Master of Form

Module 8 of *Music: Under the Hood*

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Osher Course
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Outline

- Biography of W. A. Mozart
- Analysis of *Piano Sonata No.12* (K. 332), Adagio

Biography

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756-1791
  - Fits Western concept of child prodigy
    - His father Leopold (a violinist) decided he had unusual talent.
    - Leopold was a slave driver, making his son (age 5) perform and improvise on the piano across Europe.

Mozart as a child

Biography

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  - Fits Western concept of child prodigy
    - His father Leopold (a violinist) decided he had unusual talent.
    - Leopold was a slave driver, making his son (age 5) perform and improvise on the piano across Europe.
    - Yet Mozart became very adept at composing in the “classical” style of the day.
    - He was exploited, but this made him the composer he was.

Mozart as a child

Biography

- Musical contributions
  - A perfector, not an innovator (except in opera)
    - “Classical” style was largely developed by Joseph Haydn.
    - Total mastery of the craft.

Joseph Haydn

Biography

- Musical contributions
  - A perfector, not an innovator (except in opera)
    - "Classical" style was largely developed by Joseph Haydn.
    - Total mastery of the craft.
  - Known for freshness and originality
    - Much of his work was "background music" for parties.
    - But sonatas, concertos, operas are full of delightful ideas.
    - Learned from Haydn the importance of a catchy tune.

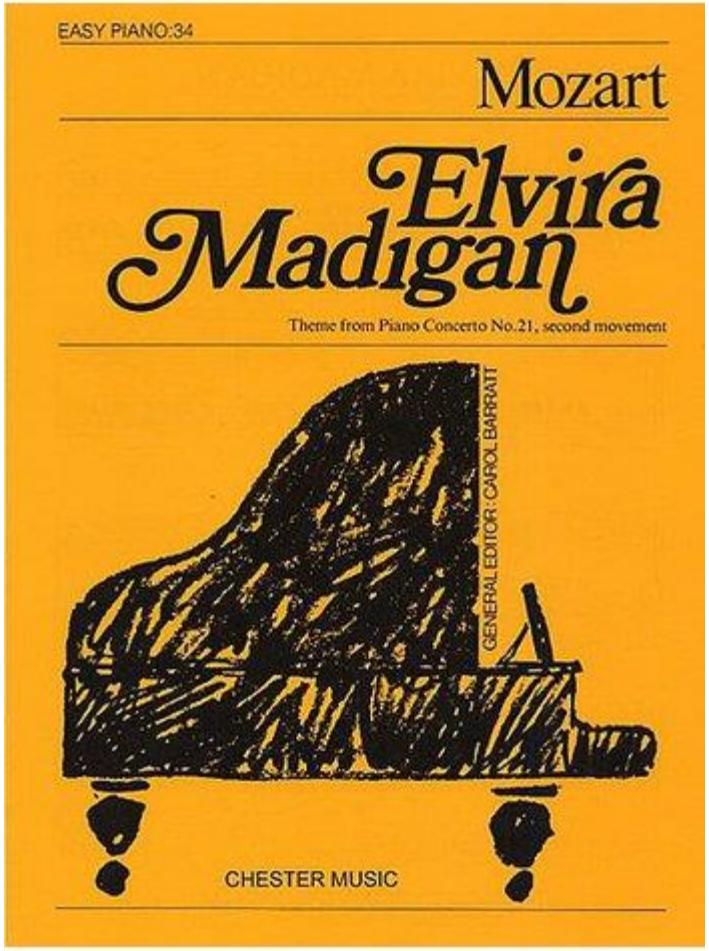
Joseph Haydn

Biography

- Musical contributions
  - Proficient in practically all genres of the day
    - Piano sonatas, chamber music, concertos, operas, symphonies, even a few religious works.
  - Best work at end of his short life
    - 3 symphonies composed in his last summer are music for the ages.
    - Died of unknown illness at age 35.

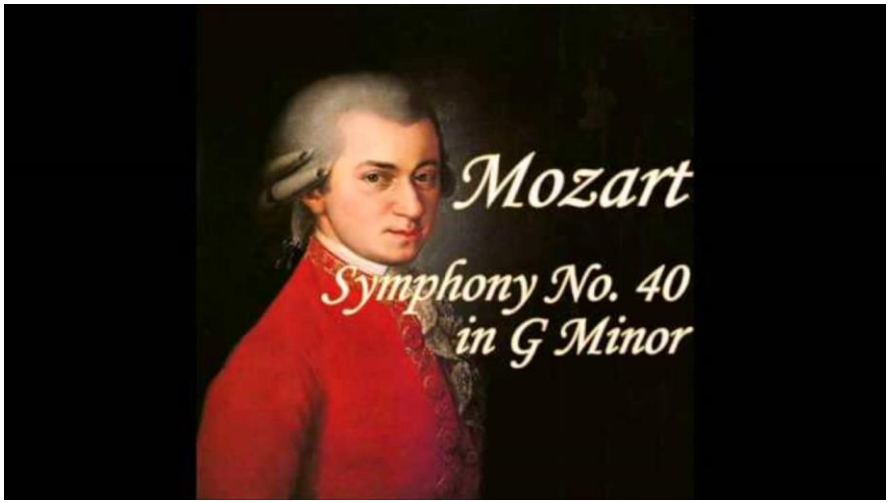
Biography

- Popularity today
  - Mozart became a phenomenon after a mediocre Swedish film used his music (1967).
    - Slow movement of *Piano Concerto No. 21*, K. 467.
    - Contains remarkable dissonance, seldom noticed (e.g., 3:21-3:45).



Biography

- Popularity today
  - Penultimate symphony (No. 40) is popular.
    - Deservedly so, perhaps his best work.
    - Known for catchy tune in the first movement.
    - But its distinction lies in powerful and sophisticated development throughout the work (development starts at 4:40 in first movement).



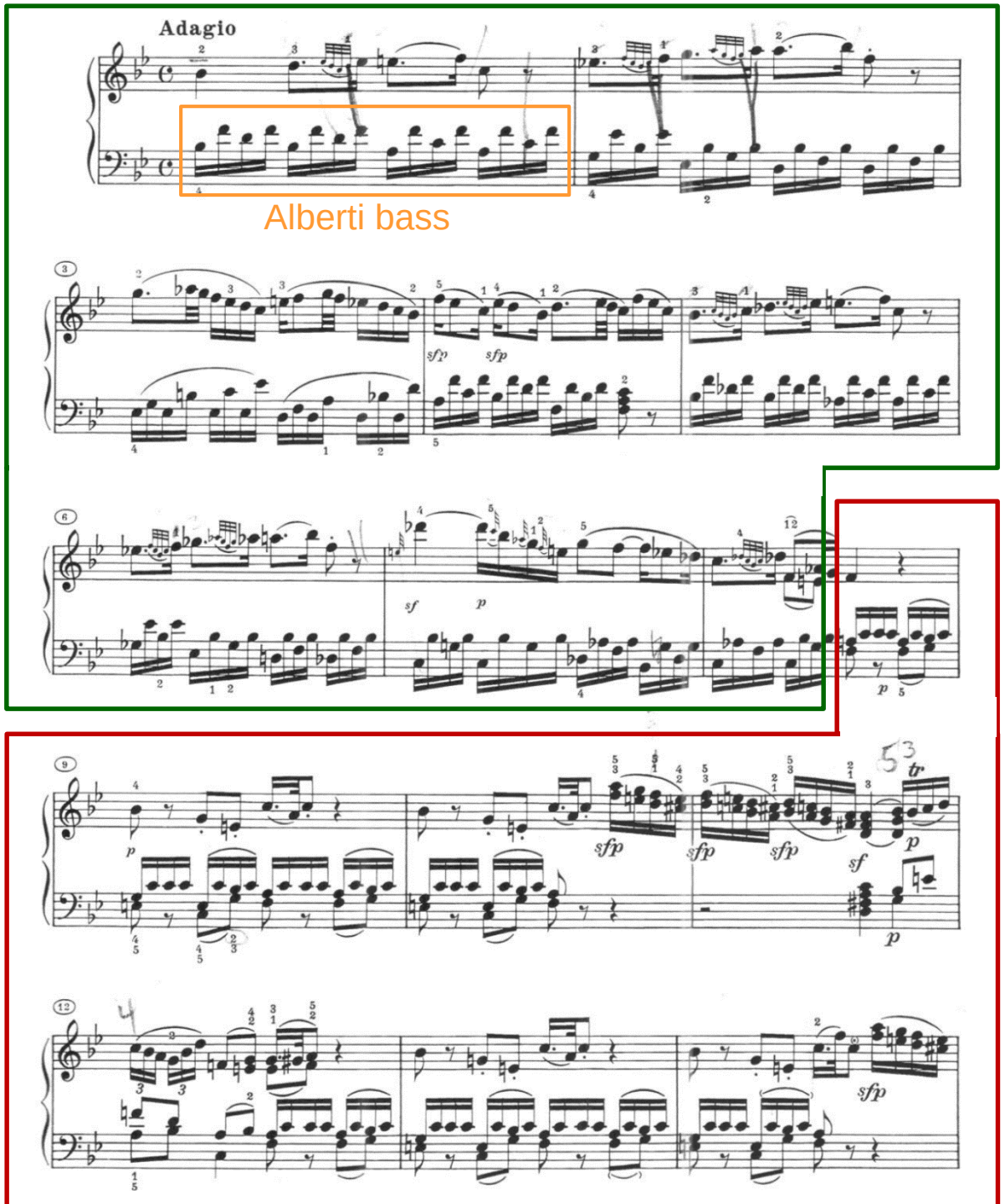
Piano Sonata No. 12, Adagio

- Illustrates mastery of form.
- Simple structure (or so it seems)
  - ABAB
  - First theme (A) in **tonic**
  - Second theme (B) in **dominant**
  - Repeat A,B
  - But how do we **end** the piece in the **tonic** key, if B is in the dominant?
  - Mozart has a trick!

Audio file (4:54)

First theme
in tonic key (**I**)

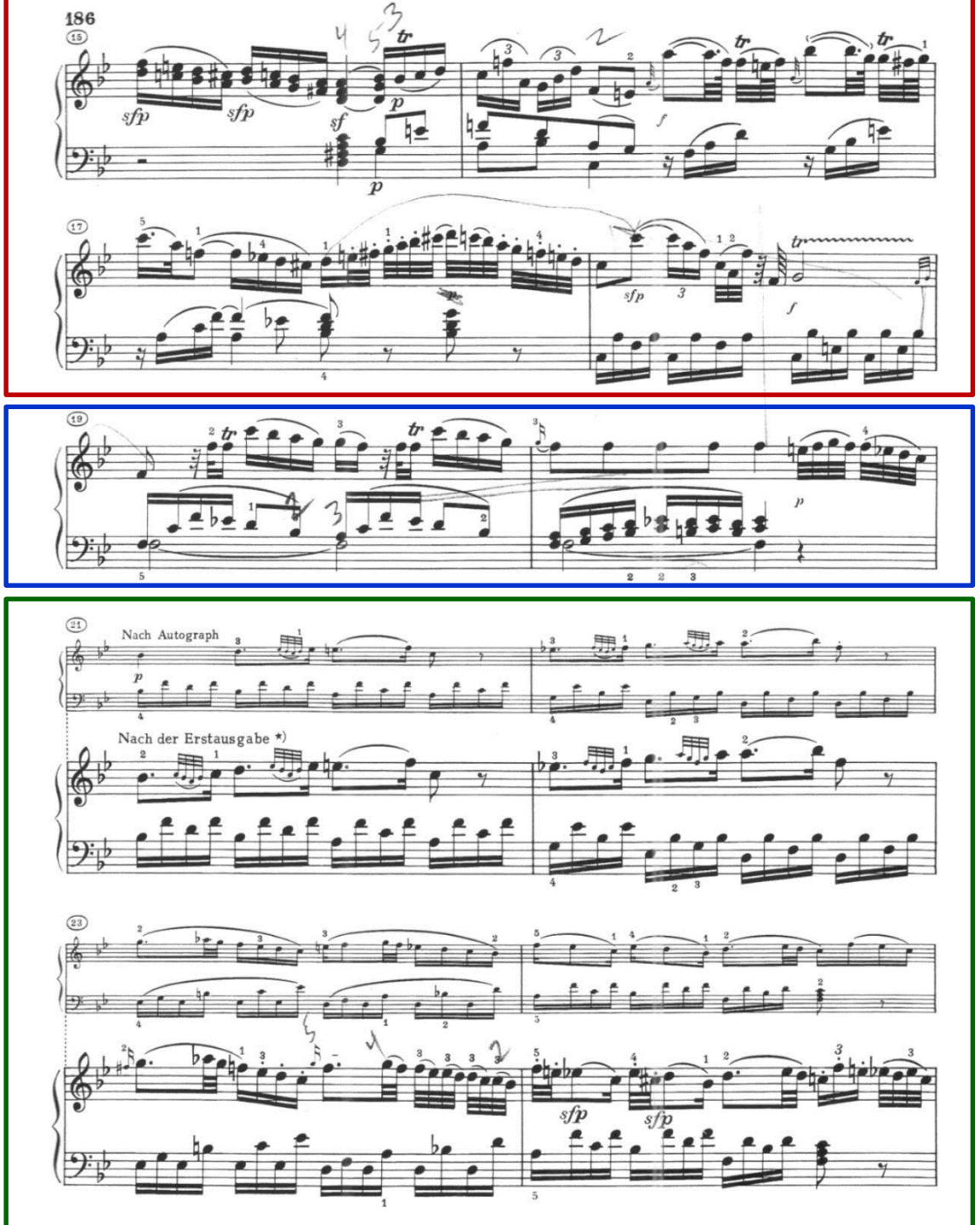
Second theme,
In dominant key (**V**)



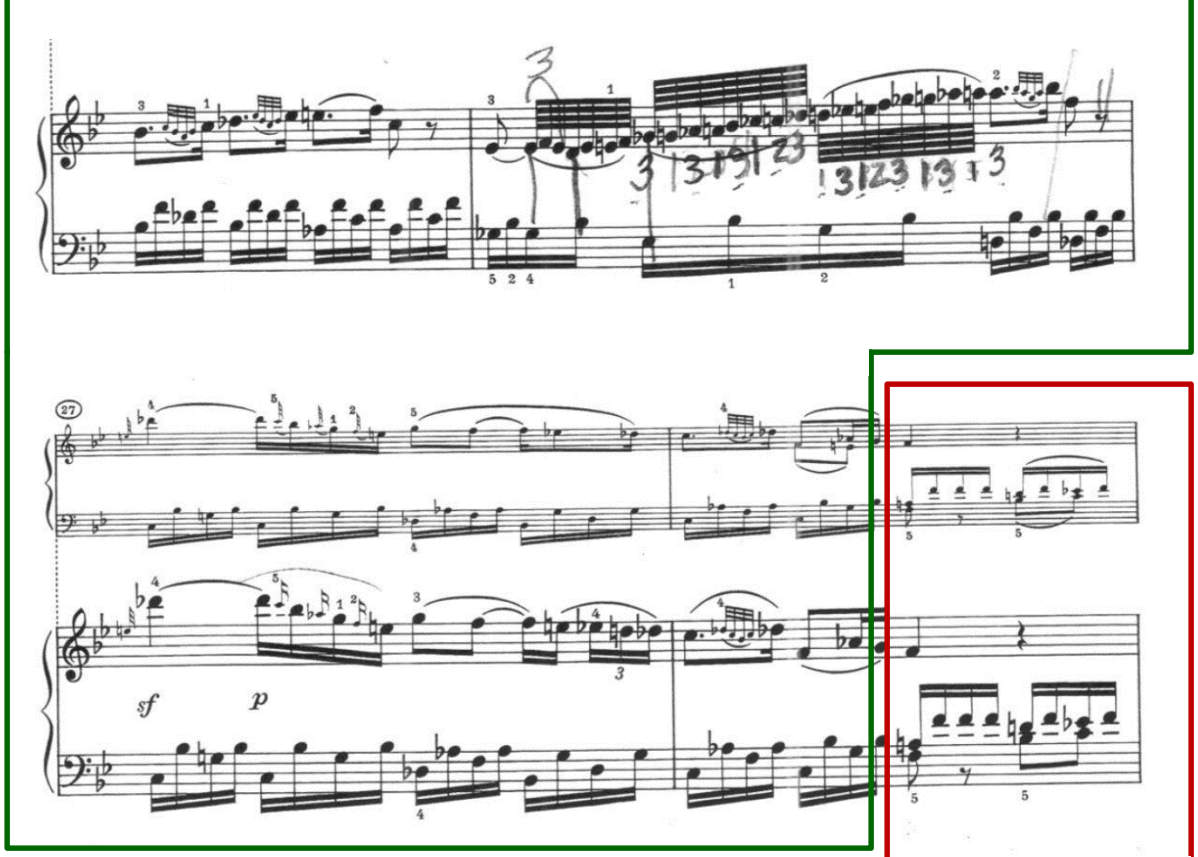
Second theme,
in dominant key (**V**)

Modulate to tonic (**I**)

First theme, repeat,
in tonic key (**I**)

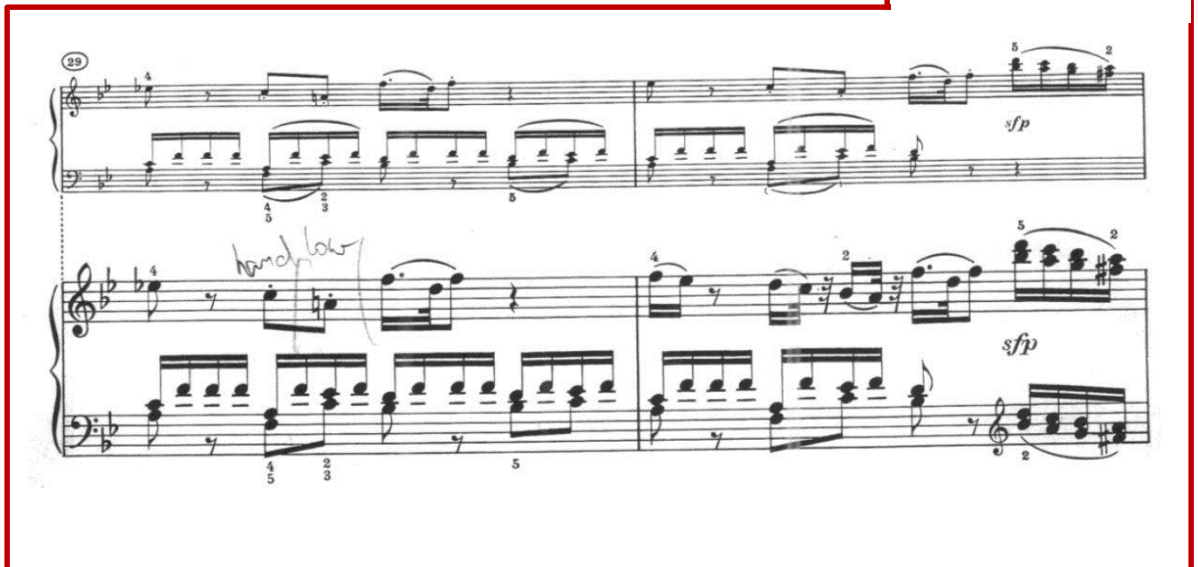


First theme, repeat, in tonic key (**I**)



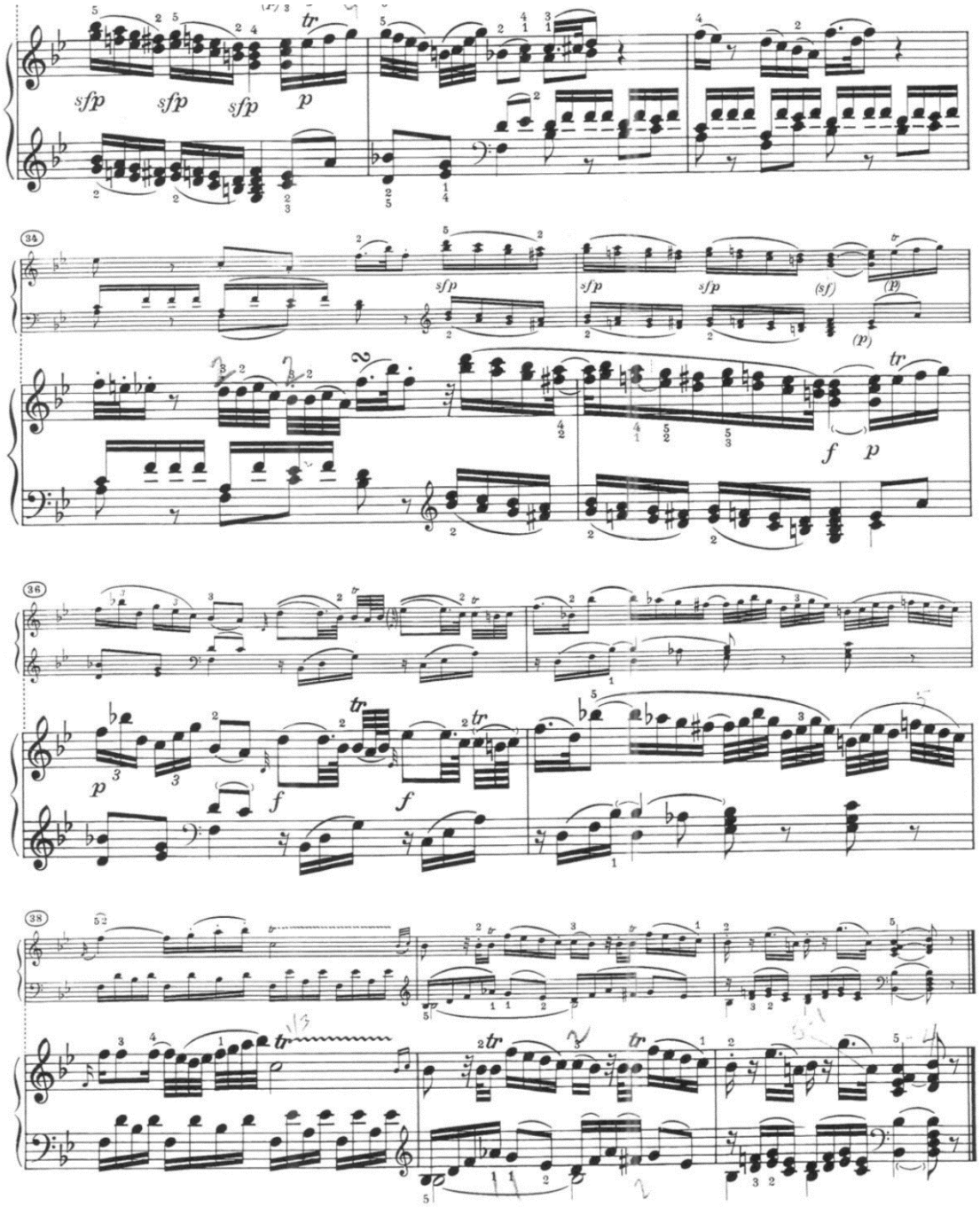
Second theme, repeat, in **tonic** key (**I**)

How did we get to the tonic? Magic!



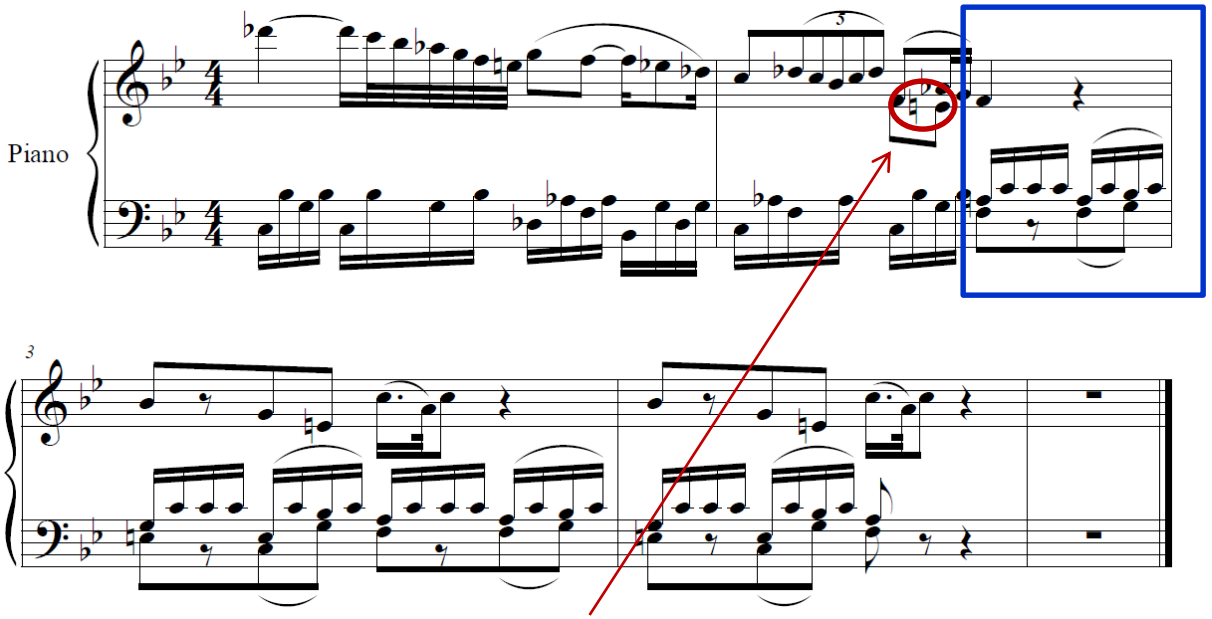
Second theme, repeat, in **tonic** key (**I**)

How do we put the second theme in the tonic, if we are **repeating** the first section?

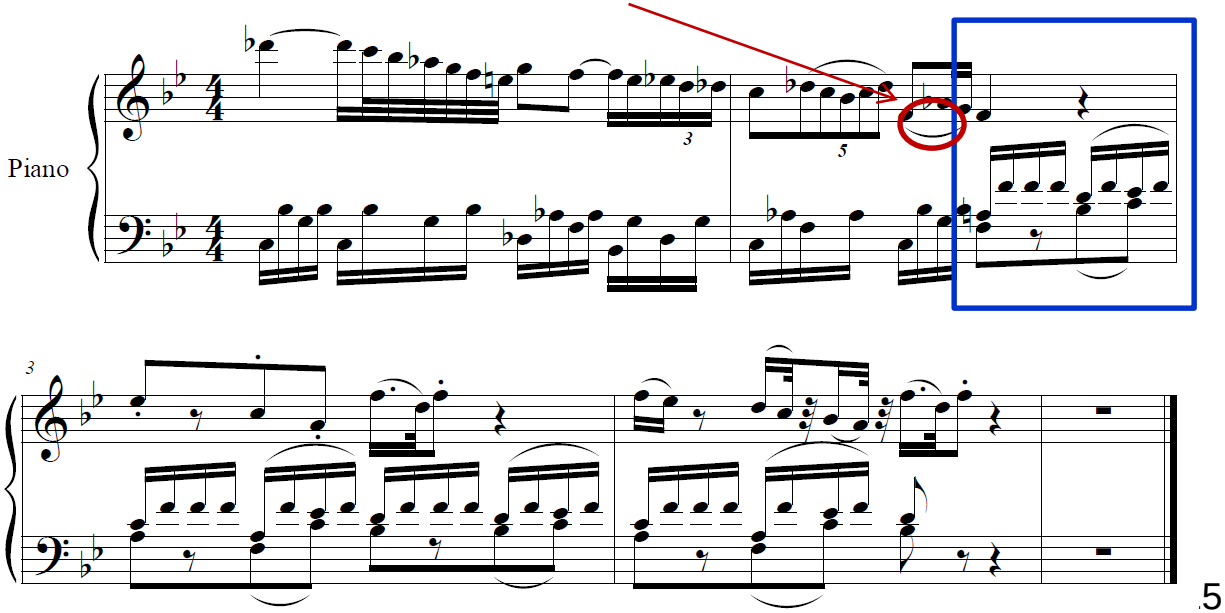


First time thru,
2nd theme
starts in **V.**
Later modulates
to tonic for
2nd time thru.

Audio file



Leading tone to F (**V**) is omitted in repeat!

Second time thru,
2nd theme
starts in **I.**
Barely perceptible
change!
Keeps music
in tonic until end.

Audio file