

W.A. Mozart Eine Kleine Nachtmusik KV 525 movement 4 (rondo)

General

This well known work is one of Mozart's "greatest hits".

The title tells us something about the "entertainment" character of the work.

It could also have been titled Serenade.

The four movements together show the makeup of a (late) classical symphony/sonata:

- Allegro
- Romanze (Andante)
- Menuetto
- Rondo (Allegro)

The general atmosphere of the composition is lightfooted, elegant, and not dramatic or complex as we encounter within larger scale symphonies.

Rondo

The fourth movement is a typical sequential form with rondo characteristics. Rondo as a form procedure is very old: it's a sequence of form segments with one segment acting as a refrain. In the course of history several schemes were developed.¹

The simplest one has the following make-up: A-B-A-C-A-D-A.... (also called Italian rondo).

Lully introduced the rondo with two couplets; the French rondo.

This was around 1750 a standard in Europe. In the 17th and 18th century we see the rondo spreading across Europe. After that the rondo develops further in late classical works; a specific variant is the so-called sonata rondo form with the following scheme: A-B-A-C-A-B-A, in which the C part has development-like characteristics. Also in the 19th and 20th century rondo's were composed (Schubert, Chopin, Schumann, R. Strauss, Bartók etc.).

Rondo from KV 525

As was to expect we encounter many repeats. Also there are several surprising (harmonic) events that remind us of sonata form.

Use the score with annotations together with this document.

Themes

There are two clearly rounded melodic phrases that act as themes.

Both are presented with a balanced grouping of measures (4+4).

Theme 1 (A) immediately at the start measure 1 - 8. (Key G major).



followed by a g of course

Theme1 has an upbeat and an antecedent-consequent structure (4+4).

Theme 2 (B), measure 16 - 24 (Key D major), no upbeat, starting on the strong beat (1) and the second half moves toward the dominant of D (=A)

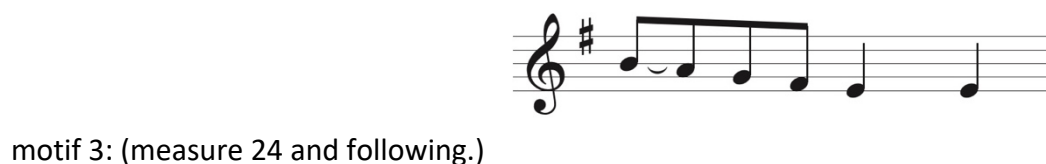
¹ For an elaborate overview see the article Rondo in Oxford Music Online (Grove).



The next 8 measures circle around A(7) and prepare A', now in D major.
 When these themes return they are modified with alternative endings, sometimes the second half is lengthened by postponing the cadential formula².

Connecting segments

Theme 1 and 2 are connected by a **transition** that creates a modulation to D major; in measure 14 and 15 we see a plagal cadence used as a temporary ending.
 Besides the two themes connecting segments or bridges are used that make use of the following motives:



These connecting segment can take the form of cadential patterns, sequences, imitations, out-composed harmonies³. The grouping of measures is nearly always balanced⁴.

Form

||: A :|| transition⁵ - B - conclusion⁶/stepping stone to - A' (lengthened⁷) - bridge with motif 1 as a sequence- :||: SURPRISE! unisono motif d-f#-a-c-Eb(!) - A'' (in Eb major) lengthened -

² for example in A' from measure 32 w.u.

³ In the coda for example the last 10 measures use just a G major triad.

⁴ grouping of measures notated below the bass line

⁵ its own motif (motif 2) with triad arpeggio (m. 9)

⁶ stepwise descending fifth motif (motif 3) (m. 24); sequence, imitation and inversion, harmonically A is accentuated as dominant of A' (32 w.u.) this time in D major.

⁷ twice a complete cadence

modulating chord progression⁸ - B' (in G major) lengthened/stepping stone to - A (G major) - lengthened with cadential formulas and return to :||

Coda unisono d-f#-a-c - A (ant.-cons.) followed by cadential formulas, motif 1 in bass.

Everything is working toward the definitive confirmation of G major. Complete cadence in 144-146, 152-154, last 10 measures just a G major triad.

Letterscheme

measure	1	9	16	24	32	49	57	59							
	: A :	trans B	concl/bridge	A'	bridge :	: surprise!	A''	mod. chord seq.	B'	bridge	A	concl. :	CODA	A	conclusions
Key	G		D		D			Eb		G		G			G

Tonality

The following keys are used: G major, D major, Es major(!)⁹.

Texture characteristics

Special are the unisono moments (*f*) in measure 57 with upbeat, 123 w.u., and 129 w.u., while using motif 1.

Besides that of course developing techniques like sequence, imitation, inversion.

⁸ the surprise-effect at just this moment reminds of the start of a development section that often starts with a harmonic turn. Also the primary harmonic character of the chord progression with chromaticism we find often in modulating episodes of development sections. This progressions leads back to G major. r

⁹ Looking at the position in the circle of 5ths a sudden shift from keys with sharps to key with flats (5 steps).