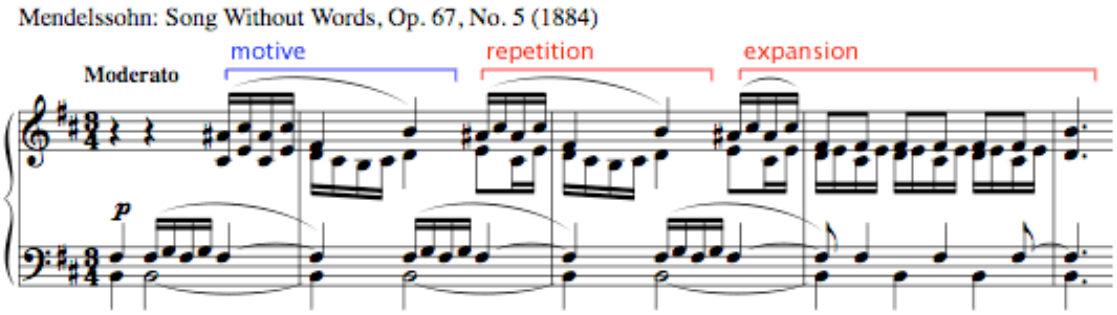
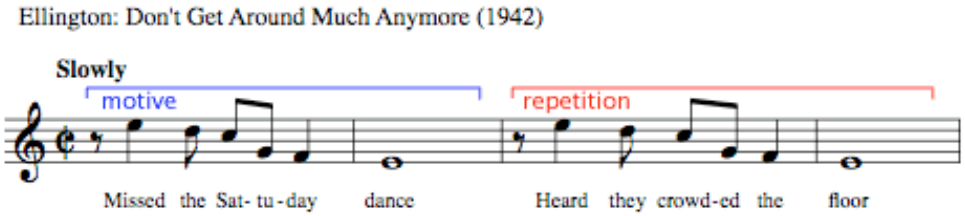
Music 231
Motive Development Techniques, part 1

New Material	
Fourteen motive development techniques:	
Part 1 (this document) * repetition * sequence * interval change * rhythm change * fragmentation * extension * expansion	**Part 2** * compression * inversion * interversion * diminution * augmentation * ornamentation * thinning

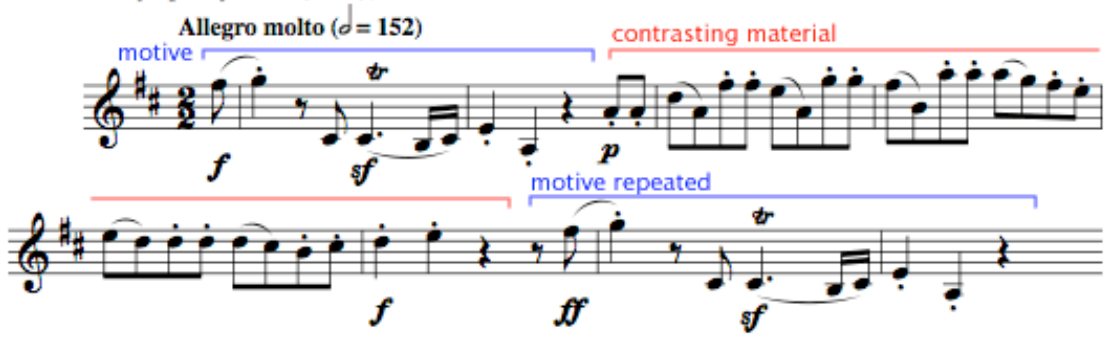
Techniques of motive development are numerous, ranging from simple repetition to complex combinations of variations. We will examine fourteen basic techniques and analyze examples using them individually and in combination. As part of the definition of each variation type, note that some techniques change the length of the motive, while others do not.

Repetition
Repetition is the simplest and one of the most prevalent kinds of motive development. Repetition is usually immediate, but may be preceded by intervening material. [motive length: same as original]





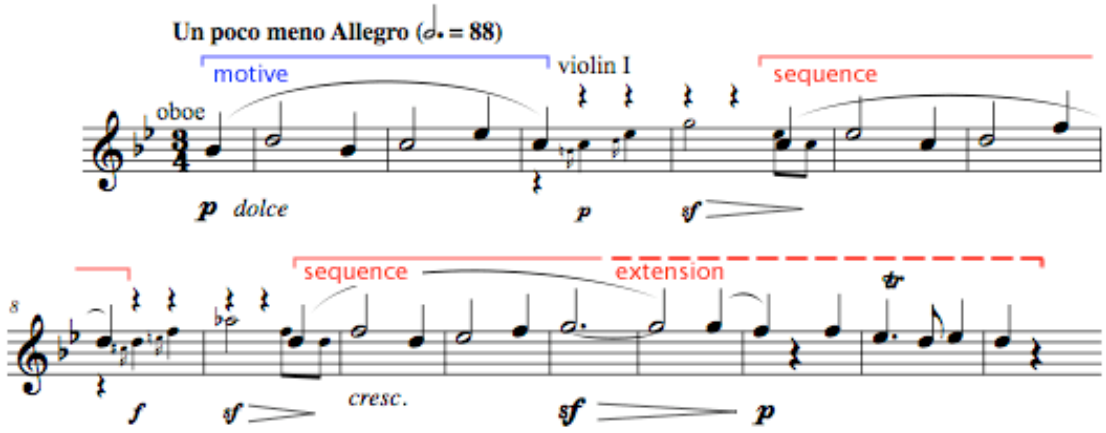
Beethoven: Symphony No. 2 (1802), 4th Movement



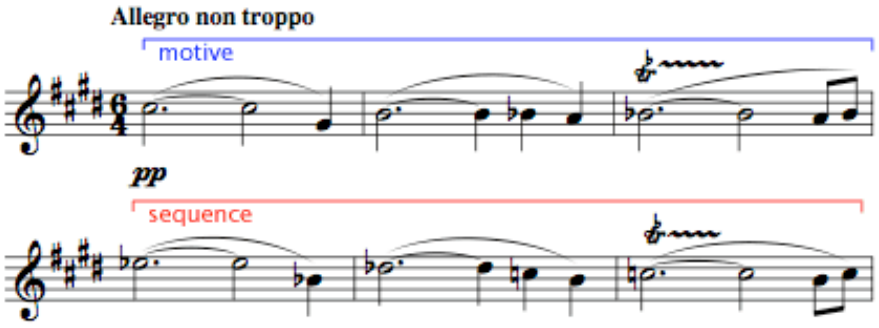
Sequence
The motive is repeated at another pitch level. In most common-practice music, the motive is transposed tonally, i.e. without chromatic alterations. The result is that intervals may change quality (but not number). [motive length: same as original]

In the Beethoven example below, the motive's opening major third becomes a minor third in the sequences that follow. Similarly, the interval between the third and fourth notes is a major second in the motive and first sequence, but a minor second in the final sequence. The example from Scheherazade is a literal sequence; every tone has been transposed a major second (sometimes written as a diminished third) higher.

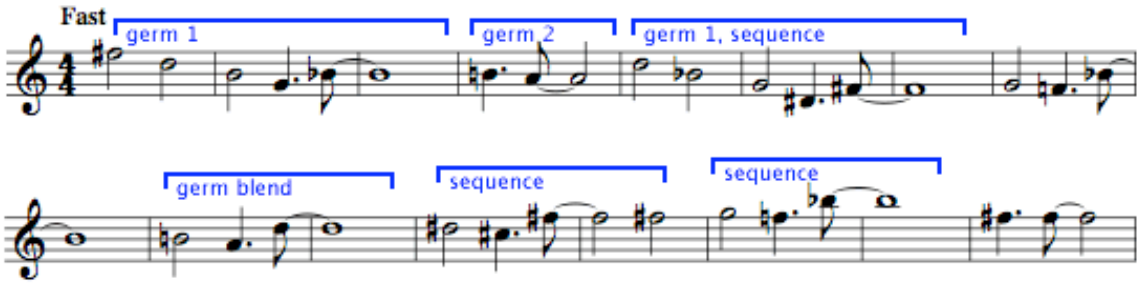
Beethoven: Symphony No. 4 (1806) Trio from the Minuet



Rimsky-Korsakov: Scheherazade, Op. 35 (1900)

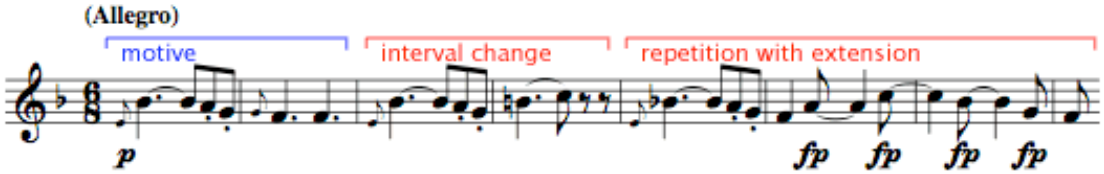


John Coltrane: Giant Steps (1960)



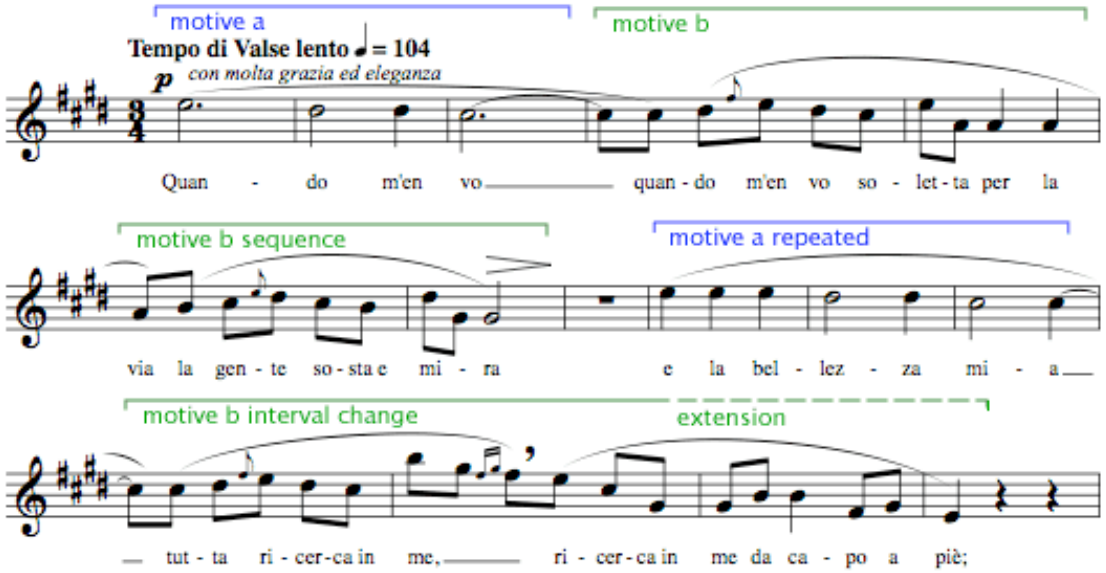
Interval change
The most common interval change occurs at the end of a otherwise literal motive repetition. But they can also occur anywhere in a motive and include one or several intervals. [motive length: same as original]

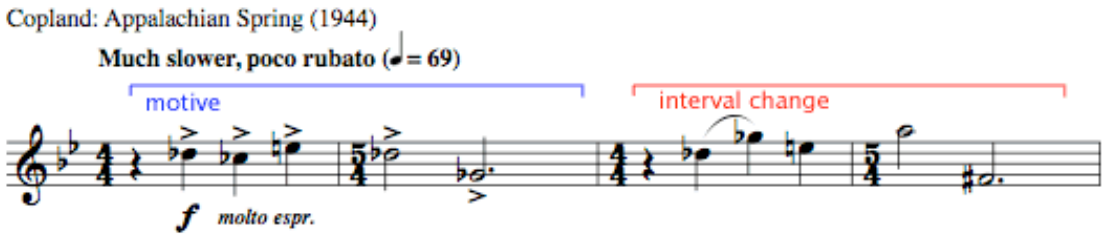
Mozart: Piano Sonata in F, K 332 (1778)



Brubeck: Blue Rondo a la Turk (1958)

Puccini: Quando m'en vo soletta, from La Bohème (1896)





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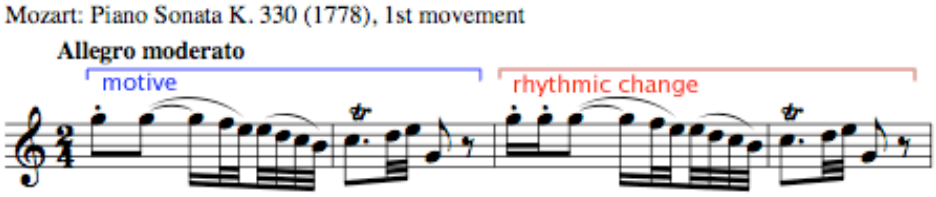
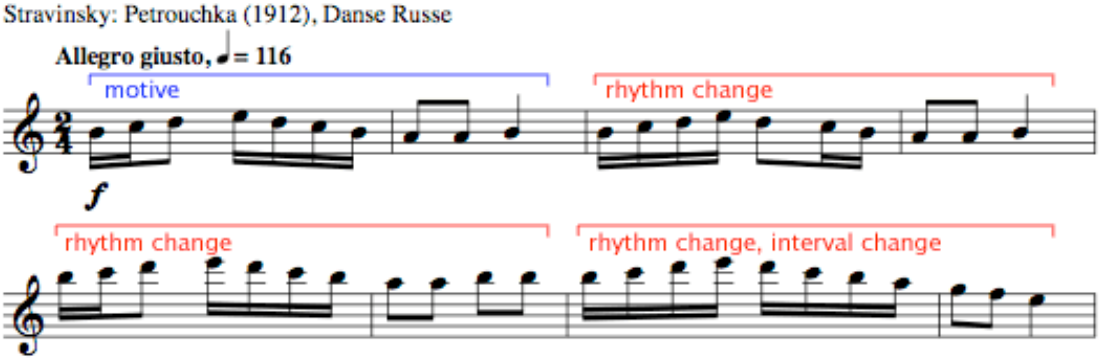
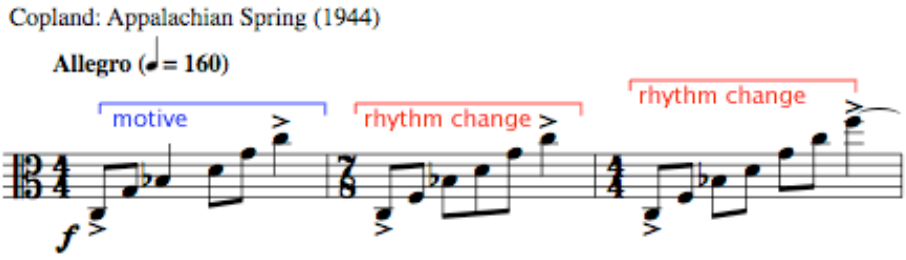
Rhythm change
Rhythm changes add a subtle change to a motive. [motive length: same as original]

In the Mozart example below, the added sixteenth notes give the third bar an extra push forward. The rhythm alteration in the Stravinsky moves second beat accent between D and E. Copland uses rhythmic changes to add more motion to each consecutive measure.



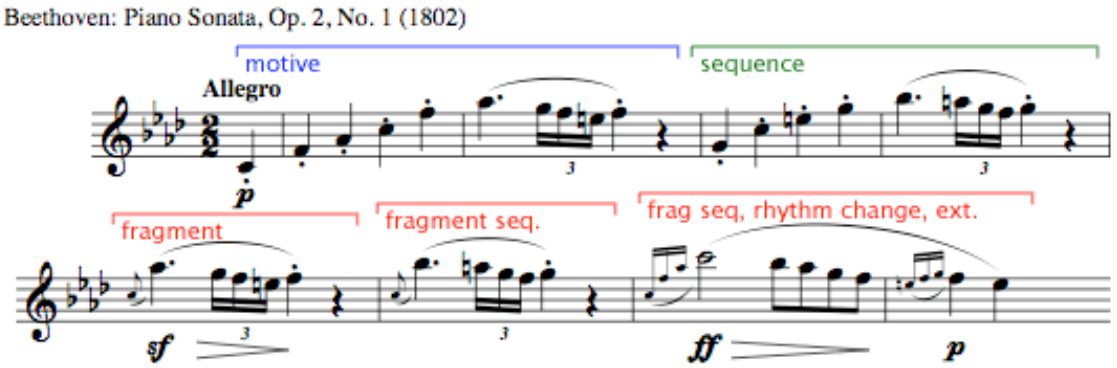




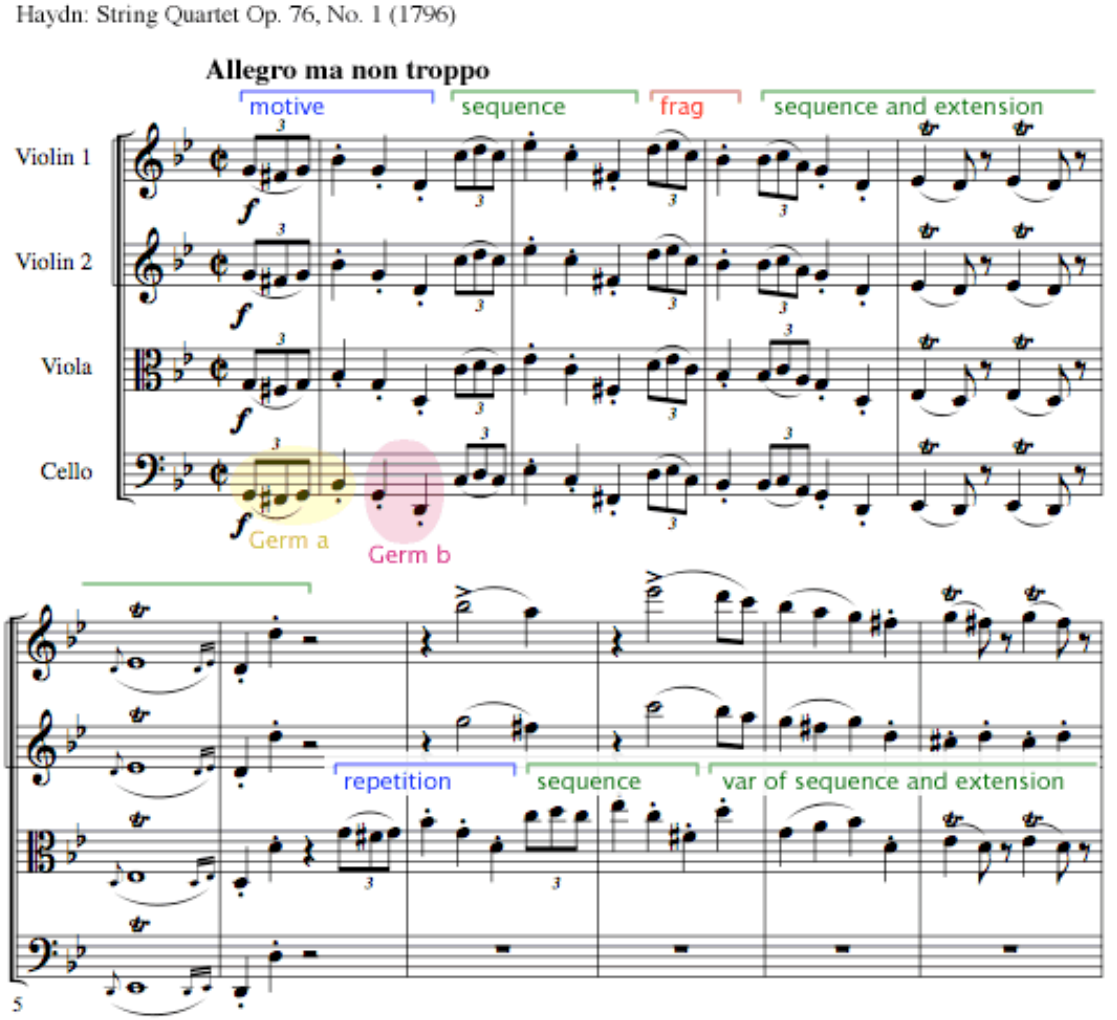
Fragmentation
One germ of a motive may be repeated and varied separately from the rest of the motive. [motive length: shorter than original]

This is central to the music Haydn and Beethoven, and is found in the music of every common-practice composer.

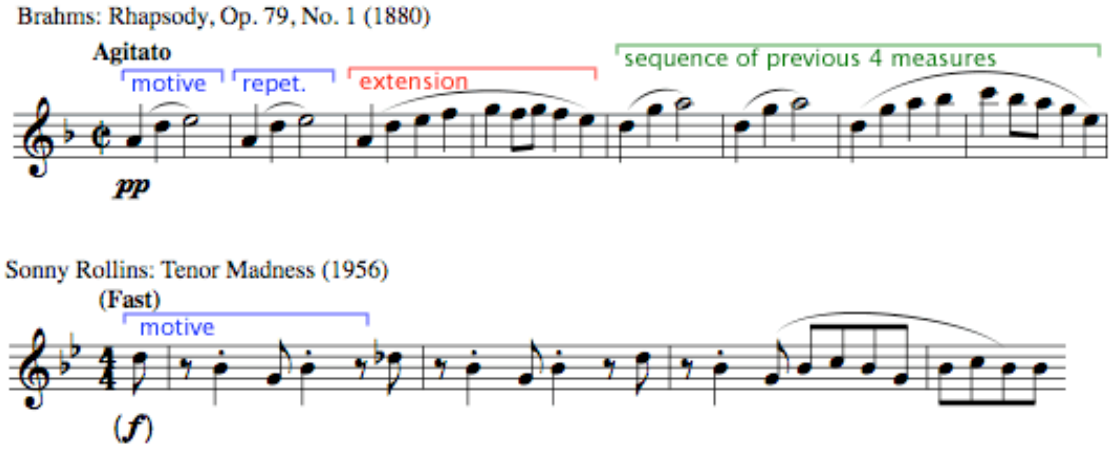
Fragmentation, example 1



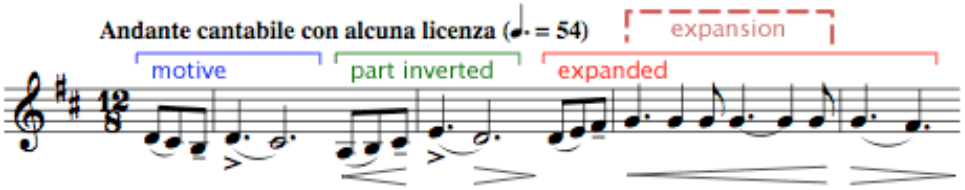
Fragmentation, example 2



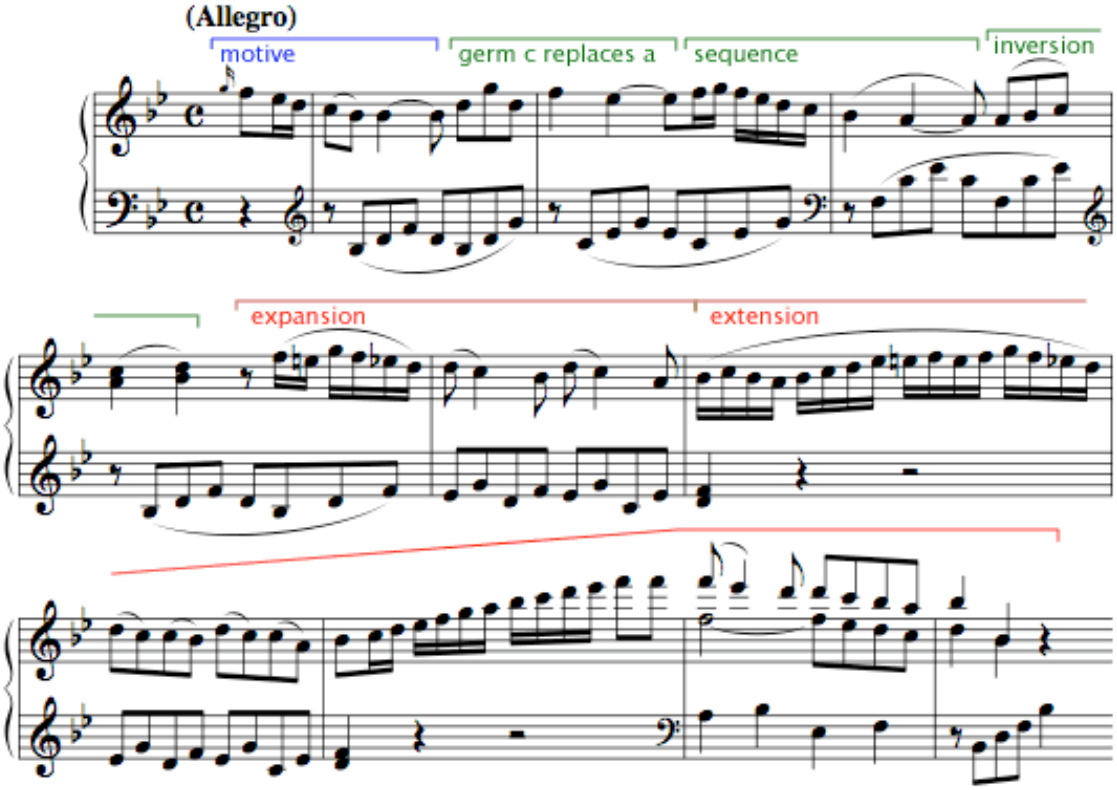
Extension and Expansion
Extension and expansion both involve lengthening the motive. If new material (or fragments, etc.) *comes before* the final note, it is referred to as an expansion. If new material *begins* with the final note, delaying the expected cadence, it is referred to as an extension. [motive length: longer than original]



Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 5 (1888)



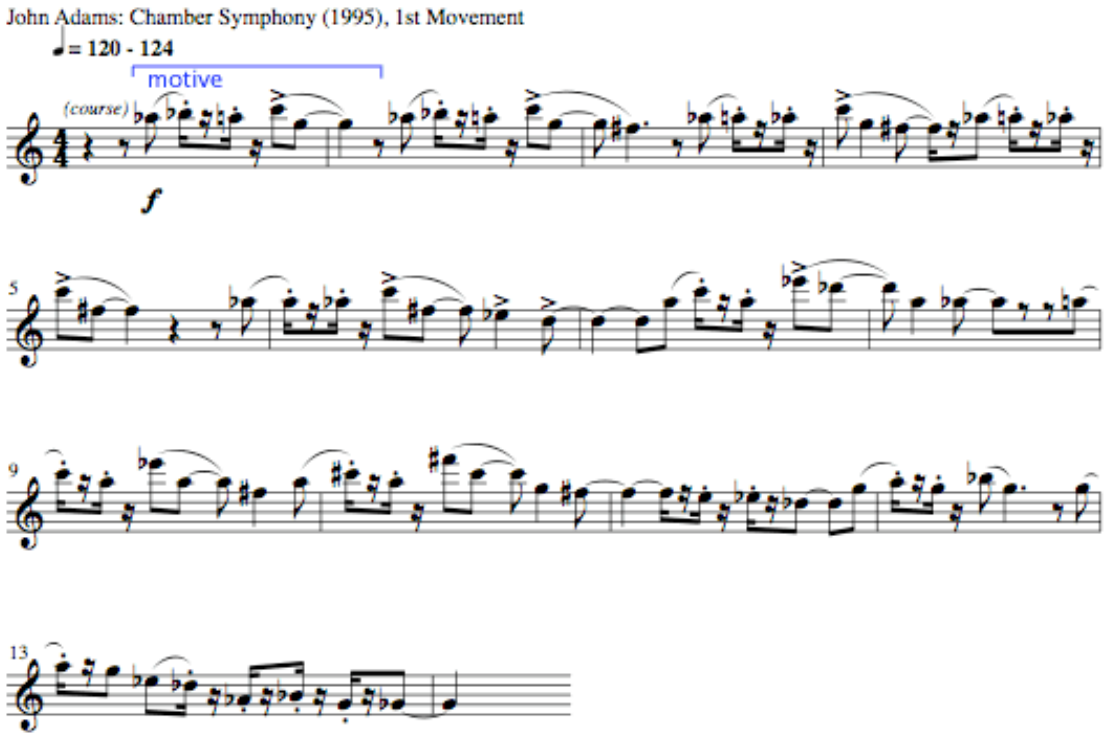
Mozart: Piano Sonata K 333 (1778)



Other examples:
1 Expansion in: Mendelssohn, Song Without Words, Op. 67, No. 5, above
2 Extension in: Beethoven, Symphony No. 4, Trio from the Minuet, above
3 Extension in: Mozart, Piano Sonata, K332, above

The E-flat clarinet solo in the first movement of John Adam's Chamber Symphony provides a particularly interesting use of motive extensions. Note the length in beats of each extended motive.

Extensions in John Adams CHAMBER SYMPHONY



Please note: the information on this page has been supplied by Dr. Ronald Caltabiano