A Moonlight Requisition: Mendelssohn Borrowing From Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata

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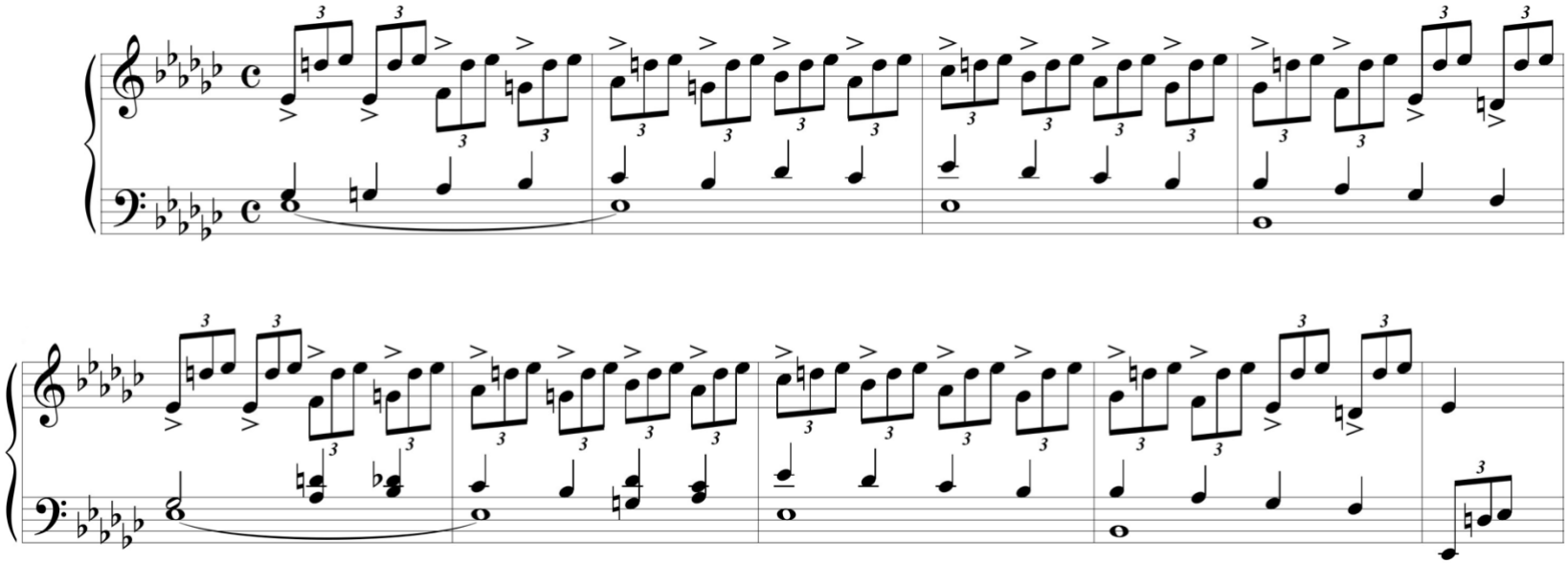
Table 1

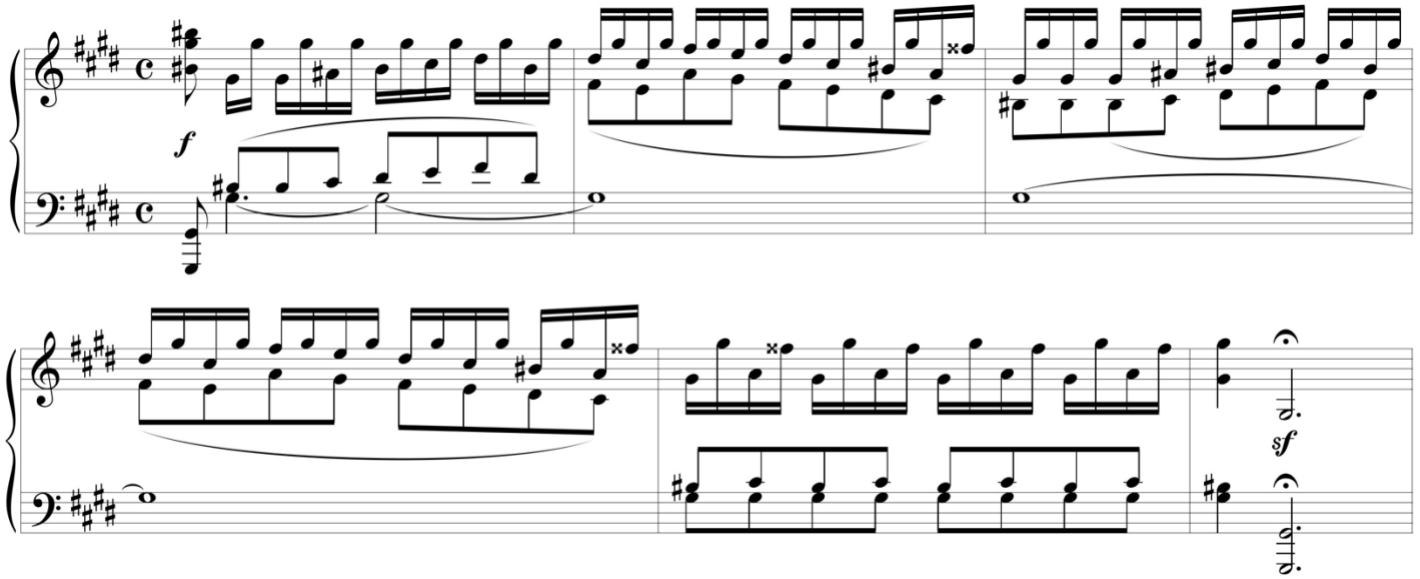
J. P. Burkholder's Criteria for Evaluating Claims of Musical Borrowing

Analytical Evidence	Biographical & Historical Evidence	Purpose
▪ Extent of similarity ▪ Exactness of match ▪ Number of shared elements ▪ Distinctiveness of shared elements	▪ Knowledge of the source ▪ Acknowledgement of the source ▪ Sketches and compositional process ▪ Typical practice in other pieces	▪ Structural or thematic functions ▪ Emulation ▪ Extramusical associations ▪ Humor

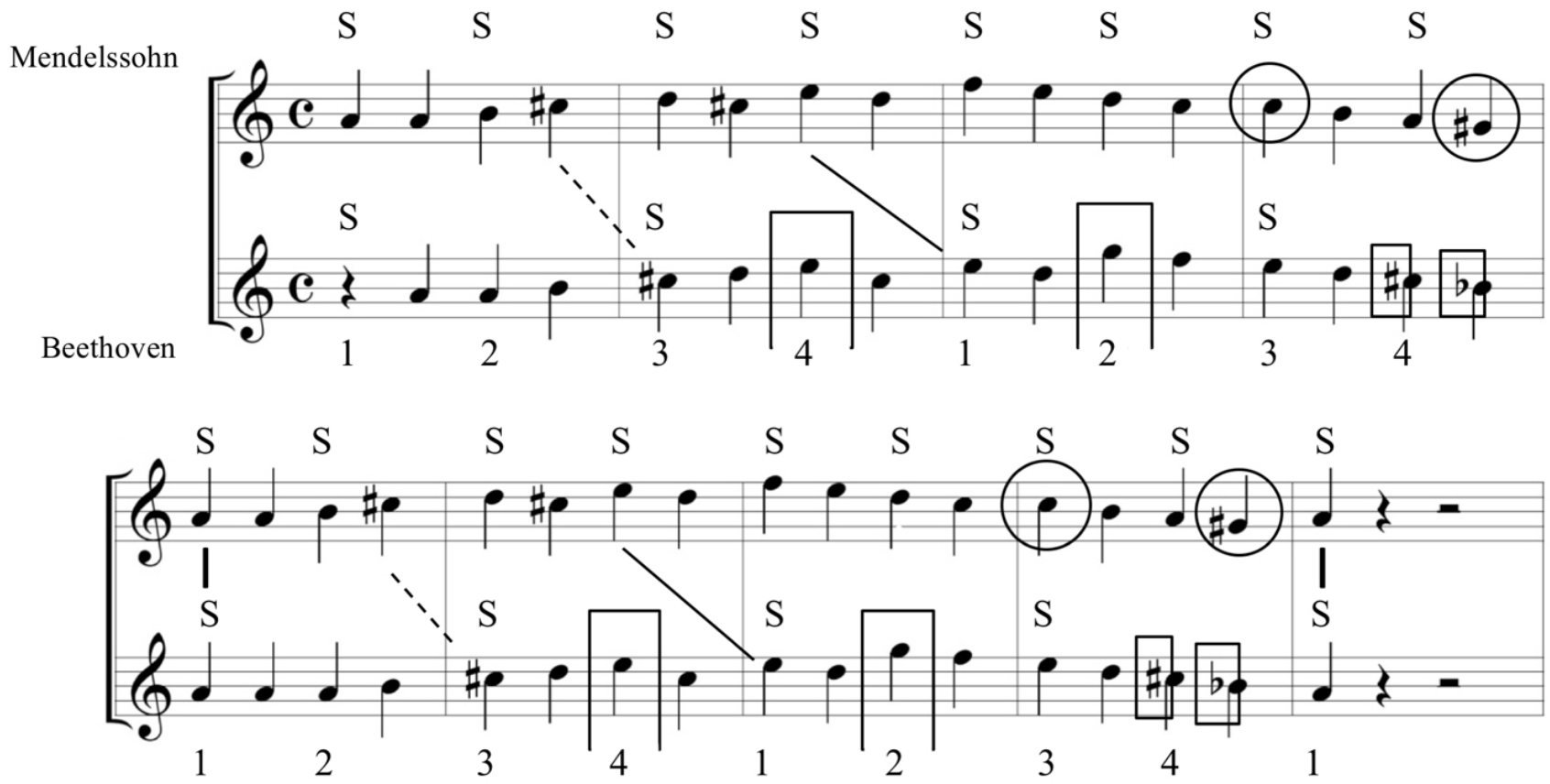
Example 1a: Mendelssohn: Capriccio in E-flat Minor (1823-4), MWV U 43, m. 220-8



Example 1b: Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 14 in C# Minor (1802), Op. 27, III. *Presto agitato*, m. 9-14



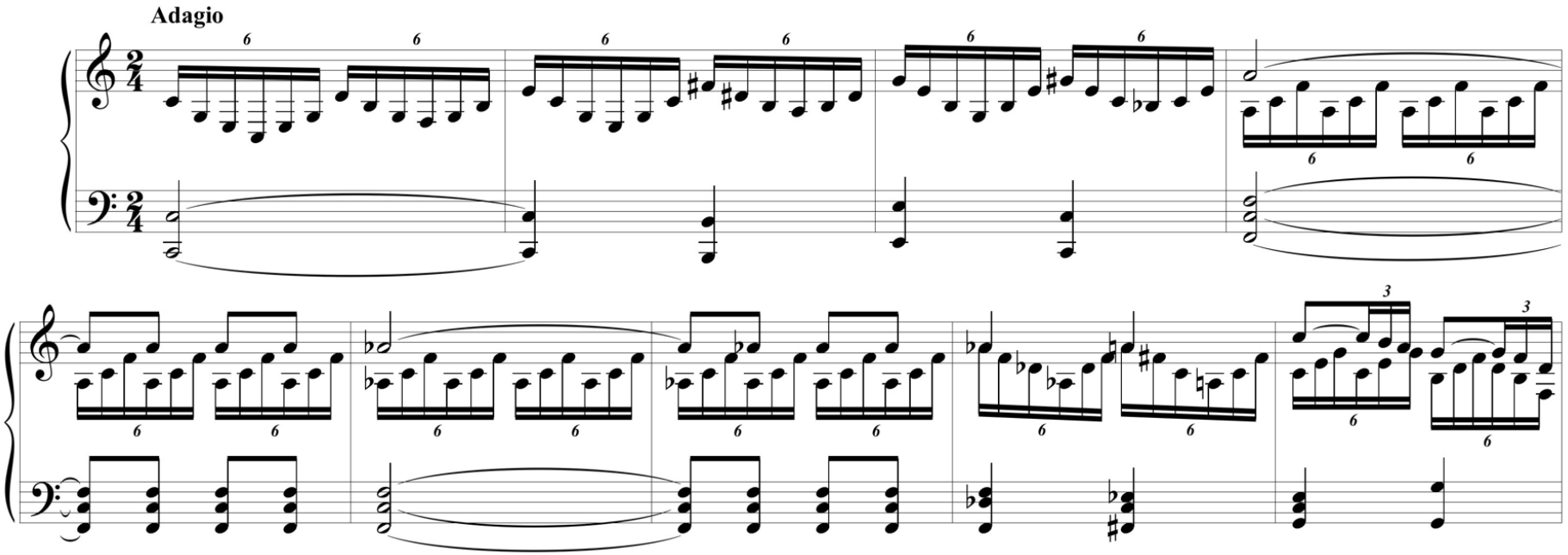
Example 1c: Melodic Comparison*



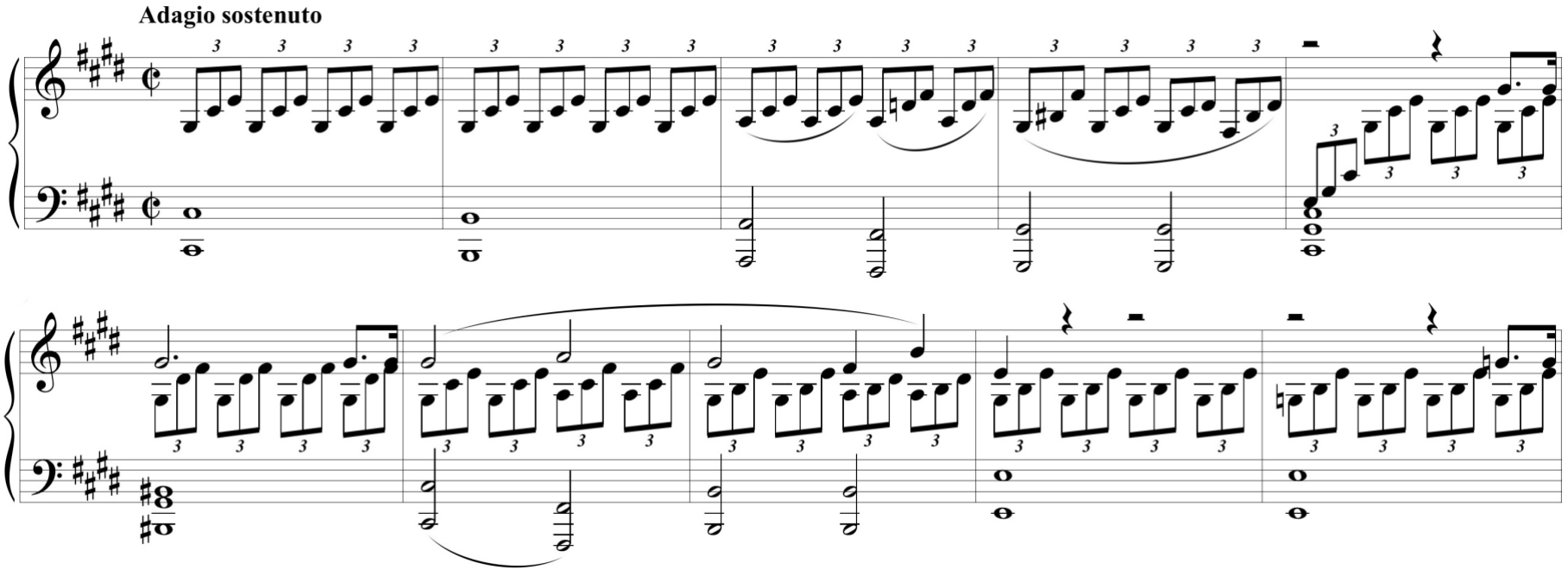
- Rectangular shapes indicate items that Mendelssohn removed from Beethoven's melody, while circles indicate notes that Mendelssohn adds to Beethoven's melody.
- "S"- Strong beat
- Dotted line – Where Mendelssohn displaces Beethoven's strong beat
- Solid line – Several instances where Mendelssohn affirms Beethoven's strong beat

*The melodies have been transposed to a common key and the rhythmic values of Beethoven's melody have been increased in order to fit along side Mendelssohn's melody.

Example 2a: Mendelssohn: Viola Sonata in C Minor (1824), MWV Q 14, III. *Andante con Variazioni*, m. 163-71



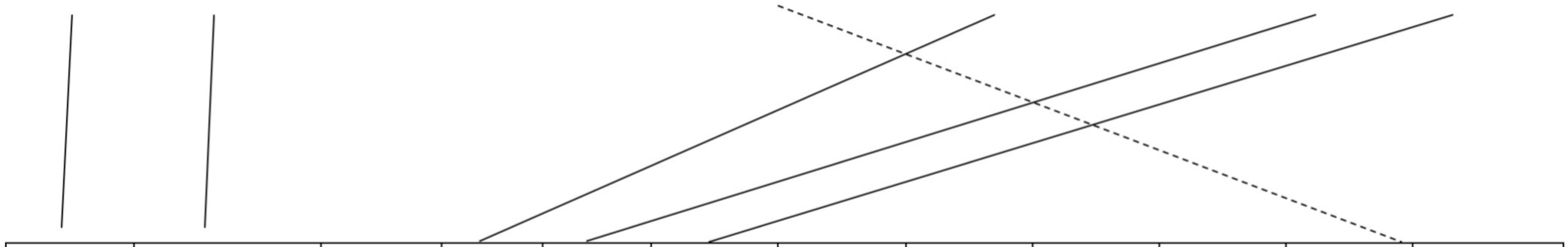
Example 2b: Beethoven: Piano Sonata No. 14 in C# Minor, Op. 27, I. *Adagio sostenuto*, m. 1-11



Example 2c: Harmonic Comparison

Mendelssohn

m. 163-4	m. 164	m. 165	m. 165	m. 166-7	m. 168-9	m. 170	m. 170	m. 171	m. 172
C: I	V^7/iii	iii	V^7/IV	IV	iv	$\flat II^6$	$vii^{\circ 7}$/V	V	I



c#: i	i (with B passing tone)	VI	$\flat II^6$	V^7	i	V^6_5	i	E: ii	V	I	i (C: iii)
m. 1	m. 2	m. 3	m. 3	m. 4	m. 5	m. 6	m. 7	m. 7	m. 8	m. 9	m. 10

Beethoven

Appendix:
Additional Parallels to "Moonlight"

Mendelssohn Piece/Section	Comments	Section of "Moonlight"
Viola Sonata, third movement - m. 180-5 and 196-201	The viola melody within these two sections contains some parallel intervals and scale degrees to the melody found in m. 7-9 of "Moonlight."	First Movement – m. 7-9
Viola Sonata, third movement – m. 209	In m. 209, the minor ninth created by top voice and the bass of the $V^{\flat 9}$ chord may allude to sections within the first movement of "Moonlight" where several pronounced minor ninths appear within a similar texture.	First Movement - m. 16, 18, 52, and 54
Viola Sonata, third movement – m. 209-214	The motif, ♭ $\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$-#$\hat{4}$-$\hat{5}$, found in the Viola Sonata's melodic line can be also detected near the end of the third movement of "Moonlight" where it follows soon after another $V^{\flat 9}$ and consists of a solitary melody in the bass.	Third Movement – m. 187-9
Viola Sonata, third movement – m. 221-70	The third movement's coda contains multiple similarities to the third movement of "Moonlight" including its opening arpeggiated gesture, the compression of its melodic and harmonic material, and its driving rhythm.	Third Movement
Viola Sonata, third movement – m. 266-70	Both the Viola Sonata and "Moonlight" conclude with a final gesture consisting of an ascending then descending arpeggiation of the tonic, followed by detached chords.	Third Movement – m. 196-200
Fantasie, Op. 28	Many, such as Todd (2003) and Leung (1990), have noted the correlations between the form and style of the Fantasie's movements and the form and style found in "Moonlight's" movements.	Entire sonata

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