The Expositions of Haydn’s String Quartets: A Corpus Analysis
by Evan Cortens

Abstract

Recent work in music cognition has demonstrated the importance of empirical analysis techniques in eliciting listener expectations. However, these techniques have yet to be applied extensively to analysis of form. While James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy’s Elements of Sonata Theory makes the promise of data-driven analysis, the data itself is often not shown in great detail. Furthermore, as several authors have already shown, Elements derives most of its norms and types from the works of Mozart. In this article, I will draw on the analytical toolset of Sonata Theory, but I will apply it specifically and more quantitatively to a corpus consisting of the sonata form expositions from Joseph Haydn’s string quartets, Op. 33 and later. In comparing Haydn to himself, so to speak, we can come to a greater appreciation and understanding of his unique approach to sonata form.

I. Introduction

Scholars in the field of music cognition have done a great deal to elucidate the role of expectation and convention in the perception of music. Since at least Leonard Meyer’s work in Emotion and Meaning in Music, scholars have investigated the ways in which composers meet or deviate from listener expectations to create emotional responses.1 In Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation, David Huron develops a generalized theory of expectation, and then applies this to music, to show how our minds process various musical stimuli to create sensations, from tension and surprise to

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boredom and predictability. In a different but complementary way, Robert Gjerdingen’s *Music in the Galant Style* documents the use of a handful of clichéd schemata by composers in the eighteenth century. Gjerdingen is engaged in the same basic project as Huron, albeit from the opposite direction: he builds his theory on top of Italian *partimenti* and *solfeggi*, the building blocks of compositional instruction. Vasili Byros has brought a schemata-based approach to bear on a wide variety of later eighteenth-century symphonic music, and in so doing has changed the way we hear the famous opening of Beethoven’s “Eroica.”

However this type of research has not yet focused extensively on large-scale form; both Huron’s book and schema theory focus on moment-to-moment listening. Huron writes that, “although there is no pertinent experimental evidence, it is widely assumed that certain ‘set’ musical forms [including ‘sonata-allegro form’] provide useful predictive schemas for those listeners who are familiar with them.” In this article, I attempt to bridge this gap by drawing both on a historical/theoretical approach and one grounded in statistical corpus analysis in a study of the 69 sonata form expositions from Haydn’s string quartets Op. 33 and later.

Perhaps the most significant and influential recent monograph on sonata form is James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy’s *Elements of Sonata Theory*. Their theory is grounded in the fundamental premise that composers do not compose and listeners do not listen

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5 David Huron, *Sweet Anticipation*, 254.

6 James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). As of this writing, RILM lists a dozen reviews of this volume, in both English and German, a proxy for its significance and influence.

To a given work in isolation; rather, they compose and listen against a complex network of generic norms and expectations. Hepokoski writes:

> First, I note that perceptions of form are as much a collaborative enterprise of the listener or analyst as they are of the composer. And second, I suggest that grasping the full range of an implicit musical form is most essentially a task of reconstructing a processual dialogue between any individual work (or section thereof) and the charged network of generic norms, guidelines, possibilities, expectations, and limits provided by the implied genre at hand. This is “dialogic form”: form in dialogue with historically conditioned compositional options.  

I would argue that the task of elucidating these generic norms, the basis for a concept of “dialogic form,” is rather more fraught than this statement might suggest.

Hepokoski and Darcy frame *Elements of Sonata Theory* as a research report, a product of their analyses of “hundreds of individual movements by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and many surrounding composers of the time (as well as later composers).” However, as William Drabkin and Paul Wingfield have noted in their reviews of *Elements of Sonata Theory*, the distribution of musical examples from these three composers alone is quite unequal: there are almost three times as many examples of Mozart as there are of Haydn and Beethoven combined. Likewise, there are few musical examples from other composers of the time: only one each from D. Scarlatti, J. C. Bach and C. P. E. Bach. My concern, however, is not with the composition of the corpus, but rather the way its characteristics are presented to the reader. Typically Hepokoski and Darcy will

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8 Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, v.

9 William Drabkin, “Mostly Mozart,” *The Musical Times* 148, no. 1901 (Winter 2007): 98–99; Paul Wingfield, “Beyond ‘Norms and Deformations’: Towards a Theory of Sonata Form as Reception History,” *Music Analysis* 27, no. 1 (2008): 141. Drabkin observes that while Mozart has eleven columns in the index of works cited, Haydn and Beethoven have only eight columns between them; Haydn has roughly 3.5 columns and Beethoven roughly 4.5. Wingfield counts up the number of movements in the index, reaching a total of 665 sonata movements. Of these, a striking 228, or 34%, are by Mozart; even more striking is that in the musical examples, 26% come from just six pieces by Mozart.
describe a phenomenon in broad strokes before moving into a specific example or two by way of demonstration. In other words, we gain only limited insight into the process through which the results were obtained, and very little raw data.

My goal, then, is to bring together the analytical framework of Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata theory with the techniques of what Eric Clarke and Nicholas Cook have called empirical musicology.\textsuperscript{10} For the present purposes, I will restrict myself to more concretely defining the statistical norms of the sonata form exposition using a corpus of works by one composer (Haydn) in one genre (the string quartet) from a narrow period of time (1781–99). Rather than attempting to elucidate a general theory for all sonatas, I seek to compare Haydn to himself, so to speak. The goal is to attempt to reconstruct in part the mental representation of a sonata form exposition held in the mind of an eighteenth-century listener familiar with Haydn’s works. I hope that this type of approach can be extended to additional composers and genres as well as to additional formal features; however, in this article my primary concern will be with the relative proportions of expositional sections, in particular the presence (and relative placement) or absence of a rhetorically reinforced break between the material in the home key and the material in the new key, the “medial caesura.”

After a discussion of Jens Peter Larsen’s problematization of historical conceptions of sonata form, I move to a definition of Hepokoski and Darcy’s concept of the medial caesura. Detailed corpus analysis of Haydn’s string quartet expositions then shows that while his compositional choices confirm some aspects of the medial caesura, they come into productive conflict with others. In addition to Hepokoski and Darcy’s two exposition categories—two-part and continuous—I will argue for a third, falling in between these two exclusive categories. We will see that both the interrelationship between medial caesura and second group initiation and the dividing line between two-part and continuous expositions, are often more complex in Haydn than the norms and types of sonata theory allow—his works therefore end up being classified as

“deformations.” Sonata theory, then, perhaps in striving to be too regulative and descriptive, ends up preserving that familiar value judgment, which sees some sort of flaw in Haydn’s music because it fails to conform to later theory.

**II. Historical Descriptions of the Exposition: Koch and Marx**

In 1961, Jens Peter Larsen articulated a “series of more or less openly expressed axioms” in the “traditional presentation of sonata form.” His second axiom reads as follows:

The actual two-part tonal division of the exposition is reflected in a two-part formal division of approximately this type: I. principal theme and bridge passage; II. second theme and (freer) closing group.

Though this is the form that most music students learn even today. But controversy remains. Mary Sue Morrow has recently characterized this controversy as a series of “analysis wars” between “melodists” and “harmonists.” Or, to put it a slightly different way, an argument between those who see sonata form as predominantly an exercise in contrasting themes and those who see it as one in contrasting key areas. As we will see below, Larsen is fundamentally arguing for an increased emphasis on harmonic contrasts, contending that an over-emphasis on themes has obscured key aspects of Haydn’s treatment of the form. I argue that ultimately we must set aside the idea that sonata form is primarily “harmonic” or “melodic” and see instead that, for Haydn in any case, the interest lies in his confounding treatment of both.

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12 Ibid.

13 Mary Sue Morrow, “Haydn and the Analysis Wars: A View from the Sidelines,” *HAYDN: Online Journal of the Haydn Society of North America* 3.2 (Fall 2013). Morrow does not actually use the term “harmonists”; rather it is my own coinage in contrast with her term “melodists.”
We can see elements of a thematic focus articulated as early as 1793 in Heinrich Christoph Koch’s *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*. For Koch, the exposition—which he calls the “first section,” while the second section contains the development and recapitulation—“consists only of a single main period [*Hauptide*] and contains the plan of the symphony.”¹⁴ He continues:

Very often no formal phrase-ending is written until the rushing and sonorous phrases are exchanged for a more singing phrase, usually to be played with less force. Thus many such periods are found in which a formal phrase-ending is not heard until there has been a modulation into the most closely related key. [...] after the theme has been heard with another main phrase, the third such phrase usually modulates to the key of the fifth—in the minor mode also towards the third—in which the remaining sections are presented, because the *second and larger half of this first period* is devoted particularly to this key.¹⁵

This same conception of sonata form is explicated even more thoroughly in the third volume of Adolf Bernhard Marx’s highly influential *Die Lehre von der musikalischen Komposition*, first published in 1845. Marx graphically represents the first part (i.e., the exposition) of the sonata form as consisting of a main phrase (*Hauptsatz*), secondary phrase (*Seitensatz*), open-ended passage (*Gang*) and closing phrase (*Schlusssatz*).¹⁶ In his later explanation, he breaks his discussion into three parts: “the main phrase,” “the progression to the secondary phrase” and “the further progress of the first part.”¹⁷

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¹⁷ In the volume three of first edition, these sections begin on pages 248, 259 and 272 respectively.
draws on a very limited repertoire, as Scott Burnham observes: “[Marx's] nearly exclusive use of Beethoven’s piano sonatas as models for his discussion illustrates his belief that sonata form found its highest realization in the hands of Beethoven.”\(^\text{18}\) Similarly, Larsen writes that the “over-emphasis on dualistic form” is much more characteristic of Mozart.\(^\text{19}\) In both cases, Haydn’s works are on the periphery. In this article, I place Haydn’s own expositions front and center, and seek to derive conclusions directly from the works themselves, rather than trying to fit them into a pre-existing theory derived primarily from other composers.

**III. The Medial Caesura (MC)**

Central to Hepokoski and Darcy’s *Elements of Sonata Theory* is an extensive theorization of the principal dividing point in the exposition, the “medial caesura” or MC, which they define as “the brief, rhetorically reinforced break or gap that serves to divide an exposition into two parts.”\(^\text{20}\) Since their initial publication on this concept in 1997, it has gained a degree of currency in the literature.\(^\text{21}\) It is such a key concept for them that they recommend beginning the analysis of any exposition by locating the MC. “Productive analyses,” they write, “often start in the middle of the exposition and work outward to the beginning and the end.”\(^\text{22}\) Beginning with the identification of the MC allows the analyst to classify the exposition as either of two types: the two-part exposition or the continuous exposition, which lacks “a successfully articulated medial caesura.”\(^\text{23}\)

\(^{18}\) Burnham, *Musical Form*, 91.

\(^{19}\) Larsen, “Sonata Form Problems,” 9.


\(^{21}\) For example, the work of Suurpää, the Graves, MacKay and Richards.


\(^{23}\) Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 23.
They go on to clarify that the MC is not merely a single event but rather the culmination of a process, consisting of six discrete parts. While not every MC will be preceded by all six events, the more there are, the stronger the MC. The six-part sequence is as follows:

1. Structural dominant attained, often through chromatic (4♯–5♯, or less commonly 3♯–4♯–5♯) motion in the bass;
2. Dominant prolongation;
3. “Unflagging drive” (i.e., no energy reduction or dynamic attenuation);
4. “Hammer-blows,” often three;
5. General pause (GP) with or without “caesura-fill”;
6. Drop to piano and the launching of a characteristic secondary theme, or ‘S’ in their terminology.  

As one of their “unequivocal examples” of the medial caesura, Hepokoski and Darcy give the first movement of Haydn’s Symphony No. 104 in D major (see Ex. 1 for an annotated reduction). The structural dominant setup (Event 1) occurs in bars 57–58 (4♯–5♯ in the bass), leading to dominant prolongation (Event 2, bars 58–61), energy is maintained (Event 3) through bars 62–63, and three “hammer blows” (Event 4, bars 64–65) lead to a three beat grand pause in bar 65 (Event 5). A drop to piano follows with the articulation of the second theme (Event 6, bar 66), which in this case begins as a transposition of the principal theme.

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24 In Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, these six events are examined in considerable detail over a total of seven pages, pp. 30–36. Here I have considerably shortened their descriptions, leaving out their disclaimers and clarifications. It is also worth noting here that in their original articulation of the medial caesura, in Hepokoski and Darcy, “The Medial Caesura and Its Role in the Eighteenth-Century Sonata Exposition,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 19 (1997), 124–25, they listed a total of seven events, a “dominant rearticulation” between events one and two listed here.
Example 1: Haydn, Symphony No. 104 in D, mvt. 1, bars 55–67 (annotated).

The composer has four different options (or “defaults” in Hepokoski and Darcy’s parlance) for the actual cadential moment of the MC proper: either a half cadence or a perfect authentic cadence in either the home key or the new key. However not all cadences are chosen with equal frequency; rather there is a series of default levels, in descending order of frequency:

1. First-Level Default: half cadence in the new key (V:HC or III:HC);
2. Second-Level Default: half cadence in the home key (I:HC or i:HC);
3. Third-Level Default: perfect authentic cadence in the new key (V:PAC or III:PAC); and
4. Fourth-Level Default: perfect authentic cadence in the home key (I:PAC or i:PAC).

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25 Hepokoski and Darcy clarify that a deceptive cadence (DC) followed by a general pause is not sufficient, since a DC cannot conclude a section. See “The Medial Caesura,” 123.
Hepokoski and Darcy say that the MC may fall anywhere between the 15% point in the exposition and 75% point, a very large range.\textsuperscript{26} Not surprisingly, cadences in the home key tend to occur earlier in the movement than cadences in the new key, and that the latter tend to be indicative of movements on a grander scale. They demonstrate this graphically, as reproduced in Figure 1, below. For the I:HC, they suggest a 15-45% range; for the V:HC they suggest a 25–50% (or “more rarely” 60%) range; and for the V:PAC they suggest a 50-70% (or “very rarely” 75%) range.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure1.png}
\caption{Hepokoski and Darcy, \textit{Elements of Sonata Theory}, Figure 3.2: Medial Caesura Placement.}
\end{figure}

\textbf{IV. The Corpus: Haydn’s String Quartets, Op. 33 and later}

Whereas Hepokoski and Darcy’s project is to discuss the sonata forms of the eighteenth century in general, my aim here is to explore in greater detail a much smaller corpus, restricted to a particular composer (Haydn), genre (string quartet) and time period (1781–99). For the present study, I analyzed all the movements in sonata form from

\textsuperscript{26} Hepokoski and Darcy, \textit{Elements of Sonata Theory}, 37, where they say “15 to 70 percent”, but cf. p. 39 where they say the V:PAC may, “very rarely” come as late as 75%.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 37, 39. They do not give a range for the fourth-level default, the I:PAC, and it is not represented graphically in their figure. Paul Wingfield, in particular, has criticized the scientific presentation of these figures without the clear presentation of data to back them up. “Given Sonata Theory’s emphasis on hierarchies of defaults,” he writes, “one would also expect at least some basic statistical analysis. An examination of modal frequency, standard deviation and regression, for example, would add much valuable definition to the bare percentages quoted with regard to the deployment of different types of medial caesura” (“Beyond ‘Norms and Deformations’,” 141).
Haydn’s string quartets Op. 33 and later, a total of 69 movements, noting the length of the exposition, beginning of the transition section, location and type of the medial caesura, beginning of the second theme and finally the beginning of the closing theme. My cue to begin with Op. 33 comes from Haydn himself: in a letter to Johann Caspar Lavater, a potential subscriber, he writes that these quartets are composed in “a new, quite special way, for I haven’t composed any for 10 years.”\textsuperscript{28} While Haydn may not have been referring to form with this comment, this point is a useful one for dividing earlier quartets (it had actually been nine years since Op. 20) from later ones in order to keep the present study more focused.\textsuperscript{29} Future work can undoubtedly expand on this methodology to make productive comparisons with other genres, and even other composers and time periods.

To show Haydn’s relative placement of the medial caesura within an exposition, I have constructed a series of boxplots. Rather than just showing the earliest and latest possible occurrences of the MC, these boxplots give a sense of the distribution of a series of data points (for an example, see Fig. 2). The “whiskers” of the plot, represented by dashed lines to the left and right of each box, extend respectively to the earliest (Min.) and latest (Max.) occurrences of the event in question. The thicker line in the middle of the box represents the median placement of the event (quartile 2, or Q2), while the left and right edges of the boxes represent the medians of the lower half (Q1) and upper half (Q3) of the observed event placement.

\textsuperscript{28} Quoted in Floyd Grave and Margaret Grave, The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 199.

\textsuperscript{29} In his dissertation, Alexander Ludwig begins with Op. 9 as a starting point for his analyses, omitting instead movements other than the first to keep his sample size more manageable. See “Three-Part Expositions in the String Quartets of Joseph Haydn,” (PhD diss., Brandeis University, 2010), 56–57.
Thus we see that each quartile of the boxplot—from Min. to Q1, from Q1 to Q2, from Q2 to Q3 and from Q3 to Max.—contains an equal share, one quarter (25%), of the observations. This means that the actual box itself contains 50% of the data, the left whisker contains the lower 25% and the right whisker contains the upper 25%. The boxplot is therefore an effective tool to visually represent a range of event occurrences, as in the case of the medial caesura. A long graph represents data that is very spread out (i.e. data with a high standard deviation); a short graph represents the opposite. Finally, the visual separation of the data into quartiles gives the reader a clear sense of where the majority of observations lie, while distinguishing outliers.

In the present corpus of 69 expositions, Haydn’s proportional use of the four MC options corresponds exactly with the order presented by Hepokoski and Darcy. As shown in Figure 3 below, Haydn uses the V:HC 64% of the time, nearly as often as the other options combined.30 He uses the I:HC with the next highest frequency, 26% of the time; and finally he uses the V:PAC the least frequently, only 10% of the time. In the present corpus, he never uses the fourth-level default, the I:PAC. Here the overall range for the placement of the medial caesura is from 25–63%, with a median of 45% and a standard deviation of 9.4—exactly as one would expect for a caesura that divides the exposition into two roughly equal parts.

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30 In this article, I follow Hepokoski and Darcy’s practice of grouping together the cadences by home key and new key, regardless of mode. Thus, I:HC and i:HC are grouped together under I:HC, III:HC and V:HC are grouped together under V:HC, and III:PAC and V:PAC are grouped together under V:PAC.
However, we can see that Haydn’s use of these three MC options shows a greater degree of variance, represented visually by the length of the boxplots, than that proposed by Hepokoski and Darcy, whose graph does not give a clear sense of the distribution of MC placements. The even shading of the lines in their graph (Figure 1), and their citing of ranges, suggest that the statistical likelihood of an MC occurring in a given part of the exposition increases uniformly toward the average occurrence. For the Haydn string quartet corpus, at least, we can see this is not the case. In fact, the median locations for both the V:HC and V:PAC are the same, at the 48% mark. We also see that the V:PAC occurs much earlier in the present corpus than in Hepokoski and Darcy’s. Figure 4 shows, further, that the upper half of the observations for both the V:HC and the V:PAC have the same overall range, although the variance differs. All of this to say that, while harmonic logic suggests that the V:PAC is likely to come later than the V:HC since it is a stronger articulation of the new key, at least for the present set of expositions this is not the case.
The next step in my analysis of this corpus was to identify the starting points of the transition (TR), second theme (S) and closing group (C); boxplots showing the distribution of these moments are given in Figure 5. My definitions of these moments correspond for the most part with those in sonata theory. The transition is the tonally open material following the tonally closed first group, and the median beginning point is at the 24% mark, though it can start much earlier, especially if it is of the “dissolving consequent” type, for which we only realize that we are in the transition once it is almost over. As to the nature of the Haydn’s second themes in sonata form movements, we need to keep a very open mind: he does, from time to time, present the stereotypical piano, cantabile theme, but just as often the second theme may be tonally unstable or virtuosic, rather than the more regular second themes observed, for example, in many Mozart works. In the present corpus, the median second theme initiation occurs at the 47% mark, just slightly after (by 2%) the median overall medial caesura placement.
In sonata theory, the moment of essential expositional closure (EEC), which concludes the second theme and initiates the closing zone (C), is “the first satisfactory perfect authentic cadence that proceeds onward to differing material.”\textsuperscript{31} However, in the analyses that follow, I often place the beginning of the closing zone somewhat later than Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata theory would dictate. In this way, I align myself more closely with the view articulated by William Caplin.\textsuperscript{32} For him, the closing material is not thematic in the same way that second theme material is; rather it is codetta-like: “the form-functional expression of these ideas is one of after-the-end.” As such, the median placement of the closing zone initiation is located at the 88% mark.

Having established these median points, one can then construct a kind of “ideal” or “average” exposition, as I have done in Figure 6. I hasten to add that this “ideal” is by no means a rule or a goal, but rather can provide a rough measure to indicate when Haydn departs substantially from his own norms for the placement of key expositional events. In constructing a hypothetical, but non-existent “average” exposition, I am using the same technique Ian Quinn has used in his study of melodic contour.\textsuperscript{33} Since it is impossible to identify any kind of prototypical exposition, as that would privilege one member of an identifiable group over the others, we must instead compare individual expositions to the aggregated characteristics of all of the expositions.

\begin{figure*}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure6.png}
\caption{The “Average” Haydn Two-Part Exposition.}
\end{figure*}

\textsuperscript{31} Hepokoski and Darcy, \textit{Elements of Sonata Theory}, 120.


Finally we can construct exposition timelines for the 50 two-part expositions in this corpus (72% of the total). In Table 1, the principal theme is indicated in orange and the transition follows it in yellow. The type of medial caesura in the exposition is given at the end of the yellow bar. The second theme is indicated in blue, followed by the closing zone in purple. The percentages printed on the bars themselves indicate the three beginning points: TR, S and C, and are printed for the convenience of the reader. The white gap between the end of TR, preceding the beginning of S, indicates the actual caesura gap, though this is often not a literal textural gap, instead we often find caesura fill. By representing a large amount of data in a graphical manner, one can easily notice trends and patterns. To give just one example, the relatively late starting point of the second group in four quartets in particular—Op. 50 no. 3/iv, Op. 54 no. 2/i, Op. 77 no. 1/ii and Op. 77 no. 2/i—immediately stands out. Of course, a significant degree of interpretation goes into compiling this data; as we will see below, determining where a given expositional event takes place can be complex and often there is no clear “right answer.” Nevertheless, taken as an aggregate, charts of this nature are useful.
Table 1: Haydn’s Two-Part Expositions, Op. 33 and later.

| 33/1/i (B-) | 33/1/iii (D+) | 33/3/i (C+) | 33/5/i (G+) | 33/6/i (D+) | 42/i (D-) | 42/iv (D-) | 50/2/i (C+) | 50/2/iv (C+) | 50/3/i (E+) | 50/3/iv (E+) | 50/4/i (F+) | 50/5/iv (F+) | 50/6/i (D-) | 50/6/iv (D+) | 54/1/i (G+) | 54/2/i (C+) | 54/3/i (E+) | 54/3/iv (E+) | 55/2/ii (F-) | 55/3/i (B+) | 55/3/iv (B+) | 64/1/i (C+) | 64/1/iv (C+) | 64/2/i (B-) | 64/2/iv (B-) | 64/3/i (B+) | 64/4/iv (G+) | 64/5/i (D+) | 64/6/i (E+) |
| 28% | 47% | 89% | 21% | 41% | 95% | 29% | 45% | 71% | 26% | 51% | 94% | 32% | 46% | 74% | 21% | 32% | 84% | 18% | 58% | 92% | 19% | 40% | 94% | 26% | 59% | 89% | 28% | 59% | 91% |
| 33% | 64% | 88% | 19% | 41% | 87% | 23% | 49% | 83% | 17% | 42% | 88% | 10% | 20% | 90% | 14% | 34% | 84% | 31% | 52% | 88% | 24% | 31% | 93% | 35% | 50% | 89% | 30% | 53% | 92% |
| 25% | 53% | 73% | 25% | 42% | 92% | 21% | 42% | 77% | 21% | 44% | 85% | 19% | 32% | 89% | 25% | 44% | 80% | 21% | 56% | 81% | 19% | 36% | 86% | 25% | 55% | 80% | 25% | 58% | 84% |
| 27% | 57% | 84% | 33% | 47% | 84% | 35% | 51% | 84% | 33% | 52% | 84% | 33% | 54% | 80% | 32% | 57% | 90% | 33% | 55% | 84% | 27% | 55% | 84% | 35% | 58% | 81% | 33% | 57% | 84% |
V. The Continuous Exposition

In “Sonata Form Problems,” Larsen states unequivocally that the “notion of monopolization by this form,” namely the division of an exposition into two parts, is “absolutely untenable.”34 As an equally valid alternative, Larsen articulates a “three-part, rather than two-part, division of the exposition”, proceeding as follows: tonic region–tonic-dominant transition–dominant region. I would note, however, that his

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formulation does not so much contradict the two-part (or four-part) division of the exposition, but rather reframes it. In place of two main sections defined primarily by their thematic contrast, he foregrounds tonal organization, elevating the mere “bridge passage” of his axiom into a free-standing modulatory section. To use Morrow’s framing of this debate, such an argument would place Larsen among the “harmonists.”

However, the examples given by Larsen that are all drawn from Haydn first movements show a rather different proportional arrangement (see Table 2) than Koch’s “second and larger half” in the new key. In all three cases, the tonic-dominant transition section is the largest; in the first two cases, it is nearly a majority of the exposition. Reading between the lines, I would suggest that it was less Larsen’s goal to articulate two different kinds of expositions, but rather to suggest that for the later eighteenth century, it was more appropriate to view the exposition fundamentally in light of its tonal framework. It is in this way that he seeks to reorient scholarship towards analysis of “the parts and their sequence” [die Teile und ihre Abfolge], rather than just the “dynamic undulations” [dyamische Wellen] or “curve of progression” [Verlaufskurve]. In so doing, Larsen is advocating not that we add an additional category to our sonata form analyses, but that if we view the forms of this time through a primarily tonal lens, the whole problem of finding a satisfactory second theme in a work like the Symphony No. 97 simply vanishes. However, we must balance the “competing claims of harmony and melody” described by Morrow. Neither melody nor harmony is superior in defining expositional structure; both must play an equal role.

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36 Michelle Fillion applies this same approach to Haydn’s piano sonatas and classified every exposition as either two-part or three-part with expansion section, placing around 30% of expositions in the latter category. She noted further that this phenomenon occurs with roughly the same frequency throughout Haydn’s compositional career. See “Sonata Exposition Procedures in Haydn’s Keyboard Sonatas,” in *Haydn Studies*, ed. Jens Peter Larsen, et al. (New York: Norton, 1981), 475–81.

Having laid out the theoretical background for the continuous exposition, I move now to more detailed analysis. In the present corpus of 69 string quartet movements, I have identified 14 (28.8%) examples of the continuous exposition, which match the proportions identified by Larsen (see Table 3). The next step in the analysis, as in the case with the two-part expositions above, is to plot Haydn’s placement of the two key events in a continuous exposition: the beginning and end of the region of tonic-dominant transition, or expansion section. In this corpus, the median beginning point is at the 35% mark of the exposition and the median ending point is at the 83% mark (Figure 7). However, the boxplots show a fairly significant variance. As before, we can use these median proportions to construct an “average” continuous exposition (Figure 8), which shows that the median length of the middle expansion section is 48% of the total length of the exposition. This happens to match exactly two of Larsen’s three examples, given in Table 2 above.
Table 3: Haydn’s Continuous Expositions, Op. 33 and later.

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Figure 7: Haydn’s Placement of Exposition Events in Continuous Expositions.

Figure 8: The “Average” Haydn Continuous Exposition.
To demonstrate with perhaps the clearest example of continuous exposition to be found in Haydn’s quartets, I turn to the fourth movement of Op. 33 no. 1 in B minor (see Example 2). After a short first group ending with a perfect authentic cadence (PAC) in bar 12, there begins a cadentially-undifferentiated paragraph, which lasts, through sheer force of energy, until the PAC in D major (III:PAC) in bar 51. A circle of fifths does lead to bass motion from A (V/III) to D (III) in bars 25–27, but one does not hear this moment as cadential given that the sequential material in the violin simply keeps going, moving up by step instead of by fifth. Likewise, there is a change of thematic content in bar 31, but it is not accompanied by a change of texture: the repeated eighths from the second violin continue in the viola and cello; the melody remains in the first violin, in the same range. The desynchronization of these two events leads us to the impression of a continuous section. In bar 51 when the cadence in the mediant finally arrives, we are more than four-fifths (83%) through the exposition, far too late for the initiation of the second group, which, as we have seen, typically happens around the halfway mark. A twelve-bar closing group, containing three authentic cadences, begins at this point, confirming the modulation and concluding the exposition. It is no coincidence that this is the fourth movement of the quartet: Haydn tends to compose both in a lighter mood and with less formal predictability in final quartet movements.

A somewhat more complicated example is found in the fourth movement of Op. 64 no. 3 in B-flat major (see Example 3). It begins with a breathless opening ten-bar (4 + 6) phrase, followed by an apparent consequent phrase which begins over a tonic pedal in bar 11, but it dissolves after eight bars into the transition section based upon the galloping sixteenth motive from the principal theme. The first significant dominant arrival is in bar 25 (31%, roughly the one-third mark of the exposition), after only six bars, setting up the possibility of a I:HC medial caesura. However, it is prolonged using neighbor-note motion until bar 33 when it veers off course and lands on C major, V/V, in bar 35. This moment could perhaps be a reasonable candidate for a V:HC MC, except that there is no caesura and the half cadence itself fails to materialize. This V/V is prolonged for four bars, again through neighbor-note motion, moving to V$_3$/V in bar 39.
Example 3: Haydn, Op. 64 no. 3, mvt. 4, bars 1–79.
In bars 40–46, for the third time in the movement, Haydn again prolongs the dominant, with neighbor-note motion in the inner voices and pedals in the outer, in repeated two-bar units, as the music gradually fades away into pianissimo by bar 44. By bar 46, the demand for a cadence has become very strong, and though the 58% mark is past the median MC location, a V:HC or V:PAC is not out of the question. Instead, though, the V₃ slides into A-flat major (locally ♭III), an example of what Tovey has called a “purple patch.” C major (as dominant of F major) is re-attained in bar 53 and prolonged for six bars; the final bar, had it occurred earlier in the exposition, could conceivably have functioned as a medial caesura. However, positioned as it is at the 73% point in the exposition, it is too late to initiate a second group. Sure enough, our suspicions are confirmed when the structural cadence comes only eight bars later in bar 67. Thus this exposition is of the “three-part with expansion section” type: tonic (bars 1–18), modulatory/expansion (bars 19–66) and dominant (bars 67–79).

For the third example in this category, I turn to the slow movement of a later quartet, Op. 76 no. 4 (see Example 4). This movement presents many challenges to the analyst, indeed Floyd and Margaret Grave label it “problematic structurally,” but go on to say that “the fact that the movement confounds simple stereotypes need hardly interfere with our appreciation of its satisfying coherence.” Even the boundaries of the exposition are unclear: the final cadence in bar 30 is elided with the beginning of the development. Of course, being a slow movement, we cannot expect it to adhere to the conventions developed in first-movement allegros, but the juxtaposition nevertheless proves informative. The melody presented in bars 1–2 of the exposition forms the motivic basis of the entire exposition: four quarter notes followed by an accented off-the-beat half note. The opening phrase closes on a I:PAC in bar 8, and it is answered by an equally regular eight-bar phrase, closing on a I:PAC in bar 16 (the 55% mark). The destabilizing of the harmonic language at this point inaugurates what appears to be a transition, but a MC-candidate never materializes: indeed, the next cadence is the

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elision into the development. So we are faced with two possible options: either the I:PAC in bar 16 was the MC after all, and the movement has no transition section, only a harmonically-unstable second theme, or we an exposition consisting only of principal theme and expansion section. Although I have opted for the latter in placing the movement in Table 3, we can see that the confounding of simple stereotypes leads to a greater appreciation of the movement.

VI. Two-Part Expositions without Medial Caesura

According to Hepokoski and Darcy’s sonata theory, the presence of a medial caesura is absolutely necessary to initiate the secondary theme (S). “If there is no MC,” they say, “there can be no S.” They continue on to say that “if there is no medial caesura, we are confronting not a two-part exposition but a continuous exposition for which the concept of S is inappropriate.” However, as soon as they have articulated this rule, they note that there are exceptions. They cite the example of the finale of Beethoven’s eighth symphony: the transition goes off the rails and “cannot accomplish the articulation of the MC.” Yet we still recognize that the “contrasting S breaks unmistakably”, but in the wrong key (♭III), which eventually “smooths out” into the expected dominant.

Hepokoski and Darcy have said that “a self-evident S that is not prepared by a clear MC (and that must be judged as an S for other compelling reasons) should be regarded as both highly unusual and deformational.” In a recent article in this journal, Alexander Ludwig has strenuously argued that “despite [Hepokoski and Darcy’s] protestations, the term ‘deformation’ carries a distinct connotation of abnormality...” Mozart, he says, figures much more prominently in their work than both Haydn and Beethoven combined, which has the effect of rendering Haydn the “deformation” of Mozart’s “norms.” I concur with Ludwig that we must “extract the concept of ‘deformation’ from the theory entirely and exchange it for a lower-level default.” Only in so doing can we consider Haydn’s music on the same terms as Mozart's. Indeed, he says, this only strengthens sonata theory, since “sonatas exist in a dialogue with compositional norms.”

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39 Hepokoski and Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory*, 52, 117. They use exactly the same phrase in “The Medial Caesura,” 122, where it is entirely in italics for emphasis.


Of the sixty-eight expositions surveyed in this article, I identified four (or 5.9%) as examples of this phenomenon: movements with clear second theme initiations but lacking medial caesuras (see Table 4). Thus, to adopt Ludwig’s suggested terminology, we might say that the first-level default is for the second theme to be initiated with a medial caesura, but that less commonly, albeit a significant number of times, Haydn adopts the second-level default of skipping the MC altogether, skipping straight into the second theme. I would suggest that this is a clear example in which an understanding of the compositional norm serves to place the exception into dialogue with a network of expectations. The principal, and perhaps most effective, manner (one of the “other compelling reasons” implied above) in which Haydn articulates this is through the use of main-theme transposition (MTT), as we see in the two following examples.

Table 4: Haydn’s Two-Part Expositions without Medial Caesuras, Op. 33 and later.

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The first movement of Op. 55 no. 1 in A major (see Example 5) is the clearest example of the absent medial caesura preceding the initiation of the second group in this corpus. The initiation of the transition section in bar 12 foreshadows the cadential play that is to come later in the exposition, at the start of the second group: namely the eighth-note rest in the cello on the downbeat weakens the arrival. This off-beat gesture, an alternation by semitone, dominates the transition section here, and is the catalyst for the introduction of the first D♯ (♯4^) in bar 16 (and again in bars 18 and 22 in the second violin). However, I must emphasize that this occurs on rather than in the dominant: what began as an alternation between 1^ and 7^ is simply transposed to 5^ and 4^. In fact, when the alternating-semitone motive returns in the second violin in bar 22, it is even over a tonic harmony. D^9 returns to the cello in bar 25 (see Example 6), leading to
a deceptive gesture on the downbeat of the following bar.\textsuperscript{43} The expected cadence having not materialized, the drive continues: I\textsuperscript{6} (bar 27) – ii\textsuperscript{6} (bar 28) – V\textsuperscript{6}/V (bar 29, beat 3) – vii\textsuperscript{o6}/V (bar 29, beat 4, the first D\# in the dominant).\textsuperscript{44}

Having perceived at least one "failure to cadence," the listener's cadential expectations are especially high at this point, the drive to the cadence having begun at least eleven bars earlier. In the typical scenario, one would expect to encounter a half cadence in the tonic key (I:HC) with an E major chord (V) on the downbeat of bar 30, followed by a caesura. Haydn “writes over” this expectation: when the expected E major arrives, it is accompanied with a near-exact repeat of first-theme material, transposed into the dominant. Our initial impression is that this music is on rather than in the dominant, but the MTT encourages us to hear this rather as “theme,” and it quickly becomes evident that the E major chord in bar 29 was a pivot modulation, not simply a tonicization. So it is clear that there is no caesura here whatsoever, as the earliest moment it could have occurred is bar 30, and one cannot dismiss the theme as “mere caesura-fill.” It is perhaps possible to think of bar 30 as an elided I:HC, indeed in the tonic key it is. From the perspective of the new key though, it is an IAC, V\textsuperscript{6} to I. Hepokoski and Darcy identify precisely this situation as an MC-deformation, but for me this obscures the point. To call an absent medial caesura a “deformation,” especially when the theoretical concept is foreign to Haydn, seems to obscure more than it reveals.\textsuperscript{45}

The first movement of Op. 64 no. 4 in G major (Example 7) exemplifies the fairly common occurrence of a transition section immediately following a 4 (antecedent)+4 (consequent) first group. Haydn uses the cadential-confirmation figure from bar 4 for the cadence in bar 8, and then as the bass line (in the first violin!) to initiate the

\textsuperscript{43} This deceptive gesture results from the strong 4\textsuperscript{\#}–5\textsuperscript{\#}–6\textsuperscript{\#} in the bass. The actual harmonies are ii\textsuperscript{o6} → vii\textsuperscript{o6}/IV → IV\textsuperscript{o}, and thus if this is even a cadence at all, it is extremely weak.

\textsuperscript{44} The ii\textsuperscript{6} harmony continues right through the first two beats of bar 29. The diminished seventh with which it briefly alternates is the fullest expression of the semitone alternation gesture first seen in bar 12.

\textsuperscript{45} Hepokoski and Darcy, \textit{Elements of Sonata Theory}, 49.
transition in bars 8–9. Recalling the first movement of Op. 50 no. 1, the first MC candidate comes very early, a mere 7 bars later. On beats 3 and 4 of bar 13, we see the canonical bass line progression: \(4\tilde\#4\tilde5\), harmonized as \(ii^6-vii^6/V-V\). Thus begins stage one of the MC-candidate, the dominant lock on the downbeat of bar 14. This harmony is prolonged into bar 15 through the use of the first-theme motive in the second violin and cello, under virtuosic arpeggiated figuration in the first violin. On the third beat of bar 15, the prominent \(g''\), metrically accented and the highest pitch in this passage, strongly suggests the conversion of this harmony into \(V^7\); the \(g'\) in the second violin, resolving down by step to \(f'\), confirms this suspicion. What was initially set up as a half cadence has instead been converted into a \(V:PAC\) on the downbeat of bar 16, and an elision into a MTT. As we saw in Ex. 5, the theme is exactly transposed and accompanied by the same figuration as in bar 1, which strongly encourages one to hear this as S. Again, there is no caesura present here, nor does the proposed half cadence materialize.

How one hears this passage hinges on the interpretation of bars 14–15. If, despite the clear seventh and the motivic significance of the material, one hears a half cadence followed by two bars of caesura fill, this could well be the medial caesura. I, for one, am not convinced. Perhaps one alternate option would be to hear the caesura happening after the downbeat of bar 15, the \(V^7\) on beat 3 acting as two-beat anacrusis. This reading certainly requires some interpretive license, given that the dominant harmony never ceases, and the second beat of the bar is filled by an arpeggio on the dominant. Ludwig identifies bar 16 as the beginning of the expansion section in a three-part exposition.46 However, the real point here is that Haydn is clearly playing against our expectation of a medial caesura at this moment. I agree with Ludwig that we ought to avoid the term “MC-deformation” in this situation, but we still must recognize ambiguity inherent in the setting up of a caesura that never materializes.

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46 Ludwig, “Three-Part Expositions,” 120.
Example 7: Haydn, Op. 64 no. 4, mvt. 1, bars 1–38.

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VII. Conclusion

In the above discussion, we have seen that the attempt to clearly classify Haydn’s sonata form expositions can obscure more than it reveals. The only characteristic one may take for granted is the modulation to the new key. In other words, rather than by “melodic” or “rhetorical” form—a form in which thematic contrast is the primary aim—all of Haydn’s expositions can be understood through tonal form: a mandatory section beginning and ending in the tonic (I–I); an optional section beginning in the tonic and ending in the new key (I–x); and a mandatory section beginning and ending in the new key (x–x). Stated in this neutral way, one avoids the issues inherent in attempting to locate articulation points between first group, transition, second group and closing. Yet this should not be read to diminish the important role of thematic details and rhetorical function in these compositions. In fact, it is through the overlay of themes upon tonal dispositions that Haydn creates meaning and interest in the compositions. Through the alignment (or lack thereof!) of these two features (and many others, of course), Haydn meets or thwarts listener expectations. Often we realize a section’s significance only after it has passed; closing groups exemplify this.

My primary focus in this article, however, is methodological. I have sought to be clear and transparent in my use of data derived directly from a well defined corpus. In this way, my study represents a preliminary step; further work would expand the corpus to include additional genres and composers, as well as look for other formal features. While specific examples of musical phenomena are required, they must also be grounded in a broader overview of generic characteristics.

In summary, both the interrelationship between medial caesura and second group initiation and the dividing line between two-part and continuous expositions, are often more complex in Haydn than the norms and types of sonata theory allow—his works therefore end up classified as “deformations.” Sonata theory then, perhaps in striving to be too regulative and descriptive, ends up preserving that familiar value judgment, which finds some sort of flaw in Haydn’s music because it fails to conform with later
theory. It is useful to articulate listener expectations, but theorists must use caution about the source of these expectations. In this article I have aimed to compare Haydn with himself, in a specific repertoire, and in a manner that strives to be neutral and objective. Through further such focused study, our appreciation of his complex approach to eighteenth-century convention will continue to grow.

VIII. Works Cited


Webster, James. “Sonata Form.” *Grove Music Online*.