Myth-busting Sonata Form

Professor Steve Goss

Composer

Director of the International Guitar Research Centre

University of Surrey and Royal Academy of Music, London

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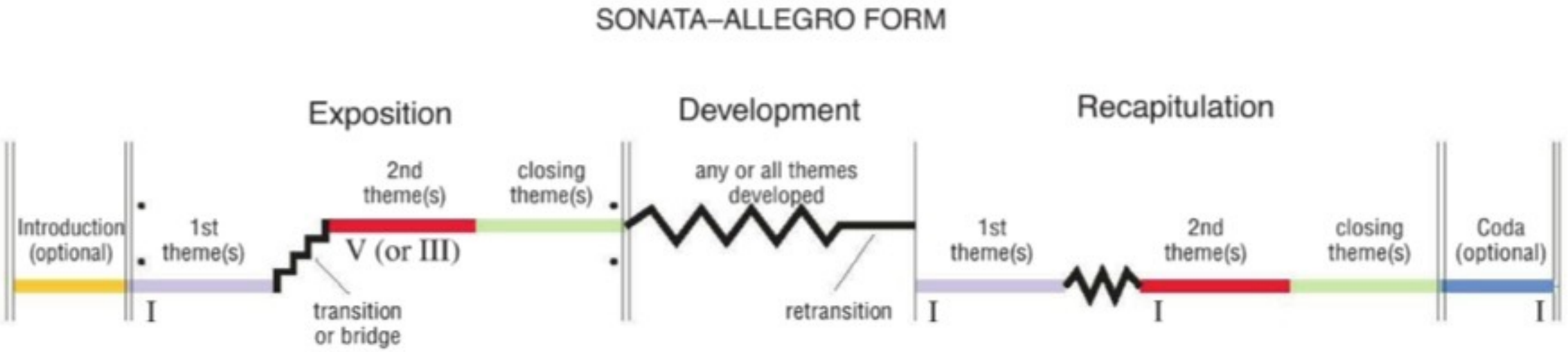
Overview

- What is Sonata Form anyway?
- Sonata Form Myths
- Where did Sonata Form come from?
- Sonata Form in Guitar Music
- Development – Continuation or Contrast?
- 2 Sonata Form walkthroughs – Giuliani and Berkeley
- Questions and Discussions

What is Sonata Form anyway?



Sonata Form Myths

- Sonata form was invented in the Classical Period
- Sonata form is about the form of sonatas
- Sonata form has three sections

Sonata form was invented in the Classical Period

- Myth

- Musicologist Adolf Marx was the first to use the term ‘sonata form’ as late as 1845 and even then in a largely unhelpful way. By 1845, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Schubert were already dead, Schumann and Chopin were near the ends of their lives.

- Sonata form gradually evolved from binary and ternary structures- evolution, not revolution (more on that later)

Sonata form is about the form of sonatas

- Myth
- Not all sonatas have a sonata form movement
- Sonata form is used a huge variety of genres – chamber music, symphonies, overtures, etc.
- Sonata form, if used, is generally only used in the first movement of a piece. So a more helpful term might be ‘first movement form’

Sonata form has three sections

- Myth

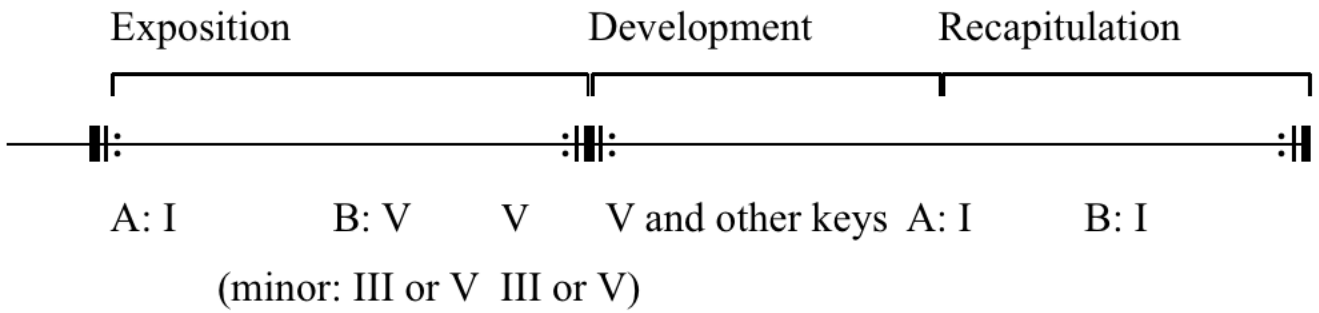
- It has 2 sections
  1. Exposition
  2. Development and Recapitulation

- Double bars mark off sections

Where did Sonata form come from?

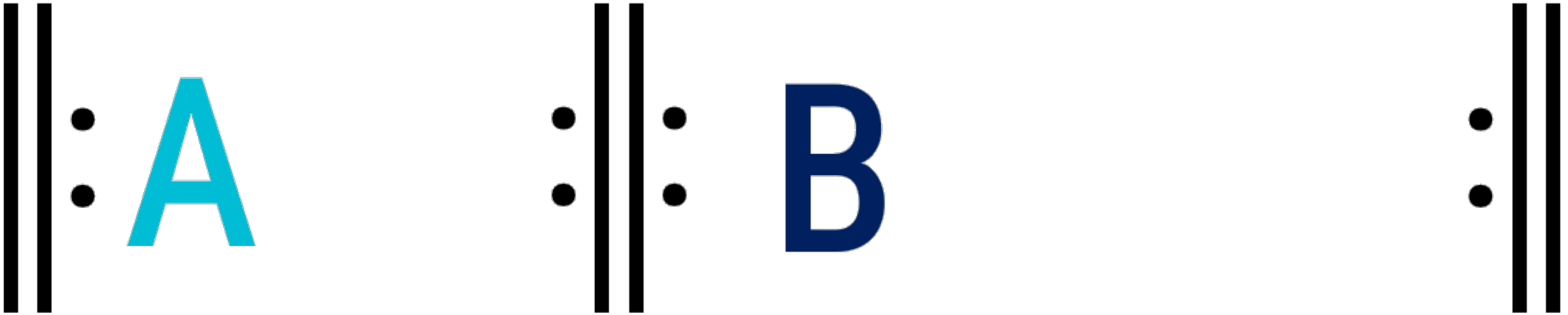
Sonata form developed mostly from binary form

(but also a bit from ternary form)



What is Binary Form?

A piece in 2 sections

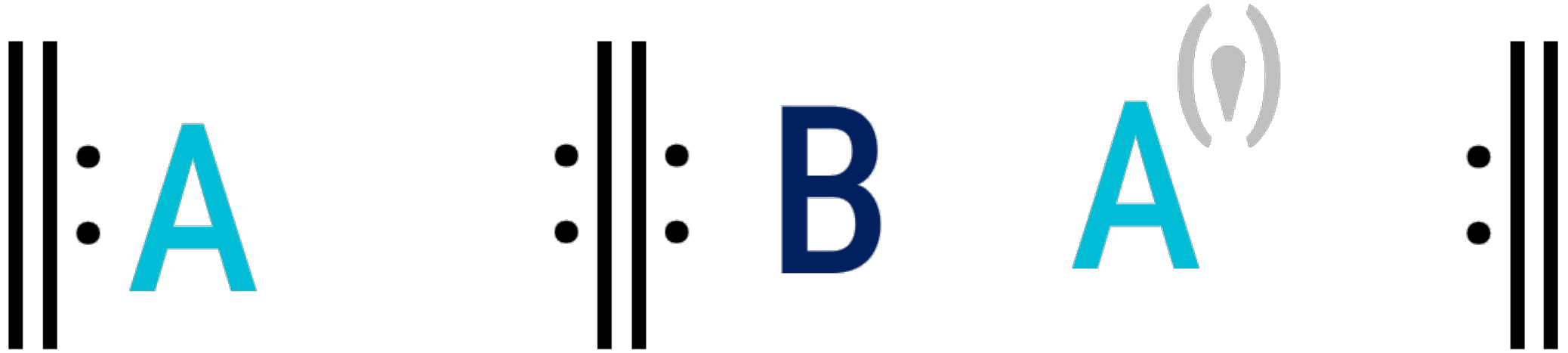


What is Ternary Form?

A piece in 3 sections

What is Rounded Binary Form?

A piece in 2 sections



But wait…

Surely Rounded Binary Form is just like Ternary Form

in terms of As and Bs

And what are these As and Bs?

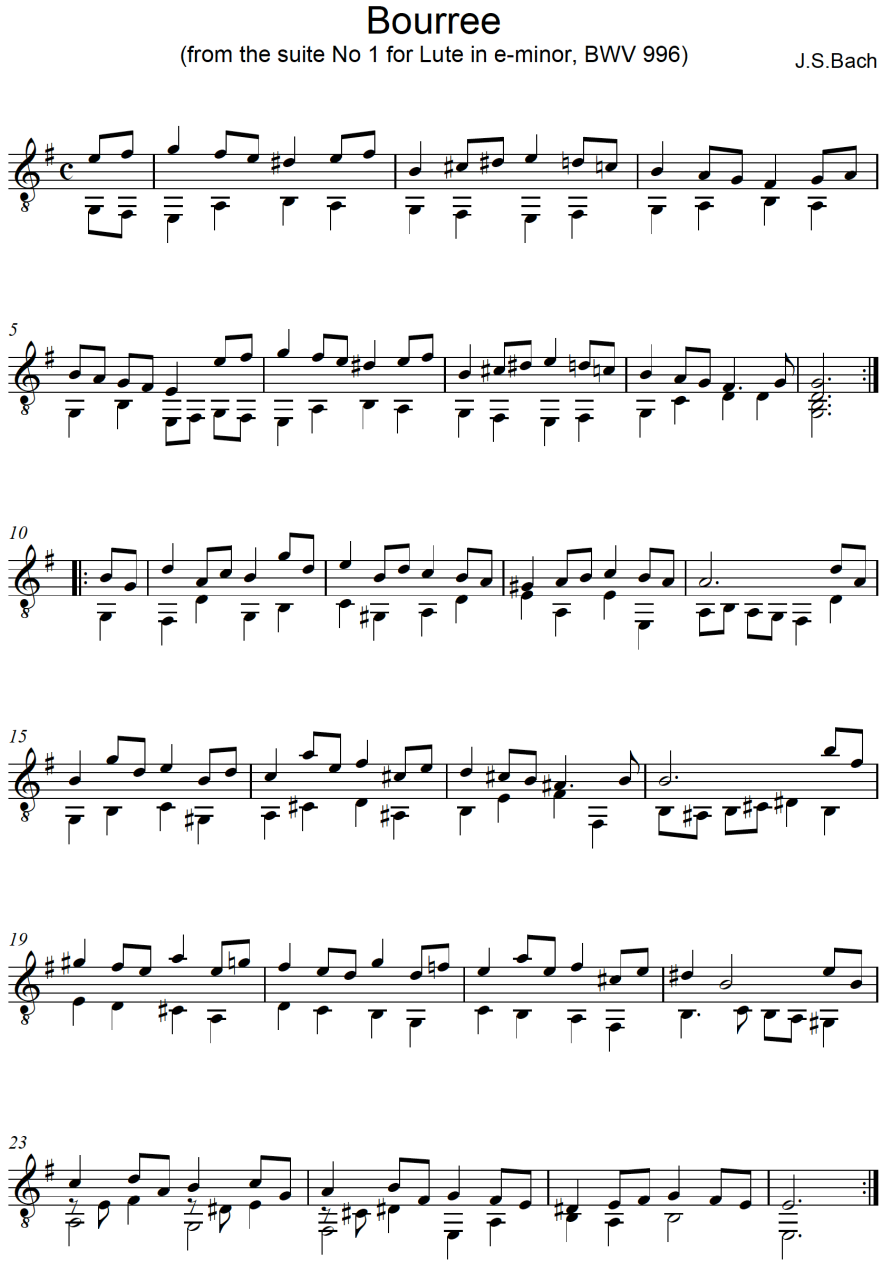
Continuation or Contrast?

- Continuation and Contrast as basic compositional elements
- B in Binary forms tends to be continuation (and later ‘development’)
- B in Ternary forms tends to be contrast

Binary

A – Em to G (8 measures)

B – modulating continuation,
finishes in Em (16 measures)

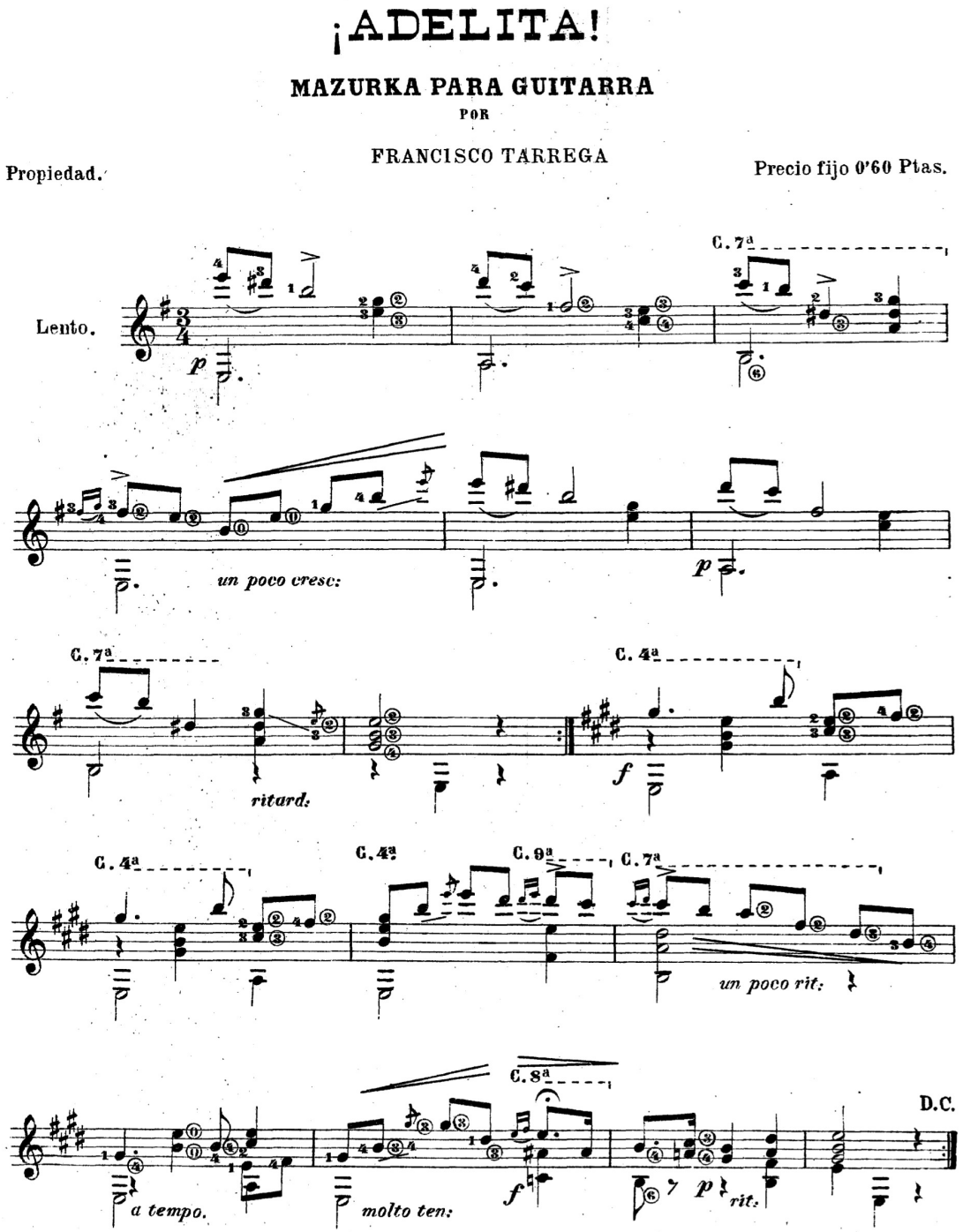


Ternary

A – Em (8 measures)

B – E (8 measures) – contrast

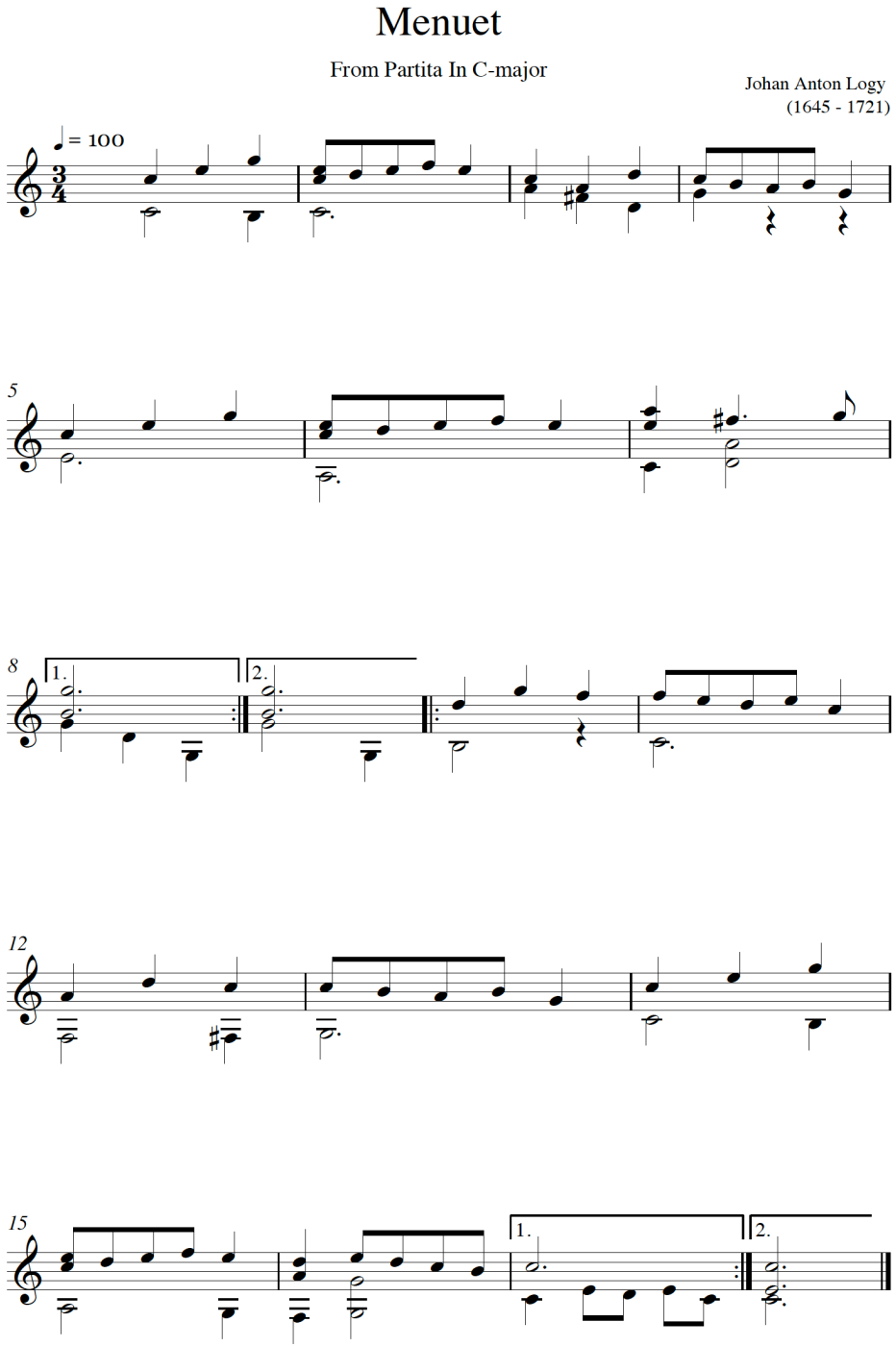
A – Em (8 measures)



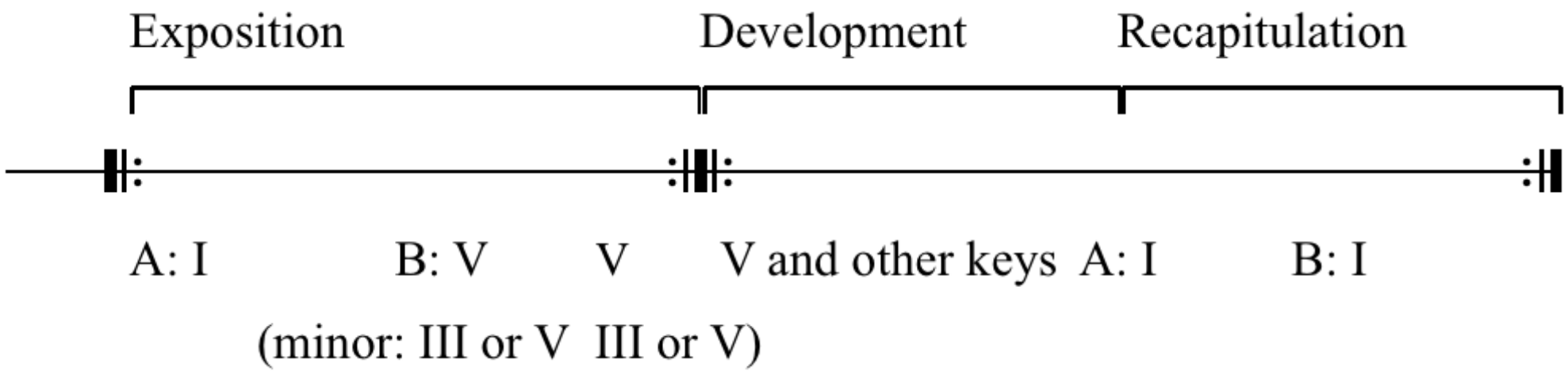
Rounded Binary

A – C to G (8 measures)

B A – G to C (8 measures)



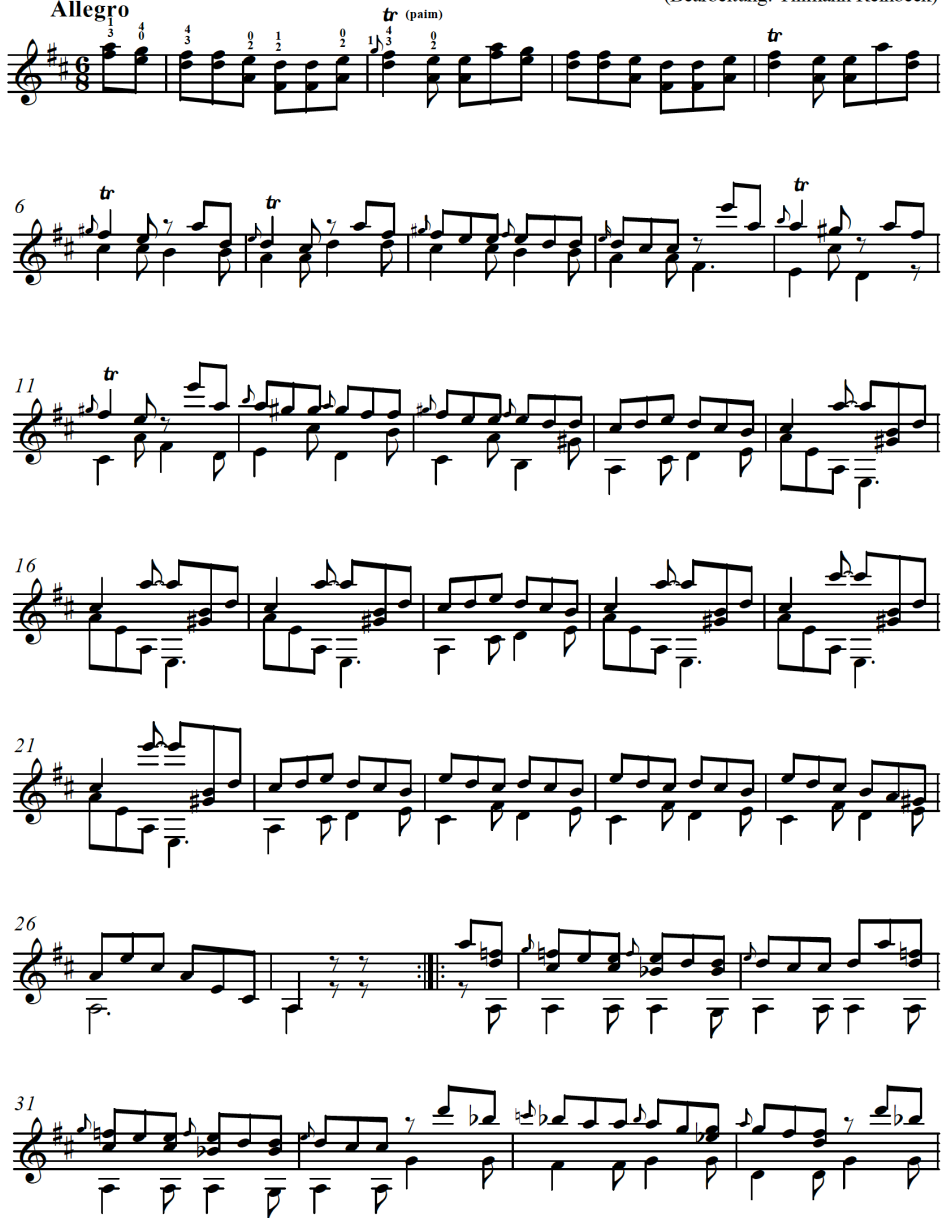
Scarlatti Sonatas and Form – Rounded Binary Plus

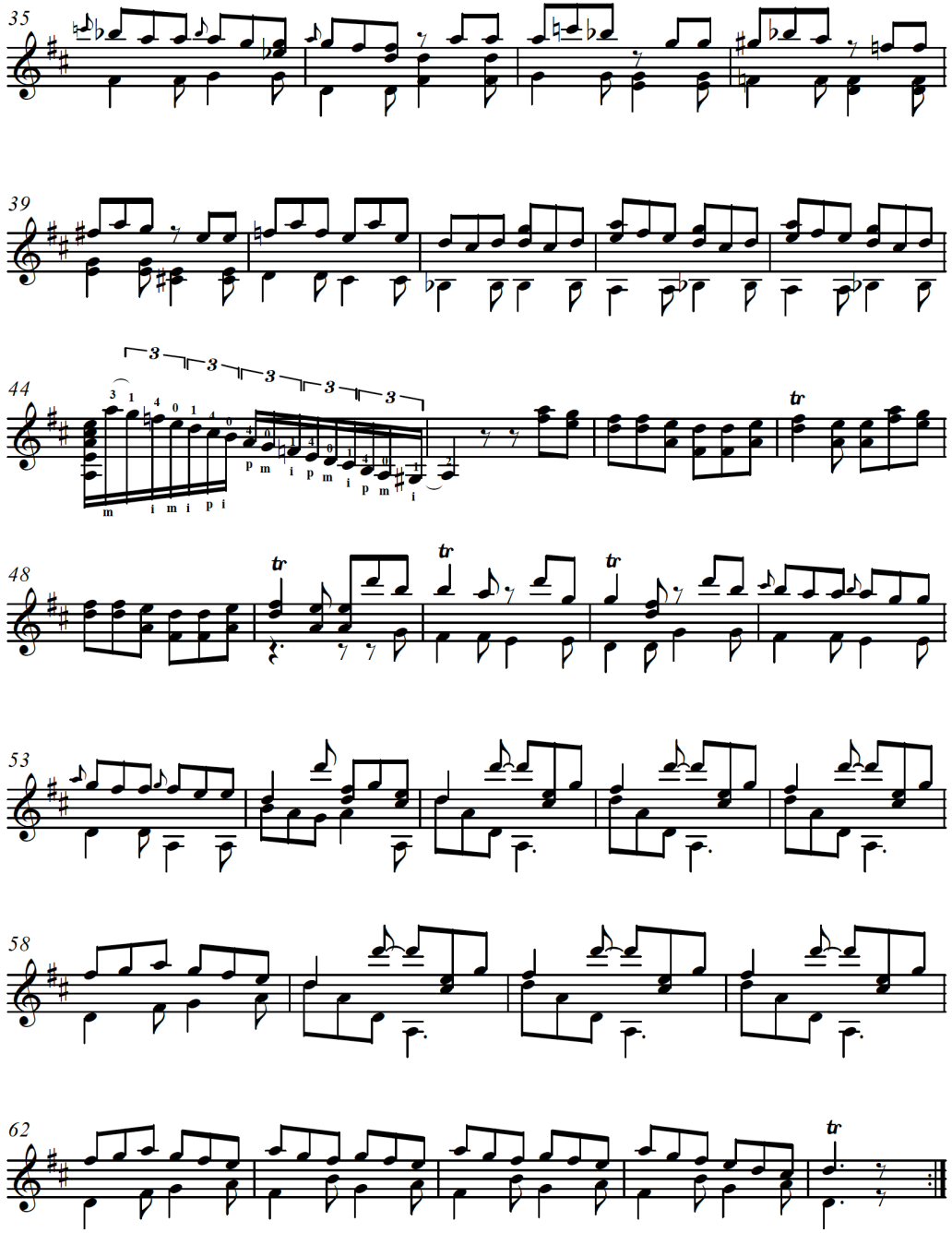


Sonate K 159

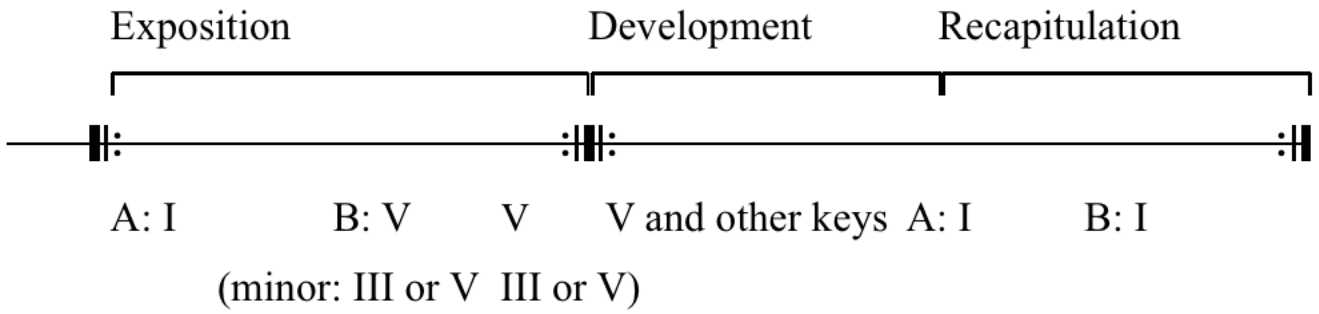
Domenico Scarlatti
(Bearbeitung: Tillmann Reinbeck)

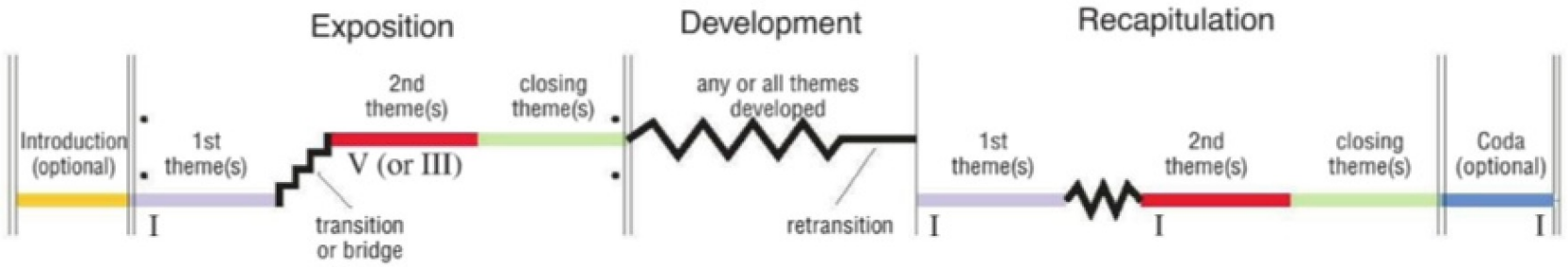
Allegro





Sonata form in Guitar Music





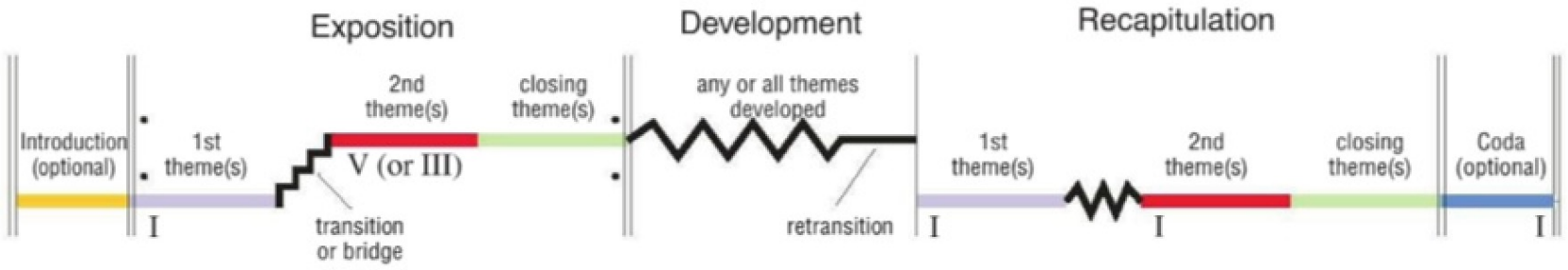
Sonata Form

Contrasting themes in the Exposition

Development

Continuation or Contrast?

Binary or Ternary?

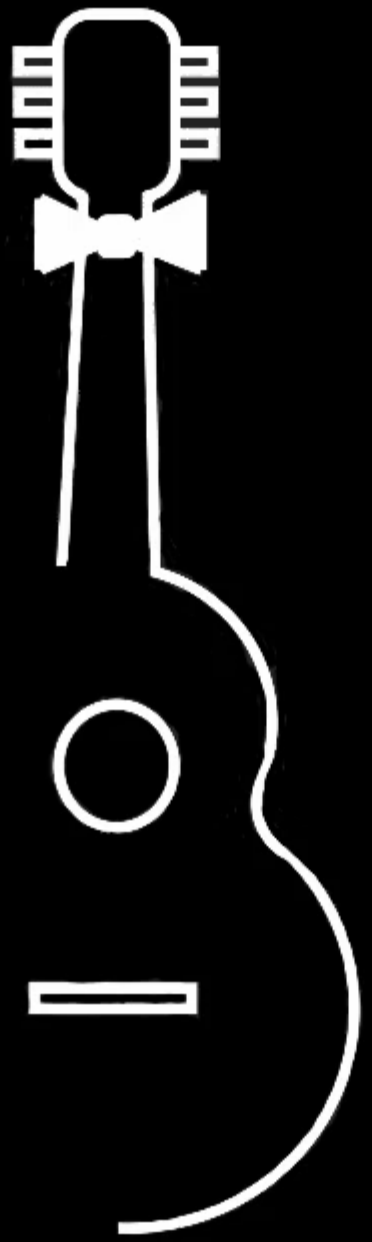


Development – Continuation or Contrast?

Development replaced with contrast – Ternary Model – Da Capo Aria

Giuliani – Grand Overture Op 61

Paganini – Grand Sonata MS 3



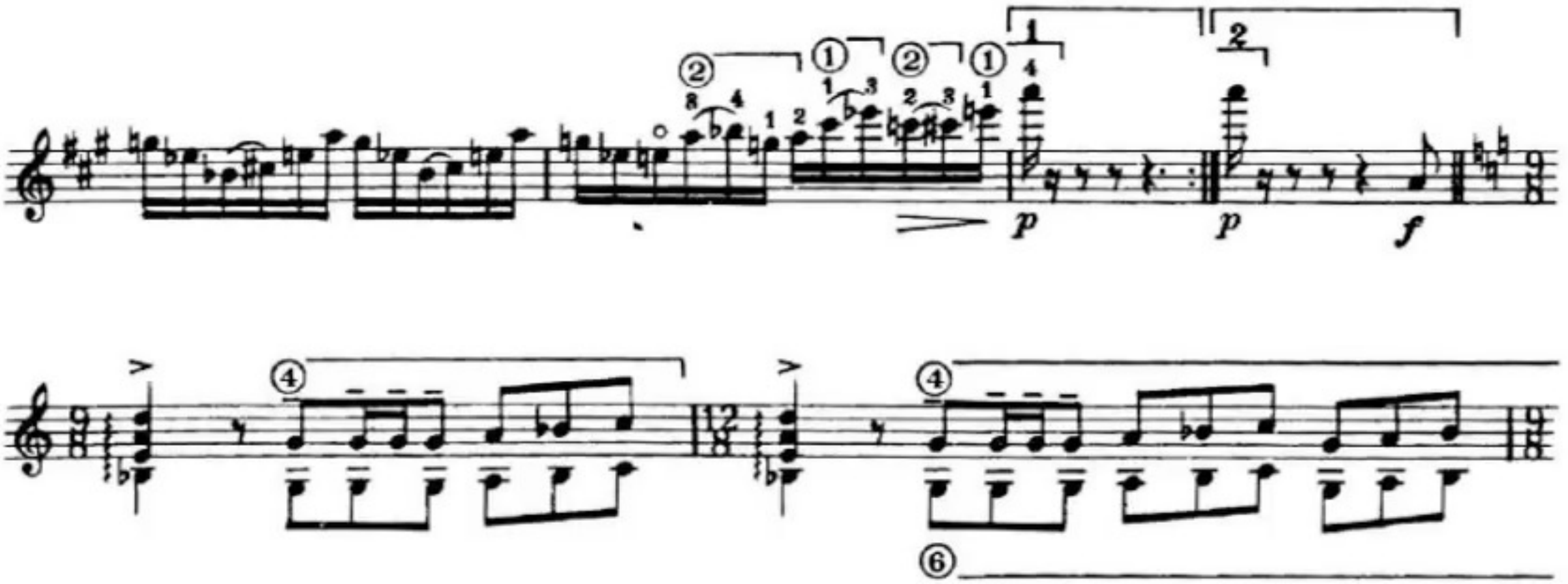
Mauro Giuliani
Op.61 Grand Overture

Development – Continuation or Contrast?

Real Development Section – Rounded Binary Model

Ponce – Sonatina Meridional

Berkeley – Sonatina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Conclusions

- Sonata form is a misleading term

- Sonata form is about:
  - Contrast – two themes contrasting in tonality and character
  - Conflict – confrontation and development
  - Resolution – Tonal reconciliation and ironing out of the differences

Conclusions

- There are many variations of sonata form coming from different historical contexts – Charles Rosen's book is called 'Sonata Forms'

- Sonata form is Binary – although there are also links to the ternary structure of the Da Capo Aria

- Sonata Form was invented after the event – a convenient post hoc explanation for patterns of compositional behaviour.

Conclusions

- Many guitar sonatas do not have a movement in sonata form: Turina, Tippett, Brouwer, Ginastera etc.

- Many sonata form movements by guitarist composers have new and contrasting material instead of a development section (contrast).

- Real development sections do exist, but they are less common. Diabelli, Ponce, Sor and others wrote some of their sonata form movements with development sections (continuation/development).

Questions and Discussion

Prof Stephen Goss

Composer
Director of the International Guitar Research Centre
Chair of Composition
University of Surrey, UK
Professor of Guitar
Royal Academy of Music, London

www.stephengoss.net