HARMONIC PRACTICE IN THE GUITAR MUSIC
OF MANUEL M. PONCE

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This investigation examines the evolution of harmonic practice in the guitar music of the Mexican composer, Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948). Ponce's harmonic practice evolved from a simple romantic style influenced by Mexican folksong to a more complex idiom influenced by Impressionistic harmony.

This study explores the change in Ponce's harmonic practice in two ways. First, general features of Ponce's harmonic vocabulary are surveyed in excerpts from various guitar works written over a twenty year period. Second, a work from Ponce's mature style—Theme Varié et Finale—is examined in detail. Chapter III gives a survey of harmonic materials in this work, while Chapter IV reveals aspects of its structural coherence.
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Chapter I
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

When Andres Segovia (1893-) began his career as a concert guitarist in 1909, his repertoire included both music written for guitar and music written originally for other instruments. Segovia made transcriptions of Baroque and Classical pieces, helped unearth much Renaissance lute music, and generally worked almost singlehandedly to create a workable repertoire for the guitar. Still, Segovia was not satisfied with the scope of the music available to him and took it upon himself to persuade contemporary composers to write for that instrument. Through his untiring efforts and his virtuosity as a performer, he began to show audiences throughout Europe, Asia, and the Americas the extent of the guitar's capability as a solo instrument. Gradually, many composers took notice of the guitar's newly-manifested capabilities and began to write for the instrument—the first modern work being Federico Moreno Torroba's *Danza in E Major* (1920). Another young composer interested in the guitar was the Mexican, Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948), who first heard Segovia at a 1923 recital in Mexico City. Ponce introduced himself to Segovia immediately after the concert and a close friendship quickly ensued, one that would last some twenty-five years and would result in the creation of over eighty works for the guitar.

It was not quantity alone, however, that distinguished Ponce's guitar music, but also a high quality of musical craftsmanship and imagination. One of the reasons Segovia invited composers to write for the guitar was what he saw as the poor quality of much music written by guitarist-composers of the nineteenth century. Ponce, along with other composers of the early twentieth century, responded to Segovia's challenge with enthusiasm and wrote all types of guitar pieces: sonatas, sonatinas, variations, preludes, arrangements of popular songs, and a concerto for guitar and small orchestra. Segovia was grateful and, in a tribute written after Ponce's death in 1948, he credited Ponce with being one of the composers who had "saved the guitar from the music written exclusively by guitarists." In Ponce, Segovia found an ally in his struggle to raise the guitar's respectability to the level enjoyed by other solo instruments such as piano and violin.

Not only in his guitar music but also in his other compositions, Ponce distinguished himself as a composer with a keen harmonic sense. This emphasis on harmony had its roots in Ponce's early musical background. Ponce, regarded by most historians as the first important Mexican composer of the twentieth century and the first figure in Mexican musical

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nationalism, from his early childhood showed a talent for music. Surrounded by both the folk songs of his native province of Zacatecas and the sacred music of the Catholic Church, Ponce at the age of nine composed his first work, a piano piece entitled The March of the Measles (inspired by a bout with that disease). By the age of fifteen, he was organist of the San Miguel Cathedral in his hometown of Aguascalientes. As a young man, Ponce became fond of both the refined romantic piano music imported from Europe, especially the salon style of Moszkowski, and the indigenous folk melodies of his own country. Ponce began composing songs and piano pieces utilizing both of these styles. At the age of eighteen, he entered the National Conservatory in Mexico City but left after only one year, dissatisfied with the quality of instruction he found there. Ponce returned to Aguascalientes to teach piano privately and, having saved enough money, he left three years later in 1905 on the first of two journeys he would make to Europe for further musical instruction. He first went to the Liceo Musicale in Bologna, Italy, where he was refused for studies in composition with Enrico Bossi (though some sources claim that Ponce did, in

fact, later study with Bossi). Bossi told him:

"Your style is too old-fashioned. Your music would have been up-to-date in 1830, but not in 1905. You have talent, but have been improperly trained."

Undaunted, Ponce stayed at the Liceo Musicale to study composition with Luigi Torchi. In 1906, he traveled to Berlin to study piano with Martin Krause at the Stern Conservatory. There, his German classmates who were devoted to German folk songs encouraged Ponce to explore the native folk music of Mexico and incorporate it into his compositions, instead of merely copying the "European classics."

Ponce would take this advice to heart, but first he had other concerns when he left Europe to return to Mexico in 1907. He returned to his home in Aguascalientes and resumed his piano teaching. Here, Ponce became the first in Mexico to teach Debussy to his students and among his first students was the young Carlos Chavez. But later, in 1908, Ponce returned to the National Conservatory in Mexico City, this time as professor of piano and music history. Along with his teaching both at the Conservatory and at a private studio in Mexico City, Ponce's career as a composer began to flourish as well.

On July 7, 1912, Ponce gave a concert of his works at the Teatro Arbeau that included his first major work, the *Concerto for Piano*. Many historians regard this concerto, along with the composition of the *Canciones Mexicanas* for piano that same

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8. Ibid.
year, as the beginning of the modern phase of Mexican national
music. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 had brought about a
nationalistic movement in the arts. Ponce became the first
Mexican composer to use native Indian and mestizo folk elements
as an acceptable musical idiom in art music—a path that his
pupil, Chavez, would take much further. Ponce, who also wrote
essays supporting the cause of a Mexican national music,
described the beginning of the nationalistic movement in Mex-
ican music in one article about this period in history:

Our salons welcomed only foreign music in 1910, such as Italianate romanzas and operatic arias trans-
scribed for piano. Their doors remained resolutely
closed to the canción mexicana until at last revolut-
ionary cannon in the north announced the imminent
destruction of the old order...Amid the smoke and blood
of battle were born the stirring revolutionary songs
soon to be carried throughout the length and breadth of
the land. Adelita, Valentina, and La Cucuracha, were
typical revolutionary songs soon popularized throughout
the republic. Nationalism captured music at last. Old
songs, almost forgotten, but truly reflecting the nation-
al spirit, were revived, and new melodies for new cor-
ridos were composed. Singers traveling about the repub-
lic spread far and wide the new nationalist song; every-
where the idea gained impetus that the republic should
have its own musical art faithfully mirroring its own
soul.

In spite of all this nationalistic fervor in his writings,
however, Ponce remained throughout his career a primarily
European-oriented composer in style. Mayer-Serra writes in
The Present State of Music in Mexico that Ponce's music had
dual tendencies, "nationalistic" and "cosmopolitan," and that

9. Nicolas Slonimsky, Music of Latin America (New York: Da

10. Stevenson, op. cit., p. 35.
Ponce's loyalty to the "cosmopolitan" (or European) tendency in his music showed that he was "deeply rooted...both ideologically and aesthetically in the past."\textsuperscript{11} It would be left to Ponce's successors such as Chavez, Silvestre Revueltas, Blas Galindo, and others to create a truly nationalistic Mexican art music. But Ponce deserves credit for having laid the foundation for these men with his role "as the first composer to show real interest in the folklore of his country."\textsuperscript{12}

Ponce's harmonic thinking during this period was a combination of nineteenth-century European harmonic practice with the characteristics of Mexican folk music, with its peculiar melodic turns and rhythmic sequences.\textsuperscript{13} Gradually, though, Ponce began to gravitate more and more towards the harmonic practices of the French impressionist music he had been exposed to during his stay in Europe. Impressionistic harmonies, as found in Debussy's works and which Ponce taught his piano pupils, struck a responsive chord in him and in one form or another would become a feature of his music for the rest of his life. Chavez, in an article published in 1969, claimed that Ponce did not understand Debussy's music (at least in 1919, according to Malmstrom).\textsuperscript{14} Ponce worked hard, however,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} Mayer-Serra, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35.
\item \textsuperscript{12} Dan Malmstrom, \textit{Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music} (Ph.D. dissertation, Uppsala University, 1974; Uppsala, Sweden: Textgruppen I Uppsala), p. 39.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Malmstrom, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 37.
\end{itemize}
throughout his career to improve his harmonic vocabulary and an important part of that process was his study with Paul Dukas, where he learned much about the techniques of European post-romantic composition.\(^{15}\)

Ponce was active in several capacities during the 1910's and 1920's: as composer, professor, and writer. In 1914, another set of *Canciones Mexicanas* was published and one of these songs, *Estrellita*, became famous not only in Latin America, but throughout the world.\(^{16}\) Ponce also wrote a great number of piano pieces in a refined salon style. From 1915 to 1917, Ponce lived in Havana, Cuba, and in 1916 he went to New York to give a recital of his own works at Aeolian Hall.\(^{17}\) Ponce returned to Mexico in July, 1917, where he resumed teaching and in September of that same year, he married the French singer Clema Maurel. In addition to his composing and teaching, he was also active in writing musical criticism and edited several issues of the *Revista Musical de Mexico*.\(^{18}\)

In spite of all his success and recognition, Ponce became dissatisfied with his compositional technique, especially in orchestration and counterpoint. Finally, in 1925, he decided to make a second journey to Europe for study and

\(^{15}\) Mayer-Serra, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33.

\(^{16}\) Slonimsky, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.

\(^{18}\) Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 234.
settled in Paris, which was to become Ponce's home for the next seven years. There, Ponce enrolled in the composition class of Paul Dukas at the École Normale de Musique. Ponce found Dukas' ideas on free thematic development very impressive and at the same time adaptable to Mexican melodies.19 Also, his studies in counterpoint were very influential in shaping a more modern harmonic vocabulary. His harmonic language began to show a greater use of chromaticism and tonal instability combined with profuse counterpoint.20

Ponce's general musical style began to change as described by Stevenson:

...his musical style became immeasurably more contrapuntal and his rhythms tauter... Accused by Bossi in 1905 of writing in an 1830 style, Ponce in the 1930's was an avant-garde.21

His study in orchestration had a similar effect and in 1929 Ponce composed the first of his great orchestral works, Chapultepec. In this, as in his later works for orchestra, Ponce's scoring is "characteristically Gallic, with subtle dynamics, and prominence given to solo instruments, particularly in the wood-wind section..."22 Also, this period saw the creation of most of Ponce's guitar works.

After first hearing Andres Segovia play in Mexico City

20. Ibid.
22. Slonimsky, op. cit., p. 245.
in 1923, Ponce composed a short piece for guitar, a serenade, which eventually was incorporated into his first large work for the instrument, the *Sonata Mexicana* (1923). But Ponce did not compose for the guitar again until his move to Paris in 1925, which brought him back in contact with Segovia, who at that time also made Paris his residence. The two men renewed their friendship and Segovia began to ask Ponce for more guitar works. Ponce responded by composing his more important guitar works: including the *Theme Varie et Finale* (1926), the *Sonata III* (1927), the *Sonata Clasica* (1930), and the *Variations and Fugue on the Folias de Espana* (1929). These works were the result of a very close personal collaboration between Ponce and Segovia, which grew out of necessity because of his lack of knowledge about musical idioms for guitar during that period. Eventually, Segovia spurred Ponce into composing over eighty works for the guitar and, subsequently, Segovia began playing these works in his international concert tours. This did much to spread Ponce's fame throughout the world.

Ponce received his diploma from the École Normale de Musique in 1932, and in 1933 left Paris to return to Mexico. For the last fifteen years of his life, Ponce devoted his time to composition and teaching at both the National Conservatory and the rival Escuela Universitaria de Musica.

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Most of his compositions of this period are orchestral works: _Ferial_ (1940), _Poema Elegiaco_ (1935), _Canto y Danza de los antiguos mexicanos_ (1935), and the _Concerto for Violin_ (1943). But Ponce would later compose a few more guitar works, and one of these was the fulfillment of one of Segovia's fondest wishes, a concerto for guitar and small orchestra. The _Concierto del Sur_, dedicated to Segovia, was premiered in Montevideo, Uruguay, on October 4, 1941, with Segovia as soloist and Ponce conducting. It quickly became one of the staples of the guitar repertoire within a few years. Other guitar works composed during this period include _Six Short Preludes_ (1947), dedicated to Carlos Chavez's daughter Juanita, and one of his last works, _Variations on a Theme of Cabezón_ (1948).

Ponce spent his last years in composition and teaching folklore at the Escuela Universitaria, but was greatly hampered by his gradually deteriorating health. On April 24, 1948, Ponce died in Mexico City of uremic poisoning. At his death, Ponce's accomplishments were noted and, as Stevenson writes, "he was recognized as the one Mexican composer whose music appealed to all levels of society." Segovia, in a tribute to Ponce published in _Guitar Review_,

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eulogized his friend and acknowledged his debt to him:

From the time that I first became acquainted with Ponce in Mexico in 1923, until the physical pain of his final illness stifled his will to create, he composed more than eighty works for the guitar; large and small, they are all of them pure and beautiful....I more than anyone else owe gratitude to Ponce because he responded with the deepest sympathy to my ceaseless eagerness to metamorphose the guitar.28

Though Ponce's change in harmonic practice is perhaps not as well documented in his guitar music as in the more numerous works for piano and orchestra, it is possible to examine this change in the works for guitar. The purpose of this thesis will be to examine this harmonic evolution in Ponce's guitar music. This will be accomplished by two means. First, general features and characteristics of Ponce's harmonic vocabulary will be examined in excerpts from various guitar works written over a twenty year period. It is hoped that this will show the gradual evolution that took place in Ponce's harmonic practice. Second, a detailed harmonic analysis will be made of a guitar work from Ponce's more mature style, Theme Varie et Finale (1926). This will show in detail the various aspects and characteristics of his harmonic language.

Chapter II

PONCE'S STYLE PERIODS

Ponce's compositional career spanned approximately fifty years and his music underwent distinct changes in style during this time, most notably in his harmonic language. Ponce changed his style of composition from that of the mid-to-late nineteenth century European romantic composers to a more modern one reflecting the musical styles of the early twentieth century. As stated by Stevenson in Music in Mexico "... he was able to change with the times. His conversion to newer ways of thinking was, moreover, sincerely felt and, unlike others whose modernisms were an unconvincing veneer, he spoke as urgently in his later style as in his earlier."¹

Stevenson uses passages from two of Ponce's major works, one from Concerto for Piano (1912) and the other from Concerto for Violin (1943), to illustrate the changes in Ponce's musical style.² The Concerto for Piano passage (Figure 1) is quoted as an example of Ponce's early romantic style, complete with "lush 'Rachmaninoffian' chords."³ The Concerto for Violin passage (Figure 2), on the other hand, is given as example of Ponce's later, more modern harmonic style in which dissonance and counterpoint play a prominent part.⁴ This latter

¹ Stevenson, Music in Mexico, p. 235.
² Ibid., p. 236.
³ Ibid., p. 237.
⁴ Ibid.
Fig. 1—Ponce, *Concerto for Piano*, cited in Stevenson's *Music in Mexico*, p. 236.

Fig. 2—Ponce, *Concerto for Violin*, cited in Stevenson's *Music in Mexico*, p. 236.
concerto is also interesting because of the fact that Ponce uses his song _Estrellita_ as a theme in the second movement, but in a more dissonant harmonic setting than in its original arrangement.

Just how modern Ponce's later harmonic style is remains a point of some dispute. Stevenson, in _Grove's Dictionary_, describes it as a combination of "French impressionist methods and neo-classical counterpoint."³ Malmstrom echoes this opinion, saying Ponce's harmonies "include dissonances that are 'unresolved,' sometimes in an impressionist manner."⁷ Behague describes Ponce's "modern" sounding harmonic vocabulary "with its dissonances and occasional tonal instability" as a result of the preoccupation with French impressionist methods.⁸ A quote from Pablo Castellanos offers this analysis of the harmonic writing in Ponce's _Danzas Mexicanas_:

> The harmonic writing presents subtle modulations, chords of the fourth, gregorian modes, "modern" cadences, and aspects of polytonality.⁹

But Mayer-Serra states that Ponce's later harmonic style, as seen in the _Concerto for Violin_, is "a somewhat outdated chromaticism" and an outgrowth of the post-romantic school,

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5. Malmstrom, _Twentieth Century Mexican Music_, p. 75.
7. Malmstrom, _op. cit._, p. 75.
separate from the "new contemporary styles" of composers such as Chavez and Revueltas.  

Most of Ponce's guitar music was written during the beginning of his later period when he was studying in Paris. For the purpose of this study, Ponce's guitar music will be divided into three style periods: the early guitar works written before 1925, the works written during Ponce's stay in Paris from 1925 to 1933, and the works written after his return to Mexico in 1933.

Early Guitar Works

In order to understand the early harmonic style of Ponce, it is helpful to examine some of the influences upon Mexican art music at the beginning of the twentieth century. As previously stated, Mexican art music had been dominated by European influence—thus Ponce's remark about "Italianate romanzas and operatic arias." But Mexican folk music, which Ponce began to bring to light, also derived much from European influence. As Bruno Nettl states in Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents:

Mexican folk music is largely in the Spanish tradition, and while the Mexican Indians retain to some extent their native musical styles, there seems to have been less influence of the Indian styles on the Spanish derived folk music here than in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador.

11. Stevenson, Music in Mexico, p. 35.
Nettl points out the similarities between the Mexican song form of the *corrido*—which is a type of narrative song, and its probable Spanish ancestor, the *romanza*. He notes that Mexican folk songs are generally not imported from Spain, but are:

...more usually songs either composed in Mexico in the styles brought from Europe, or they are indeed songs brought from Europe centuries ago but so changed by the process of oral tradition that the tunes in Europe that are related to them can no longer be recognized as relatives...

Nettl quotes an example of Mexican song transcribed by Vincente Mendoza, an authority on Mexican folk music, that shows some characteristics of the style—the use of triplets derived from Spanish folk song and the doubling of the melody in parallel thirds. This latter device is one Ponce would later use in Theme Varie et Finale.

Figure 3—Vincente Mendoza, example of Mexican folk song, cited in Nettl's *Folk and Traditional Music of the Western Continents*, p. 193.

14. Ibid.
This relation between Mexican and European folk music may explain why so many of the Mexican folk themes used by Ponce and others fit so well into what Mayer-Serra terms "the forms consecrated by European piano music."\(^{15}\)

Ponce made an arrangement for guitar of three of his Canciones Mexicanas during the 1920's. This arrangement, which includes the songs "La Pajarera," "Por Ti Mi Corazon," and "Valentina," has become a staple of the guitar literature and, although not an original guitar work, offers a look at Ponce's early harmonic style.

The harmonic style of the Canciones Mexicanas is relatively simple. The harmonies are, in Malmstrom's words, "...functional and no more advanced than that frequently found in 19th century European music."\(^{16}\) Figure 4 shows

![Allegro](image)

**Fig. 4**--Ponce, "Valentina," Canciones Mexicanas, measures 1-8.

---

the opening measures of \"Valentina.\" The basic harmonic progression is tonic to dominant, as seen in the bass notes. A running line in the inner voices creates interest and a feeling of movement over the simple harmonies. Another example comes from \"Por Ti Mi Corazon,\" (Figure 5). The salon style melody (an original melody by Ponce) is set over a harmonic progression of I-V/ii-ii-V-I. The harmony in this example is also relatively simple, but interesting points come at the end of measure 4 (a iv chord with added 6) and the beginning of measure 6 (the G# and B# that resolve up to A and C#).

The first true guitar work by Ponce was the Sonata Mexicana (1923). This grew out of a short piece that Ponce wrote, a serenade based on the theme of the Jarabe Tapatio (termed as the national dance of Mexico),\(^{17}\) that became the third

\(^{17}\) Stevenson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 182.
movement of this sonata. In this movement, Ponce's harmonies are for the most part diatonic with some alterations. In Figure 6, Ponce uses a minor dominant in measures 2 and 4. In measure 7, the use of elision is seen in the omission of a dominant seventh chord between the augmented sixth chord and the tonic A minor chord of the following measure.

Another example comes from the opening of the first movement of the Sonata Mexicana. Here, the opening twelve measures are shown in which an overall harmonic progression of B minor to E minor is seen. But Ponce makes a short modulation into C major in the middle of the section by means of the B half-diminished chord (vii in C) and the cadence on E major is made only by an abrupt shift from C. This is an early and relatively consonant example of the sudden changes in tonal centers that would become more commonplace and dissonant in his later music.
Allegro moderato

![Musical notation](image)

Fig. 7—Ponce, Sonata Mexicana, first movement, measures 1-12.

Other aspects of the first movement worth considering include the second theme (Figure 8) in parallel thirds, employing a chromatic lower neighbor tone figure. (The use of chromatic upper and lower neighbor tone figures will be a device used frequently in Theme Varie et Finale, as will be seen in Chapters III and IV.) Another point of interest may be seen in the closing theme of the exposition (Figure 9) which uses the Neapolitan chord as an upper neighbor structure instead of in a normal N-V-I cadence, a characteristic of Spanish flamenco music.

The second movement of the Sonata Mexicana shows signs of the impending change in Ponce's harmonic vocabulary. All of the examples of his music cited up this point have been in a relatively diatonic harmonic setting reflective of what Mayer-Serra
...an almost Schubertian romanticism." But the second movement shows the greater use of chromaticism and the beginnings of tonal obscurity cited by Behague as a characteristic of Ponce's later style. The main theme of the movement is shown in Figure 10. In measures 11-13, the overall progression to the dominant of D is obscured by the chromatic movement of the bass upward until the augmented sixth chord is spelled out in measure 14. Another point of interest is the chord on the last beat of measure 8. This

chord, which is given emphasis by a fermata, is an altered dominant of D. The spelling of this chord, A C# E# G Bb, shows it to be an augmented dominant seventh with a flatted ninth.

![Musical notation]

Fig. 10—Ponce, Sonata Mexicana, second movement, measures 5-15.

It was not long after the composition of the Sonata Mexicana that Ponce decided to return to Europe for further study. During Ponce's seven year stay in Paris he would "...gain an extraordinary mastery of the techniques of European post-romanticism."19

Works of the Paris Years

As previously stated, it was during the years in Paris from 1925 to 1933 that most of Ponce's guitar works were composed. These works reflect the change in Ponce's style that was taking place as a result of his studies in composition and counterpoint at the Ecole Normale de Musique under Paul Dukas. For the purpose of this study, passages from two of Ponce's guitar works of this period will be examined: the Sonata III (1927), and the Sonatina Meridional (1932). Theme Varie et Finale (1926) will be examined in detail in Chapters III and IV.

The Sonata III and the Sonatina Meridional use what Otero terms "...a more contemporary harmonic language." Examination of this vocabulary will be accompanied by excerpts showing general features of this style.

Some interesting substitutions for the dominant chord may be seen in Figures 11 and 12 from the Sonata III. A harmonic structure built around the leading tone is present on the third beat of measures 1 and 3 of the principal theme of the first.

Allegro moderato

![Musical notation]

Fig. 11--Ponce, Sonata III, first movement, measures 1-4.

movement in Figure 11, while a more conventional bVII structure may be seen on the second beat of measure 1 in Figure 12.

Allegro non troppo

Fig. 12--Ponce, Sonata III, third movement, measures 1-3.

An interesting harmonic progression is used to announce the arrival of the second theme in the first movement of the Sonata III. In Figure 13, an overall progression of Bb to A (the key of the second theme) is colored by the change from a Bb augmented-major seventh chord to a Bb minor-major seventh, which in turn leads to the A minor theme. Both of the chords on Bb are repeated four times for emphasis.

Fig. 13--Ponce, Sonata III, first movement, measures 39-41.

Another example from the third movement of the sonata shows a transitional passage that is used to unify different sections of the movement. In this passage (Figure 14),
Fig. 14--Ponce, Sonata III, third movement, measures 39-41.

described by Otero as "a series of very slow dramatic chords"\textsuperscript{21}, upper and lower neighbor tones are used to create a feeling of tension and tonal unrest within the basic progression of D to B. The use of imitation between voices in this excerpt reveals Ponce's increased concern with counterpoint.

A very interesting section of the third movement of the Sonata III is reminiscent of a Bach chorale. In this neo-classical adaptation, Ponce uses the basic tonal framework of the chorale to exhibit some of the most extensive use of abrupt tonal shifts and chromatic passing chords in the entire work. Of interest is the final chord of the section in Figure 15, an F augmented-minor seventh (marked by a fermata). The voicing of the chord ($V_6^5$ in Bb) makes it appear that it will resolve to Bb, the principal key of this section, but instead the A and C# make the chord function as a dominant of D (to which it resolves in the next measure). Note how the soprano and bass resolve outward chromatically to the D major chord. This device of modulation to third related keys is common throughout Ponce's music.

\textsuperscript{21} Otero, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 26.
Fig. 15—Ponce, \textit{Sonata III}, third movement, measures 47-66.

Some short excerpts from the first movement of the \textit{Sonata III} that suggest quartal harmony appear in Figures 16 and 17. Figure 16 shows a pair of quartal structures in the second half of the excerpt that begin a transition passage. Figure 17 shows a use of quartal harmony for coloristic effect.

Fig. 16—Ponce, \textit{Sonata III}, first movement, measures 29-32.
Neapolitan harmony is much in evidence in both the *Sonata III* and the *Sonatina Meridional*. The opening themes of the first movements of both works show the use of the Neapolitan chord (Figures 18 and 19).

Fig. 18--Ponce, *Sonata III*, first movement, measures 6-8.

Fig. 19--Ponce, *Sonatina Meridional*, first movement,
Ponce often uses two different versions of the phrygian mode: the pure phrygian, and a mixture of the phrygian and major modes. Figure 20 illustrates the pure phrygian, while the mixture of phrygian and major may be seen in Figure 21.

Vivo

Fig. 20--Ponce, Sonata III, third movement, measures 76-78.

An increased concern with counterpoint is one of chief characteristics of Ponce's later style. Previously stated examples that show evidence of this are Figures 14 and 15. An example of a short two-voice canon from the third movement of the Sonatina Meridional is shown in Figure 22. Note the instructions in the music "claras ambas voces" (both voices clearly).
Ponce's harmonic style reached maturity during his years in Paris, and all of his later works are characterized by this more advanced harmonic vocabulary.

Works After 1933

Ponce's works written after his return to Mexico showed an increased concern with musical nationalism. Ponce made a revision of his symphonic poem Chapultepec in 1934 and, later, created another, Ferial (1940), in which he portrayed "a fair in a small village in the vicinity of Teotihuacan in central Mexico." This work uses various aspects of folk and popular music, such as imitations of church bells calling the villagers to worship and the use of a Mexican wind instrument much like an oboe called the chirimia along with a small-size drum section to imitate the sound of a village.

The harmonic style of the works after 1933 is described by Malmstrom as being somewhat more dissonant than the works of earlier periods, with the *Concerto for Violin* (1943) shown as being more dissonant than *Ferial* (1940). On the other hand, the *Concierto del Sur* (1941) for guitar and orchestra is described as being "comparatively 'romantic', almost pre-revolutionistic in its idiom."  

A few excerpts from the *Concierto del Sur* reveal some general aspects of Ponce's later harmonic style. Figure 23 shows the opening chord for guitar in measure 5, a quartal chord (E A D G# D G) which also has a polychordal effect because of G# sounding against G (it may be noted that the guitar's tuning in fourths makes quartal sonorities very much accessible).

![Chord Diagram](image)

**Fig. 23—Ponce, Concierto del Sur, first movement, measures 5-6.**

A passage from the cadenza using quartal sonorities reveals a theme stated in parallel fourths over an ostinato bass on E (Figure 24).


25. Ibid.
Fig. 24—Ponce, Concierto del Sur, first movement, measures 342-349.

Another passage from the same cadenza shows Ponce's use of quickly shifting tonal centers, characteristic of impressionistic harmonies (Figure 25).

Fig. 25—Ponce, Concierto del Sur, first movement, measures 361-366.

One additional example, from the climatic second theme of the second movement, shows several aspects of Ponce's style: (1) contrapuntal writing is shown by the use of outer voices in close imitation, particularly in the second half of the theme, (2) the harmony becomes gradually more chromatic and dissonant, with the bass rising chromatically. Among the devices Ponce uses to create dissonance is the
use of major and minor seconds in the chordal structures, (3) at the climatic point, a planing effect is achieved by doubling the melodic line of F# to E in tritones over a bass progression of G to D.

Fig. 26—Ponce, *Concierto del Sur*, second movement, measures 74-85.

Summary

Ponce's harmonic style underwent a distinct change during his compositional career. His earlier style of the pre-1925 years reflect a diatonic romantic style using aspects of Mexican folklore and mid-to-late nineteenth century European harmonic practice. His style changed, however, during his residence in Paris from 1925 to 1933, owing much
to his study with Paul Dukas. Studies in counterpoint and orchestration, along with exposure to current musical trends of the day, led Ponce to adopt a more complex and dissonant harmonic style derived from impressionism and other European post-romantic schools. This harmonic language is characterized by elements of impressionistic harmony and counterpoint. All of Ponce's work after 1925, to one degree or another, is characterized by this more modern harmonic practice.
Chapter III

SURVEY OF HARMONIC MATERIALS
IN THEME VARIE ET FINALE

Theme Varie et Finale (1926) is a product of the years Ponce spent in Paris and reflects the changes in his overall style that took place during this period. A description of the work states:

In the variated theme and finale, the composer handles the old and fascinating musical technique of variation in his own way. The theme, stated in an andante permeated with sweet melancholy, is followed by six variations with alternating melodies and rhythms. With the finale, written in vivo scherzando, the series of variations end on a joyful note.26

This chapter will attempt to show, through a survey of harmonic materials in Theme Varie et Finale, surface aspects of Ponce's later harmonic style. Broader aspects of structure in this work will be examined in Chapter IV.

Despite the descriptions of his later harmonic style as being "avant-garde"27 and employing "tonal instability"28, Ponce's harmonies are based on a firm tonal hierarchy. Ponce's later harmonic language is essentially a continuation of European post-romantic practice, with emphasis on the harmonic language of impressionism. Counterpoint assumes a much greater


27. Stevenson, Music in Mexico, pp. 234-235.

role in his later style, serving to provide a greater sense of structural unity and also creating more dissonance.

Characteristic devices of Ponce's later style include the use of borrowed chords, the use of Neapolitan harmony, and the use of "unresolved dissonances." This latter device is descriptive of Ponce's use of neighbor tone actions, in particular the use of the incomplete neighbor tone. (An example of this may be seen in Figure 10 on the last beat of measure 8, given emphasis with a fermata.) In fact, much of the dissonance in Ponce's music is due to neighbor note (or auxiliary) actions. This line of discussion will be covered in more detail in Chapter IV.

Theme

The theme of Theme Varie et Finale is cast in classical variation theme structure, with some modification. The first part of the theme is the traditional binary form: an eight measure period with repeat. The second part of the theme, however, is only four measures in length and is without repeat.

||: 8 measures :|| 4 measures ||

The theme's harmonic sequence (or progression) serves as the basis for the variations that follow. The harmonic progression is a commonly employed minor key chord sequence:

1 - IV - VII - III - VI - ii - V7 - 1

29. Malmstrom, op. cit., p. 75.
Ponce takes this basic sequence and, as seen in both Table I and Figure 27, alters it to fit the phrase structure of the theme. The first part of the theme follows the sequence to the IV chord in G major (VI in E minor). Ponce takes this chord (measures 5-6) and by enharmonically spelling the implied Bb as A#, makes it a dominant augmented sixth chord (in this case a French sixth) in B major. After ending the first part of the theme with a cadence in B major, Ponce returns to E minor for the final four measures. The sequence is rejoined in measure 10 with the same chord used in measure 5 to depart from it. Ponce replaces the E with a D, however, and the chord now functions as a dominant eleventh of the Neapolitan (VII/N in Table I).

Andante un poco mosso

Fig. 27—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, theme, measures 1-12.
TABLE I

HARMONIC DIAGRAM: THEME AND VARIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Variations I, III, IV, V</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
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<tr>
<th>Variation II</th>
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<tr>
<td>E-D</td>
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<tr>
<td>F-Eb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gb-F</td>
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<tr>
<td>V⁺</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>V⁺</td>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv/7</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<th>Variation VI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
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37
Two other aspects besides the harmonic sequence serve as foundations for the following variations, the bass progression and motivic patterns. The bass progression seen in the theme in Figure 27, which is made up of the root notes of the harmonic progression, is seen relatively unaltered in all of the variations except Variation II. Motivic patterns found in the theme serve as a basis for thematic material in the variations. In measure 1 of the theme, two distinct motivic may be found. In the top voice a motive of a descending minor third from G to E is seen, while in the inner voice an oscillatory pattern of E to D is present. Motivic relationships play an important part in providing structural unity within the overall work, and from these two motives is derived much of the thematic material of not only the variations but also the finale.

The oscillatory pattern of E to D and its various manifestations throughout the theme demonstrate the important role that neighbor note actions will play in Theme Varie et Finale. This is especially true in the final four measures of the theme, in which the placement of chromatic lower neighbors gives these tones the sense of being chord tones. The extensive use of neighbor tones in this sections helps create a descending chromatic line in the top voice. More conventional neighbor note actions may be seen in the suspension like figures in measures 2 and 4.
Variation I

The basic harmonies and phrase structure of the theme is seen virtually unchanged in Variation I. This variation, which is rhythmic in character, presents the motive of a minor third in the melodic line over a series of quick, pulsating rhythmic patterns (Figure 28). Some points of interest in the first section include the absence of the neighboring A# of the theme in measure 3 and the emphasis on the repeated A in measures 5-6 against the A# of the augmented sixth chord.

![Fig. 28--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation I, measures 1-8.](image)

In the second part of the variation, the chords are identical to the second part of the theme but the use of neighbor note is somewhat different. Here, the use of both chromatic lower and upper neighbors to the chord tones in the melodic line is observed (Figure 29).

![Fig. 29--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation I, measures 9-12](image)
Variation II

Variation II is a harmonic departure from the theme and from Variation I. A change of key and mode is made from E minor to C major. More importantly, the harmonic sequence of the theme is departed from, being present only in the second part of the variation.

Variation II is actually a short fugal section which uses the oscillatory motive of E to D as its subject. The opening measures in Figure 30 shows the first statement of the subject in the middle voice followed by a real answer an octave higher over a V-I statement in F. This same subject and answer is repeated a half step higher in Gb, beginning a short sequence upwards in which the subject is seen in fragmentation. This sequence moves to C and then through C# to a V-I statement in G that concludes the first section. In the final four measures, a short stretto may be seen in which the fragmented subject is observed in imitation between the outer voices. Here, the original harmonic sequence of the theme returns, although in C rather than in E.

Fig. 30--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation II measures 1-10.
The V-I statements in the bass are emphasized by Ponce's use of rhythm in this variation. Although the time signature is 3/4, the metric accent of the motive gives the feeling of either 2/4 or 4/4 throughout. Each V-I progression in the bass is emphasized by the use of two quarter notes in succession, while in the rest of the variation alternation of quarter and eighth notes is the rule.

Variation III

Variation III returns to the original key (E minor), harmonic sequence, and phrase structure of the theme and Variation I. The melodic line of this variation is written for the most part in parallel thirds, a characteristic device of Mexican folk music cited on page 16 of Chapter II.

The oscillatory pattern is again used as a motive, but in a different fashion. The motive is compressed both rhythmically and intervallically, from a major second to a minor second. The compressed motive is used to form a melodic line, in thirds, made up of chord tones and and their chromatic lower neighbors. Metric placement of the chromatic lower neighbor tones is used to emphasize their dissonance. In Figure 31, the oscillatory

Fig. 31--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation III, measures 1-3.
motive (indicated in brackets) features the chromatic lower neighbor tied over into each strong beat. In Figure 32, the opening up of the melodic texture into sixths and fourths is accompanied by the appearance of chromatic upper neighbor tones as well. Figure 33 shows how added chord tones in the inner voice on weak beats help create intervals of fifths and tritones with the melodic line.

Fig. 32--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation III, measures 6-7.

Fig. 33--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation III, measures 9-11.

Variation IV

In Variation IV, a return of the minor third motive is seen in the arpeggiated melodic line. Both the ascending and descending minor third are seen. This melodic line is stated over repeated ostinato-like figures in the bass in Figure 34. In Figure 35, from the second part of the variation, a harmonic
texture reminiscent of Variation III is seen in which both lower and upper neighbor tones are used in the melodic line.

**VAR. IV Agitato**

![Musical notation for Variation IV]

*Fig. 34--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation IV, measures 1-4.*

![Musical notation for Variation IV measures 17-20]

*Fig. 35--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation IV, measures 17-20.*

The fast tempo of the variation forces a doubling of the phrase structure from eight measures plus four measures to sixteen measures plus eight measures.

**Variation V**

A return to the original phrase structure of eight measures plus four measures is seen in Variation V. The minor third motive is outlined by a triplet figure in the melodic line (Figure 36) which, together with repeated chordal figures, gives this variation the character of a march. (This triplet figure will later resurface in the finale, as the main theme of the
coda.) As in all of the previous variations except for Variation II, the original harmonic sequence of the theme remains intact.

**VAR. V Vivace**

![Music notation for Variation V](image)

Fig. 36—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation V, measures 1-4.

**Variation VI**

The final variation is marked by a change of mode from E minor to E major. The phrase structure is expanded to twelve measures plus eight measures.

In Variation VI, a slow, lyric theme marked expressivo is formed in which the minor third motive—now changed to a major third—is seen in augmentation. The fundamental bass is unchanged, but the harmonic sequence is altered somewhat due to the change of mode. The dominant augmented seen in the original theme is replaced by a $11^7$ chord in E major. A temporary change of mode back to minor marks the beginning of the second part of the variation.

**VAR. VI Molto più lento**

![Music notation for Variation VI](image)

Fig. 37—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, Variation VI, measures 1-4.
Finale

The concluding finale to Theme Varie et Finale is in overall sonata form (Table II). The overall key of the movement is E minor. The tempo is brisk, marked vivo scherzando.

The opening theme of the movement--theme A--is seen in Figure 38. Marked deciso, this theme is a combination of the minor third motive with the oscillatory pattern. A rhythmic pattern in 3/8 derived from the oscillatory motive characterizes the new theme:

![Theme A Notation](image)

Theme A states an E minor chord for four measures and then proceeds to a dominant pedal on B for four more measures. Over this pedal, a progression of a-b-c-G-a appears. The last four measures of the theme are marked by a scalar motive moving upward from the pedal on B, utilizing the phrygian mode on B. A

![Fig. 38--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 1-12.](image)
TABLE II

FORM OF THE FINALE

Exposition: (60 measures)

A 1-12
Transitory themes 13-34
B 35-44
Transition from B 45-60

Development: (48 measures)

C(a) 61-84
C(b) 85-108

Recapitulation: (54 measures)

A 109-120
Transitory themes 121-130
C(a) 131-138
B 139-148
New transition theme (theme from Variation V)

Coda: (43 measures)

Part I (theme from Variation V) 163-186
Part II (theme from Variation V) 187-205

Key

e
a, B, C#
a#
E, g#, a#
e, a, F, G#
C, B, F

e
B
a
F, f# to B

e
E
rhythmic reversal of the pattern in 3/8 is seen in this scalar motive, which will later reappear as theme B.

Measure 13 begins a transition from theme A. Two measures of A minor are followed by two measures of an F ninth chord that then moves unexpectedly to a C# seventh. This short transition leads in turn to a larger transition section that, for the purpose of this study, will be labeled as the transitory theme.

The transitory theme is sixteen measures long, consisting of two eight measure periods. In Figure 39, the first eight measures of the transitory theme are seen. This excerpt consists of two distinct parts. In the first part, the minor third motive from the theme and variations may be seen as reflected in the incomplete thirteenth chords that glissando down a minor third from D to B and then A to F#. In the second part of this excerpt, three measures of a pedal on B lead to a measure on E. The second eight measures of the transitory theme is virtually identical to the first eight measures, but transposed up a whole step to C#. The ending of this section is different, however, in that the C# pedal resolves down a minor third to A#, the key of theme B.

Theme B begins in measure 35 (Figure 40) with the scalar motive seen at the end of theme A. This theme uses the phrygian mode on A#, and is ten measures in length. The B major chord in measure 36 that gives the feeling of the Neapolitan may be seen as an upper neighbor structure to the tonic on A#.
Fig. 39--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 19-27.

Fig. 40--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 35-39.

The transition to the development begins in measure 45. The beginning motive of theme B is stated over an E major chord, starting a series of repeated chords on E that move up a half step to F. Progressions of repeated chords of g# to A and then to a# are seen. The section in a# concludes the exposition with a single note C# in the melodic line.

The development section begins with a series of pedal points, a favorite device of Ponce for creating harmonic inactivity or prolongation. A new theme, theme C(a), appears over an eight measure pedal on E (Figure 41). Chords outlined over this pedal include D, E, and d. This theme is characterized by both a dotted rhythm motive in measure 61 and a triplet
in measure 65. This theme is repeated over first a four measure pedal on A and then over a four measure pedal on F. From there, the dotted rhythm motive becomes an ostinato figure over a chromatically moving bass progression of G#-A-G#-G -F#-G -E in measures 77-84.

Fig. 41--Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 61-68.

A second development theme, theme C(b), is introduced in measure 85 (Figure 42). The beginning of this theme bears an interesting resemblance to the opening measures of another work for guitar by Ponce, the Preludio in E (Figure 43). Theme C(b) begins in C and then moves to a pedal on B and then Bb. This theme begins to fragment with the introduction of seconds into the melodic texture. The development section ends with eight measures of theme C(b) in fragmentation in F major, the Neapolitan of E minor. The last measure of this section sees a N-V7 cadence in E minor.

The recapitulation has several changes from the exposition. The twelve measures of theme A are unchanged, but the short
transition that follows in the exposition is omitted in the recapitulation. The transitory theme (Figure 44) is reduced to eight measures and is altered to include an octave motive of B to C. Next a return of theme C(a) from the development is seen over its original pedal on E. Harmonies over this pedal, however, are transposed up a fifth to A, B, and a.
After this, in measure 139, a restatement of theme B is made, but in A rather than in A#. The theme is otherwise unchanged in form or phrase length.

Another transition from the B, this time to the coda, begins in measure 149 (Figure 45). This transition begins with the triplet motive used originally in Variation V. The transition is fourteen measures in length, and is in an overall N-V-I progression in E minor. Ponce expands the progression into the following:

\[ N-ii-iv-II^+V-i \]

![Figure 45—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 149-154.](image)

The coda begins in measure 163 with the motive from Variation V in E minor. For the purpose of this study, this section of the coda will be called Part I. After four measures of E minor, a transition to the dominant is made using the augmented sixth chord from the theme and variations. But instead of proceeding to a \( I_6^4 \) chord in B major as before, the augmented sixth moves to a \( I_6^5 \) chord in E major in measure 175. This point marks the change of mode in the coda from minor to major and begins the transition to Part II of the coda. In the
transition to Part II, the last use of the Neapolitan is seen. First appearing as a chord over a bass note of B in measures 177-178, the Neapolitan is reduced to the notes F and A combined with the note B in octaves in measures 183-184 (Figure 46).

![Figure 46](image_url)

**Fig. 46—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 181-188.**

Part II of the coda begins in measure 187 with the motive from Variation V in E major. The motives alternates between E major and G minor for eight measures. The final eleven measures of the finale are all E major, ending with an upward scalar figure to a trill on D# (Figure 47).

![Figure 47](image_url)

**Figure 47—Ponce, Theme Varie et Finale, finale, measures 199-205.**
Chapter IV

ASPECTS OF STRUCTURAL COHERENCE
IN THEME VARIE ET FINALE

A survey of harmonic materials as conducted in Chapter III reveals surface aspects of the harmonic language Ponce uses in Theme Varie et Finale. But a deeper investigation into the work by means of reductive analysis reveals broader aspects of structure that serve to unify the work and provide it with a sense of tonal coherence. This chapter will explore the question of tonal coherence by identifying some basic aspects of structure found in this work and showing how they interrelate.

Throughout Ponce's music and especially in his later works, a vivid sense of organic structure may be seen. One aspect that Ponce uses to achieve this is the use of motives as a unifying device. Motives and bits of thematic material appear and reappear in different guises throughout a work, giving an overall feeling of coherence. The ideas on thematic development that Ponce learned from Paul Dukas during his years in Paris could be seen as important influences in this regard. Other aspects of structure that pervade Ponce's harmonic practice include the use of auxiliary actions and characteristic types of root movements in his music. All of these aspects are observed within different levels of structure as not only providing overall coherence, but also as governing the ebb and flow of momentum within the work. Therefore, discussion will center on
these three aspects of structure—motives, auxiliary actions, and root movements. The interrelation of these aspects within the overall tonal framework will be examined in a final discussion.

Motives

The use of motivic material as a unifying characteristic with its relation to harmonic materials may be seen in Theme Varie et Finale. In this work, two important motives may be found in the opening measures of the theme (Figure 48). The first motive is a descending minor third from G to E in the top voice, while the second motive is an oscillatory pattern of E to D. From these two motives may be derived much of the linear material of the variations and finale.

![Minor third motive](image1)

![Oscillatory pattern](image2)

Fig. 48—Motives from theme.

These two motives are easily detectable on a surface level within the variations. The minor third motive may be seen as the basis of four of the variations. In Variation I, the minor
third motive appears over repeated chords (Figure 23). Ascending and descending minor thirds form the melodic line found in Variation IV (Figure 34). In Variation V, the descending minor third is outlined by a triplet figure that later reappears in the coda of the finale (Figure 36). Variation VI shows a descending major third in augmentation in the melodic line (Figure 37). In the main theme of the finale, the minor third motive is combined with the oscillatory pattern (Figure 49).

![Figure 49--Main theme of finale.](image)

The oscillatory pattern may be seen as the basis for the remaining two variations. In Variation II, this motive serves as the subject of a short fugal section (Figure 30). Variation III sees the oscillatory pattern truncated into an interval of a minor second, which is used to form a melodic line of chord tones and chromatic lower neighbor tones (Figure 31).

The two motives are also seen in deeper levels of structure throughout the entire work, aspects of which will be more fully covered in later discussions. A prominent characteristic of the oscillatory pattern, the use of neighbor tones, leads to the next discussion on the use of auxiliary actions.
Auxiliary Actions

Neighbor tones are a prominent feature in Ponce's harmonic vocabulary. Neighbor tones manifest themselves not only as individual tones, but also as neighboring chords and even neighboring tonal areas within the overall structure. For the purpose of this study, this broader use of neighbor tones will be defined as auxiliary actions.

Felix Salzer in *Structural Hearing* cites the use of neighboring tones and "embellishing motions" as a typical feature of impressionistic harmony. These devices play an important role in Ponce's harmony as well. Much of the dissonance in Ponce's music is due to auxiliary actions, in which harmonically clear tonal areas are given a dissonant quality by the use of neighbor tones. An example of this may be seen in the final four measures of the theme (Figure 27) where neighbor tones are prominent in the melodic line. This example also highlights a characteristic neighbor tone action favored by Ponce, the use of the incomplete neighbor tone (Figure 50).

![Incomplete neighbor tone](image)

Fig. 50--Incomplete neighbor tone.

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The oscillatory pattern of E to D is itself a neighbor tone action and serves a function typical of auxiliary actions, creating a sense of harmonic prolongation. On the surface level, such a feeling of prolongation is important to the ebb and flow of momentum. Other manifestations of neighbor tone actions will be observed in the discussions of root movement and tonal framework.

Root Movement

Three main types of root movements will be discussed in this section: root movement of a fifth, root movement of a minor third, and root movement of a tritone.

The traditional root movement of a fifth is present in the harmonic sequence of the theme, which is essentially a cycle of fifths progression. But traditional V-I progressions are also used in areas where Ponce wishes to establish a feeling of tonal mobility. An example of this is seen in the first six measures of Variation II (Figure 30) in which V-I progressions are used to state different tonal levels. Figure 51 shows a reduction of this excerpt, in which the three V-I progressions are seen.

Fig. 51—V-I progressions in Variation II.
The idea of the minor third that is seen as a motive in this work is also seen on a deeper level as a frequently employed root movement in the finale. This root movement of a minor third allows Ponce to modulate to third related keys, generating a considerable amount of tonal momentum. Two striking examples of root movement of a minor third down come from the transition between themes A and B of the finale. In the first example (Figure 39), the use of chordal glissandi from D to B and then A to F# is used to establish a new tonal level on B. This same device is repeated up a whole step to create another tonal level, this time on C#. At the end of this second tonal level, the bass moves from C# to A—the key of theme B (Figure 52). Figure 52 shows a reduction of this transition area, in which the relation between these two prominent root movements may be seen on a deeper level.

![Fig. 52--Reduction, transition area from finale.](image)

Root movement of a tritone is frequently present, especially at cadences involving the Neapolitan (N-V-I cadences). This is due to the fact that Ponce consistently spells the Neapolitan chord in root position in these cadences. N-V-I
cadences may be found throughout not only the theme and variations, but also throughout the tonal structure of the finale. The tritone itself is transformed into a motivic idea in the coda (Figure 53).

![Fig. 53--Tritone motive from finale.](image)

**Tonal Framework**

The interrelation of motivic ideas, auxiliary actions, and certain root relationships may be seen in the overall tonal framework through reductive analysis. A final discussion will attempt to show how these aspects of structure relate in giving overall coherence to the different levels of structure in the work.

The basic tonal framework of *Theme Varie et Finale* is the key of E minor at the foundation of a theme and variations form. Within this larger form, the work falls into formal parts: the form of the theme with its variations, and the form of the finale. Because most of the variations follow the harmonic pattern of the theme, the reduction seen in Figure 54 represents not only the theme but also all but one of the variations. The one variation that makes a significant departure from the
harmonic structure of the theme, Variation II, is seen in its own reduction in Figure 55.

The tonal framework of the theme follows the pattern cited previously in Table I of Chapter III. In Figure 54, two levels of reduction are seen. Level A, the background, gives only the basic melodic and bass structure. Level B, the middleground, shows all of the various chords of the harmonic sequence within the overall structure. The reduction highlights the auxiliary actions found in the theme by showing how the chords of the sequence act as neighboring structures to elements of the fundamental line. For example, at the end of the first part of the theme the movement of E to F# in the melodic line and C to B in the bass is seen (indicated by arrows). Within this area—an overall augmented sixth to dominant progression—the dominant 6 chord followed by the secondary dominant form chromatic lower neighbor chords to the augmented sixth (which itself is a neighboring chord action to the dominant). Other prominent neighbor tone actions are seen in the melodic line of the second part of the theme, with its extensive use of chromatic lower neighbors. N-V-I cadences, which may be seen as an overall neighboring chord action, are marked with brackets below.

Figure 51 shows the reduction of the first six measures of Variation II. (The last four measures return to the original harmonic sequence of the theme.) The reduction of this fugal passage reveals an underlying structure not seen before in the discussion of this excerpt in Chapter III. Two important
aspects of this structure are shown in this reduction: a prolongation of the tonal center C, and a melodic arpeggiation of E to G. The prolongation of C in the bass is indicated by a dotted line connecting the two bass notes on C. This prolongation is accomplished by the use of the melodic arpeggiation of E to G, which is seen in the bass and middle voices as well as in the top voice. All three statements of this arpeggiation of E to G are filled with passing tones of F and F#. All melodic

Fig. 54--Reduction of theme.

Fig. 55--Reduction, Variation II
tones of this upward step pattern have auxiliaries, provided much of the time by the oscillatory pattern (indicated by brackets above the staff).

The reduction of the finale may be seen in Figures 56 and 57. In Figure 56, a middleground reduction is seen in which important chord voicings and tonal areas are shown within the overall tonal structure. In Figure 57, a somewhat more reduced version of Figure 56 is seen in which motives of a third, auxiliary actions, and tritones are marked with brackets.

In the reductions of the finale, the extensive use of neighbor tone actions is apparent. In the melodic line of the exposition, A#, C#, and C are used as neighbor tones to the B of the fundamental line. Other neighbor tone actions are seen in the neighboring chords found throughout the movement, particularly chromatic upper neighbor chords.

The motive of a third is present in both the melodic line and in the bass. In the melodic line, the motive of a third is used in some prolongation patterns from tones of the fundamental line (for example: E down to C, and B up to D). Root movement of a third in the bass has the opposite effect, however, as it is used to create quick tonal shifts and generate momentum. Root movement of a third may be seen not only in surface actions such as the chordal glissandi, but also in deeper levels of structure such as the two keys seen in the second part of the coda—E major and G minor.
Exposition: A | transition | B

Development:

Recapitulation:

Fig. 56—Reduction, finale.
\[ I = \text{am do} \]

Minor third oscillatory pattern tritone

Fig. 57--Aspects of structure, finale
Root movement of a tritone is also an aspect found in different levels of structure within the finale. As a surface level device, root movement of a tritone is found in areas suggesting N-V-I cadences. Root movement of a tritone is also present on a deeper level, however, as may be seen in the exposition. Within the exposition, the overall bass progression of E to A# that connects themes A and B is seen on a smaller scale in the transition that leads from theme B to the beginning of the development.

Summary

Aspects of structure as found in reductive analysis of Theme Varie et Finale serve to organically unify the work. Motivic relationships are used as a unifying factor throughout the whole of the work. Auxiliary or neighbor tone actions are extensively used in creating dissonance in clearly tonal areas and providing harmonic prolongation. Root movements of a fifth, third, and tritone are found throughout the work, relating to both motivic ideas and auxiliary actions. Finally, the inter-relation of all of these aspects in the overall tonal framework is revealed through reductive techniques.
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Notes with Recordings