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**ORGANICISM, MOTIVIC PARALLELISM, AND PERFORMANCE IN
BEETHOVEN'S PIANO SONATA OP. 2 NO. 3**

By

Hamish James Alexander Robb.

**A thesis
submitted to the New Zealand School of Music
in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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in Musicology.**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis summarises the important ideologies and concepts of musical organicism in the late eighteenth century and applies them to motivic analysis and performance.

Much has been written about the organic nature of Beethoven's later works, but less has been written about the organic coherence found in his earlier compositions. This study involves a motivic analysis of his Op. 2 No. 3 sonata (1795), for which little or no significant research has been carried out. This musical work is used as an illustration of ways in which musical organicism, motivic analysis, and performance can interrelate.

The thesis is in three parts. Part one presents a review of late eighteenth-century ideologies of unity and their musical applications. In the search for an effective means of comparing motivic development with organicism, it is then argued that Schenker's 'motivic parallelism' or 'concealed repetition' is considerably undervalued in his analytical framework. Drawing on the insights of Richard Cohn, I endorse a more autonomous treatment of the motivic parallelism in analysis, so that it is an independent unifying tool in its own right and not only a by-product of tonal analysis. Several approaches are applied to the motivic parallelism in order to illustrate how the parallelism can be used in ways normally only associated with the surface motif.

Part two of the thesis consists of a detailed motivic analysis of Beethoven's Op. 2 No. 3 sonata. It is argued that the motivic parallelisms contained in this sonata reflect late eighteenth-century ideals of organicism. I propose that there are several motivic cells found in the opening four bars of the sonata, which recur (or are 'paralleled') within all structural levels and over all four movements, unifying the sonata organically as one whole. In this way, I show that the Op. 2 No. 3 sonata can be seen to foreshadow the organic treatment of motifs by later composers, who were influenced by Goethe's complex prototype (1802) as an organic model.¹ I also offer an 'organic narrative' for the sonata, using motivic parallelisms as the guiding forces in the discourse.

¹ The sonata can also be seen to foreshadow the highly seminal treatment of motifs that was to become more widely used in Beethoven's later works (such as the Eroica Symphony).

The third and final part relates the motivic parallelisms and other analytical findings to performance. Techniques of ‘performing’ motivic parallelisms are discussed and applied to the Op. 2 No. 3 sonata. The organic perspective is proposed as one avenue through which to understand and enhance a performance of a work.

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