



Considerations on Developing Variation in Brazilian Romantic Music: The First Movement of Leopoldo Miguéz's *Violin Sonata Op. 14*

MODALIDADE: COMUNICAÇÃO

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Abstract: This study, which integrates a masters dissertation aimed at examining the constructive procedures employed by Leopoldo Miguéz, focuses on the thematic structure of the first movement of his *Violin Sonata op.14*. Its eight themes are examined using derivative analysis (MAYR & ALMADA, 2014). Some genealogical charts summarize the results and point to a notable economic and organic process in the construction of the themes which suggest the use of developing variation techniques for extracting material from a basic group of musical elements.

Keywords: Constructive procedures. Developing variation. Derivative analysis. Leopoldo Miguéz. *Violin Sonata Op.14*.

Considerações sobre Variação Progressiva na Música Romântica Brasileira: O Primeiro Movimento da *Sonata para Violino Op.14* de Leopoldo Miguéz

Resumo: Este artigo, que integra uma dissertação de mestrado dedicada ao exame dos processos construtivos de Leopoldo Miguéz, focaliza a estrutura temática do primeiro movimento de sua *Sonata para Violino op.14*. Seus oito temas são examinados com o emprego da análise derivativa (MAYR & ALMADA, 2014). Alguns esquemas genealógicos resumem os resultados e apontam para um notável processo econômico e orgânico na construção dos temas, o que sugere o uso de técnicas de variação progressiva para a extração de material de um grupo básico de elementos musicais.

Palavras-chave: Processos construtivos. Variação progressiva. Análise derivativa. Leopoldo Miguéz. *Sonata para violino op.14*.

1. Introduction

This study presents the main results of a recently completed masters dissertation (MAYR, 2015), which examines the constructive procedures employed by the Brazilian romantic composer Leopoldo Miguéz (1850-1902) in the first movement of his *Violin Sonata op.14*, analyzing its formal, harmonic and thematic structures. Considering specifically the thematic element, Miguéz employs an economically and organic process in the construction of the eight themes that integrate the movement, suggesting the use of developing variation techniques for extracting thematic material from a basic group of musical elements (*Grundgestalt*, in Schoenberg's terminology). By applying an original analytical method (ALMADA, 2013; MAYR & ALMADA, 2014), the derivative correlations between the themes and those between them and the *Grundgestalt* were properly identified.

2. Theoretical fundamentals

The theoretical basis of the present study, the principles of *Grundgestalt* and developing variation, is derived from the organic conception that predominated part of German music during the 19th century (MEYER, 1989: 189-191). Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) elaborated both principles from analysis of the works of his declared masters, in particular those of Beethoven and Brahms, and from his own compositional practice. A *Grundgestalt* denotes a basic group of musical elements which, in an ideal case, forms the entire basis for the construction of a musical piece, as “in an apple tree's blossoms, even in the bud, the whole future apple is present in all its details” (SCHOENBERG, 1984: 165). Developing variation is ultimately the way by which this basic material is used for the construction of the whole, through a gradual, and organic growth. In other words, this process corresponds to the application of variation over variation, producing lineages of forms derived from the *Grundgestalt* elements. The analytical method employed in this research seeks the “parentage” between the themes of the Miguéz’s piece, demonstrating that the composer would have indeed employed organic constructive procedures.

3. The first movement of the *Violin Sonata Op.14*

Written in 1884, the Op.14 is believed to be the first violin sonata composed in Brazil (FRÉSCA, 2012: 6), even though it is not possible to recognize any traces that would be associated with Brazilian musical aesthetics in it. Its initial movement (henceforward labeled as Op.14/I), the subject of this analysis, is structured as a sonata form, depicting the basic conventional sections and subsections of the classical-romantic model. The formal analysis identified eight themes (of which seven are distinct, and one is a variation of the first theme, labeled A’) in the exposition, associated with the respective formal functions as shown in Figure 1.¹

Thematic nucleuses	m.	Subsection
A	1-10	Main Thematic Group
A'	34-37	
T	64-69	Transition
B1	87-95	Secondary Thematic Group
B2	107-110	
B3	118-122	
C1	145-153	Concluding
C2	153-161	

Figure 1: The eight thematic nuclei of Op.14/I's exposition section.

As it will be presented in section 5 of this article, these themes have strong interconnectivity. The origins of the material employed for their construction can be traced back to a small group of basic motives that form the *Grundgestalt* of the movement, presented in Figure 2.²



Figure 2: *Grundgestalt* of Op.14/I.

The next section of this article concisely describes the analytical method employed in examining Op.14/I's thematic structure.

4. Brief description of the methodology

Once the *Grundgestalt* is identified, it can be subdivided into elements named *Grundgestalten*-components (Gc's).³ From the Gc's are abstracted their intervallic and rhythmic contents, labeled *Grundgestalten*-abstractions (Ga's), which serve as basis for variation. The results of this process form a first generation of *geno-variants* (Gv's), or

derived forms in the abstract level. In turn, these Gv's can become referential forms for the production of further generations, and this process (named *first order developing variation*) can be indefinitely repeated. In the concrete level (represented ultimately by the score), the Gv's and/or Ga's can be recombined to form *pheno-variants* (Pv's), which are “normal” musical unities (like, roughly speaking, motives). These basic Pv's can also be considered as references for the production of new variants, in this case in the concrete level. This phase is associated with the *second order developing variation*.

Figure 3 summarizes the group of concepts described above, with their respective graphic representations adopted in the method.⁴

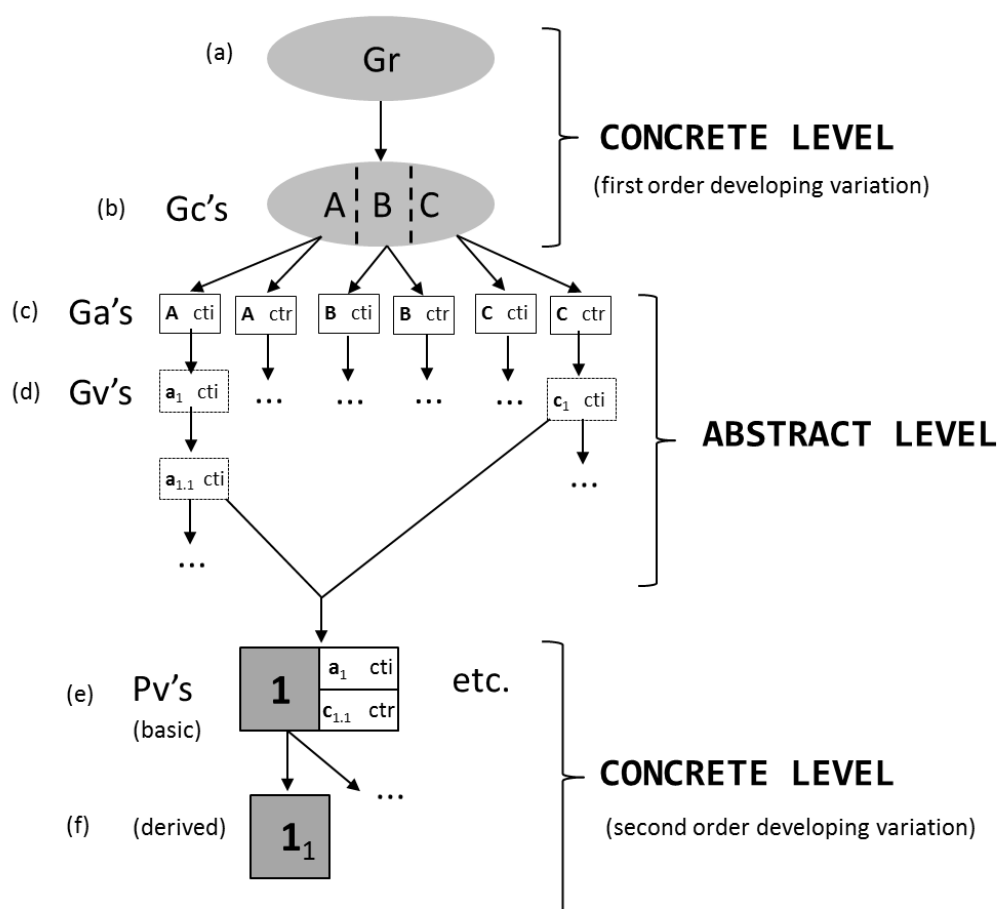


Figure 3: Principal elements of the derivative analysis methodology: *Grundgestalt* (a); *Grundgestalten*-components (b); *Grundgestalten*-abstractions (c); geno-variants (d); basic pheno-variants (e); derived pheno-variants (f).

The next section shows the main results of the application of this methodology to the analysis of Op.14/I's thematic structure.

5. The derivative thematic structure of Op.14/I

The data obtained in the analysis is presented in genealogical charts that clearly show the relationships between the themes and their constituent parts, considering both derivative processes, in the abstract and concrete levels, while also revealing the organic relationships that emanate from the *Grundgestalt*. With the purpose of summarizing the most relevant information about these processes, four charts, related to the concrete level and accompanied by corresponding comments, are presented as follows.⁵

The first scheme (Figure 4) displays the 17 basic pheno-variants (numbered in chronological order of appearance) identified in the analysis, also considering the respective abstract forms from which they originate.

Figure 4: Basic Pv's in Op.14/I.

As one can observe in Fig.4, the last Pv's (numbers 16 and 17), unlike the other cases, do not result from the recombination of two abstract variants (Ga's and/or Gv's), as their constitutions are dependent on just one musical aspect: rhythmic (16) or intervallic (17).

Second order developing variation is illustrated in Figure 5, with the production of derived Pv's from the basic ones presented in Figure 4.

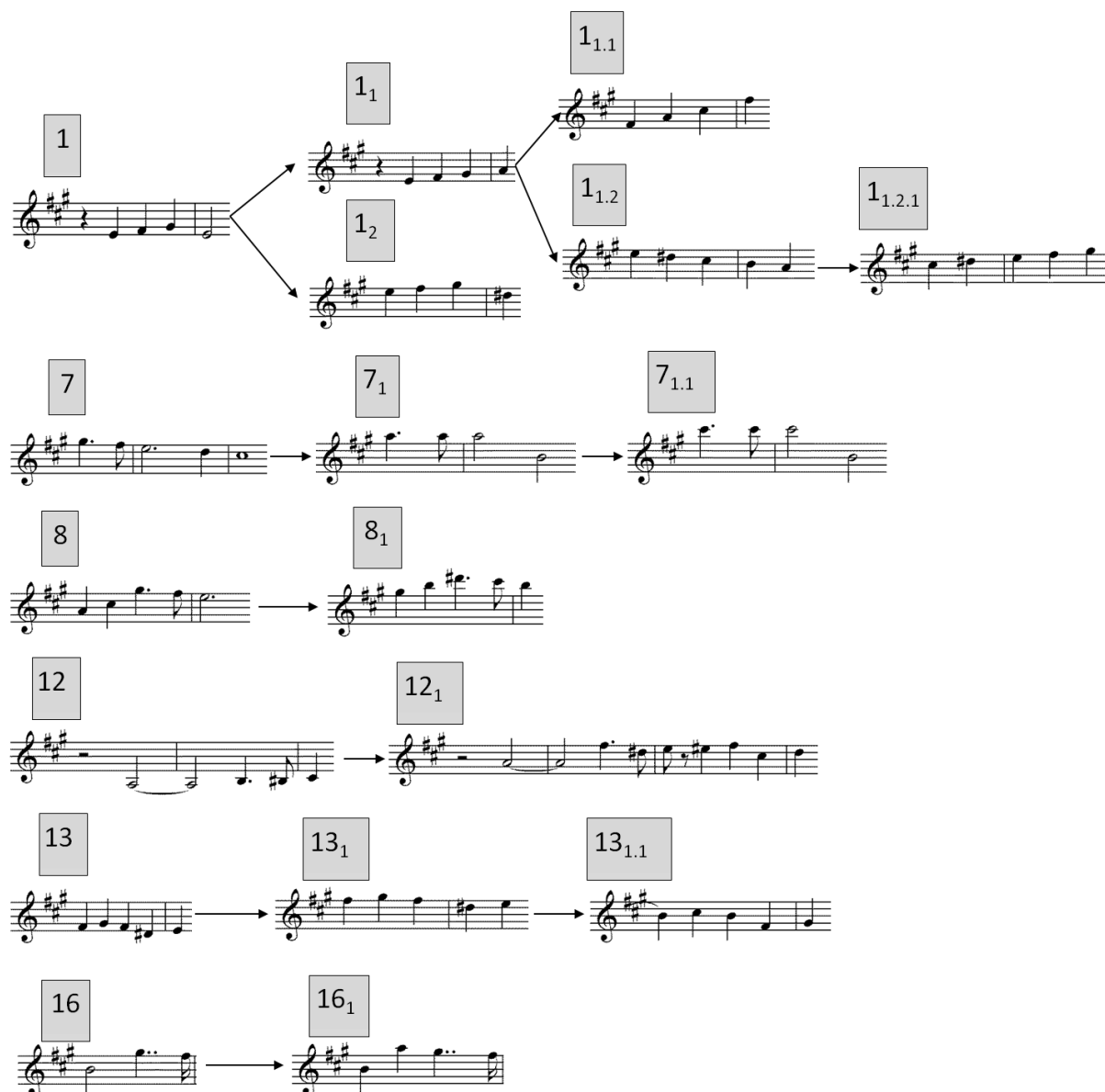


Figure 5: Second order developing variation in Op.14/I.

One may notice that some forms are more prominent than others, evidenced by the corresponding number of “descendants”. It is the case of Pv's 7, 13 and, especially, 1. Indeed, the latter can be considered the main building block of thematic structure of the movement which can be confirmed in Figure 6's genealogical tree.

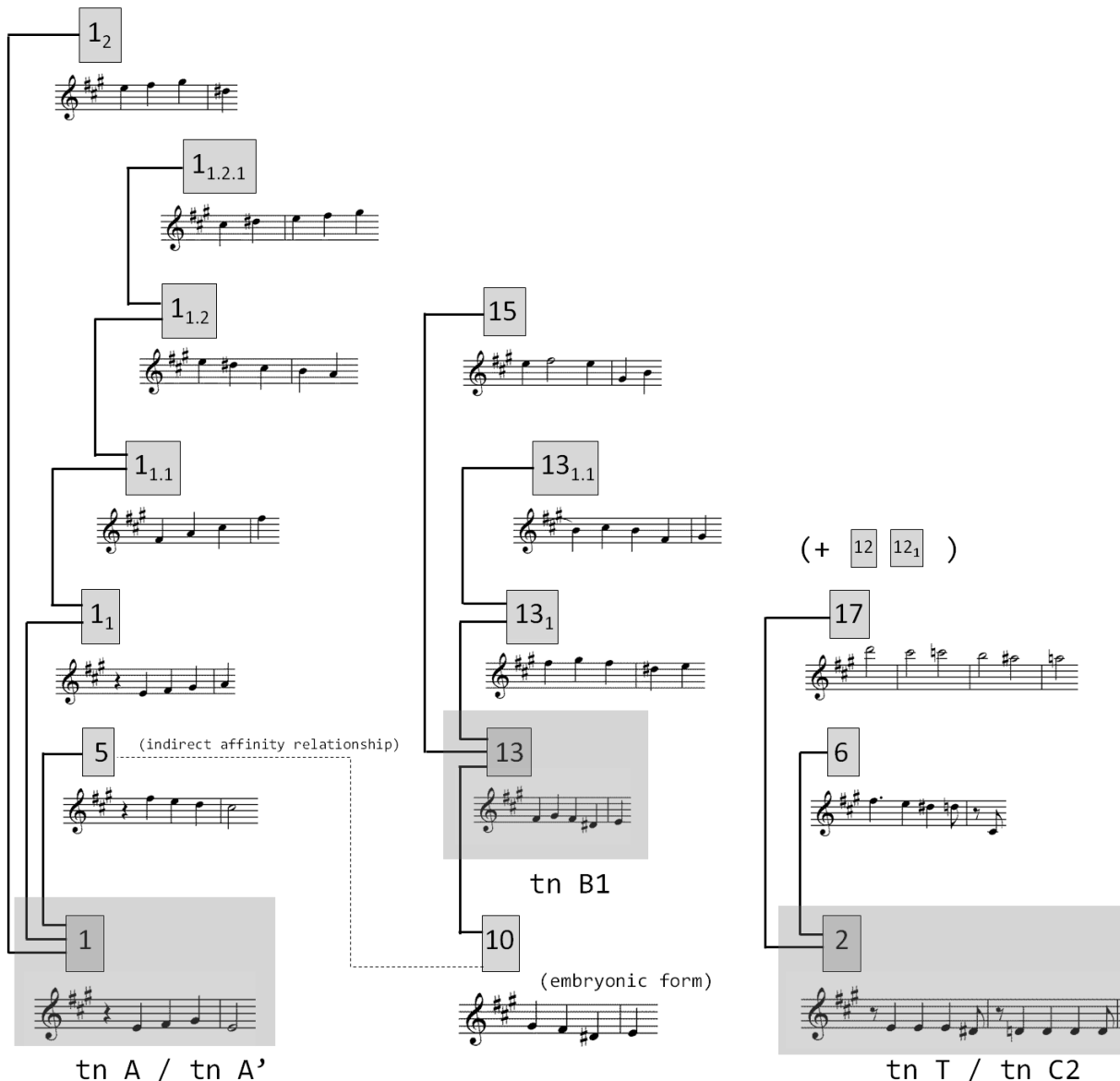


Figure 6: Genealogical tree of Pv's, considering lineages 1, 13 and 2.

This scheme presents the correlations of affinity between basic and derived Pv's, according to the three principal lineages. Comparing with the results obtained in the formal analysis (MAYR, 2015: 20-49) one can conclude that the far-reaching elements in the derivative process (highlighted in Figure 6) are precisely the main motives employed in the construction of the main themes of the sonata-form structure:

- Pv 1: associated to tn's A and A';
- Pv 13: associated to tn B1;
- Pv 2: associated to tn's T and C2.

It is interesting to note that, albeit relatively contrasting ideas, Pv's 1 and 13 are related by a “parenthood” link, which is evidenced by the dashed line that connects variants 5 (derived from 1) and 10, the latter as a kind of “embryonic” stage before 13.

Figure 7 presents the list of the eight thematic nuclei identifying the respective Pv's which form them. Apart from B1 (a not casual fact, considering it's contrasting character within the sonata structure), the remaining tn's have elements that originate from Pv 1's lineage, be it directly (A, A', B2, B3 and C1), or in the accompaniment (T and C2), evidencing the propagation power in the thematic structure.

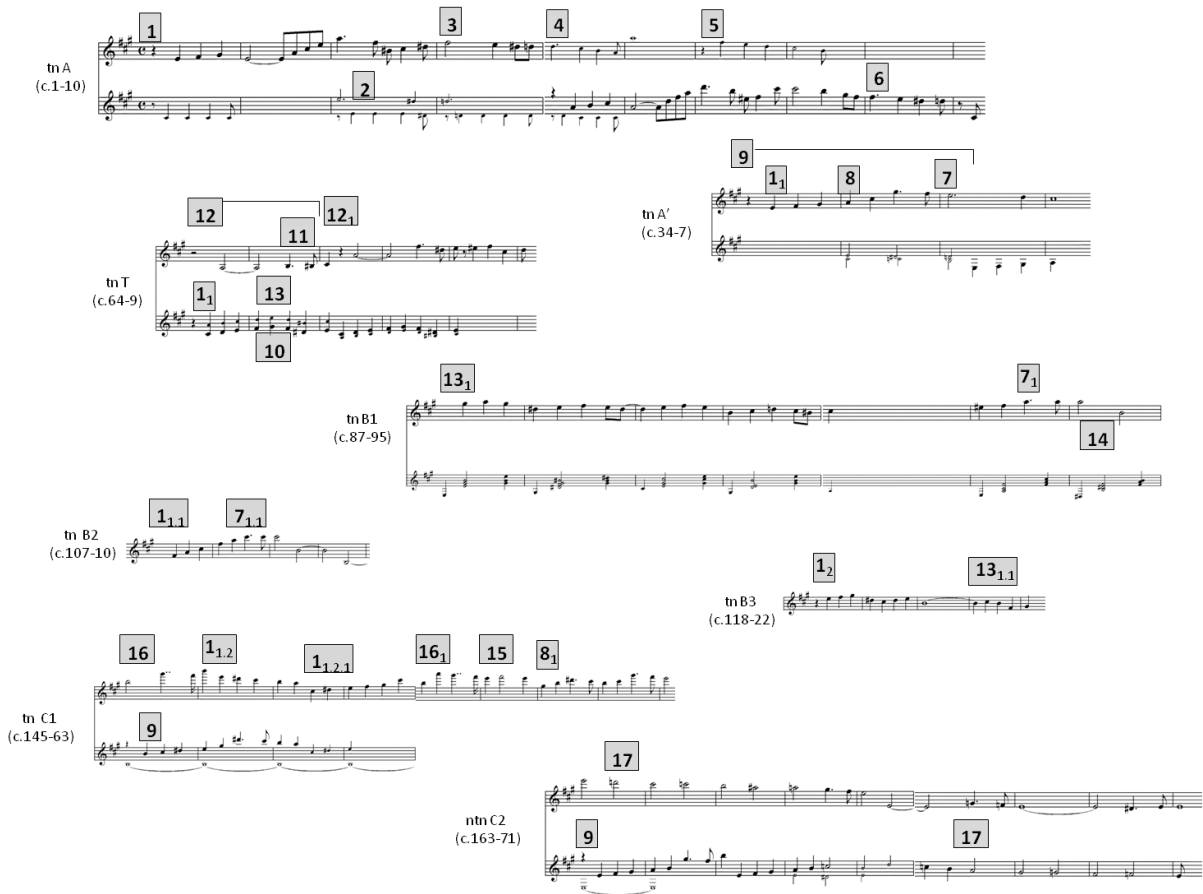


Figure 7: Theme's catalogue, Op.14/I.

5. Conclusion

The application of the derivative analysis method for the thematic examination of the first movement of Miguéz's sonata reveals a notably economic and coherent organization, evidenced by the presence of traces of the principal theme (A) in almost all other thematic ideas, as shown in Figure 7, which confirms the main assumptions of the research. The results of the analysis (summarized in this study by the genealogical charts) also suggest the

influence of Brahms, not just Liszt and Wagner, who have been traditionally identified as Miguéz's primary influences. Considering that he employed economic and organic procedures for the thematic construction of this work, one can perceive a possible association with the formalist-organicist tradition, especially represented by Brahms. Further analysis of other works by Miguéz (chamber and/or symphonic) may come to confirm this lineage of constructive procedure.

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Notes

¹ More precisely, only the initial segments of the themes (containing the essential, most relevant material) are considered for the derivative analysis. These segments are named *thematic nucleuses* (tn).

² As can be observed in Fig.2, the *Grundgestalt* of the piece is formed by six non-contiguous fragments (labeled from A to F), which represent meaningful basic elements with further implications on the structure of the eight themes (as well, on non-thematic material). As it will be mentioned in section 4, these elements are named *Grundgestalten*-components.

³ The identification of a *Grundgestalt* of a musical piece is a somewhat subjective task, consisting on what can be classified as a pre-analytical phase. It not only requires from the analyst a considerable familiarity with the piece, but also a sort of retrospective exam of some of the more important motivic ideas backwards to their presumed origins. The determination of a *Grundgestalt* can thus be considered as the search for a "smallest common multiple" (SCHOENBERG, 1969: 8) between such original elements, that correspond in sum to the *Grundgestalten*-components.

⁴ For more details about the structure of this analytical methodology and its application, see MAYR & ALMADA (2014: 20-22) and MAYR (2015: 53-58).

⁵ For simplicity and due to lack of space the events in the abstract level and, consequently, the processes associated to first order developing variation were omitted.