

Secondary Dominants and Seventh Chords: Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata

We are going to look at the opening measures of the first and second movements of Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13, the "Pathétique."

A. Second Movement

First up is the theme of the slow movement. It features a lot of inverted seventh chords, two "secondary V⁷'s" and a neat little suspension thing at the end of the phrase.

Adagio cantabile. ⑤

Ab: I V₂⁴ I⁶ V₅⁶ I V⁶ vi V₃⁴ V vii^{ø4}₃ V₂⁴
 HC

I⁶ V⁷ ii V⁷ (susp. I V⁷)

B. First Movement, Slow Introduction

This introduction is very dramatic. It features a ton of fully-diminished seventh chords, both the “primary” $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ that belongs in the key of C minor and “secondary” ones as well. Also, there is a lot of flipping back-and-forth between $\text{vii}^{\circ 7}$ and V^7 , which is interesting - you can see how closely related they are. This excerpt ends by modulating to E^{\flat} -major - to make things easier I’ve handled that for you. (Everything prior to that point can be analyzed without modulating.) We also see another instance of that suspension-like thing that’s in the other passage.

Grave.

sf *sf* *big sus*

$\text{C: } i \quad i^6 \quad \text{V}_4^6 \quad i \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 7} \quad \text{V} \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 4}_2 \quad \text{V} \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 4}_3 \quad i^6$

sf *sf* *cresc.* *p* *sf* *sf*

$\text{vii}^{\circ 4}_2 \quad \text{V}_4^6 \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 4}_3 \quad \text{V}_6^6 \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 4}_2 \quad \text{V}_4^6 \quad \text{vii}^{\circ 4}_3 \quad \text{V}_6^6 \quad \text{V}_2^4 \quad \text{iv} \quad \text{iv}^6$

$\text{E}^{\flat}: \text{ii}^6 \quad \text{V}^7$

p

I