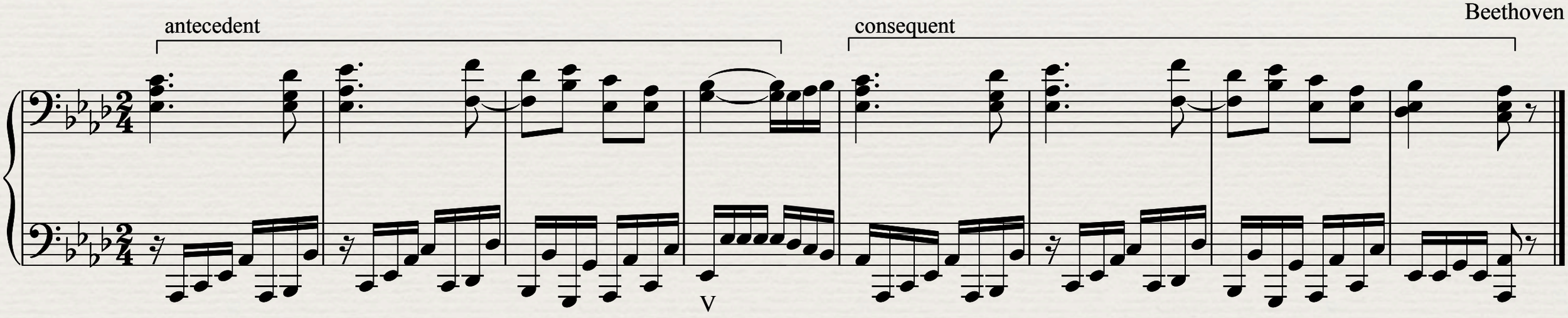
# The Period

## Two Phrases Become One Structure

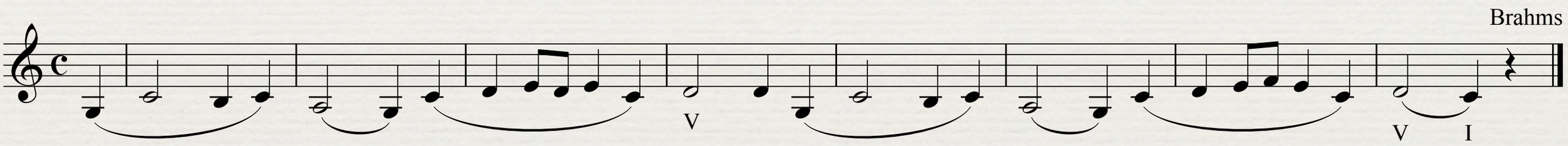
# Definition

A *period* consists of two phrases, joined together in a coherent succession. The two phrases are called the *antecedent* and the *consequent*.



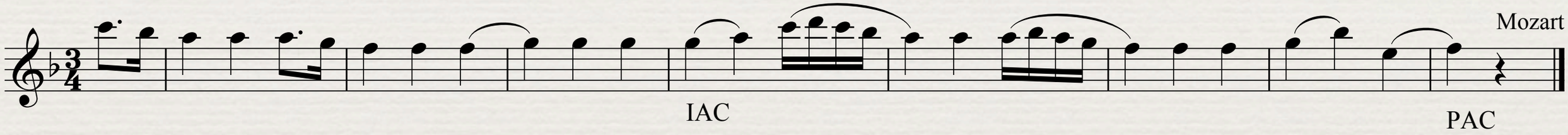
# The Antecedent

The antecedent usually ends in a half cadence of some sort.



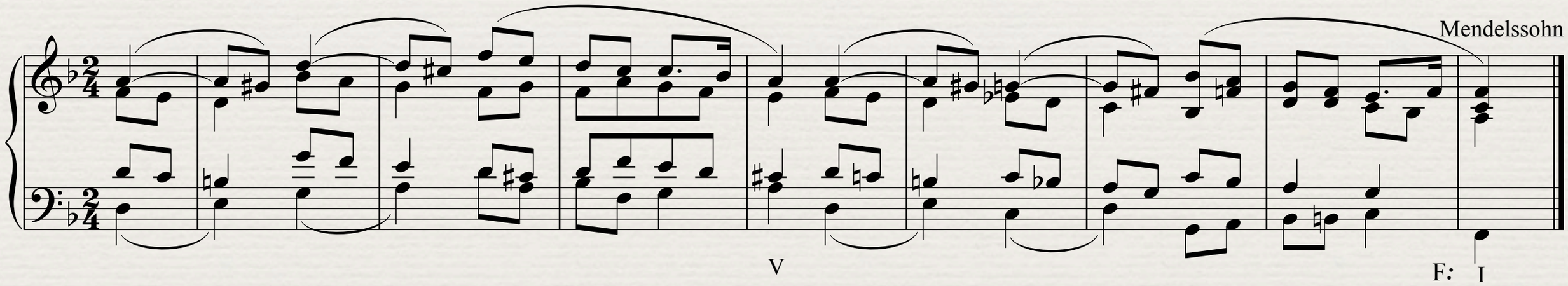
# The Antecedent

Sometimes the cadence can be authentic, if it is rhythmically weak:



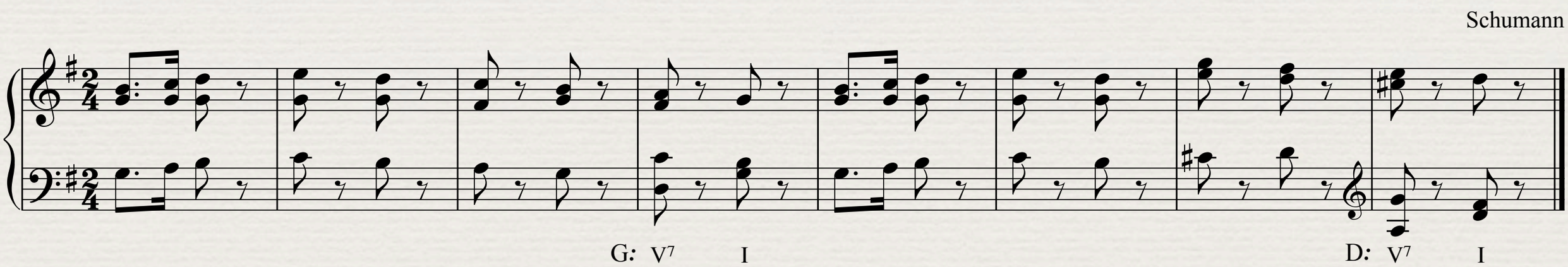
# The Antecedent

An antecedent may end with either a half or an authentic cadence if the consequent modulates. Here the antecedent ends in a half cadence:



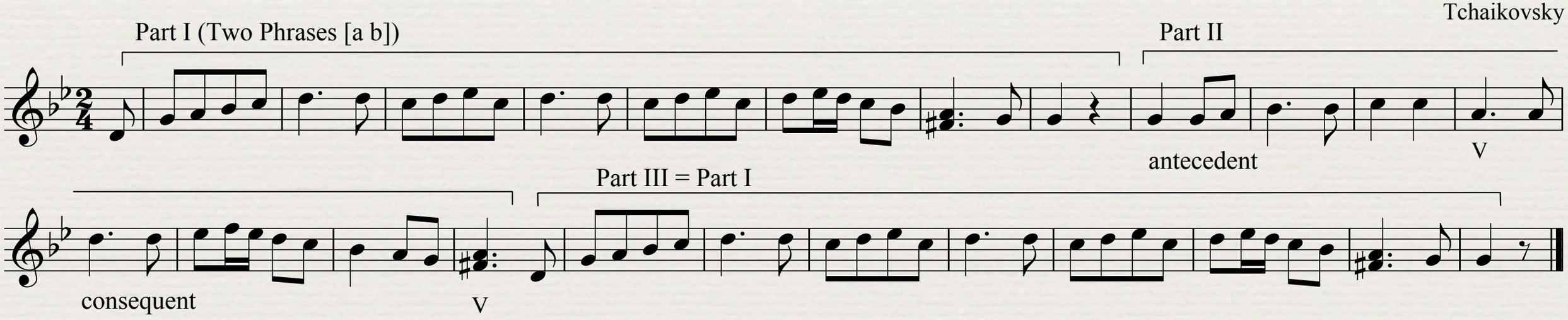
# The Antecedent

The resolution of a modulating consequent is strong enough so that the ear hears a period structure even if the antecedent ends on an authentic cadence:



# The Antecedent

There are even situations in which both antecedent and consequent end on half cadences—such as if the period is Part II (the middle section) of a three-part song form:



# The Consequent

As a rule the consequent ends in an authentic cadence, either in the original key or in a new key (in the case of a modulating period.)

In addition to the previous exception (when the period is Part II of a three-part song form) a consequent will end on a half cadence if it is part of the first half of a *double period* (a form which we'll cover later.)

# Types of Periods

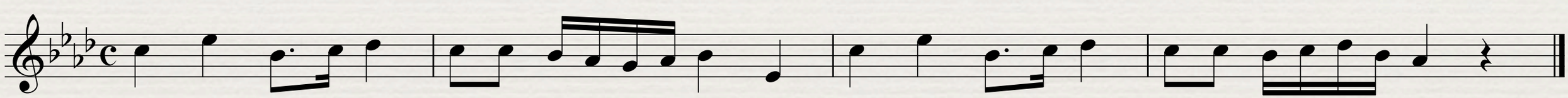
- Parallel Period
  - Both antecedent and consequent are similar in some way, at least at the beginning of the phrase. (Rhythmic similarity is not necessarily a determinant.)
- Contrasting Period
  - The antecedent and consequent are different from each other. (Rhythmic similarity is not necessarily a determinant.)
- "Mirror" Period
  - A kind of contrasting period in which the consequent moves in the opposite direction from the antecedent.

# Types of Parallel Periods

Parallel period by identity:

At least the first measures of the phrases are identical

Consequent by identity (Schubert's Original)

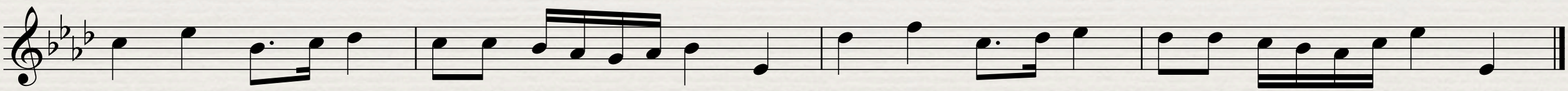


# Types of Parallel Periods

Parallel period by transposition:

The consequent is a transposed (or pitch-shifted) version of the antecedent.

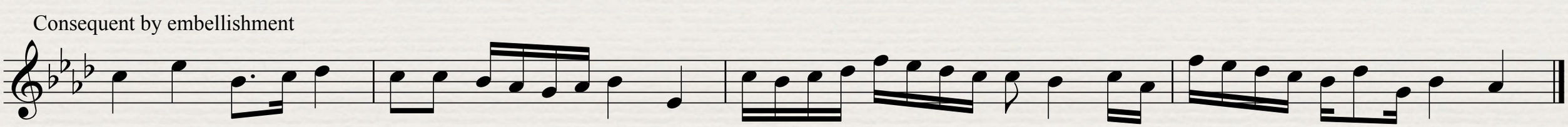
Consequent by transposition (this would work well in a double period)



# Types of Parallel Periods

Parallel period by embellishment:

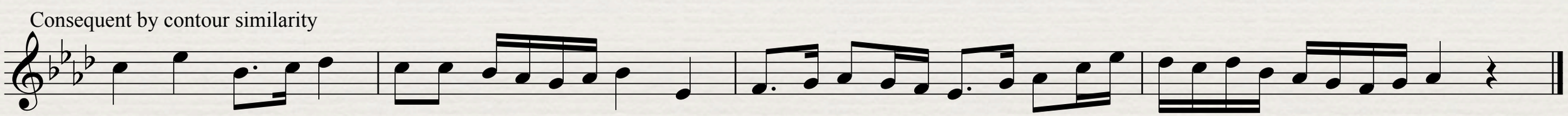
The consequent is an embellished version of the antecedent.



# Types of Parallel Periods

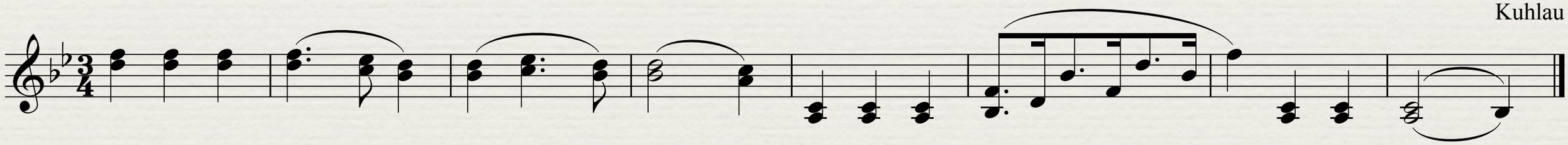
Parallel period by contour similarity:

The consequent moves in similar motions to the antecedent.



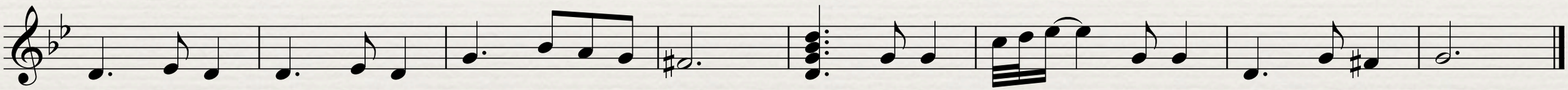
# Contrasting Periods

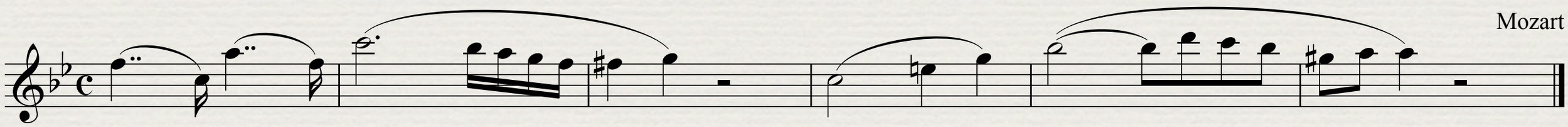
Rhythm is not an issue in determining contrasting periods, but if the two phrases are markedly different yet still dependent upon each other for making an entire statement, it is a contrasting period.



# Contrasting Periods

The rhythm of the consequent may be similar or even identical:



# Ambiguity

It's not always clear whether a period is contrasting or not. Is this a parallel period with contour similarity or a contrasting period? The overall melodic motion is the same, and the consequent is sequential but rhythmically different.