

Schubert – Trout Quintet: 4th Movement – **Andantino** **(Theme and variations)**

A quintet is a work for five instruments, in this case piano, violin, viola, cello and double bass (piano quintet).

The fourth movement of this quintet is a theme and variations on Schubert's song 'Die Forelle' (The Trout). Schubert (1797 -1828) was a prolific song / lied composer. Many of his songs took their inspiration from the beauty of nature; 'The Trout' being a good example. Much of his 'lieder' display pictorial word painting effects in either the vocal or piano writing – note the piano 'ripples' of the brook in the accompaniment of 'Die Forelle'.

Schubert was inspired to write the quintet in 1819 while staying with a friend who was an amateur cellist. Schubert wrote out the parts while he was there, so it is likely that the friends performed it as soon as it was written.

'Die Forelle'

Key: Db major

Structure: Binary structure A :|| B

Phrasing: 16 bars in each section

Musical characteristics of song melody: Four 4 bar phrases in each section, simple melodies and some repeated rhythms.

Theme

In the theme of 'Die Forelle', only strings are used with no piano. The melody has dotted rhythms, which was not in the original. The piece is however still in binary form (A :|| B). There is ornamentation of A major added in part A with extra notes, and in part B with an acciaccatura trill. The piece modulates to the dominant chord near the end.

Variation 1

The similarities of Variation 1 to the theme are that it has mainly the same notes, the same structure and the same modulation. The same dotted notes are still obvious and the same chords are used.

However there are many differences in Variation 1 to the theme too. The piano plays the main themes, and it was absent from playing before. The piano plays two octaves in the treble register. There is a viola in the

background playing a counter melody, which slows towards the end. The strings accompany the theme, with a walking bass-line of pizzicato viola and cello playing triplets (harmonic fills). There is more ornamentation in Variation 1. The violin plays ornaments in section B, taking up the piano's trills in a high register suggesting birds twittering.

Variation 2

The similarities of Variation 2 to the theme are that it carries the same structure of binary form. The piece is also the same length, and the same harmonic progressions are present.

The differences are that the violin plays a lot more notes than in the poem, while the viola carries the main theme. The piano accompanies the main melody with chords. The violin is prominent, and has many different keys and plays decorative triplets. The piano seems to echo the viola's melody effectively.

Variation 3

The few similarities in variation 3 to the theme are that it follows the same chordal and harmonic progressions.

The differences are that the cello and the double bass play the main theme, with the cello playing the main theme and the double bass playing an octave below for most of the tune. There are inversions of chords to allow a smoothly leaping bass line. The piano plays a very noticeable decorative pattern of demi-semi quavers, which is a sprightly joyous figuration. The viola and violin play together creating chords; both staccato and syncopated (unexpected). They provide a harmonic filling of detached chords.

Variation 4

The phrase structure is similar to the theme in Variation 4, and the same basic harmonic progressions are followed.

The differences are quite evident in this variation. The cello and double bass carry the main theme in this variation. There are both major and minor chordal patterns, which wasn't in the theme. There are extreme contrasts in mood with a violent, forte opening. It doesn't retain the original melody at times too. It is in the tonic minor of D, modulated from D major, which is unexpected as B minor is the relative minor of D major. For the minor parts of the tune, the texture is thicker, and it gets thinner for parts in major keys. The texture reduces to violins imitated by the cello at the end. The piano displays thick chordal writing, along with the violin and the viola (double stopping).

Variation 5

The original theme is present in Variation 5, however it is changed at times.

The cello carries the main melody for most of the tune, with the violin and viola sometimes accompanying. There are many accidentals in this variation. The piano is introduced in a different key. There are different modulations to chords, such as D major to B major, which hold a 'tertiary' relationship. The mood is calm and slow for this variation. The tune itself is longer, with the last two bars being repeated to get back to the initial key of D major. The use of sequence and modulation is also present.

Allegretto (Coda)

The violin carries the main theme in this variation, and the viola begins to play at the start of the first repeat of section A. The main melody is firstly accompanied by the piano, then the strings, and then back to the piano to end the tune. The post lude ends, which is taken from the song.