MYASKOVSKY, CELLO SONATA NO.2 IN A MINOR, OP.81,

I. ALLEGRO MODERATO

A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS AND ITS EFFECT ON PERFORMANCE

by

ALINA ALEJANDRA VÁZQUEZ

(Under the Direction of David Starkweather)

ABSTRACT

The following dissertation provides a narrative analysis of the first movement of Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata primarily using the narratological method of Byron Almén, but also drawing upon the semiotic approach of Robert Hatten. Nikolay Myaskovsky achieved high acclaim in Russia during his lifetime, yet his music is not well known in the United States today. For this reason, I believe it is important to study and perform this work. This analytical approach provides a vital tool for musicians facing the challenges of giving a musical and meaningful performance of a piece that is relatively unknown in the United States.

INDEX WORDS:     music theory, narrative analysis, cello sonata, performance, Nikolay Myaskovky, Byron Almén, Robert Hatten

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ALINA ALEJANDRA VÁZQUEZ

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Major Professor: David Starkweather
Committee: Emily Gertsch
Maggie Snyder

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my parents, Alejandro and Lydia Vázquez. This would

not have been possible without their constant love and support.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

**Introduction to the Project**

The following dissertation provides a narrative analysis of the first movement of

Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata. My analysis will primarily use the narratological

method of Byron Almén, but will also draw upon the semiotic approach of Robert Hatten.

Nikolay Myaskovsky achieved high acclaim in Russia during his lifetime, yet his music

is not well known in the United States today. For this reason, I believe it is important to

analyze and perform this work. This narratological analytical approach provides a vital

tool for musicians facing the challenges of giving a musical and meaningful performance

of a piece that is relatively unknown in the United States.

**Nikolay Myaskovsky**

Nikolay Yakovlevich Myaskovsky (April 8, 1881 – August 3, 1950) was born in

the fortress town of Novo-Georgiyevsk, Poland to a family with a strong military

tradition. Although music held no special place in the family home, Myaskovsky was

exposed to it early on; his mother played the piano and his father sang. After his mother's

death in 1890, his aunt helped raise the four children. She was musically trained and

became Myaskovsky's first music teacher.[1]

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[1] Alexei A. Ikonnikov, *Myaskovsky: His Life and Work* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1946), 1-3.

At the age of 12, Myaskovsky entered the Nizhni-Novgorod Cadet College, and then moved on to the Second Cadet College in St. Petersburg two years later. Although he continued his piano studies, he was often frustrated with limited access to the practice rooms at school because he was not a full-time music student. He then started violin lessons and joined the Cadet College amateur symphony, leaving his piano study for some time. He also began his first harmony lessons under N. Kazanli, the conductor of the college orchestra.[2]

Three years later, Myaskovsky composed his first pieces, which were several preludes for the piano. He graduated from the Cadet College in 1899, having been trained for a military career for which he had no interest. He decided to enter the School of Military Engineering, the least military in spirit, and met a group of music enthusiasts, followers of the "Big Five."[3] This group's meetings had a significant influence on Myaskovsky as his interest for Russian nationalistic music grew.[4]

When Myaskovsky graduated from the School of Military Engineering in 1902, he was enrolled in the Second Reserve Sappers Battalion in Zaraisk, and then the 17th Sappers Battalion in Moscow. While there, he was able to obtain a recommendation to study with Glière. He was then transferred back to St. Petersburg where he reunited with his old friends. As he continued to learn about contemporary composers, he realized he needed to enter the conservatory if he wanted to pursue composition as a career. In 1905 he formally applied to the Academy of Law to avoid attending military camp, but instead

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[2] Gregor Tassie, *Nikolay Myaskovsky: The Conscience of Russian Music* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 6-8.

[3] Mily Balakirev, César Cui, Modest Mussorgsky, Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov, and Alexander Borodin

[4] Ikonnikov, *Myaskovsky: His Life and Work,* 9-10.

of studying for his entrance exams, he continued to work on his compositions. By the end of 1906, at the age of 25, Myaskovsky entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory where he studied under Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov. He had to balance his musical studies along with his military duties until the spring of 1907 when he handed in his resignation at the end of his compulsory service.[5]

Myaskovsky graduated in 1911, the same year he wrote his first symphony. This genre would become the most significant of his compositional output as he would go on to write 27 symphonies. He also became a music critic and continued to develop that career along with his compositional career until the beginning of World War I in 1914 when, as a reserve officer, he was sent to the front lines. After suffering from shell-shock, he returned to St. Petersburg and continued composing. Following the final demobilization of troops in 1921, Myaskovsky became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory, a post he held until his death in 1950.

Myaskovsky became a leading musical figure in Russia as an influential professor and as a member of different musical associations and editorial boards. He was also the recipient of the awards Honored Representative of the Arts of the RSFSR, People's Artist of the USSR, and the Stalin Prize.[6]

**Cello Sonata No. 2 in A Minor**

Myaskovsky's second cello sonata is in three movements marked Allegro moderato, Andante cantabile, and Allegro con spirito. Myaskovsky began sketching this

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[5] Ibid., 11-17.

[6] Iosif Genrikhovich Rayskin, "Myaskovsky, Nikolay Yakovlevich," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online,* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19490 (accessed October 30, 2016)

work in the summer of 1948. He put the sonata aside for a few months and returned to it

in October.[7] He completed the first movement on January 4, 1949. He finished the second

movement two days later, and the sonata was fully completed on January 10th.

Myaskovsky had originally planned for the sonata to be in four movements, but he

decided to do away with the minuet he had written for the piece. He soon arranged to

meet with Mstislav Rostropovich, whom he had heard perform his Cello Concerto, Op.

66 four years earlier. They worked through it together, and made just a few small

changes. Rostropovich premiered the piece on March 5, 1949 with pianist Alexander

Dedyukhin. This piece is dedicated to Rostropovich and was awarded the Stalin Prize,

Second Class, in the chamber music category.[8]


## Methodology

I will be using narrative analysis to analyze the first movement of this sonata,

focusing primarily on Byron Almén's approach. This approach draws on Northrop Frye's

four narrative archetypes: romance, tragedy, irony, and comedy. Almén's theory of

musical narrative essentially traces the tensions between an order-imposing hierarchy and

a transgression of that hierarchy, the result of which produces a narrative archetype.

Almén's theory uses Robert Hatten's idea of markedness to identify the musical

elements that are transgressive versus the elements that represent the order-imposing

hierarchy. Markedness is defined by Hatten as the asymmetrical valuation of an

opposition, with marked entities representing the exceptions and having a greater

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[7] Tassie, *Nikolay Myaskovsky: The Conscience of Russian Music,* 285.

[8] Ibid., 295-297.

specificity of meaning than the normative unmarked entities.[9] The marked entities in music are mapped onto a transgression while unmarked entities are mapped onto order. Almén stresses that rank, on the other hand, assigns value to the distinctive features in a cultural unit. Rank deals with determining the value of a musical event in relation to other events.

The concept of transvaluation is used to synthesize Almén's approach. Transvaluation is the rising and falling tension caused by the markedness and rank relations, and it is transvaluation that articulates the narrative trajectory in a piece of music.

To summarize Almén's approach, narrative analysis consists of identifying the hierarchical relationships in a piece and tracing how they change throughout the piece to create a narrative trajectory. Initially, one must identify the marked elements (the things that are "unusual") in the music, and those marked elements will fall into the "transgression" category. Unmarked elements (the things that are "normal") fall into the "order" category. Then the analyst must trace the rising and falling tension created by these oppositions (order vs. transgression) in order to assign one of the four possible archetypes (Table 1).

**Table 1: Four Archetypes**

| Romance | the *victory of an order-imposing hierarchy* over its transgression (*victory + order*) |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Comedy  | the *victory of a transgression* over an order-imposing hierarchy (*victory + transgression*) |
| Irony   | the *defeat of an order-imposing hierarchy* by a transgression (*defeat + order)* |
| Tragedy | the *defeat of a transgression* by an order-imposing hierarchy (*defeat + transgression)* |

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[9] Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1994), 291.

A Romance archetype illustrates the victory of order over transgression while a Comedy archetype features the victory of a transgression over an order-imposing hierarchy. In these two archetypes, the listener's sympathy lies with the winners. In the Irony/Satire archetype, the order-imposing hierarchy is defeated by a transgression. Although this appears to be like the Comedy archetype, our sympathy is now with the defeated. The Tragic archetype reveals a defeat of transgression by an order-imposing hierarchy, and our sympathy again is with the defeated. Based on these archetypes, one must identify the conflicting musical elements in a piece, and then recognize with which side the audience will sympathize.

One can use various analytical techniques in narrative analysis. There is not a single approach because conflict may be found in various musical elements including motives, themes, form, and programmatic entities. When attempting to identify conflicting elements, musical elements such as register, key areas, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre, and accents can be addressed. Other important issues include, but are not limited to: musical topics, musical conventions, character, text, descriptive titles, and the attribution of anthropomorphic status to musical figures.

Almén's theory of musical narrative encompasses a combination of approaches from literary theory, semiotic theory, musicology, and music theory. It is the eclecticism found in this approach to narrative in music that allows the analyst the flexibility to create a meaningful and musical analysis of narrative. And, it is my opinion that an analysis of narrative can potentially have an enormous impact on a performer's musical interpretation of a piece of music. Using this analytical methodology, I hope to show how a narrative reading of the first movement of Myaskovsky's Cello Sonata Op. 81 as a

Romance archetype can communicate a deeper musical meaning for the performer and

listener.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSIS: I. ALLEGRO MODERATO

My analysis will demonstrate how the first movement depicts a romance
archetype. The order-imposing hierarchy is victorious over the transgression, an outcome
with which the listener is sympathetic. Throughout the movement, the order imposing
hierarchy is faced with challenges from opposing forces, but in the end it is able to
overcome those obstacles.

**Order-Imposing Hierarchy vs. Transgression**

In this movement, the order-imposing hierarchy is represented by the home key of
a minor, characteristics expected in a sonata form, diatonicism and modal harmonies,
metrical consonance, and a stable and smooth character. The transgression is shown by
different key areas, deviations from sonata form, chromaticism, metrical dissonance, and
an agitated and restless quality (Table 2).

**Table 2:  Order-Imposing Hierarchy vs. Transgression**

| Order-Imposing Hierarchy | Transgression |
| --- | --- |
| home key (a minor) | different keys |
| sonata form | deviations from sonata form |
| diatonicism/modal | chromaticism |
| metrical consonance | metrical dissonance |
| smooth, stable character | agitated, restless character |

This movement is in sonata form. It begins with the primary theme (P) in a minor, followed by the secondary theme (S) mainly in C major. Then the primary theme returns in e minor at the end of the exposition. The short development features foreign keys and leads to an extra hearing of the secondary theme before the recapitulation. This time the primary theme starts in a minor but moves to different keys, with an emphasis on f-sharp minor. The secondary theme is then presented in A major. The movement ends with a truncated primary theme and a Coda, both in the home key of a minor.
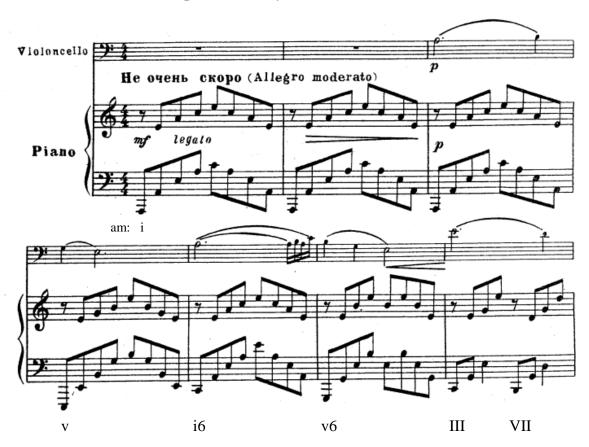
## Exposition

The exposition (mm. 1-96) begins with two measures of sweeping arpeggios in the piano which set a smooth, flowing tone. The primary theme is then presented in three parts. P(a) remains in the home key establishing the order-imposing hierarchy. P(b) introduces the first hint of transgression by moving to different key areas, and then P(a') reestablishes order by returning to the key and texture of the opening. The transition exhibits more characteristics of transgression as it leads into the highly contrasting secondary theme. The return of the primary theme demonstrates how it has been affected by the transgression by presenting the theme in a new key and texture, as if weakened by what it has faced (Table 3).

**Table 3: Exposition**

| Theme | Intro | P(a) | P(b) | P(a') | Trans | S(a) | S(b) | P |
|--------|-------|------|----------|-------|-------|---------|---------|---|
| **Key** | a | a | a, c♯, f♯,A | a | a | C, a, C | C, a, e | e |
| **Measure** | 1 | 3 | 14 | 34 | 44 | 55 | 71 | 89 |

## Exposition: Primary Theme

The primary theme (mm. 1-43) is in three parts and is first heard in the cello as the piano arpeggiates the harmony. The first part (mm. 1-13), P(a),  has a folk-like quality supported by the use of the minor dominant in m. 6 and the major subtonic in the second half of m.7. There are two distinct motives in this theme that will return throughout the movement and remind the listener of the primary theme. The first is the opening rising major second, followed by a descending major third and minor third in mm. 3-4. The second is a sixteenth-note figure where the first note is tied to the previous note, and the first and third sixteenth notes are the same, heard in mm. 5 (Example 1), 10, and 11.

**Example 1: Primary Theme, P(a), mm. 1-7**

The second part of the primary theme (mm. 14-33), P(b), features the melody in the right hand of the piano with accompanying cello counterpoint rather than arpeggiations. It begins like P(a) in a minor but extends almost twice as long, and moves to the unexpected keys of c-sharp minor, f-sharp minor, and A major. This is the first sign of a transgression in the music, but although different key areas are introduced, the primary theme remains intact and recognizable. Stability quickly returns in the third part of the primary theme (mm. 34-43), P(a'), with a return to a minor and to the opening texture. This time the cello plays the melody an octave higher, providing a sense of achievement.

The primary theme presents characteristics of order. It begins and ends in the home key and contains diatonic and modal harmonies. Additionally, it exhibits metrical consonance and a smooth character. Nonetheless, this theme does foreshadow the obstacles that the order-imposing hierarchy will face throughout the piece.

**Exposition: Transition**

The transition (mm. 44-54) is eleven measures long and remains in a minor. It combines the sixteenth-note motive from the primary theme, with elements of transgression that will become stronger in the secondary theme. For example, instead of the flowing arpeggiations, the left hand of the piano is heard in stepwise descending motion, which becomes chromatic in the second beat of m. 46 through the end of m. 47. Chromaticism is also heard in the cello line in m. 52. The harmonies in this section become stagnant; mm. 48 thorough 51 simply alternate between a minor and d minor chords with no direction. The cello line also flails as it makes several attempts to rise but

keeps falling. It finally rises to an F♯ in m. 52, only to fall back again in defeat two measures later (Example 2).

**Example 2: Transition to Secondary Theme, mm. 49-56**



**Exposition: Secondary Theme**

The secondary theme (mm. 55-88) is in two parts. In the first part (mm. 55-70), the cello begins the theme in C major, moves to a minor, and ends with a return to C major. This new key area and change in modality does represent a transgression, but a

move to the relative major is to be expected for the secondary theme area. In the second

part (mm. 71-88), the voices switch with the cello taking over the right hand of the piano

as the piano plays the melody. The piano begins with the same key areas and then moves

to e minor at the end. In addition to the move away from the tonic key, the secondary

theme also exhibits higher levels of chromaticism, heard especially in the

accompanimental cello in mm. 74-78. Another sign of transgression is the metrical

dissonance of triplets versus duples heard between the two instruments in mm. 79-84. To

add to the dissonance, the piano is also playing syncopations. These new rhythmic

characteristics threaten the order-imposing hierarchy in a way not heard before (Example

3).

**Example 3: Secondary Theme, S(b), mm. 75-80**

Additionally, the secondary theme is quite static harmonically. For example, mm. 58-62 and mm. 78-84 alternate between g♯ half diminished and a minor seventh chords; mm. 75-78 alternate between C dominant seventh chords and F major chords. These alternations are mirrored in the faster moving lines which also feature repetitions of alternating notes and a sense of urgency. Coupled with the highly chromatic nature of the passage, this theme has a searching quality.

Another sign of a transgression is heard in mm. 68-70. Except for a one beat forte in the cello line in m. 27, this is the first forte. This change in dynamic signals a change in character that will become more apparent in the development. In addition, the harmony used here is a tritone substitution. Rather than moving from a G dominant seventh chord to the C major tonic, a D-flat dominant seventh chord is used (spelled enharmonically as a German augmented sixth chord). This chord shares two common tones, B and F, with the expected dominant seventh chord, but its root is a tritone away (Example 4).

**Example 4:  Secondary Theme, S(a) to S(b), mm. 68-71**



CM:  subV

D♭Mm7

I

## Exposition: Return of Primary Theme

The primary theme returns before the development (mm. 89-96). This is not expected, but with it a certain level of order is restored. The opening theme is easily recognizable in the right hand of the piano accompanied by arpeggiations in the left hand. This accompaniment is slightly different in that it is only in one hand and leaves an eighth note rest at the beginning of each measure, then on beats one and three in mm. 93-96. The lack of a strong bass on beat one of each measure creates some instability. When the piano previously had this primary theme, the cello supported it with a moving eighth notes line, but this time it only plays pizzicato. This much lighter texture leaves the piano melody more vulnerable. Lastly, the primary theme does not return in the home key but in the minor dominant e minor. Although the theme's return is fully recognizable, it is in the "wrong" key and weaker than before. The obstacles it has faced have had an effect on it and subdued it (Example 5).

**Example 5: Return of Primary Theme, mm. 89-96**

## Development

The development (mm. 97-122) presents the strongest transgression of this movement. It develops the previous themes mainly through fragmentation. The right hand of the piano begins with the opening motive of the primary theme; the ascending major second is heard in mm. 97 and 99. The following descending major and minor thirds heard in m. 3-4 are now altered both rhythmically and by interval size until only the ascending major second remains in m. 103. The piano also builds on the sixteenth-note figure from the primary theme and incorporates the syncopated rhythm heard in the secondary theme. The left hand of the piano is taken from P(b), although the rhythm is different with the half note on beat three rather than on beat two. The cello line is also taken from P(b) and shortened to one-measure fragments. The fragmentation in each of the lines creates high instability. Additionally, the development begins with an alternation of a-sharp half diminished seventh chords and g-sharp minor chords in mm. 97-101 (Example 6).

The agitation in the music is further supported by the Piu appassionato marking and the forte dynamic maintained throughout the development. This contrasts with the rest of the movement as fortes are only seen on two other occasions: the first beat of m. 27 in the cello, and in mm. 68-70. This stark dynamic disparity emphasizes the change in character shown in this section.

**Example 6: Development, mm. 97-104**



The development ends with three measures parallel to mm. 68-70. As in the previous appearance, a tritone substitution is used; this time an E-flat dominant seventh chord leads to D major. These measures are easily recognizable from before because the piano holds over three measures while the cello moves above it. The change in texture and the diminuendo in the cello in m. 122 lead into the secondary theme.

**Addition of Secondary Theme**

The first part of the secondary theme, initially heard at mm. 55, returns in mm. 123-137. This is highly conflicting as one would expect the primary theme to follow the development. Like before, it exhibits characteristics of transgression such as chromaticism and metric dissonance. It also introduces the new key areas of D major and b minor. It is presented in foreign keys, out of place, and delays the recapitulation. At the

end, it signals the return of stability and the home key by holding an E major minor ninth chord for six measures. This serves as a dominant preparation for the recapitulation in a minor.

## Recapitulation and Coda

The recapitulation (mm. 138-end) exhibits characteristics of the order-imposing hierarchy and the transgression. It begins with the primary theme in a minor as expected; it is exactly the same as the opening except for an altered ending to lead into the key change of the next phrase. Order and stability seem to have been restored, then the second part of the primary theme moves to f-sharp minor, a-sharp minor, d-sharp minor, and ends in F-sharp major. These new key areas are parallel to those in the exposition, they are each a minor third below the original keys. The order-imposing hierarchy continues to be denied, as only the first two sections of the primary theme are heard.

The transition is in f-sharp minor and leads to the full two-part secondary theme heard in the exposition. This time the theme is presented in A major, touches on f-sharp minor, and ends in a minor. This leads to the return of the primary theme, but only a shortened version of P(a') is presented before the Coda (Table 4).

**Table 4: Recapitulation**

| Theme | P(a) | P(b) | Trans | S(a) | S(b) | P(a') | Coda |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Key** | a | f♯, a♯, d♯, F♯ | f♯ | A, f♯, A | A, f♯, a | a | a |
| **Measure** | 138 | 149 | 168 | 179 | 195 | 214 | 220 |
| **Exposition Measure** | 3 | 14 | 44 | 55 | 71 | 34 | none |

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Despite the elements of transgression, the beginning of the recapitulation is very clear because it presents P(a) in the home key. P(a') also remains in a minor and is immediately recognizable even in its truncated six measure form. This leads into the Coda in mm. 220, which emphasizes the sixteenth note figure from the primary theme. The cello also highlights scale degrees one and five, especially from m. 227 to the end. This confirms the tonic key and reinforces the order-imposing hierarchy.

In addition to staying in the home key, the coda also retains the folk-like quality of the primary theme in its use of both the minor dominant and major subtonic, heard especially in mm. 223-228. The coda also does not feature the strong chromaticism or metrical dissonance so prominent in the second theme and development. This creates a calm and stable character to end the movement.

### Conclusion

The first movement of Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata provides an example of a romance archetype. Initially, the primary theme establishes the order-imposing hierarchy. As the movement continues, it faces transgression in the form of foreign keys, chromaticism, metrical dissonance, and an added appearance of the secondary theme. These elements threaten stability with an agitated and restless character. The primary theme is temporarily changed by the transgression and is presented in a different key, but eventually it returns to the home key and order is reinstated.

This narrative reading is somewhat ambiguous as we do not get a full return of the primary theme at the end. A different interpretation could lead to a Tragic reading of the same movement, where a transgression is defeated by an order-imposing hierarchy. In

this case, our sympathy would be with the defeated. I interpreted this movement to demonstrate a Romance archetype because my sympathy is with the order-imposing hierarchy. I also consider the primary theme victorious though at a cost. The order-imposing hierarchy is affected by the transgression but it does not lose its identity. It remains highly recognizable and is supported by the Coda and tonic key at the end.

Narrative analyses are significant because they help explain why music elicits certain reactions and help trace conflict and resolution through evidence found in the structure of the music. In addition, they demonstrate that a text is not needed for a narrative because of the semantic characteristics found in music. Because the meaning of what constitutes "order" and "transgression" is purposefully broad, this type of analysis can lead to different interpretations of the same piece.

CHAPTER 3

EFFECT ON PERFORMANCE

Narrative analysis provides an invaluable tool for dealing with the difficult issue of explaining meaning in music and translating this into a meaningful performance. By identifying the marked moments in the music, I was able to recognize the conflicting elements of the order-imposing hierarchy and the transgression. This helped me assign specific characters to each theme, and influences the way I play them.

For example, in the primary theme I want to bring out long phrases and play legato to emphasize the smooth character of this theme. I also want to highlight the different motives that will return in the development and coda, so that the audience can identify and remember them. Initially, I was shortening the phrases and focusing on short-term goals in the phrase rather than making a smoother, longer phrase.

In the transition, the changes of character quickly become apparent as the elements of transgression begin to appear. Highlighting the chromaticism is important, as well as emphasizing the repeated attempts of the cello line to rise.

The secondary theme's repetitive nature seemed stagnant, along with the static harmonies, but the narrative helped me find a character for this theme as well. I realized that I need to give this passage an urgent feel and bring out the elements of transgression. This will provide contrast, and keep the audience from losing interest. One way to do this is to keep the direction of the line constantly moving forward. Emphasizing the short crescendo and decrescendo markings also adds to the restless character.

Bringing out the elements of transgression becomes more significant in the development, as it presents the strongest transgression in the movement. The tempo can move forward slightly to provide a highly agitated character. Emphasizing the fragments of the previous themes is also important.

Because of my interpretation of this movement as a romance archetype, the performance of the Coda is very important in establishing the victory of the order-imposing hierarchy over the transgression. The Coda should grow out of the return of the primary theme with matching character. It should also place emphasis on returning motives from the primary theme and members of the tonic triad to highlight the order-imposing elements and their success.

This narrative analysis helped me find different characters in the music, appropriate to the elements of order and transgression. It also helped me recognize the return of motives and how they were transformed throughout the movement. This approach addresses the challenge of reading beyond the notes, and guides performers to tell a story through performance.

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APPENDIX A

LECTURE RECITAL SCRIPT

**SLIDE: TITLE** Good afternoon. Today I will discuss the first movement of

Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata using narrative analysis. My analysis will primarily

use the narratological method of Byron Almén but will also draw upon the semiotic

approach of Robert Hatten. Nikolay Myaskovsky achieved high acclaim in Russia during

his lifetime, yet his music is not well known in the United States today. For this reason, I

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approach provides a vital tool for musicians facing the challenges of giving a musical and

meaningful performance of a piece that is relatively unknown in the United States.

**SLIDE: MYASKOVSKY** Nikolay Myaskovsky was born on April 8, 1881 in the

fortress town of Novo-Georgiyevsk, Poland to a family with a strong military tradition.

He was trained from the age of twelve for a military career for which he had no

interest, while also studying piano, violin, and harmony on the side. Then he entered the

School of Military Engineering, the least military in spirit, and met a group of music

enthusiasts, followers of the "Big Five." This group's meetings had a significant

influence on Myaskovsky as his interest for Russian nationalistic music grew.

Myaskovsky graduated from the School of Military Engineering in 1902, but soon

realized he needed to enter the conservatory if he wanted to pursue composition as a

career. By the end of 1906, he entered the St. Petersburg Conservatory at the age of 25,

where he studied under Lyadov and Rimsky-Korsakov.

Myaskovsky graduated in 1911, the same year he wrote his first symphony. This genre would become the most significant of his compositional output as he would go on to write 27 symphonies.  In 1921, he became a professor at the Moscow Conservatory, a post he would hold until his death in 1950.

Myaskovsky became a leading musical figure in Russia as an influential professor and as a member of different musical associations and editorial boards.

**SLIDE: SONATA NO. 2 IN A MINOR** Myaskovsky's second cello sonata is in three movements marked Allegro moderato, Andante cantabile, and Allegro con spirito. He completed this work on January 10th, 1949 and arranged to meet with Rostropovich soon after. They worked through it together, and made a few small changes. Rostropovich premiered the piece on March 5, 1949 with pianist Alexander Dedyukhin. This piece is dedicated to Rostropovich and was awarded the Stalin Prize, Second Class, in the chamber music category.

**SLIDE: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS** I will be using narrative analysis to analyze the first movement of this sonata, focusing primarily on Byron Almén's approach. This approach draws on Northrop Frye's four narrative archetypes: romance, tragedy, irony, and comedy. Almén's theory of musical narrative essentially traces the tensions between an order-imposing hierarchy and a transgression of that hierarchy, the result of which produces a narrative archetype.

Almén's theory uses Robert Hatten's idea of markedness defined by Hatten as the asymmetrical valuation of an opposition, with marked entities representing the exceptional and having a greater specificity of meaning than the normative unmarked entities. The marked entities in music are mapped onto a transgression while unmarked

entities are mapped onto order. Rank, on the other hand, assigns value to the distinctive features in a cultural unit. Rank deals with determining the value of a musical event in relation to other events.

**SLIDE:** The concept of transvaluation is used to synthesize Almén's approach. Transvaluation is the rising and falling tension caused by the markedness and rank relations, and it is transvaluation that articulates the narrative trajectory in a piece of music.

**SLIDE: FOUR ARCHETYPES** A Romance archetype illustrates the victory of order over transgression, **SLIDE** while a Comedy archetype features the victory of a transgression over and order-imposing hierarchy. In these two archetypes, the listener's sympathy lies with the winners. **SLIDE** In the Irony archetype, the order-imposing hierarchy is defeated by a transgression. Although this appears to be like the Comedy archetype, our sympathy is now with the defeated. **SLIDE** The Tragic archetype reveals a defeat of transgression by an order-imposing hierarchy, and our sympathy again is with the defeated. Based on these archetypes, one must identify the conflicting musical elements in a piece, and then recognize with which side the audience will sympathize.

One can use various analytical techniques in narrative analysis. There is not a single approach because conflict may be found in various musical elements including motives, themes, form, and programmatic entities. When attempting to identify conflicting elements, musical elements such as register, key areas, rhythm, dynamics, tempo, texture, timbre, and accents can be addressed. This allows the analyst the flexibility to create a meaningful and musical analysis of narrative. And, it is my opinion

that an analysis of narrative can have an enormous impact on a performer's musical interpretation of a piece of music.

**SLIDE: ROMANCE** Using this analytical methodology, I hope to show how a narrative reading of the first movement of Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata as a Romance archetype can communicate a deeper musical meaning for the performer and listener.

**SLIDE: ORDER IMPOSING-HIERARCHY VS. TRANSGRESSION** In this movement, the order-imposing hierarchy is represented by the home key of a minor, characteristics expected in sonata form, diatonicism and modal harmonies, and a stable and smooth character. The transgression is shown by contrasting key areas, deviations from sonata form, chromaticism, and an agitated and restless quality.

**SLIDE: SONATA FORM** This movement is in sonata form. It begins with the primary theme, which begins and ends in A minor, followed by the secondary theme mainly in C major. Then the primary theme returns in E minor at the end of the exposition. The short development features foreign keys and leads to an extra hearing of the secondary theme before the recapitulation. This time the primary theme starts in A minor but moves to different keys, with an emphasis on F-sharp minor. The secondary theme is then presented in A major. The movement ends with a truncated primary theme and a Coda, both in the home key of A minor.

**SLIDE: EXPOSITION** The exposition begins with two measures of sweeping arpeggios in the piano which set a smooth, flowing tone. The primary theme is then presented in three parts. P(a) remains in the home key establishing the order-imposing hierarchy. P(b) introduces the first hint of transgression by moving to different key areas,

and then P(a') reestablishes order by returning to the key and texture of the opening. The transition exhibits more characteristics of transgression as it leads into the highly contrasting secondary theme. The return of the primary theme demonstrates how it has been affected by the transgression by presenting the theme in a new key and texture, as if weakened by what it has faced.

**SLIDE: PRIMARY THEME, P(A)** The primary theme is first heard in the cello as the piano arpeggiates the harmony. This theme has a folk-like quality supported by the use of the minor dominant in m. 6 and the major subtonic in the second half of m.7. There are two distinct motives in this theme that will return throughout the movement and remind you of the primary theme. The first **SLIDE** is the opening rising major second, followed by a descending minor third in mm. 3-4, which sounds like this. (played on piano) The second **SLIDE** is a sixteenth-note figure where the first note is tied to the previous note. That motive sounds like this. (played on piano)

**SLIDE: PRIMARY THEME, P(B)** The second part of the primary theme, P(b), features the melody in the piano with accompanying cello counterpoint rather than arpeggiations. It begins like P(a) in A minor but extends almost twice as long, and moves to the unexpected keys of C-sharp minor, F-sharp minor, and A major. This is the first sign of a transgression in the music, but although different key areas are introduced, the primary theme remains intact and recognizable. Here is the beginning of P(b) on the piano. (played on piano)

**SLIDE: PRIMARY THEME, P(A')** Stability quickly returns in the third part of the primary theme, P(a'), with a return to A minor and to the opening texture. This time the cello plays the melody an octave higher, providing a sense of achievement.

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The primary theme presents characteristics of order. It begins and ends in the home key and contains diatonic and modal harmonies. Additionally, it exhibits a smooth character. Nonetheless, this theme does foreshadow the obstacles that the order-imposing hierarchy will face throughout the piece. We will now play the complete primary theme. **GO TO BLANK SLIDE**

**SLIDE: TRANSITION, MM. 45-48** The transition to the secondary theme is ten measures long and remains in a minor. It combines the sixteenth-note motive **SLIDE** from the primary theme, with elements of transgression that will become stronger in the secondary theme. For example, **SLIDE** instead of flowing arpeggiations, the left hand of the piano is heard in stepwise descending motion, which becomes chromatic in the second beat of m. 46 through the end of m. 47.

**SLIDE: TRANSITION, MM. 49-56** The harmonies in this section also become stagnant; **SLIDE** mm. 48 through 51 simply alternate between A minor and D minor chords with no direction. The cello line also flails as it makes several attempts to rise but keeps falling. It finally rises to an F♯ in m. 52, **SLIDE** only to fall back again in defeat two measures later. You will now hear the transition. **GO TO BLANK SLIDE**

**SLIDE: SECONDARY THEME** The secondary theme is in two parts; the cello begins the theme in C major, moves to a minor, and ends with a return to C major. This new key area and change in modality does represent a transgression, but a move to the relative major is to be expected for the secondary theme area. The voices then switch with the cello taking over the right hand of the piano as the piano plays the melody. The piano begins with the same key areas and then moves to E minor at the end.

**SLIDE: SECONDARY THEME, MM. 75-80** In addition to the move away from the tonic key, the secondary theme is quite static harmonically. For example, mm. 75-77, in the top line of this example, alternate between C major minor seventh chords and F major chords. Mm. 78-84 alternate between G-sharp fully diminished and A minor seventh chords. These alternations are mirrored in the faster moving lines **SLIDE** which also feature repetitions of alternating notes, creating a sense of urgency.

The secondary theme also exhibits higher levels of chromaticism, **SLIDE** heard especially in the cello and left hand of the piano. The syncopations in the piano **SLIDE** starting at m. 79 add to the agitated character.

**SLIDE: SECONDARY THEME, MM. 68-71** Another sign of a transgression is heard in mm. 68-70. Except for a one beat forte in the cello line in m. 27, this is the first forte. This change in dynamic signals a change in character that will become more apparent in the development. In addition, the harmony used here is a tritone substitution. We would expect a G dominant seventh chord moving to C Major, which sounds like this, (played on the piano), but instead we get this. (played on the piano)

**SLIDE: RETURN OF PRIMARY THEME** The primary theme returns before the development. This time, the accompaniment is slightly different in that it is only in one hand of the piano and leaves an eighth note rest at the beginning of each measure, then on beats one and three in mm. 93-96. The lack of a strong bass on beat one of each measure creates instability. When the piano previously had this primary theme, the cello supported it with a moving eighth notes line, but this time it only plays pizzicato. This much lighter texture leaves the piano melody more vulnerable. Lastly, the primary theme does not return in the home key but in the minor dominant E minor. Although the

theme's return is recognizable, it is in the "wrong" key and weaker than before. The rank value of transgression is at the highest level at this point in the piece because the primary theme returns out of place and in a different key.

**SLIDE: DEVELOPMENT** The development presents the strongest transgression of this movement. It develops the motives from the primary theme mainly through fragmentation, which creates high instability. For example, the ascending major second heard in the opening of the movement, is heard in mm. 97, 99, and 103. You can hear these fragments as you listen to the piano play the beginning of the development. (played on the piano)

The agitation in the music is further supported by the Piu appassionato marking and the forte dynamic maintained throughout the development. This contrasts with the rest of the movement as fortes are only seen on two other occasions. This stark dynamic disparity emphasizes the change in character shown in this section.

**SLIDE: DEVELOPMENT/ADDITION OF SECONDARY THEME** The development ends with two measures parallel to mm. 68-70. As in the previous appearance, a tritone substitution is used; this time an E-flat major minor seventh chord leads to D major.

The first part of the secondary theme, initially heard at mm. 55, returns in mm. 123-137. This is highly conflicting as one would expect the primary theme to follow the development. Like before, it exhibits characteristics of transgression such as chromaticism. This added secondary theme also introduces the new key areas of D major and b minor. It is presented in foreign keys, out of place, and delays the recapitulation. At the end, it signals the return of stability and the home key by holding an E major minor

ninth chord for six measures. This serves as a dominant preparation for the recapitulation in A minor. The rank value of order is raised as we get the expected E chord.

**SLIDE: RECAPITULATION AND CODA** The recapitulation exhibits characteristics of the order-imposing hierarchy and the transgression. Order and stability seem to have been restored, but are immediately undermined by transgression when the second part of the primary theme moves to F-sharp minor, A-sharp minor, D-sharp minor, and ends in F-sharp major. The order-imposing hierarchy continues to be denied, as only the first two sections of the primary theme are heard.

The transition is in F-sharp minor and leads to the full two-part secondary theme heard in the exposition. This time the theme is presented in A major, touches on F-sharp minor, and ends in a minor. This leads to the return of the primary theme, but only a shortened version of P(a') is presented before the Coda.

Despite the elements of transgression, the beginning of the recapitulation is very clear because it presents P(a) in the home key.

**SLIDE: RECAPITULATION, MM. 214-219 /CODA, MM. 214-221** P(a') also remains in A minor and is immediately recognizable even in its truncated six measure form.

**SLIDE: CODA** This leads into the Coda which emphasizes the sixteenth note figure from the primary theme. **SLIDE** The cello also highlights scale degrees one and five, especially from m. 227 to the end. **SLIDE** This confirms the tonic key and reinforces the order-imposing hierarchy.

In addition to staying in the home key, the coda also retains the folk-like quality of the primary theme in its use of both the minor dominant and major subtonic, heard

especially in mm. 223-228. The coda also does not feature the strong chromaticism so prominent in the second theme and development. This creates a calm and stable character to end the movement, and also supports the order-imposing hierarchy.

**SLIDE: CONCLUSION** The first movement of Myaskovsky's Second Cello Sonata provides an example of a romance archetype. Initially, the primary theme establishes the order-imposing hierarchy. As the movement continues, it faces transgression in the form of foreign keys, chromaticism, metrical dissonance, and an added appearance of the secondary theme. These elements threaten stability with an agitated and restless character. The primary theme is temporarily changed by the transgression and is presented in a different key, but eventually it returns to the home key and order is reinstated.

This narrative reading is somewhat ambiguous as we do not get a full return of the primary theme at the end. I consider the primary theme victorious though at a cost. The order-imposing hierarchy is affected by the transgression but it does not lose its identity. It remains highly recognizable and is supported by the Coda and tonic key at the end.

Narrative analyses are significant because they help explain why music elicits certain reactions and help trace conflict and resolution through evidence found in the structure of the music. In addition, they demonstrate that a text is not needed for a narrative because of the semantic characteristics found in music. Because the meaning of what constitutes "order" and "transgression" is purposefully broad, this type of analysis can lead to different interpretations of the same piece.

**SLIDE: EFFECT ON PERFORMANCE: P THEME AND TRANS** Narrative analysis provides an invaluable tool for dealing with the difficult issue of explaining

meaning in music and translating this into a meaningful performance. By identifying the marked moments in the music, I was able to recognize the conflicting elements of the order-imposing hierarchy and the transgression. This helped me assign specific characters to each theme, and influences the way I play them.

For example, in the primary theme I was initially shortening the phrases and focusing on short-term goals. Now I want to bring out long phrases and play legato to emphasize the smooth character of this theme. I also want to highlight the different motives that will return in the development and coda, so that the audience can identify and remember them.

In the transition, the changes of character quickly become apparent as the elements of transgression begin to appear. Highlighting the chromaticism is important, as well as emphasizing the repeated attempts of the cello line to rise.

**SLIDE: EFFECT ON PERFORMANCE: S THEME AND DEV** The secondary theme's repetitive nature seemed stagnant, along with the static harmonies, but the narrative helped me find a character for this theme as well. I realized that I need to give this passage an urgent feel and bring out the elements of transgression. This will provide contrast, and keep the audience from losing interest. One way to do this is to keep the direction of the line constantly moving forward. Emphasizing the short crescendo and decrescendo markings also adds to the restless character.

Bringing out the elements of transgression becomes more significant in the development, as it presents the strongest transgression in the movement. The tempo can move forward slightly to provide a highly agitated character. Emphasizing the fragments of the previous themes is also important.

**SLIDE: PERFORMANCE OF CODA** Because of my interpretation of this movement as a romance archetype, the performance of the Coda is very important in establishing the victory of the order-imposing hierarchy over its transgression. The Coda should grow out of the return of the primary theme with matching character. It should also place emphasis on returning motives from the primary theme to highlight the order-imposing elements and their success.

This narrative analysis helped me find different characters in the music, appropriate to the elements of order and transgression. It also helped me recognize the return of motives and how they were transformed throughout the movement. This approach addresses the challenge of reading beyond the notes, and guides performers to tell a story through performance.

**SLIDE: BLANK** I will now perform the complete sonata. I hope you hear the contrasting elements we discussed in the first movement. You can apply a similar approach as you listen to the second and third movements. Thank you for coming.