

Quick Guide to Writing a Coda (or Codetta)

The function of a coda is to bring a movement to a close. A codetta brings a section, such as the exposition, to a close. In a sonata form movement the two might be the same or the coda might expand upon or add to the codetta. Codas usually build up to a series of more emphatic perfect cadences or wind down to a gentle close. In a common practice piece, codas and codettas will include at least some of the following :

Basic elements

- tonic pedal: (with chords I, ii, IV, V⁷, vii over the top)
 - Haydn 104/i – bars 99-103 (alternating I and vii⁷)
- repeated use of a simplified or fragmented version of a motif or theme from earlier
 - Haydn 104/i – bars 99-107 (triadic idea and inverted X)
 - Haydn 104/iv – bars 326-329 (Y idea inverted)
- cadences or cadential progressions (often repeated), for example:
 - **V – I**
 - Haydn 104/ii – bb. 143-144
 - Haydn 104/iii – bb. 48-51
 - Haydn 104/iv – bb. 302-306 (**V^{4/2} - I⁶**)
 - **I^{6/4} – V** (cadential six four)
 - Haydn 104/i – bb. 283 & 289
 - **I - vi - ii – V**
 - 104/iv – bb. 307-8
 - Other possibilities: **I⁶ – ii⁶ – V** or **I - IV⁶ – V**
- Repeated tonic chords or unisons
 - Haydn 104/i – bb. 289-end
 - Haydn 104/ii – last two bars

More advanced elements

- a modified reprise of a key phrase (either stated more emphatically or more quietly)
 - Haydn 104/iv – bb.309-319 (very forceful restatement of initial theme)
- dominant pedal: I (as a cadential 6/4), V⁷, V of V (secondary dominant), vii of V, diminished seventh onto dominant (i.e. a semitone below dominant)
- Part of a circle of fifths
 - Haydn 104/i – bb.108-112
- Turn to minor or other key briefly before reaffirming tonic
 - Haydn 104/iv – bb. 287-300 (tonic minor)