

**UNIVERSITY OF READING
DEPARTMENT OF MUSIC**

**MA THEORY and ANALYSIS
PORTFOLIO OF ANALYSES:**

To what extent does Mozart's *Fantasia* in D minor, K. 397
possess *Fantasia*-like characteristics?

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Preface

Although the title '*fantasia*' is often used as a generic implication for a work where its structural features are secondary to the imagination of the composer, the K. 397 is, paradoxically, a very predictable work. Its most striking orthodoxy is the manner in which Mozart reiterates the thematic materials at the original or anticipated pitch, maintaining the accustomed rhythmic and melodic gestures along the way; even the episodic cadenza passages do little to substantiate the title. One is therefore captivated by how the composer has 'operated' on the work's thematic materials in order to warrant the appendage of such a title – particularly if one compares this alongside the composer's *Fantasia and Sonata* in C minor, K. 475/457, which conforms more appropriately to this taxonomy.

Each of the three movements were initially viewed as separate, self-contained entities since a link between thematic materials could not be easily established. Each thematic idea seemed radically different from the last, both in harmony and harmonic rhythm, texture and melodic temperament. But, with retrospect, this was a naïve assumption: this work can be viewed as a *fantasia* since all three sections share a commonality in motivic ideas and pitch gestures, proving that not even the alleged 'episodic/bridge' sections are unmarried in the musical structure.

For ease of understanding, a thematic overview of each section is provided to allow one to appreciate my 'interpretation' of the formal scheme at a glance.

Formal/Thematic Overview

Andante	<i>D minor</i>
1-11	Quasi-Improvisatory Introduction
Adagio	<i>D minor</i>
1-8	FIRST THEME [a]
9-11	Bridge
12-16	FIRST THEME [b]
18-22	FIRST THEME [a]: transposed to A minor
23	Cadenza
24-26	Bridge: transposed a tone lower than previous bridge
27-32	FIRST THEME [b]: transposed a tone lower (G minor)
33	Cadenza
34-42	FIRST THEME [a]: re-instatement at original pitch
Allegretto	<i>D major</i>
1-8	SECOND THEME [a]
9-16a	SECOND THEME [b]
16b-32	SECOND THEME [c]: closest link to [a]
	SECOND THEME [a]: with variation and concluding material
33-53	

Although the opening *Andante* movement seems to serve little more than an introduction to this melancholic work, it possesses constituents that give rise to features of the successive movements. It therefore not only holds an essential function for its intuitive or aesthetic values, but more importantly because it presents in itself an embryonic genesis.¹

¹ For purposes of clarification, the thematic ideas in the movements that follow (*Adagio* and *Allegretto*) have been categorised simply as **First Theme or Second Theme**, despite the dramatic changes in character that arise in each of the variants. Therefore within the context of each movement, one might describe this tendency as monothematic.

Andante

The opening *Andante* consists of a series of arpeggiated chords in D minor – serving not only as an introduction – but also delineating the melodic contours of the entire work. In measures 7 and 8, Mozart introduces appoggiaturas that descend to an imperfect cadence, concluding this section. These appoggiaturas are not merely arbitrary gestures; instead along with the delineating melodic contour, they reveal themselves as the ‘nucleus’ of entire *Fantasia*.

Outlining Sketch of measures 1-11

The analysis above demonstrates not only the initial contrary motions (mm. 1-6) but also the descending line evident from measure 7 (G-F#-E-D-C#), which is later incorporated into the *Adagio*'s theme (see illustration below). The harmonic

progressions are often restricted and move usually by tone or semitone; this feature is particularly significant in the *Adagio* movement.²

Adagio (mm. 1-2)



Adagio

Adagio <i>D minor</i>	
1-8	FIRST THEME [a]
9-11	Bridge
12-16	FIRST THEME [b]
18-22	FIRST THEME [a]': transposed to A minor
23	Cadenza
24-26	Bridge: transposed a tone lower than previous bridge
27-32	FIRST THEME [b]': transposed a tone lowered (G minor)
33	Cadenza
34-42	FIRST THEME [a]: re-instatement at original pitch

The *Adagio* movement represents a relatively straightforward elaboration of *rounded binary form*, and forms the major section of the work with each thematic statement separated by bridge and/or cadenza passages. Although Mozart makes some adaptation to the thematic statements (particularly by transposing material down a tone)³, there is little that is surprising. However, the work exhibits fantasia-like characteristics because the first theme is in two separate guises; and are not separate 'subjects' in their own right. Although the character of the two melodies [first theme *a* / *b*] is very distinct; they share remarkable similarities with their insistent chromatic appoggiaturas, common descending trends, comparable accompanying harmonies, and a definite similarity in closure.

² This 'tightness' also allows a great deal of emotional tension.

³ This is an integral feature of the *Fantasy and Sonata*, K.475/457.

Adagio (mm. 1-16)

A musical score for a piano piece, marked *Adagio*. The score consists of four systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the tempo marking *Adagio*. The second system continues with piano (*p*) and fortissimo (*f*) dynamics. The third system features piano (*p*) dynamics. The fourth system includes dynamic markings for *cresc.*, *f*, *p*, and *cresc.* with fortissimo (*f*) dynamics. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature.

Common Trends and Closure Properties

Despite an initial rising gesture in measures 1, 3, and 5, *first theme* [a] possesses a number of descending trends; some are predominantly *local* (as in measures 1 and 3); others are more extensive (such as in measures 6-8).

Adagio - *first theme* [a] (mm.1 and 3)

Two staves of musical notation showing the first two measures of the first theme. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. Arrows are drawn above the notes in both staves, pointing downwards to indicate descending trends in the melody.

Adagio - *first theme* [a] closure (mm.6-8)

A single staff of musical notation showing the closure of the first theme. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 3/4 time signature. A long arrow is drawn above the notes, pointing downwards from left to right, indicating an extensive descending trend.

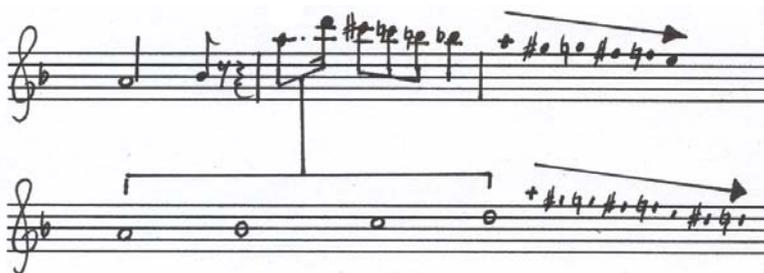
First theme [b] initial upward trend from ‘A’ to ‘D’ appears to contrast with [a], but this too eventually falls chromatically, retracing some of the notes used in the closure properties to *first theme* [a].

Adagio - *first theme* [b] closure (mm.15-16)



It is also interesting to note the way in which measure 6 of *first theme* [a] provides a “setting-up” of the parameters between ‘A’ and ‘D’, which are later augmented in measures 12-15. There is also a remarkable similarity in the harmonies that accompany the melodic material in *first theme* [a] and [b] (see annotated extract on page 6).

Adagio (mm. 5-8 [top-line] and mm. 12-15 [bottom-line])



Appoggiaturas

In the *Andante* opening I highlighted how appoggiaturas were introduced and how they prove significant in the *Adagio* movement. The appoggiaturas in *first theme* [b] are easy to identify (particularly due to the repetition and quickening rhythm), however, the appoggiaturas in *first theme* [a] might appear more conspicuous. But if one examines the simplified content of *first theme* [a], one is left with a surprisingly elementary descending melody, merely decorated with appoggiaturas. And to use

voice-leading terminology as a brief departure, one will also notice the prolongation of the note 'F'.

Adagio (mm. 1-4)

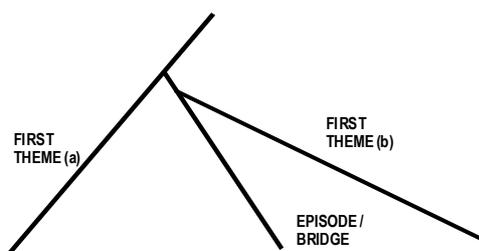


The substance of *first theme* [b] is derived from a misleadingly-defined 'episode' used in measures 9-11.⁴ As the following illustrates, Mozart retraces the last three notes of the episode as an idea in which to commence *first theme* [b].

Closing Measure of Episode and Start of First Theme *b* (mm. 11-12)



As a concept of unification this is contentious because one has initially grouped theme *a* and theme *b* as synonymous units - **yet** theme *b*'s substance is derived almost exclusively from the episode that prefixes it. The only answer I have to substantiate this argument is that while the melodic idea stems from the episode, its accompanying harmony is based more closely on *first theme* [a]. One might therefore analyse the relationship thus:



⁴ The 'episode' is misleading since it proves an important inspiration for *first theme* [b], and therefore, it should not be described as an episode or bridge.

The chromatic bass of the episode also reiterates the closure from *first theme* [a] and is identical to theme *b*.

Episode (mm. 9-11)

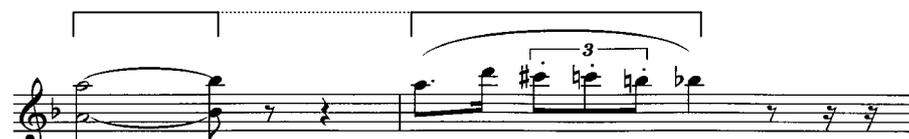


Adagio – *first theme* [a] (mm. 6-8)



Although the *consequent* phrase to theme *a* [measures 5-8] is relatively weak since it does not really ‘answer’ the *antecedent*, such metamorphosis is an integral element of the fantasia. The second bar of the *consequent* (mm. 6) is derived as an augmentation of the A-Bb interval (in mm. 5). This expansion/filling-in is a common device used by composers and Mozart often sets up two intervals and fills in the gaps created by these two parameters. Mozart, yet again, uses this to add a degree of uncertainty as to the outcome – both in melodic destination and harmony.

Unfolding of this idea (mm. 5-6)



Allegretto

Allegretto D major	
1-8	SECOND THEME [a]
9-16a	SECOND THEME [b]
16b-32	SECOND THEME [a] ¹ :
	SECOND THEME [a] ² : with variation and concluding
33-53	material

The final movement is a positively, jovial theme in three sections,⁵ presenting a formal thematic plan (with repeats) of: AA; BB; A¹; cadenza; A² – resembling an almost *rounded binary form*. I have titled the thematic material as *second theme* and distinguished it from the *first theme* [a] since it does not appear significant, despite some common traits. But unlike the *Adagio* movement that, at times, can seem a little odd, our musical intuition grasps hold of the eight-bar phrases and its more traditional Mozartian harmony.

Allegretto - second theme [a] (mm. 1-8)



Allegretto - second theme [b] (mm. 9-16a)



As you will notice, both *second theme* [a] and [b] comprise of balanced eight-bar phrases, and demonstrate a converse contour by its upward trend – appropriately matched by its D major tonality. *Second theme a¹* is closely identified with *second theme a*, but is more self-standing. Unlike the *Adagio*'s thematic materials that are often

⁵ There is an additional cadenza and repetition/variation on the second theme b.

significantly contrasted in character, the *Allegretto*'s are very similar (particularly in the last two-bar closure property). Moreover both *second theme* [a] and [b] have similar leaps in the melody that exists merely as parameters in which successive material 'fill in the gaps'. This technique, commonly associated with the work of Leonard Meyer, does not present itself anywhere else in this piece, despite the typicality at which composers uses this device. One of the primary explanations for the absence of this in the *Adagio* is that the melodic material and its accompanying harmony work by stepwise or chromatic motion, and such a feature is out of character.

Allegretto (mm. 1-8)



Allegretto (mm. 9-16)



Both *second theme* [a] and [b] share short prolongations of the tonic and dominant notes, and similarly reiterate the motion 'D-C#'. This initial observation is confirmed and brought to fruition in *second theme* [a¹] where Mozart constantly reiterates this motion several times. With retrospect, this motion reflects the idea common in the first two bars of the *Adagio* – so in this respect they are related.

2. Harmonic instability

Having discussed the way in which the thematic material is linked, it is now worth examining the harmonic language. In many respects, Mozart reveals instances of instability in harmony, thus helping to reinforce the 'fantasia' characteristic.

Andante

The opening *Andante* although more stable because the rhythmic values stay constant, proposes instances of instability: For instance, the first four bars are routine enough, but in measures 5 and 6, Mozart introduces a D⁷ chord that proposes a progression to the subdominant key. This progression, however, proves to be a temporary and deceptive transition. The successive measures are also similarly 'mystifying' as their chromatic tendencies confuse our expectations.

The Neapolitan Sixth chord in measure 8 (and successive progressions) is worthy of note because it reinforces my whole hypothesis that the opening measures represent an almost tonal/thematic plan.

Adagio (mm. 8-11)

Musical score for *Adagio* (mm. 8-11). The score is in G major, 3/4 time. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A large slur covers measures 8, 9, and 10. A *poco ritenuto* marking is present in measure 10. Fingerings are indicated with numbers 1-5. Chord symbols Eb/G, G#dim 7, and A are shown below the staff.

Adagio (mm. 41-43)

Musical score for *Adagio* (mm. 41-43). The score is in G major, 3/4 time. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. A slur covers measures 41, 42, and 43. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in measure 43. Chord symbols Eb/G, G#dim 7, and A⁷ are shown below the staff.

Adagio

The opening phrase (mm. 1-8) combines elements that continue to confuse our tonal expectations. Although the first two bars which suggest D minor are routine enough, it is in measures 3 and 4 where things appear more uncertain: The upper-part 'G' when combined with the C# in the bass (and supported by the notes 'E' and 'A') propose a Vb to I progression in D major – especially with the 'bright' major-confirming 'F#' that is present in the right-hand. Yet again this - along with measure 7 – merely appears as deceptive confusions of the tonal structure.

Examples 1-4 adagio



Measure 7 is particularly interesting in its arrangement and its chord progressions. For example, from measure 6 the resolution of the Bb and C# (to A and F respectively) are natural progressions; yet from measure 7 the E⁷ chord anticipates the A chord – which then gains a seventh – finally resolving to the D. However, it is not until the next quaver beat when the F# appears that the major/minor quality arises. Then, annoyingly, the following G# diminished seventh cancels the previous F# (with an F natural) and propels the music to an A major chord.

Mozart then deliberately employs false-relations to further the effect. For instance, in measure 8, the composer concludes with an A chord (assumed imperfect cadence in D minor). Yet, the repetition of the note 'E' in measure 9 is 'interpreted' as the fifth note of continuation of the 'presumed' 'A' major chord. Mozart, however, opts for the A minor chord as its underlying harmony – thus juxtaposing a false relation with the previous key.

The episode in measure 9-11 adds further confusion because one expect this 'bright' E major triad as a dominant preparation for A; but Mozart never pursues it in this manner.

Episode (m.11) and *First theme* [b] (m.12)



The cadenzas similarly display elements of key invariance. In measure 22, the concluding chord is a C# diminished 7th. The cadenza, however, manipulates the key in a mischievous manner by alternating between C# and C. The concluding chord to the cadenza is an F# diminished 7th (on C), and is similarly wayward because we expect it to resolve to G.⁶

Adagio (mm. 18-27)



⁶ Although it does, possibly, anticipate the left hand in measure 24 (which is a 'G').

Allegretto

The sheer 'brightness' of the tonic major contradicts all the intense seriousness and melancholic nature of the earlier movements. It is almost devoid of any ambiguous elements, and, as previous diagrams demonstrate, there is much prolongation of the fundamental poles ('D' and 'A') conclusively underlying the tonal structure.

Conclusion

The harmonic uncertainty of the *Fantasia* has now been discussed in some considerable depth, and I have demonstrated the significance of tonal/thematic plan that represents the Andante. The unpredictable, almost impetuous, nature of this work is characterised by adaptations to melodic shape; rhythmical contrast and harmonic instability. There is also a certain degree of tension produced through the use of fermatas – particularly the one in measure 17 of the *Adagio*. However, it is the *Adagio* that typifies this quality mainly, as the *Allegretto* is rather more balanced and predictable in its inception. Nevertheless, one might argue the 'D-C#' motion exhibited in this section unifies the whole work.