# APPENDIX 3
## THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF NAPOLI '92

This may be used in conjuction with the score and the recording; the alpa-numeric thematic labels also correspond with the Neo-Tonal Schematic linear analysis. I also offer one or two reflections upon the compositional process and and lessons drawn from other composers.

### A Note on Form

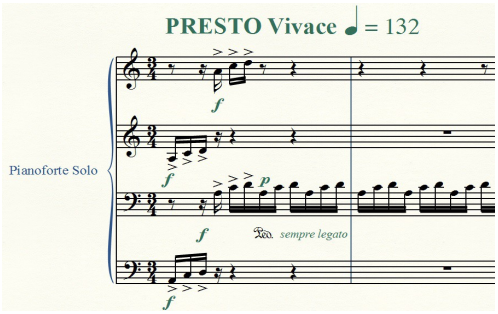
Napoli '92 is in ternary form **a-b-a.** In terms of tonality this is much more influenced by Chopinesque 'departure and return' forms than by Sonata Form. There is no attempt for example, to place secondary thematic groups in dominant or related keys; neither is there any particular atttempt to modulate in the calmer central section. The harmonic direction is geared to moving from **D** in the **a** section to **E*b*** in the **b** section, and back again. (see APPENDIX 2). On the other hand I was very conscious of the need for modulatory 'shenanigans' in the third section. This *is* characteristic of sonata form, where the secondary material has to be in the home key, yet without loss of harmonic tension. Whether I was successful, you must judge for yourself!

## Motivic Analysis

# Section **a**

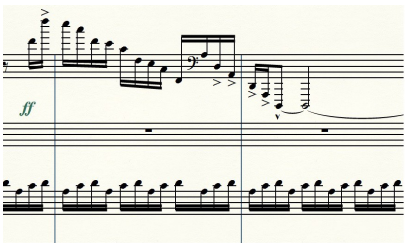
The piece opens directly into the first thematic area **1** with the first form of an arpeggiated motif which functions here as an introductory flourish ***i***1 *(forte)* establishing the neo-tonal triad A/D, *Primary Form* (see APPENDIX 1, A). The left hand then plays an 'alberti bass' continuation, *(piano)* as accompaniment:

**1*i*1**



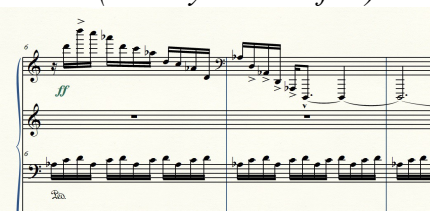

An inversion of this motif **1*ii*** follows immediately: a downward *fortissimo* arpeggio gesture, passing from the top of the keyboard to the bottom. This neatly overlaps the left hand figuration on the way, and, by dint of the bottom note, firmly establishes the neo-tonality as *Upper Root* (See APPENDIX 1, B) i.e. in **D**:

**1*ii***

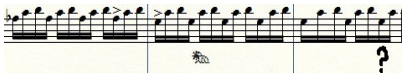


The accompaniment then begins a chromatic shift downward and **1*ii*** is repeated with the neo-tonal triad in the *Tertiary Form* (SEE APPENDIX 1).

**1*ii*** *(tertiary – minor feel)*



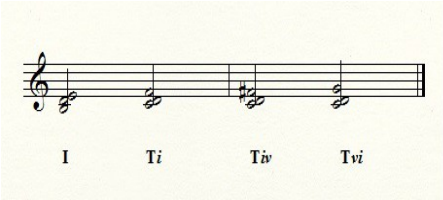

This downward chromatic movement was as far I got in 1992 – up to the question mark! What came next? It took 21 years to decide:



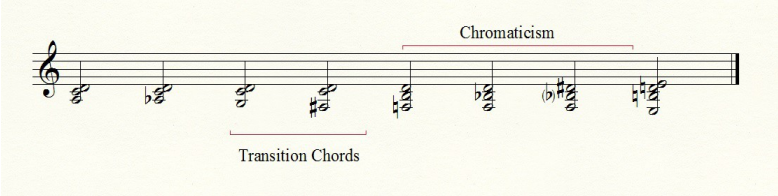

The G natural in the left hand produced a chord (G-C-D) which I could not in 1992 identify as part of the harmonic series, or even a chromatic alteration of it. Therefore I came to a full stop, and composition of the piece ceased. I wanted the harmonies to 'work' like traditional harmonies 'work': I wanted the principles to be based on relationship - establishment, progression and resolution; and I didn't know what place this chord had in relationship to its context. Doubtless this would not have worried some, but I did not want to invent anything foreign to the language.

I suppose it was simply maturity that brought me to realize that triadic music in general contains chords which are not strictly triadic. In standard tonality, G-C-D is a sus4, and resolves onto the tonic triad of G: that is to say it is a 'transition chord.' And for a decade I could not hear this chord in any other terms than traditional tonality. It's all in the ear!

In 2003 I first used transition chords in "Discourse", see APPENDIX 1, *fig* 11, i (p.5), as suspensions above the neo-tonal triad. As I became more fluent in neo-tonal harmony I found a variety of such transition chords, and I gradually worked out the relationship of this odd 'sus4' chord to the simpler transition chords. For example, if we assume E as our tonic (I), it is possible to work upwards chromatically, which offers the following transistion chords, all of which resolve downwards back to I:

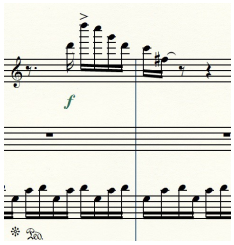



The last chord above (transition vi) requires one or other of the intervening chords for a natural stepwise motion, i.e. two transistion chords in a row. Once I permitted myself that, as well as some unnecessary but attractive stepwise chromatisicm, the problem of *Napoli '92*'s continuation was solved. This then, is the progression found in bars 9-19 of *Napoli '92* starting with the blessed sus4-type chord all reinvented! It moves towards **E** as chord I of the new section:



The melody is a series of small downward gestures:

**1***iii*

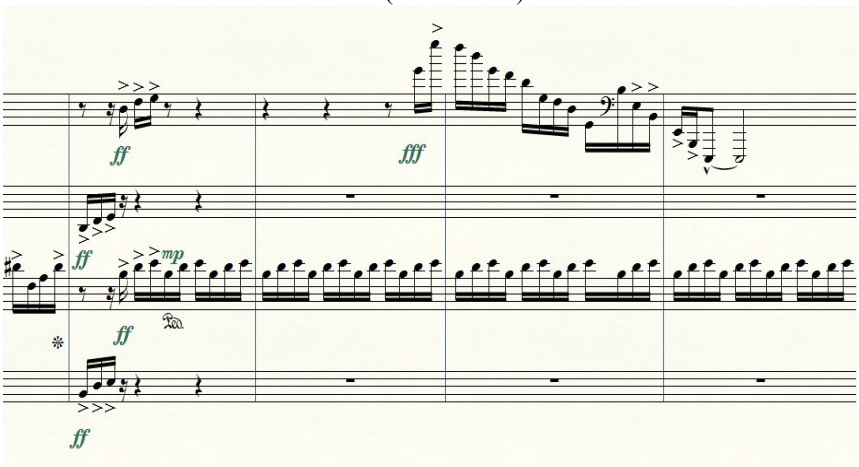



... whilst the harmonic sequence which took so long to gestate is found in the left hand:

**1***iii* harmonic sequence

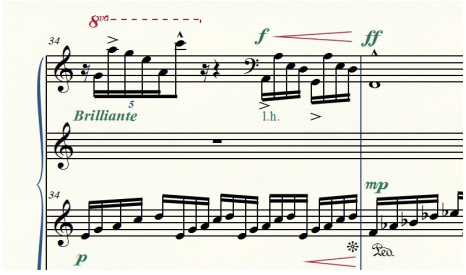
This brought me to the desired safe haven of a restatement of the opening, a tone higher:

**1*i***1 (restatement)

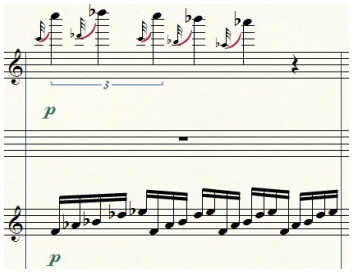



At last this twenty-year old idea was working out the way I wanted it to sound, and using formal structures I wanted! I point out here that there is no embarassment in using the familar notion of a thematic restatement, typical to so many Classical first movement openings: neo-tonal music is likely to behave like tonal music. I like restatements, though I see no reason why they should appear in the key of the opening. After **1*ii*** restatement, section **a** begged for a continuation in a contrasting way using abrupt chromatic steps rather than transition chords as well as stacked triads for a richer texture. The second thematic area **2** is therefore a series of four episodes each of which is a semitone higher:

**2*i***



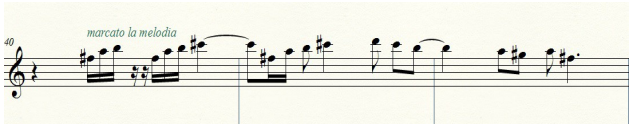
**2*ii***




It may interest the reader that amongt the bustle sounds of city life, I knew at some point I wanted to quote the "la donn'e mobile" tune that the Neopolitan street cleaner had whistled. Starting from a need for a more lyrical thematic episde, I soon realized that **2*ii*** would be the place where, in the third section of the piece, the Verdi could be placed. I knew from then on that it was my job to integrate that theme into the piece, gradually revealing it to the listener lest it appear abruptly like a rabbit from a hat! (More on that in the central section.)

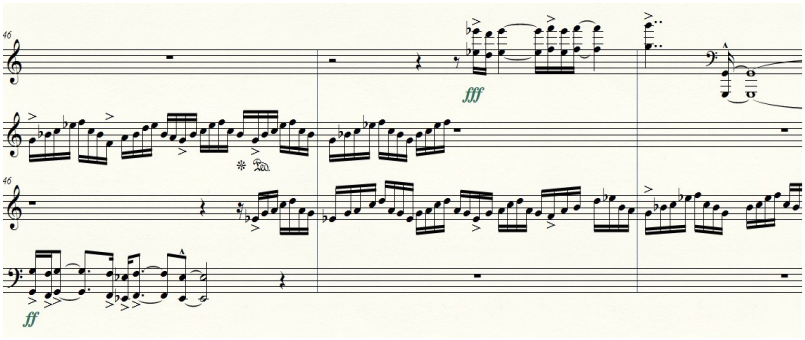
The next episode returns to the exuberance of the primary mood:

**2*iii***



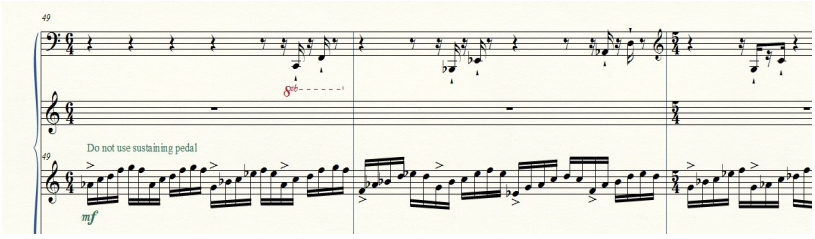

And the fourth is a triad-stack figuration in sub-units of 7 semiquavers, which I notated in 7/4. In retrospect I wonder whether would have been better notated in 7/16 – pianists e-mail me:

**2*iv***



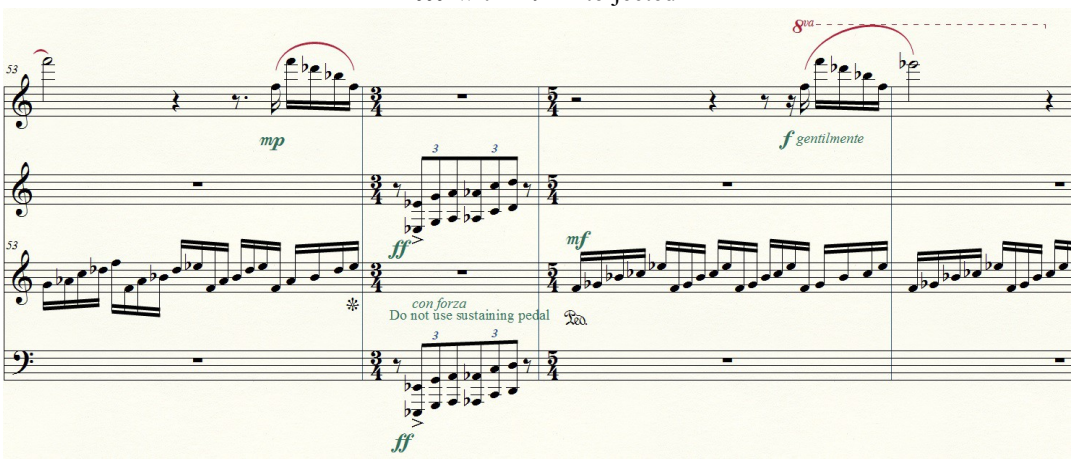

I played with this idea in sequential way with a 'circle of fifths' flavour:

**1*ii*** rapid progressions



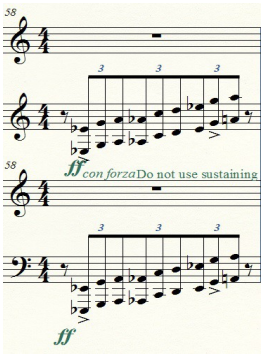

...which brought me to the point where the final modulation to **E♭** was ready to begin. In order to do this I repeated the downward motif **1*iii***, and interjected it with a transformation of the opening:

**1*iii*** with **1***i*2 interjected

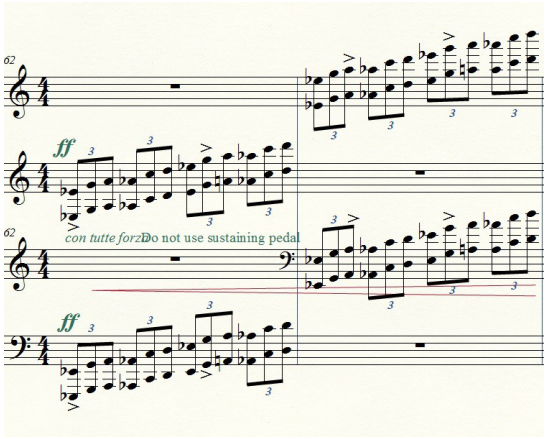



This is a technique Elgar uses in *'Alassio'* as he winds down towards the famous *canto populare* viola solo, where the new idea (its accompaniment on glockenspiel) first interupts the old, then becomes more prominent, and finally takes over altogether:

**1***i*2 bigger



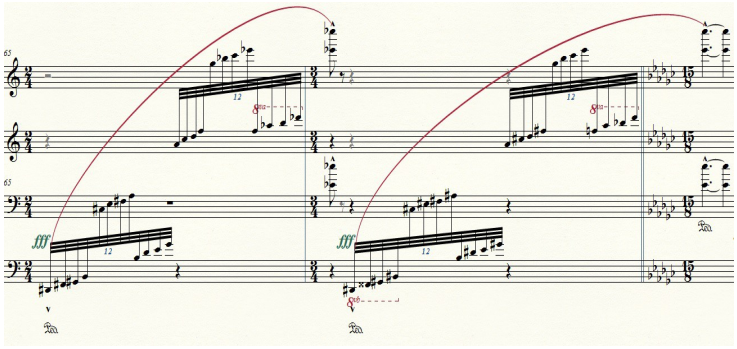

**1***i*2 biggest




Melodically this is a good way to end the **a** section as it is a thematic transformation of the first bar of the piece. The harmony outlined here by the Lisztian octaves is also of interest as it is a stack of tertiary chords with their 'minor' or whole tone feel characterized by the false relation A and A*b*. The method of emhasizing a tonal centre by repetition is a favourite of Bartok. A final complete stack forms the arpeggiated finishing flourishes: stacked neo-tonal triads starting on D sharp, rising right round the harmonic circle and back to the new key of E flat. This is the third thematic

transformation of the opeing bars of *Napoli '92*:

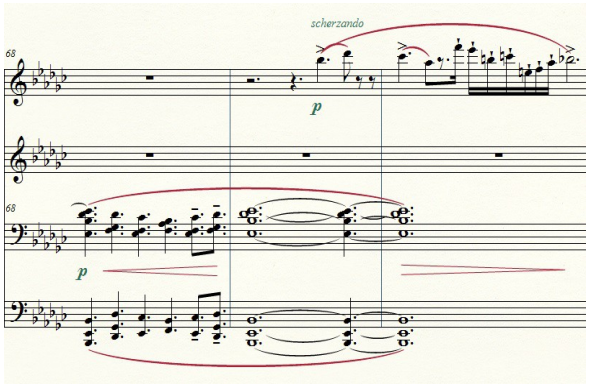
**1***i3*



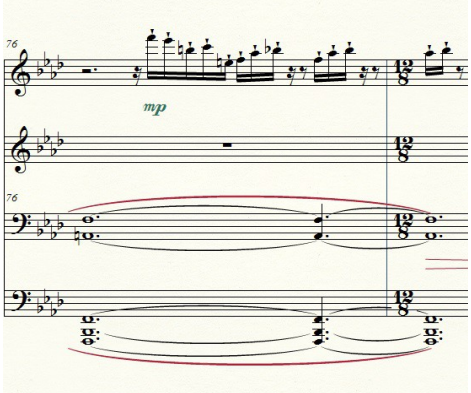
# Section **b**

After some repetitions of the note E flat, to wind down the tension as much as to assert the tonality, we begin a new tempo and a new key. We hear the third major thematic area **3**: a chorale-like idea answered by the first version of a skittish reply:

**3***i* and **3***ii*1

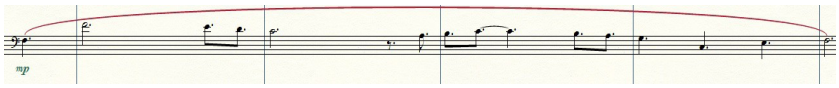



Note that the chorale melody follows the scalic outline of the new tonal area, whilst the skittish reply has the seeds of *la donn'e mobile*, followed by chromatic appoggiaturas around the neo-tonal triad. The chorale is made up of entirely diatonic neo-tonal chords (see APPENDIX 1). Contrasting chromatic and diatonic is a favourite device of Romantic composers, especially Wagner. Again, neo-tonal music is unashamed to learn from tonal music. The chorale has several phrases. Note the use of the major-feel Secondary form of the Neo-Tonal Triad (Lower Root) in the bass:

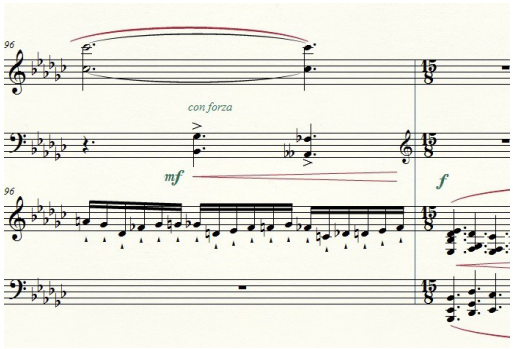


This movement to F is sufficient to permit an extended melodic line in the bass ***3iii*** with its skittish high accompaniment developed into a cheeky commentary ***3ii*** (not shown):

***3iii***



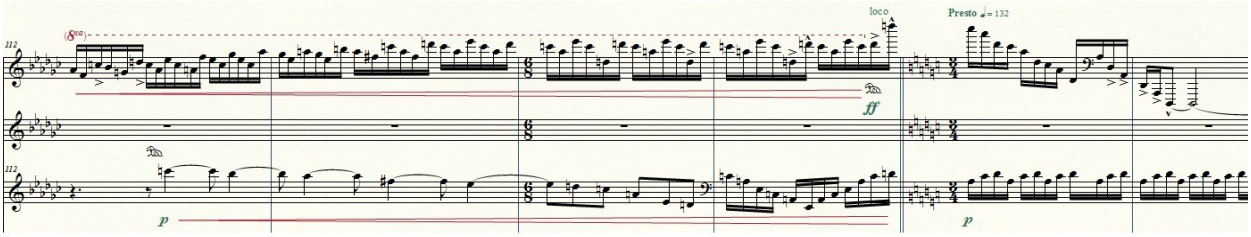

Thematic consistency is important to me and so I used a transformation of the chorale tune which outlines the Neo-Tonal Triad of F (Primary Form). It would seem I eventually learnt the lesson Paul Patterson was teaching, "develop your material" (see Question and Answer blog). This melody finally winds its way back to a *forte* restatement of the chorale in E flat, by way of a F flat. A sequential extension, which plays with the falling fifths as the skittish accompaniment changes to the bass, leads the way::




After the restatement of the chorale, there is a transition section leading back to the section **a** material. This was not easy to write, and involved several false attempts. As an aside it is interesting to ask how the composer should manage recapitulation in ternary form? Juxtaposition would be the easy option but I always have Sherlaw-Johnson's voice in my head, like a driving instructor, quoting Boulez: "Messiaen does not compose, he juxtaposes." This works for Messiaen, but it is not sufficient for a style based on motif and key (though in *Alassio* Elgar famously juxtaposes his recapitulation after the viola solo mentioned earlier.) *Quot licet Jovi, non licet bovi*[*]*,* however and generally symphonic forms require care at the reprise: do it badly and the seams show, like Tchaikovsky; do it too well and you merely repeat Beethoven's Fifth, 1st Mvt! In Napoli '92 I adopt a return to the home key but only briefly, and I save the reprise of the very opening bar for later.

# Section **a** Reprised

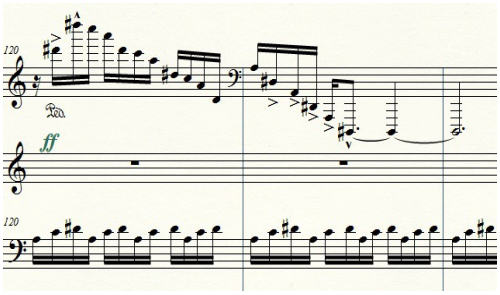
Section **a** returns in terms of key at the point where we move from E Flat to D, and **1*ii*** slips in almost unannounced after a fantasia-like passage of triadic semiquavers:



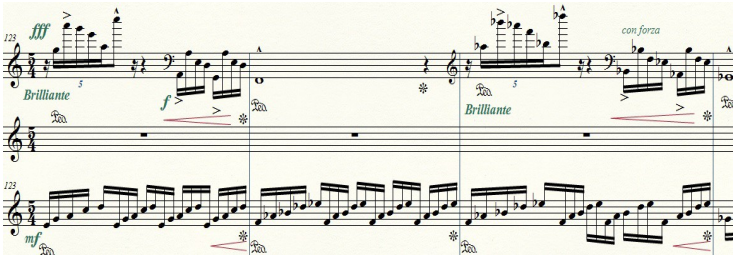

* "what is permitted for God is not permitted for oxen"

The music then proceeds straight into the second thematic area via the sharp direction, D#, (See APPENDIX 2). This is the part of the tonal shenanigans mentioned at the beginning:

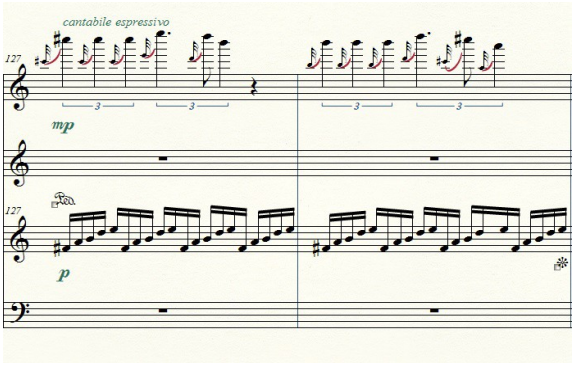
***1ii***



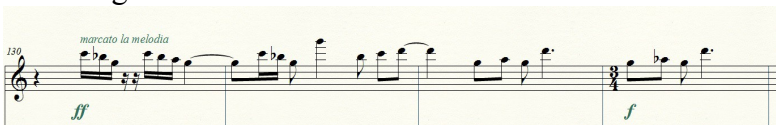

**2*i***



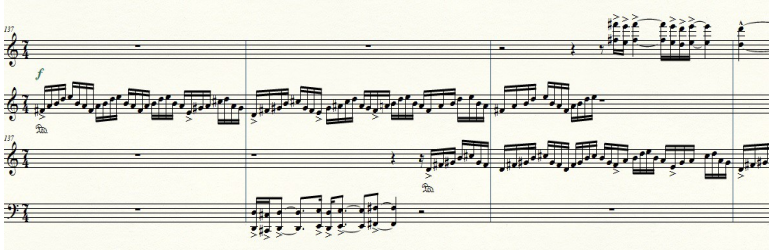

As mentioned, no sooner have we touched on D, we move away to E. Elements of the second thematic area are the same, but reprise in variations of their former selves: **2*i*** appears twice (above), **2*ii*** is where the Verdi quote slips in, mimicking but not reproducing the melody in section **a**:




Inversion is the name of the game in **2*iii***:

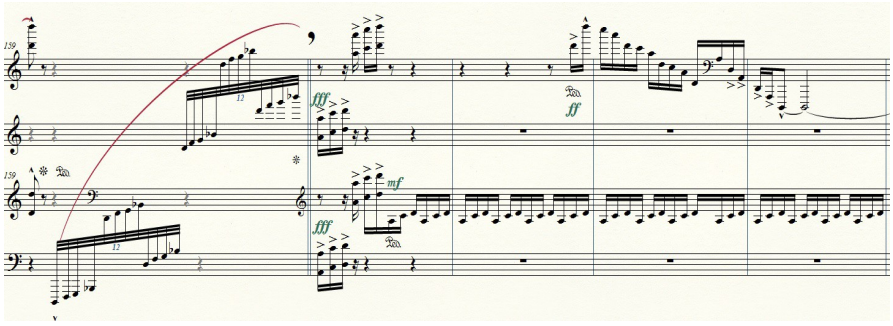



As it is in **2*iv*** :

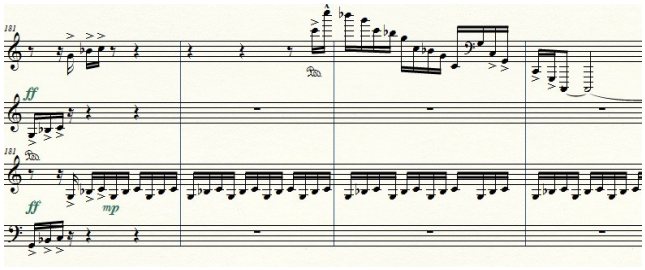


In each case we progress as in section **a**: up by abrupt chromatic shifts, down through the same rapid progressions (without any variation), following the same pattern of interjected octaves and stacked triads (three instead of two): but with a different outcome – not the arrival into section **b**, but the firm establishment of the opening thematic flourish in D, in powerful octaves:

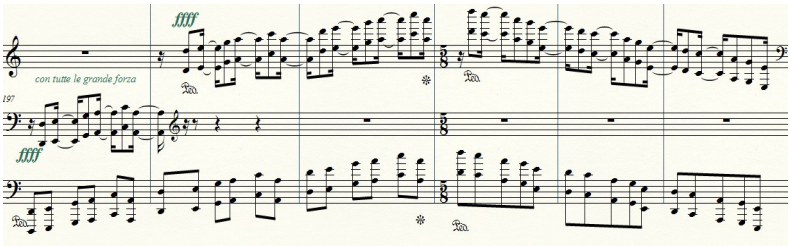
**1*i***



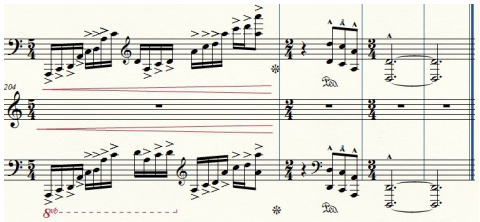
After this there are more tonal shenanigans: another move in the sharp direction which turns unexpectedly to a restatement a tone lower in C:



But it is not long before a series of high-pitched parallel transition chords in 2nd inversion take us back to the home of D for a final, Liszt-inspired peroration, which, harmonically, is simply chord V stacked inside chord I :




The conclusion of the piece reprises bar one, **1*i*** played from depth to height, and **1*i*** is inverted to bring the tonal journey firmly to rest on a bottom D:



I would be fascinated what my teachers would have made of the journey thus constructed, and whether they felt the 'shenanigans' were effective!