Mozart's K. 331 sonata – rounded binary form

We'll analyze the theme from the first movement of Mozart's K. 331 piano sonata in A.

Analysis of first half

First, we'll do some harmonic analysis. In bar 1, we start with I and can take the entire bar to be in the same chord.

Bar 2 starts with a V in first inversion, but the D in the treble makes this a seventh chord. We treat this D as a chord tone rather than a NCT because it lasts a long time and is a significant part of the melody. Also, we leap into and out of the D, which isn't done with a NCT.

Although the D is the fourth scale degree which normally would be resolved down by a step, the leap down to the tonic is ok here as this is piano writing where some of the vocal rules can be relaxed.

Bar 3 uses a new progression, with a vi\(^7\) going to V\(^6\). The main component of this first phrase is the set of parallel thirds between the bass and treble. Another structure central to the phrase is the common E that runs throughout the phrase.

In bar 4, there is a ii\(^6\) with the top E sixteenth note being an appoggiatura (leap into, step out) and the second sixteenth note (D) being a chord tone. This leads to a cadential I\(^6\)-V half-cadence. The harmony in bars 7 and 8 is the same as in bars 3 and 4, but at a faster tempo, and instead of ending on a V, we end on I for a PAC.

In both cases, the cadential I\(^6\) lasts longer than the V which follows it.

The form of this first section is A-A', that is, it splits into two sections that are the same except for the cadences at the end. This is another example of a parallel period form. The texture of this first section is homorhythmic homophony.
Analysis of second half

The second half (B section) should have some contrast with the first (A) half. We start with some new material and then return to material from the A half.

In bar 9, we start with I and then get a IV\(^6\) which is a pedal 6-4 since the bass note is repeated from the preceding I. In bar 11, we can include the D in the treble as a chord tone, making the chord a V\(^6\).

The second chord in bar 12 can be interpreted as a triad if we take the D# as the root, the F# as the third and the A as the fifth. As the triad is made up of two minor thirds, it is a diminished triad. In major, the only diminished triad is the leading tone (vii\(^6\)) triad. D# is the leading tone in E major, and E is the fifth up from A, so that makes this chord a vii\(^6\)/V.

The harmony from bar 13 to the start of 16 is the same as before. The third chord in bar 16 is a retardation suspension (04.07), Since the G# and B are held over from the preceding V and resolve to the A-C#, making the harmony here a I.

The second chord in bar 17 is a passing chord (02.01.01). We met this type of chord originally as a passing 6-4 going to a i\(^6\), but here the chord is a seventh chord in second inversion, giving a V\(^4\); it still resolves to a I\(^6\).

Rounded binary form

The overall structure of the piece is A-A'-B-A'. That is the first half consists of a parallel period, but the second half consists of a new theme (B) followed by a return to material from the first half. This form defines a rounded binary form.

The contrast between the first and second halves is that in part A, homorhythmic homophony is used, while in the second half, the left and right hands could be played by different instruments. To develop contrasts, look in the 'toolbox' of techniques to see what effects can be added to the music.