conceptual milestones, but more significantly the variability of perceptual and conceptual understanding. These processes of understanding link the theoretical enterprise to the very nature of hearing and thus to the renewal of musical conception itself.

The musical theoretical enterprise may have no particular solution to the problems of world terrorism, but the task of the music theorist is very much of the world. Focus on its processual nature allows the epistemological function of theoretical work to appear. The theoretical task of moving from the practical domain of perceptual understanding to the formal domain of conceptual understanding is one that both clarifies and shapes the practical domain, and at the same time the theoretical task contributes to the transformation of knowledge—to keeping knowledge dynamic and relevant, to the way we conduct our lives in a world in which terrorist acts occur.

Judy Lochhead

A Story, An Apologia, and A Survey

My department of graduate study ran two independent programs, one in theory and the other in history. They were quite separate operations, and the concerns of one were rarely noticed by the other. The faculty itself cleaved along programmatic lines for political and ideological reasons, and it was not hard to get the impression that one's alma mater was to be the particular program, not the whole department.

Fate had it that, while the two student populations mostly but not entirely pursued separate courses, they came together haphazardly for fellowship in the library stacks, over coffee and lunch, and at parties, both official and unofficial. Friendships blossomed despite academic segregation. A few of us, finding our friends in the other program to be kindred spirits of one kind or

another, banded together to form a study group, which we whimsically named the *Verein für Privatmusikforschung.* Like most study groups, it came together for a season before dissertations struck and scattered its members. But for a while, it was a wonderfully stimulating adventure in music scholarship, one that seemed to breach the wall between music history and music theory.

Towards the end, I was having coffee with a historian friend and was enthusing over an interesting treatment of some chord or another. She looked at me quizzically and said, "You really get excited about those things, don't you?" And at that moment, while answering "Yes, I guess I do," I realized with no little sadness that perhaps the wall was there because there were music scholars who got excited about things like chord usage and there were music scholars who did not. And those who did, by and large, were music theorists.

All this is preparation for me to take a contrarian position to the feel-good hope for unification of music scholarship. I do not reject out-of-hand any cross-disciplinary conversation and attachments, since scholarship is already too diffuse and specialized for any one of us to pass up the benefits of such neighborliness. But I argue that the separation of disciplines reflects a real separation of interests and basic principles of the respective practicing communities, and that, because music theory is more difficult a subject to sympathize with and support than most others, it must be particularly on the lookout for crushing embraces from well-meaning friends and neighbors. I do not hold that it is necessary that cross-disciplinary conversations occur so one party can keep the other out of error. Rather, each discipline converses with others for enrichment and growth. Their founding principles, however, are self-sufficient.

Which ones inform my work?

- A musical object can be abstracted from history for inspection of parts that are unaffected by the passage of time.[1]
- The individual composer and his or her place in history can be irrelevant to such inspection.
- The lowliest chorale and the loftiest opera can be discussed in the same breath as phenomenal equals.
- A system of tonal organization, though it emerge in some historical period, can be regarded as timeless and, hence, ahistorical.

It is now easy to see where I got the idea that theory is the more difficult subject of the two to sympathize with and defend! I make, of course, the standard disclaimers—that I speak for no one other than myself and for those who might share my peculiarities in these matters. I also allow that the articles of faith enumerated above are couched in their most uncompromising form, and that any music theorist who espoused these without the grace of a historicist muse would produce sterile and tasteless fruit. I hope that my own manifest delight in historical investigation evinced in the second half of *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music* testifies to my rejection of an essentially anti-intellectual (and hence, anti-scholarly) music-theory fundamentalism.

But these articles of faith are nonetheless foundational, and they stand in direct opposition both to the traditional beliefs and values of music historians and to current postmodern dogma, which is only able to see them as hopelessly entangled in time, culture, power, gender, and other social relations. They would be gleefully derided by any new musicologist. Perhaps they are too extreme even for you.

Though you may readily reject them, why then suffer their propagation in the undergraduate curriculum and in the theory texts? Why permit a nocturne by Chopin, a piano concerto by Brahms, a Bach chorale, and a symphony by Haydn to break free of

[1] This is not to ignore the findings of research into historical performance, which demonstrate that pitch objects, at least, can be affected by changes in temperament as well as in timbre due to differences in instrument construction. Still, these are differences of degree, not of kind.

history and become examples 18–14 through 18–17 in Aldwell and Schachter's *Harmony and Voice Leading*?[2] Why treat these august artists as mere specimens and permit the authors to speak of structures found in "the Chopin" and in "the Brahms"? I will take umbrage to the view that such pabulum is okay for undergraduates and their pedants, but that serious scholars need a more nourishing historicist fare. Why? Because you then force music theorists into hypocrisy every time they enter the classroom, and, what is more, because you compel them to worship at your altar because you cannot understand the rites performed at the other. I will also take umbrage to the view that examples 18–14 through 18–17 are monstrosities of nature and that theory instruction must be reformed so that such offenses do not occur again. Why? Because I delight in examples 18–14 through 18–17; I find that they satisfy some curiosity; I find the notion that they could all manifest something really cool like "§-chord techniques" exciting. Hands off my pleasures.

Personal privilege aside, how can examples 18–14 through 18–17 be defended? Music theory is—or was, in the not too recent past—fundamentally attached to music composition, and it is only within the last twenty-five years that theory has pulled itself away. (In many places, theory and composition are still linked institutionally as departments or divisions within a school.) With this in mind, we can understand the theorist to be like a composer in attitude and interest, but in practice a tinkerer, a builder of models, a parts-store proprietor, a daydreamer in sound, a devotee of under-the-hood mysteries. Or at least, the kind of theorist that I imagine myself to be. And so examples 18–14 through 18–17 are to me not really representatives of musical art, in which case they would be the vaguely offensive remains of analytic dissection, but instead are abstracted examples of compositional technique that are useful for study, imitation, and variation by those learning musical language and by those interested in musical language in general.

This point of view commits theory to being a kind of composition pedagogy, as a specific instruction in tonal and

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[2] Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group, 2003): 300-301.

rhythmic organizational systems. And I—the tinkerer, occasional composer, more frequent improviser and noodler, not to mention theorist—I find this a perfectly satisfying commitment. Others have come to the discipline with other interests, especially since the dissolution of the theory/composition alliance, and they likely find my interests too narrow or old-fashioned or simply not to their taste. And that is for the good, since I also enjoy the intellectual ferment of a diverse community. Even so, "Why are you a music theorist?" is a question that constantly needs asking if this community is to preserve its traditions and initiate new members into its stimulating folkways.

But here is a problem: our object of study is dissolving. Classical music—the only Western music that ever had need of theorists—is now housed in a cultural assisted-living center, keeping company with other beloved but senile residents—Hesiod and Pindar, Catullus and Ovid, and other venerables from a distant cultural past. While no one denies these worthies their appropriate place in the history of Western culture, no one—not even the Classics professors who teach them—presumes to make a serious case that they have any current cultural impact. What about serious drama and visual art? Contemporary playwrights are still able to have their works performed before appreciative audiences; some of these works are translated into film, benefiting thereby from the immense reach of the entertainment industry. Visual art still commands attention in our culture, with the assistance of such guides as Sister Wendy and the formidable Australian critic Robert Hughes. But any look at the culture offerings of, say, *Time* magazine, where Hughes holds forth so strenuously, would confirm that when the subject is music, it is popular and not art music that is meant. Even *The New Republic*, which has editors for film, theater, poetry, art, and architecture, pointedly has none for music. When the United States Information Agency prepared a cultural exhibit of recent American art a few years ago for parts overseas, it was the music of Bruce Springsteen rather than, say, Milton

Babbitt, that was offered for inspection. All this is to say that classical music is culturally marginal, and new classical music (that is, anything that the Three Tenors aren't singing) might as well be a hot-air balloon adventure—a bit of curious nuttiness that harms no one, akin to the compiling of Klingon dictionaries and the re-enactment of Civil War battles.

This is not to say that Classical music is dead, since there will always be sensitive souls who want, appreciate, and even make sophisticated music—in other words, souls kind of like our own. But the teaching of associated compositional techniques and systems might easily become the equivalent of teaching Latin; §-techniques, as cool as they are, might as well be the ablative absolute. Is this bad? Not if one thinks the continued teaching and study of Latin is bad. We might mourn the loss of cultural prestige that Classical music once had, even if that prestige was the product of mystification, snobbery, and an art-as-castor-oil approach to cultural health. But the music and its admirers will not go away any more than will Horace or Pindar. Rather, it will simply become harder to maintain any immediate relevance to contemporary society, especially to the young people in our classes who have been nourished by ever more interesting and varied forms of pop music.

Does turning our attention to pop music, then, keep the music-theory enterprise going? Somewhat reluctantly, given my involvement in pop-music studies from my undergraduate thesis onwards, I have to demur. For the music simply doesn't need the kind of chin-stroking attention we lavish on the more complex creations of the Western art-music canon. (If you think this is a thinly veiled and undigested modernist claim for the privileging of complexity in art, it is not—rather, it is a simple statement that when things get complicated, cadres of specialists are needed to explain and interpret them. If things are fairly simple, then even teenagers in garages or playing in Hamburg nightclubs can work on them.) Tonal systems are generally complex, requiring lots of guidance and instruction on the part of its practitioners. But in current popular music, the trend is away from traditional types of complexity—pitch, rhythm, form—and towards complexity of what Leonard Meyer would call secondary-parameter

effects—timbre, voicing, spatial placement of voices and instruments in a recorded mix, etc. Although we have some tools for analyzing these kinds of effects, the effects themselves don't lend themselves to intricate systematization the way pitch and rhythmic materials do, or at least they have not so far. In a sense, the true cutting edge of music theory as a compositional pedagogy may be taking place in trade magazines dealing with sound synthesis, modification, and recording technology. There, one finds articles about "processing reverb reflections," "Bit Wars: 16 vs. 24-bit Listening Tests"[3] and the like. These are the subjects that many aspiring composers find more important to their technical training than harmony and counterpoint—or Latin.[4]

Another movement, one of cross-disciplinary unification, is that towards music theory as cognitive science. Verifying or refuting the cognitive reality of time-honored theoretical ideas (roots, tonal regions, key) has, for me at least, been a satisfying entertainment, much like the seeing one's guesses and hunches pay off big. This development, however, will, if it hasn't already, run into some thorny aesthetic problems. For one thing, it is at present an exclusively listener-oriented mode of investigation, relying as it does on asserting the validity of some construct if it can be generally heard by some group of people—the more of them and the more untrained they are, the more valid the construct. Not only cannot the subtle insights of a single expert listener be accommodated in this regime (unless introspection makes a comeback as a research tool in psychology), but matters of compositional technique and structuring, which may not be directly hearable, are also left out. This reduces my interest in this movement considerably, since part of what it means to go "under the hood" of music is to deal with those things that may not, in fact, be hearable, or that leave traces on the musical surface that belie their apparent causes. For another thing, the object of study

[3] These articles were found at http://www.keyboardmag.com.

[4] In this connection, see the "technical section" of John Adams's web site (http://www.earbox.com/tech-guide/t-specs.htm) for information about musical instruments and signal processors needed for performance of certain of Adams's music.

for the cognitive scientists is, for the most part, a remarkably conservative construct: standard-issue tonal music with occasional allowances made for "classic" atonality. The claim that this branch of research is about *music* cognition in general thus surely founders on the artistic content of Xenakis's *Mycenae alpha*, Stockhausen's *Spiral* (for soloist and short-wave radio), and, of course, Cage's *4'33"*. With these ruled right out (for the moment, at least), might the fruits of music cognition for the musician mostly be another round of "discoveries" after another run through the masterworks?

In the end, the more music theory is attached to classical music, the more certain it is that the academic-humanist side of the discipline will be reassigned to an expanded Classics Department. I do not see this as a terrible fate, since such departments will likely be the treasury of as much of the Western cultural "old wealth" endowment as our society cares to store up; I have no qualms keeping company with Shakespeare scholars, specialists in drawing perspective, translators of Aquinas, historians of science, and the like. The conservatory, on the other hand, might be compelled to give up harmony and counterpoint altogether as fundamental requirements, much like the university dropped first classical and then modern languages from the required curriculum over the course of the twentieth century. "Practical" aural skills will, of course, endure as long as the musical imagination needs coaching and training, but the "theoretical" portion of the current conservatory theory curriculum may well be taken over by a new composition pedagogy in digital sound synthesis and manipulation. (But only so long as theory is affined with composition.)

Those of us currently in managerial positions in the academic theory business will likely be the shepherds for the transition to the new discipline—Classicized and/or Technologized—and I pray that we do it well. But I also hope that we not forget that music theory fundamentally does not need the academy to endure. Indeed, some of the best theory has been done by amateurs: Schenker was trained as a lawyer and was essentially a freelance musician by avocation; Gottfried Weber was a civil servant; most medieval theorists were clergymen; Boethius, a Roman senator and statesman. We have lived in a remarkable moment where it is

possible for one to earn a living as a full-time music theorist—and not only one, but the SMT hundreds. Yet even if the academy were to dry up intellectually and the conservatory to jettison everything not connected directly to virtuosity, there would always be people who will want to play around with music, who will want to share that play with others, teach it, and even write about it. I do not know whether this will be harder or easier to do in the future. But I do know that people will find a way to do it. And I hope they do it knowing the friendships and colloquies and mutual music-loving—all suffused with that coffee-house *bonhomie* known by the *Verein*—that sustains my interest in doing music theory.

Daniel Harrison

Autocommentary: Thoughts on Music Theory at the Millennium

The form of this writing is text and commentary, a common means of transmission in classical Asian literature. In India for example, *shastras*—manuals and other technical discourse—were written in Sanskrit in succinct and abbreviated lines of poetry. As time went on, commentaries on earlier *shastras* were composed interpolating lines of explanation in the original text. Then commentaries on the commentaries were written, and so forth. Writing a commentary permits me to express my current ideas in footnotes where cross-relations and elaborative reference flourish, cutting across the hierarchy of the main text. Here I will comment on a text I wrote in 1994 and subsequently revised every year until 1998. I passed it out to students on the first day of "Theory and Analysis of Twentieth-Century Music," a graduate theory course I