

Mozart's Delayed Dominants, II:

The Subordinate Theme(s)

Notwithstanding all that's been written about sonata theory in recent decades, we still possess little understanding of the multiple subordinate themes that are common in the high Classical style of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven. Nor do we have a particularly good nomenclature with which to label them (or, for that matter, with which to label the anticipatory dominant that underlies them). In this second part of my two-part article, I try to describe the subordinate themes of three Mozart keyboard sonatas in conjunction with the anticipation and gradual establishment of the dominant key area,¹ and in conjunction with the gradual establishment or reestablishment of a high obligatory register in the upper voices (Example 1a). That higher register may not necessarily prove to be the entire movement's obligatory register, but at the very least it will act as the

¹ In Willner 2019 I take the first step in addressing this issue from a Schenkerian perspective, but I do so more in terms of Mozart's borrowings than in terms of his subordinate themes. As I mention there, my notion of the delayed dominant has more in common with Hepokoski and Darcy's *EEC deferral* (the late arrival of the Essential Expositional Closure) than with the traditional Schenkerian location of the structural dominant in sonata form.

The background structures in this article follow the paradigm described by Ernst Oster in an extensive unnumbered footnote in his translation of Schenker's *Der freie Satz* ([1935] 1979, 139-41; see p. 139): $\hat{5}$ stays put through to the end of the exposition, while $\hat{3}$ moves on to $\hat{2}$. For a detailed account of this formulation see Beach 2016; my analyses of K. 332 and K. 333 bear some similarity to Beach's, but differ in many details.

local obligatory register for the duration of the dominant's ongoing tonicization, in the deep middleground; Example 1b illustrates.²

K. 330. The dominant enters without much preparation (most likely as a back-relating dominant) in bar 18; we sense right away that the tonic remains the underlying sonority (Example 2).³ The subordinate theme that follows in bar 19 therefore does not sound as if it unfolds within the dominant area. And indeed a look at its return in the recapitulation (Example 3) reveals explicitly the uncertainty that was implied in the exposition: here the subordinate theme is first reintroduced, rather facetiously, over the dominant, then corrected to appear over the tonic.⁴

With this tonal instability and uncertainty in mind, we can return to the exposition's tentative bass line. In prospect, we become aware that the subordinate theme's G is an upper neighbor of F# (bar 25), just at the point where the subordinate theme suddenly breaks off (see the first ellipsis sign in Example 2). It is at this point—bar 25—that the theme suffers an intrusion by a cascade of 32nd notes and a massively chordal, left-hand V6/5 in the key of the dominant. The intruding bass F# dissonates against the opening tonic's implicitly sustained C, and the interval C-F# resolves to a sixth, B-G (bar 26).

² Schenker, [1935] 1979, §§268-270. Gagné 1989 offers an indispensable introduction to the registral intricacies involved in the compositions under discussion here. See also Miyake 2008 and 2011, 9-10, and Horn 1989. My account of the obligatory register differs from theirs in that it involves a much later arrival of the structural dominant; that affects the disposition of the upper voice(s).

³ My analysis differs from that in Gagné 1990, 25, Example 2.2.

⁴ Hepokoski and Darcy (2006, 488-90) discuss this feature of Mozart's compositional manner, and offer several additional examples.

The intrusion into the second theme simulates a parenthesis, and it comes to a close just ahead of the first dominant cadence in the same way it began, with a second run of falling 32nd notes (bar 30; see the second ellipsis sign in Example 2). The subordinate theme then goes on to its cadence in G, the key of the dominant, but not quite yet the structural dominant (bars 30-34; see Example 2b).

One feature of the design still remains incomplete and prevents the confirmation of the structural dominant at this point. Although the subordinate theme does come to a close at the beginning of bar 34, it concludes in the one-line octave instead of the two-line octave. It is now up to the two *complementary subordinate themes*, which follow, to reintroduce and reestablish the higher register, at the border of the two-line and three-line octaves (Example 4a).

While the movement's principal structural tone, g^2 , prevails throughout the exposition (see again Example 1b), the opening theme repeatedly reaches up to a covering c^3 (bars 5-6, 9-10, 12 and 14) and aims at an embellishing but highly expressive and suggestive d^3 just before the tentative dominant enters (bar 17, Example 4b)⁵. This closing gesture signals that the higher register will prevail (if only locally) during the second, longer part of the exposition. The subordinate theme immediately takes up the suggestive d^3 (bars 21-22), but the intrusion of the 32nd notes and the ensuing rhetorical parenthesis weigh the

⁵ The asterisk over c^3 in Example 4b points to the consonant anticipation of the exposition's later high register; d^3 is, of course, dissonant.

subordinate theme's register down, so that it concludes in the one-line octave (bars 31-34^a).

The first complementary subordinate theme (bars 34^b-42^a) would seem to confirm the dominant in a straightforward manner, but (as intimated above) it is firmly rooted in the lower part of the two-line octave and the upper part of the one-line octave, away from the Allegro's obligatory register.⁶ The second of the two themes (bars 42^b-48^a and 48^b-54^a), by contrast, reclaims the upper two-line octave and reaches climactically to d^3 (bars 45-46, 52-53), signalling that the task of the subordinate theme group has been accomplished. It is the confirmation of the high register in bars 42^b-54^a that lends the dominant of bar 54^a a structural weight and a sense of closure that the area's earlier dominant cadences lack. These earlier dominants anticipate the structural dominant of bar 54^a, but they do not express it to the fullest extent.⁷

K. 332. The obligatory register of the opening Allegro is established unequivocally during the bipartite main theme, in which an ascent from f^2 to a^2 (bars 13-20) complements an earlier descent from c^2 to f^1 (bars 1-12; see

⁶ Gagné 1989 notes the tendency of Mozart's subordinate themes, and their accompaniments in the left hand, to close in on the keyboard's central register (a highly expressive and not always properly appreciated gesture). Hepokoski and Darcy discuss the multiplicity of subordinate themes in terms of *trimodular blocks*; for a succinct explanation of trimodular blocks, see Drabkin 2007, 92.

⁷ For the same reasons, the EEC is deferred to bar 54^a.

Example 5a and 5b).⁸ The fundamental structure aligns with David Neumeier's *three-part Ursatz* (Example 5b; recall Example 1a).⁹

The transition to the second theme, marked by mixture with the minor, jarring counterstresses, and dramatic leaps (Example 6a), articulates a familiar Mozartean ploy: the preparation, via consonant arpeggiation, of a dissonant augmented 6th (in this instance, over A-flat, in bars 35-36; see Example 6b). The augmented 6th, in turn, emanates from a long-range voice exchange going back all the way to the opening tonic (Example 6b).¹⁰

It is under these circumstances that the major supertonic enters, in bars 37-40. When the subordinate theme arrives (bars 41-48, 49-56; see Example 7a), its register (like that of K. 330 at this point) contracts in both hands, inching toward the center of the keyboard. The subordinate theme's centripetal quality opposes diametrically the centrifugal, outreaching idioms and textures of the opening theme and the transition.¹¹ One can infer that the subordinate theme is something of a parenthesis, at least rhetorically,¹² and that it occurs within a larger voice-leading procedure and not within a genuine dominant, let alone a

⁸ This analysis differs in its outlines from those found in Schenker [1925] 1994, Vol. 1, 106-108, Fig. 3 and 5; Beach and McClelland 2012, 197-209; Samarotto 2015, 63-67; and Gagné-Cadwallader-Samarotto 2020, 148-150. It has quite a bit in common with Hepokoski and Darcy 2006, 159-162, but it articulates its findings in a Schenkerian way.

⁹ Neumeier 1987.

¹⁰ Chromaticized voice exchanges at this level—including the bridge theme but not the subordinate theme—are taken up by Kamien and Wagner 1997, with further references (see especially p. 2, fn. 3 and 4).

¹¹ On the role of energetics in K. 332, see Samarotto 2015; see also Samarotto 2009.

¹² The notion of the subordinate theme as parenthesis is discussed in detail in Kimball 1991, Burstein and Nguyen 2017, and Willner 2019.

structural one. And indeed it extends over a large-scale, partly implicit bass unfolding that prolongs the preceding major supertonic, G: that is, G-B♭, C-A♭, G (bars 32-40, 41-67, 68; see Example 7b). The unfolding extends all the way to the end of a second, agitated transition (bars 56-66, Example 7c) that in many ways parallels the first transition—it is replete with similar accentual instabilities, borrowings from the minor tonic, and an augmented sixth (this time implicit) over A♭ (bar 66).

Once the major supertonic reenters, in bars 67-70, we are in a position to gauge what has transpired (outlined already in Example 1a). The supertonic G and the upper voice g^2 in bars 37-40 are, as it now turns out, passing tones: they help compose out a larger voice exchange within the tonic, one that encompasses the entirety of bars 1-66. The earlier voice exchange, in bars 1-36, is embedded within the second, larger exchange.

Even as late as bars 67-70, though, we are still only on the approach to the structural dominant. The complementary subordinate theme, which follows in the manner of an auxiliary cadence (bars 71-76, and, an octave higher, bars 77-86; Example 8a), consolidates the chordal textures introduced during the two transitions and reestablishes the two-line octave as the principal locus of thematic activity (bars 77-80). This is by no means a parenthetical theme but, morphing from the lyrical to the energetic and the extrovert, a long cadential

statement that sets the stage for the entrance of the structural dominant, in bar 86 (Example 96b).¹³

Only in the codetta that ensues (bars 86-93, see again Example 8a) does the dominant introduce the structural upper-voice g^2 explicitly, in the upper voice of the three-part *Ursatz* (recall Example 1a); g^2 continues the tonic's a^2 under the cover of c^3 , the superimposed $\hat{5}$ (held over from the opening tonic, where it was superimposed in bars 12, 16, and 20).

(Examples 1a and 8b interpret the bass of bars 71-86 somewhat differently, according to the more—or less—sustained emphasis that one might place on the opening F and C major chords in bars 71-72. Much depends on the performance practice and instruments that one has encountered across years of listening, performing, and contemplating.)

K. 333. The registral and structural design of the B \flat Sonata's opening Allegro is as complex as that of *K. 330* and *K. 332*, but in a different way.¹⁴ The opening theme of *K. 333* aims explicitly at the three-line octave (bars 1-10, Examples 12a and 12b). The structural f^3 , expressed at the surface only as a superimposed inner-voice tone at the end of the theme, is held over to the end of the exposition (bar 56, Example 11). At that point, a locally superimposed,

¹³ And that is also where Hepokoski and Darcy find the EEC (2006, 162).

¹⁴ The analysis offered here differs from that in Jonas [1934] 1982, 67, Example 97a (with an important footnote, No. 26, by John Rothgeb), Gagné 1990, 32-33, Example 2.8, and Laufer 1991, 1029-38; it has more in common with Beach 2019, 20-23, Example 1.9.

climactic f^3 reminds us that in the background, f^3 is the $\hat{5}$ governing the entire exposition (see the dotted lines at the beginning and at the end of Example 11). The opening theme's d^2 - d^3 represents the lower voice of the Allegro's three-part *Ursatz*; it is continued by c^3 at the end of the exposition (see again Example 11).

The "soprano" upper voice of the transition to the subordinate theme arpeggiates the major supertonic 7th chord from c^2 in bar 14 to bb^2 in bars 19ff. via e^2 and g^2 in bar 18 (Examples 12a and 12b), leaving it at that, structurally—even though a superimposed c^3 follows in bar 20 and the subordinate theme enters over the temporary dominant in bar 23 (Examples 13a and 13b). And although bb^2 also resolves locally to a^2 in bars 19^b and 21^b , bb^2 is sufficiently prominent to be left hanging over the entire subordinate theme. It is taken up immediately once the subordinate theme has concluded (bar 39; see Example 13).

As the subordinate theme enters, the entire texture again gravitates to the center of the keyboard.¹⁵ Despite an outburst of 16th notes at the end of the theme (bars 35-37), the theme appears to be sheltered from both the aforementioned arpeggiation of the major supertonic and from the arpeggiation's continuation in bar 39. It is, in other words, a parenthesis (see again Example 13b).

¹⁵ Gagné 1989. For a differently nuanced interpretation see Beach 2019, 40-43, Examples 2.9 and 2.10.

The exposition's soprano upper voice now picks up in bar 39 where it left off in bars 21-22, with bb^2 superimposed over the lower, alto structural voice's c^2 (Example 13b). The major supertonic that encloses the subordinate theme's parenthesis moves on to the structural dominant only much later; Example 11 shows how the supertonic is prolonged by two composed-out unfoldings of the intervals C-E \sharp , F-B b , C from bar 22 (before the subordinate theme) to bar 39 (after the theme), and thence to bars 43-45, and again from bar 45 to bar 49^b, and thence to bars 50-53.

What we encounter in the upper voices during these supertonic unfoldings is a group of four subphrases, some of them repeated, which yields the impression of a string of complementary subordinate themes (Example 14). This, however, is a particularly elaborate example of what William Caplin calls the *small binary*—a four-part constellation of phrases or subphrases that may or may not embody repetition.¹⁶ The four are marked A, B, C, and D in Example 14, and it is they who articulate the bass unfoldings shown in Example 11.

The soprano upper voice of subphrase A (bars 39-42) picks up the high bb^2 that still rings in our ears, held over as it is from bars 19 and 21 (see again Example 13b). Although in the foreground—that is, locally—the bb^2 of bars 39 and 41 does resolve down to the small octave's a in the left hand (in bars 40 and

¹⁶ Caplin 1998, *passim*. For extended explanations of how I apply Caplin's small binary see Willner 2019^a and 2019^b.

42), a more deeply lying, passing c^3 (again bars 40, 42) leads it up to d^3 , where subphrase B begins (see again Example 11); d^3 is a registrally elevated neighbor note of c^2 , long held throughout the entire transition (bars 14ff; Example 11).

While c^2 , in the two-line octave, anticipates the structural c^3 that arrives, implicitly, as late as the structural dominant in bar 59, its neighbor note, d^3 , is tasked with establishing the obligatory register in the three-line octave (again, Example 11).

Subphrase C (bars 46-50) presents a preliminary soprano upper-voice descent, $d^2-c^2-b\flat^1-a^1-g^1-f^1$, in the approaching key of the dominant, but over the second of the aforementioned bass unfoldings (C-E \flat , F-B \flat , C), which stretches into subphrase D (see the upper voice and bass unfolding signs in Example 11). This upper-voice descent takes place in the one-line octave, rather than in the structurally obligatory two-line octave, which was so clearly realized at the end of the opening theme.

It is the task of subphrase D to establish the proper register of the descent (bars 54-57, Example 16). As if to make matters more complicated, the descent's $\hat{3}$, $\hat{2}$, and $\hat{1}$ appear in the one-line octave (bars 57^b-59^a). But the strength of d^3 , c^3 , and $b\flat^2$ (along with the prominence of their embellishing tones) in bars 54-57 suffices to claim the upper registral space for the local descent's structure.

The background structural dominant arrives in bar 59, where a brief, low-register codetta follows (Example 10).¹⁷

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In hindsight, we can see (and, hopefully, hear) how the subordinate theme and the ensuing small binary of the B \flat Sonata anticipate but at the same time delay the structural dominant's arrival as they gradually pave the way for the soprano upper voice's descent in its proper high register. Common to the areas usually associated with the dominant in all three of our Mozart sonata movements—from our latter-day, Schenkerian perspective—is this anticipation and composed-out delay of the dominant. While tracing such anticipation and delay may initially come across as a laborious, not to say academic attempt to pinpoint the arrival of the structural dominant, the acquired perception of the tonic area giving way gradually—not precipitously—to the dominant area, and collaborating at the same time with an extended, multi-registral and multi-tasked collection of subordinate thematic groups, is essential to a properly expressive understanding and performance of Mozart's—and other composers'—sonata practice.

¹⁷ That is where I would also locate the deferred EEC.

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