Brahms' Symphony No. 1, Movement 1

Background

The following materials are essential for use with this resource:

- Eulenberg score of Symphony No. 1, Op. 68 by Brahms [ISBN 3-7957-6682-6]
- Recording of Brahms' Symphony No. 1

Preparatory work with the class should include information on:

- The musical and stylistic conventions of the Romantic era
- The development of the symphony, 1830 to 1910
- Brahms' musical style
- An analysis of the movement required for study, i.e. *Movement I: Un poco sostenuto – Allegro*

These notes are intended to assist music teachers in their preparation and delivery of the set work. They are offered as outline guidance and contain suggestions regarding the necessary musical content and background for study, but they are not meant to be an exhaustive resource or the only analytical approach.

There are many analyses of Brahms' Symphony No. 1 in existence, and all logical and well-supported analytical accounts will be considered on their own merits. Any references to previous analyses should be properly cited.

The current analysis is indebted to David Brodbeck, whose discussion of the work in his book Brahms: *Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge Music Handbooks) provides an important starting point for any study of the symphony and is a valuable resource for students wishing to explore the work further.

The main stylistic characteristics of Romantic music

The Classical era refers to an era of classical music between roughly 1750 and 1830. It began to emerge during the last few years of the previous Baroque era.

The main stylistic characteristics of classical music

The meaning of 'Romantic' as applied to the music of the 19th century is not straightforward to define. It encompasses a range of individual styles that share certain musical elements, although many of these elements can also be found in the works of earlier composers who would not typically be considered Romantic.

Examples of earlier works that exhibit Romantic tendencies include Mozart's operas *Don Giovanni* and *The Magic Flute*, as well as Haydn's oratorios *The Creation* and *The Seasons*. Later composers such as Beethoven, Weber and even Schubert further bridged the transition from the Classical era to the Romantic style.

Nevertheless, some form of guidance is necessary to support students' understanding and overall appreciation, though only a brief outline and a few suggestions can be offered here in the Teachers' Notes.

It is generally accepted that Romantic music was inspired by literature, history, nature and human emotion. Heine (1836) wrote: 'Classical art had to express the finite… Romantic art had to represent the infinite and the spiritual'.

Romantic composers were no more versatile or powerful than Mozart or Bach, but most of them were shaped by a wider general culture, as musicians increasingly found acceptance within literary and artistic circles. The political landscape following the Napoleonic Wars left its mark on many areas of society. While scientists attempted to explain the universe through reason and mechanics, music and literature often expressed a reaction against the rationalism of the previous century.

Of all the social changes affecting music, however, the eventual decline of the old system of patronage was probably the most significant. If the Classical era in music is typified by order, accessibility, convention and a certain playful sophistication, Romanticism in many ways rejects these ideals, placing greater value on the irrational, the passionate and the unconventional.

General characteristics of Romantic music

Early Romantic composers included Schubert and Mendelssohn, and more characteristically, Schumann, Chopin and Weber. Later stages of Romanticism were reflected in the work of Wagner, Liszt and Berlioz. Other notable composers from this era included Tchaikovsky, Dvořák, Smetana, Verdi and, of course, Brahms.

A more personal expression of emotion became evident, accompanied by greater freedom of form and design. The formal distinctions between the movements of a symphony began to break down.

Closer links with the other arts gave rise to programme music, such as the symphonic poem, the programme symphony and the concert overture.

Further organisation and unity were achieved through the use of recurring themes, often developed and transformed. Examples include the idée fixe (Berlioz), the leitmotif (Wagner) and thematic transformation or metamorphosis of theme (Liszt).

There was greater variety in the types of music composed, ranging from short songs and piano pieces to multi-movement orchestral works, song cycles and extended, spectacular music dramas. The shorter pieces were especially effective vehicles for Romantic lyricism.

The orchestra expanded significantly, and improvements in various instruments, particularly in the brass and percussion sections, contributed to a richer and more colourful orchestral palette. Composers now had access to a broader range of dramatic contrasts, from great power to extreme delicacy in expression.

There was an increasing emphasis on virtuosic display, especially among pianists and violinists. The piano itself evolved, with an extended range and improved mechanics, including enhanced use of the pedals, which allowed for greater sonority.

Textural contrasts became more pronounced, influenced by earlier homophonic and contrapuntal traditions, but now capable of much wider variation in pitch, tone colour and dynamics. Composers were generally more comfortable with harmonic language, while counterpoint came less naturally to many of them.

Thematic material became more emotive and less mechanical, with a greater emphasis on lyrical melodic substance. Melodies became more expressive, enriched through dynamic nuance and often carried by solo instruments, with increased exploitation of extreme registers.

Harmonic exploration became a defining feature. Already hinted at in some of Beethoven's later works, Romantic composers introduced unexpected and adventurous modulations. Chords grew more complex, chromatic and bold. While much of this harmonic language still served a functional purpose, some progressions became increasingly ambiguous. In the music of Wagner, for example, the sense of tonality began to erode, with dissonance and irregular phrasing obscuring clear key definition. Many composers of the later Romantic period turned away from traditional functional harmony and the classical sense of key relationships.

A growing sense of national identity was reflected in the music of several composers, often as a reaction against dominant Germanic influences.

Music became more commercial, supported by freer markets and increased state patronage. Public concerts, opera houses, travelling virtuosi, music journalism and formal music education all flourished. Printed music also became more widely available, contributing to the broader dissemination and popularity of music.

Brahms – Life and times

Johannes Brahms (1833 - 1897) was a German composer and pianist. Born in Hamburg, Brahms spent most of his adult life in Vienna. He is recognised as one of the greatest composers of all time. As an exponent of the Romantic era in music, he is considered both a traditionalist and an innovator; his music contains elements of both Classical and Romantic styles. His work is rooted in the past, particularly in the structures and compositional techniques of the Baroque and Classical eras.

He was a master of counterpoint and musical development, following in the tradition of Classical composers such as Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. Alongside Bruckner, Brahms showed deep respect for the ideals of the Classical symphony as embodied by Beethoven, while incorporating Romantic features such as expanded harmonic language, figurative writing and orchestration in his own distinctive way.

As a young boy, Brahms received musical instruction from his father, who was also a musician. By his teenage years, he was already a highly skilled musician and a proficient pianist.

Although Brahms began composing at an early age, he was a perfectionist and did not retain early drafts of many of his works. This practice remained with him throughout his life; he often destroyed pieces he felt were not up to standard. It is said that, as a young composer, he papered the walls of his room with twenty self-rejected string quartets before completing one he deemed worthy of publication.

Brahms showed an early interest in composition, and his work gained attention when he toured as accompanist to the Hungarian violinist Ede Reményi. In 1853, they visited the violinist Joseph Joachim, and Brahms played some of his piano compositions for him. Around the same time, he also visited Robert and Clara Schumann. He performed several piano pieces for them, which they famously described as "veiled symphonies". His ambition to compose a symphony began to grow from that time, and he remained close friends with both Schumanns thereafter.

Brahms began composing orchestral music between 1857 and 1859, when he worked with the Detmold orchestra, having previously studied orchestration while in Düsseldorf. His difficulty and hesitation in producing orchestral works was noted by his friends and contemporaries. Although his early output was substantial, it consisted mainly of chamber music and songs.

Some of Brahms' contemporaries considered his music overly academic. Modernist composers such as Liszt and Wagner criticised his more conservative style. However, later composers, including Schoenberg and Elgar, admired his craftsmanship and structural discipline.

By the early 1870s, Brahms was principal conductor of the Society of Friends of Music and also directed the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra for three seasons.

Brahms composed a wide range of music, including chamber works, symphonies, concertos, piano pieces and choral compositions. Before completing his first symphony, he had already published two serenades of quasi-symphonic scope, a large-scale piano concerto, and the *Variations* on a *Theme* by Haydn.

Composers of symphonic works, 1830 to 1910

Schubert, Mendelssohn, Berlioz, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, Smetana, Bruckner, Dvořák, Mahler, Tchaikovsky, Strauss, Spohr, Sibelius, Ives and Scriabin.

For details of suggested listening, please refer to the Guidance for Teachers on the WJEC website.

Brahms – Musical style

Perhaps more than any other composer before him, Brahms was acutely aware of the full breadth of the tradition he inherited. Despite the powerful Romantic characteristics in his music, he remained a traditionalist. His Classical inclination cannot be ignored; in his own day, he was regarded as a true upholder of the central German tradition.

During the formative years of his life, the 'new' German music was influenced by Liszt and Wagner. However, along with Joachim, Brahms opposed the programmatic approach of this school. Romantic composers of the time, preoccupied with creating emotional immediacy, often produced works that, to some extent, lacked structural integrity. Brahms, the scholar and academic, sought to redress this imbalance.

Behind most of Brahms' experiments with musical structure was a specific musical model, which he used as an ideal and a guide. These included both sonata form and the polyphonic textures and forms of the Baroque. He was particularly influenced by Beethoven in his sense of form. His expansion of sonata form is especially noteworthy.

While he followed the external structure and maintained the emphasis on the outer movements, he also preserved the classical tradition of a slow second movement, often monothematic in the first and last sections, with central sections offering contrasting material. In his symphonies, he never labelled the third movement a 'scherzo' but instead blended characteristics of the minuet, scherzo and Austrian Ländler.

Regarding the inner structures of sonata form within a movement, Brahms did not strictly adhere to the traditional development of ideas, yet he did not necessarily invent anything new. While many composers of the era were exploring programmatic forms, he retained clear structural divisions. However, his thematic material was subject to intense transformation, often beginning in the opening sections. Brahms was undoubtedly a master of variation, both in general technique and in variation form, sometimes using themes by other composers such as Haydn, Schumann, Handel and Bach.

While the use of sonata form is more conventional in the first movement, in the finale of Symphony No. 1, he fuses the development and recapitulation sections. Movement 3 of his fourth symphony also follows sonata form but omits a development section. Apart from his final symphony, he always marked the end of the exposition in first movements with a conventional repeat sign. His second subjects are often subsidiary and grow out of the first subject. These are frequently extended or elaborated, serving more as digressions than as contrasting ideas. The concept of a second subject as a contrasting theme is thus replaced by variation and transformation of earlier material. Notably, he adopted the chaconne ostinato idea in the finale of Symphony No. 4, while the repeated bass idea used for the second subject in the finale of his first symphony also shows this influence.

Brahms also favoured the use of cyclic devices. For example, the finale of Symphony No. 1 reintroduces the horn call from the introduction. These introductions are significant; they serve clear structural and thematic functions, particularly in movements I and IV, where they prepare the Allegro sections and offer thematic material central to the movement's development.

Harmonically, Brahms employed clear functional relationships within his formal designs, handling tension and resolution with care, underpinned by strong bass lines. Chromaticism was usually contained. He was fond of tonal schemes in which successive movements move away from and return to the tonic by major thirds (e.g. C–E–A♭–C). His reliance on mediant relationships is also a noteworthy characteristic.

Brahms' creative tension between tradition and innovation is especially clear in his harmonic language. Though often labelled a conservative, he did not shy away from reshaping tonal syntax to suit his compositional aims. His music features remote modulations, dense harmonic textures, and chords rich in sonority. He frequently used heavy doublings, parallel 3^{rds} and 6^{ths}, and chromatic alterations such as the dominant minor, which in his hands sometimes functions as a secondary tonality. These elements reveal the depth of his harmonic thinking.

He exploited Romantic harmonic techniques to great effect. Incomplete chords contribute to tonal ambiguity, while enharmonic and chromatic chords facilitate striking modulations. In the first symphony, one hears the influence of Schumann's chromatic progressions, and the struggle between C minor and C major becomes a key expressive feature.

An interesting aspect of Brahms' writing is the independence of melody and harmony. Harmony may anticipate or move ahead of the melody, creating an effect of harmonic

anticipation. He also used melodic dissonance in innovative ways, made acceptable through supportive harmonies.

His melodies are often triadic, extended by arpeggios or based on wide spacing and broken octaves. Figuration was integral to his melodic character, always made functional and distinctive. His melodic style, while sometimes mechanical, is consistently well-crafted and effectively placed, echoing Haydn's approach. While influenced by Beethoven in form, Brahms was said to be haunted by Schubert's lyricism and his interweaving of melodic lines created distinctive textures. His affinity for folk music is also evident.

Students of Brahms must not overlook his rhythmic subtlety. He revitalised 19th-century rhythmic language through complex combinations, syncopations, and polyrhythms. Examples include:

- triplets set against duplets
- syncopation across whole bars and phrases
- rhythmic ideas that imply alternate metres while preserving the stated time signature
- metric displacement, irregular phrase lengths, and conflicting rhythmic layers
- augmentation and diminution of rhythmic figures
- 'hocket'-like techniques contributing to the broader musical line
- use of hemiola and unexpected note placements

His orchestral writing reveals a unique approach to tone colour, particularly in his treatment of woodwind, brass, and strings. Orchestration is closely linked to structure, contributing as much as harmony or thematic development. Though he favoured dense scoring and frequent doublings in 3^{rds} and 6^{ths}, he was sparing with the use of solo instrumental colour – with some exceptions, notably the horn and clarinet, likely due to personal acquaintance with outstanding players. His orchestra remained more Classical than Romantic in its constitution, featuring double woodwind.

Brahms' style is marked by lyricism, structural integrity, and a clear avoidance of superficial virtuosity. He often employed contrapuntal textures with interrelated lines rather than simple homophony. While some critics, especially when comparing him to Berlioz or Wagner, find his orchestration lacking in brilliance, his focus was often more on the musical line than the orchestral effect.

His symphonic achievements had a lasting influence on later composers. These works are regarded among the finest in the symphonic repertoire. Like Bruckner, Brahms retained the four-movement Classical structure: fast, slow, dance and finale. They display key Classical traits:

- they are examples of 'absolute' music
- all are in four movements with recognisable sonata-form outlines
- they include motivic development and contrapuntal techniques
- they are not programmatic, unlike many Romantic works

Yet, they are unmistakably Romantic in spirit, harmonic language, and orchestral colour. Brahms infused the traditional symphonic framework with fresh and imaginative content.

Symphony No. 1 - Introductory Notes

It is a well-accepted fact that Brahms nurtured the early sketches and workings of his first symphony over many years. He approached its composition with considerable trepidation, concerned by what he perceived as a responsibility not to fall short of Beethoven's monumental achievement in the genre. He famously remarked: "I shall never compose a symphony! You have no idea how hard it is for our kind to hear the tramp of a giant like him behind us" (Swafford, 1997). He was, of course, referring to Beethoven.

Throughout his career, particularly while living in Vienna, Brahms felt the shadow of Beethoven looming large. Yet he longed to be assessed on his own merits, rather than measured against his predecessor. In 1854, having heard Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Brahms was inspired to compose one of his own. Dissatisfied with the result, however, he reworked the material into a sonata for two pianos. Many of its ideas later found their way into the First Piano Concerto.

The delay in completing the Symphony was not due to a creative block, as Brahms remained highly productive during this period, just not in orchestral music. He appears to have convinced himself that his symphonic debut should be nothing less than a masterpiece.

Whatever the reasons for the slow progress, Brahms was gradually moving closer to his goal and his symphonic ideas were steadily taking shape. By 1868 he had sent Clara Schumann the now-famous horn theme from the finale, a pastoral melody to which he attached the words: 'High on the mountain, deep in the valley, I greet you many thousand times' (Brahms, 1868).

The final movement has been discussed by Scott Burnham as a deliberate response to the challenge posed by Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In that work, Beethoven famously sweeps away all previous orchestral material with the choral 'Ode to Joy'. The main theme of Brahms' finale bears a notable resemblance to that melody. However, unlike Beethoven, Brahms allows this noble, hymn-like theme to be overtaken by purely instrumental ideas that grow organically out of it.

His growing experience as a conductor, culminating in his appointment as director of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in 1872, gave him a deep understanding of orchestral technique. In 1873, he tested his developing skills with the *Variations* on a *Theme* by Haydn, a piece that reflects both his structural command and mastery of orchestral colour. This success seems to have given him the confidence to complete his first symphony, although he continued to revise and refine the work, making several cuts.

Orchestration:

- 2 flutes
- 2 oboes
- 2 clarinets
- 2 bassoons
- Contrabassoon
- 4 horns
- 2 trumpets
- 3 trombones (used in the fourth movement only)
- Timpani
- Strings: violins (including a brief solo part in addition to the usual division into first and second), violas, cellos, and double basses

Structure:

The Symphony comprises four movements:

1. **Un poco sostenuto – Allegro – Meno allegro** (C minor, ending in C major)
2. **Andante sostenuto** (E major)
3. **Un poco allegretto e grazioso** (A♭ major)
4. **Adagio – Più andante – Allegro non troppo, ma con brio – Più allegro** (C minor to C major)

The first movement has been set as the prescribed work for A Level study in the current WJEC Music specification.

Brahms: influences and allusions

Even in the early stages of this composition, Brahms admitted that he had "laid much emphasis on thematic development". As listeners and analysts, we can appreciate the transformation of the themes with a sense of admiration for the unfolding craftsmanship.

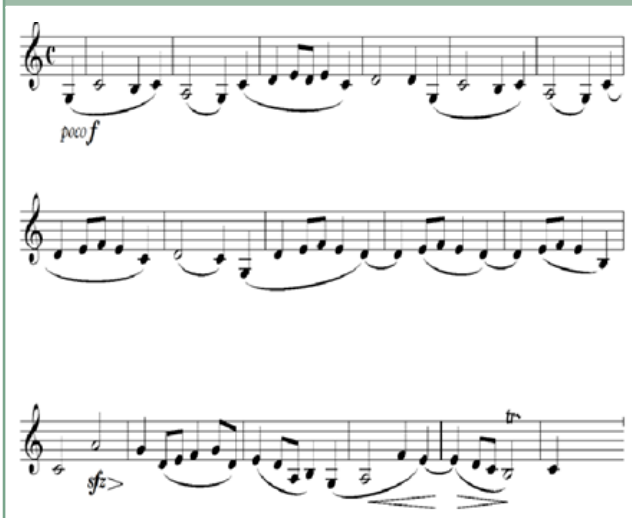
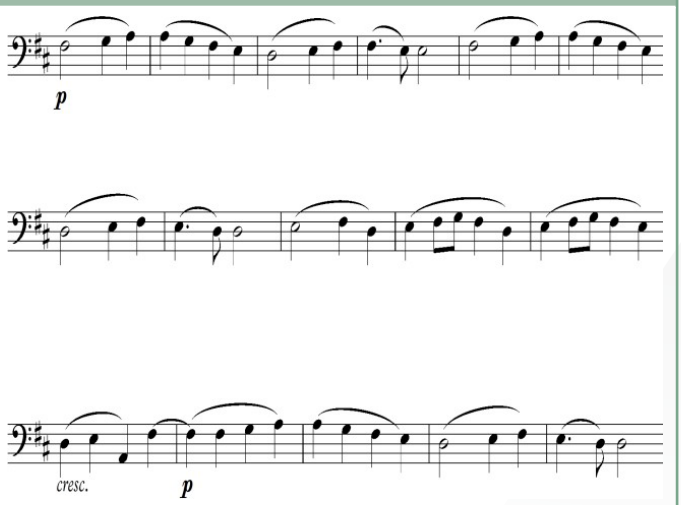
Though it is not the primary focus here, teachers may wish to encourage discussion and independent research into the use of motivic development across the entire Symphony, particularly in the final movement, in order to fully appreciate the significance and coherence of Brahms' thematic transformations.

For further in-depth explanation of structure and meaning in the first movement, teachers are advised to consult the chapter 'Structure and Meaning in the First Movement' by David Brodbeck in *Brahms: Symphony No. 1* (Cambridge Music Handbooks). Brodbeck discusses and illustrates various possible links with other works by Beethoven and, in particular, Schumann. Some of these will be briefly referenced later in the analysis.

Allusions to earlier composers are a frequent feature of Brahms' style, and this Symphony is no exception. In the stormy opening of the first movement, for instance, we hear a

tonality and a 'fateful' rhythmic motif that seem to echo the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. The practice of foreshadowing later material in the introduction is not entirely new, but Brahms may well have been directly influenced by Schumann's Fourth Symphony in D minor and his Second Symphony, where the introduction presents material that will become central in the subsequent Allegro.

Perhaps the most striking allusion, however, is found in the finale, where the main theme bears a clear resemblance to Beethoven's 'Freudenthema' from the Ninth Symphony. Brahms, it seems, was fully aware of this similarity — indeed, he is reported to have remarked, with a touch of wry humour, "Every fool notices that…".

Brahms: Symphony No. 1, Movement IV, Subject 1	Beethoven: Symphony No. 9, Movement IV, 'Ode to Joy' theme
	

Rather reticently, Brahms acknowledged the resemblance and the similarities are there for all to see:

- Simple in style
- Quite religious in character, hymn-like or folk-like, broad
- Use of opening dactylic rhythm (i.e. long-short-short; ♩𝅗𝅥♩♩)
- Repeated melodic supertonic at the end of the first four-bar phrase
- Similar harmonic profile
- Stepwise or conjunct melodic movement
- Narrow range
- Distinctive and similar use of ♩♪♩♩ pattern
- Both themes in the major key

We will mention other possible allusions as we come across them in the ensuing analysis of the first movement.

Outline structure of the first movement: SONATA FORM

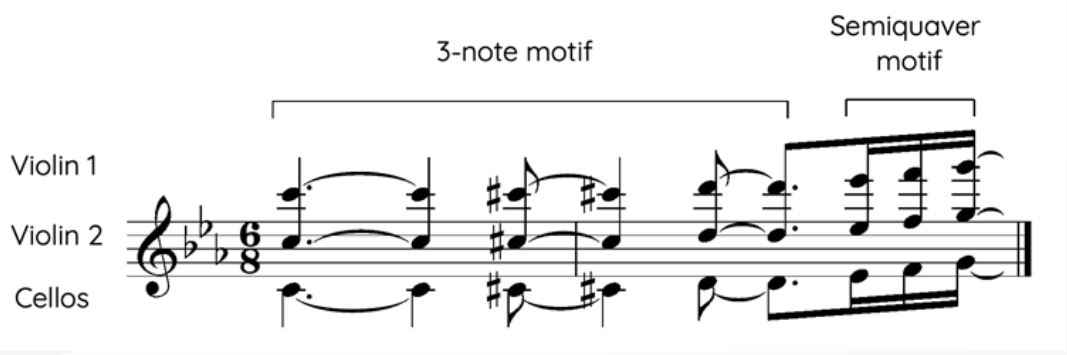
Introduction: Bars 1 to 38	
Exposition: Bars 38 to 189	S1: Bars 38 to 89 Transition: Bars 89 to 121 S2: Bars 121 to 156 Closing group: Bars 157 to 189
Development: Bars 189 to 339	Part 1: Bars 189 to 197 Part 2: Bars 197 to 225 Part 3: Bars 225 to 273 Part 4: Bars 273 to 293 Part 5: Bars 293 to 321 Part 6: Bars 321 to 339
Recapitulation: Bars 339 to 462	S1: Bars 339 to 369 Transition: Bars 370 to 394 S2: Bars 394 to 429 Closing group: Bars 430 to 4621
Coda: Bars 462 to 511	

Analysis

Introduction – Bars 1 to 38 – C minor – 6/8 – Un poco sostenuto

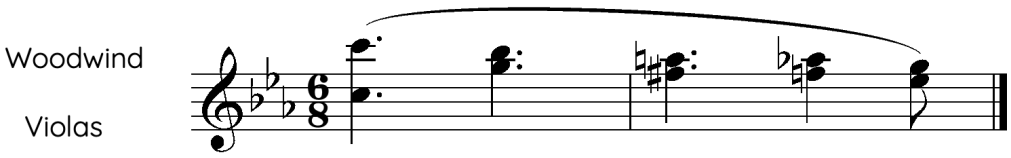
This thirty-eight-bar introduction was added later, and its mood and content clearly foreshadow the character and material of the rest of the movement. Perhaps Brahms added it to balance the introduction of the final movement; both serve similar functions. Its C minor tonality and throbbing tonic pedal establish the intended tragic mood.

The movement opens with the violins and typically high cellos stating the three-note rising chromatic motif that will pervade the movement:



This is often referred to as the 'motto theme' in analyses of the movement and we will refer to it as such. Note its syncopated setting which immediately adds to the tension.

Concurrent with this motto theme, the woodwind, along with violas and horns, play another figure that is integral to the material, character and progress of the movement:



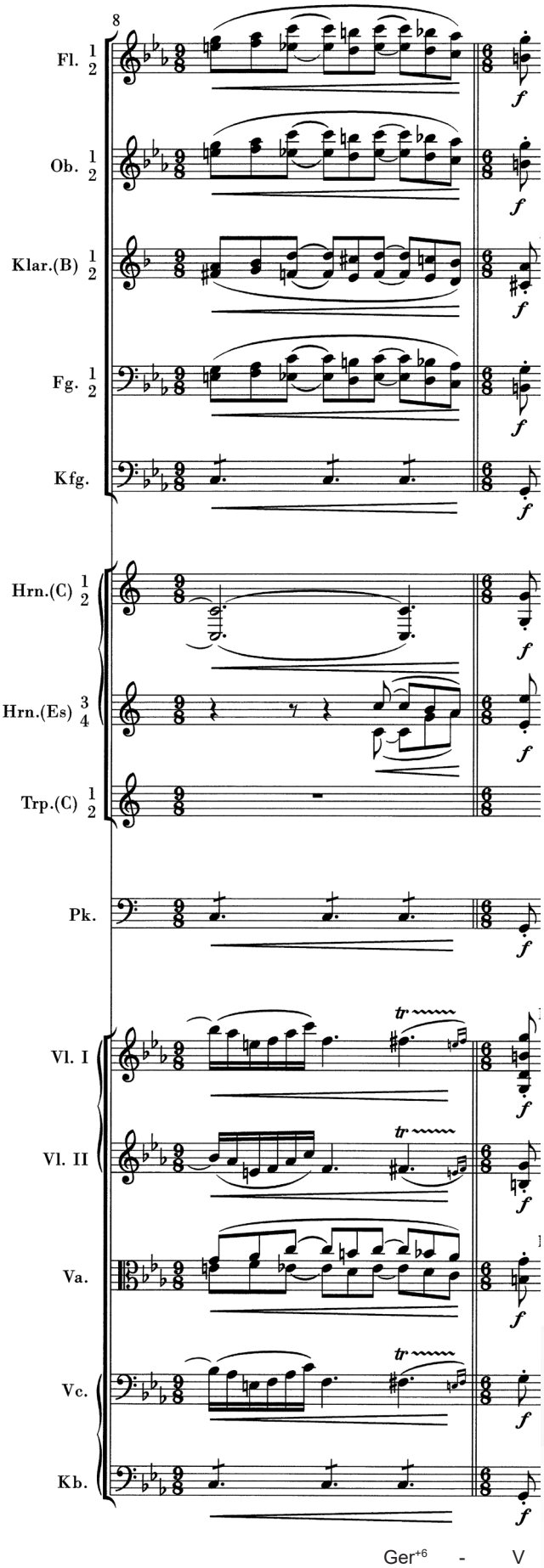
Typical of Brahms, these descending parallel chromatic thirds move in contrary motion to the motto theme in the violins and the use of 3rds and octave doubling of both ideas points us to important characteristic features of Brahms' textural and instrumental style from the outset.

These two motives are underpinned by an ominous tonic pedal (C) in the contrabassoon, double bass and timpani, its throbbing quaver rhythm providing both energy and tension.

The key is C minor, though the chromatic nature of both motives results in chromatic harmony in the first two bars with passing 7th chords as a result.

There is one more important figure to note in the opening: the three-note rising scalic semiquavers in the violins and cellos at the end of bar 2, as seen above in the first example. This figure will return in developed forms both melodically and rhythmically as we shall see.

The texture and mood continue, with the syncopations, three-note semiquaver figure and woodwind thirds (later expanded to 6ths in bar 8) layered over the ominous tonic pedal, building in dynamic through bar 8 to the first clear harmonic progression – an imperfect cadence onto V in bars 8 to 9. Note how this focal point is emphasised by Brahms through the addition of three quavers to create a bar of 9/8:

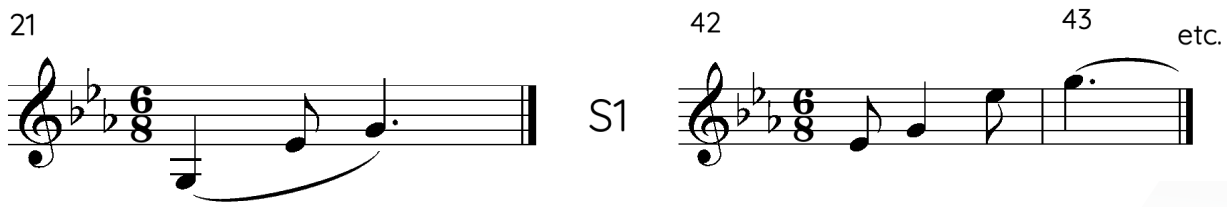

8
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
f
tr
Ger+6 - V

As the above example shows, while the overall harmonic thrust as an imperfect cadence in C minor is clear, the harmony is typical of Brahms in its use of chromatic colouring. The passing notes and the German augmented 6th chord on A♭ over the still-present tonic pedal in bar 8 reinforce the Romantic language.

At bar 9, after the cadence, the texture and dynamic change, with string pizzicatos allowing the disjunct diminished 7th and 6th intervals in the woodwind to come through. The offbeat, syncopated rhythmic writing here makes it intentionally difficult to tell where the beat is. The rich chromatic nature of the harmony continues, with D♭7 in bar 11 (one of many nods to Neapolitan harmony in the movement) giving way to another half-close cadence in bar 13. A sequential repeat of bars 9 to 12 starts in bar 13, moving towards F minor (with the Neapolitan G♭7 in bar 15), but an extension results in a rising chromatic bassline. The harmony builds up to a 1st inversion D♭ major chord in bar 19, a clear Neapolitan relationship this time to the tonic C minor.

F minor is suggested, but by bar 21 only two notes remain – G and E♭ – and it is unclear if the tonality is C minor or E♭ major.

However, bar 21 is very important for another reason, for the rhythm and pitch of this two-note figure anticipates the main theme, S1, of the exposition, to be heard in bars 42 to 43:



As if to confirm its importance, Brahms repeats these two notes in gradual rhythmic diminution in the strings in bars 22 to 24. The accompanying dominant pedal (G) this time purposefully becomes twice as fast in the timpani from bar 22 onwards, and a dramatic crescendo propels the music onwards to a repeat of the opening in bar 25, now on the dominant, G, instead. Note how the timpani semiquavers become a roll in bar 25 to underline the drama. The repeat is curtailed, though not before ending with the same imperfect cadence, using a German augmented 6th chord on A♭ (still over a dominant pedal) to V in bars 28 to 29.

Just as the dynamic dropped to piano in bar 9, so does it in bar 29. But instead of the disjunct woodwind intervals, we now hear a plaintive melody in the oboe confirming the tonic key of C minor, ending on a 4-3 appoggiatura over V in bar 32. An imitative repeat starts in the flute before being taken over by the cello, and a soft, drawn-out 4-3 perfect cadence in C minor in the strings in bars 36 to 38 concludes the Introduction and launches the Exposition.

EXPOSITION: C major – Allegro

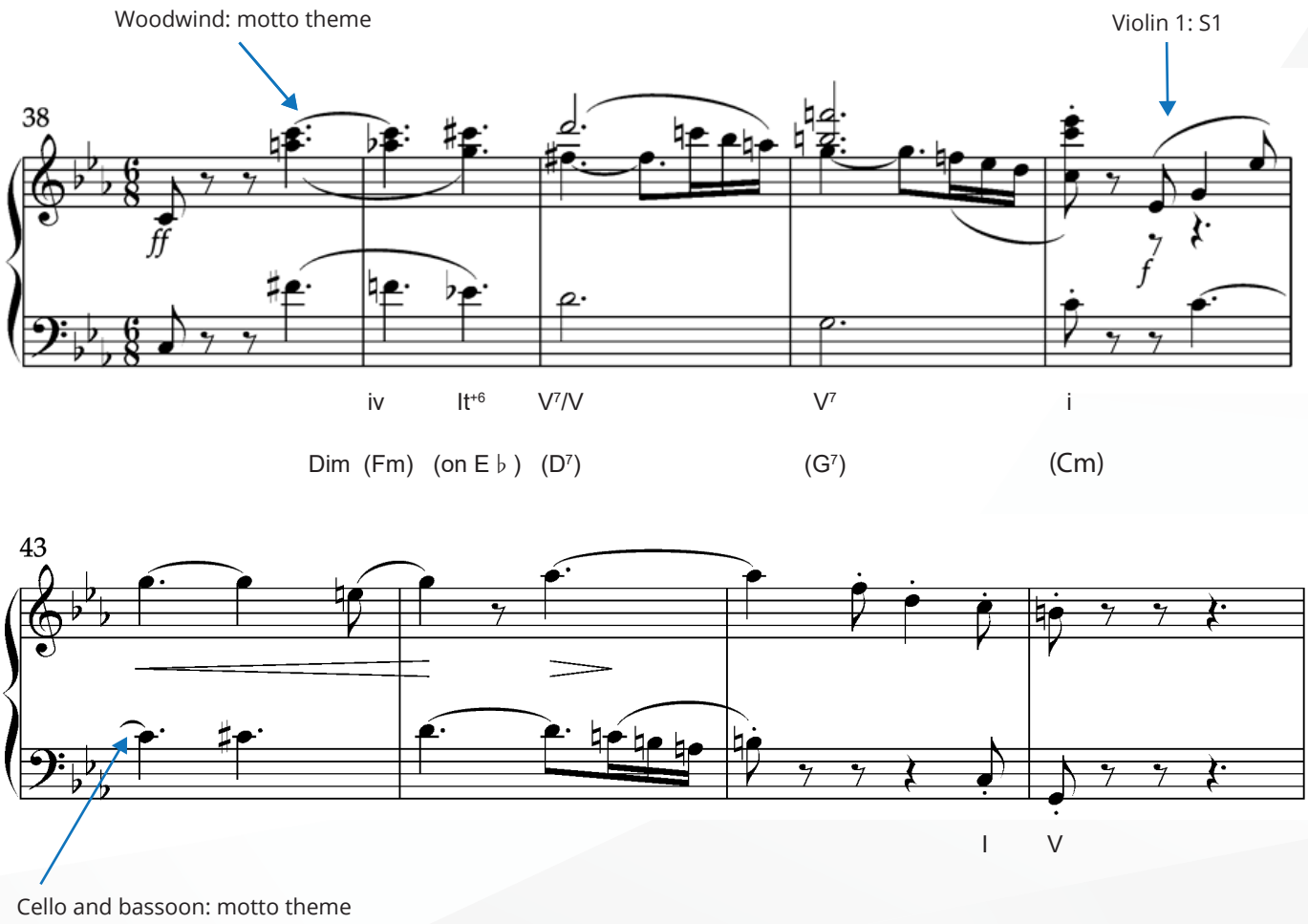
S1 - Bars 38 to 89

Bars 38 to 51

The musical writing of the Exposition is characterised by dense thematic unity and motivic counterpoint. While it is possible to identify the different sections of this sonata form exposition and of the movement as a whole, they are never clear cut, each section merging with the next, the whole forming a fabric of constantly developing thematic connections.

We have already met the ingredients of the S1 group in the introduction. As the example below shows, the opening of the Exposition and main theme consists of:

- the chromatic motto theme from the start of the introduction, followed by the three-note semiquaver figure, now reversed
- the arpeggiated third figure based on E♭ and G

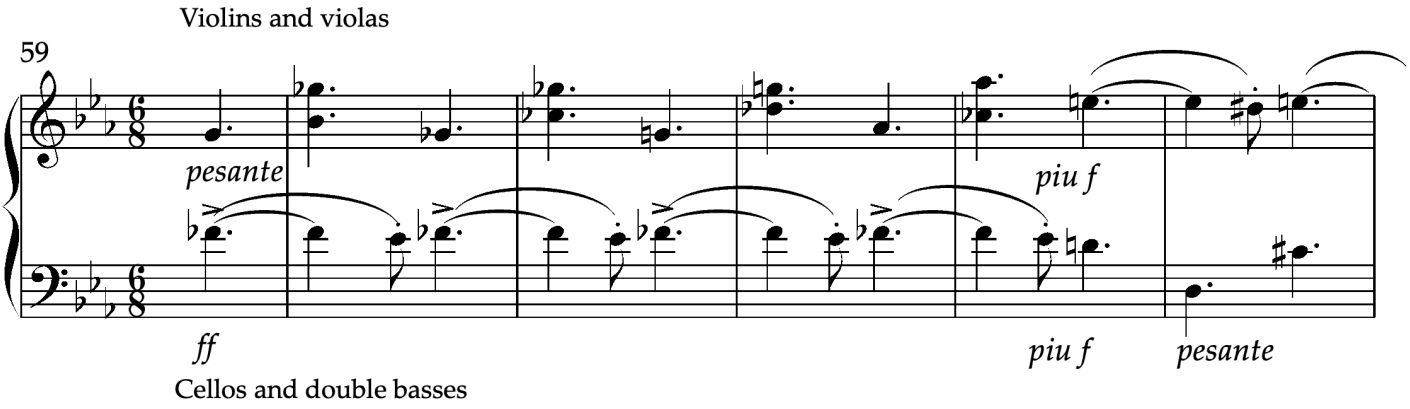


We can immediately see the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic connections with the material in bars 1 to 2 and bar 21 of the Introduction, though the tempo changes into what has been described as a "sinister gigue" by Brodbeck. The motto theme first appears in the woodwind. At bars 42 to 46, the motto theme (now in bassoon and cello) and the

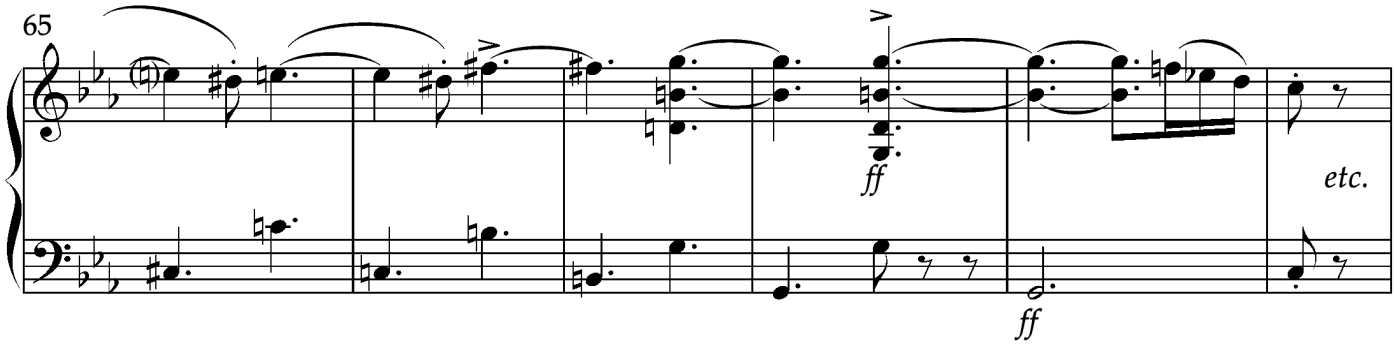
arpeggiated S1 theme (in first violins) occur simultaneously, one in counterpoint with the other to create a double S1 theme. The harmony is predictably chromatic, with use of diminished, Italian 6th and secondary V chords (as shown above), though there is a clear perfect cadence, V^7 – i in C minor bars 41 to 42. A repeat of S1 on the minor dominant (a favourite harmonic procedure of Brahms) in bar 46 is extended and finishes with a half close cadence bars 50 to 51.

Bars 51 to 70

Paralleling bar 9 of the introduction, the half close cadence is again followed by the descending diminished 7th and major 6th intervals, 'melodic sighs' and Neapolitan $D♭^7$ harmony, ending on an imperfect cadence in bars 56 to 57 as in bars 12 to 13. In fact, the harmonies of bars 9 to 16 of the introduction are repeated here from 51 to 60, though the 'sighs' are then extended in bars 63 to 71 with rich modulatory harmony that makes rapid use of circle of fifths, 3rd-related chords, Italian 6th and enharmonic shifts (as shown in quote 6 below).



Circle of 5ths: G ♭ 7 C ♭ (dim) F ♭ m E^7 (enharmonic of F ♭) A

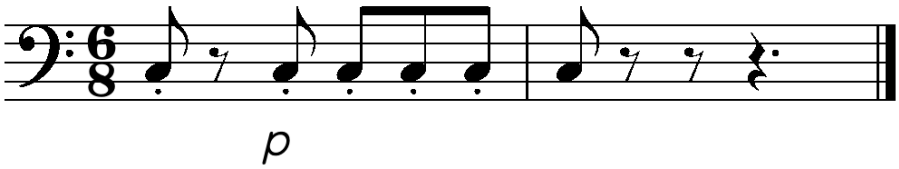


By 3rd from A to: It +6 (on C) B By 3rd to: G (V) G^7 (V^7) C min (i)

Note the way Brahms switches his material between different instruments in these bars, the 'sighs' and disjunct intervals moving from cellos to violins and vice versa, creating what is known as invertible counterpoint. The changes of octave dramatically disrupt the voice-leading, particularly notable as the C–A♯ of the augmented 6th in bars 65 to 66 resolves to B. A strong perfect cadence in the tonic in bars 69 to 70 confirms that the tonality is still C minor despite the colourful chromaticism.

These bars form the counterstatement of S1. It is now extended and the motto theme is inverted, descending in the cellos and basses rather than ascending as previously. One other change is the addition of the rhythmic figure in the timpani in bars 70 to 71:

Timpani 'Rhythm tynged' Beethoven



As noted by Brodbeck and many other critics, this pattern is highly reminiscent of Beethoven's 'fate rhythm' in his Symphony No. 5. It is no surprise that the key of C minor is also the same. As mentioned previously, Brahms was only too aware of what a great symphonic genius Beethoven was, and while it probably delayed Brahms' own symphonic compositions, it also provided him with unquestionable guidance and influence to carry forward in his own symphonic writing. Indeed, it is possible to identify at least five ways in which Beethoven's influence is felt in this movement:

1. C minor key
2. Intense rhythmic drive
3. Use of his 'fate rhythm'
4. Consistent motivic development
5. Structure

The motto theme and its three-note semiquaver figure appear in both rising and falling forms throughout this extended counterstatement (as in the low strings, bars 70 to 77). The 'fate rhythm' not only appears in the timpani but also begins to pervade other parts (for example, the upper strings in bars 70 to 77). The arpeggiated S1 theme starts off in the woodwind during bars 70 to 77 before moving to the strings in bar 78. Note how this theme is also reversed, inverted and developed, such as in bars 75 to 77 in the woodwind, where it descends and is played staccato rather than legato. A perfect cadence in the tonic rounds off the first section of the counterstatement in bars 77–78.

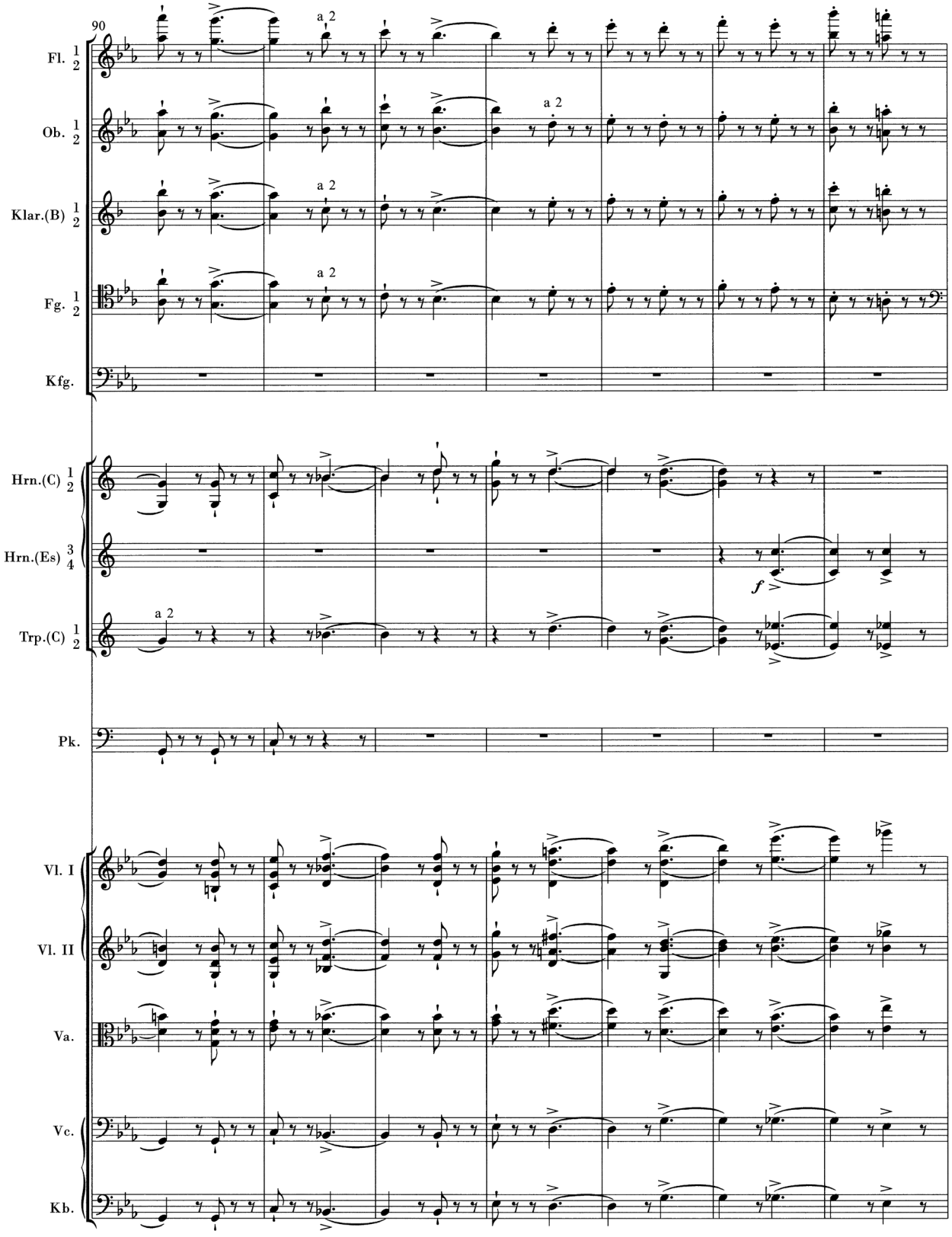
A repeat of the S1 arpeggiated material on F minor then ensues, starting in bar 78, while the woodwind present various versions of the motto theme, underpinned by the 'fate rhythm' in the horns and timpani. The texture and dynamic build with the addition of sequential repetitions of the three-note semiquaver figure, syncopation and more diminished and minor harmonies during bars 82 to 87, culminating in a clear perfect cadence on the tonic C minor in bars 88 to 89 to mark the end of the S1 section and the beginning of the transition.

TRANSITION

Bars 89 to 121

Four ideas can be identified in the transition section:

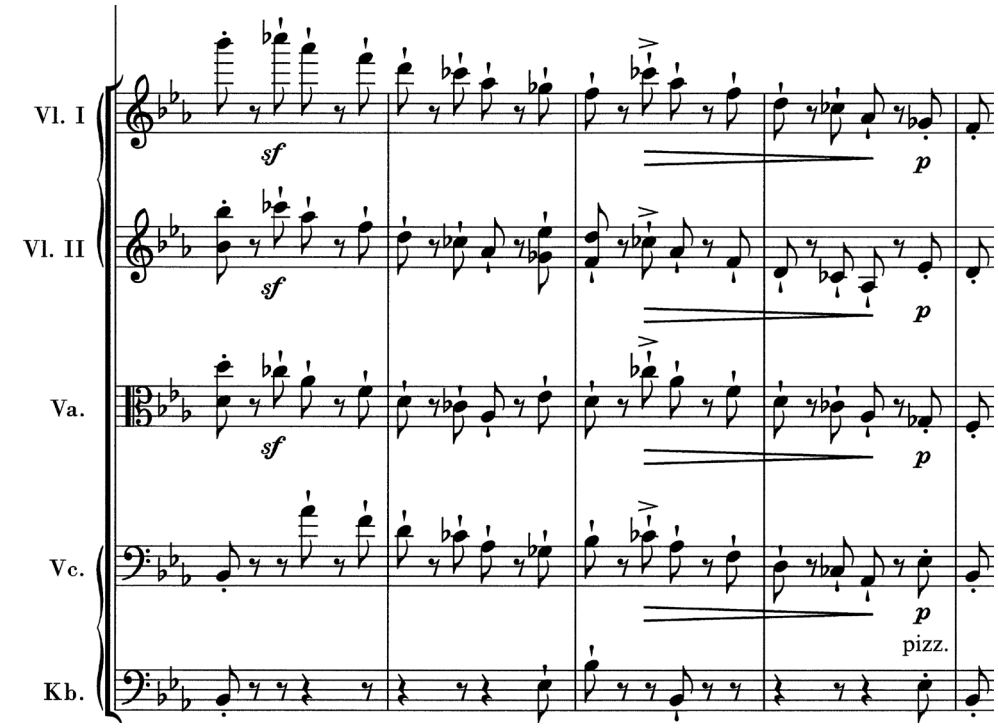
1. T1: the offbeat, detached, accented chords in tutti orchestra, bars 89[2] to 97[1]:



etc.

Tonicises: E♭ Gm E♭m

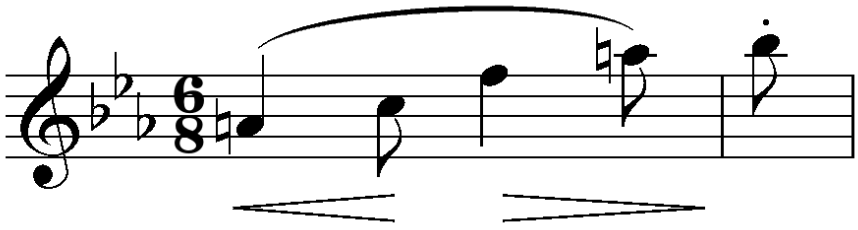
2. T2: the detached, descending minor 3rds in strings, bars 97-101[1]:



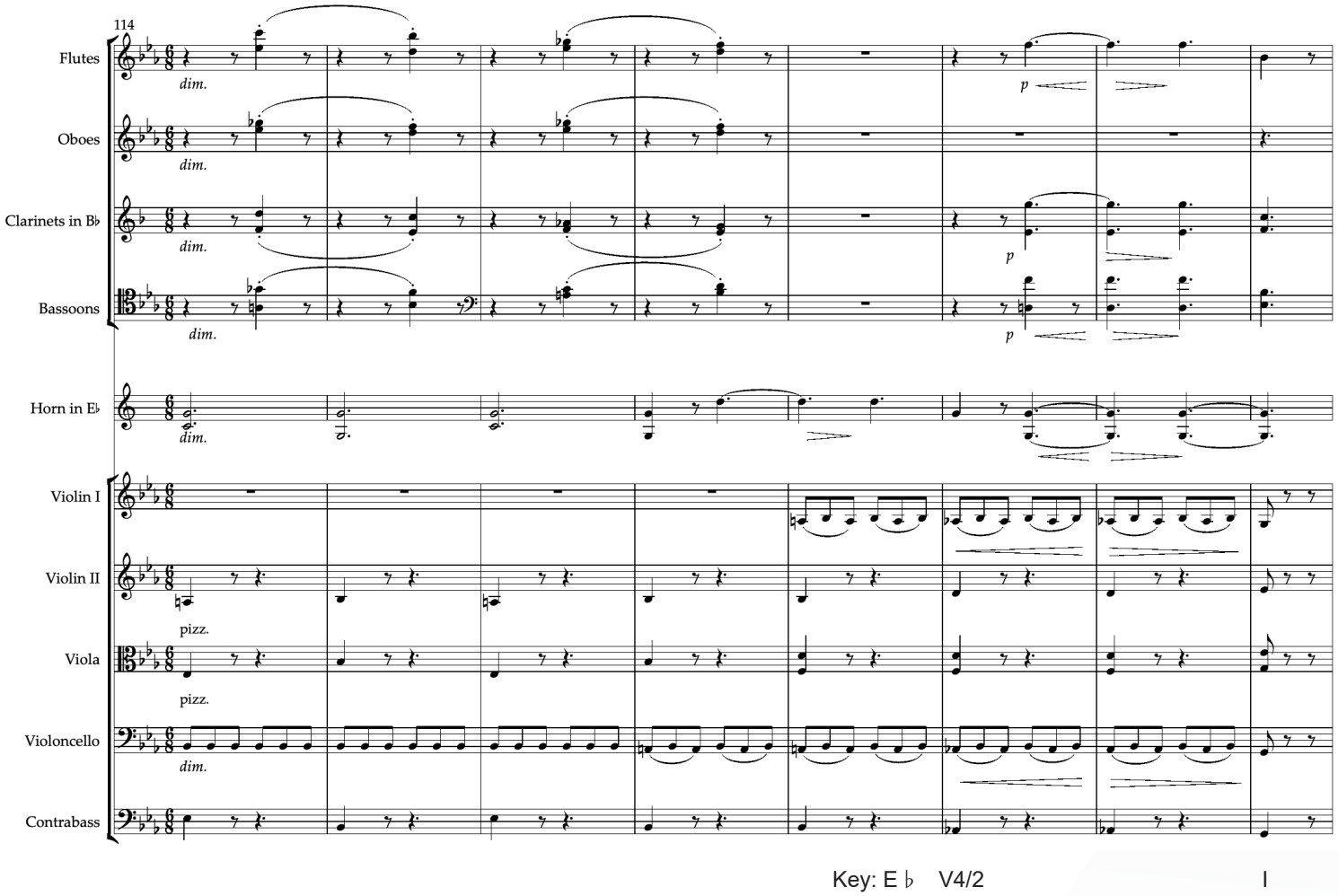
E♭ minor: V⁹ i V⁹ i V

3. T3: the legato, arch-like figure reminiscent of S1, bars 104 to 105[1]:

Oboe and clarinet



4. T4: pizzicato and staccato chords followed by descending 5th (horn then flute), bars 114 to 121:



The staggered wind and string chords of T1 are heard in sequence in bars 89 to 97 and set in motion the modulation away from the tonic C minor. The music tonicises E♭ major 91 - 93^1, G minor bars 93^2 - 95^1, before heading towards E♭ minor at bar 95.

T2 emphasises the dominant chord of E♭ minor with its V^9 harmony, interspersed with a few E♭ minor chords.

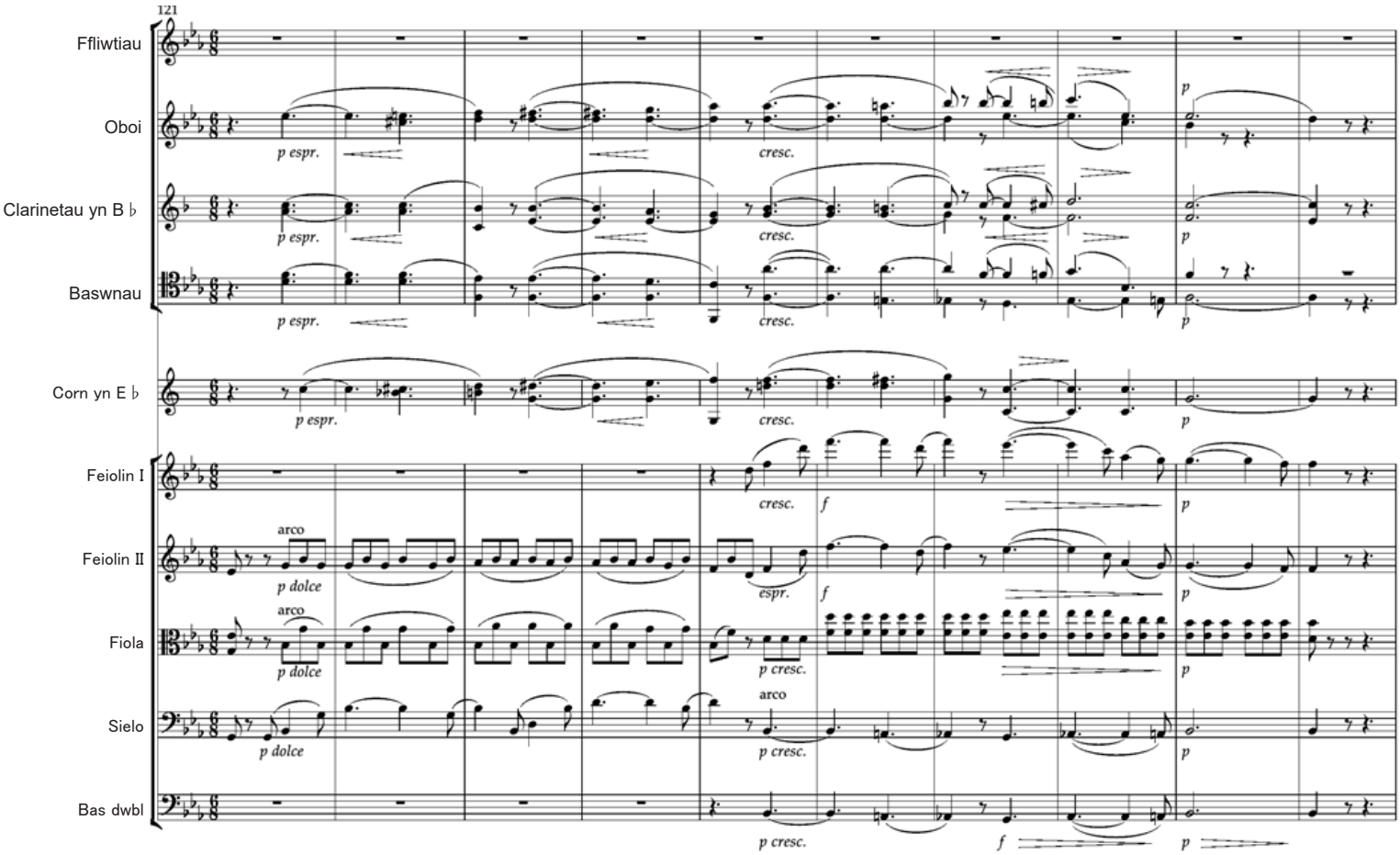
B♭ is still emphasized in T3 by underpinning the secondary dominant F major harmony above it in bar 104. However, bars 105 to 111 are more modulatory, seemingly delaying the modulation to the new key and the second subject group through digressions into E minor and E major (bars 106 to 108). Via an Italian 6th on G♭ at bar 109^2, (which seems to prompt the return of the motto theme as in bar 38, now in staccato form in the upper woodwind and 2nd violins), the descending chromatic bass does weave its way back towards B♭ again for T4.

This dominant note of E♭ is made strong by the harmonies around it, such as the diminished 7th harmony on A in bar 114 and the F/B♭ perfect 5th intervals in horn and flute in bars 117 to 121. Eventually, an A♭ is added (bar 119), making the B♭ harmony $B♭^7$, and though it is in 3rd inversion, there is finally a perfect cadence, V^7 – I, into the relative major of E♭ major in bars 119 to 121, marking the start of the second subject group.

S2 - Bars 121 to 156

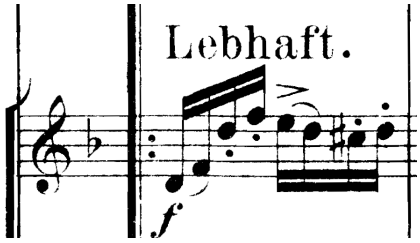
Bars 121 to 129 (S2a)

Brahms' predilection for 3rd-related keys is satisfied by the move from the tonic C minor to its relative major, E♭ major, for the second subject group. The key is also clearly a bow to traditional symphonic structure, something else Brahms is noted for and has in common with Beethoven. However, we quickly realise that although the key and mood have changed, with the soft, legato and lyrical setting typical of a second subject group, the thematic material has not: both the motto theme and the arpeggiated S1 theme from the first subject group still form the basis of this subject group too:



As the example above shows, the chromatic three-note motto theme that began the introduction and featured prominently at the start of the exposition is clearly present in the woodwind and horns in bars 121 to 125, joined by the cellos at bar 125. It appears in both its rising and descending forms. Simultaneously, the arpeggiated S1 theme is heard first in the cellos at bar 121 before being taken over by the violins at bar 125. This is also heard in its inverted form in bars 127 to 129. As before, this switching of themes between instruments results in invertible counterpoint.

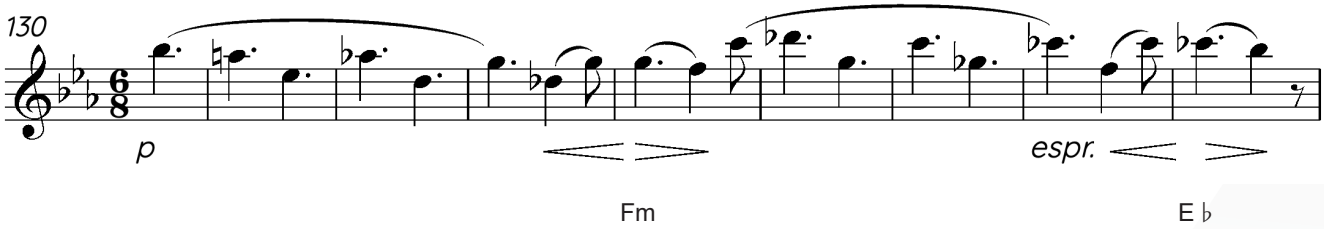
The version on D and F in the violins at bar 125 over the inverted motto theme has been likened to bar 29 of the first movement of Schumann's Fourth Symphony by Brodbeck:



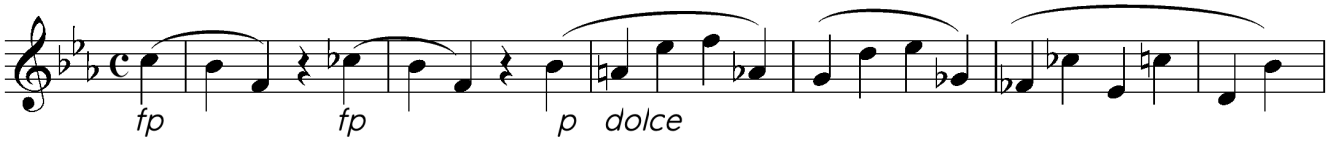
This first section of the S2 group ends on an imperfect cadence in E♭ in bar 129.

Bars 130 to 138 (S2b)

There follows an even more lyrical, sparsely textured subject 2b where the plaintive descending oboe theme, based on tritones, could be said to derive from the downward leaps of bar 9 of the introduction:



The melody has also been called the 'Clara melody' as it is reminiscent of material in Schumann's *Manfred* Overture (bars 217 to 223), a likeness noted by the composer's wife, Clara Schumann (see Brodbeck for further detail):



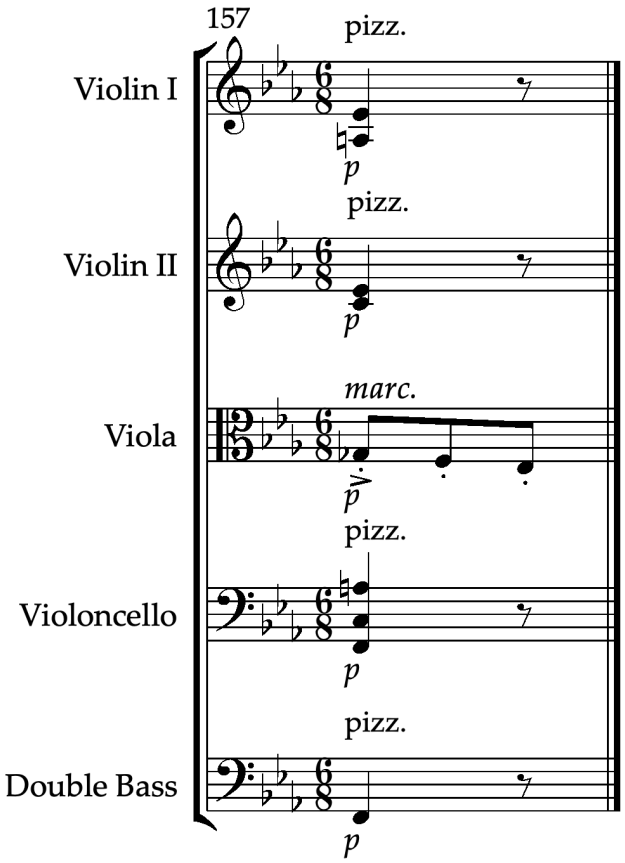
The use of tritones in the melody and diminished 7th harmony gives the antecedent phrase of bars 130[2] to 134 a wistful character, moving towards F minor, while the sequential consequent in bars 135 to 138 returns the tonality to E♭.

Bars 139 to 156

The concluding cadential figure of S2 is now taken up and used in imitative echoes in the woodwind. The tonality shifts by a third to C♭ major at bar 142, but a German 6th on C♭ in bar 145[2] serves as a pivot back towards E♭. However, the mode remains ambiguous, hovering between E♭ minor and E♭ major during bars 146 to 156. Note the motto theme embedded in the string writing of bars 146 to 148, beneath the cadential hunting-call-like figures in the woodwind and horn. As this section dies away and descends in pitch, it becomes clear that the tonality is now E♭ minor, and the 1st inversion chord at the close in bars 155 and 156 adds to the sense of unease that this modal choice evokes.

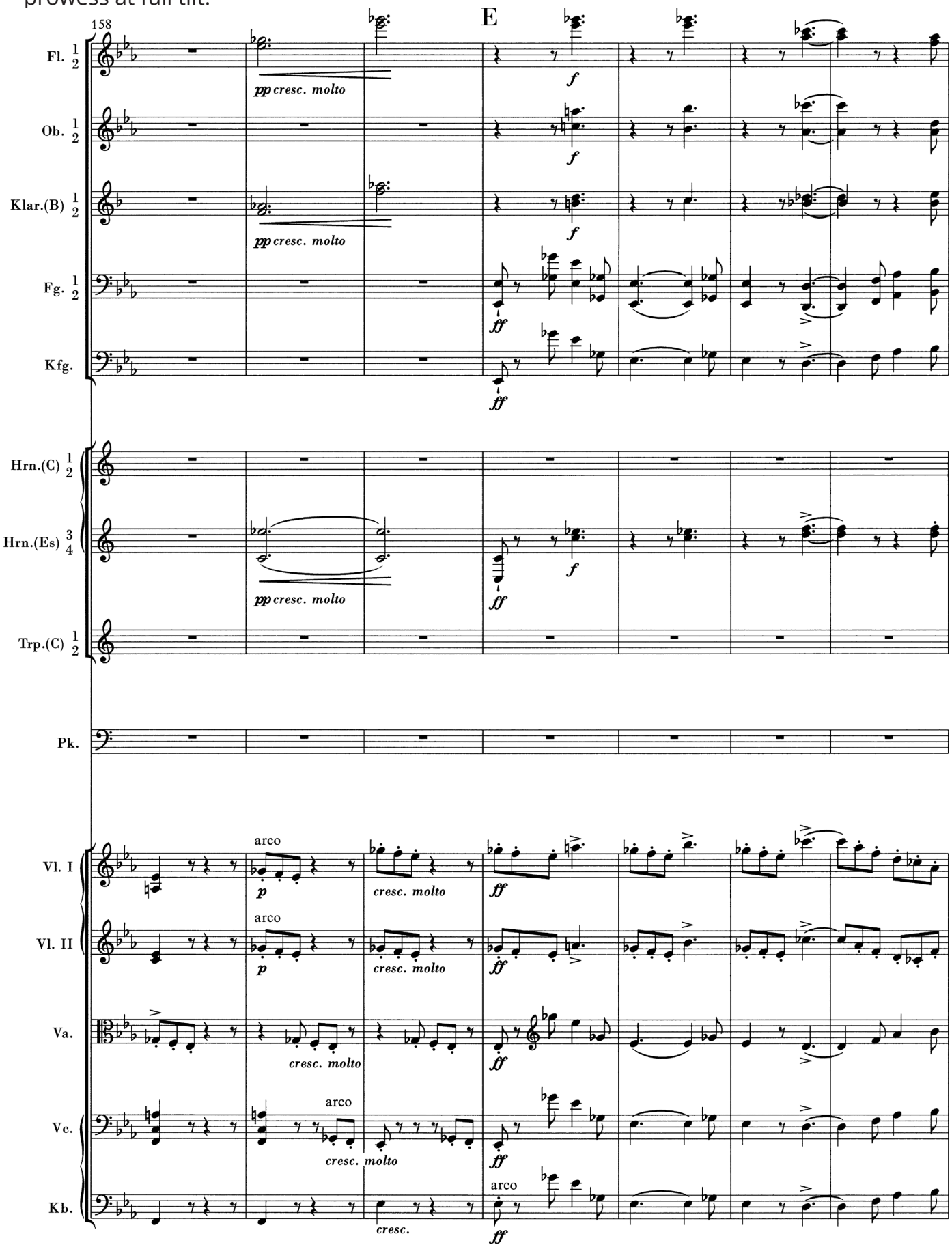
CLOSING GROUP - Bars 157 to 189

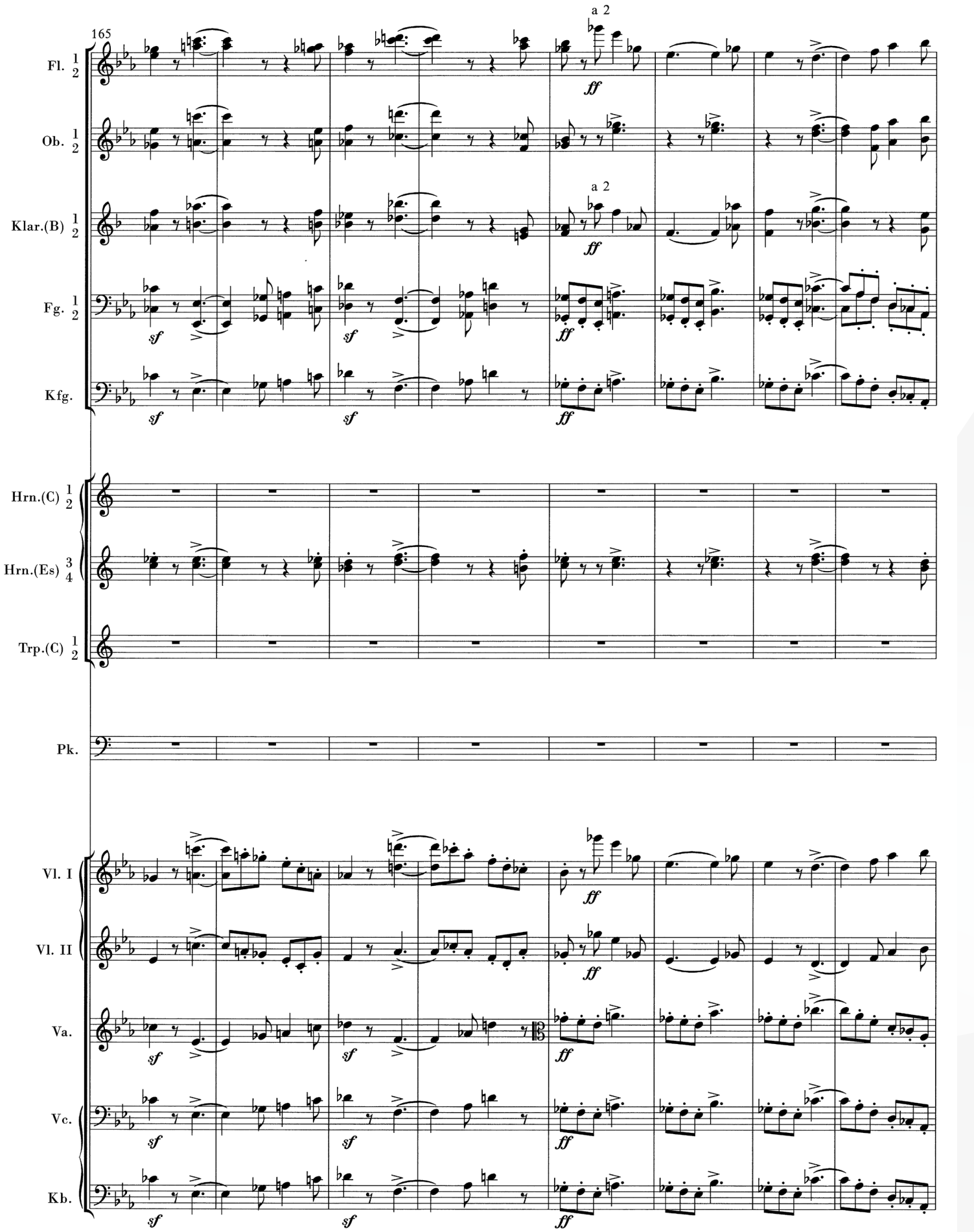
There is a sudden change of mood at the start of the closing section, as the dissonant V9 harmony of bar 97 returns — now as F9 rather than B♭9 — but still outlining E♭ minor in its detached three-note motive in the violas:

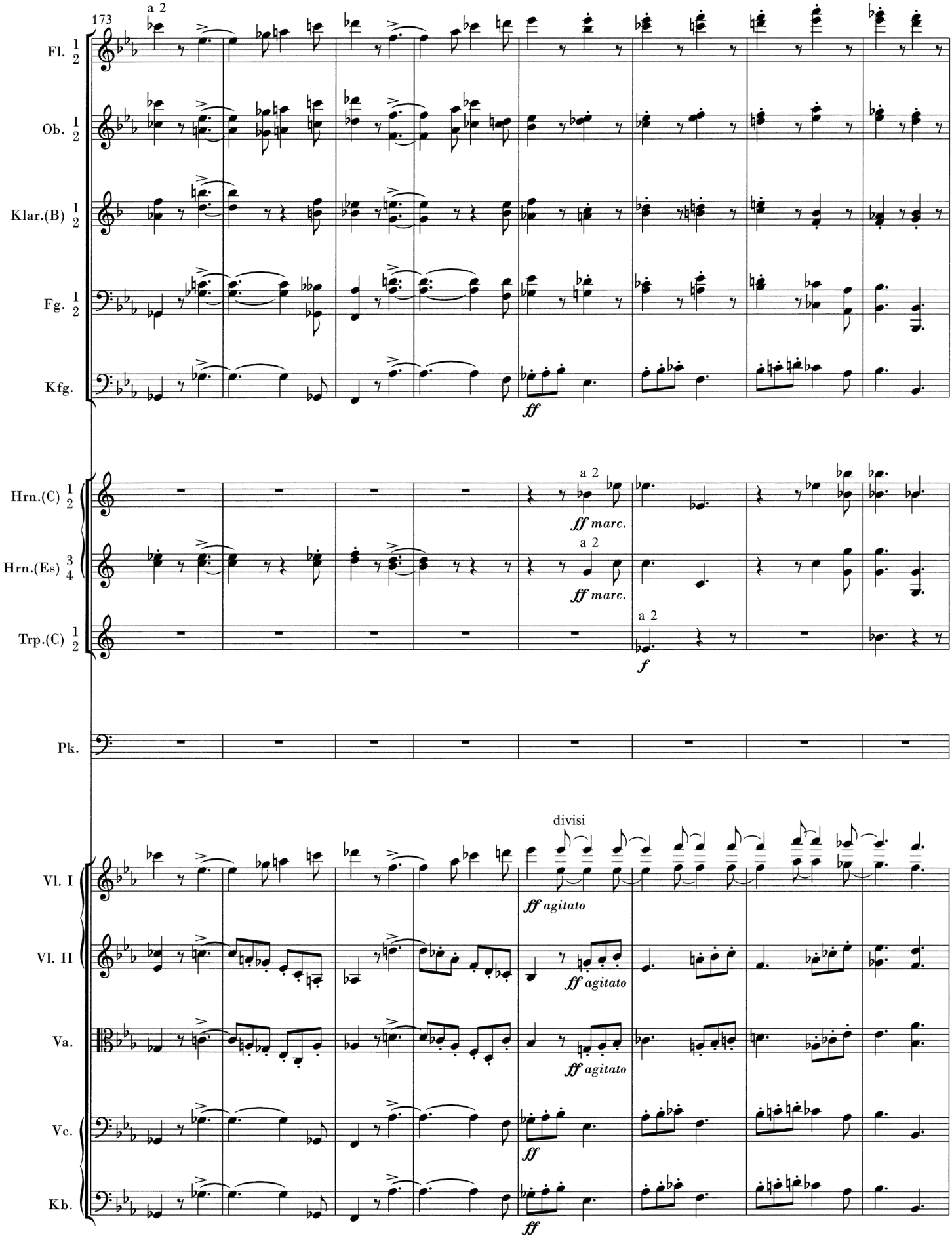


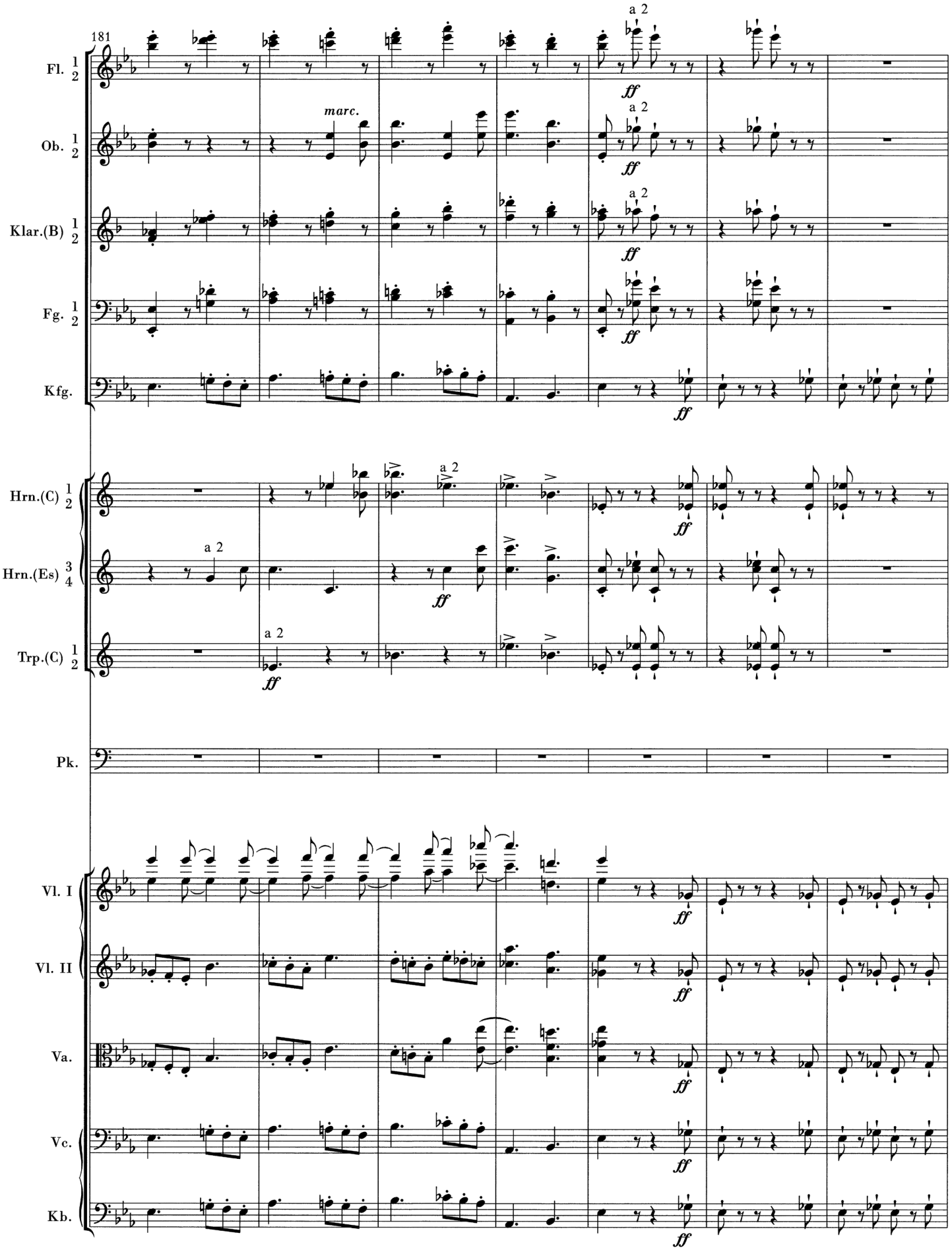
This motive could be derived from the three-note semiquaver figure at the end of the motto theme in bar 40, now heard in quavers rather than semiquavers. It is quickly passed around the strings in overlapping entries in bars 159 and 160, and when an extra note is added to it in bar 161, it immediately takes on the rhythm of the 'fate rhythm' heard in bar 70.

Bars 158 to 187 are worth close inspection, for here we see Brahms' compositional prowess at full tilt:




165
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
a 2
a 2
sf
ff


173
a 2
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
ff
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
a 2
ff marc.
a 2
ff marc.
a 2
f
Pk.
divisi
Vl. I
ff agitato
Vl. II
ff agitato
Va.
ff agitato
Vc.
ff
Kb.
ff


181
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
marc.
a 2
ff

Note the way that the last note of the closing motive in the violins in each of bars 161, 162 and 163 rises by a semitone each time, thus forming the original three-note rising chromatic motto theme. The accents would seem to confirm this.

At the same time, the S1 arpeggiac motive is being played by bassoons and lower strings in both its original and inverted forms, with the off-beat chords in upper woodwind and horns adding to the dramatic nature of this section. As before, these motives are swapped between instruments, resulting in dense invertible counterpoint. The key is E♭ minor, with diminished 7th and D♭ and C♭ harmonic colouring. The texture, harmony and motivic writing are rich and intricate, with deliberate offbeat syncopations heightening the tension.

At bar 177, the cadential motive from the end of S2b (as heard in bars 149 to 150) returns, now marked *ff* (fortissimo) and marcato in the horns, instead of *p* (piano) and legato as originally presented. This is combined with the closing motive, now in inverted form in the strings and contra bassoon, with insistent syncopated octaves in the 1st violins and detached chords in the woodwind, all driving towards an agitated close to the exposition. The key remains firmly E♭ minor, and the perfect cadence in bars 180 to 181 confirms this.

A repeat of bars 177 to 180 in bars 181 to 185 restores the closing motive to its original form, and a clear iv–V–i cadence again confirms E♭ minor between bars 184 and 185.

From bars 185 to 189, the minor 3rds of bar 97 from the Transition return, now hammered out in the strings on G♭ and E♭ to consolidate the E♭ minor tonality of the end of the exposition.

The first-time bar is particularly striking: it forms a startling harmonic and tonal shift. The bass drops by a semitone from D♭ to C, quickly reverting the key to C minor and preparing a repeat of bars 38 to 39 in bars 189a to 189b as the exposition begins again.

DEVELOPMENT - Bars 189 to 339

This section can be subdivided into six parts (as identified by Brodbeck):

- **Part 1:** bars 189 to 197
- **Part 2:** bars 197 to 225
- **Part 3:** bars 225 to 273
- **Part 4:** bars 273 to 293
- **Part 5:** bars 293 to 321
- **Part 6:** bars 321 to 339

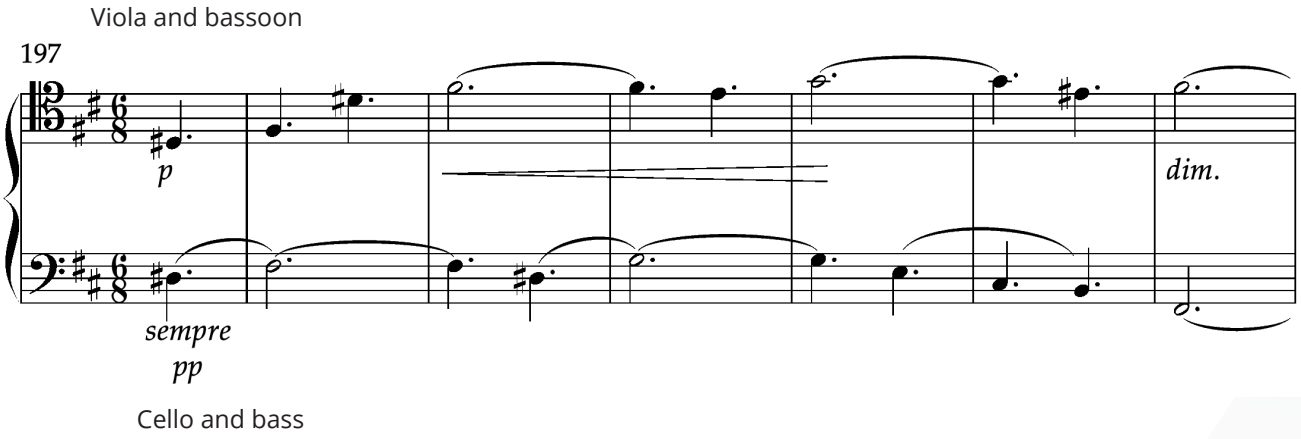
Part 1: Bars 189 to 197

Whilst the first-time bar saw a sudden return to C minor, the second-time bar introduces an equally surprising tonal shift, this time to B major. (Note that the key signature changes to two sharps, which would usually imply B minor rather than B major.) At first, B major may seem distant from E♭ minor, but we quickly realise that the enharmonic equivalents of E♭ and G♭ are D♯ and F♯ - two of the three notes that form the tonic triad of B major. With the bass now moving down a tone to B (rather than a semitone to C as in the first-time bar), the harmony is completed, and B major is seamlessly established via one of Brahms' favoured methods of modulation.

The first part of the development features the arpeggiated main theme (S1) in loud canonic treatment between the lower strings and bassoon and the violins, all over B major harmony. This statement closely resembles the counterstatement of bar 70. This first part of the development ends with an imperfect cadence, V/V to V in B major, from the last chord of bar 196 to bar 197.

Part 2: Bars 197 to 225

A sudden dramatic drop in dynamics sets the scene for a quieter, somewhat mysterious-sounding section, which begins in B major but gradually drifts towards C major/minor via B minor and several other rapid key changes. The main theme, S1, remains the basis of the melodic development, though it is now heard in augmentation and treated canonically between the lower strings, violas, and bassoons:



As the above example shows, the key has shifted to B minor, and the tremolo violins, pulsating quavers in the violas, and diminished 7th harmony all contribute to a heightened sense of suspense. A perfect cadence in B major in bars 204 to 205 sets in motion a repeat of the previous nine bars. This time, however, it is the flute and oboe (typically doubled at the octave) that are in canonic counterpoint with the cellos and basses from bar 205 onwards. The harmony changes and roves more widely, touching on an A dominant 7th in bars 209[2] to 210 and a G♯ dominant 7th in bars 212 to 214. This chromatic root movement is another of Brahms' favoured harmonic procedures.

As the key signature reverts to three flats in bar 215, the tonality begins to veer back towards C minor. The tonic and dominant notes of this key become increasingly prominent, reinforced by the return of the timpani in bar 213. The bass slips down another semitone to G in bar 215, and the harmony in bar 216 is clearly V^7 of C minor. However, a plagal progression concludes this section: the iv chord in bars 221 to 222 moves not to C minor, but to C major in bars 223 to 224. We have had a glimpse of the ultimate tonal goal of the movement - and indeed, the Symphony as a whole - but we are not there yet, as Part 3 of the development will show.

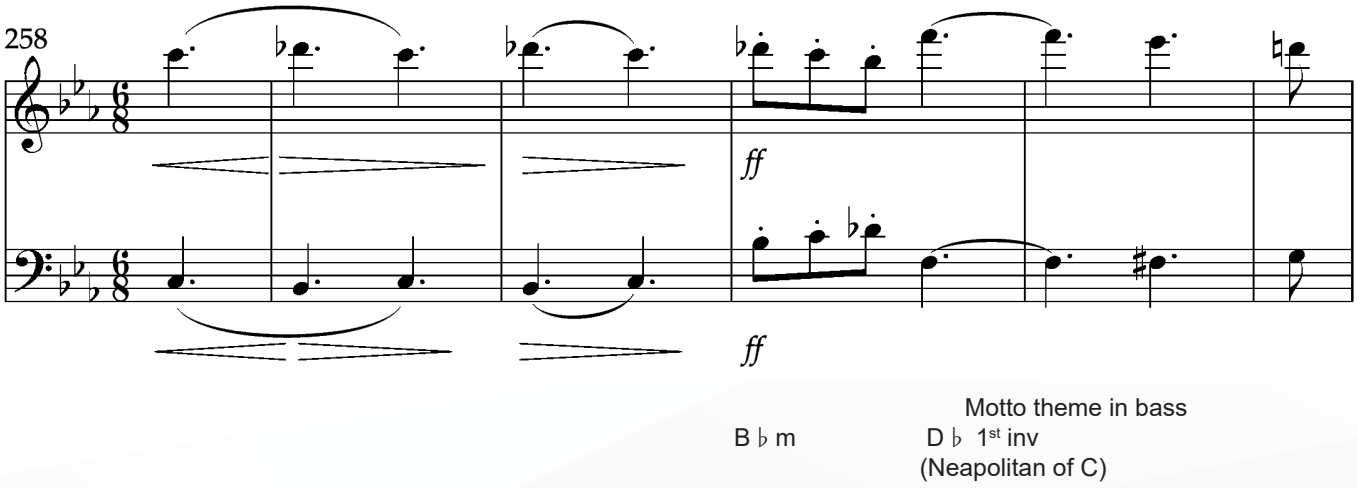
Part 3: Bars 225 to 273

The previous mood of Part 2 and the momentary glimpse of C major are quickly shattered by the return of the closing theme (from bar 157). The C major harmony is reinterpreted as a V^9 chord on C, with the D♭ (the minor 9th) quickly turning the tonality towards B♭ minor (whereas it had been E♭ minor in bar 157). It is now the turn of this theme to be developed, and Brahms immediately employs overlapping stretto entries of it across the strings. The texture and dynamic rapidly build, echoing the climax at the end of the exposition. Then, at bar 232, a new ***ff***, chorale-like theme in G♭ major is suddenly introduced, accompanied by dramatic outbursts of the 'fate rhythm' in the timpani and woodwind.

The closing theme and B♭ minor tonality briefly return in bars 237 to 240[1] but the chorale theme and G♭ major tonality reassert themselves at bar 240[2], now heard in the woodwind with the contrabassoon adding notable depth. An antiphonal response follows in the strings at bar 242[2] where the chorale tune is restated enharmonically in F♯ major. The tonality then shifts to F♯ minor followed by a move by a third to A major at bar 245, another of Brahms' favoured key relationships. As before, the mode shifts to the minor (A minor) in bar 249 followed by another third-related shift and a repeat of the chorale theme now in C major in bar 251.

From bar 252, the chorale theme is reduced to its first three notes only, forming the basis for alternating cadences: plagal (IV–I) in the woodwind and modal (♭VII–I) in the strings. From bar 257, the return of A♭s alters the wind cadence to iv–I, which triggers a shift back to what appears to be the original B♭ minor tonality that began this part of the development. With it comes the return of the closing theme in that key in bar 261.

Note how the melodic material flows seamlessly from the two-note version of the chorale theme into the full closing theme in the 1st violins (bars 258 to 263). This provides clear evidence of the close connections that exist between Brahms' themes and motives, and highlights a central feature of his melodic and thematic style - constant variation and transformation:



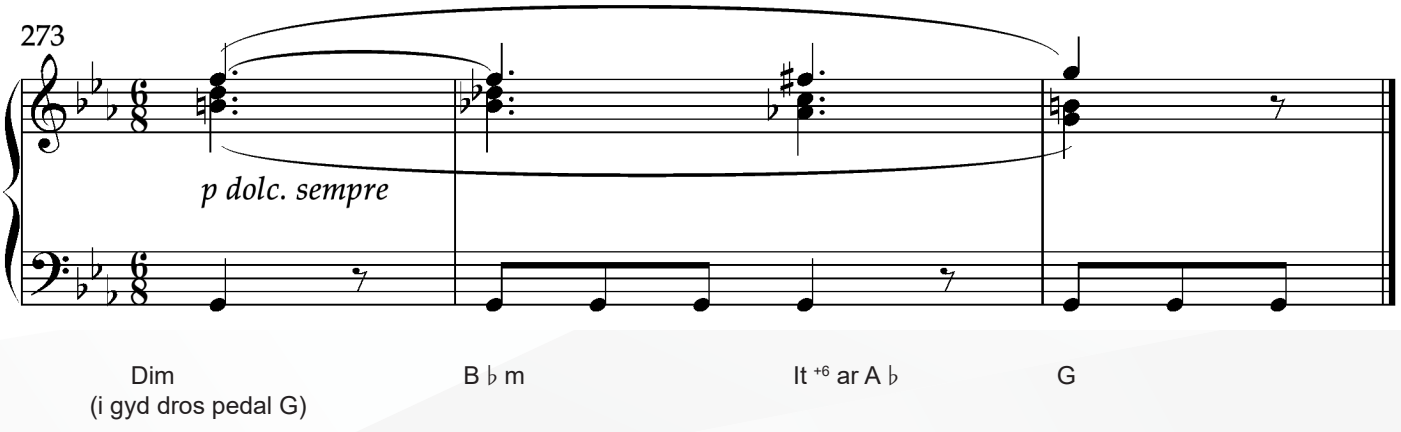
However, the B♭ minor tonality does not fully materialise. Although the remainder of this section continues to feature the closing theme in antiphony between the strings and woodwind (bars 261 to 271), each phrase now ends with an imperfect cadence in C minor. Brahms subtly prepares this shift by transforming the B♭ minor harmony into D♭ major (e.g. in bars 261², 263², 265², 267² and 269²). D♭ major, of course, functions as the Neapolitan chord of C minor, and the fact that it appears consistently in 1st inversion strengthens the eventual return to the tonic.

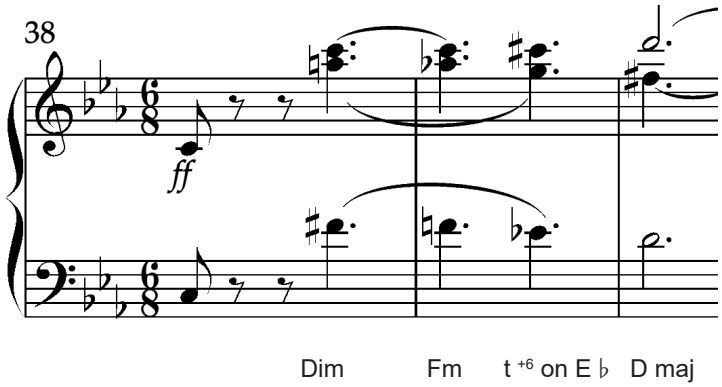
As the tonality winds its way back to the original key, another detail emerges in bars 261² to 263: the bass line moves in rising semitones, directly recalling the original motto theme of the movement. Indeed, this motivic figure underpins each subsequent phrase as well. In total, the motto theme appears in the bass six times from bar 261 to the end of this section in bar 273, providing further evidence of the tight motivic integration that characterises Brahms' compositional style. The 'fate rhythm' remains the primary rhythmic figure throughout this passage. Following a gradual reduction in dynamic and texture, Part 3 comes to rest on a *pp* dominant chord (V) of C minor in bar 273.

Part 4: Bars 273 to 293

The final appearance of the motto theme in Part 3 occurs without the closing theme above it, as if to confirm its structural and expressive significance just as Brahms begins his retransition back to the Recapitulation. Appropriately, Part 4 opens with a repetition of this version of the motto theme, now transferred from the bass to the violins (predictably in octaves) in bars 273² to 275¹. The woodwind reinforce the connection to the start of the exposition with their descending chromatic 3rds, just as they had done at the outset. Indeed, this section of the development (bars 273 to 293) is constructed entirely from sequential statements of these two essential ideas: the motto theme (in both its rising and inverted forms) and the descending chromatic 3rds.

These are underpinned by a dominant pedal on G, played in the timpani using the 'fate rhythm', which continues until bar 290. The link to the opening is further reinforced by the fact that the harmonic setting of the motto theme and the descending thirds here is exactly the same as at the start of the exposition, though now transposed a perfect 5th lower:





As can be seen, both passages use the progression from an Italian 6th to the dominant at the end of the phrase, and this is repeated each time the motto theme appears in its rising form in Part 4 of the development. Furthermore, the two chords preceding the Italian 6th are often the same as those in earlier instances—though the second of these is occasionally major rather than minor, as in bar 38.

The dynamic and texture gradually diminish, and the final appearance of the motto theme in bars 287² to 290 is rhythmically augmented as the section fades away. However, the long G pedal and dominant harmony do not resolve to C as expected. Instead, the bass slips down a semitone to F♯, and the section ends inconclusively on a second inversion chord of B minor.

Part 5: Bars 293 to 321

From its total dissolution by the end of Part 4, with only a very low syncopated F♯ remaining in the double basses and contrabassoon, this section initiates a gradual reconstruction. The motto theme once again becomes the primary motivic driver, first stated in the double basses and contrabassoon in bar 293 then imitated freely by the rest of the strings interspersed with legato statements of the closing theme in the upper woodwind.

The entries of the motto theme ascend chromatically and the dynamic increases in tandem with the rising pitch as both register and texture gradually expand. Note how the final interval of the motto theme is gradually widened (e.g. bars 304 to 308). As ever, the timpani and horns underpin the texture with the 'fate rhythm' which also matches the rhythm of the closing theme in the woodwind.

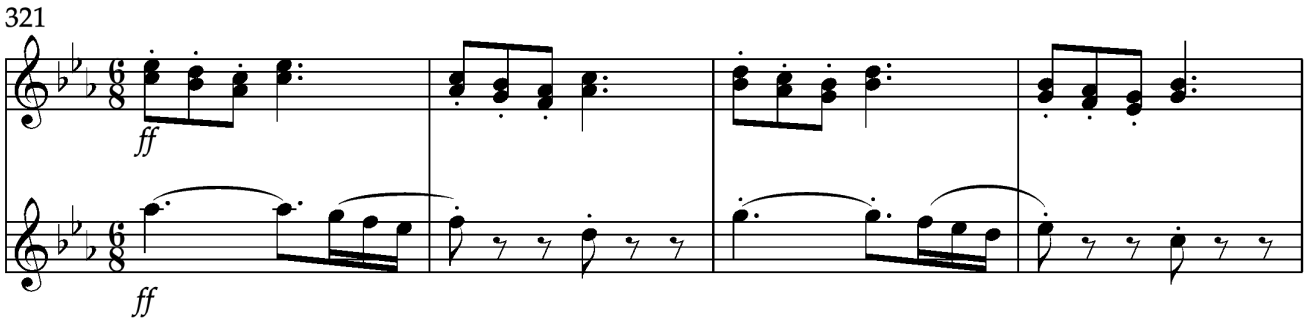
Having ascended from the initial low F♯, the bass appears to settle around D from bar 312, and the final statements of the motto and closing themes in bars 313 to 320 are set over D minor, B♭ major, B minor and finally G major harmonies. The roots of these chords are linked by thirds and also represent the dominant major and dominant minor chords of the tonic key, C minor.

Part 6: Bars 321 to 339

Having reached dominant harmony in bar 320, bar 321 sees the return of the throbbing dominant pedal now underpinning the whole of this last section with its 'fate rhythm'. It is now heard in all the brass (trumpets joining), contra bassoon, double basses and timpani, its prominence and significance amplified as it drives the music towards the recapitulation.

Together with this, the closing theme continues, though now thrown into bold relief by its staccato *fortissimo* setting in the rest of the woodwind. Added to the mix and giving further weight to the move towards the recapitulation is the concluding part of the motto theme: the descending three-note semiquaver figure from bars 40 to 41 of the exposition, now returning in sequential imitation through the strings. And now we see the connection between this figure and the closing theme heard simultaneously in the woodwind, the semiquaver figure being a clear diminution of the closing theme motive, as shown in the following example:

Closing theme

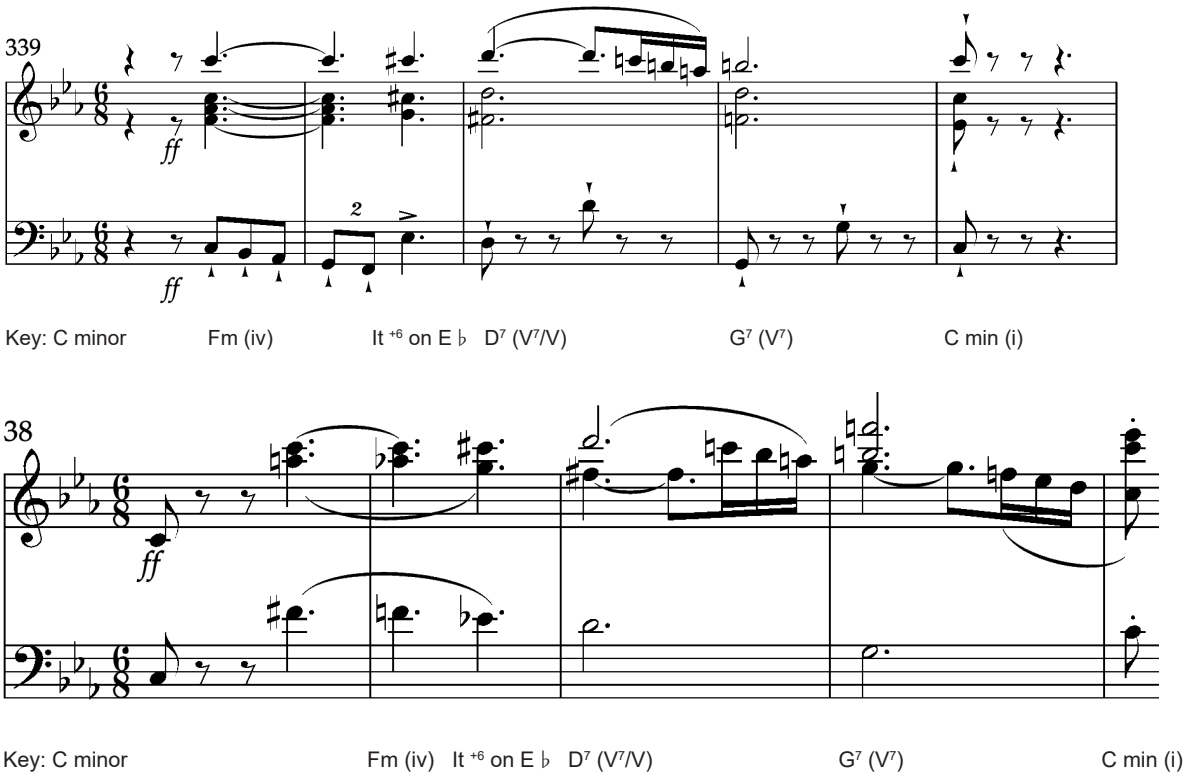


End of motto theme

The harmony of bar 321 is our old friend V^9. As the descending sequential repetitions of the semiquaver motive in the strings are diminished and fragmented in bars 327 and 328, giving way to the start of a busy accompanying scalic pattern in bar 329, a very loud version of the original motto theme starting on C is heard in the woodwind and horns from bar 327. This is repeated before settling on loud V^7 harmony through bars 331 to 334. The 'fate rhythm' in the timpani gives way to repeated quavers from bar 327 and finally to rolls in bars 333 and 334 as the music is poised on tutti V^7 harmony. However, after a short but dramatic GP, rather than resolving as expected to C minor, the music side-steps down a semitone to a tutti unison F♯ at the start of bar 335, and what follows is a dramatic return of the opening of the motto theme on F♯ in upper woodwind and upper strings, combined with the semiquaver ending of the motto theme in the bassoons and lower strings. The tonality implies B minor.

Continuing the chromatic rise of the motto theme, a repeat of the previous two bars has the motto theme starting on A in bar 337^2 and the tonality now implies D minor. One more repetition of this sequence has the motto theme starting on C in bar 339^2, just as it did in bar 38^2 at the start of the exposition, and we realise that we are seamlessly back in the recapitulation. The tonality implies F minor in bars 339 to 340, continuing the third-based pattern begun in bar 335, but via an Italian 6^{th} chord in bar 340^2 the harmony quickly moves to D major, V of V, in bar 341, from where it proceeds logically to G^7 in bar 342, finally cadencing on C minor in bar 343. The tonic key is restored.

In fact, as we ponder this return to the recapitulation, we realise that the F minor of bars 339 to 340 is perfectly logical too, as the two chords that underpin the original statement of the motto theme in bar 39 are none other than F minor and the Italian 6^{th} on E♭, moving to D^7 in bar 40, G^7 in bar 41 and C minor in bar 42. That is the same progression as Brahms uses in bars 339^2 – 343, as the two examples below show:



The presence of the marcato articulation and *ff* dynamic in bar 339, along with the duplet and accent in bar 340, seem to emphasise the importance of these bars as the start of the recapitulation.

We can also now look back and recognise that, starting from and including the G in bar 334, the subsequent tonal shifts in bars 335 to 340 through B minor, D minor and F minor outline the V^7 chord of G^7. Brahms' entire compositional technique is, as we have seen, highly integrated in all respects.

RECAPITULATION: Bars 339 to 462

Bars 339 to 369

As we have seen above, bar 339 is the equivalent of bar 38, the start of the exposition. The scoring has changed, with the strings now playing the motto theme alongside the woodwind, who are less involved than in the exposition. The scoring and texture are generally fuller in the recapitulation; the timpani roll at the perfect cadence in C minor in bars 342 to 343 adding weight.

The arpeggiated S1 theme is then heard in the violins at bar 343, very much like in the exposition, though the woodwind and horns join in with the pulsing quaver rhythm, continuing the richer texture. The recapitulation of the first subject group replicates that of the exposition in terms of melodic material and harmony up to bar 369, though the scoring is fuller and the woodwind take a more prominent part, for example through the disjunct descending intervals in bars 352 to 360. The horns are now doubled at the octave too. At bar 369[2], the harmony changes, with a diminished 7th chord replacing the dominant chord of bar 68 and instead of the perfect cadence that led into the counterstatement of S1 in bar 70 of the exposition, Brahms instead jumps to the middle of the transition material.

TRANSITION: Bars 370 to 394

Bar 370 is equivalent to T2 material, the detached descending thirds from bar 97. There, the harmony was V^9 on B♭ as the transition modulated towards E♭. Here, the harmony is V^9 on G as the tonality remains centred around the tonic C minor in the recapitulation.

The rest of the transition parallels that of the exposition in terms of material, with the legato arch-shaped T3 theme, reminiscent of the arpeggiated S1 theme, reoccurring at bars 377 and 384 as at bars 104 and 111 in the exposition, followed by the detached chords and perfect fifths of T4 in bars 387 to 394 as at bars 114 to 121. The harmonic progressions are the same, though transposed down a minor 3rd in order to remain in the tonic key rather than modulate to E♭ as before. The scoring is also lighter but otherwise Brahms follows the traditions of sonata form recapitulation very clearly.

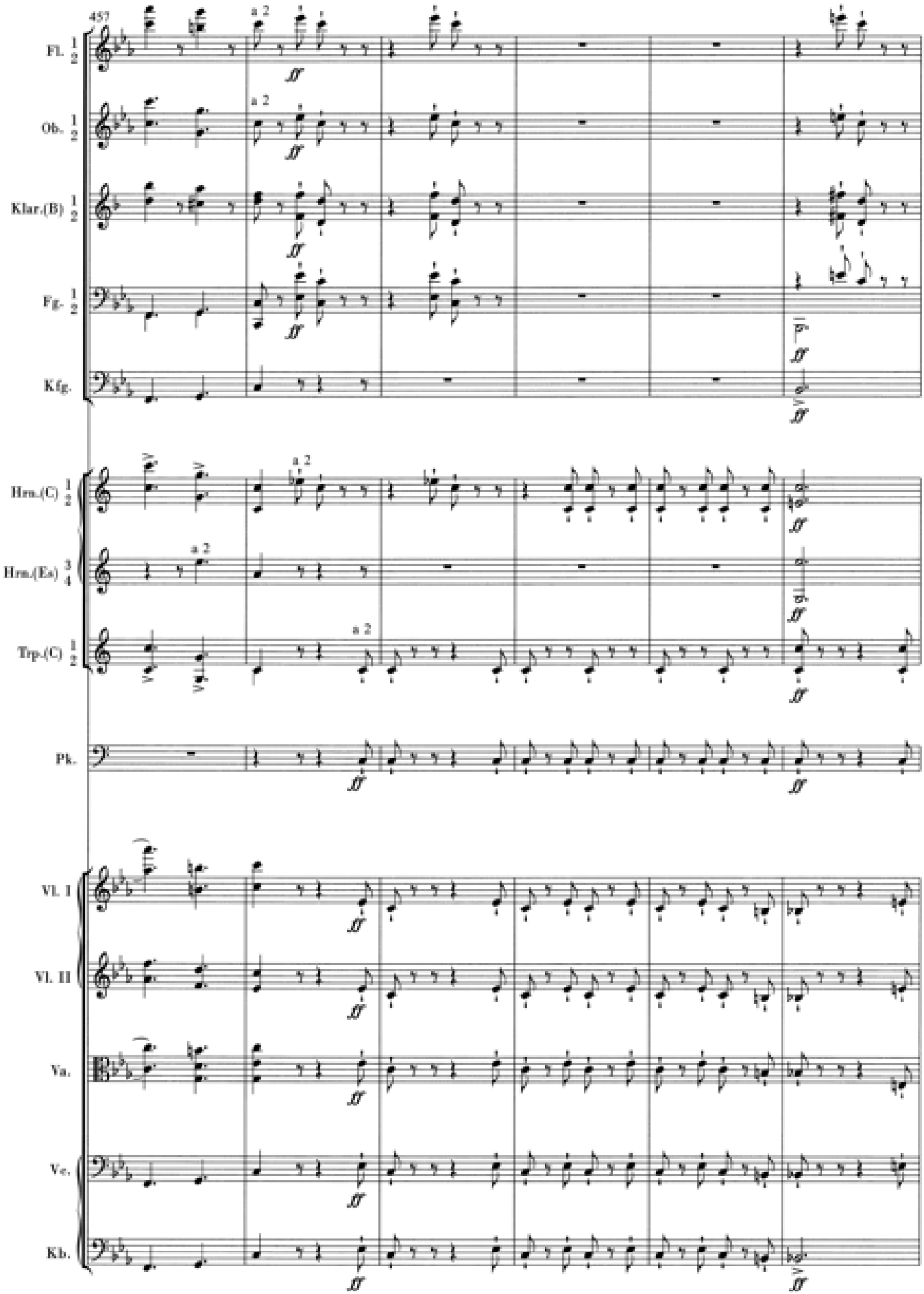
SECOND SUBJECT GROUP: Bars 394 to 429

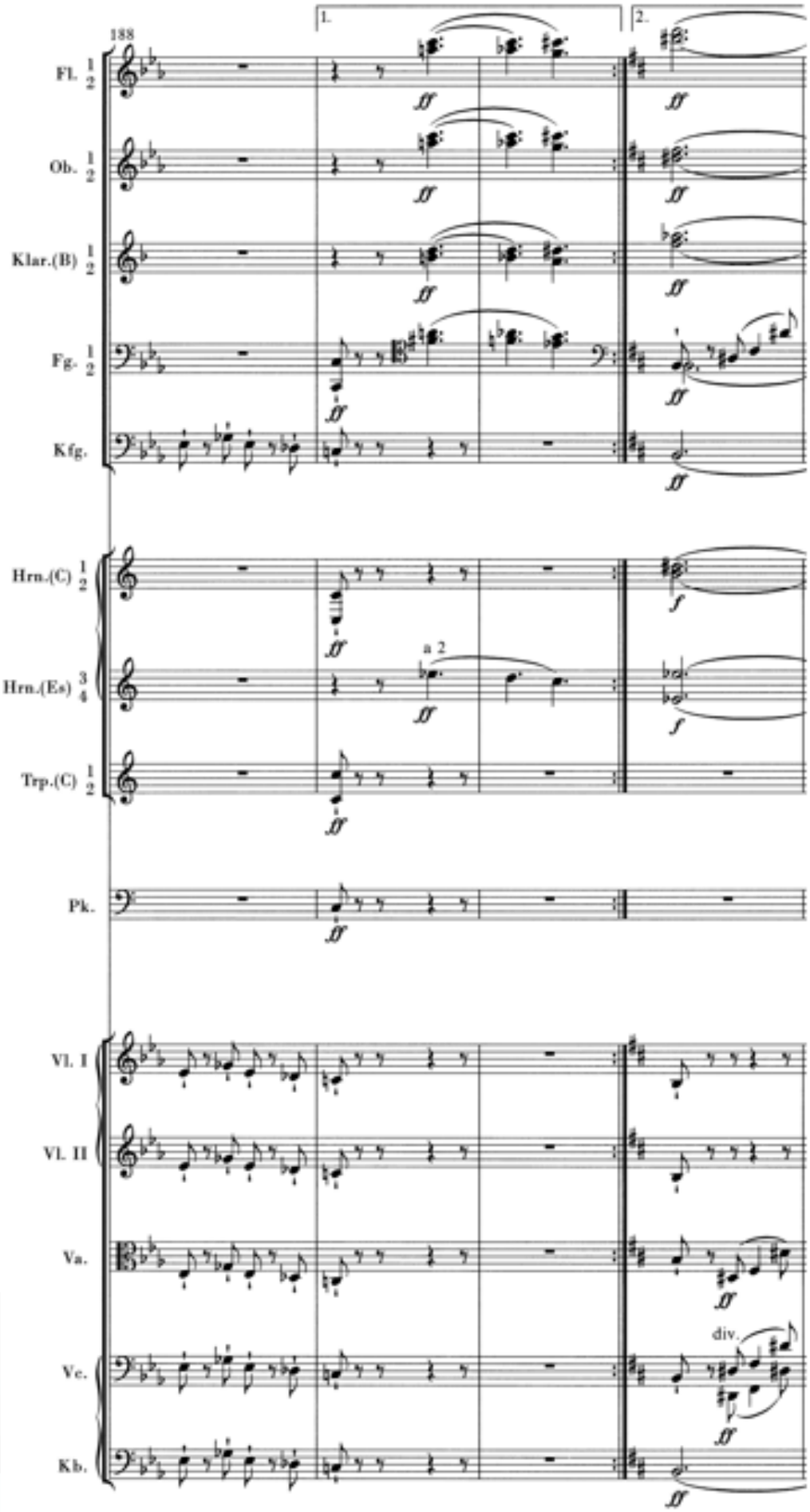
This conformity to traditional sonata form structure continues in that Brahms brings back S2a and S2b as they appeared in the exposition, though now transposed so as to be centred around C not E♭. We quickly realise that in mirroring the exposition, the tonality is C major rather than the expected tonic C minor. We are again reminded of the influence of Beethoven 5th Symphony. The material and harmonic progressions remain the same as those of the exposition for both S2a (bars 394 to 403^1 parallel bars 121 to 130^1) and S2b (bars 403^2 to 429 parallel bars 130^2 to 156) but in C major rather than E♭ major. There is rescoring, for example in the strings for the quaver accompaniment for S2a, and S2b's instrumentation has changed to better reflect the timbre of instruments in the new key, the cello omitted, and flute and violin lines added.

As at bar 146, German 6th harmony, now on A♭ rather than C♭, and a reference to the motto theme in 1st violins leads into the last bars of the second subject group, the hunting-call intervals rescored again to suit the tonality.

CLOSING GROUP: Bars 430 to 462^1

As expected, this section also repeats its equivalent section (bars 157 to 189) of the exposition, though now transposed of course, and just as the tonality suddenly switched to the minor mode of E♭ minor in the closing section of the exposition, so too here does Brahms, the tempestuous nature of this closing theme heard in C minor rather than C major. Again, the music of this section, bars 430 to 461, replicates that of bars 157 to 188 a minor 3rd lower. The scoring remains pretty similar. It is only on the last quaver beat of bar 461 that the harmony changes. Here, rather than descending a tone from the previous note as happened in the exposition, the bass descends a semitone to a B natural instead, and from here, another semitone onto B♭ in bar 462. This is enough to show us that the music is now different from the exposition. As the examples below show, the bass descended to a C in bar 189a, the first-time bar, ready to repeat the exposition, and descended to B natural at the start of the second-time bar as the development saw the tonality propelled off to B major. Here, in bar 462, the B♭ forms the 7th of what is now C major harmony, and the tonality is suddenly steered away from the tonic as we realise Brahms has not finished developing his music yet. We find ourselves at the start of a significant coda section, another example of Beethoven's influence.

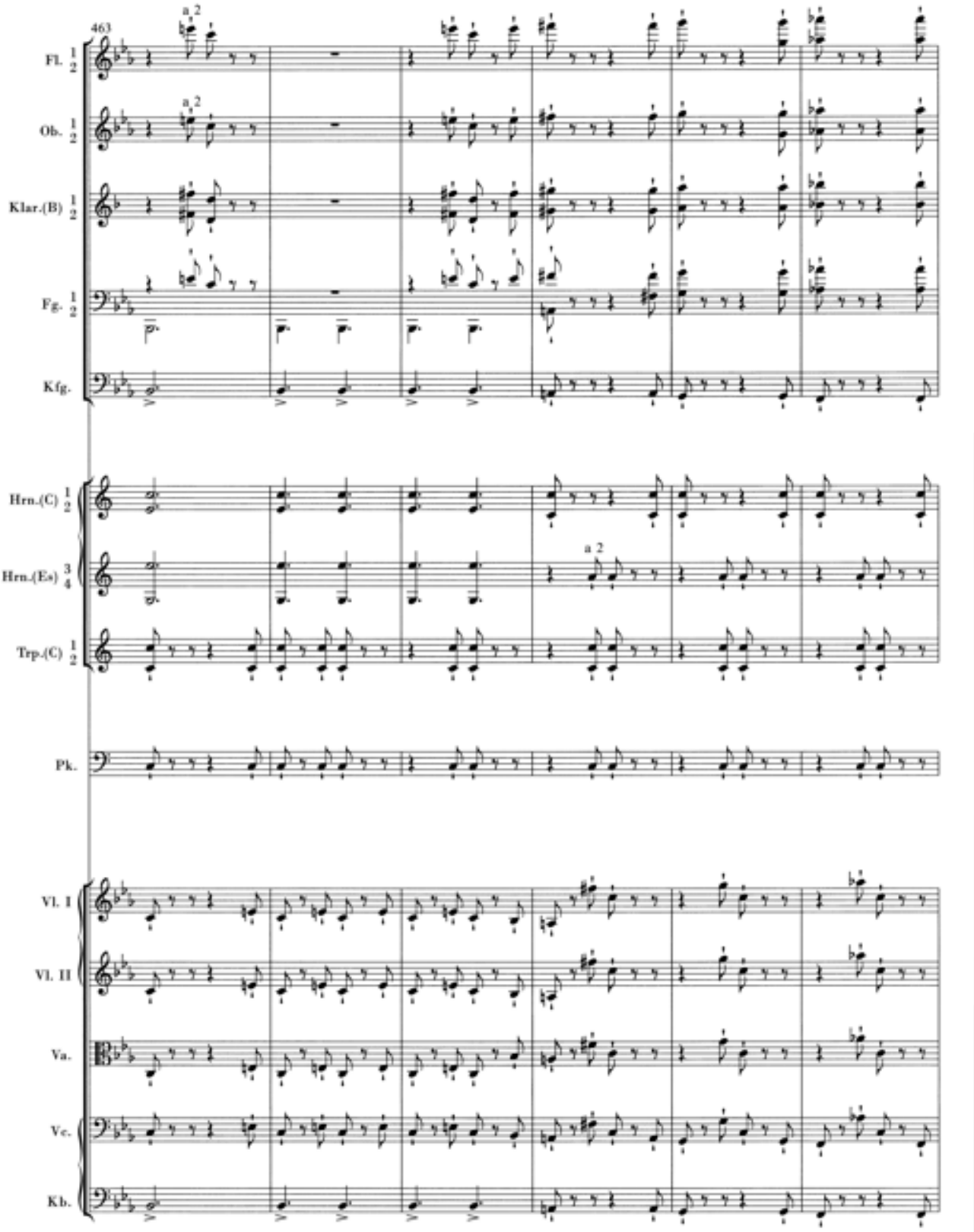

457
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
a 2
ff
p

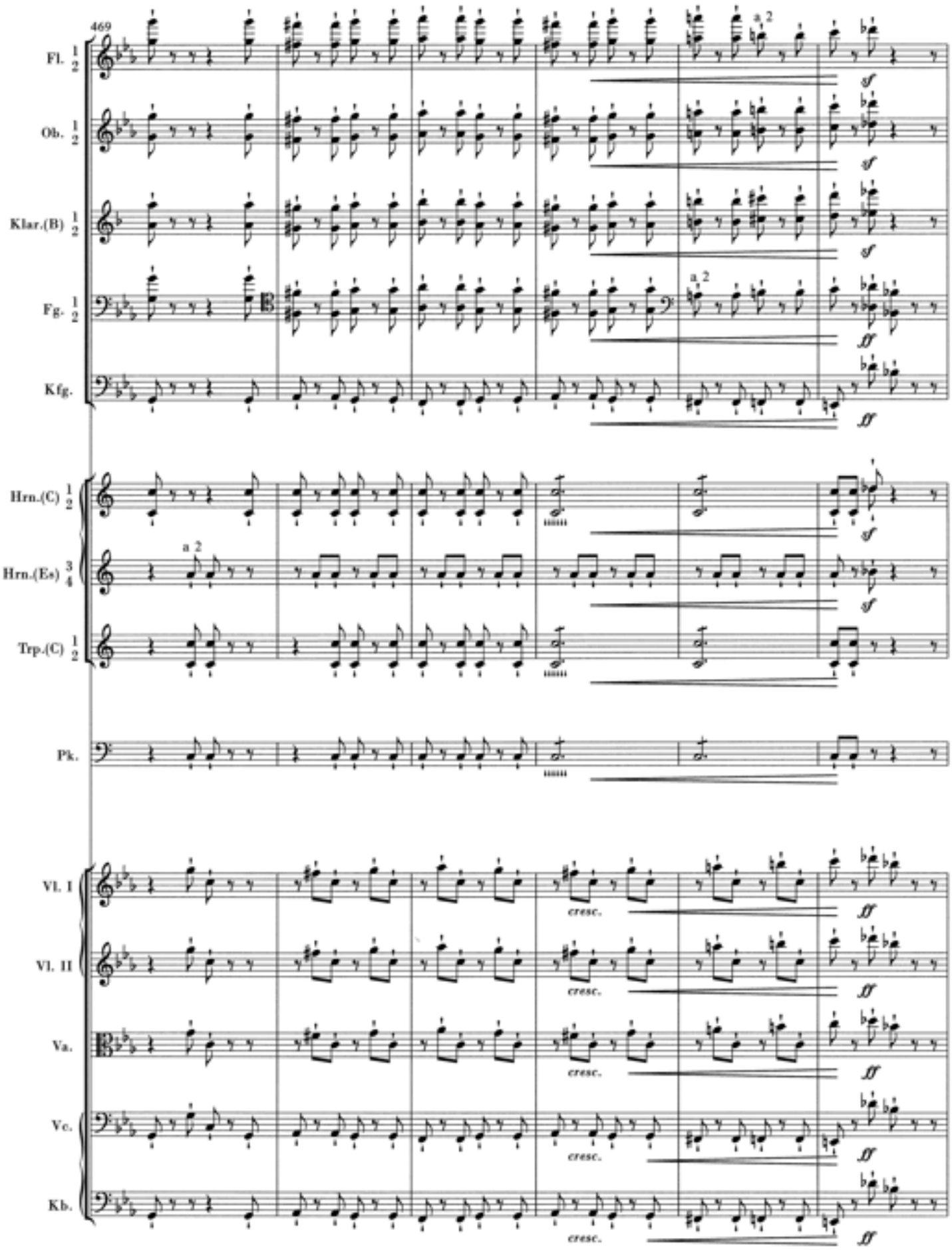

188
1.
2.
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
a 2
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
div.
Vc.
Kb.

CODA: Bars 462 to 511

Bars 462 to 494

Further development of the closing theme ensues, the pedal C in brass and timpani and the C^7 harmony of bars 462 to 465 suggesting F minor. The move to a diminished chord on F sharp at bar 466 prompts reference to the motto theme in the woodwind and top notes of the violins through bars 466 to 472, heard in its rising and falling forms as the rhythmic excitement also builds:

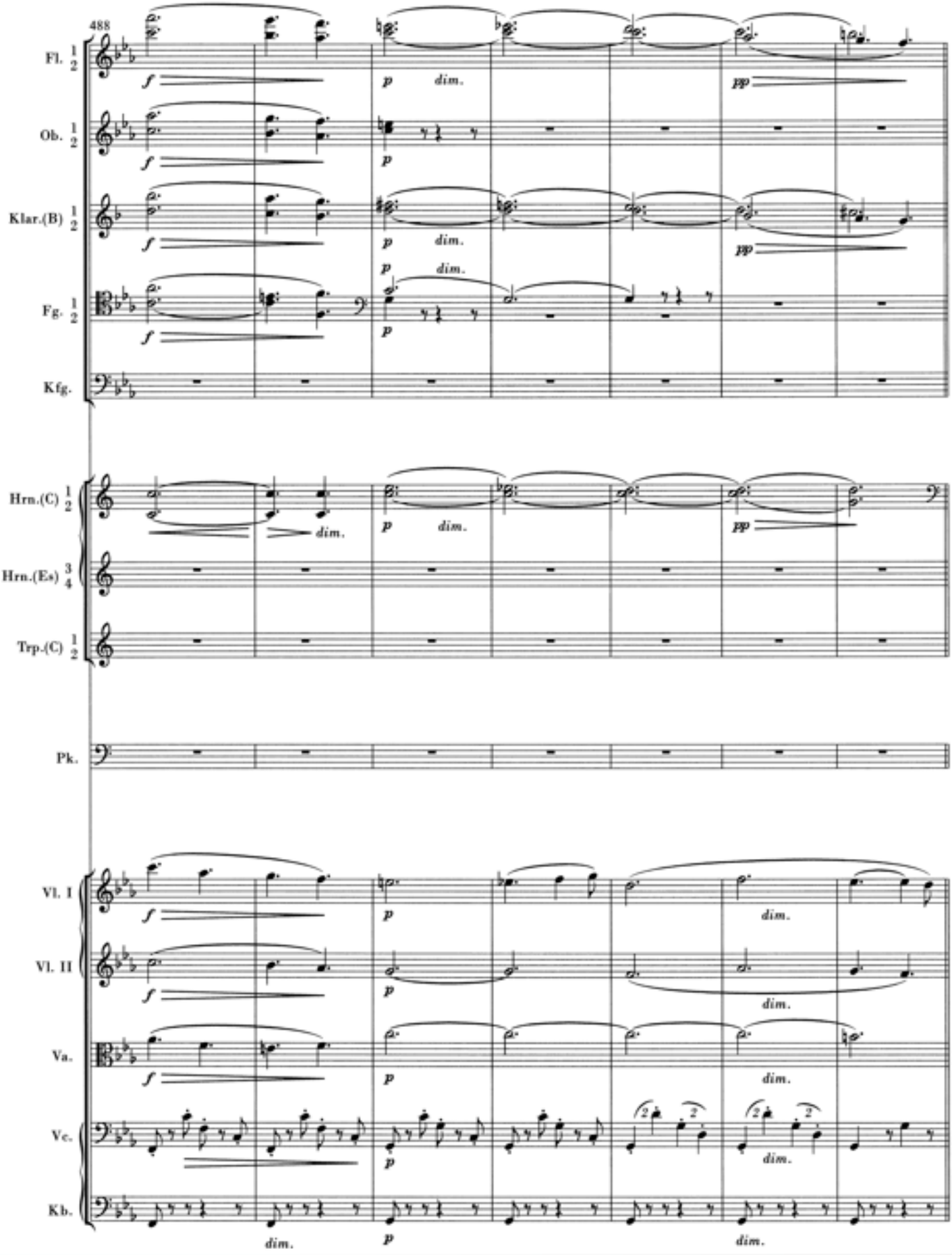



469
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
a 2
cresc.

Note how the minor third interval of the closing theme gradually expands in the violin parts, reaching a major 7th in bar 473. The harmony includes the much-used diminished, F minor and Italian 6th chords, used to harmonise the very first appearance of the motto theme in bars 38 and 39.

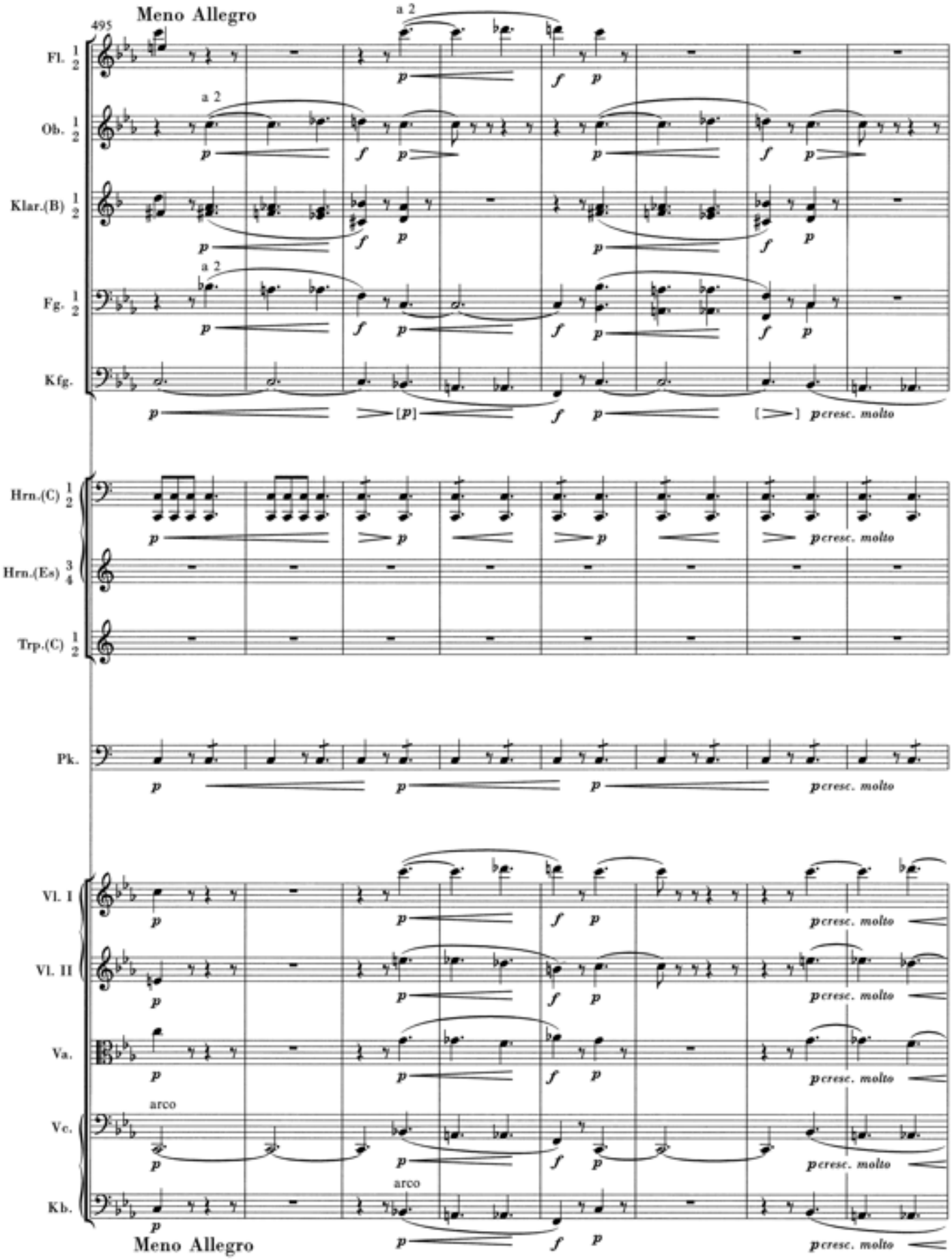
As the rhythmic tension, dynamics and texture build, the minor third that has been the catalyst for the development in the last 12 bars abruptly returns in bar 474, now as D♭ and B♭, and after a dramatic GP, there follows further development of it and also the motto theme in the violins (bar 478), this time in B♭ minor. As the minor 3rd continues in the cellos, we appreciate its connection with the arpeggaic S1 theme, though it is inverted here and staccato rather than legato.

The motto theme is repeated up a tone starting on G in the violins bar 482[2] as the harmony changes to V^7 on G and we move away from the B♭ minor tonality. F minor harmony still features and the descending lines of bar 486 feel mournful. However, as the dynamic and rhythmic activity decrease (note the duplets of bars 492 and 493 effecting a quasi-rallentando), E♮s sporadically replace the E♭s and from bar 489, the harmony steers the tonality towards C major. A drawn-out perfect cadence with both 6-5 and 4-3 suspensions resolves the tonality onto C major in bar 495 for the start of the final section of the Coda and movement.

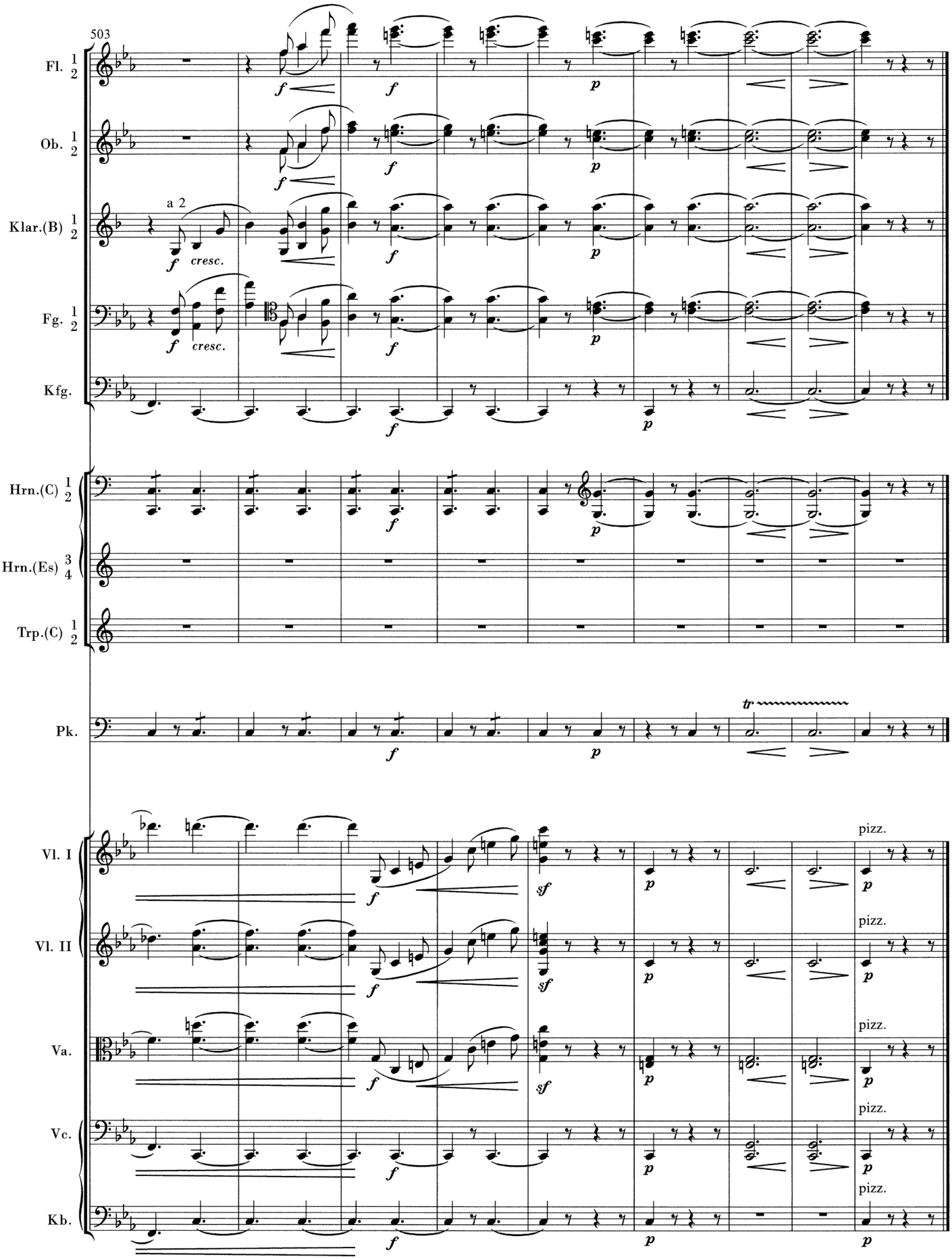

488
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
f
p
dim.
pp

Bars 495 to 511, Meno allegro

The reduction in tempo and return of the throbbing tonic pedal quavers in the timpani (and now in the horns also) remind us of the start of the introduction. We note that the rhythm of the pedal is now that of Beethoven's 'fate rhythm' which has featured so importantly throughout the movement. It underpins this final section, alternating between the horns and timpani. Above it, the woodwind have the motto theme, harmonised differently (and still somewhat ominous sounding with its minor and diminished chords), and notably with an extra fourth note added now – a C – as if to give the motive and the movement as a whole, a sense of closure as the example below shows:


Meno Allegro
495
a 2
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
arco
p
f
[p]
pcresc. molto
Meno Allegro

This is heard four times, alternating between woodwind and strings for each presentation. The fourth version is augmented and the third note, D, of the motto theme is repeated rather than resolved down to C. Instead, the C resolution comes from the appearance of the arpeggaic S1 theme in the violins and violas, its C/E natural 3rd firmly and unequivocally confirming C major as the final resolution of the tonal struggle that has pervaded the movement. A minor plagal cadence (bars 503[2] to 505[2]) featuring S1 on chord IV in the woodwind but tinged with 6th colouring formed by the repeated D of the motto theme in 1st violins, brings the music to rest in C major. A final GP in bar 507 allows this to sink in before tutti C major harmony over tonic timpani roll confirms it, all passion spent:


503
Fl. 1 2
Ob. 1 2
Klar.(B) 1 2
a 2
Fg. 1 2
Kfg.
Hrn.(C) 1 2
Hrn.(Es) 3 4
Trp.(C) 1 2
Pk.
Vl. I
Vl. II
Va.
Vc.
Kb.
f
cresc.
p
sf
tr
pizz.

Acknowledgements

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