

L. Poundie Burstein*¹

*City University of New York, United States of America

¹poundie@aol.com

Striking Approaches to Galant Recapitulations

ABSTRACT

From the late-eighteenth century on, recapitulations commonly were preceded by a V chord that powerfully prepares for the ensuing double return at the start of the recapitulation. However, during the mid-1700s composers took advantage of a far wider net of harmonic possibilities for approaching the recapitulation. In music of this era, one can find recapitulations immediately preceded not only by either V, V/vi, vi, or iii, but also by I, i, ii, V/ii (!), V/iii, IV, V/IV (!), v, V/V (!), or vii. In some of these cases, a non-dominant harmony that appears at a cadence is followed directly by the recapitulation; other times the harmony in question is the final chord of the retransition. These non-dominant approaches to the recapitulation often have a deep on the large-scale tonal and narrative structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

What harmony could appear at the end of a development section? The answer seems painfully obvious: in almost every case, it is V that serves as the final harmony of a development. This makes much sense, since of all the possible harmonies, V most convincingly leads into the tonic that appears at the start of what is perhaps the tonal and dramatic climax of the movement, namely, the point of recapitulation. Furthermore, it is V that can most convincingly demarcate the dominant prolongation that serves within the large I–V–I structure that anchors the entire movement.

Naturally, in works of the high Classical period, there are some exceptional cases where the development ends on V/vi. Such situations, however, are usually regarded as variants of the more typical ones where the development section ends on V. Movements with developments that end on V/vi frequently are interpreted to involve a modified version of the normative I–V–I background structure, with V/vi inserted within an embracing V–I motion.¹ But have we been too quick to accept the norm of a I–V–I background structure, along with the norm of a dominant-harmony approach to the recapitulation?

2. NON-DOMINANT PREPARATIONS

Especially during the Galant era, many types of chords other than V may directly precede the onset of the recapitulation.² These non-dominant approaches to the recapitulation in turn often help give rise to a narrative and tonal framework that deemphasizes the point of recapitulation as a highpoint of the movement.

For instance, in Galant movements it is particularly common for a recapitulation to be directly preceded by a cadence on iii

or vi. Sometimes this cadence is followed first by a caesura and then by the start of the recapitulation; such is the case in Giovanni Marco Rutini's Sonata for Keyboard in E Op. 2 No. 5, II (1754), where a cadence in iii at the end of the second *Periode* is followed by an eighth rest before the recapitulation enters. Sometimes a quick melodic filler links to the start of the recapitulation, as in Anna Bon's Sonata for Keyboard in B-flat Op. 1 No. 2, I (1756), where a cadence in vi at the end of the second *Periode* is followed by a quick, one-bar scale in the bass that leads to the recapitulation. Other times, however, the first chord of the recapitulation immediately follows the cadence on iii or vi, with no rest or filler in between, as in Georg Christoph Wagenseil's Sonata for Keyboard and Violin in E-flat Op. 1 No. 1, III (1753), where the recapitulation enters directly on the heels of a cadence on vi, without any intervening silence. In each of these instances, the development section simply ends on a non-tonic harmony, and then the recapitulation enters, with no strong tonal dominant-to-tonic motion leading from one section to the other.

The possibility of preceding a reprise with a non-dominant harmony was amply recognized by theorists of the eighteenth century, such as Joseph Riepel (1755), Friedrich Wilhelm Marburg (1756), Heinrich Christoph Koch (1793), and Francesco Galeazzi (1796). Each of these theorists either discussed or provided an example in which what today would be called a recapitulation is immediately preceded by a cadence on iii or vi. They did note or demonstrate that a short retransition could lead from such a cadence to the return to the main theme in the home key.³ However, such a retransition clearly was not regarded as mandatory.

Furthermore, these theorists did not insist that a retransition must end with V of the home key. Indeed, Riepel (1755, 98) provides an example in which a cadence in the key of vi is followed by a retransition consisting of a *fonte* that concludes on a tonic chord. That a tonic harmony should immediately precede a recapitulation may seem strange from the standpoint of modern sonata-form concepts, which assume that the large return to tonic should normally coincide with the point of recapitulation. To anticipate this resolution by having a tonic chord appear at the end of a development section — before the start of the recapitulation — would seem to ruin the punch line, as it were. For Galant compositions, however, the point of recapitulation was not such a momentous juncture as it would become in music of later decades. Although in his 1793 treatise volume Koch (1793, 404; see also 37–38) does recommend having a phrase that ends on V immediately before the reprise, it remains that having a tonic chord at the end of the development was by no means out of character or particularly rare during the Galant style.

¹ See, for instance, Cadwallader and Gagné (2007, 337–40).

² Some studies that have explored the tonal and structural implications of non-dominant endings of development sections include Petty (1999), regarding developments that end on vi; Webster (2004, 138–45) regarding unusual development endings in symphonies by Joseph Haydn; and Neuwirth (2009) regarding 'disguised' recapitulations.

³ See, for instance, Riepel (1755, 92); Koch (1793, 309); see also Budday (1983, 164).

For instance, in the second movement of his Symphony No. 23 (1764), Joseph Haydn uses the exact same device described above that Riepel demonstrates as a means of approaching a reprise. That is, the development section of this movement by Haydn ends with a cadence on vi, followed by retransition based on a *fonte* that leads to a I triad, so that a tonic harmony immediately precedes the onset of the recapitulation. This is hardly an isolated incident, for one can find a tonic harmony immediately preceding a recapitulation in a number of other works from this time, such as the first movement of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 8 (1761) or the third movement of Christian Cannabich's Symphony No. 47 (1772). Similarly, in François-André Danican Philidor's Overture to *Le Jardinier et son seigneur* (1761), a major-key recapitulation is immediately preceded by a minor tonic chord.

Recapitulations composed around the mid-eighteenth century can be — and often are — preceded by other harmonies as well. For instance, a development section can conclude on a V/iii, as in Joseph Haydn's Keyboard in E-flat, Hob. XVI:25 (1773).⁴ A more extreme case appears in the second movement of Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's Sonata for Keyboard, Wq. 57, III (1781), where a minor triad on v followed by a short rest immediately precedes the reprise of the main theme.

In his discussion of the C. P. E. Bach piece just mentioned, Heinrich Schenker (1908, 18–19) proposes that a major V chord is implied during the rest that follows the minor v triad. I would counterargue, however, that to imply a major V here is unnecessary, for to have a reprise immediately follow a minor v is neither illogical nor stylistically inappropriate. After all, even when composers do write retransitions that lead to the recapitulation, the retransition often ends on a harmony other than V, or even other than I. For instance, towards the end of the development section of the first movement of Gaetano Brunetti's Symphony No. 9 in D, L. 298, I (c. 1784), there is a big cadence landing on a minor vii chord. The retransition that follows wavers between major VII and minor vii chords before plunging into the recapitulation — without the help of V. Likewise, toward the end of the development in Ernst Wilhelm Wolf's Symphony in G, first movement, a cadence in the key of ii is followed by a retransition that leads not to V of the home key, but to IV, which is then followed directly by the recapitulation. Despite the complete absence of a V here, the start of the recapitulation is made clear as a result of the melody, orchestration, and texture. In the movements just mentioned, Brunetti and Wolf had plenty of time to put a V chord at the end of the retransition, had they chosen to do so. However, they evidently did not feel it necessary to have a retransition conclude on V — so why should we imply such a V where it is not present?

A number of development sections from the Galant era end on a supertonic triad, such as the finale to Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 56 in C (1774) or the first movement of Johann Adolph Hasse's Overture to *Alcide al Bivio* (1760). In each of these there is no dominant harmony in sight, either in actuality or by implication.

⁴ I discuss development sections that end on V/iii at length in Burstein (1998).

A more daring approach to the recapitulation may be found in the finale to Andrea Luchesi's Symphony in C (c. 1773), where the development ends with a half cadence in the key of the subdominant, so that a triad on V/IV comes right before the point of recapitulation. More striking still is the first movement of Luchesi's Symphony in G (c. 1773), where the development ends of a V/ii, followed directly by the onset of the recapitulation.⁵

Let's consider the first movement from Luchesi's Symphony in G a bit more closely. The exposition of this movement ends in the key of V, and the ensuing development section starts in the key of ii and ends with a half cadence in this key. This half cadence in ii is followed immediately by the recapitulation. There is certainly no large I–V–I layout underlying this movement, nor any dominant-to-tonic approach leading to the recapitulation. The large-scale tonal layout is perhaps best understood as involving a tonal interruption directly after the arrival on V/ii, as depicted in Example 1. This framework admittedly differs from paradigmatic Schenkerian backgrounds — but such paradigmatic backgrounds are based on norms of the high Classical era. A layout such as shown in Example 1, however, is quite in keeping with the style and aesthetic of the Galant era. Nor is this layout illogical: as is typical, tonal tension is sustained within this development, it's just that this sustained tonal tension does not involve a prolonged V. And why should it need to do so?

Ex. 1. Bass-line voice-leading sketch of first movement of Luchesi, Symphony in G.

The most unusual pre-recapitulation harmony that I have found is V/V. It would seem impossible for V/V to directly precede a recapitulation that starts on I — yet this is precisely what happens in a trio attributed to Niccolò Jommelli! In the D major Trio No. 6 for Two Flutes and Continuo published under Jommelli's name in 1753, the middle movement's exposition is surprisingly cut short in such a way that an arrival on V/V (at the end of *Quintabsatz in der Tonart der Quinte*) leads straight to a recapitulation starting on I. To be sure, there is a brief melodic link between the V/V and the tonic at the start of the recapitulation here, so that one may argue that a V chord is implied on the last eighth note before the recapitulation. However, such an implied V would be weakly asserted at best.

⁵ Incidentally, Luchesi — who was evidently fond of non-dominant approaches to the recapitulation — served as *Kapellmeister* in Bonn, and some have surmised that he may have taught the young Ludwig van Beethoven. Although Beethoven's early expositions typically employ a forcefully prolonged dominant harmony at the end of the development section, in his later works Beethoven experimented with other harmonies at the end of the development — as in his Op. 81a, where the developments of the first and last movements end on subdominant harmonies. Whether works such as Op. 81a reflect any influence of Luchesi is a matter for further study and speculation.

3. CONCLUSION

To return to my earlier question: what harmony could appear at the end of a development section? If you've been keeping score, the answer by now should be clear: almost any! In addition to V, among the harmonies that directly precede a major-key recapitulation in at least one Galant composition include I, i, ii, V/ii, iii, V/iii, IV, V/IV, v, V/V, vi, V/vii, and vii. Examples of each of these possibilities have been cited above. As we have seen, sometimes these harmonies appear at a cadence followed directly by the recapitulation; other times the harmony in question is the final chord of the retransition. Furthermore, sometimes the harmony is followed by a short melodic link leading to the first chord of the recapitulation, sometimes by a rest, and sometimes the last chord of the development is followed immediately by the first harmony of the recapitulation, with no break between.

These non-dominant approaches to the recapitulation deeply impact the tonal structure of these works. In many cases they suggest large-scale structures that resist interpretation according to prototypical Schenkerian backgrounds. Such alternate background structures, such as depicted in Example 1 above, nonetheless can be utterly logical, extremely perceptible, and consistent with the Galant aesthetic. In stereotypical works from the high Classical period, we might expect a huge struggle within the development that drives heroically to the onset of the recapitulation. But in works composed during the Galant era, it was common for the development to stir up some tension and then simply to come to an end, after which the recapitulation begins without much further fuss.⁶

Non-dominant approaches to the recapitulation also can affect the narrative design of the movements. As James Webster (1980, 497) famously noted, the point of recapitulation often serves as 'the central aesthetic event of a sonata-form movement'. This indeed is often true of works composed during the high Classical era. But in several Galant movements, especially those where the recapitulation is preceded by a non-dominant harmony, the tonal and dramatic climax instead appears in the middle of the recapitulation. This mid-recapitulation climax is often preceded by a so-called 'secondary development'. In Galant-era compositions, the 'secondary development' frequently is even more extensive and developmental-sounding than the section that is actually labelled as the development.⁷ Although such a strategy often is associated with daring works composed after 1800, it may be witnessed in full force in several Galant compositions as well, particularly those in which the recapitulation is directly preceded by a non-dominant harmony.

KEYWORDS

Recapitulation, Harmony, Form.

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⁶ In some cases where the development ends on a chord other than V, it might be that the tonic at the head of the recapitulation is best understood as an 'apparent tonic' couched within a larger motion to deep-level V that appears in the middle of the recapitulation, much as Schenker (1935, Fig. 119/8) suggests is the case in the first movement of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6. But in such instances, the tonic at the start of the recapitulation usually is clearly deemphasized. In each of the situations discussed in the present essay, conversely, the tonic at the start of the recapitulation is strongly established as a convincing formal and tonal return by means of melody, texture, rhythm, and gesture.

⁷ This was discussed at length in Greenberg (2016).