A MULTITHREADED ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO FATE AND LEGACY IN MANUEL M. PONCE'S VARIATIONS SUR "FOLIA DE ESPAÑA" ET FUGUE

A Thesis
Submitted to the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree MASTER OF MUSIC

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ABSTRACT

Multithreading, or applying different analytical tools to a piece or work concurrently in order to produce an ultimate deduction. In this presentation, the author analyzes Manuel Ponce’s Variations sur “Folia de España” et Fugue, a sophisticated amalgamation of German counterpoint and French harmony, infused with Spanish music. Utilizing analytical tools such as Sonata theory, Schenkerian analysis, and Hermeneutic discourse, this analysis provides insight into the ways multithreading can produce a holistic analysis without being too broad or narrow.

The author first applies a narrative to Ponce’s work, and proposes that its various tonal areas and orchestration are in dialogue with sonata form. The author then uses Schenkerian graphs to support this hypothesis by mapping out the piece’s harmonic landscape and identifying correlations between thematic areas at the deep middleground level. An underlying narrative regarding D minor’s role in the struggle between fate and free will in the piece is discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my classical guitar teacher, Allen Krantz, for introducing me to the music of Manuel Ponce and always encouraging me to better myself. I would also like to thank Dr. Barrón for accepting to act as an advisor to me for this thesis. I am fortunate and honored to have worked with such a brilliant scholar and musician. Most important, I would like to thank Dr. Latham. He challenged me to work hard and he always made time for my questions . . . all of them. A special thank you to Rebecca Boyle for all the graphs she illustrated so masterfully for me. Finally, I would like to thank the entire faculty at Temple University for their support and kindness. Each professor has made an impact on me, and I desire to pursue a career in music theory because of them.
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CHAPTER 1  
THE HUMAN SPIRIT

The human spirit is powerful. It is an ineffable and unpredictable concept—a concept because it is ineffable, ineffable because it is so unpredictable. The human spirit allows us to defy our instincts and make decisions, be they logical or irrational. It is how humans not only endure but innovate and thrive. The human spirit is important to our existence for reasons beyond our comprehension, so much so that even winning a war can depend on it.¹ But what about the antithesis to the human spirit? Something that denies us our will? An antithesis to spirit that destroys nations, cultures, art, and time—something that undoes everything we worked for and believed in?

Fate

Fate shares in the conceptual status of human spirit as it, too, is an idea. It can be seen as a whimsical stroke of luck or the direst of consequences. Regardless of circumstance, it is simply beyond our control. Of course, as with any rule set before humankind, we will challenge it. Had he been warned of his fate, Sisyphus would still have tricked the gods. This is where the two ideas clash.

¹ In battle strategy, various facets of morale play into strategizing: fighting conditions, dynamic leadership, unified vision, and even cultural upbringing, i.e., the Romans having a penchant for victory. Conversely, shaking the enemy’s morale can be vital to strategy. Take, for instance, the Persians using cats, the sacred figures of Egypt, against the Egyptian army in the battle of Pelusium.
If we, as humans, are told we are incapable, we will try and find a way to become capable; in that sense, the human spirit triumphs in pure retaliation. But fate triumphs when we make it a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The *Folia* theme may be perceived as a testament of human spirit. The adaptation and creation of a theme that has endured the test of time. Its mysterious melody and harmony, even in its simplest form, inspires a rush of emotions. Several composers have expounded upon the *Folia* theme over the span of hundreds of years, a kind of musical “inheritance,” passed on from generation to generation, era to era—a testament to the human spirit in its perseverance. But what if the theme is more than an inheritance? What if it is more akin to fate?

**Sonatas, Dialogues, and Labeling**

Theme-and-variation form enables composers to focus their concentration on one fragment of music and develop it in myriad ways. The compositional thought process behind a carefully constructed theme-and-variations is vast and deeply rooted in creativity. To take a singular idea and expand and contract that idea to its limits in diverse manners is nothing short of awe-inspiring—it is akin to a still-life painting, in that the artist must consider their subject using different angles, lighting, and filters.

Of course, form and construction take a back seat to the music as it unfolds in time during a performance, but they are noteworthy for the listener and
performer, nonetheless. I imagine that a composer constructs a landscape of the whole piece before they proceed to the “putting dots on paper” bit. Taking Manuel Ponce’s *Variations sur “Folia de España” et Fugue* as an example, is it not conceivable, then, that Ponce wanted to provide a clear introduction and, once the audience had latched onto the theme, a departure from the now-familiar theme and subsequently a recapitulation? If he was meticulously mindful of his harmonies and motives, why would he neglect the form? This led me to consider a larger question: how are all the variations related? I found the piece’s key scheme suspiciously similar to that of a traditional sonata form.

Please note the word “similar” in the previous sentence. Not all aspects of the variations can be made to fit into the academic definition of sonata form. There are parallels that occur, but along with the parallels come some discrepancies. This does not rule out that the possibility that the overarching form may be in dialogue with sonata form. While sonata form contains certain characteristics, tropes, and expectations, a piece in sonata form rarely exhibits all the aforementioned qualifiers in practice. Sonata form is, therefore, in a constant state of flux, and its parameters are continuously being questioned and reconsidered. Analyzing any bit of music in a manner that pedantically tries to confine it in the straitjacket of a textbook definition would be unfortunate, and possibly detrimental to interpretation and understanding. Likewise, if Ponce had composed the variations in a manner that obeyed *every* characteristic of sonata
form, the work would most likely have been predictable, uninspiring, and banal. As an aside, it would be foolish to classify all tripartite forms as sonata forms; nonetheless, this particular work’s overarching form operates in partial accordance with the sonata principle. I could call the overarching form a “quasi-sonata,” or “sonata-like,” but James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy write that pieces or works that share these qualities with sonata forms are “in dialogue with” Sonata forms.

In any adequate genre-based analysis, the goal must not be merely to identify patterns and to assign labels to them . . . Under no circumstances should an analysis seek to normalize unusual occurrences and anomalies . . . Rather, in confronting potentially ambiguous situations—and sonatas are filled with them—the proper goal of analysis is to explicate the ambiguities, to reawaken the strains and uncertainties within the text, not to suppress them or filter them out . . . The goal of analysis must never to be to explain away the difficulties of a musical work but rather to call forth a work’s problems, tensions, and larger implications.2

My goal for this analysis is to synthesize forms of analysis to contribute to the meaning and interpretation of Ponce’s Variations sur “Folia de España” et Fugue. I call this synthesis “multithreaded analysis.” Multithreading, in computer terms, is defined as: “the execution of multiple parts of a program concurrently

(or apparently concurrently) by the use of multiple processors or by switching rapidly between the parts. Also: a technique whereby several processors can access or operate on the same data concurrently without interference.”3 So, why raise the question of sonata form in Ponce’s piece and what does it matter? I am not trying to argue about how forms should or should not act, nor am I trying to confine Ponce’s music into any one form. This twenty-plus-minute monothematic work can tax both the performer and the listener. This analysis is meant to be subservient to the music, audience, and performer, in that it clarifies what Ponce constructed, how he constructed his Folia, and how all the variations are connected and necessary in order to achieve cohesion. To reiterate, the form itself, while identified as a theme and variations, is in dialogue with sonata form. I will use Schenkerian theory to further examine this dialogue and will apply a discourse to it all. Let us begin, shall we?

3 Definition sourced from The Oxford English Dictionary.
CHAPTER 2
A LITTLE BACKGROUND

In 1929, classical guitar maestro Andres Segovia wrote the following request to Manuel Ponce:

I want you to write some brilliant variations for me on the theme of the Folias de España, in D minor, and which I am sending you a copy of from a Berlin manuscript. In a style that border between the Italian classicism of the 18th century and the dawning of German romanticism. I ask you this on my knees . . . If you do not want to sign your name to it, we will assign it to Giuliani, from whom there are many things yet to discover, and from whom they have just given me a manuscript in Moscow. I want this work to be the greatest piece of that period, the pendant [i.r., counterpart] of those of Corelli for violin on the same theme.4

As we familiarize ourselves with the work, which was published by Schott in 1932, we find that Ponce does not firmly adhere to Segovia’s instructions. His departure from the requested style was not out of incompetence—Ponce composed multiple suites in the Germanic, contrapuntal style. In fact, he was so good at composing in learned style that he fooled publishers, audiences, and academics.

Ponce is often categorized as a “late Romantic.” However, his compositional styles vary from baroque, folk music, Spanish and French styles, to

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4 Andres Segovia and Manuel Ponce, The Segovia-Ponce Letters (Columbus, 1989), 50.
post-tonal styles. Labeling a composer with such a title as “late Romantic” seems like a blatant disregard for the composer’s *oeuvre*, and even like it is out of utter laziness. Regarding this specific label, Hepokoski writes:

This ‘generation of the 1860’s’ included, most prominently, Richard Strauss, Mahler, Debussy, Elgar, Sibelius, Nielsen and Glazunov, all of whom began to establish their careers in the late 1880s and 1890s. The strongly personalised styles within this group could hardly be more distinct from one another. Nevertheless, these styles were all individualised solutions to the problem of seeking to fashion a marketable voice within the ‘idealistic’ tradition in an urban age in which such earlier aesthetic convictions were rapidly decaying away. That these composers thought of themselves as the first modernists—as something of a youth movement, not as ‘late romantics’—has now been clearly established. The pejorative label ‘late Romanticism’ (or ‘post-Romanticism’), with its faded, pressed-flower connotations, was a polemical term of reproach affixed to them only by the next generation of high modernists, supporters of the dissonant ‘new music’ in the years before and after the First World War.5

The moniker “late Romantic” was and still is detrimental to the composers classified as such—I agree with Hepokoski on that score. Moreover, while the label itself is inaccurate, the term “modernist” is also flawed, since the steady march of time gradually transforms the new into old. The composers in that awkward period were transitional, but more than mere links between eras. If the

growing pains of extending tonality whilst adhering to Classical, Romantic, and even Baroque standards are ever-present in their compositions, their voices, reflecting the social, cultural, economic, and industrial revolutions of that time, are clearly heard, as well. This period of music history may be considered the Beam Sea\textsuperscript{6} era. In nautical terms, the least ideal placement of a ship is parallel to the shoreline, or beam sea.\textsuperscript{7} It is a position that leaves the ship vulnerable, as it maximizes the percentage of the ship bearing the most resistance from both waves and current. It is an unavoidable position, though, as the ship must turn whilst docking or departing. Composers such as Ponce, Liszt, and even Stravinsky bridged the gap from the Romantic to “Post-Tonal” eras. Composers of this beam-sea era should never be discounted or discredited, nor should their works be overlooked in the study of harmony and history.

We will encounter several adaptations of forms and harmonies of times past in Ponce’s \textit{Folia} variations. I strive to get the point across that the \textit{Folia} theme is a harbinger of new eras—a traditional progression that acts as a litmus test of its time. We, as observers and analysts of music and history can acquire a

\textsuperscript{6} Thank you to Dan Carlin and his podcast \textit{Hardcore History}. In his podcast, he aptly applies the nautical term “beam sea” to describe the lost generation having to adapt to the technological innovations into battle strategy during World War I.

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Merriam-Webster Dictionary} defines “beam sea” as: “a sea whose surface motion is approximately at a right angle to the course of the vessel.”
sense of that time, its forerunners, and what is to come by examining this traditional theme’s various interpretations.
CHAPTER 3
THE WORK

“Und gibt’s sein Mittel, ein erloschnes ich zu neuen Licht. Zu neuem Leben zu erwecken, Tod--?”

“O Death, is there no way to awaken to new life, a life that’s been extinguished?”

A sonata deformation is an individual work in dialogue primarily with sonata norms even though certain central features of the sonata-concept have been reshaped, exaggerated, marginalised, or overridden altogether. What is presented on the musical surface of a composition (what one hears) may not be a sonata in any ‘textbook’ sense, and yet the work may still encourage, even demand, the application of one’s knowledge of traditional sonata procedures as a rile for analysis and interpretation.

As previously discussed, I believe the work is in dialogue with sonata form. While there is no proof that Ponce intended the work to be perceived as such, nor that he intentionally laid out the work with that form in mind, he was certainly conscious of his decisions, and the order of the keys in the piece’s harmonic landscape was not arbitrary. This particular landscape of keys, with its constant returns to D minor, is reminiscent of the 1921 film Der Müde Tod, in which an anthropomorphic Death-figure takes the beloved of the movie’s heroine. She then seeks out Death and begs for her beloved’s return to the realm of the

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8 Der müde Tod. Directed by Fritz Lang. Germany: Decla-Bioscop AG, 1921. Translated by the author.
living. Death does not grant her wish but instead, allows her three attempts to alter fate. If she succeeds, her beloved will be brought back from the grave. Her task: prevent Death from taking only one of the three souls slated to die. She fails at each attempt, allowing fate to prevail; the inevitable remains inevitable. Could the *Folia* be more than a legacy? Could it represent inevitable fate? D minor, of course, is its principal harmony, but the piece always seems to try and undermine and stray away from it, only to return. Even the first iteration of the theme seems to struggle to maintain its tonic underpinnings. Let us analyze the work first, beginning with the figure seen below. Please note that, for the sake of avoiding monotony, some variations of the variations will not be discussed in this chapter.
Figure 1. Middleground and background of the entire work. Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
In Figure 1, we see that $\hat{3}$ is prolonged throughout the piece. Scale-degree $\hat{2}$ is a persistent lower neighbor and will act as a recurring middleground element known hereby as the “struggle motive,” along with the related lower-neighbor D–C# gesture. A skeletal outline of the piece’s formal design, elaborated in Figure 2, displays the workings similar to those of a sonata form, in that we begin in the minor tonic, proceed to the major dominant, explore different key areas, and recapitulate in the minor tonic, ending with a Picardy third.

*Figure 2. Variations in dialogue with sonata form.*

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11 Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
Schenkerian graphs strip away “decorative” tones, leaving only those “essential to the structure.” This endows the reader and analyst alike with the ability to see relationships and connections that may previously have been considered “clouded.” While I can prattle on about how the whole of the variations resembles a sonata form, if I cannot present hard and fast correlations between variations and the landmarks comprised in a sonata form, my argument is null. Schenkerian analysis is a tool that allows the reader to peek behind the curtain of a composition and see constructional landmarks. But Schenker graphs alone cannot support my argument. In my topical analysis, I will take to task the “orchestration” of the work and how it interacts with the variations to form a dialogue with sonata form. Music theorist Timothy Cutler states:

> Even toward the middle of the nineteenth century, one of the most important and obvious uses of orchestration—including textural, timbral, registral, and dynamic contrast—was to articulate structure. The most typical way that orchestration interacts with the exposition of a sonata form is to underscore the contrast between the first and second key area. Assuming that the movement is not monothematic, the way that a composer orchestrates (their) first and second themes is a crucial component in distinguishing the characters of the two themes.\(^\text{12}\)

Ponce’s *Variations sur “Folia de España” et Fugue* were composed around 1929-1930,\(^\text{13}\) while studying under the tutelage of French composer Paul

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Dukas. Orchestration was on his mind and the guitar is capable of several orchestral colors. Given Segovia’s acute awareness of the guitar’s broad palette of sound,14 Ponce must have taken cues from both sides, composing for an orchestra on a single instrument. Slonimsky points out: “In 1926, at the age of forty [44], he [Ponce] joined the class of Paul Dukas at the École Normale de Musique. He was profoundly impressed by Dukas’ ideas on free thematic development and orchestral color.”15 On his experience studying with Dukas, Ponce writes: “His course dealt with advanced composition and critical analysis of musical works. Seated in front of a piano, surrounded by his disciples, which made quite an international group, he corrected and criticized the most diverse works: a symphonic fragment, an excerpt for piano, a sonata, a fugue, a string quartet.”16 Ponce’s diverse use of tone colors, textures, and compositional techniques reveal the underlying form and structure of his piece. Moreover, the textural shifts align with sonata form tropes. Below, in Table 1, is the piece’s harmonic landscape in chronological order, including both notes on orchestration and incipits for each section. Note that the content in the “orchestration” columns are of the author’s

personal, subjective opinions of what instrumentation(s) Ponce may have been representing, if at all.
Table 1. Table of variations with the author’s suggested orchestrative styles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Orchestration</th>
<th>Sonata dialogue</th>
<th>Folia Ground Bass?</th>
<th>Incipit</th>
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<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Chorale</td>
<td>First Theme Area (FTA)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Lento</td>
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<tr>
<td>Var I</td>
<td>String quartet</td>
<td>False transition</td>
<td>Departs</td>
<td>Poco vivo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Var II</td>
<td>Solo violin</td>
<td>FTA continuation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Allegretto mosso</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Italian Courante style</td>
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<tr>
<td>Var III</td>
<td>Wind trio</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lento</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Operatic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Var IV</td>
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<td>Transition</td>
<td>Departs</td>
<td>Un po’ agitato</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Akin to Var. II of</td>
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<td>Beethoven’s Diabelli</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Musical notation]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Var VIII</td>
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<td>Begins on ground, but departs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Musical notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Var IX</td>
<td>Aria with accomp.</td>
<td>Ground bass in major, and allusion to minor in middle</td>
<td>Andantino affettuoso</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Var X</td>
<td>Vivacious guitar Akin to Corelli’s <em>Folia</em> variation XIII</td>
<td>Departs</td>
<td>Presto</td>
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<th>Var</th>
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<td>XIV</td>
<td>Bowed strings Akin to Corelli variation XX on the same theme</td>
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<td>XV</td>
<td>Corelli-like violin and keyboard trade-off in variations VI and VII</td>
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<td>XVI</td>
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**Symbols:**
- Andantino
- Animato
- Sostenuto
- Allegro non troppo
- Allegro moderato, energico
- Moderato
With the orchestration table and the table laying out how the variations interact with sonata form both in hand, we can now proceed to analyze the piece at a deeper level. I want to reiterate to the reader that not all aspects of the work
may adhere to sonata form—there will be rough patches and parts that are atypical to the form, and I want to reinforce the idea that the work is in dialogue with sonata form and may not meet all criteria. But what piece of music has ever met all criteria and stipulations of form? With that said, we shall begin our analysis on a deeper level.

The theme is a presentation of, well, the theme. In terms of the work’s compositional history, Segovia performed renditions of Ponce’s composition, but with a “theme not harmonized by Ponce.”17 The usual Folia progression is as follows: i-V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V-i.18 Ponce’s interpretation of the Folia theme (Figure 3) adds harmonic inflection that reflects the compositional language and style of his time.

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What is peculiar about Ponce’s theme is that the second harmony of the entire work is a French augmented-sixth chord. What is an augmented-sixth chord doing at the beginning of a work, instead of at one its structural cadences? The same chord progression appears frequently in the subsequent variations, so it is not simply a “throw-away” chord included only for surface effect. This striking chord relates not only forwards, emphasizing a movement toward the dominant, but also backwards—it is a direct reaction to the preceding harmony. The French 6th chord, while it distances itself from the initial tonic harmony, serves it still by leading to a dominant that will ultimately resolve back to the tonic. It is as if there is a duality—one involving fate (the key of D minor) and a force that is set on changing the course of fate. This is my point of departure for a comparison of aspects of agency in both the film *Der Müde Tod* and the *Folia* theme.

The grounding harmonic formula of Ponce’s *Folia*, i-Fr6-V-i-VII-III-ii-V-i [reduction], contains a wealth of developmental material which the composer can mine. For one thing, the harmonic motion from VII-III can be reinterpreted as the tonicizing progression V/III-III. Furthermore, as noted above, the immediate departure from the tonic has an air of defiance to it, as if the harmony wanted to quit D minor altogether, only to return and face its fate. Most significantly, the *Folia* progression mirrors a minor sonata form: a departure from the minor tonic

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19 One other occurrence of an augmented chord appearing in the beginning of a piece would be Felix Mendelssohn’s Piano Trio, op. 49, movement IV.
that transitions to the major mediant (the relative major), a brief development, and a retransition to the tonic—the whole world in a grain of sand.

The Theme is a straight-to-the-point, laconic utterance of the *Folia* theme—it contains an initial presentation of melodic material, a slightly altered reutterance of the same, and a cadence. This construction corresponds to music theorist William Caplin’s description of the main theme of a sonata form, or FTA (First Tonal Area), as “tight-knit.” “Tight-knit construction is characterized by harmonic-tonal stability, cadential confirmation, unity of melodic-motivic material, efficiency of functional expression, and symmetrical phrase groupings” (Caplin, 17). As we see in Figure 3, the theme meets most, if not all, of Caplin’s criteria. Aside from its various chromatic tones, the theme’s harmonic progression generates symmetrical 8-measure phrases, reinforced with D-minor cadences. Further, my graph reveals that despite minor variations during the repetition of the theme, Ponce uses the original harmonic progression of the *Folia*, solidifying and stabilizing the home key.

*Figure 4. Skeletal representation of Ponce’s theme. Ground Bass.*
In Figure 4, a skeletal outline of the theme reveals its bass ostinato, granting we exchange the latter 8-measure phrase’s register shift for its octave equivalent. The ostinato plays a role not only with regard to the piece’s sonata-form dialogue, but also in the orchestration of the work. First and foremost, the ostinato may serve as an analytical guidepost. Supporting the proposition that the work is indeed in dialogue with sonata form, its ground-bass underpinnings are present in the FTA, STA, and the recapitulatory variations reflecting the FTA and STA. Further, the “developmental” variations eschew or significantly distort the ostinato. This will be illustrated below, but let us first examine the foundations of the theme.
Figure 5. Ponce’s *Folia* theme, middleground and background.

Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
In Figure 5, the theme begins with an Anstieg, but a lower neighbor C# is visited before the melody can proceed. The melody climbs to $^\wedge 3$ and strives to remain there, struggling from mm. 5–13 to do so. The true struggle is in the bass, as it exceeds its original register of an octave, only to sink back down to its origins in defeat. The interruption in m. 8 is elided with a return to D minor, as the theme returns and reinitiates $^\wedge 3$.

The subsequent variation, variation I, acts as a false transitional section by straying away from D minor but leading to the real FTA in variation II. This is the first problem we encounter when analyzing the work. The key aspect of the theme is not its melody, as listeners might expect, but rather its ground bass. The melody is not what makes a Folia a Folia. It is a nice theme, and composers generally use it as a guideline to aid the listener, but the variations are subservient to the ground-bass pattern. The first variation diverges from the ground bass, creating a sequential variation instead. Could this be setting the tone of the work in some manner? Are the mediant relations and stepwise sequences foreshadowing what is to unfold? Regardless, the phrase structure and harmonies are “loose.” William Caplin writes: “Loose organization is characterized by harmonic-tonal instability, evasion or omission of cadence, diversity of melodic-motivic material, inefficiency or ambiguity of functional expression, and asymmetrical phrase
groupings (arising through extensions, expansions, compressions, and interpolations).”

In the first variation, we notice that the ground bass that was established as support for the theme is gone. Moreover, the harmony is governed by mediant relationships (e.g., D minor to F# minor in m. 2, F# minor to A# minor in m. 4), and a mediant relationship also initiates the descent in m. 5 (e.g., G minor down to B-flat major). The first phrase is seven measures long, followed by a twenty-one-measure phrase. The combination of lopsided phrase lengths and meandering, chromatic harmonies qualify this first variation as loose, constituting a departure from the FTA as a result. This is our second encounter with retaliation towards D minor by means of departure, and it is only the first variation! The ground bass is re-established in variation II (figure 6), and the key stabilized. The audience is now reintroduced to a reconfiguration of the initial theme.

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Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
Figure 7. Variation III. Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
As the reader can gather from looking at the graphs in Figures 6 and 7, the background structures of Variations II and III mirror the theme, the work’s initial FTA. Rhetorically, the return of the FTA from a variation-long digression mimics the struggle motive. Departing from D minor or the ground bass straightaway in the work is an act of resistance, but the resistance is followed by an immediate succumbing to its fateful origin, the FTA. Both variations II and III prolong $\hat{3}$, but in different manners. Variation II focuses on $\hat{3}$’s lower neighbor whereas $\hat{3}$ in variation III is prolonged with third-progressions (3-prgs).

In variations IV and V, we encounter transitory material, with heavy emphasis on moving away from the tonic harmony. Of transitions, Caplin writes “Standing between these two functions is the Transition, a themelike unit that destabilizes the home key and (usually) modulates to the subordinate key.”24 The variations are transitional in that they depart from the *Folia* ground bass. In variation IV, the bass effects this departure by means of mode-mixture (e.g., by replacing B-natural in m. 10 with B-flat). Moreover, it expands the melody to twice its original length.

Although it may be difficult to judge whether in a sonata exposition a given transition is more or less loose than a subordinate theme, the subsequent development section is almost always distinctly looser than any of the interthematic functions in the exposition. Indeed, a development combines

24 Caplin, *Classical Form*, 17.
harmonic-tonal instability with phrase-structural extensions and expansions to create the most loosely organized part of an entire sonata movement.\textsuperscript{25}

In variation V, the ground bass is forfeited for a heavily contrapuntal variation that includes a brief digression, or B section, starting in m. 11 and lasting until m. 24. The digression is quite shocking, as the assumed dominant, or A major, in m. 10 drives to a mediant-related C-sharp minor. Moreover, the bass moves in a more chromatic fashion.

In variation VI, we arrive at our second thematic area (STA), which is in A major, or V of the tonic. This may be considered a “wrench in the works” in claiming a dialogue with sonata form. The STA is expected to be set in major III (the relative major)—F major. Instead, Ponce uses the major dominant key of D minor—A major (not closely related). Though this modulation scheme may not follow normal procedure, it is not uncommon. Schubert’s Piano Sonata in A minor, D184 follows the same scheme of transitioning from minor i in the FTA to major V in the STA. Beethoven uses a related strategy in the first movement of his Piano Sonata No. 17, Op. 31—the tonic key of the FTA, d minor, transitions to its minor dominant, A minor, in the STA.

\textsuperscript{25} Caplin, \textit{Classical Form}, 21.
Furthermore, both the orchestration and mood changes for the first time in
the work. The texture consists of a singing melody and light accompaniment. This
plays into the sonata trope of textural opposition between the FTA and the STA.

Of this textural opposition, Cutler writes:

> The most typical way that orchestration interacts with the exposition of a sonata form is to underscore the contrast between the first and second key [tonal] area . . . Even if the same instrument leads the orchestra in both themes, the surrounding orchestrations are different. First themes are often presented in both soft and loud versions (more often than not in that order, while the second theme is typically characterized by a calmer, less cluttered orchestration.26

Variation VI’s orchestral texture is, indeed, lighter compared to the presentation of the theme, which involved heavy chords on every downbeat, where almost every note on a beat had at least one textural companion. Further, the melody in our proposed STA is free-flowing and whimsical, most notably in the top voice’s descent beginning in m. 11. If we were to assign an instrumentation to this variation, it would be akin to a flute with an airy, unrealized figured bass. Caplin notes with regard to the comparative looseness of the Transition and the STA:

> If the subordinate theme is distinctly looser than the main theme, how does the former stand in relation to the transition section, which also features a looser organization? In general, it is difficult to compare degrees of loosening between transitions and subordinate themes, since both functions use many

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of the same loosening techniques. Nevertheless, somewhat different devices tend to be emphasized by the two functions. In this exposition, the transition is rendered loose by harmonic, tonal, and cadential means, whereas the subordinate theme acquires its looser form from extensions and expansions of the grouping structure.27

In Figure 8, we see a stretching of the harmony and an extension of the melodic line, making the STA “looser.” Ponce prolongs $\hat{3}$ for twelve measures, and it takes five more measures for the melody to reach $\hat{2}$. Notice the octave transfers in the *Urlinie* and *Ursatz*. The melody is free-flowing and quite whimsical. There is also an interruption in m. 18, which will recur in the recapitulation, as well as an open-ended final cadence that implies something is to come. Hepokoski summarizes the contrast between the FTA and STA in this way:

> After about 1840 one influential treatment of sonata form centered on the idea of creating a stark, maximal opposition between the two ‘halves’ of an exposition. This procedure was the one most amenable to the ten-emerging possibility of more or less explicitly gendered themes. Most commonly, the two-block exposition opened with a tormented, driven, ‘masculine’ first theme, typically thrashing about in the minor mode and sometimes bonded to a continuation or transition, although one similar in distressed urgency. To this would be immediately counterposed a contrasting block, an angelically redemptive, lyrically ‘feminine’ second theme in the non-tonic major mode and not infrequently in a slower tempo as well. Interpretable within the

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27 Caplin, *Classical Forms*, 20–1.
exposition as the prediction of a hope, this alternative theme was often treated in the recapitulatory space or coda to a grandiosely salvific, major-tonic-grounded ‘Weber apotheosis.’

Now that we have examined all the parts that make up our exposition, we can look at the larger picture. The dualism of the Exposition is prevalent: a lugubrious and seemingly “tormented” FTA, if you will, is offset by a relaxed STA, giving the listener hope. Hope is a key word here. The listener hopes to depart from D minor yet must face it once again in the Recapitulation. Each departure from D minor is a glimmer of hope, providing a respite from conflict. I shall expound further as we examine the development.

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Figure 8. Variation VI.1

Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
Development

The Development section is initiated in variation VII and lasts until variation XV. D minor, D major, and C major all serve as tonal centers during this development section. As Cutler notes of the Development:

The ways that composers score development sections are less consistent than how they orchestrate expositions. Mainly this is because development sections are free to roam in so many directions. Because music in development sections is more difficult to predict, in some ways orchestration is more essential here than in the exposition and recapitulation . . . Here, the scoring is often fragmented in nature—like the melodies and motives themselves—but composers use well-crafted orchestration to alert the listener to potential and realized structure goals.30

Figure 9. Development as a whole.¹
Figure 9 shows a prolongation of $\hat{3}$. The Urlinie is in a state of flux, never reaching $\hat{1}$. Our struggle motive returns, as $\hat{3}$ resolves to its lower neighbor, $\hat{2}$, struggling to veer away from D minor, but to no avail. In variation XIII, we are met with an interruption, which will lead us to the Retransition.

Figure 10. Variation VII.

In Variation VII, the first developmental variation, we return to D minor, but it is highly unstable. The second harmony in the variation is an E-flat minor chord, preceded by the initial D-minor harmony. The variation concentrates more on contour than harmony, thereby exchanging “Classical tonality” for melodic line. Like variation I, variation VII departs dramatically from characteristics of the Exposition and the Theme itself. There is heavy chromatic sequencing in all voices, parallel motion between voices from downbeat to downbeat, and not much trace of D minor, or functional harmony for that matter.

Variation VIII returns to clear-cut D minor, again, echoing what happened in the Exposition. This iteration, however, remains “loose-knit” in comparison to the FTA by enlarging the motive. The variation concentrates on arpeggiation and leaves little room for melody and/or motive. It is primarily a virtuosic variation.
The melody is parsed out between arpeggiations and odd cadences ensue. One such instance is found in m. 8, when G-flat major resolves to C major. The final cadence is a half-cadence, eschewing closure in D minor, and creating a harmonic elision\textsuperscript{32} into the next variation in D major.

Variation IX emulates the FTA, or \textit{Folia} theme, in both major and minor keys. Its relaxed D major gives the listener some respite from the turmoil, but the B section, which employs the original harmonic progression, reminds us that the struggle rages on. Please humor me for a brief moment. Could we speculate that the B section, in prolongation of D minor’s lowered (or corrupted) members, once residing in the realm of D major, acts as a series of lower neighbors? That this is an exaggerated iteration of our struggle motive?

The next landmark of the development section is variation XI, which is in C major. This is where $\hat{2}$ comes into play. Much like variation IX, it shares a major/minor duality. Unlike variation IX, though, the minor B section is in the relative minor, or A minor. This variation is orchestrated like an opera with a singing melody with supporting “continuo.” The A section contains a beautiful soprano line that reaches beyond our suppressing $\hat{3}$ to a shining $\hat{5}$ as Kopfton. But, lo! and behold, the B section in the key of A minor brings us back down to $\hat{3}$. The

\textsuperscript{32} “A moment of time that simultaneously marks the end of one unit and the beginning of the next.” Caplin, \textit{Classical Form}, 254.
initial melody is now corrupted and can only reach a diminished \( \hat{5} \). The final variation in our development section, variation XIII, is in a two-part canon in D minor, and ends on a half cadence, leading us into the retransition.

Retransition

The retransition should be heavy-handed in *trying* to reestablish i.

Dominant pedals starting in variation XIV and reappearing in variations XVI and XVIII. Pedals, are, by their very nature, employed to either establish a key or add drive towards another key. The A pedal in variation XIV establishes A minor as the new tonic, preparing the listener for variation XV, which is in A minor. With one last imperfect authentic cadence, using the 5\(^{th}\) in the soprano voice, the last harmony in variation XV wants to resolve to d minor again, which it does in XVI.
Figure 11. The Retransition. Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
The Retransition variations consist of an array of progressions, all of which do not cadence in D minor, and ultimately emphasize A and the dominant in general. Variations XV thru XVII may be considered a plagal lead-in to the dominant of D minor in XVIII. The lower neighbor, or struggle motive, is the emphasis of the Retransition, serving as the of the dominant.

Recapitulation
The recapitulation is easier to spot due to the work the piece completed while returning to the starting key. After several variations with a heavy dominant presence, we finally reach resolution in variation XIX. The ground bass is fully re-established alongside stable harmonies. No further harmonic exploration takes place, just fair dinkum Folia. To consider the last two variations as recapitulating the exposition, one would have to find some echo of the STA, transposed to the tonic key in some manner, in the music. Charles Rosen points out: “In the sonata, there is a reinterpretation of the pattern of the exposition, a transformation of a clearly articulated movement away from stability into the affirmation of a large stable area.”

As Cutler notes:

It is well known that one of the primary uses of orchestration in the recapitulations of sonata forms is to add variety to material previously stated in the exposition. By using changes in scoring, a composer can keep the original structure of a musical passage intact while varying other aspects of it. The result is a pleasant

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balance between repetition and variety, one that is necessary to convey formal comprehensibility as well as avoid unwanted monotony.  

With that said, let us first look at the orchestration. The orchestration of variation XI coincides with our supposed FTA in variation II. It has a virtuosic quality, that of a violin and accompaniment with a figured bass. A couple direct connections and correlations that reinforce mirroring of the FTA in variations II & III to the recap in variation IXX. If we compare variation IXX in figure 12 to Variations II and III in figures 6 and 7, we can see direct correlations, primarily with the appearance of 3-prgs. The Kopfton is activated right away, and the neighboring motion, or struggle motive, returns in full force. We can see the prolongation of ^3 is present, and the same Phrygian cadence in variation 2 and peculiar ^2 reappears. The range of pitch transfers, mirroring the FTA, as well. Finally, the penultimate soprano notes in the initial FTA, as well as the recapitulatory FTA, leading to the final note are inverted intervals.

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Figure 12. Variation XIX.36

Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
Variations VI and XX reflect each other, as well, adding to the sonata dialogue rhetoric. They both employ a light orchestration. This change in orchestration allows the variations to come to an end and lead into the strict fugue. Both the initial STA and the recapitulatory STA employ implicative endings—they end on the 5th of the tonic chord. The variations do firmly cadence, implying continuation. This lack of solidified endings is a reoccurring theme we are not yet finished with. I will return to this. In a charming way, variation XX cadences into the fugue, achieving \( \hat{1} \), but also begins an Anstieg to the next Kopfton—a sort of saloon-door effect of an ending that also serves as a beginning.
Figure 13. Variation XX.1

Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
CHAPTER 4
MAPPING THE FUGUE

In this section, I will use a series of charts that analyze the fugue’s construction. I will then explain how this fugue correlates to the preceding variations, and how one might interpret the work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Mm. 1–4</th>
<th>Mm. 5–10</th>
<th>Mm. 11–14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soprano</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td></td>
<td>A(answer)</td>
<td>CS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>S(subject)</td>
<td>C(counter) S(subject)</td>
<td>F(ree)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2. Fugue subject occurrences and voices used.*

In Table 2, above, the bass enters with the subject, and the middle voice answers. The subject then appears in the soprano voice. The order in which the voices are introduced evoke to a sense of “rising” to the episode in F major, or the mediant of D minor. The subject then sinks back into the middle voice and recidivates to D minor in the next entry..

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38 Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
Table 3. Middle episodes and entries.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
Entry in D minor \\
Mm. 21–24 \\
F \\
S \\
CS \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Episode leading to iv- mm. 25–28

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
Entry in G minor (iv) \\
Mm. 29–31 \\
CS \\
S \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
Episode in VI- Mm. 32–36 in VI \\
Entry (“prolonging” VI) \\
Mm. 37–39 \\
Free \\
S \\
CS \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Episode leading to iv in mm. 25–28

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
Entry in D minor \\
Mm. 50–51 \\
CS \\
F \\
S \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Entry alludes to D minor as iv/i instead of i, harkening back to the variations.

\textsuperscript{39} Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
The next episode mm. 52–55 in the key of the major mediant. Measures 56–64 preparing false recap like in the variations. Measures 65–74 False climax in D minor! Rule of the octave, reassuring the listener that Ponce is in control of the world and his abilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entries in D minor. Stretto evoked.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M. 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Real pedal begins in mm. 81–92

Table 4. Final entry.⁴⁰

The final entry, occurring in mm. 93–95, invokes full chordal harmonies. Measure ninety-six to the end are closing matters. The texture is lighter and thinned out, and simple bass figures appear continually on the downbeat. A melody floats over top of the bass to incite a feeling of finality to the listener. Mm. 98-105 are similar to sequences found in episodes. Could this “resolution” have been triggered by the frantic, truncated, “searching” sequences after the horizontal chords in mm. 94–97? What is most peculiar about the end of the work is not that it cadences

⁴⁰ Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
with a Picardy third, but that the final cadence ends in an inauthentic fashion, with \(^3\) in the soprano voice.
Figure 14. The Fugue. Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.

<sup>41</sup> Illustrated by Rebecca Boyle.
The fugue, and the entire work for that matter, ends in the major mode of D, as previously stated. Not only is there change in register before the final descent of the *Ursatz*, there is a $\frac{3}{2}$ in the soprano voice of the closing harmony, rendering the cadence imperfect. It is not the ending we anticipated to hear. So, what do we make of this “imperfection?” Could this be Ponce leaving the *Folia* story open for the next era of composers to interpret? Further, does the register transfer suggest persistence and the struggle between fate and free will continuing?
CHAPTER 5

LET’S START OVER

We now return to our narrative about fate and Der Müde Tod. Our heroine fails her three tests given to her by death and, with that, fails to return her beloved to the realm of the living. Fate could not be changed after all. Suddenly, a building catches fire and she goes in to rescue a lone child. Death appears and gives her another chance at bringing her husband back: she must sacrifice the child. In her time of temptation, she bravely refuses to fulfill her own desires, and sacrifices not only herself, but her husband’s chance of being resurrected, in order to save another’s life. Her fate was sealed.

With her death came a reuniting with her beloved. Her free will brought her what she had desired. Her fate helped the process. We may have given in to the tone world of D but were given an ethereal Picardy third floating in the afterlife above. There is retribution for hard work and toil. Life goes on: the living with the living, and the afterlife thereafter.
Hört Ihr Leut; und laßt euch sagen:
Die Glock’ hat zwölf geschlagen!
Bewahrt euch vor gespenstern und Spuk,
Daß kein böser Geist euer Geel’ beruct’!

Do you hear; let me tell you:
The clock has struck twelve!
Beware of ghosts and ghouls,
That no evil spirit touches your own!42

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42 *Der müde Tod*. Directed by Fritz Lang. Germany: Decla-Bioscop AG, 1921. Translated by the author.
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