Purposes and Necessity of Length in the First Movements of Franz Schubert’s Last Three Piano Sonatas

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‘Franz Schubert’s music has always been prized for what Robert Schumann called its heavenly lengths - by which Schumann meant not only the breadth of Schubert's beautiful melodies, but also the wealth of thematic materials, the myriad harmonic nuances, and the breathtaking scope of design exhibited in Schubert's compositions.’

D. 958, 1. Movement, Beginning of exposition
Melodic gesture of bars 14-15 in the B part of the ABA form

Melody of the second theme

Melody starting the second movement
A part of the ABA’ form – second theme group

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‘Having exhausted the traditional developmental *fugato* here, Schubert must find an alternative compositional strategy for his actual development section, and his solution is stunning: a musette-like theme in the high register that features oscillation between C major and B major.’

D. 960, 1. Movement, Beginning of exposition

Molto moderato
‘We first hear Gb as a moment of disjunction, a trill in the lowest register and with the softest dynamics (m. 8). It emerges from the depths of the half cadence that ends the main theme’s antecedent phrase and delays the appearance of the answering consequent … At measures 20–35, Gb is stabilized with a closed, lyrical theme that seems to function as the middle section of a ternary form.’

Bb major – main tonality
Sixth lowered degree of Bb: Gb – tonality of the B part in the ABA´ form
Enharmonic of Gb: F# - second tonality of the exposition

F major – third tonality of the exposition
Sixth lowered degree of F: Db
Enharmonic of Db: C# - tonality of the beginning of the development and tonality of the second movement
‘Schubert would not entirely be Schubert without the temporal expansion of his music; yet, the explanation of its specificity cannot be merely quantitative – it has to be qualitative too.’