

Music Theory Society of the Mid-Atlantic

Fifth Annual Conference, Catholic University—March 23, and 24, 2007

**ABSTRACTS**

**Friday, March 23**

**Session 1: Time, Text, and Narrative (1:00 – 3:00)**

**Multiply-Directed Moments in Brahms's *Schön war, das ich dir weihte...***

Melissa Hoag (Indiana University)

Brahms's song "Schön war, das ich dir weihte..." (Op. 95, no. 7) offers a melancholy setting of a brief text by Georg Friederich Daumer. Two melodic disjunctions figure prominently in Brahms's setting of the poem; in treating these disjunctions, Brahms thwarts normative voice-leading expectations in ways that never meet satisfactory resolution. Around these violations crystallize the central expressive issues of each song, involving not just melody, but harmony, phrase structure, and form. Other issues in Brahms's setting include the discursive phrase structure in the B section, as well as Brahms's musical treatment of the subjunctive mood.

Schenkerian analysis will be used to explicate the unique melodic processes at work in Brahms's setting and the relationship of these melodic processes to Daumer's text. The tangled phrase structure of the middle section will also be examined using a phenomenological model, which will yield yet another layer of implication for Daumer's poem. Nearly every parameter and time point in the song can be identified as multiply-directed, a spectrum of possible continuations or meanings presented at every turn; Brahms seems to make a marked effort to avoid some of the most likely continuations. Brahms's setting thus focuses our attention on the multiply-directed moments in the song by meeting expectations with various levels of denial or surprise. This analysis also highlights moments of melodic anomaly not usually highlighted in voice-leading analysis, but which are essential to the expressive value of a song.

**Found in Translation? Discovering the Middleground of Music and Speech**

Bret Aarden (UMass Amherst)

One of the most evocative ideas about music, and melody in particular, is that it is deeply connected with language. Plato's prescriptions for the proper composition of music certainly suggests this, and in Leonard Bernstein's opinion, music is "Heightened Speech". Using phonological theories about pitch accents in language, alternate constructions of meaning are explored in the foreground of Schubert's "Auf dem Flusse."

The concept of “mutual belief space” from discourse analysis of pitch accents provides an explanation for some of the oddities in the middleground and background structures of the Andante of Schubert’s String Quartet no. 15.

### **Narrative and Inter-Self: Form and Expressive Meaning in Takemitsu’s *Rain Tree***

Tomoko Deguchi (Winthrop University)

The title of Toru Takemitsu’s *Rain Tree*, a work for three percussionists, is inspired by the image of the tree that appears in Oe Kenzaburo’s short novel *Atama no Ii Ame no Ki* (The Ingenious Rain Tree). In this paper, I explore how musical form emerges as the music unfolds in time, and how it interacts with broader questions of expressive meaning in *Rain Tree*. I base my discussion on the studies of scholars who explore the idea that music has a narrative, and that expressive meaning can be articulated according to a literary analogy. My interpretation of meaning in *Rain Tree* refers to the issue of the “inter-self” in Japanese literature. As in other artistic genres, there are unique narrative characteristics in Japanese literature that are essentially distinct from those of Western literature. The concept of the “self,” “inter-self,” and “non-self” as discussed in David Pollack’s *Reading Against Culture*, offers insight into the analysis of the narrative in Takemitsu’s *Rain Tree*. Pollack’s concept of the inter-self is influential in my recognition of the protagonist of *Rain Tree*, who acts or behaves in the way suggested by the attributes of music, as well as the functions of certain sections of the music. When the identity of a single motive changes from a state of, for instance, “self” to one of “non-self,” the music exhibits an ambiguity that requires a constant updating of the interpretation of the formal function of motives and sections.

### **Range, Tessitura, and Text-Setting in Byrd’s Vocal Polyphony**

Jason Gersh (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

William Byrd’s polyphonic songs present an enigma to music theorists interested in examining the range and tessitura of individual voice-parts. While frequently exceeding the boundaries of a modal octave in their overall ranges (sometimes by a fourth or more), the voice-parts of Byrd’s songs arguably demonstrate a preponderance of pitches within a thinner band. The conventional approach to this problem is a type of qualitative analysis in which the analyst searches for extremes in a voice-part’s range and attempts to determine reasons (textual or otherwise) for departures from the established tessitura—a method that has both benefits and costs. In this paper, however, I take a more quantitative approach with my case-study on Byrd’s six-voice motet *Miserere mihi Domine* (from the 1575 *Cantiones sacrae*), expanding upon Richard Rastall’s concept of pitch centers of gravity (PCG) in order to determine the prevailing tessitura of various sections of the piece. As I argue, an examination of changes in PCG within a polyphonic work provides us with a rigorous tool for identifying particularly striking departures from the norm as well as a data set with which to compare various measures of contrapuntal

activity. Furthermore, it opens up a number of broader and exciting possibilities: the ability to compare voice-parts with identical ranges and clefs; the ability to compare voice types within a large body of works; and even the possibility of identifying specific ensemble types.

## **Session 2: 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Music (3:30 – 5:00)**

### **Hierarchy, Prolongation, and Harmonic Structure in “Majesty of Christ Praying That His Father Should Glorify Him” from Messiaen’s *L’Ascension***

Martin Lee (University at Buffalo)

In his description of “Majesty of Christ Praying That His Father Should Glorify Him” from *L’Ascension*, Messiaen noted that “the solo trumpet sings and rises up on a mode of limited transposition, supported by spacious dominant chords.” Messiaen informally disclosed his use of “modes of limited transposition” earlier than his first preface to *La Nativité du Seigneur* and his theoretical treatise – *Technique de mon langage musical*. However, by the publication of *Technique*, he did not elaborate on how the modes and the dominant chords work.

In order to understand the mechanism of these materials in this symphonic meditation, one first needs to know Messiaen’s use of modes. Robert Sherlaw Johnson has noted Messiaen’s mixed use of mode 2, mode 3 and the key of E major in this movement, but he did not demonstrate how these collections interact with each other. This factual description tells us what collections Messiaen used, however it does not tell us how they work and transform from one point to another.

This paper, based on “Majesty of Christ Praying,” illustrates not only Messiaen’s compositional techniques with respect to his use of harmonies, but also offers different readings with respect to traditional functional harmonies. Although the modes of limited transposition play an important role in Messiaen’s harmony, we still can easily find hints of functional harmony and his unique form of chromaticism in this music. Through an understanding of the harmonic structures, different prolongations are revealed. Hence, the hierarchical structures of the piece are also shown.

### **Ligeti’s *Pièce électronique no. 3* and its Relation to Stockhausen’s Serial Practice**

Benjamin Levy (University of Maryland)

In 1957 György Ligeti had recently immigrated to Cologne and was learning about the developments of the avant-garde while working in the electronic music studio of the WDR. Among his works from this time is an unfinished work, *Pièce électronique No. 3*, a fascinating, yet virtually unknown composition. Originally conceived under the title, *Atmosphères*, it was then renamed after this title was taken by his landmark orchestral composition of 1961. *Pièce électronique No. 3* looks forward to the innovative texture-driven orchestral compositions for which Ligeti became famous, but also reflects

the influence of serialism as practiced by many of the Darmstadt composers. For instance, the piece uses a consistent series of odd numbers to generate durations and pitch material for both small and large scale structures, and the piece's use of sine tones as the predominant type of material is clearly indebted to Stockhausen's ideology. Moreover, the arrangement of these sine tones also reflects Stockhausen's use of a serialized system of schematic entrances. Shortly after this composition, Ligeti criticizes aspects of serial practice, including the use of duration rows and serialized dynamics, and in his later works Ligeti clearly breaks from Stockhausen's influence. This paper uses Ligeti's comments on his *Piece electronique no. 3*, and his approach, particularly to the use of dynamics in this piece, to illustrate a clear difference in aesthetics and different artistic ends which these composers sought through serial means, thus showing the significance of this piece as a turning point in Ligeti's career.

### **Repetition, Memory, and “Stuplimity” in *For Samuel Beckett* by Morton Feldman**

Philip Duker (University of Michigan)

Although the sheer amount of repetition in Morton Feldman's late works can make his scores appear deceptively simple, our experiences of and reactions to this music, ranging from detached contemplation to overwhelming fascination, suggests an intricate complexity behind the repetitions. While a number of writers have explored this aspect of listening, producing diverse theoretical approaches that aid in understanding this phenomenon, I will contribute to this discourse by examining Morton Feldman's *For Samuel Beckett*, specifically focusing on the role of memory from a phenomenological perspective and the concept of “stuplimity” from an aesthetic one.

This piece, like many of Feldman's works, creates musical obstacles for a listener's memory to traverse. By combining Husserl's tri-partite structure of temporal experience with recent work by other theorists on Feldman's music, I will propose a model that traces how this piece shapes, manipulates, and often frustrates our memories. This phenomenological perspective will be particularly useful in mapping out the repetitive and recursive aspects of our listening experience.

The aesthetic effect of this experience can be productively explored with Sianne Ngai's notion of the *stuplime*, a paradoxical evocation of excitement and boredom. Analyzing Feldman's composition using a phenomenological construction of memory and applying the concept of *stuplimity* to frame the aesthetic affect of this music will offer a novel window into understanding the complexity of our listening experience.

**Saturday, March 24**

**Session 3: Tonality in Theory and Analysis (9:00 – 10:30)**

**On Function**

Jill Brasky (American University)

Function is an inescapable apparatus in recent American music theories. Many theorists write about the kinds of function that deal with harmonic progression, yet there remains little consensus as to what function actually is. Eleven years ago, David Kopp concluded that, in spite of its intuitively obvious meaning, the precise sense of ‘function’ is difficult to specify, in part because the term is used in so many different ways. Since Kopp’s proclamation, the waters have become even more murky. This paper begins by examining the function theories of Hugo Riemann, and three modern Riemannian approaches to function: those by Eytan Agmon, Daniel Harrison, and David Kopp. Part II weighs the benefits of and the problems caused by these definitions of function, and briefly examines our contemporary analytical and theoretical reliance on the concept. The third section of this presentation proposes a redefinition of function, in order to allow for analytical uses in a wider array of music.

**Understanding Hybridity: Comparing Geometric Models of Tonal Hierarchy**

Richard R. Randall (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)

The impact and influence of music-perception and cognition research on contemporary music theory is undeniable. Descriptive (how we *actually* hear and understand music) and prescriptive (how we *might* or *could* hear and understand music) theories have merged into hybrid systems. Hybrid systems are a delicate balance between narrowly focused empirical experimental data and highly generalized models. One such hybrid model, Fred Lerdahl’s tonal pitch space (TPS) model, approximates cognitive perceptual relations between chords by providing a combinatorial procedure for computing the distance value between two chords. Because of the influence of experimental data on the TPS model, we would expect a high correlation between experimental data and analyses of chord progressions generated by the TPS model. The value of such a comparison is clear. If the TPS model posits a hypothesized model of perception, then we would like to know if and by how much it differs from the experimental data it claims to approximate. This paper focuses on the intra-regional relation descriptions of TPS and achieves two important goals. First, a similarity measure is developed that allows the accurate comparison of the TPS model with a model of perceived chord relations created by Bharucha, *et al.* Second, this paper applies the similarity measure to normalized canonical representations of each model, thereby avoiding comparisons affected by arbitrary design choices.

## **On Step Beyond: Beethoven's Whole-Tone Transpositions**

Eric Wen (The Curtis Institute of Music)

In a sonata movement, the necessity of readjusting the transitional passage of the recapitulation to remain in the tonic allows for novel compositional possibilities. Beethoven often recomposes the transitional section between the first subject and second group in the recapitulation in elaborate and unexpected ways. In particular, he will often restate a theme in the recapitulation a whole step away from its original appearance in the exposition. This paper will look at the opening movements of three Beethoven sonatas in which this whole-step transposition occurs: the Piano Sonata No. 5 in C minor, the Violin Sonata No. 4 in F (“Spring”), and the Symphony No. 7 in A. Although Beethoven’s penchant for whole-step transpositions of his transitional themes is a characteristic compositional procedure, each of these examples has a different expressive meaning within the articulation of an individual work’s tonal structure. Nevertheless, it will be shown that each case plays an integral part in outlining the design of sonata form. Finally, this paper will consider these passages in light of two recent additions to the vernacular of sonata form: Charles Rosen’s concept of the “secondary development” and the notion of the *medial caesura* as coined by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy.

### **Session 4: Modernism (11:00 – 12:00)**

#### **Bach’s Tetrachords and Stravinsky’s Blocks: The Sketches for the “Grand Chorale”**

Don Traut (University of Arizona)

This paper presents analyses of the score and sketches for Stravinsky’s “Grand Chorale” from *A Soldier’s Tale* (1918). It contextualizes these analyses in two main ways. First, it illustrates the role of Bach’s “Ein’ feste Burg,” which clearly had specific musical properties that interested Stravinsky. The paper shows how Stravinsky manipulated the two transpositionally equivalent tetrachords that conclude the first and second phrases of Bach’s settings. Indeed, these tetrachords appear throughout Stravinsky’s chorale at various transposition levels. Second, it shows how the sketches containing Stravinsky’s earliest drafts of this piece corroborate other sketch studies, particularly regarding Stravinsky’s penchant for composing beginnings and endings and then connecting them and for composing in blocks of material. As the sketches reveal, most of the piece was composed in two-phrase units, which were later transposed and concatenated to form the final version.

## **All in the Family: Contour, Musical Domains, and Motive ‘Families’ as Continuity in Webern’s Unfinished *Cello Sonata* (1914)**

Carolyn Mullin (Florida State University)

At the urging of his teacher and mentor Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern undertook the task of composing a piece in a larger form in earnest in 1914. However, Webern stopped work on his *Cello Sonata* to write *Three Short Pieces*, Op. 11, and he never returned to the *Cello Sonata* to compose the second movement he intended. The extant score was not published until Carl Fischer brought it out in 1970, and apart from a brief mention in Demske (1986) there are no published analyses of Webern’s *Cello Sonata*. This might be because analyzing an incomplete piece raises some interesting questions about continuity and coherence. For example, can a structural and formal plan be determined? Can a single movement truly be complete in the context of a multi-movement plan? To answer these questions, my paper investigates what role both rhythmic and melodic contours play in the motivic structure of this work and how transformations of these contours create unity through varied repetition.

Despite this piece being unfinished, there is a complete and identifiable developmental process involving motivic variation of tetrachords. Using Christopher Hasty’s idea of musical domains and his concept of structure as a starting point, I isolate the motives that form boundaries of continuity and discontinuity, which result from their relationship to the basic motive. These motives are then organized into ‘families’ according to how strongly they are associated with the basic motive. Ultimately, four-note motives at the beginning of the piece are clear and salient segmentations, and then as the piece progresses, the motives become liquidated and less easily identified due to the different types of distortions applied to the motives.

Motivic variation and deformation processes indeed confer a unifying role for determining the formal structure and creating continuity across the movement. By examining rhythmic contours (both durational patterns and in duration space) and melodic contours, which develop a similar variation process across the piece, a coherent, complete, and overarching progression unfolds, despite Webern’s *Cello Sonata* being an incomplete work.

### **Session 5: Rhythm (2:15 – 4:15)**

#### **A Circular Plot for Rhythm Visualization and Analysis**

Fernando Benadon (American University)

This paper describes a graphing method designed to aid the study of rhythm and expressive timing in beat-based music. Expressive timing lies at the core of rhythm production. The evidence—reviewed by Clarke (1999)—confirms that musicians often place attack points along a continuum of beat subdivision values rather than on the predetermined slots afforded by metrical grid spacing, thus imbuing the performance with expressive depth. Visualizing how these rhythms are organized can help us understand

how we hear them, since their divergence from a clear-cut temporal lattice is inadequately, if at all, represented by standard music notation. Desain & Honing (2003) devised a triangular chronotopic map that plots the temporal nuances and categorical boundaries of three-note rhythms. For longer rhythms, note-for-note expressive timing data are often visualized with an XY graph that has proved helpful in different musical contexts such as jazz (e.g., Benadon, 2006) and Western classical music (e.g., Repp, 2002). Since musical rhythm usually operates within a recursive temporal framework such as a beat or measure, it seems logical to visualize rhythm as a cyclical concept, using a polar coordinate plot in which the beat is represented by a circle. A note's duration and onset position are represented by the radial and angular coordinates, respectively. The circular plot can be used to re-interpret complex rhythms, partition tempo curves, and summarize rhythmic profiles by making beat subdivision details apparent to the naked eye. These features are illustrated with examples drawn from different musical traditions.

### **Bimetricity and Linear Funk Drumming**

Joti Rockwell (University of Chicago)

This study focuses on non-periodic, “bimetric” rhythms and their use in funk drumming. It begins by defining such rhythms as patterns which split their allegiance between a prevailing meter and a displaced version thereof. To fit this definition within the context of existing theories of rhythm and meter, I use beat-class set terminology to demonstrate how such rhythms can be generated by transposition (time-shifting), by inversion, or through the combination of metrically dissonant and consonant pulse layers. I then show how bimetric rhythms arise in funk music, a genre that has received very little analytic attention in music scholarship. The analytic focus is on brief passages of “linear funk,” an essentially monophonic style of drumming pioneered by players such as Mike Clark (Herbie Hancock), David Garibaldi (Tower of Power), and Steve Gadd (Paul Simon, Chick Corea). I conclude that with respect to funk music, inversional symmetry is an important component of bimetricity, since it characterizes rudiments from which linear funk drumming is built.

### **Nonlinear Time in Funk as Exemplified in James Brown's *Say it Live and Loud***

Gabriel Miller (Ohio State University)

In *The Time of Music*, Jonathan Kramer provides a categorical vocabulary with which to describe various kinds of time. He finds *linear* time to be normative for common-practice tonality, whereas *nonlinear* time is created by some twentieth-century compositions in which goal-directed harmonic motion does not control the temporal continuum. Kramer's discussion focuses on linear and nonlinear time in traditional Western music; I wish to expand this discussion to include vernacular musics, and in particular, funk. It is my assertion that essential to an understanding of funk music is an

awareness that the primary temporal continuum it generates is nonlinear. This is demonstrated through an analysis of time in the album, *Say it Live and Loud*, recorded in 1968 by funk pioneer, James Brown.

Four categories of nonlinear time posited by Kramer are germane to this paper. Continuous nonlinear time, in which neither goal-directed harmonic motion (linearity) nor interruptions of the temporal continuum (discontinuities) affect the time, is called *vertical* time. Discontinuous nonlinear time, or *moment* time, features temporal interruptions that create distinct sections within a piece. Specific types of moment time include *mobile* time, in which the order of sections is arbitrary, and *composite* time, which features levels of linearity in the foreground. Each of these kinds of time is exemplified by one (or more) composition(s) from Brown's album. Drawn from analysis of time in these works are implications for funk music in general—most notably, that it necessarily creates one or more of the four categories of nonlinear time.

### **Hypermetric Irregularity, Incongruence, and Innovation in the Songs of Roy Orbison**

Mark Richardson (East Carolina University)

Known by the nickname “the voice” by rock critics, Roy Orbison brought a new dimension to early rock music with his broad vocal range and operatic approach to the ballad. Though mostly known for his distinctive three-octave range (from low baritone to a high register falsetto) and his lyrics that turned away from male bravura and instead spoke of vulnerability, loneliness, and dreams, Orbison was an accomplished songwriter who wrote most of his own material—songs that did not follow an established formula. In fact, Orbison's songs were often more complex formally than the alternating verse and chorus structure so frequently heard in the songs of the day. Perhaps more striking, however, are the metrical shifts in established hypermeter within songs that disrupt the listener's expectations and contribute to increasing the tension or anticipation of a musical climax. Hypermetric units, once established, can be perceived as irregular by internal repetitions of strong and weak hypermeasures or by contraction or expansion. Harald Krebs discusses these conditions of hypermetric irregularity as they apply to the songs of Josephine Lang, and these conditions could just as well apply to selected songs of Roy Orbison. Examples of hypermetric irregularities (such as expansions and contractions) will be explored in Orbison's “It's Over” (1964), “Crying” (1961), “Oh, Pretty Woman” (1964) as well as a more detailed exploration of the interaction among three discrete layers of hypermeter (vocal solo, chorus, and bass) within Orbison's “Only the Lonely” (1960).