

Listening Guide

Beethoven: Piano Sonata in C-sharp minor, Op. 27, No 2, (Moonlight)

DATE OF WORK: 1801

MOVEMENTS: I. Adagio sostenuto; modified song form, 2/2, C-sharp minor
II. Allegretto; scherzo and trio, 3/4, D-flat major
III. Presto agitato; sonata-allegro form, 4/4, C-sharp minor

First Movement: Adagio sostenuto; modified song form, 2/2, C-sharp minor

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Delicate character of melody, played very softly.
Singing quality of the piano.
Continuous melody and arpeggios (outlining harmony).
Strophic return of melody after middle section.
No pause before second movement (*Attaca*).

INTRODUCTION

Four-measure arpeggiated chords.

STROPHE 1

Melody in right hand, with dotted figure on repeated note accompanied by left-hand arpeggios, C-sharp minor; 4-measure phrases:

The musical notation for the first strophe is in 2/2 time and C-sharp minor. It consists of a four-measure phrase. The right hand melody begins with a dotted quarter note on G4, followed by eighth notes. The left hand provides arpeggiated accompaniment. The first measure is marked with *pp* (pianissimo).

Melody in new key, expands and modulates.

New 3-note idea in dialogue between two hands:

The musical notation for the second strophe is in 2/2 time and C-sharp minor. It consists of a four-measure phrase. The right hand melody begins with a dotted quarter note on G4, followed by eighth notes. The left hand provides arpeggiated accompaniment. The first measure is marked with *p* (piano).

Melody returns set in higher range.

MIDDLE SECTION

Motivic development of dialogue, exchanged between hands.

Pedal on dominant (G sharp) under arpeggiated chords.

STROPHE 2

Returns to opening melody and key center (C-sharp minor), followed by short dialogue idea.

CODA

Closes with melody stated in bass on repeated pitch (left hand).

Resolution on tonic cadence with arpeggios and chords.

Second Movement: Allegretto; scherzo and trio form, 3/4, D-flat major

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Syncopations in triple meter give asymmetrical feeling.
Characteristic rhythmic pattern (♩ ♩ ♩).
Short, repeated sections (except first); overall **A-B-A** structure.

SCHERZO (A-A'-B-B)

A section—scherzo theme, 8 measures, lilting triple meter, in short 4-note ideas (bracketed):



A' section—with more connected rhythm.

B section—more lyrical, closing with return of **A**; 20 measures.

B section—repeated.

TRIO (C-C-D-D)

C section—trio theme, with emphasis on third beat of measure alternating with accented bass chord on downbeat; 8 bars:



C section—repeated.

D section—hands alternate chords, 16 measures.

D section—repeated.

SCHERZO (A-A'-B)

A section—repeated, followed by repeat of **A'**

B section—leads to gentle closing.

(Shorter recordings stop here.)

Third Movement: Presto agitato; sonata-allegro form, 4/4, C-sharp minor

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Underlying restless movement, usually in left hand.
Dramatic character, with sudden dynamic contrasts, building to huge climax.
Two distinct theme groups and key centers.

EXPOSITION

Theme 1—rising arpeggios punctuated by 2 sharp chords:



Builds to hold (*fermata*) on dominant.

Theme 1—repeated with some variation.

Theme 2a—more lyrical, with restless accompaniment:



Grows louder, set in octaves.

Theme 2b—with accented chords played in both hands:



Gentle closing theme, then builds to repeat of Exposition.
Exposition repeated.

DEVELOPMENT

Theme 1—treated in various keys; then theme 2 explored.
Slows on sustained pitch of dominant (G sharp) in bass.

RECAPITULATION

Theme 1—in tonic.
Theme 2a—in tonic.
Theme 2b.

CODA

Explores rising theme 1; free cadenza-like passagework.
Rising chromatic scale leads to trill, then statement of closing theme, builds to 2 *fortissimo* chords.