

Texture

Compared to the Baroque period, Classical music generally has a lighter, clearer texture, and is less complex. Baroque music is often polyphonic, while Classical is mainly homophonic. Baroque music can sound complicated, and quite weighty, while Classical music is lighter and more clearly structured, and it emphasises light elegance while still being energetic and lively. Beethoven's music is certainly energetic and lively, but perhaps does not have the light elegance as other composers of the period, such as Mozart. 6

The texture varies throughout this movement, particularly with the addition and subtraction of instruments. This creates contrast within the orchestra (e.g. strings vs woodwinds) and also between the thick texture of the orchestra and thin texture of the solo piano. 1

When the piano plays on its own, the thinner texture emphasises the beauty of the piano, especially when the lyrical second theme is played. The piano also has the use of two hands so while it may not have the power of the orchestra; it has other avenues to explore texture. For example, the piano uses rhythmic ostinato to thicken the texture (bars 294-300). While the piano mainly uses homophonic texture, there are passages of polyphony and monophonic textures e.g. bar 309 where every instrument plays the same notes in unison. This emphasises the triadic theme with real power and strength - strong, triadic melodies were an important Classical compositional device. 2
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While Beethoven uses the more traditional homophonic texture expected from his audience, he also manages to use monophonic and polyphonic textures to create contrast, musical structure and interest to his work. 3