

Student 3: Low Merit

Intended for teacher use only

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No 3 in C minor

Texture

As for texture, Beethoven's first movement is not quite typical of the Classical era, in which music was mostly homophonic. **On the contrary - apart from the featuring the typical homophonic texture, this movement also delves into monophony and, arguably, polyphony.** Notably, however, Beethoven uses monophonic textures against thick, heavy textures in this movement with a "punch" that is solely and dramatically "Beethovenesque". Although other Classical composers make use of monophony, the effect that Beethoven's use of the texture has on listeners is unique.

Monophony is first introduced in bar 1, where the entire string section (Violins, / Violas, Violincellos and Basses) plays the same theme in parallel octaves.

Monophony is used here so the first theme can be firmly stated. The presentation of the theme in bar 1 (example below), through using a monophonic texture, creates a clear musical idea that can be referred back to and elaborated on (as is, for example bars 5 - 8; bars 104 - 110, **where theme 1 is varied through using a round between the woodwind and strings**), as well as amplifying the dramatic effect of the homophonic sections of the movement.

Piano Concerto No.3
Op.37

Ludwig van Beethoven
1770–1827

Allegro con brio

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Monophony is used particularly effectively in bar 309 with the entire orchestra playing in unison. The reason that a monophonic texture there is so effective is because of the contrast with the bars directly before it. Bars 303 - 308 are busy, to say the least. Although some would argue that these bars are of a thick homophonic texture, I remain convinced that they are polyphonic. This is due to the separate melodic lines, such as that of the piano, alternating between both hands and that of the strings, playing the ur-motif against the woodwind (which play chords).

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Regardless of the texture, these bars are complex, heavy on the ear and a little bit frantic. This busyness then lends itself to the suddenness of the bold fortissimo recapitulation to theme 1 in bar 309- 312. Beethoven's use of a bold monophonic texture after the debatably polyphonic, heavy texture is atypical of the Classical period, which mainly stuck to simpler homophonic textures and a less dramatic emphasis than what Beethoven explored as an early Romantic composer.

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