work. Ravel cited several influences and inspirations; that of Spanish folk tunes for the melody, along with the sound of unceasing factory machines for the rhythm. Michael Lanford describes *Boléro* as having "long defied traditional

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[29] Some works that reflect the influences of her time in Mexico include *Capriccio Espagnol* for piano (1945) and *Fiestas y Danzas* for piano (1961).

[30] Helmig, 270.

[31] Helmig, 270-271.

methods of musical analysis owing to its melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic repetitiveness."[32] Schonthal might particularly relate to this twentieth century work in that her own work also cannot be approached in a customary method. While Ravel's work is traditionally tonal, it breaks boundaries of form and therefore cannot be analyzed in a traditional way. In the case of Schonthal, she breaks with tradition in the exact opposite way; she retains recognizable forms while using a wide variety of harmonies and meters.

As in the traditional bolero, Schonthal begins with a constant and unchanging accompaniment in the piano part, in m. 36. The rhythmic pattern is not in the traditional triple meter, but rather primarily in $\frac{5}{8}$.[33] In the Schonthal, the underlying rhythm does not act as an anchor to the melody, nor does it really resemble a bolero rhythm at all. Rather, the piano part sounds Impressionistic and lilting, reminiscent of Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). When the melodic fragment from the middle of the Ravel *Boléro* begins at the pick-up to m. 38 in the violin part, it causes the ear to belatedly reimagine the role of the piano part.

Ravel's *Boléro* is written in the traditional $\frac{3}{4}$ meter; Schonthal pays homage to this idea of a steady pulse by writing the entire passage from mm. 36-64 in an eighth-note meter, despite the many changes within the eighth-note pulse. The passage begins with seven measures of the $\frac{5}{8}$ meter, then switches to $\frac{6}{8}$ for four measures, $\frac{3}{8}$ for three measures, $\frac{5}{8}$ for one measure, and so on, until the *Lento* in m. 65. The meter changes mainly affect the piano part as it constantly realigns

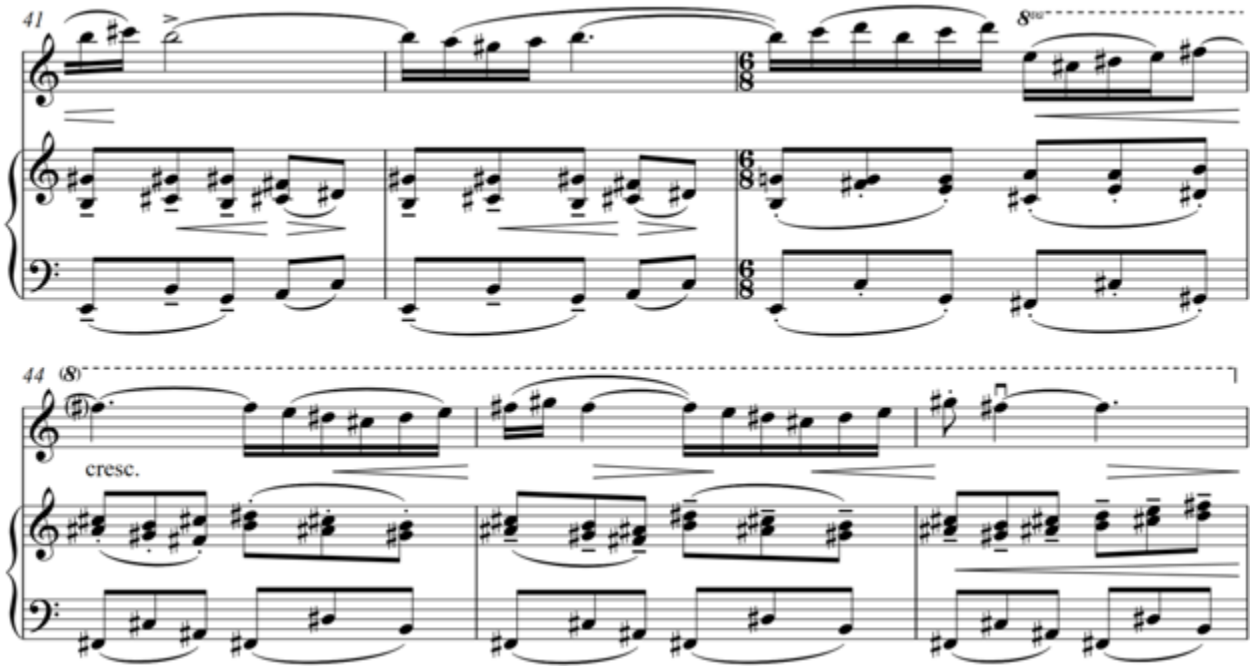
[32] Michael Lanford, "Ravel and 'The Raven': The Realisation of an Inherited Aesthetic in "Boléro"" *The Cambridge Quarterly* 40, No. 3 (Sept., 2011): 244.

[33] This alteration of a dance customarily in triple meter brings to mind the second movement of Tchaikovsky's Symphony no. 6 "*Pathétique,"* which includes the infamous waltz written in $\frac{5}{4}$ meter.

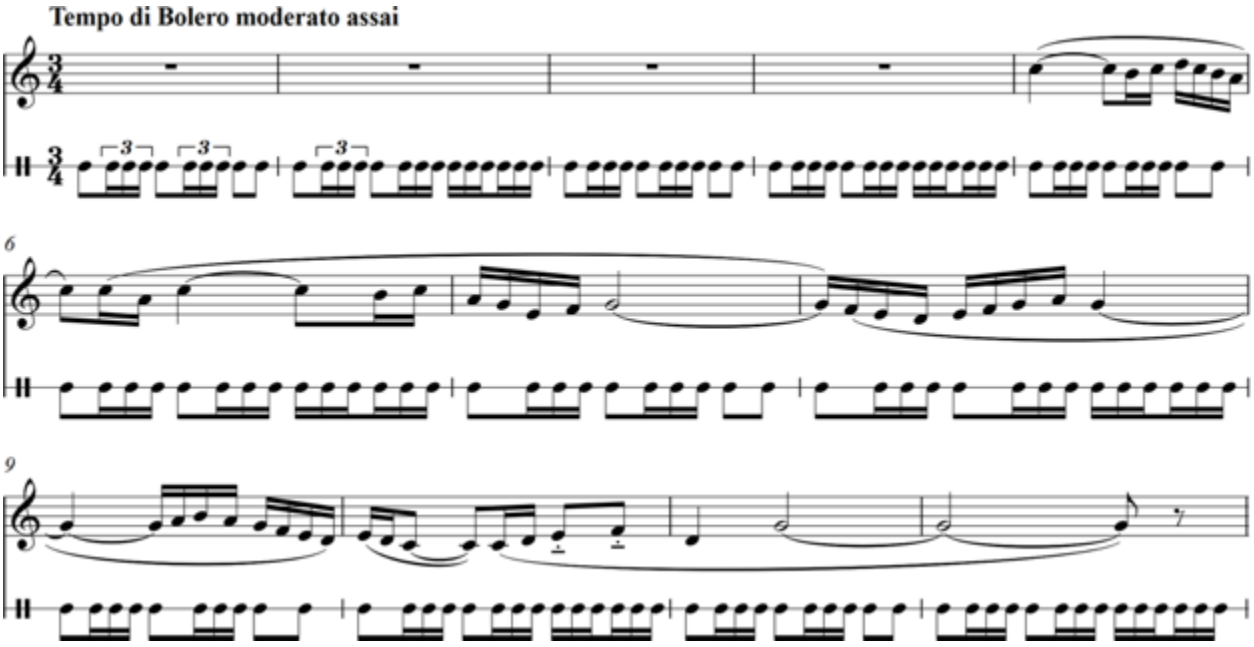
its accompanimental figure to reflect the strong beats of any given meter. The violin melody however, continues on almost as though no meter change has occurred; its very entrance in m. 37 is on the fifth eighth note of the bar indicates its independent bent from the outset. This choice on the part of Schonthal would seem to be an attempt to blur the obvious reference to a bolero and to make the melody more abstract and thus reflective of its time.

Schonthal imitates the melodic fragment of Ravel's *Boléro* that begins in the ninth bar of the piece. The elements of the Schonthal that are similar to the Ravel include the tied rhythms that are slurred to sixteenth notes, the general contour of the line, the distinctive staccato eighth-note downbeat in the middle of the phrase, and the fact that the melody modulates. (Example 2.14 & 2.15)

Example 2.14: *Sonata in e, Very slowly and with much expression,* mm. 41-46, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Example 2.15: Maurice Ravel: *Boléro,* mm.1-12.



Schonthal's melody is much less expansive than Ravel's as it remains confined to the range of one octave, moves mostly by step, and mostly remains close to the starting note B_5. With such restricted use of the melodic fragment, Schonthal makes the most of the aforementioned characteristics of Ravel's melody to hint at the quotation. The melody seems to get stuck in m. 51 and Schonthal repeats the same melodic figure for the next thirteen measures. In the first six of these repeated measures, the melody undergoes slight transformations as it descends slowly from its initial presentation beginning on B-flat$_5$ in m.51 and finally settles on F_5 beginning in m.57 for the remaining seven measures. When the violin part begins repeating the motive in m.51, the piano part suddenly becomes more active with the addition of sixteenth notes in the right hand that seem to attempt to jostle the melody from its immovable position. This increasingly loud and relentlessly repetitive section leads to the bar before *Lento,* where there is a *ritartando* that finally culminates in a *fortissimo* chord on the downbeat of the *Lento.* (Schonthal often repeats a melodic fragment to signal when a section is coming to a close. She uses a

similar device in the first movement in the transition after the first theme, and again in the conclusion of the development section from that movement.)

The closing section of the second movement refers back to the motivic material of the A section. Schonthal does not specify a new metronome marking for the ending, however the tempo indication is *Lento* in mm. 65 through to the end. The movement closes with one last arpeggiated figure in the piano alone, outlining many notes from an A major triad, with allusions to E and D along the way. The final five notes belong to A major and the last note is a quietly pressed A_1 in the lowest range of the piano ensuring that the overtones of A are the last sounds heard in this movement.

MOVEMENT III: Allegro molto un poco scherzando

The concluding movement of the *Sonata in e* is the most jovial of the three movements. Unlike the prior movements, the jubilant character is not encumbered by as many frequent *ritardandi* whenever phrases attempt to reach their peak. Schonthal again does not indicate a key signature, yet she creates strong tonal centers within the movement. The overarching tonal center is around the note A, which has the added advantage of being a prominent open string on the violin, further lending the movement an amicable and bright sound. This tonal center also serves to connect to the end of the prior movement as well, as that movement finished on a predominantly A major triad.

As she had in the first movement, Schonthal uses a form derived from the 19th-century for this movement; namely, the rondo form. Given this form's fluidity, it is fitting that Schonthal would be drawn to it as it combines her predilection for the old and the new at once. This section will examine how the *Allegro molto un poco scherzando* fits into the rondo form and how

Schonthal incorporates it using 20th-century idioms. This discussion will include her treatment of thematic and motivic material, use of harmonies and tonal centers, and will discuss her use of meter.

Schonthal's rondo form consists of the following sections: A B B_1 A A_1 C (A_1 Coda). The A theme of the rondo is comprised of thirteen measures and is characterized by staccato quarter notes and a distinctive closing motive comprised of staccato eighth-note triplets. Theme A begins with an ascending interval of a fourth in the melody (E_4 up to A_4), comprised of two slurred quarter notes, the second of which is marked with a staccato. This initial rising fourth, and this specific rhythm and articulation, is a recurrent motivic kernel throughout the movement. It appears in all thematic areas, either as part of the melody or in the accompaniment. The motive is often altered, appearing as a rising third, fifth or sixth, but is always recognizable on account of its distinctive articulation.

In its initial presentation, the piano part doubles the rising fourth interval in the right hand thus emphasizing it all the more. (In the left hand of the piano, the bass part plays the same rhythm and articulation, only it outlines a falling fifth from the notes $F\#_4$-B_3.). The opening interval in the melody is significant in that it further perpetuates the opposing tonal centers from the first movement. In examining each appearance of Theme A in the movement, one can follow Schonthal's trajectory in crafting the entrances to culminate in the final statement of the theme. The first statement occurs in the violin part at the opening of the movement on the downbeat of the first measure which is in $\frac{5}{4}$. The meter of Theme A is mixed, though the quarter note is always the main unit of measurement. Each repetition of the A theme thereafter occurs in the same octave register, yet it never returns in exactly the same way twice. Schonthal alters either the accompaniment, changes the meter or metric placement of the theme within the bar, and in

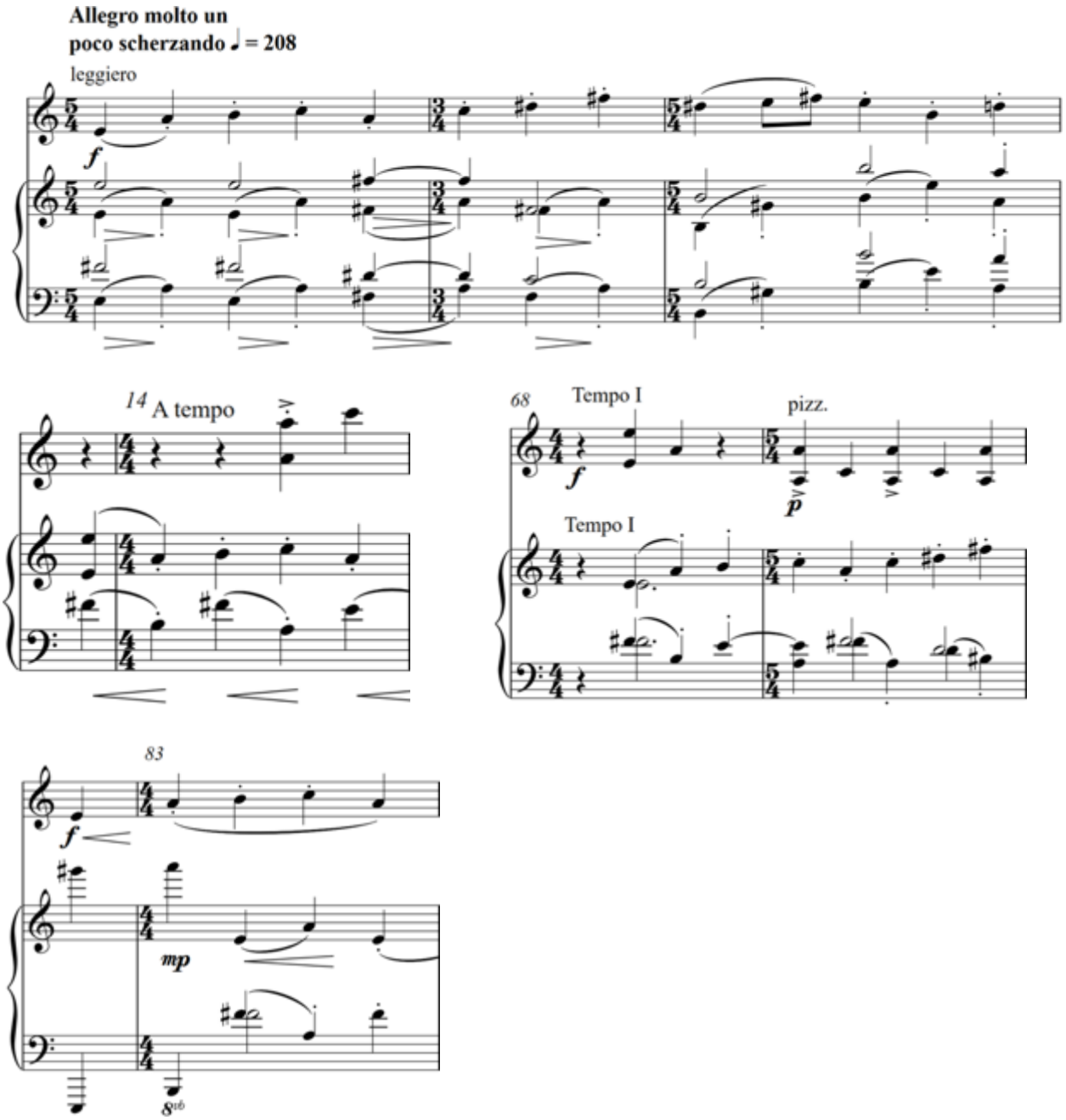
one iteration, even adds an extra measure to the end of theme. In the first statement of theme A, one melodic difference from the others seems to be a typographical error; in the fourth measure of the piece, the second quarter note of the bar should be an E#5, rather than the printed D#5.

When the piano enters with theme A in the pick-up to m.14, the meter has changed from $\frac{5}{4}$ in the first statement to $\frac{4}{4}$. This means that this time the second beat of the theme falls on the downbeat, rather than on the second beat of the bar. This change does not affect the overall pulse of the theme as Schonthal has kept the remainder of the theme metrically identical. However, one marked difference is that the accompanimental texture is much denser the first time, with thicker chords clouding the harmonies. In m.1, for instance, the A on the fifth beat of the bar is underpinned by a D# minor chord. This contrasts with the harmonization of the same note within the second statement of the theme where it is supported by an implied A minor harmony. The sparser texture of the second theme allows for more clarity of the lines and less dissonance, but at the same time leaves more of the harmonies open or implied.

The third time theme A is heard is in m. 68; the right hand of the piano plays the theme, this time beginning on the second beat of a $\frac{4}{4}$ bar. The effect of the metric displacement of the theme is felt more strongly in this case because the first three quarter notes of Theme A sound like three pick-up notes on account of the downbeat in the following measure. At that moment two events coincide that place an emphasis on the fourth note of the theme; one is that the downbeat is given a strong A minor triad with the fifth present (it had been absent in the prior two statements of theme A) and that the violin part has an accented *pizzicato* octave on the beat. The fourth and final time that Theme A is presented in m.83, it contains the most intricate counterpoint of all of the entrances. The first three presentations of the theme were always preceded by silence, whereas this entrance springs from a flourish of leaps by fifths in both

hands of the piano that lead to the extremes of the piano range. The left hand starts on F#$_3$ and leaps down to C#$_2$ and repeats this interval twice more, each an octave lower than the last. Conversely, the right hand leaps up from C#$_4$ to G#$_4$ and repeats this interval, ultimately going up to G#$_6$. When the final theme A enters with the violin on the note E$_4$, the right hand of the piano is playing G#$_6$ and the left hand is playing E$_1$. This strong implication of an E tonal center is significant at such a climactic moment. (see Example 2.16)

Example 2.16: *Sonata in e, Allegro molto un poco scherzando,* mm.1-3, m.14, mm.68-69, and m.83, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

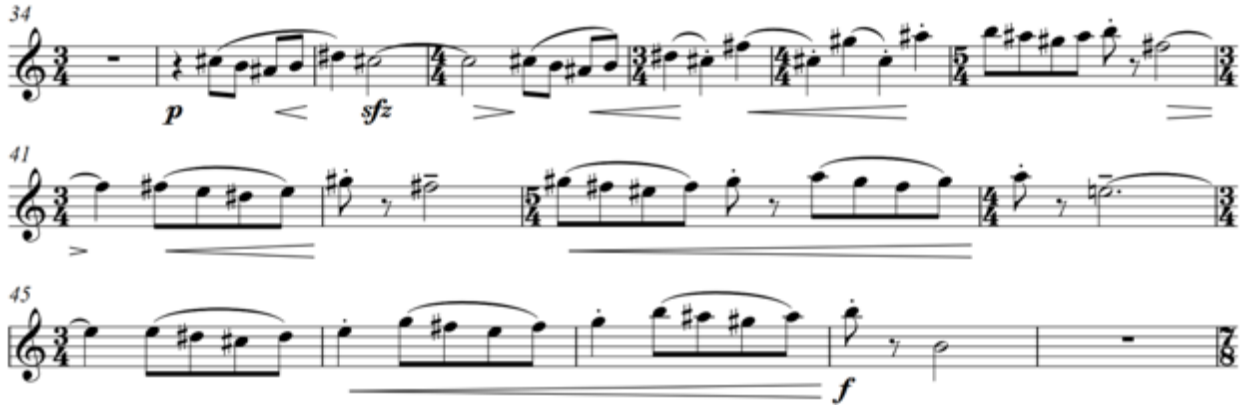


In addition, the opening notes of the melody are repeated twice in succession in the piano part, the first iteration appearing as a canonic entrance in relation to Theme A. Further, this last statement of A is extended by three extra beats at the end of the phrase. As though this culmination of events weren't enough, Schonthal begins what seems to be another entrance of

theme A, this time transposed up a sixth in m.96, only one beat after the theme ended. This curious entrance starts with the same four note intervals (a fourth, followed by a whole step and a half step) as theme A before veering off into variation of it. This section can best be labelled A_1 as it retains the character of A and stands in for theme A in the coda. Despite its short length and harmonic simplicity, A_1 plays a pivotal role when the coda begins in m.175.

In m. \27 is marked *Meno mosso* marks the start of Theme B. Theme B is comprised of a tight knot of motivic connections across two movements. The material originates in m. 50 of the B section, as part of the Ravel quotation in the second movement. Schonthal pairs this with the motivic kernel of the slurred quarter notes from theme A in the third movement. (see Example 2.17)

Example 2.17: *Sonata in e, Allegro molto un poco scherzando,* mm. 34-49, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

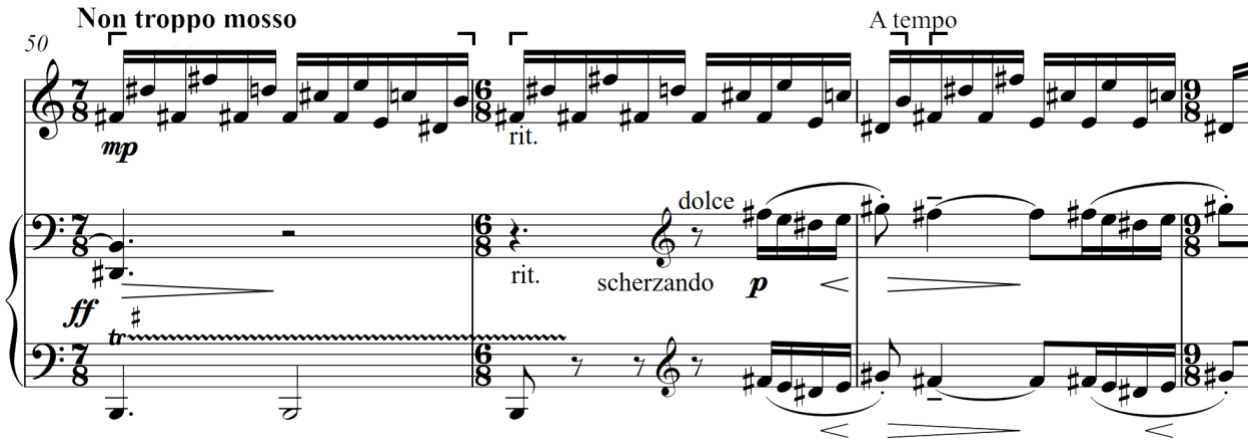


At twenty-three measures long (mm. 27-48), Theme B is roughly the same length as Theme A. Theme B revolves mainly around the tonal center of C#. At m. 50, the theme is further developed when Schonthal compresses the thematic material into sixteenth notes and eighth notes and changes the tonal center to F#. (One might argue that the rising fourth motive established in the first thematic area functions here on a broader harmonic scale.). This sixteenth note version of B comprises its own section, hereafter called B_1.

B_1 is marked *Non troppo mosso* and continues until m. 68 where A returns. B_1 has several distinctive characteristics; there is a meter change, a new accompanimental figure in the violin, and for the first time the piano plays only the melody in octaves in both hands. These three changes cause the sonority of the passage to be distinctive from the rest of the work. The meter changes to $\frac{7}{8}$ in m. 50 and then changes in almost every measure during the B_1 theme. Schonthal keeps the eighth note as the main unit, but avoids a feeling of a pulse in this section by rarely writing two consecutive measures with the same amount of eighth notes per bar. She accommodates the meter changes by varying the length of sixth note of the theme and adjusting the sixteenth-note filigree passage in the violin accompaniment accordingly. This counterpoint is notable because of its unique timbre, violinistically technical complexity and because Schonthal has indicated unusual brackets amongst the sixteenth notes.

The sixteenth notes in the violin part are comprised of a series of intervals of fifths, sixths, sevenths and octaves that make up a long passage of bariolage bowing. As is typical of this bowing, the lower note of the bariolage passage is generally fixed, while the upper notes alternate. This results in physically awkward left-hand work for the violinist as Schonthal's bass note is often $F\#_4$, which is a compressed second finger on the D string. Tuning the various intervals above the $F\#_4$ is difficult; one finger must remain fixed in place while the upper intervals adapt to it via small adjustments of the left elbow. (see Example 2.18)

Example 2.18: *Sonata in e, Allegro molto un poco scherzando,* mm. 50-53, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Schonthal has grouped these sixteenth notes into even divisions of notes by indicating them with brackets. The brackets do not line up with the bar lines, but rather follow the contour of the melodic line in the piano. Whenever the piano melody plays the first five notes of the B_1 material, Schonthal writes a bracket after the fifth note (the staccato eighth note) after which the the violin part changes chords. This serves to emphasize the space between the staccato eighth note in the B_1 theme, as it implies a slight hesitation in the violin part before continuing to the next beat.

A transitional passage that uses repeated fragments of the B and B_1 themes leads into the final thematic section of the rondo. The C theme is an anomaly in the movement and arguably in the piece as a whole. Despite the motivic fragment that it shares with B_1, the C theme is unique in its character and clipped phrasing. Theme C appears as an outgrowth of the B_1 theme from the transitional section (mm.124-148), which prepares the C thematic area by way of a new accompanimental figure consisting of broken triads.

The C theme begins in m.155, yet a hint of its predominant tonal center appears six measures earlier. There a G-major chord on the first beat of m.149 signals the start of a new passage that refers frequently to G major and focuses on consonant triads. At m. 149, the

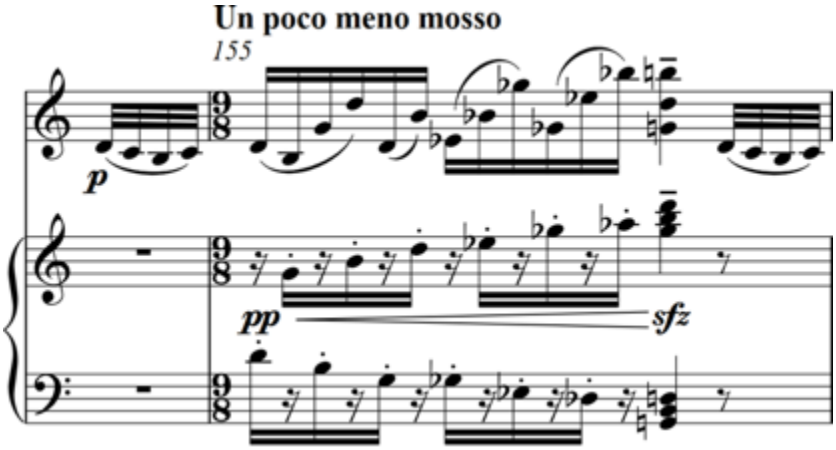
passage is marked *espressivo e un poco agitato*, and the broken triads on each beat have clearly delineated accents on every beat in the right hand of the piano. Therefore the triads become melodic in function rather than accompanimental as they had been earlier in the transition. In this short passage from mm.149-153, Schonthal uses harmonic planing which is yet another nod to the French Impressionist school that influenced so many other aspects of the sonata.

A series of unexpected arrivals on G major triads begins in m.154 at the outset of Theme C, and repeats every bar until m.157. From there the chordal arrivals modulate up a half-step to A-flat major for two measures, and a bar later to B-flat major. In a piece that has thus far obscured almost every single consonant cadence, the emphasis on these chords is striking. The frenzy of cacophonous sixteenth-notes in both the violin and piano parts leading up to these chords makes their appearance all the more significant. It is as though Schonthal is being pulled back towards tonality despite her attempts to resist it. The five-note motif from the B theme comprises the pickup to each cacophonous gesture that leads to the cadences in this section. After the pickup, the gesture itself is made up of a new staccato sixteenth-note motif in the piano part, marked *leggiero* and *pp*, while the violin has with *legato* arpeggios in *p*. Both figures in the piano and violin respectively start softly and crescendo through to the major chord. Both the violin and piano chords approach the consonant triad by voice leading, but not in the same way, thus leading to many dissonances leading into the resolution. In other words, in this passage, Schonthal uses a conventional gesture without the traditional tonal harmonic underpinnings. Helmig noted that "[f]rom the 1960s onwards, gestures, with their inherent emotive qualities, gain increasing importance in Ruth Schonthal's works."[34]

[34] Helmig, 90.

This compositional technique becomes a common method in the twentieth century, and has its roots in Romantic piano music.[35] Patrick McCreless documents this phenomenon, tracing the tonal cadential gesture from Beethoven to Davidovsky's *Electronic Study No. 1* (1960). The Romantic pianistic gesture is in keeping with Schonthal's oeuvre, given how steeped she was in the Romantic tradition and that her main instrument was the piano. Her biographer observed that Schonthal drew upon Chopin's "technique of pianistic virtuosity."[36] (see Example 2.19)

Example 2.19: *Sonata in e, Allegro molto un poco scherzando,* m.155, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



For all of its references to tonal chords, the C theme succumbs to the B_1 thematic and accompanimental material and the section comes to a close in m. 174 on an A major chord, with an added G_3. This functions as a dominant seventh chord that leads into the D tonal center at the beginning of the coda section of the rondo.

The coda in m. 175 is marked *Presto* and is driven by repetitive rhythmic and melodic patterns derived from themes A and B. The *Presto* opens with theme A_1, this time transposed up

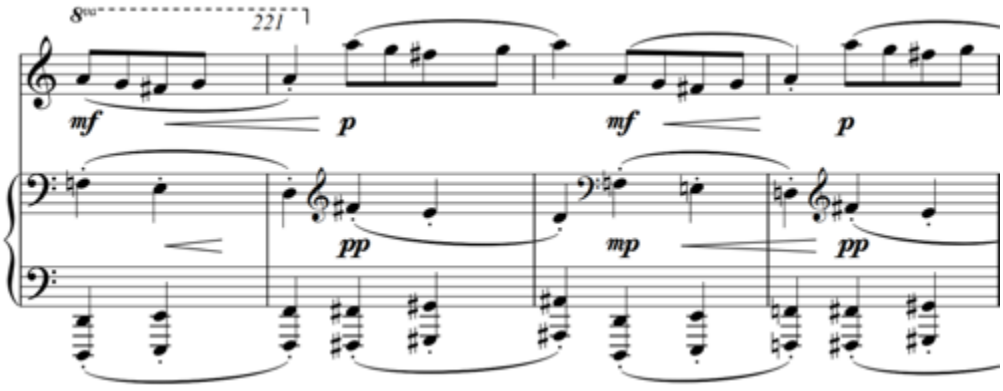
[35] Patrick McCreless, "Anatomy of a Gesure: From Davidovsky to Chopin and Back." *Approaches to Meaning in Music,* 11-40.

[36] Helmig, 268.

a sixth from F# to D. Schonthal repeats theme A_1 three times on the same notes and with a strong D tonal center underpinning the entire section. Schonthal also mirrors the opening of the entire sonata with its constant quarter note rhythm, asymmetric slurs, contrary motion, and voice exchanges in the accompaniment to theme A_1. Schonthal also includes fragments from theme B in the rondo, which of course had its origins in the second movement.

Thus the coda encompasses many aspects of the sonata as a whole, mirroring Beethoven's technique of concluding all prior movements in the culminating movement. In Schonthal's case, the motivic connections are so tightly linked that a teleological ending is not necessary to feel closure in the *Sonata in e.* However, Schonthal may have felt it necessary to work out something of a harmonic solution to a piece that has not ever entirely committed to a tonal center. In the end, the group of four eighth-notes that form the pick-up to m.221 unleashes a "Beethovian" frenzy of cadential material that revolves around the tonal center A for twenty measures. The accompaniment seeks to destabilize the feeling of A with the right hand of the piano alternating between D major and D minor and the left hand converging on $A\#_2$ and $F\text{-natural}_2$ each time the violin plays A_6 and A_5 respectively. (see Example 2.20)

Example 2.20: *Sonata in e, Allegro molto un poco scherzando,* mm. 220-223, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The penultimate and final chords remain somewhat open-ended despite so much preparation toward a cadence. The last two chords are E-flat$_2$, F$_4$-A$_6$ leading to a dense chord of thirteen notes that mostly belong to an A major triad. (The E-flat and F both resolve to E and the A remains in the last chord.). The octave range of the notes of the last chord cause A major to clearly stand out, despite the dissonant B's and B-flat's that punctuate it. Schonthal remains true to her style and even in such a grandiose finale, does not present a triad without an added dissonance. In the end, the struggle between the E and A tonal centers is never settled, yet perhaps the strongest hint Schonthal has given us lies in the title of the work itself: *Sonata in e.*

Chapter Three: *Improvisations*

Introduction

Schonthal composed *Improvisations* in 1994, thirty-two years after she completed her last composition for violin, *Sonata in e* (1961/62) which I discuss in chapter two. The stark contrast in style between these two works demonstrates clearly the change in compositional style that characterized Schonthal's later compositions, which eschewed strict rules of form and were more programmatic in nature. By the time she wrote *Improvisations,* Schonthal had already composed a number of programmatic vocal works inspired by poetry, such as *By the Roadside* (1975), based on the poetry of Walt Whitman, and *Seven Songs of Love and Sorrow* (1977), whose seven movements incorporated texts from six different poets. Schonthal had also written an opera *The Courtship of Camilla* (1979/80) and a number of instrumental works with programmatic titles. Another marked trend in her compositional oeuvre was an increasing interest in pressing socio-political issues evidenced in works like *The Young Dead Soldiers* (1987), and *A Bird Over Jerusalem* (1987, revised 1992). This latter is particularly pertinent to *Improvisations* as both pieces either use or make reference to Arabic chant. In a short preface to *Improvisations,* Schonthal indicates: "This piece should be performed with a free rhythmic, improvisatory flow, much like Arabic chant, dictated by the musical expressive gestures. The notation is 'additive' and not designed to observe a regular pulse, or 'fit' into any metric regular meter."[37] The emulation of Arabic chant is such a key stylistic feature of *Improvisations* that this element will form the basis of my analysis of the piece.

[37] Ruth Schonthal, *Improvisations* (Kassel: Furore-Verlag, 1998), 1.

It is important to note that though Schonthal cites the influence of Arabic chant on *Improvisations*, on close inspection, there are few exact resemblances. Rather, *Improvisations* is in keeping with the trend in the latter half of 20th-century Western classical music that was informed by "[a] general style or sound"[38] when composing improvisational works and was not based on an exact rendering of a specific technique. I argue that *Improvisations* maintains Schonthal's distinctive style which never strays far from the emotive sonorities of the late 19th and early 20th-centuries. I support this hypothesis by demonstrating how in spite of its emulation of Arabic chant, the piece remains distinct to Schonthal's style in numerous ways including: use of tempo and meter as an organizational tool, recurrent motivic fragments, and the influence of idiomatic violin writing on the compositional style. As I examine these three areas, I will touch upon those elements of Arabic chant that Schonthal emulates.

Since detailing the long and intricate history and development of Arabic chant lies beyond the scope of this paper, in this section, I provide a brief introduction to Arabic chant in order to contextualize my analysis of *Improvisation*. While Arabic chant encompasses a wide variety of sacred and secular purposes and styles, these chants all share some basic musical features. Perhaps most significant is that chants are based on a maqām; a set of pitches and characteristic motifs that are understood to have a distinct character. While there exist dozens of maqamat, only a small handful are predominantly in use. Within a particular chant, the maqām always stays the same. Another key characteristic of the maqam is that "the rhythmic-temporal component is essentially free"[39] and are thus largely improvisatory in nature. Other

[38] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Improvisation," accessed December 1, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13738

[39] Habib Hassan Touma. *The Music of the Arabs*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Amadeus Press, 1996), xx.

characteristics include a prevalent vocal part, repetition of specific melodic figures in various combinations, and a lack of polyphony, polyrhythms, and motivic development. Lastly, an important trait of Arabic chant is the interchange between sections in which fixed rhythms underlie a free melody and the reverse.[40]

The free-form improvisatory nature of *Improvisations* is clear from its very structure. Schonthal describes the work as comprised of "three interconnected parts,"[41] language that immediately invokes a piece in free form, distinct from the traditional classical practices. The piece is weighted toward the middle section, and at 184 measures long, it is about double the length of the outer movements. This second section also contains the most variety of musical moods. While Schonthal eschews movement titles or standard tempo indications, she marks each section with a specific character prompt. Section 1 is marked *Molto rubato,* section 2 *molto espressivo,* and section 3 *poco dolente.* Schonthal does not indicate that the sections should be played continuously, yet the thin double bar at the end of the first section gives a sense of continuing motion. Indeed, the new tempo marking (quarter-note = 60) two measures before the second section begins seems to indicate that the motion should remain almost unbroken between sections. There is a much larger pause between the second and the third sections however, with a fermata over a three-beat rest at the end of the second part, followed by a double bar that is comprised of a thin and thick line, as one would find at the end of a piece.

The improvisational character of the piece is aided by the fact that each large section of the piece is comprised of phrases of varying length. Phrases lengths are indicated in three ways; Schonthal indicates a new tempo at the start of a new phrase, rhythms become elongated at the

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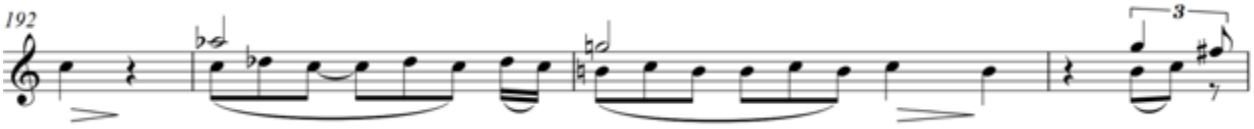
[40] Ibid, xx.
[41] Schonthal, 1.

ends of phrases, and she inserts silence between phrases in the form of rests. Many times, two or all three of these devices are used to indicate phrases simultaneously. The very first phrase of the piece is demarcated by a breath mark at the end of m.6, but curiously, that is the only such phrase marking in the entire piece.

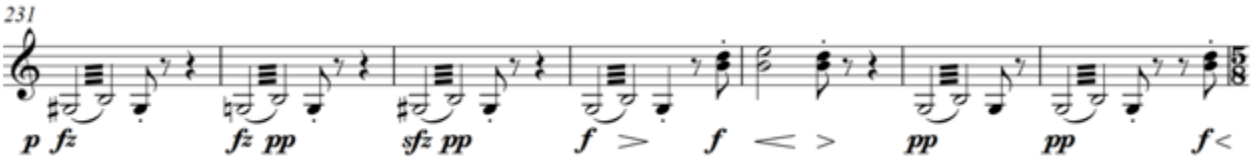
In general, the piece alternates between tranquil sections and more active sections that are rife with undulating thirty-second-notes. The tranquil sections always give rise to the active ones through gradual compression of note lengths, and the same gradual elision is true of the return to the slower rhythms. Schonthal connects the fast and slow parts with at least one measure of transitional music to signal the change, and usually there are several transitional measures to prepare a new character.

Finally, her use of rests is reminiscent of the pauses one hears in Arabic chant: Schonthal uses rests within the main body of *Improvisations* to separate repetitions of the same musical material or to emphasize a short musical motif. For example, she uses the rests in mm. 192 and 195 to emphasize the musical idea. Another such example are the rests in mm. 231-237, which imply a kind of "breathing" sound effect because the rests occur between the same soft G#3-B3 tremolos on the G-string each time. These rests are evocative of the human voice, as in Arabic chant. (see Example 3.1)

Example 3.1: *Improvisations*, mm. 192-195, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Improvisations, mm. 231-237, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



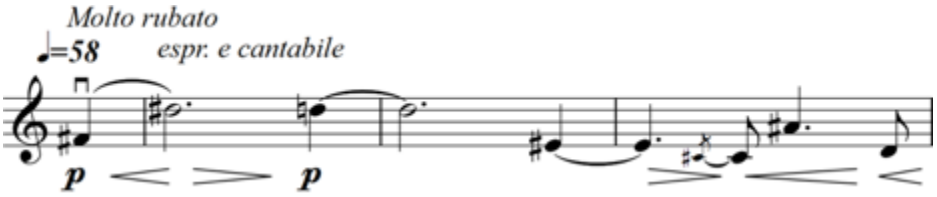
METER

Schonthal devotes most of her introductory remarks in the preface to *Improvisations* to meter and rhythm. She emphasizes that the meter is free and that the rhythms are gestural and often additive. These guidelines help to better understand her general intentions for the piece. Yet a closer analysis of the specific ways that Schonthal uses the bar lines, and the ways she expands and contracts certain measures, helps to interpret the piece. This section will make note of how the placement of bar lines, metronome markings, and the occasional use of meter serve to organize the music.

There is no time signature indicated at the outset of any section of *Improvisations,* however it is clear that the quarter note is the main unit of tempo for most of the piece. All of the measures are comprised of whole beats (i.e. there are no measures with fractions of beats in them). The one exception is m. 4, which has 4.5 beats but that is very likely a typographical error, and the C#4 in that measure should be an eighth note. Without a time signature, one might argue that bar lines are superfluous. However, Schonthal uses the bar lines very deliberately in the piece. In the absence of a meter, the function of the bar lines is to imply strong beats verses

weak beats. For instance, in the very opening of the piece, first quarter note, F#4, should be executed as a pick-up because of where the bar line is placed. (Technically, since it is given its own measure, it could be interpreted as a strong beat instead. Conversely, if the bar line were not there at all, the emphasis would be placed on the F#4.) Thus, the bar lines themselves are an essential part of the phrasing. (see Example 3.2)

Example 3.2: *Improvisations,* mm.1-3, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

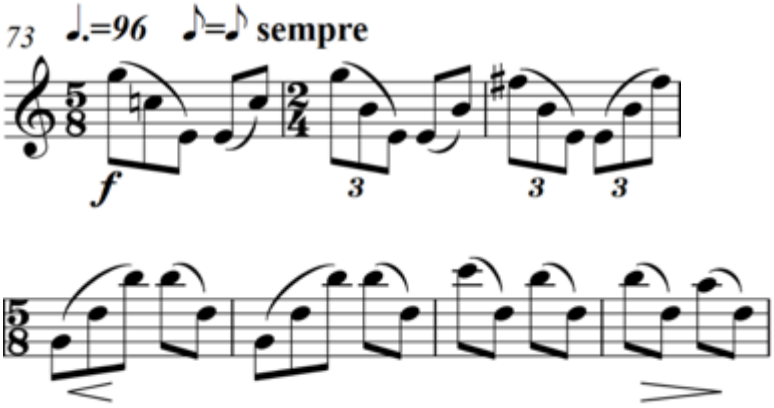


Schonthal also meticulously specifies metronome markings throughout the piece. These markings suggest the fluctuations in the tempi amongst the phrases and are helpful for the performer to understand how far, for instance, to let a *ritardando* slow down, or vice versa.

Despite the general lack of time signature, there are the occasional exceptions scattered sporadically throughout the work. For instance Schonthal marks mm. 43-44 in $\frac{9}{8}$ and $\frac{4}{8}$ respectively. The following measure, m. 45, is marked $\frac{2}{4}$ which serves to return the piece back to a quarter-note pulse. It seems that the reason for the sudden appearance of time signatures is for there to be a way for Schonthal to notate a rhythmic gesture more fluidly and to allow for an extra half beat in the bar without it being visually disruptive. For example, the three groups of slurred eighth notes in m. 43 would appear to be a syncopated figure if notated in a time signature based on the quarter-note. The eighth-note meter also allows Schonthal to write out what is essentially a slow triplet figure that gradually becomes more and more compressed when

the quarter-note beat returns in mm.45-46. This same notational device appears in mm.73-74 and mm. 78-79. (see Example 3.3)

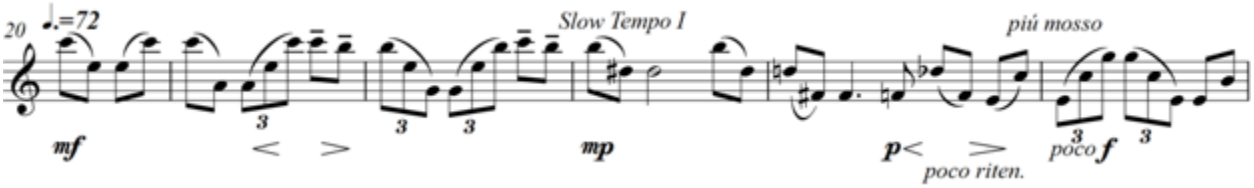
Example 3.3: *Improvisations,* mm.73-75 & mm. 78-81, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The effect of using this notation in these measures is to build in a natural *accelerando*. From the beginning of the piece up through m.5, notwithstanding the upbeat measure, there are four beats in each measure. In m.6, the number of beats per measure begins to change. At first, the subtraction or addition of beats is almost imperceptible because of the way that Schonthal masks these transitions with held notes, as in mm.6 and 8. Yet when more distinctive rhythms begin to appear, as in m. 11, the importance of the metric distinctions again come to the fore. Adding beats to the measure changes the length of the phrase and the way that the beats are grouped. This is illustrated clearly in mm. 20-28, in which Schonthal starts the phrase with one bar that has two beats, mm. 21-22 have three, m.23 has four, and m.24 has five in beats in the bar. (see Example 3.4) By gradually adding beats, Schonthal expands the phrase; the performer perceives the beats in those bars to be connected over a broader expanse of time and thus the melodic line is sustained. The extra beats in the larger bars serve to spread out time; this is one way that Schonthal makes it sound improvisatory. At the end of m. 23 for instance, the last

quarter-note of the bar consists of the same two eighth-notes as the first beat of the measure, yet in its placement at the end of the bar, the function of the eighth-notes at the end of the bar is as a pick-up to the next bar and thus propels the music forward. Had the bar line been moved a beat earlier, this subtle difference would change the perception of these notes and the repetition would sound more redundant than improvisatory. Conversely, as she subtracts beats over the next four measures (mm. 25-28), the phrase contracts and comes to an end.

Example 3.4: *Improvisations,* mm. 20-25, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



This usage of rhythm imitates the certain "genres of Arabian music [that] have a rhythmic-temporal structure that lacks regularly recurring measures and motives and does not display a fixed meter (pulse)."[42] It is not until mm. 60-67 that Schonthal writes a regular amount of beats per measure; for those brief eight bars, Schonthal writes three beats per measure. This prolonged group of regular bars is exceptional in the piece as a whole. Schonthal thereafter returns to varying measure lengths and does not ever write such a prolonged group of regular measures for the rest of the piece.

In m.140 of the second section, Schonthal indicates a meter at the start of a twenty-three bar section of thirty-second notes, yet the meter does not correspond correctly with the number of notes in the bar. The meter is written $\frac{5}{8}$, yet there are three eighth-notes in the bar and it is

[42] Touma, 47.

likely a typographical error. The next time $\frac{5}{8}$ is indicated four measures later, there are the correct number of beats in the bar. The reason for a meter in this section would be to imply a steady pulse throughout this section so as to resist the temptation to add rubato or linger too long on melodic notes.

MOTIVES

Throughout *Improvisations* Schonthal's signature technique of connecting different sections of the piece through intervallic motives is evident. This section will discuss the specific ways that motives function in *Improvisations.* The two central motivic intervals are the sixth, and the falling minor second. These motives start and end phrases, or even entire sections of the piece. While the motives are often buried within sections of passagework, an awareness of them informs the way one phrases those passages and thus connects larger sections of the work to one another. Of special importance is how these intervallic motives help to establish a pitch center of G.

Schonthal uses various guises of sixths throughout *Improvisations;* sometimes they serve as the opening and closing of phrases, or they appear in a succession of sixths forming a longer melodic line. Still other times they are merely gestural, in which the interval leaps up and then back to the lower note again without any forward motion. Schonthal begins the entire piece with a rising sixth between F#$_4$ up to D#$_5$ that also implies a large-scale harmonic goal towards the note G.

The different iterations of the sixth throughout *Improvisations* is in keeping with the aspect of Arabic chant which dictates that the same musical material never be repeated exactly the same way twice. This also coincides with Schonthal's approach to composition which favors motivic development and constant variation of materials so that no motive ever returns in an

identical manner.[43] In Arabic chant the opening interval of a sixth would not be repeated again later as it has a very specific function in that context. In her repetition of the sixth, Schonthal has appropriated an aspect of the Arabic practice, yet used it in her own way.

The very opening of the piece immediately starts with two consecutive motives; the intervallic leap of a sixth from F#$_4$ up to D#$_5$, followed by a minor second sighing motive to D$_5$. This opening leap is reminiscent of the Arabic call to prayer, as the the start of a chant is always a rising intervallic leap. In Arabic chant, the opening interval contrasts with the rest of the chant, which would normally proceed in mostly step-wise motion.

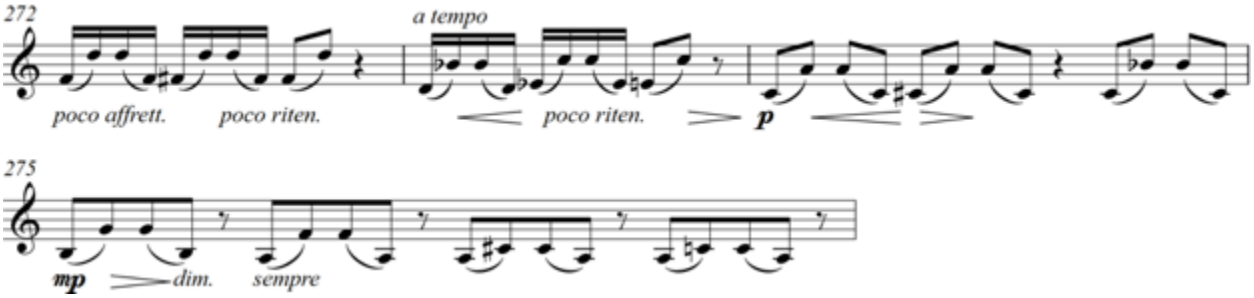
These two the opening notes, F#$_3$ and D#$_4$, reappear throughout the piece in various guises, thus making them aural focal points. The notes retain their core, but are often altered by a half step and sometimes appear inverted as a third. One first sees the sixth altered in m. 24 where the interval is between F#$_4$ and D$_5$, rather than D#$_5$; within the same measure, both voices drop a half step again to F$_4$ and D-flat$_5$. In mm. 18-19, the exact same rising sixth from the opening returns and would seem to signal a repetition of the first phrase. Instead, the D#$_5$ is a beat shorter, and the interval of a sixth seems to function here as a half cadence. It is a much more declamatory statement of the opening interval, marked *forte* here, and is left lingering inconclusively. A new phrase begins in the following measure, in a faster tempo; incidentally this new phrase also begins with the interval of a sixth, from C$_6$ down to E$_5$ and back to C$_6$ again. (In this instance, however, the sixth has an essentially static function; the C$_6$ is the main melodic tone and the E$_5$ provides a harmonic underpinning to the C.)

[43] Bruce Duffie, "Ruth Schonthal: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie," last modified, January 2004, accessed November 26, 2012, http://www.bruceduffie.com/schonthal2.html.

While locally the piece appears to have few tonal centers, there are several important moments when Schonthal uses G as a focal point. One such example is early in the piece, in mm. 5-8. Here, a second sixth motive emerges, between B-flat$_4$ and G$_5$ in m. 5, briefly implying G minor. The B-flat$_4$ then morphs into a B$_4$ in m.7 where it is again paired with the G$_5$. This G$_5$ then sinks a minor second to F#$_5$ at the end of m.7; just as in the beginning, the sighing motive is paired with the sixth motive. Here the sighing motive also functions as a leading tone to the G tonal center. The long sustained G$_5$'s in this opening further reinforce the opening sixth motive as an implied V chord. In fact, mm. 97-98, at the end of the first section, confirm the importance of G as a tonal center since the conclusion of this section ends with a blatant G-major chord sustained over eight beats.

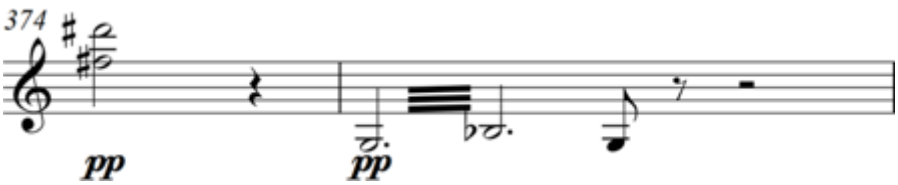
While sixths are ubiquitous throughout the entire piece during long bariolage sections or within arpeggiated figures, Schonthal most noticeably uses the interval of a sixth to start or close a phrase. This is true not only of the first section, but also of the subsequent two sections. The second section opens with a sixth in every bar for nine consecutive measures. The opening sixths are characterized by a slower rhythm and therefore a more deliberate execution. When the sixth is used at the conclusion of a phrase, Schonthal writes it in a lilting slurred pattern, with the lower note of the sixth ascending to the upper note and returning back down again. An example of this can be found in mm. 92-94, near the end of the first section. Similarly, the end of the second section contains the same type of figure in mm. 272-275. (see Example 3.5) Only the final section doesn't use the sixth in this rhythmic configuration near its conclusion, but rather near to the beginning, in m. 291.

Example 3.5: *Improvisations*, mm. 272-276, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



At the conclusion of the third section Schonthal utilizes the original notes of the piece, transposed up an octave, as a chord. This gives the notes an even clearer harmonic implication of a V chord around the tonal center of G. Mm. 374-375 is the clearest example of Schonthal's resolution of the F#-D# interval. (see Example 3.6) Marked *pianissimo*, this chord leads to the final measures of *pianissimo* tremolo (G_3-B-flat$_3$) that resolves to the note G_3. It is that final occurrence of the progression, so clearly laid out, that causes the listener to reconsider what has come before. This ending alert us to the possibility that Schonthal has been plotting this tonal progression from the outset. Even the very first note of the piece, $F\#_4$ could be thought as prolonged seventh scale degree to the resolution G_3 in the last measure. Upon closer inspection, the sparing and unique way that Schonthal uses the note G brings out its significance.

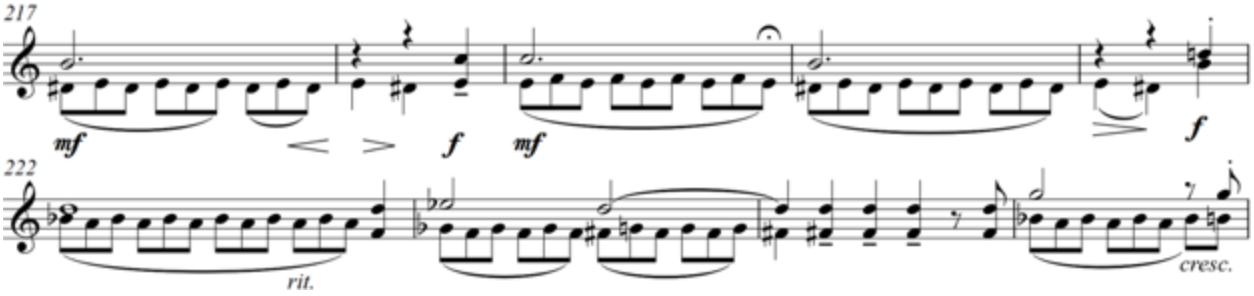
Example 3.6: *Improvisations*, mm. 374-375, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



In light of the G tonal center, another significant moment that emphasizes the interval of a sixth occurs in m. 224, towards the end of the second section of the piece. (see Example 3.7)

In this measure, it appears in the form of a minor sixth, between the notes F#4 and D5. Much like the ending of the piece, the importance of this measure comes from its presentation as a chord. Here its rhythmic repetition and *forte* dynamic is really what distinguishes it from the rest of the texture. In m. 224 the music has returned to a placid state, following eighteen bars of very active tremolos and thirty-second notes. Tracing the progression back to m. 217, the rhythm is very fluid, with languid triplets oscillating up and down a minor second, beneath a sustained note. The sustained note always forms the interval of a sixth with the first note of each bar; beginning in m. 217 the sixth is between D#$_4$ and B$_4$, in mm.218-219, between E$_4$ and C$_5$. The next sixth is in m. 222; Schonthal writes a sixth on the last beat of the bar from F$_4$ to D$_5$, followed by G-flat$_4$ and E-flat$_5$ in m. 223. This sixth then contracts as the G-flat enharmonically becomes F#$_4$ and the E-flat$_5$ drops to D$_5$. In m. 224 this last F#$_4$/D$_5$ sixth is repeated five times over the course of five quarter-notes. (The fifth time the chord is an eighth-note pick-up.) The dynamic is *forte* and it stands out as the only such measure in the entire piece. It is difficult to ignore the significance of this interval when it is repeated so emphatically and interrupts the rhythmic flow so conspicuously. Here the sixth in m. 224 resolves to a G-minor/major sixth in m. 225. The sixth feels less conclusive here due to the continuous motion of the triplets beneath the G$_5$.

Example 3.7: *Improvisations,* Section II, mm. 217-225, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



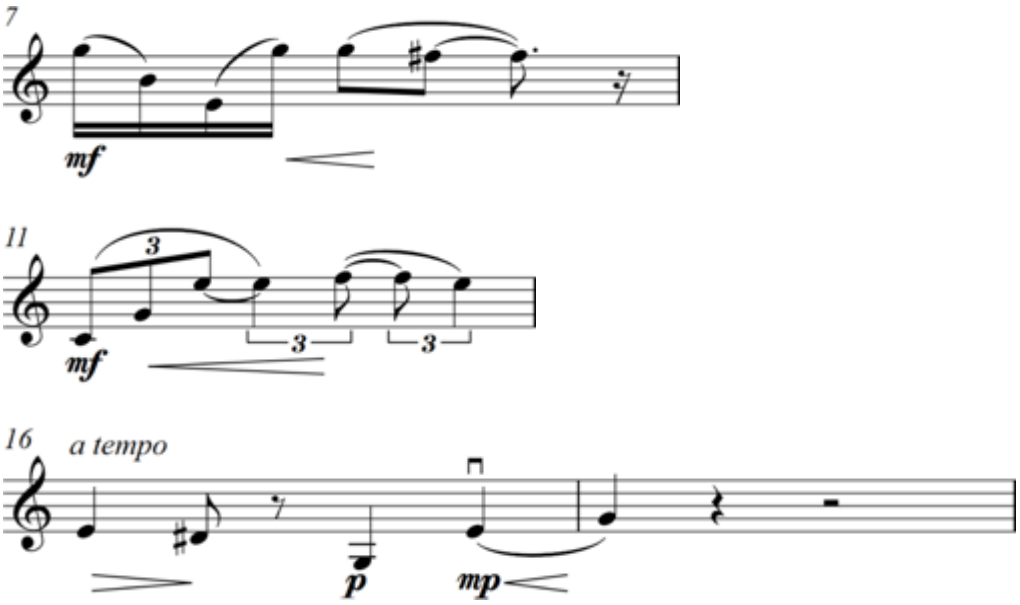
Like many of the other sixths in the piece, it continues on chromatically and in constant motion. Yet the resolution to this *forte* moment is merely delayed until m. 231, where the same aforementioned *tremolo* figure that signals a G tonal center at the end of the piece first occurs. It is here in the middle of the second section that the ending is foreshadowed. In its first iteration, Schonthal switches between a minor and major third within the *tremolo.* The first *tremolo* is G#3 together with B3, and then Schonthal lowers G#3 to G3 while keeping the B3. The thirds alternate from minor to major chords every other measure for four bars, before there is a brief interjection of *forte* chords for one measure and then a return to the G3-B3 *tremolo.* This time the major version is repeated twice more and gets the last word before the music returns to its rippling *legato* triplets as before.

There are two more instances of this G-B *tremolo* in the second section; they occur in mm.252-259 and again at the end of the section in mm. 277-280. In m. 259, the G3-B3 appears as two eighth notes that are plucked in quick succession. This is then followed by seven and a half beats of rest. This large break in an otherwise continuous piece is another signal of the significance of the G tonal center. The piece comes to a standstill around the note G.

Another motive that is prevalent in *Improvisations* is the interval of the minor second. Minor seconds most often appear as falling or sighing figures that finish a phrase, and many

times succeed or precede the interval of a sixth. Near the beginning of the piece, mm. 2, 7, 11, 16-17, and 30 all contain the falling second motive in this capacity. (see Example 3.8)

Example 3.8: *Improvisations,* mm.7 & 11 & 16-17, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

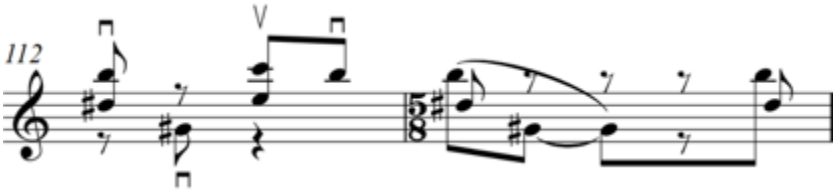


These falling seconds build in pauses within phrases and evoke the human voice. While there are no breath marks per se, the pauses are implied by the rhythm, which usually is longer during the minor second than what preceded it, and many times is followed by a brief rest or change in register. These early measures of the piece contain the most concentrated cluster of minor seconds; as the piece continues, the time between the appearance of this motive grows larger as the phrases begin to expand and become more intricate.

Eventually, this sighing motive gets reinterpreted. Schonthal changes the articulation, dynamics and harmonization of the falling minor second in the second section. For instance, in m. 112, the last beat falls from C_5 to B_5 in the top voice and beneath the C_5 an E_5 falls to a $D\#_5$ on the downbeat of m. 113. (see Example 3.9) The music is *fortissimo* and percussive in the measures that follow (it is one of the few instances that Schonthal indicated a bowing, and here

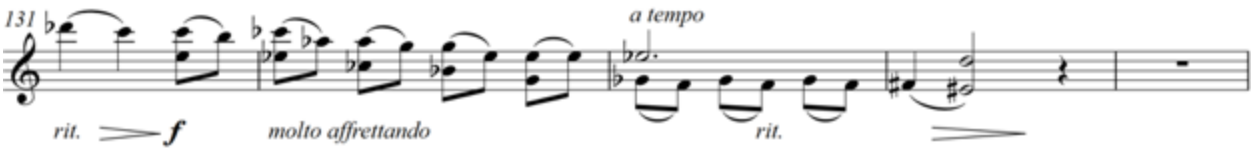
she indicates almost all heavy down bows) and the minor second has been transformed and disguised in this context.

Example 3.9: *Improvisations,* mm. 112-113, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



In m. 131 Schonthal returns to the original character of the sighing motive and writes two in a row, from D-flat$_5$ to C$_5$, followed by B$_5$. This sets off a series of falling intervals that coalesce around G-flat$_4$-F$_4$, which is repeated three times in m.133. This then culminates in the final falling minor second in m. 134 where Schonthal has the two motives (a sixth and a second) coincide. (see Example 3.10). The downbeat F#$_4$ falls to E#$_4$; the E#$_4$ is sounded simultaneously with D$_5$. Thus, in m. 134 the F#$_4$ falls a minor second and rises a minor sixth at the same time.

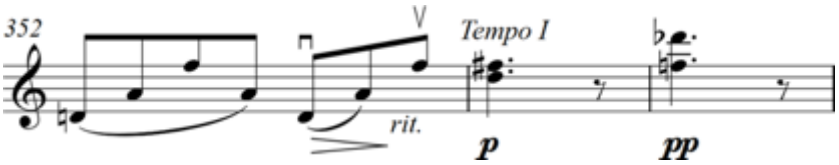
Example 3.10: *Improvisations,* mm. 131-135, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The opening of the third section also uses the falling second motif, however here it appears as a major interval and is written in double-stop form in thirds, so that there are two simultaneously falling seconds. (The notes of the third are D$_5$-F#$_5$ falling to C$_5$-E$_5$; both of the resultant thirds are also major intervals themselves.) Schonthal has reinvented the motif yet again by changing the harmony and by placing it at the start of a section, rather than at an ending. It is also significant that the opening notes of the third section are simply an inversion of

the sixth motive, F#-D. Later in this section at the *Tempo I* in m. 353, Schonthal writes this same major third from the opening of section 3 again. Here it is followed by a pause and the falling second motive is hidden within the next chord on the downbeat of m. 354. (see Example 3.11) The F#$_5$ falls a minor second to F$_5$, yet the bottom of the chord, D$_5$ leaps up a major seventh (the inversion of a minor second) to D-flat$_6$. In this way, Schonthal has obscured the second motive by changing the register and inverting the interval. Even in inversion, these notes still closely relate to one another and moreover, to the G tonal center. The D-flat$_6$ can be heard enharmonically as a C#$_6$ and thus adds harmonic tension as a part of the overarching implied V$_7$ chord of G. (In retrospect, one sees that in that previously discussed pivotal moment in m. 224 in the second section during which Schonthal hammers the sixth five times, both motives appear together in succession again. In that instance, the sixth is approached by two falling minor seconds.)

Example 3.11: *Improvisations,* mm. 352-353, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



VIOLINISTIC CONSIDERATIONS

When first approaching an unaccompanied piece for violin, one immediately summons Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750). While not the first composer to write works for solo violin, it would be safe to declare that Bach's three Partitas and three Sonatas for violin are the standard bearer for all solo violin works written thereafter. One recalls the famous Belgian composer and violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931) who payed direct homage to Bach within his own set of six

solo sonatas for violin. The first movement of Ysaÿe's Sonata no. 2, op. 27 No.2 was written in 1922, and is entitled "Obsession." It begins with a direct quotation of the Prelude from Partita no. 3 (BWV 1006) by Bach. Just as in Partita no. 3, the first movement is written in continual sixteenth-notes and quotations of the Bach Prelude appear throughout the work, interspersed with Ysaÿe's own phrases. Aside from paying homage to Bach, Ysaÿe emulated the ingenious way that he utilized the violin. One of the ways that Bach circumvented the limitations of four strings was by an innovative usage of the open strings. The open strings lend a full-bodied sound and ringing sonority to Bach's music that add to its grandiosity. Ysaÿe's 20th-century interpretation of the solo violin repertoire retain this open-string feature even amidst his tonally chromatic construal of Bach's style. Schonthal's *Improvisations* brings to mind many of these same elements as the Ysaÿe and Bach.

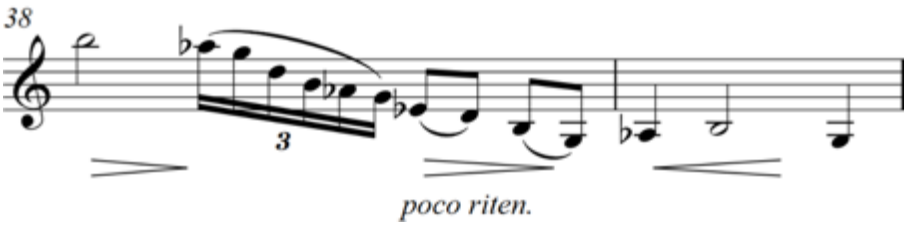
Schonthal's first work for an unaccompanied string instrument was written in 1976 for viola solo. The piece is entitled *4 Epiphanies* and in Judson Griffin's review in 1979 in the journal *Notes,* he describes a piece quite similar in character to *Improvisations.* Griffin described the piece as having "pervasive modality, frequent open fifths, absence of regular meter, and long cadenza passage." Griffin later continues to mention the practical issues a performer encounters when preparing *4 Epiphanies*. "Many thorny technical problems have been solved by Paul Doktor's excellent fingerings, while others, such as fifths in high registers and fast scale patterns, remain formidable. This is a very difficult work."[44] In contrast to the description of the technical perils of the solo viola work, Schonthal utilizes the idiomatic potential of the violin to maximum effect and she does not make the piece overly difficult. It would seem that Schonthal may have had more experience with the capabilities of string instruments by the time of *Improvisations,*

[44] Griffin, 983.

and may even have used the works of Bach as a reference. Certainly Schonthal's use of the open strings of the violin, arpeggiation over three or more strings, a limited range of notes, voicing, and ornamentation can all be traced to fundamental qualities of the solo violin writing of Bach. The effect of using the open strings is to allow the violin to ring longer than it would otherwise and therefore to create the illusion of a sustained chord, even if the open string is played in succession, rather than simultaneously, with another note. The open string that carries the greatest weight in *Improvisations* is G_3. This is the lowest note on the violin, and as such it cannot be played in any other way. (All of the other open strings can potentially be played on different strings with the left hand fingers.) The open G appears throughout the piece at important phrase endings and beginnings and since the note is the tonal center of the piece, Schonthal uses this open string sparingly and deliberately. The first time this open string occurs is in m. 16 at the start of a phrase and one is not quite aware of its significance in this context yet. However, in m. 31, when it is part of a G-major arpeggio, its importance becomes gradually more discernable. In an otherwise atonal framework, a G major arpeggio certainly carries a lot of weight. Several bars later, in mm. 38-39, Schonthal writes a cascading series of notes that come to rest on G_3, following a *poco ritenuto.* (see Example 3.12) The music regains its momentum two measures later when Schonthal ascends from the G_3 in a series of triplet sixteenth-notes that propel the music onward again. Starting in m. 48, Schonthal reiterates the same short phrase three times, each time with a triplet eighth-note figure that starts on G_3. The second iteration of the triplet includes three open-strings: G_3-D_4-A_4. After this passage, G_3 disappears from the piece, except for at important cadences. One of these instances is in the last two measures of the first section in which a G-major chord is built upon G_3. Schonthal writes the G_3 as a quarter note, followed by the fifth of the chord (executed on the open D string) and

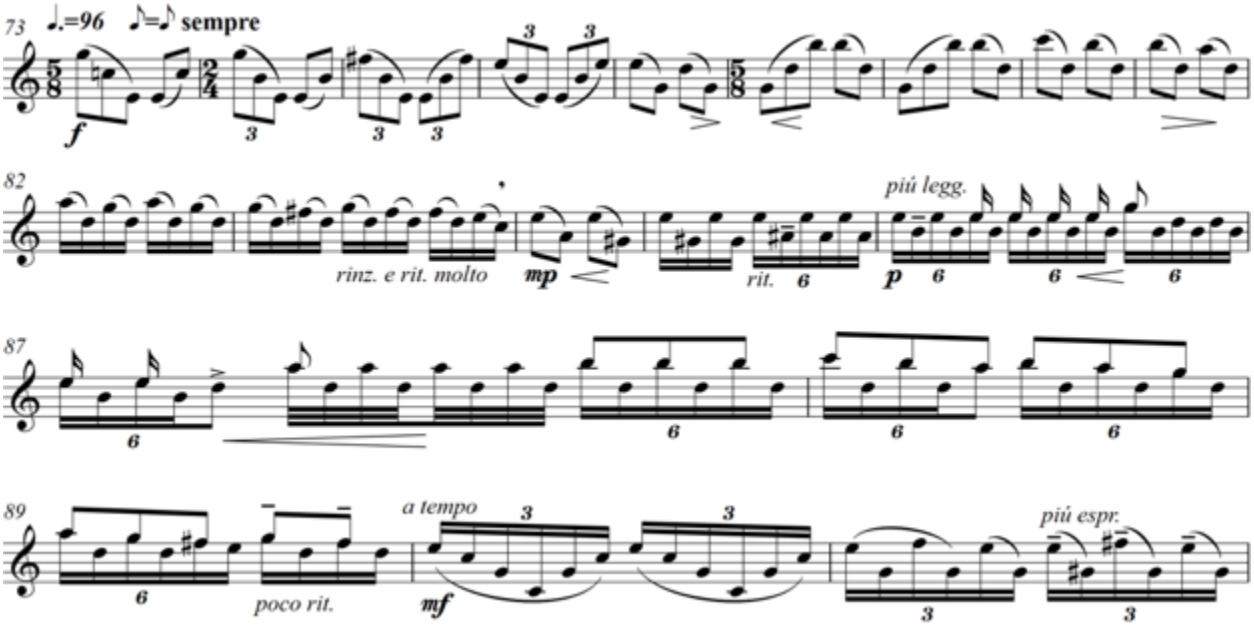
the third of chord (B_4) that are played simultaneously for seven beats following it. Here Schonthal relies on the ringing quality of the open G string as well as the aural memory of the tone that may linger with the harmony immediately following it.

Example 3.12: *Improvisations*, mm. 38-39, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

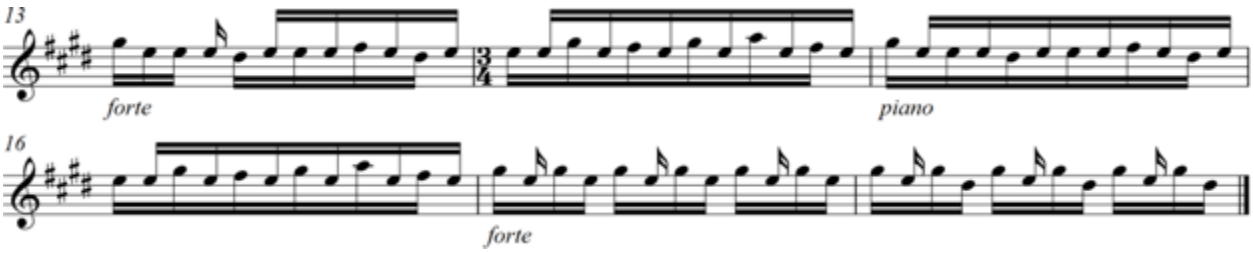


In other instances, Schonthal's uses the open strings of the violin to similar effect. Schonthal incorporates them into arpeggiated figures across three strings, during passages of bariolage bowing, and during long passages of thirty-second notes; all of these treatments of the open strings are reminiscent of the baroque style. Measures 73-91 in the first section contain examples of Schonthal's use of bariolage bowing, arpeggiation across three strings, as well her incorporation of open strings with the passage. (see Examples 3.13, 3.14) The passage bears a resemblance to the *Prelude* of Bach's *Partita no. 3, BWV 1006* in which Bach exploits the ringing E-string on the violin for nearly an entire page. Schonthal seems to even emulate Bach's way of notating the passage by changing the direction of the stems of the notes in mm. 86-87, in order to emphasize the melody.

Example 3.13: *Improvisations,* mm. 73-91, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Example 3.14: *J.S. Bach Partita no. 3, BWV 1006 Prelude,* mm. 13-18.



Other similar passages in *Improvisations* occur in mm. 294-297 and in mm. 311-313, and frequently from m. 330 through the end of the piece.

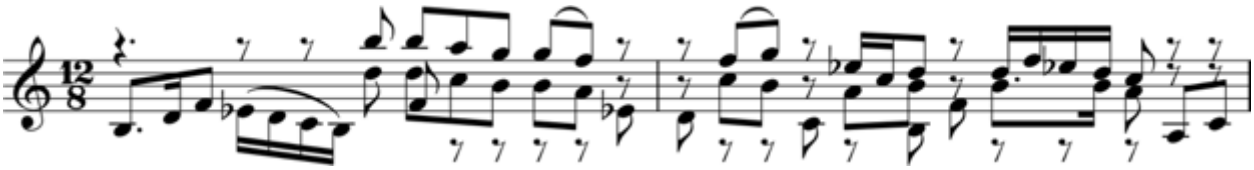
Schonthal limited the note range in *Improvisations*; except for the occasional harmonic (mm. 321, 365, 369 and 373)[45] and a short percussive passage towards the end of the third section (mm. 337-340), the highest note is G#6. Bach also limits his note range and does not write above G6 on the violin; it occurs once in his entire set of sonatas and partitas, in m. 86 of

[45] The double-stop harmonics in mm. 365, 369 and 373 are all unplayable as written. Both notes of the double-stop need to be executed on the same string, or else require such a distortion of the left hand as to be unplayable simultaneously by a solo player.

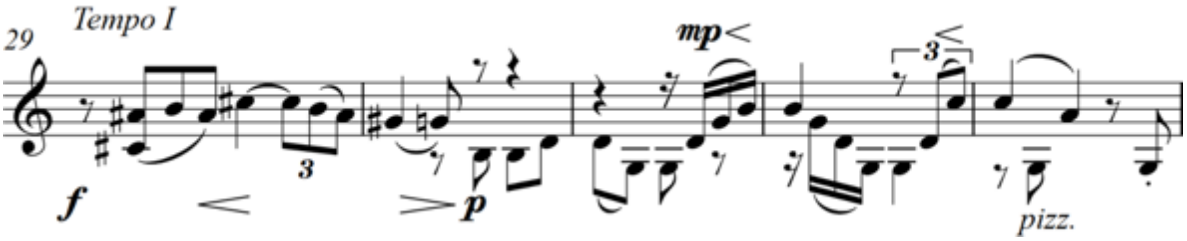
his infamous *Ciaccona* from *Partita no. 2 BWV 1004*, in the midst of a cascading thirty-second-note passage. Similarly, when Schonthal uses G#6, it starts a fast passage of falling sixteenth-notes, and she does not linger on the note. This restricted range lends *Improvisations* a distinctive sonority akin to Bach, and it is in keeping with her linear and chordal writing. There are no sudden leaps or overly virtuosic passages full of high notes; rather, the focus is on the warmer sound range of the violin.

Another characteristic of unaccompanied Bach is the use of voicing. Despite the predisposition of the violin to be a melodic instrument, it is possible to create multiple voices within a melody comprised of a single line. Bach does this constantly in his unaccompanied work. An example from Bach that most resembles Schonthal's usage is from his *Siciliana* from *Partita no. 1 (BWV 1001).* (see Example 3.15) In the very opening of the *Siciliana* Bach begins with the melody in a lower voice and answers two beats later in an upper voice. The voices alternate for three measures until they unite on the fourth beat of the third measure. Schonthal uses alternating voices in mm. 29-33 of *Improvisations,* except that she places the melody in the upper register and answers in the lower register. (see Example 3.16)

Example 3.15: *JS Bach Partita no. 1, BWV 1001 Siciliana*, mm. 1-2.



Example 3.16: *Improvisations,* mm.29-33. Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



Lastly, ornamentation is synonymous with Bach and the Baroque style in general. Though Schonthal's ornamentation is more akin to Arabic chant than to anything Baroque, it shares the similarity with Bach in that it is explicitly written out. In Bach, the ornamentation functions as a bridge between harmonies that serve as pillars of structure for the music. For example, in *Sonata no. 1 (BWV 1001),* Bach writes a series of chord progressions that are connected by notated ornamentation. In the Schonthal, ornamentation functions as connective material between tones rather than chords, and these tones most frequently form a linear melody.

Much like *4 Epiphanies* for viola solo, *Improvisations* would benefit from editing in order to make it both more cogent and easily playable. One clear example of how the bowing can impact the musical phrase can be demonstrated in the passage that begins in m. 20. Earlier in this document this section was discussed in terms of its additive rhythms. The bowing can enhance the phrasing implied by this additive rhythm. The phrase that starts in m. 20 should be played as a down-bow and the bows should alternate in succession, following the marked slurs. This pattern should be broken in m. 23, after the half-note on beats two and three, and another up-bow should follow on the last quarter-note of the bar. This ensures that the last quarter-note sounds like a pick-up into the next bar, rather than as a new downbeat. In the following measure, the first F-natural should be a hooked up-bow since it also functions as a pick-up and this bowing also reflects the *crescendo* and *diminuendo* and leads well into the following bar which should start on a down-bow. Because of the constantly varying meter, it is important that the bowings correspond with the ever-changing strong and weak beats so that the bowings compliment the phrasing.

Schonthal does mark a handful of bowings which implies that she felt strongly about the character of the music in those places. The most prolonged example of one of her bowings is in

the second section, during a climactic moment in the phrase in m. 111 that is marked *fortissimo.* It is preceded in m. 110 by a *crescendo* written beneath an ascending group of sixteenth-notes. In m. 111, the percussive quality of the notes in that bar is indicated by the successive use of down-bows. Schonthal's indicated bowings make is impossible to execute the rhythm exactly as she has notated it because the overlapping quarter-note on the first beat with the eighth-note on the second beat are both marked down-bow, implying that the bow should be lifted between the two notes. Therefore, the rhythm cannot overlap. However, in this improvisatory context, a literal reading of the rhythm is not paramount, and it would be permissible to prolong the bar slightly to give the quarter-notes their full length while also fitting in the interrupting eighth-notes. Schonthal likely notated it this way to have the lower voice be played as closely as possible to the upper voice in order for it to sound like an interruption.

As Schonthal clearly describes in her own preface to this work, *Improvisations* is heavily influenced by Arabic chant, in particular the rules of the maqamat, and the alternating rhythmic structure that oscillates between free form melody and stricter structured rhythm. A close examination of the piece revealed that her references to Arabic chant are largely in keeping with the trends of late-19th and early-20th century composition, in which composers incorporate flavors of diverse musical traditions rather than exact compositional rules and figures.

Chapter Four: *Little Suite for 2 Violins*

INTRODUCTION

Little Suite for 2 Violins is the last piece in Schonthal's violin oeuvre. It was composed in 1995, at the very end of the 20th century and towards the end of Schonthal's life. (The piece was not published until 2002.) *Little Suite for 2 Violins* was written as a result of a commission by the Hoff-Barthelson Music School in Scarsdale, New York. The author and her sister, Yona Stamatis, were the violinists who premiered the work in 1995. It was intended as a pedagogical piece for "young virtuosi"[46] and is part of a series of duos entitled *Divertimenti* that were written for various two-instrument combinations.

A considerable part of Schonthal's career was devoted to pedagogy. Ruth Schonthal acknowledged the necessity for composers to teach as a practical means to sustain themselves. She fully embraced a pedagogical role in her writings for the piano, and she was fascinated by how students learn. Schonthal explained her thoughts on teaching to interviewer Bruce Duffie:

> Teaching is necessary. Most people know that you can't live just on being a composer. Very few composers can do that, so there has to be something else. Teaching comes natural to me…I always verbalize everything I think. So to me, teaching is a wonderful outlet. Besides, I'm very interested in how the human mind absorbs and thinks and learns.[47]

Schonthal's early efforts at writing pedagogical works were encouraged and promoted by the composer Paul Creston (1906-1985), whom she met in the 1960's in New York. Creston was responsible for connecting Schonthal with publishers and providing essential resources to Schonthal, such as informing her of the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers

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[46] https://furore-verlag.de/shop/produkt/316-Ruth-Schonthal-Little-Suite/

[47] Bruce Duffie, "Ruth Schonthal: A Conversation with Bruce Duffie," last modified, January 2004, accessed November 26, 2012, http://www.bruceduffie.com/schonthal2.html.

(ASCAP) among others. He was very encouraging of Schonthal's pedagogic works and thought she was well-suited to this kind of writing, especially for the piano. Creston claimed that Schonthal "understands fully the technical problems encountered by the students…and sees to it that musical alludes are not lost in the process of developing technique."[48] While Schonthal may not have had firsthand knowledge of the technical intricacies of the violin, the latter part of Creston's claim certainly applies to the *Little Suite for 2 Violins*. That Schonthal retains her voice even in a simplified setting make this set of duos a compelling musical work and worthy of study. As such, *Little Suite for 2 Violins* resembles the pedagogical duos, *44 Duos for 2 Violins*, of Béla Bartók, as this document intends to demonstrate.

As *Little Suite for 2 Violins* was intended for pedagogical purposes, this chapter will not discuss it in terms of art music per se. This chapter will provide a short musical analysis of some of the significant attributes of the duos, focus on the specific violinistic techniques that the piece teaches, and suggest a place for it in the student repertoire.

MUSICAL ANALYSIS

Little Suite for 2 Violins is divided into eight movements, each ranging in length from a mere twenty seconds, to no more than a minute and a half long. Schonthal often favored writing pieces comprised of many short movements, and she used this format in many of her other works.[49] The movements are played in quick succession, with only a short break between them

[48] Kim, 67.

[49] Some other works that Schonthal composed in this format include *Fourteen Inventions*, *In Homage of… , 65 Celebrations,* all for piano, and from this same set of student works, *2 Short Divertimenti, Little Suite* for two clarinets, *Suite* for violin and violoncello, and *Two Duets* for violin and viola.

to establish each new character and tempo. Within a pedagogical framework, the movements will be discussed in terms of Schonthal's use of harmony, meter and motivic connections.

HARMONY

Little Suite for 2 Violins is intriguing to examine in light of her earlier art music for violin because of the way that she distills her basic style into this condensed form. In general, Schonthal makes more conservative musical choices in *Little Suite for 2 Violins* than she does in her art music. One way that Schonthal modifies her style for the student violinist is to provide clear key signatures. Unlike like *Sonata in e* and *Improvisations*, which did not have any key indications, *Little Suite for 2 Violins* has a clear key signature at the beginning of every movement. Yet, in keeping with her customary method, Schonthal often diverges from or subverts the key signatures she does provide. In this work, she always returns clearly to the original key, at the very least at the final cadence of each movement. This helps to give the student a clear framework within which to gain exposure to deviations from tonal expectations.

Since Schonthal is writing for two melodic instruments that usually play only one note at a time, the harmonies are often implied, or else must be inferred by examining the linear voice leading. For example, the first movement, marked *Tranquillo e dolce*, begins with the second violin part playing legato eighth-notes, which continue for most of the movement. Schonthal indicates that the first movement is in D major, yet the opening two-beat groups of eighth-notes outline intervals of a fifth between D_4 and A_4, and a seventh between $C\#_4$ and $B\text{-flat}_4$. The open fifth between D and A leaves the possibility of the third scale degree open, and the seventh that follows is diminished, and belongs to the key of D minor. Immediately, Schonthal establishes the ambiguity between D major and d minor. In this case, the C-sharp and B-flat are functioning

as neighbor tones to D and A, yet their implication of D minor cannot be ignored, given the proliferation of F-naturals and C-naturals that begin shortly thereafter. In her 2011 dissertation, Cox observes that this same technique is used in Schonthal's piece for clarinet entitled *Love Letters,* which also deals with the same tonal center as *Little Suite for 2 Violins.*

> Schonthal contrasts tonal harmonic language with chromatic, tonally ambiguous harmonic language. The chromatic harmonic language is often based on principals of linear convergence and divergence from a single pitch, converging around D. The more traditional tonal areas of the work are rooted in D (both major and minor).[50]

Indeed, Schonthal often sets up a major-minor duality within the movements of *Little Suite for 2 Violins,* and it is often unclear which of the two polarities has prevailed. The first movement ends with a clear D major chord, despite the allusions to D minor early in the movement.

It is in m.17 that a conspicuous E-sharp appears and surreptitiously signals the goal of the movement, which is a resolution in D major. Schonthal could easily have chosen F-natural in place of the E-sharp, thus emphasizing the major-minor polarity. Instead, Schonthal has chosen to use chromatic voice-leading to emphasize the F#, and thus the dominance of D major. Schonthal has relinquished the significance of traditional harmony that would normally place most of the importance of a leading tone on the 7th scale degree. Instead, a raised second scale degree is the key to the harmonic goal and the piece narrows its harmonic focus towards the final measure where D major is finally affirmed.

Another example of Schonthal reinterpreting standard harmonic progressions that add to the harmonic ambiguity occurs in m.5 in the first movement, where Schonthal writes a B-flat major chord that initially sounds like a VI chord in D minor. Yet, in the next measure, Schonthal

[50] Cox, 34.

writes a V_7 of B-flat major (F_7) and causes the ear to reinterpret what had come before as the tonic of the F_7 chord outlined in m.6. No sooner has the listener readjusted to this new implication, does the harmony make another chromatic swerve. This time, the A from the F_7 chord resolves enharmonically to A-sharp in m.7, rather than B-flat, and the E-flat from the V_7 chord is respelled as a D-sharp at the same time as the A-sharp appears. In other words, there is seamless chromatic linear motion that causes an enharmonic shift. This shift in harmony is nonetheless slightly jarring because it does not ever resolve the tension of the V_7 chord from m.6. The harmony merely moves chromatically by half step and maintains the tonal ambiguity established at the outset of the movement. As Helmig summarizes: "In Schonthal's harmonic language there are fluid transitions between chords, whose neighboring tones are clearly to be seen as simultaneous neighboring tones, and the superimposition of independent chords and polytonal chord progressions."[51] Akin to the examples in the first movement, Schonthal continues this method of tonal ambiguity in the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth movements.

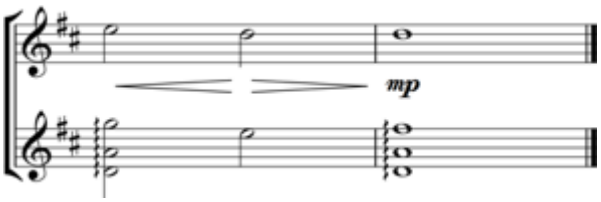
Schonthal often exploits tertian relationships between relative keys, as in the opening of the second movement. Like the first movement, it shares two sharps in the key signature, only here the sharps indicate the key of B minor. Despite this, the first half of the movement contains D#'s, thus strongly implying B major. It is only in the seventh bar of the piece that the A#'s become A-naturals and the other accidentals gradually fall away. Only by the second half of the movement, in the ninth measure, does the movement finally feel rooted in B minor.

Another type of open-ended harmony occurs in m. 22 of the first movement; on the first beat there are two fifths stacked on top of each other, with a minor third on the top. The notes of the chord include D_3, A_4, E_6 and G_6. This chord has a feeling of stasis, both rhythmically and

[51] Helmig, 175.

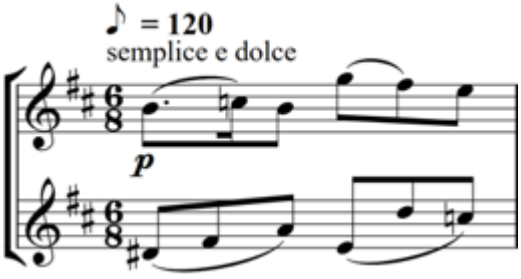
harmonically. There are none of the leading tones implying D that had appeared earlier in the melodic writing. In tonal harmony, the chord could imply ii of D. Yet, the chord even includes two notes from the tonic simultaneously. It is as though Schonthal has combined these chords together to create tension in the same way that a traditional cadential chord would. On the second beat of this measure, there is simply a major second comprised of the tonic, D alongside E a whole step away. Schonthal seems to distill the dissonance from the first chord down to D_4 and E_4, doing away with the notes A and G. The two chords resolve uneasily to a whole-note D major chord in the last bar. Schonthal often treats cadences this way, giving the movements a feeling of being clipped or stopping short. (see Example 4.1)

Example 4.1: *Little Suite for 2 Violins,* mvmt. 1, mm. 22-23, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The opening of the fourth movement provides an example of Schonthal indicating a key signature (D major), and then not composing within it. The first measure begins with the second violin part outlining a D#-minor diminished 7th chord while the melody in the first violin part is in G major. (Example 4.2) As the third movement had been in G major, it appears as though the first violin part has not immediately adjusted from the prior movement. By the downbeat of the second measure however, it is clear to see that in retrospect the second violin part had been setting up a chromatic, linear approach to D major. After the downbeat of the second bar, which outlines a strong D major sonority, the rest of the movement stays within the key, save for a small moment of voice-leading with a C_4 on the downbeat of m.8 that leads to B_3.

Example 4.2: *Little Suite for 2 Violins,* mvmt. 4, *semplice e dolce,* m.1, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



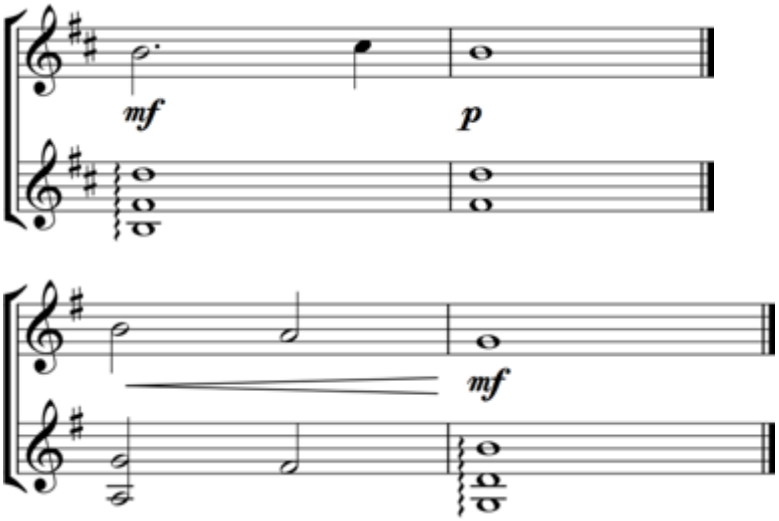
Schonthal's treatment of the cadences at the ends of the movements is distinctive in that she uses harmonically neutral chords, such as stacked fifths, before resolving to the tonic chord. The final tonic chord at times feels unsettled as it sometimes occurs suddenly and without any chromatic voice-leading, at times appears in inversion, or even missing the third of the chord. (The final cadence of fifth movement for instance, ends with an open fourth stacked on an open fifth, outlining B_3-$F\#_4$-B_4. This leaves B major or minor as two possible interpretations for this final chord.) As Helmig notes, "In Schonthal's compositions, traditional cords are partially divorced from their historical form and function through elisions, alteration, and superpositions. As a result, they evoke a more or less vague and veiled allusion to the tonal tradition." [52] This is certainly true of Schonthal's preparation and treatment of cadences in this work.

Another example occurs at the end of the 3rd movement, which has been otherwise entirely tonal, and centered in G major. Only the cadential material preceding the final chord is dissonant and harmonically ambiguous. On the downbeat of m.8 in the third movement, Schonthal writes a half-note chord consisting of A_3, G_4 and B_4. These notes move inwards to $F\#_4$ in the bottom part and A_4 in the top voice. The first chord of the measure implies a G-major chord with the dissonant A imposed on it in order to add tension where perhaps a traditional V_7

[52] Helmig, 174.

chord should be. The F# and A to which these chord tones move make up a vii° chord in D. In this instance, the last two chords do follow a traditional tonal progression and move to a root position G major chord. However, Schonthal does not always make the resolution so overtly tonal, such as in the ending of the 2nd movement where the fifth of the chord is in the bass. (Example 4.2) Thus the student learns in stages to incorporate these new dissonant sonorities in the safety of an environment that at least alludes to a framework of a key. The feeling of overall stability of the work is bolstered by the third movement and the final two movements since they are all written in stable tonal keys from beginning to end. (These keys are G major, D major and D minor modulating to D major, respectively.) For the student, these movements provide a kind of reprieve from the onslaught of new sonorities and foreign chord progressions, and therefore help to make the piece accessible.

Example 4.3*: Little Suite for 2 Violins,* mm. 15-16, mvmt. II, *Tranquillo,* & mm. 8-9, mvmt. III, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

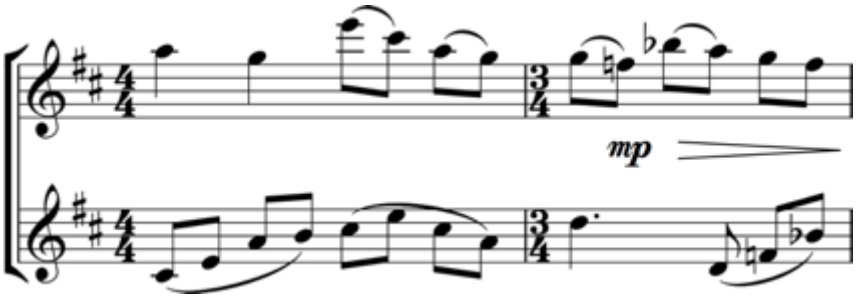


MOTIVES

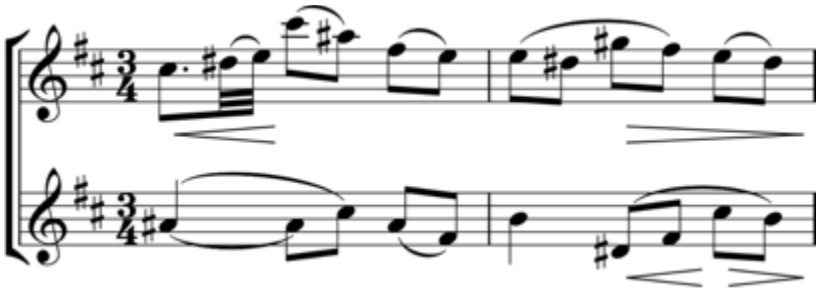
Schonthal uses motivic connections time and again in her art music. In *Little Suite for 2 Violins,* the kernels of her affinity for motivic connection are seen, even in this abbreviated form. The movements are connected by subtle fragments of common thematic material. For instance, the melodic figure in the first violin in mm. 4-5 in the first movement returns in mm. 3-4 in the second movement. The intervals in the second half of m. 4 of the first movement are two falling thirds, followed by two descending major seconds. This is followed by a leap up of a fourth and a descending four-note scalar motion. This same basic intervallic pattern returns in mm. 3-4 of the next movement, and the figure retains the same rhythm and articulation. The motive is particularly noticeable because the character of the surrounding music in the second movement is so different from the motivic material that it borrows from the first. (Example 4.3)

Example 4.4: *Little Suite for 2 Violins* mm. 4-5 mvmt. 1, *Tranquillo e dolce* and mm. 3-4, mvmt. 2, *Tranquillo,* Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.

Tranquillo e dolce



Tranquillo



Another motivic connection occurs in the fourth, fifth and seventh movements. The connection between the fourth and seventh movements is the most obvious pair, as the motive is more complete in that instance. The first measure of both movements are the same, albeit transposed nine notes lower in the seventh movement. Both movements begin with a dotted sicilienne rhythm that ascends and descends a minor 2nd, and then both figures leap up a minor 6th before descending step-wise. The movements also share a time signature, $\frac{6}{8}$, and are in the key of D major. The fourth movement also cites this motive, yet has a different character from the other two instances of the motive because there is a steady accompaniment of slurred *eighth-notes* in the second violin part. In the seventh movement, the soundscape is more hollow and despondent on account of the lower register of the motive (played by the second violin which gets the main melody for the first time in the entire work) and because the first violin plays a very sparse and steely figure of oscillating thirds in *sixteenth-notes* that only occur sporadically throughout the movement. When the snippet of the sicilienne rhythm motive occurs in the fifth movement, the character is jovial and light-hearted as here it appears in a quicker tempo, with new staccato articulation on the third *eighth-note* of the motive, and with a percussive accompaniment.

METER

Most of Schonthal's works feature variable meter and lack a fixed pulse.[53] Indeed, Schonthal imbues the many of the movements of *Little Suite for 2 Violins* with metric ambiguity due to the constantly changing meter. In the movements that have varied meter a pattern emerges; Schonthal tends to change the meter more frequently in the first half of the movement and as the cadence nears, she maintains a single time signature for last several bars. This is stabilizing for the performer and the listener, as it helps to signal the end. This would also aide a student just learning to navigate mixed meters.

While the quarter-note stays the same throughout the first movement, the shifting meter prevents any consistent sense of strong and weak beats. It is not until the conclusion of the movement that we have the largest succession of five bars in $\frac{4}{4}$. Not coincidentally, the arrival in the key of D major coincides closely with the onset of the regular meter. Schonthal allows for the movement to converge on familiar grounds in both harmony and meter.

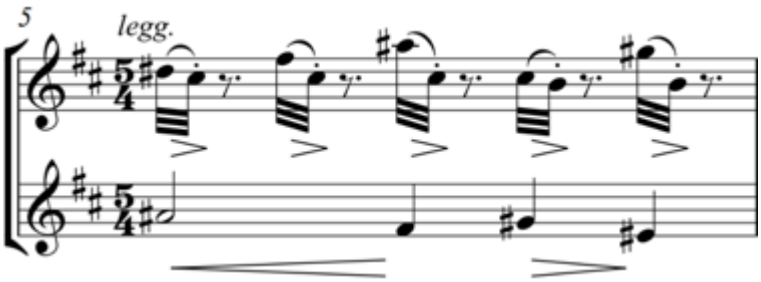
The most challenging rhythmic feature of the first movement is the juxtaposition of triplets against duplets, as well as three against four that occur in mm.11, 12, and 18. In m. 19 the meter returns to $\frac{4}{4}$ for the final five bars. Here both violin parts align in even subdivisions of the quarter-note. The ending is rhythmically abrupt in that the eighth-notes continue right up until the final chords in m.22, with only two brief measures of half-notes and a whole-note to conclude the movement. This same metric approach to the final cadence occurs in movements II, III, IV,and VIII.

The metric ambiguity of the second movement is similar to the first movement, yet also distinctive in several ways. Like the first movement, this movement alternates meter frequently

[53] Helmig, 316.

until $\frac{4}{4}$ is established in m.9 until the end. Where this movement is different, however, is in the furtive 32nd note gestures in m. 5 of the first violin part that punctuate the otherwise static legato that runs throughout. (Example 4.4) These gestures ruffle the placid surface of movement and spur forward its momentum. These quick figures also foreshadow the character of the next movement which is a scherzo-like dance in which the melody is also fragmented by rests.

Example 4.5*: Little Suite for 2 Violins,* m.5, mvmt. 2, *Tranquillo*, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The most metrically interesting movement is the sixth. Marked *energico* (dotted *quarter-note* = 120) and *pizzicato*, this movement changes meter almost every bar for the first eleven measures. The melodic line is passed seamlessly from the first to the second violin in the first four measures before they split into two distinct parts, with the first violin playing the melody and the second violin continuing a harmonically constrained counterpoint. (During the first four bars, the two notes, D_3, and E_3, in the second violin, comprises part of the melody. Those two notes continue for the rest of the movement as an accompanimental figure.) The eighth-note is the basic pulse in this movement; the first eight measures alternate between $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{2}{8}$ and there is an accent on the first of every five eighth-notes in these bars. The meter then changes every few measures for the rest of the movement. (See Table 4.1)

Table 4.1: *Little Suite for 2 Violins, Energico.* Use of alternating meter and accents at the start of the bar.

m. 1	m. 2	m. 3	m. 5	m. 6	m. 7	m. 8	mm. 9-10	mm. 11-14	m. 15	mm. 16-21
$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{2}{8}$	$\frac{3}{8}$	$\frac{6}{8}$	$\frac{5}{8}$	$\frac{9}{8}$	$\frac{6}{8}$
>		>		>		>	>>	>>>>	>	

Schonthal has used meter instructively in this movement by presenting the same melodic material twice in two different ways. In the first eight measures, the groups of five eighth-notes are broken up between the two parts and also written in alternating meters between $\frac{3}{8}$ and $\frac{2}{8}$. The same melodic idea occurs in mm. 11-14, yet here Schonthal indicates a meter of $\frac{5}{8}$ and has thus combined the measures that were previously separated. The reason for this is twofold; in the first instance the first and second violin form the melody together by way of *klangfarbenmelodie.* In the second instance, the second violin accompanies the melody and must fit a group of four eighth-notes into each $\frac{5}{8}$ bar beginning on the second eighth-note of the bar. Had Schonthal continued to alternate between two time signatures, this would have made the second violin part even more challenging to read and execute. Moreover, it would likely lead to a false accent on the third eighth-note of the melody as it would fall on a downbeat, were the meter mixed like it was in the beginning. Indeed, that is one of the violinistic challenges of the opening; to make the melody seamless despite the entrance of another instrument in the second measure.

The last movement of *Little Suite for 2 Violins* is the most metrically demanding as it changes the basic unit of measurement three times. Although Schonthal indicates that the quarter-note = 96, after the first measure in $\frac{4}{4}$, the second measure is in $\frac{6}{8}$, the third and fourth

measures are in $\frac{9}{8}$, and the fifth measure is in $\frac{12}{16}$. Since the movement is written entirely in sixteenth-notes, the metronome marking should immediately be subdivided into sixteenth-notes so that the basic unit of measurement remains consistent throughout the movement. Schonthal writes the $\frac{6}{8}$ measures as though there are two dotted quarter-notes in the bar. Therefore, continuing with the quarter-note pulse would cause a syncopated accent every four sixteenth-notes that would go against the contour of the line and against the way that Schonthal notated it. Similarly, the $\frac{12}{16}$ measures are written in groups of three sixteenth-notes, and thus the overall pulse shifts to four in those measures. Yet, the unit of measurement for those four beats is a sixteenth note shorter than a quarter note. This is another reason for the need to subdivide the suggested quarter-note tempo into sixteenth notes right from the beginning. This complex shifting of the pulse is instructive for a student and is a wonderful way to introduce this concept on a small scale. This sort of metric shift will surely be encountered in other contemporary repertoire and is especially prevalent in an orchestral context.

PEDAGOGICAL CONTEXT

The musical analysis provided above is intended to facilitate teaching *Little Suite for 2 Violins*. Students may not be able to articulate what it is about this piece that is challenging, or conversely, what about it is familiar. With a better understanding of Schonthal's compositional style, this pedagogical work opens a small window into her world of composition and to some 20th-century sonorities in general.

It is suggested by the publisher that this piece is geared toward "Grade 3-5" and is described as "[b]rilliant teaching material."[54] It is unclear which grading system this suggestion refers to. The repertoire lists of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Canada (RCM), and the American String Teacher's Association (ASTA) provide a graded repertoire that roughly correspond to one another, with the ASTA list being slightly more ambitious by Grade 3. The RCM list states that in Grade 3 the student will have mastered the first, second and third positions on the violin. The ASTA list designates that by Grade 3, violinists should already be able to master positions up through and including the fifth position. *Little Suite for 2 Violins* requires the use of positions as high as seventh position in the first violin part. Therefore, this suggestion on the part of the publisher may be slightly ambitious for this piece. However, a talented student at the Grade 3 level could manage the less technically demanding second violin part.

The ASTA repertoire list for Grades 3-4 includes a section on duets and includes 20th-century duos by Béla Bartók (*44 Duos),* Luciano Berio (*Duets for 2 Violins),* Ramin Entezami (*24 Duets for Two Young Violinists),* and Paul Hindemith (*14 Leichte Stücke).*

Another interesting repertoire list to consider when assigning this piece is that of Mimi Zweig, at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. While Zweig does not provide specific grade levels, her sequence of repertoire is thoughtfully structured and includes input from two other world-renown pedagogues, Rebecca Henry and Dorothy Delay. Rebecca Henry's contribution is especially pertinent because she helped to compile the list of contemporary violin repertoire, as well as a section that includes violin duos. On her list of

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[54] Furore Verlag, "Schonthal Little Suite Product Description," https://furore-verlag.de/shop/produkt/316-Ruth-Schonthal-Little-Suite/ (Accessed 3 December 2019).

violin duos, she also suggests Béla Bartók's *44 Duos.* In the context of these aforementioned 20th-century duos, *Little Suite for 2 Violins* would fall after the Entezami, Hindemith and Bartók, yet before Berio.

The Bartók duos pose a particularly interesting and relevant comparison to Schonthal's *Little Suite for 2 Violins* in that he also geared his work toward the student violinist. In composing his duos, Bartók collaborated with the eminent German pedagogue Erich Doflein (1900-1977) who wanted to arrange Bartók's pedagogical piano works for two violins. Instead, Bartók decided to compose his own set of duos for the violin while personally consulting with Doflein.[55] The result is a set of "duos [that] are constructed with considerable harmonic and contrapuntal sophistication, and, despite their use of folk tunes, are written in a distinctly modern idiom." Bartók shares many similarities with Schonthal on a biographical level; both were exiles from Europe, and were pianists who performed their own works. Both also lived and worked at universities in New York City during their careers

Luciano Berio wrote a collection of 34 duets entitled *Duetti per due Violini,* each one named and composed for a distinctive friend of the composer. As such, the works are highly programmatic; Berio described the gestation of the duos himself when he said, "It can happen that a violinist friend tells a composer, one night, that, other than those of Bartók, there are not enough violin duets today. And it can happen that the composer immediately sets himself to

[55] Chris Woodstra, Gerald Brennan, and Allen Schrott, eds. *The Definitive Guide to Classical Music.* (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 2005), 87.

writing duets that night until dawn…"[56] Berio modeled his set of duos on those of Bartók and even the easiest of them would be considered intermediate.[57]

Despite the fact that Berio chose a programmatic framework for his duos and Bartók did not, they both had the same goal in composing pieces; they "could be used by students of the violin as a musical work-out, a training ground of contemporary musical language and music in general."[58] In Bartók's *44 Duos*, the canonic treatment of material is intended as a teaching tool, so that the student will listen to and learn from the teacher's character and style of playing. The canonic treatment of material leads to the production of atonal chords which broaden the challenges of the pieces which may seem otherwise technically simplistic on the surface.[59] As in the Bartók set, there is also a progression throughout the duos of Berio of increasing technical difficulty.

Schonthal's duos do not follow a trajectory of easy to difficult; rather they are all written at the same level of difficulty and function as a through-composed piece that was conceived of as a whole. The contrasting characters of the movements are intended to be performed in succession, especially since the movements contain important harmonic relationships between them. Unlike the other composers discussed here, it would not suit the intentions of the composer to perform an isolated movement or selection of movements.

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[56] Luciano Berio, lucianoberio.org, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1371?237685848=1 (accessed 23 April 2018).

[57] David Littrell. *String Syllabus Volume One.* (Fairfax: American String Teachers Association, 2009), 121.

[58] Luciana Galliano, Universal-Edition AG, https://www.universaledition.com/composers-and-works/luciano-berio-54/works/duetti-per-due-violini-2177 (accessed 23 April 2018).

[59] Paul Griffith. *Bartók.* The Master Musicians Series. (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1984), 173.

Each movement presents its own challenges for the student, many of which have been discussed in the musical analysis section. However, the piece would benefit from a more specific outline of the technical difficulties encountered in each movement. A brief overview of each movement follows as a guide to the teacher.

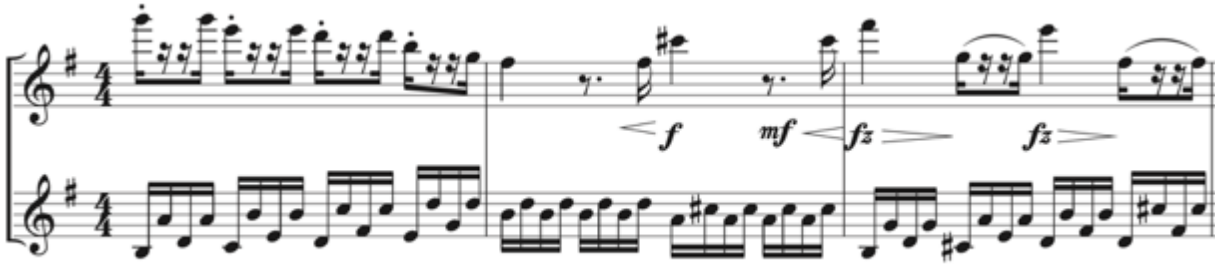
In the first movement. *Tranquillo e dolce,* the student learns how to negotiate triplet rhythms against eighth-notes, such as in mm. 11-13. Both violin parts must learn how to seamlessly dovetail the melodic lines such as in m.5 when the second violin changes from a dotted quarter-note to eighth-notes. Lastly this movement presents a challenge to the first violinist in its use of the seventh position on the E-string in m. 17. The ascent up to B_6 is chromatic and it is difficult to perceive the correct notes, making learning that passage a challenge.

The second movement, *Tranquillo,* presents a new rhythmic challenge in mm. 8-14 as the second violin plays triplets against the sixteenth-notes of the first violin. The thirty-second notes in the first five measures in the first violin part are also rhythmically complex in that the student must carefully subdivide to play them at the correct time. The first violin has another high ascent on the E-string, only this time there are two large leaps in the passage, both of which outline the interval of a seventh. In particular, the leap between m. 8 and m. 9 (B_5 to A_6) would require a big shift on the E-string. (The prior leap of a seventh, from $F\#_5$ to E_6 can be fingered so that the top of the seventh is arrived at across two strings, thus shortening the length of the shift.) Lastly, the second violin in m.8 has to contend with two stacked fifths which requires using the same finger across three strings. Fifths are notoriously difficult for tuning across just two strings, so the added fifth adds quite a challenge. Because the lower fifth is slurred and the higher one is marked separately, the violinist can quickly and lift the finger in order to place it down again to

produce then next fifth on the higher strings. This is quite violinistically awkward and thus challenging for the student.

The third movement requires that the two violins align their sixteenth-notes exactly, despite the two sixteenth-note rests that interrupt the middle of each beat. It is important that the second violin remain absolutely steady throughout the movement and that the first violin does not lose the integrity of the beat. As in the prior two movements, Schonthal writes the interval of a 7th in a three-bar sequence from mm. 5-7 in the first violin part. (Example 4.5) This time the sevenths are slightly more difficult in that they descend down the violin, requiring the student to find a new position for every downward leap. The second violin part also encounters its own difficulties in that same three measure stretch; the alberti bass part outlines a series of fourths and fifths that result in tricky finger patterns that are difficult to tune.

Example 4.6: *Little Suite for 2 Violins,* mm. 3-5, mvmt. III, Copyright by Furore Verlag, Kassel, Reproduced with permission of the publisher.



The fourth movement, *semplice e dolce* and fifth movement have few new technical difficulties and so have been grouped together. In the fourth movement, the sicilienne rhythm in the first violin in the opening measure is played against three eighth-notes in the second violin part and thus is hard to align. The other challenge of this movement is in the second violin part in mm.6-7, because the bowing pattern in m. 7 goes against the intervallic leaps. Thus the second violinist must play a more difficult fingering in order to execute the slurred bowing, and despite the adjustment in fingering, must still navigate awkward string crossings that fight the

contour of the line. This is another instance of Schonthal's likely pianistic conception of the music that does not transfer well to the violin. The fifth movement's main challenge is in the second violin part which has many sustained fourths and fifths that provide intonation challenges. The first violin part has a short rhythmic challenge in mm.14-16 when the sicilienne rhythm appears with ties across the bar lines. At this moment, the first violin must also be in a high position (5th position) to execute the sixteenth-notes in the following two measures.

Movement VI, *Energico,* is most stylistically distinctive in that it is all *pizzicato,* save for the last chord. This teaches the student the invaluable skill of getting a good sound in the *pizzicato* while holding the bow in the right hand. Here, Schonthal does seem to show a bit of violinistically technical foresight as she inserts a measure of rest just before the final chord. This allows the performer to hold the bow during the *pizzicato* in the fist (rather than retaining the bow hold and plucking by extending the first finger) and gives the performers time to regain a proper bow hold. The other skill emphasized in this movement is precise rhythm. There is no leeway for error as the parts perform a continuous stream of eighth-notes that must align. This is especially difficult for the second violin as it has many more rests and drops out for odd numbers of eighth-notes before having to seamlessly reenter the texture.

The seventh movement, *Dolce e un poco melancolico* gives the opportunity to the second violin to play a lyrical melody throughout. Schonthal emphasizes the dark lower register of the violin and requires that the second violinist play many sustained chords at a slow speed. This teaches bow control, *legato* connections, and also requires that the performer have impeccable intonation as the part is essentially a solo line. The first violin merely interjects occasionally with *pp* broken sixteenth-note thirds.

The eighth and final movement, is similar to the sixth *pizzicato* movement, because both require the first and second violin parts to dovetail one another and play an unbroken series of notes. Here the notes are all sixteenths and make for a rousing finale. The technical difficulties in the finale consist of a bariolage passage in the first violin part that requires the main note of the bariolage be played with one finger constantly down on the fingerboard, while the moving line changes around it. The hand must constantly adjust for every interval in the bariolage passage as each interval requires a slightly different finger angle. In this passage the most difficult intervals are diminished fifths, perfect fifths and fourths. Another interval challenge for the left hand occurs when the main note of the bariolage changes from D_6 to A-flat$_5$ in m.4. In order to execute this, the violinist must shift seamlessly from fifth position to third position. The first finger must leap back from F#$_5$ to a third finger F-natural$_5$ on the A string while the first finger crosses strings and jumps to A-flat$_5$ on the E string at the same time. This is a tricky fingering as the fingers must shift and cross the strings quickly and seamlessly. The register of this passage does not change and therefore would seem unremarkable to a pianist, while on the violin, playing these two chords successively presents a challenge.

As in much of Schonthal's art music, her music is conceived pianistically. It is quite clear that much of her writing for the violin is actually idiomatic for the piano. The swaying slurred notes in her accompanimental figures and many of her arpeggiated gestures are pianistically conceived in that they do not lie well on the violin. This is a bit problematic in a work designed specifically for pedagogical purposes. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Schonthal did not have violinistic technique as her specific pedagogical intent.

In addition, fourths and fifths proliferate throughout the duos, and are both some of the hardest intervals to play in tune on the violin. Schonthal did not seem to have an innate sense of

how a violinist plays fifths as she often stacked them on top of one another in legato passages. While this works when using the open strings as the notes for the stacked fifths, often Schonthal seems to apply this same principle to notes that need to be compressed with the left hand fingers. This requires the violinist to lift or else awkwardly roll the left-hand fingers in order to compress the higher fifth. (M.8 in the second movement is one example of stacked fifths that are difficult to execute.). This is very difficult to both execute in tune and to play *legato.* Additionally, her music for violin, be it pedagogical or art music, rarely includes bowings. The violinist must infer from the character, indicated slurs and dynamics, which bowings would best suit a particular passage. Often times Schonthal's indicated slurs are inconsistent, even if the musical material is exactly the same. Therefore the violinist or teacher must decide how best to interpret Schonthal's musical intent.

Epilogue

Ode to a Departing Swan is a brief, twenty-seven measure work for violin and piano. As suggested by the publisher, the work would be most suitable as an encore piece. It was composed in 1964, shortly after *Sonata in e* and is melancholy in character. The circumstances of its composition are not precisely known, yet some presumptions may be inferred based on the year it was written and on what is known about Schonthal's compositions prior to *Ode to a Departing Swan*.

The title of the work seems undoubtedly influenced by literature, and in particular the works of Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). In an interview with Selma Epstein, Schonthal stated, "Literature has been a major influence in my music, vocal and instrumental….My song cycles use the texts of many poets – R.M. Rilke…Li Po…W.B. Yeats…and Walt Whitman."[60] In 1941-46, Schonthal had based a song cycle, *8 Lieder*, on the poems of Rilke. In particular, the Rilke poem entitled *The Swan* contains powerful imagery of a swan departing into water as a metaphor for life passing into death. In an excerpt from *The Swan*, translated by Robert Bly, Rilke writes;

> …And to die, which is the letting go
> of the ground we stand on and cling to every day,
> is like the swan, when he nervously lets himself down
> into the water, which receives him gaily
> and which flows joyfully under
> and after him, wave after wave,
> while the swan, unmoving and marvelously calm,
> is pleased to be carried, each moment more fully grown,
> more like a king, further and further on.[61]

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[60] Selma Epstein, "Composer Interview: Ruth Schonthal." *International Association of Women in Music.* February 1994.

[61] https://emilyspoetryblog.com/2013/10/03/the-swan-by-rainer-maria-rilke-translated-by-robert-bly/ Accessed 12/1/19.

It seems more than a mere coincidence that in 1963, just before the composition of *Ode to a Departing Swan,* Schonthal's most significant mentor, Paul Hindemith, died. The piece makes a fitting tribute to the teacher who so influenced Schonthal and who so significantly altered the trajectory of her career.

Musically, *Ode to a Departing Swan* is comprised of a simple melody in the violin and repetitive chordal accompaniment. The work shares some motivic similarities with her much later *Improvisations* in its prevalence of the falling second "sighing" motives which Schonthal uses here to express sorrow and which continually interrupt the ascent of the melodic line in the violin. While Schonthal provides a key signature that would suggest D major, appearance of the major tonic chord are fleeting and do not appear at the expected junctures. However, Schonthal uses D as a grounding tonal center as the piano repeats an open D_2-A_2 on nearly every downbeat. The dynamics and the register of the violin line suggest an arch form, with the music building gradually from *piano* in the m. 1 to *fortissimo* in the middle of the piece in m.13 before quickly receding to *p* again by m. 15. The piece ends softly, with *perdendosi* (dying away) marked in m. 21, and the last measure marked *pianississimo.* The final gesture of the piece is a sequence comprised of three chords that begin in the low range of the piano and continually repeat up through three octaves. The chords are comprised of fifths and sixths, beginning with D_2-A_2 as in the measures past, yet metamorphosing into A-flat-F-D#, by the third chord of the cycle. (Hidden within that progression is a falling second motive from A to A-flat.) Each of the final chords is punctuated by dissonant seconds, while the violin holds a $D\#_6$ resolving to a E_8 in the final measure. This final ascent, with intruding dissonances, seems to signify sorrow and symbolize a departure from earth into the heavens.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I examined the four violin works for violin by Ruth Schonthal, including *Sonata in e, Ode to A Departing Swan, Improvisations* and *Little Suite for 2 Violins.* The purpose of this analysis was to demonstrate how Schonthal used a combination of old and new practices in her music. The paper sought to follow the progression of Schonthal's compositional style from her early *Sonata in e* (1961/62), to her much later *Little Suite for 2 Violins* (2002), and to show how her style remained both recognizable and innovative at once. Unifying elements of her compositional style include the use of tempo, meter and tonal centers as an organizational tool, the incorporation of recurrent motivic fragments, and the influence of idiomatic violin writing. Through a detailed analysis of Schonthal's violin works, I argue that her compositions evolved from being form-based to those in which elements of form and structure are of secondary importance to their programmatic character.

The findings of this paper will aid in the performance of these works and help future musicians approach Schonthal's music with a more complete understanding of her music. Further research into the extent of her collaboration with string players during the gestation of these violin pieces would be valuable in understanding some of her musical decisions. It is the hope of the author that this study may also lead to edited performance editions of Schonthal's violin works, as well as more performances of these pieces. Future research will hopefully take advantage of Schonthal's surviving relatives, musical collaborators, as well as her archives at Akademie der Künste in Berlin to further unearth details of her life and work as they pertain to her works for violin.

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