Intégral 30 (2016)
pp. 81–98

Die Geheimnisse der Form bei Richard Wagner: Structure and Drama as Elements of Wagnerian Form*

by Matthew Bribitzer-Stull

Abstract. Wagnerian operatic forms span a continuum. At one end lie the delineated, non-developmental, "structural" kinds of shapes, at the other the "formless" streams of music that arguably depend on the extra-musical for their continuity and coherence. In between we find musical processes that embody more of a sense of motion and development than the fixed structures, but that cohere without the need of a text or programme. In this article I attempt to illustrate this range by applying my analytic methodology to two contrasting examples, one leaning heavily toward the structural (the *Todesverkündigung* scene from *Die Walküre* Act II, Scene 4) and the other (the Act II, Scene 2 love duet from *Tristan und Isolde*) best understood as a musical representation of the drama. The overarching point I make with this comparison is that the range of Wagnerian formal techniques is best served by a flexible, multivalent analytic orientation.

Keywords and phrases: Wagner, opera, form, Alfred Lorenz, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Die Walküre*.

Introduction

Anyone familiar with Alfred Lorenz's exhaustive analyses of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, and *Parsifal*, published between 1924 and 1933, will recognize the title of this article as a parody of Lorenz's—a parody implying that there is more than one secret to understanding Wagnerian form. Lorenz's study was the first serious attempt to present the formal process of the Wagnerian *Musikdrama* in a systematic, analytic way, an argument against the then-prevalent view that Wagner's late music was formless.[1] After its publication in the 1930s, Lorenzian structuralism was followed some thirty years later by Carl Dahlhaus's looser characterization of Wagnerian form. English-speaking theorists and musicologists then effected their own rapprochement of the two German scholars' works in the 1980s and 1990s, with notable contributions coming from Robert Bailey, Anthony Newcomb, Patrick McCreless, Warren Darcy, and many others.

* Readers of this article should be aware that saying anything about Wagnerian form at this late date is dangerous business. So many analysts have contributed to the mammoth literature on the subject that to engage in informed dialogue with it, and to avoid duplicating any of it, means digesting enormous amounts of material. In the pages that follow, I have tried to keep my discussion to a minimum. Nevertheless, the ratio of secondary-literature citation to actual music analysis remains necessarily high.

[1] Lorenz saw it as his duty to refute the usual charge against Wagner's music being "formlessness"; see McClatchie (2015, 273).

The prevailing attitude among modern-day Anglo-American scholars seems best summarized by a view taken by Anthony Newcomb, who conflates three kinds of musical shape (i.e., form):

1) the architectural: clear, Lorenzian blocks of material that lend themselves well to the As and Bs of *Formenlehre*-inspired textbook diagrams;
2) the music-procedural: processes that follow the contrapuntal, harmonic, and/or thematic musical logic of techniques like sequence and developing variation; and
3) the extra-musical-procedural: mimetic techniques in which music follows the play of words, gestures, and emotions (Newcomb 1981, 40–42).

Such a view can be expressed on a continuum of formal clarity and fixedness, at least in musical terms. At one end lie the delineated, non-developmental, "structural" kinds of shapes, at the other the "formless" streams of music that arguably depend on the extra-musical for their continuity and coherence. In between we find musical processes that embody more of a sense of motion and development than the fixed structures, but that cohere without the need of a text or programme. The form of the Wagnerian *Musikdrama* is at its best—at least in my opinion—when it merges all three. Two examples that spring to mind are both "fixed-structure" refrain forms, one interwoven with the three-by-three shape of the text and drama in the Norns' scene from the prelude to *Götterdämmerung*, and the other employing sequential repetition (as expressive tonality) and thematic recapitulation amidst the question-and-answer refrain structure of the Mime/Wanderer riddle game in *Siegfried*.[2]

But of course not all formal shapes in the Wagnerian *Musikdrama* follow this recipe. There are, in fact, multiple secrets to the form of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*; understanding any given musical section requires hearing both its uniqueness and its reliance upon familiar, recurrent formal concepts. The problem for the analyst—at least in Wagner's mature works—is that this recommendation embraces such a wide range of possibilities. In this article I attempt to illustrate this range by applying my analytic methodology to two contrasting examples: one leaning heavily toward the structural, the *Todesverkündigung* scene from *Die Walküre* Act II, Scene 4; and the other, the Act II, Scene 2 love duet from *Tristan und Isolde*, best understood as a musical representation of the drama. The overarching point I hope to make is that the range of Wagnerian formal techniques is best served by a flexible, multivalent analytic orientation.

1. The Form Problem in Wagner's Music

The study of musical form is rife with oft-repeated platitudes: form is the shape of a piece of music; every piece embodies its own unique form; music's abstract nature makes it difficult to apprehend formally; musical form is predicated on rhythm/tonal structure/thematic repetition and variation (or continuity vs. disjunction); and so forth. It would be hard to argue against any of these statements, but as guides to detail-level decision making when actually analyzing a piece of music, they are not especially helpful. In Wagner's later works, the problem reaches the level of crisis. We find phrase-level forms, scene forms, act forms, and whole-opera forms, few of which fit into neat *Formenlehre* categories. Moreover, when we attempt to conceive of form at levels smaller than an act, we run into the difficulty of segmentation; that is, the problem with form in Wagner is not like that in, say, a Chopin ballade, in which the boundaries of the piece are clear even if its formal shape is not. Rather, in Wagner we are often at a loss to determine just where one formal chunk ends and another begins.

Having addressed the question of Wagnerian form at length elsewhere,[3] I will only summarize here. In brief, the form issue Wagner faced in his new artwork was the need to balance the recapitulative techniques of absolute music with a developing drama. Of course, this compositional challenge was not new (Beethoven confronted it in his many attempts at composing a *Leonore* overture), only larger and more complex (Grey 1998, 10). Wagner's solution was to conceive of form as a web, overlapping multiple aspects of music: tonality, themes, drama, poetic forms, orchestration, and the like.[4] As a result, his forms are often ambiguous and blurry; rather than conforming to Classic-era models, they are developmental, constantly in the process of becoming something else. The most common relief to mitigate this seemingly endless formal *Fortspinnung* is Wagner's oft-used strategy of using a recapitulation or refrain as a recurring formal punctuation mark (see Section 2.2 below for more details).

[2] In the *Siegfried* riddle-game scene, a loose rondo, or refrain, form fits the repeated question-and-answer structure of the dialogue. Thematic and tonal content, however, are determined by associative considerations, such as the "Giants" theme in F minor and the "Valhalla" music in D♭.

Generally, I follow Darcy's names for themes in the *Ring*; see the appendix to Bribitzer-Stull (2001). Note that, since 2001, I have replaced my convention of capitalizing all the letters in a theme's name with enclosing the name in quotation marks.

[3] See Bribitzer-Stull (2001, 219–252; and 2006, 329–333).

[4] Wagner says his forms model the unity of the symphonic movement, especially his interrelated themes and motives. His use of the word "web" (or in Ellis's translation, "tissue") to describe form, rather than "architecture" or "structure," is noteworthy. See Wagner (1966b, 183).

While compositional unity may be achieved by a number of means, in most art music from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, the strongest is arguably tonal unity. Wagner's attempt at compositional unity, however, was not principally tonal in nature. More important to him as his musico-dramatic idiom developed was motivic unity; in fact the "symphonic" unity Wagner so admired *was* "motivic" unity.[5] But his motives (*Leitmotive*) serve a number of functions, which is why successful analyses of Wagner's music must make a distinction between form-defining motives and those that are referential. Form-defining motives are usually laid out in an initial exposition and appear at the beginning of a large formal section, most often as new or newly transformed statements (Clark 1990, 173). Purely referential ones, on the other hand, appear for reasons of dramatic/emotional recall and pose no threat to the formal function of principal form-defining themes. Of course, themes do not always obey these guidelines. In many cases, a new, stable theme, related to a previous one, will be both referential and form-defining at its first statement (Newcomb 1981, 47).

While Wagner's thematic material is paramount in analyzing his forms, it should not be studied to the exclusion of tonality. In Wagner, tonal progressions determine phrases, periods, and cadences, imply extra-musical associations, and determine the relative tonal stability (or lack thereof) of a given section. Since key areas are most strongly confirmed by cadences, it is telling that emphatic authentic cadences are rare in Wagner's *Musikdramen*, usually marking clear formal boundaries between large spans of music when they occur.[6] Thus, the unmitigated perfect authentic cadence in the *Ring*, for instance, becomes an almost unmistakable signal of tonal and formal closure. Even some elided or deceptive cadences create convincing demarcations if the cadential preparation and rhetoric are strong enough (see Newcomb 1981, 53). Distinguishing between the strengths of his various cadences shows that Wagner employed a hierarchy of cadential techniques weighted according to their structural meaning.[7]

In addition to theme and tonality—purely musical elements—it would be unthinkable to ignore the drama when performing formal analysis of Wagner's operas. In fact, many of Wagner's forms make little sense without it. In this respect, too, Wagner's works are not new; drama has long absolved unusual compositional choices. From Monteverdi's fourth book of madrigals to nineteenth-century mad scenes and program symphonies, extra-musical considerations have justified musics that might otherwise have been judged to be ill-conceived.[8] And so we find ourselves with a final problem: in addition to understanding the shape of the music alone, we must also understand it as a work of multimedia, taking into account the form of the text and of the drama.[9]

2. A Brief Overview of Wagnerian Formal Analysis

So, how have analysts proposed solving these problems? In brief, the multitude of approaches boils down to two: applying pre-existing models of musical form (based largely on musical elements) and applying Wagner's theories to a more dramatically oriented approach. Both have enjoyed modest successes, though none can really claim to have uncovered "the secret" of Wagnerian form. That said, digestion of these past attempts is a necessary step in shaping one's own understanding of Wagner's *Musikdramen*. For our purposes here, I have chosen to approach this material synoptically, summarizing the many formal models and analytic approaches proposed for Wagner's music over the last eighty years before unveiling my own analyses. Serious students of Wagner's music will benefit from poring critically, and in more detail, over the analytic work of the authors cited below.

[5] Wagner himself implicitly acknowledges his debt to Beethoven's thematic developments in his construction of symphonic unity; see Wagner (1966a, 109–110). In order to compensate for tonal and formal ambiguity, motivic/thematic unity bears the onus of cohesion, as it does in the *Tristan* introduction; see Jackson (1975, 48–52).

[6] McCreless links the absence of an unambiguous cadential hierarchy in *Siegfried* Act I, Scene 3, part 1 with the absence of an unambiguous tonal hierarchy. But, note that there are many authentic cadences in this scene. These cadences are not musically effective in establishing key. Rather, they suggest structural closure when there is none, lending the music a breathless quality. In cases like these, text, meter, tempo, and melody are of greater use in determining formal divisions than are cadences (McCreless 1982, 143–145).

[7] To be clear, by "structural" I refer to tonal structure. In my opinion, the most effective tool to describe a work's tonal structure—that is, how it is functionally monotonal—is Schenkerian analysis. To wit, in grappling with large, multi-part works, analysts working off the assumption that a single piece, movement, or section corresponds to the composing out of one background triad can use Schenkerian analysis to good effect. Multi-movement instrumental works, operas, and song cycles usually contain more than one piece or movement, and thus, more than one *Ursatz*. Attempting Schenkerian analyses can help locate tonal and formal divisions in these works. I return to this topic in the next section.

[8] Sometimes they are so judged anyway. Examples include Artusi's famous criticism of Monteverdi's contrapuntal technique in the madrigal *Cruda Amarilli* and Schenker's criticisms of Wagner's compositional technique. For Schenker's criticisms of Wagner, see Schenker 1979, 106; Schenker 1992, 29; Schenker 1994, *passim*; and, in synopsis, Marvin 2001.

[9] Nicholas Cook's description of media in a work like opera working in conformance, complementation, or contest is a helpful trichotomy of general possibilities for how, say, music and drama might interact (Cook 1999, 98–106).

2.1 Traditional Forms

Wagner's mature music dramas struck most contemporary listeners as so new that the many patterns that mimic established instrumental and operatic formal templates were largely unrecognized. While instrumental forms, *da capo* arias, and *scena ed aria* constructions may not be obvious through much of Wagner's later works, these are shapes Wagner knew well from his career as a conductor, and their influence on his work—even his later work—is significant.[10] Alfred Lorenz and Warren Darcy both, for example, hear the *Vorspiel* to *Das Rheingold* as a variation set (Lorenz 1966a, 23 and 125–26; Darcy 1993, 76–86). And it is hard not to hear the opening of *Das Rheingold* Scene 2 (the Valhalla scene) as a prelude, scene, and aria, while the music that follows (the Wotan–Fricka dialogue leading up to Freia's entrance) comprises a recitative and arioso (Darcy 1993, 130–138). While clear examples of traditional forms may not be legion in Wagner's later music, they do appear at both local and global levels, albeit often with some modification from "textbook" models.

2.2 Refrain and Rotational Forms

Among traditional formal procedures in Wagner, the refrain is surely the most common. Recent work in Anglo-American music theory recognizes a variety of refrain paradigms in Wagner's music.[11] These ritornello formal types often parallel a dramatic scheme in which interruptions delay one central goal or narrative. Unlike Classic-era forms, however, Wagner's ritornelli are predicated on thematic restatements, not large-scale tonal movement or closure. Rather, the sense of tonally stable versus tonally unstable sections is often stronger than a sense of departure from and return to a given tonic (Newcomb 1981, 54).

A related concept, developed originally by James Hepokoski in his study of Sibelius's music, is rotational form. A model presentation of rotational form would include "varied, multi-sectional strophes" repeated in the same succession, i.e., ABC, $A^1B^1C^1$, $A^2B^2C^2$, etc. (Hepokoski 1993, 23–26). Each rotation ideally becomes more "revelatory," propelling the compositional statement forward in a goal-directed motion toward its eventual *telos*. This rotational concept has proved useful to Warren Darcy, Graham Hunt, and others to explain the form of passages from the *Ring* and *Parsifal*.[12]

2.3 Poetic-Musical Period

The earliest, and arguably most problematic, theory of form in the Wagnerian *Musikdrama* is Alfred Lorenz's poetic-musical period.[13] (For that reason, I lavish a good amount of space on it here.) Lorenz, a conductor by trade, devised his poetic-musical periods (herein PMPs) as an aid to memorizing the score. Analysis, for Lorenz, was a practical matter of learning a new work; for a conductor attempting to get a grip on the mammoth score of the *Ring*, segmenting it into smaller chunks was a logical first step (McClatchie 1998, 3).

The Lorenzian PMP is first and foremost a tonal unit, governed by one tonic key. Boundary lines between PMPs require a change of key and, in theory, reflect a change in the mood or expressive quality of the text, a condition based on passages from Wagner's own writings.[14] Wagner's explanation of modulation is suggestive; not only does it assert the associative powers of tonality (an idea seized upon by both Lorenz and, later, American scholar Robert Bailey), it also implies that the distance or tonal path between keys can be invested with semantic value. Lorenz addresses these associative tonal paths between PMPs via his Riemann-style analysis but he has little to say about modulations within PMPs.[15]

Other musical parameters bolster tonality's preeminence in the PMP. Local meter unifies each PMP in a manner similar to tonic key (Skelton 1991, 98–100). Additionally, each PMP is also governed by a single theme or motive, though, like tonality and meter, there are possibilities for subordinates (McClatchie 1990, 7). Unlike tonality and meter, which are relatively static on the large scale, however, Lorenz believed that associative themes structured the form of each PMP through an organic exposition–development–recapitulation scheme (ibid., 11). Thus, these themes embody both a musical and a dramatic function (McClatchie 1998, 117). Theme and tonality unite to create *Gestalt*-type forms independent of size (i.e., length). Many of Lorenz's favorites, *Bogen* (arch, or ABA) and *Bar* (AAB), can model music as brief as a single period and as long as an entire act.

[10] For an overview of nineteenth-century Italian operatic conventions emerging from Rossini's practice (like the *scena ed aria*), see Balthazar (1989).

[11] See Kinderman (1980), Newcomb (1981), Abbate (1989a), and Daverio (1991) for but four examples.

[12] See, for instance, Darcy (1994, 2005), and Hunt (2007, 192–196).

[13] Actually, the term is Wagner's own, but the very brief definition he gives it leaves much room for interpretation; see the discussion in Grey (1995, 181–241).

[14] I refer, of course, to the point in *Oper und Drama* when Wagner implies that a new key dictated by the text should relate to the previous key in the same degree as the second text-expressed emotion is related to the first; see Wagner (1966a, 292–293).

[15] McClatchie (1998, 90–91). A PMP is governed by one main key, though it may travel through many. Without invoking a theory capable of distinguishing tonal levels, however, Lorenz is at a loss to explain how interior modulations relate to the overarching tonic. See Skelton (1991, 36).

To keep his PMP definition flexible, Lorenz allowed for drama-induced exceptions to the guidelines laid out above. For instance, PMPs that do not exhibit the hegemony of one principal theme can still articulate form by opposite or "free" symmetry in which one theme substitutes for another to create large-scale formal (and rhythmic) symmetry (McClatchie 1998, 6).

Lorenz's analyses have been roundly criticized, most famously by Carl Dahlhaus,[16] who believes that the bloated dimensions of the Lorenzian PMP far exceeded what Wagner's prose or nineteenth-century practice suggested.[17] Dahlhaus argues that the inconsistent lengths of Lorenz's PMPs (anywhere from 14 to 840 bars) weaken the integrity of the concept. These are valid critiques. Shackled by his insistence on monotonal PMPs and his lack of machinery for demonstrating how triads assert themselves as large-scale tonics, Lorenz sometimes arrives at bizarre tonal parsings. Many of his PMPs, for instance, are assigned keys whose tonic triads open and close a section, but appear nowhere in between, or whose tonic is reflected only by the appearance of its dominant chord (Murray 1978, 216–217). Because smooth transitions and blurred forms were part of Wagner's artistic vision, analyses with sharp formal edges, like Lorenz's, will often do injustice to the music (Newcomb 1981, 64). In his desire to distill the entirety of the *Ring* into a few stock repetition schemes, Lorenz often ignored the thematic and tonal structure in favor of the sung text, whose Norse poetic forms embody Lorenz's repetition schemes more faithfully than does Wagner's music (see Murray 1978, 217–218).

That said, modern-day scholars, most notably Patrick McCreless and Warren Darcy, have embraced Lorenzian period-style models.[18] While neither adopts Lorenz's Riemann-style harmonic analysis, both employ a modified PMP as their formal unit of choice. Citing Wagner's aforementioned *Oper und Drama* quotation on modulation, McCreless retains the Lorenzian PMP as a large-scale formal unit from *Das Rheingold* through Act II of *Siegfried*. He hears each scene or act of these operas as a "suite" of PMPs—a formal structure that mimics a three- to six-movement symphony—joined by transitions that are smoothed over on the musical surface. Providing for specific transitional sections allows McCreless to avoid Lorenz's mistake of assigning principal keys to the more developmental portions of the cycle and also enables McCreless to redraw some of Lorenz's formal boundaries. Monotonality is, hence, jettisoned in favor of a polarity based on Bailey's directional concept of tonality, spanning the opening and closing tonic in a scene or act (McCreless 1982, 104–105).

While McCreless retains the term "poetic-musical period" (or just "period"), Warren Darcy, in an effort to distance himself from Lorenz's weaknesses, refers to formal units as "episodes." Unlike the PMPs, tonal closure is not necessary for Darcy's episodes, form segments that he limits mainly to *Das Rheingold* (Darcy 1993, 59). Since Darcy hears musical form emerging from the text, he does retain many of Lorenz's formal boundaries, though he relaxes the reliance on monotonal models and stock forms like *Bar* and *Bogen*, which deny the potential for unique, text-driven forms (ibid., 61). Hence, episodes may be controlled by directional tonality, an expressive tonal shift, or a transitional, recitative-like span free from a large-scale tonic.

2.4 *Leitmotiv*

Because Wagner's themes develop alongside the drama, tracing these developments is an important component of formal analysis. Much of the thematic practice in Wagner's later works can be characterized as instantiations of certain *Leitmotive* that arise primarily as form-defining themes (that is, their regular appearance in a given span of music helps to articulate that span's formal cohesion and shape), only later returning for largely expressive purposes. A particularly clear example is the nested bar forms that arise from Wagner's statements of the "Fate" and "Annunciation of Death" themes in the Siegmund/Brünnhilde duet that comprises Scene 4 of *Die Walküre* Act II, a scene we will examine in more detail presently. These themes return, of course, in new dramatic and musical contexts later in the *Ring*, but not in the form-defining manner of their first appearance. Much more can be (and has been) said about the *Leitmotiv*, but for our purposes here, clarifying themes' abilities to function both as form definers and as instances of dramatic recall will suffice.[19]

[16] See Dahlhaus (1969, 95–129). It should be noted that political motivations likely also led to attacks on Lorenz; his structural formalism was criticized in part because it smacked of National-Socialism-era fascism. See McClatchie (1998, 5).

[17] This is borne out in Wagner's discussion of modulation in *Oper und Drama*, which addresses only one or two lines of text at a time ("Die Liebe bringt Lust und Leid" and "Doch in ihr Weh webt sie auch Wonnen" are the oft-quoted examples Wagner provides); see Wagner (1966a, 292–293). Gauldin notes that Wagner's comments on modulation and the PMP relate more to "transient tonicization" as a surface phenomenon embedded within the larger context of a tonic key; see Gauldin (*Analytical Studies*, Chapter 13, p. 12). See also Grey (1995, 183–189) and Abbate (1989b, 41).

[18] That is not to say that these two scholars do not also criticize Lorenz for his perceived failings. See, for instance, Darcy (1993, 55–61 and *passim*) and McCreless (1982, 105, 173 and *passim*).

[19] For a thorough treatment of the concept of *Leitmotiv* and its application in Wagner's works and those of his successors in concert and film music, see Bribitzer-Stull (2015).

2.5 Musical Prose

Wagner's smaller, phrase-level forms are where one looks to understand the composer's notion of "musical prose." Really, any analysis that links lines of text to phrases of music (and their concomitant cadences) can be said to be an analysis of musical prose. The most detailed application of the idea is William Rothstein's, in which he traces the development of Wagner's metric groupings from clunky, four-bar units with clear cadences in the early operas to the fluidity of the mature works, which eschew metric regularity and cadential clarity in favor of continuity (Rothstein 1989, Chapter 8).

2.6 Endless Melody

The continuity of musical prose rests largely on another Wagnerian concept: endless melody. Endless melody embraces the idea that the musical narrative should comprise significant or meaningful melodic content, by extension avoiding stock formulas of melodic-harmonic articulation (cadences) and other hackneyed or meaningless melodic materials like word-painting, topics, and madrigalisms. Unlike the PMP, Wagner's ideas of musical prose and endless melody have led not to detailed formal algorithms, but rather to what some call "formlessness,"[20] and what others refer to as a developmental understanding of form, or what Wagner called "the art of transition" (Millington 1984, 220).

2.7 Wandering Tonality

Inspired by developmental passages and sections in Beethoven's symphonies, Wagner's new dramatic art form aimed for continuous development, his so-called "art of transition."[21] Thematic development—at least of the kind one finds in Beethoven symphonies—implies tonal instability: quick modulations, sequences, keys suggested rather than confirmed by cadences, and so forth. With so few authentic cadences confirming tonal centers in them, it is easy to hear Wagner's works as tonal patchworks, "wandering" or "floating" tonal centers uncontrolled by a larger hierarchy. Modulations or harmonic progressions at a variety of structural levels occur to serve the local dramatic affect, rather than the clear composing-out of one principal tonality. This understanding of Wagnerian form is most thoroughly described by Dahlhaus, who relied heavily on Schoenberg's description of "floating tonality," a tonal organization in which units are founded in themselves and linked together by transitional means that originate in the tonal tradition (e.g., modulating sequences and so forth). Dahlhaus argues that tonal integration in Wagner has no inherent relationship to syntax or motive, resulting in tonal spans that seem fortuitous rather than generated by deep levels of structure. In short, wandering or floating tonality conceives of modulations as related only to those keys immediately preceding or following, as in links in a chain; there is no hierarchical relationship of keys in an overarching tonal structure like the Schenkerian *Ursatz*. Likewise, overall form does not depend on a single tonal center.[22] Hence, form charts that simply list successions of key areas and thematic appearances without making claims about larger-scale organization can be said to support a "wandering tonality" view of form.

2.8 Schenkerian Analysis

Just as Dahlhaus criticized Lorenz for excessive formalism in his analyses, later theorists reacted to the notion of "wandering tonality" by arguing that there *are* spans of Wagner's music—spans larger than just a phrase or two—that are functionally monotonal. Examples occur in books and articles by Warren Darcy, Patrick McCreless, and myself.[23] Apart from simply showing *that* or *how* certain spans of music in Wagner are functionally monotonal, these analyses often make larger claims about the motivic and dramatic importance of Wagner's tonal structures. That is, the details of the Schenkerian analysis speak to musical and dramatic coherence and meaning outside the confines of a given graph. Importantly, because Schenker's theory provides for the possibility of incomplete structures, the analytic method can prove especially useful in describ-

[20] True development, to Lorenz, was not a component of form, but rather its antithesis; see McClatchie (1998, 111).

[21] This type of seeming through-composition is one Wagner may have learned from Weber. Weber's *Euryanthe* (1822–1823), a work Wagner conducted, blurs the distinction between aria and recitative, contains no secco recitative, and has minimal breaks, though set numbers are still evident; see Millington (1984, 31). Just as Wagner structured his own works, so too did he attempt to remake other pieces to conform to the theories he laid out in *Oper und Drama*. For instance, Wagner conducted a performance of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* and revised the original by adding preludes, postludes, and interludes/transitions using thematic material from Gluck's opera (Millington 1984, 31).

[22] Dahlhaus (1989, 108). This concept of tonality works especially well in conjunction with Bailey's dramatic theories of tonality. (For more on these—expressive, associative, and directional tonality, plus the double-tonic complex—see Bailey 1977; McCreless 1982, 88–100; Lewis 1984, 1–8; and Stein 1985, 7–11, 43–44, 141–146.) McCreless (1996, 106–108), for instance, suggests we hear keys and their dramatic implications both in abstract, atemporal relations to one another (synchronic) and in the context of what immediately precedes and follows them (diachronic).

[23] For examples, see Darcy (1990), McCreless (1989), and Bribitzer-Stull (2008).

ing the monotonality of given spans, even when these are not clear, stand-alone tonal structures.[24]

2.9 Dramatically Oriented Forms

Amidst numerous approaches to Wagnerian form, few (if any?) neglect the drama. We all recognize that if most operatic forms are, in some way, shaped by the drama, this is doubly so in Wagner's case because even the themes, tonalities, harmonies, and orchestration are guided by dramatic purposes.[25] That said, some forms of analysis are more explicit about this than others. Scholars like Warren Darcy and Patrick McCreless depict Wagnerian form as annotated dramatic synopses, the form of the text and/or stage action augmented by notations of tonal centers, themes, and so forth.[26] Others, like Carolyn Abbate, use drama to explain the appropriateness of certain formal shapes.[27]

In taking this under consideration, we must not conflate the form of the libretto with the form of the music drama. In both, content and form are inseparable. Thus, the musical form, especially when it contradicts poetic or dramatic boundaries, informs the content of the text just as the text affects how we group spans of music (Dahlhaus 1989, 101). This, in brief, is how I treat the two sections below. By combining dramatic synopses with musical information concerning thematic/motivic material, tonal centers, and traditional formal shapes, I hope to show how the secret of Wagnerian form lies in flexibly drawing from all the insights above to comprehend both the uniqueness of each formal shape and its relationship to recurring formal patterns and strategies. In so doing, I take a bird's-eye view of the music, opting in the limited context of this journal article to focus on a formal overview rather than doing detailed analyses of harmony and motive.[28]

3. *Die Walküre*, Act II, Scene 4

Among all the sections comprising Wagner's mature works, the so-called *Todesverkündigung* ("Annunciation of Death") scene from *Die Walküre* best exemplifies the composer's architectonic approach to form.[29] Wagner completed the text of *Die Walküre*—the second of the four *Ring* dramas—in 1852, and its music in 1855 in a score dotted with love notes to his then paramour, Mathilde Wesendonck. The section in question is the fourth scene of the second act, in which the Valkyrie, Brünnhilde, appears to the heroic Siegmund to announce both his death in the upcoming battle and his subsequent ascension to Valhalla.

It would be hard to find a clearer example of the Wagnerian potentiated bar form, a nested derivative of the ancient AAB structure whose early Germanic instantiations include the music of the *Minnesingers*, *Meistersingers*, and the Lutheran chorale. After Wagner, Arnold Schoenberg's description of the sentence—a commonplace structure in Austro-Germanic music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—follows the same fundamental AAB arrangement, even if it is predicated on additional rhythmic and motivic processes.

Alfred Lorenz describes the Wagnerian bar form as comprising two *Stollen* ("strophes," or repeated A ideas) and an *Abgesang* (the "aftersong," or new[ish], B idea).[30] Lorenz goes on to note the frequency of "*Abgesang* intensification" in which the musical ideas in the *Stollen* deepen and develop in the *Abgesang* to mirror a concomitant dramatic rise in tension on stage (McClatchie 1998, 133). This process is evident throughout the *Todesverkündigung* scene, appearing at the very beginning with the first two statements of the "Fate" theme. These comprise a pair of *Stollen* (with an expressive transpositional rise) that gives way to the

[24] These include not only the auxiliary cadence, which is an incomplete structure missing an opening root-position tonic (see Burstein 2005 for more on the topic), but also structures missing a final tonic (or, perhaps, missing both). Satyendra (1997) argues for the importance of fragmentary Romantic-era tonal structures lacking both an opening and closing tonic; these "open structures," rather, begin and end on V, or have a moment of clarity on V, identifying tonic without articulating it.

[25] See, for instance, Wagner's comments about changing key in Wagner (1966a, 292) or his claim that it was as great an injustice to separate his orchestration from his harmony as it was to separate his music from his text (in his letter to Theodor Uhlig of May 31, 1852, cited in Spencer and Millington 1987, 261).

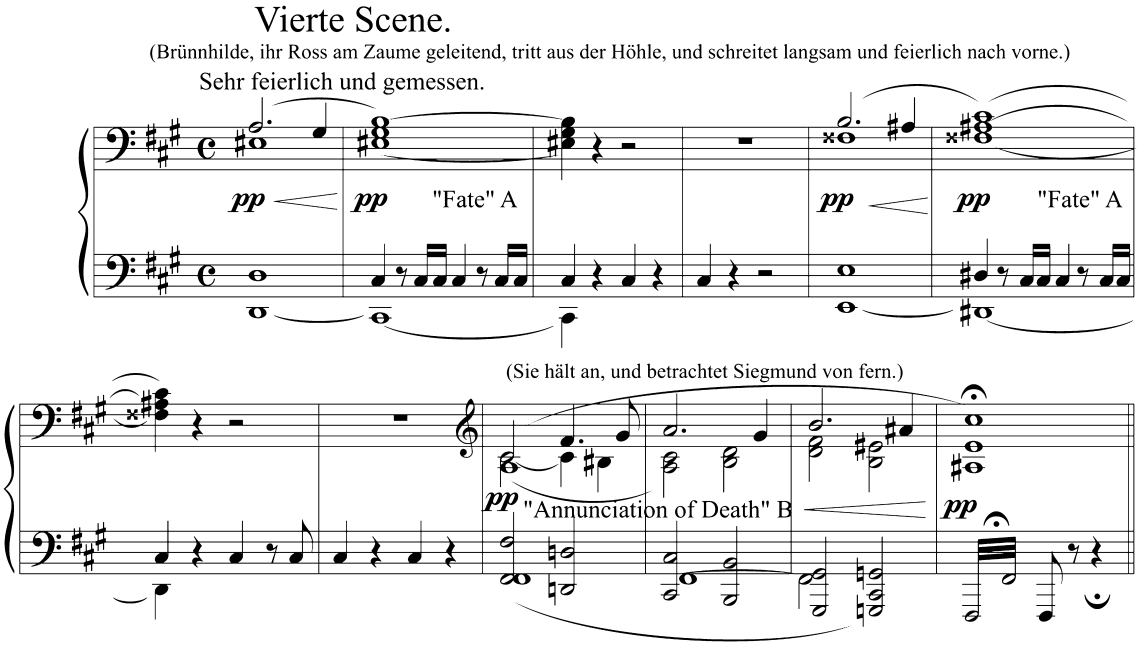
[26] See the analyses throughout McCreless (1982) and Darcy (1993).

[27] For Abbate, music as sound-objects-in-succession creates an event series or plot. She argues that *Siegfried*, for instance, is performed narrative (akin to reading a bedtime story out loud to a child; see Abbate 1991, 159). (A fascinating digression, but one we lack the space to explore here, is the difference between *Erzählzeit* [the time it takes a narrator to tell a tale] and *erzählte Zeit* [the amount of real time that unfolds in a tale]. For more on this topic, see ibid., 54.)

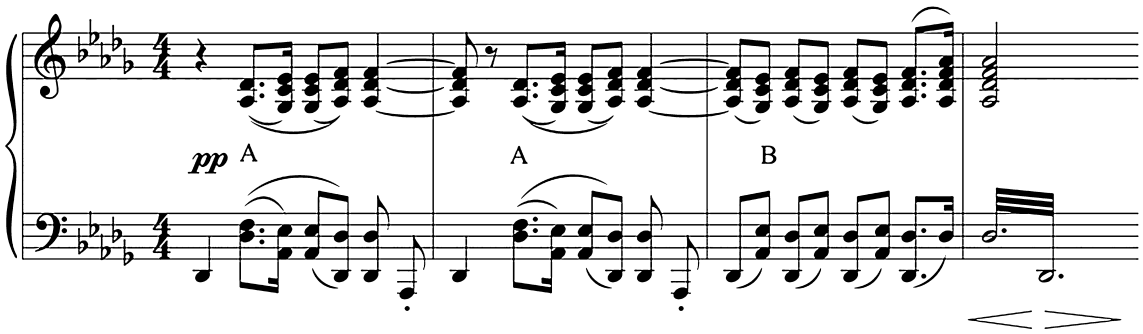
[28] That is not to say that such detail-level work is not necessary or rewarding. Though I have not included it here, Schenkerian analyses from background-to-surface level and multi-level thematic transformations inform my formal decisions. For one example of how a form overview grows from more detail-level analysis, see Bribitzer-Stull (2008).

[29] Certainly, Millington's advice on Wagnerian formal analysis, that "any attempt to impose from the outside an architectonic structure…is doomed," is a good general rule of thumb (1984, 137). This analysis, however, shows that such structures are important components of some Wagnerian forms, even if they cannot explain them in their totality.

[30] See Lorenz (1966a) on bar forms (145–159) and potentiated bar forms (176–185). McClatchie (1998, 129–135) is an accessible English-language source summarizing Lorenz's work on Wagnerian bar forms.



Example 1. The opening bar form of the Todesverkündigung *scene in* Die Walküre.



Example 2. "Valhalla" in bar-form presentation.

Abgesang, a new theme that many commentators call "Annunciation of Death," but one whose closing melodic material grows out of the "Fate" theme's contour. (See Example 1.) On stage, the two *Stollen* accompany Brünnhilde's approach while during the *Abgesang* the Valkyrie stands motionless and observes her quarry. A similar intensification process unfolds in the music and drama of the next small bar form (an expressive transposition of the first), in addition to later bar structures in the scene, many of which feature a bar-form presentation of the "Valhalla" theme. See Example 2.

Lorenz, too, cites this scene as exemplary of the potentiated bar form. He analyzes it as three periods (numbers 10–12 of Act II), with the first two periods comprising gigantic *Stollen* and the third a gigantic *Abgesang*. Each period is itself a bar form, and each section of these bar forms also comprises nested forms, often bar forms themselves. See Figure 1 for Lorenz's overview.[31] (In the pages that follow, I use Lorenz's analysis as a foil to my own. Readers who tire of reading analytic detail in prose may profit from simply comparing Figures 1 and 2.)

My own reading differs somewhat; see Figure 2. While I concur with Lorenz that there are many bar forms, both local and global, in this scene, I hear a somewhat looser organization starting in m. 1530.[32] The pervasive, architectonic bar forms of the opening give way to a more dramatically oriented form. Whereas Lorenz marks his first large

[31] Lorenz (1966a, 179–185) includes the analysis of all three periods.
[32] Measure numbers begin with m. 1 on the first downbeat of Act II, as do the measure numbers cited in the *Tristan und Isolde* analysis below.

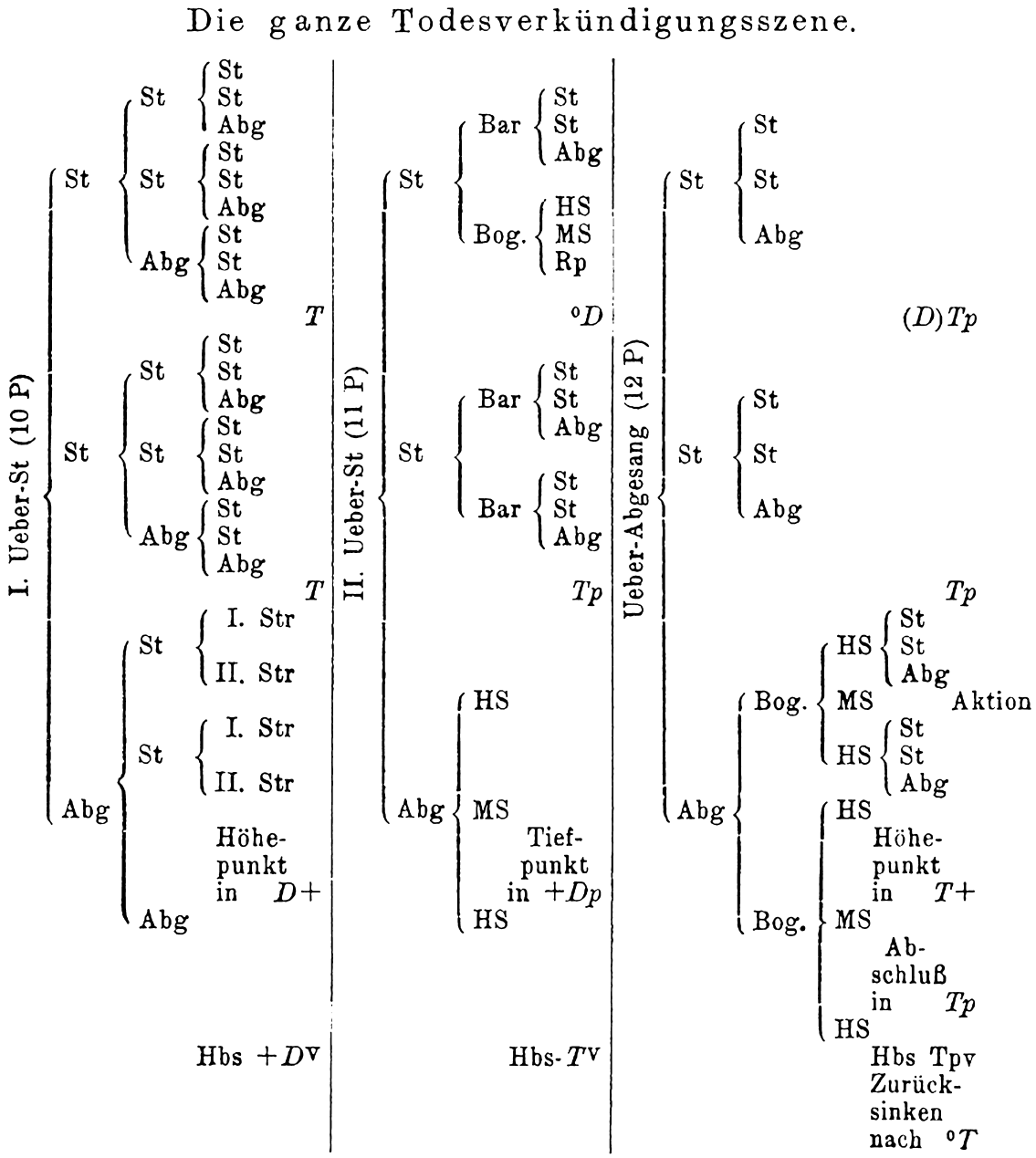


Figure 1. Alfred Lorenz's form overview of the Todesverkündigung *scene in* Die Walküre *(Lorenz 1966a, 184).*

bar form lasting from m. 1462 to m. 1617 (with his large A sections matching mine), I hear the *Abgesang* of the entire scene commencing at m. 1530, itself comprising a three-part form.[33]

The first part is rotational in nature, cycling five times through themes presented in the scene to accompany the five question-and-answer exchanges between Siegmund and Brünnhilde. These rotations serve both a musical and a dramatic purpose; each proves revelatory both to Siegmund (about the nature of his fate) and to Brünnhilde (as she learns where Siegmund's ultimate concern lies; "Will Sieglinde be with me when I go to Valhalla?").[34] Likewise, the music arrives in the final rotation on the Volsung form

[33] I find Lorenz's reading of these measures as a large-scale *Abgesang* to be somewhat forced; he describes it as a bar form whose *Stollen* are themselves strophic in nature. See Lorenz (1966a, 181).

[34] The rotational structure is not exact. Within each rotation, themes may be added or deleted without destroying the feeling of thematic rotation toward the "Love" theme *telos*. Hepokoski (1993, 25) makes clear that rotational "form" is more of a process than

(entire scene centered on f♯ minor, though there are few authentic cadences)

A 1462–90—Brünnhilde appears (expressive rise for AAB in this section)	
A 1462–74—Brünnhilde appears (expressive rise for aab in this section)	**V/f♯** – V/B
a 1462–65, "Fate"	
a 1466–69, "Fate"	
b 1470–73, "Annunciation of Death"	
A 1474–85 (expressive rise for aab in this section)	V/a♭ – V/D♭
a 1474–77, "Fate"	
a 1478–81, "Fate"	
b 1482–85, "Annunciation of Death"	
B 1486–90, "Valhalla" — associative tonality	**D♭ (= V of f♯)**
a 1486	
a 1487	
b 1488–90	
A 1491–1529—Brünnhilde announces Siegmund's death (first *Stollen* with vocal line added)	
A 1491–1502	**V/f♯** – V/B
a 1491–94, "Fate"	
a 1495–98, "Fate"	
b 1499–1502, "Annunciation of Death"	
A 1503–16 (note three-bar groups for both *Stollen* here)	V/a♭
a 1503–1505, "Fate"	
a 1506–1508 "Fate"	
b 1509–16 "Valhalla" (itself a miniature bar form again)	b to **G♭ (= I)**
B 1517–29	**f♯: i – V**
a 1517–19	
a 1520–22	
b 1523–29	
B 1530–1853—Siegmund and Brünnhilde's conversation (a three-part form)	
Part I 1530–1617—Questions by Siegmund to "Annunciation" and answers by Brünnhilde	
Rotation 1 1530–42 "Annunciation of Death" and "Valhalla"	**i** – III – V/III
Rotation 2 1543–52 "Annunciation of Death" and "Valhalla"	iii – v/iii
Rotation 3 1553–60 "Annunciation of Death" and "Valhalla"	iv – ♭II/iv
Rotation 4 1561–76 "Annunciation of Death" and "Freia" + "Riding"	III – **V**
Interpolation 1577–86—Siegmund Interjects	V/III – **V**
Rotation 5 1587–1617 "Annuniciation" and "Valhalla" ("Love" + "Freia")	**i – V**
Part II 1618–73—Brünnhilde stresses that Siegfried has no choice in the matter	
A 1618–35 ("Fate," "Fate," "Annunciation" bar form with "Death" theme)	→ **V – i** →
A 1636–56 ("Fate," "Fate," "Annunciation" bar form with "Death" theme)	*unstable*
B 1657–73 ("Fate," "Fate," "Sword" bar form with "Death" theme)	*unstable*
Interlude 1673–1718— Siegmund refuses and Brünnhilde reacts	
"Love," "Siegmund's Rebellion," and "Fate"	V/b♭
(1706ff "Fate," "Fate," etc. bar form breaks down)	
Part III 1719–77—Siegmund threatens to take Sieglinde's life	
A 1719–38 ("Brünnhilde's Growing Compassion")	**i** – iv
A 1739–48 ("Brünnhilde's Growing Compassion")	iii
B 1749–77 ("Sword" in *Abgesang* as in Part II, as well as "Love")	*unstable*
Coda 1777–1853—Brünnhilde's change of heart and orchestral peroration	
Themes in the coda include: "Brünnhilde's Exultation," "Death," "Love," and "Fate" (last iteration (1846*ff* at pitch level used at opening of scene (**V of f♯**)!)	→ V/A (PAC in A undercut at 1800)

*** Clear moments of tonic and dominant in f♯ minor are bold, above, to highlight their structural importance. ***

Figure 2. Form diagram for the Todesverkündigung *scene in* Die Walküre.

of the "Love" theme (mm. 1602–1604) with its characteristic chromatic passing-tone figure, indicating that it is love that motivates Siegmund's concern, love being the same emotion that will sway Brünnhilde to change her mind about Siegmund's fate by the end of the scene.

The second part comprises another bar form and an interlude, lining up with Lorenz's Period 11.[35] We again hear familiar themes alongside the new "Death" quintuplet turn figure in both *Stollen* and *Abgesang*, and a recollection of the "Sword" theme in the *Abgesang*. Again, the *Abgesang* provides an increase in dramatic tension as Siegmund and Brünnhilde reveal that the magic of the Sword is central to the upcoming battle. The following interlude is a good example of how Wagner's architectonic forms are prone to dissolution that has dramatic significance. The "Fate"-centered bar forms heard so often up to this point in the scene—bar forms that have suggested the inexorable structure (i.e., "Wotan's grand plan") of which Siegmund's life is a part—lose coherence as Siegmund refuses to comply with his fate.

In fact, Siegmund resurrects the bar form in Part III (which comprises the first part of Lorenz's Period 12, along with what I have marked in my analysis as the scene's coda) to propose his own structure: he will take Sieglinde's life if his own life is to be forfeit.[36] Fittingly, Siegmund's bar form introduces a variation of the "Annunciation of Death" theme that Warren Darcy names "Brünnhilde's Growing Compassion." The *Abgesang* of this bar form contains both the *telos* "Love" theme of the rotational form, and the revelatory "Sword" theme of the Part II bar form. Not coincidentally, these were the two themes featured in the orchestral postlude to Act I when Siegmund and Siegfried consummated their love. Hence love, as both an associative theme and an emotional dramatic agent, wins out at the end of the scene during the coda and orchestral peroration. It is here that Brünnhilde embraces her change of heart and announces her decision to Siegmund.

Thus far I have addressed only the thematic and dramatic content of this scene. I believe this music can also be heard as *tonally* unified. Lorenz assigns F♯ minor as tonic to all three periods in the scene without going into much further detail save labeling significant half and authentic cadences. I concur that the scene is tonally unified in F♯, and have tried to give some indication of that on Figure 2. I have not included a Schenkerian graph of the tonal structure as I have done in other analyses of Wagner's music, largely because I am not convinced Schenker's analytic method is especially helpful here. For one thing, the pervasive use of expressive tonality often ruins a strict contrapuntal structure.[37] Moreover, the tonal ambiguity throughout seems to parallel the dramatic uncertainty; partial *Auskomponierung* spans in F♯ emerge and unravel to such an extent that trying to posit the entire scene as one F♯ tonal structure strikes me as a dubious venture.[38] That said, there can be little question that F♯ stands as the scene's referential and associative tonic. The many arrival points on functional dominants and tonics in F♯ (sometimes spelled enharmonically), as well as the emergent i–III–V arpeggiation in the Part I rotational form, all lend enough tonal unity to the scene to bind it together.

To bring this analysis to a close, it is worth noting that the relative clarity of the architectonic bar forms often parallels the characters' clarity of mind or purpose, first Brünnhilde's and later Siegfried's. More formally amorphous sections correspond to upheavals or uncertainty. To suggest that the entire scene comprises nested bar and *Bogen* forms, as Lorenz does, misses the point. Certainly Wagner was capable of composing clear formal structures predicated on rigid thematic presentations, but ultimately these formal structures serve the drama, rather than comprising a sort of musically self-sufficient and pervasive Wagnerian *Formenlehre*.

4. *Tristan und Isolde*, Act II, Scene 2

Like *Die Walküre*, Wagner composed his Schopenhauerian retelling of the old Celtic tale of Tristan and Isolde during his affair of the heart with Mathilde Wesendonck. The shock waves the opera's premier sent through the European musical community lay not only with its advanced tonal and harmonic language, but also its graphic and explicit musical portrayal of the Act II love scene, the focus of our analysis here.[39] We find that this scene is, first and foremost, dramatically motivated. That said, while it contains

a formal architecture; omitted, added, and/or developed thematic materials are to be expected.

[35] Lorenz's Period 11 (mm. 1618–1715) comprises a potentiated bar: this is my Part II. Lorenz's AAB here matches mine, but within each A, my B includes for Lorenz both the *Abgesang* of the small bar form followed by a small *Bogen* form (for the first A) and a small bar form (for the second A). My B-plus-interlude is for Lorenz the *Abgesang*, itself a *Bogen* form.

[36] Lorenz's Period 12 (mm. 1716–1847) comprises another potentiated bar. This is my Part III; again his AAB matches mine, but he structures the internal organization of the B into two *Bogen*, themselves further subdivided.

[37] As Proctor (1978, 158–170) notes when he describes his "transposition operation" in contradistinction to traditional counterpoint.

[38] Though it would certainly qualify as one or more of the "open structures" described in Satyendra (1997).

[39] "Shocked by its eroticism, men at the first performance [of *Tristan*] removed their women from the Munich theater, and a priest was seen to cross himself before fleeing in terror" (Boyden 2002, 275).

none of the clear formal architecture of the *Todesverkündigung* scene, the dramatic form contains within it many musical processes, including sequences and wedge progressions.

In Figure 3, I present a large portion of Act II, Scene 2 as a self-standing love scene.[40] From the point at which the two lovers lie down on the flowery bank together until the moment of *coitus interruptus*, there are two acts of sexual intercourse punctuated by a refractory period of philosophical musing and Brangäne's two warning cries. Like the *Todesverkündigung* scene, there are thematic and tonal reasons to hear this music as a unit. I want to begin, however, with the "Sexual Drama" column of Figure 3. Upon Tristan's arrival in the garden at the beginning of Act II, Scene 2, the two lovers embrace, express their joy at seeing one another, curse the false lives they must live apart during the day, and reflect upon the events that led to the awakening of their love aboard the ship in Act I. Not until Tristan and Isolde lie down together (around m. 1102), however, does the sexual drama truly begin. The measures that follow (until Kurwenal rushes in at m. 1631, warning of King Marke and Melot's imminent arrival) comprise a dramatically unified love scene of two sex acts. The second act of sexual intercourse culminates in arguably the most graphic musical build-up toward orgasm ever written by a composer working in the Western tonal tradition. It is, of course, broken just before the moment of climax in a painful musico-dramatic *coitus interruptus* whose ultimate satisfaction is only achieved at the very end of the opera when Isolde joins Tristan in death, sublimating their sexual union into a spiritual (perhaps "philosophical" is more accurate) one.

The "Sexual Drama" column in Figure 3 relies not just on the text and stage directions, but also on motivic, formal, and tonal elements of the music. Hence, while I hear the drama driving this excerpt (in contradistinction to the drama being carried along by the pervasive nested bar forms of the *Todesverkündigung* scene), this does not mean that the music is devoid of form or process. Over the next few paragraphs, I will describe how the music supports the hearing of this excerpt as a sexual drama.

The first moment in the sexual drama I call "sensual touching." It begins with the "O sink' hernieder, Nacht der Liebe" text at m. 1223 (the text itself, of course, heavily implying the beginning of a sexual tryst). The music features typical nineteenth-century operatic love tropes (many used by Wagner to great effect in earlier love scenes from *Tannhäuser*, Act I; *Das Rheingold*, Scene 1; and *Die Walküre*, Act I). These include a relatively slow tempo and harmonic rhythm, pulsating orchestral wind chords, rich seventh-chord harmonies, vocal duets, and falling-step "sigh" motives.

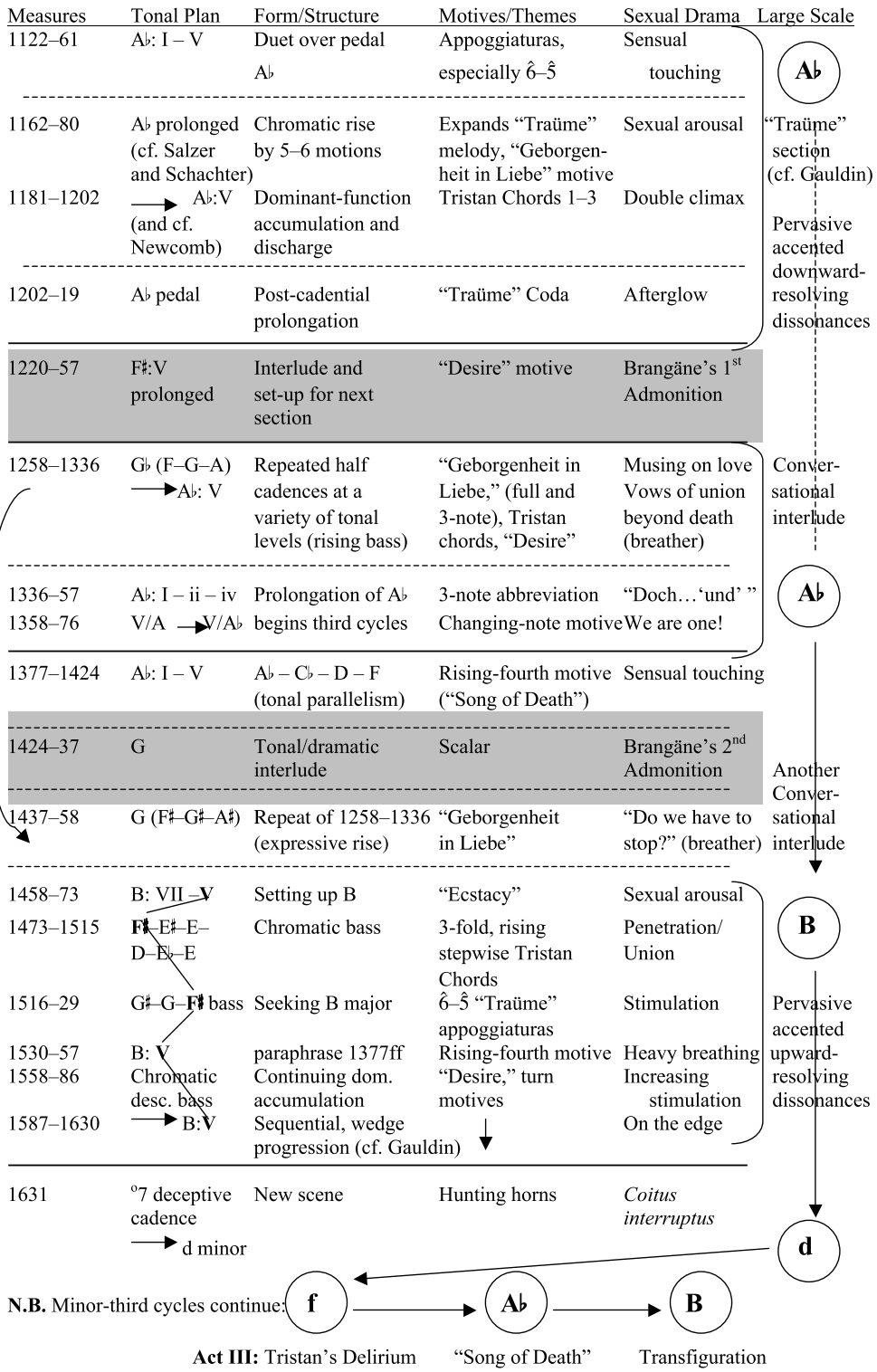
This last element demands further explanation, since it derives from Wagner's *Lied* "Traüme," music he wrote when setting the love poem of the same name that Mathilde Wesendonck penned for Wagner. While *Die Walküre* and *Tristan* were composed in part during the period of Wagner's affair with Mathilde Wesendonck, Mathilde's influence is much more strongly felt in *Tristan und Isolde* than in the *Ring* cycle. Most obvious is the use of some of the music from the five so-called "Wesendonck Lieder" that Wagner composed, setting Mathilde's love poems as sketches for various sections of *Tristan*.[41] "Träume" features prominently in the Act II love duet, where the A♭-major key and prominent falling-step motive recur frequently. In the opera, though, Wagner inserts music between the song's opening ("sensual touching") and coda ("afterglow"). This music comprises a chromatic rising 5–6 sequence (an "expressive rise" here correlated with rising sexual arousal and tension; see Examples 3 and 4) featuring the so-called "Geborgenheit in Liebe" motive (see Example 5), as well as an accumulation of dominant-function harmonies culminating in a double climax on the first "Tristan" chord from the *Vorspiel* (mm. 1192–1193, "Welt") as well as the second and third (mm. 1198–1999, "Liebe, heiligstes").[42] This is followed by the final dominant-function chord (V of A♭ in mm. 1200–1201) and the discharge of this dominant build-up onto the A♭-major tonic (m. 1202) and subsequent tonic discharge.[43] The languid rising chromatic line, derived from the opera's opening "Desire" theme (see Example 6), and its

[40] The perspicacious reader will find it worthwhile to compare my analysis to Alfred Lorenz's in some detail. Lorenz reads the excerpt I analyze as seven periods (numbers 13 through 19 of Act II): Period 13 in A♭ major ("Nachtgesang"), mm. 1122–1209; Period 14 in G♭ major ("Brangänens Wachtgesang und Morgenlied"), mm. 1210–1294; Period 15 in A♭ minor ("Das süße Wörtlein: und"), mm. 1295–1376; Period 16 in A♭ major ("Das Sterbelied"), mm. 1377–1424; Period 17 in G major ("Zweiter Ruf Brangänens und Morgenlied"), mm. 1425–1480; Period 18 in B major ("Liebesekstase"), mm. 1481–1529; and Period 19 in B major ("Höhepunkt der Liebesekstase"), mm. 1530–1630. See Lorenz (1966b, 111–124). While Lorenz's divisions are largely understandable—and based, as usual, first and foremost on monotonal grouping centered on a given tonic—I find the small forms he gives each period less convincing than an understanding of this music as dramatically motivated, said drama supported by musical processes concerned with thematic and tonal presentation. Moreover, some of Lorenz's tonic labels are referential, applying only to the beginning or end of his periods rather than being the underlying tonic of a Schenkerian monotonal prolongation.

[41] See Gauldin (1979) for a more detailed analysis of how Wagner reworked "Träume" into *Tristan*.

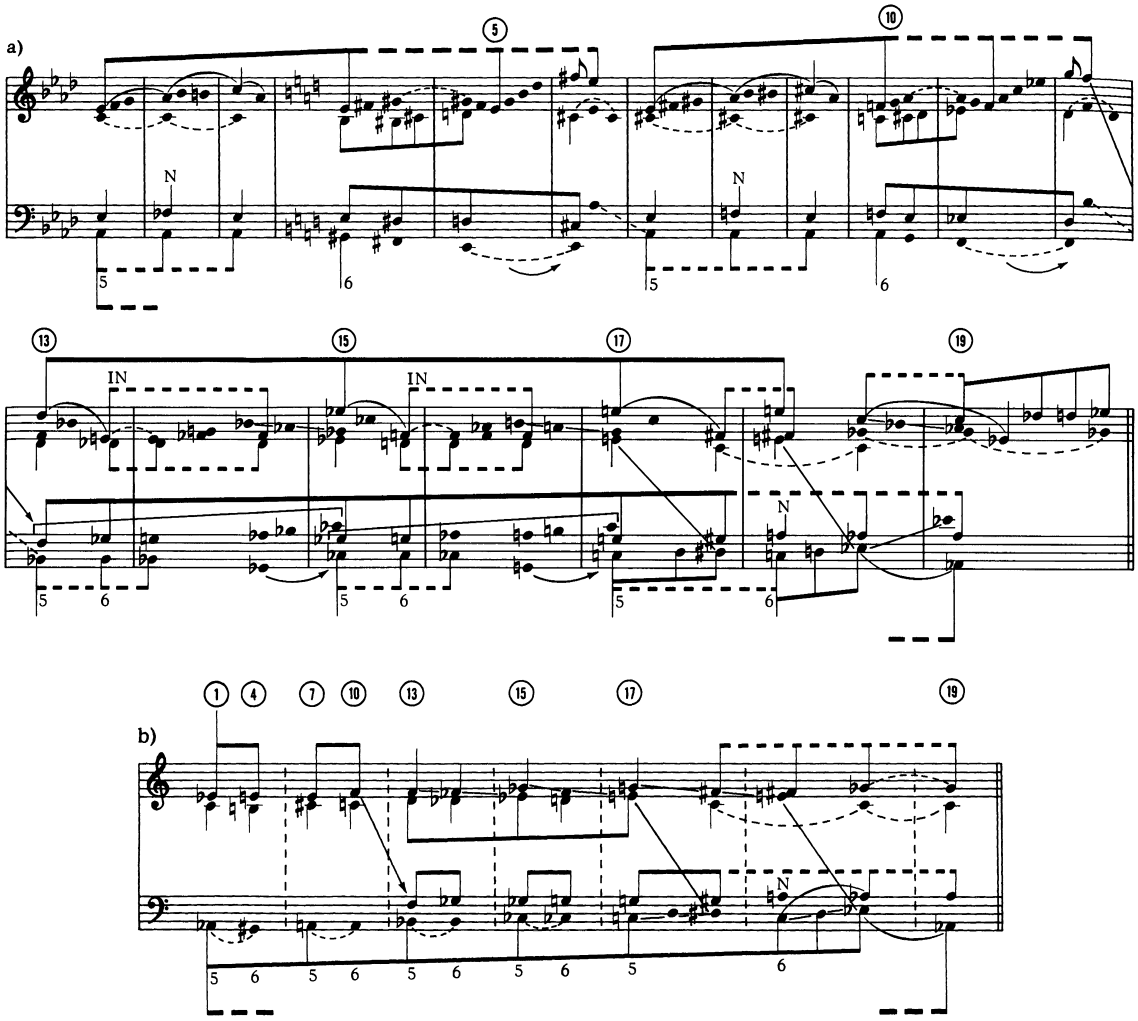
[42] Gauldin (*Analytical Studies*, Chapter 25) offers a fascinating analysis of the "forgotten" third "Tristan" chord from the *Vorspiel* and why its voicing differs from that of the first two chords.

[43] Harrison (1994, 153–165) is largely responsible for my understanding of functional accumulation and discharge.

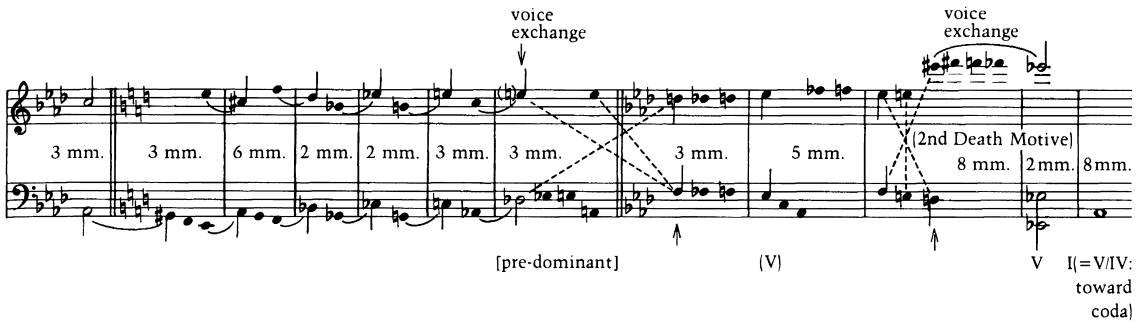


Ultimate goal of opera is to bring a/c from Prelude to A♭/C♭ (B) of Love Duet

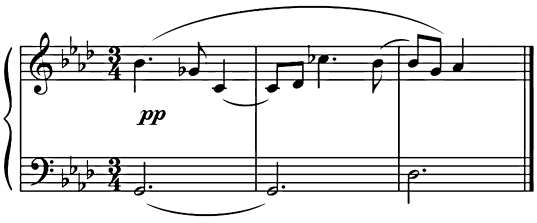
Figure 3. Form diagram for Tristan und Isolde, *Act II, mm. 1122–1631.*



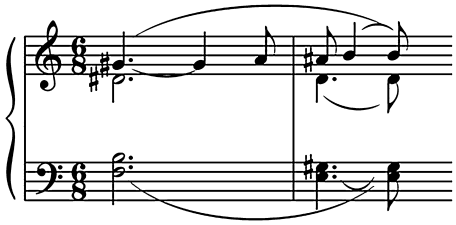
Example 3. Salzer and Schachter's Schenkerian analysis of the rising 5–6 sequence prolonging A♭ major in Tristan und Isolde, *Act II, Scene 2 (1989, 456–457). Used by permission of Dover Publications.*



Example 4. Newcomb's linear analysis of the rising 5–6 sequence prolonging A♭ major in Tristan und Isolde, *Act II, Scene 2 (1981, 57). Used by permission of University of California Press.*



Example 5. "Geborgenheit in Liebe" theme.



Example 6. "Tristan" chord and "Desire" theme.

inversion back down combined with a tonic pedal, musically accompany Tristan and Isolde's post-orgasmic afterglow.[44]

Turning now to the tonal plan and formal structure, I wish to engage again with Alfred Lorenz's views as a foil to my own. Again, readers wishing to skip the analytic detail may find it helpful simply to study Figure 3. Lorenz's Period 13 from Act II largely comprises the "Träume" music and inserted material. He asserts—as do I—this to be an A♭-major section, without going into specifics as to how A♭ is prolonged (a Schenkerian concept he would not have understood the way we do today in Anglo-American analytic circles). I trust that readers of this article would find graphing this span as a closed structure to be relatively straightforward. Lorenz's fourteenth period, in G♭ major, lines up largely with what I have called Brangäne's first admonition, though his sectional divisions seem more motivated by a tonal unity around G♭ than a dramatic division. In fact, though I mark the dominant of F♯ and subsequent tonic G♭ as important to the large-scale tonal structure in Figure 3, it is not at all clear that G♭ is prolonged in a Schenkerian sense, let alone that a complete G♭ tonal structure exists.[45] The "Desire" theme, heard earlier in the "Träume" coda comes to the fore in this scene.

While hearing a rising-step key succession in mm. 1272–1299, Lorenz interrupts this process to begin his Period 15, in A♭ minor (the dominant of A♭ being achieved in m. 1327), just after an orchestral inversion of the "Desire" theme to accompany Isolde's asking of Tristan how he could die of love if his love is immortal. I, however, hear mm. 1258–1336 as a philosophical/conversational breather that begins in G♭, continuing with a rising-step key succession (F–G–A implied).[46] The next section, set up by V of A♭, begins on an A♭ tonic and continues again to the dominant while the lovers contemplate the significance of the tiny word "und" that separates them from one another and from true unity. Finally, mm. 1377–1424 correspond to Lorenz's A♭-major Period 16, where I hear the lovers beginning to warm up for a second sexual act. This music, the so-called "Song of Death," is significant tonally because it rises through a clear transposition operation across the cycle of minor thirds, A♭–C♭ (B)–D–F (see Example 7), the large-scale tonal plan for the entire opera, shown in the bubbles on the right and bottom of Figure 3.

Lorenz's Period 17, which he labels a questionable G major, cuts across what I hear to be significant dramatic and tonal divisions. First is Brangäne's brief, second warning call (clearly in G major). Next is an expressive transposition up a step in mm. 1258–1336, another "breather" (albeit one with a sense of increased dramatic/sexual tension given the higher pitch level) featuring the "Geborgenheit in Liebe" motive. The end of this section leads into the second *bona fide* sex act, a lengthy section that returns frequently to F♯ (eventually clarified as V of B) and that achieves another dominant accumulation even stronger than the first. The three-fold, rising "Tristan" chords, the falling-step "Traüme" motive, the "Song of Death" rising fourth, the "Desire" motive, and the appearance of the "Ecstasy" motive (heard earlier in the act, but not present so far in this dramatic scene) all provide a sense of motivic saturation and recall that contributes to the climactic build-up already strongly suggested by the harmonic dominant accumulation, the rise in pitch, the increased sound mass, and the rhythmic accelerando.[47] What I hear as one dramatic/tonal sweep, Lorenz separates into two B-major periods: numbers 18 and 19.[48] The final musico-dramatic

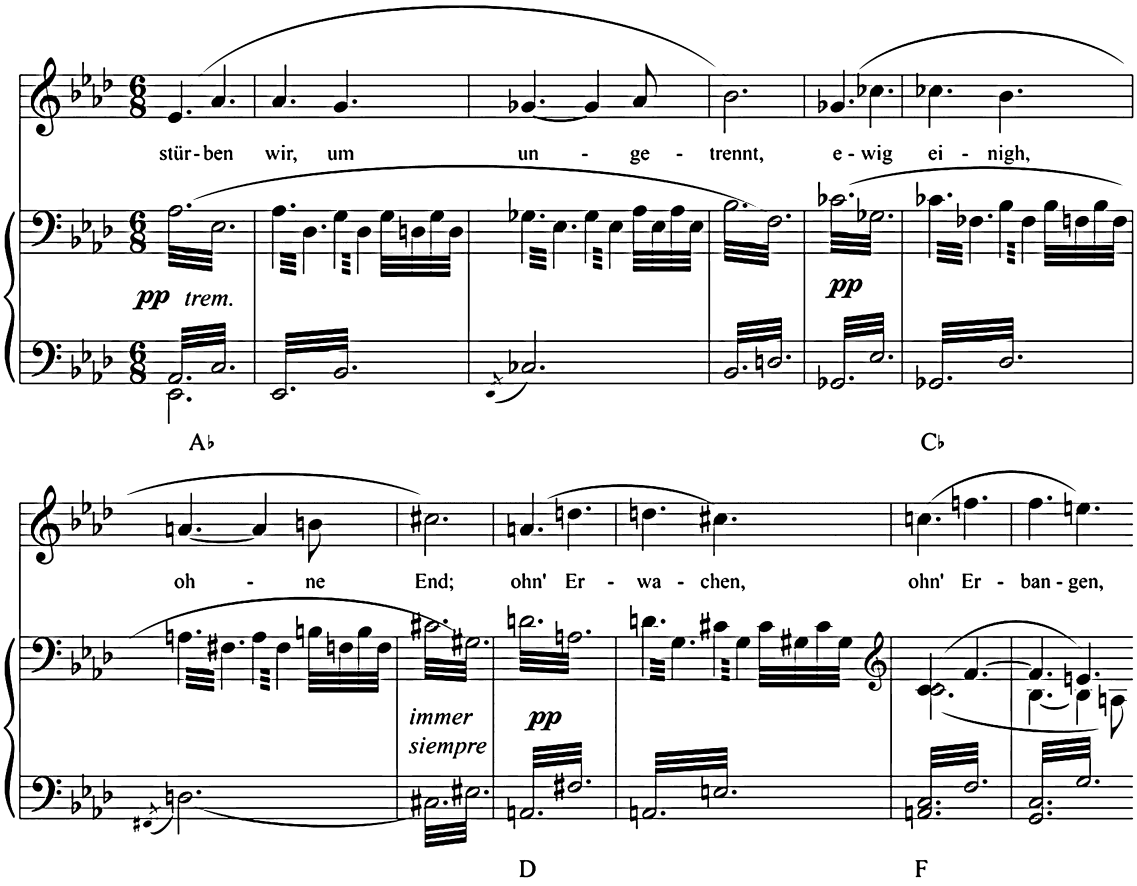
[44] Salzer and Schachter (1989, 453–457) provide a graphic Schenkerian analysis of the rising chromatic sequence, showing how it functions to prolong A♭. I have reproduced it as my Example 3. Newcomb (1981, 56–58) provides a similar analysis highlighting the rising-step motion to explain how a musical process creates formal coherence in this music. I have reproduced it as my Example 4.

[45] G♭ is perhaps more interesting when understood motivically and/or expressively. Motivically, it is a step below the preceding A♭—a conceptual (if not "hearable") large-scale reflection of the descending "Träume" whole step. Expressively, the step down accompanies a decrease in dramatic tension from the sexual climax of the preceding section.

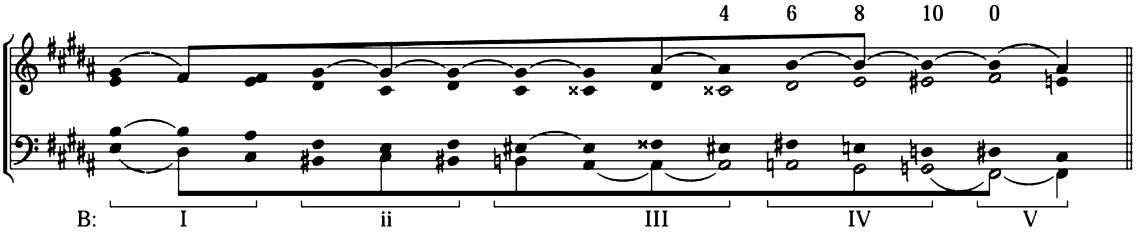
[46] This is another of Proctor's transposition operations; see note 37, above.

[47] See Patty (2009) for a description of the various compositional techniques that contribute to a sense of musical climax.

[48] Lorenz titles Periods 18 and 19 *Leibesekstase* and *Höhepunkt der*



Example 7. "Song of Death" from Tristan und Isolde, *Act II, Scene 2.*



(a) [4 6 8 10 0], Tristan, Act II Love Duet, 193/3/4–195/3/4 = Act III Transfiguration, 298/2/2–300/2/2.

Example 8. Gauldin's wedge analysis of the climax to Tristan und Isolde, *Act II, Scene 2 (Gauldin 2004, 11). Used by permission of Oxford University Press.*

thrust of this second sex act provides harmonic intensification by means of an outer-voice chromatic wedge progression whose implied tonicizations form an expressive rise to an unresolved dominant; see Robert Gauldin's analysis, reproduced in Example 8.[49]

The entrance of King Marke and Melot disrupts the fever-pitch harmonic/sexual energy, preventing its discharge, and necessitating the long-range minor third scheme begun in the "Song of Death" to bring the opera to a close. B major's dominant is only attained and satisfactorily resolved in Isolde's Transfiguration at the end of Act III, in which the unfulfilled harmonic/sexual energy is sublimated into a plagally-elided spiritual consummation, which finally puts to rest—harmonically and melodically—the "Tristan" chord and its concomitant "Desire" theme.

Liebesekstase, respectively, labeling these as scenes of climax (if not explicitly orgasm). See Lorenz (1966b, 123).

[49] See Gauldin (2004, 9–11) for a discussion of this wedge progression.

Closing Remarks

From these two examples, we see the value in treating each opera—perhaps even individual acts or scenes—as its own musical world. Like Mahler's symphonies, Wagner's *Musikdramen* must be taken on their own terms. Hence, the most compelling analyses tend to avoid slavish consistency to analytic models, terms, and expectations and instead embrace pragmatism and faithfulness to each individual combination of music and drama. This orientation may well lead the analyst, as I have done, to select a variety of analytic tools to explain even brief excerpts of Wagner's music. Despite the conceptual dissonances that sometimes arise when attempting to reconcile competing theoretic values and the assumptions that underlie them, the richness of the end result—a more satisfying hearing and understanding of the music at hand—will, in my experience, usually outweigh the loss of purity sometimes offered by rigorous application of one analytic method to the exclusion of all others. Engaging the music, text, and drama on their own terms before deciding which analytic tools are best suited to the job means accepting the fact that there is no single *Geheimnis* to form in Wagner. This makes the task of analyzing Wagner all the more daunting and, by extension, rewarding; learning all of *die Geheimnisse* is no less a feat than learning all of Wagner's music itself.

References

Abbate, Carolyn. 1989a. "Opera as Symphony: A Wagnerian Myth." In *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, edited by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 92–124. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1989b. "Wagner, 'On Modulation,' and *Tristan*." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1): 33–58.

———. 1991. *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bailey, Robert. 1977. "The Structure of the *Ring* and Its Evolution." *19th-Century Music* 1: 48–61.

Balthazar, Scott. 1989. "The 'Primo Ottocento' Duet and the Transformation of the Rossinian Code." *Journal of Musicology* 7:471–497.

Boyden, Matthew. 2002. *The Rough Guide to Opera*, 3rd ed. London: Rough Guides, Ltd.

Bribitzer-Stull, Matthew. 2001. "Thematic Development and Dramatic Association in Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*," Ph.D. dissertation, Eastman School of Music.

———. 2006. "The End of *Die Feen* and Wagner's Beginnings: Multiple Approaches to an Early Example of Double-Tonic Complex, Associative Theme, and Wagnerian Form." *Music Analysis* 25 (3): 315–340.

———. 2008. "Echoes of Alberich's Anguish: Compositional Unity, Analytic Plurality, and Wagner's *Das Rheingold*." *Journal of Schenkerian Studies* 3:59–91.

———. 2015. *Understanding the Leitmotif: From Wagner to the Hollywood Film Score*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burstein, Poundie. 2005. "Unraveling Schenker's Concept of the Auxiliary Cadence." *Music Theory Spectrum* 27 (2): 159–185.

Clark, Frank Leo. 1990. "*Götterdämmerung*: A Tonal and Formal Analysis," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Arizona.

Cook, Nicholas. 1999. *Analyzing Musical Multimedia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dahlhaus, Carl. 1969. "Formprinzipien in Wagners *Ring des Nibelungen*." In *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Oper*, edited by Heinz Becker, 95–129. Regensburg: Gustav Bosse.

———. 1989. "What is a Musical Drama?" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 1 (1): 95–111.

Daverio, John Joseph. 1991. "Brünnhilde's Immolation Scene and Wagner's 'Conquest of the Reprise.'" *Journal of Musicological Research* 11 (1–2): 33–66.

Darcy, Warren. 1990. "A Wagnerian *Ursatz*; or, Was Wagner a Background Composer After All?" *Intégral* 4:1–35.

———. 1993. *Wagner's* Das Rheingold. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1994. "The Metaphysics of Annihilation: Wagner, Schopenhauer, and the Ending of the *Ring*." *Music Theory Spectrum* 16 (1): 1–40.

———. 2005. "'Die Zeit ist da': Rotational Form and Hexatonic Magic in Act 2 Scene 1." In *A Companion to Wagner's* Parsifal, edited by William Kinderman and Katherine Syer, 215–241. Rochester, NY: Camden House.

Deathridge, John, and Carl Dahlhaus. 2005. *The New Grove Wagner*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gauldin, Robert. 1979. "Wagner's Parody Technique: 'Traüme' and the *Tristan* Love Duet." *Music Theory Spectrum* 1:35–42.

———. 2004. "The Theory and Practice of Chromatic Wedge Progressions in Romantic Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 26 (1): 1–22.

———. *Analytical Studies in the Music of Richard Wagner*. Unpublished manuscript.

Grey, Thomas. 1995. *Wagner's Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1998. "Wagner, the Overture, and the Aesthetics of Musical Form." *19th-Century Music* 12 (1): 3–22.

Harrison, Daniel. 1994. *Harmonic Function in Chromatic Music: A Renewed Dualist Theory and an Account of its Precedents*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hepokoski, James. 1993. *Sibelius, Symphony No. 5*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hunt, Graham. 2007. "David Lewin and Valhalla Revisited: New Approaches to Motivic Corruption in Wagner's *Ring* Cycle." *Music Theory Spectrum* 29 (2): 177–196.

Jackson, Roland. 1975. "Leitmotive and Form in the *Tristan* Prelude." *Music Review* 36 (1): 42–53.

Kinderman, William Andrew. 1980. "Dramatic Recapitulation in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*." *19th-Century Music* 4 (2): 101–112.

Lewis, Christopher. 1984. *Tonal Coherence in Mahler's 9th Symphony*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.

Lorenz, Alfred. 1966a. *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner. Vol. 1. Der Musikalische Aufbau des Bühnenfestspieles* Der Ring des Nibelungen. Tutzing: Hans Schneider.

———. 1966b. *Das Geheimnis der Form bei Richard Wagner. Vol. 2. Der Musikalische Aufbau von Richard Wagners* Tristan und Isolde. Tutzing: Hans Schneider.

Marvin, William. 2001. "Tonality in Selected Set Pieces from Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*: A Schenkerian Approach," Ph.D. dissertation, Eastman School of Music.

McClatchie, Stephen. 1990. "'The Warrior Foil'd:' Alfred Lorenz's Wagner Analyses." *Wagner* 11:3–12.

———. 1998. *Analyzing Wagner's Operas: Alfred Lorenz and German Nationalist Ideology*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

———. 2015. "Lorenz, Alfred." In *The Cambridge Wagner Encyclopedia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McCreless, Patrick. 1982. *Wagner's* Siegfried: *Its Drama, History, and its Music*. Vol. 59 of Studies in Musicology Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

———. 1989. "Schenker and the Norns." In *Analyzing Opera: Verdi and Wagner*, edited by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 276–297. Berkeley: University of California Press.

———. 1996. "An Evolutionary Perspective on Nineteenth-Century Semitonal Relations." In *The Second Practice of Nineteenth-Century Tonality*, edited by William Kinderman and Harald Krebs, 87–113. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Millington, Barry. 1984. *Wagner*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Murray, David. 1978. "Major Analytical Approaches to Wagner's Musical Style: A Critique." *Music Review* 39 (3–4): 211–222.

Newcomb, Anthony. 1981. "The Birth of Music out of the Spirit of the Drama." *19th-Century Music* 5 (1): 33–66.

———. 1989. "Ritornello Ritornato: A Variety of Wagnerian Refrain Form." In *Analyzing Opera: Wagner and Verdi*, edited by Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, 202–221. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Patty, Austin. 2009. "Pacing Scenarios: How Harmonic Rhythm and Melodic Pacing Influence Our Experience of Musical Climax." *Music Theory Spectrum* 31 (2): 325–367.

Proctor, Gregory. 1978. "Technical Bases of Nineteenth-Century Chromaticism," Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University.

Rothstein, William. 1989. *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music*. New York: Schirmer.

Satyendra, Ramon. 1997. "Liszt's Open Structures and the Romantic Fragment." *Music Theory Spectrum* 19 (2): 184–205.

Salzer, Felix, and Carl Schachter. 1989. *Counterpoint in Composition*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Schenker, Heinrich. 1979. *New Musical Theories and Fantasies, Part III: Free Composition*. Edited and translated by Ernst Oster. New York: Longman.

———. 1992. "On Organicism in Sonata Form." In *The Masterwork in Music*, Vol. 2, edited by William Drabkin, translated by Ian Bent et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 1994. *Beethoven's Ninth Symphony*. Edited and translated by John Rothgeb. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Skelton, Geoffrey. 1991. *Wagner in Thought and Practice*. London: Lime Tree.

Spencer, Stewart, and Barry Millington, eds. and trans. 1987. *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

Stein, Deborah. 1985. *Hugo Wolf's Lieder and Extensions of Tonality*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press.

Wagner, Richard. 1966a. "Opera and Drama." In *Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 2, edited and translated by William Ashton Ellis, 3–376. New York: Broude Bros.

———. 1966b. "On the Application of Music to the Drama." In *Wagner's Prose Works*, Vol. 6, edited and translated by William Ashton Ellis, 175–191. New York: Broude Bros.