

# **Bartók's String Quartet No. 5**

Exploring the Intersection of Symmetry and Form

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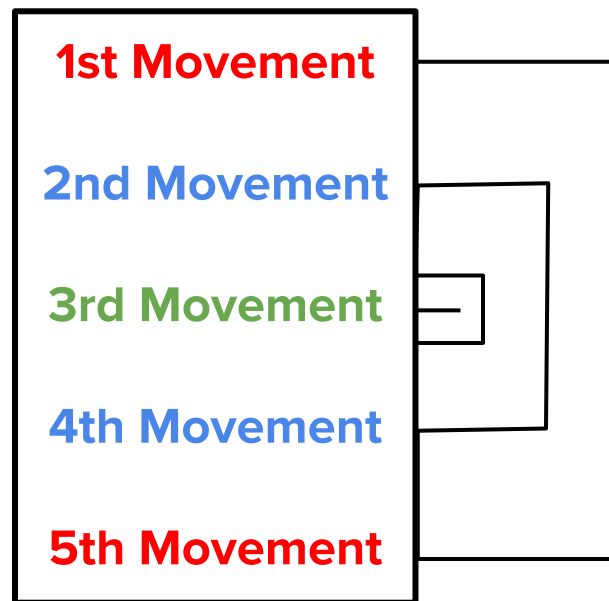
# Bartók's Life

- Hungarian Composer (1881-1945)
- Musical influences include Strauss, Debussy, Liszt, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg
- “Traditional Modernist”
  - Uses Hungarian folk music
- Faculty at Academy of Music
  - Spent holidays searching for folk music



# Musical Context

- High Compositional Output
- Cycle of 6 String Quartets
  - Demonstrates stylistic development
- String Quartet No. 5 (1934)
  - Arch Form
  - 7-Fold Symmetry
    - Mvt. 1 Theme appears in Mvt. 5
    - Mvt. 4 is a variation of Mvt. 2
    - Mvt. 3 in ABA' Form



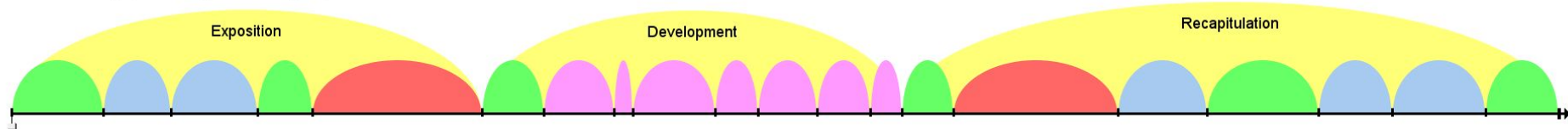
# Symmetry Overview

- Mvt. 1: Allegro, Sonata Form
- Mvt. 2: Adagio Molto, Arch Form
- Mvt. 3: Scherzo, Minuet Form (ABA')
- Mvt. 4: Andante, Variation on "Adagio Molto"
- Mvt. 5: Allegro Vivace, Rondo Form

# First Movement

- Sonata form, with a twist.
  - The order of themes in the Exposition is flipped when they reappear in the Recapitulation, creating symmetry on the outer bounds of the movement.
  - The development is also symmetrical
- Use of folk dance themes and textures
- Symmetry breaks down slightly in the recapitulation, with the insertion of a single extra phrase.

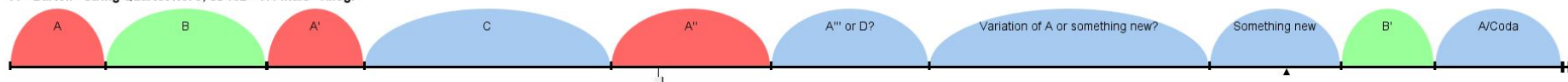
07 - Bartok - String Quartet No. 5, Sz 102 - I. Allegro.mp3



# Fifth Movement

- Sonata-Rondo form
  - Recurring A theme with contrasting sections in between, Note that the B section is also present at the beginning and end of the movement.
- Similar thematic content to first movement, creating a sense of symmetry through recurring folk themes.
- Breakdown of symmetry returns

11 - Bartok - String Quartet No. 5, Sz 102 - V. Finale - Allegro



# Second Movement

- Arch Form
  - A B C C' A' B'
  - Starts and ends with ambient “night music” sounds
- A: Simple, stepwise motion
- B: Rich harmonic texture, melody above sustained chords
- C: Ascending flourishes, varied rhythmic texture



# Fourth Movement

Variation on Movement 2: “Adagio Molto”

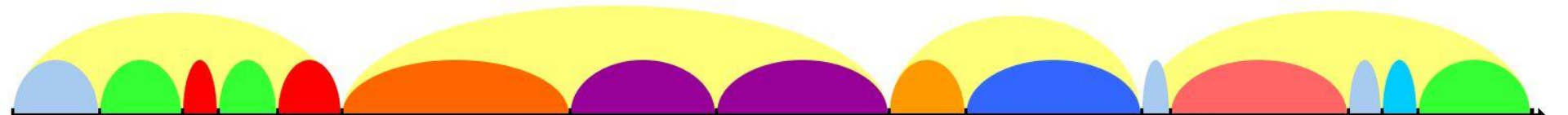
First section: Quiet, but tense build-up to the second section.

Second section: Strong bowing between all players at the beginning of this section. The purple bubbles of this section indicate a calmer theme before building up to the third section.

Third section: The beginning of this section uses the strong bowing that is used in the beginning of the second section. The blue bubble in this section indicates a slight variation.

Final section: This whole section is much calmer than the rest of this movement. The narrow, blue bubbles indicate that a solo violin plays over the quartet. The pink bubble is a change of mood since all of the players perform in soft harmony rather than playing tensely atonal like the other sections.

Bartok String Quartet No. 5, Mvt. 4.mp3

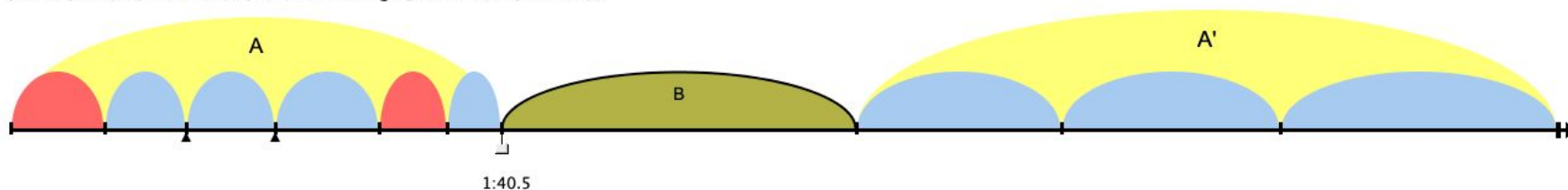




# Third Movement

- Center of symmetry
- Minuet and trio form ABA', with rounded binary within the A sections
- Fun Bulgarian rhythms
  - A → 4+2+3
  - B → 3+2+2+3

/Users/amelia/Downloads/Bartok - String Quartet No. 5, Sz 102/0



# Musica and Recording Information:

Bartók, Béla. *String Quartet No. 5*. 1935.

Bartók, Béla. “String Quartet No. 5” with The Jerusalem Quartet, 2020. Harmonia Mundi 3149020941997, digital MP3.