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Hiu-Wah Au
trace@utk.edu

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Hiu-Wah Au

Entitled Quasi Variazioni, the third movement of Schumann’s Piano Sonata in F Minor, op. 14 (1835–36), challenges our usual expectations of variation form. In a typical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century variation set, the theme is usually a self-contained unit in binary form, whose form and voice leading are preserved throughout. But in this Schumann movement, the theme presents an unusual, tripartite ABC form. Along with its peculiar form, the variations also diverge markedly from the theme’s voice leading. None of the four variations duplicates the form and voice leading of the theme, and no two variations have the same form and voice leading. These differences are engendered by Schumann’s special handling of the theme: he treats its motivic, melodic, and harmonic structures as discrete components that are developed independently in individual variations. In this essay, I will trace the ways in which

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1 This is a bit of an overgeneralization. In the eighteenth-century ornamental variation, composers applied surface embellishments to the theme, keeping its melodic outline, foreground harmonic progression, and form intact throughout the set. In the nineteenth century, composers adopted freer variation techniques, resulting in a looser harmonic and voice-leading relationship between theme and variation. Individual variations may no longer share the theme’s foreground voice leading, as is always the case in the ornamental style. Instead, it may be the theme’s deeper middleground scheme to which a variation conforms. In Heinrich Schenker’s view, voice-leading parallelisms between a theme and its variations are the source of organic unity in variation form; see the discussion of variation form in Schenker, Free Composition (Der freie Satz), trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), §323. Most of Schenker’s analyses of variation sets consist of sketches of the theme alone, which seems to imply that variation form comprises a chain of variations, each of which duplicates the voice leading of the theme. For his studies of complete variation sets, see “A Counter-Example: Max Reger’s Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Bach, Op. 81, for Piano,” trans. John Rothgeb, in The Masterwork in Music: A Yearbook, Vol. 2 (1926), ed. William Drabkin (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996): 106–117; and “Brahms’s Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel, Op. 24,” trans. William Renwick, in Der Tonwille, Vol. 2 (Issues 6–10), ed. William Drabkin (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005): 77–114.
these discrete components are changed throughout the movement, and show how these changes affect the form and voice leading of the variations. This investigation will also illustrate how these changes create connections between the variations—connections that not only forge a sense of development from one variation to another, but also articulate the large-scale organization of the entire set.\(^2\)

**Theme**

The theme (see the complete score in the Appendix) is divided into three eight-measure sections, each of which is further subdivided into two identical phrases. Phrases a (mm. 1–4, repeated in 5–8) and b (mm. 9–12, repeated in 13–16) are harmonically static. Phrase a prolongs tonic with a melodic fifth descent from C to F, over a tonic pedal.\(^3\) In phrase b, the melody appears in the lower voices. The only phrase that contains a harmonic progression is phrase c (mm. 17–20, repeated in 21–24), which delineates a descending-fifth progression that leads to a half cadence. Figure 1 illustrates that the Kopfton C is prolonged throughout the theme. The melody of phrase b strongly implies a middleground D\(\flat\)–C neighboring motion, which is an important surface and middleground element in the variations.

Figure 2 presents the form of the theme and individual variations (it also describes the method of phrase labeling used herein). The table lists the melodic and harmonic features of the theme and how they are transformed in each variation. Each variation has two sections. The

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\(^2\) Despite the marked formal and contrapuntal differences between the theme and its variations, this movement has features of variation form. First, all variations are in the same key as the theme. Second, Variations 1 and 2 feature rhythmic diminution. And third, Schumann’s extensive use of motivic development conforms to the nineteenth-century character variation practice.

second section of Variation 1 is a modified repetition of the first section; it is four measures shorter due to omission of the repetition of phrase a1’. Variation 2 features an extensive rounded binary form. The return of phrase a2 at the end of the second section provides harmonic and melodic closure not only for Variation 2, but also for the theme and Variation 1. Variations 3 and 4 are both in rounded binary form. But although these variations share a generic [A|B|A’] form, they differ in their harmonic schemes: in Variation 4, tonic harmony accompanies phrase a4’ in the second section; and in Variation 3, phrase a3+i recapitulates only the melody of phrase a3i (with transposition), without the expected tonic return.
**FIGURE 2.** Schumann, op. 14, III: Form diagram

NB: Each box of the table represents four measures in length, unless otherwise indicated. The labeling of phrases corresponds to the variations to which they belong; the number in subscript indicates the specific variation. Subscripted Roman numerals i and ii further distinguish between melodies that use the same motive. Single dotted lines represent boundaries between identical phrases. Regular double lines represent the boundaries between sub-sections. The bold double lines demarcate larger sections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>mm. 1–24</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>a-C-B♭–A♭–G–F</td>
<td>Db–C–B♭–A♭&lt;sub&gt;i&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>A&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;–Db&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt;–G–C</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I pedal</td>
<td>implied Db–C neighbor</td>
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<tr>
<th>Var. 1</th>
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<th>a&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>(b+c)&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>(b+c)&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C–B♭–A♭–G–F (a)</td>
<td>C–B♭–A♭–G–F (a)</td>
<td>melodic Db–C–B♭ (b)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Db–C neighbor (b)</td>
<td>Db–C neighbor (b)</td>
<td>harmonic</td>
<td>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV tonicization</td>
<td>IV tonicization</td>
<td>Db&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;–Eb&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt; expansion (b+c)&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>chromatic ascending bass</td>
<td>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<th>Var. 2</th>
<th>mm. 45–78</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>b&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt; (6 mm.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C–B♭–A♭–G–F (a)</td>
<td>C–B♭–A♭–G–F (a)</td>
<td>Db–C–B♭–A♭ (b)</td>
<td>Same as c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Db–C neighbor (b)</td>
<td>Db–C neighbor (b)</td>
<td>Db&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;–Eb&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt; expansion (b+c)&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV tonicization</td>
<td>IV tonicization</td>
<td>chromatic ascending bass</td>
<td>c&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<th>mm. 79–102</th>
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<th>a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;iii&lt;/sub&gt; (8-m. sentence)</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;ii&lt;/sub&gt; (8-m. sentence)</th>
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<td>expansion of motive (a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td>melody from a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;ii&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>chromatic ascending bass (b&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td>prolongation of VI</td>
<td>harmony from a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;iii&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>IV tonicization (a&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td>middleground UN D♭ (b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>V tonicization</td>
<td>F–B♭–E♭ bass from Db&lt;sup&gt;6&lt;/sup&gt;–Eb&lt;sup&gt;7&lt;/sup&gt; expansion ((b+c)&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
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<th>Var. 4</th>
<th>mm. 103–143</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt; (8-m. sentence)</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;ii&lt;/sub&gt; (11 mm.)</th>
<th>a&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt; (8-m. sentence)</th>
<th>Coda (15 mm.)</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>same motive as a&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>same motive as a&lt;sub&gt;4&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>D♭–C neighbor (b)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>↓ 5ths (c)</td>
<td>↓ 5ths (c)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>prolongation of VI (a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;iii&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
<td>prolongation of VI (a&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;&lt;sub&gt;iii&lt;/sub&gt;)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>middleground UN D♭ (b)</td>
<td>middleground UN D♭ (b)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Coda (15 mm.)

- D♭–C neighbor (b)
Variation 1

Variation 1 begins like a typical ornamental variation (see again the Appendix’s score). While maintaining the same note values of the melody as phrase a of the theme, Schumann embellishes the bass with neighbors and chordal leaps in sixteenth notes. Despite its melodic similarities, Variation 1 differs from the theme in several ways. First, at the end of phrase a₁ (mm. 27–28), a D♭–C upper-neighbor figure—one that is implied in phrase b of the theme—is added to the end of the melody, replacing the theme’s tonic ending of phrase a with a half cadence. Second, instead of appearing sequentially, the melody from phrase b, and the descending-fifth progression from phrase c, are combined in Variation 1. The melody of phrase (b+c)₁ in mm. 33–36 inherits only the descending third, D♭–C–B♭, from phrase b; the rest of the melody is new. The progression A♭₇–D⁷–G⁷–C⁷ (a modified version of the A♭₇–D♭₇–G⁷–C⁷ progression from phrase c of the theme) harmonizes the new melody in mm. 34–36; a D♭₆–E♭₇ progression is added to this descending-fifth progression as a prefix in m. 33. Third, the expected repetition of phrase (b+c)₁ is interrupted by the insertion of another statement of phrase a₁, which is followed by a slightly reharmonized version of phrase (b+c)₁; both phrases are in a chordal texture and return to the bass register of the theme.

Figure 3 presents the middleground of Variation 1. The D♭₆ and E♭₇ chords, newly added in m. 33, play an important role in modifying the harmony and voice leading. The D♭₆ triad not only provides harmonic support for the upper-neighbor D♭—a middleground embellishment suggested by phrase b of the theme—but it also connects phrases a₁ and (b+c)₁ via a large-scale 5–6 motion. The E♭₇ chord prolongs the upper-neighbor D♭; anticipates the chordal seventh, G, of the following A♭₇ chord; and extends the descending-fifth progression A♭₇–D⁷–G⁷–C⁷. In the last eight measures, the music returns to the chordal texture and bass register of the theme, combining the theme and Variation 1 into a larger unit.
Variation 2 follows the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic schemes of the theme more strictly than did Variation 1. The first phrase, labeled $a_2$ (mm. 45–52), has the same rhythm as phrase $a$ of the theme, with the addition of a triplet accompaniment. The large-scale C–$D_b$–C neighboring motion in the theme appears in Variation 2 as surface figuration in the inner voice.
Schumann employs stepwise motion—a gesture that is derived from the linear descending fifth in phrase a—to enrich the melodic content in the accompaniment. The melody of the next phrase, b2 (mm. 53–56, repeated in mm. 57–60), begins with the same fourth descent as in phrase b of the theme. Harmonizing this melody is an expansion of the Db6–Eb7 progression from phrase (b+c)1 of Variation 1 (see Figures 4a–b); the original descending second in the bass is inverted into an ascending seventh that is chromatically embellished. Figure 5 illustrates that in addition to the harmonic parallelism, the Db–C–Bb surface melodic figuration that counterpoints the F–Eb in the bass in Variation 1 (m. 33) is also expanded to outline the upper-voice motion in phrase b2 of Variation 2. The upper-neighbor Db is embellished in the foreground by a fifth descent to G over a chromatic bass line. Phrase b2 concludes with a tonicization of Ab major.

Perhaps the most significant feature of Variation 2 is the return of phrase a2 in mm. 69–78. The phrase that originally prolongs the opening tonic harmony of the theme now provides the first harmonic and melodic closure in the movement, binding the theme, Variation 1, and Variation 2 into a complete formal unit. Figure 6 shows the middleground of these three sections combined. Upper-neighbor motion embellishes the Kopfton in these sections; the descent of the Umline takes place at the end of Variation 2, in phrase a2'.

In addition to the transformation of the voice-leading plan and expansion of Variation 2 with the repetition of a2', Schumann modifies the formal design of the variation by joining phrases b2, c2 and a2 with a repeat sign, transforming the 8+8+8 tripartite division of the theme into an asymmetrical, extended rounded binary form: 8+[8+8+10]. The repetition extends the length of Variation 2 to sixty measures—which is longer than the theme and Variation 1 combined (which totals forty-four measures)—further supporting the structural importance of Variation 2.
**Figure 4.** Transformation of F–Eb bass progression

(a) variation 1, phrase \((b+c)_1\)

(b) variation 2, phrase \(b_2\)

(c) variation 3, phrase \(a_{3i}\)

(d) variation 3, phrase \(a_{3ii}\)
Figure 4c reproduces the opening of Variation 3, which is the least similar to the theme of the four variations. The most noticeable difference in this variation is the change of character caused by the persistent use of syncopation and large leaps in the melody. But despite these surface rhythmic and melodic differences, Variation 3 inherits several melodic, harmonic, and voice leading features from the theme and the previous variations. First, the descending chro-

Variation 3

Figure 5. Schumann, op. 14, III: Middleground of variation 2, b2
matic figuration in the melody of phrase $a_3$ is reminiscent of the fifth descent of phrase $a$ of the theme. Second, the bass line of mm. 79–83 unfolds a descending-fifth progression, F–B♭–E♭, which is a transposed and shortened version of the A♭–D♭–G–C progression of phrase $c$ of the theme. Third, the bass lines of both Figures 4b and 4c delineate a stepwise ascent of a seventh from F to E♭, a bass progression that makes its first appearance as a descending second in m. 33 of Variation 1 (Figure 4a). Figure 2 shows that phrase $a_3$ makes use of elements from the theme and Variations 1 and 2: from the theme, it takes the descending motive from phrase $a$ and the descending-fifth harmonic progression from phrase $c$; from Variation 1, the F–E♭ bass from the D♭–E♭₇ progression; and from Variation 2, the IV tonicization from phrase $a_2$ and the chromatic bass ascent from phrase $b_2$.

Figure 7 displays the middleground of phrase $a_3$. Unlike the opening phrases of the theme and Variations 1 and 2, in which a descending-fifth linear progression elaborates the Kopfton, an octave descent prolongs the Kopfton over the large-scale progression I–V in

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**Figure 6.** Schumann, op. 14, III: Middleground of theme, variation 1, and variation 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Th.</th>
<th>Var. 1</th>
<th>Var. 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$a_1$</td>
<td>(b+c)₁</td>
<td>$a_2$ $b_2$ $c_2$ $a_2'$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Variation 3. The descending-fifth harmonic progression, F–B♭–E♭, harmonizes the upper-voice descent from C to G and brings the music from the tonic of F minor to the mediant triad of C minor in m. 83. Phrase a₃i also differs from the theme and the previous variations in that it features tonicizations of both IV and V. A tonicization of the dominant is brought about by a III–IV–V–I progression harmonizing a local 5-line descent in the key of C minor.
As in Variations 1 and 2, a D♭6 triad appears at the beginning of the second section at m. 87. But the D♭ triad takes on a more significant role in Variation 3 in that it dominates phrase a3ii (see also Figure 4d). The bass line of phrase a3ii imitates the F–Bb–Eb sequential progression of phrase a3i: mm. 87–88 present a two-measure model, harmonized by IV♭–V♭–I in the key of Ab major; the next two measures (mm. 89–90) transpose this model down a fifth, bringing the music back to the tonic of D♭ major. Figure 8 provides the graph of phrase a3ii. As in Variations 1 and 2, the first-inversion D♭-major triad at the beginning of m. 87 introduces the middleground upper-neighbor D♭. The upper voice then traverses a descending octave in mm. 87–90, over the prolongation of a D♭6 triad. The middleground upper neighbor is further prolonged through two upper-neighbor motions before continuing to C over the dominant of D♭ major.

Phrase a3i+ii (mm. 95–102) presents the melody of phrase a3i in transposition, but it draws upon the harmony of phrase a3ii. This phrase contains the highest concentration of chromatic activity in the variation, as Schumann replaces the first-inversion triads at the beginning of the two-measure segments with root-position triads, and the diatonic harmonies in phrase a3ii (in the keys of Ab and Db, respectively) with diminished-seventh chords. Figure 9 illustrates the middleground of the phrase. Prolongation of the upper-neighbor D♭ occupies half of the phrase. The upper voice first moves from D♭ down a third to B♭ in mm. 95–97, then back up chromatically to recapture D♭ in m. 98. Harmonizing the D♭ at the end of the sequence is an E♭7 chord, which replaces the D♭6 triad at the end of the sequence in phrase a3ii (compare mm. 90 with 98). As in phrase a3ii, an F7 chord is found four measures before the end (see m. 99 in Figure 8 and m. 91 in Figure 8). Whereas the F7 in m. 91 harmonizes the upper-neighbor E♭ (see Figure 8), the F♯7 chord in m. 99 supports the Kopfton C (see Figure 9). The chord of resolution, B♭ minor in m. 100, functions as the background IV in the key of F minor.
In Variation 4, the linear fifth descent from phrase a of the theme—elaborated by yet another D♭–C neighbor figuration—returns as a surface motive. But despite these motivic connections with the theme, Variation 4 is in fact more closely related to Variation 3 with respect to its voice-leading plan. A comparison of the first phrases of Variations 3 and 4 reveals that both
tonicize first the IV chord—with emphasis on E\textsubscript{b}–D\textsubscript{b} in the melody (compare mm. 80–81 with 105–106)—then the dominant; and tonicization of the dominant is accompanied in both cases by a prominent G-to-C stepwise melodic descent on the surface (see mm. 84–85 and 109–110). In addition to these surface similarities, phrases \textit{a\textsubscript{3i}} and \textit{a\textsubscript{4i}} also exhibit marked parallels on the middleground. The graph of phrase \textit{a\textsubscript{4i}}, given in Figure 10, indicates that the Kopfton is prolonged in a similar manner as in phrase \textit{a\textsubscript{3i}} (see Figure 7): in both phrases there is an octave descent, a I–IV progression in F minor that accompanies the initial C–B\textsubscript{b} descent in the upper voice, and a G-to-C melodic descent on the surface that serves as a local 5-line, confirming the key of the dominant.

In Variation 4, Schumann abandons the large-scale 5–6 motion that connects the first and second phrases in the previous variations. Instead, the descending-fifth bass progression that defines phrase \textit{c} of the theme (A\textsubscript{b}–D\textsubscript{b}–G–C) returns prematurely to begin phrase \textit{a\textsubscript{4ii}}. Note that the G\textsuperscript{7} chord of this progression is missing; only the bass note G appears in m. 113 as part of an arpeggiation of a C\textsuperscript{7} chord. The expected D\textsubscript{b}-major triad appears in m. 114 as a deceptive resolution of the C\textsuperscript{7} chord. A series of stepwise sequential motions follows thereafter, bringing the bass
line first from D♭ down to B♭ in m. 117, then back up to D♭ in the next measure. At the end of the sequential motions in m. 118, the presence of a D♭⁴-to-D♭⁷ motion strongly suggests a tonization of G♭ major. But the appearance of a G♯₃ chord in m. 119 denies this implication. Instead, the music proceeds to tonicize the dominant of F minor, bringing the phrase to an end with the same cadential figuration as in phrase a₄ii.

The graph in Figure 11 indicates that this highly chromatic passage is governed by the signature descending-fifth progression from phrase c of the theme: A♭–D♭–G–C. The surface
descending fifths in the bass, in mm. 111–113, prolong A♭ in the bass, with a counterpointed E♭–D♭–C descent in the soprano. In mm. 114–118, another descending third, F–E♭–D♭, embellishes the middleground upper neighbor over a prolongation of D♭ in the bass. A modulation to C major is facilitated by the upper-voice’s descent from D♭ to G, with the latter functioning as 5 of C major. Phrase a4i concludes with the same local 5-line as phrase a4i.

Phrase a4i’ returns in m. 122. It bears a strong resemblance to phrase a4i except in m. 127, where an A♭ replaces the B♭ from m. 108. The A♭’s resolution to the IV6 chord leads to cadential closure in m. 129. A graph of this phrase is provided in Figure 12.

The foregoing analysis has shown how, in the third movement of Schumann’s op. 14, the motivic, harmonic, and voice-leading components of the theme are varied over the course of the movement. Each of these components plays a different role in modifying the form and voice leading of the theme. The surface descent, C–B♭–A♭–G–F, contributes to the surface motivic makeup of all four variations. Its role in prolonging the opening Kopfton is transformed into a background Urlinie descent in Variation 2. The descending-fifths progression, A♭–D♭–G–C,
performs a similar formal, harmonic, and voice-leading role in the theme, Variation 1, and Variation 2. This progression performs its most significant middleground role in the final variation, where its prolonged version dominates phrase a\textsubscript{ii}.

Among the different components and their transformations, the progressive transformation of the upper-neighbor motion from phrase \( b \) is crucial to promoting a sense of development throughout the movement. In Variation 1, the \( D\textsubscript{b}^6-E\textsubscript{b}^7 \) progression in m. 33 provides harmonic support for the upper-neighbor \( D\textsubscript{b} \). This progression is then composed-out in Variation 2 to an entire four-measure phrase. In Variation 3, Schumann continues to highlight the upper-neighbor \( D\textsubscript{b} \) by prolonging a \( D\textsubscript{b}^6 \) triad. The middleground upper-neighbor \( D\textsubscript{b} \) makes its final appearance in the second section of Variation 4. But this time, it is embedded in the underlying \( A\textsubscript{b}–D\textsubscript{b}–G–C \) progression.

As the third movement of a four-movement composition, this short Quasi Variazioni draws much of its melodic material from other movements. The most obvious melodic connection with the other movements is the use of the “Clara” theme—the stepwise descending fifth from C to F. Certain harmonic and voice-leading events in the variations evoke similar events in the first movement. For example, the first movement’s strong charge to the subdominant harmony, with registral and dynamic emphasis, finds its parallel in Variation 4 (Figures 13a–b). Anthony Newcomb has observed that the same passage in the first movement is also related to the beginning of Variation 3, in its use of a descending chromatic line and an immediate transposition of a two-measure segment (Figures 13c).\(^4\) The 5–6 motion that connects phrase \( a\textsubscript{1} \) with phrase \( (b+c)\textsubscript{1} \) in Variation 1 is also foreshadowed in the opening movement (Figure 14). Finally,

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**FIGURE 13.** Schumann, op. 14

(a) I, mm. 1–4

(b) III, variation 4, mm. 103–106

(c) III, variation 3, mm. 79–82
the \(\frac{6}{16}\) figuration that concludes the first movement not only reappears, it is expanded into a coda at the end of the *Quasi Variazioni*.

In addition to these surface similarities, significant harmonic and voice-leading events in the variation movement also have precedents in the first movement. For example, the F–Eb bass progression in Variation 1 recalls the respective use of F and Eb major in the first and second themes in the first movement. The order of keys in which the second theme of the first movement appears—first in Eb major, then twice in Ab major (mm. 76 and 158), and finally in Db major (m. 196)—closely resembles the unfolding of the descending-fifth bass progressions in phrase c of the theme and phrase \((b+c)\) of Variation 1.

Less than a decade after the publication of op. 14, Schumann wrote another *Quasi Variazioni* as the second movement of his String Quartet in F Major, op. 41/2 (1843). The approach he took in this quartet is totally different.\(^5\) Nonetheless, it is notable that the only two *Quasi Variazoni* that Schumann ever wrote are each part of a larger composition. He may have felt

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\(^5\) What makes op. 41 “quasi” is the use of multiple themes and the combination of *da capo* and variation forms. The movement has seven sections: A–B\(_2\)–B\(_1\)–B\(_3\)–C\(_1\)–C\(_2\)–A. The first sixteen-measure A does not function as the theme. Instead, it returns at the very end to close the movement. B\(_2\) and B\(_1\) are variations of B\(_1\), having an identical form and similar harmonic and melodic outlines. C\(_1\) presents a new theme using a lower-neighbor motive derived from A and a harmonic outline derived from B\(_1\). The variations in this *Quasi Variazioni* movement are in fact rather strict, conforming quite loyally to the harmony, melody, and voice leading of their respective themes.
freer to experiment with new formal and developmental possibilities in an inner movement of a multi-movement work, as opposed to a self-standing variation set. In the case of the *Quasi Variazioni* of op. 14, although the drawing of materials from the first movement does not relate to the ways in which the theme is treated in the variations, the inter-movement connections suggest a large-scale formal role for the *Quasi Variazioni* movement, a role that does not exist in independent variation sets.

As the title “*Quasi Variazioni*” indicates, Schumann was well aware that he was not writing a variation set in the conventional sense. As a known innovator of form and style, Schumann demonstrates a new approach to variation form in this short movement. I hope this study has offered insights into both the uniqueness of this variation movement, and Schumann’s innovative approach to thematic design and variation techniques.
APPENDIX

SCHUMANN, PIANO SONATA IN F MINOR, OP. 14: III

QUASI VARIAZIONI.
Andantino de Clara Wieck. \( \text{\#84.} \)

VAR. I.

\( \text{\#25} \)

\( \text{\#30} \)

\( \text{\#36} \)
AU: PROGRESSIVE TRENDS IN VARIATION FORM

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ABSTRACT

Entitled Quasi Variazioni, the third movement of Schumann’s Piano Sonata in F Minor, op. 14 (1835–36), displays features that are not usually associated with variation form. In a typical eighteenth- and nineteenth-century variation set, the theme is usually a self-contained unit, whose form and voice leading are often preserved throughout the set. But in this Schumann movement, the theme presents an unusual, tripartite ABC form, its half-cadence ending evoking the tradition of continuous variation. Along with the theme’s peculiar formal plan, the variations also diverge markedly from the theme’s form and middleground structure. These differences are engendered by Schumann’s special handling of the theme. Instead of regarding the theme as an entity to be varied as a whole, Schumann treats its motivic, voice-leading, and harmonic elements as discrete components to be developed independently of one another. By reworking and combining these elements, Schumann progressively transforms the form and middleground of the theme. Significantly, these changes create motivic, harmonic, and voice-leading connections among the variations. These connections not only create a sense of development from one variation to another, but also articulate the large-scale organization of the entire set.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hiu-Wah Au received her Ph.D. in Music Theory from the Eastman School of Music. Her research interests include Schenkerian theory, variation form, performance and analysis, and humor in music. She has presented papers at Music Theory Southeast, the Music Theory Society of New York State, and the Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic. She is Associate Professor of Music at Appalachian State University.

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